

KWAZULU-NATAL JUNIOR CAMP JANUARY 2012

A training camp was held for U/12 and U/14 boys as well as U/14, U/16 and U/18 girls at the Hoy Park Sports Complex in Durban from 6 to 8 January 2012. In total 55 players from schools as well as clubs attended. Twenty local coaches both from clubs and schools assisted with the running of the camp.

On Friday evening I held a meeting with all the local coaches at the Hoy Park Sports Complex Baseball Club House. At the meeting I went through the weekend program (copy attached for easy reference) in detail. At the meeting it was emphasised that the camp would be a teaching camp.

The camp focused on and covered the following:

- (a) Warm-up and stretch
- (b) Agility drills
- (c) Throwing program
- (d) Quick hand drills
- (e) Relay plays
- (f) Individual Player Skills (all positions)
- (g) Infield/Outfield Drills
- (h) Base running
- (i) Bunting (game situations)
- (j) Batting (game situations)

Emphasis was placed on fundamental movement skills, glove work, correct fielding positions, use of the feet, mechanics related to throwing and catching a ball, approach to and fielding ground balls, approach to and catching fly balls and the mechanics required to execute all the baseball disciplines.

The camp was well attended by both players and coaches. There were also lots of parents in attendance watching the camp and of course to view their children in action. This is very encouraging for the region as a whole.

Overall I believe that the camp was a success and it appeared that the players enjoyed themselves, had lots of fun and learnt a lot. The coaches as well as the parents should be complimented for the overall discipline shown by all the players.

The camp was held in extremely hot and humid conditions and all the participants must be complimented for their commitment and approach throughout the weekend. All the disciplines included in the camp programme were done. The two baseball fields that were used were well prepared and in perfect condition for the camp. Well done to the region for ensuring that all the equipment requested was available at the camp.

In future we must ensure that a qualified physiotherapist (referred to as a trainer in the USA) is on duty throughout camps of this nature. Quite a few athletes were injured and needed medical attention during the weekend. We also need to ensure and confirm that all athletes nominated for the camp are physically medically and physically fit prior to attending the camp.

In my opinion, to improve the skill levels of players and to improve pertinent areas within the game of baseball in the region, the following needs attention and needs to be addressed in future:

- Coaching knowledge must improve
- Structured training sessions must be run at club and school levels
- All participants must have and maintain fun in the game at all levels
- Fitness levels of the players must improve
- Basic fundamental movement skills must be encouraged from an early age
- Agility drills and exercises must be done at schools and clubs on a regular basis
- Player arm strength must improve (follow a throwing program on a regular basis at least 4 times a week)
- The health of the throwing arm must be monitored and be maintained
- Concentration levels of the athletes must be given attention and must improve
- Players and coaches must learn and understand the mechanics required to perform as well as the fundamentals of the game
- Coaches must teach the mechanics of the game
- Players/coaches must become students of the game
- Players/coaches must learn the rules of the game
- Communication skills need to improve at all levels
- Coaches must follow the approved accreditation courses
- The shoulder program must be followed at all levels and must be monitored
- More parent involvement in the game should be encouraged

At the end of the second day I was able to address the coaches together with the parents of the players. It gave me the opportunity to thank all the participants, to enlarge on the correct approach to coaching and teaching this highly technical game and to give the reasons why certain drills were done on a repetitive basis. I also gave some feedback on the junior national camps that were held during 2011 and the African Academy that was recently held in Cape Town.

Finally I gave all those present information on the LTPD project that we have been working on and the future launching thereof this year not only for baseball but also for all sports.

Congratulations to Dion Desanois, the Kwazulu-Natal Baseball Region and all their members for holding a camp of this nature. Thank you to Paul Whitfield for his support and assistance throughout the weekend. A special thank you also to all the coaches for their patience, assistance and commitment throughout the weekend. One cannot say enough about everyone in the region that played a part in making the whole camp such a success.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity of running the camp. I really feel honoured. I certainly had lots of fun and enjoyed myself immensely.

Mike Randall
Coach in Residence
10 January 2012