

## **Coaching Baseball Oakville House League. YES, YOU CAN!**

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Dare we be honest, that for many, the thought of assuming the helm of any youth sports' team might create a sense of primal fear accompanied by a pervasive feeling of deep doubt and apprehension. Thinking one may not be qualified, or the burden will be too much to bear, we might suppress a genuine inclination to raise a hand to respond to the call of duty.

### **WAIT!**

Firstly, we need to dispense with any thoughts of "I can't do it" and to recognize that we are talking about House League. This is in no way to suggest that House League is of lesser importance or stature than, say, Rep or Select ball, however, the reality is that House League exists for a purpose. Primarily, it does not require nearly the same level of commitment as do other leagues, and it provides a more relaxed environment for kids and parents, alike, to enjoy a summer pastime. That does not make it necessarily less competitive, but we generally emphasize that House League is an opportunity for kids at any level to freely participate without worrying about on-base percentage, batting average, or a misread fly ball.

Similar principles apply to House League Coaches and while the importance of coaching is omnipresent, the role can be approached in a more relaxed and informal fashion. Structure and organization is still a necessity, but a single game and practice per week is much less demanding than the commitment required for a rep league.

### **WHAT DOES IT TAKE?**

Becoming a House League coach with OMBA is a simple process. An expression of interest coupled with a successful police check is really the extent of the administrative effort needed to head up a House League team. Clearly, your preference will be to coach the team your son or daughter will play on.

The most important traits one should possess for becoming a House League coach are a positive attitude and penchant for seeing kids have fun. Beyond that, the rest comes easy. OMBA will offer you whatever assistance you require to be successful, including tips and instruction on how to run practices, form your team's line-ups and the rules / dealing with Umpires. Support will always be close at hand.

When thinking about House League teams, the ideal coaching complement consists of three, ideally four, parent volunteers who share Head and Assistant Coach roles. Assistant Coaches are important as they should be capable to fill in should the Head Coach not be available for a game or practice.

House League Coaches need not possess an innate knowledge of baseball as a pre-requisite, this can be developed by choice over time, although Coaches should familiarize themselves with OMBA's rules and policies including Playing Rules and Umpire Engagement. Coaches should commit to running organized practices, understanding the fundamentals of the game, setting boundaries and expectations for players, and interacting often and openly with parents. These are key attributes that contribute to an

enjoyable experience for players, parents, and coaches. Instrumental to a positive playing experience for kids is to observe that the Coaches are also having fun and enjoying their role.

## **THE RELUCTANT COACH**

We have all met The Reluctant Coach. The parent who feels compelled to raise their hand because ultimately no one else will. Extra kudos to those who fall in this category. Except, of course, if you raise your hand while at the same time publicly expressing honest feelings about having to “do this because no one else will.” You have made an honorable gesture to volunteer, and perhaps because no one else has. In any case, avoid diminishing this selfless act by vocalizing your disappointment as to the reason why. By all means, feel The Reluctant Coach within yourself, but remember the importance of showing the kids that they matter most, and you are now their Leader in how to have fun. And, who knows? You may find yourself enjoying the coaching role despite your original apprehension.

Regardless of whether you are Reluctant, or Willingly Enthusiastic, ask for help from the other parents. Even if it is only to mind the bench when the team is at bat, or to keep score, or to help run drills at practice, no coach acting alone is an island, and you will need, and welcome, the support.

## **CASUAL HELP**

Not ready for Prime Time as a Head or Assistant Coach? No problem, let the Head Coach know at the beginning of the season the extent of your willingness to help, when able, and when needed. This level of participation can be a good introduction to the coaching role and perhaps prepare you for greater involvement in future years. Regardless, helping out whenever possible is always appreciated.

## **I'M CONVINCED, WHAT'S NEXT?**

That reads *I'm convinced*, NOT *I'm convicted*! Donning the Coach's hat and shirt does not by any means place you in some form of jail. The House League season runs from early May to Mid-August. It requires one game per week and a practice on the weekend. Excellent training materials will be published in *Coach's Corner* on the OMBA website to help you plan and run your season, covering games, practices, umpiring and parent involvement, amongst other subject areas. With some study and on field work, you'll be a pro in no time.

In the meantime, while Spring Season is still several weeks away, please consider participating as a Coach, Assistant Coach, or Helpful Parent for 2023.

Interested in coaching? Please send an inquiry to [hjdombek@gmail.com](mailto:hjdombek@gmail.com).

## ***About Stuart Walsh***

*Stuart is OMBA's VP, House League and has coached House League teams for the past seven years, including Rookieball, Mosquito, PeeWee and, more recently, Bantam divisions. Stuart is also a Baseball Ontario Level 2 Umpire and officiates in both the OMBA Rep and House Leagues. He can be reached at [cstuartwalsh@gmail.com](mailto:cstuartwalsh@gmail.com).*