

2014 COACHES HANDBOOK

Holmdel Youth Athletic Association

4 Crawford's Corner Road, Holmdel, NJ 07733

Tel: (732) 945 8016

www.hyaa.org

Dear Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering to coach softball for HYAA. Your time and effort is invaluable and the reason we are able to provide such an awesome experience for so many kids!

The information in this handbook will give you a good start to your season and will answer many questions, especially if you are new to coaching. Please read it carefully and if you have further questions you can follow up with HYAA Commissioners and league presidents for clarification or to ask questions.

Thanks again, have a great season and have fun.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Commissioner: John Migliazza – 732.939.8864

Commissioner: Chris Briamonte – 201.424.2113

League Presidents:

Tee ball (prek/K/1)

Jaimie and Bryan Hynes -917 575 6526 & 732-809-2842

Dan Bodnar 732.425.8556

Clinic (2nd /3rd)

Jim Quirk 732-539-2895

Minors (4,5)

Chris Briamonte 201-424-2113

Majors (6,7,8)

Dennis Pavlik 201—803-4697

For more softball information, including game schedules and all season specific documents please visit the baseball/softball page at www.hyaa.org

COACHING AND TEAM FORMATION

With between 100 – 120 participants in our spring softball season we rely on approximately 30-40 volunteer coaches. A head coach can request an assistant coach and those players are assigned to the team. Our preference is for each team to have 1 Head Coach and at least two assistant coaches. Teams are selected by our league presidents and our head coaches. We cannot guarantee that each team will be balanced in terms of ability, but the nature of recreational softball is that you take the team you are assigned, focus on fun and learning and enjoy your season, no matter what the results.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

The following responsibilities are *suggestions* of how the 3 coaches can work together. However, depending on your relationships, friendships and experience our coaches can decide how to best work together.

HEAD COACH

The head coach is responsible for:

- Selecting practice day/s, time/s and location and communicating that to the team.
- Communicating information to the team about practices and games.
- Planning and leading the practices.
- Coaching the games.
- Communicating with parents about their child and the team.
- Handling concerns with the team, opposing coaches, parents etc.

ASSISTANT COACH

The assistant coach is responsible for:

- Assisting the head coach in practices and on game days.
- Standing in when the head coach is absent or unavailable.
- Helping the head coach performs of his/her duties.

ROSTERS

Coaches will receive their team rosters prior to our Coaches Meeting. **Coaches are not allowed to trade players without approval of the league president and commissioners.** Anyone found doing so will jeopardize their coaching position.

Please contact everyone on your roster before March 24, 2014. Contacting players before the deadline eliminates a lot of phone calls as parents call in a panic that they haven't been contacted. Do not rely on e-mail as your only means of initial communication as we cannot guarantee that the e-mail addresses on the roster are accurate and up to date. Please follow up with a phone call if you don't receive a response. Make your own e-mail distribution list to add second e-mails, work e-mails, both parents, etc. and then use that for the season.

If you cannot reach a family and it appears that the contact information is incorrect please contact the HYAA office so they can look for and provide you with alternate phone numbers/e-mails.

If you contact a family and get no response (after trying multiple numbers/e-mails) please let the office know. A player who does not return calls/e-mails and does not show up at all needs to be reported.

If a parent indicates their child might not play please let the league president know so we can follow up immediately. **Do not** imply they will be refunded. Players only receive a refund if there is a player on the waitlist to replace them and there is an administrative charge. The best case scenario for everyone is if we can replace dropping players with waitlisted players and the sooner we can do this the better.

EQUIPMENT BAGS

Coaches in our clinic, minor and majors divisions are provided with an equipment bag that contains; 2 batting helmets, practice and game softballs, catcher's gear, and ice packs. This is available for pick up at

the coaches meeting and must be returned at the conclusion of the season. Coaches cannot keep bags and equipment (including softballs). The equipment must be inventoried, cleaned, and then the bags are re-stocked and re-issued each season. We expect to lose equipment and there is obvious wear and tear but the value of the equipment bag and its contents is approximately \$300 so please take good care of it.

Please do not write your team name on the softballs or helmets.

Coaches will receive keys to the storage boxes and sheds at their fields. Softball has our own set of keys so please do not lend and give your keys away. Keys will be returned at end of season.

FIELDS

Fields are assigned to each league as follows.

T-ball: Cross Farms #2

Clinic (2/3): Indian Hill Lower (left-most field behind the school)

Minors (4/5): Germinario (left of Satz Middle School)

Majors (6/7/8): HS Upper (behind driveway along the HS maintenance area)

Other leagues may utilize your field but all requests should be made through the league presidents and posted on the HYAA website. Teams posted on the website will have first rights to the field.

