



RALLY CAP PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Rally Cap Program. This booklet provides the information necessary to run Baseball Canada's Official Initiation Program.

The Canadian Government has proposed the development of a long term athlete development model for each sport. Our program was developed with the purpose of making the sport of baseball more attractive to young Canadians. Baseball Canada is confident that this program will satisfy young baseball players and their parents and that it will be a useful tool for those involved in teaching baseball at the community level.

Enjoy the Baseball Canada Rally Cap Program.

Acknowledgments

Baseball Canada would like to thank everyone who submitted comments following the conclusion of the pilot year of this program. Your comments were very useful in assisting the development of this program to successfully reflect the needs of our players across the country. We would especially like to thank Mr. Benoît Lavigne of Québec for his contribution in making this document more complete.

Goals

The goals of the Baseball Canada Rally Cap program are to:

1. Create an environment in which children and adults can have fun with baseball
2. Teach baseball skills, rules and strategy to our players
3. Model and teach competitiveness with an emphasis on good sportsmanship
4. Promote increased self-esteem among Rally Cap children and adults

The Crucial Role of Coaches

The most important individual in the Rally Cap program is the coach. The coach is the person the players look at for instruction, encouragement and inspiration. The assistant coaches, as well as the parents, take their cues from the coach. Therefore, success of the program is dependant on the coaches embracing our goals and working to achieve them.

How Coaches Can Help Achieve Rally Cap Goals

The following are ways in which coaches can help achieve the Rally Cap goals:

Goal #1:

Create an environment in which children and adults can have fun with baseball.

- a. Encourage players often. Demonstrate by behavior and words that each child is an important member of the team regardless of their level of performance. Recognize and encourage effort as well as results.
- b. Allow each player equal playing time.
- c. Demonstrate your own enthusiasm and enjoyment of the game to your players.

Goal #2:

Teach baseball skills, rules and strategy to our players

- a. Rely on positive reinforcement for things done correctly. Minimize negative emphasis on mistakes. This is required in order for learning to take place. Players can handle only so much negative feedback without becoming discouraged. Players will learn more, try harder and be more open to accepting criticism if they are praised often. Praise players in public and correct them in private.
- b. Provide adequate repetition when teaching. Baseball is complicated and lessons often need repeating before they are understood. Once players understand, they often need repeated practice before they can perform the expected behavior well.
- c. Encourage players to set individual and team goals corresponding to their ability levels and then work to master the skills needed to achieve them.
- d. Organize practices to maximize learning and minimize inactivity.

Goal #3:

Model and teach competitiveness with an emphasis on good sportsmanship

- a. Teach players aggressiveness and good sportsmanship at the same time.
- b. Obey the rules and show respect for the officials even when you disagree.
- c. Acknowledge good plays by the opposing team in front of your players.
- d. Treat players on opposing teams as members of the community first and as opponents second. Always refrain from displaying actions or words that undercut the self-esteem of players on either team.

Goal #4:

Promote increased self-esteem among Rally Cap children and adults

- a. Encourage players whenever possible. Demonstrate by words and actions that you like and accept them regardless of how they perform. Adults often assume children can read their minds, but children determine whether they are liked and accepted by adults based on what the adults say and do.
- b. Spend comparable instructional time with all players regardless of ability.
- c. Encourage parents to become involved with the team.

STRUCTURE

The Rally Cap program was developed using existing baseball initiation programs, as well as adding new ideas in order to create increased interest for players.

In the Rally Cap baseball program, each team will consist of 6 players only. This allows for the formation of more teams, meaning more repetitions, which will allow players to improve their individual skills.

In Rally Cap baseball, 3 teams will meet at the park at the same time. Two (2) teams will be playing a game while one (1) team will be practicing in the outfield.

THE GAME

Each session will last 75 minutes. Two (2) teams will play an actual game while one (1) team will be practicing drills in the outfield area. After each inning played (both teams have batted), teams will rotate. The rotation will be as follows: Team on 1st base dugout side moves to 3rd base dugout - Team on 3rd base dugout moves to the outfield - the outfield group moves to the 1st base dugout.

All six players will come to bat during their team's ½ inning. The ½ inning will end when all six players have completed their turn.

Teams will score runs the same way they score runs during a regular game (i.e. touching home plate). Teams will also have the opportunity to earn points or runs on defense. A point can be earned by catching a fly ball, or by throwing a runner out at a base. Therefore, a possible 6 defense points can be earned every inning. To throw a runner out, the ball can be thrown to any base before the runner reaches 1st base. An out at 1st base can only be made by running to and touching 1st base before the hitter.

VARIATIONS: You can develop a different point system to reward different defensive plays.

(i.e. You can allow more points for fielding a ball followed by an accurate throw.)

There are no walks, no strikeouts, no base stealing and runners can advance only on batted balls.

With hitting being the most fun part of the game, the program has been designed to help players hit the ball no matter what the skill level. Three different formats can be used:

- Tee-ball
- Parent-pitcher
- Pitching machine

Each player can choose the format they wish to use, depending on their development stage. All 3 formats can be used during a game.

Each hitter will have a maximum of 5 baseballs. If the 5th ball is not hit, a coach will roll the ball to allow the hitter to run the base paths and to allow the defense to field the ball and make plays.

When the last hitter (#6) hits the ball, the ball must be thrown to home plate in order to get the hitter out.

The batting order will change each time a team comes to bat (first hitter becomes last, etc.)

Defensive positioning will also change each time a team comes to bat.

VARIATIONS: You can actually use the volleyball rotation style and proceed with defensive rotation with each opposite batter.

THE PRACTICE

While in the outfield area, each team will practice different drills with respect to the following **FUN**damentals:

Throwing
Receiving
Hitting
Base running
General knowledge

A coach's guide including drills is included to help coaches prepare the practice sessions. Three (3) stations with 2 players at each station will be developed. Players will rotate stations each time they return to the outfield practice area.

