



**FUNDAMENTAL COACHES TRAINING**  
**PROVIDED BY NILES-CENTERVILLE LITTLE LEAGUE**



## **Overview**

Niles-Centerville Little League's commitment is to provide the best program for the youth of our league. With this training, all coaches should have a better understanding for the fundamentals. The material within this training guide is broken into two sections. Section 1 is devoted to improving the skills of the players. Section 2 is devoted to practice drills and how to make a practice plan. This material is presented to improve the quality of play but more importantly to help you as manager or coach to pass on the correct fundamentals to each player.

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# Throwing Mechanics

## **The Grip:**

1. Fingers on *top* of ball somewhat close together.
2. Fingers preferably across wide seams.
3. Ball should be out and away from the meat of the hand.

## **Hand position for maximum strength on ball:**

1. Rotate hand out and away from the body. This helps lift the elbow.
2. Fingers on top of the ball.
3. Throw ball so that there is back spin. Back spin will insure an accurate throw.

## **Arm Action:**

1. Catch the ball in glove. If ball comes in above waist align thumbs and catch. If ball comes in below waist align little fingers and catch.
2. Bring ball in a downward arch and then up.
3. Rotate ball and wrist outward so that wrist is in a cocked position and elbow is high.

## **Body Action:**

1. Pivot foot should be moved so that it is square to the target. (Instep of foot will face the target.)
2. The front shoulder should be in a closed position. In this closed position the front shoulder will be pointed at the person your are throwing to.
3. Striding foot-- With back foot squared and front shoulder closed, the body should move into a position as the stride foot lands in which the belly button is in line with the person being thrown to.
4. Follow through-- Rotate shoulder to shoulder. Back shoulder will rotate through and come into a position in which it now points at the target. Back foot should come off the ground.

## **Throwing Accuracy:**

1. Throw ball into an imaginary circle that begins at belt level to the chin, on a straight line or slightly downward plane with back spin on the baseball.
2. Use the skip and throw method. (crow hop)

## **Basic Rules for Defensive Play**

1. Each player must know the number of outs, location of runners, score, and inning. Infielders should know the ball and strike count.
2. Each player should be eager to be involved in the next play.
3. Players should charge all ground balls.
4. Players should use both hands on plays whenever possible, and the hands should be carried in a low position before fielding ground balls.
5. Players should throw to a specific target, not a general area.
6. Players should make sure of the first out on a double play, even though it may take a split second longer. If the ball is bobbled, get an out somewhere.
7. With runners on base, players should try to knock down all potential base hits and try to keep them in the infield.
8. With runners on base, infielders should be ready to take proper cutoff or relay position on base hits.
9. Players should keep the glove wide open when fielding all ground balls.
10. The player's hips should be low and hand stretched well in front of the body to field the ball.
11. Players should call pop flies after the ball has reached its peak.
12. Players should field all ground balls with the quickness necessary to succeed against runners of various speeds.
13. Players should concentrate on the proper mechanics of fielding every ball.

# The Effective Infielder

## Qualifications

1. Be competitive and alert.
2. Throw with accuracy and in most infield positions, power.
3. Mobility left and right.
4. "Soft", quick hands.
5. Eagerness to make a challenging play.
6. Knowledge of defensive situations and all options.

## Attitude

An effective infielder desires that the ball be hit to him. Infielders should be eager to display their skills and help the team. The infielder should always be in a the ready position before each pitch regardless of the length of the game or the number of pitches thrown. Good infielders know what they are going to do with the ball before it is hit to them.

Effective infielders are constantly "talking it up" and supporting their pitcher and other teammates. The effective infielder always displays a competitive but positive attitude. He must be mentally keyed to respond instantly to each situation as it develops.

## Communication

Effective infielders communicate with each other as well as the rest of their teammates. The shortstop should always communicate with the infielders as to base coverage in certain situations. Constant support and communication between infielders is a must. Infielders must constantly communicate outs and situations to each other as well as the outfielders. Communication on pop flies on the infield is essential. Communicating what certain players did previously to all players is also important.

## Field/Weather Conditions

An effective infielder is always aware of conditions of the playing surface. Fore example, many times a damp playing surface leads to a "slow" infield in which the ball is going to come to them slower and may not bounce quite as high as under normal surface conditions. An infield that is "fast" or "slow", grass or dirt, rocky or sandy, may necessitate how the infielder positions himself on the defense.

As with outfielders, infielders must contend with sun and win successfully. Although infielders do not receive as many fly balls as outfielders do, they still must be aware of the possibility that the sun and wind may be a factor in fielding a pop fly or receiving a throw from the outfield.

## Throwing the Baseball

Effective infielders use the entire throwing side during the "skip and throw" for a good throw, bringing the throwing shoulder quickly over the top of the throw to insure both power and accuracy. Good infielders complete a successful fielding effort by making a perfect throw, keeping eyes on the target, and following through with the throwing shoulder towards the

target.

After the throw, the back leg should move up from the ground about one foot after the ball is released, to allow the body to roll properly during the follow through. Dragging the back foot as the ball is thrown will contribute to a "lazy" throwing shoulder and often result in a high throw.

The effective infielder thinks, field---skip---and throw and while doing this concentrates on one of these components at a time.

# Playing the Infield

## **Preliminary Movements**

The "Ready Position" is straight forward with knees pointed slightly inward and weight leaning forward similar to a defensive stance in basketball. The feet should be comfortably apart while fielding, slightly wider than the shoulders. The most important concerns at this point are to get the best jump on the ball and to concentrate on the speed and bounce of the ball.

### *Points of Emphasis*

- Ready position, similar to a defensive stance in basketball.
- Concentrate on ball. Move in a couple small steps as the ball approaches home plate. This will allow for a quicker start.
- Infielder should stand up and move around between pitches in order to relax muscles of tensions and strain.

## **Fielding Ground Balls**

When the ball is hit, the infielder should charge the ball, staying as low as possible. The glove should remain wide open while keeping the belt buckle lined up with the ball. The glove foot should be several inches in front of the throwing foot as the ball enters the glove. The hands are well out in front and the eyes concentrate squarely on the ball as it enters the glove.

As soon as the ball enters the glove, it should be brought straight back to the belt in order to cushion the ball, and assume a skip and throw position. The infielder should point the glove side shoulder straight at the target before throwing. After the ball is fielded the infielder should bring the glove and throwing hand together in the center of the chest while starting the skip and throw.

### *Points of Emphasis*

- Charge ball that is hit, staying as low as possible.
- Keep belt buckle lined up with ball.
- Glove side foot in front of throwing side foot.
- Hands well in front, "pinky" finger to "pinky" finger style.
- Eyes concentrate completely on the ball.
- Pull glove straight back to belt after fielding ball.
- Point glove shoulder at target before throwing.
- Glove and throwing hand in center of chest while starting the skip and throw.

## **The Backhand Method**

The infielder should try to avoid having to use the backhand method when possible.

However, this is not always possible.

When making the fielding using the backhand method, the infielder should try to field the ball with his left foot down, plant the right foot while closing off the hips and shoulders. Then the infielder will push off to throw while transferring the weight back to the left foot. The glove should be on the ground, completely open and in line with the baseball.

When making a long throw across the diamond the infielder should throw overhand.

### **Diving for Balls**

Players should dive and extend the body fully. Players who dive a little bit at a time rarely reach the ball and make the play. It is very important for players to not hit the glove hand elbow when diving. This will cause the glove to close. The glove of course should be open as wide as possible and on the ground.

