

# SKILL BUILDING WARM-UP

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*- Baseball is a Game of Movement -*

## Skill

### Building Warm-up

**Dynamic drills for the team prior to playing catch. Maximize limited practice time. Build skills, starting with the first minute of practice, while warming up players' bodies.**

Most of the drills in this section are applicable to other parts of practice, most specifically as part of 'Three Groups Drills' in the TEAM DRILLS segment of a practice. The unique feature of all these drills is the player's arm does not need to be warm to execute these drills. All throws made in these drills are an underhand toss. Many of the drills do not involve throwing, but focus on footwork and receiving throws.

Players who need to improve a part of their game can have drills in this section suggested to them by their coach and work on them at home with a parent, sibling or friend. Alert all your players and parents of this page of the site.

Many if not all drills found on the Skill Building Warm-up page can be used on days where the weather (or league field scheduler) keeps you from getting on a diamond. These drills can be run on any level patch of grass, on a concrete school yard, in an empty parking lot, in a gym, etc. They are also great activities for getting a club ready to go prior to a game - we can run a pre-game 'practice' before every game.

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## **First Base Side**

- 3-1 Play (first baseman fielding; underhand toss to the pitcher covering first)
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## **RECEIVING A THROW AT A BASE**

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- 1-6 Play (pitcher fielding; underhand toss to the shortstop covering second)
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- 1-3 Play (bunt)

# **MINI DIAMOND - Super Tool**

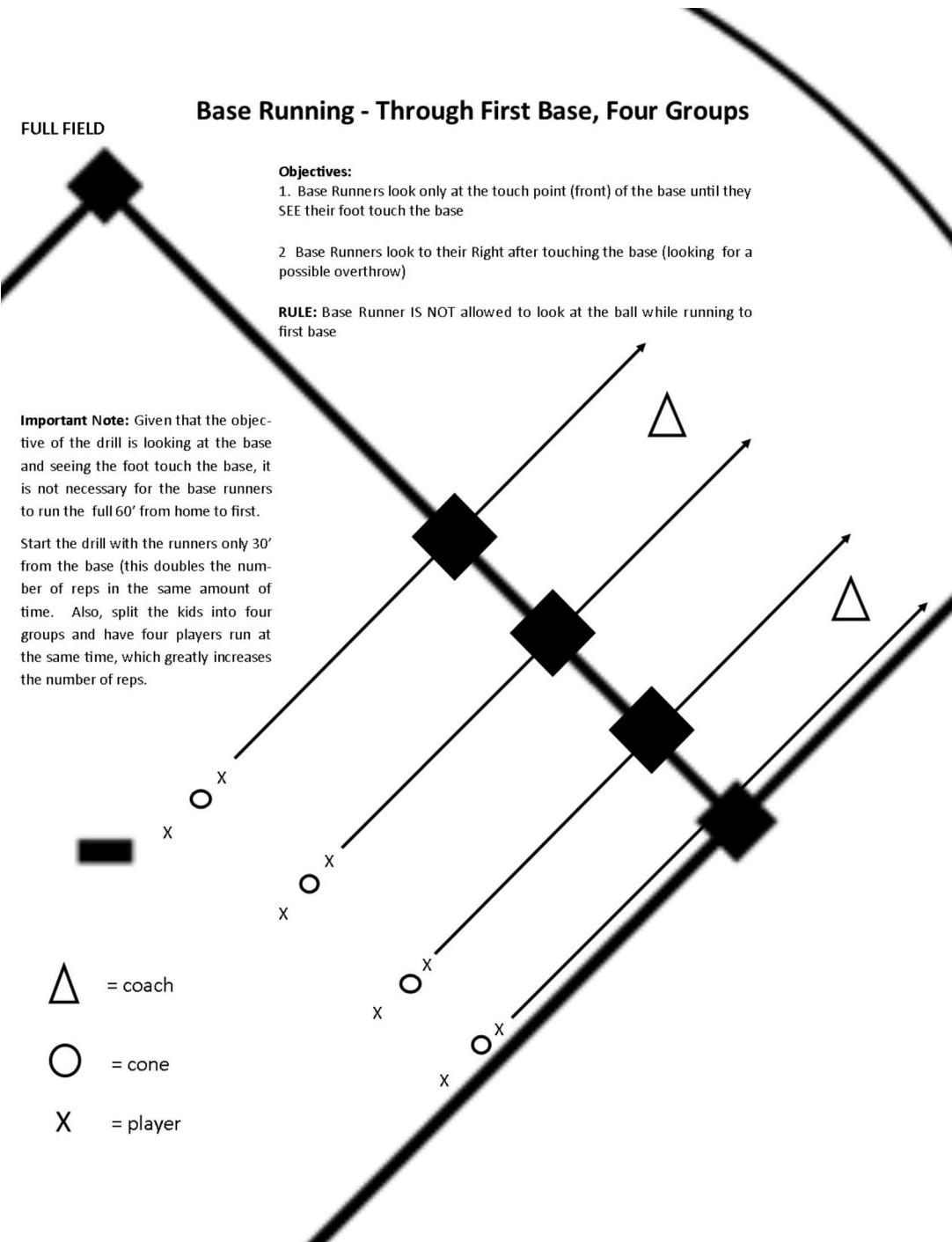
One of the most valuable tools a coach can use is the Mini Diamond. Any drill in which the focus of the teaching is something other than working on full on overhand throwing technique can be run on a Mini Diamond. Use of the Mini Diamond is referenced throughout the Coaching Guide.

A Mini Diamond is 20'-25' square, but can be modified larger or smaller depending on the activity. It is constructed using cones, throw down bases, ball caps, extra shirts that are laying around, a leaf, anything. Anytime we compact the teaching/learning environment we reduce distractions, improve communication and the players get many more repetitions during a drill.

Examples of drills that can be run using a Mini Diamond include relays, backing-up and base coverage responsibilities, and first and third defense. Keep in mind that for most activities the throwing and catching aspect is the last skill that needs to be mastered (and we take care of that during 'Playing Catch Practice'). Proper movement, positioning and communication need to be understood and mastered to some extent before adding the throwing aspect to cement the execution of the activity.

The Mini Diamond is also useful for teaching how a drill is supposed to run before going to the full size diamond.

# BASE RUNNING



# Turns & Touches - Base Running

The drill diagram below illustrates running the drill with the entire team (12 players). When running the drill during the Skill Building warm-up, we have 3-5 players. **In the SBW we run the drill with one group using just one base.** Which base should we choose.

**My suggestion is Second Base.** The impact on the defense when a runner can go from first to third on a ball hit to the outfield is significant. The result is a First & Third Situation, which is difficult to defend.

The other drills on a given day's SBW set-up may force us to run this group at first base or third base, which is fine.

Also, given the current needs of the team, practicing this drill at first or third base may be preferable on the day this drill is incorporated into the SBW.

**OBJECTIVE:** Players learn how to approach a base to make a turn and touch the proper spot on the base.

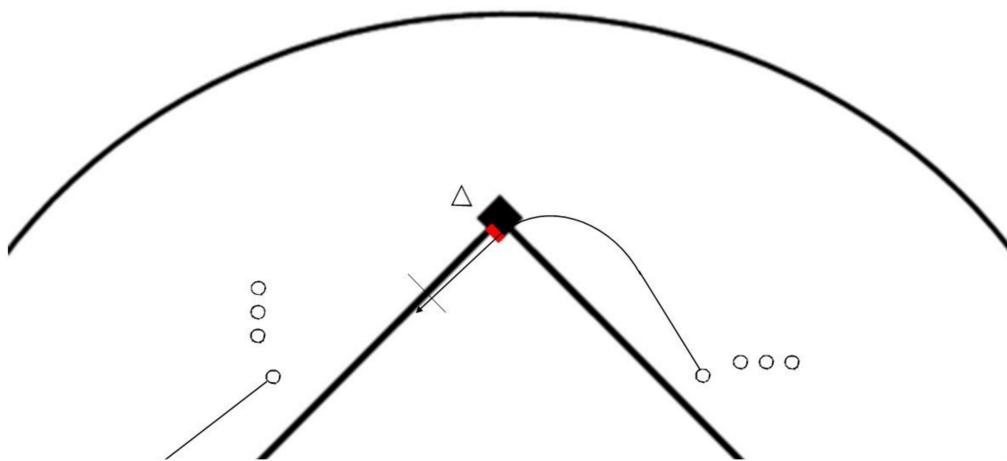
**SET UP:**

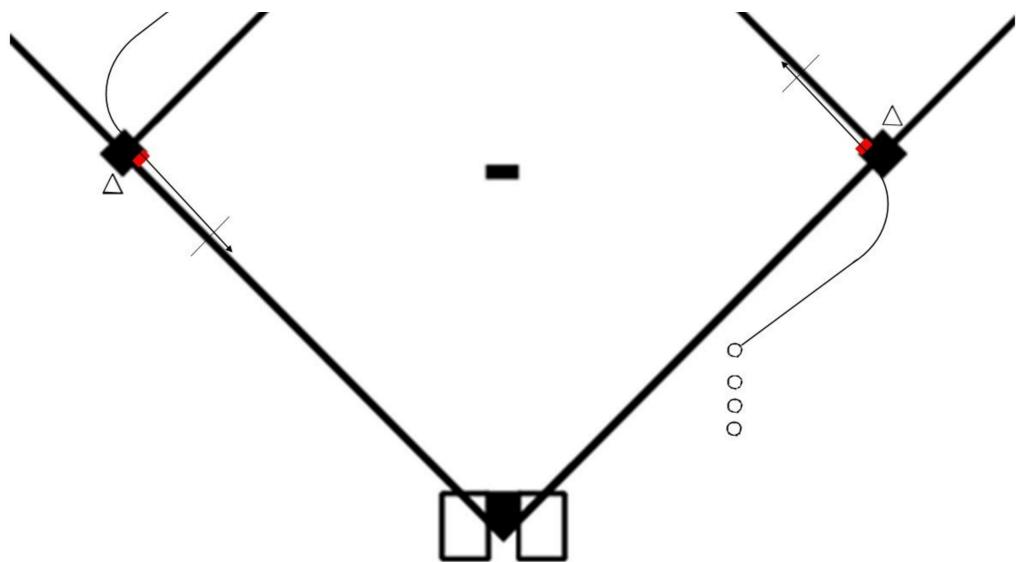
Place a cone 10' feet in front of each base where the turn and touch is being made and 5 feet outside the base line.

Draw a line in the baseline 15' beyond each base. Coaches are positioned at the base where the players are making their turns and touches.

**TEACH:** Run a straight line to a point 10' prior to the base and 5' outside the baseline, with eyes on the touch point on the base. Baserunners want to touch the far side of the inside corner of the base. Use that part of the base to push off and accelerate in a straight line to the next base. See the foot when strike the base, Have young players holler, "Touch!" when they see their foot contact the base.

**DRILL:** Players start 30' from the base they are working at; accelerate 10' past the base, then return to where they started. When a player touches the base, the next player runs.





**NOTE:** This is a drill to develop the skills of properly approaching a base and touching the correct part of the base. Given these objectives, it is not necessary for players to run the full 60' to a base. When we cut the starting distance to 30', we are able to increase the number of reps the players get in developing the skills that are the objective of the drill.

## SET UP

LAY DOWN THREE THROW DOWN BASES ON THE PERIMETER OF THE INFIELD. IF YOU HAVE A DEEP INFIELD AND DON'T MIND CHEWING UP THE DIRT AT THE BACK END OF THE INFIELD THE IDEAL SCENARIO IS TO HAVE THE FIRST TO THIRD GROUP RUNNING ON THE DIRT. THE OTHER OPTION IS TO PLACE THE BASE JUST BEYOND INFIELD DIRT.

GET THE PLAYERS IN THREE GROUPS OF FOUR. ONE GROUP AT HOME PLATE, ONE GROUP AT SECOND BASE AND ONE GROUP AT FIRST BASE OF THE THROW DOWN BASES.

HAVE COACHES AT FIRST BASE, THIRD BASE AND AT SECOND BASE OF THE THROW DOWN BASES.

## TEACH

1. ANYTIME A BALL IS HIT IN THE OUTFIELD EACH BASE RUNNER (INCLUDING THE BATTER) HAS A MINDSET THAT THEY ARE GOING TO ADVANCE 'TWO BASES'. ONLY WHEN THE DEFENSE FORCES THEM TO STOP DO THEY ONLY GO ONE BASE.

2. AS SOON AS THE BASE RUNNER(S) RECOGNIZE THE BALL IS GOING TO THE OUTFIELD THEY WANT TO IMMEDIATELY RUN, IN A STRAIGHT LINE TO A POINT SIX FEET OUTSIDE THE BASELINE AND TEN FEET IN FRONT OF THE BASE. WHEN THEY GET TO THAT POINT THEY LOWER THEIR INSIDE SHOULDER TO HELP THEM START THEIR TURN TOWARD THE BASE.

THE RUNNER WANTS TO STEP OVER THE INSIDE CORNER OF THE BASE AND TOUCH THE FAR SIDE OF THE INSIDE CORNER (THIS IS THE SPOT ON THE BASE THE COACH IS POINTING AT (TOUCHING) DURING THE DRILL. THE BASE RUNNER HAS THEIR EYES LOCKED ON THAT SPOT ON THE BASE UNTIL THEY SEE THEIR FOOT TOUCH THE BASE. WHEN THE RUNNER TOUCHES THIS SPOT ON THE BASE THEY USE THE BASE TO PUSH OFF AND DRIVE THEIR BODY IN A STRAIGHT LINE TOWARDS THE NEXT BASE.

**NOTE:** IN A GAME, WHEN ROUNDING SECOND OR THIRD BASE, JUST PRIOR TO GETTING TO THE POINT WHERE THEY BEGIN THE TURN THE RUNNER WANTS TO LOOK TO THE THIRD BASE COACH FOR INSTRUCTION AS TO WHETHER THEY WANT TO CONTINUE ON TO THE NEXT BASE OR TO STOP AT THE BASE. IF THE RUNNER SEES THEY ARE NOT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER TO BE TAGGED OUT IF THEY COME OFF THE BASE THEY WANT TO MAKE A TURN AT THE BASE AND GO AN ADDITIONAL 5' - 15' (DEPENDING ON HOW CLOSE THE BALL IS TO THE BASE) WHILE KEEPING AN EYE ON

THE BALL AND BE READY TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT BASE IF THE DEFENSE MAKES A MISTAKE OR THROWS THE BALL TO A POINT ON THE FIELD WHERE THAT RUNNER HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF ADVANCING TO THE NEXT BASE