We strongly recommend that you set up your equipment before the start of the session. The only equipment a player should be bringing to the session is their glove. Bringing their own bats and balls is discouraged.

THE RALLY CAP SYSTEM

During the season, the teams will be working on the 5 **FUN**damentals of baseball. At least 2 Official Rally Cap Days will occur during the season. During these events, the players will have an opportunity to perform different tasks they have learned in order to earn a coloured Baseball Canada Rally Cap. We recommend two of these events during the summer because we feel that having an "official" Rally Cap Day will create more interest. You can have more or less of these events, but **please avoid awarding caps on a daily basis as we would like to players to be prepared to perform on a "special" day.**

During the Rally Cap event, all players will go through stations where they will perform different tasks. When a player succeeds at each task at a particular level, he/she will be awarded an appropriate coloured hat.

Rally Cap Program

Level Ability	/	White Cap	Grey Cap	Black Cap	Green Cap	Blue Cap	Red Cap
Throwing		1. Able to throw a ball 5 feet	2. Able to throw 7 of 10 balls to partner from 10 feet	3. Able to throw the ball 25 feet	4. Able to throw 9 of 15 to a 4x4 target hung on the backstop of fence from 20 feet	5. Able to throw the ball at a distance of 50 feet	6. From a fielding position, I can throw 10 of 15 balls to 1 st base from SS
Receiving		7. Able to catch a ball thrown from 5 feet	8. Able to field 10 of 15 ground balls from 15 feet	9. Able to catch 10 of 20 fly balls from a height of 15 feet	10. Able to catch 5/5 ground balls, 5/5 fly balls, 5/5 balls thrown by a partner from 15 feet	11. Able to catch 12/15 fly balls not directly hit to me (20 feet in front and 5-10 feet left and right)	12. Able to field 5/5 grounders to the left and 5/5 grounders to the right (regular distance)
Hitting		13. Able to hit a ball off a tee	14. Able to hit 10 of 15 balls off a tee	15. I can hit 7 of 15 balls thrown underhand	16. Able to hit 7/15 balls past the base paths, rolling or in the air	17. Able to hit 12/15 balls at least 75 feet in distance	18. Able to hit 10/15 balls between cones.
Base running		19. Know what direction to run after hitting the ball	20. Know what the bases are called (1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and home)	21. Able to run around the bases without stopping	22. Know how to make a banana turn at 1 st base	23. Able to run from 1 st to 2 nd and slide at 2 nd base	24. I can run from 1 st to 3 rd with a correct slide at 3 rd base.
General		25. I know my team's name, coach's name and names of 3 teammates	26. Able to name all of the position numbers	27. I know 3 different ways to get a player out	28. I know where to throw the ball when I field it	29. I know the difference between a hit and an error; a strike and a ball; safe and out; a single, double, triple and HR; fair and foul	30. I know where to position myself depending on the hitter

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1. White Cap – Throwing

With a partner or coach standing in front of the player at a distance of 5 feet, the player is asked to throw the ball. Accuracy is not important at this stage, only that the player be able to throw the distance. Below are drills that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“HANDCUFFS”

Goal:

- Teach players the proper way to hold a ball

Description:

- Players pair up with each other or with a parent. At a signal, players take a proper grip on the ball.

Variation & Progression:

- A. Players are seated, pick the ball off the ground and show it to a partner
- B. Players are seated, throw the ball (2 feet high) and show it to a partner
- C. Players are seated, pick the ball off the ground and throw it to a partner
- D. Players are seated, throw the ball (2 feet high) and throw it to partner
- E. On two knees, pick the ball off the ground and throw it to partner
- F. Players are seated, throw the ball to a partner
- G. On two knees, throw the ball to a partner
- H. Standing up, throw the ball to a partner
- I. On their back, throw the ball to a partner

Key Points:

- Always put two or three fingers on the ball
- Hold the ball with the fingers and not in the palm of the hand

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Equipment: Incrediball for each player



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2. Grey Cap – Throwing

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the kid at 10 feet, ask the player to throw the ball. The accuracy is not important at this stage. We just want the player to be able to reach the distance. Below is a drill you can use to prepare your players for this task:

“THE WHEEL”

Goal:

- Teach the proper mechanics when throwing a ball.

Description:

- In pairs, the players play catch using the proper mechanics

Variations & Progression:

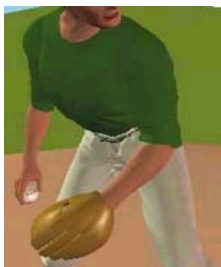
- A. Players simulate the mechanics without a ball.
- B. Players sits with legs crossed
- C. On both knees
- D. On 1 knee (throwing arm’s knee)
- E. Players are executing on command 1) throwing arm goes down; 2) reach back; 3) lift arm to shoulder height
- F. Execute 3 circles before throwing (small, medium, large)
- G. Add one step with the glove side (giant step), just before throwing

Key Points:

- Explain that the longer the arm circle, the faster the arm speed (small wheel vs. big wheel)
- Make sure they hold the ball right, facing away.
- Glove foot goes forward while throwing

Equipment:

Incrediball for each player



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3. Black Cap – Throwing

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the player at a distance of 25 feet, the player is asked to throw the ball. Accuracy is not important at this stage, only that the player be able to throw the distance. Below are drills that can be used to prepare players for this task:

THE NET

Goal:

Throw a certain distance without paying attention to accuracy.

Description:

Divide the players into 2 equal groups on each side of the net. Using all soft balls and wiffle balls, ask players to pick a ball off the ground and to throw it over the net. Both teams are throwing and receiving balls over the net for one minute before taking a break and then repeating the exercise. A little competition can be created where the goal is to send all balls to the other side.

