



THE 'MMB WAY' COACHING MANUAL

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Welcome

Thank you for your support of Mathewson McCarthy Baseball. (MMB) At MMB, we recognize the importance of the history of the game of baseball and understand that there are tried and true methods, tactics, skill building drills and strategies that have been developed prior to our league's inception in 1957. The first iteration of the league was known as 'The Joe McCarthy Little League' after the Hall of Fame Great – "Mars" C. Joe McCarthy. MMB is chartered annually with the Babe Ruth League; a national organization which provides our league and its participants with access to a variety of resources to support game education and training for players, coaches and umpires. Our league administration is also supported as Babe Ruth League rules and regulations are the foundation for both MMB Local/House League Teams as well as Tournament Teams. Accordingly, 'The MMB Way' is part an extension of Babe Ruth League (www.baberuthleague.org) principles and instruction and the other part experiences of MMB volunteers over the years. We appreciate all contributions that have been made to create this document that will be kept evergreen as the years go by.

[According to Wikipedia](#), the earliest known mention of [baseball](#) in the U.S was a 1791 [Pittsfield, Massachusetts](#), ordinance banning the playing of the game within 80 yards (73 m) of the town meeting house.^[1] In 1903, the British sportswriter Henry Chadwick published an article speculating that baseball derived from a British game called [rounders](#), which Chadwick had played as a boy in England. But baseball executive Albert Spalding disagreed. Baseball, said Spalding, was fundamentally an American sport and began on American soil. To settle the matter, the two men appointed a commission, headed by Abraham Mills, the fourth president of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs. The commission, which also included six other sports executives, labored for three years, after which it declared that [Abner Doubleday](#) invented the national pastime. This would have been a surprise to Doubleday. The late Civil War hero "never knew that he had invented baseball". [But] 15 years [after his death], he was anointed as the father of the game", writes baseball historian John Thorn. The [myth about Doubleday inventing the game of baseball](#) actually came from a [Colorado](#) mining engineer.^{[2][3][4][5]} Another early reference reports that *base ball* was regularly played on Saturdays in 1823 on the outskirts of New York City in an area that today is [Greenwich Village](#).^[6]

In 1828, an article published in a Hagerstown, Maryland, newspaper briefly describes a young girl who's drawn away from her daily chores to play a familiar game with her friends. In "A Village Sketch", author Miss Mitford wrote: *"Then comes a sun-burnt gipsy of six, beginning to grow tall and thin and to find the cares of the world gathering about her; with a pitcher in one hand, a mop in the other, an old straw bonnet of ambiguous shape, half hiding her tangled hair; a tattered stuff petticoat once green, hanging below an equally tattered cotton frock, once purple; her longing eyes fixed on a game of baseball at the corner of the green till she reaches the cottage door, flings down the mop and pitcher and darts off to her companions quite regardless of the storm of scolding with which the mother follows her runaway steps."*^[7]

The first team to play baseball under modern rules were the [New York Knickerbockers](#). The club was founded on September 23, 1845, as a social club for the upper middle classes of New York City, and was strictly [amateur](#) until it disbanded. The club members, which included its president [Doc Adams](#) and [Alexander Cartwright](#), formulated the *Knickerbocker Rules*, which in

large part dealt with organizational matters but which also laid out rules for playing the game.^[18] One of the significant rules prohibited *soaking* or *plugging* the runner; under older rules, a fielder could put a runner out by hitting the runner with the thrown ball, similarly to the common schoolyard game of [kickball](#). The Knickerbocker Rules required fielders to tag or force the runner, as is done today, and avoided a lot of the arguments and fistfights that resulted from the earlier practice.

Writing the rules did not help the Knickerbockers in the first known competitive game between two clubs under the new rules, played at [Elysian Fields](#) in [Hoboken, New Jersey](#) on June 19, 1846. The self-styled "New York Nine" humbled the Knickerbockers by a score of 23 to 1. Nevertheless, the Knickerbocker Rules were rapidly adopted by teams in the New York area and their version of baseball became known as the "New York Game" (as opposed to the "Massachusetts Game", played by clubs in the Boston area).

As late as 1855, the New York press was still devoting more space to coverage of [cricket](#) than to baseball.^[19] In 1857, sixteen New York area clubs, including the Knickerbockers, formed the [National Association of Base Ball Players](#) (NABBP). The NABBP was the first organization to govern the sport and to establish a championship. Aided by the [Civil War](#), membership grew to almost 100 clubs by 1865 and to over 400 by 1867, including clubs from as far away as [California](#). During the Civil War, soldiers from different parts of the United States played baseball together, leading to a more unified national version of the sport. Beginning in 1869, the NABBP permitted [professional](#) play, addressing a growing practice that had not been permitted under its rules to that point. The first and most prominent professional club of the NABBP era was the [Cincinnati Red Stockings](#) in Ohio, which lasted only two years. Businessman [Ivers Whitney Adams](#) then courted manager Harry Wright and founded the "Boston Red Stockings" and the [Boston Base Ball Club](#) on January 20, 1871.

In 1858, in the [Corona](#) neighborhood of [Queens](#) (now part of [New York City](#)), at the Fashion Race Course, the first games of baseball to charge admission took place. The games, which took place between the all stars of [Brooklyn](#), including players from the [Brooklyn Atlantics](#), [Excelsior of Brooklyn](#), Putnams and [Eckford of Brooklyn](#), and the All Stars of New York ([Manhattan](#)), including players from the [New York Knickerbockers](#), Gothams (predecessors of the [San Francisco Giants](#)), Eagles and Empire, are commonly believed to be the first all-star baseball^{[10][11]} games.

Fast forward to the modern day as Major League Baseball in the United States now has 30 teams across two leagues with a total of six divisions. (Source: [www.mlb.com](#))

AMERICAN LEAGUE

AL East



Baltimore

AL Central



Chi White Sox

AL West



Houston

Boston



Boston

NY Yankees



NY Yankees

Tampa Bay



Tampa Bay

Toronto



Toronto

NATIONAL LEAGUE

NL East



Atlanta

NL Central



Chi Cubs

NL West



Arizona



Miami



Cincinnati



Colorado



Milwaukee



LA Dodgers



Pittsburgh



San Diego



St. Louis



San Francisco

Commitment

By accepting this position you have made a great commitment to help develop many young children in the art of baseball. It is important for you to understand that these children will count on you to direct them in many areas of their lives in the months to come. Please take this commitment seriously. Above all safety must be the primary thought in everything you do as a coach. From the beginning of practice to the last game you are responsible for these children. Please make sure that there is supervision and direction in every practice game and event that you and your team participate in.

Four main reasons kids play baseball

Fun

Baseball is a game; games are played to have fun. During all practices games and events try to encourage kids to enjoy themselves keeping busy working in small groups and directing them with high enthusiasm will help them have a good experience throughout their baseball season.

Exercise

Baseball is a game; games are played to have fun. During all practices, games and events try to encourage kids to enjoy themselves, keeping busy working in small groups and directing them with high enthusiasm will help them have a good experience throughout their baseball season.

Learn

A major part of working with young people is to educate. Teach them as much as possible in the short time you have with them. This will most likely be their only chance to learn the fundamentals of baseball. It is up to you to help them have a chance to improve their skills. Remember, if they cannot do something it is very hard to have much fun at it.

Compete

It is OK to try to win. In fact that's why we keep score. Learning how to compete is the secret. Winning graciously, and handling defeat with class is the difference that separates the champions from the rest. There is an old saying on the wall at Wimbledon which sums up what sport is really about. Facing victory and defeat and treating these two impostors the same.

The real key to success in having fun, learning, competing and exercising is to *practice*. If possible try to practice three times a week before the season starts, and at least once a week during the season. Players that are learning the game will get more from playing all the positions in practice than they will ever get out of playing the game itself. Remember COMMITMENT.

Objectives of Youth Sports

Working in youth sports can be a very rewarding experience. It is man's nature to share and give to others the things he has learned. We are all teachers in everyday life, whether it is as a parent continuously pushing and guiding our children toward success and away from harm, or as a business person directing others in profitable efforts. Our teaching and sharing is essential to our children, ourselves, our friends, our church and our community. Your desire to direct a group of young baseball or softball players puts you in a "teaching" category. Your greatest and longest lasting thrills will come as you see the positive role you have played in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of young athletes. This feeling is called THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS. The objectives of the adult in youth sports, whether as a coach, parent, or league official, must be to develop young people:

- PHYSICALLY by improving their physical condition and health habits, by learning to execute skills and avoid injuries
- MENTALLY by helping them learn to discipline their minds which control their bodies
- EMOTIONALLY by helping them learn to control themselves in various situations while developing a strong self-image and positive self-esteem
- SPIRITUALLY by helping them listen to and hear the TRUTHS about our creation and putting its laws into practice

By focusing your efforts on DEVELOPING the player in a FUN atmosphere, the end result is always A WIN, regardless of the scoreboard.

Player Development Schedule

Overview

Every age group starting at 5 years of age (Rookie 1) has stages of development that should be taught and monitored. These stages must progress from one division to the next. All managers must cover the new skills while maintaining those of the previous divisions. We are asking that all managers follow these stages and criteria.

Rookie 1 (Age 5)

- A. Throwing
 - 1. Proper grip
 - 2. Proper arm motion
- B. Fielding
 - 1. How to field a ground ball
 - 2. How to catch a thrown or hit ball
- C. Batting off the tee
 - 1. Proper grip on bat
 - 2. Proper stance
 - 3. Proper swing
- D. Base running
 - 1. Over run first base
 - 2. Do not over run 2nd and 3rd base
 - 3. Step on each bag and home plate
 - 4. Avoid collision with defensive player
 - 5. Remain in base path
- E. Basic defense
 - 1. Introduction to each defensive position
 - 2. Throw ball to a base to which a runner is advancing
 - 3. Tag runner for an out
 - 4. Do not interfere with a runner
- F. Introduction to the fundamental rules of the game
 - 1. Batting in order
 - 2. Batter and base runners are subject to being put out
- G. Teach good sportsmanship
 - 1. Proper behavior in the dugout and on the field
 - 2. No heckling or teasing teammates or opponents
- H. Teach safety
 - 1. Swinging bats around others
 - 2. Throwing the baseball around others
 - 3. Proper equipment (helmets, cups, etc.)

Rookie 2 (Age 6)

Reinforce all skills taught at Rookie 1 Division and add:

- A. Fielding
 - 1. How to catch a fly ball
- B. Batting
 - 1. Hitting a pitched ball
- C. Basic Defense
 - 1. Introduction to each defensive position, including catcher
 - 2. Proper positioning for defense

Single “A” Division (Age 7) – Fold into “AA” Division when there is no “A”

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Fielding
 - 1. Backing up defensive plays
 - 2. Emphasis on making defensive play
- B. Base running
 - 1. Tagging up on a fly ball
 - 2. Sliding

Double “AA” Division (Age 8)

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Base running
 - 1. When to run on ground balls
 - 2. When to run on pop-ups
- B. Basic Defense
 - 1. When to use a cut-off
 - 2. Where to throw a cut-off
- C. Pitching
 - 1. Teach full windup
 - 2. Proper mechanics
- D. Catching
 - 1. Proper stance
 - 2. Proper hand positioning
 - 3. Proper use of equipment

Triple “AAA” Division (Age 9) – fold into “M60” when there is no “AAA” division

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Fielding
 - 1. Outfield participation in defensive plays
 - 2. Rundowns
 - 3. Covering bunts
 - 4. Defending an attempt to steal

Major 60

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Basic Defense
 - 1. Run downs
 - 2. Back-ups
 - 3. Bunt coverage
- B. Stealing bases
 - 1. Proper technique and positioning
 - 2. Stealing home
 - 3. Delayed steals
- C. Sliding
 - 1. Types of slides
 - 2. Proper technique and positioning
 - 3. Proper time to slide

Major 70

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Base running
 - 1. Hit and Run
 - 2. Play calling
 - 3. Squeeze Play
 - 4. Stealing (M70 rule change)
- B. Rules of game
 - 1. Dropped third strike
 - 2. Adjustment to 70 ft. diamond
- C. Pitching
 - 1. Pitch out
 - 2. Pitching from the stretch

Seniors

Reinforce all skills taught in previous divisions and add:

- A. Base running
 - 1. Major emphasis on base running
- B. Rules of the game
 - 1. Full Baseball Rules
 - 2. Adjustment to 90 ft. diamond
- C. Pitching
 - 1. Pick-off moves
 - 2. Balk
 - 3. Change up
 - 4. Cut fast ball
 - 5. Split finger

Dealing with Parents

Coaching a Youth League team is exciting and rewarding. But from time to time, you may experience difficulty with parents. Some may want their children to play more or they might question some of your judgments as a coach. This is normal, so don't feel that you're alone if this happens.

