

## **Spring Sports Program**

### **Grades 5/6 Coach Pitch Manual**

#### **Message from the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA):**

Thank you for taking part in the Spring Sports Program and making it a success year after year. The Spring Sports league is one of the programs of the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA), a not-for-profit community organization whose mandate is to work together with our community to make Bridlewood a great place to live, work and play. The BCA is committed to making sport in our community a positive and rewarding experience for everyone and has designed the Spring Sport Program to give children aged 5 – 14 an opportunity to have fun, learn new skills, get exercise and enjoy the beautiful parks of Bridlewood. It is a non-competitive league where the values of excellence, fun, inclusion and fairness dominate the game. On our fields, everyone is a winner.

#### **Overall Objectives of the Spring Sports Program:**

- Emphasize safety and, above all, have fun!
- Help young athletes develop coordination, a sense of teamwork and teach the fundamentals of the sport.
- Recognize the important contribution that sports can make to our children and our community.
- Afford families a chance to get to know other Bridlewood families in a relaxed, fun, outdoor setting. Make new friends!
- Reinforce the True Sports Principles as part of the culture supported by the BCA, the City of Ottawa and local schools.

#### **Coaching Philosophy:**

As a volunteer coach, your most important job is to ensure that your athletes have fun, learn new skills and make new friends. As this is an entirely volunteer-run program, all parents are expected to participate in some way, this includes asking parents to help out both on and off the field! Remember that the entire Spring Sports team is there to help you as well.

#### **Requirements to be a coach:**

- You enjoy working with children.
- You encourage and are able to organize children.
- You are available for weekly practices and games.
- You may have some experience with the sport. This coaching manual will provide rules, suggestions for warm up and drills and tips to help you teach the sport.

#### **Expectations of Coaches:**

- Arrange for equipment pick up as organized by the convenor. If you are not available, delegate it to another parent on your team.
- Communicate information to team regarding schedules, location, expectations for both players and parents, etc. or arrange for team manager to do so.
- Arrive on time for weekly practice with the equipment or designate someone to take your place for the warm up if you will be delayed.
- Be prepared – plan the warm up, drills and game plan or delegate to your assistant coach or manager.
- Explain and/or demonstrate skills, rules and positions to the team.

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- Ensure all children have an equal opportunity to play and try out different positions.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.

### Expectations of Players:

- Arrive on time for practice with all necessary equipment, proper footwear and water. No sandals or jewellery.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.
- Pay attention to coaches or managers.
- Always be aware of what is happening on the field.
- When not actively on the field focus on the game, encourage your teammates and use only positive comments.
- Work with everyone on your team, not just your friends.
- Shake hands with opposing team after the game.
- Help the coach assemble all equipment after the game and clean up after yourself.

### Expectations of Parents:

- Have child at the field on time and ready to play every week.
- Assist coach in whatever capacity they need – snacks, supervising children not on the field, with game, etc.
- **CRITICAL:** Ensure that your child is supervised at the field. If you cannot attend, please have another trusted adult supervise your child.
- Communicate any absences to coach in advance whenever possible.
- Respect all participants including players and coaches from both teams.

### Getting Ready to Coach:

- Review this manual in its entirety – contact [springsports@bridlewood.ca](mailto:springsports@bridlewood.ca) if you have any questions, concerns or are missing any equipment.
- Contact your team with information about dates, times and location of your sessions. Recruit parents to act as team manager or any other function you may require.
- Pick up your t-shirts, coaching manuals, equipment, etc. as directed by the Spring Sports Coordinator. If you are not available, please arrange for someone else from your team to attend in your place.
- To help you learn the children's names, and make t-shirt distribution easier, write their name on masking tape and attached to the front of each shirt before you hand them out.
- Select a team manager to prepare snack schedules, manage the children on the bench when you are on the field and contact parents with any schedule changes or other information.
- Don't be afraid to add a bit of silliness to the drills or practices – keep it fun!

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### Sample note to parents (prior to the first game)

Hello Coach Pitch parents,

I hope your children are excited about playing Intermediate Coach Pitch this year.