Variations and progressions:

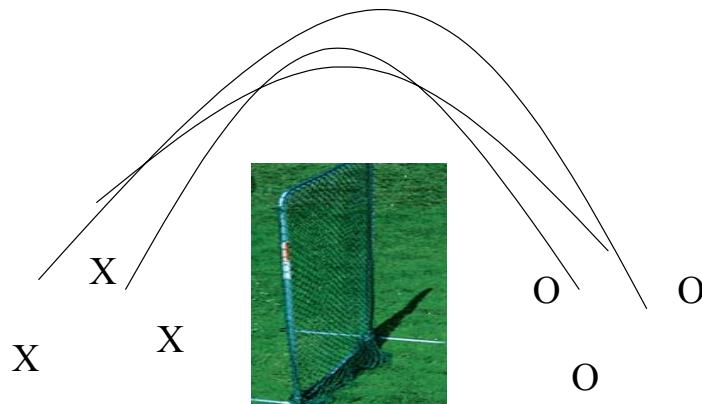
Players are located farther from the net.

Key points:

Make sure the grip is appropriate
Glove side foot forward when throwing

Equipment:

A minimum of 6 soft balls or wiffle balls
Screen or net



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4. Green Cap – Throwing

Position a player 20 feet from a backstop or fence where a 4 x 4 target has been hung. The thrower will have 15 attempts to throw 9 balls to the target. Below is a drill which can be used to prepare players for this task:

THE TARGET

Objective: Execute a throw with precision and accuracy.

Description: While using the proper throwing technique (giant step, arm action and grip), the player tries to reach a target from an appropriate distance to be successful. Players are placed in 2-3 columns and throw one after the other. A parent, located behind the fence returns the balls to the next player in line.

Variations and Progression: Change distance in relation to the players’ abilities.

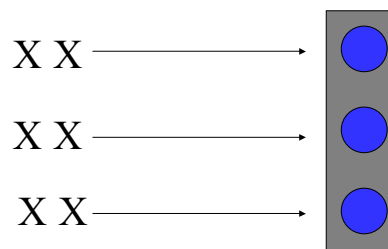
- A. Player attempts to hit a can filled with water which is sitting on a bench or chair.
- B. Player tries to throw the ball into a Graco basketball hoop.
- C. Use a target bullseye.

Key points:

- Make sure the grip is appropriate
- Glove side foot forward when throwing

Equipment:

- 1 ball per player
- 3 cans or other containers
- Graco basketball hoop



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5. Blue Cap – Throwing

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the player at a distance of 50 feet, the player is asked to throw the ball. Accuracy is not important at this stage, only that the player be able to throw the distance. Below are drills that can be used to prepare players for this task:

THE RELAY

Goal: Execute a throw with precision and accuracy.

Description:

Split players into 2 groups (depending on the number of players). Each team forms a line. A hoola hoop filled with balls of different kinds is located 30 feet in front of each team, with two cones placed at 15 feet and 30 feet from the hoop. When given a signal, a player goes to the hoop and from there tries to throw a ball at each cone. Two throws are allowed. The player then returns to the line and the next player attempts the task.

Variation:

Distance - depending on players’ abilities (closer or farther)

A- If player hits 1st cone = 1 point, 2nd cone = 3 points; first team to finish = 2 points

B- Without cones and hoops, teams are in line. Players throw to a partner. First team to go all the way and back gets the point.

Key points:

None. Let’s have fun here !

Equipment:

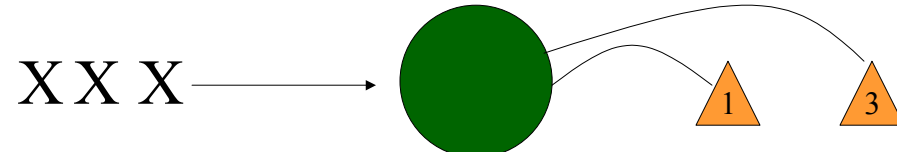
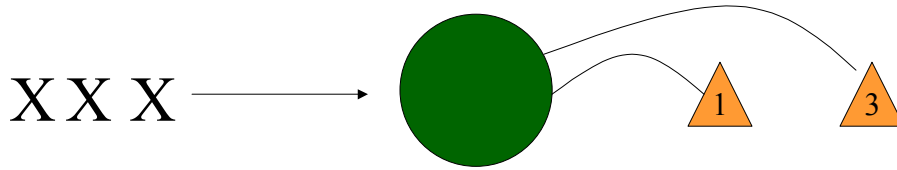
Several balls (2 minimum) of all kinds

2 cones per team so between 4 and 6 cones

2-3 hoops

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6. Red Cap – Throwing

Roll 15 balls to a player standing at the shortstop position and have the player throw the balls to a player positioned on 1st base. At this stage it is possible to judge a player’s ability to throw the ball the full distance to 1st base without the ball bouncing and also to judge accuracy because it is important that the player receiving the throws at 1st base be able to keep one foot on the base when catching the ball. Also, if the player at 1st base drops the ball, it can be judged whether the ball was catchable. Fielding techniques are not important here.

Below is a drill which can be used to prepare players for this task:

CHAMP

Objective: Practice throwing and receiving

Description:

1 adult for every 2 players or players in partners if they are capable of throwing and catching the ball back and forth

Every time a ball is caught by one of the two players, they get a letter from the word “CHAMP”. Partners can compete against other partners to see which pair can spell “CHAMP” first. Letters can be awarded for good throws back to the adult as well.

Variation and progression:

Let players select their own words (e.g. Barney, elephant, etc.)

