

Majors/U11/U12 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 I

- The arm as a “whip”
- Grip: Varied grips make the ball move differently
 - Index and middle finger position “the finger snap”
 - Wrist snap
- Elbow position/arm slot—full overhand vs $\frac{3}{4}$
 - Full—(+) eliminates some side to side issues in strike zone; (-)trajectory is more 2-D and easier to pick up by hitter, slightly less velocity
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ --(+)trajectory is 3-D and a bit harder to pick up by hitter, usually better velocity; (-) harder to control side to side
 - Varying arm slot on pitches can disrupt batter’s timing
- Head position –varies depending on individual and arm slot , but needs to stay consistent
- Close the hip
- Drills> balance drills
- Arm motion with full draw downward past hip pocket
- Landing leg; “soft” front; relaxed ankle w/toe point
- Follow through to other hip pocket
- Practice pitching from both sides of the rubber

Throwing>Pitcher>Off Speed Pitches (Change-up)

- Pitcher’s job is to throw off hitter’s timing; this can be accomplished with a change-up
- Best thrown after a set-up fastball
- Demonstrate various grips:
 - Circle change(recommended as it is easiest to control)
 - Three finger
 - Split or fork (hardest to control)
- Throw with same arm motion as fast ball
- No or little “wrist snap”

Throwing>Pitcher>Holding Runners

- 1st base--right handed pitchers- hard to see the lead over shoulder. May prefer to depend on catcher for signal. Left handed pitchers-easy to see lead. More latitude to throw over.
- Don't be preoccupied with runner; priority should be on getting hitter out
- Slide step vs. full leg lift

Throwing>Pitcher> Pickoff Move to 1st

- Demonstrate pickoff move for lefty and righty
 - Engaged on rubber vs. not engaged
- Throws accurate and low to mid—throw to pickoff vs. timing throws

Throwing>Pitcher>Pickoff Move to 2nd/3rd

- Demonstrate pickoff moves

Throwing> Pitcher> Balking

- Demonstrate balks
- Hard to break a balking habit for some pitchers—have to catch it early and do drills
- Balk: any attempt to deceive the runner
 - Fidgeting feet, knees
 - Fidgeting hands/elbows/shoulder
 - For lefty: planting foot slightly in direction of 1st and throwing home

Throwing>Catcher>Throws to 1st/2nd

- Fastest release: $\frac{3}{4}$, or “archer” throws
- Shoulder alignment—“gun sight”
- Err on the low side; high throws lead to overthrows and runner advancing

Throwing>Infield/Outfield> Double Play

- Shortstop generally plays closer to 2nd base in a potential double play situation—this leaves a larger hole between SS and 3rd.
- Field the ball first!
 - Shortstop fields ball; 2nd baseman covers base
 - “Archer” throws to 2nd base should be chest high—avoid sidearm throws
 - 2nd baseman (assumes RH thrower) plants left foot on far corner of base and strides toward SS when making catch “thumb to thumb;” lets momentum carry to shortstop side of bag, pivots and throws (we will cover the step back variation in Pony)
 - 2nd baseman fields ball; shortstop covers base
 - SS Plants right foot (RH thrower) in far corner of bag; catches “thumb to thumb,” pushes off, aims (left) shoulder at 1st base, throws

- Get runner out at 2nd before worrying about 1st. The covering player should not to release the throw if no chance at 1st—when in doubt hold it

Throwing>Long Toss

- Long toss during warm up throws. Gradually increase distance. #1 way to improve arm strength and accuracy

Fielding>Catcher>Blocking Balls

- 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

- Communicate: “I got it, I got it”
- Drills> have catcher practice fielding bunts within the zones and throwing to 1st base

Fielding>Catcher> Foul Ball Pop-Ups

- One of the hardest fielding plays to make; catcher has to locate ball and shed mask
- Understand that due to the spin on the ball, the pop-up will (absent wind)curve back into the field
- Drills> practice, practice, practice

Fielding>Pitcher>Covering 1st

- 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

- 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

- **Review from AAA/U9/U10:**
 - *Cutoffs II with pitchers*
- Pitcher also backs up:
 - Home on any throw to home from outfield (see Cutoffs III)
 - Covers home plate on passed balls or wild pitch with runner on 3rd base

