

Coaches Reference Manual

Greater Victoria Baseball Association



Written by

Mitch Davidoff

Anthony Pluta

Jason Gibson

Introduction

This manual is intended to be utilized as a reference guide for baseball coaches to assist in implementing a uniform and simplified instruction process for all age groups that fall under the Greater Victoria Baseball Association (GVBA).

Following the guidelines within this manual will help groom mature, positive, intellectually inclined and fundamentally sound baseball players and coaches. Each of the six founding baseball associations within Greater Victoria will be expected to utilize this coaching manual in order to ensure vast improvements throughout their respective associations. This manual has been written by both collegiate and professional perspectives and was created in the best interest of GVBA's short and long term developmental success.

Divisions within GVBA

Blastball (4U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • players enter the game of baseball • emphasis here is FUN • introduces some basic concepts of baseball and teamwork • program requires parent participation
Rally Caps (5U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focused on teaching “FUNdamentals” of baseball • teach proper throwing, receiving, hitting, base running and basic game strategy knowledge
Tee Ball (7U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main introductory stage for children of organized baseball • co-ed division with boys and girls • high degree of hands on instruction by coaches and parents
Tadpole (9U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developmental program that emphasizes learning hitting, pitching, fielding and base running • introductory level of pitching (live pitchers are used for the initial innings while pitching machine is used for remaining innings)
Mosquito (11U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning of breaking down mechanics • live pitchers are used throughout the six inning game • regulation hard balls are implemented
Pee Wee (13U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuation of breaking down mechanics • rule changes such as leadoffs, pickoffs and balks are applied to game settings • importance of warmups and stretching are preached
Bantam (15U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advanced training and mechanics • higher intensity • minor details such as positional play, glove and foot work become critical
Midget (18U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advanced training and mechanics • higher intensity • minor details such as positional play, glove and foot work become critical • possible college prep training

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Section 1: Coaching Ethics

1.1 Protecting Player's Arms and Treating Injuries

It is essential to be coaching in the best interest of the players and not yourself as a coach. Everyone loves to win and remain competitive, but certain variables should NOT be overlooked as a coach. Remember that competition should always be perceived as "healthy competition." Hurting a 10 year-old's throwing shoulder in turn for a championship is not morally right or fair. Our goal as the GVBA is to limit the number of potential injuries. Listed below are some key points that will prevent injuries and retain overall health throughout GVBA divisions.

- keep pitchers on their respective pitch counts
- refrain from using pain and/or anti-inflammatory medication
- 20 mins on/20 mins off intervals when icing throwing arms
- Pee Wee, Bantam and Midget divisions need to do long distance running, abs and band work (surgical tubing) pre and post pitching
- most important of all is REST

1.2 Fair Play

In many cases, fair play is immensely overlooked and should be closely monitored. Even the divisions as high as Mosquito (11U) can be considered as an introductory level for some players. The majority of kids will still be grasping the basic concepts of the game. Therefore as coaches, we do not want to be playing these games like we would a World Series game. Keep in mind these divisions are created primarily for player development and fun.

- these divisions are developmental; not high performance
- a continuous education theme should be preached
- always keep everything FUN
- equal playing time is necessary for development
- as a coach do NOT run up the score
- remember you can play hard just play with respect

1.3 Positive vs Negative Reinforcement

This section may be perceived as more of a parental reminder, but kids will truly play harder and with more passion when positivity is reinforced. The mind is a powerful entity and can ultimately make a player's mind busier than a beehive. Instead of telling him or her "don't strikeouts" reinforce positivity by saying "put the ball in play." In the initial statement ("don't strikeouts") the last word "strikeouts" will remain in the player head in stead of "play" (referring to the second statement).

- keep everything positive
- the mind cannot process the words "can't", "won't" and "don't"
- criticism is important but it needs to be constructive
- telling a player not to do something will need to be followed up with an alternative way to how he or she can fix it
- example: "Stop throwing the ball high!"
- reinforcement: "Keep your glove arm strong and follow your body through your throwing partner."
- attitude of the player is reflected by the attitude of the coach
- if the coach is having fun and staying positive then the players possess positivity and enjoyment

Additional Notes:

Section 2: Coaching Different Age Groups and Skill Levels

Before we breakdown the different approaches of certain age groups and skill levels, it is imperative that we understand the three different ways of learning.