Teams are welcome to practice in outfields on any day that is not your assigned day provided they do not interfere with an ongoing practice. Fields noted as free on the HYAA website are on a first come, first served basis so please be flexible, share and work with other teams and coaches.

Games always have priority on the fields.

FIELD MAINTENANCE

Our league encourages all team parents to help run our programs. This includes maintaining and setting up our fields prior to each game. At the start of our season, our league presidents will assign a league Field Coordinator who will be responsible to ensure teams set up fields prior to their games. Field duties include care and maintenance of our softball fields such as raking fields prior to and after our games, laying down bases and pitchers mounds and lining fields. Each team will have a field liaison who will work with the Field Coordinator to assign field duties for teams scheduled to be on the field that day. It is the responsibility of assigned parents to find fill-ins if they cannot handle field duties during their assigned time. Coaches should walk parents through the field duties at the first practice or soon afterward. Please note that this is a new request of parent's this year and should take less than 15 minutes. Most important, it provides our coaches more time to get their teams ready to play.

League Field Coordinators also make the final decision on whether a field is "playable" due to water or other conditions. Field Coordinators will notify league presidents and the two head coaches or township representatives) if a field is not playable no later than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, unless both teams agree to an alternative time.

If applicable, Field Coordinators also work with the township office to ensure umpires are scheduled for each game and notified of any changes or cancellations. If the Field Coordinators are not available, the responsibility will fall on the League President.

UNIFORM INFORMATION

Uniforms are purchased from Athlete's Alley and are included in the registration fee. The uniforms add a great, professional look to our leagues and the kids love them. In addition to the t-shirts, girls are provided matching tie dye socks and a hat (in certain leagues). Coaches are encouraged to have the teams wear same color pant if/when possible.

If for some reason a player receives a uniform that does not fit and there's no-one to exchange with on your team please instruct parents to contact the league president to see if we have a uniform from another division that may fit. Replacements can be ordered if necessary but it will take at least two weeks. All uniform issues need to be resolved prior to the second game if possible, but definitely by Picture Day so don't delay handing them out.

UMPIRES

This year we are experimenting with using teenage umpires for our clinic and minor leagues. A majority of our umpires are experienced players: recreational, travel, and possible high school and they all know the game. We have a **zero tolerance policy** as far as umpire abuse and we ask that you respect the umpires, let them do their job and not shout or criticize from the bleachers. Concerns should be reported to our softball commissioners who will handle them accordingly.

MULTI-TOWN LEAGUE PLAY

Holmdel participates in a multi-town league along with Hazlet, Matawan/Aberdeen, Keansburg and St. Joe's. All our age divisions will travel for games in these towns and we see this approach adding an exciting element to our recreational league. We have published League-wide rules for each division that can be found on the baseball/softball page of the HYAA website. All coaches are expected to be familiar with league rules and abide by them.

At the end of the season, our 4/5 and 6,7,8 divisions will have an in-town playoff sending the winning team to a League World Series!

ONLINE GAME SCHEDULES

Game schedules are posted online for all divisions. To view the schedules please visit www.hyaa.org.

Schedules will be updated throughout the season with any changes, rain outs, reschedules etc. so please continue to check and consider what is posted online to be the most accurate and up to date. We try to avoid game conflicts for head coaches coaching more than one team so they can be at all games. We cannot guarantee it 100%, but try to make accommodations when possible.

RESCHEDULES

League Presidents will be responsible for rescheduling cancel games. Preferences will be considered but not guaranteed. All coaches are responsible to ensure they update parents and players with new games or practice times.

TELEPHONE HOTLINE AND ONLINE UPDATES – WEATHER & FIELDS

When the Township or Board of Education closes fields **ALL** community sports groups are made aware of the closure and we expect, but can't guarantee, that everyone adheres. Official field closure means **ALL** practices and/or games are cancelled.

Coaches are responsible for contacting their team. If fields are open but you choose to cancel that is at your discretion. Make your team aware but don't assume they see your email. It may be best to all send text messages or have it posted in the website if there is enough advanced notice.

Coaches should try to "make up" practices missed due to bad weather but it is not always possible. The League Presidents will always try to reschedule games cancelled due to the weather, but depending on the severity of the rain throughout the season we cannot guarantee it.

