

## **Tee Ball Practice – Week 1** **(Veterans Field, Saturday 4/24/04, Players 9:30 – 11:00 AM)**

1. Supplies:
  - a. Cell phone & check reception (all)
  - b. Phone list & exercise list (all)
  - c. Ice (Tony)
  - d. First aid kit (3 head coaches)
  - e. Equipment (Terry)
  - f. Extra water & trash bag (Tony)
  - g. Shirts & hats for players who missed opening day (3 head coaches)
  - h. Attendance List (Tony)
  - i. Nametags (Tony)
2. Be Early – Coaches need to get to the field at least 20 minutes before practice starts to coordinate the day's events & prepare the area.
  - a. Start with safety check of the fields & equipment. Raking and picking up trash is often required.
  - b. Put lines down as needed.
  - c. Water infield if too dusty.
  - d. Review plan & drills to make sure you are ready to demonstrate them to the players. Identify who will run which stations.
3. (9:30 – 9:35) Gather players at the bench – as players arrive have them collect at one place. Don't start throwing balls around etc. If it is real early have them help with field preparation. Talk with them. Work on players & coaches learning names. Put nametags on players. Take attendance.
4. (9:35 – 9:38) Snake run – no later than 5 minutes after the scheduled start time begin a snake run. Start by having players pile their gloves at first base. Keep it to a jog. Slower players can cut corners & higher energy players can cover more ground. Have them get their knees high. Purpose is to get some heat into muscles & right attitude for starting practice.
5. (9:38 – 9:45) Warm-ups / Stretching: Spend about 5-7 minutes on exercises. At this age they need to develop the habit of warming up much more than needing the actual warm-up. Don't expect them to get the exercises perfect. We are teaching them "for life" so let's develop the proper habits. We will use the same exercises every practice and work on doing them more properly as the season progresses. Keep the whole age group as one for this part. Players that come late will go through exercises off to the side before they join in. Keep sheet of exercises handy. We have a lot of exercises on our sheet so adjust the number of repetitions to fit the time. It is tempting to skip this step when in a hurry. Don't. Try to involve the players in leading the exercises.
6. While one coach is handling the run & exercises, the other coaches set up the first round of drills. The reason the gloves are on first base is so that we can get into the first drill without wasting time at the bench. Decide how to split the players into three groups during this time. Check if you have an even balance of colored shirts. Some weeks divide by colors other weeks mix them up.
7. (9:45 – 10:10) First set of stations - divide into three groups. Throwing, Catching, Fielding. Everyone learns everyone's names. Proper throwing & catching technique is the most important skill at this age. Remember one on one is best & attention span is zero. After 8 minutes players rotate to next station. Coach stays at same station the whole time. Make sure you know what the lesson is & how to evaluate & correct. Remember: Compliment, correct, compliment. "Good throw Sue. I think if you reached back further the ball would go even further. Can you try that? You're really working hard today."

The nature of these stations will get more advanced as the season progresses. Watch what works & doesn't work. Talk with the other coaches to improve things for next session & next season.

Mix in water breaks as needed depending on heat index.

- a. Throwing (week 1)  
Focus on overview of throwing motion & getting the right grip to the extent allowed by hand size.

Players are spread out in a line. Each player has a bucket of balls. Bucket contains a mix of wiffle and tennis balls (around 12 balls each). Put a target of some kind out in the field.

Demonstrate the 1 step throw.

- Grip ball, look at target, hip & shoulder pointed to target, hands together in front of chest
- Lean back, arm down then back, fingers on top of ball, glove toward target
- Step toward target with glove foot, throw overhand, elbow at shoulder height, release ball at full arm extension, and finish with throwing shoulder toward target and back foot up.

Have players pretend to throw & try to correct them.

Have players pick ball out of bucket & show their grip.

Have players throw the balls into an open field toward or past the target. Explain that wiffle balls don't go very far. When everyone has thrown have them collect the balls and repeat. Make sure they get some exercise when collecting the balls. We want lots of throws so don't stop the players while you are instructing one of them.

b. Catching (week 1)

Focus will be on knowing where glove and hands should be as a function of where the ball is headed and not turning away from the ball.