Equipment: 1 ball for every 2 players

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OTHER DRILLS TO PRACTICE THROWING

SPACE SHUTTLE

Goals: Throwing for distance, low level competition against each other

Description: 1 adult and 1 ball (space shuttle) for every 2 players; 1 marker for each player; Try to assign partners as close in ability as possible. Partners stand behind a line and see how far they can throw (send the ball into space). The adult leader can be in the area of the throw to mark the spot. Competition can be introduced by seeing if they can throw farther each time and by competing against each other

Variation and progression:

Use different types of balls (tennis, incredible, baseball, Wiffle)

Equipment: 1 ball for every 2 players

BIG FOOT

Goals: Improves throwing and catching skills

Description: Partners start in lines, facing each other, approximately 10 feet apart. One adult per pair. Players throw to each other (or adult throws if skill level is too low for accurate throws). Each time a catch is made the partners move back one giant step. The pair that ends up the farthest apart while still able to catch the ball is given the BIG FOOT award.

Variation and progression:

Use different types of balls (tennis, incredible, baseball, wiffle) depending on ability.

Equipment: 1 ball for every 2 players

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HOME RUN

Goals: Throwing with accuracy

Description: Hang targets on a backstop or fence. Place one group of three players at each target. Mark out 4 lines at various distances from the target. The closest line to the target is considered a single, the next closest a double, the next closest a triple, with the farthest line from the target being a Home Run. Distances can be adjusted, according to the ability of the players in the group.

Target: Single, double, triple, home run
Players choose which distance they throw from in order to hit the target
Points are awarded as follows: single - 1 pt.; double - 2 pts.; triple - 3 pts.; HR - 4 pts.
Objective can be to see if each player can increase their points with each consecutive throw or it can be competitive based on the total number of points made in each group.

Key points: Place 2-3 fingers on the ball, without paying attention to the seams.
Hold the ball with fingers instead of palm of hand
Step forward while pitching

Equipment: 2 targets, 4 balls



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THE FOOTBALL PASS

Goal: Throwing harder with accuracy while adding receiving

Description: Split players into 2-3 groups (depending on total number of players). Each team forms a line. At a given signal, first player in line does a banana path. The following player in line throws a ball to the first player who attempts to catch it. The player then returns to his line and becomes the one who will throw the ball to his partner.

Variation and Progression:

Change the distance depending on players’ abilities (closer or farther away) and use several types of balls and maybe even a small football.

- A. The player catching is walking with his glove
- B. The player catching is running with his glove
- C. The player catching is running barehanded (softer balls)

Key points:

None. Let’s have fun !

Equipment: Several balls (1 minimum per player) of all kinds
2-3 small footballs

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7. White Cap – Receiving

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the player at five (5) feet, throw the ball underhand to the player. At this stage, look for players who can receive the ball using both hands.

Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“CATCH THE BALL LIKE AN EGG”

Goal: Help players absorb the ball when catching it

Description: With a partner or a coach located in front of the player at a distance of 6 feet, throw the ball underhand to the player. Look for players who will catch the ball with two hands. Place players opposite each other at a distance of 6 feet. With players on 2 knees, and bare handed, have the players play catch throwing the ball under hand. For younger players, it would be a good idea to match a player with a parent.

Variation and progression:

- A. On both knees, use foam balls
- B. On both knees, no glove, use a bigger ball
- C. On both knees, no glove, use tennis balls
- D. Standing up, no glove, use tennis balls or bigger ball, throw with one bounce.
- E. Same as A-C but standing up.
- F. Add a glove, on knees or standing
- G. Use a bucket to try to catch the ball

Key points:

Reach out for the ball
Bring hands towards the body when catching the ball

Equipment: Several types of balls (minimum 1 per player)
2-3 buckets

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8. Grey Cap – Receiving

With the coach located 15 feet in front of the player, roll 15 balls to the player. In order to succeed, the player must field 10 of the 15 balls. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“THE CROCODILE”

Goal: Teach and reinforce the proper way to receive a ground ball

Description:

Coach instructs the players to simulate the proper way to receive a ground ball. With a partner or a parent located in front of the player, roll the ball underhand to the player. Look for players who will field the ball with two hands. It is recommended starting on two knees and bare handed in order to isolate the movement. For younger players, it is recommended to use a parent as a partner.

Variations & Progression

- Simulate receiving the ball
- Coach rolls a ground ball
- In pairs, one player rolls the ball and the other receives it
- With and without gloves
- With different type of balls

Key Points:

- Always put hands out like a crocodile’s mouth
- “Pet” the ball when receiving it
- Feet and hands form a triangle

Equipment:

Several types of balls (minimum 1 per player) and bigger balls.

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9. Black Cap – Receiving

With a partner or coach standing in front of the player at 10 feet, throw the ball in the air at approximately 15 feet. Look for players who will catch the ball using both hands. To succeed, the player must catch 10 fly balls out of the 15 balls thrown. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

SKY BALL

Goal: Improve use of glove and positioning when catching fly balls

Description: 1 adult for every 2 players. Players will practice using high tosses from an adult.

Self-competition can be included by:

- 1) Catching a higher ball each time
- 2) Number of consecutive catches

Variation and progression:

- A. Standing alone, players toss a badminton birdie and let it bounce on their head
- B. Standing alone, players toss a badminton birdie and catch it with their hat
- C. Standing alone, players toss a ball in the air and try to catch it bare handed
- D. Coach throws the ball
- E. Coach hits a badminton birdie
- F. With or without a glove

Key points: Hands together slightly above forehead

Equipment: 1 ball and glove for each player

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10. Green Cap – Receiving

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the player at 15 feet, the player will receive 5 ground balls, 5 fly balls and 5 thrown balls. In all cases, the player must catch all of them. Same procedures as previous drills. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“ALL MESSED-UP”

Goal: Help players catch the ball from every direction

Description:

In pairs with no gloves, players face each other about 6 feet apart. Stationary, players throw the ball up in the air, left, right and below the waist; the receiving player must catch the ball without moving their feet.

