



## **Journey Starts with Lots of Smiles at T-Ball**

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As a baseball fan living in this part of Wisconsin, chances are we cheer for the Milwaukee Brewers and their minor league affiliate Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. It's possible we could be part of the crowd who adopted the Chicago Cubs when the Braves left for Atlanta and the Brewers hadn't arrived yet from Seattle.

Regardless, if you are looking for a chance to catch a peak at all the rookies and have nothing but fun doing it, put the pros aside and check out your local T-Ball league.

There's nothing better for unadulterated excitement than watching youngsters begin their baseball journey.

Opening night for T-Ball usually consists of stations which include some form of throwing, catching, running and hitting. Adult volunteers scribble numbers on charts to evaluate youngsters, so balanced teams can be formed. Constant rotating gets everyone graded.

Is there anything more fun than watching a beginner with a tongue sticking out of the corner of his or her mouth trying to remember with which foot to lead when making a throw?

As the toss is completed, you hear, "Good job Billy," and the tongue goes back in the mouth and the best part reappears – the smile.

"Did I do good Dad?"

"You sure did son."

Confidently pounding his glove, the little boy moves on with sheer delight.

The second night of T-Ball is when the brightly-colored shirts are dispersed and everyone finds out who's on what team. There might be some initial disappointment because certain friends aren't on the same team, but that quickly goes away as the pride of their new "uniform" and team quickly takes over.

What makes T-Ball so popular that every president since Ronald Reagan has hosted a game on the South Lawn of the White House?

T-Ball is a great way to introduce baseball to our kids and teach them basic skills and have fun. There is no pressure and everyone gets along.

It's easy to coach a T-Ball team on which more attention should be dedicated to teaching kids to drop the bat instead of throwing it, running to first base instead of third after a clean hit, or rotating boys and girls defensively so everyone gets a chance to play their favorite position.

When you make the game fun, kids will look up to you for a long time.

It is an opportune time for parents to develop proper sportsmanship habits right from the beginning. In fact, there's only a couple you really need to perfect – smiling and giving the thumbs-up signal.

As a T-Ball game concludes, the kids happily look for a treat at the concession stand, they can't wait for next week, and the only thing that should be hurting is your cheeks after so much pleasure.

It's not hard to find joy in Muddville. All it takes is a plastic tee and some horsehide.