1. **“Seeing”** - individual needs to physically watch it play through
2. **“Hearing”** - individual comprehends best when listening to instructions
3. **“Doing”** - individual must work hands on and feel for him or herself first hand

As we all know, no one is exactly the same. The same idea applies for the kids we coach, train and instruct. Everyone has various learning curves, strengths and weaknesses. Once you recognize the individuals strongest learning method, take advantage of it and showcase your knowledge to him or her in that manner.

2.1 Approaching Age Groups Properly

- treat kids as if they are your own
- 12 year-olds and younger have short attention spans
- constantly switch up drills to refrain from “drill mode” mindsets ultimately keeping players mentally and physically engaged
- speeches need to be short and to the point
- constructive speeches should take place prior to game
- post game is no speech or positive speech

2.2 Approaching Abilities of All Players Properly

- patience with all players
- Rome wasn't built in one day; do not overload a player with information
- highlight a primary focus for an individual to work on instead of several
- spread equal attention to all players; not just the best/easiest to coach
- best way to practice will all abilities is station to station work; each player can work at his or her own pace
- small group and individual work aside from practice is also recommended

2.3 Understanding Intensity and Difficulty Levels

- coaches need to be aware that they are role models
- Fun + Competitiveness = Intensity
- teenagers hate authority; give them options
- example: “Do you want to do sprints or long distance running?”

Additional Notes:



Section 3: Fundamentals/Absolutes

At the early stages of your childhood you may recall going out to your local park with your friends and simply just playing the game of baseball and naturally competing. As times change and the game of baseball evolves, so do the fundamentals and absolutes of the game. As players continue to grow mentally and physically, the importance of fundamentals and absolutes increases exponentially. These are the most vital assets within the game of baseball. Not only will this section help guide your players to compete at high levels of performance but it will also allow them to remain healthy and injury free. To any coach, regardless the age group they are instructing, the fundamentals and absolutes of baseball need to be perceived as the foundation of your baseball skill set.

3.1 Throwing/Pitching Mechanics

In regards to baseball fundamentals, pitching and throwing mechanics are critical. The game revolves around players having the ability to throw the baseball around the diamond. Without this particular skill, the game of baseball can be perceived as boring and ultimately under appreciated. As coaches, it is essential to reinforce proper throwing mechanics daily in order to produce fast pace and fun orientated baseball games. Listed below is the mechanical criteria and expectations for each age group.

3.1.1 Throwing/Pitching Mechanic Criteria and Expectations for Divisions

(Technicality criteria increases with age of players)

Criteria Level: Simple Mechanics

- | | |
|---|--|
| Blastball
(4U)

&

Rally Caps
(5U) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standing parallel to partner and working on simplicity • getting their arm back and glove facing towards where they want to throw the ball • throwing arm up, hand away from head, eyes level • step with glove foot towards partner, arm and elbow up, ball facing away • glove arm level with shoulder and elbow with glove palm facing partner • imagine looking down a barrel of a gun • lined up facing target • “thumb to thigh, ball to sky” |
|---|--|

Criteria Level: Simple Mechanics (similar to 4U and 5U)

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Tee Ball (7U) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce how to balance on throwing leg • knee up at least parallel with belt • foot under knee but relaxed • eyes on target • refer to 3.12 “Five Stage Throwing Routine” (use stages #1 - #4) |
|----------------------|--|

Criteria Level: Moderate Mechanics

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Tadpole (9U) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce balancing to throwing position • separation on hands; thumbs down when separating • pause in both spots (balancing position to throwing position) • refer to 3.12 “Five Stage Throwing Routine” (use stages #1 - #4) |
|---------------------|---|

**Mosquito
(11U)**

Criteria Level: Moderate Mechanics

- working on new throwing warm up drills for proper and efficient throwing
- arm strengthening drills and more technical on mechanics such as: following through
- balancing position to throwing position to finish balancing position
- refer to 3.12 “Five Stage Throwing Routine”
- refer to 3.13 “Basics of Pitching Mechanics”

**Pee Wee
(13U)**

Criteria Level: Advanced Mechanics

- mature enough to begin throwing longer distances
- long toss for strength
- refer to 3.12 “Five Stage Throwing Routine”
- refer to 3.13 “Basics of Pitching Mechanics”
- refer to 3.14 “Basics of Pickoffs and Holding Runners”
- refer to 3.15 “Ways to Strengthen Throwing Arm”

