

BULLDOG Baseball/Softball

“DEFENSE”

Defense wins games. Pitcher’s have the job of putting the ball into play...then the entire game rests with the defensive outcome of the team.

CATCHING:

We need to also change our perspective on catching. Too many kids shy away from the “tools of ignorance” because they are NOT “ignorant”...to get behind the plate and take a beating from foul balls, bats, wild throws, and potential collisions, most kids say “thanks but no thanks”. We need to get kids to realize it is the most exciting position in the game. You touch the ball more often than anyone else, you get to see the whole field and every play, and your job is perhaps the most important along with the pitcher. Below you will see the five Catching Objectives as well as basic points and the proper throwing steps (which slightly vary from standard throwing).

CATCHING OBJECTIVES

1. *Be a Leader – take charge on the field –THE QUARTERBACK/POINT GUARD position of Baseball*
2. *Handle the pitching staff*
3. *Limit and control the running game*
4. *Be an AMBASSADOR for the team –THE person closest to the Umpire!*
5. *Run the defense*

Throwing Steps	CATCHING points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Ready receive position</i>• <i>“T” turn</i>• <i>K.A.S.H. up to BOW & ARROW</i>• <i>LOVE, Spin, Throw, FOLLOW THRU!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Giving signs</i>• <i>Receiving – no runners/runners on – quiet body</i>• <i>Blocking pitches – COBRA/MEATBALL</i>• <i>Bunts & Pop ups</i>• <i>Throwing – Arm action</i>

LEVEL STANDARDS:

Catching skills are universal at all levels, but ultimately come down to hard work. Too often Leagues try to make up for poor coaching of catchers by limiting the runs a team can score based on wild pitches/past balls. Taking time to train all athletes on your team in the basics of catching will make them better over all players at all the other positions. All levels have the obligation to reach all points listed above.

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Communication: talk with the rest of the team, You have the best seat in the house and are vital to communicating all aspects of the defensive game, encourage the pitcher(s), know what the play is – MAKE SURE YOUR TEAM DOES AS WELL!

Ready position: Stay low, on the balls of your feet, comfortable position, maintain agility, present a consistent target for the pitcher, catching is a two handed position, use your body, NO ONE BACKS YOU UP, BLOCK FIRST, catch second.

Execute catching fundamentals: able to block and recover a ball to the right, to the left, straight on. POP and throw (1B/2B/3B), field pop-ups & bunts, back up bases, block the plate, DIRECT TRAFFIC!!

Throwing accuracy: hitting your partner square in the chest to TAG, four seam grip, 12-6 rotation, over the top ALWAYS

Lateral agility: ability to go left and right and still be in control

Ball handling: SOFT HANDS, pliable, out in front for flexibility, give with the pitch, Four corners, FRAMING, ALLOW UMPIRE TO SEE THE STRIKE.

Develop timing: know where your teammates are, where they are going to be, individual signals.

Educated Decision: KNOW your pitcher, WHAT does the batter look like – game plan to get the out in the least amount of pitches and or the desired outcome of a ball in play, Anticipate the pitch for the situation, the count, outs, KNOW your environment, Recognize the speed of the ball, Understand the abilities of the opposing team – TENDENCIES. CONSTANT EVALUATION!!!

Aggressive attack: PITCHERS AND CATCHERS ARE NOT ON DEFENSE THEY ARE IN ATTACK OFFENSE. Exploit the weaknesses of the batter/other team. Get the umpire on our side, to call out pitches.

KNOW YOUR TEAMMATES: their abilities, their physical and mental tendencies, their personalities – can they bounce back? Do you need to pick them up? Will you trust them? How can you play off each other's strengths and weaknesses?

HUSBAND the Pitchers: you are responsible for getting the most out of each pitcher. Meet their needs, know their emotions, and understand their reactions. WALK off the field after every inning with your pitcher, ENCOURAGE HIM – RENOVATE HIM (MAKE LIKE NEW)– INSPIRE HIM! (In that Order!). LISTEN to your pitcher in between innings; get him a towel, his jacket, some water, and the pitching coach.