Variations & Progression:

- Use gloves
- Use tennis balls
- Use foam balls

Key Points:

- Put thumbs together when catching balls chest high or higher to the left and right
- Put pinkies together when catching balls below the waist
- Fingers always pointing to the outside
- Catch the ball using both hands

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11. Blue Cap – Receiving

With a partner or a coach standing in front of the player at 20 feet, throw the ball in the air at approximately 5-10 feet to the player’s left and to the player’s right. The objective is for the player to catch 12 fly balls out of the 15 balls thrown. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

FIELD 3

Goal: Hitting, fielding, catching, throwing

Description: Form 2 teams of 6 - 1 batter, 1 catcher, the rest are fielders. Set up 2 separate activity areas at a safe distance apart. There will be 1 adult pitcher in each area for each group of 6. Set up bases on diamond. One batter at a time bats off an adult pitcher, with one player in catching equipment. When a fielder has successfully fielded 3 groundballs or has caught 1 fly ball, they become the batter. Players rotate positions. Make sure all players get an opportunity to bat and catch

Equipment: 2 bats, 2 balls, 2 sets of catcher’s equipment, 2 helmets, 2 sets of bases

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12. Red Cap – Receiving

With a partner or a coach standing at home plate, roll or hit the ball on the ground at approximately 5-10 feet to the player’s left and to the player’s right. The objective is for the player to catch 5 out of 5 grounders to the left and 5 out of 5 grounders to the right. If the coach is not good using the bat, simply roll the ball. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“THE GUARDIAN”

Goal: Teach players a safe way to field a ground ball

Description: In pairs or with an adult, players, players practice fielding the ball (one knee down).

Variations & Progression:

- A. The players simulate the action without a ball
- B. Same with a stationary ball
- C. The coach rolls a ball and the players field the ball
- D. The coach rolls the ball, the players field and throw the ball

Key Points:

- Put one knee on the ground
- Upper body must be behind the ball
- Always face the ball

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OUT !

Goal: Teach players to field a ball and throw the ball back

Description: Form 2 groups of 3 players. One player is located at mound area and the 2 others at first base (or at home plate for second group). One player halfway between home plate and first base, rolls a ball at the player standing on the mound who then fields it and throws it to the player at first base. Then rotate (follow the throw)

Variations & Progression:

- A. Use different type of balls
- B. Could create a competition between the 2 groups on fielded balls
- C. Have the players back off (greater distance)
- D. Place players in infield, 2 men fungo: 6-3, 4-5 and any other infield situation

Key points: Take your time and do it properly.

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13. White Cap – Hitting

With a partner or a coach standing beside the player, simply ask the player to hit the ball off the tee. Contact with the ball, not distance is important here. Ensure the tee is placed in front of home plate and NOT directly on home plate. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“BETWEEN THE TWO”

Goal: Introduce players to the perfect batting stance

Description: Each player has a bat in their hands. Copy every different position the coach takes. Every time the coach asks the players how to position themselves, they answer: “Between the two”. In all cases, you want “Between the two” extremes as a better method for your hitters to start from.

Variations & Progression:

- A. Close feet vs. wide feet (wide vs. compact stance)
- B. Straight legs vs. bent legs
- C. High hands vs. low hands
- D. Bat pointing straight up vs. lying on shoulder
- E. Complete swings without ball

Key Points:

Feet must be wider than shoulders
Hands high and back
Hands together on bat

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14. Grey Cap – Hitting

With a partner or a coach standing beside the player, simply ask the player to hit the ball off the tee. Contact with 10 of 15 balls is important here, not distance. Ensure the tee is placed in front of home plate and NOT directly on home plate. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

T-BALL

Goal: Hitting and to allow hitter to concentrate on proper hitting technique. High percentage of success.

Description: With a partner or a coach located to the side of the player, ask player to hit the ball from a tee. Ensure the tee is placed in front of home plate and NOT on it. Others pick up the baseballs.

Variation and Progression: As many as the various types of balls

Bats: Regular, plastic, hockey stick, small, large ...

Balls: baseballs, wiffle, tennis, incredible, balls, small, large, softballs

- A. Standard T-Ball
- B. Hit the ball through a hoop
- C. T-Ball to hit inside (player on the side)
- D. Cone behind the player (balance)
- E. 3 swings and hit

Key points:

Feet wider than shoulders

Hands high and back

Hands together on the bat

“Rally Cap” Program

Baseball Canada’s Official Initiation Program

15. Black Cap – Hitting

With a partner or a coach standing in at 45 degrees from the player, simply ask the player to hit the ball thrown underhand. 7 out of 15 attempts should be successful. The distance is not important here. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

500

Goal: Introduce players to the perfect batting stance

Description: 1 group of 4-6. 1 batter while the others field. Batter will bat off a Tee or via adult-pitch. Each batter gets 10 swings or hits. Fielder can get points by fielding the ball, * 100 for caught fly, * 50 for one bouncer, * 25 for a grounder

Variation and Progression:

- Small balls, no glove
- Wiffle balls, no glove
- Tennis balls, with glove
- Incrediballs with glove

Key points

Feet wider than shoulders
Hands high and back
Hands together on the bat

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16. Green Cap – Hitting

With a coach standing in front of the player at 20 feet and throwing overhand from his knees, simply ask the player to hit the ball. The ball must reach the outfield portion, rolling or in the air. This must be done 7 times out of 15 attempts.

Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

Light toss

Goal: Gives players an opportunity to work on specific areas of their swing

Description: Players can do this in pairs or in groups of three (each group needs 6-10 baseballs). With a partner or a coach located at 45 degrees beside the batter, simply ask the player to hit the ball tossed underhand. Get one player to kneel in front and to the side of the hitter and toss a ball with little or no arc in front of them. After the hitter has had 10-15 quality swings, get the players to switch. The pitcher should keep the delivery consistent so that hitters can find their timing.