PICTURE DAY

Picture Day is scheduled each season and each team is assigned a specific time. The schedule will be posted online. Coaches will receive their picture envelopes with the uniform pick-up and these should be handed out about one week prior to the date. If you hand them out earlier parents may lose them! Players should wear their full uniform (jersey, socks, and hats) and tennis shoes. Cleats are not allowed in the gym. Instruct players to arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time. Pictures will be handed out at the end of the season. Players are not required to purchase pictures, but everyone should be encouraged to attend to be a part of the team picture.

Pictures are scheduled back to back where possible for head coach and assistant coaches coaching more than one team. If you cannot make the picture time you have been scheduled please let us know as soon as possible to reschedule the time. An alternative date will not be available.

TROPHIES (FINAL DETERMINATIONS MADE AT END OF SEASON)

At the end of the season players will receive a participation medal in t-ball and Clinic and first and second place trophies in other leagues. These will be available for pick up at the last game and we encourage all coaches to take a final game picture, if possible.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR SOFTBALL TEAM

While there is no one magic formula for being successful with your new softball team, these tips should make the process a little smoother for the players, their families and you, as a coach. The most important thing for you to remember is to make softball FUN for your players. This will guarantee that your players will come away with a good experience after the season is over.

In general, there are keys to being an effective coach:

- Always be prepared – know what you want to accomplish and how you will do it in all practice and game situations.
- Make it fun!
- Stay flexible – if what you are doing is not working, do something else.
- Be Positive – words of encouragement go a long way!
- Keep the energy level high
- Keep your eyes open and get to know your team. They are a group of individuals with specific learning and communication styles.

Pre-season steps:

Schedule a pre-season parents meeting (this could be before your first practice or at a separate time). Call or e-mail all the parents to say "hello" and inform them of the date of the meeting. Things to cover at this meeting are:

- a) Introduce yourself & assistant coaches – tell them a few things about yourselves, your athletic history, your family, your coaching philosophy.
- b) Solicit a team coordinator and a field coordinator.
- c) Hand out uniforms (if available) and discuss equipment that players must have (cleats, mitt, helmet, field masks, etc.).
- d) Discuss schedules for practices and games.
- e) Encourage parents to check the web-site for schedules, weather, updates etc.
- f) Discuss practice policies – why attendance and timeliness are important.
- g) Set up phone tree and/or e-mail list.
- h) Review important points the Parent's Code of Conduct
- i) Discuss your expectations for the season, i.e., practices and games are fun, everyone plays, what age-appropriate skills can be taught at specific age levels.

During the season:

Plan your practices. Don't try and "wing" it – do your homework and practices will be much more fun and useful. Spending 15-20 minutes planning your practice will pay off. Have REALISTIC expectations of what children can learn at different ages and don't expect too much too soon.

Practices should follow a logical, consistent pattern.

A suggested sequence of activities would be:

1. Warm up activity
2. Skill Introduction – demonstrate – try – demonstrate – try
3. Game/activity to reinforce skill. **Holmdel uses a skills and activity station philosophy to reinforce skills** – we don't want our players standing around the fields while one or two other players are up a bat, etc. Uses your assistant coaches to set up two or three stations that reinforce a skill or a set of skills and rotate the players between the stations.
4. Scrimmage – "let the game teach the game"
5. Wrap Up

Plan more activities than you think you will need. If an activity does not seem to be working, move to the next activity. Our league presidents will distribute activity ideas throughout the season. If you have a good activity, please share it with your league presidents so we can incorporate into other team practices.

Try to keep your instruction to a minimum. Learning will be reinforced naturally as the player masters a skill. A few comments between activities are all that most children will absorb. Again, remember to keep your directions age-appropriate. Remember to keep it positive!

Plan your game day:

- Make sure that parents know to arrive to a game early. 20-30 minutes ahead of the scheduled game time. This will also leave parents on field duty time to prep fields.
- Determine which responsibilities will be taken by coaches and asst. coaches.
- Plan your line-up, but be flexible. Be sure to incorporate substitutions.
- Keep sideline direction to a minimum. Coaching is done 95% during practice sessions. Let the players play and don't commentate.
- Focus on small victories – "nice pitch", "great hit" rather than runs.
- After the game, conclude with a few positive feedback points and things to think about for the next practice or game.

GENERAL GAME INFORMATION

(PLEASE REFERENCE THE 2014 LEAGUE RULES FOR A COMPLETE SET OF RULES IN EACH AGE DIVISION)

1. Games will be played on Saturday's beginning at 9:00am. Weeknight games will be played no earlier than 6:00 pm.
2. The home team bats last and uses the third base dugout. Official score is kept by the home team, but coaches will confirm the score after each half inning. Each team will provide a game ball.