We will be playing on \_\_\_DAY\_\_\_ starting on May \_\_\_DATE\_\_\_ from 6 pm to 7:30pm. Due to the age of your child, it is imperative that a parent or guardian be present at all times. If you have a question about this requirement, please contact the BCA President Margaret Kellaway at [pres@bridlewood.ca](mailto:pres@bridlewood.ca).

I wanted to share a few things with you so that we start the season off with a common vision of what we're hoping our children will get out of their time on the baseball diamond.

Once again, the Bridlewood Community Association (BCA) is committed to True Sport, a national movement that promotes positive values in sport, helping to ensure that we provide a quality sport experience for everyone.

Here's what you can expect for our team during our 8 weeks together:

Schedule: 6 - 6:30 pm

Warm-up and drills: please show up as close to 6:00 as possible so that the kids can get properly warmed up.

Game: 6:30 to 7:45 pm or so, followed by SNACKS

(ADD ANY RELEVANT INFORMATION REGARDING THE WAY YOU WANT TO STRUCTURE THE GAME). Please make sure that when the kids are not playing that they're being supervised. Ideally, a parent can volunteer keeping the kids warmed-up.

- **Everyone gets to play:** that's pretty self-explanatory.
- **Keeping it fun:** while it sounds obvious and I'm sure you're all nodding your heads, we all know how easy it is to get over zealous at times. Let's remember that this is about the kids and that the main objective is for them to have a great time out on the field.
- **Stay healthy:** in this day and age, getting kids off the couch and onto the playing field is no small feat. You've already shown a commitment by getting your children involved in a community sport program. My goal is for the kids to enjoy moving, running, throwing and playing so much that they'll want this to become a lifelong habit.
- **Respecting others:** using this short time together to instill a respect for the game, their team mates and competitors. We all have a role to play in that regard and as parents, we need to demonstrate this on and off the field of play.

And finally, in order to bring True Sport to life for our children, please visit the True Sport website ([www.truesportpur.ca](http://www.truesportpur.ca)) which outlines the principles that will guide us as we work together to honour sport.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or the Spring Sports Coordinator at [springsports@bridlewood.ca](mailto:springsports@bridlewood.ca).

COACH NAME, COORDINATES (phone or email – whatever you are comfortable with)

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### Tips for running a good practice and game for Senior Coach Pitch Athletes

- Practice begins at 6:00 pm and we encourage all children to arrive at that time. Coaches should organize warm ups and drills with the help of some assistants.
- Games should start at 6:30 pm and last for as many innings that can be played by 8 pm. No inning should start after 7:45 pm. Before each game meet with the other coach to discuss how you would like the game to be played.
- Place the home plate and the bases about 14 m down the base line.
- The visiting team bats first. Each team will bat through their roster in an inning. Fielders will try to make plays to get the runner out. Outs will leave the field but the inning will not end before every child has batted. This may be helpful early in the season. Towards the end of the season, if both coaches agree, the game can be played with 3 outs ending an inning.
- The infield should be organized as follows: one child just behind and off to the side of the pitcher, first base, second base, shortstop, third base, left field, centre, field and right field. If there are enough children or you wish them to learn the position, you can have a catcher. Otherwise have a parent catch the ball. Use the provided roster sheet each game to ensure that players rotate through all positions. Coaches should be in the infield with the children reminding them to watch the batter and ensuring that the children stay fairly close to their positions and are not in base lines obstructing the runners.
- The Coach pitches to their team. The pitches **should be slow and arced**. Each batter gets five pitches. If they do not hit the ball, they strike out (please use your judgment especially if the pitches were not very good). When the last batter bats, all the children on base may run all the way home. Base coaches should be placed beside first and third base to remind the children when and where to run and when to stop.
- Once a child has caught the ball they should try to make a play to get the runner out. They will need to know where to throw the ball before the ball is hit. They will be trying to get the lead off runner out. Runners should not advance more than one base on overthrows or errors.
- Batters and base runners **must wear helmets** at all times. Batters are not to throw the bats after hitting the ball. The only person swinging a bat should be the batter. Base runners are **not permitted** to “lead off” or steal bases.
- If you are using a catcher, they do not need to step on home plate or tag the runner to make the out. Draw a line behind home plate (on the third base side) towards the backstop. The runner must cross this line before the ball is caught to avoid being out.
- At the end of each game, take the time to praise the athletes on what they did well; highlight some good examples of teamwork, sportsmanship and mastery of skills. You can even get the kids involved in describing their “True Sport Moment”! Be creative and see where it takes you.