Variations and Progressions:

- A. Regular toss at 45 degrees
- B. Regular toss at 45 degrees with colored balls
- C. Regular toss without moving feet (no step)
- D. Regular with 1 knee down
- E. Regular toss with bottom hand only (use light bat)
- F. Regular toss using 2 balls

Key points:

Feet wider than shoulders
Hands high and back
Hands together on the bat

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17. Blue Cap – Hitting

With a coach standing in front of the player at 30 feet and throwing overhand, simply ask the player to hit the ball. The ball must reach 75 feet or more, rolling or in the air. This must be done 12 times out of 15 attempts. Below is a drill which can be used to prepare your players for this task:

Wiffle BP

Goal: This is a fun drill that allows players to get a lot of swings in a very short period of time

Description: With a coach located at 20 feet in front of the player, toss the ball with both knees on the ground while asking the hitter to hit the ball. Players are usually set up as follows; 2 players hitting, 2 players catching behind the hitters, 1 player feeding tennis balls to the coach, and the rest in the field gathering balls. Players rotate (in pairs) from the field, to catching behind the hitters, to hitting, and finally back to the field. After coach has thrown a ball to one hitter, he/she immediately throws the next pitch to the other hitter. Players rotate after each group has had 10-15 quality swings.

Variation and progression: The greater the ability level, the more hitters at the same time. Be creative !

- A. One player per parent/coach using plastic bats and wiffle balls
- B. Baseball bats, small balls
- C. Baseball bats, wiffle balls
- D. Baseball bats, tennis balls
- E. Plastic bats, badminton birdies
- F. Cut hockey stick, wiffle balls
- G. Cut hockey stick, badminton birdies
- H. Tennis racquet, wiffle balls
- I. Tennis racquet, tennis balls

Key points:

Feet wider than shoulders
Hands high and back
Hands together on the bat

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18. Red Cap – Hitting

4 cones are required for this drill. Cones #1 and #2 will be placed at shortstop at 15 feet apart while cones #3 and #4 will be placed between 1st and 2nd base at 15 feet apart. With a coach standing in front of the player at 30 feet and throwing overhand, simply ask the player to hit the ball. On the first 5 balls thrown, 3 must be hit between cones at shortstop. On the next 5 balls, 3 must be hit between cones in the middle and on the last 5 balls, 3 must be hit between cones between the 1st and 2nd base area. The ball must reach the outfield portion, rolling or in the air.

The accurate hitter

Goal: Drill allowing players to hit at all fields

Description: You will need 4 cones for this drill. Cones #1 and #2 will be placed at shortstop at 15 feet apart while cones #3 and #4 will be placed between 1st and 2nd base at 15 feet apart. With a coach standing in front of the player at 30 feet and throwing overhand, simply ask the player to hit the ball. On the first 5 balls thrown, 3 have to be hit between cones at shortstop. On the next 5 balls, 3 have to be hit between cones in the middle and on last 5 balls, 3 have to be hit between cones between the 1st and 2nd base area. The ball has to reach the outfield portion, rolling or in the air.

Variation and progression:

- A. Start with one area only.
- B. Add a point system

Key points:

Feet wider than shoulders
Hands high and back
Hands together on the bat

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19. White Cap – Base running

The coach is standing down the 1st base line. The player takes position in the batter’s box. With a ball standing on a tee, the player takes a full swing and starts running towards 1st base, then 2nd, then 3rd and back home. To be successful, the player must touch each bag and yell the name of the bag he is touching. (distance of 60 feet)

The train

Goal: Help players to know the bases and to touch them properly

Description: Starting from home plate, players form a line and walk around the bases, saying the name of the base as they touch it. Parents can join in this activity.

Variation and progression:

- A. Coach leads the line
- B. Individually, done while jogging
- C. Individually done while backpedaling
- D. Have players start at different bases
- E. Individually done by running, player goes around the bases (same as Hit Run and Throw)

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20. Grey Cap – Base running

A coach is standing at home plate. The player takes a position in the batter’s box. With a ball standing on a tee, the player takes a full swing and starts running towards first base. He then rounds 1st base, 2nd base and 3rd base before returning home. To be successful, the player has to run the distance without stopping at regular speed.

The musical base

Goal: Help players recognize bases on the field

Description:

All players are jogging in the infield. At the coach’s signal, players run towards a designated base as mentioned by the coach.

Variation and progression:

- A. Ask players to get to any base while having a maximum number of players at each base.

Key points:

Name the bases

Players cannot push each other during the game

Avoid consequences to losers

Equipment: 4 bases minimum

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21. Black Cap – Base running

The player takes a position in the batter’s box. With a ball standing on a tee, the player takes a full swing and starts running towards 1st base. He then rounds 1st base using the banana turn before going to 2nd base. To be successful, the player must round 1st base in order to be in line with 2nd base.

THE RELAY

Goal: Teach players to touch bases properly by rounding them using a good technique

Description: All players are at home plate. At their turn (after player in front has reached 1st base), players round the bases. Between each base, there is a challenge to perform.

Challenge examples. Be creative.

- A. Backpedal
- B. Rounding cones
- C. Roll
- D. Jump between sticks
- E. Pass under a stick on 2 cones
- F. Jump over a partner
- G. Shuffle steps or other running drills
- H. T-Ball
- I. Field a ball, throw to the coach
- J. Etc ...

Key points: More than one ability can be incorporated.

Equipment: 4 bases minimum, depending on the challenges.

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22. Green Cap – Base running

A coach is standing down the 1st base line. Player takes a position in the batter’s box. With a ball standing on a tee, the player takes a full swing and the coach instructs the player to run. To be successful, the player must run toward 1st base and touch the bag. (distance of 60 feet)

KILL THE MOSQUITO

Goal: Learn how to round bases properly

Description: Put bases down in proper locations on diamond, with 3 players at each one. Pretend there is a mosquito on the INSIDE corner of each base. Players, in turn, take a swing at an imaginary ball, drop the bat, run as fast as possible to the next base, stepping on the “mosquito” as they round the base. Players then wait their turn at the base they just rounded.

