

INFIELD / OUTFIELD / THROWING / RUNNING

***** 80% OF THE GAME OF FASTPITCH IS PLAYED BELOW YOUR WAIST *****

Every drill has a variation. Feel free to add your own ideas on any of these drills listed .

5X5 DRILL

Usually at the end of our practices we initiate the 5 x 5 drill. The drill is for infielders and outfielders including pitchers and catchers...

Each infielders will get 5 grounders to play at their specific position, field a bunt or slap, field a grounder and turn two, field 3 grounders hit to inside and outside their position, (watch their feet, do they shuffle or cross over) make the throws to 1st base.

Now here is the kicker, if they drop or juggle the ball they start over, if its a bad throw, they start over. If the ball is throw wild, start over. They soon find out what is expected of them. Outfielders will get fly balls on the run from left field running to center field to right field, with a proper throw to 3rd, 2nd and 1st (watch how they set their feet).

Catchers in full gear in their ready position, balls are rolled from behind make plays at 1st, 2nd, 3rd. We have the pitchers field bunts, turn and pivot to make plays at 1st, 2nd, 3rd. As I stated before, if there is juggle or dropped ball that specific player starts their 5 over again.... hope you can use the drill.

FOUR CORNERS DRILL

I call this drill the Four Corners. Players are located at 3B fielding position, 2B (on bag), 1B (on bag) and at catcher. All other players are lined up at 3B coaching box. Coach hits ground ball to 3B who throws to 2B who throws to 1B who throws to catcher. After they throw, the player then sprints to the position she threw to. The next player in line then assumes 3B and the drill starts over. When everyone has been through I then place the players at 1B and the drill goes from 1B to 2B to 3B to catcher.

This drill provides a quick warm-up, works on fielding ground balls, throwing accuracy, and pivoting to make the next throw.

This is a great drill to begin each practice.

FUNNEL DRILL

This drill was one of the most helpful drills as a player, and now as an assistant coach. Players can do this drill after warming up their arms, with their partner. One player keeps their glove on, the other takes their glove off. The partner with the glove rolls them the ball. The fielder must get down on the ball, or they will miss it.

They also learn they must get completely in front of the ball, and scoop or "funnel" the ball to their waist.

READY FOR ANYTHING DRILL

Have someone to throw the ball and to catch. First you form a line about 30 to 40 feet away from the person that is throwing the ball. Tell the players just to charge the ball. Also tell them that they could expect almost anything. Grounder, Pop Fly, or a line drive right to them. Anything.

It teaches them to be ready for anything. And to always charge the ball.

INFIELD/OUTFIELD/RELAY DRILL

With many years of coaching youth, high school, women's, and college fastpitch softball, I found one drill that fits every level of play. It develops both the INFIELD mechanics, OUTFIELD mechanics, and finally RELAYS to HOME.

I divide the team into 2 groups. One group lines up behind third-base. The other group lines up in deep right-center. I have an assistant coach acting as my catcher as I hit hard grounders to the first in line at third-base. She fields the ball and quickly makes a sharp throw to home-plate. I then hit a deep fly ball to the first in line at right-center. As this player sprints to catch the ball, the fielder that was at third-base sprints to a relay position for home-plate. The outfielder hits the now relay fielder who should be properly positioned to receive and relay the throw to home-plate.

The cycle repeats as the infielder that was the relay joins the rear of the line of outfielders. The outfielder that caught and threw the ball to the relay then joins the rear of the line of infielders. This cycle should be

repeated as to correctly get everyone to errorlessly field, catch, throw, and relay through an entire cycle.

OUTFIELD FLY DRILL

There is a drill I have been using for the past 3 years for outfielders. Place half the team in left field and the rest in center. The coaches hit a fly ball in between the first two outfielders.

They both go for the ball with one catching it and the other properly backing up the fielder. If the ball happens to get by both fielders then they will use a relay throw to get the ball back to the coach.

This drill has helped greatly in backing up on all balls, and easy to do before games.