Here are a few thoughts to remember when dealing with parents:

- Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
- Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you
- No coach can please everyone. Don't try.
- Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not the parents.
- Make certain all parents know your ground rules. Have rules, regulations, your philosophy, practice dates and times, etc. printed on a sheet of paper you can pass out to all parents. Have a parent meeting before the season begins to discuss your operating procedures if necessary.
- Resist unfair pressure. You are the coach and it's your responsibility to make the final decisions.
- Most important, be fair. If you treat all players equally you will gain respect.
- Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. If you do change something, make sure the parents are informed as soon as possible.
- Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Don't be defensive. Don't argue with a parent. Listen to their viewpoint, and thank them for it.
- Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time.
- Ask parents not to criticize their children during a practice or game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents. Explain that you must be under complete control of your team when they are on your "turf".
- Don't blame the players for their parents' actions, if negative. Try to maintain a fair attitude.
- Parents must accept the fact that umpires, coaches and other league officials are volunteers and should not be subjected to criticism during ball games.

Always remember that you will be dealing with all types of children and parents with different backgrounds and ideals? One of your main challenges as a coach is to deal with these differences in a positive manner so the team's season will be an exciting and enjoyable experience for all.

More on the Parents

- A. Know the goals of the league. If you can't live with them, go elsewhere. You might say, "Right! Where?" WORK FOR CHANGE quietly and orderly.
- B. Support the league
 - 1. Volunteer – as opposed to complaining. Example: concessions, practices, fund raising, team parent.
 - 2. See yourself as a member of the team, pulling together with the coach. Agree with the coach in every way that you can. Support the coach's decisions.
 - 3. Determine your child's responsibility to the team (scheduled practices, times, rules) and be consistent. Let the coach know as early as possible if there is a conflict.
 - 4. Volunteer to help the coach rather than grumbling. This is a good opportunity to spend time with your child.
 - 5. Please, please do not "rip" the coach in front of your child. He/she will lose respect for that adult (and perhaps other adults in authority). The situation will get worse and perhaps unbearable. Your child will pass on your feelings to others.
 - 6. Call the coach and thank him/her for something good he/she is doing. Remember the coach is having an impact on your child.
- C. Support your child.
 - 1. Love your child apart from his/her performance. (Are you expecting more than you should?) Your child gets all the pressure to perform that he/she can handle from peers. You are a shelter.
 - 2. Make games a family affair. Picnic or eat out after the game.
 - 3. Discuss games in positive terms. Compliment effort, attitude, attention, incremental improvements.
 - 4. Know what your child wants from participation (this varies from child to child) – FUN, skill improvement, camaraderie, friendship, physical activity, self-image improvement, to impress you.
 - 5. Learn what you can about the game so as to discuss it intelligently with your child. This could be the common ground to improve communication skills between parent and child.
 - 6. Speak highly of your child's teammates and coaches.
 - 7. Participate in activities – fund raisers, barbecues, award dinners, work days, field development, etc.
 - 8. See the game and practices as FUN for your child. Don't be a parent of the percentage of youth who prefer their parents do not show up. You are a primary, consistent source of love and encouragement for your child. He/she gets enough pressure away from home.

Topics for Initial Parent and Player Meeting

Objective

To conduct an open and frank discussion with all team members that outlines your goals, objectives, philosophy, methods, requirements, disciplinary system, etc. This meeting is essential to open the lines of communication with parents and to create a positive air for interaction and support.

Setup

Ideally, this meeting should be conducted prior to your first practice. If that is impossible, it should be the first thing accomplished at the initial practice.

Discussion Topics

- A. Introduce yourself and your staff. Provide brief background and reasons for becoming a coach.
- B. Provide a brief recap of your Coaching Philosophy.
 - 1. Being a teacher first and coach second. Purpose of youth sports is to HAVE FUN and develop players
 - 2. Your philosophy on WINNING versus DEVELOPMENT
 - 3. Your ideas on participation minimums in games
 - 4. Your method for determining what positions players will play in games
 - 5. Your requirements for attendance at practice and games
 - 6. Emphasize need to HUSTLE at all times and why
- C. Discuss what you expect from parents
 - 1. Parental involvement. Give examples.
 - 2. Notification process if player unavailable for practice or games.
 - 3. Making sure player is on time for games and practices.
 - 4. Be sure eye sight has been checked recently to prevent injury.
 - 5. Pick up child promptly after every event for safety purposes.
 - 6. Bring all problems to you immediately. No grumbling in stands or talking behind back.
 - 7. Pre-game meals – high in carbohydrates. Avoid sweets and sugar-based products before and during games.
 - 8. No sideline coaching during games. Stay away from dugouts during games. Let the kids PLAY.
 - 9. Always be positive. Praise efforts – not results.
- D. Get written permission to distribute team rosters with home address and phone number.
- E. Be sure any special health problems are brought to your attention immediately.

CAUTION: BE SURE YOU GET A SIGNED FORM FROM EVERY PARENT GRANTING YOU PERMISSION TO GET EMERGENCY TREATMENT FOR THEIR CHILD. NO PLAYER PRACTICES UNLESS YOU HAVE THIS FORM COMPLETED AND SIGNED. NEVER PRACTICE OR PLAY UNLESS YOU HAVE THESE FORMS WITH YOU. (Sample form attached)

- F. Weather issues. Discuss when you will and will not practice or play.
- G. Outline cancellation notification of game or practice procedures.
- H. Discuss care of uniform and equipment.
- I. Outline post-game refreshment program.
- J. Outline practice and game schedules.
- K. Discuss All-Star program, requirements, schedule (if applicable)
- L. Outline any team functions (picnics, etc.)
- M. Discuss our policy and program for MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE.

The following is one method. Use whatever works for you but, by all means, have a disciplinary system and make sure everyone knows what it is. This will prevent many problems during the year.

A commonly used method is to set up rules you deem appropriate for the age group and to assign a point value to each rule. If anyone breaks that rule, they are given the designated points for that infraction. If at the end of a given period of time (day, week, month, season) the player exceeds a predetermined number of points, he/she will be disciplined according to whatever is allowed by the league or by your personal philosophy. It could be sitting out one game, season suspension, not allowing player to play his/her favorite position for a period of time, etc. You make the determination. The key to the system is that it is FAIRLY and UNIVERSALLY applied. The first time you make an exception, you have no disciplinary system at all.

The following are some possible infractions to consider awarding points for:

- Talking to non-playing friends, spectators, etc. during games
- Leaving the bench area during the game except to go on field or rest room.
- Latter requires coach's permission.
- Throwing of bats and equipment.
- Cursing of any form.
- Excessive displays of temper or getting into an argument.
- Ridiculing the performance of any participant.
- Making derogatory remarks about any participant.
- Inappropriate remarks to umpires or league officials.
- Unexcused tardiness or absence.
- Coming to games without complete uniform. (Add additional items you feel are important)

N. Explain to players:

- The need to hustle at all times
- The need for good sportsmanship (shake hands with other team after games, never make excuses for losses-only losers make excuses, never harass other players about beating them when you see them in school)
- Onfield procedures – on one knee during all instruction, no talking, all eyes on coach
- How to throw when warming up during practice to be safe (all in same direction)
- No throwing until after stretching drills
- No swinging of bats unless told to do so in drills
- Other safety or procedural requirements you set up
- No jewelry and nothing in mouth during game or practice

O. Recommend that there be a mid-season and post-season meeting

- Mid-season meeting for update on team goals and progress
- Post season meeting for thank you's and encouragement for league participation next season

Developing a Coaching Philosophy

Breaking down your own coaching approach into several key areas will be helpful in determining your coaching philosophy. If you have a “road map” to help get you where you are going, the journey will be much smoother and enjoyable. Use the following information to assist you in developing and strengthening your own philosophy.

First of all, view yourself as a TEACHER first, and a COACH second. The only time you really do any coaching is during those 3 or 4 hours a week when the game is actually in progress. The vast majority of your team time is spent teaching and that’s the way it should be.

A truly successful coach must have a strong philosophical base which serves as the motivation for everything he or she does in baseball/softball. It has been expressed that “Baseball is Life with the volume turned up.” This is true. There is far more to be learned from participation in baseball/softball than how to hit, run and throw. Many of the most important values in life can be vividly experienced through team participation. Your philosophy should evolve from that realization.

A good coaching philosophy can best be described as a “total person” philosophy. While it places strong emphasis on teaching the fundamentals of the game, it also includes training in “lifetime” skills.

Outlined below is a philosophy which represents an integration of ten separate elements we believe are critical to program success.

- A. **TEACH SOUND FUNDAMENTALS** – Provide every player with kinesthetically sound skills that will enable him to compete successfully. Break each skill into smaller components and teach it in short, repetitive sessions, constantly building upon each subcomponent until the entire skill is taught. Teach in short sessions over a number of training periods rather than teaching the full skill in one long session.
- B. **MIND POWER** – A critical and frequently overlooked part of preparing athletes for competition is mental preparation. It has often been said that baseball is 90 percent mental. Yet, as a coach, we often devote 99 percent of the time to physical preparation. Let's refocus practices to improve that ratio. We must spend more time working to develop visualization and focusing techniques and on helping the players develop mental images and mindsets prior to task performance. These efforts will help take our players to another level of performance.
- C. **FAMILY ATTITUDE** – Make every player feel he is a part of something bigger than himself. Let him know that someone will always be there when needed. Involve the players in goal development and other critical team activities so they feel they “own a piece of the rock.”
- D. **ESSENTIALITY OF ORGANIZATION** – The key to bringing all these vital elements together in the limited time available is organization. There is no substitute for organization. Every practice must be painstakingly laid-out to ensure it is upbeat and focused on the specific, pre-planned objectives for that session. Every practice should be designed to be more demanding than anything the player will experience in a game. An integrated practice

plan is essential to ensure all of the basics are covered before your players participate in their first game. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure no situations arise in a game that your players aren't prepared for. An integrated training plan is the tool to make that happen.

- E. **POSITIVISM** – It is important that players enter a game expecting to win rather than hoping not to lose. A key element in everything we do is positive reinforcement. Players need this every day. Every correction must end on a positive note. A coach should spend considerable time teaching players how to develop positive mental images prior to performing any skill and to focus on what they will do rather than what they hope will not happen.
- F. **DEVELOPMENT OF “LIFETIME” SKILLS** – These skills include such things as an appreciation for the values, benefits and responsibilities of being a part of a team and the need for teamwork, a strong emphasis on good sportsmanship, the requirement for commitment (individual and team), the necessity and rewards of hard work, how to handle adversity and success, and mental training for maximum performance. These are skills that will benefit the athlete in any endeavor he/she chooses in life.

Jerry Kramer, a Hall of Fame football player who played for Vince Lombardi, is quoted as saying that the above mentioned skills were perhaps the most important things he learned from his coach. These skills prepared him to be a very successful businessman after he retired because he knew he had the skills to do well at anything he tried. No player should leave a team without feeling the same way. These values must be incorporated into every practice and game session. Try to make them a “team tradition” – something players take pride in. It’s exciting to be a part of a team where players truly believe they can’t be outhustled or outworked. It gives birth to an air of confidence that puts tremendous pressure on opponents.

- G. **PRACTICE “PRESSURE”** – Everything your players do in practice should be timed or evaluated to increase pressure on them beyond that which they will experience in a game. Time should be spent on “game situations” set up to be more demanding than in a real game. “Practice pressure” produces game confidence and pressure-free execution.
- H. **COMMUNICATION** – This is the most essential element of a successful program. Philosophy, goals and requirements must be clearly articulated and stringently adhered to. This factor must include the entire team “family” – players, parents, supporters, the administration, and the press. Openness and a willingness to listen are the strongest tools to build support for your program.
- I. **MOTIVATION** – Perhaps the most important consideration for a coach is motivation. Great coaches provide their players with incentives to grow. They should encourage players to go beyond themselves to experiment and take risks. This is the most demanding responsibility for a coach. Every player reacts to different stimuli and has different motivations for playing the game. The successful coach must know what motivates every player and provide that motivation in abundance. There is no “one” motivational technique that works every time with every player. It must be player-specific. The coach must be able to excite every player to want to work hard. Hard work will produce commitment and commitment will produce success. Success builds greater motivation and it soon becomes an ever-expanding process resulting in victory.

