

On Being a Successful Youth Baseball Manager at Toluca...

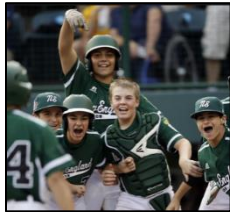
from Toluca Baseball's Board of Directors

Toluca's Culture

1. Positivity
2. Competitive but within reason
3. Winning is fun, losing isn't negative
4. Effort is always applauded
5. Always treat the game with respect

Toluca's Key Codes of Conduct

1. Stay positive, avoid confrontations with others
2. Treat kids as rec players, not high school or collegiate players
3. Assume umpires will make mistakes; don't waste time arguing calls, which usually embarrasses them
4. Don't let your parents engage umpires, players, coaches—unless it's positive in tone



Your #1 job: Make every player want to come back

Make no mistake: If a player is bummed that the season is over and is already excited about next season, you've done a fantastic job as a manager. If you can further their fundamentals along the way, even better. But stay focused on what's most important: evolving each player's love of the game and each family's understanding of it. In doing so, everybody wins.



Be prepared → have a plan

Before every practice, write out a practice plan. Drills should last no more than 15 minutes. Studies have shown that more time spent on a particular concept is lost on players this age. Build upon the basics, keep things moving then reinforce.

- Great coaching resource: QCBaseball.com



Strongly consider practice uniforms

Optics play a huge role in team building. If parents don't want to spring for a practice shirt, have your players wear similar colored shirts and pants. Also, don't allow for booty socks or hats other than those issued by Toluca. A kid's apparel individuality can shine elsewhere. On the field, it's all about the team.



One key concept

Studies have shown that kids can rarely absorb no more than one key concept at a time and even then such concepts need constant reinforcement. Accordingly, at the beginning of each practice – and game – provide that day's key concept then do everything in support of it. In your earlier practices, focus on team building and key rule changes, then regularly review the concepts as they roll out. "Let's review what we've all learned so far...."



Literally get on player's level

When speaking to players, take a knee so they physically see you on their level. I can't overstress the importance of this. Yes, they need to respect you but they also shouldn't feel intimidated. Eldrick Woods' approach to his son Tiger is an once-in-a-lifetime (dubious?) success story, so leave the yelling, belittling and bullying to the agro drill sergeants. These are kids playing a game and most of them still sleep with teddy bears. Take a knee and communicate with them calmly and eye to eye.



Assign homework

Ask your players to do baseball work on their own between practices. Something that doesn't require a parent, sibling or a friend—you'd be amazed at what one can accomplish with nothing more than a wall. Use a tennis ball to hit a small target 20 times. Lengthen your pitching stride. Keep your back elbow close to your stomach when hitting. Key is to demonstrate the drill before they leave practice—and tell the parents the drill—then start the next practice by asking everyone to demonstrate it back to you. You'll soon find that they'll all do the work.



Stay classy

With deference to Ron Burgundy's baby panda re-awakening, when it comes to dealing with parents, umpires and other coaches, always take the high road. All eyes are on you — the kids are especially watching — and they'll learn more from your actions than your words. If you don't like the strike zone or an opposing fan is obnoxious or the other coach isn't following the rules, address the situation calmly and quietly. You'll be amazed at how well this works for all involved, but especially the kids.

- **Protesting an Umpire:** *No one* should hear you complain about an umpire. If you've got a problem with the way a game is being called, call time out, pull the umpire aside and respectfully speak with him about your concern. Yelling and complaining to others sets a bad example for everyone and won't be tolerated. *Assistant coaches should not argue at all.*
- **Opposing Manager Complaints:** Likewise, if you've got issues with a fellow manager — and observe actions that are unbecoming — respectfully pull him/her aside and speak with them. Please also inform the division's commissioner.