AMBASSADOR to the Umpire: the umpire is not a hostile country, he is Switzerland and you need him to be an ally not neutral. Be the buffer between him and your teammates and coaching staff. Call him SIR (not BLUE)! Offer him water, some seeds, a towel. He can be our BEST friend or our WORST enemy. Make conversation and keep it light. KNOW when to question a call and when to let it lie (don't win the battle but cost us the war).

DRILLS:

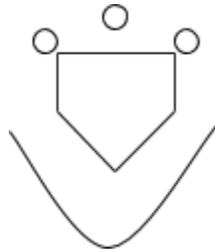
Coach Controlled groups – Smallest groups relating to # of Coaches able to work. All drills can be used for all levels, however they should be qualified for the skill level. Do not be afraid to challenge the athletes, but be conscious that if they experience consistent failure the drill will be counter productive.

• **Line Ball:**

Divide the team into two equal lines the same distance apart. Take older baseballs and using a permanent marker draw a line through the four seams. Have athletes with partners practice throwing their respective “W” or “V” grip four seam fastballs. This drill can also be incorporated with “other” grips so athletes can recognize spin or rotation of ball dependent on their grip. **FOUR SEAM ROTATION IS CRITICAL FOR CATCHER THROW!**

• **Static Ball Blocking:**

Set up a home plate blocking area with three baseballs. Catcher in gear will work on defensive lateral agility. Using the plate with the baseballs in three positions a Coach will signal which way the catcher will block. Coaches observe and correct technique (focus point should be on the “Cobra” position and keeping the “Meatball” on the plate).



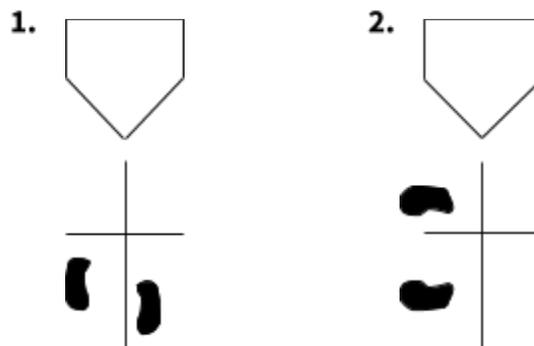
• **Active Ball Blocking:**

Set up a home plate blocking area with a bucket of tennis balls/rubber balls/baseballs (start with tennis balls to break in a new catcher or for early season work). Catcher in gear will work on defensive lateral agility. Using the plate as a reference point a Coach (standing approximately 15-20 ft. away) will throw a ball in the dirt, as the catcher will attempt to block it. Coaches observe and correct technique (focus point should be on the “Cobra” position and keeping the “Meatball” on the plate).



• **“T” Throwing Drill:**

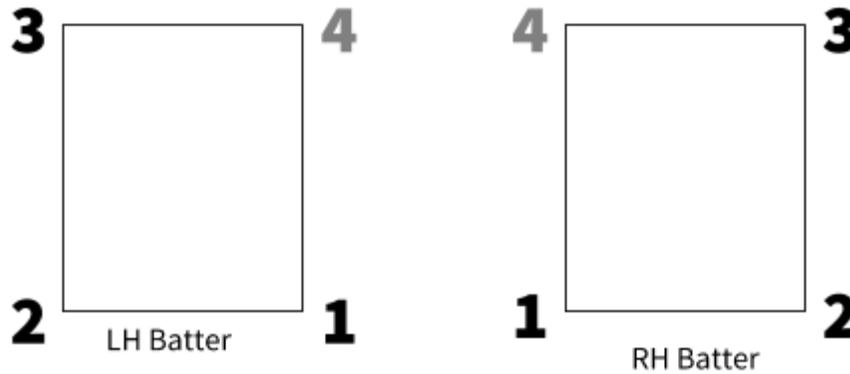
Set up a home plate with a drawn or taped “t”. Catcher in gear will work on defensive throwing. Using the plate and the “t” as a reference point, a Coach (standing approximately 15-20 ft. away) will throw a ball to the catcher who will work on his throwing footwork. Using the “t”, a catcher is looking to go through the throwing steps (see figure on previous page). Coaches observe and correct technique (focus point should be on the **K.A.S.H. up to BOW & ARROW**). For further throwing technique the “t” is also used for throwing to 1st base and 3rd base. Instead of the feet going from vertical to horizontal on the “t” they actual go diagonal.



