

Tips for Select Or Travel Team Coaches

Select, travel, or tournament teams are designed to get players more experience competing at a higher level of play. Continue to focus on player development in multiple positions in order for your team to grow. Even though there are no playing time rules for tournaments, remember that parents are paying for their kid to get more experience and each player needs to have a significant role on your team. Depending on the age, the majority of teams use pool play to develop players (batting the lineup and pitching your less experienced pitchers) and bracket play to compete and win. Below are some guidelines to help your select team be successful.

1. **COMMUNICATION COMMUNICATION COMMUNICATION!** The best programs are the programs that communicate well with kids and parents. Be honest and give feedback about their kids' development. Most parents and kids will be happy with their role on the team if they understand the why and how to get where they want to be.
2. Girls thrive on the social aspects of team sports. Encourage team unity, building friendships, building relationships, and being a great teammate. Although all players are different, most girls respond better to positive feedback and positive reinforcement. Teach them to love the game.
3. Tournament teams are more demanding and more competitive. Kids will be fighting for positions in practice. Encourage your parents to work with their kids outside of practice and/or take them to lessons or privates. Every kid will be attending practices. If they want to advance their individual skills, they need to go above and beyond what every other kid is doing.
4. Involve parents. Tournament teams are a big financial and time commitment for a family. They need to understand their role is to encourage and cheer and let the coaches coach, but your families will be spending a lot of time together and need to feel like a family.
5. Picking up other players mid-season for tournaments can cause conflict and controversy especially when pick up players are taking away playing time or positions of your regular roster players. Try to avoid picking up players if at all possible. If you have to pick up a player, play them as a pick up player playing in place of and in the same position of the player they are replacing. If you pick up kids from another team, do not try to recruit that player during their current season. They need to finish the season with their current team and any changes need to happen after the season.
6. If you decide to remove a player from your roster, you need to notify the parents directly after the season ends to give the family an opportunity to find another team (within 14 days). If you decide to remove a player mid-season, you need to have a justifiable, documented reason. (behavior, attendance to practice/games). Removing a kid from your roster mid-season does not allow the player to find another team and is unfair to the family without just cause.
7. When doing team tryouts, communicate with parents. Be honest and don't mislead them. After a tryout, call the parents/player and let them know if they made the team or not in a timely manner (10 days or less from tryout). If they ask, give constructive feedback to help the player grow.
8. Maintain accurate financial records and make them available to the parents at any time requested. Teams are independent on how they operate their finances, fundraising, uniforms, travel, specialized training, equipment, or tournaments, etc. Do yourself a favor and make sure to keep good records and don't put yourself in a bad position. It is always a good idea to have at least 2 non related members of the team in charge of the teams finances.