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. **Harassment of the umpires by coaches, parents and spectators will not be tolerated.** Coaches may only approach the umpire for an interpretation of the rule in question. If no umpire is available coaches will share umpire duties.
2. Positive chatter is fine, but harassing or negative chatter or cheers are forbidden.
3. **No spectators are allowed to stand or sit behind the backstop**
4. No smoking!
5. No coaches or spectators are allowed to stand/sit in front of dugout fence with the exception of base coaches.

EQUIPMENT

1. Players must wear team jersey, softball pants, and gym shoes with laces tied or multipurpose rubber cleats (no metal spikes).
2. Catcher must wear a mask, hockey style helmet, chest protector, and shin guards.
3. All batters and base runners must wear a batting helmet. Intentional removal of the helmet by the base runner shall result in a warning for the player and if it occurs again, an automatic out for that runner.
4. Girls who are playing 3rd base and pitching are encouraged to wear an infielder mask.

FIELD DIMENSIONS

The following field dimensions will be used in each designated league:

1. T-ball - the bases will be 55 feet apart.
2. Clinic and minors - Pitching mound at 35 feet and the bases will be 60 feet apart.
3. Majors - Pitching mound at 40 feet and the bases will be 60 feet apart.

GENERAL GAME RULES

1. Every girl must play at least three (3) full innings. No player will sit two consecutive innings
2. No jewelry may be worn during practices or games. This is for your own protection. Medic alert brackets are allowed as long as they are taped to the skin.
3. Batting order should be continuous and cannot be changed once the game begins.
4. Intentional walks are not allowed.
5. Collision Rule– In order to prevent injury and protect the defensive player attempting to make a play on a runner, the runner will be called out if she does not avoid contact with a fielder who has the ball and is making a play on the runner. To prevent this, the runner must slide or give herself up.
7. A player will receive a warning for throwing her bat. After two warnings, she will be called out.

AGE APPROPRIATE PROGRESSIONS

T-BALL Goals:

1) Learning the basic rules:

- a. The right direction to run when the ball is hit
- b. Where the bases are and runners must touch the bases
- c. How to record outs (catch the ball in the air, throw to first, or tag the runners)
- d. Running past first base
- e. Concept of a team
- f. Three outs constitute a half an inning (our games will not count outs – all players bat)

2) Throwing Mechanics:

- a. Turn the body so the front shoulder points toward the target
- b. Keep the throwing elbow above the shoulder
- c. Step toward the target with the non-throwing foot and release the ball

3) Tracking:

- a. Follow the ball with the eyes into the glove
- b. Whether on the ground or in the air use softer balls
- c. Use two hands to catch and field
- d. Try to catch the ball out in front of the body

4) Hitting:

- a. How to hold and swing a bat
- b. Batting safety! When not to swing bats and wearing batting helmets
- c. Hitting off a tee
- d. Hitting softly tossed pitches

5) Learning Position Play:

- a. If the ball is hit to a teammate let him or her field it
- b. Proper fielding position (down and ready)

AGE APPROPRIATE PROGRESSIONS

2nd and 3rd Grade Goals:

1) Learning the basic rules: ☑☑Concept of TEAM

- a. Force outs
- b. Tagging up
- c. What is a double play
- d. Base running -When you don't have to run -Not running into or past teammates on the base paths -
Always keep running after ball is hit with two outs
- e. Balls and Strikes
- f. Good Sportsmanship

2) Throwing Mechanics

- a. Introduce the four-seam grip
- b. Point the front shoulder, step and throw
- c. Introduce the concept of generating momentum to the target and following the throw.

3) Catching and Fielding

- a. Thrown and hits balls
- b. Fingers up versus fingers down
- c. See the glove and the ball
- d. Use two hands
- e. Forehands and backhands
- f. Introduce the underhand flip
- g. First-base fundamentals
- h. Cross over and drop steps

4) Hitting

- a. Choosing the right bat
- b. Proper grip
- c. Hitting pitched balls
- d. Introduce drill work (tee, soft toss, short toss)
- e. NO elbows up

5) Learning Position Play

- a. Learn the positions and the areas each player should cover
- b. Cover the nearest base when the ball is not hit to you.
- c. Basics of cut-offs and relays

AGE APPROPRIATE PROGRESSIONS

10-12 Year Old Goals

1) Learning the Basic Rules

2) Base Running

- a. Leads
- b. Stealing
- c. Extra-base hits
- d. Tagging up and going half way
- e. Proper Sliding techniques