DRILLS (continued):

- **“SOFT” hands and framing:**

Set up a home plate area with a bucket of tennis balls/rubber balls/baseballs (start with tennis balls to break in a new catcher or for early season work). Catcher in gear will work on receiving the ball and framing. Using the plate as a reference point a Coach (standing approximately 10-15 ft. Away) will throw a ball, as the catcher will work on his receiving technique – WITHOUT A GLOVE. Coaches observe and correct technique (focusing on SOFT HANDS, pliable, out in front for flexibility, give with the pitch, Four corners*, FRAMING, ALLOW UMPIRE TO SEE THE STRIKE.)



**We don't want the pitcher to throw to the 4th corner but we still need to frame it!*

INFIELD:

We need to continue to defeat the fear of the baseball in the game. Too often especially with Infielders they back off or get out of the way of a ball. We need to develop a solid level of confidence to combat this "FEAR" of the ball, and keep the ball in play, in the infield where we have the best chance of getting an out and limiting runs.

INFIELD Steps

- *Ready position*
- *Creep step (move to ball breakdown)*
- *Landing gear (wide base, glove out in front, eyes on level of ball)*
- *Alligator (palm up, top hand)*
- *Turn step to throw*

LEVEL STANDARDS:

Infield skills are universal at all levels. In order to increase ability from 8U to 14U, consistent routine infield play must be developed in practice. You cannot take too many ground balls. Athlete's only build confidence when the skill set become routine. The challenge is helping a "ball shy" player overcome their fears. That must be done through drill work prior to ground ball fungo play. Drills must include lots of movement and engagement. Players standing around do not gain any positive routine.

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Communication: talk with each other, help out the outfielders with information, encourage the pitcher(s), know what the play is!

Ready position: proper approach, comfortable position with feet a little more than shoulder width apart and slightly staggered (glove foot leading), hands out in front with palms to the sky. As players get older the ready position may start more up right as they are moving in multiple locations as they learn tendencies.

Creep Step: the steps taken to get the fielder's body in motion to attack balls in play. For RH fielder it goes left – right – left. For LH fielder it goes right-left-right.

Landing gear: dropping the fielder's hands to the ground-up position. Hands are out in front of bodies slightly toward the glove side of the body. The palms up in the low five position of "playing catch". The hands need to be down as it is far easier for the body to work from the ground up then down to the ground to make a play.

Alligator trap: the act of using two hands to trap the ball within the pocket of the glove. Given the nickname like an alligator's mouth to help remind players that they need to "eat big" to keep their alligator alive. Using two hands also sets up the fielder to go directly into the throw through the funnel technique.

Turn Step, scissor kick, crow-hop, back step, off-balance plant step : first step taken to get the fielder's body in line with the target of their throw.

Execute infield fundamentals: able to field a ball hit at, to the right, and to the left.

Throwing accuracy: hitting your partner square in the chest, four seam grip, 12-6 rotation, over the top as much as possible.

Lateral agility: ability to go left and right and still be in control

Ball handling: SOFT HANDS, pliable, out in front for flexibility.

Develop timing: know where your teammates are, where they are going to be.

Educated reaction: KNOW your pitcher, the count, outs, WHAT are you going to do with the ball, Anticipate the pitch for the situation, KNOW your environment, Recognize the speed of the ball, Understand the abilities of the opposing team – TENDENCIES. CONSTANT EVALUATION!!!

