Infield Daily Drills---Four Corners

Goal/Purpose---Infielders (middle and corner) perform these drills at least 2 times a week during the season as way to improve footwork, throwing and receiving in order to improve proficiency on routine plays, tough plays and double plays.

1. A catch, a throw, and a catch usually equals an out
2. Be solid on routine plays, do what you can do really well.
3. Eliminate balls that hit the fence. Defense is more important than ever because offense is harder to come by. Become a defensive asset and you will have a role and a place in high school baseball.

Setup- The drill series can be done inside or outside. Set bases at the distance your team plays at. The bases are used as markers but should not be stepped on during the drills. If you have left handed throwers, they should all be in the same corner.

Emphasis-
1. Move your feet to receive throws (center of the body is ideal)
2. Step toward target on every throw (never throw off of a dead back foot)
3. Receive throws with hands together.
4. Be quick, but don’t hurry—John Wooden

Series 1---Roll to corner (clockwise)
  a. Player gets in a good ready position (tennis player, no glove in the dirt)
  b. Ball is rolled to player in a corner.
     i. 3 keys in fielding (butt down, glove out front, throwing hand gator chops
     ii. Come get the baseball to field it
  c. Player that fields it rolls it to the next corner (ROLL NOT THROW)

Game skill connection---work on fundamental fielding position for a routine grounder

Series 2---Around the horn (clockwise, not for speed)
  a. SHUFFLE STEP, and throw ball to the player in the next corner.
     1. Key is to get the thrower to step into his throw
        i. Why important---shorten throw, insures accuracy, safer on arm, uses legs to increase power and velocity
  b. Receiver ADJUSTS TO THE LINE
     1. Key is to receive ball at center of chest, chest high, need to move feet to do this. If you can’t catch it, knock it down.
        i. Why important---makes next throw easier, quicker and more accurate, avoids balls to the fence. Balls to the fence=runs for other team!
  c. Receiver shuffle steps and throws to next corner

Game skill connection---Importance of the routine play, outs and stopping runs are on both the fielder/thrower and the receiver (not just the thrower), beginning skills of DP

Series 3 ---Around the horn (counter clockwise, not for speed)
a. Same as a above on except after receiving the ball the player rotates/turns GLOVE SIDE, THEN SHUFFLES, before making the next throw
   1. As players get proficient at this they should start quarter turning glove side as the ball arrives, making it quicker to get to their shuffle step and throw.
      i. Lefties do the opposite in each of these drills

Game skill connection—-tag plays, back picks, cut-off of relay throw, unconventional DP

Series 4—Drop Drill (drop ball after catch, shuffle step, throw counter clockwise)
   Key to this drill is stepping into throw and avoiding taking throwing hand to glove (PACKING the baseball)
   a. Player receives throw, then drops the ball behind them
   b. Player picks up the ball with BARE HAND, pushing the ball into the dirt
      (dead balls are always barehand, live balls are always two hands)
   c. Player then shuffle step and throws the ball to next corner
   d. Drill continues in a counter-clockwise manner.

Game skill connection---bunts, routine play not fielded clean, tough play not fielded clean, go counter clockwise because the footwork is closer to a play at first base what we would have on a play of this type.

Series 5—“Duck” Drill (clockwise throws around the horn, similar to series 2 with variation)
   a. Players throw to next corner simulating drill series 2.
   b. BEFORE player in preceding corner receives ball, player can chose to “DUCK” by squatting down.
   c. If the targeted player squats down when the player in the corner with the ball shuffles to throw, the player with the ball cannot throw to that corner.
   d. player with the ball must RESHUFFLE HIS FEET to throw across the diamond, then throw it across to the far corner.
   e. When the far corner receives the ball, the clockwise rotational throwing from corner to corner continues as before.
   f. key rule #1 here are NO DOUBLE DUCKING, meaning two corners cannot duck consecutively and if the throw goes across the diamond the very next corner cannot duck.
   g. key rule #2 is to make sure the player RESETS HIS FEET pointing to the corner of his intended target AND the player takes at least one SHUFFLE to the new target. This shortens the throw, gains momentum and improves accuracy.

Game skill connection---This simulates a bobble after fielding where a player thought they could get the lead out, but now has to go to first for the out. It simulates fielding a hard hit ball with a slower runner. It simulates a fielded ball where a runner attempted to steal, or a hit and run.

***doing the duck drill and the drop drill have greatly cut down on errors on routine plays to get an out where simple solid fundamentals can eliminate errors and free runs or extra outs given.