# The Effective Outfielder

## Qualifications

1. Better than average quickness.
2. Throw with power and accuracy.
3. Be competitive and alert.
4. Eagerness to make a challenging play such as the low liner or, the long drive overhead, or throwing out a baserunner attempting to advance.
5. The centerfielder is usually the best outfielder of the three. He needs good speed. He should have a strong accurate arm, and a leader.
6. All outfielders must be keyed up on every pitch in order to get the jump on every ball.

## Attitude

An effective outfielder will be able to get the best jump on all balls from the ready position. He should be in a ready position before each pitch regardless of the length of the game or the number of pitches thrown. Outfielders never know when the ball is going to be hit toward them, so they must be ready on every pitch.

Good outfielders are eager to play the next ball in order to have the opportunity to display his skills and help the team. He does not know whether the ball that is hit is going to be a sinking liner, a line drive over the head, or a challenge with the fence in trying to make a play.

Therefore, he must be mentally keyed to respond instantly to each situation as it develops.

## Communication

Effective outfielders communicate with each other. Often an outfielder must turn his back on the infield to field a ball and therefore, is unaware of where to throw the ball after fielding it. He needs to focus all his attention on executing the play. Other outfielders should observe the locations of the base runners and tell the fielder where to throw.

## Sun & Wind

Most of the time effective outfielders will contend with the sun and wind successfully. A good way to become aware of the wind's direction and velocity is to throw grass in the air between pitches. This is helpful in tracking fly balls. When battling the sun, the outfielder should use his glove as a sun shield to keep the sun from getting in his eyes. Sun glare, the black "stuff" may also help fighting the sun. Proper adjustment of the hat is also helpful.

## Throwing From The Outfield

Throwing from the outfield is very similar to an overhand pitcher's delivery. As an effective outfielder plays a fly ball or ground ball, he should build his momentum and put it into the throw by performing a "crow-hop", which distributes the weight on the back leg and allows him to put the full force of the body into the throw. In this move the elbow is relaxed as it extends backwards during the throw, and the glove hand points toward the throwing target. As the weight comes forward, the outfielder should release the ball from an overhanded position and follow through low with the throwing shoulder.

The throw from an effective outfielder is usually thrown overhand so that it stays on a straight line as it comes into the infield. Good outfielders develop a strong downward wrist snap as they release the ball, to insure the proper spin and to insure that the ball goes in the right direction as it hits the infield ground.

The most effective throws from the outfield are low, sometimes bouncing one time to the infield. A high, arching throw doesn't have the speed or direction that a low throw will have. In order to throw low, an outfielder should be certain not to drag the throwing shoulder. The throwing shoulder must reach a higher plane than the lead shoulder does as the throwing arm starts forward to release the ball. The effective outfielder must get "on top" of the throw with the upper part of the body. If this does not occur, the throw will sail off with a high, ineffective arch.

To be an effective outfielder players must learn to hit second base, third base, and home plate, always trying to hit the base on a low, one bounce throw. Good outfielders must be able to hit the cut off man or relay people in the chest.

A good outfielder is sound mechanically and alert. He is a tremendous help to his team.

## Playing The Outfield

Outfielders do not get as many chances as infielders do to field ground balls or fly balls. However, their errors can be even more costly because a mishandled ground ball or fly ball will almost always result in extra bases.

An outfielder needs to have good foot speed, good hands, a strong arm, and instincts that will allow him to get a jump on any ball hit his way.

The fundamentals can be broken down into three categories for instructional purposes:

- 1) Preliminary movement
- 2) Fielding ground balls, and
- 3) Fielding fly balls.

### **Preliminary Movements**

Outfielders should never get caught flat footed by a batted ball. The following is a method of preparing to catch a batted ball.

Take two and half steps as the pitcher begins his wind up: a step with the glove-side foot, a second step with the opposite foot, and then a half-step with the glove-side foot. The outfielder should be ready at this point to enter the proper ready position.

Ready Position-- A well balanced stance with the feet shoulder width apart, toes parallel, weight over the balls of the feet, knees bent, and upper body in semi-crouched yet relaxed position with the hands up in front of the body. This stance is likened to that of a tennis player preparing to return a serve. This position will allow the fielder to move in any direction in the quickest possible fashion.

#### *Points of Emphasis*

- First step with glove side foot. (2 1/2 steps total)
- Be in proper ready position.
- Relax between pitches. Step back before the pitcher's next delivery.

### **Fielding Ground Balls**

Most outfielding errors occur on ground balls. Outfielders should go hard to the ball the moment it is hit in order to cut down on the distance of the throw. There are three basic techniques, depending upon the playing conditions, skill of the fielder, and the situation.

**Safe Technique--** Usually used when the playing surface is rough and uneven and when there is no chance of a runner advancing. The outfielder should drop to his throwing side knee so that the lower part of the leg is curled behind the body to block any ball that gets under the glove. At the same time the player should extend his hands and field the ball in front of the body. The head must be down to look the ball all the way into the glove, with the chest serving as a backstop in case of a bad hop. The player should come up into a throwing position immediately after fielding the baseball.

#### *Points of Emphasis*

- Drop to throwing side knee.
- Curl lower half of leg to block any passed ball.
- Extend hands to field ball out in front of body.
- Keep head down to see ball into glove.
- Use chest as backstop when bad hops occur.

**Infield Technique--** Just as the name implies, the outfielder can also make the play in infielder fashion. Outfielder should create a solid fielding base by putting feet shoulder width apart, the glove side foot slightly in front, and the knees flexed to put the upper half of the body in proper position to field the ball. The hands extend out in front of the body with the elbows flexed and the bare hand positioned along side the glove to help secure the ball as it enters the glove.

### *Points of Emphasis*

- Keep glove side foot slightly in front to allow a step through and throw.
- Bend knees, keep head down, and extend arms out in front of body.
- Flex elbows to absorb impact of ball.
- Place throwing hand alongside of glove to secure the ball in glove.

**Pro Method--** In using this method the player will field the ball slightly in front of and on the outside of the glove side foot, with the back of the glove on the grass, palm up, to ensure a clean pick up of the ball. The knees should be bent and the head down to look ball into the glove. If a right handed player fields the ball, it will be fielded on the outside of his left foot. As the ball enters his glove, he will step through with his right foot, plant it, and throw toward the intended target. This method should be used by very few young players because if the baseball would take a bad hop, there is no part of the body to keep the ball from getting past the infielder.

There are three phases to the **Pro Method**

Phase 1 begins with the outfielder going hard to the ball, lining up with it so that all the momentum is going toward the intended target.

Phase 2 the outfielder gaining control of his momentum by lowering his center of gravity while getting into proper fielding position.

Phase 3 concludes the process with the actual fielding of the ball.

### *Points of Emphasis*

- Field ball on outside and in front of glove side foot.
- Keep knees bent, head down.
- Keep back of glove flat on ground. (Palm up.)
- Upon fielding the baseball, step through and throw to target.

## Fielding Fly Balls

An outfielder must get to the ball quickly in proper position to make the catch and throw. Laziness can not be tolerated, as it will cause poor angles and drifting.

The most basic technique is to catch the fly ball with two hands, (thumb to thumb), at shoulder height, and whenever possible, on the throwing side of the body. This will allow the outfielder to get into throwing position faster than he could by bringing the ball across the body.

