

Pony/U13/U14 League

Stretching and Warmups

- Players should get to the field 30 mins before game
- Stretches and warmups required before doing any throwing or hitting
- Warmups led by one or two players

Throwing>Pitcher>Mechanics II

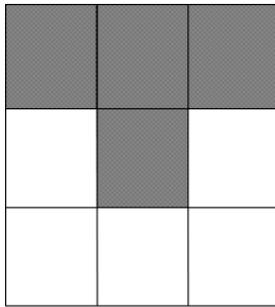
- **Review from Majors/U11/U12:**
 - *Mechanics I*
- Reinforce the concept that pitching motion has to be consistent to throw strikes—consistency = control
- Catchers need to be taught what to look for (location of front foot plant/heel strike or “hard front”, hips or shoulder flying open too soon, head and neck position)
- Missing high in the zone:
 - Pitcher is excited (overthrowing)
 - Correct: have the pitcher take a bit off/throw changeup
 - Pitcher is tired (arm drags behind body and release point is high)
 - Correct: shorten stride; or remove pitcher
- Missing low in the zone:
 - Pitcher’s arm is moving faster than body
 - Correct: make sure arm has full drawdown past pocket; ensure pitcher is not “short arming” or making “archer” throws; make sure front foot lands soft—a hard landing “stops” the body, allows arm to speed up
- Missing inside(on pitcher arm side):
 - Pitcher’s arm is moving slower than body
 - Correct: make sure hip and shoulder stays closed in windup; if hips or shoulder open too early the body leads the arm; watch head and neck tilting away from arm; less often the cause, but have catcher look at foot plant location
 - Have pitcher try a higher arm slot if they are comfortable throwing in a higher slot
- Missing outside(on pitcher glove side):
 - Pitchers arm is moving faster than body
 - Correct: As in missing low watch for “hard” landing, especially on heel of stride foot
 - Watch plant foot location—have catcher look for this
- For minor inside/ outside issues and when mechanics are correct, a simple repositioning on the pitching rubber right or left can help. Do not use this as a quick fix until mechanics are fixed.

Throwing>Pitcher>Breaking Pitches

- Controversial whether 13-14 year olds should be throwing breaking pitches. Dr. James Andrews says not until kids are shaving.
- Whether we like it or not kids are going to experiment w/ breaking pitches, so we may as well understand a few things about throwing them:
 - Slider:
 - thrown hard about 80-85% of fastball speed with a 2 o'clock to 8 o'clock rotation as seen by pitcher
 - can be thrown 2 seam or 4
 - wrist curves in slightly on wrist snap
 - thumb not used much
 - can miss high and still break, but plane will be flatter
 - Curve:
 - thrown soft about 70%-75% of fastball speed with closer to 12 o'clock to 6 o'clock rotation as seen by pitcher
 - if you try to throw it hard: it hangs, or breaks late
 - generally 4 seam rotation
 - wrist has to curve in almost 90 degrees on the wrist snap
 - thumb is active (like snapping fingers)
 - cannot miss high, needs to be thrown waist or lower

Throwing>Pitcher>Working the Count and Location

- Rule #1: Don't walk the batter; especially the leadoff batter—leadoff walk scores >50% of time;
 - Pitch batter to contact-- even the best hitters get a hit less than 40% of the time.
- Rule #2: Get ahead in count early;
 - the first pitch to the hitter should be a strike—most hitters are takers on the 1st pitch
- Know your best pitch that day and if you get into trouble in the count, throw that pitch
- Key all pitches off the fastball;
 - Work on being able to locate fastball all over the strike zone
 - Set up other pitches with fastball location
 - If your fastball is 70 mph, your offspeed should be 10 mph slower--you want to disrupt hitter's timing
- Stay "low and away", especially if you don't know the hitter
 - Avoid the "zone of death"



 - Zone of Death for Pitchers

Throwing>Catcher> Signaling Pitches and Calling the Game

- Know what your pitcher's best pitch is and call it often
 - don't get cute and try to fool the hitter with 1st pitch secondary pitches
- Keep signals simple: 1, 2, 3 fingers for pitches; pinky for pitchout; full hand tap to right knee for throw to 1st
- Don't shift around in the catcher's box while pitcher is in windup
- Note any pitcher mechanical faults and make a trip to the mound if necessary;
 - if pitcher is struggling with a batter, walk the ball back to him and let him know if you see any mechanical issues, or just tell him a joke

Throwing>Catcher>Throwing to 1st, 2nd, 3rd III

- **Review AAA/U9/U10 and Majors/U11/U12**
- Add:
 - Stopwatch throws to 2nd
 - Work on getting times down, i.e. College runner can get from 1st to 2nd in 3.5-4.0 secs
 - If pitcher takes 1.5 secs to deliver ball to catcher, catcher has to get throw to 2nd in 2.0-2.5 secs.
 - For this league, time your fastest runner and aim to have the battery pair at least equal that time

