BASEBALL ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR YOUTH BASEBALL

MARVIN R. LEROY, JR.

This contribution to the game of baseball is dedicated to
Marvin and Catherine LeRoy, parents of the author, who have both
enjoyed the game immensely throughout their lives
as players, fans, and parents of ballplayers,
and to this day still count it as an important part of their lives
as they watch their grandson, Will, hitting those beautiful line-drives.
They too also understand the tremendous life experiences
one gains from this great sport, and that
the values of fairness and justice are not solely reserved
for determinations by umpires between the lines.

It is also dedicated to all those kids "on the bubble,"
who endeavor to make all-star rosters in their communities.
May we all better understand their passion and dedication to the game,
and commit ourselves to making decisions that are fair and just.

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Ballplayer Assessment Tool
for Youth Baseball

All across America, and within all national youth baseball programs, the selection of travel/all-star teams engenders far too much political gamesmanship and ill will. All too often the process and final selections are the result of overly subjective opinions of player talents made by individuals with separate agendas. Equally troubling is the lack of any objectively grounded assessment tools to assist in this process.

With most selection processes taking place within a dynamic of "half the team roster places viewed as givens and the remaining roster spots culled from a larger pool of ballplayers with very close skill levels," it is imperative that the determinations regarding this "second group" be carefully facilitated and driven by well-grounded analyses.

To this end, this assessment tool, with its seven assessment areas – the five standard tools generally accepted in the evaluation of all baseball players plus two tools related to learning and commitment to skill development by young players – has been developed to help coaches and league officials bring greater objectivity and fairness to this important process.

Before considering the concepts revealed here, it is essential to note that, while everyone should commit themselves to keeping youth baseball within its proper perspective as simply an avenue for learning and growing as young boys and girls, these decisions are very important to the young people entrusted to us. It's not the World Series … but it is the most important games they will play in their lives at this time!

 ## The Assessment Tool Components

This assessment tool builds its objective, numerical rating system around seven (7) core evaluation components, with each using a 1-6 point evaluation scale. Each of these evaluation scales includes narrative-based standards that allow for evaluators to select a specific place on the scale for each player assessed.

The assessment tool kit includes the evaluation scales, the rating sheets (for evaluators and individual players), the ballplayer feedback form, as well as directions for their effective usage found below.

Effective Utilization of the Tool

To best garner results of meaningful value, it is strongly recommended that a minimum of nine (9) evaluators be engaged in the rating process, with one being designated as the lead evaluator for the team by the league. That way, the highest and lowest scores may be discarded to protect against wide variations from the norm (most often the result of evaluators' lack of knowledge of certain ballplayers and/or the unfortunate dishonesty displayed by some in these roles).

Each of the evaluators, based on their personal knowledge of the players being considered for the travel/all-star team (and their participation in whatever formal tryout system is used), selects the appropriate numerical rating for the players in each of the seven categories and records the scores across the *Evaluator's Rating Sheet* accordingly. In so doing, they should carefully read all narrative statements for the respective numerical levels assigned, and strive to best define individual player talents within these parameters. While it is clearly impossible to eliminate all levels of subjectivity (especially when numerical assignments are at issue), the six-tier scales used within each of the seven categories should easily provide for proper individual evaluator judgments.

Following the completion of the evaluations by each person participating in the ratings function, the individual ratings sheets are then collected by the lead evaluator and recorded on each *Player's Rating Sheet*.

The player's rating sheets, which now include individual ratings for each category from up to nine evaluators, are tallied and recorded as average scores (minus the polar extremes) carried out to two decimal points. The final scores for each player under consideration are then listed in ranked order from highest to lowest.

Effective Analysis and Usage of Results

All final scores from the assessment process are then used to ultimately select the top ranked players to fill the travel/all-star team roster. Given the highly technical and often specialized nature of baseball, it is recommended that the final 2-3 roster slots on the team be filled by the head coach, consistent with his/her overall philosophy and the specific, strategic needs of the team. It is further recommended that the officials who establish policy for the league in question set the parameters for how many selections will be left to the head coach prior to the initiation of the ratings process.

Following the selection of ballplayers to fill roster slots on the travel/all-star teams, each player who participates in the team tryout process then receives their personal *BAT Feedback Form* to help them – and their coaches – structure their continuing skill development program. These forms have been developed to provide individual average scores, as calculated by the team of evaluators, within each of the seven areas of assessment, and are designed to communicate to all players in their respective age groups both their own personal scores as well as the average scores of their peers.

Credits

This Assessment Tool was developed and designed by Marv LeRoy, a former Division I baseball player at Siena College, and longtime youth baseball coach and skill development advisor in the Clifton Park (NY) Baseball League. Mr. LeRoy has taught a number of college-level courses on the sociology of sports and youth leagues, and has been a regular presenter on these topics across New York's Capital Region.

Special thanks to Ed Dempsey, Tom Huerter, Mike Lawson, Mike McCoy, Dan McGuire, Pat Morrissey, John Novenche, Andy Pedone, and Paul Ruddy for their individual and collective review and critique of this assessment tool. All are terrific baseball minds, successful coaches, and true believers that our national pastime is so much more than just a game. Thanks also to the members of the board of directors of the CPBL for their continuing interest in improving the selection process of these teams. Everyone offered thoughtful and pertinent suggestions for improvements overall, and were especially helpful with the ultimate expansion of the rating scales to provide for expanded ranges of scores of the players and the addition of a player feedback component.

Special thanks also to my son, Michael, for his creative input with the cover design, and to my colleagues at Hudson Valley Community College, Mary Beth Mullen and Sandi Eyerman, for their invaluable assistance with graphic design and document layout for electronic transmission. I'm sure all would agree that they have met our goals of creating an attractive piece, while ensuring that the forms contained therein are easily reproduced for their intended purposes.