J. GOALS DEVELOPMENT – Goals are essential in any competitive event. They are the yardstick for measuring levels of success. Goals allow the players to focus their efforts. Without goals, hard work is usually wasted on non-productive ventures. Goals are like the targets for great marksmen. With them, the greatness of a marksman is easily determined. Without them, his abilities may never be fully realized. Every player should be actively involved in establishing individual and team goals. Once established, they must be internalized as the ever-present motivation for hard work.

Legal Issues Associated with Coaching Youth Sports

Having the opportunity to coach young players can be one of the most rewarding experiences an adult will ever have and player safety is the top priority for our league. As a Babe Ruth Chartered League, MMB is required to have all volunteers that interact with players submit and pass a criminal background check. The background check is conducted against National Criminal Databases as well as the National Sex Offender registry. While parents may sign up their child to play in a league, the bottom line is that ultimately, they are making a conscious decision to allow another adult to take responsibility for a phase of their youngster's development. This carries with it a significant responsibility on the part of that adult coach. The most significant one is to return that child to the parent uninjured, or if he/she is injured, to take prompt, effective action to minimize the trauma and impact of the injury. It is our responsibility as coaches to learn proper techniques that minimize injury and liability.

When an injury occurs you must be prepared to answer the question, "Did I do all that was reasonable to prevent the injury from occurring, and after it occurred, did I respond in a manner such as would be expected from a reasonable, prudent person?" To successfully pass this test of "responsibility," you must be able to prove that you did all that you could to prevent the injury and all that you could to render the appropriate care after the injury. Also, you must ask yourself if you did more than a person with your training should do in rendering first aid.

REMEMBER – IF YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO DEAL WITH AN INJURY – DON'T!!

SUMMON MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY.

Coach's Safety Responsibilities

General Policy

Expect everyone in your organization to be “safety-minded” and to be guided by safety considerations. The inexperience of many young athletes makes it essential that safety be an integral part of your thinking in everything you do. You must be aggressive in controlling the causes of accidents.

Specific Safety Issues

Safety of the player ultimately rests with the coach. You are the person to whom the parents have entrusted their child. Proper planning is perhaps the most effective method of preventing injuries. By planning:

- A. Did the coach develop an integrated plan that phased instruction so that no player was allowed to attempt a task before instruction was provided? For example, was the proper method to slide taught before base running drills were executed? Building a master plan outlining your season-long instructional program is very important to keep a situation like that from happening. Later on in this planner, we have provided a sample integrated planner. Use it as a tool to plan safe practices.
- B. Develop a plan to effectively deal with emergencies should they arise. This is especially true at remote locations where access to telephones is not readily available. Coaches should refrain from practicing at remote locations without having another responsible individual available to assist in case of emergency. The plan should outline who will go for help, who will assist an injured player, and the location of the nearest available phone. Once an injury has occurred, the coach should confine his/her activities to accepted first aid activities and nothing more. Above all, he must not diagnose or take any other actions that are only to be performed by qualified medical personnel. This includes providing aspirin or other pain-reducing medications. When in doubt about the severity of an injury, summon medical help immediately by dialing 911. **IF IN DOUBT, PLAY IT SAFE.**
- C. Allocate sufficient time before practice to check the field for unsafe conditions to eliminate/correct dangerous conditions.
- D. Ensure all playing equipment is safe and notify the league immediately of defective equipment. If your league or program requires special equipment or equipment certification, i.e. N.O.C.S.A.E. certification on helmets or the use of Reduced Injury Factor (RIF) ball, did you comply with these requirements? Additionally, ensure that athletes wear all required personal protective devices prior to allowing them to practice or play.
- E. If your league has developed safety policies or procedures or has developed other guidelines for coaches, have you reviewed them and planned for their compliance? One of the quickest ways to get in trouble is to violate established league policies and procedures.
- F. Ensure that players of similar skill levels are paired during warm up and drills to reduce the potential for injuries.

- G. Loosening-up drills at the beginning of practice to ensure the athletes' bodies are ready for strenuous activity. Try to use the same series of warm-up drills at every practice. Extensive studies on the effect of conditioning, commonly known as warm-up, have demonstrated that stretching and contracting muscles just before an activity improves general control of movements, coordination and alertness. Such drills also help develop the strength and stamina needed by the average youngster to compete with minimum accident exposure.
- H. Make plans to have adequate supplies of water or other fluids available for all games/practices, especially during extremely hot weather, and encourage athletes to consume fluids often to prevent dehydration and heat exhaustion/stroke.
- I. Take action to ensure unsafe practices are corrected during practice, i.e. players not swinging bats around one another, everyone throwing the ball in the same direction rather than in a rampant manner, control of horseplay, etc.
- J. Ensure emergency First Aid Kit is readily available for all practices and games.
- K. Have each player and parent complete and sign an "Authorization for Emergency Treatment Form" that authorizes qualified medical personnel to provide prompt and effective medical treatment in the event parents cannot be contacted. Ensure that this form is immediately available at each practice or game.
- L. Make sure parents are aware of the time practice will end and be sure the players are picked up promptly. Never, never leave a player alone at the field to wait for a parent or someone else to pick them up. Your responsibilities do not end when practice is over. You are responsible for that player's safety until that responsibility is transferred to another authorized adult (parent, relative, friend, etc.)

These are just a sample of the situations coaches must consider and build a plan to prevent. If you are not willing to do the planning required to protect yourself and your players, you are asking for trouble. Always make safety your highest priority for planning and onfield activities.

Onfield Decisions for Athletic Injuries

General

Most injuries would be treated no differently whether they happen to a 10-year-old shortstop or to an adult. In evaluating injuries to young athletes, you must remember you are dealing with children. The young player may not be able to easily describe just how he was hurt or how badly he/she is hurt. If they really want to keep playing and think you may take them out of the game to treat an injury, they might not even want to tell you where or how badly it hurts. Therefore, your careful observation and good instincts are very important. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT COACHES AND PARENTS BE RESPONSIVE TO COMPLAINTS OF INJURY FROM ATHLETES OF ALL AGES.** **THEY SHOULD BE AWARE THAT ANY ATHLETE WHO IS NOT PLAYING UP TO SKILL LEVEL MAY BE SUFFERING FROM A SIGNIFICANT INJURY.** Be sure that the player's mom and dad are informed of every injury, how it happened, what you did to assist the player, and your recommendation for further actions by the parents. However, while you may rightly feel that not every bruise and sprain should be seen by a physician, the final decision on this must rest squarely on the parent or guardian.

Qualifications to Administer First Aid

It is recognized that few coaches have any training in first aid techniques and that it is impractical to have a completely experienced first-aider on duty at all times. However, every effort should be made to determine if any of the team parents or other individuals associated with the team have been trained in basic first aid techniques and to attempt to have them present at all team events.

Coaches are encouraged to avail themselves of basic first aid training that is available through public agencies. Ideally the training should be from an accredited agency such as the American Red Cross which offers both classroom as well as online training.

(<http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid>) 'First Aid, Health and Safety for Coaches' will teach you how to care for an athlete who is unconscious, dealing with asthma, sudden illness, heat-related illness, wounds, injuries to the head, neck and spine as well as psychological and mental health problems. (Note that this course does not provide CPR or AED certification). MMB does have a portable AED device within the Wehrle Field House and several board members have been certified to use it. There are also usage and application instructions accompanying the AED device itself.

The alternative is to get training by a medical doctor or registered nurse who is familiar with athletic injuries. Minimum training should include handling of extreme emergencies such as use of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and external cardiac massage. Until such training is received, coaches should limit themselves to performing only minimum, prudent first aid needed to sustain life. This includes immobilizing the injured area, applying ice and immediately summoning help. **IF YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION, DON'T!! CALL THE RESCUE SQUAD AND SUPPLY THEM WITH AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE.**

Dealing with Injury Situations on the Field

Act quickly and shrewdly, assuming every injury is serious until proven otherwise. Keep the person lying down and still. Don't be in a hurry to get them on their feet or off the field. Never move them until you are certain doing so will not further aggravate the injury.

Find the injury and do your best to immobilize it. Reassure the athlete and keep him/her calm. Your first impulse will be to help, but before you do-get a good idea of the problem.

- A. Did you see the injury occur? If so, you will have a pretty good idea of what happened.
Also look at the injured area to see any signs of swelling, deformity or bruising.
- B. Let the players tell you what it feels like. Ask:
 1. How did it happen?
 2. Where is the pain?
 3. Can you move it by yourself?
 4. Can you sit up, stand, walk?
- C. Pinpoint the exact area of pain by applying gentle pressure. Compare injured and non-injured part. Once the area is localized, begin ice treatment immediately. Ice, compression (ace bandage, etc.) and elevation of the injured if possible can reduce pain and swelling. Move player off the field only when you are confident it is safe to do so.
- D. In case of head or neck injuries, unconsciousness, or eye injury, treat it as a serious injury until you are assured otherwise by medical personnel.
- E. **ALWAYS HAVE ICE/COLD PACK AVAILABLE FOR INJURIES**

Evaluation of Injuries

Injuries can be classified in three categories: MILD, MODERATE, or SEVERE

Classification and treatment depend upon symptoms and signs. The best way to determine the symptoms and signs is by looking and listening, then by carefully feeling and moving the injured area. While we cannot list every symptom and sign of injury, you can generally rely on the following general statements:

- A. The sooner the player has disability, the more serious the injury. By disability, we mean the player cannot use that part of the body as it should be used. If an athlete twists an ankle but has only a slight limp, the injury could be mild or moderate. If he falls and cannot get up at all, he probably has a severe injury.
- B. The larger and more immediate the swelling, the more serious the injury because swelling on the outside means bleeding on the inside.
- C. A noticeable deformity means a serious injury.
- D. Consider all unconsciousness or eye injuries as serious.

DO's and DON'Ts

- Ice an injury for at least 48 hours to allow healing
- When in doubt, it is better to see a physician now than wait until greater damage is done.
- Never give aspirin to cover symptoms of minor injuries
- Don't attempt to "work off" an injury. Greater problems can arise from this.

Injury Recuperation

After an injury, do not return an athlete to participation until they are truly ready. It is recommended that for minor injuries, the coach get a note from the parent releasing the child for participation again. For more serious injuries or in situations where the player has a physical condition which brings doubt about his/her fitness for play, insist on a medical release from a competent medical authority. Once the medical waiver is obtained, a wise coach will administer functional tests to determine the exact status of the athlete.

You can make lots of mistakes in lots of areas as a youth coach and still be very successful; but safety is not one of those areas. Even one mistake can have disastrous repercussions.

THINK SAFETY EVERY MINUTE YOU ARE WITH YOUR PLAYERS. SAFETY IS ONE OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT JOBS!

Emergency First Aid Procedures

NOTE: Always keep in mind that you are NOT a doctor. Your objective is to calm the victim and GET HELP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

A. CUTS, SCRAPES & BRUISES (minor)

1. Stop the bleeding
2. Cleanse the wound
3. Protect the wound

B. BLEEDING (profuse)

1. Apply direct pressure
2. Elevate if possible

C. BLOODY NOSE

1. Sit victim down
2. Lean victim forward with chin toward chest
3. Pinch nose

D. STRAINS & SPRAINS

1. Ice
2. Compressions
3. Elevation

E. FRACTURE (can be diagnosed by X-ray)

1. Ice
2. Immobilize
3. Elevate

F. HEAT INJURY

1. Symptoms: Dry, hot skin, no sweating, confusion, dizziness and chills on the chest.
2. Cool the athlete immediately
3. If athlete is unconscious:
 - (i) Remove clothes
 - (ii) Douse with cold water, ice, ice towels
 - (iii) Do not give liquids by mouth
 - (iv) Call an ambulance
 - (v) Give C.P.R. if breathing stops

G. FRACTURE (can be diagnosed by X-ray)

1. Ice
2. Immobilize
3. Elevate

H. BITES & STINGS

1. Apply ice compress
2. Insect sting salve

I. UNCONSCIOUS PLAYER

1. Call for help immediately
2. Check breathing continuously (C.P.R. if necessary)
3. Do not move the athlete even if he/she becomes conscious
4. Keep quiet and calm until professional help arrives

J. HEAD INJURY

1. Must be treated seriously however minor it may appear
2. Call police and transport immediately

Practice Tips and Drills

How to Run a Practice

The old saying “Practice makes Perfect” is very true in the game of Baseball. But in Baseball we take the saying one step further and say that “Perfect Practice makes Perfect.”

