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1. The Mental Side of Baseball

   a. The “Inner Game” philosophy (All Levels)

Coach our kids to get into the habit of thinking about the situation (and knowing what to do) in between plays (AND before the ball is in play) – so they can then rely on their instinct during the play. The problem is that the kids first need to understand the game well enough to be able to understand the different game situations - so they are then able to “think” at the appropriate times. So, you are going to need to teach them the game of baseball (situations), and teach them when and how to think.

Use analogies (it’s like playing a video game – using unconscious part of mind instead thinking about what button to push next – same is true when the ball is in play).

This concept is very different to what they have been taught – so we need to create new habits.

b. Teach Game Situations (All Levels)

c. Coaching Basics (All Levels)

   i. Get the players to connect to the visuals of what “proper technique looks like” technique, and understand the “why”
   ii. Focus your perspective on the positive (versus the negative)
   iii. Have a lesson plan in mind and cover lessons learned
   iv. Do not “over-coach” during games (e.g. 3rd base coach giving too many instructions)

Practicing with poor technique is just getting better at doing something wrong. Take time to teach technique – using visualization and positive teaching.
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

*** DRILLS ***

**Simulate Game Situations:** Simulate game situations with runners on base (no fielders needed).

a. For example, place base runners on 2nd and 3rd base.

b. Call out the situation (example – “1 out”) and give the runners about 5-7 seconds to think about what they will do before you then call out the result.

c. Call out the hit (example – “ground ball to 2nd base”, “ground ball back to the pitcher”, “deep fly ball to center field”, “line drive to short stop”, etc.).

d. Watch the runners react. Then correct or positive feedback. The goal is to get the players to understand what they should be doing in different baseball situations – so they can then react when it happens.

- **“Quiz”:** Give your players a pop quiz on their first practice (see APPENDIX 2 - Quiz) to get a baseline of what they know/don’t know. You will be surprised by how little they know. Give the same pop quiz at their final practice – see how much they learned.

- **Talk Through Scenarios:** During your “talk time” with the team, simulate scenarios by talking through examples of what you should be thinking about (focusing on positive visualization and “clearing the mind”). For example, “I am walking up to the plate. I am walking slowly and not running so I have my full breath and remain calm and relaxed. I am thinking about hitting the ball square and hard up the middle. I am staying focused and clearing my mind of extraneous thoughts”.

- **Have team listen to The Inner Game concept (homework assignment)** – 10-minute-long synopsis of 1972 book/concept that is used by many successful professional coaches.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUDtXXkcr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUDtXXkcr8)
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

2. Base Running

   a. Proper base path (All Levels)

   b. Left foot (Major)

   c. Body lean (Major)

   d. Picking up coaches in box (Minor, Major)

   e. Secondary leading (Minor, Major)

   f. Stealing a base (Major)

   g. How to slide properly (Minor, Major)

**Key Points:**

- Always run the bases at maximum speed and effort!
- Always keep your eye on the ball when it is being thrown around by a fielder (to advance every chance you get).
- Be aware of the baserunner in front of you.
- Always know how many outs there are when on the bases.
- Always know the situation and what you will/should do before the ball is put in play.
- If less than 2 outs, and a line drive is hit - freeze and first make sure it is not caught before running.
- If less than 2 outs and on 3rd base, and a fly ball is hit to an outfielder, always tag up!
- If less than 2 outs and on 1st or 2nd base, and a fly ball is hit to an outfielder, either go halfway or tag up (coaches will help in this situation).
- If there are 2 outs and the ball is hit, RUN hard – unless the fielder is in front of you and there is no force out.
- Always look for the box coaches when looking to stretch a base.
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

*** DRILL ***

a. Run the base path (All Levels):
   This can be done every practice (look for proper base path, lean, correct foot placement). Use the baseline visuals and use cones to help define the path if necessary.

b. Stealing, Sliding, and catcher throw-outs (Majors):
   Practice secondary leads, steals, throw-outs, and sliding, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> plays. Explain timing for runner “jumps”, push-offs, understand when to look for the ball, when and how to slide properly. When practicing this, make sure to rake the infield dirt well so sliding area is soft and re-rake dirt after every slide. Part of this teaching is to get the kids to look forward to sliding and to do so without getting injured.
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3. Infield
   a. Proper ready stance (All Levels)

   b. How to execute a rundown (Minor, Major)

   c. Ground ball fielding mechanics (All Levels)
      i. Proper technique
         • Remember the TRIANGLE
         • Feet wider than shoulders with hands out in front and butt down
         • Catch the ball out in front for balance
         • Watch the ball all the way into the glove
         • After catch, bring hands to belly as you begin to crowhop
      ii. Eliminating “bad hops”
         • Catch the ball at either the peak or valley of the hop
         • Always be moving forward (don’t let the ball “play you”)

Other Key Points:
- Be in a ready position
- Know what you are going to do with the ball BEFORE it is in play.
  o Know how many outs are there.
  o Always know where the force out is.
  o Always know if the runner is fast or not.
- Try to get in front of the ball and stay low – have no fear.