**Bantam
(15U)
&
Midget (18U)**

Criteria Level: Most Advanced Mechanics

- should obtain previous knowledge of basic mechanics
- fine tuning
 - using lower half to throw harder
 - leading with hips
 - staying closed as long as possible
 - different grips and pitches
- refer to 3.12 “Five Stage Throwing Routine”
- refer to 3.13 “Basics of Pitching Mechanics”
- refer to 3.14 “Basics of Pickoffs and Holding Runners”
- refer to 3.15 “Ways to Strengthen Throwing Arm”

3.1.2 Five Stage Throwing Routine (Warmup)

It should be apparent that a healthy baseball player is the result of a proper warmup. Implementing and utilizing all five (5) stages of throwing as a warmup before every practice and game will build a creature of habit. In a short amount of time players will showcase an increase in arm strength and accuracy while dramatically reducing their chances of an arm injury.

1. One Knee

- right handed throwers will have there right knee on the ground (vice versa for left handers throwers)
- face to face with throwing partner
- throw with forearm and wrist to loosen wrist



2. Straight On

- on your feet facing your throwing partner
- feet remain stationary
- glove straight out in front; glove palm should be open towards your face
- working on getting throwing arm back and releasing out front
- finish with throwing arm to opposite hip



3. Side On

- widen your feet for a strong base
- face your throwing partner with your left shoulder (if you are a right handed thrower, vice versa for left handed throwers)
- elbow and the palm of your glove hand should be facing your throwing partner
- working on trunk twist and releasing the ball in front of your front knee
- throw with your feet on the ground; back heel can lift off ground
- finish with bent back and throwing arm to opposite hip



4. Step, Turn and Throw

- face your throwing partner straight on
- step in front of your left foot with your right foot (if you are a right handed thrower, vice versa for left handed throwers)
- raise and turn your opposite leg until it is at a 90 degree angle facing your throwing partner
- now stride towards your throwing partner
- complete your throw with bent back and throwing arm to opposite hip



5. Drop Step

- face your throwing partner side on
- step behind your left foot with your right foot (if you are a right handed thrower, vice versa for left handed throwers)
- stride towards your throwing partner with your left foot (if you are a right handed thrower, vice versa for left handed throwers)
- complete your throw with bent back and throwing arm to opposite hip utilizing all five throwing drills in one



3.1.3 Basics of Pitching Mechanics (Applies to 11U to 18U Divisions)

There are two different ways to deliver a pitch to the plate. The “windup” is ideally used when there are no runners on base, while pitching from the “stretch” is typically used for when base runners are present. The “stretch” is also utilized for holding runners on base.

A. Windup

- “rock step”
 - what is a rock step?
 - moving your glove foot in 1 of 4 directions



- “pivot”
 - what is a pivot?
 - turning throwing foot to be flush with the rubber



B. Stretch (vary your times to the plate)

- receive sign (assuming pitcher throws at least two pitches)
- hands apart feet spread apart looking towards the catcher
- baseball is wherever is comfortable
- “coming set” known as bringing baseball and glove together
- spread feet apart or close together but not touching (wide enough to shoot a free throw)



Once you have begun pitching from the windup (Option A) or the stretch (Option B), you will need to follow the next four (4) steps in order to fully demonstrate and deliver a mechanically sound pitch.

1. Balance

- knee will be lifted as high as your belt (able to balance a pop can) and in a controlled position
- foot is relaxed and directly under knee
- eyes are on the target



2. Landing Position

- hands separate (thumbs are pointing down)
- “thumb to thigh, ball to sky”
- weight should be on the balls of your feet (nose over your toes)
- baseball is facing second base (like your knocking on a door)
- glove palm is facing target



3. Throwing Position

- foot lands and lower body rotates and upper body will follow suit
- glove stays in front
- take your chest to the ball
- baseball should be released in front of your front foot
- keep momentum going forward
- keep back foot on the ground until baseball is released (foot can drag)
- baseball should be released in front of upper body and plant foot



4. Follow Through

- arm releases ball out front as far as possible
- be able to reach down and grab the dirt (second balance point)
- back is flat (able to balance a board) back leg will follow through creating a stance that is ready to field a hit ball



3.1.4 Basics of Pickoffs and Holding Runners (Applies to 13U to 18U Divisions)

Pickoff rules are first introduced and applied at the PeeWee (13U) division. It is important as coaches to remain patient and helpful to players during the introductory stage of pickoffs. To some players it will come naturally, to others it will be more difficult than math class.