## Circling Fly Balls

On balls hit high into the air on which the outfielder has time, he should circle the ball to bring his body into the direction of the throw. An outfielder should run a route that will put them two or three steps behind the ball and thus enable him to move into the ball and get his momentum going in the right direction. The ball should only be circled only when the outfielder has time to do so. A large circle isn't going to be effective as it will cause the outfielder to lose valuable time getting to the ball. Basically, an outfielder should get to the ball as fast as he can, get his feet underneath him, and set himself for the throw.

### *Points of Emphasis*

- Get under ball as quickly as possible.
- Catch the ball at shoulder height whenever possible.
- Catch the ball on the throwing side of the body.
- Catch with two hands.
- Circle the ball if time permits.

The best outfielders have one skill in common: They can turn their backs on a ball hit over their heads and run to a point at which they sense the ball will fall, turn and make the catch. This is a skill worthy of working on with the right type of player.

# Steps to Hitting

## Stance

One of most overrated and over-coached phases of game. There are all kinds of stances in baseball.

Accomplished hitters have three things in common:

- a. They keep their head and eyes level with the pitcher. Any cocking of the head will tilt the eyes and make it very difficult to track the pitch.
- b. All good hitters have some kind of movement in their swing, which serves as a timing mechanism vs. the pitcher, and helps alleviate tension in the stance.
- c. Since the hitter's hands will automatically tighten up when they start to swing, it is essential to keep them loose in the stance. Remember: Tight muscles are *slow* muscles, loose muscles are *quick* muscles.

## Stride

The stride enables the hitter to go from his stance into the power position. The hitter takes a short, low step toward the pitcher as his hands move back. Both of these movements must be done simultaneously as the pitcher's arm comes forward.

Most good hitters have similarities in their stride:

- a. They keep their head and eyes level.
- b. Their hands go back into position over the back leg at shoulder level.
- c. Remember, one of the hardest things to do in any sport is to start from a dead standstill. The stride helps the hitter get started and takes him to the power position.

## Power Position

This is the point at which the hitter's front foot touches down after striding. It is extremely critical to the development of a mechanically sound swing.

Consistent hitters have similarities in the power position:

- a. The front arm is flexed with the elbow pointing down-enabling the hitter to have a short swing. A locked front elbow will produce a swinging action that will cause poor and inconsistent contact.
- b. The top hand is closer to the pitcher than the bottom hand, called "**cocking the bat**". This helps keep the front elbow flexed and helps the bat take the shortest route to the ball.
- c. The bat stays up, as if someone is pulling up on the back of the hitter's pants. This helps put the weight over the balls of the feet, enabling the hitter to be balanced.
- d. The knees are flexed and the eyes, shoulders, and hips level, further ensuring the hitter's balance. The front foot should be closed and pointing straight at the plate.
- e. This is the most athletic position a baseball athlete can be in. It is the equivalent to the defensive position in basketball or the serve-reception position in tennis.
- f. Successful hitters will form a triangular formation from the tip of their bat to the bottom of

their feet.

## Initiation with Lower Half of Body

THE LOWER HALF OF THE BODY INITIATES THE SWING--**not the hands**--that initiate the swing. This is just the opposite of what many young players will normally do. The back hip should send a message down the back leg, which then starts a pivot on the ball of the foot.

The impulse and the movement cannot be seen with the naked eye, but slow motion photography shows that the back leg starts while the hands are still back in a cocked position.

Since the largest, strongest muscles of the body are in the buttocks and thighs, it is essential to use them to generate bat speed and power. The hitter who starts his swing with his hands will find it almost impossible to use the lower half of the body, thus losing most of his power. He would also become very susceptible to off-speed pitches, as the hands have already committed to the ball and the hitter has nothing left to swing with.

## Hands to Baseball & Rotate

Once the hitter has started the initial approach with the back leg, he will do two things.

Take his hands directly to and just inside the ball, while keeping the barrel of the bat above the hands. Any time the barrel drops below the hands before contact, it will decrease the chances of making consistent contact. By keeping the barrel above the hands, the hitter is able to take the shortest route to the ball, creating a short swing and more contact.

As the hitter is taking his hands to the ball, he must aggressively rotate on the balls of his feet. The rotation action helps generate power through the lower body. The rotation action helps generate power through the lower body.

## Contact

All good hitters do the following essential actions when the bat comes in contact with the baseball.

- a. Head Down. The head comes down at contact as the hitter tracks the ball so that, at contact, his chin almost contacts the back shoulder.
- b. Palm Up, Palm Down. At contact the hands are in a palm up, (bottom hand), palm down, (top hand), position. Any other position would cause poor contact. If, for instance, the top hand rolls over prematurely at contact, the hitter would top the ball, thus hitting weak ground balls.
- c. Stiff Front Leg. Hitting against a bent, rather than straight leg, would cause a loss of valuable power, as the hitter would be using mostly his upper body in the swing.
- d. Back Leg Forms An "L". This is a positive indication that the hitter is using the lower half of his body, and most importantly, getting his hips and thighs into the swing. At contact, the hitter is also slightly flexed. He doesn't really straighten out until the follow through.

## Follow Through

The key element is the top hand rolling over with the hitter still behind the stiff front leg and the L-shaped back leg.

Should the hitter let go of his top hand in his follow through? This will neither help nor hinder

the hitter, as the ball has already left the bat and nothing more can be done about it. If the hitter feels more comfortable letting go of his top hand, fine--as long as he does not let go too early at contact, losing power.

The purpose of the follow through simply completes the swing but can also serve as a way to evaluate and remedy any potential problems in the swing.

# Bunting

## **Sacrifice Bunt**

In a sacrifice bunt situation we are giving up the batter in order to advance a runner or runners. It is very important that the ball not be bunted to the pitcher or catcher moving toward each other in a direct line toward second base. The ball must be bunted toward the baselines on the ground. Do not try for the lines too closely because we want a fair ball.

The pitch *has got to be a strike* when the sacrifice bunt is on. A smart pitcher and catcher will throw a high fast ball if they are thinking sacrifice bunt. This is a very hard pitch to bunt, so either take the pitch for a strike or make sure that you bunt the top of the ball. (To do this you have to be an excellent bunter.) There is no harm taking a high strike first pitch.

You can bunt to either side of infield with a baserunner at first base only. If there is a runner at second, the preferred side of the infield would be the third base side. If the third baseman fields the ball then the bunter has done his job. In the same situation, a bunt down the first base side would be okay as long as it is well away from the pitcher and catcher.

In a sacrifice bunt situation and you see the third baseman or the first baseman over half way to the plate and moving toward you, *do not* bunt no matter how good a bunter you might be. With no strikes, swing and miss or take the pitch acting like you might want to hit the ball. With one strike do not swing and miss, but just take the pitch. In most cases you will check with the coach after every pitch to see if the same sign is still on.

With the baserunner on first base and the bunt is fielded by the third baseman, the baserunner must be aware of the extra base (third base) if the catcher or pitcher is not covering the base.

All baserunners in bunt situations will not commit themselves to the forward base until they read the down angle of the ball toward the ground. Be careful of the pick-off from the catcher if the bunter misses the pitch.

Never attempt a sacrifice bunt unless the defense allows you to do so. Be careful not to step on the plate.

Do not commit yourself to bunt until the ball is just about to be released by the pitcher. Showing bunt too early allows the first and third baseman to get too good of a jump.

Try to move up slightly in the batter's box when attempting to sacrifice bunt in order to get more of your bat in in fair territory. Do not move up so much that you give your intentions away.

