



## Coaches' Clinic-Division A

### Preparing for Practice

- Know your logistics  
Consider all of the following factors when planning your next practice
  - ❑ Number of players
  - ❑ Number of coaches
  - ❑ Location of practice
  - ❑ Equipment Needs
  - ❑ Weather forecast (*rain plan-Consider using Friends' Central*)
- Practice Plan - ***Emphasis: Keep on schedule***
  - ❑ Establish times for hard work and cool down exercises
    - Best to have team very active first and then do teaching when players are more tired
    - Make drills more enjoyable by having the players move more
  - ❑ State in writing each players position or grouping (i.e. infield or outfield) to lessen the number of question
  - ❑ Set aside time for water breaks
  - ❑ Preparing Practice Plan
    - Set objectives for each practice for team and plan practice accordingly (decide what areas you want to focus on)
    - Skeleton Plans provided for first two practices (See attached)
- Be clear with team
  - Give team overview of the practice and goals of each workout
  - Be brief-Less talking and more play will improve your team
  - Set standards or challenges for the team
    - Keep team focused by giving them a goal (i.e. no dropped pop-ups, each drop results in 5 push ups for the team)
    - Immediate accreditation for a job well done (i.e. best fielder gets to hit first during BP)
- Keep team moving
  - Have every player involved at all times during practice and game
  - Give each child a responsibility in order for him to feel his importance to the team (i.e. equipment or warming up pitchers)

## Fundamentals of Throwing and Catching

- Grip-Adjust to 2 fingers on top and thumb underneath  
*Many players at 6-7 years old still throw with three fingers on top of the ball*
  - Grip is comfortable, but slows down the ball because of surface area
  - Hand will never expand to the size of the ball without stretching it
  - Sooner players can adjust to two fingers the better, because they will have to make adjustment eventually
  - Throw the ball up and find the “C” grip without looking
  - Ground balls/throws and race to get the grip set to show coach
  - Coach checks player’s grip during warm-up throws on a random basis
- Proper Mechanics of the Throw
  1. Get feet in line with target by stepping with the throwing hand foot first
  2. Spilt hands down to make a circle with ball (point thumbs at ground)
  3. Get throwing elbow above shoulder in curled position with glove hand raised in direction of target
  4. Keep elbow of throwing arm above shoulder as pull in the glove hand arm towards body
  5. Follow through low and bring throwing arm leg in front of opposite leg with release of ball
  - Progression of Drill Work from sitting to long toss

Step	Position	Distance	Focus
1	Seated legs crossed	10 ft	Elbow above shoulder at release point, follow through of wrist and rotation of ball
2	Two knees	15 ft	Taking ball out of glove down and rotating body to target
3	One knee	15 ft	Making circular motion with throw
4	Standing facing	20 ft	Hands splitting down and good follow through while on balance
5	Standing sideways	30 ft	Circular motion of arm while keeping elbow above shoulder
6	Quick Throws	30 ft	Hitting target and moving feet
7	Long Toss	60-90 ft	Throw on a line, not pop-up, use legs (can also be done in cage)

  - Line Drill-One player faces four players and have to throw the ball to each person and rotate
  - Relay Drill-Four players in straight line 60 feet apart, must throw down the line and back using relay and cut-off principles
  - Star Drill-5 players spread out in circle and throw the ball to make the shape of a star
  - 4 Corners-Send players out to each base and throw the ball from base to base clockwise then counter-clockwise
- Long Term effects of improper mechanics
  - Elbow injuries result from over-extension or throwing with low elbow
  - Rotator cuff injuries result from a release point to the side of body
  - Back and leg injuries result from improper follow through
  - Loss of Velocity and Accuracy

- Side arm throwers

*Players throw side arm because they bring the ball straight out of their glove and/or let their weight fall forward, thus rushing their throwing arm*

- What to do with a side arm thrower
  1. Talk to the player about the advantages of throwing over the top and the dangers of throwing side arm
    - More accurate
    - More velocity
    - Danger of injury
  2. Break down mechanics of throw to see where player is starting the side arm motion (slow motion throws or break down drills listed above)
    - Wrist flat in glove
    - Curl hand out of glove in downward motion
    - High elbow
    - Weight transfers with the throw
  3. Correcting the side arm throw
    - Give the player one simple drill to do to fix the one area which throws the arm off (focus on wrist, elbow, weight)
    - Monitor the players throwing motion throughout the season during warm ups

*Side arm throw can only be corrected by practice. The player must create new muscle memory to have his arm know to over the top. Proper throwing technique is the most important area a coach can help his players with.*

- Catching-Focus is on catching every ball with two hands in the center of the body
  - Quicker release
  - Control of ball
    - Check to make sure glove is proper size
    - Check to make sure glove is broken in, should be in a rounded shape, not flat
      - Encourage players to keep a ball in their mitt when not in use
      - Teach players to roll glove fingers
- Catch the ball on outside of glove or use a soft hands (start with short distances)
- Catch and freeze with hands together, then throw to partner
- Throw ball to player on a side to side basis to make them move to the throw rather than sticking out glove

## Pitching Mechanics

- Fastball Grips
  - 4-seam
    - Across the “C”
    - Ball Goes Straight
  - 2-seam
    - With the train tracks
    - Movement dependent on position of the fingers
- Steps 1-5 - *Emphasis: Balance Position*

