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**TEE BALL'S
S'POSED
TO BE
FUN!**





HI EVERYBODY!

My name is Tee Bear® .

I'm just a big, fun-loving bear here to help you and your friends learn more about a really fun game called teeball. I have lots of great tips to help you be a better player and you'll be able to read lots of fun stories about me and my buddies playing the great game of teeball and learning how to be better players.

This is the first story in the Tee Bear® Storybook Series, and it's called...

Tee Ball's 'Sposed To Be FUN!

Alex Maxwell came in the dugout and excitedly ran up to the coach, and said, "Today's the day you promised I get to play second base, right, Coach?"

Coach Freddie, busy with a group of four boys, said, "Ahhhh... sure Alex. Talk to me after the first inning." With that, Alex grabbed his glove and ran into the field to begin warming up for the game.

After a few minutes, the team finished with their warm-ups and Coach Freddie called everyone into the dugout. "All right Wranglers, let's get ready to bat!" All the players ran into the dugout eagerly pushing to see what the batting order was on the clipboard hanging on the fence. Alex had a hard time seeing the lineup sheet through the crowd of players, but when he did, he tried hard not to cry.

"Last again," he mumbled to himself. "I'm batting last again."

"What's wrong, Alex?" Alex's friend Tommy asked, putting an arm around his friend's shoulder.

"Oh, nothing, Tommy, I'm just batting last again," Alex said dejectedly.

Tommy grinned and said, "Hey, don't worry, Alex, TeeBall's 'sposed to be fun!"

Alex tried hard to smile as he thought to himself, "Yeah, easy for you to say, you're batting fifth - AGAIN!" But Tommy was Alex's friend, and he WAS right, 'teeball is 'sposed to be fun,' so arm in arm they went into the dugout to get ready to bat.

The Team Mom, Miss Lisa had everybody get in their proper place on the bench to get ready for their turn at bat. "HmMMM, Alex, looks like you'll be on the end again today, since you're last batter." Alex's face turned red as the four boys Coach Freddie had been working with before the game turned and looked at him. One of them whispered something to the other three and all of them grinned.

Alex sadly took his place at the end of the bench and waited for his turn at bat. Suddenly, he thought,

"At least Coach Freddie said I'll get to play second base today!" He began to smile and cheer for Chad, the first batter, as he stepped up to the plate and took careful aim at the ball on the tee. "C'mon Chad, knock it outta here," Alex yelled as Chad took a mighty cut that sent the ball between two outfielders and rolled to the fence.

"Atta boy Chad," Coach Freddie yelled as Chad ran quickly to first and then second base and came to third as the outfielders had a hard time getting the ball back into the infield. Alex and Tommy were jumping up and down in the dugout yelling at the top of their lungs, "Yayyyyyyyyy, Chad!"

The second batter, Mitchell reached base safely too, scoring Chad from third, and then Coach Freddie's son, Ryan stepped into the batter's box. "All right, Ryan, hit it hard!" Coach Freddie yelled from the third base coach's box. Ryan hit it hard to the shortstop, who saw Mitchell running to second,

and bobbled the ball. Picking up the ball, the shortstop looked and was surprised to see that Ryan had stopped halfway to first and was kicking the dirt!

"RUN, RYAN!" yelled Coach Freddie. The sound of his father's voice surprised Ryan, and he started running for first. By this time, the shortstop had thrown the ball on to first base and Ryan was out. Ryan began the long walk back to the Wranglers' dugout and burst into tears. His dad, Coach Freddie, was yelling, **"RYAN, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS RUN OUT A BASE HIT! YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN SAFE!"**

Ryan was miserable and couldn't help but cry as walked into the dugout. He sat on the bench and buried his face in his hands and sobbed. Alex came over, and put a hand on Ryan's shoulder and said, "Hey, Ryan, it's okay. You'll get a hit next time."

Ryan jerked his arm away from Alex, and mumbled, "Leave me alone!" Surprised and hurt, Alex walked back over to Tommy and sat on the bench. "Gosh,

what'd I say? I was just trying to make him feel better."

Tommy said, "Aw, don't worry Alex. He's just mad because his dad's mad at him. Hey! I gotta get ready to bat!" Tommy then took his place in the on deck circle, and took a few mighty swings with his bat. Jumping up, Alex took his place at the fence and began cheering for Tommy.

Justin, the number four hitter, hit the ball deep to left field to score Mitchell and he came in to score on a wild throw from the outfield.