Key points: Remind players it will be easier to step on the “mosquito” if they run a little to the outside of the base line as they approach the base. It would be helpful to put some markers down for them to go around as shown in the diagram.

Equipment: 4 bases and 4 cones

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23. Blue Cap – Base running

A coach is standing down at 2nd base. The player takes a position at 1st base keeping only one foot on the base. When the player is ready, the coach says "Go" so the player can leave. To be successful, the player has to run the distance with a correct slide at 2nd base using the proper criteria: bend leg to height of calf, leg extended in the air, hands in the air, weight on the butt, upper body raised. Below is a drill to prepare players for this task:

Sliding

Goal: Improve base sliding techniques

Description: Place the mat on an open field. Have players line up in single file approximately 10 to 15 feet away from the mat. Have players run and complete the slide into the mat, one player at a time. For all sliding techniques, the coach can shorten the "run up" distance to slow the players down and focus on the technique of the slide, then slowly increase the speed of the players after they feel more comfortable.

Variation and progression:

- A- Final position
- B-** Sliding with legs forming a 4.
- C-** Football slide
- D-** Run and slide at 10-15 feet distance

Key points:

Bent Leg Slide:

- Make sure the players have their hands in the air to avoid injury.
- Stay low throughout the approach of the slide in order to decrease the amount of impact with the ground.

Equipment: Mats (optional)

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24. Red Cap – Base running

A coach is standing at 3rd base. The player takes a position at 1st base keeping only one foot on the base. When the player is ready, the coach says “Go” so the player can leave. To be successful, the player has to run the distance with a correct slide at 3rd base using the proper criteria: bend leg to height of calf, leg extended in the air, hands in the air, weight on the butt, upper body raised. Below is a drill to prepare players for this task:

Sliding Mat

Goal: Improve base sliding techniques

Description: Place the mat on an open field. Have players line up in single file approximately 10 to 15 feet away from the mat. Have players run and complete the slide into the mat, one player at a time.

Key points: For all sliding techniques, the coach can shorten the "run up" distance to slow the players down and focus on the technique of the slide, then slowly increase the speed of the players after they feel more comfortable.

Bent Leg Slide:

- Make sure the players have their hands in the air to avoid injury.
- Stay low throughout the approach of the slide in order to decrease the amount of impact with the ground.

Equipment: Mats (optional)

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Other drills to help players improve base running abilities

Running drills

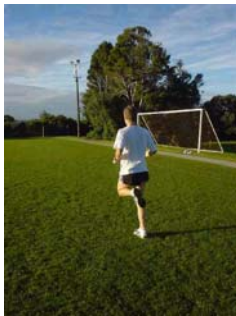
Goal: Learn the proper running technique and improve coordination of legs and arms

Description: Have all players side by side on a line. Players execute the drill by going 45 feet (both ways). To be done in warm-up.

Variation and progression:

- A: Military walk
- B: High knees
- C: Shuffle steps
- D: Cross steps front and back
- E: Football print
- F: Heel to butt
- G: Giant step
- H: Sitting, use only arms
- I: Regular sprint
- J: Sprint, baseball start
- K: Backpedal run

Key points: Always have opposite arm to leg for each movement



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TAG BASEBALL

Goal: Learn to know the situations where you can pass a base or stop at it.

Description: Install hoops behind 1st base and home plate. Install hoops on 2nd and 3rd base. One or some players have the tag. Players have to reach the next base while following the base paths. Player with the tag must leave the mound to touch players.

Variation and progression:

- A. Ask parents to participate
- B. Allow players to run anywhere in the infield and to go to a base for a tag protection
- C. Add balls on the mound. Player must go get a ball and then come back to his base without being tagged.

Key points: Possibility to pass 1st base and home plate
Make sure to avoid too many players at each base

Equipment: 4 bases minimum

“Rally Cap” Program

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“THE GAZELLE”

Goal: Teach and help players to use the right technique to get out of the batter’s box

Description: Player takes a swing with a bat. Player must leave the box using the right foot. Player takes some quick steps towards 1st base and stops at ¼ of the distance.

Variations & Progression:

- Simulate a swing with a foam or aluminum bat
- Hit a badminton birdie
- Hit a practice ball (foam or wiffle ball)
- Hit object and run to 1st base

Key Points:

- Players use their batting stance and take a swing
- Don’t look at the ball after it is hit
- Never throw the bat
- Right-handed batters’ first step is with the right foot and left-handed batters’ first step is with the left foot

Equipment:

Two bases minimum
1 bat minimum and 1 ball

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GIMME 5

Goal: Develop speed and learn how to run to 1st base

Description: Place bases 30'-40' from players; 4 groups of 3. Players, in turn, take a swing at an imaginary ball, drop bat, run as fast as possible past their base, give the coach "high 5," return to base as if running to 2B.

Variation and progression:

A- Simulate a swing with a plastic or aluminum bat

B- Hit a badminton birdie

C- Hit a wiffle ball tossed

D- Hit an object and run towards 1st base

Key points: Make sure players are running full speed across the bag, slowing down only after touching it

Equipment: 4 bases

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GOTCHA

Goal: Base running, determination

Description: Place 2-4 groups of players at each base or at home plate and 2nd base depending on number of players. Set up bases in diamond formation 20–30 feet apart. On the signal "Go," one player from each group starts running around the bases. The objective is to run past the person ahead of you. Score 1 point for your team for every player passed. Run for a set period of time (15-30 seconds).