Success in the game of Baseball comes from hard work during practice. Practice sessions are where the Ballplayers learn to hit the cutoff Man, turn the Double Play and to hit the curve ball.

It is the responsibility of the Coaching staff to prepare its Players for each – and every situation that may arise during a game. This can be accomplished by teaching the basic skills and strategies of Baseball, and through repetition (practice) develop these skills so that they become almost instinctive for the Player.

The following itinerary suggests what a normal in-season practice should consist of. The practice itinerary can be modified to whatever level of competition you may coach.

Keep in mind that, at the High School and College level, there may only be one or two coaches, so that where we suggest activities or drills that need Assistant Coaches, High School or College players may be substituted to help run the drills.

Warm-Ups

The offensive and defensive skills of Baseball require the body to twist, bend, start quick, stop fast and run hard. Therefore, a proper warm-up is important. The whole body should be stretched out, starting with the neck right down to the ankles. Several different stretches may be used. Once the body is completely stretched the next step is to further loosen the legs with a slow jog that ends with a sprint. Here are a few variations to traditional warm-up jogging. Whenever you have the team jog to get warm, have them jog OUTSIDE the fence (to prevent shortcuts). More importantly, they take a baseball and throw it up in the air and catch it as they jog. They do this bare-handed, alternate catching and throwing with each hand, keep the ball in the air at all times and toss it above their heads on every throw. You can vary this drill by having 2 players share a ball, tossing it to each other as they jog. They are all-thumbs at the beginning of the season but soon learn to track and catch the ball while running with their heads up and avoiding obstacles.

Next, it is very important to get the throwing arm good and loose. As in running, throwing should be done as a team. The players should line up in the outfield (never warm-up as a group in the infield because of the damage it may do to the infield surface) with a partner. One partner on the left (or right) field foul line and the other about 60 feet away, towards centerfield. The partner on the foul line should be approximately fifteen feet apart to avoid getting hit by an errant throw. After several throws, the distance of the throws should be increased at intervals of approximately twenty feet until a distance of one hundred fifty is reached. Remember these distances can be modified to the age group that you are coaching.

Another warm-up activity that helps to loosen up the body, is a game called “Pepper.” Not only does Pepper loosen the body, but it helps develop good reflexes and good bat control. The ideal number of players necessary to play Pepper is six. One player uses a bat to hit ground balls that

are thrown to him by one of the five other players who are situated approximately forty feet away. The player with the bat develops a good Batting Eye and good bat control by hitting ground balls to each fielder. The fielder develops their reflexes by fielding the ground balls and proper mechanics are developed by throwing the ball back to the hitter. After each player has fielded several balls, a new hitter is assigned and the previous hitter becomes a fielder. This rotation continues until all players have had a chance to hit. At this stage of the practice all the players should be loose and ready to perform the movements that are necessary to help develop their skills.

Station Training

In order to keep the players attention during practice sessions, the practice session must be fun. In order to be fun, it has to stay active, there must be games involved, it must be informative and it should vary from practice to practice.

The mainstay on all practice sessions is to have small groups of players working with different coaches. This is called STATION TRAINING. The more stations available with different activities the higher the player's interest will be. If at all possible, each station should include instruction, drills, and games.

In order to run each station correctly, managers should design these activities and direct the parent/volunteer as to how to run the station, designating the amount of time for each segment of the station.

The more enjoyable the practices are, the more the player's interest will peak and they will tend to stay in the game.

Warm-up Drills

Remember, you should always warm up to throw NOT throw to warm up.

- A. Light Jog – To stimulate the Cardio-Vascular System, have players jog lightly twice around the OUTSIDE of the fence. This prevents cheating and insures they run the proper distance. You may want Pitchers and Catchers to run 3-4 times due to the leg strength needed for these positions.
- B. Jumping Jacks – 25 to 50 depending on the age group.
- C. Short Toss – Have players stand 30-40 feet apart and play catch for 5 minutes.
- D. Base Toss – Form lines on each of the 4 bases and have players throw the ball around the bases. When the player catches the ball, have him apply a proper tag to the front of the bag before he throws to the next base. This will reinforce the proper technique and lead to more outs in the field. Have players rotate through the line they are in. Do this drill for 10-15 minutes.
- E. Move and Catch – used to teach quick feet and hands when receiving a throw. This can be used with 13-15 year olds. It can be slowed down and modified to teach 7-8 year olds how to play catch. This drill works best for a small group (4 or 5) of kids because it keeps them busy. Line the group up on the outfield foul line. The first kid in line runs up the foul line about 4 or 5 steps. From there he receives a throw from the coach who is standing

approximately 45 feet in front of him. Stressing proper footwork (moving his feet to receive the throw in the center of his body) the kid receives the throw and then makes a throw back to the coach. The player then returns back to the group and goes to the end of the line. Repeat the same thing with each kid in line. This drill is a fun and effective way for 7-8 year olds to learn to play catch. It has been found that with this age group, just breaking out the balls and having them play catch with each other can be futile and a waste of time. A coach can put as much on the throw as the individual kid can handle comfortably. The kids that are having trouble get a nice easy toss; the more advanced players get a throw with a little more on it. After a while it's time start working on moving to their left and right.

- F. Around the Horn – Split players into two groups 6 per group works well pitcher, catcher, 1st, 2nd, SS, 3rd will be the order of throws. Once third is reached the order is reversed and the players go to one knee after they throw. The horn ends when the pitcher goes to one knee. You can have competition between the groups to see who can do the fastest horn (without dropping the ball).

Individual Skills

After all players have hit, fielded and been involved in game situations, practice as a team is now over. It is at this time some players work on individual skills.

Catchers can work with a coach or another catcher on their throws to second base or on pitched balls in the dirt or foul pop-ups.

Pitchers may work on covering first base on ground balls that are hit to the right side of the infield or they may work on pick-off plays.

Infielders may work on turning double plays or take a few extra ground balls. Outfielders may take a few fly balls or field balls hit on the ground.

If there is enough time left, a few hitters may want to get a couple of extra swings in the batting cage.

Attitudes and sportsmanship

Practice is also the time where the coach teaches proper attitudes and sportsmanship to his players. Attitudes and sportsmanship are just as important as the physical skills of the game.

Baseball games are won on the practice field. Repetition is the “key” to developing skills and understanding of “Game Situations.” It is the responsibility of the players to hustle and play hard, as it is equally the responsibility of the coach to prepare the team to be ready to play the game.

Remember, “Perfect Practice makes Perfect” and as the young player asked the older gentleman how to get to the ballpark the gentleman replied, “Son, you have to practice.”

Hitting

Hitting Commandments

1. *Select a bat you can control and handle.* We want the player to use the heaviest bat he can comfortably control. The laws of physics tell us that mass times acceleration equals force. Since the mass of the bat is variable, the hitter should use the heaviest bat he can swing freely.
2. *Assume a comfortable stance with the feet at least shoulder width apart.* The hitter needs a stance that is balanced and will help him initiate the hitting action. Too narrow a stance will often cause overstriking.
3. *Take only one preliminary swing.* Young hitters tend to take too many preliminary swings so that the pitch may catch them unprepared.
4. *Make sure the bat covers the outside corner.* The hitter should check to see that his bat covers the plate after his stride. A hitter may have good plate coverage before the stride, but because of his tendency to step into the bucket his coverage can be poor at the completion of the stride.
5. *Hold the hands at the top of the strike zone.* Our hitters are told not to swing at any pitch above their hands. The high hand position also helps the batter swing down on the pitch.
6. Keep the middle, knuckles of the hands in line. This enhances the wrist action.
7. *Keep the weight on the back foot while awaiting the pitch, and transfer it to the front foot during the swing.* Keeping the weight back when awaiting the pitch assures a quick weight transfer and a powerful swing. Where the weight is keep centered or forward, power is lost.
8. *Push the bat back so the front arm is straight when waiting for the pitch.* This insures the longest possible arc for the swing and helps develop greater bat speed.
9. *Know your strike zone and offer only at strikes.* Good hitters hit good pitches. Swinging at bad balls enlarges the strike zone and can only help the pitcher.
10. *Be aggressive and prepared to hit every pitch.* The batter who is mentally prepared to hit every pitch becomes an offensive rather than defensive hitter. We prefer a hitter who is over-aggressive to one who is timid – who takes too many good pitches.
11. *Have complete confidence that you can hit the pitcher.* Good hitters feel they can hit anyone. No matter who throws the pitch, it still has to travel through the same strike zone in order to be a strike.
12. *Do not be afraid of the ball.* Young hitters will often bailout on curve balls or on pitchers who tend to be wild. The ability to overcome fear is one of the first prerequisites of a good hitter.
13. *Do not guess, but do anticipate the fast ball.* The batter who thinks fast ball will rarely have the pitch thrown by him. When mentally prepared for the fast ball he can always adjust his

swing to the slower breaking pitch. We will often have hitters layoff breaking pitches with less than two strikes.

14. *Be very aggressive when ahead of the pitcher.* The 3-1 and 2-0 counts are the hitter's dream. He can anticipate a strike and, hence, attack the ball. In certain situations, the 3-0 pitch is also a good one to swing at. When ahead in the count, the batter can anticipate certain pitches and refuses to swing if he is fooled.
15. *Learn to wait as long as you can before swinging.* The great hitters are able to wait longer because of their quick reactions. It is a big advantage to be able to observe the pitch as long as possible. The average hitter has a reaction time of about one-tenth of a second. Babe Ruth's reaction time was one-twentieth of a second.
16. *Hold the bat relatively loosely while waiting for the pitch but squeeze the bat during the swing.* One of the factors determining force is the firmness of the grip at contact. A firm grip will tend to eliminate recoil and impart maximum force. A tight grip while awaiting the pitch will tend to tighten and tire the hand and forearm muscles and prohibit them from achieving maximum contraction at contact.
17. *Watch and learn to read the spin on the ball (over spin-fast ball; angular spin-breaking pitch).* To-be a good hitter, you must be able to read spin. It will tell you whether the pitch will be a breaking ball or fast ball. All great hitters are able to do this. Many young players fail to understand the principles of rotation that causes certain pitches to break. They have to have this explained and demonstrated to them.
18. *Stride into the ball and point your foot at the pitcher.* Pointing the stride foot at the pitcher will help the hitter open his hips quickly and shift his weight. For the body mass to aid in hitting, it must be moving into the ball.
19. *Stride no more than six inches and usually much less.* Proper striding helps the weight shift, whereas overstriding locks the hips and causes the body to fall away from the plate. Overstriding may also cause lunging, upper-cutting, etc.
20. *Hit against the stiff front leg.* The weight is transferred into the front leg, not onto it. The batter should be pushing his weight against a firm front leg and side.
21. *Keep the rear leg bent throughout the stride and pivot on the rear toe.* The striking force will depend partially on the rigidity and firmness of the back leg at impact. The firm back leg will help absorb the shock of impact and limit the amount of recoil.
22. *Hit on the balls of the feet, not the heels.* The batter who strides on his heels will fall away from the plate, transferring his weight away from the contact point. The result is a considerable loss of force.
23. *Swing with the arms extended completely away from the body.* The arm extension insures a maximum bat arc and maximum bat speed.
24. *Keep the shoulders and eyes level.* Dropping the rear shoulder will cause an uppercut swing that will produce a lot of pop-ups. The eyes can best follow the ball when kept on a level plane. Changing the plane during the swing will make the ball more difficult to follow.