RELAY THROW DRILL

Have the players line up in a line stretching to the outfield. The first player throws the ball to the glove side of the second player in the line. The second player must turn around in the direction for her glove side and throw to the glove side of the third player. Repeat this for every player until reaching the end of the line.

Divide the team into 2 or 3 groups. Have the groups compete to see which one can get the ball to the end of their line and back quickest. The girls love it.

This teaches the proper location for the relay throw and also teaches quick turn and release of the throw.

OVER-THE-HEAD DRILL

Have the players line up and have one of them selected to field a ball hit over her head. Hit or throw the ball over her head and to the right or left. Make sure that she does not run with her glove up, but rather put the glove down and run to catch the ball and then get her glove up and make the catch.

Also, when doing these drills, make sure the fielder catches the ball in front or to her throwing side so she can make a quick release of the ball to an infielder.

STAR DRILL

The fielder stands about 20 yards away from a coach or player throwing pop-ups. The fielder runs to the right and makes a catch, then drops the ball and runs to the far left, makes a catch, drops the ball, then runs away from the thrower for the long ball, catches it, drops it, and runs straight towards the thrower for the shallow ball.

RUNDOWN PRACTICE

Keep the ball ahead of the runner - always run straight at the runner regardless of where you start on the field, the most likely tag area is 3-4 strides from the previous bag.

Keep the ball in view & hold your arm steady - hand up by your head, lots of white showing, no fakes. (Minimum ball movement will actually make the runner less certain of your intentions.).

Make a short-arm, snap throw. - a wrist shot straight to the glove.

Throw beside, not across - The receiver should present a good target on the throwing arm side for the player with the ball, never throw across the runner's path.

Don't block the base path unless you have the ball - as soon as you've made a relay, sprint forward to the base you just threw at to let your back-up fielder get a good view for the next throw.

This is a good practice drill - You can keep it going for several relays but in game conditions you want to keep a rundown to 1 or 2 throws max.

TURN & SPRINT / 3-FLY DRILL

Start with all outfielders in a line. First fielder moves 50' out. First in line tosses a pop-up far enough beyond fielder to force her to turn and sprint. *Underhand toss is more accurate than a fungo.*

On first cycle, ball is caught and dropped, then a second then third ball is lobbed - each one farther out, to either left or right. *Emphasis on over-the-shoulder catches.*

On second cycle: each ball is caught and thrown to a cut-off player. The next lob starts as soon as fielder has released throw - no time wasted. *Emphasis here is first on clean catch, then on finding bearings for accurate throw.*

Player rotation should be cut-off to fielder, fielder to back of tosser line. More players can be run through this drill by dividing the team into groups of 3.

GIVE AND GO DRILL

Find some room in OF and have team form line 15' in front of you. Give each player a ball. Player runs hard at you, tosses you ball and keeps sprinting past you. Turn and toss an over the shoulder throw to the player. Emphasize quick feet and proper mechanics when catching ball.

VARIATION: When player catches ball, have her relay the ball back to coach or someone catching off.

FIND IT DRILL

Have team form line in OF. Player lays face down in grass, covering eyes. NO CHEATING!! Coach throws pop up in her general area and yells FIND IT! Player must get to feet, find ball, make catch and relay throw back to coach.

SOMERSAULT DRILL

Team forms line in grass about 30' in front of you. On go, player runs does somersault on command, on her way up to her feet coach tosses ball underhand to either side of her to the point of diving for it.

GOT IT DRILL

Team forms line on both sides of coach. On command, players from each line sprint straight out. Coach throws pop up, one player calls for it and makes catch. Player then relays ball back to coach and both players hustle back to end of line.

FOLLOW PATH OF BALL DRILL

Team forms two lines, one in CF, the other in RF. Hit ground ball to outfield, both players run to *path* of ball. One player will field ball and hit cut at 2nd, other player backs up. Switch lines.