Variation and progression:

- A- Use parents so players can try to pass them
- B- Backpedal

Key points: At all time, players must touch all bases

Equipment: 4 bases

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SMASH

Goal: Getting out of the box and improve speed

Description: Ball gloves are placed on the ground across from where players are standing along the 3rd base line, to simulate where 1B would be for each batter. Draw a home plate (or use carpet plates) on the ground along the 3B line for each pair of players. On verbal signal "Hit," one partner swings at imaginary ball, then pivots on their lead foot and runs toward their glove (1B). They then return to behind their plate while their partner takes a turn.

Key points: Use proper foot to leave the box
Coaches should emphasize getting out of box quickly, with power
Driving the arms rather than the correct pivot

Equipment: ball gloves, 6 carpet home plates

"Rally Cap" Program

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25. White Cap – General

By using the report card attached with this document, ask the player to fill out the portion relating to this item. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

Around the horn

Have the players stand in a circle. Use an odd number of players if necessary. The coach gives a ball to one player. At the start signal, the player throws the ball underhand to the second player to his right. While throwing the ball, he must say the name of the player catching the ball. Once the players become comfortable with 1 ball, the coach can add a second, third and fourth ball. See how many balls the players can handle at the same time.

“Rally Cap” Program

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26. Grey Cap – General

By using the report card attached with this document, ask the player to fill out the portion relating to this item. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“NAMES & NUMBERS”

Goal: Teach the players the name and number of the positions

Description: Name each position and their number. Give each player a position name and instruct them to go to that position

Variations & Progression:

- Start them off the pitching mound
- Write position numbers on balls, place the balls in a bag; have players draw a ball and take it to the corresponding position

Key Points:

- 1 = pitcher
- 2 = catcher
- 3 = first base
- 4 = second base
- 5 = third base
- 6 = shortstop
- 7 = left-field
- 8 = center-field
- 9 = right-field

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27. Black Cap – General

By using the report card attached with this document, ask the player to fill out the portion relating to this item. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

“OUT!!”

Goal: Teach and explain to players how to make an out

Description: Play a game and instruct players to touch the runners to make an out.

Variations & Progression:

- Make a couple of teams and play mini-games using only one base
- Play mini-game using 4 bases
- Rotate the teams to change match-ups

Key Point: Touch the runner with the ball before the runner touches the base

“Rally Cap” Program

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28. Green Cap – General

By using the report card attached to this document, ask the player to fill out the portion relating to this item. Below is a drill that can be used to prepare players for this task:

BUCKET BALL

Goal: Throwing, fielding, base running, cooperation, and teamwork

Description: 2 teams of 6 - one on offence - one on defense. The defensive team has a catcher at home plate and the other players at appropriate locations. The offensive team has 1 player to THROW from home plate and the other players awaiting their turn from a safe distance.

Activity: Offensive “batter” throws out 2 balls, at one time in quick succession and runs around the bases trying to make it home before the fielding team gets both balls in a pail. If the ball is caught, the “batter” is out. Fielders may NOT run with the ball. It must be thrown Home. Relay the ball if necessary. Remind players to make sure the catcher is looking; An adult may have to help at home.

Variation and progression:

A- Batter throws 2 balls

B- Batter hits 2 balls

Equipment: 2 balls, 4 bases, helmet, pail or bag

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29. Blue Cap – General

BALL/STRIKE

A strike is when a batter swings and misses at a pitch or doesn't swing at a pitch that goes through the strike zone. It also counts as a strike if a batter hits a pitched ball into foul territory (see 'The Field'). This is called a foul ball.

A ball, the opposite of a strike, is a pitch that does not go through the strike zone, and the batter chooses not to swing at.

The strike zone is an imaginary area that is as wide as home plate and extends from the batter's chest to his knees. To get a strikeout, the pitcher must throw 3 strikes to the batter before he throws 4 balls. However, a batter can never strike out (be given a 3rd strike) on a foul ball. If a batter gets 4 balls before he gets 3 strikes it is called a “walk” and the batter automatically goes to 1st base.

SINGLE/DOUBLE/TRIPLE/HOME RUN

A hit that gets a batter to 1st base is called a “single.” If the batter makes it to 2nd base safely on a hit it is called a “double.” And, if he makes it to 3rd base safely it is called a “triple.” Doubles and triples usually make it past the outfielders, allowing the batter to advance around the bases more easily. Sometimes, a batter makes it around all 3 bases and back to home plate in one attempt. Getting around all the bases with one hit is called a “home run.”

FAIR/FOUL BALL

Together the infield and outfield make up what is known as “fair” territory. Batters want to hit the ball into this area as it allows them to start running the bases (and hopefully end up scoring a run for their team). Straight lines drawn on the field from home plate to the outfield fence are known as foul lines and they separate fair territory from foul territory. If a batter hits a ball behind or outside of fair territory it is called a “foul” ball. A batter cannot start running the bases on a foul ball.

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HIT/ERROR

A hit is a special term in baseball and does not refer to just any batted ball. To be considered a "hit" the ball must be batted into fair territory, usually away from the defensive players and the batter must get on base safely.

When a batter reaches base and the defensive player has not been able to field the ball cleanly or throw it properly to put the batter out at 1st base it is considered an "error."

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30. Red Cap – General

The defensive positioning will vary depending on who comes up to the plate. For example, a weak left-handed batter will allow the players on the left side of the field to play in. The opposite is true when a weak right-handed batter comes up. The players will have to cover more ground when a power hitter comes up to the plate. The defense will also have to shift to the right or left depending on the hitters’ tendencies.

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Feedback Form

Province: _____

Association: _____

Name of contact person: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail: _____

Number of players involved in the pilot: _____

"Rally Cap" Program

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Do you believe the program answers the players' needs at the initiation level?

Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Do you believe the different levels of caps include appropriate tasks? Were they attainable?

Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Were the drills provided helpful?

Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Did you receive any comments from the parents and players who have participated in the program?

Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Do you have suggestions that would make this program better in the future?

Yes ___ No ___

Comments: _____

Please return to Baseball Canada by fax at 613-748-5767 once you have completed the program.