

To all AA Managers and Coaches -

This note is primarily intended for those who have not participated in the tryout and draft process, and merely contains some of my personal observations.

First, the tryouts. Expect an extremely long day. I say this not only because of the actual length of the day, but we'll be watching a couple hundred kids at 5 stations each, so expect to record about 1,000 ratings. Personally, I've tried ratings (ie 1 - 10; etc), but with so many kids I've found a much more simple "- / 0 / +" to be effective. FOR ME: "-" if they're below average, "0" if they're average, and "+" if they're above average. Additional "-" or "+" can add emphasis. You may also want to consider mechanics vs results. Also be prepared to write comments to help distinguish among the main participants. Just expect - especially if this is your first time - that the more complex you try to make the process the more the players will blur into one another.

The Draft: This can be a very simple, quick process, or very long and drawn out, depending on your own preparation. I am surprised at the number of coaches who have shown up to the draft with their tryout sheets and nothing more. What works for ME is the following:

After receiving last year's evaluations and massaging my notes from the tryouts, I use Excel to prepare two almost identical lists: The first list is sorted by RANKING, ie the first name on the list is the first player I'd pick if I could, the second name on the list is the second pick, and so on. Your ideal team would be the top twelve or thirteen names on your list. The second list is the same as the first, except sorted in alphabetical order, and has both the name and the ranking. (Both lists should have the players' tryout numbers as well.)

Here's what to expect on draft day (if it's the same as previous years): The Majors teams pick first. After they are done, the pool on your list(s) has been reduced by the number drafted to the Majors. The AAA teams pick next. After they fill their teams, the remaining players - plus all the 9-year-olds - are still available.

When you arrive at the AA teams' draft, you'll need to cross out the names of the players already chosen. You don't NEED to cross them out, but if you don't, chances are you'll delay the process as you call out "The Cardinals will take Jimmy Smith" and everyone else in the room will yell "He's already taken". That'll happen the FIRST time. Every subsequent time will likely be followed by an <expletive deleted> as you delay our return to our recliners and our favorite golf/soccer/swimming/bowling/mud wrestling telecast.

If you have a rankings list, you'll be prepared to take the next available player off your list each time it's your turn to draft. (In my last draft, all but two of my players came from my first page, and one of those was a hat pick.)

Once all the 9-yr-old slots are filled (roughly 40 by the 5th round), expect to select among the 10- and 11-yr-olds for the remaining 7 or 8 rounds. That will continue until the remaining slots equals the number of hat picks (players who did not tryout).

I use two lists just to help locate the player's name on my ranking list. As the draft progresses, you'll likely see that your rankings sheet fairly closely matches the order that the players are taken, but occasionally you have to jump back and forth several pages to locate a player's name. I also add a column to indicate which team takes which player.

This note merely summarizes the way I personally participate in the tryouts and draft. If you've never done it before, it may help.

Now you have to read my own personal editorial comments about WHO I draft:

As Scott and Bruce echoed last night, remember, this is for the kids and not the NBA or NFL draft. Personally, I'm managing this year because my son asked me to. I don't draft to make THE winning team. I draft to give my son and the kids a fun playing and learning experience. FOR ME, this means I tend to weigh heavily my son's and my coach's son's friends, because that's who THEY want to play with. Also, while I do look closely at the 9-year-olds, I tend to focus on the 10- and 11-yr olds just as much. FOR ME, the most rewarding aspect of coaching is seeing a player return next year. If you treat the 11-yr-old as nothing more than a reject, I guarantee he won't be back. And

remember, after the allotted 9-yr-olds are drafted, the remaining 10- and 11-yr-olds will become key to filling out your roster (about half). If I recall correctly, there's a limit to the number of 9-yr-olds a team can have regardless (6?).

FOR ME, the most important observation at the AA level during tryouts is which 9-yr-olds are not ready to leave A division. It's our responsibility to provide a fun, educational, and developmental experience for the rest. And THAT's the bottom line.

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