Spread the players out in a line and demonstrate the 6 catching positions (left-right-center for both high & low).

Play monkey-see monkey-do with pretend catching. You put glove in one of the six positions, pause while they mimic you then slap glove as if trapping the ball and have them mimic you.

Soft toss to them so that they are catching below the waist. Use a wiffle or tennis ball. Have enough balls handy so you don't stop if they have to chase one down.

c. Fielding (week 1)

Focus on "Alligator hands" for rolling ground balls and not turning away from the ball.

Demonstrate relax position (hands on knees, eyes up); ready position (hands above waist, forward of body, thumbs together, knees bent, eyes on the batter); & final fielding position for ground balls (Throwing side foot slightly forward, bottom stuck out, "Alligator hands", and eyes low and on the ball)

Play Simon says with these three positions.

Roll balls to players and have them toss back to coach. Use tennis or tee balls. Have enough balls handy so you don't stop if they have to chase one down.

Teach them to toss a wiffle ball in the air and catch it. Tell them to work on this at home.

8. (10:10 – 10:13) Water break & regroup. Get players together for a one minute pep talk & revisit what they just learned. Give coaches a chance to set up next set of drills.

9. (10:13 – 10:33) Second set of drills. Three groups again. Mix in water breaks as needed depending on heat index

a. Hitting A (week 1)

If there are enough coaches set up two stations of this drill.

We will work on grip, stance & arm extension. Show everyone the proper grip. Knocking knuckles lined up. For right-handed hitters, right hand is on top. Uncurl index fingers & they point the same

way. Hands are near end of bat (we have light enough bats so no need to choke up). Stance for this group is feet shoulder width line across toes toward pitcher. For this drill tee is mid-way between feet. Bat is held back, hands shoulder level, knees bent, body relaxed.

One player has bat & helmet. They stand at tee. You call out grip, they uncurl index fingers to check their own grip & show you where it is. You call ready and they put fingers back and get into stance. You put tennis or wiffle ball on tee and they knock it off with the butt end of the bat. This should force them to straighten the left (for right-handed players) elbow. Watch where all your players are & make sure they are paying attention. They can be fielders but be prepared some of the players will not follow instructions and will try to hit the ball with the bat.

Have on-deck batter ready with helmet on or at least in hand so things move quickly.

b. Hitting B (week 1)

Short swing (like a bunt) at a tossed wiffle or tennis ball. Use a bucket of them if you don't have a coach to be catcher. Check grip. Hit ball in front of leading hip. Watch ball hit bat. Very short swing. We are working on where is the contact point & watching the ball. Keep players other than batter safe. Keep turns short or players will lose attention.

c. Catcher (week 1)

Show the players rest position (knees on ground), relax position (arms leaning on thighs) & ready position (glove ready & throwing hand behind leg – book is wrong).

Line them up side by side, call a position & they go to it.

How long can they hold the ready position?

How long can they hold the relax position? Tell them they can only hold these longer by practicing at home & that this is a real fun position to play when you get older. Good way to watch TV.

Still lined up. Everyone in relax position (rest if they can't hold the position). Stand 5 feet in front of player #1 & call ready. When they are ready toss a wiffle or tennis ball into their glove. Tell them stopping it is more important than catching it.

10. (10:33 – 10:35) Water break & regroup.

11. (10:35 – 10:50) Game time. There is a good chance we will not get to this the first week. That's OK practices will run faster after the first week.

a. Fast paced t-ball. Three squads of about 5 players each. Use tennis ball it goes far & doesn't hurt. No one is out. Last batter circles the bases. Everyone on batting team has a helmet on. No catcher. Coach puts ball on tee, One squad is at bat. One is infield third squad is outfield. Each player bats twice then rotate squads.

b. If time permits have players run the bases a few times.

12. (10:50 – 10:55) Wrap up. What did we learn? Schedule for next week. Candy and buy out \$. Make sure you end with pep talk.

a. Are we going to schedule a makeup day on 4/19 (Easter Saturday) same time & place?

13. (10:55 – 11:05) Clean up & discuss what happened.

Notes: Need to make sure all players learn coaches & other players names. Incorporate learning the basic rules of softball into drills & games. Be prepared & look organized. Stay in charge. In case of emergency do not panic.