#### **DRILL**

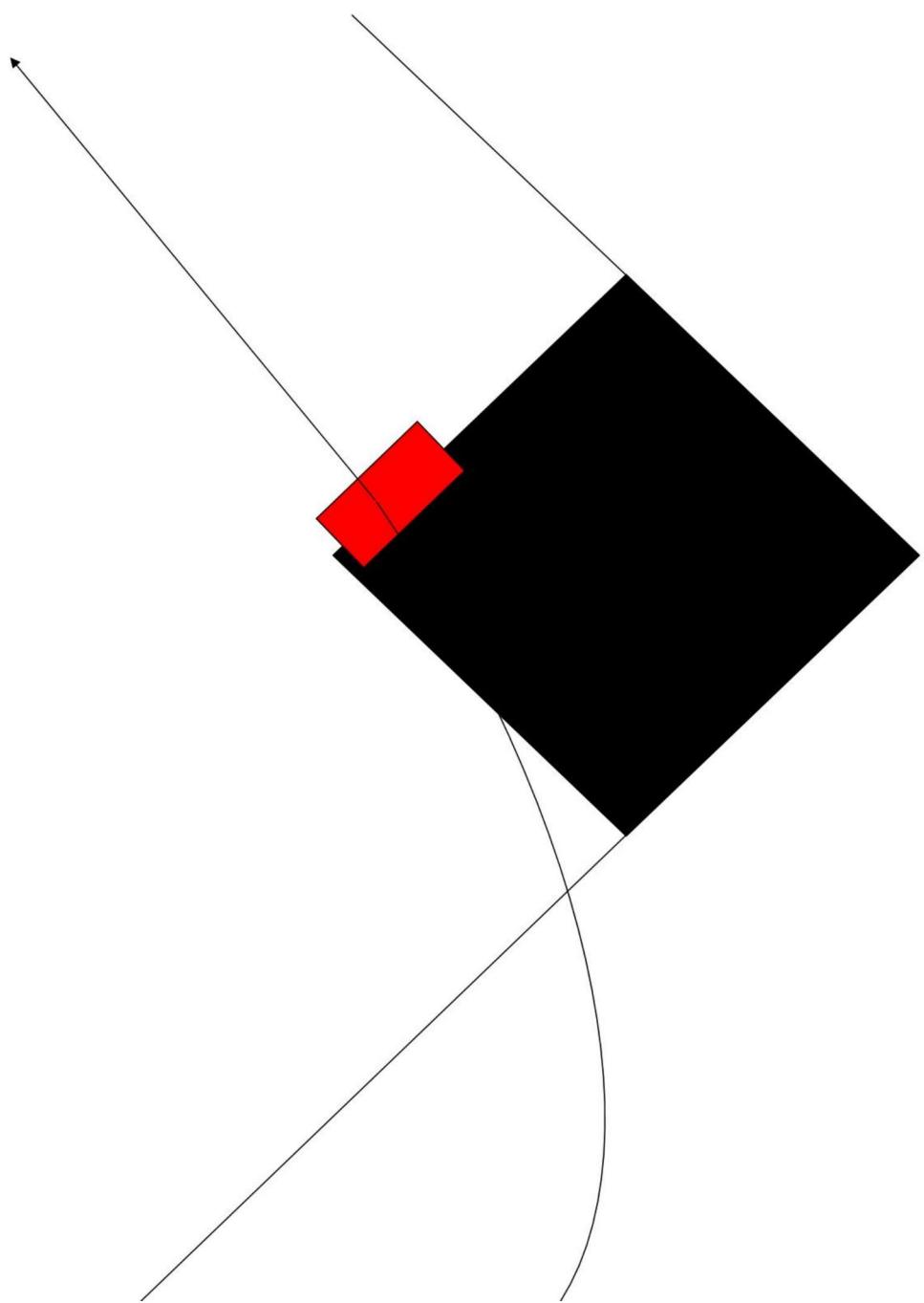
A COACH HOLLERS FOR ONE GROUP TO, "GO!" WHEN THE FIRST GROUP IS ABOUT TO ROUND THEIR BASE HOLLER FOR THE NEXT GROUP TO GO, ETC

IDEALLY THE THREE COACHES AT THE BASES WHERE THE PLAYERS ARE MAKING THEIR TURNS AND TOUCHES ARE ON A KNEE AND ARE TOUCHING THE POINT ON THE BASE WHERE THE PLAYERS ARE TO MAKE THEIR TOUCH.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

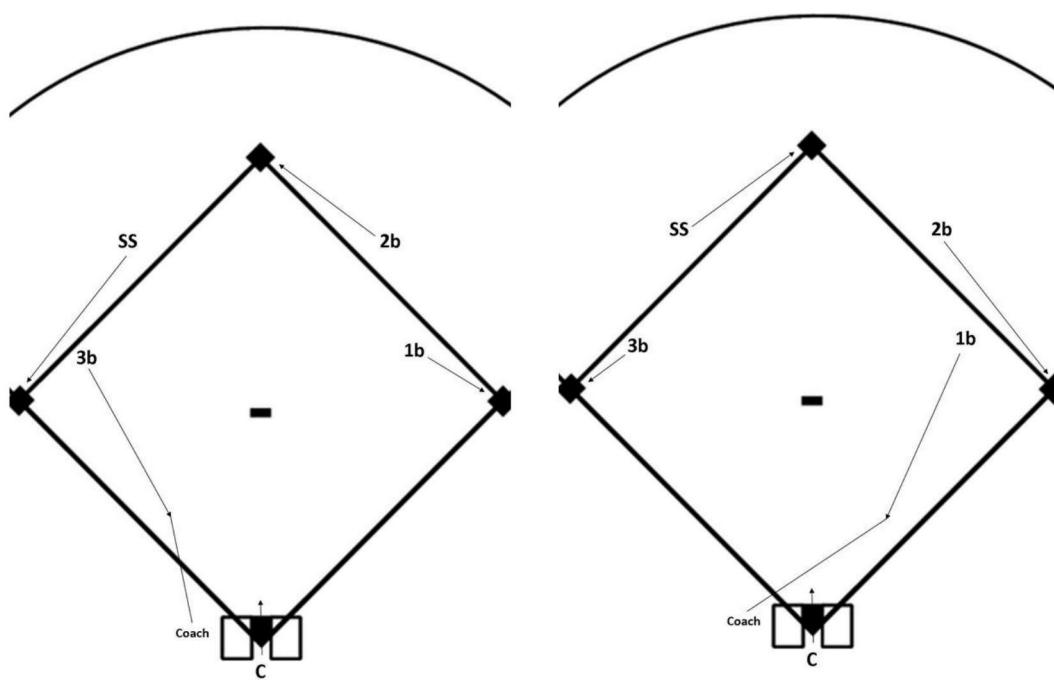
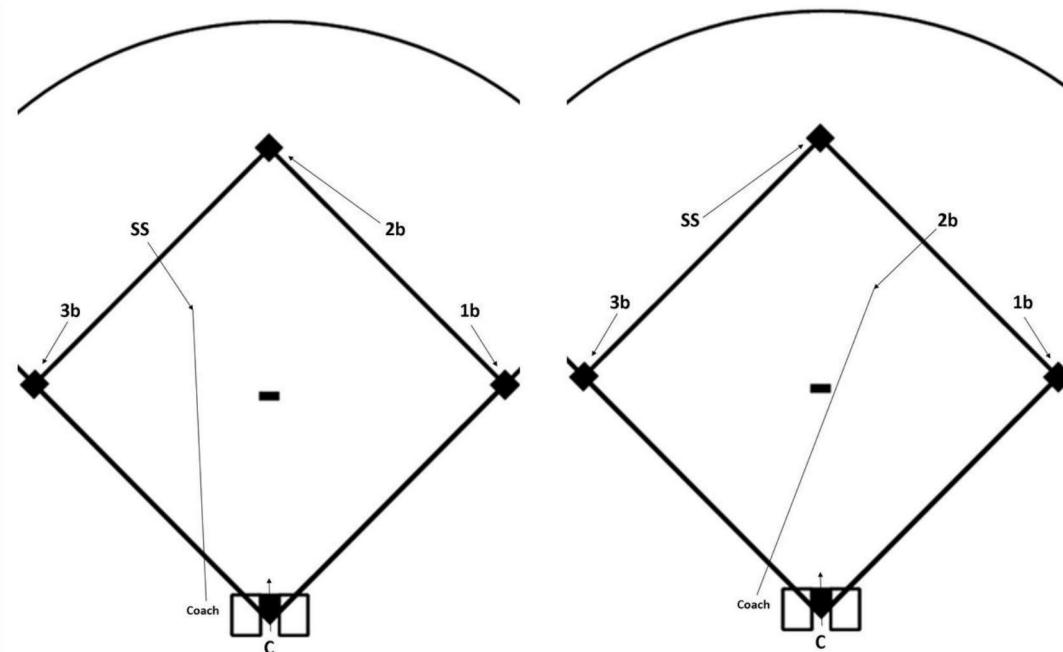
1. LEARN TO, WHEN APPROACHING THE BASE, RUN IN A STRAIGHT LINE TO A POINT 6' OUTSIDE THE BASE LINE AND 10' PRIOR TO THE BASE.
2. LEARN TO LEAN THEIR INSIDE SHOULDER IN TOWARD THE BASE PRIOR TO MAKING THE TOUCH.
3. RECOGNIZE THERE IS A SPECIFIC SPOT ON THE BASE THEY WANT TO TOUCH WITH THEIR FOOT AND TO ACTUALLY SEE THEIR FOOT TOUCH THAT SPOT AND TO USE THE BASE TO PUSH OFF OF TO ASSIST THEM IN ACCELERATING TO IN A STRAIGHT LINE TO THE NEXT BASE.

## **Touch Point on the Base**



# DEFENSIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

## Infield Base Coverage



## Infield Base Coverage Responsibilities - Explained

There are four infielders, the game is played with one ball and there are three bases. The rule for infielders is 'Play the Ball, or Cover a Base'. Each infielder has only two possible responsibilities: 1. Ball or 2. Base. The formula for infield base coverage:  $4 - 1 = 3$ ; the three infielders that aren't playing the ball cover a base.

The First and Third Basemen have one base they are responsible for; the Shortstop and Second Basemen have two bases they are responsible for; one to their Left and one to their Right. These two players, positioned in the middle of the field, follow this simple rule: If the ball is hit to your Left and you aren't playing the ball, **SPRINT** to the base on your Left; if the ball is hit to your Right and you aren't playing the ball, **SPRINT** to the base on your Right.

The rule for the players in the middle of the field is "Always move towards the ball"

The Catcher also participates in this drill and has a responsibility to move. When the ball is delivered to the infield the Catcher leaves the spot where they receive pitches and move to their 'Position', which is in front of home plate.

### **Running the Drill:**

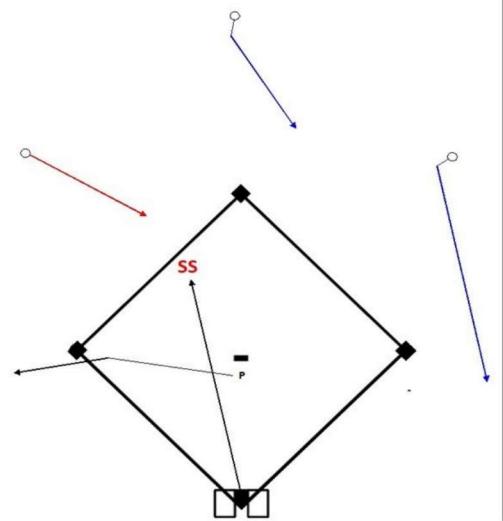
1. The coach rolls a ball to one of the four infielders; not to the pitcher
2. When rolling a ball to an infielder, the coach calls out "ground ball to <position>". This is important because on the Mini Diamond it is simple for more than one kid to go get the ball.
3. The player fielding the ball does not\* throw the ball after fielding it
4. The three infielders not fielding the ball move **quickly** to their base, then turn and face the ball in a "Ready Position".
5. The players return to their positions and the coach rolls the ball to another position
6. Be sure to rotate the players to different positions

\*Later in the season, after the players have demonstrated the clearly understand their movement responsibilities, modify the drill by having the catcher call out which base to throw the ball to. The player fielding the ball throws the ball to that base using a technically sound underhand toss. If the ball goes to second the infielders can 'turn a double play' and if the ball goes to a corner base they can throw the ball around the bases and back in to the catcher ..using an the underhand toss technique for all throws.

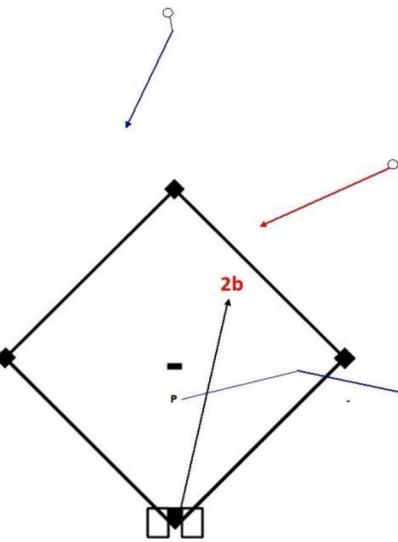
**IMPORTANT NOTE:** When delivering the ball to the first baseman or third baseman, only roll the ball about one third of the way toward the base. This forces the player to move far away from their base making it clear to the other infielders that it is not covered. When working on movement responsibilities this clear visual of an uncovered base helps the kids recognize where they are needed.

## Backing-Up Bases (P & OF) - Ball Hit to the Infield

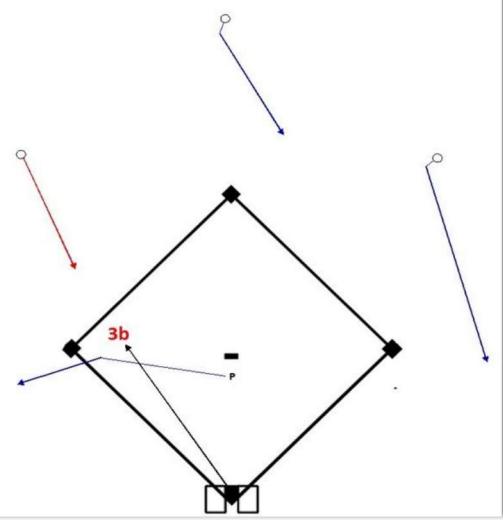
**Backing-up, Ball to Shortstop**



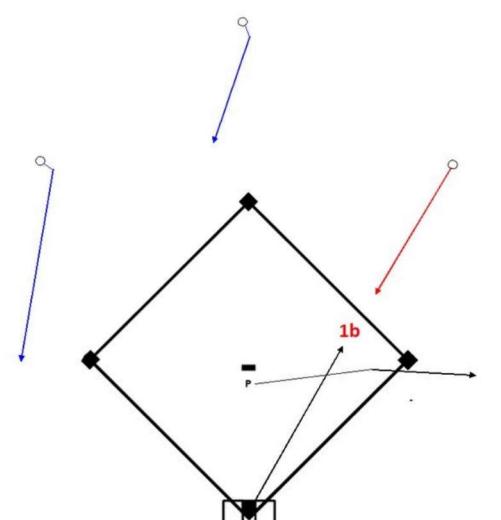
**Ball Hit to Second Baseman**



**Backing-up; Ball to Third Baseman**

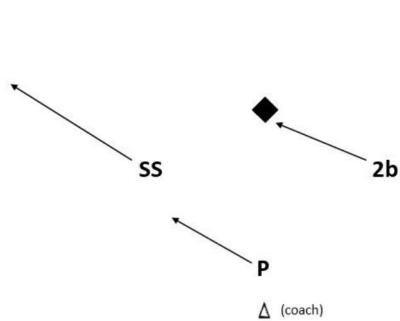


**Backing-up, Ball to First Baseman**



**Middle Infielders & P Movement - Balls Hit to the Outfield**

◎ (cone)



**Coach** "Ball hit to left field!"

**SS** Sprints to a point 30' from 2b bag

**2B** Covers the base.

**P** Sprints out to the baseline

△ (coach)

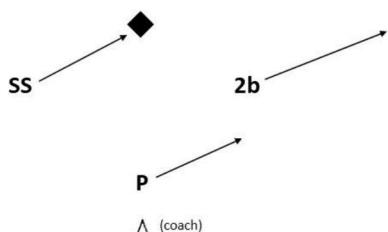
◎ (cone)

**Coach** "Ball hit to right field!"

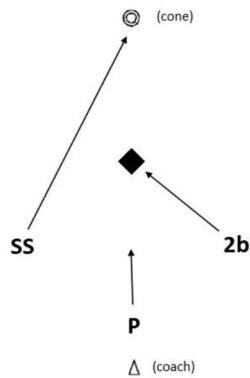
**SS** Covers the base.