Ballplayer Assessment Tool for Youth Baseball
Evaluation Scales for Targeted Assessment Areas

I. Hitting for Average

One of 5 basic tools of competency generally accepted in evaluating baseball players.
Hitting for average is viewed a bit differently at the youth level in that more than 50% of balls
put in play result in the batter reaching base … making it critical that solid contact is achieved.

1   Struggles with basic skills of hitting - seldom makes solid contact in putting ball in play
2   Generally competent at plate - makes solid contact in putting ball in play at least 25% of at bats
3   Average hitter for age group - makes solid contact in putting ball in play at least 40% of at bats
4   Better than average hitter for age group - makes solid contact in putting ball in play at least 60% of at bats
5   Exceptional talent for age group - makes solid contact in putting ball in play at least 80% of at bats
6   Universally viewed as one of the best hitters for average in age group

II. Hitting for Power

One of 5 basic tools of competency generally accepted in evaluating baseball players.
While an important tool at the adult level, hitting for power at the youth level is generally most associated
with physical size of players and less with developed skills related to driving the ball.

1   Will have occasional extra base hit
2   At least 20% of hits go for extra bases
3   At least 40% of hits go for extra bases
4   At least 60% of hits go for extra bases
5   At least 80% of hits go for extra bases
6   Universally viewed as one of the top power hitters in age group

III. Speed & Quickness

One of 5 basic tools of competency generally accepted in evaluating baseball players.
The qualities of speed and quickness are generally the most determining factor of team success and excellence at this level of play.

1   Generally perceived as station-to-station player
2   Will occasionally advance bases on passed balls / limited range at positions on defense
3   Average speed for player of age group / regularly steals bases and gets to balls in field
4   Better than average speed / generally has green light to steal on own and covers positions with ease
5   Very disruptive on bases / Exceptional defensive prowess
6   Universally viewed as one of swiftest players in age group

IV. Arm Strength & Throwing Accuracy

One of 5 basic tools of competency generally accepted in evaluating baseball players.
Easily the most significant skill level for young players, and the easiest to develop. The best players are regularly playing catch and always throwing to targets.

1   Struggles to make throws in all game situations
2   Adequately makes throws, but not always in timely way
3   Average arm for player in age group - can be counted on to most often make plays in infield
4   Better than average arm for age group - can be counted on to most often make plays in outfield
5   Much better than average skills / can pitch successfully for age group
6   Always makes solid throws and often throws out runners trying to advance extra bases / one of best pitchers in age group

V. Fielding Competency

One of 5 basic tools of competency generally accepted in evaluating baseball players.
Regardless of coaching philosophy - whether playing ballplayers at a few positions or many positions - development of skills and building confidence in the field is critical to success at the youth level. With very few exceptions, teams that make plays win games.

1   Struggles to make basic plays at all positions assigned
2   Makes routine plays at a single position
3   Makes routine plays at multiple positions
4   Average player in field for age group - can play 1-2 positions with confidence / nice range at positions
5   Plays most all positions assigned with confidence / better than average range
6   Exceptional defensive talents - competent at numerous positions / seemingly always make the play

VI. General Baseball Instincts

Given the complexity of the game, young baseball players benefit greatly from watching games and learning from game situations as they develop their own general instincts.

1   Cannot make plays without constant coaching reminders
2   Can make some plays with regular prompting
3   Average understanding of game for player in age group - requires some prompting
4   Better than average - requires little or no prompting
5   Solid understanding of game / can be counted on to make good decisions without prompting
6   Clearly knows all aspects of game and fully understands roles and responsibilities

VII. Coachability

During this critical developmental phase of a young ballplayer's life, it is imperative that he conduct himself in a mature manner and take direction from coaches toward continuous improvement of skills.

1   Immature for age / constant challenge for coaches
2   Somewhat immature for age / occasional challenge
3   Attentive and committed, though often struggles to carry out directions
4   Average player for age group - generally takes direction well
5   Mature player / listens, hears, and learns from coaching direction
6   Very mature player / quick study / a true student of the game

Ballplayer Assessment Tool for Youth Baseball
Rating Sheet for Players Under Consideration

Team: _____   **Date:** _____

Evaluator Name: _____

Players Names		I. Hit /Ave		II. Hit/Pow		III. Speed		IV. Arm		V. Field		VI. Instinct		VII. Coach		TOTAL

Ballplayer Assessment Tool for Youth Baseball
Rating Sheet for Each Player Under Consideration

Team: _____   **Date:** _____

Ballplayer Name: _____

Evaluater Name		I. Hit /Ave		II. Hit/Pow		III. Speed		IV. Arm		V. Field		VI. Instinct		VII. Coach		TOTAL
Average Scores																

Ballplayer Assessment Tool for Youth Baseball
Player Feedback Form

Team: _____   **Date:** _____

Ballplayer Name: _____

The scores below reflect the Ballplayer Assessment Tool individual scores within each of seven evaluation areas for the player named above, as well as the average scores for his/her peers involved in the assessment/tryout process. Each assessment category score is based on a scale of 1 - 6 (6 being the highest score), with a possible maximum score of 42. This information is provided as a means of conveying to the ballplayer and his/her coaches how the individual player compares to his/her peers, and areas of focus in skill development programs.

Assessment Category		Personal Average Scores		Average Scores of Peers	
Hit for Average					
Hit for Power					
Speed & Quickness					
Arm Strength & Accuracy					
Fielding Competency					
General Baseball Instincts					
Coachability					
TOTAL SCORE					