1. First Base Pickoffs

- clear the rubber turn and throw to first
- accuracy is more important than speed

2. Second Base Pickoffs

- clear rubber turn and throw
- if not necessary, do NOT throw
- “the noodle” or “spaghetti” move (intended for 15U+)
 - ▶ lift leg up to balance position, crossing over rubber (making sure foot is all the way over the rubber), pivot feet and throw
 - ▶ make sure foot goes behind and put down behind the rubber; if not placed behind the rubber than a balk will be called

3. Third Base Pickoffs

- No reason to ever pickoff at third base

4. Holding Runners

- vary your times to the plate

3.1.5 Ways to Strengthen Throwing Arm (Intended for 13U to 18U Players)

A lot of players wonder how they can throw harder and further. Keep in mind that the players mindset should be focused on “strengthening” their arm rather than “throwing harder or faster.” The answer to gaining any velocity or accuracy primarily lies within your throwing mechanics (refer to “Five Stage Throwing Routine”). With that said, some healthy alternatives to increase arm strength lie within anaerobic (meaning very high intensity or at your maximum level of exertion) and flexibility training.

- surgical tubing and band exercises will strengthen and create flexibility smaller muscle fibers within the throwing shoulder (double the amount of exercises for the rear part of your shoulder in ratio to the front)
- abdominal exercises such as crunches will produce core strength that will help balance and equilibrium
- sprints, long distance and interval running will create stamina, endurance and help drain lactic acid build up in fatigued muscles, ultimately improving recovery time
- lightweight (max. 5 pound) dumbbells and pushups can also enhance arm strength and performance

3.1.6 Proposed Pitches to Throw

As you may already know, it doesn't take much to destroy a young player's arm. Whether it's throwing over their pitch limit or not getting enough rest, the continuous stress on the arm can become permanent. A common mistake when coaching is letting a player throw curveballs when they are not ready. Without proper mechanics no pitch other than a 4 seam fastball should be thrown. Remember that the best pitch in baseball is strike one and the hardest pitch to hit is a well located fastball. Listed below are some alternative pitches for younger players to adopt.

4 Seam Fastball



2 Seam Fastball



3 Finger Changeup



4 Finger Changeup



Circle Changeup



Curveball (refer to 3.17 When Should a Pitcher Throw a Breaking Ball?)



3.1.7 When Should a Pitcher Throw a Breaking Ball?

- once a pitcher has control of the 4 seam fastball, then he or she can begin to work on a 2 seam fastball
- until a pitcher has control of a 4 seam fastball, 2 seam fastball and change up should the he or she then begin to throw a curveball
- fastball should be thrown 90% of the time
- in addition, the wrist should never turn or spin when throwing a pitch

3.2 Hitting Mechanics

3.2.1 How do you hold a baseball bat?

First and foremost, every hitter should know how to hold the baseball bat properly. Holding the bat incorrectly will increase the number of mechanical issues in a hitters swing.

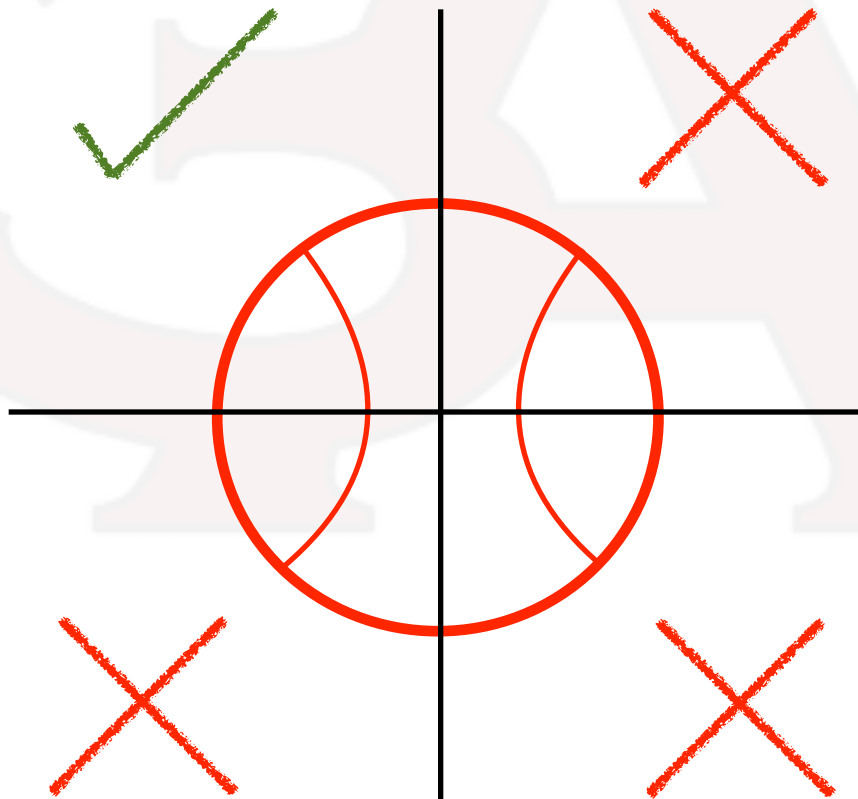
- bat should be rested in your finger tips and not the palms of your hands
- the hitters knuckles on both hands should line up
- if you point forward with your index fingers on both hands your knuckled should automatically line up