**2B** Sprints to a point 30' from 2b bag

**P** Sprints out to the baseline



△ (coach)



**Coach** "Ball hit to center field!"

**SS** Sprints to a point 30' from 2b bag

**2B** Covers the base.

**P** Moves to half way between  
pitching rubber and base

△ (coach)

# FIELDING

## Ground Balls

### 20' Ground Balls

#### SET UP:

Coach: 20' - 25' from the players; with a supply of 3-4 balls

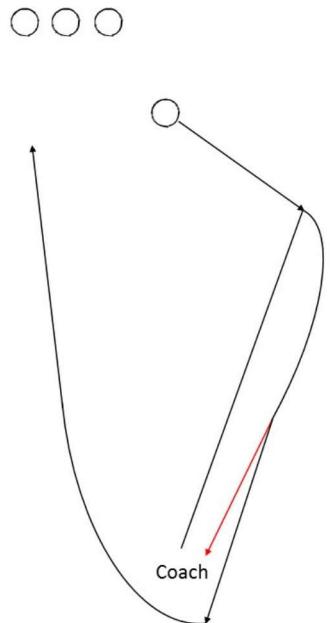
One Player: positioned at a cone or other type of marker

Other Players: lined up behind a second cone or marker located 5' - 10' behind the first cone/marker

#### DRILL:

The coach rolls a ball medium to slow speed approximately six feet to the left of the player. The pace of the ball should be such that the player is able to angle in while going after the ball. Once the kids understand the drill routine, the coach can roll balls to the kids' right. **Note:** do not mix up the ground balls to the left and the right. Players (of all ages) learn better when repeating the same action over and over.

As soon as one player returns the ball to the coach, the coach wants to get the next player moving. Once the drill is fully in action we should only have two players (out of four) 'waiting in line'. One player is returning to the line; one player is executing the drill.



#### TEACHING:

Call out "Ready Position" to the player. Once the player is in a "Ready Position" roll the ball.

The player moves their feet FAST to the ball, they SLOW down to catch the ball. Tell the player "Wide (feet) to Catch" as they prepare to field the ball. After they field the ball they run FAST toward the coach. Tell the player "(Move Your) Feet to throw".

The player runs towards the coach, returns the ball using an underhand toss, then follows their throw ("Follow Your Head"), runs around the coach and returns to the line at the 'waiting cone'.

#### COMMON MISTAKES:

1. Players, especially those that are more aggressive and/or nimble, will often not slow down to catch the ball resulting in them losing their balance while fielding, which negatively impacts their ability to get under control to make a good throw, or they will miss the ground ball altogether (this becomes more of an issue with older players).
2. Some players will want to run through the catch using one hand as if they are fielding a 'slow roller'. This is a natural tendency for more aggressive and/or nimble players. We need to explain to them that we are rolling the ball slowly in order for them to better focus on their footwork and the 'fast, slow, fast' cadence of fielding.
3. Slowing down or stopping when making the underhand toss or not continuing forward movement after throwing the ball. The requirement to run around the coach is incorporated into the drill to eliminate the tendency of players to stop and help them develop the habit of continuing to "Move Your Feet" during and after the underhand toss.

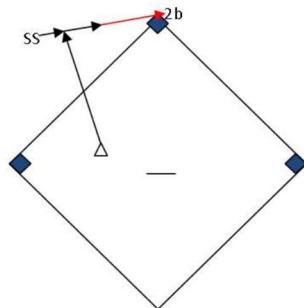
## 6-4 / 4-6 Using Underhand Toss

### Positioning of Players for the Drill:

Shortstop 25' from the base for this drill (rather than the standard 15'), to allow extra room for emphasis on "Move Your Feet to Throw" towards target to power the throw.

Second Baseman plays at the bag for this drill. They stand 'behind' the bag in line with the Shortstop, with the bag between them, in a "Ready Position". The reason for positioning 'behind' the bag is because of the short distance of the throw. Standing 'behind' the bag gives the player covering a little more time to react to the throw.

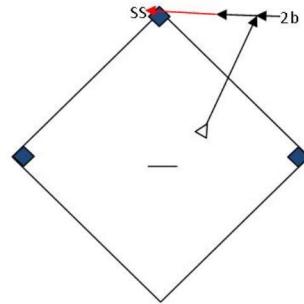
Coach rolls the ball a couple steps to the Shortstop's left. Shortstop fields, throws and follows their throw. Following the play the players switch positions.



**6 - 4 Play**

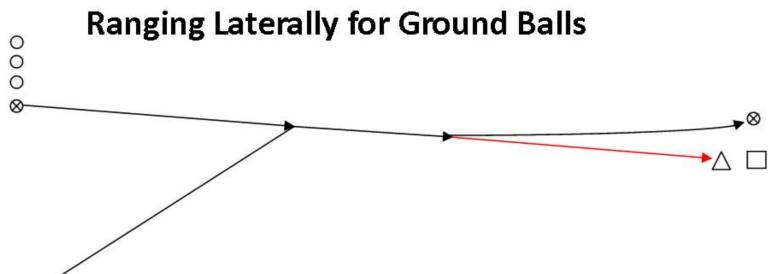
<u>Player's Actions</u>	<u>Coach's Teaching Phrases</u>
1. Fields the Ball	1. "Wide (feet) to catch"
2. Underhand Toss	2. "Move feet (to throw)"
3. Follows the throw	3. "Follow your head"

**NOTE:** From time to time coaches will likely have to remind the player receiving the throw to be in a "Ready Position".



**4 - 6 Play**

Same as above, but with Second Baseman fielding and tossing with the Shortstop covering the base.

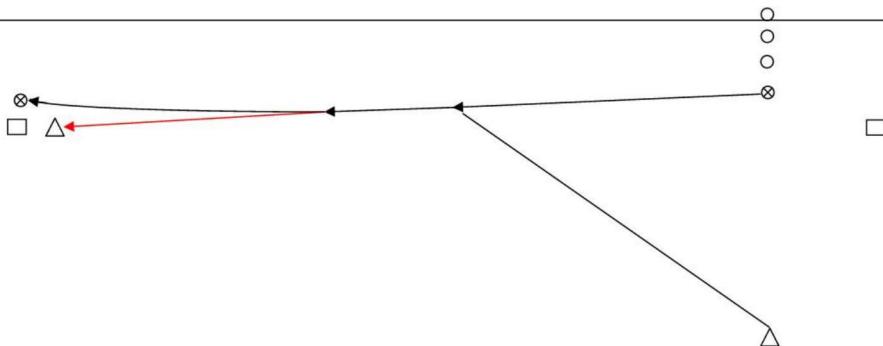


**Ranging Laterally for Ground Balls**

Players lined up 10' from base; coach 20' from players, directly in front of the players. This coach rolls balls approximately 20'-25' to the side of the fielder forcing the fielder to run full speed and just barely reach the ball. The players are to reach out and field the ball with just their glove hand, while running full speed, then continue running and make an underhand toss to the coach (or player) at the opposite base. If the ball rolled by the coach does not force the fielder to run full speed the player should angle in towards the ball so to continue running at full speed and field the ball with one hand.

If a second coach is not available, have a player receive the first throw. That player then joins the fielding group. As each player finishes fielding and tossing they receive the next player's toss. Following the fielding and tossing action, players line up at the opposite base. When all players have gone, the coach moves down to the other base and runs the drill in the opposite direction.

NOTE: Coach/Machine Pitch and Tee-ball kids can field the ball as they choose. Simply having them moving to field and toss will develop skills for their stage of development.



**Backhand plays:** Teach 'thumb down' and to keep the 'glove between eyes and the ball'; this will get their glove into a proper relationship between their body and the ball. NOTE: left handed players will be working on forehand-backhand going in the opposite direction of the other players.

Kids age 8 or 9 and younger don't have to backhand balls if they are not comfortable with the skill. At the younger levels we are working to develop movement and confidence in catching and tossing while moving.

**Skills developed in this drill:**

- 1) Ability and confidence in fielding while ranging to the ball
- 2) Aggressiveness towards the ball
- 3) One handed fielding skills for when both hands are not available

NOTE: Kids love this drill because there is a lot of movement and a lot of satisfaction gained from their improved fielding skills.

THIS DRILL REQUIRES AN INFIELD SURFACE TO RUN WELL, SO WE NEED TO BE SURE WE (IN THE NORTH) HAVE GOOD WEATHER LEADING UP TO THE DAY WE PLAN TO INCLUDE THIS DRILL IN A PRACTICE. HOWEVER, IF IT A WET DAY AND WE ARE WORKING OUT ON A CONCRETE SCHOOL YARD OR IN A GYM THIS DRILL CAN BE USED IN OUR PRACTICE.

THIS IS A GOOD DRILL TO INCORPORATE INTO A 'THREE GROUPS DRILLS' PLAN. - SEE THE TEAM DRILLS PAGE.  
'THREE GROUPS DRILLS'.

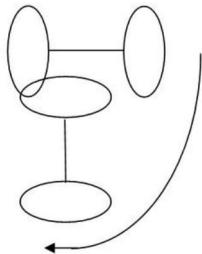
**BACKHAND TECHNIQUE:** SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS: 1. POINT THE THUMB OF THE GLOVE DOWN, 2. "REACH FORWARD TO CATCH" (WE WANT THE GLOVE IN FRONT OF THE 'LINE' ALONG WHICH THE FIELDER IS RUNNING. WE WANT THE GLOVE 'BETWEEN THEIR EYES AND THE BALL'.

YOUNGER KIDS, AGES 8 AND YOUNGER: WHILE WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BACK HAND THE BALLS, SOME ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THIS TECHNIQUE, ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH TRYING IT AND MANY WILL NOT (WANT TO) DO IT EVEN AS WE CONTINUE TO INSIST. THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THIS DRILL IS FOR THE KIDS TO GET EXPOSED TO CATCHING THE BALL WHILE RUNNING FAST, LATERALLY. WITH THE YOUNGER KIDS, ALLOW THEM TO FIELD THE BALL USING THE HAND POSITION THEY ARE MOST COMFORTABLE. AT AGE 9 MOST WILL BE COMFORTABLE PUTTING THEIR GLOVE INTO A BACKHAND POSITION.

# Fly Balls

## Drop Step Routine

### Drop Step Footwork



○—○ = position of feet

Throwing hand foot drops back.  
This diagram illustrates a right  
handed thrower making a drop  
step.

1. Drop Step from Ready Position; back to ready position; repeat ~5x (throwing hand foot back; glove up to catch)
2. 'Drop and Go' Drop Step and run back 4-5 steps ...*Fast* (eyes facing the coach - where the ball is coming from)
3. Get Behind It: 'Drop and Go'; after players are back 4-5 steps, Coach says, 'Catch and Throw'. Players take a step or two forward, simulate a catch, continue forward simulating a the throwing action.

...No ball is used for this drill, so one coach can run the entire group/team at once.

### Drop and Go

**Coach:** "Drop and Go"

**Player:** Drop Step and starts running straight back with eyes on the coach.

**Coach:** Let player get started back 2-3 steps then toss a pop fly approximately 10' beyond the player, who is forced to run full speed in order to make the catch.

**Note:** Be sure the player ALWAYS throws the ball back using proper throwing technique, "Move Feet to Throw", "Follow Your Head".

### Get Behind It

**Coach:** "Drop and Go"

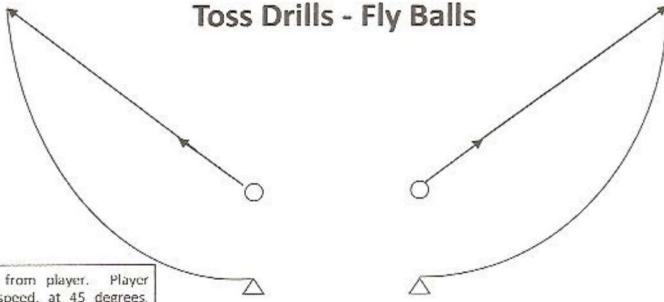
**Player:** Drop Step and starts running straight back with eyes on the coach/ball

**Coach:** Let player get started back 2-3 steps then toss a pop fly 20' in the air and a step or two beyond the player. The height and depth of the throw should allow the player a fair amount of time to get 'behind' the ball, be able to change directions and step forward to catch.

The player comes forward to catch then 'moves feet' and finishes the throwing action while gaining ground back to the coach. At the completion of the action the player returns the ball to the coach using a proper underhand toss technique.

**Note:** This is a skill better suited for players age 10 or older.

## Toss Drills - Fly Balls



Coach stands 10' from player. Player breaks back, full speed, at 45 degrees. Allow player to run 10' then toss a fly ball approximately 30'; limit height of toss to 12'-15'. This is a running and catching drill, not a high pop fly drill.

In most cases an underhand toss by the coach works fine, is more accurate and easier on the arm.



### <— Get Behind It:

Coach uses underhand toss. Stand 10' from player, toss the ball ~20' in the air and ~5' behind the player.

Player Drop Steps, runs 2-3 steps, then coach tosses ball. Player gets to a point a step or two behind the ball, then comes forward to catch.

**NOTE:** Early on put emphasis on footwork, not on catching the ball.



### <— Going Back:

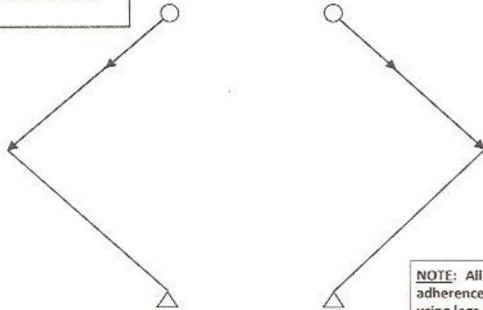
Coach: "Drop and Go" Player drop steps and starts running back as fast as possible.

After a couple steps, the coach tosses the ball about 10-15' beyond the player forcing them to run full speed to catch the ball.

**Note:** this can be a one handed catch.

Coach stands 40' from player who breaks in, full speed, at 45 degrees. Allow player to run 10' then toss a fly ball to a point approximately 30' ahead of the fielder; limit height of toss to 10'-12'.

**NOTE:** An Underhand Toss by the coach is usually more accurate.



**NOTE:** All return throws require absolute adherence to *proper throwing technique* using legs, and moving feet toward target.

## PITCHERS FIELDING

### Third Base Side

## 5-1 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (third baseman fielding , underhand toss to pitcher)

### 1. SET UP:

- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the third base position (15' off the base/foul line)
- Coach 40' from third base.

### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit to the pitcher's right, when they don't field the ball, the pitcher *sprints* straight to third base (slows down on the last few steps...need to be under control in order to get in a "Ready Position") and "**Cover the base with your eyes**". Third baseman moves their feet to make an underhand toss to the pitcher covering the base. If the pitcher is not ready for the throw...keep moving toward the base until they are ready.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

Pitcher builds the habit of sprinting to the base when they don't field a ball hit in the infield.  
Third Baseman learns to recognize those times they need to delay their throw...but *not stop moving* toward their target.

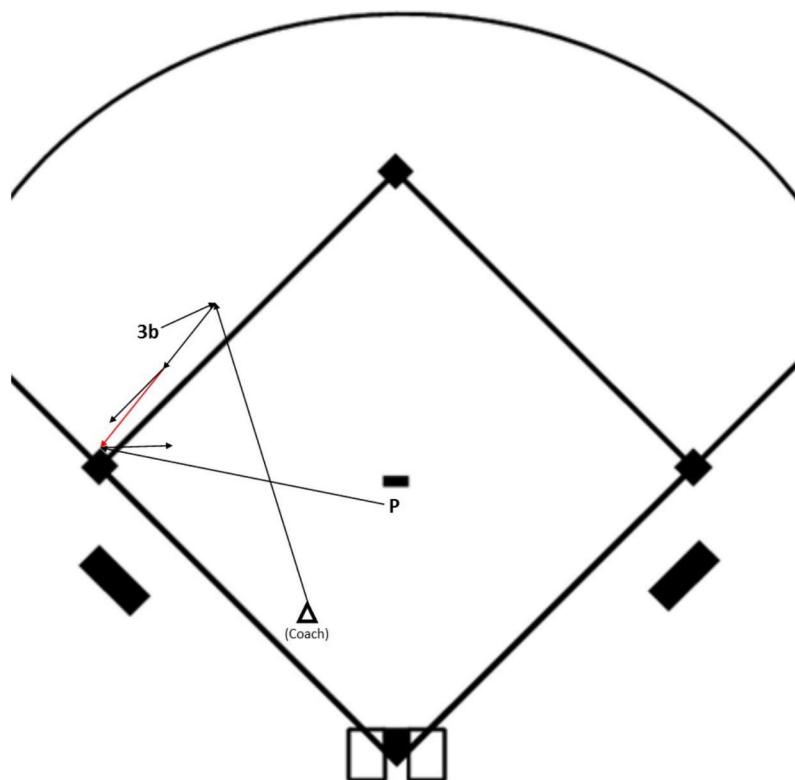
### 4 DRILL:

Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the third baseman's left.