Tommy tugged on his batting helmet and looked back at his friend Alex in the dugout and winked. He then pounded his bat on the plate and growled at the kid playing pitcher for the other team. Alex giggled. Tommy was always doing funny stuff like that during the game. He said he had seen one of the pros do it, and thought it was cool. After all that, Tommy hit one that bounced high over the pitcher's head so he

reached first base safely. He looked at Alex in the dugout, gave him a big smile and a thumbs up.

It seemed like forever before it was Alex's turn to bat, but finally his chance arrived. He nervously took his place in the on deck circle as the next to last batter; Brock took his turn at the plate. Brock was a big kid that usually hit the ball pretty hard, but had a hard time scoring because he was not a very fast runner. Brock took one swing and hit the ball deep into right field over all of the fielders' heads. Because he was so slow, though, he barely made it to first base.

Alex stepped up to the plate as he heard one of the four boys who were favorites of Coach Freddie yell, "Come on, Last Boy, see if you can get a hit and score - this time!" Alex's face turned red as he blushed, as he heard the other three boys and Ryan laugh. He thought, "It's hard to score when you're always last. You have to really hit it hard to score."

Tommy stood on the bench and yelled, "C'mon Alex! You can do it! Hit it to the fence and score!" Alex turned to look at Tommy, who had his cap turned inside out and backwards on his head - his famous "Rally Cap." He was grinning and giving Alex another big thumbs up. Alex smiled and walked slowly towards home plate.

Coach Freddie, looked at him and called out, "Come on, Alex, we're counting on you to get a hit today!" Alex had never been so nervous!

Alex's palms were sweaty and he kept wiping them on his shirt, thinking, "I don't want the bat to slip today." The umpire looked at Alex and said, "All right Alex, you're the last at bat today. You have to score before they tag you out for your run to count." Alex gulped. He knew the Park's rule. He just hoped he would hit it hard enough to score today.

"Batter up!" the umpire called as Alex stepped up to the tee.

Alex licked his lips as he took a couple of practice swings. One of his swings tipped the ball and it rolled foul. "Strike one," he heard one of the boys say, as the others giggled. The umpire put the ball back on the tee and said, "Okay, Alex, now hit it hard."

Biting his lip, Alex took the bat back slowly, and keeping his eye on the ball, hit the ball as hard as he could.

The ball sliced down the first base line, but went foul.

He had begun running to first, so he came walking back to pick up his bat to hit again. As he bent over to pick up the bat, he heard Coach Freddie say, "C'mon Alex, don't let me down - today." "Oh, great," Alex thought, "just what I needed."

He took his place at the tee again, and got ready to swing. This time, when he hit it, the ball went screaming down the first base line, fair by just inches. The first baseman didn't even have time to react

before the ball was by him. The right fielder was watching a plane fly overhead and didn't even see the ball until one of his teammates yelled, "Tyler! Get the ball!"

Alex was already running as hard as he could, having rounded first (the first base coach waving him on) and headed for second. Up ahead, he could see Brock running as hard as he could too, but he seemed to be barely moving. "Run, Brock, run!" he thought. He heard Coach Freddie scream, "C'mon Brock, pick those feet up and run, boy!"

As he rounded second, he looked up and saw Coach Freddie at third waving Brock home and motioning for him to do the same. By this time, he was almost on Brock's heels and had to slow down so he didn't pass him on the baseline. "Run, Brock, RUN!" Coach Freddie yelled.

Alex looked over his shoulder as he ran and saw that the outfielders had finally stopped fighting over

Alex, face down in the dust, could hear Coach Freddie as he groaned, "Ohhhhh, Alex, can't you even stand on your own feet?"

Then Alex heard Tommy as he stood over him, "Wow! Great hit Alex! You almost made it home, too!" Good old Tommy, always looking at the bright side of things. Slowly Alex got to his feet, and he felt some of the boys on his team patting him on the back as he went to the dugout to get his glove and cap. "Good hit Alex." "Nice job, Alex." "Way to go, Alex"

"Oh well, at least Brock scored and I can play second base this game," thought Alex as he tugged his cap over his blonde hair. He sighed and then turned to go into the field. Then he saw Coach Freddie's son, Ryan standing at second base! Ryan grinned at Alex.

