

## IS JUST COACHING ENOUGH?

When we look at successful learn to play programs we wonder what makes some more successful than others. We think its **IMAGINATION**. We all know that the Learn to Play program is only going to be as good as the coaches who are delivering it. We talk about the LTP program being very easy for associations and new coaches to learn. It comes with lesson plans, it comes with a DVD and voice over video, but it needs **IMAGINATION** to deliver it...that comes from the coach! It is not enough to be prepared and organized you also have to be **imaginative!**

We fish every couple of weeks at one of the NB LTP. A father complained once that our one hour of softball during the week was the time he and his son used to fish off the bridge by the ball field. Now he comes & fishes at the ball practice. We started out with one father, now there are 4 who sit in lawn chairs holding out their fishing rods with whiffle balls at the end of the fishing line, instead of hooks. The kids practice their hitting and our year end party is going to involve a fishing tournament at the back creek. What will they remember about the summer – that they learned how to hit....no....but maybe how funny it was using a fishing rod to reel in a whiffle ball 'after' they hit it.

We also play “chicken in a pot” softball! Have you ever thrown a rubber chicken from home plate? A 6 year old can throw that rubber chicken pretty far! When the defensive team picks up the chicken, it has to be thrown to every player and then back to the pitcher, where the pitcher “throws” it into a pot. As the offensive “chicken chucker” passes each base they get a point for their team. Everyone on the team gets a turn at being a “chicken chucker”, then the teams switch places. It’s hilarious and there’s lots of screaming going on and usually the coach is running a color chicken commentary during the play about why the “chicken ran to first base”.

Have you ever had someone film a “TIDE” commercial on the night you introduced sliding? Was it a rainy night & a dirty infield or did you use a slip-n-slide with water and Johnsons no-tear shampoo? Don’t forget to save that video for your closing night banquet!

A simple every day analogy of “soft hands” when trying to get players to field and catch balls can turn into a riot at practice if you introduce eggs and/or water balloons to teach them what soft hands actually means and they’ll get it faster that way!

Is **imagination** all just fun and games? No, it has many practical applications too. Take away a 13 year olds glove that she inherited from her brother and is too big anyway, and give her a small fisher

price glove that is the size of her hand. She'll be able to feel the ball better when fielding at practice and it won't take her long to understand how a bigger glove can work to her advantage.

Look on-line for some homemade equipment that will help give your team an edge no matter what the age or come up with some of your own ideas and share them!

**Imagination** .....use it....talk to other coaches and find out what their best practices are!

Respectfully submitted,

NB LTP team