Pitcher sprints to third and "**Covers the base with their eyes**", gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot. After finishing the play they roll the ball in to the coach, then rotate to first base.

Third Baseman "(feet) Wide to Catch", then "Move your Feet (to throw)", then follow their throw - "Follow Your Head"

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next third baseman who fields and tosses to the next pitcher.



## 1-5 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (Pitcher fielding, underhand toss to third baseman)

### 1. SET UP:

- Place the pitching rubber 30'-35' from third base
- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at third base position (15' off the base/foul line)
- Coach 40' from the third baseman.

### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit straight back to the pitcher or to the pitcher's right, the pitcher can usually use the underhand toss for the throw to third base.

With runners on first and second we want to get the lead runner at third when possible.

Third Baseman, "**Cover the base with your eyes**", then set up in a "Ready Position" facing the ball. After tagging the base, the third baseman, in a 'Power Position', shuffles a couple steps towards the 'middle of the infield' and "Looks for Other Runners".

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

Players come to recognize the value of the underhand toss technique and that it can be successfully used very often.

Players ingrain the habit of getting into a "Ready Position" when preparing to receive a throw at a base.

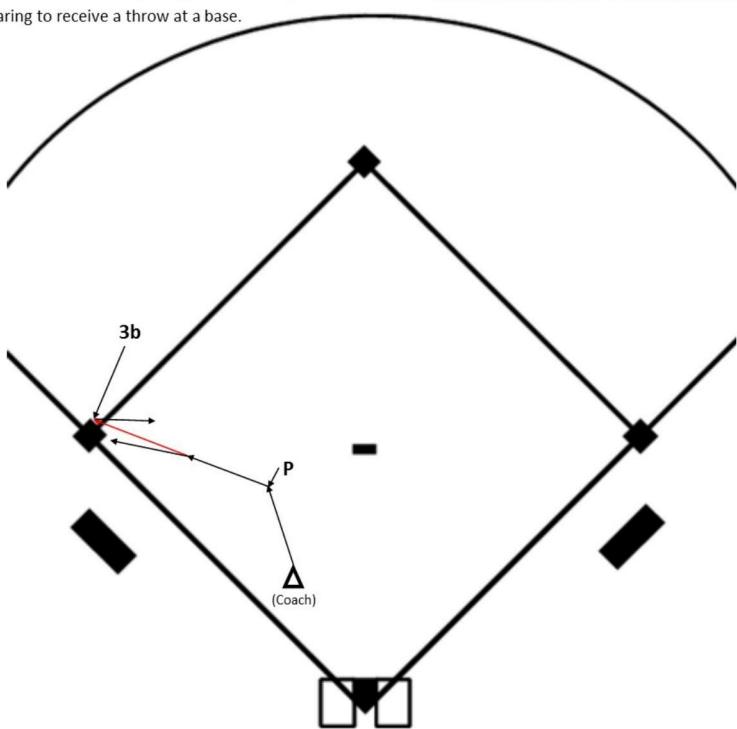
### 4 DRILL:

Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the third baseman's right.

Third Baseman - "**Cover the base with your eyes**", gets in a "Ready Position", "Move Your Feet to Catch", get the "Ball first and the base second", tag the base and then "Look for Other Runners". After finishing the play the third baseman rolls the ball in to the coach, then rotates to pitcher.

Pitcher fields the ball with "(feet) Wide Apart", then runs towards third base - "Move Your Feet (to throw)"; uses proper underhand toss technique and follows their throw - "Follow Your Head".

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next third baseman who tosses the ball to the next pitcher.



## 6-5 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (shortstop fielding, underhand toss to third baseman, pitcher backing-up)

### 1. SET UP:

- One player at the pitcher position, one at the third base position and two at the shortstop position
- Coach 20' in front of home plate, in line between home and the shortstop position.

### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit to the Pitcher's right, when they don't field the ball, the pitcher *sprints* straight toward third base. If the base is covered (as it is in this drill), they break to a spot in foul territory, in line with the throw to the base.

Third baseman - "Cover the base with your eyes"; get in a "Ready Position" to prepare for the throw.

Shortstop - SLOW down to field the ball; "(feet) Wide to Catch". Then "Move Feet" FAST in a straight line toward the target and make an underhand toss. If the third baseman is not ready for the throw...keep moving toward the base until they turn and are set.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

The pitcher builds a habit of sprinting to the base when they don't field a ball hit in the infield; recognize when to back-up.

Third baseman "covers the base with their eyes"; shortstop learns to recognize those times they need to delay their throw...but *not stop moving* towards their target.

### 4 DRILL:

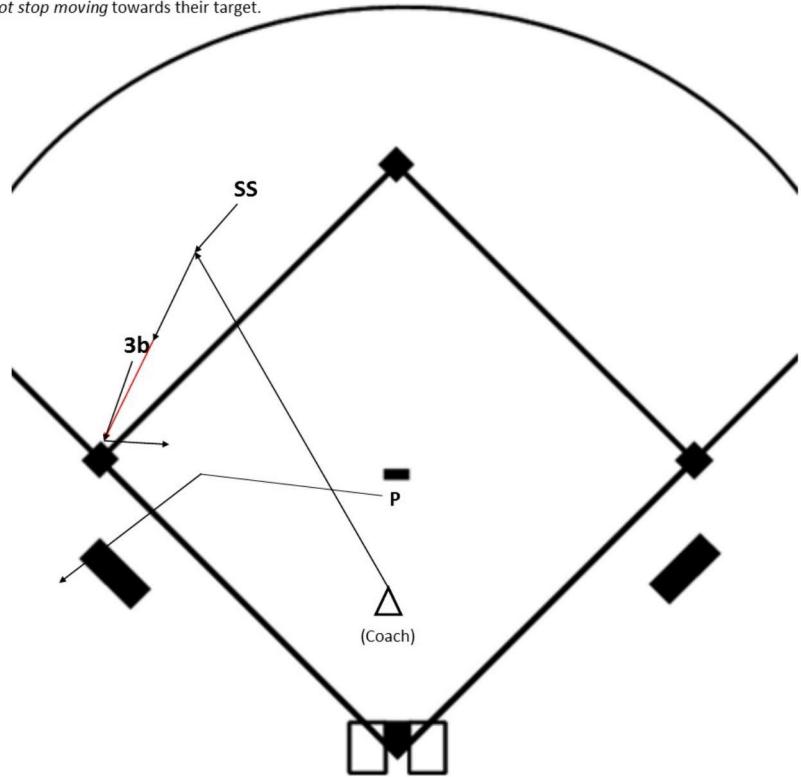
Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the shortstop's right.

Shortstop -"(feet) Wide to Catch", then "Move Your Feet (to throw)", then follow their throw - "Follow your head"

Third Baseman - "Cover the base with your eyes", gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball First and the Base Second". Then shuffle a couple of steps, in a 'power Position' towards 'The middle of the infield'. "Looking for Other Runners" After finishing the play, rotate to the pitcher position. Underhand toss the ball in to the coach on the way.

Pitcher sprints toward third, sees the base is covered, breaks into foul ground as far beyond the base as there is room up to 20' - 30'.

Rotation: extra shortstop gets into position for the next repetition; shortstop takes over at third; third baseman takes over at the pitcher position' pitcher moves to shortstop and takes a break for one repetition.



**First Base Side**

### 3-1 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (first baseman fielding , underhand toss to pitcher)

#### 1. SET UP:

- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the first base position (15' off the base/foul line)
- Coach 40' from the first baseman.

#### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit to the pitcher's left, when they don't field the ball, the pitcher *sprints* straight to first base (slows down on the last few steps...do to not go into the runner's path) and **"Cover the base with your eyes"**.

First baseman moves their feet to make an underhand toss to the pitcher covering the base. If the pitcher is not ready for the throw...keep moving toward the base until they are ready.

#### 3. OBJECTIVES:

The pitchers build a habit of sprinting to the base when they don't field a ball hit in the infield.

First baseman learns to recognize those times they need to delay their throw...but *not stop moving* toward their target.

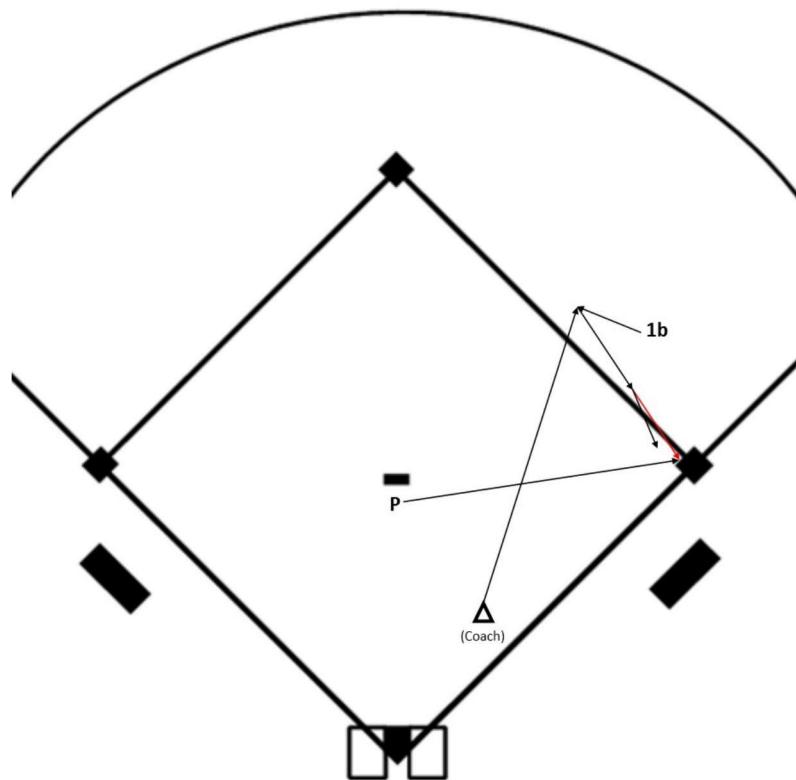
#### 4 DRILL:

Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the first baseman's right.

Pitcher sprints to first and **"Covers the base with their eyes"**, gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot. After finishing the play, pitcher rolls the ball in to the coach, then rotates to first base.

First Baseman feet "Wide to Catch", then "Moves feet to throw", and follows their throw - "Follow your head". If pitcher is not ready for the throw...keep moving toward the base until the pitcher turns and is set.

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next first baseman who fields and throws to the next pitcher.



## **1-3 Play - Skill Building Warm-up** (pitcher fielding , underhand toss to first baseman)

### **1. SET UP:**

- Place the pitching rubber 30'-35' from first base
- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the first base position (15' off the base/foul line)
- Coach 30' from the pitcher..

### **2. TEACH:**

On a ball hit straight back to the pitcher or to the pitcher's left, the pitcher can usually use the underhand toss for the throw to first base. Follow your throw - "Follow Your Head" First baseman sets up in a "Ready Position" and does not commit their feet (move their feet into a 'stretch' position) until they see the ball out of the pitcher's hand.

### **3. OBJECTIVES:**

Players come to recognize the value of the underhand toss technique and that it can be successfully used very often. Players ingrain the habit of getting into a "Ready Position" when preparing to receive a throw at a base.

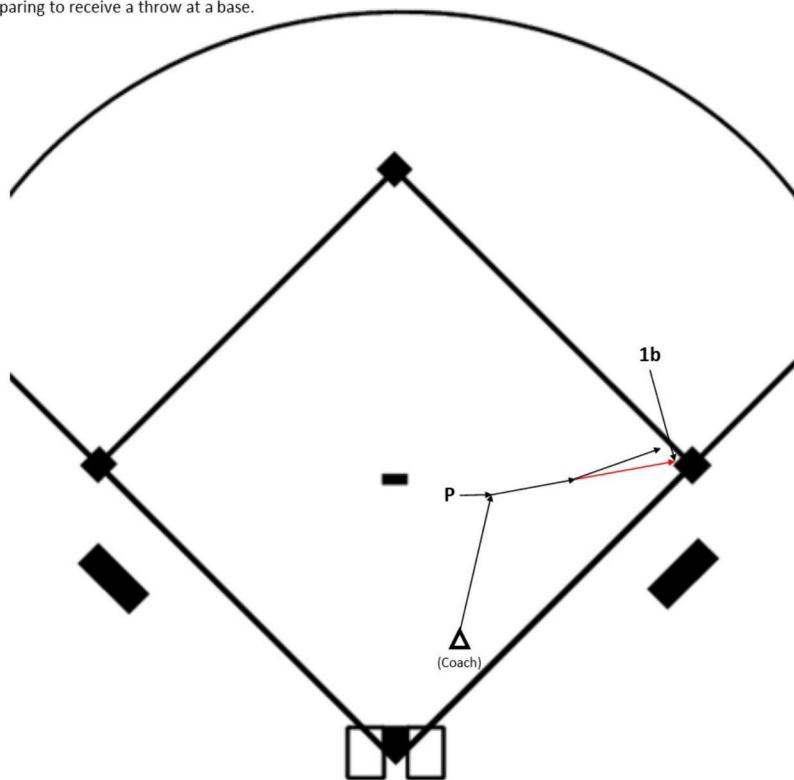
### **4 DRILL:**

Coach rolls a ground ball to the pitcher a couple steps to the pitcher's left.

Pitcher fields the ball with "Feet Wide", then runs towards first base - "Move your feet to throw", uses proper underhand toss technique and follows their throw - "Follow your head"

First Baseman gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot. After finishing the play they roll the ball in to the coach, then rotates to pitcher.

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next pitcher who fields and throws to the next first baseman.





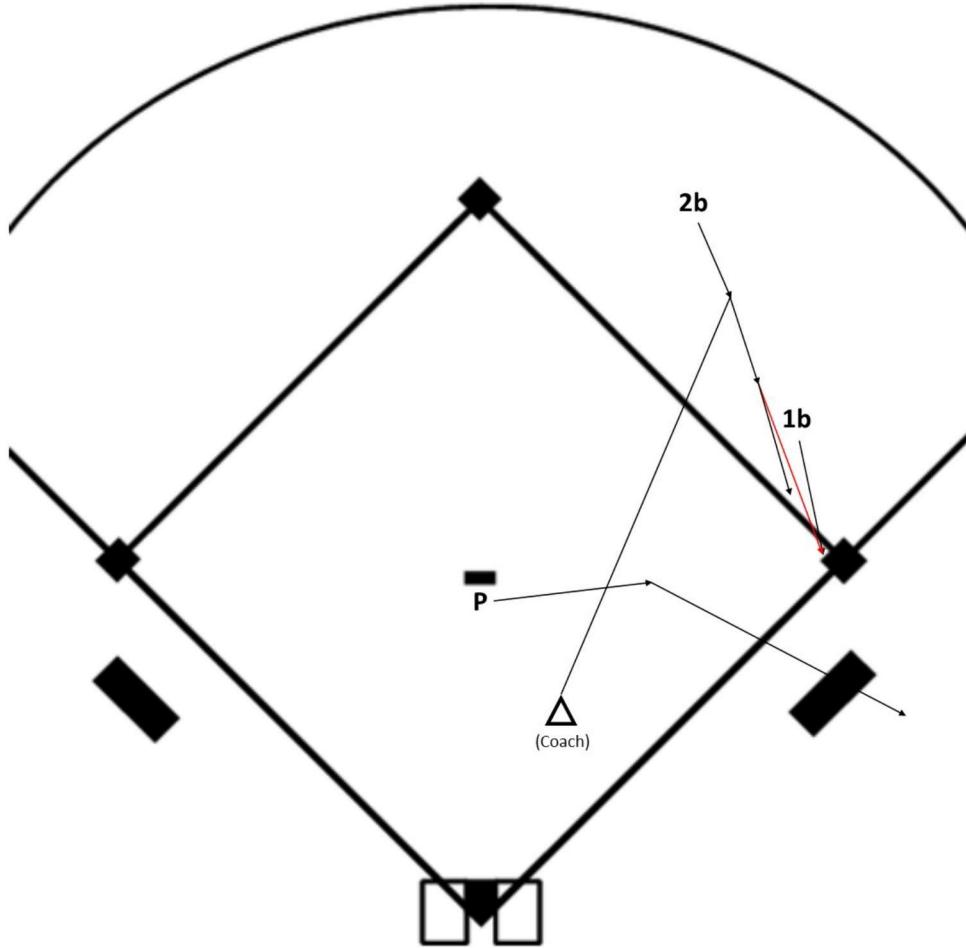
#### 4-3 Play with Pitcher Backing Up First Base - Skill Building Warm-up

This drill is designed to train the pitcher the proper movements, responsibility and positioning when a ball is hit to the first base side of the infield.