## **Drag Bunt**

Certain individuals will be allowed to drag bunt on their own, with no one on base. Wait for a good pitch to bunt and get the ball on the ground. Make sure to bunt ball before making any motion toward first base. Sacrifice a step toward first base for a perfectly bunted ball. Work the lines on the drag bunt for a poor drag bunt must be a foul ball. Do not try to bunt high pitches, change-ups, or curve balls, or anytime you are fooled.

Never drag bunt for a base hit when we are well ahead in the game or in late innings when we are more than 5 or 6 runs ahead.

Never drag bunt with baserunner on second base. We are looking for hits into the outfield to score runner from second base. A successful drag bunt in this situation only gives the

defense opportunity to be in a double play situation.

If you are one who likes to drag bunt, check the third baseman during infield practice to see how quick he is, how strong his arm is, etc.

Remember that right handed pitchers fall off the mound to the first base side and left handed pitchers fall off the mound to the third base side. Left handers also have a tough time fielding a bunt on the third base side and making that play to first base.

### **Suicide Squeeze Bunt**

The batter must attempt to bunt any pitch that the catcher can get his glove on, *no exceptions*. Put the ball on the ground anywhere in fair territory, especially if the pitcher is throwing from the windup for the runner at third base will have a good jump toward the plate. If the pitcher is throwing from the stretch try to bunt the ball away from the pitcher and catcher toward the line on the grass.

The baserunner at third base should not break too early and give away the squeeze bunt. With a right handed pitcher throwing from the windup, the runner at third starts his walking lead when he begins motion into the windup. When the pitcher's right hand passes his pivot leg (right leg) the runner will break full speed for the plate. With a right handed pitcher throwing from the stretch, the runner holds until the pitcher's right arm again passes his pivot leg and then he breaks for the plate. With a left handed pitcher throwing from the windup, the runner at third base takes a walking lead as he begins the windup and when the pitcher lifts his lead leg (right leg) for his kick to the plate the baserunner breaks for the plate. From the stretch the runner will hold until the pitcher again lifts the right leg to prepare for the pitch. At that point it is again full speed to the plate.

If the batter misses the bunt, the baserunner is to get in a run down and let other runners who might be on base advance.

Whenever the squeeze bunt sign is on, all other runners on base will treat the play as a straight steal. The runners should always move up the next base when a run down occurs with no or one out. With two outs, allow the runner in the run down the back base to return to.

### **Fake Bunt and Slash**

The pitch has got to be a strike in order for you to swing at the ball. All base runners will react as if the batter is hitting away.

As the pitcher starts into the stretch position on the mound you must look like you are going to hit. Time the pitcher from the set so that you quickly square around to show bunt at the time he moves his hands from the set position. You can actually show bunt a second before the pitcher begins his delivery. As the pitcher's arm reaches back and starts forward, quickly get your hands back to the hitting position. The goal is to move the infielders on the show of the bunt and create some holes which a hitter might be able to take advantage of with a ground ball.

# **Base Running Fundamentals**

## **Introduction**

With hard work and proper technique, a team can steal a run or two that could win a game. It seems more games are lost because of poor base running such as getting caught off base on a line drive, getting picked off by a pitcher, failing to advance on a pitch in the dirt, failing to run on an outfielder in poor position to throw, etc.

Good base running starts before the first pitch is thrown. During the opponent's infield practice, all players should be watching opposing outfielders throwing, checking for arm strength, accuracy of throws, length of time it takes to release the ball, what side they throw from, and whether they have a sore arm or bad leg. Players should always watch the opposing pitchers warm-up to get some idea of how he throws and what he throws: the quality of his mechanics, quickness of his delivery, what he is actually throwing, etc. Pitchers with deliberate motions or slow breaking pitches are easy to steal on.

Players should continue to study the opposing team's bench and pitcher, studying the pitcher's move to bases, look for tip offs, and get some idea of release time to the plate.

The on deck hitter should make himself visible to the base runner coming home. The best location for this is about 15 feet from the plate on the first base side.

## **Home to First Base**

After hitting the ball, the runner should come out of the box with his back foot. His run to first will depend on how the ball has been hit.

If the ball is hit on the ground to the infield, the runner must run at full speed straight to first and go right through the bag. The runner should run in the "running lane" and sprint to a point beyond the bag about 5-10 feet.

Runners should remember to:

Touch the front part of the bag with whichever foot comes up. The runner should not stutter step in trying to step on the bag with the same foot every time. (This will slow you down and possibly cause an embarrassing fall.)

Lean forward when touching the bag. (Do not lunge at it. This may cause the runner to hit the bag awkwardly and cause injury.)

After touching the bag, look over right shoulder to pick up any over-throw.

If there is no overthrow, start spreading out feet to help slow down.

## **Running to First Base on a Hit to the Outfield**

Anytime a hitter hits the baseball to the outfield, his first thought should be "Two Bases!" After leaving the batter's box, the runner should pick an imaginary turning point outside the first base line approximately four feet off and 10 feet down the line and run straight to it.

Upon reaching this point, the runner should tuck his left shoulder and gradually make the turn at first, touching the front inside corner of the bag and keep going until the defense stops him. Anytime the runner hits the ball into the gap or down the line, he should be able to take two bases if he runs hard. If the ball goes directly to the outfielder, he should still be aggressive and round the bag at first aggressively. This aggressiveness will pay off if the outfielder bobbles the ball or nonchalantly it. The alert runner will take the extra base.

## Common Mistakes by Baserunners Going Down the Line

Not running hard out of the box.

Not running outside the baseline, forcing himself to take a big turn at first.

Stepping on top of the bag, causing a poor turn.

Being unaggressive, not getting out in the baseline. (Aggressively rounding the bag.)

## Stealing Second Base

The length of the lead depends on the player. Factors that affect his lead include lateral quickness, condition of the field, quickness of the pitcher's pick off move, importance of the run, and whether the runner is stealing or just reading the pitcher for a pitch or two.

The runner should get between a 10 and 12 foot lead. The runner should feel comfortable and safe with the lead. The runner should know that he can dive back safely. The runner who gets a big 12 foot lead and then becomes too concerned about getting picked off isn't going to get a good jump. He would do better to get a 10 foot lead and feel comfortable. Runners should feel that they are only 2 feet off the base.

If runners have done their homework before reaching base, they won't have to be concerned about getting picked off.

## Primary Lead

Before taking his lead, the runner should place both heels on the inside edge of the base and do three things:

Check for number of outs.

Check the coach for a sign.

Check the defense for alignment.

The runner accomplishes the primary lead by,

1) stepping off base, 2) take two long crossover steps followed by, 3) two or three shuffle steps.

This method of taking the primary lead will let the player know exactly how far off the base he is.

First step off base = about 1 foot

Each crossover step = about 3 feet each

Each shuffle step = *about 2 feet each*

Total between 11-13 feet

This calculation will eliminate the need for the runner to look back and will ensure a consistent lead.

## Lead Angles

A popular running technique is to get lead off the front edge of the base putting the runner about one or two feet in front of the direct line to first base. This is done to give the pitcher the optical illusion that the runner isn't as far off the base as he actually is. This may cause

the runner to have to run an extra step or two.

For the most efficient run to second base, the runner should begin lead from the back corner of first base and approach second on a straight line. If the runner executes a head first slide, he should reach for the back (right field), corner of second base. This makes it difficult for the shortstop or second baseman to tag the runner.

## Stance

Upon reaching the maximum stealing lead, the runner should be in a good running stance. The stance consists of:

feet shoulder width apart,  
knees slightly bent,  
arms flexed in front,  
weight on the balls of the feet, and  
the upper body at a 45 degree angle.