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### Basic Skills for Senior Coach Pitch Athletes

**Hitting the ball** – Batters must always wear a helmet. Try to have the child hit the ball with a smooth, level swing. Determine if the child swings left or right.

- **Grip:** the bat is held with hands together.
- **Feet:** should be parallel, not together or wider than shoulder width, perpendicular to home plate.
- **Hands and Elbows:** the hands should be kept back almost in line with the rear shoulder; the elbow should be down, not up in the air.
- **Eyes:** make sure both eyes are pointed in the direction of the ball
- **Stride:** The motion of the stride should be in the direction of the ball. Try for a medium stride.
- **Hips:** Make sure the hips open toward the pitcher. The hips should not be locked. The back foot will pivot like squashing a bug.

**Sample Drill** - *Kneel beside the plate facing the pitcher. Using a gentle underhand motion, toss the ball about waist high and have the batter hit it. This gets you out of the line of fire and gives the hitter a consistently hittable ball to swing at. Hit into the backstop.*  
- *Practice pitching to the children with the other children playing the infield. This works well while you are waiting for everyone to show up.*

**Catching the ball** – The children should use two hands to catch the ball. If the ball is caught above the waist the thumbs of the two hands should be together. If the ball is caught below the waist, the pinkies of the two hands should be together. The children should be encouraged to get in front of the ball especially when catching fly balls. They should get down low for ground balls.

**Sample Drill** - *Start close together and as the player begins to catch the ball, start to move slowly apart. Encourage the players to use two hands and to get in front of the ball.*  
- *Two ball drill. As the player makes the return throw you send the next ground ball out to them. This requires more concentration and quick reaction to the ball.*

**Throwing the Ball** – The ball should be held in the fingertips between the thumb and middle and index fingers. The idea is to throw with the fingers. The non-throwing shoulder and the front foot point toward the target. Reach back to begin the throw. The elbow should be kept above the shoulder. The hand should always be behind the ball. When reaching back the weight goes on to the back foot. The thrower pushed off the back foot and, as the arm comes forward, the body weight transfers to the front foot.

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**Sample Drill** - Have children practice throwing to each other. The throw should be as level and as straight as possible. Have them throw to the head or chest of their throwing partner. Be sure that they are close together to begin and only move apart after they begin to catch consistently.

**Fielding the ball** - Try to find a smooth surface as grass will cause bounces. Begin by rolling the ball on the ground to the child getting them used to getting low and in front of the ball to stop it. As they progress, throw the ball harder or introduce a small bounce.

**Sample Drill for Fielding** - Have the players make a semicircle just behind the bases. Have one of the players hit the ball and the rest try to catch the ball and make plays.  
- Have the coach hit balls to the players in the outfield.  
Encourage the children to get low and in front of the ball.

**Running the bases** – Players must touch each base with their foot as they go by. When they reach first base they can overrun but only on the foul side. They must stay on all other bases or they can be tagged out. Base runners are **not permitted** to “lead off” or steal bases.

**Sample Drill:** - Practice sprinting from home plate to first base.  
-Run relays with each child running to the next base and tagging the next runner.

**Sportsmanship and demonstrating True Sport** – This is an important value that we hope to help our children learn. One way to do this is to encourage shaking hands with opposing team after each game as well as offering three cheers for both their team and the opposing team at the beginning or end of each game. Another way is to cheer on the other players on their team when they are batting. While children are waiting for their turn at bat they should be sitting on the bench.

**Strategy** – Players must learn to be aware of where the runners are and where the next out should be attempted. Coaches should be on the field with their players to help keep them focused and remind them where to throw the ball.

Above all else – have fun!