25. *Swing down on the ball.* That will produce ground balls and line drives. Actually, the batter should swing down only on letter-high pitches. The belt-high pitch should be hit with a level swing and the low pitch with a slight upper-cut. However, the command “swing down on the ball!” will tend to make the hitter conscious of the level swing.
26. *Don’t swing hard – no more than 70 to 80 percent.* This is essential to control the direction and arc of the swing. Most young hitters tend to overswing, which usually causes them to turn their head and thus fail to follow the ball.
27. *Throw the bat at the ball.* This is our way of insuring a good wrist “pop.” The wrist snap and the extension of the forearms constitute the most important factors in increasing the linear velocity of the bat. The batters who pull the bat through with their front arm wind up with poor wrist action.
28. *Hit the ball in front of the plate – with the arms slightly in advance of the straight line out from the shoulders.* This pointing front of the plate is where the bat has achieved its greatest velocity.
29. *Keep the head perfectly still and try to see the ball hit the bat.* Pulling the head away and not following the ball all the way to the plate is one of the most common hitting faults. Studies indicate that hitters do not follow the ball movements of the head but rather through pursuit movements of the eyes. Turning the head on the swing prohibits these tracking movements by the eyes.
30. *Throw your belly button at the pitcher and rotate the hips.* The hitter who can visualize this concept will be able to open his hips quickly. At the moment of contact, the hips and shoulders should be squarely facing the pitcher.
31. *Do not stop your swing; follow through fully.* The follow-through insures a complete swing so that the batter does not chop off the momentum of his swing before contact is made.
32. *Hit the ball where it is pitched.* The batter should push the outside pitch to the opposite field and pull the inside pitch. He should not try to pull outside pitches, or he will find himself hitting a lot of balls on the end of the bat. To pull the inside pitch, he must open his hips quickly. Failure to do so will cause the batter to hit a lot of balls on the handle.
33. *Practice and keep on practicing.* The last of our cardinal rules is probably the most important of all. A young player cannot play too much baseball. He has to hit thousands of baseballs in order to become a sound hitter

Hitting Drills

1. *Soft Toss.* Coach will stand 3-4 feet to the side of the player and lightly toss balls which player will hit. Players can get a lot of swings in a relatively short amount of time. Coaches can work on weak areas of a player’s swing by locating the ball differently and vary the speed of the tosses.
2. *Hip Turner Drill.* Player places a bat behind their waist while holding the bat in his hands and assumes regular batting stance. Player imagines a pitch being delivered and executes a normal stride and swing, using the bat to help turn the hips faster. Players should finish in

proper contact position. The bat may also be placed behind the shoulders when executing this drill.

3. *Batting Practice.* Have either a coach or the pitchers pitch batting practice to the hitter. Vary the starting count on the hitter to teach pitch selectivity or protecting the plate. Another variation allows the pitchers to pitch an inning. Rather than give a player X amount of swings, have them take an At-Bat as they would in a game. If they strike out or walk, the result is the same as in a game.
4. *Off-Speed Hitting.* Two of the better (and simplest) drills to teach the kids the fundamentals for keeping the hands back include:
 - a. *Self-Toss.* The kid just takes the ball, throws it up with one hand, and swings at it. (Can go into the top hand or bottom hand, but prefer the bottom hand to trigger, thus for this drill keep the top hand still.)
 - b. *Bounce Toss.* Either with a partner, or by himself. When the ball bounces on the ground, prep the bottom hand; when the ball comes back up into the hitting area, swing at it.
5. “*Crush the Coach*”. Get a couple dozen “whiffle ball” style plastic golf balls. Sit or kneel on the ground about 12-15 feet in front of the batters. Pitch to them (takes a lot of wrist action). The kid’s goal is to hit the coach with the golf ball – the harder the better. Helps train the batters to keep their eyes on the ball. Wear protective eyewear. As they get older, wear catcher’s gear.
6. *Bomber Drill.* Get a bunch of old tennis balls and pitch to a batter. Tell him to assume his normal batting stance, the only difference is that you (the pitcher) are going to try and hit him. Give him an example toss so he is confident that you aren’t going to fire a tennis ball at him at 100 mph. Tell him to avoid getting hit. It’s great fun! The kids will just love this game. Naturally, before you begin this drill you want to go through the proper mechanics of HOW to roll away from an inside pitch. For a right-handed batter, turn to your right, tuck the chin, lower the bat, and collapse – all at the same time. Show the pitcher your butt and back. Roll away! Demonstrate to them with another coach pitching tennis balls at you. Allow a few to hit you on purpose. Try the drill again, only THIS time instruct them to hit the strikes, layoff the balls, and get out of the way of the bean balls. Let them know that you WILL, on occasion, try to beat them.
7. *Strike Zone Recognition.* A drill favorite is to have players stand in a line and have each one say in turn:

“Good Call Blue!”
“You’re absolutely right, Blue!”
“Great Strike Zone, Blue!”
8. *Water Balloons.* This is part hitting drill and part FUN! It makes a nice surprise for the players on a hot day. A good coach removes the boredom (which is so common) out of baseball practices. Fill a trashcan with a bunch of water balloons and bring it to practice. Don’t let the players see them because it will distract them. Save this for LAST. Pitch the balloons to the batters. They’ll absolutely LOVE it! Also, you will see some of your

weaker and timid hitters become MANIACS. It will bring out the animal in them . . . just what they need. Also, this is a good way of increasing attendance at practices since the kids will always anticipate a repeat of this “drill.”

9. *Quick Hands Drift.* This drill develops quick hand and wrist speed. Players pair up, one has a bat the other has a few balls. The batter is standing 6 feet away from a fence while the player with the balls stands 6 feet behind the batter. The batter is facing the fence but watching for balls to come back through the strike zone. The player with the balls then tosses the balls back through the strike zone while the batter tries to hit the ball into the fence. A player with quick hands should have no trouble with this drill and should be able to hit the ball directly into the fence.
10. *Multiple Batters.* You need several tennis balls to do this drill. It is possible that old tennis balls may be obtained at a local tennis club. They usually discard the balls on a regular basis once the balls become too flat for tennis. You’d be surprised to know that most of these tennis clubs actually throw the balls away. Pay them a visit and tell them that you would like the balls. They’re great for batting practice. Here’s one of the most efficient hitting drills ever devised. All you need are several adult pitchers and tons of tennis balls. Line up 4 or 5 bases along a fence. Make sure they are spaced far enough apart so the batters won’t interfere with each other. Have a bucket of balls by each pitching station and have a batter at each plate. Have them all bat AT ONCE! Balls are flying everywhere! You can essentially let about 1/3rd of the team bat at one time. The other third can be running around collecting balls and the other third can have their gloves on grabbing fly balls, pop-ups and grounders. The kids love it – it keeps them all busy – it is efficient – and it allows you to have a batter hit for a long time without subjecting his teammates to complete boredom while they watch.
11. *Bunting Drill.* Purchase a wooden canoe paddle and cut down the handle until the length is workable for your players. Then cut a circular hole approximately 2 inches larger in diameter than a tennis ball. Get your “bunter” in position with his “paddle” bat. Throw tennis balls for him to bunt from approximately 20 feet. The idea is to have the tennis ball go through the hole in the paddle. The players have a great time with it and it really helps the hand-eye coordination needed for bunting.

Catching

Fundamentals of Being a Catcher

Good catching presupposes a good glove, a good arm and a good general knowledge of the game. In catching there are two types of players, the receiver and the catcher. The catcher needs to do more than just receive the ball – they must take charge of the game.

A. CATCHER'S STANCE

1. A wide, flat-footed stance where the feet are slightly wider than the shoulders. They should be in a crouch position so that the hips are above the knees. The weight should be on the balls of the feet.
2. The right leg should be 2-3 inches behind the left leg. The left foot should be pointed outward in the direction of the pitcher. The right foot will be pointed at first base.
3. The arms should be semi-extended, so they can act as a spring when receiving the pitch. The arms are to be slightly bent, while the arms, hands and wrists should be relaxed. The elbows should be outside of the knees and free for movement.

B. BODY AND GLOVE POSITION

1. Giving a target
 - (i) The glove should be held at a 45-degree angle to the pitcher.
 - (ii) Keep the glove open so the pitcher can concentrate on the entire target.
 - (iii) The catcher should not hide behind the glove. They should be up for maximum visibility.
2. Wearing the Glove
 - (i) Do not jam the fingers all the way into the glove. This will allow for maximum wrist movement.
 - (ii) The glove should be worn loosely, so that the heel of the palm is not in the glove.
3. Position
The catcher should assume his crouch position as close to the batter as possible. This skill will come with experience. The following are reasons supporting the “catcher in” theory:
 - (i) It cuts down the distance from the pitcher to the catcher.
 - (ii) The knees, shoulders and glove will become better targets for the pitcher because they are closer to the plate.
 - (iii) The catcher should get hit by less foul tips.
 - (iv) Most throws to third base can then be made from the inside of the diamond.
 - (v) The catcher will be in a better position to field bunts.

C. RECEIVING THE BALL

1. High Pitches
 - (i) Do not move the entire body up to get the ball. Just extend the arms to the ball. This will help avoid injury should there be a foul tip.
 - (ii) Receive the high pitch deep.
2. Low Pitches
 - (i) Approximate where the ball is going to be.
 - (ii) Rollover the hands so that the fingers are pointing down.

- (iii) Catch the ball from underneath hand bring the ball up to the strike zone. The mitt shall be angled towards the strike zone.
3. Receiving the Pitch
 - (i) Do not overreach or stab at the ball. This will help to relax the arms and hands.
 - (ii) When possible, avoid jumping or quick movements of the body so that the umpire can get a clear view of the pitch.
 - (iii) Hold the ball in the glove for a moment upon receiving the pitch. This will allow the umpire to get a good look at the pitch.

Catching Drills

All catching drills should be done in full equipment to simulate game conditions.

1. *Bunt Defense.* Catcher is set up behind the plate with a runner in the box. Coach stands behind catcher and tosses a bunt out. Runner runs to first base while catcher must field bunt and throw runner out. Allow catchers to be athletic when doing this drill.
2. *Foul Ball Drill.* Catcher is set up behind the plate with coach standing behind him. Coach tosses foul fly balls into the air which catcher must locate and catch.
3. *Cut Off Drill.* With runners on base, coach hits fly balls to the OF. Catcher must judge play and call for the cutoff man to throw the ball to the base of the catcher's choosing. The catcher must be able to judge the runner's speed and the defense's ability to get the runner out.
4. *Blocking Drill.* Use of a soft baseball is good for this drill. Tennis balls bounce too far. Set the catcher up in his regular stance. Coach stands 20-30 feet away and throws a soft RIF ball into the dirt in front of the catcher. The catcher falls to his knees while dropping the glove hand to the ground, pocket facing the ball, free hand is behind the back side of the mitt. The catcher tries to make the ball come off his chest protector and land in front of the plate. Also throw balls in the dirt to both sides to get them used to sliding out and keeping their bodies square in order to make the ball bounce in front of them. The idea here is to block the ball off of their gear. Not try to catch the ball in the mitt.
5. *Glove Work.* Coach kneels 15-20 feet in front of catcher with a bucket of tennis balls. Catcher is in full gear, but does not use his glove. Catcher is in his regular stance with his non-glove hand behind his back or with one finger tucked the heel of his right shoe. Coach throws tennis balls to all pitch locations while catcher works on getting glove hand in the proper position for each pitch. Coach can keep the balls coming quickly and can work out 2 to 3 catchers at this station. It's not real important for the catcher to catch the balls. Just work on the proper hand position for receiving each pitch location.
6. *Blocking/Throwing.* Two primary skills for high school catchers are blocking and throwing effectively. These two skills take the longest to develop, and therefore are the two we spend the most time working on. We would like to share our techniques for developing blocking skills. The basic process cue is: "Glove to the ball – knees to the glove." The difficulty is that most try to do it the opposite way. The teaching process is this:

