



Be Inspired A Baseball League for All Inclusion at its Finest

October 3rd, 2016

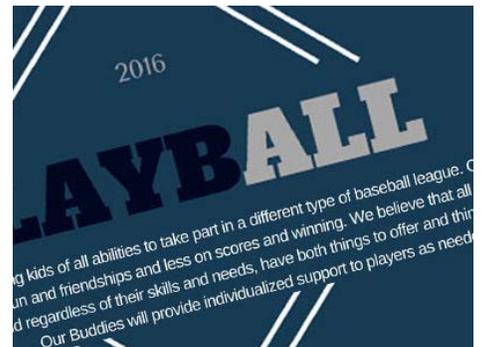
This #WeBelongWR post comes from the [Extend-A-Family blog](#) and is written by Kim Sproul. It looks at the ways a local baseball club is building inclusion into their programs.

“When I hear the words “inclusive [insert group]” I typically expect a group designed *specifically* for individuals with some sort of disability. Separate. Apart from peers who don’t have a disability.

How ironic is that?

However, recently I re-connected with someone from a past job and she shared an opportunity that brings the ‘inclusion’ back into the word inclusive. But lo and behold, it isn’t just inclusive of people with a disability. This league is inclusive of those youth who have not had experience with baseball previously, and now at, say age 10, find themselves with no place among their peers who have been playing since they were 5! I think about the [softball Olympian, Lauren](#), who didn’t even start to [play the sport until she was 11 year old](#)! She and her peers played everything and anything, picking up sports on a casual basis. She may be a natural athlete and that may not be my particular experience, however I am envious that there was a space left for an 11-year-old girl to try out a new sport. I don’t think that is necessarily always the case.

I often think of three examples in sport that depict ways of organizing and planning for the different levels of proficiency. There is the swim lesson model: youngsters are presumed to start when they are small. Levels are attached to ages, in addition to skill level. What happens when you are a 40-year-old non-swimmer with almost no experience? Private lessons. Of the swim classes I have seen, seeing an adult learning alongside a youngest has been no existent. Okay, another model. I call this the beginner/intermediate/advanced model: folks are grouped based on skill level. You begin in beginner and then proceed through the other levels.



Ages will range. The term ‘beginner’ defines you as someone who has never played/participated before. A challenge arises when you are definitely not a beginner in experience, but you are a beginner in skill level. What do you call someone who has been playing basketball for years and “fits” in best in beginner? What if there is zero interest and/or ability to progress? Then there is a final model, that of karate: again, there is progression, but with clearly defined skills that are requisite to advance. Each level has a multitude of ages of people. Each level is an achievement in and of itself, thus there is a journey in each belt. There is an expectation that there will be time spent in each level and that mastery occurs in each level, and not just upon reaching the completion of “black belt”. In this model, it is more about the steps along the way than your relative progress towards some final destination.

We hold a very linear idea about sport – start when you are young, and progress at very ‘typical’ and appropriate rates. It is expected that your skill level will match a chronological age and that it all is very ‘natural’.

But what happens when you don’t start young?

My daughter, Clara, at almost 8, has never really picked up a bat before. Where do I take her, that she isn’t seen as a deficit to a team of players who have many years of experience under their belt? How does one recreate in a non-linear way? How does one learn among others who are far more proficient?

2016
PLAYBALL
LEAGUE

WHO
KIDS AGED 6 - 12 YEARS OLD

WHEN
WEDNESDAY NIGHTS IN AUGUST
3, 10, 17, 24, 31 | 6:00 - 7:30 PM

WHERE
PLAYBALL ACADEMY CANADA
10 EXECUTIVE PLACE, KITCHENER

CONTACT
FOR MORE INFO AND REGISTRATION:
CONTACT@PLAYBALLACADEMYCANADA.CA

We're inviting kids of all abilities to take part in a different type of baseball league. One where the focus is on fun and friendships and less on scores and winning. We believe that all kids, young and old, and regardless of their skills and needs, have both things to offer and things to learn. Our Buddies will provide individualized support to players as needed.

Cost: \$75 per player
Includes five weeks of instruction and play,
uniform, and all equipment
Discounts for siblings available

want to help out?
**BECOME
A BUDDY!**

This is where [Playball Academy Canada, in Kitchener](http://playballacademycanada.ca), comes in.

They envisioned what it means to play baseball and have plenty of fun doing it! Designed for youths aged 6-12, this league is a great place for the new player, as well as the more experienced player, who are interested in having fun and making friends. If a player uses some mobility device that would typically exclude them from their local “house league” team, this is a place for them to belong. In so many instances, we are missing out on people who are passionate about playing sport. It may have to look a little different, but is no less part of the experience of belonging to a team and learning a sport together.

I celebrate this shift in models – a shift that sees kids playing sport together regardless of age, ability, and experience. Sports can be for fun. If you don’t happen to catch, bat or run as well as others, that shouldn’t mean you should be excluded from the sport.

I commend these fine folks for reminding us that perhaps we can play sport for the love of it and surround ourselves with a diversity of other people who do, too.”

As printed online: <http://webelongwr.ca/2016/10/03/baseball-league-inclusion-finest/>