*** DRILL ***

c. 4-Corners Drill (All Levels):
   Practice revolving players through the 4-corners drill. This drill helps get
   players used to throwing from base to base (footwork, balance, body and
   throwing motion practice). This drill can be run both indoors and outdoors.

d. “Z”-ground ball cone drill (All Levels):
   This drill develops infielder footwork, balance, and technique. Make sure
   to change up directions (don’t always go in the same direction).
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

e. Infield situations with runners on base (All Levels):
   This teaches situations for infielders, outfielders, as well as base-running – rotate with fresh base-runners as needed.

f. Rundown Drill (Minor and Major):
   Keep runner in the middle, and push away from next base, keep ball in throwing hand, practice fakes, and minimize the number of throws (use cones for drill).
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

4. Outfield
   a. Proper ready stance (All Levels)

   b. Practicing cutoffs (leverage visuals/white-boards) (All Levels)

   c. Keeping the ball steady (balls of feet) (All Levels)

   • Whenever possible, beat the ball to its spot and get underneath it – do NOT run with outstretched arms.
   • Use 2 hands when underneath the ball and catch it overhead, and in front of you

Other Key Points:
- Always be ready and anticipate where the ball will be hit
- Know where you are going with the ball before ball is in play
  o Runner on 2nd base, will be throwing home on a single
  o No one on base, will be going to 2nd on a single
- Get under fly balls & pop ups. Run to the spot first, and then try to catch it.
- Throw the ball in as quickly as possible all times (one continuous and smooth motion).
- Make the play – always go for the catch.
- Always run at maximum speed.
- Always run on the balls of your feet – so your eyes are not bouncing.

*** DRILL ***

a. Multi-toss Outfield Drill (All Levels):

This drill develops footwork, balance, and an ability to judge the flight of the ball

b. Cutoff Drills (All Levels):

Playout cut-off scenarios in practice and use visuals (dry erase board or flip chart) to illustrate the concept/flow of cutoffs.
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

5. Hitting
   a. WALKING to the plate (All Levels)

   b. Picking up signs (Minor, Major) - one foot outside of the batter’s box

   c. What to be looking at/thinking about/focused on (All Levels)

   d. Correct grip at the plate is to line up the knuckles used to knock on a door (All Levels)

   e. Hitting musts: (All Levels)
      i. A balanced swing throughout
      ii. Loading hands when ball is being delivered (straight back, no twist)
      iii. Keeping hands “inside the baseball” (fence drill) – look for the knob leading
      iv. Slice through the ball, then an upward follow-through
      v. Keep your head still throughout your swing
      vi. Stance, balance, and plate coverage

      vii. The ideal stride is short & soft (All Levels)

      viii. A proper swing takes the hands to the ball, leading with the knob of the bat
           • Barrel will follow and enter hitting zone with optimum power

   f. Explain the strike-zone (and “swing first” mentality) (All Levels)
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

*** DRILLS ***

a. Fence Drill: keeping hands “inside the ball”

b. Use visuals of what “good” looks like (still pictures, videos)
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

6. Bunting

1. Execute a sacrifice bunt (Major)

2. Executing a bunt for a hit (Major)
   - Square shoulders and hips to the pitcher
   - Slide top hand to the bottom of the barrel
   - MUST get the bat out in front of the plate
   - Watch the ball hit the bat.
   - Stay on top of the ball
   - Just “catch the ball” with the bat, don’t snap or push at it
   - Pull the bat back if it is a ball (and if not a squeeze/suicide bunt).

*** DRILLS ***

a. Bunting Drill – use cones to identify the ideal bunt destination. Batters are in a line and rotate to try and bunt the ball closest to one of the two cones.
7. Throwing & Pitching

b. Throwing (All Levels)
   - All fielders and pitchers should be taught to throw with 4 seams whenever possible
   - Reduces the amount of lateral movement ("cutting" or "tailing" action)
   - The rotating 4 seams cut through the air, therefore 4-seam throws have most velocity
   - Crowhop, Throw, Follow-Through: These 3 concepts will result in consistent throws when used correctly
   - "Crowhop" is another term for shuffling the feet. A good crowhop is always towards the target.
   - Throw the ball from a sideways stance, over-the-top, with the throwing elbow up
   - Let the momentum of the crowhop and the throw carry you past the throw towards the target
Pitching Basics (Minor, Major):

- LESS IS MORE!
- Keep it simple and minimize body movements
- Anyone with good fundamentals can pitch
- Do NOT stand on the pitching rubber, push off the edge!