Coach Freddie walked over to Alex and asked, "What happened to you out there, Alex? Can't you

stay on your feet while you're running the bases? You know what you did wrong, don't you? You weren't watching where you were going! A good base runner is always aware of where the other runners and the ball are at all times."

Stunned, Alex could only stammer and reply, "But, Coach Freddie, you said I could play second base today!"

"I did? Well, Ryan's already out there. You go into the outfield. Maybe I'll get you in there later or maybe next game."

Alex couldn't believe his ears! Again! He broke his promise again! Fighting back tears, he turned away.

Dejectedly, he began the long walk out to the outfield. His dad walked alongside the outside of the fence with him and said, "Great hit, A-Man. You really toasted that ball. Your mom and I were sure you were going to score that time."

Alex looked up at his Dad. "I don't really mind the outfield," he said. "I just wish I could learn to play a position in the infield too." "I know it, son," his dad replied, "but Coach Freddie's the coach. We need to respect him as the coach and hope he's doing the right thing for the team."

"C'mon, Alex, hustle out to the field," Coach Freddie called from the dugout. "Remember, a good player hustles on and off the field!"

The rest of the game was a blur for Alex. Each team batted twice and played in the field twice before time ran out. Alex popped out to second base in his second at-bat and played in the outfield again in his second time in the field. He made some nice plays in the field and did the best he could even though his heart wasn't in it.

After the game, Coach Freddie gave his end-of-game speech and awarded Ryan the game ball for the third time this season. "Good game today, boys.

I was really pleased with the way most of you played today. Most of you hit the ball pretty well and played well in the field. Just a little reminder to each of you - hustle is very important and always watch the ball and where you're running. Right, Alex?"

Alex reddened and nodded. He could feel every player on the teams' eyes on him as Coach Freddie went on to remind them of the next practice and game.

Miss Lisa handed him his juice box and snack. "Tough day, huh Alex?" She smiled and rubbed his head.

"Yes ma'am," Alex mumbled.

"Well, that was a great hit," she added, "I don't think anybody else on our team has hit the ball that hard this year. You really smacked that one!"

"You really think so?" Alex's face brightened as he heard Miss Lisa's encouraging words.

"You bet!" Miss Lisa continued. "I think if Brock

had been able to run a little faster, you would have scored easily."

"Oh, Brock was running as fast as he could, Miss Lisa, I just stumbled and fell," he lowered his eyes, "'cause I wasn't watching where I was going... Coach Freddie said."

Just then Brock came over and took a big sweaty hand and wiped the fruit drink from his lips and extended it towards Alex. "Way to hit the ball today, Alex! Boy, if I wasn't so slow, you'd have scored easy. I'm sorry I'm so big and clumsy, you did a great job!"

Alex looked at Brock and grinned - wasn't that just like him? He came over to make ME feel better! "Aw Brock, you were running plenty fast. You really hit the ball hard today, too."

Miss Lisa laughed as the two boys congratulated each other on how well they played. "Whoa!" she said, "if you guys keep that up, you won't be able to get your heads in the car to go home. She rubbed

each boy's head and hustled them away from the bleachers, so the next team's families could take their place to watch the next game.

On the way home Alex and Tommy sat quietly in the back seat listening to Alex's Dad and Mom talking in the front seat. Alex's Dad, motioned to the two boys in the back seat and said, "These guys really played well today, didn't they Mom?"

"They sure did," she said, "they really played for the team today!"

"Right - that's what I thought. Sure they wanted to do well, but they were really interested in how the whole team was playing, and what they could do to make the team better."

Tommy interrupted and asked, "Mr. Maxwell, why do you suppose Coach Freddie makes such a big deal about playing Ryan in the best spots all the time and spends so much time working with just his four or five 'favorite' players?"

"Tommy, I don't know," Mr. Maxwell answered, "I guess he just feels like it's really important to keep those players in certain spots during the game."

"But why, Dad?" Alex blurted out, "we don't even keep score in the teeball games anyway. Teeball is 'sposed to be fun!"

"Yes, Alex, you're right," Mr. Maxwell agreed, "teeball is supposed to be fun. Sometimes adults forget that it is just a game meant for little boys and girls to play and learn to get better. It's not meant for just a few kids on the team, but for everyone. I'm sure if Coach Freddie realized how a lot of the kids felt, he'd do something about it."

Alex's Mom raised an eyebrow and said, "Maybe."

"Yeah, maybe," Tommy laughed and added, "and maybe all he cares about is what certain players do."

