



# Bronco Development Program

## Introduction

Welcome coaches and parents to the FRAA Bronco Baseball Program. In efforts to enhance and increase engagement of your baseball experience, the FRAA Baseball Development Coordinators have created a Bronco Development Program for future Commissioners and Coaches.

At the Bronco age group (12 years old and under), studies and experts have all concluded that implementing more skill activities keeps the interest of the young ball player and provides them not only skills to progress to the next level of play but also increased motor skills for human development. The Bronco level builds from the Mustang level, by introducing playing the outfield with 3 outfielders, bunting, lead offs / pick off attempts for the first time. These events through Bronco should be fun, encouraging and memorable for all parties involved.

## Goals

The goals of this program are simple but important to the development. We ask that each coach, volunteer and parent or guardian understands each of the goals listed below and embraces these on the journey of developing our youth.

- 1) Clear expectations for players, coaches, and parents/ guardians
- 2) Provide a safe and fun environment
- 3) Understanding of Bronco game play and rules
- 4) Increase skill level of our young athletes
- 5) Strong emphasis on encouragement and positive feedback
- 6) Provide the basis of structure and discipline for baseball, school and life.

## Communicating Expectations

Prior to the start of the season the coach should communicate to the parents/ guardians of your team the following:

- 1) Introduction of yourself, Asst. Coaches and your roster.
- 2) Mission and goals of the program
- 3) Clear understanding that the Bronco Program is about skills development
- 4) Expectations of parents, guardians and spectators:
  - a) only positive and encouraging words to each player
  - b) encouragement for parents to participate as assistant coaches. (Background checks)
  - c) encourage fans to root for every player on the field, including the opposing team
  - d) encourage parents to interact with all team parents
  - e) only coaches of the team will provide instruction on the field. The head coach should be the loudest voice on the field
  - f) NO adults past the fence gates or field unless head coach permits and background checks are complete
  - g) any and all concerns and questions must be addressed directly with head coach.

## **Safe and Fun Environment**

For our youth to begin to enjoy the game, team and structure they must feel safe in the environment and it is the responsibility of all coaches, parents and spectators to ensure the safety of the children.

We want our kids to continue to develop with baseball or softball as they progress in age. We also recognize this is a sport that may incur some “lumps” such as bad hops, overthrows and general mistakes. As such, safety needs to be explained to the kids and parents alike. All coaches should remain vigilant at all times. Correct any problems or potential issues prior to them becoming a major issue. The following are tips and rules to follow to ensure the safety of the players and coaches during practices and/ or games:

- 1) **Bats** - Only 2 team players should have a bat in their hands at any given time. The batter at the plate and the batter on deck. ALL other bats should be hung on the bat racks in the dugouts or in the players gear bag. Absolutely no exceptions to this rule.
- 2) **Throwing** - When throwing a ball to another player it is imperative that every player ensures the receiving player is paying attention. It is a good skill to get each thrower to say the name of the person they are throwing to. This promotes communication, team building and safety.
- 3) **Dugout behavior** - When the team is batting, it is important to encourage the team on the bench to cheer on their teammate batting. Make up chants or use the standard “let’s go,

Bob” whatever works for you and your team. One assistant coach should be designated as bench coach during these times. The bench coach should be between the bench and the on-deck circle. No kids should pass unless they are advancing to the on-deck circle.

- 4) **Behavior problems** - If you see a kid behavior poorly and potentially putting themselves or others in harm, let the kid know that this will not be tolerated with a warning. Second offense is bench time and lastly is parental engagement. Zero tolerance!!!
- 5) **Defensive Alignment** – The Bronco level removes the 4<sup>th</sup> outfielder that has been part of the game since Shetland. At this age, there will only be 3 outfielders (LF, CF, RF). Keep this in mind during practices so player’s at the outfield position know what is expected of them and understand that they need to cover more ground than in the lower levels.
- 6) **Pitching** – Players at this age have experience with pitching, however please keep in mind pitching limitations (i.e. number of pitches, innings thrown, etc.). Again, player safety continues to be a main priority and at the player’s first mention of arm fatigue or pain, the player should be removed and given rest.
- 7) **Bunting** – This is generally the player’s first introduction to the act of bunting while at bat. This is also a skill that should be taught in great detail as the player at bat is exposed in a way that could cause serious injury if not taught correctly. Defensively, catchers should be taught how to field a bunt as this is new for that position as well.
- 8) **Catcher’s position** – The catcher’s position is also a heavy focus at this age group. This is the first time that stealing home is permitted and should be taught the proper way to defend stealing home, while maintaining player safety on both sides. Additionally, as stated above, with the introduction of bunting, catchers need to be ready to field the bunt and understand this new skill. Lastly, a batter can now become a baserunner if the third strike is not caught by the catcher. This should be address and practiced prior to games to prepare both the batters and the catchers if this happens during a game.
- 9) **Stealing** – The act of stealing should be taught with the focus on player safety as the first priority. This goes for the baserunner as well as the player accepting the throw from the catcher. Please stress to the baserunner that sliding is critical and could cause serious injury to both players if not done properly. Stealing home is permitted at the Bronco level.
- 10) **Lead off / Pick off** – This is an advanced baserunning & pitching skill that is introduced in Bronco. This is something that should be focused on during practices before the games begin.

## **Equipment and Tools for Skill Development**

The following are helpful and fun items that are appropriate for the Bronco Program to use during practices, pre-game warm-ups or while at home:

- 1) FRAA Supplied Items for Coaches:
  - a. Bucket of baseballs
  - b. Complete set of youth sized catcher's equipment (including a catcher's glove)
  
- 2) Optional Items for Coaches to Provide:
  - a. 1 pack of low-profile field cones
  - b. Stationary hitting net with tee

The following are required to be purchased by the parents for each player. These items should be purchased and brought to each practice and game:

- 1) Heart guard chest protector ([Amazon link](#))
  
- 2) Youth athletic supporter
  
- 3) 1 "USA" stamped and rated baseball bat up to 2 5/8" barrel only
  
- 4) 1 Baseball Glove of good quality leather and well broken-in \*\*
  
- 5) 1 Baseball Batting Helmet (with jaw protection)\*
  
- 6) Baseball Pants\*
  
- 7) Baseball Cleats\*

\* Used equipment that is in good working order is fine and encouraged.

\*\* For this age group 10" - 11.5" leather gloves are best and can be purchased for \$30 - \$40 and less for used gloves. Used gloves are typically already broke-in.

## **Reference Material**

The following websites provide great ideas for skill development and drills to do during practices:

- 1) <https://www.littleleague.org/downloads/baseball-pitching-log/>

2) [Practice Plans — Baseball Positive](#)

The following websites provide great tips for field maintenance before/ after practices and games:

- 1) [Municipality of Murrysville Field Maintenance](#) <-Section 2 for Baseball Fields
- 2) [How to Properly Line a Field](#)
- 3) [How to drag a field](#)
- 4) [Field drying tips](#)

The following websites provide great coaching tips for new coaches:

- 1) <https://www.youthbaseballedge.com/> <- Excellent podcast
- 2) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8rIhLrIPcgN9E3929MaIRQ>
- 3) [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=justin+stone+elite+baseball+training+](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=justin+stone+elite+baseball+training+)

# Appendix A

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