Pitching Fundamentals
  - ix. Square Foot
  - x. Balance Point
  - xi. Stride
  - xii. Rotation & Finish

Square the Foot:
- Our feet dictate where we throw a baseball, therefore, our pivot foot MUST be perfectly square to the rubber
- Means we are perfectly square to the plate
- If pitcher is missing inside/outside, this should be the first thing checked
- If using windup, make it easy to pivot
- Start with heels on rubber at 45-degree angle
- Small step at 45-degree angle to minimize upper body movement and keep head over pivot foot

Balance Point:
- Controlled lift of the stride leg
- Lift the knee, don’t swing the foot out & away from the body
- Swinging the foot affects balance
- Leg should be slightly closed with butt pointing slightly at catcher
- Hands together slightly above the belt
- Bullpen Drill – Make the pitcher hold their balance point for 3-5 seconds before continuing the delivery

Stride:
- Stride should be perfectly straight to the plate
- Ask pitchers to imagine a straight line to the plate
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

- As pitcher gets older, stride should be as far as possible to use the pitch of the mound
- Ball should be up & out
- Weight stays back to create torque during rotation

Rotation & Finish:

- Use front side to generate torque to the plate
- Glove hand tucks under front shoulder
- Both feet on ground until ball released
- Follow through should be a result of momentum
- Momentum should still stay on that straight line to the catcher
- Back foot should end up even with or slightly in front of stride foot
Catching Basics

a. Basics (All Levels)
   - Safety is highest priority for catchers— make sure equipment fits
   - Place throwing hand behind catcher’s glove or behind back
   - Set up at proper distance behind plate
   - Understand what to do on a dropped 3rd strike (Major)
     - Dropped 3rd strike, must throw runner out at first unless first base is occupied
     - With 2 outs, and dropped 3rd strike, must throw runner out at first base even if first base is occupied
     - If bases are loaded, catcher just needs to step on home plate to get force out on a dropped strike.
   - Understand how to throw to targets at all bases (especially throws to first using inside and outside targets)
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

9. Other

1. Dugout Rules (All Levels)

2. Studying the pitcher (Minor, Major)

3. Interaction with teammates (All Levels)

4. Running on and off the field (All Levels)

5. Positive mindset (All Levels)

Other Key Points:

• Always run on and off the field (at least 80% of maximum speed). Set a strict expectation.
• Always stretch and plyometrics for warm-up before throwing to loosen up your arm – at least 10-minute warm-up.
• Always arrive at least 30 minutes prior to game start time.
• Always pay attention in the dugout and no horseplay.
• Never argue with or give gestures to an umpire.
• Listen to and respect all coaches and umpires.
• Don’t be afraid to make a mistake! Go all out and make a big play!
• Always be positive with other teammates. Cheer and celebrate with your teammates. If you do not have anything positive to say, then keep it to yourself.
• Develop “calls” for outfield depth and location (Minors, Majors)
  o Depth and shifts
• Develop “calls” for first and third situations (Majors)
Coaches Requirements:

Coaches must satisfy a certain minimum amount of service hours to be able to continue coaching. Practice and game time is not counted as coaches’ service hours. A service hour log process will be explained.

- 40 service hours for all Coaches for 2018 (head coaches and assistants)
- 80 service hours for all Board members for 2018

Service hours should be reported to Mike Stats (via text) for tracking. 570.840.5129

Include:

- Your name, # of service hours, date of activity, the activity.

For convenience, you may want to send to Mike in batches (by week or month) to limit the number of texts he is receiving.

If you do not fulfill your service hour requirement, you will not be able to coach the following year.
Coaching Minimum Requirements (by Level)

Other practice drills/games:

“CAP” Game (with player pitch/catch): Rotate players throughout the positions/field – with the first player going into the field entering in left field, and the next player to bat coming in from third base. Any balls caught in the air are a direct exchange between fielder and batter. 3 players hitting always and continuously rotate in the field with live runners and play situations. Need at least 12 players for this unless a coach(s) volunteers to play a steady position.

Infield or Outfield Knock-out – For Infield KO, line players up at various infield positions and any fumble or ground ball miss sends the player off the field. Rotate ground balls until one man remains and is the winner. The same game can be played for outfielders (fly balls instead of ground balls).

Pepper – One batter with multiple fielders who are approximately 15 – 20 feet away. Fielder tosses pitch to batter, who makes soft contact for fielders. This drill requires hand-eye coordination and should only be played with skilled players.

Front Toss – Using a L Screen, have a coach front toss to batters with a team of fielders or in a cage. The front toss distance will be much shorter than the standard plate to rubber distance (approximately half). You can simulate a faster pitcher with front toss – getting the batter to react to pitches. If your distance is close to the batter, make sure you are front tossing with a similar trajectory as a ball takes from full distance (may need to be on one knee)

Soft Toss and Tee work – never stand close to the in-play area during these hitting drills.