

1980 Pony Royals – A Summer of Fun

By Chris Alaniz

My name is Chris and I have coached several different sports. I've coached Pony League baseball, Pop Warner football, Little League baseball and Girls softball (which won the city championship). I have known Monique, the creator of BestTEAMMOM, for several years and she didn't know I had coached. I guess she assumed since my son is going on 5 years old that I had no opportunity. I did have nephews and nieces and friends who asked me to coach.

The first time I was asked to coach was for my nephew in 1980. He had signed up for Pony League baseball for 13-14 year olds. I was watching TV one evening and my nephew popped his head around the corner and asked if I would coach his baseball team. I took it more of him messing around because I myself was only 18 years old. The next thing I know he is on the phone with the League President telling him that he had found a coach for his team. Now I'm in, and the next thing I know we were sitting in the president's office picking up paperwork and equipment.

I played football, baseball and basketball in high school and knew the fundamentals. My inexperience at being a coach led me to not only be the coach, but the driver and Team Mom as well. I didn't meet many of the player's parents and didn't get much help from them. I did get help from my friends occasionally.

Entering the league so late I didn't get a chance to attend tryouts or draft my team. So the first thing I had to do was to familiarize myself with my players and find out what positions they wanted to play.

One day we had a game with a league from a different city that our league had merged with. We met at the park and at game time the other team didn't have enough players to play so the game was canceled. As we began to pack up and leave 7 of my players told me that they didn't have a ride home. So I packed all 8 of them (including my nephew) and myself into my '65 Mustang and drove them two cities over to our city. It was tight, but the guys had fun, so did I. You can't do that nowadays.

We finished the season one game out of first, finishing tied with the Cubs and behind the Padres. Funny thing was, it seemed like we could never beat the Padres, but we always beat the Cubs and everyone beat the Reds. I found out at the coaches meeting to select All-Stars that the Cubs always beat the Padres. I learned that doing a little scouting never hurt.

Each team selected four players onto the All-Star game. I decided to go watch in support of my players. I got there a couple of innings into the game and our league was getting pummeled. I was sitting there and as the game was going on, one of the player's mother was just yelling at the coach, telling him he didn't know what he was doing (putting it nicely). I felt sorry for the coach as she was ruthless. The next thing I know she turns to me and thanked me for being her son's coach. She went on to tell me that her son had been seriously ill the year prior and they didn't know if he was going to make it. She went on and told me how much her son enjoyed being on our team and the positive encouragement I had given him. All the players signed a baseball and presented it to me at our last game. To me, that season was priceless.