

SUPER SIX T-BALL
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PREMISE

- Games need to be learned in an easy manner, played in a rapid fashion, yet build self-esteem.
- Deterioration in skill levels and number of players are challenges that need to be met.

CONCEPT

- Provide much of what T-Ball's main competitors offer.
- Soccer is our biggest competitor for kids' time as it is seen as fast-paced and easy to feel part of the game.
- T-Ball uses outfield positions that are largely unpopular - too much "standing around". On offense every child wants to be at bat but due in part to team size there is too long a wait between opportunities.
- Teams can now score on both offence and defence.

PROPOSAL

- Restrict teams ideally to six per side with all six batting.
- Eliminate the long stretches in the outfield.
- Remove the catcher as the "statue behind the plate".
- Focus on teaching the appropriate essentials of the game including good sportsmanship.
- Focus on throwing and catching and knowing the play.
- Set up a scoring system that rewards both offence and defence.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- More play by each team player.
- More change over thus, more chances for everyone to bat.
- Each player gets equal play at infield.
- Players place more focus on defence with throwing, building arm strength, fielding and knowing the play.
- Headaches of out-field play eliminated.
- Faster pace.
- Hitting remains a dominant part of the game with rewards for hitting spread throughout the batting order.
- Easier introduction to the game for coaches.

NEW CHALLENGES

- Fewer players per team create more teams and thus more head coaching and sponsorship positions.
 - Coaching role lessened by simpler rules, fewer positions and direct parental involvement.
- Uniforms for coaches will increase in number.
 - This is a hat and a sweater. Pants for players can be optional if cost is a factor.
- Field availability may be a factor.
- Umpiring costs may go up (more games).
 - Complexity of play and simple rules reduce the need for paid umpires at this age. Parents can umpire.
- Forfeitures more probable without proper planning and parental commitment.
- Call-ups from Blastball (where available) may be needed or perhaps some leagues may consider carrying a seventh player with each player sitting an inning as an option.
 - The key offset would be a greater number of innings and therefore more at bats, lessening the sting of sitting occasionally.

TRAINING

- Learning defensive skills and development are key premises for changing the game. In many respects the development can be enhanced by having a breakage in play in the middle innings for a specified training session emphasizing one skill per session.
- We believe that placing the training in the middle is strategically correct to ensure all players get to practice the skill and in order to avoid the issues of lateness and early departures.
- The skill schedule will be provided by the convenor prior to the season as part of the overall schedule.
- Games will be run as follows:
 - Two innings of play
 - One 15 minute skills development session
 - Two additional innings of play
- If the latter two innings cannot be completed, the final score will revert to that at the end of the 3rd inning.

STRUCTURE / SETTING UP

- The field will be set up by the coaches prior to the game as a shared responsibility.
- Each team comprises seven players. Six play at one time and the seventh rotates in each inning. Accordingly, if all seven show up, a different child sits each inning. This is the child who played third base in the prior inning.
- Six players per team bat each inning in the order arranged by the coach prior to the game. The seventh player (if present) bats first in the next inning and the batting order is maintained. If a team has five players, the first batter in each inning bats twice and the batting order is maintained.
- Five players is the minimum for a game. Any less is a default and the team that is short, while losing the game for purposes of the standings, should be blended with the other team's players to still complete what becomes a "fun" game.
- Six children play an infield position every inning when on defence.
- There is no catcher and there are no out-field positions.
- Positions are: Pitcher (P), First Base (1B), Right Rover (RR), Second Base (2B), Shortstop (SS), and Third Base (3B). The new position of Right Rover (RR) covers an area within the infield but can be anywhere on the right side of the diamond. This would likely be in the area between first and second. The rotation of players from inning to inning is in the order indicated above. **All players must rotate through each position to get experience in all spots. This includes the requirement to put all players at the "skill" positions of Pitcher and 1st base, regardless of their ability.** The only exception to this rule is for a safety concern if the child has difficulty paying attention or is overly nervous of playing those positions.

BATTING / OFFENCE

- All hitters hit off a tee.
 - Each hitter is permitted 5 swings to hit the ball. After that an out is recorded.
 - Weaker players not able to hit the ball need extra practice but they will not be permitted more than 5 swings to keep the game moving. (The thinking is that they will get many more chances).
 - Hits must pass an arc drawn between the foul lines, a reasonable distance between the plate and the pitcher's rubber. This is called the Dead Ball Line and prevents bunting which is disallowed and any very weak hits which would be overly beneficial to the offence given the lack of a catcher. A hit ball not passing the Dead Ball Line is considered a strike.
- The batting team has a coach behind the plate to help instruct and set the batters for hitting. This coach is also the umpire for that half of the inning. The umpire places the ball on the tee and play commences only after he/she checks that all fielders are paying attention and yells, "Play ball," loud enough for all fielders to hear and which then allows the batter to swing. Any swings before this are disallowed (dead balls) and count as a strike.
- Hits in the infield are a single and the batter and each runner may advance one base in peril of an out being made. There are no overthrows and no runner may advance beyond one base on an infield hit.
- Hits first touching the infield and rolling to the outfield are a maximum double and the batter and each runner may advance up to two bases in peril of an out being made. It is expected the defensive players will run down the ball and make a play. Again, there is no ability to advance on an overthrow beyond the two base maximum.
- Hits first touching the outfield (in the air without an infield bounce) or some marked line in the outfield agreed by the coaches prior to the game are home runs and all runners and the batter run the bases to home plate in no peril.
- There is no stealing and all runners must have one foot on the base they occupy until the ball is hit. If in the opinion of the umpire there was a lead off, there will be one warning allowed per team; thereafter each violation will result in an automatic out and score one point for the defensive team.
- An inning constitutes batting six players.
- A maximum score on offense is six per inning.