The right foot should be opened and dropped back a little, with the right toes on line with the with the left instep. This allows the runner to pivot on the right toes and push off straight for second base. A toe-to-toe alignment would force the runner to take a short step left of the straight line as he crosses over.

## Arms

The runner should get arms out in front and flexed. As the runner pivots on his right foot, he should drive his left arm toward second base in an uppercutting fashion and pull it back. At the same time, he should throw his right arm back toward first.

Basically, the runner pumps his arms like a sprinter coming out of the blocks, except that he pivots on his right foot and crosses over with his left. In addition, the runner must stay low like a sprinter as he crosses over, careful not to rise up. (This would cause him to slow down.) He should start low to the ground and gradually rise up on each stride.

*When should the runner begin his lead?*

As the runner begins his lead, he should train his eyes on the pitcher, stay in low in a quality position to dive back on a pick off attempt. The runner should take his lead while the pitcher is getting his sign and should avoid moving while the pitcher is going to the set position. Many pitchers like to throw over when going to the set position.

## Secondary Lead

The purpose of the secondary lead is to reduce the distance between bases and it enables the runner to eat up ground as the pitcher goes to the plate from the set position. This kind of lead is used in a non-steal situation.

The idea is to extend the primary lead with two shuffle steps as the pitcher kicks and throws to the plate. On the second shuffle step the runner should land on his right foot at about the same time the ball reaches the hitting area. If the ball is hit, the runner must determine if it is a ground ball or line drive. If it is a hit, he can pivot on his right foot, cross over, and head for second without stopping. If the ball is caught by the catcher, the runner can simply push off the already planted right foot and return to first.

To avoid a pick off attempt, the runner should take two quick crossover steps back to first without cockiness or a lackadaisical attitude.

### **Key Points to Remember ( when at first base)**

The runner should do their "homework" in the dugout before reaching first base. He should study and the the pitcher's best move.

The runner should concentrate his thinking on stealing and getting a good jump. The runner should remove all thoughts of getting picked off.

The runner should know if the pitcher has a quick pick off move or a slow one.

The runner should be aware if the pitcher has a slow kick to the plate.

The runner should know if the catcher has a good release time. (2.0 - 2.1 seconds)

### **Leads at Second Base**

Before the runner steps off second, he should do four things.

Look down to coach at 3rd base for signs and/or instructions.

Check the number of outs.

Check the defense to see how it is playing the hitter.

Make sure the pitcher has the ball.

### **Primary Lead**

The Primary Lead is achieved in much of the same manner as from first. A comfortable primary lead is important because if the pitcher turns and throws, the runner can get back to second with a step and dive. Good communication is necessary . Getting picked off of second base will kill a rally. The runner at second base should get a 12 - 15 foot lead. If there is less than 2 outs the runner should move in a straight line toward third base. With two outs, the runner should move back a couple of steps behind an imaginary straight line from second to third base.

### **Secondary Lead**

An aggressive secondary lead can produce a lot of extra runs during a season. The runner should take two hard shuffle steps that put him out about 18 - 20 feet from the base. He should land on his right foot as the ball is entering the hitting zone, and read the ball off the bat. It is very important that the runner *never* cross his feet as the catcher is receiving the ball. If the runner does, he is vulnerable to being picked off by the catcher at second base. As the catcher receives the ball, the runner should push off with his right foot and cross over a step or two back to second base. This should help prevent the catcher from picking him off.

If the ball is hit directly at or behind him, he'll be able to advance to third base. If the ball is hit in front of him, he should wait for it to go through the infield. An exception to this rule would be on a chopper hit to the third baseman that forces him to charge about 15 feet in and throw to first base.

### **Advancing to third base on a bunt**

If the coach decides to bunt, the runner must concentrate on getting to third base. Before

getting into the secondary lead, the runner has to make sure that the pitcher throws the ball to home. The runner must not crossover in a movement toward third base until he sees that the ball has been bunted on the ground.

If the ball is bunted on the ground, the runner must break toward third base, reading the play as he runs. If the hitter misses the ball or takes the pitch, the runner must be balanced enough to return quickly back to second base.

### **Advancing to third base on ground balls**

As a general rule, runners should freeze and get back on line drives, hold up on a ball hit in front of him. In most case the runner should be able to advance on balls hit at him or behind him.

The following is a list of situations in which the runner can probably advance to third base on ground balls.

Slow rollers to the third baseman that forces him to come in, field the ball, and throw to first base.

If the third baseman has to move left and toward the inner part of the infield in order to field a slow chopper.

A chopper between shortstop and third base that forces the third baseman to make a drop step near the outfield grass, or that brings the shortstop over to field, allowing the runner to advance to third base.

The third baseman fields a ground ball in traditional fashion but fails to freeze the runner. The runner can extend his lead and, as soon as the third baseman releases the ball, break for third.

### **Stealing Third Base**

If the runner is stealing third, he should extend his lead by a step more than the normal lead. This extra step is very important. The runner should be in a straight line between second base and third base. The runner should not allow the pitcher to see him move up toward third base. The runner should move toward third base after the pitcher turns his head.

The runner at second should have already done his work in the dugout to get familiar with the pitcher to know if he looks once or twice or whether or not he lifts his mitt, kicks, and then goes to the plate. (If he does this, the runner should be able to steal easily.)

Some other questions that should be answered include:

Is the pitcher slow to the plate?

Does he have a high kick or low kick?

Does he like to throw to second base?

Do the shortstop and second baseman do an adequate job of holding runners, or do they go to sleep?

### **Key Points to Remember (when at second base)**

The runner should look to see if he can steal signs from the catcher.

Give a signal to the hitter telling him where the catcher is setting up-on the inside or outside part of the plate.

The runner should make sure that a ground ball is behind him before trying to advance to third base.

With two outs, the lead angle should be about three steps back behind the imaginary straight line between second and third base. With less than two outs, the runner should be on a straight line to third base.

Look at the pitcher to see if he is giving away his pitches by showing his grip in the glove.

The runner should be aggressive in his secondary lead so he can score on a base hit.

## Pitching

Pitchers must do three things to be successful.

1. Control. Throw to spots.
2. Change speeds.
3. Get the ball to move.

### **Mechanics of Pitching.**

Rocker step. Short step straight back or slightly diagonal. Some pitchers do not step back at all.

Balance point. Pivot. Back hip over the back foot. Front heel lined up with toe on back foot. (Remember Green's chair) Show pocket. Knee should be hip high or higher. Shoulders should be parallel. Keep in power position. delivery should be slow and deliberate.

Stride. The stride is not part of the throw. Step to the plate. Land on the ball of the foot. Weight must be back. Pitchers must get feeling he is back. If you hand a ball to a player and say throw it over the trees, he will bend back and throw. Staying back is important.

Repetition: Start with front shoulder to the plate. Glove is in front of the sternum. "Ready, break!" and drop hands down to sides. "Ready, bounce!" and let hands bounce. Hands should fall on a line from second base to home plate. "Ready, tuck!" and align front foot with back foot. Hands must break before stride foot lands.

Power position. "Ugly position." Tuck glove, shoe lace to the ground. A violent rotation of the hips will take place. Belly button and chin must be to the catcher.

Follow through. Motion should be a ferris wheel verses that of a merry-go-round. Back foot should come up with letters on the bottom of the shoe to the sky. Do not drag the foot. Shoulder and chin should be locked.