Aggressive controlled attacks: go hard after the ball, save a run, keep it in the infield, and throw out the lead runner.

Fielding: Back hands, Forehands, Short hops, line drives, pop ups

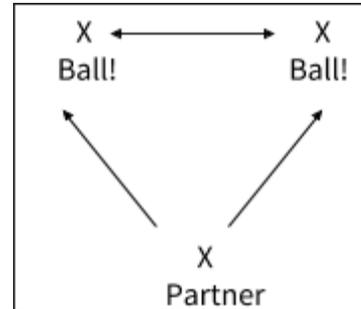
Fungo:

KNOW YOUR TEAMMATES: their abilities, their physical and mental tendencies, their personalities – can they bounce back? Do you need to pick them up? Will you trust them? How can you play off each other's strengths and weaknesses?

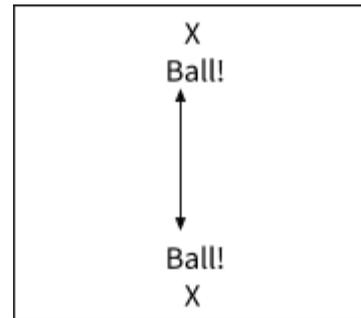
DRILLS:

Coach Controlled groups – Smallest groups relating to # of Coaches able to work. All drills can be used for all levels, however they should be qualified for the skill level. Do not be afraid to challenge the athletes, but be conscious that if they experience consistent failure the drill will be counter productive.

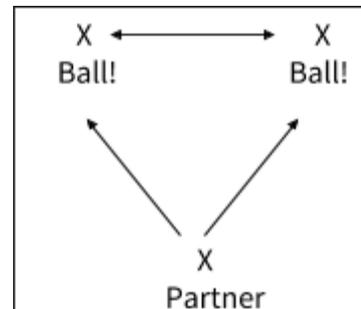
- **Windshield Wipers** – no gloves
- ✓ Partners- shuffle between points
- ✓ Two hands bring the ball to the body
- ✓ No crossing feet
- ✓ Flip back



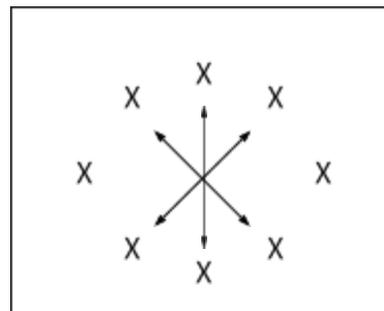
- **Short hops** – no gloves (10)/gloves (10)
- ✓ Partners across from each other – short hop in front
- ✓ Two hands bring the ball to the body
- ✓ Back and forth



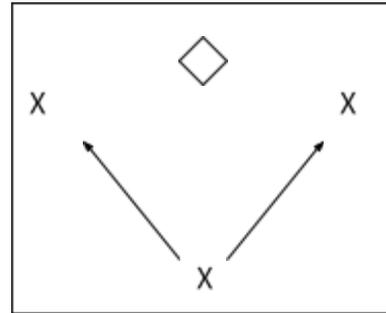
- **Windshield Wipers** – backhand (10)/forehand (10)
- ✓ Partners- shuffle between points
- ✓ Two hands bring the ball to the body
- ✓ No crossing feet
- ✓ Flip back



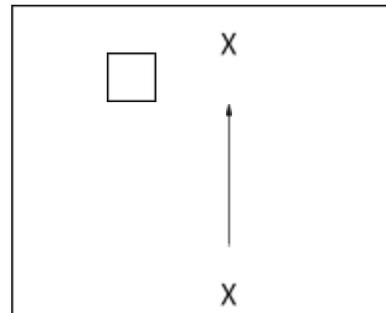
- **Hockey game** – no gloves – till eliminate
- GROUP – circle in breakdown position
- ✓ Two hands
- ✓ Field and roll ball low
- ✓ Eliminate when ball goes between legs