3.2.2 What part of the baseball do we intend on hitting?

Before we explain anything more mechanical with regards to the ideal baseball swing, we need to focus on which part of the baseball we should be hitting.

- if we split the baseball into quadrants, we want to aim for the upper, inside quadrant
- this helps create the ideal backspin on the baseball
- figure below shows the upper left quadrant we intend to hit as a right handed hitter (vice versa for left handed hitters)



3.2.3 Where do you stand in the box and what should a hitters stance look like?

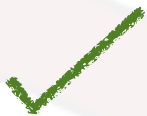
It is essential for every hitter to be 100% comfortable when standing in the batters box. We all know there are numerous ways in which you can stand in the box, but most importantly it is based off the hitter's preference.

- ideally, a hitter should stand in the box where the meat of their bat can reach all areas of the plate
- it is recommended to stand in the back of the box as it allows the hitter to see the baseball for the longest amount of time, therefore giving the hitter more time to react
- a way of measuring complete plate coverage is by placing the end of the bat on the middle part of the plate and stand accordingly
- hitter should be viewed as relaxed
- hitter's stance should have some slow and controlled hand or body movement
- "keep your back elbow up" is not always ideal for every hitter as it can cause stiffness and disallow proper range of motion within a swing

3.2.4 What is a strong hitting position?

Once your hitter establishes his or her stance, it is essential for the hitter, regardless of age, size or skill level to get into a strong hitting position.

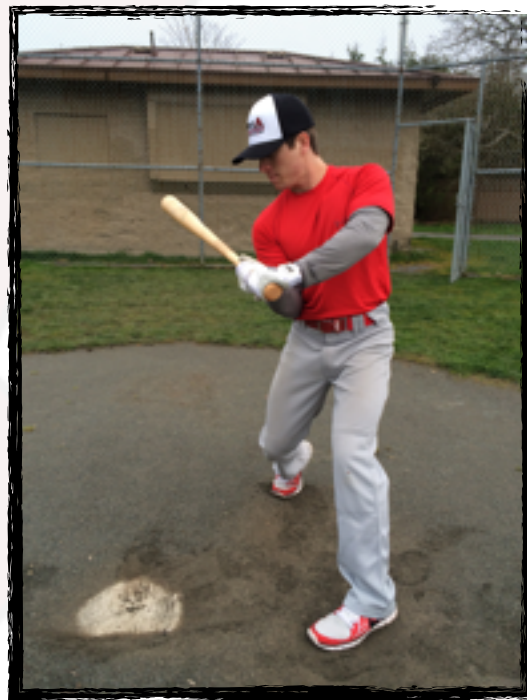
- once the pitch is thrown, the hitter must stride towards the pitcher (committing to the pitch)
- keep in mind that the hitters foot should become planted once the pitchers foot becomes planted as well
- it is ok for every hitter to be different; some have high leg kicks and some will only pick up their heels
- make sure the hitter doesn't jump at the pitch as it will cause his or her head to move up and down, ultimately creating the pitch to move on them
- a steady head is critical in order to properly see a thrown or pitched baseball
- when the front foot is planted the hitter should be in an athletic 50/50 stance (half weight on front side and half weight on backside)
- think of a circle, square and triangle balancing on one another (shown in figures below)
- refer to the circle as the hitters head, square as the hitters body and triangle is the space between the hitters legs



3.2.5 What does initiating the lower half mean?

After we establish our strong hitting position, we must initiate our lower half allowing our upper body to follow.