Throwing> Infield/Outfield> Double Play II

- **Review Majors/U11/U12**
- Add:
 - For 2nd baseman covering the base introduce "step back and throw"
 - Don't always want the runner to know which side of bag you will step to when you pivot and throw—mix it up
 - For "step back" place right foot (RH thrower) on back corner of bag, "thumb to thumb" receive throw, and instead of stepping into SS/3B, use that foot to bounce backwards, pivot, and throw

- Don't try to throw while jumping in the air, looks cool but not accurate; pivot, throw then jump

Throwing>Infield/Outfield>Throws Directly to a Base

- Due to the larger distances of the 60/90 field you should always try to throw to a cutoff if possible in this league
- But in instances where a throw must be made directly to a base over long distance (i.e., cutoff man not there or play is redirected), err on the low side; high throws lead to overthrows and runner advancing
- Throws should be made full overhand, "spear," with one (or two max) bounces
- Drills> long toss drills into a net or to a baseman should be practiced

Throwing>Long Toss

- We'll repeat it again...#1 way to improve arm strength and accuracy

Fielding>Catcher>Blocking Balls

- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- *Blocking pitches in dirt (side to side and over plate)*
- *Demonstrate slide to both right and left side of plate to block pitches*
 - *Glove open; fills gap in legs—not trying to catch ball in glove*
 - *Chin is tucked*
 - *Chest protector blocks ball*
- *Drills> toss to catcher varying the location of the wild pitch*

Fielding>Catcher>Bunts

- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- *Communicate: "I got it, I got it"*
- *Drills> have catcher practice fielding bunts within the zones and throwing to 1st base*

Fielding>Catcher> Pitchouts

- Intentional walks vs. pitchouts
 - a pitchout is signaled by the catcher; pinky finger waggle
 - call them on hit and run counts (1-1, 2-0, 2-1) or with leadoff runner on 1st
- Catcher has to remain within catchers box during pitch delivery
- Drills> practice both intentional walks and pitchouts with pitchers and 2nd baseman

Fielding>Pitcher>Covering 1st

- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- *Break to base on any ball hit to 1st or 2nd*

- Approach to bag; use shallow approach if possible, teach this vs. direct
- Pitcher should display open glove target to the fielder through the run to the bag
- Drills> practice this with 1st baseman regularly

Fielding>Pitcher> Bunts

- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- Communicate: "I got it, I got it"
- Drills> have pitcher practice fielding bunts within the zones and throwing to 1st base

Fielding>Pitcher> Backing up Bases

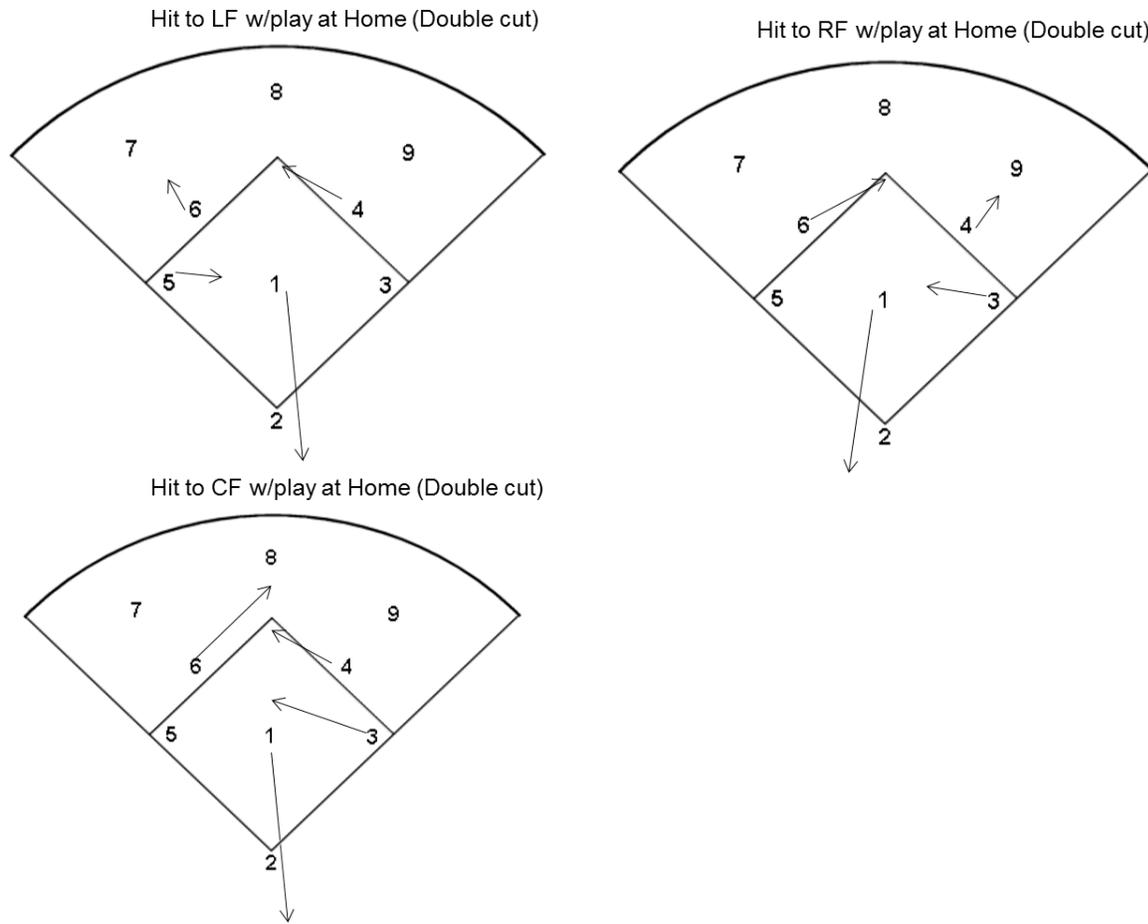
- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- Pitcher also backs up:
 - Home on any throw to home from outfield (see Cutoffs III)