- (a) In a catcher's stance, no glove, 3 balls arranged in a shallow triangle. The first ball is dead center behind the plate, the second to the right and forward, the third to the left and forward. Balls 2 and 3 are even with each other. Catcher falls forward to the ball on his hands, and then brings both knees to his hands. Do this with each of the balls, emphasizing that the angle of the body must deflect the ball onto home plate.
 - (b) In a stance, with glove. Catcher puts glove to the ball, then brings knees to the glove. Do with each ball position until the move comes easy.
 - (c) Full gear, throw soft balls (tennis or indoor balls). Catcher blocks by glove to ground/ball then knees to ball. We are short tossing at this point.
 - (d) Full distance soft ball toss. Same process.
 - (e) Hard balls, short throws.
 - (f) Full distance throws, medium speed to called area.
 - (g) Full distance throws, hard to called area.
 - (h) Full distance throws to varied areas.
 - (i) Once we are satisfied with the technique development, we work regularly in bouts of 50 blocks, 10 at a time. Catchers work in pairs. In season we cut back to 25 blocks. What we have seen is that catchers will cup over the ball naturally using this technique. They become active players, like infielders charging the ball, rather than targets for missiles. The final step is to add block the ball then get up and recover it.
7. *Flinching.* This is intended for first-time catchers and is not really so much a drill as it is a demonstration. Flinching is one of the biggest problems with new catchers. They turn their head when the batter swings and they turn their head on pitches in the dirt. They will NEVER be a good catcher until they stop flinching! Ask your new catcher if he has ever played the game "I Bet I Can Make You Blink." His answer will be "yes." Every kid has played this game with a friend at one time or another. Explain to him that being a catcher is very much like that game. The batter is saying, "I bet I can make you blink when I swing" and the catcher is saying, "I bet you can't!" Now you have to convince the catcher that the mask is going to protect them. They need confidence in their equipment. The coach should toss tennis balls lightly at the mask or wave their arm in front of the catcher.
8. *Play at the Plate/Passed Balls.* In Minors AAA and Major 60 (9-10 year olds) there inevitably are going to be balls that get by the catcher. With a runner on 3rd base, the next thing the catcher needs to focus on is getting to the ball to make a play at the plate. This drill is specifically designed to imitate that play. This drill can be used on the side in an open area, as a backstop is not needed for this drill. We set up a portable home plate in an open area. Place 5-10 balls behind the catcher in a semi-circle (about the distance of the backstop). The coach stands at home plate, imitating a pitcher covering the plate. On the coach's command "Go" (the right-handed) catcher runs to the 1st ball, approaches it from the right side, rakes in the ball and makes a toss to the pitcher (coach) covering the plate. The catcher gets back up and sets up in the squat again, waits for the coach to give the command and repeats the drill with the next ball, and keeps repeating the drill until all baseballs are thrown to the coach. Things to look for:

- (a) Catcher hustles for the baseball.
- (b) The toss back to the coach should be almost like a shortstop's toss to 2nd base when turning the double play. Meaning, it should NOT be a full wind up throw.
- (c) As with "b" above, the catcher should stay low. If possible throwing from one knee. Popping up will only delay the throw and possibly allow the runner to score.

Alternate drills using the same set-up:

- (a) Catcher works one way using all the baseballs, setups up a new half circle and works the other way.
- (b) Cut the amount of baseballs down to 5 baseballs spread apart. The coach calls out a number from 1 to 5 and the catcher must react by recognizing which ball must be played.
- (c) Same as above, however once the catcher gets to the ball the coach will call out "2nd" or "3rd" or other set signal for the catcher. The catcher must listen for this signal; if he/she DOES NOT hear it they make the play at the plate. If they DO hear the signal, the catcher must pick up the ball and run the ball back in to the infield, being ready to throw to a base (2nd or 3rd usually).
- (d) *Speed Drill.* Same 5 to 10 baseballs all done on a timed basis. If the catcher completes it within a set time they get a water break or other "reward." If they don't do it they get a 30 second rest and must repeat the drill. NOTE: Coaches should be realistic when setting the time limit. Setting a time that cannot be met, may mentally defeat the catcher before he/she starts the drill and you will not get the "hustle" you are trying to positively reinforce.

Pitching Drills

1. *Mechanics.* Walk the player through their pitching motion and work on the mechanics of the player. Teach the 3 phases of the delivery:
 - Phase 1 – Initial stance up to and including the balance position.
 - Phase 2 – From the balance position to when the stride foot lands.
 - Phase 3 – After the stride foot is down (i.e., follow-through, fielding position, etc.).
 The key to good pitching is great mechanics.
2. *Batting Practice.* Allow pitchers to pitch batting practice as if they were in a live game. Keep track of strike outs, walks, and hits.
3. *Location Drill.* Have the pitcher pair up with a catcher and practice throwing at different locations (i.e., catcher's helmet, shoulder, knee, chest, etc.). Naturally, the catcher should catch the ball and NOT let it hit him.

Outfield

FUNDAMENTALS OF OUTFIELD PLAY

A. FIELDING A GROUND BALL IN THE OUTFIELD

The method of fielding a ground ball in the outfield varies with the game situation, although the basic fundamentals are the same as when fielding a ground ball in the infield:

1. Ground ball hit sharply with nobody on base – sprint to the ball – Gradually slow down as you come within three steps of the ball. Drop one knee to the ground to block the ball to prevent the ball from eluding the glove.
2. Base hit with runners on – Base-charge the ball then slow up to field the ball using the same technique as an infielder.
3. Hit with a runner attempting to score – sprint to the ball without slowing up – field the ball to the glove side of the body, thus lessening the possibility of your kicking the ball. The fielder should come up throwing, since this is usually an all-or-nothing play.

B. THE THROW TO THE INFIELD

1. In all cases, step and throw with a full, overhand arm motion, placing backspin on the ball so that the trajectory will hold true.
2. Pull the opposite hip and shoulder down to bring the throwing arm more overhand, thereby adding greater body action to the throw.
3. Practice making long throws to second, third and home plate. Make throws so as to bounce once before reaching the base. Also practice throwing on the fly to the glove side of the relay man.

C. CATCHING A FLY BALL

The one basic rule of thumb when catching fly balls is to get to the ball quickly and position yourself to make the catch.

1. Turn quickly in the direction in which the ball is hit.
2. The fielder should always check the direction and velocity of the wind. Such information is helpful in determining the flight path of the ball. For a ball which is hit over your head, simply turn in the direction of which the wind is blowing.
3. On calm days, line drives curve toward the foul lines. A right-handed batter tends to hook the ball down the left field foul line. Conversely, the left-handed batter hooks the ball toward the right field line and slices it to the left field line.

D. TIPS FOR OUTFIELDERS

Here are some basic rules to consider when playing the outfield:

1. Turn Concentrate on the game and anticipate your play if the ball comes to you. In some games outfielders may get few chances to field the ball. Bear down on every pitch – don't be caught napping – and make the best attempt on plays hit in your direction.
2. To catch balls hit over your head, run with your back to the infield and turn your head to watch the ball over your shoulder. DO NOT BACK PEDAL. Get to the ball the quickest way. If there is time, turn to face the infield and make a normal catch at head or chest level with the fingers of the glove pointing skyward.

3. To catch sinking line drives, keep your glove to the side of the body. By keeping your glove to the side of your body, you should be less likely to kick the ball out of your glove.
4. To avoid colliding with fellow outfielders and infielders, get in the habit of “calling” for the ball, providing that you intend to make the catch.
5. Do not hold onto the ball in the outfield. Always return the ball to the infield as soon as possible to prevent runners from taking an extra base.

Defensive Drills

1. *Crossover Drill.* The purpose of this drill is to teach the player the proper way to move laterally. Have players pair up and stand 15-20 feet apart. Player 1 will be in the ready position while Player 2 rolls a ball to either the left or right of player 1. Player 1 will execute a CORRECT crossover step, field the ball, and throw back to Player 2. Coaches will walk around and correct any deficiencies they see.
2. *Dive Drill.* Let’s face it, all kids dive for the ball, so let’s teach them how to do it properly. This drill is easily divided into two separate stages.

Stage 1 – Players will pair up and Player 1 will begin on his knees with the ball already in his glove. Player 1 will then fall, simulating a dive. Player 1 must maintain control of the ball, hop up, and throw to Player 2.

Stage 2 – Involves Player 1 on his feet with Player 2 tossing the ball so Player 1 must dive for it. Player 1 must dive, field, and throw back to Player 2.

3. *Short Hop Drill.* Players pair up and alternate throwing difficult short hops to one another. Throws should be of varying speeds and difficulty. Players should attempt to keep feet stationary (in good ready position) and rely on knees, hips, elbows, etc. to catch the difficult short hops. Another variation has the player on his knees while fielding the short hops. This way, he must rely on only his hands.
4. *Slow Roller.* When hitting ground balls to the infield, remember to include slow rollers that the players must charge and field. Allow the players to be athletic when fielding these types of balls.
5. *Team Defense.* Set up a full 9-player defense with the rest of the players to be used as hitters and base runners. Then have the hitters hit off of a tee. Before each hitter takes his turn hitting off the tee and running the bases, make the defense call out what the situation is. Example: “nobody on, 0 outs, play is at 1st base.” If the first hitter gets a double then before the next hitter hits, the defense calls out, “runner on second, nobody out, play is at 1st base.” We use 1st and 3rd base coaches just as if it were a game being played and run the bases accordingly. After 3 outs are made, have the hitters grab their gloves and trade out with some of the fielders. Using a tee for hitting keeps everything moving quickly. Just don’t let the hitter hit the ball until after the defense calls out what the situation is each time. If you work on this enough to carry over into the games, it can make your team look pretty good on defense when they always know what the situation is. You can keep score and they don’t get tired of this one too quickly.

6. *Fly Balls.* Here is a fun drill to use with 7 and 8 year olds that will help them on fly balls. Using a tennis ball and tennis racquet, serve fly balls to your kids. This drill can be used indoors or outdoors. No matter how high a tennis ball, it's not likely to hurt anyone. This drill allows kids to learn how to catch fly balls without the fear of being hit with the ball. Using a tennis racquet is an easier way to get the ball to travel in a natural arch and less tiring than throwing. We also think it more closely simulates a ball coming off of a bat than a thrown ball. The kids like it because it's fun and different.

7. *Total Defense.* One of our favorite drills combines pitching, catching, fielding, and base running work into one drill as follows:

- (a) Runner on first
- (b) Fielders at 1B, 2B, SS
- (c) Pitcher pitches "live" to catcher (in full gear)
- (d) "Dummy" batter (of course in helmet)

The idea is for 1B to practice his holds, pitcher working from stretch, runner on lead (unless not allowed), catcher on throw downs, and fielders on tags. This is a fun drill that can get a majority of the team involved at the same time, as well as a very useful evaluation tool in pre-season. We recommend the entire team rotating through the fielding and base running. Our feeling is that the pitchers can get quality work in (15-20 pitches and rotate), with all the players getting an opportunity at defensive technique work. This drill can also be modified to runner stealing 3rd, with fielders at 2B/SS/3B.

8. *Defensive Back Drill.* Use it for all players:

- (a) Player lines up facing coach (about 10 feet away).
- (b) Coach calls "hut" and player begins to back-peddle.
- (c) Coach throws ball either right or left; player must turn to go get the ball.

A variation is to simply have the player "go out for a pass" since many coaches prefer not to teach the fielder to take an initial "back-peddle" on a fly ball. Our theory is that the back-peddle gets the player into the habit of an initial step back on any fly ball, since it is easier to come back in, than get burned with a ball hit over their heads.

9. *Fungo Fielding Drill.* This provides players with an opportunity to field a large number of ground balls. The drill has one fielder, who is 60 feet in front of hitter, and one shagger, who stands on the right side of the hitter (three person groups.). Drill can have as many groups as desired. The hitter hits 10 ground balls to the player. After fielding the 10 ground balls, the player becomes the shagger, the shagger becomes the hitter, and the hitter becomes the new fielder. The drill continues to proceed in this manner for as long as desired.

10. *Controlled Game.* Usually done AFTER initial pre-season practice, but BEFORE scrimmaging. Spilt the team up into two teams. Players fill all IF positions, coaches handle OF. Hit the ball around the IF while the offensive team runs bases. As a twist instruct some runners not to stop unless they are tagged out or score. In other words, run wild on the bases. This has two benefits. First, for many kids, it is their first time with real aggressive

base running. Second, it puts pressure on the defense and you will want to see how they respond.

Infield

FUNDAMENTALS OF INFIELD PLAY

A. READY POSITION

1. Preparation to field the Ball – Always assume that the ball will be hit to you. Think through in advance what you will do with the ball once you field it.
2. The stance – Assume a ready position, so that when the ball is delivered to the batter you will be able to move from a balanced position. This means that your weight is forward and over the balls of your feet.
 - (i) Face the batter.
 - (ii) The feet should be comfortably spread apart.
 - (iii) The knees should be bent.
 - (iv) The fielder's weight should be forward and on the balls of the feet.
 - (v) The fielder's eyes should be fixed on the action.
3. The approach – Whenever you must move more than a few steps to field the ball, the fielder should:
 - (i) Move quickly towards the ball while using a fairly direct path.
 - (ii) Then slow up as the ball nears the fielder in order to gain full body control prior to fielding the ball.
 - (iii) Too often fielders move slowly at first, and then accelerate when attempting to field the ball. Errors usually are a result of this type of play.