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>1st Base: Stretch and Holding Runner

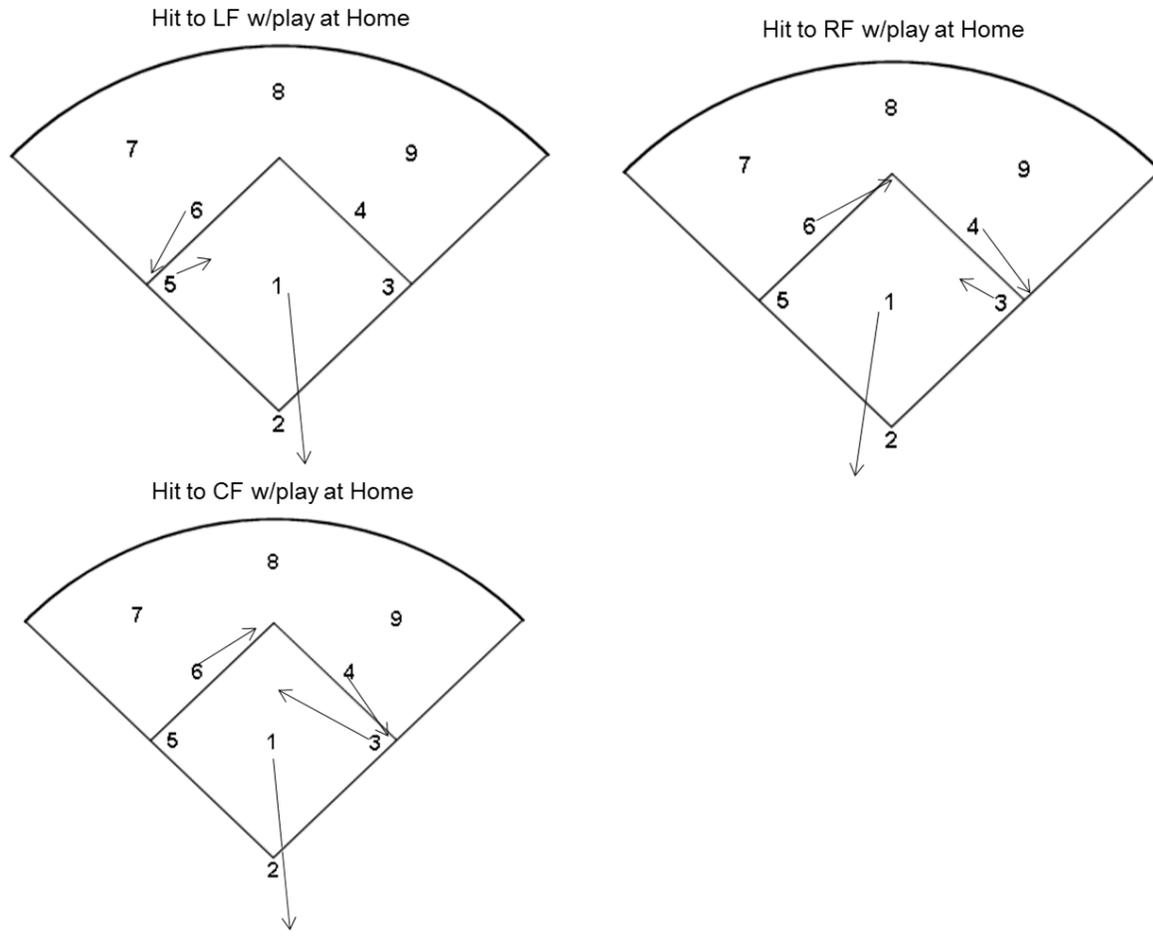
- Stretch: determine direction of the throw—do not stretch early, reposition foot to either (infield side) of the base if necessary, then stretch
- Holding Runner: right foot on inside portion of base (does not need to be touching base)—want most of heel in front of base (home plate side), forefoot off of base
 - Be a big target, receive throw, then bend and place tag in front of base—no swiping
- Getting off the base after pitch is made
 - “Cheat” with left foot
 - Quickly bring right foot parallel to base path, and crow hop into ready position
- Drills> practice the stretch; receiving throws, tag and footwork ; getting off base