Be a player advocate

If something is holding back one of your players—an overbearing parent, a teammate, a feel of inadequacy, shyness, etc.—take measures to fix it. Do so professionally (“stay classy”) but don't be shy about addressing any external contributor to the situation, especially relatives. If you constantly act in what you believe is each player's best interests—even if it means a difficult private conversation with someone—everyone will benefit greatly.



Keyword for managing parents: transparency

Players play, coaches coach and parents cheer. Defining such roles is easier said than done but holding the line on all three is critical to your team's success and managerial satisfaction. Especially important is setting proper expectations with parents and taking any needed action early and often. Most parents think only about their own kid and too many inappropriately judge a manager's efforts based on where their kid plays or how their kid performs. By laying out your approach clearly and concisely—with an abundance of transparency—you'll find harmony in the stands. Solicit and take under advisement all parent feedback—not just your assistant coaches—and ask families what they'd like Little Johnny to work on, then provide updates on progress. If the only insights they're getting is what they see on the field, you're sunk. Bottom line: Be honest, be thoughtful and always overcommunicate.



Looks can kill

Every manager and coach gets frustrated on the field. But instead of physically showing it by yelling across the field or shrugging your shoulders or shooting disapproving eyes, jot down a note and address the situation outside the heat of your annoyance. You'll find players—especially kids—will respond very well. After all, it's not like they're *trying* to be vexing and it's never ever anything personal.



It's all about a smile

As a volunteer manager, you are the lifeblood of Toluca Baseball and are to be commended for stepping forward to lead these kids. We ask that you do well by everyone by keeping things simple and friendly. Have an end goal of creating happy players and supportive parents. This is youth sports. To be sure, there will be ups and downs. There will be tears. But there are no nuclear clocks ticking in the dugout, there are no burning buildings. Stay calm and remember that your chief job is to **protect every player as if you are a lion** and shower their young impressionable minds with love, kindness and understanding. Because at the end of the season,

regardless of how much baseball you teach, **every one of your players will remember you forever.**

Manager's Tip Sheet

Key Rules

- No player can sit twice before every player sits once
- No barrel bigger than 2-5/8; must have 1.15 stamp
- Two innings max per player per game
- No one allowed on field without LiveScan on file with Toluca (this include dugout managers)
 - Exception: field maintenance only
- Pitch count are in full effect:
 - Know your division's pitch count rules
 - Pitchers may not pitch on consecutive days no matter how many pitches are thrown
 - Pitchers who throw too many pitches are not eligible to play catcher for the remainder of the day
 - Each manager must submit their team's pitch count to the commissioner within 24 hours of the scheduled start time of each game

Expected Etiquette

- Practice
 - Respect other teams' practice times, rights to facilities
 - Leave fields in top shape
 - Help other teams put away fields after practices
- Pregame
 - Warm-ups should begin 45-60 minutes advance (consider it extra practice time)
 - Batting cages are available during games, unless home team needs to warm up a pitcher
 - Provide lineups to other manager with players' names and jersey numbers
- In-Game
 - Always show kids how to win with class, lose with grace
 - Don't criticize kids in front of everyone; they're allowed to make mistakes
 - Don't stall for time to preserve wins; your reputation will suffer quickly
 - Don't argue with umpires
 - Don't confront opposing coaches; ask umpire to mediate
- Postgame
 - Shake hands with opposing teams, clap for other team's families, then applaud their own
 - Exit dugout quickly and leave it clean
 - Home team for upcoming games is responsible for field setup; each team should help!

And please don't forget...

- Treat neighbors with respect; this is where they live
- Don't park where you shouldn't
- Treat volunteers with appreciation
- Respect other park users
- No pregame warm-ups, no practicing on pedestrian paths
- No batting practice with hardballs outside of fields (unless into nets)

About Travel Team Players

- Most are very good, but not all. Some don't pitch or are used sparingly on hill.
- Pitchers may be on pitch restrictions; parents should tell you in advance.
- More middle schools offer baseball; pitchers are used even more.