The first baseman gets reps "Covering The Base With Your Eyes" while the second baseman gets fielding and throwing work. The coach can mix things up by ranging the second baseman to their right for a backhand play or get them moving to their left resulting in an underhand toss to first base.

The pitcher follows the rule (for the three players in the middle of the field (SS, 2B, P): "Always Move Towards The Ball" and 'The Three B's', "If you don't play the **ball**, and the **base** is covered, run past the base to **Back UP**". Note: when backing up first on a ground ball in the infield, the pitcher runs *behind* the base runner. This eliminates the possibility of a collision and usually puts the pitcher right in line with the throw to first base.

The coach rolls the ball to the second baseman's left, who gets "(feet) Wide to Catch)", runs towards first base - "Moves Feet to Throw", then follows their throw - "Follow Your Head". The players rotate positions after each repetition of the drill.



## RECEIVING THROWS AT A BASE

## **Receiving a Throw at a Base - Positioning and Footwork**

Throws to a base at the 12u level (especially with kids ten and under) are off the mark quite often. In order for kids to consistently catch throws at a base, they will need to leave the base a fair amount of the time in order to catch the ball.

Before we can teach kids how to receive a throw at a base we need to understand what is going on in their minds. Young players' exposure to this play is dominated by seeing the game at high-levels and seeing most plays being made at first base.

The result is kids develop two misconceptions about what is involved in receiving a throw at a base:

1. One foot is anchored to the base before their teammate makes a throw.
2. The other foot is extended out towards their teammate making the throw. They think the player at the base is supposed to stand in a 'Stretch' position (even on tag plays).

These invariably lead to kids not being able to adjust to, and catch, off-line throws. The info below address reprogramming our kids perception of what is going on in preparing to take a throw at a base and how to properly prepare to receive a throw at a base.

We do not want players at the 12u level to straddle the base. Given their misconception of what is going on in this situation kids often (subconsciously or consciously) place a higher priority on being at/on the base than on catching the ball. They see the game played at higher levels and come to believe that all thrown balls will

be on target at the base. The fact is that in many instances throws are not on target, which requires the player at the base to leave the bag to get to the ball.

The problem is the base serves as a '*magnet*' and kids are resistant to moving away from the base ("How am I supposed to get 'em out if I'm not on the base?").

## **Solution**

At this level of play we instruct our players to stand on the side of the base the ball is coming from (if the ball is coming straight to the base in line with the base line they stand on the side of the base that places their glove between them and the base). We teach: "The Base is for the Runner, The Ball is for the Defense"

Once they understand where to position their feet they follow this sequence when receiving a throw:

1. "Move Your Feet to Catch"
2. "Ball First, Base Second"
3. After making the play at the base -move feet towards the middle of the infield in a 'Power Position',

prepared to throw and they "Look for Other Runners". (see the diagram below in 'Receiving a Throw -

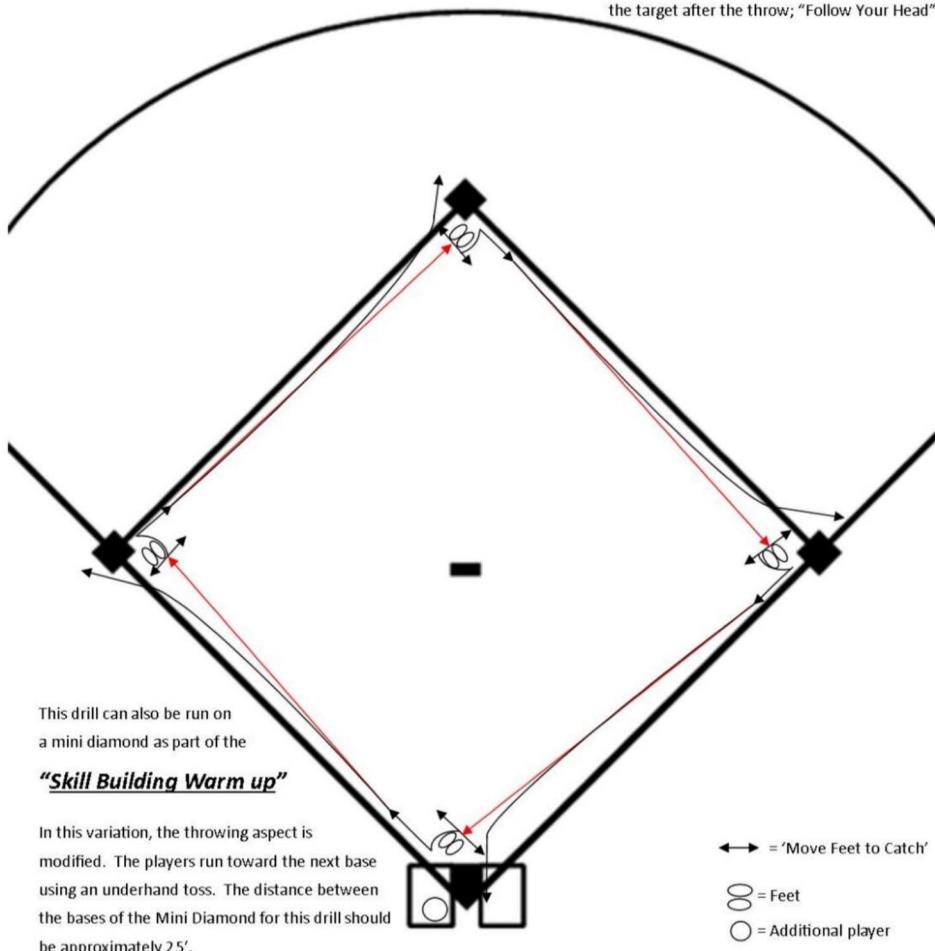
Tag Play'

## Catch, Tag & Throw

### Full Field

NOTE: can be run on a MINI Diamond using the Underhand Toss

- 1) "Ready Position"
- 2) "Move Feet to Catch"
- 3) Tag the ground in front of the base
- 4) "Move Feet to Throw"
- 5) Momentum continues in a straight line towards the target after the throw; "Follow Your Head".



This drill can also be run on a mini diamond as part of the

### **Skill Building Warm up**

In this variation, the throwing aspect is modified. The players run toward the next base using an underhand toss. The distance between the bases of the Mini Diamond for this drill should be approximately 25'.

↔ = 'Move Feet to Catch'

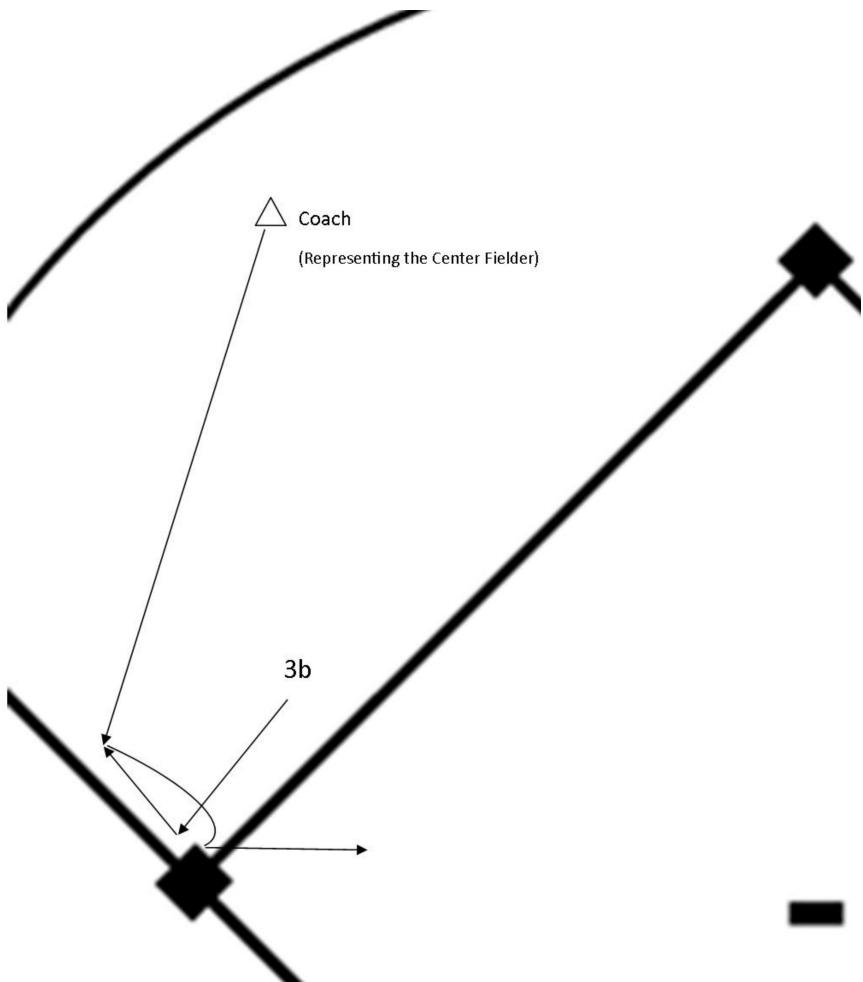
○ = Feet

○ = Additional player

## Receiving a Throw at Third from CF

This drill requires **five** distinct and quickly executed movements:

1. Get to the base as quickly as possible - "Cover the base with your eyes" (Player does not look for the ball until they get all the way to the base. If they look back before getting to the base, start the drill over.)
2. Get in a "Ready Position" facing the thrower.
3. "Move Feet" to catch (Coach intentionally tosses the ball 5'-6' away from the base.)
4. Make tag on the ground in front of the base (If they don't put the glove on the ground, start the drill over.)
5. Move toward the middle of the infield (Must make a couple aggressive shuffles in a power position - "Look for other Runners")



**PRIOR TO RUNNING THIS DRILL THE PLAYERS MUST:**

1. BE CLEAR ON THE INFIELD DEFENSIVE RULE: "IF YOU ARE NOT PLAYING THE BALL YOU COVER A BASE." (CLICK: [RULES FOR DEFENSIVE RESPONSIBILITIES](#), THEN SCROLL DOWN TO: THREE DEFENSIVE RESPONSIBILITIES > INFIELD.)
2. UNDERSTAND PROPER POSITIONING OF THEIR FEET TO RECEIVE A THROW (SEE THE INFO ABOVE THE DRILL DIAGRAM)

**OBJECTIVES (IN ORDER OF PRIORITY):**

1. PLAYERS DEVELOP THE DISCIPLINE TO MAKE THE BASE THEIR ONLY CONCERN WHILE APPROACHING THE BAG (AS OPPOSED TO CONCERNING THEMSELVES WITH THE BALL).
2. PLAYERS RECOGNIZE THEY MUST CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH CATCHING THE THROWN BALL BEFORE THEY CAN WORRY ABOUT GETTING THE RUNNER OUT AT THE BASE.
3. PLAYERS MAKE A HABIT TO IMMEDIATELY 'LOOK FOR OTHER RUNNERS' AFTER MAKING THE TAG (INTRODUCE THIS OBJECTIVE AT THE NEXT PRACTICE THAT THIS DRILL IS RUN)

## **SET UP:**

ONE PLAYER AT THE THIRD BASE POSITION (15' FROM THE BAG)

THREE PLAYERS (NEVER MORE THAN 4 IN A GROUP WHEN RUNNING THIS DRILL OR ELSE THEY WILL BE STANDING AROUND TOO MUCH) ON THE INSIDE OF THE BASE LINE (AWAY FROM THE PLAYER INVOLVED IN THE DRILL, AWAY FROM THE BASE AND OUT OF THE WAY OF THE THROW FROM THE COACH).

COACH STANDS IN LINE WITH THE CENTER FIELD POSITION APPROXIMATELY 30'-40' FROM THE BAG.

## **RUNNING THE DRILL**

COACH CALLS OUT, "BALL HIT TO CENTER FIELD; COVER THE BASE."

1. PLAYER LOOKS TO THE OUTFIELD (RECOGNIZES THE BALL IS SOMEONE ELSE'S RESPONSIBILITY)
2. PLAYER RUNS TO THE BASE - "**COVER THE BASE WITH YOUR EYES**". THE PLAYER LOOKS AT THE BASE, AND THE BASE ONLY, UNTIL THEY ARRIVE AT THE BASE.
3. PLAYER GETS IN A "READY POSITION" IN PREPARATION FOR THE THROW
4. THE COACH THROWS THE BALL, AT PACE THAT THE PLAYER CAN CATCH, APPROXIMATELY 5' TO ONE SIDE OF THE BASE OR THE OTHER REQUIRING THE BALL TO "MOVE THEIR FEET TO CATCH" THE BALL.
5. AFTER THE PLAYER CATCHES THE BALL, THEY MOVE BACK TO THE BASE AND TAGS THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THE BASE WHERE THE BASE RUNNER WOULD BE SLIDING. (**IMPORTANT:** KIDS WILL TRY TO SIMPLY WAVE THE GLOVE TOWARDS THE BASE TO 'MAKE THE TAG'. MAKING SURE THEY ACTUALLY SQUAT DOWN AND PUT THEIR GLOVE ON THE GROUND IS CRITICAL. 'IF YOU DON'T TOUCH THE GROUND WITH YOUR GLOVE, YOU ARE NOT GETTING THE RUNNER OUT - WHAT WAS THE POINT OF THROWING THE BALL TO THE BASE IN THE FIRST PLACE...?')
6. AFTER THE PLAYER, "COVERS THE BASE WITH THEIR EYES", "MOVES THEIR FEET TO CATCH" THE "BALL FIRST" AND TAGS THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THE BASE THE PLAYER COMES UP SHUFFLES THEIR FEET A STEP OR TWO TOWARDS THE MIDDLE OF THE FEET IN PREPARATION TO MAKE ANOTHER THROW IF NECESSARY AND "**LOOKS FOR OTHER RUNNERS.**"

A COMMON OCCURRENCE IN 12U BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL GAMES IS THE PLAYER MAKES A PLAY AT THE BASE THEN TURNS TO THE UMPIRE TO SEE WHAT THE CALL IS AND/OR STRIKES UP A CONVERSATION WITH THE BASE RUNNER WHO OFTEN IS THEIR CLASSMATE AT SCHOOL. IN THE MEAN TIME THE OTHER RUNNER(S) ARE ADVANCING TO THE NEXT BASE(S).

THROUGH A FEW WEEKS OF TRAINING, OUR YOUNG PLAYERS WILL DEVELOP THE HABIT TO IMMEDIATELY "**LOOK FOR OTHER RUNNERS**" AFTER MAKING A PLAY AT A BASE

## **TEACHING PHRASES:**

1. "COVER THE BASE WITH YOUR EYES" (THE PLAYER'S ONLY CONCERN IS THE BASE, UNTIL THEY ARRIVE)
2. "READY POSITION" (...PRIOR TO ANY THROW IN ANY SITUATION)
3. CONCEPT (NOT USED WHILE A PLAYER IS IN MOTION) "THE BASE IS FOR THE RUNNER; THE BALL IS FOR THE DEFENSE" (MOST YOUNG DEFENDERS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BASE IS NOT THEIRS)
4. "MOVE YOUR FEET TO CATCH" (THE FEET TAKE THE HANDS TO THE OFF-LINE THROWS THAT OCCUR OFTEN)
5. CONCEPT (NOT USED WHILE A PLAYER IS IN MOTION) "BALL FIRST; BASE SECOND" (THE DEFENSIVE PLAYER NEEDS THE BALL BEFORE THEY CAN RECORD AN OUT AT THE BASE)
6. "LOOK FOR OTHER RUNNERS" (IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PLAY AT THE BASE THE PLAY NEEDS TO LOOK FOR WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON - 'WHAT ARE THE **OTHER** RUNNERS DOING?'

