



“Conditioning” for youth players

If your goals are correctly aligned as a youth coach, one of your top goals should be to have all of your players want to play again next season. If you accomplish that, it has been a successful season. What coaches of many sports don't realize is that they can literally “run off” some of their players. Players do not like conditioning, they don't like being forced to run for the sake of running, or doing pushups for making mistakes.

Over conditioning athletes is the quickest way to make them not want to come to practices and games, and to have them not return to play next season. As we all know, conditioning is an important part of the game and players have to be physically strong and in shape to maximize their abilities. The below conditioning program gives you ideas for fun ways to condition at practice or after games.

Wide receiver/Defensive back - Pair athletes up who have similar athletic abilities. Select one to be the wide receiver and one to be the defensive back. Have them start from about 15 feet to the side of the coach (quarterback) who has a bucket of baseballs. The coach says “go” and the wide receiver has to try to get open and catch a pass from the coach. Make them run a good distance each time they go out for a pass.

Next time that pair comes up, have them switch wide receiver and defensive back.

Triple relay - Divide your teams in to groups of four (if someone has less than 4, one member of that group goes twice... good luck to them). One member of the team at each base. The runner at home plate runs a triple. When he gets to third, the runner from third runs a “triple” from third base to second base. Then the runner from second runs a triple to first, and the runner from first runs a triple to home. The coach should time the group from when the first player starts until the last player crosses home plate.

Obstacle course - There is no specific way to set up a perfect obstacle course on the field, but be creative. Have some baserunning, a section where they have to do bunny hops, a section where they have to skip, bear crawl, run backward and/or sprint in a straight line. Have each relay team select who will do each segment of the course. Once the teams to it once, have the players rotate what stations they are at and do it again. Each time you do this, set it up differently with different obstacles and different activities. Be creative and have fun. Maybe even let the players set one up.

Home to first sprints - Add a little spice to this otherwise boring activity by dividing your team into equal groups and adding up each group's home to first time. Every time someone doesn't look to the right as soon as they hit the bag or break down right after, add .5 seconds to the team's time. The team with the lowest time wins. This game can be done with doubles, triples, and inside the park home runs too.

Medicine ball relays - Each group starts at the right field foul line with a medicine ball. They will throw the medicine ball with a sideways rotational chest pass. Once it stops rolling the next member of their team will pick up and do the same. The first team to throw their med ball over the left field fence wins



Use some of these games or create some of your own. The players on your team will hardly realize they have been doing conditioning and will have a blast doing it!

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