- as a right handed batter your back leg (right leg) needs to commit towards the pitcher (vice versa for a left handed hitter)
- back knee should rotate towards pitcher; do NOT sweep through with back knee in a golfing motion



- hitters upper body will then “work down and thru” the baseball meaning swinging down on the baseball and remaining on the same level plain as the baseball on follow through
- “working down and thru” the baseball will help us create back spin on the baseball once we hit it, ultimately creating the baseball to travel a further distance
- we want to refrain from “working upwards” meaning dropping our hands and swinging up, as it creates front spin on the baseball just like a tennis player would hit a tennis ball to his or her opponent

3.2.6 What does your ideal contact point look like?

After the hitter works down on the baseball being pitched, he or she will come to their “contact point.” The point of contact is just as it sounds; the stage of the swing in which the hitter connects with the baseball that has been thrown.

- the hitter’s head, butt and back knee should all be on the same vertical line with one another
- the hitter’s hands should be extended in front of their body depending on where the pitch has been thrown, but not to full extension!
- palm up, palm down with bent back arm
- the elbow of the hitters top hand arm should be close to his or her belly button; keep in mind this will deviate depending on the pitch location



3.2.7 What is extension, pertaining to hitting?

Following the hitters contact point, extension must take place. Without extension a hitter's swing will only stay in the plain of the baseball for a brief moment. Extension not only adds power to the hitter's swing but also improves the chance of hitting the baseball since the bat is on the plain of the baseball longer.

- “extension” can as be described as “working thru” the baseball
- good extension can be explained by showcasing the ability to hit through five baseball widths after contact



Once the hitter completes his or her swing, they should be able to hold themselves, ultimately showcasing a strong balanced position. At the younger levels, it is common to see hitters falling over the plate and out of the batters box because they have not developed the strength to swing a bat. As coaches, we want to preach the importance of being balanced not only during our stance or swing but concluding our swing as well. Without balance, hitters will struggle to hit the baseball with any consistency or power.

3.2.8 Common Faults in Younger Swings

Common Fault	Alternatives to Fixing Weakness
Hitter continues to swing upwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask the hitter to try to overcompensate and hit balls on the ground High tee drill: set a hitting tee up as high as it can go and ask hitter for ground balls or line drives only
“Rolling over” or consistently pulling the baseball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain to the hitter “how to hit the ball deeper in the zone” or “let the baseball travel” the hitter needs to watch the pitch all the way to contact or into the catchers glove work on the away pitch off a hitting tee
Hitter is consistently late swinging on pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the hitter is getting his or her foot down early shorten the hitters swing by getting them to “choke up” on the bat

3.3 Fielding Mechanics

3.3.1 Ready Position

You must acknowledge the fact as a player that a baseball is bound to come your direction at least once throughout the duration of a game. Although you cannot predict every play, you can be ready for every play. Here are some basics of the “ready position.”

- be on the balls of your feet
- every position player except the pitcher and catcher should be creeping and moving their feet until ball crosses plate
- once you anticipate the pitch crossing the plate implement a short hop with both, keeping you prepared for a ball either direction rather than being dominate on one side
- fielder should land with knees bent in an athletic position
- as a fielder you need to be anticipating a ball your way every play

3.3.2 Infield Glove and Foot Work

A lot of people wonder what it takes to get to the next level and the main answer is repetition and luck. The more ground balls you take the more natural it will become for you as an infielder. Remember it takes 1,000 repetitions to create a habit.

- keep soft hands
- back must be flat rather than bent or round
- butt needs to be down with your glove out in front using a straight arm
- create a triangle with your feet and glove hand on ground
- glove leg slightly in front of other leg
- throwing hand over top of glove creating a “crocodile” effect



- once ball is fielded bring both hands to belt
- eyes on ball, coach must be able to see the button on the fielders hat
- make sure your moving in the direction of your throw (“follow your throw”) and keep momentum
- on backhands keep glove fingers on ground and “rake the ground”
- glove foot with glove hand is ideal on backhands



3.3.3 Double Plays

- throw the ball above waist and below hat
- always throw to the base even if player isn't there yet
- one foot on base one foot back
- clear once ball is thrown
- within 10-15 feet under hand toss; stiff wrist
- ALWAYS make sure of one out
- “double play depth”
 - middle infield more towards second base
 - 3rd base even with bag unless hitter has power

3.3.4 Outfield Glove and Foot Work

At the younger divisions the outfield is perceived as a lesser position because there are not as many plays to be made, but as you climb up divisions the outfielders bare an overlooked and under appreciated role of being the last line of defence. It must also be noted that batting practice is the best time for an outfielder to get his or her work in because they are consistently seeing baseballs hit off live bats.