3) Pitching & Throwing Mechanics

- a. Push off mound
- b. Four seam grip
- c. Step, throw, follow

4) Hitting

- a. Repetitions
- b. Drill Work
- c. Tee -Soft toss -Quick Swings -Stick Ball
- d. Bunting

5) Learning Team Fundamentals

- a. Cut-offs and relays
- b. Basic bunt defenses
- c. Basic first and third situations
- d. Double plays
- e. Defending the steal
- f. Infield and outfield communication and priorities
- g. Backing up bases

Hitting

Main Points

1. **Selecting a bat**-pick a bat that feels right and that is light enough to generate good bat speed. Player should be able to hold bat straight to the side, shoulder height for at least 20 seconds.
2. **Stance**-starting point; need vision, balance, and plate coverage.
3. **Weight shift**-weight shifts to backside, generating energy, before being taken forward; verbal cue: "You have to go back to go forward." (Load Phase).
4. **Stride**-short and soft (toward pitcher) or none at all.
5. **Swing**-short and quick, using waist, backfoot/leg, hands, wrists and forearms. Head down, rotating at the hips as back foot rotates towards pitcher so laces face pitcher.
6. **Follow-through**-one or two hands; takes care of itself if all elements of swing are in place.

Soft Toss

Objective To use a proper grip and understand how that helps improve bat speed, verbal cue: "Loose hands, quick bat" **Setup** Bucket of balls, coach, player or toss machine to toss; net screen, or fence to hit into **Execution** This is a standard hitting drill that can be done virtually anywhere. Teammates can toss to one another, or a coach can toss to a player.

The batter takes his or her stance; the tosser kneels across from the hitter, slightly in front of home plate in foul ground, not in the direction that the ball will be hit. The ball is tossed underhand so the batter can hit it out in front of the plate. The hitter wants to concentrate on having a loose grip in the fingers with the "door knocking" knuckles lined up. This will allow the wrists to unlock, promoting a quicker swing using the hands, wrists, and forearms. Batters should think loose hands, quick bat. This drill works best if done into a screen with a target, but it can also be done into a fence if plastic balls, tennis balls, or rubber balls are used. Never hit softballs into a fence.

Coaching Keys If players seem to be getting jammed quite a bit, take a look at where the tosses are coming from and are being hit. A lot of coaches try to soft toss from a position directly across from the batter. When the ball is coming directly at the batter, he or she actually has to drag the bat to the ball, hitting it at a location that's not in front of home plate. The toss should come from an angle slightly in front of home plate and be struck slightly in front of the plate. This allows the wrists to unlock and the barrel of the bat to get to the ball.

Tee Work

Objective To develop proper weight shift; verbal cue: "You have to go back to go forward" **Setup** Batting tee, bucket of balls, net, screen or fence to hit into **Execution** Players adjust the batting tee to a height that makes them swing down slightly to get the barrel of the bat to the ball. Players hit into the screen or a net with a target. Work strictly on weight shift ("Go back to go forward"). Take all the weight to the back side before exploding forward. Keep the head down and eyes on the ball. Take the front foot and front shoulder directly toward pitcher. Try to hit the ball at the target each time. Avoid an uppercut swing. If you don't have a net, plastic balls, tennis balls, or soft rubber balls can be hit into a fence. Never hit softballs into a fence.

Coaching Keys To help keep players from dropping the front shoulder, tell them to focus on hitting the ball into a target directly in front of the tee. If they're pulling the ball weakly, remind them to go straight back first before striding straight forward toward the pitcher ("Go straight back, then straight forward"). If they hit the tee, top ground balls, or swing and miss often, have them pick a spot on the ball and focus on that spot until they make contact.

Hitting Contests

Objective To add a competitive angle to regular hitting drills to make them seem less like work **Setup** Depends on the drill; usually a bucket of balls and a coach or pitching machine to feed or pitch

Execution Almost any hitting drill can be turned into a contest using a point system. Award a point for a hard ground ball up the middle, 2 points for a line drive up the middle, and 5 points for a line drive up the middle that reaches the back wall of a cage or the outfield grass (depending on where you're hitting). Develop your own point systems for whatever concept you're teaching. Stress proper hitting mechanics at all times. The scoring sheet included here is designed to help you track individual and group totals for two rounds as well as the team total. Keep a record and compare results over the season to see how your team is progressing.

Throwing Main Points

1. Use a four-seam grip.
2. Take the ball down, out, and up out of the glove (circular motion).
3. Hand above the ball at first, shifting to behind the ball as release point approaches.
4. Elbow above the shoulder.
5. Point front shoulder toward target.
6. Step toward target.
7. Release ball.
8. Follow through.