B. FIELDING GROUND BALLS

1. Whenever possible, ground balls should be fielded in the middle of the body. The fielder should carry the glove close to the ground, with the fingers pointing downward. Bend at the waist to get your head in position to follow the ball with your eyes.
2. With the glove just off the surface of the ground, the arms are relaxed and extended in front of the body. The head must stay down to follow the ball into the glove with your eyes.
3. Glove the ball with the elbows in front of your knees. Then secure the ball with your throwing hand and begin the throwing motion.
The type of throw depends upon how much time you have to make the play. Whenever possible, use a full arm and body motion, preceded by a skip and step towards the target. To throw the ball more quickly or to a teammate close by, the side-arm or underhand throw may be used, while eliminating the skip and step.

C. TIPS FOR INFIELDERS

Here are some general rules to consider when playing the infield positions:

1. Always charge balls hit slowly or with medium speed. “Play the ball – don’t let the ball play you.” This simply means that as a fielder you have two choices:
 - (i) Charge the ball and while doing so, choose the bounce or hop to field the ball or;
 - (ii) Lay back and wait for the ball, taking the chance that you may have to glove the ball on a difficult in-between hop or that the ball might take an erratic bounce over your head.
2. Keep the ball in front of you. It is impossible to field ground balls, cleanly every time. However, the hustling ball player very often avoids an error by scrambling after the ball to throw the runner out.

By knocking the ball down and keeping it in front, you stand a good chance of making the putout with a quick recovery and throw. Once the ball gets past you, the chances of your recovering in time to throw the runner out are considerably less.
3. Keep your eyes on the ball. Often, in anticipation of making the throw, an infielder will take his eye off the ball at the last instant. In most cases, the ball skips under or over the glove. Keep your head down and look the ball into the mitt.
4. Take time to set up before throwing. After ranging far to your left or right to field the ball, you may feel that you have to get rid of the ball quickly. By taking that extra little second to brace the rear leg, the fielder will be able to “get off” a stronger throw.

Baserunning Drills

1. *Run the Bases.* Players line up at home and, one at a time, begin running the bases. Coaches will be on both 1B and 3B instructing the players what to do. Coaches must mix commands for different runners (i.e., run through first, round first, slide into 2B/3B, all the way). This will teach the players to “pick up” the coaches and follow instructions.
2. *Sliding.* This drill is best done in the OF after a light rain. Wet grass is easier to slide on and will cut down on possible injuries. Players will line up along foul line and coaches will place a base regulation distance from the line. Each coach will have their own base to minimize the time spent on this. Players will run and properly slide into the base. Coaches can teach different sliding techniques through this. Remember, always walk through before going full speed.
 - (a) Stand-Up Slide – Right knee is bent slightly and left leg positioned under right knee. Runner must slide on hip pockets, holding hands high. The slide should start about 4 steps from the base. When practicing this, have the coach hold a bat over and just in front of the bag. When the runner slides, they should reach for the bat as they are going down. This will help them remember to keep their hands high.

- (b) Hook Slide – A very easy slide that is easy to execute. Runner will simply leave the ground, lean back, and extend both legs to one side in a hooked position. Runner can slide to either side, but should always tag the base with his rear foot.
3. *Tag Up.* Have players on a base while coach throws fly balls to OF. When OF catches the ball, have runner tag up and advance while defense attempts to throw them out.
 4. *Conditioning Drill.* This drill is to be done at full speed. Players will line up at home plate and proceed like so one at a time:
 - (a) Run hard and round 1B, dive back into bag.
 - (b) Get up, steal and round 2B, dive back into bag.
 - (c) Get up, run hard, round 3B, continue and slide home.
 5. *Total Team Sprint.* Have the entire team line up behind home plate. On command have the first player sprint to first and as soon as he touches first then give the command for the next player to go. Time how long it takes from the first to the last player to reach first. Can be really good for conditioning and speed, and as a team event since the team as a whole can see their improvement as the season goes on.
 6. *Infield Hit.* Here is how to teach the kids how to run out an infield hit. Have players line up well behind HP. The first batter fungos a whiffle ball (doesn't matter if he hits it or not), drops the bat and sprints toward first. Coach stands along the 1B foul line in foul territory about 8 feet beyond 1B with his right hand out to slap hands with the runner, but his left hand hidden behind his back, holding a baseball. The runner is supposed to sprint PAST 1B, slap the coach's hand and turn his head to the right to see whether or not the coach tossed the ball onto the ground toward the fence. If they don't see the ball they are to slow down, turn right and return to the end of the line behind HP in foul territory. If they see the ball rolling on the ground, they are supposed to turn left, sprint toward and slide into 2B. This teaches them 2 things: run ALL THE WAY to and through 1B, look for the overthrow and take advantage of it to advance to 2B. Notes: It is useful to have a helper to retrieve balls or have several balls. Have each batter fungo for a little realism and use a whiffle ball for safety and ease of retrieval.
 7. *Leadoffs.* Two things to make sure of before you take your lead on the bases:
 - (a) Know where the ball is.
 - (b) Make sure that you have the sign from your coach. Don't ever, ever look for your coach without being on the bag.

At this time, with your left foot, take one step back towards the outfield (when on 1st or 2nd) and then 3 side straddle steps towards second base (4 going towards third). The step back towards the outfield puts you in position to dive to the “back” of the bag which is the furthest distance from the pitcher’s pickoff and also gives you a better vision of where the base fielder is and when he releases from the bag. Also, when diving back, tag the back edge of the base with your hand, and your arm fully extended. This gives the fielder very little to tag. If you see that you are getting back in plenty of time, you may want to take an extra half or full step on your lead. At 3rd base, your

lead should always be in foul territory with the same dive back as 1st and 2nd. At 3rd, be ready for line drives, as your lead may take you right into one. Remember, good, smart base running doesn't start on the bases; it starts in the dugout by observing the pitcher and his moves.

8. *Relay Drill.* Divide up in two teams and put a player from team 1 on 1st and one from team 2 on 3rd with the rest of the players at home in separate lines facing their base (1st or 3rd). Give a baseball to the first one in line on each team. On "go" they run to their base and hand off the ball to the player waiting, who sprints home and hands off to the next player in line, who returns to the base and hands off and so on until the player who started on the base returns to the base. Great for conditioning, teamwork, competition and gets them digging down the base lines.

Practice Session Templates

Templates for Five and Six Year Olds

Practice #1

10	Minutes:	Players & Parents Rules & Requirements
2	Minutes:	Fake Swing, Run Home to 1st; go to OF for Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Hitting: Finish
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Throwing: Stance
5	Minutes:	Practice Evaluation & Future Itinerary
67	Minutes:	Total

Practice #2

2	Minutes:	Fake Swing, Run Home to 1st; Go to OF for Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting Review: Finish
20	Minutes:	Hitting: Stance
5	Minutes:	Break
5	Minutes:	Throwing Review: Stance
20	Minutes:	Perfect Fielding Position
5	Minutes:	Practice Evaluation & Future Itinerary
67	Minutes:	Total

Practice #3

5	Minutes:	Run Home to 1st; 1st to 2nd; go to OF for Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting Review: Stance
20	Minutes:	Hitting: T-Hit (Using Tennis Balls into Fence)
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Catching Instruction
5	Minutes:	Fielding Review: PFP
5	Minutes:	Practice Evaluation & Future Itinerary
70	Minutes:	Total

Practice #4

7	Minutes:	Run Home to 1st; 1st to 2nd; 2nd to 3rd
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Fielding: PFP Roll & Ready Position
10	Minutes:	Catch & Throw
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting: T-Hit
5	Minutes:	Sliding Stance
5	Minutes:	Practice Evaluation & Future Itinerary
77	Minutes:	Total

Practice #5

10	Minutes:	Run Home to 1st; 1st to 2nd; 2nd to 3rd; 3rd to Home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Fielding: PFP Roll
5	Minutes:	Catch & Throw
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Infield & Outfield Practice
10	Minutes:	Hitting: T-Hit
5	Minutes:	Practice Evaluation & Future Itinerary
70	Minutes:	Total

Practice #6

10	Minutes:	Run home to 2nd, 2nd to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Catch and throw
40	Minutes:	Simulated Game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation & future itinerary
70	Minutes:	Total

Practice #7

10	Minutes:	Run home to 2B, 2nd to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
5	Minutes:	Sliding
5	Minutes:	4 square flip
50	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
85	Minutes:	Total

Templates for Seven and Eight Year Olds

Practice #1

10	Minutes:	Players and parents rules and requirements
2	Minutes:	Fake swing and run home to 1B; go to OF for stretch
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
25	Minutes:	Hitting: Finish and objective
5	Minutes:	Break
10	Minutes:	Throwing: Stance
20	Minutes:	Perfect Fielding Practice: Cover, Cradle, Separate
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
82	Minutes:	Total

Practice #2

2	Minutes:	Fake swing run home to 1B; go to OF for stretch
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting Review; Finish and objective
20	Minutes:	Hitting: Stance, Trigger, Objective, Finish
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	PFP roll and ready position
20	Minutes:	Throwing; lower half
10	Minutes:	Fly ball
5	Minutes:	Sliding
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
97	Minutes:	Total

Practice #3

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting Review: Stance, Trigger, Objective, Finish
20	Minutes:	Hitting: T-hit or flip
5	Minutes:	Break
10	Minutes:	Throwing Review: Stance – lower half
10	Minutes:	Catching instruction
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
15	Minutes:	PFP roll
15	Minutes:	Fly ball
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
100	Minutes:	Total

Practice #4

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Sliding drills
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice
5	Minutes:	Break
40	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
95	Minutes:	Total

Practice #5

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Hitting: T-hit or flip
10	Minutes:	Steal signs
5	Minutes:	Break
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
5	Minutes:	4 square flip

40	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
100	Minutes:	Total

Practice #6

7	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	PFP Roll
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Cut-offs to 2B and 3B
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting T-hit or flip
40	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
117	Minutes:	Total

Practice #7

5	Minutes:	Run home to 1B, 1B to 3B, 3B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting review; Stance, trigger, objective, finish
5	Minutes:	4 square flip
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice
45	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
120	Minutes:	Total

Templates for Nine and Ten Year Olds

Practice #1

10	Minutes:	Players and parents rules and requirements
2	Minutes:	Fake swing, run home to 1B; go to OF for stretch
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Hitting: Finish, Objective and Stance
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Perfect Fielding Position – short hop
10	Minutes:	Throwing – stance
10	Minutes:	Proper Catch
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
87	Minutes:	Total

Practice #2

2	Minutes:	Fake swing, run to 1B. Go to OF for stretch
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting: Finish, Objective, Stance
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Trigger and hips

5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Lower half
20	Minutes:	Fly ball
5	Minutes:	Sliding stance
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
107	Minutes:	Total

Practice #3

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Review PFP
20	Minutes:	Fielding; Ready position and 1-2 field
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Upper half (Pitchers work separately)
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
5	Minutes:	Break
10	Minutes:	Infield Depths
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
100	Minutes:	Total

Practice #4

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Review: Stance, trigger, hips and throwing
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Cut-offs and relays to bases
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
10	Minutes:	Sliding
10	Minutes:	Coaches Signs
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
115	Minutes:	Total

Practice #5

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Towel drill
10	Minutes:	Throwing; 4 square
5	Minutes:	Break
5	Minutes:	Yes-Yes Hitting
60	Minutes:	Simulated game
5:00	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
115	Minutes:	Total

Practice #6

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Towel drill
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Bunting; Sacrifice and squeeze
40	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
120	Minutes:	Total

Practice #7

5	Minutes:	Run home to 1B, 1B to 2B, 2B to 3B, 3B to home
5	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield with cut-offs and relays
55	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
120	Minutes:	Total

Templates for 11 and 12 Year Olds

Practice #1

10	Minutes:	Players and parents rules and requirements
2	Minutes:	Fake swing, run home to 1B. Go to OF for stretch
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Hitting: Finish, objective, stance
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
20	Minutes:	Perfect fielding position short hop
10	Minutes:	Throwing stance
5	Minutes:	Throw (Controlled)
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
107	Minutes:	Total

Practice #2

2	Minutes:	Fake swing, run home to 1B. Go to OF for stretch
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting review; Finish, objective, stance
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Trigger and hips
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
20	Minutes:	Throwing lower half
5	Minutes:	Throw (Controlled)