- field balls on the ground with shoulders square to target or cutoff man
- you can field the ball off either foot but it is preferred to field off your right foot forward if you are a right handed thrower (vice versa for left handed throwers)
- once you field the ball, “crow hop” to initiate momentum on your throw to your target; you can crow hop by pushing and kicking up with right leg in front of your left foot if you are a right handed thrower (vice versa for left handed throwers)
- the key to your crow hop is gaining ground horizontally to make a shorter and stronger throw to the infield



(Crow hop pictures continued on next page)



- on a slower ground ball getting around the baseball is essential as it allows you to gain momentum thru your target or cutoff
- on a harder hit ground ball your priority is to cut it off; this means using your backhand as a last resort
- getting to the ball and getting rid of the baseball as quickly as possible is vital
- on a ball in the air, work behind the baseball once again gaining momentum through your target and cutoff
- keep your feet moving prior to catching the fly ball to initiate proper foot work

3.3.5 Basics of Catching

The catcher should be considered the leader on the field for several reasons, but most importantly because he or she is the only positional player who has the view of the whole field. There are multiple variables to consider while catching. For the younger age groups it is crucial to keep this complex position as simplified as possible.

- weight on balls of feet
- butt down; hips more forward
- elbow on knee or outside of knee when receiving
- hand behind back



- make signs clear and visible to pitcher
- keeping signs hidden from 1st base and 3rd base coaches
 - pull knees closer together and use your glove to hide from 3rd base coach
- goal is to block and keep ball in front
 - create a “cave” with your body to smother the ball
- with runners on, you must anticipate steal; be on your toes
- get ball out of glove in front of you, not behind or beside your head
- if the pitch is an obvious ball do NOT bother trying to frame it
 - an umpire will begin to trust you and that’s when you frame a close pitch for a called strike
- keep mask on at ALL time

Section 4: Effective Practice Planning

Many coaches overlook the importance of practice planning. Effective practice planning can help you overcome chaos at the field and keep you organized internally with regards to your assistant coaches and parents. Arriving at the field with a plan is essential otherwise everything becomes an impromptu mess. At the same time, do not feel obliged to do everything on your own. Use your assistants for constructive criticism and ask for help when it is needed.

4.1 Maintaining Player Involvement, Intensity and Competitiveness

In order to run a quality practice you must maintain player involvement, intensity and create a competitive atmosphere. Here are some pointers for on how to run an effective practice.

- head coach and assistant coaches should have an idea of what is going on at practice that day (come to practice with something in writing)
- make sure players get plenty of water breaks throughout practice
- ensure that a proper dynamic warmup takes place before any fundamental drills (refer to 4.2 Practice Plan Templates for dynamic warmups)
- try to revolve your practices around a timed station to station atmosphere in order to maintain a higher intensity level
- trust your assistant coaches and enlist help from parents
 - teach a parent to take over and specialize in one drill
 - give them pointers on one specific mechanic to look out for
- have point systems to keep the players engaged and competitive
- your ideal drill will go as follows:
 - explain drill/do drill
 - regroup and discuss issues that need to be altered
 - go back into drill and make it a competition
 - point system
 - punishment or no punishment (always positive)
 - example: pushups or laps

4.2 Practice Plan Templates

4.2.1 Dynamic Warmup

Stretching (15mins)

- 1-2 light
- jumping jacks
- jog 40 feet and back peddle 40 feet (x2)
- high knees
- butt kicks
- skipping jumps
- lateral skips (swinging your arms in hugging motion)
- alternating knee hugs
- alternating toe touches
- alternating groin shuffle
- alternating squat shuffle
- trunk twists
- arm circles
- static shoulder stretches
- static forearm stretches

Throwing (15mins)

- (refer to Section 3.12 for “Five Stage Throwing Routine”)

4.2.2 Fundamental Development Stations

- split team into A, B, C and D groups (15mins each)