Step	Position	Focus
1	Step Back	Glove up, eyes on target and step straight back
2	Pivot	Keep shoulders square to home and step in front of rubber
*3*	Balance	Head on target, foot under knee, quad parallel to floor
4	Power	Feet in straight line to home, weight back, arms apart
5	Follow-through	Towards home, bend knees and back, head up

- Emphasis on throwing mechanics
  - Break hands down with thumbs down
  - Curl arm up
  - Throw in circular motion, not in straight line
    - Keep elbow above shoulder
    - Follow through down low
- Drill work (*may do on flat ground at 25 feet until players develop balance, then extend drill work to 45 feet on flat ground before getting on mound*)
  - Step down drill on stairs to get comfortable with steps 1-2
  - Break down of steps to check each step
  - Balance drill to check that player is on balance to increase accuracy
- Throwing to target (*Always want pitchers working on hitting spots*)
  - Set specific targets for every pitch (i.e. batting tees)
  - Encourage to throw to target during warm-ups as well
  - Start by throwing at targets at 15 feet then move back when players has mastered each distance (15 ft, 30 ft, 45 ft)
- Off-Speed Pitches  
*Only teach those pitchers who have mastered their throwing mechanics with a fastball*
  - Only way to master new pitch is to throw it
    - Play catch and only throw with new grip
    - Throw off-speed pitch over distance (60 ft) to see movement
  - Change up-“OK” change
    - Throw with “OK” signal grip
    - Throw pitch just like a fastball, but with a different grip to slow down the pitch

## Hitting Techniques

- Before the Pitch-Proper Bat Size, Positioning and Stance
  - One arm test of bat
  - Stand 3 steps from plate-*Enables player to hit a pitch which is inside, down the middle or outside*
  - Stance
    - Feet in straight line to pitcher shoulder width apart
    - Door knocking knuckles lined up
    - Knees slightly bent
    - Elbows down-to avoid an upper cut
    - Bat slightly off shoulder with bat at 45 degree angle to ground-Do not wrap bat around head
- Stride-Timing Mechanism
  - Short stride to make feet same distance apart as the length of bat
  - Head stays still and weight back during stride
  - Stride early in order for the front foot to be planted before pitcher's front foot hits the ground
  - Practice stride in mirror or with bat between legs to mark center of balance
- Swing to Contact
  - Knob of bat to ball (Pull bottom hand and throw top hand)
  - Rotate hips and turn back foot with swing
  - Hit top half of ball
  - Keep head down on ball, go shoulder to shoulder with chin
  - Swing down to a level plane through the hitting zone
- Follow through
  - Swing hard through ball, not to the ball
  - Hips open to pitcher
  - "Squash the bug" with full 90 degree turn of back foot
  - Head down on plate, not up looking at the pitcher or the ball
  - Roll wrists out in front of body
  - Hands finish between shoulder and top of head to lift the ball
  - Test follow through to see how swing was
    - Balance
    - Two hands on Bat
    - Head Down
- Progression of Drill work from dry swings to the batting cage
  - Dry swings with bat on a straight line
  - Bat behind back drill on a straight line
  - Swing next to a fence
  - Swings off batting tee
    - Set ball up in front of hitter to encourage player to extend arms
    - Hit line drives, if player hits the tee, he is looping his swing

- Soft toss
  - Straight on
  - Off Speed
  - Inside
  - Outside
  - From back
  - One arm (work both top and bottom hand)
  - Chop Down Swings
- Hitting with L-screen on field or in batting cage
  - Shorten throws for pitcher to increase number of good pitches (seated or standing) from 25 feet away
  - Enables coach to work inside and outside of plate

### Individual and Team Defense

- Fielding Mechanics for IF and OF
  - Field ball in front and between legs
  - Funnel ball with two hands into mid-section
- Getting from fielding to throwing position
  - Step with throwing arm foot in front of body until perpendicular to target
    - Lead with throwing hand foot heel
    - Land on the balls of the feet with each step
  - Get glove hand foot in straight line with target to get hips in line to throw
  - Stay low through throw and follow through
- Using proper throwing technique (per throwing and pitching section above)
- Progression of Drill work from short hops to full IF/OF practice
  - Short hops on knees-forehand, backhand and down the middle
  - Short hops-pairs 10 feet apart throwing balls 1 foot in front of partner
  - Side to Side-One person on knees, partner slides side to side fielding grounders staying low
  - Football drill-Coach throws pop-ups out for kids to run under
  - Drop drill-players run towards coach who drops ball to be caught in front
  - Round off drills
    - Still balls for fielders to charge, set feet and throw
    - Big hops to charge
    - Ground balls
    - Pop-ups
  - Repetition with ground balls (*Can hit to two positions and place balls into crates to save time of overthrows*)
  - Relay drills-RF > 1B > C and CF > SS > 3B (*hit or throw balls from pitchers mound and crate balls at C and 3B*)

### Catcher Position

- Stance
  - Low Target
  - Feet spread for balance
  - Throwing hand behind thigh for protection
- Blocking
  - Glove drops first to 5 hole
  - Knees drop to ground and spread to cover more ground
  - Lean chest and head into the ball
  - Angle body into the plate
- Throwing
  - Throwing hand foot moves first
  - Feet in straight line to target
  - Stay low through release
  - Follow through with back leg on throw
  - Pop Drill from crouch to throwing position with feet on straight line
  - Receiving good and bad pitches (add in throws to bases)