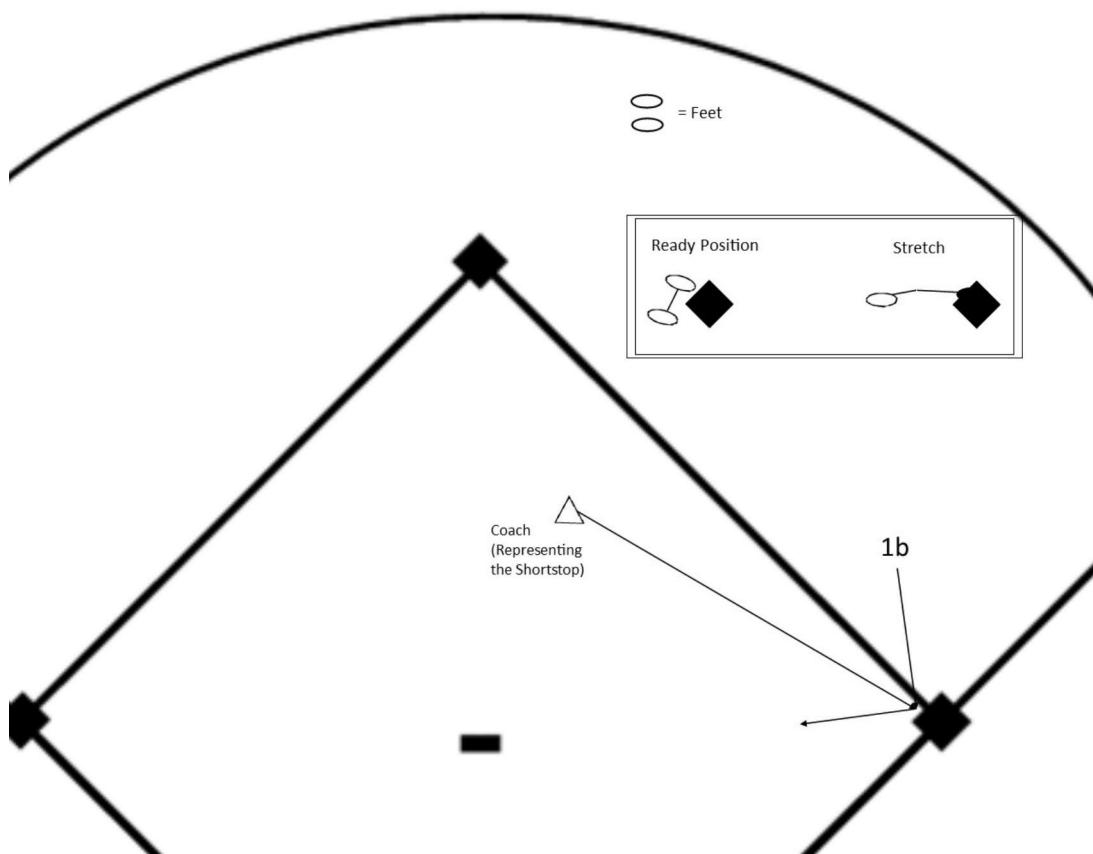
**NOTE:** AFTER THIS DRILL IS RUN A FEW TIMES THE VERBAL INSTRUCTION BY THE COACH WILL EVOLVE TO, FOLLOWING THE INITIAL CALL OF "BALL HIT TO CENTER FIELD": "**BALL!, TAG!, RUNNERS!**" AS THE PLAYER IS PROGRESSING THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF CATCHING, TAGGING AND LOOKING FOR OTHER RUNNERS.

**NOTE:** THIS DRILL CAN ALSO BE RUN WITH THE COACH STANDING IN LINE WITH RIGHT FIELD, WHICH REQUIRES THE THIRD BASEMAN TO POSITION THEMSELVES ON THE RIGHT FIELD SIDE OF THIRD BASE PRIOR TO THE THROW.

## Receiving a Throw at First - ('accurate throw from the coach')

This is the first phase of a drill for developing a first baseman's footwork at the bag. (the second phase involves inaccurate throws)

1. Get to the base as quickly as possible - **"Cover the base with your eyes"** (Player does not look for the ball until they get all the way to the base. If they look to the ball before getting to the base, start the drill over.)
2. Get in a "Ready Position" with feet squared up to the thrower. **Important:** the throwing hand foot's heel is positioned at the center of the base a few inches from the bag (not touching). **Note:** a Right handed throwing first baseman may need to slightly modify the position of their left foot so to not be in the way of the base runner.
3. "See the ball before making a stretch" to catch. (In this first phase of the drill, where the player is learning the timing of moving their feet from a "Ready Position" to the stretch position, we want to make accurate throws to the first baseman (and slow throws).
4. After the first baseman sees an accurate throw coming, they slide their throwing hand foot against the edge of the bag, then step with the glove-hand foot towards the point where the catch will be made. (After the player gets adept at this action they may be able to progress to moving both feet simultaneously. This involves a slight jump- just a couple of inches.)
5. Over time we want the first baseman to strive to "beat the ball to the spot". This means getting their glove to where the ball is going to be caught before it arrives. This takes some time and for younger players it might take a couple of seasons.
6. After making the catch the first baseman, in a "Power Position", shuffles a couple of steps towards the middle of the infield, to **"Look for Other Runners"**.



## Receiving a Throw - Infielder Going Back on a Fly Ball, Tag Play (at Second Base)

### 1. SET UP

Second baseman in their regular spot 15'-20' from the bag. Short stop approximately 10' from the bag, even with the base line. Coach stands 10'- 15' from the shortstop.

### 2. Teach

Second baseman - Positioning at a base to take a throw on a tag play: in 'front' of the bag (the side the base runner will arrive at) and on the side of the bag the ball is coming from. Do not touch the bag. "Move Your Feet to Catch", "Ball First, Base Second".

You don't need to look at the runner to make a tag; catch the ball and take the glove immediately to the ground in 'front' of the bag.

Shortstop - "Drop Step", then sprint back to catch the ball. Reach glove out away from the body to make the catch. Use underhand toss technique to deliver the ball - "Move Your Feet to Throw" and "Follow Your Head" after making the throw.

### 3. OBJECTIVE

Second baseman learns proper positioning of feet to take a throw on a tag play. And how to apply a tag properly.

Players learn they do not have to look at the runner before applying a tag.

### 4. DRILL

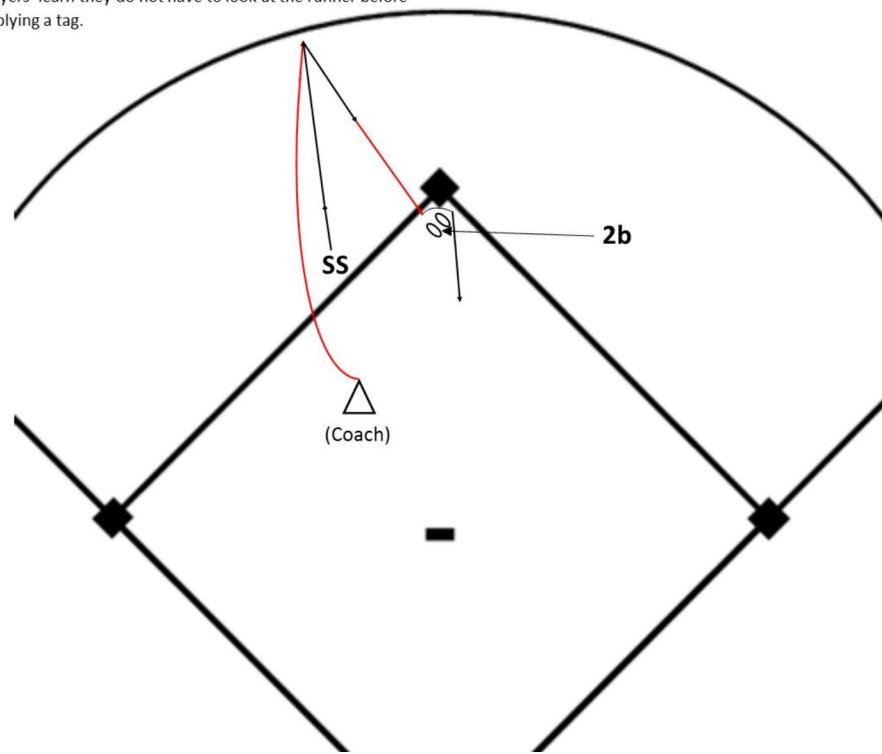
Coach tells the shortstop to 'Drop and Go', then throws a pop fly approximately 20' behind the shortstop. **Note:** tossing the ball underhand is an option to consider; often this is a more accurate technique.

The shortstop catches the pop fly, then runs towards second, "Move Your Feet to Throw", and uses an underhand toss to deliver the ball to the second baseman and follows their throw - "Follow Your Head".

Second Baseman runs to the base - "**Cover the Base With Your Eyes**". Gets in 'front' of the base and on the side of the base the throw is coming from; in a "Ready Position" facing the ball.

The second baseman, "Move Your Feet to Catch", tags the ground in front of the base (the side where a runner would slide), then in a 'Power Position', shuffles towards the 'middle of the infield' and "Looks for Other Runners".

The two players switch positions. While they rotate, the next two players step up and the drill continues.



## Wild Pitch / Passed Ball Communication Drill

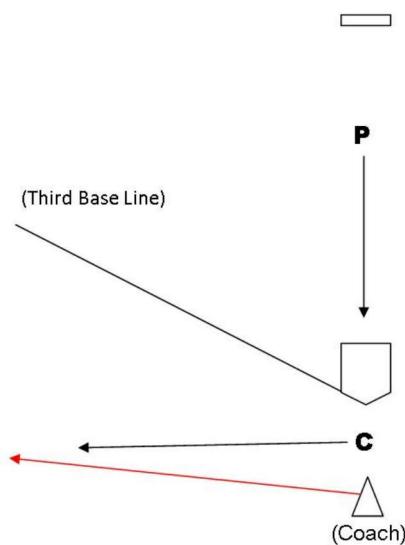
It is important to maintain discipline in the kids' actions when running this drill. There is a correct way to position the feet and body in relation to the ball. There is a specific technique in picking

up the ball and when it comes to the throwing aspect of the drill and, as with all throws, the feet must be moved properly.

This drill deals with the situation of a runner trying to score from third base on a ball that gets past the catcher. However the actions of the catcher in this drill are the same they would use when a runner is attempting to advance to second base or third base on a wild pitch or passed ball.

When a catcher veers away from using proper technique in picking up the ball and proper footwork throughout the action, remind them that while they are not making the longer throw to the other bases in this drill, the good habits they are reinforcing will enable them to make a strong throw to any point on the diamond following a wild pitch or passed ball.

## Wild Pitch / Passed Ball Communication - 3rd and 1st Base Lines



Coach rolls ball to third base side of catcher.

Pitcher runs to a spot in front of home plate, while calling loudly, "Three, three, three". The pitcher stands in a "Ready Position" facing the ball.

Catcher moves quickly to the ball. The positioning of their feet and body in relationship to the ball is a key part of the drill.

Feet are positioned with the ball centered between them. The glove side of the body is pointing directly toward the target (pitcher).

Catcher "Picks up Both Sides of the Ball", "Moves Feet to Throw", tosses the ball using the underhand toss technique, then "Follows Their Head".

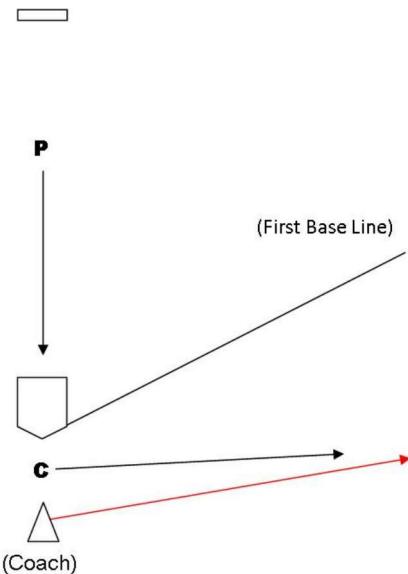
Coach rolls ball to first base side of catcher.

Pitcher runs to a spot in front of home plate, while calling loudly, "One, one, one". The pitcher stands in a "Ready Position" facing the ball.

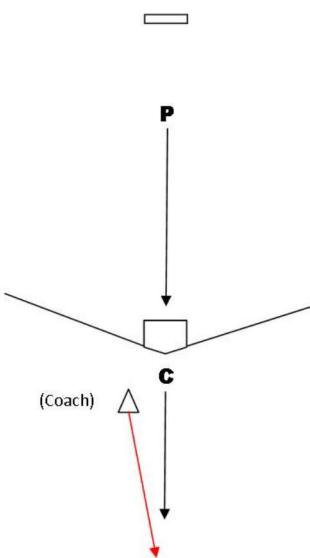
Catcher moves quickly to the ball. The positioning of their feet and body in relationship to the ball is a key part of the drill.

Feet are positioned with the ball centered between them. The glove side of the body is pointing directly toward the target (pitcher).

Catcher "Picks up Both Sides of the Ball", "Moves Feet to Throw", tosses the ball using the underhand toss technique, then "Follows Their Head".



## Wild Pitch / Passed Ball Communication - Balls Behind the Catcher



Coach rolls the ball 10' - 15' behind the catcher.

Pitcher **points** at the ball and loudly **hollers**, "Back, back, back", while running to a point in front of the plate. The pitcher stands in a "Ready Position" facing the ball.

Catcher moves quickly to the ball. The positioning of their feet and body in relationship to the ball is a key part of the drill.

Feet are positioned with the ball centered between them. The glove side of the body is pointing directly toward the target (pitcher).

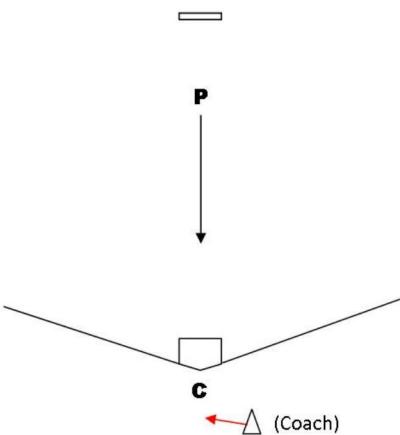
If the ball is close to the back stop the catcher picks up the ball with their back to home plate, "Picks up Both Sides of the Ball", "Turns Glove Side", "Moves Feet to Throw", tosses the ball using the underhand toss technique, then "Follows Their Head".

Coach drops the ball behind the heels of catcher.

Pitcher **points** at the ball and loudly **hollers**, "Feet, feet, feet", and breaks toward the plate. Even though the ball is near home plate the pitcher still moves toward the plate in order to maintain the habit of always being alert of covering home.

Catcher moves back to the ball. Positions their feet with the ball centered between them. The glove side of the body is pointing directly towards third base and the runner. (pitcher).

Catcher "Picks up Both Sides of the Ball", makes a shuffle step towards third base and the runner and gets into a "Power Position".