FIELDING / DEFENSE:

- An out occurs the same way as in regular baseball except **all outs are force plays to prevent injury from tagging at this young age.**
- Six outs per half inning is the maximum defensive score. Each out made by the defensive team earns them a point toward the final score of the game.
- For safety reasons, when play commences all fielders must be behind the Encroachment Line. This is an imaginary line between 1st and 3rd base. The pitcher must be on the rubber.
- A maximum of two defensive coaches may be in the outfield only. They may call time out to enter the infield to reposition or otherwise guide their players but the umpire shall not call, “Play ball,” until the defensive coaches have all returned to the outfield. This is to ensure the children have no distractions or obstructions once play commences.
- **A defensive play must be made on every live hit, regardless of whether the batter/runners are already safe.** This is to ensure the skills of throwing and catching are practiced on every batted ball. There are no overthrows and no runner may advance beyond the stipulated number of bases so there is intentionally, no penalty for making a play.
- A play ends with a throw back to the pitcher who then throws the ball to the offensive coach behind the plate to be put on the tee for the next batter. Exception - if this is found to materially slow down the game (ball just going back and forth across the diamond because the pitcher is missing it) then the player at the base where the play was made may throw the ball directly to the umpire – however, try the throw to the pitcher to get the extra practice in.
- To end the inning on the sixth batter, prior to putting the ball in play the umpire will yell, “Last batter.” The defence may still make an out at any base to get a point but runners not yet put out continue to run the bases in an attempt to all get home (i.e. the max one or 2 base rule does not apply on last batter). The inning ends when the ball is thrown to the pitcher who steps on a second plate placed in the field of play between the rubber and the normal home plate. This is for safety reasons and to prevent a collision at the normal plate with both the pitcher and runner approaching the same plate from different directions to get the final out. When the pitcher steps on his/her home plate each run scored prior to that counts one for the offensive team and each runner that did not make it home prior to this counts as one run for the defensive team. No other defensive players may enter the home plate area to make an out (safety reason). A successful or unsuccessful attempt for an out at a base other than home plate does not stop the play on last batter but the pitcher stepping on the defensive home plate does.
- A caught fly ball results in the batter being declared out and all runners may advance to the base they were approaching in peril but without tagging up (too complicated for this age). Example, the runner leaving 1st can be put out at 2nd base by a fielder touching 2nd before he/she gets there but cannot be put out at 1st base for not tagging up.

- There is to be no running all over by a fielder to make a play. We are trying to teach the skills of throwing and catching at this level so the ball must be thrown for any normal distance one would expect a throw to be made in regular baseball (e.g. the quicker 7 year old shortstop can't pick up a ball and run to 1st base to make an out on the slower 5 year old runner – the runner would be declared safe).
- Throws are to be overhand in all circumstances except where one would expect an underhand throw, e.g. very close distance. Rolling the ball will not result in an out and the runner will be declared safe even if the play is made.
- Better players are not permitted to “steal” the ball from a teammate in order to make a play. This is house league T-Ball and everyone gets a chance. Example, if the ball is hit to the shortstop, the 3rd baseman may not cut in front to make the play because he/she is a stronger player. The 3rd baseman should be taught the skill of covering up (going behind the SS) in this instance, as this allows the player to whom the ball was hit to make the play and also teaches the skill of backing-up which will be useful in the higher levels. An out made by a player who “steals” the ball as described here, will result in the runner being declared safe.

SPORTSMANSHIP

- While the umpire is a member of the offensive team, his/her call is final for that half of the inning and there are to be no public disagreements in front of the children. Anything that really requires a conversation, and this should be very rare, should see the two head coaches, and only the two head coaches, meeting off to the side, well away from the players and having a brief discussion in a very low tone.
- Teams will shake hands after every game with no negative commentary either during the game or the handshake. No teasing, no climbing fences or playing in the equipment boxes which have very heavy lids.
- Coaching for this level is all positive reinforcement and teaching. We are trying to get kids interested in baseball and negative reinforcement from a non-parent has a much greater chance of scaring them away.
- Parents should be asked to provide a snack (usually juice and a treat) on a rotational basis after each game. This helps build team spirit and is really looked forward to by the children.
- Parents and coaches should ensure all litter is picked up after snack and the field left in good condition (rake as necessary).

OTHER SAFETY ISSUES

- Have the fielders hold their positions on last batter until all the runners are home to avoid collisions.
- Keep an eye on the bats. Only the player at bat should be holding a bat. There is no real need for “on deck” warm up at this level. If a child insists, the on deck circle will never be on the field of play and must be behind the parents’ seating area and only with an adult present. There are too many little siblings wandering around that could be seriously injured by an errant swing.
- Each team receives one warning per game for a thrown bat. Any infraction by any player on the same team following the warning is considered an out and scores one for the defence.
- Other than the batter at the plate, others on offence should be sitting on the bench cheering on the batter.
- If runners are coming home, it is the umpire’s responsibility to remove the tee from the plate following a hit so that runners can safely run through home plate.
- A double safety base is used at 1st. The red side sits in foul territory and is for the runners and the white side sits in fair territory and is for the fielders. Again, to prevent collisions or stepping on another player.