Fielding>Infield/Outfield>Barehanded Plays

- For Majors/U11/U12 keep it simple; if ball stops=bare hand; if ball is not stopped=glove
- Drills> bucket drills utilizing bare hand; practice bare handed plays and throws with slow rollers

Fielding>Infield/Outfield> Cutoffs III

- **Review from AAA/U9/U10:**
 - *Cutoffs II*
- Consistent throws to glove side of cutoff man
- Introduce cutoffs to Home (alternate method: with a very short backstop to home plate distance seen on some fields the pitcher may play role of 3B and 1B instead of backing up home)



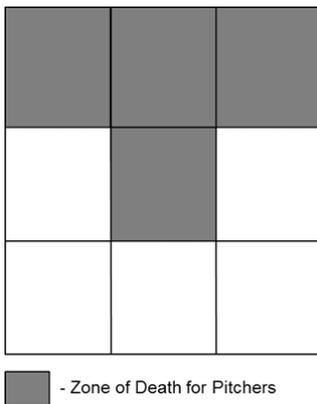
Fielding> Infield>Rundowns

- Not every play is a rundown, demonstrate what is a rundown, and what is not
- Create a lane, thrower runs quickly to receiver, receiver approaches thrower to close gap and shouts “ball” when runner ~10 ft away from receiver
- Thrower rotates to base avoiding runner (who may try to get an obstruction call)
- The less often you throw the ball the better
- No fake pumping when throwing the ball—keep ball visible in your raised hand and run towards runner

Hitting>Swing >Hands and Arms>Inside/Outside Pitches

- Discuss the “sweet spot” on the bat—generally between the bat CG and barrel—you can feel it on the tee
- The most power comes when baseball contacts the bat barrel just before the wrists break and the hips open
- Demonstrate the location of the “sweet spot” for inside and outside pitches

- Hitting inside and outside pitches is timing related –weight shift, hip opening, and stride are critical
 - Outside pitches are hit earlier in the swing arc (this is not the same meaning as “swing early”) and with hands a bit “inside out” so ball contacts the “sweet spot”
 - If you try to pull outside pitches a weak ground ball results
 - Inside pitches are hit later in the swing arc (not the same meaning as “swing late”)
 - If you do swing late or try to go to the opposite field with an inside pitch a pop-up often results
- Outside/ low pitches are most difficult to hit—most pitchers will try to pitch you there and “paint the lower outside corner”
- Drills>practice hitting high and low strikes that are on inside and outside corners using the tee. Practice, practice, practice!!



- As a hitter, take advantage of any ball thrown in the zone above.

Hitting> Stance> Bunting

- Sacrifice bunting (vs. bunting for a hit)
- Bat barrel needs to be pointed upwards and forwards—top hand at label
 - Level or down barrel results in pop-ups
 - To get to lower pitch bend at knees, not at waist or arms
 - Absorb impact of ball with top arm

Hitting> Stance> Off-Speed Pitches

- Have to maintain weight shift discipline; hands back, shorten stride and keep back foot loaded longer
- Since you wait a fraction of a second longer for an off speed pitch you have to be faster with hands and hip “pop”

Hitting> Signals

- Most coaches will start giving hitter simple signals in this league—keep them simple. “Steal,” “take” or “swing”

Running>Ball Awareness>Leadoff/Stealing

- 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 lead +/- one step within distance of covering player
 - 3rd base
 - Always lead in foul territory; on the baseline is fair territory
 - Same as 2nd base; but watch 3rd baseman
- Stealing
 - When you are in dugout watch pitcher’s move to 1st base
 - 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> Rundowns

- 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 and hope the fielder drops the ball
 - Try to run into a fielder who does not have the ball to get an obstruction call

Running> Ball Awareness>Signals

- Again, as in giving hitter signals keep it simple; unless your team is up to it, leave “hit and runs,” “double steals,” etc., for the next league