

## Playing the Infield – Third Base

### Positioning:

- ✓ Six steps toward second base and two steps toward left field is the standard position for a third baseman.
- ✓ A double play or bunt position has the third baseman in two to three steps in front of the base.
- ✓ In the late innings or in close games, the third baseman should guard against doubles down the line.
- ✓ Third basemen shouldn't try to hold runners at third. If a runner takes too big a lead, the catcher should call a pitchout and throw to third. (Tom Emanski, <http://members.aol.com/baseparent/defense.html>)

### Fielding

- ✓ Third base technique revolves around three points of emphasis:
  1. fielding the ball on the highest point of its bounce,
  2. fielding slow rollers or bunts,
  3. and not letting balls get past.
- ✓ Because they have so little time to react, deciding whether to come in on a bouncing ball or wait for it is one of the hardest plays for a third baseman to make. However, it is almost always better to be aggressive, as long as proper balanced is maintained.
- ✓ Proper technique for fielding slow rollers or bunts requires the player to utilize a scooping motion where the fingers get under the ball, rather than reaching down and grabbing the ball from above. It doesn't matter what foot the player throws off of after fielding the slow roller, as long as the throw is made as quickly as naturally possible.
- ✓ For tag plays at third base, the most important thing to remember is to avoid collisions.
  - ❖ The third baseman should straddle the base while waiting for the throw.
  - ❖ Once he has received the ball, the proper technique is to place 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.
- ✓ The third baseman's primary field responsibility is to serve as a cut off for throws from left field to home plate. He also needs to coordinate with other infielders in a double steal situation.
- ✓ Not letting balls get past is more of an attitude – third baseman should be taught to knock the ball down at all costs. (Skip Bertman, Coaching and Playing)

### Double Plays

- ✓ Third baseman have two primary options in ground ball double play situations:
  1. If the ball is fielded close to the base, the can step on the base and throw to either first or second for the out.
  2. If the ball is fielded away from the base, they can deliver a strong, accurate chest high throw to second base.