CUT DRILL

We do this drill before every game. Do this along either base line. Need two coaches near home, half of team in line near first or third base fence, half of team in line in outfield, near fence. Coach A hits ground ball to first in line base player. Player fields and throws ball to coach B. Coach B throws pop up to first in line outfielder, who catches and throws to base player who is now on base yelling "CUT". Base player relays to coach B. Infield and outfield rotate, hustling to end of next line. When game time approaches we form one line and player gets two ground ball, one being a bunt. If player makes bad throw or bobbles grounders, they go to end of line to do it again.

BUNT LOOPS

Get everyone in motion early and keep them moving.

This drill will get infielders charging harder on bunts and throwing on the fly.

First and third charge hard towards the plate.

Short and second charge hard to cover the corners. Line forms at 2nd and short.

Bunter (catcher) chooses either side to place the bunt.

Bunt is fielded by the nearest 'charger' and thrown to opposite corner (first baseman throws to third base, third baseman to first base.)

Both 'chargers' sprint to the end of the lines at 2nd and short. Players that covered the corners position themselves to charge the next bunt. Ball caught (at 1st or 3rd) is returned to the bunter (catcher)

Variations:

As soon as bunt heads down one line, the other (unused) charger breaks to second early to take a relay throw from the corner.

The catcher puts two balls in play at same time - one down each line.

Same set-up can be used to practice 'same base' plays - i.e., first baseman throws back to first, third baseman to third.

Incorporate batting practice by using a pitcher and a live bunter.

QUICK RELEASE DRILL

To get infielders to release the ball quicker we line up half the team 3/4 of the way to 2nd base and the rest wearing helmets lined up half way to 1st base. A coach says "go" and rolls ball to infielder, she throws to first and tries to beat base runner who left for first on release of ball. Keep drill moving rapidly 3-4 times through and switch players. You may need to "tweak" where you start your runners until the plays at 1st get closer.

BACKHAND DRILL

We don't pound ground balls at the team when we work on fundamentals. This drill is a good example of that. Team lines up at third, coach rolls easy ground ball to their throwing side. Player backhand fields ball off of her glove leg, out in front. She then throws to first and follows her throw as coach throws a easy pop up to her. She then under hands ball to first and hustles back to receive another backhand. She throws to 1st and returns to the end of line.

THE STEAL

The steal is made in the first four steps and the slide at the end. At first we start with our runner facing home plate, with the left foot touching the inside of the bag. The first step involves a short rhythm step with the right foot or a cross-over step with the back foot turning towards second. With either move, the next critical area involves the arm action. It must be fast and powerful enough to get the body lined up with second base. As the steal motion is started, the right elbow is driven back bringing the body around and immediately upon facing second base, the arm and leg action begins.

We want our runners to be at full speed within four steps.

Work on the initial step or pivot, the arm drive and the first four steps.

Set a cone down the line from first base and time each runner to that point.

Have two players race to that cone to emphasize competition. The final note concerns timing. Too many coaches take it for granted that runners can easily determine when to start the steal motion. Actually it takes a great deal of practice. We have a line of runners at first, a pitcher throwing to the player and a coach standing at the best angle to watch both the runner and the Pitcher's release. The coach lets the runner know if she's gotten a good jump or was too quick or too slow. This can only be done once the runner is consistent with her stealing motion.

THREE BASE RUNNING DRILL

BY JIM "STONEY" STONEHOUSE

Players start at home, first base or third base. A coach simulates a pitch to the batter at home plate, this "pitch" activates all three stations. First and third base coaches are in position.

1) The batter runs from home to first. Practice form; running in the lane, running through the bag and coming under control after running through first. (Player goes to back of the line; recovery time.)

2) The player on first base gets a jump and runs first to third, rounding second properly and using good footwork and technique. Runner will slide into third base as the third base coach instructs. (Player goes to back of the line.)

3) The player on third base leads off with the pitch and pretends that it is a fly ball. The player tags up and waits to be released to home where the on-deck batter gives instructions to slide or stand-up. (Player goes to back of the line.)

