

Playing the Infield – Shortstop

Shortstop Defense

Positioning:

- ✓ The standard position for shortstop play on 60-foot diamonds is six steps toward third base and six steps toward left field (nine steps plus nine steps on regulation diamonds), because most action is up the “spine” of the infield.
- ✓ Young players often play too close to third base or “in the hole.”
- ✓ In double-play situations or to cover a steal, the shortstop should take the risk of pinching the middle and letting any ball hit in the hole go; he should be between four and seven steps (on a regulation diamond) away from the bag toward third and the same number of steps back.
- ✓ Don’t make the mistake of automatically shifting the short stop depending on right or left-handed hitters until you know what that hitter’s tendencies are. (Tom Emanski, <http://members.aol.com/baseparent/defense.html>)

Fielding

- ✓ Shortstops have the longest throw to first base of any infielder, and so they should be players with the ability to cover ground quickly and make strong accurate throws.
- ✓ They should charge nearly every ball in order to get to the ball quicker and to shorten their throws.
- ✓ Once the shortstop reaches the ball he fields it using a balanced stance, feet shoulder width, rear end down, head down on the ball.
The player can then take a small hop step to align him with whatever base he is throwing to.
- ✓ The short stop also coordinates coverage with other infielders on double steal situations.
- ✓ Credo here is to make sure you get at least one out.

Runners on First and Second

- ❖ Double play depth for shortstops is two to three steps closer to second base and two to three steps in. This helps guard against steals as well.

Balls to the right side of the infield (second base/first base – covering second base)

- ❖ The shortstop moves quickly to the base, slowing a step or two from and making sure his weight is evenly balanced on both feet.
- ❖ He waits to see how accurate the throw to him is before committing to the ball. If the play is handled cleanly and a strong, accurate throw is made, the player can catch the ball, drag his right foot across the base, and then take a short hop step to align himself for the throw to first.
- ❖ If the play is not made cleanly, or the throw is inaccurate, the shortstop must make:
 - a. sure of the catch and then
 - b. the out of at second.
- ✓ The short stop get double plays in several ways:
 - ❖ If a ball is fielded close to the base, he can step on second base and throw to first.
 - ❖ If the ball is fielded further away from the base, he can make an accurate, chest high underhand throw to the second baseman covering second base.
 - ❖ If the ball is hit closer to third base, he can make a strong, accurate chest-high overhand throw to the second baseman covering second base.
 - ❖ Or he can make a shorter, but more difficult throw to the third basemen covering third base to either get a force or start a double play

Tag Plays at Second

- ✓ For tag plays at second, the most important thing to remember is to avoid collisions.
- ✓ The shortstop should align his shoulders to the direction the throw is coming from, taking care to stay out of the base path until he has received the ball.
- ✓ Once he has received the ball, the proper position is to straddle the base, placing the glove on the ground in front of the base.
- ✓ It is important that the player does not reach his glove to the runner to apply the tag, which might result in the runner sliding under the tag. Placing the glove on the ground instead lets the runner slide into the glove, putting him out.
- ✓ As soon as the tag is applied the player should lift the glove to avoid having the ball knocked loose by further contact. Two hands can be used to apply the tag to further secure the ball.

Page 2 – Playing the Infield - Shortstop

Pop Flies – Center Field/left Field

- ✓ On pop flies to center field and left field, the shortstop tracks the ball until he hears it called for by another player.
- ✓ He should immediately give way on balls called by the outfielder, but prepare himself to make a play on the ball on the chance it might be bobbled and dropped.
- ✓ If he must make the play on the fly, he should endeavor to set his feet under the ball, and field the ball over his head.
- ✓ If he must make the catch on the run, he should try to angle his track so that he does not have to make an over-the-shoulder-catch.
- ✓ Lastly, he should set himself as quickly as possible to make a throw-back to the infield.

Pop Flies – Right Field

- ✓ The shortstop take all throws at second base from the right side of the outfield.

- ✓ Shortstops take all cuts to third base.
- ✓ They back up throws from the left side of the infield to first base.
- ✓ They also serve as cut-offs for throws from left and center field to second base.
- ✓ For balls to left field or center field, the shortstop continues out for the cut until the outfielder picks up the ball