### **Throwing Strikes**

The four seam fast ball is the foundation for all pitches. Pitchers must be able to throw this before anything else. Longest finger across widest seam of the ball. Throw to imaginary box of catcher. Ball must be delivered on a downward plain. This pitch must be mastered.

Possible drill: Diagonal drill. Pitcher and catcher are working together on this drill. Throw to up and in corner and then down and away corner. Then around the corners and down the middle.

Two seam fast ball. Put pressure on 2 joints of outside finger. This pitch will go down and away.

Change-Up. The change up comes in the grip, not in delivery. All motion is mentally fast ball. Circle change. People try to be too rigid in throwing the circle change. Hold ball in hand, let it roll back. Use normal fast ball motion. This pitch takes work and patience, but can be thrown.

Cut Fast ball. Also known as the super slider. This is an out pitch used when way ahead in count. Use 4 seam grip, turn ball 1/4 turn. Thumb on the bottom seam. Force release the ball and point away. Get extension and point a bit away.

Overhand Curve. The goal is to get 12 to 6 spin. Horseshoe to outside of finger. Turn thumb

under. Pull with middle finger, snap thumb. Overhand curve is a fast ball until phase 4 of delivery. You snap overhand curve, not spin it. The movement of hand is out and around. Make a circle. Avoid hitting the imaginary barrel in front of you. If circle is too big, the pitch will hang. If circle is too small the pitch will go in the dirt. Ball has to go seam over seam. Requires a quick arm. To work on this have pitchers 40 feet away spin the ball to each other. You can also simulate this by throwing tennis or soda cans. Wrap first two fingers around bottom of can and throw it so it using the described motion above. Can should move end over end.

## Catching

A catcher usually:

- has a good glove
- has a moderate to strong arm
- is a take charge guy and usually has good knowledge of the game
- is a leader. He leads by example
- a hustler.

### Stance

The stance a catcher assumes should be balanced and comfortable. He can use the crouch or high squat position. The feet should be shoulder width apart. Toes of the right foot should be opposite the heel or instep of the left foot, moving him closer to the batter as possible without interfering with the batter's swing. Advantages of this stance include:

- being closer to the batter will allow the catcher to cut down the distance between him and the pitcher as well as cut down the distance he will have to throw to the bases.
- getting hit by *fewer* foul tips.
- being in a better position to get out cover bunts and poorly hit or topped balls.
- making doubtful pitches strikes by receiving the ball closer to the plate

### Signaling the Pitcher

Giving the sign. The catcher gives the sign to pitcher while squatting close to the batter. The right knee should be pointing towards the pitcher and the right hand and wrist in the "cup" area, right side. The glove hand is over the left knee with the pocket facing toward the plate and the wrist bent down. Signs should be easy to read. The use of fingers, waving fingers, fist, open hand, indicator with following sign, tight elbows, open elbows are just a few of the possible methods of signs.

### Shifting the Feet & Body

A good catcher should always keep the ball in front of him by shifting the feet. On a pitch to the right, he must step to the right with his right foot. Same technique on pitch to the left. If the pitch is very wide either way he may have to shift both feet.

A catcher should get in the habit of shifting a little of his body weight onto his left foot on a curve from a right hander and to his right foot on curve from a left hander. This should put him in a good position to shift if necessary.

### Glove Positioning

The catcher must remember to turn the fingers of the glove down on all pitches below the waist and up when the ball is above the waist.

## Basic Fielding Drills

### One Knee Throwing Drill

**Purpose:** To develop the player's arm and shoulder strength for throwing.

**Procedure:** Each player kneels on the ground 10 yards apart facing each other. (Right handed players kneel on right knee with the left leg out in front, while left handed players kneel on left knee with the right leg out in front.) Each pair has one baseball.

The players throw the ball back and forth to each other for a desired time period. Then the players are moved apart another 5 yards, and they continue to throw back and forth to each other for an additional time period. The drill continues to proceed in this manner for as long as desired. The distance the players are moved apart depends on their arm and shoulder strength.

### Fungo Fielding Drill

**Purpose:** To provide players with an opportunity to field a large number of ground balls.

**Procedure:** Drill has one fielder, who 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.

### Lateral Pick-up Drill

**Purpose:** 1. To improve the player's overall conditioning. 2. To improve the player's ability to move laterally and to assume a good defensive position in fielding a ground ball.

**Procedure:** The drill has one tosser and one player, who are 6-7 feet apart facing each other. (Pairs) Drill can have as many groups as desired.

The tosser rolls a ball about 5-6 feet out to the side. The player moves on a semicircular path to field the ball. After picking-up the ball, the player throws the ball back to the tosser. The tosser then rolls a ball about 5-6 feet out to the opposite side, and the player fields the ball in a similar manner. The drill sequence is repeated from five to 10 times depending on the player's conditioning level. The number of repetitions is increased as the player's conditioning level improves.

It is important for the player to field the ball by moving on a semicircular path in order for the drill to be effective.

### Lateral Movement Drill

**Purpose:** To improve the player's ability to react and move laterally in fielding a ground ball.

**Procedure:** The drill has two tossers near the pitching area. Each tosser has two shaggers with one standing on each side of the tosser. The drill can have four or more players in each line. One line of players is at the shortstop's defensive position, while the other line of players is at the second baseman's defensive position.

The tosser throws a ground ball randomly to the right or left of the player making the player

move laterally to field the ball. After fielding the ball, the player throws the ball back to the shagger on that side. Then the player turns to the outside and jogs back to the end of the line.

### **Charging Drill**

**Purpose:** To improve the player's ability to charge a softly hit ground ball.

**Procedure:** The drill can have as many tossers as desired. Drill can have three or more players in the lines, which are about 70 feet in front of the tossers.

The tosser throws a ground ball so that the player has to charge the ball at about midway between the tosser and the player. The player then throws the ball back to the tosser, turns to the right, and jogs back to the end of the line.

A variation of this drill would be for infielders to start about 70 feet in front of the tossers, outfielders should start about 90 feet in front of the tossers. The tosser still attempts to throw the ground ball so that the player has to charge the ball at about midway between the tosser and the player. Rotation can also be varied so that the player replaces the tosser who in turn goes to the end of the line.

### **Over The Shoulder Catch Drill**

**Purpose:** To improve the player's ability to catch a fly ball over the shoulder.

**Procedure:** The drill can have as many tossers as desired. The drill can have 4 or more players in each line. Each player has a ball.

The tosser stands on the left side of the player. The player hands the ball to the tosser, then runs out, and the tosser leads with a fly ball so that the player has to reach to catch the ball over the left shoulder. After catching or retrieving the ball, the player turns to the left, and jogs back to the end of the line.

A variation of this drill would be to work the players in a rotation of tosser, fielder, end of line. Make sure to have all players also work on fielding fly balls over the right shoulder.

## Infielding Drills

### Star Throwing Drill #1 & #2

**Purpose:** To improve the infielder's throwing accuracy.

**Procedure:** The first baseman and third baseman are at their respective bases while the catcher, second baseman, and shortstop are at their defensive positions.

#1: The ball should be thrown continuously in the following sequence: catcher to second baseman, second baseman to third baseman, third baseman to first baseman, first baseman to shortstop, and shortstop to catcher.

#2: The ball should be thrown continuously in the following sequence: catcher to shortstop, Shortstop to first baseman, first baseman to third baseman, third baseman to second baseman, and second baseman to catcher.

Repeat this drill as many times as desired.

