

BASEBALL

DIESEL's unique approach fuels immediate success

Travel team stresses unity, stays together through high school

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The Journal News

After coaching various Little League and youth travel baseball teams throughout Rockland, coaches Pat Trozzo and Brian Aviles vowed that if they ever got a chance to run their own team, they would do several things differently.

Their core vision was to assemble a team that draws from all over Rockland. They wanted to build a hand-picked 15-and-under team and keep the players together throughout their formative high school years.

Finally this summer, they got their wish, translating their vision into the creation of a new 15U travel baseball team named DIESEL.

The word "DIESEL" is also an acronym that stands for "Dedication, Integrity, Excellence, Sacrifice, Esteem and Loyalty."

"If this team was going to spend eight months with each other for the next four years, there was no time for any nonsense," said DIESEL manger Aviles, a former pitcher in the Atlanta Braves' organization. "When Pat and I assembled a list of names, we would ask first: What's his attitude like?"

One of the things they most disliked was when travel teams would have a tryout and pick players without any re-

gard to how they previously worked with each other.

"Most teams have a tryout process, but we didn't want to do that," said Trozzo, a Blauvelt resident. "Also, most AAU travel teams have expanded rosters to make up for those with other conflicts. We chose to have a smaller team with only 15 kids to stress teaching and chemistry."

Players on the DIESEL team are required to commit to baseball full-time during the summer. They played many of their games on weekday mornings and afternoons.

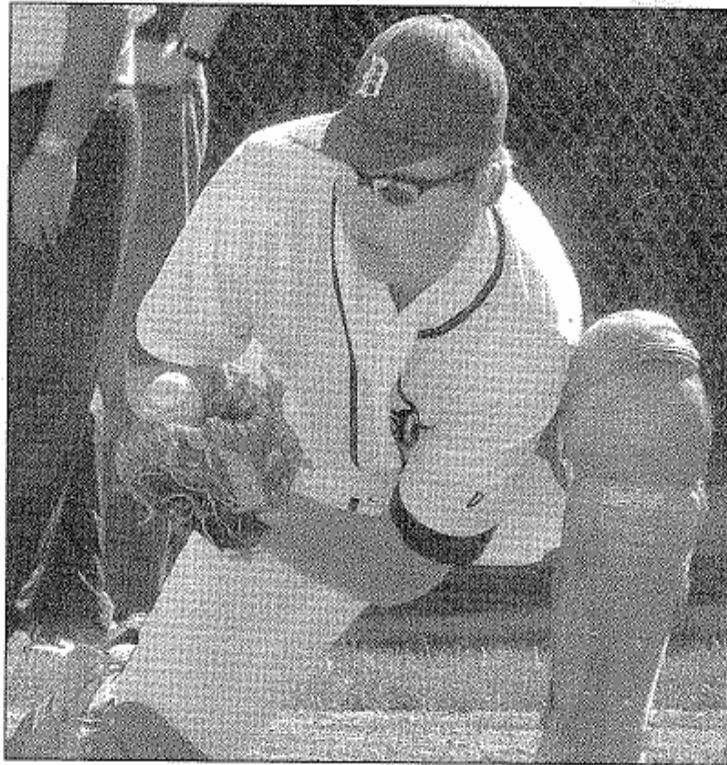
"At first, I didn't know if I could stay with one team for four years," DIESEL catcher/shortstop Alex Lorenc said. "Everyone gets a fair share of playing time and, in my opinion, it's been a lot better than other teams I've been on."

One of the unique aspects of the DIESEL formula that Aviles and Trozzo put together is they didn't want to name any team captains, to keep everyone on the same level.

"We can name anyone on this team a captain and we could look up to that person," said Brian's son, Robbie Aviles, who is a pitcher and shortstop. "We don't care about that; we just care about wins and losses."

The results this season have been superb. Most recently, DIESEL won the 16-and-under East Coast Nationals tournament at Baseball Heaven in Yaphank.

"I think the coaches picked the perfect players. No one thinks they are better than anyone else," said Lorenc, a Nanuet resident. "I think we reached



Kathy Gardner/The Journal News file photo
DIESEL catcher Christian Graven practices with the Diesel baseball team in Suffern. On DIESEL, every player gets a fair amount of playing time.

and maybe exceeded our expectations by winning tournaments above our age group."

DIESEL third baseman Michael Zeman says everyone's dedication to the newly founded baseball team has paid off.

"I played with a lot of these same kids from Little League; we're like a family, and there are no favorites," Zeman said. "On other teams in the past, I struggled. On this team, if you do something bad, someone else is going to pick you up."