Variations: Let the players coach their teammates. Add an actual fly ball to left field and then throw to home. Hit to outfielders and throw to get runner at third base. Various slides can be incorporated.

This drill provides conditioning, reinforces principles of good base running, establishes the "system" for tagging up on fly balls, practices leadoffs, turns, fair and foul territory running and on-deck responsibilities are learned. Also, the third base coach learns to be sharp releasing the runner then picking up the player coming from first base.

This drill, run properly, is effective for any age. You can add your own things to the drill to make it more complex for older age groups.

TEAM BUCKET RACE

Three coaches are needed for this drill. Divided the team into three groups. The It is not necessary that the groups be equal as the drill takes care of evening things out. The players in each group line up in single file behind the first player, who takes an infield ready position. The coach has five balls and a bat and is a base length (60 feet) away from the first player. A bucket is placed 15 feet away from the first player, toward the coach. The three coaches are approximately 25 feet apart.

Each coach begins hitting ground balls to her/his group at the same time, with each player, after she fields the ball, sprinting to the bucket and dropping the ball into it. When a ball is in the bucket, the coach can hit the next ball. When a player misses the ball, she must run after it and sprint back to the bucket (and drop the ball in) before the coach can hit again. When all five balls are in the bucket, player putting the fifth ball into the bucket runs bucket to coach, dumps balls at coaches feet, and returns bucket to where it was. The first team to complete five sets wins. The team has a lot of fun with this drill and usually asks to play it.

HIGH FIVE DRILL

This drill is great for the younger players who were taught to stop on 1st base in tee-ball. Form two lines on the first base line, one half way to first, facing the outfield, the other 10 yards past first facing home. First girl in line runs *through* first and high five's first girl in line on opposite side. She then runs *through* first and high five's next girl in line...

This drill teaches girls to run hard through the bag and not to slow down when reaching first.

FLOWER DRILL

Divide the team into 2 groups and form 2 lines on opposite sides of a base facing each other 12 feet from base. First player in both lines starts running at the base at the same time. The runners hit their respective inside corner, turns left and runs approximately 12 feet and stops, turns and faces base and waits for the others to do the same. Continue around each corner. This drill works on hitting the inside corner when running bases.

Emphasize exploding off base as they round it.

FIND BALL DRILL

Put players in line at first. Have a coach simulate pitch. First player breaks and slides into second. Have another coach somewhere in outfield hold up a ball. Player should pop up and "find ball" and break for third and take an aggressive turn and again "find ball". She then breaks for home and slides into home and returns to the line.

Emphasize:

Trying to get to full speed in four steps on break to second and leaving with pitch.

Proper sliding mechanics.

"Popping up" and breaking for third.

The aggressive turn at third.

This drill is good for pre-season. They will get a workout going through this drill 4-5 times.

THROW AND GO

Divide the team in 4 equal groups and position at home, 1st, 2nd & 3rd.

The first player in line at home throws the ball to the first player in line at 2nd then runs to 1st.

The player that catches the ball at 2nd throws the ball to first to try to get the player running from home out.

From now on the pattern continues: throw the ball to the base the player is running to and run to the next base.

This is a conditioning drill that incorporates throwing and catching skills.

Add the sliding skill by requiring players to slide into the base they are running to.

Challenge the team to continue the drill until they have thrown and caught the ball 10, 20 or 30 times without an error.

DROP AND GO

Line your players up in foul territory by 1st base with the first in line in the 1st baseman's playing position.

The coach stands at home plate with a bucket of balls and throws a hard line drive to the player at 1st.

The player catches the ball, immediately drops it and begins jogging toward 2nd.

The coach now throws a second hard line drive slightly leading the runner.

The runner catches the ball, immediately drops it and begins running all out past 2nd into left-center field.

The coach now throws a high pop fly leading the runner.

The runner catches the ball, turns and throws it back to home and returns to the end of the line.

Variation: Combine with the "Barney Game". Set Barney up on 3rd base. The players love it!