Mr. Maxwell nodded and said, "Maybe that's true, Tommy. But all you boys can do is do the best you can every time you play and try to have fun. Perhaps

I can have a one-on-one talk with Coach Freddie and see if he'd be willing to move players around a little and try some different things."

Alex's eyes got wide and he stammered, "A—are you going to yell at Coach Freddie, Dad?"

"Oh no, son - not at all. I just want to make sure he realizes that sometimes it would be a good thing to change things up a little bit, especially in teeball. There will be lots of time to settle in on certain players and positions as you guys get older. Now's the time to focus on learning and fun."

"Say, there's the Dairy Dee-Light," Mrs. Maxwell said. "I sure could use a double scoop of Chocolate Chip ice cream."

"Awesome!" Tommy and Alex said in unison. "Can we have Bubble Gum Cotton Candy Extravaganza with Jelly Worm sprinkles?"

Mr. Maxwell made a face as he pulled into the parking lot. "Sure, guys, but don't blame me if you get a tummy ache!"

A QUICK TEE BEAR QUIZ:

If you want a good indicator of what your young player thinks is okay in coaching and playing a sport, ask them the questions in this Quick Quiz. Read them the questions first, hear their answers and then read the suggested answers below. Tee Bear® thinks that your young players will give answers that are pretty close to the ones we've provided.

Q. Alex was really excited about starting at second base for the Wranglers as our story opens. Apparently Coach Freddie forgot his promise and even batted Alex last again - what should Coach Freddie have done?

A. Coach Freddie should have spoken with Alex one-on-one and made sure Alex understood that the mistake was his (Coach Freddie's) and at least let Alex have played second base the next time the Wranglers were in the field. Coach Freddie should have started Alex at second base the next game and moved the batting order around where another player would bat last. A good way to prevent this problem is to work out a schedule where the coach has it planned when the players play a certain position and the order in which they bat.

Q. It sounds like Coach Freddie was spending more time with his "favorite" players. Is this a good idea?

A. Some players will always be more skilled than others. Coaches should always try hard to not create the impression among the players that cer-

tain players are their “favorites.” If possible, a head coach should divide the players among other coaches and parent helpers to make sure that every player gets the help he or she needs. It may even be necessary for the head coach to spend a little extra time with a player that needs a little more help to give that player a confidence “boost.”

Q. Coach Freddie yelled at his son Ryan, but it's okay because Ryan is his son. True or False?

A. **False!** Coaches should never yell at any player, even their own son in a negative way. It is okay to call out praise or constructive instruction across the field, but players should never be criticized in front of everyone.

Q. Coach Freddie criticized Alex when he fell, and then again when he gave his end-of-the-game speech. What are some things he could have done that would have been better choices?

- A. There are many answers to this question that would be “right.” Here are a few:
1. He should have come immediately to Alex and congratulated him on his great hit.
 2. He should have praised both Alex and Brock for hustling so well on the play.
 3. After the game, during his end-of-game speech, as Coach Freddie is making his positive review of the game, he could have made special mention of Alex and Brock on a great play.
 4. Perhaps he could have given Alex the game ball

instead of someone that had already received several.

Q. Brock came over to congratulate Alex on a great hit and apologized for being so slow. Was he being a good team mate and displaying good sportsmanship or not?

A. Brock was being a good team mate and displaying great sportsmanship to his friend Alex. While he didn't need to apologize, it was really nice for him to try and cheer Alex up. Miss Lisa, the Team Mom was obviously sensitive to the way Alex was feeling and was doing her best to cheer him up too.

Q. The Maxwells and Tommy were discussing the game on the way home. Is this a good idea?

A. As long as the conversation focuses on the positives and the parents use the opportunity to build up rather than tear down, it is a good idea. Notice Alex's Dad tried really hard to explain Coach Freddie's possible motives and did not say negative things about Coach Freddie in front of the boys.

Q. Should Mr. Maxwell get into a fight with Coach Freddie or argue with him about the game?

A. No. As Mr. Maxwell said, he was going to meet with Coach Freddie privately and discuss the situation with him calmly. Usually, this will solve the problem. Even if it doesn't solve the problem, the Maxwells should continue to stress that Alex should always do his best for the team and not worry about the coaching. As long as Alex works hard, continues to improve, has a good attitude

and has fun playing, everything will be all right. Perhaps Mr. Maxwell can volunteer to coach next year, and work hard to correct the problems.

Above all... Remember...



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