Series 6---Duck Drill with reverse throw behind
   a. Drill runs exactly the same as above with one exception
   b. When player “DUCKS” the player ROTATE GLOVE SIDE and throw to the corner in which he just received the ball from
c. This combines the duck drill with the GLOVE SIDE TURNS in series 3
d. Player should rotate, then shuffle to target.
e. Once player throws behind then the throw comes right back to him and resumes the clockwise rotation of throwing until the next duck.
***For safety this drill should not be done with younger or beginning level baseball players. This drill also requires both the thrower to be alert and the next corner to be alert and ready.

Game skill connection---This simulates a back pick, or a player over rounding a base and fielder throwing behind the runner to get an out, or even a tag play.

Series 7---Wrong Foot Throws
a. player rolls the ball ACROSS THE DIAMOND to the far corner
b. receiving player comes toward rolling ball in a slow moving jog in order to field the ball on the run.
c. player fields the ball ON THE MOVE with TWO HANDS. PLAYER NEVER SETS HIS FEET ON THIS PLAY!!!!
d. player plants his THROWING SIDE FOOT and kicks out his glove side foot for momentum
e. throws the ball to the corner on his GLOVE SIDE, the corner to the left of the corner that threw the ball.
f. player then continues onto the corner the throw came from and gets in the back of that corner’s line of players.
g. player that received the throw then rolls the ball across the field and the drills continues on.
****left handed throwers should not participate in this drill, they just mess it up. Have them do short hops, or picks in the dirt instead.
***We don’t work on bare hand plays. I don’t believe they are any faster on a play of this nature bare handing it and usually a player at the high school level cannot field it clean and make an accurate throw bare handing this play. Eliminate balls that hit the fence.

Game skill connection---slow roller, bunt for a hit, swinging bunt, high pressure plays.

Advanced variations for middle infielders
1. Stay in a square shape but move players closer together (40 feet)
   a. Players throw the ball around the horn clockwise
   b. Players DO NOT SHUFFLE STEP towards target
   c. It’s more about keeping hands together and redirecting throws
   d. Be quick but don’t hurry
   e. Feet should be live and moving before the ball arrives.
   f. Still adjusting to the line of the throw.
   g. Accuracy is far more important than velocity. Quick accurate release

Game skill connection---double play turns
2. Square shape figure 8s
   a. Same as above but players are now making a figure at with the throws to simulate DP.
3. Reverse figure 8s
   a. This simulates a different angle on the DP turn.
4. Rectangle Four Corners
a. 90 by 15 rectangle
   i. Players throw on the 90 foot side, and underhand flip on 15 side
      1. Underhand flips—lock wrist, shovel toss, fingers off ball, glove out of the way
      2. Follow your toss
      3. Develop a communication system, “flip, toss, 2-2-2-2”

b. Flip the rectangle around and reverse the throwing direction

c. 90-25 rectangle—players throw, instead of flip

Other points for youth baseball coaches

1. Foster an aggressive mindset. Allow kids to make mistakes and figure things out, take risks—machine pitch, try to avoid the “TIME” game. Encourage your kids to try to make the play and get an out, if they throw it away, so what, they will eventually figure it out and that fearless mentality will benefit them long term.

2. Emphasize the process over outcome. Outcome is short term success but long term success means teaching love of the game, doing things right, being a good teammate, delayed gratification, hard work. Process kids will build resiliency and stay in the sport longer. Evaluate effort over scoreboard. Baseball is a tough game, prepare them for the long term.

3. Have a time where baseballs go away and kids play other sports. MLB research says 4 months is about right. Here is a quote from Wayne Gretzky on his belief as it pertains to all year round efforts in a sport “If a sport has a high point of the year, it must be the first week of spring. When I was growing up, I used to love this time of year. It was when I put my hockey equipment away and I was absolutely ecstatic to see the end of the hockey season. One of the worst things to happen to the game, in my opinion, has been year-round hockey and, in particular, summer hockey. All it does for kids, as far as I can tell, is keep them out sports they should be doing in the warmer weather. I could hardly wait to get my lacrosse stick out and start throwing the ball against the walls and working on our moves as we played the lacrosse equivalent to road hockey. All the good hockey players seemed to play lacrosse in those days and everyone of them learned something from the game to carry over to the other - things athletes can only learn by mixing up the games they play when they are young.”

4. Set and follow pitch guidelines www.pitchsmart.org

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