# Additional Drills

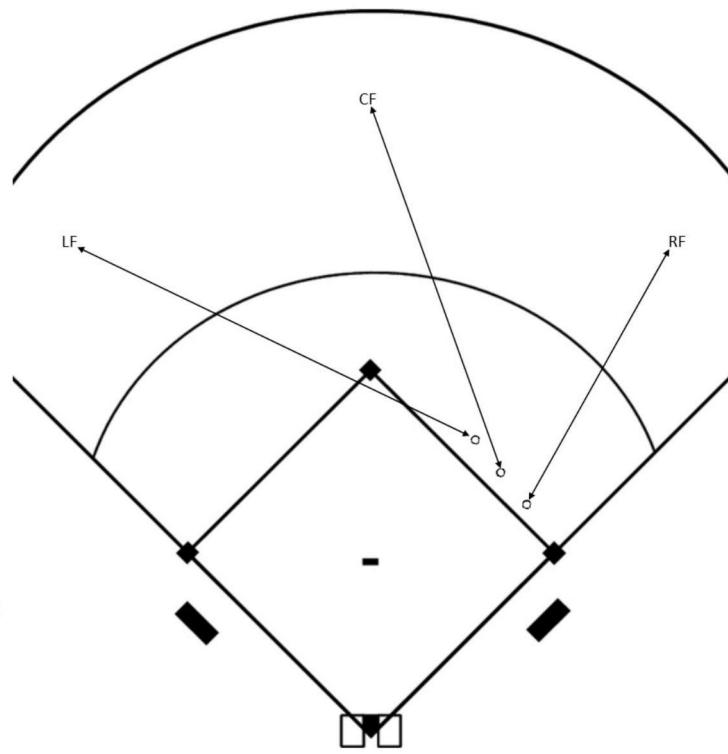
## BASE RUNNING

### Base Running

#### Fly Balls - 'Half Way'

X = Runner	Δ = Coach	○ = Player	Φ = Bucket	OO = Feet
Fly Ball	Ground Ball	Thrown Ball	Movement to Ball	Movement with Ball

Fly balls that are not hit far enough away from the next base a runner wants to advance to, meaning the runner will not have the opportunity tag up if the fly is caught, the runner wants to come as far off their base as possible, so to advance in the case the fly ball is not caught. The diagram at the right and notes below serve as guides to teaching.



#### Runner on First Base:

General Rule;  
Ball to RF—10' off base  
Ball to CF—20' off base  
Ball to LF—30' off base

Through repetitions running bases during batting practice, scrimmages and games the runners will develop their instincts of how far they can safely come off a base on a fly ball.

#### Runner on Second Base:

There is not a concrete rule based on which field the ball is hit to b/c all fields are effectively the same distance from second base. The base runner, given their knowledge learned at first base, uses their judgment to come off the base further, the further the ball is hit from second base.

#### Runner on Third Base:

If the fly ball is deep enough to score, then the runner goes to the base to tag up.

If the fly ball is shallow (not deep enough to tag) the runner comes off the bag as far as is safe to get back if ball is caught. If ball is dropped, by coming off the bag, the runner may have an opportunity to score

THIS IS AN ADVANCED DRILL. IT WON'T BE UNTIL AROUND AGE 9 OR 10 THAT BALLS ARE GETTING HIT DEEP ENOUGH IN THE OUTFIELD FOR THIS DRILL TO BE APPLICABLE. WHEN WORKING WITH KIDS AGES 10-12 IT IS STILL IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO GAIN MASTERY OF THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL BASE RUNNING SKILLS BEFORE INTRODUCING THIS DRILL.

**DRILL:**

COACH TOSSES A POP FLY TO ONE OF THE THREE OUTFIELD POSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE SMALLER SPACE IN WHICH THE DRILL IS BEING RUN. BALLS TO 'RIGHT FIELD' WILL SIMPLY DROP TO THE GROUND. BALLS TO 'CENTER FIELD' AND 'LEFT FIELD' GO TO THE KIDS FILLING THOSE POSITIONS. (CATCHING THE FLY BALLS MAKES THE DRILL FUN FOR THOSE KIDS.) THE BASE RUNNERS COME OFF 'FIRST BASE' THE APPROPRIATE DISTANCE PER THE RULES ABOVE.

ALLOW THE BASE RUNNERS TO GET 3-4 REPS, THEN SWITCH THEM WITH THE TWO KIDS SERVING AS OUTFIELDERS.

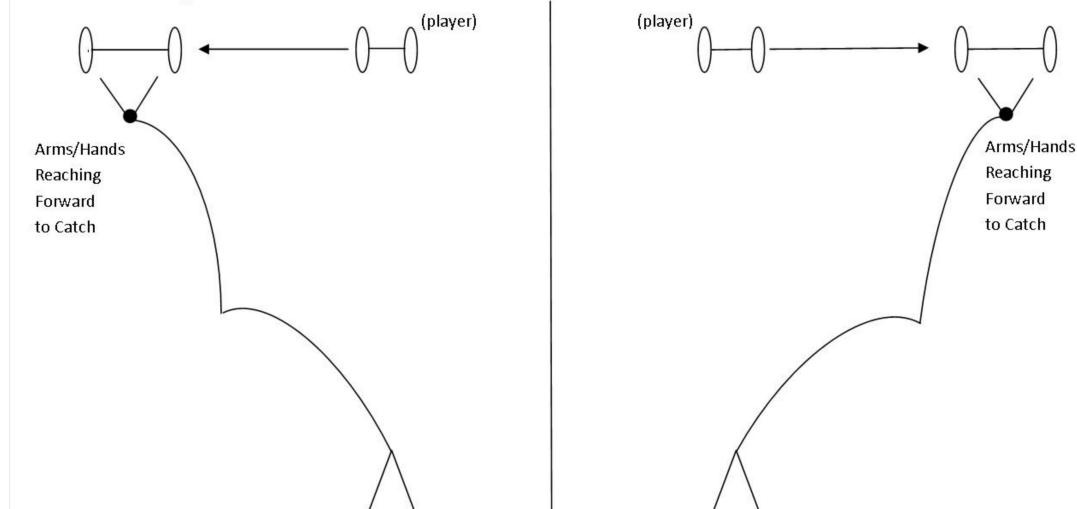
**NOTE:** THE BALLS SHOULD BE TOSSED HIGH ENOUGH TO GIVE THE BASE RUNNERS TIME TO GET OFF THE BASE THE PROPER DISTANCE AND GET THEIR BODIES IN CORRECT POSITION IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE BALL.

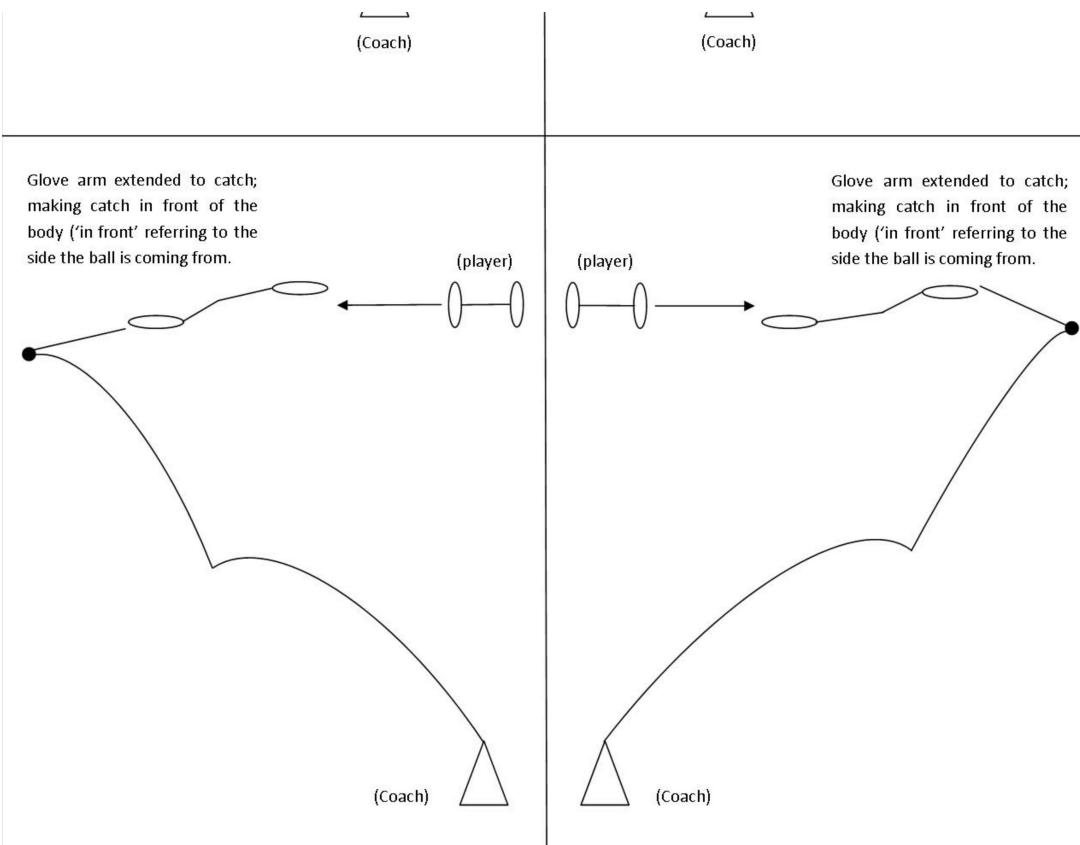
**NOTE 2:** THE FIRST TIME OR TWO THIS DRILL IS RUN, THE FACT THAT LIVE BALLS ARE INVOLVED AND WITH 'BASE RUNNERS' HANGING OUT 'OFF THE BASE' THE KIDS CAN GET OFF TASK B/C OF THE TEMPTATION TO 'GET THE BASE RUNNER OUT'. ALSO THE 'CENTER FIELDER' WILL BE TEMPTED TO CHASE BALLS TOSSED TO 'RIGHT FIELD'.

EXPLAIN TO THE CENTER FIELDER THAT THEY CAN'T GO CHASING BALLS TOSSED TO RIGHT FIELD B/C IT WILL SLOW THE PACE OF THE DRILL. WE NEED THEM TO STAY PUT, SO THEY ARE AVAILABLE FOR US TO TOSS A BALL TO THEM AS SOON AS THE BASE RUNNERS ARE READY FOR THE NEXT TOSS. (WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COMPLETE 3-4 REPS, BEFORE HAVING THE BASE RUNNERS SWITCH WITH THE KIDS PLAYING THE OUTFIELD POSITIONS, IN ABOUT 30 SECONDS.

## FIELDING - GROUND BALLS

### One Hop Drill





#### **OBJECTIVE:**

PLAYERS REINFORCE THE HABIT OF MOVING THEIR FEET TO CATCH A GROUND BALL AND TO REACH FORWARD TO CATCH.

SPECIFICALLY IN THIS DRILL THE ADDED ELEMENT TO MOVE QUICKLY, BUT UNDER CONTROL AND TO CATCH THE BALL IN A BALANCED AND STABLE POSITION.

#### **SET UP:**

ONE COACH AND 3-4 PLAYERS. USE A CONE OR MARKER TO INDICATE A STARTING POINT FOR THE PLAYERS. THE COACH STANDS APPROXIMATELY 18'-20' AWAY DIRECTLY IN FRONT TO THE PLAYER THAT IS GOING TO RECEIVE THE THROW.

#### **DRILL:**

THIS DRILL REQUIRES A HARD SURFACE. IN THE SOUTH A HARD DIRT SURFACE IS GENERALLY NOT DIFFICULT TO COME BY. IN THE NORTH THIS DRILL WILL BE HARD TO RUN MUCH BEFORE MID-APRIL. HOWEVER A GYM FLOOR OR CONCRETE SCHOOL YARD CAN BE USED ANY TIME OF THE YEAR (THIS IS A GREAT DRILL TO RUN ON A RAINY OR WET DAY WHEN YOUR TEAM IS PRACTICING IN A SCHOOL YARD).

THE COACH BOUNCES THE BALL TO THE SIDE OF THE PLAYER ON ONE HOP, SO THAT THE BALL REACHES THE PLAYER AT HEIGHT APPROXIMATELY EVEN WITH THE BELT TO BELLY-BUTTON. THE BALL IS DIRECTED TO A POINT A FOOT OR TWO BEYOND THE REACH OF THEIR GLOVE TO THE SIDE THE BALL WILL BE BOUNCED. THE BOUNCING POINT WILL BE ROUGHLY HALF WAY BETWEEN THE COACH AND THE CATCHING POINT. LIKE MANY OF THE OTHER DRILLS, IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME AND REPETITION FOR COACHES TO DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO CONSISTENTLY DELIVER THE BALL WELL TO EACH PLAYER.

THE PLAYERS ARE ALWAYS TOLD IN ADVANCE WHAT SIDE THE BALL IS GOING TO; TRICKERY IS NOT THE OBJECTIVE, THE OBJECTIVE IS TO GET MULTIPLY QUALITY REPETITIONS IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

AFTER THE FIRST PLAYER GOES THEY TOSS THE BALL BACK TO THE COACH USING A TECHNICALLY SOUND UNDERHAND TOSS, THEN GET BACK IN LINE. AS SOON AS THE COACH GETS THE BALL BACK FROM THE FIRST PLAYER (THE SECOND PLAYER SHOULD ALREADY BE IN A "READY POSITION" AND PREPARED TO MOVE) THEY BOUNCE A BALL TO THE NEXT PLAYER. THERE SHOULDN'T BE A DELAY OF MORE THAN A SECOND OR TWO BETWEEN PLAYERS.

#### **KEY ACTIONS:**

PLAYERS ARE TAKING SHORT QUICK STEPS TO MOVE.

THE PLAYERS ARE GETTING TO A POINT WHERE THEY ARE CATCHING THE BALL WITH THEIR HANDS CENTERED BETWEEN THEIR SHOULDERS WITH THEIR ARMS CLOSE TO FULLY EXTENDED IN FRONT OF THEM ("REACH FORWARD TO CATCH")

IDEALLY THE PLAYERS ARE GETTING TO THE RECEIVING POINT QUICK ENOUGH, SO THAT WHEN THEY CATCH THE BALL THEY HAVE THEIR LATERAL MOVEMENT UNDER SUCH CONTROL THAT THEIR MOMENTUM DOES NOT CONTINUE LATERALLY AFTER THE CATCH. WE WANT THE PLAYER RECEIVING THE BALL TO BE ABLE TO IMMEDIATELY MOVE TOWARDS THE COACH, AFTER CATCHING THE ONE-HOP THROW, AND DELIVER AN UNDERHAND TOSS

#### **VARIATION:**

AFTER PLAYERS HAVE MASTERED THE DRILL, MEANING THEY ARE CONSISTENTLY GETTING INTO PROPER POSITION TO CATCH THE THROW AND HAVE THEIR MOVEMENTS UNDER CONTROL THROUGHOUT, WE CAN BOUNCE THE BALLS FURTHER TO THE SIDE OF THE PLAYERS SO THE PLAYERS TO EXTENDING THEIR GLOVE ARM LATERALLY TO REACH THE BALL. IN THIS VERSION OF THE DRILL THE PLAYERS' MOMENTUM WILL FORCE THEM TO RUN A COUPLE MORE STEPS LATERALLY AFTER MAKING THE CATCH BEFORE THEY CAN GET UNDER CONTROL TO THROW THE BALL BACK TO THE COACH. **IMPORTANT:** STILL REQUIRE THAT 100% OF THE THROWS TO THE COACH ARE MADE USING TECHNICALLY SOUND MECHANICS. KIDS, IF ALLOWED, WILL TURN THIS INTO A CIRCUS OF CRAZY THROWING ACTIONS.

#### **FINAL NOTE:**

IN MOST CASES THE QUICKNESS AND ATHLETICISM OF OUR PLAYERS WILL VARY QUITE A BIT. AS COACHES WE MUST ADJUST THE SPEED AND FIRMNESS OF OUR THROWS SO THAT EACH PLAYER IS CHALLENGED, BUT ALSO CAN SUCCESSFULLY EXECUTE THE ACTIONS WE ARE WORKING TO DEVELOP.

# PITCHERS DEFENSIVE PLAYS

## 1-6 Play, "Turn Glove Side" - Skill Building Warm-up (Pitcher fielding and throwing to shortstop at second)

### 1. SET UP:

- Pitch works from a point 20' from second base
- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the shortstop position (shortstop stands only a couple of steps on the shortstop side of the base for this drill. This drills runs so fast that there isn't time to wait for the shortstops to run between their regular position and the base)
- Coach 20' from the pitcher.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

This simulates a ball hit back to the pitcher with a base runner on first.