### V-Throwing Drill

**Purpose:** 1. To improve the infielder's throwing accuracy. 2. Improving accuracy and execution of 1st & 3rd defensive plays used by Newburg High School.

**Procedure:** The catcher, first baseman, and third baseman are at their respective positions, while the second baseman and shortstop are at their defensive positions.

The ball should be thrown continuously in the following two part sequence: Part one--catcher to first baseman, first baseman to third baseman, third baseman to second base with the second baseman covering, second baseman to catcher, catcher to second base with the shortstop covering the base, shortstop to third baseman, third baseman to catcher.

Part two-- catcher to second baseman covering in front of second base about 5-10 feet, second baseman to third baseman,(pretending runner at third has gotten off base or has ran for home plate) third baseman to catcher, catcher to shortstop who is running forward, and shortstop back to catcher, (pretending that there will be a play at home.)

### Tag Drill

**Purpose:** To allow all infielders to practice covering their bases and receiving the ball for tags and forced outs.

**Procedure:** The first baseman and the third baseman are at their respective bases, while the catcher, second baseman, and shortstop are at their defensive positions.

The catcher throws the ball to first base, (force play), first baseman throws to third baseman, (force play), third baseman throws to second baseman with second baseman covering the base, (tag play), second baseman to catcher. The catcher throws the ball back to second base with shortstop covering the base, (tag play), shortstop throws to first base, (force play), first baseman throws to third base, (tag play), and the third baseman throws back to the catcher.

### Second Baseman and Shortstop Fielding Drill

**Purpose:** To provide the second baseman and shortstop with an opportunity to field a large number of ground balls at their positions and to practice throw accurately to specific bases.

**Procedure:** Drill has two hitters with one on the right side of home plate and the other on the left side of home plate. Both hitters have a shagger. Each shagger stands on the right side of the hitter and has a bucket of baseballs. Empty ball buckets at third base and first base. The first baseman and third baseman are at their respective positions, while the second baseman and shortstop are at their defensive positions.

Hitter 1 hits a ground ball to the shortstop, who fields the ball and throws it to third base. Hitter 2 hits a ground ball to the second baseman, who fields the ball and throws it to first base. The first baseman and third baseman then toss baseballs into the empty ball buckets.

### **Double Play Drill (3b, Pitcher, 1b)**

**Purpose:** To allow the pitcher, first baseman, and third baseman to practice timing needed to throw the ball to second base for double play. Work on communication between shortstop and pitcher when pitcher fields ball in front or to the side of the mound and between pitches on who will be covering the bag if ball is hit back to the pitcher.

**Procedure:** The drill has one hitter, who is at home plate. The pitcher, catcher, first baseman, second baseman, shortstop, and third baseman are at their defensive positions. The pitcher pitches a ball to the hitter, who hits to the pitcher, first baseman, or third baseman. If the pitcher or first baseman fields the ball, it is thrown to second base with the shortstop turning the double play. If the third baseman fields the ball, it is thrown to second base with the second baseman turning the double play.

### **Double Play Drill (Shortstop & 2b)**

**Purpose:** To allow the shortstop and second baseman to practice timing and technique needed to turn a double play.

**Procedure:** The drill has one hitter, who is at home plate. All infielders are in their defensive positions. The ball is hit to the shortstop who throws to second base with the second baseman covering. The second baseman finishes play by throwing to first base with the first baseman covering. The hitter then hits a ground ball to the second baseman who throws to second base with the shortstop covering the bag. The shortstop then finishes the play by throwing to first base with the first baseman covering.

### **Bunt Fielding Drill**

**Purpose:** 1. To allow the pitcher, catcher, third baseman, and first baseman to practice fielding bunts and throwing to first base. 2. To improve Infielders' throwing accuracy.

**Procedure:** Drill has one hitter, who is at home plate. The pitcher, catcher, first baseman, second baseman, shortstop, and the third baseman are at their defensive positions.

The pitcher pitches a ball to the hitter who bunts the ball. Then whoever fields the bunt, (the catcher, pitcher, first baseman, or third baseman), throws the ball to first base with the second baseman covering the base. If the third baseman fields the bunt, then the pitcher covers third base.

This drill can be varied by putting runners on base.

### **Pitcher Cover Drill**

**Purpose:** 1. To develop pitcher's technique of covering first base in the absence of the first baseman. 2. To develop first and second baseman's throwing accuracy to the pitcher on the

move covering first base. 3. Field a large number of ground balls and receive a large number of throws by pitchers at first base.

**Procedure:** Put all pitchers in the area of the mound. Put all second and first basemen in their respective defensive positions. The hitter will stand at the plate with a catcher. The pitcher delivers a pitch. The baseball is hit to the 1st baseman in such a way that the pitcher must cover first base. The pitcher then covers the base and the first baseman throws ball to the pitcher. The baseball is then hit in such a way that the second baseman is pulled away from base, however, the second baseman fields the baseball and makes the throw to the pitcher covering first base.

Repeat as often as needed. Add variety to this drill by adding baserunners that start from home plate or even on the bases themselves. This is a very simple drill that allows for many repetitions.

## Hitting, Team & Individual Drills

### Batting Stance Drill

**Purpose:** To improve the hitter's batting stance

**Procedure:** The hitter assumes the regular batting stance with the coach checking the placement of the feet, knees, hips, shoulders, head, and eyes

### Hip Turner Drill

**Purpose:** Development of quicker hips and the relationship of hip speed to the entire swing.

**Procedure:** Place a bat behind the waist, horizontal to the ground, and use a glove as home plate. While holding the ends of the bat in the hands, assume a normal batting stance and watch an imaginary pitch being delivered. Execute a stride and quick turn using the bat to help turn the hips faster. Finish in the proper contact point position.

### Stride Drill

**Purpose:** To practice the proper stride for hitting.

**Procedure:** The hitter assumes the regular batting stance and isolates the stride by taking a low, quick and soft stride forward. The coach should make sure the hitter is not moving the weight too far forward during the stride because this causes the hips to be thrown forward.

### Wrist Roller Drill

**Purpose:** To enhance bat speed and control by facilitating the maximum efficiency in "throwing" the bat at the ball.

**Procedure:** Players place themselves in the contact position, and then roll the bat forward and backward causing the bat to touch each shoulder as it completes a full arc. Players should use only their wrists and forearms to rotate the bat. You should be able to do about 60-80 wrist rollers in 1 minute.

### Lead and Follow Hand Swings Drill

**Purpose:** The lead hand swings allow a hitter to establish proper timing and power with the lead side of the body, giving the hitter proper contact with the ball. The follow hand swings establish the feeling of throwing the bat at the ball.

**Procedure:** Hit off a tee, imaginary ball, or soft-toss. When executing swings with the lead hand, you should concentrate on keep the hand above the plane of the ball. If the lead hand drops under a pop out, strike out, or fly out will usually occur. The hitter must also turn the hips quickly for proper timing and power. The lead elbow should not extend fully before contact with the ball, since that will promote a slow bat due to an excess of arm arc in the swing.

By concentrating on keeping the lead hand on top of the ball and turning the hips quickly, a hitter can establish proper timing and power with the lead side of the body. The lead hand/follow hand action creates timing and power. Both hands should snap straight into the ball precisely the same instant. This will help you establish proper bat speed and control.

## Hitting Off A Tee

**Purpose:** To develop the mechanics of players' swings using a stationary ball.

**Procedure:** Alternate between one handed, (Lead & follow hand drills), and two handed swings to establish proper timing and relationship between bottom part of body and the hands. Develop a feel for striding with the hands and hips cocked, and then turning the hands and hips together as a unit during the swing.