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Barehanded Plays

- For Majors/U11/U12 keep it simple; if ball stops=bare hand; if ball is not stopped=glove
- Drills> mix up various ground balls and practice bare handed plays

Fielding>Infield/Outfield> Cutoffs IV

- **Review from Majors/U11/U12:**
 - Cutoffs III
- Double (or Secondary) cutoffs. Useful for:
 - Younger players who make the jump to the 60/90 field where distances are increased
 - Balls hit deep into gaps and/or play is at home plate



- Redirects:
 - **For plays at 3rd base or home plate** the catcher is responsible for redirecting the throw by saying loudly and repetitively “cut 3, cut 3, cut 3!” or “cut 4, cut 4, cut 4!,” and the cutoff men are responsible for realigning themselves appropriately.
 - **For plays at 2nd or 3rd base**, the baseman initially receiving the throw from the cutoff, redirects the cutoff man to throw to another base
 - 2nd baseman can redirect cutoff throw from outfielder to 3rd base by saying loudly and repetitively “cut 3, cut 3, cut 3!”, or to home “cut home, cut home, cut home!”

Fielding> Infield>Rundowns

- **Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**

Hitting>Swing >Hit and Run

- Get the infielders moving (RH hitter>2nd baseman opens gap when breaking to base; LH hitter> SS opens gap)
- Want to hit grounder to opposite side—but most important; need hitter that can put ball on the ground
- Drills> tee work hitting ground ball to opposite side

Hitting> Stance> Bunting

- ***Continue to reinforce skills learned in Majors/U11/U12***

Hitting> Stance> Breaking Pitches

- Very similar approach to other off-speed pitches— assume fastball, don't look for curve otherwise you will never catch up to the fastball –try to pick up rotation early (some pitchers will cock their wrists early in the delivery tipping off the pitch)
- As with a change-up you have to maintain weight shift discipline; hands back, shorten stride and keep back foot loaded longer
- Counterintuitive: since you wait a fraction of a second longer for an off speed pitch you have to be faster with hands and hip “pop”
- Don't change swing plane—hit as you would a fastball, don't swing upward or downward

Hitting> Signals

- Review simple signals: “steal,” “take” or “swing”, and introduce “hit and run”

Running>Ball Awareness>Leadoff/Stealing

- ***Review skills learned in Majors/U11/U12***
- *Introduce leading off on bases*
 - *1st base*
 - *2-2 ½ steps*
 - *No crossing over on leadoff—eyes on pitcher*
 - *Return to outfield corner of base*
 - *Dive back is allowed; tag the back corner of bag*
 - *2nd base*
 - *Same as above except for lead length*
 - *Watch SS, 2nd baseman and CF; take their lead +/- one step*
 - *3rd base*
 - *Always lead in foul territory; on the line is fair territory*
 - *Same as 2nd base; but watch 3rd baseman*
- *Stealing*
 - *When you are in dugout watch pitcher's move to 1st!*

- *Also look for high or low leg kick on delivery to plate*
- *You steal off the pitcher, not catcher*
- *Take secondary lead on each pitch; break back to base quickly if the ball is not hit or fouled off to avoid getting picked off at 1st or 3rd by catcher*

Running> Ball Awareness>Hit and Run

- Same as stealing a base, but must be very alert for a pop-up!

Running>Ball Awareness>3rd Strike Drops

- Always look back on the 3rd strike
- Try to cheat a bit and run on inside of base path, but not so far inside as to get called out—most 1st baseman want to receive throws on the inside of the bag

Running>Ball Awareness>Rundowns II

- **Review skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- *If you get caught in a rundown...*
 - *You goofed; try to get back to either base safely*
 - *Try to make the infielders throw the ball as much as possible—you have a better chance*
 - *Don't run out of running lane to avoid tag—you'll be called out; take the tag, hope the fielder drops the ball*

Running> Ball Awareness>Signals

- **Review skills learned in Majors/U11/U12**
- Introduce “hit and runs,” “double steals”
 - On double steals; have lead runner acknowledge signal and make sure trail runner sees it