We want the pitcher to throw to second and force out the lead runner.

The pitcher learns proper footwork for throwing to second base - "Turn Glove Side"

Kids learn that the shortstop takes the throw from the pitcher and the second baseman backs up the base. Both, "Always move towards the ball" (the ball is hit up the middle, to the shortstop's left and the second baseman's right. Both move in those directions)

### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit back to the pitcher, the shortstop covers the base and takes the throw, the second baseman runs to back up second base. Pitcher, "Turns Glove Side" to get in position to throw.

### 4 DRILL:

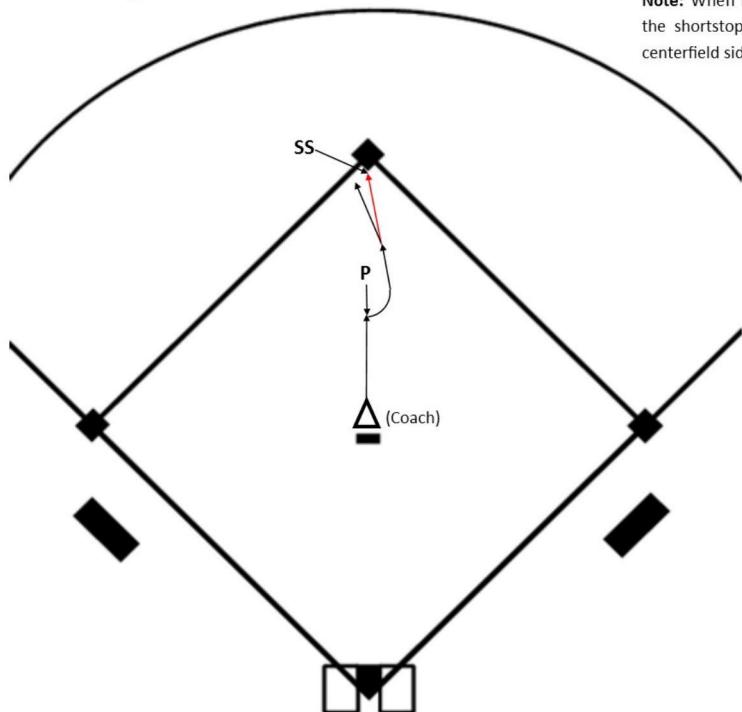
Coach rolls a ground ball to the pitcher.

Pitcher fields the ball with their back facing second base. Then "Turns Glove Side", "Moves Feet to Throw" (using an underhand toss) and "Follows Their Head." The pitcher then rotates to shortstop.

Shortstop moves to a point next to the base, standing between the base and the pitcher, gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot. After finishing the play the shortstop runs the ball to the pitching rubber, then rolls ball in to the coach, then rotates to pitcher.

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next pitcher who fields and throws to the next shortstop.

**Note:** When kids get older (10+) the shortstop will stand on the centerfield side of second base



THIS IS A PLAY THAT WOULD NEVER UTILIZE THE UNDERHAND TOSS IN A FULL SIZE FIELD (60' DIAMOND) SETTING. HOWEVER IN THE SKILL BUILDING WARM-UP VERSION, THE PLAYERS DO USE AND UNDERHAND TOSS (BECAUSE THE SBW IS RUN PRIOR TO PLAYING CATCH).

HOWEVER, THE PLAYERS GAIN TWO BENEFITS FROM USING THE UNDERHAND TOSS IN THIS VERSION OF PRACTICING THE PLAY.

1. THE CRITICAL ACTION OF 'TURN GLOVE SIDE' IS FULLY EXECUTED.. WHEN THROWING OVERHAND, A COMMON MISTAKE PLAYERS (AT ALL LEVELS) MAKE, IS TO BEGIN THROWING BEFORE THEY HAVE COMPLETED THE 180 DEGREE TURN.. IN THE MINI DIAMOND ENVIRONMENT, THEY ARE REQUIRED TO RUN TOWARDS THEIR TARGET TO EXECUTE THE UNDERHAND TOSS, .....THEY DEVELOP THE HABIT OF COMPLETING THE FULL 180 TURN.
2. IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE OVERHAND THROW CONSISTENTLY WELL ON THIS PLAY, WHEN THROWING OVERHAND, A PLAYER MUST CREATE MOMENTUM, IN A STRAIGHT LINE, TOWARDS SECOND BASE. THE REQUIREMENT TO RUN TOWARDS SECOND BASE TO EXECUTE THE UNDERHAND TOSS, HERE IN THE SKILL BUILDING WARM-UP VERSION .....THE PLAYERS DEVELOP THIS CRITICAL HABIT..

## 4-1 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (second baseman throwing to the pitcher covering first base using an underhand toss)

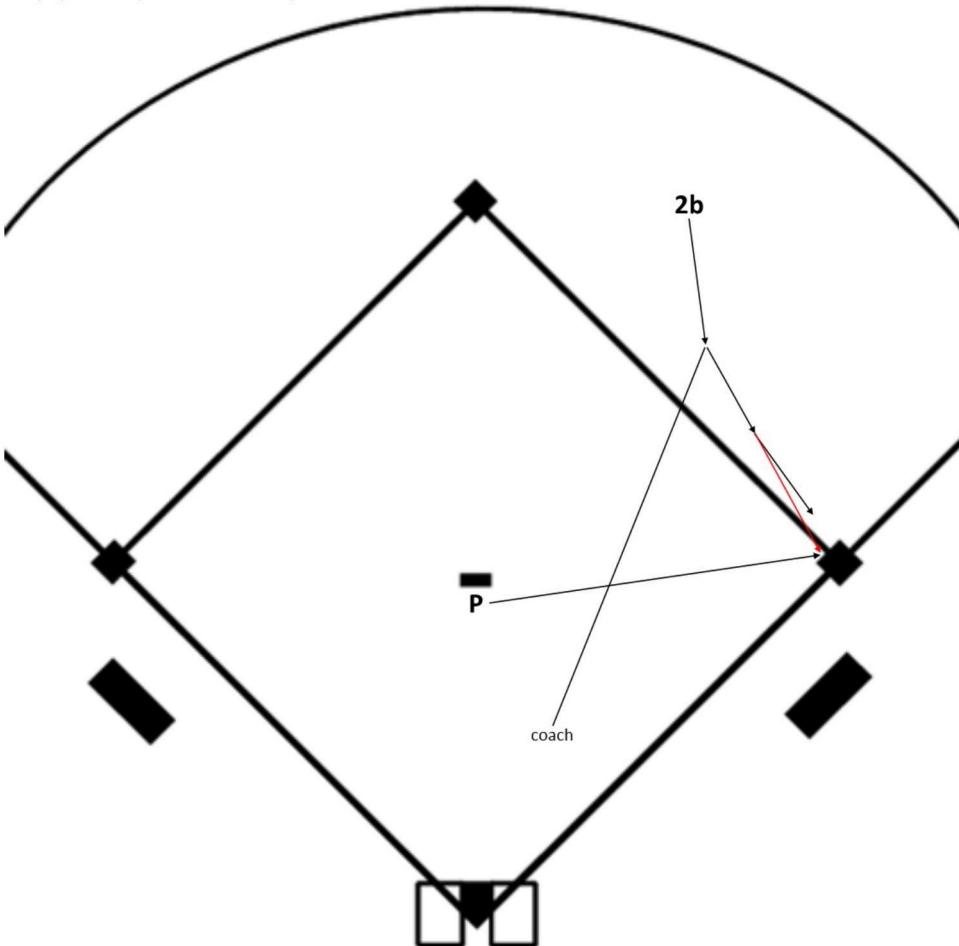
This drill simulates a ground ball hit between the first baseman and second baseman where the first baseman has ranged far to their right, in an effort to play the ball, and is unable to get back to the base to take a throw. In this situation the pitcher is needed to cover first base.

The coach rolls the ball 10' to the second baseman's left. The second baseman moves FAST to the ball, SLOWs down to field the ball and gets "feet) Wide to Catch", then "Moves Feet (FAST) to Throw" using an *underhand toss*. After making the toss, "Follow Your Head" toward the target at first base.

The pitcher follows the rules: "Always move towards the ball" and "If you don't play the ball, you cover a base". The rule for the pitcher on ground balls hit in the infield is to break straight towards the corner base when going for the ball. When the ball gets past the pitcher, they continue in a straight line towards the corner base, running at full speed.

The pitcher slows down on their final few steps and "**Covers the base with your eyes**". When they arrive at the base the pitcher turns and faces the ball in a "Ready Position". After receiving the throw, the pitcher, in a 'Power Position', shuffles a couple of steps towards the middle of the infield and "Looks for Other Runners".

The players rotate positions after each repetition of the drill.



## 6-1 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (shortstop fielding, underhand toss to pitcher)

### 1. SET UP:

- Coach 20' in front of home plate.
- Pitcher 25' from third base
- One player at the pitcher position, one at the third base position and two at the shortstop position

### 2. TEACH:

On a ball hit to the Pitcher's right, when they don't field the ball, the pitcher *sprints* straight toward third base. **"Cover the base with your eyes"**; get in a "Ready Position" to prepare for the throw.

Shortstop - SLOW down to field the ball; "(feet) Wide to Catch". Then "Move Feet" FAST in a straight line toward the target and make an underhand toss. If the pitcher is not ready for the throw...keep moving towards the base until they turn and are set.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

The pitcher builds a habit of sprinting to the base when they don't field a ball hit in the infield; recognize when to back-up.

Shortstop learns to recognize those times they need to delay their throw...but *not stop moving* towards their target.

### 4 DRILL:

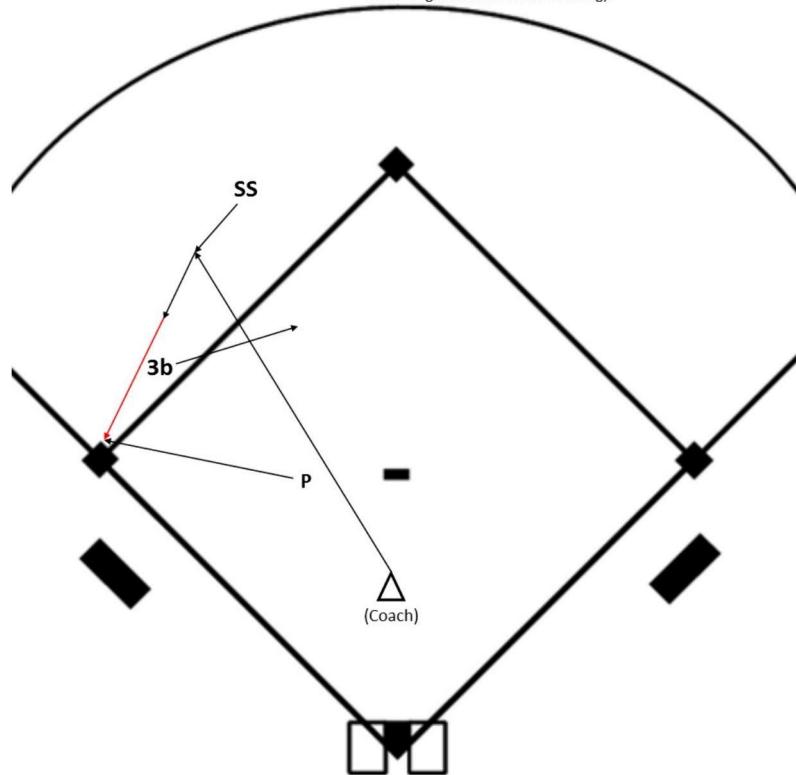
Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the shortstop's right.

Shortstop - "(feet) Wide to Catch", "Move Your Feet (to throw)", then follow their throw - "Follow your head".

Pitcher sprints to third and **"Covers the base with their eyes"**, gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base. After the play, in a 'Power Position', shuffle towards 'the middle of the infield', "Looking for Other Runners".

Third Baseman - breaks toward the ball, but does not field it; continues past the line of the ground ball. Again, DOES NOT interfere with the ball.

Rotation: extra shortstop gets into position for the next repetition; shortstop takes over at third; third baseman takes over at the pitcher position' pitcher moves towards coach and returns the ball using a good underhand toss technique. Then moves to shortstop (gets out of the line of the next ground ball while rotating).



## 1-3 Play (bunt) - Skill Building Warm-up

### 1. SET UP:

- Place the pitcher 30'-35' from first base.
- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the first base position (five feet off the base/foul line)
- Coach is positioned half way up the first base line a few feet in foul territory.

### 2. TEACH:

Right Handed Pitcher: field ball with it centered between feet and glove side of the body facing first base. "Pick up Both Sides of the Ball", "Move Feet to Throw", follow your throw - "Follow Your Head"

Left Handed Pitcher: move to a point between the ball and first base with back to first base and ball centered between feet. "Pick up Both Sides of the Ball", "Turn Glove Side", "Move Feet to Throw", follow your throw - "Follow Your Head"

First baseman sets up in a "Ready Position" facing the ball and with their left foot 8-12 inches off the base. "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot.

### 3. OBJECTIVES:

Pitchers learn the proper relationship of feet and body to the ball when fielding a bunt.  
First Baseman learns proper relationship of feet and body to the base when receiving a throw on a bunt.

### 4. DRILL:

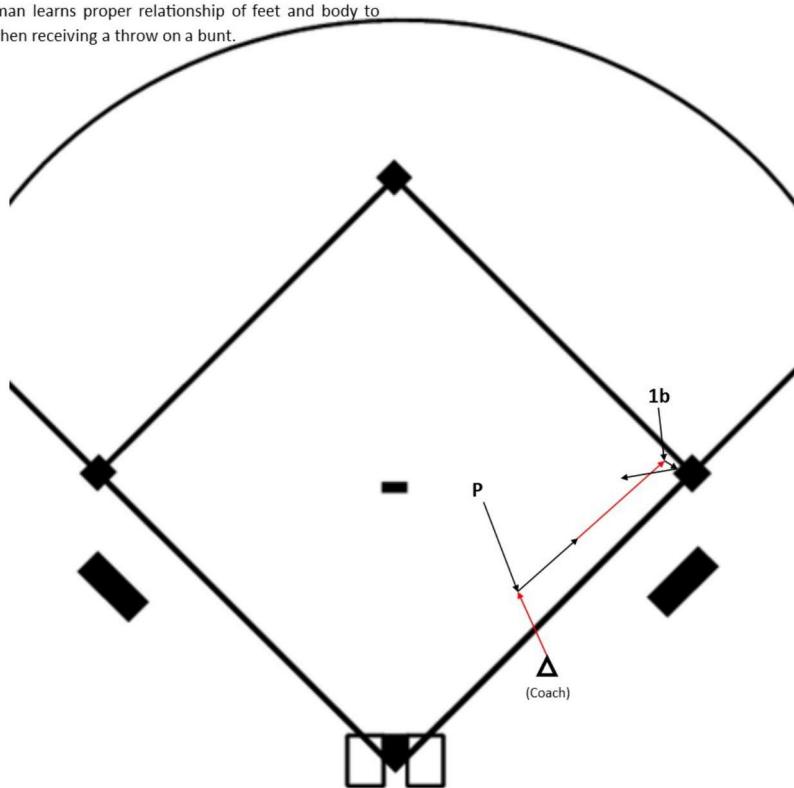
Coach rolls a ball to a point about five feet off the first base line.

Pitcher fields the ball and throws to the first baseman using an underhand toss technique.

First Baseman "Cover the Base With Your Eyes", receives the throw and tags the base. After tagging the base, the first baseman, in a 'Power Position', shuffles a couple steps towards the 'middle of the infield' and "Looks for Other Runners".

Following the play, the ball is rolled in to the coach, then the first baseman rotates to pitcher.

While those two players are rotating, the coach rolls the ball to the next pitcher who fields and throws to the next first baseman.



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