## Eye Contact Drill

**Purpose:** To improve eye contact with the ball.

**Procedure:** There are three players to a group, a hitter, thrower, and catcher. The hitter stands 30-40 feet away from the thrower, and the catcher is in a catching position behind the hitter. The thrower throws the ball to the catcher and the hitter watches the ball in from the release of the pitch to the hitter's contact point. The catcher does not need to wear catching gear because the hitter doesn't swing at the ball.

## Soft Toss Drill

**Purpose:** To increase the number of practice swings a hitter can perform using the correct technique.

**Procedure:** The hitter stands 12-15 feet away from a screen or fence. The tosser kneels on one knee 12 feet in front and to the side of the hitter and tosses the ball softly underhanded into the hitter's strike zone so the hitter can take a full swing.

## One Knee Hitting Drill

**Purpose:** 1. To improve bat velocity. 2. To increase the number of practice swings a hitter can perform using the correct technique.

**Procedure:** The hitter kneels 12-15 feet away from a screen or fence. The hitter's right knee is on a towel and the left knee is bent at approximately a 90 degree angle. The tosser kneels on one knee 12 feet in front and to the side of the hitter and tosses balls underhanded into the hitter's strike zone, so the hitter can take a full swing.

## Quick Hit Drill

**Purpose:** 1. To increase the strength and quickness of the hands for hitting. 2. To increase the number of practice swings a hitter can perform using the correct technique.

**Procedure:** The hitter stands 12-15 feet away from a screen or fence. The tosser kneels on one knee 12 feet in front and to the side of the hitter and tosses the ball underhanded at a fast rate into the hitter's strike zone, so the hitter can take a full swing. The hitter swings hard at the ball, and after each swing, the bat is rapidly returned to the ready position.

## Wall Drill

**Purpose:** To help players develop a short, quick swing that takes the bat directly to the ball. This is a great drill for a hitter to do while on deck.

**Procedure:** Place knob of bat into stomach and extend the bat so that the top of it touches the net or screen. The hitter should set up in his stance and take an "inside-outside" swing, with the end of the bat just barely hitting the net. If the player swings with arms, he will create

a long, looping swing and will hit the net or screen, keeping him from finishing his swing.

### **Basic Bunting Drill**

**Purpose:** To learn different types of bunts.

**Procedure:** Drill has one hitter and one tosser. The tosser is 25 feet from the hitter and kneels on one knee. The tosser throws the hitter ten balls, while the hitter practices on one type of bunt. After the hitter hits ten bunts, the hitter and tosser rotate. The drill may be repeated as many times as desired practicing the different types of bunts.

### **Bunting Accuracy Drill**

**Purpose:** To improve the player's accuracy in bunting to a specific area.

**Procedure:** A rope is placed 15 feet from home plate and in a semicircle stretching from one sideline to another. The pitcher and catcher are in their defensive positions. The pitcher has a full ball bucket, and the catcher has an empty ball bucket. All hitters are at home plate. Each hitter bunts the ball and tries to keep it inside the rope. The hitter gets two chances to contact the bunt. If the first or second ball is bunted, the hitter runs to first base. If the hitter misses both balls, the hitter runs all the bases before returning to the end of the line.

### **Bunting Technique Drill**

**Purpose:** To improve players bunting technique.

**Procedure:** A protective screen is in the middle of the pitching area. The drill has two pitchers and two catchers. Pitcher one is in front of the protective screen and throws to home plate. Pitcher two is behind the protective screen and throws to second base. Each pitcher has a bucket of baseballs and each catcher has an empty bucket. The hitters are divided into two groups, with one group at home plate and the second group at second base.

Hitter 1 bunts a specific bunt and runs to first base, while at the same time, hitter 2 bunts a specific bunt and runs to third base. Then the hitters jog to the ends of the opposite lines. For time efficiency, the balls not contacted by the hitter are placed in the catcher's ball bucket, thereby allowing the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch.

### **4 Station Bunt Drill**

**Purpose:** To improve players bunting technique.

**Procedure:** Use first base, second base, and third base as well as home plate as bunting stations.

The drill should have 6 to a group that include a 3 shaggers, catcher, pitcher, and bunter. The pitchers should be around the mound area.

Players will bunt two down each line and rotate positions.

Players should not talk during drill.

### **Intra-squad Games Special Situations**

**Purpose:** 1. To practice specific game situations. 2. To improve player's concentration during specific game situations.

**Procedure:** The team is divided into two squads. Various games include:

Three-Two Count Game: Each player goes to plate with 3-2 count. Players must be selective but also protect the plate with a 3-2 count.

Hit & Run Game: Runners are placed on the different bases prior to each inning. The teams play an intra-squad game with each batter going to the plate in hit & run situation. The defensive and the offensive teams play the hit and run game with the same rules that they would play a regulation game.

Nine Outs Game: The teams play an intra-squad game with the defensive team staying on the field for nine outs, instead of three. The bases are cleared after a new inning is started after three outs.

Two Strike Game: Players go to the plate with a two strike count. With a two strike count players must choke up and shorten their swings protecting their at bat and battle with the pitcher until a pitch comes down the "pipe". You can add runners on base if you like.

## **Batting Practice--Multi-Phase Offensive Drill**

### **First Round**

Begin round with runner on 1st base.

Have defensive players at each position.

Runner on 1st base will take his best lead.

Pitcher will stretch and play on runner at 1st base one time, then he will throw to the 1st hitter.

The first hitter will bunt one, (the runner on 1st base will advance to 2nd base on the bunt and then will go to defensive position or end of hitting line). On hit two, the batter will run the second hit out and stay there. The pitcher will play on the runner one time and throw to the second hitter in round one. This procedure should be followed through all of the hitters.

### **Second Round**

Begin round one with runner on 2nd base.

Pitcher will play on runner one time, using middle infielders.

Hitter will bunt two, (sacrifice runner to 3rd and then squeeze the runner home). Hit two, run the second hit out to 2nd base and stay there. Continue this procedure through all hitters in second round.

### **Third Round**

Begin round with runner on 1st base.

The runner on 1st base breaks on the first pitch to the hitter and goes all the way to 3rd base.

The hitters try to take the first pitch to right field. If they execute the hit and run successfully, they should be rewarded with an extra hit. After they hit two or three, they run out the last hit and stay and 1st base.

## **21 Outs Drill**

### **Purpose of Drill**

To make your defense handle the ball to get outs.

To convince your pitching staff that a fast ball thrown for a strike will be hit at someone most of the time.

### **Drill Rules**

No base on balls.

No strike outs.

No curve balls. Pitchers should work on fast balls "down the pipe."

No bunting.

No stealing. Runners may advance on passed balls and wild pitches.

No sliding.

The eight defensive starters stay on defense for all 21 Outs.

Runners left on base will come off after each "inning."

The catcher will keep track of the outs and innings.

### **Advantage of 21 Outs Drill**

It gives the coach a drill for coaching team defense.

It can serve as batting practice for those not on defense.

Good conditioner for pitchers.

Develops pride on defense.

### **Important Notes**

1. The coach and the players must treat this drill with the utmost game-like seriousness.
2. The pitching staff could and should chart pitches. A good 21 Outs Drill should require only 50 to 75 pitches.
3. This drill should not take longer than 30-40 minutes. (Record is 27 minutes.)

**All Championship Teams Begin On Defense!**

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