Example Fundamental Development Station Template:

A. Hitting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • front toss • ensure hitter gets foot down early • hitter strides toward pitcher not out or away from the plate 	B. Throwing/Pitching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pitching target game • partner up; one pitches and one catches • catcher calls balls and strikes for pitcher
C. Infield <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partner ground balls • each player rolls each other ground balls back and forth • reinforce ready position 	D. Outfield <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coach throws fly balls • throw balls left, right and shallow • teach them to communicate • yell “I GOT IT”

Proposed Drills to Implement Within Practice Plan:

- choose four (4) drills in total at 15 mins each
- for example if you want to hold a hitting practice choose four (4) hitting drills at 15 mins each
- if you want to do a combined pitching and fielding practice choose two (2) throwing/pitching drills and one (1) infield drill and one (1) outfield drill
- mix and match to what you ultimately want to get out of your practice

<p>A. Hitting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tee drills • soft toss • overhand toss • top hand drill • bottom hand drill • live batting practice • one knee drill • 3 ball drill • opposite field hitting drills • hit and run, behind the runner • hitting game 	<p>B. Throwing/Pitching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wind up • stretch • pick offs (pickoffs to both 1 • flat ground work with other pitcher (shorten up distance to around 40-45 feet) • pitcher's fielding practice (bunts, slow rollers, ground balls, double plays) • bullpens • covering bags when balls are hit to the outfield • run downs (with all infielders) • balancing drill
<p>C. Infield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forehands/backhands • straight on ground balls • double plays • slow rollers • between hops • bunts defence • line drives • covering bags • cut offs • quick hands 	<p>D. Outfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic routes • in-ward turns • fielding balls on the ground • communication drill • diving drill • balls of the fence • line drives over the head • pushup fly balls • reaction drill (turn around) • proper turns

Section 5: Game Strategy

5.1 Baserunning

As you move up within age groups and skill levels, the ability to run the bases properly is increasingly considered an asset. Utilizing the correct base running techniques can be the difference of a player being out or safe on a “bang, bang” play at the plate. Make every foot step count.

Home to 1st base

- run through the base
- step on the front part of the base
- chop your feet to slow down while straddling the foul line
- look to the right for your first base coach or possible overthrown baseball
- then peel off to the right
- NEVER slide into first base

Home to 2nd base

- take a banana route to 1st base from the box (running towards coaches box)
- touch the front left corner of the bag with right foot
- chop your feet to slow down at second or slide into base feet first

5.2 Lead offs

1st Base

- both heels start on first base
- first step with left foot
- pivot on left foot and step with your right foot
- shuffle towards second base never bringing your feet closer than shoulder width to refrain from tripping on a pickoff
- be at least a body length from first base

2nd Base

- take three steps back from second base towards left field
- creep at an angle towards the base line

3rd Base

- step into foul territory (if you get hit by a batted ball in fair territory you are will called out)
- take a walking lead and a couple hard steps until ball is in the catchers glove
- once the catcher receives the pitch, turn and run hard back to 3rd base in fair territory

5.3 Fly Ball Communication

Communication is one of the most important parts of the game. Without it, fielders are vulnerable to collisions and severe injuries. In order to avoid all possibilities of a collision the catcher must take complete charge of the field.

- you need to understand who has fly ball priority throughout the field
- pitcher can be called off by any other player
- 1st base can call off the catcher but can be called off by the second baseman
- 3rd base can call off catcher but be called off by short stop
- short stop has priority over every infield player
- all outfielders can call off every infielder
- center field has priority over all outfielders
- whoever can get to the baseball the easiest needs to yell “I GOT IT”
- everyone else in the play needs to acknowledge whoever yelled “I GOT IT” by saying “TAKE IT”

5.4 Pre Game Routine

- every outfielder takes a fly ball or ground ball and makes a throw to second base (x2)
- every outfielder takes a fly ball or ground ball and makes a throw to third base (x2)
- every outfielder takes a fly ball or ground ball and makes a throw to home (x2)
- outfielders are done their part of the pre game
- infielders play in; field ground ball and throw to home
- infielders play back; field ground ball and throw to first base
- double plays from each infield position
- infielders play back; field ground ball and throw to home
 - ▶ catcher receives throw and rolls a slow roller to same infielder who will now field and throw the slow roller to first base
 - ▶ first baseman will field and throw his last ground balls to third baseman

Additional Clinic Notes:



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