20	Minutes:	Fielding; Ready position, 1-2 field with short roll
10	Minutes:	Sliding stance and drill
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
122	Minutes:	Total

Practice #3

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Review PFP and 1-2 field
20	Minutes:	Fielding; 1-2 field with long roll
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Upper half (pitchers work separately)
5	Minutes:	Controlled throw
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
10	Minutes:	Fly ball
10	Minutes:	Infield depths
10	Minutes:	Coaches signs
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
125	Minutes:	Total

Practice #4

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Throw
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Cut-offs and relays to bases
20	Minutes:	Pitchers work infield and outfield fungos
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Hands
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
130	Minutes:	Total

Practice #5

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Throwing; Towel drill
10	Minutes:	Fielding; Backhand and short hop
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
60	Minutes:	Simulated Game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
125	Minutes:	Total

Practice #6

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	4 square (Pitchers work separately)
20	Minutes:	Double steal defense
5	Minutes:	Break
15	Minutes:	Bunting; Sacrifice and squeeze
50	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
130	Minutes:	Total

Practice #7

5	Minutes:	Run home to 1B, 1B to 2B, 2B to 3B and 3B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield with cutoffs and relays
55	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
125	Minutes:	Total

Templates for 13 – 15 Year Olds

Practice #1

10	Minutes:	Players and parents rules and requirements
2	Minutes:	Fake swing and run home to 1B. Go to OF for stretch
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Finish, objective, stance
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
20	Minutes:	Perfect fielding position – short hop
15	Minutes:	Backhand and short hop
10	Minutes:	Throwing stance
5	Minutes:	Throw (Controlled)
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluations and future itinerary
122	Minutes:	Total

Practice #2

2	Minutes:	Fake swing and run home to 1B. Go to OF for stretch
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Hitting review; Finish, objective, stance
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Trigger and hips
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Lower half

5	Minutes:	Controlled throw
20	Minutes:	Fielding; Ready position, 1-2 field with short roll
10	Minutes:	Sliding stance and drill
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
122	Minutes:	Total

Practice #3

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Review PFP and 1-2 field
20	Minutes:	Fielding; 1-2 field with long roll
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Throwing; Upper half (Pitchers work separately)
5	Minutes:	Controlled throw
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
10	Minutes:	Fly ball
10	Minutes:	Infield depths
10	Minutes:	Coaches signs
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
125	Minutes:	Total

Practice #4

5	Minutes:	Run home to 2B and 2B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Throw
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Cut-offs and relays to bases
20	Minutes:	Pitchers work & infield-outfield fungos
20	Minutes:	Hitting; Hands
20	Minutes:	Hitting; T-hit or flip
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
130	Minutes:	Total

Practice #5

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
10	Minutes:	Throwing; Towel drill
15	Minutes:	Baserunning; Primary and secondary leads
5	Minutes:	Break
5	Minutes:	Yes-Yes hitting
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
60	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
135	Minutes:	Total

Practice #6

5	Minutes:	Run rounding 1B and 1B to 3B
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
20	Minutes:	Baserunning; What to look for on a steal; Pitchers work separately on CB
20	Minutes:	Double steal defense
5	Minutes:	Break
15	Minutes:	Bunting; Sacrifice and squeeze
50	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
130	Minutes:	Total

Practice #7

5	Minutes:	Run home to 1B, 1B to 2B, 2B to 3B, 3B to home
10	Minutes:	Calisthenics
5	Minutes:	Catch and throw
20	Minutes:	Bunt defense
5	Minutes:	Break
20	Minutes:	Infield and outfield practice with cut-off and relays; Pitchers work separately on CB and pickoffs
55	Minutes:	Simulated game
5	Minutes:	Practice evaluation and future itinerary
125	Minutes:	Total

Babe Ruth League Virtual Academy

A member login is required to access the BRL Virtual Academy at:

<https://www.baberuthleague.org/virtual-academy.aspx>

Basic Front Toss

Front Toss is one of the most essential drills in your arsenal. Bill demonstrates how having more control over the placement of the pitch can force a hitter to load and explode on the outside pitch with authority.

High Leg Tee Drill

Hitting for power demands an effective weight transfer. With the High Tee Drill, hitters can work on maximizing their weight shift to hit the ball with authority.

Soft Toss from Behind

Bill demonstrates how to build hand-eye coordination for quick reaction with a unique and fun drill.

Turning Two at 2B

Bill covers the footwork and fundamentals of turning the double play as a second baseman.

The Box Drill - SS to 2B

Bill Ripken demonstrates the Box Drill - a useful and efficient drill for middle infielders to practice starting the double play. In this Box Drill demonstration, players work on starting the double play from second base.

Throwing Off the Back Hand

A great backhand play is just the beginning. Now you have to throw across your body to get the out. Bill Ripken shows how infielders can leverage good footwork to generate momentum toward their target after making a backhand stab.

Going First to Third

If you're going to make it all the way to third base from first on a base hit, you better have the proper footwork during your secondary lead. In this tip of the day, Bill Ripken shows you how to get off the bag, get a secondary, and take the proper path to go from first to third.

Making the Barehand Play

In crucial situations, the third baseman has to make a play with his barehand. Ryan Heller and David Bounds show you the keys to the barehand play when it matters most.

Infield Throwing

The greatest players use their entire body to make strong, accurate throws. In this tip, Bill Ripken uses a simple drill to get players in the habit of generating momentum toward their target, making an accurate throw, and following through.

Running Through First Base

Bill Ripken explains the two important fundamentals of beating out an infield hit: pick a finish line beyond the bag & step on the front of the bag. You want to be running full-tilt all the way and you want to hit the part of the bag closest to home plate to cut down the time and distance to the bag as much as possible. On a bang-bang play, it makes all the difference.

Sacrifice Bunt to Third Base

Bill Ripken demonstrates the keys to laying down a successful sacrifice bunt toward the third baseman.

Suicide Squeeze

When the game is on the line, your coach will call for the suicide squeeze. Will you be ready to win the game for your team? Bill Ripken gives you everything you need to know to execute the suicide squeeze with perfect timing.

Advanced Front Toss

Take your soft toss to the next level by placing a focus on the outside corner but varying with tosses to the inside part of the plate.

Scoring from Second

They call it scoring position for a reason. Once you get to second base as a baserunner, you are expected to score on a base hit. Bill Ripken shows how runners should create depth and cut a tight angle at third base in order to score from second base every time.

Quick Hands Drill

With the Quick Hands Drill, hitters isolate their hand and arm movement to strive for the quickest bat speed to the ball while staying balanced.

Holding the Runner at First

Stay big. Stay athletic. Stay ready. Bill Ripken demonstrates the proper positioning for holding a runner at first base.

Starting the 4-6-3 Double Play

How do you start the double play as a second baseman? Bill Ripken shows you how with the correct footwork and the fundamentals of a perfect underhand toss.

The Backhand

Bill Ripken demonstrates an easy drill for getting infielders to field tough groundballs with the proper backhand fundamentals.

Turning the 5-3 Double Play

Ryan Heller and David Bounds demonstrate the footwork needed to start the 5-3 double play at third base.

Picking Balls in the Dirt

Good first basemen catch good throws from their teammates. Great first basemen catch anything their teammates throw. If you want to be a great first baseman, check out this tip from Bill Ripken as he explains how to attack balls in the dirt to help your team generate outs.

Receiving Throws at First Base

A first baseman's main job is to receive throws from his teammates in order to generate outs. The wider an area a first baseman can cover while keeping a foot on the bag, the more effective he will be at making his team better defensively. And to be effective, it all begins with getting your footwork in-sync.

The Walking Lead at 3B

At third base, the runner's secondary lead changes from a shuffle to a walking lead. Bill Ripken explains how the walking lead gives you the best chance of scoring from third with every opportunity - whether your teammate puts the ball in play or the defense gives you a chance with a passed ball or wild pitch.

Plate Coverage

In this quick tip, David Bounds shows how footwork in the batter's box has a huge impact on your ability to cover the plate and drive the ball to every field.

Bunting for a Hit

How do you bunt for a base hit? A well-timed reaction and strategic placement of your bunt, that's how. Bill Ripken demonstrates how to bunt for a base hit, the Ripken Way.

Eliminating the Double Threat at 3B

In late-game situations, defending against the double is crucial to keeping your team in a position to win. Ryan Heller shows you where a third baseman should play to give himself the best chance of preventing a double down the line..

Outfield Footwork Fundamentals

Going back on a deep fly ball is one of the toughest plays and outfielder has to make. To prevent extra bases, it's important that an outfielder starts with the correct footwork in order to give himself the best chance of making a great catch. Bill Ripken demonstrates the correct footwork - drop-step, crossover and go!.

One Arm Drill

Cal Ripken, Jr. and Bill demonstrate the One Arm Drill at the Under Armour All-America training facility. With the One Arm Drill, hitters isolate their bottom hand on the bat and focus on taking a quick path to the point of contact.

Taking Your Lead from First Base

Moving up on the basepaths demands a good lead and an even better secondary lead. Bill Ripken demonstrates the fundamentals of getting off the bag at first and being aggressive with your secondary.

Starting the 5-4-3 Double Play

The 5-4-3 double play is one of the most difficult turns in baseball - it all begins with an accurate throw from the third baseman. Ryan Heller shows you how to gain momentum and deliver a perfect throw to second base to start the 5-4-3 double play.

Bat Grip

In this quick tip, David Bounds shows the proper way to grip the bat with your "door knocking knuckles" aligned.

Front Toss With a Purpose

In this training tip, Cal and Bill demonstrate how to approach Front Toss with a purpose to get the most out of the drill. Work the outside corner and drive the ball to the big part of the field. To do that, you have to stay within yourself and let the ball get deep in the zone.

Covering The Gaps

An outfielder's primary job is to prevent the offense from taking bases they haven't earned. Lateral quickness plays an important role in enabling outfielders to do just that. And to have great lateral quickness, it all begins with your first step.

Managing the Run Game

Sometimes the best way to deceive a runner at first base is to simply hold the ball. Bill Ripken and John Habyan explain in this Tip of the Day.

The One Knee Tee Drill

For young players developing their arm strength, there's nothing more crucial than getting the elbow above the shoulder when throwing. Dropping the elbow creates unnecessary strain on the arm and limits your ability to throw hard. Use this variation of the One Knee Drill to correct a player who drops his elbow.

The Box Drill - 2B to SS

Bill Ripken demonstrates the Box Drill - a useful and efficient drill for middle infielders to practice starting the double play. In this Box Drill demonstration, players work on starting the double play from second base.

Throwing from the Outfield

Bill Ripken shows how a great throw from the outfield depends less on pure arm strength and more on using the proper footwork to create momentum toward your target as you catch the ball and transition into a strong and accurate throw.

Proper Tee Positioning

The tee is one of the most effective training tools in your arsenal, but you have to know how to use it. David Bounds demonstrates how to use the tee the Ripken Way, and it all begins with putting yourself in the right starting position.

High Five Drill

The underhand flip is perhaps one of the most overlooked fundamentals in baseball. But it always comes into play at crucial moments in game situations, like starting double plays or getting out of a jam with the pitcher covering first. Use this drill to perfect your underhand flip.

Fielding the Ground Ball

The three keys to fielding a ground ball are: have a wide base, get your butt down, and field the ball out in front. Bill Ripken demonstrates a simple drill for perfecting how you field the ground ball so it becomes routine in game situations.

Getting Up With the Pitch at 1B

As a first baseman, when you're holding a runner on the bag, it's important to get into a ready defensive position once your pitcher commits to throwing toward home. Bill Ripken shows you how to get up with the pitch so you're ready to play your position.

Power Position Drill - Basic

The power position is the most important phase of a pitcher's mechanics - the pivotal moment when all of the momentum a pitcher has generated gets transferred to the ball. With this drill, John Habyan shows how isolating the power position allows a pitcher to focus on getting his upper and lower body in sync to maximize power to the plate.

Advanced Hitting with the High Tee

It's no secret: to hit the high fastball, the fundamentals of your swing have to be flawless. That's where the high tee drill comes in. By elevating the tee, you force your hands to be quick through the zone in order to stay on top of the ball.

One Knee Drill for Arm Action

Take a knee and isolate your upper body movement in order to work on developing the proper arm action from glove to release point. This drill is perfect for pitchers of all ages and levels to incorporate into their warm-up routine.

Side Toss Drill

Take your lower half out of the equation and focus on having quick hands through the zone with the Side Toss Drill.

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