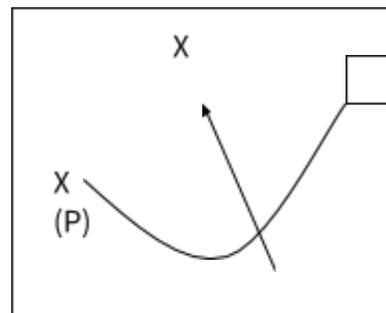
- **Double play feeds** – gloves
- ✓ Two lines – SS/2B – 1 thrower/fungo
- ✓ Focus on footwork around the bag
- ✓ Thrower rolls or short hops ball to all 2B while SS turns double play (switch after going through line 2x).

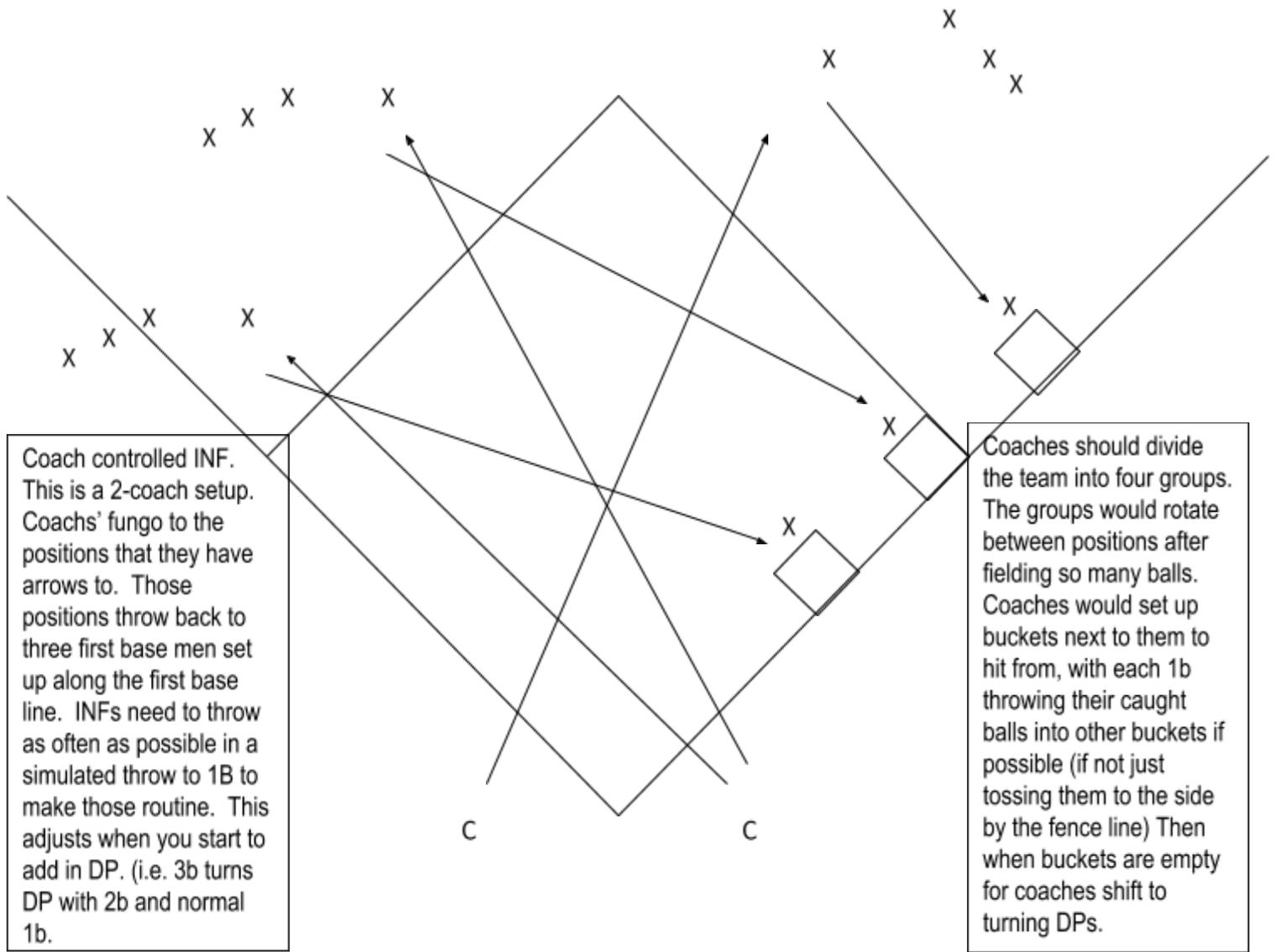


- **3B Quick hands/feet** – gloves
- ✓ One line – 3B – 1 thrower/fungo
- ✓ Focus on foot work around the bag, even with base
- ✓ Thrower/fungo quick rolls or short hops ball to 3B he feints the throw to 1B or 2B(DP), then flips ball back to thrower/fungo. Should be done in rapid fire action!



- **1B Quick hands/feet & PFP*** – gloves
- ✓ Two* lines – 1B/P – 1 thrower/fungo
- ✓ Same as 3B but with a step on base or throw to covering pitcher (*if available).
- ✓ thrower/fungo quick rolls or short hops ball to 1B he feints the throw to covering P or runs through the bag then flips ball back to thrower/fungo. Should be done in rapid fire action!





Once the season gets going it is critical to have infield practice like this during each practice that you conduct. These high rep/game like situations allow athletes to gain routine and confidence. Each player can play all of the positions during practice and get lots and lots of repetitions.

OUTFIELD:

We need to continue to defeat the fear of the baseball in the game. Too often especially with Infielders they back off or get out of the way of a ball. We need to develop a solid level of confidence to combat this "FEAR" of the ball, and keep the ball in play, in the infield where we have the best chance of getting an out and limiting runs.

OUTFIELD Steps

- Ready position
- Creep step (move to ball breakdown)
- Drop/Drive- get behind the ball-ANGLE OF ATTACK!
- Feed the LION
- Movement in direction of throw (run through the catch) FUNNEL!
- Crow Hop

LEVEL STANDARDS:

Outfield skills are universal at all levels. In order to increase ability from 8U to 14U, consistent routine outfield play must be developed in practice. You can not take too many fly balls. Athlete's only build confidence when the skill set become routine. The challenge is helping a "ball shy" player overcome their fears. That must be done through drill work prior to fly ball fungo play. Drills must include lots of movement and engagement. Players standing around do not gain any positive routine.

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Communication: talk with each other, help out the infielders with your defensive alignment, Center fielder has priority calls over the other outfielders – any ball he can get to is his, Keep in mind the next move (someone may have a better angle than you), know what your play is!

Ready position: proper and even ready position, weight over the balls of your feet and evenly distributed over both legs square to the plate – allows for movement in any direction. CREEP steps (no DEAD FEET!!) You must be able to run on the balls of your feet to keep your head still.

Fielding ground ball: fielded just off of glove foot, charge hard first few steps, as you approach the ball shorten steps (get control), sink to knees, set on glove foot, step and throw, YOU MUST KEEP THE BALL IN FRONT, Proper drop-steps to angles on the ball.

Fielding fly balls: fly balls should always be caught on the throwing side. Balls hit at an angle you should step with the outside foot at an angle that takes you to the spot where the ball will land. I.E. if ball is hit to the right – drop step angle w/ right foot first. After catching the ball, you must stop your momentum on your throwing foot and then set to throw back to the infield.

- Over the head: drop step stay on a straight line, Three Techniques 1. Eyes fixed 2. Quick glances 3. Dead run and find the ball. Each has distinct advantages and disadvantages – some are better for certain situations. Learn to Reverse Pivot – used to correct initial wrong turn or slice. (Do it quickly rotating your head and picking up the ball)
- To the R: drop step w/ Right foot
- To the L: drop step w/ Left foot
- At YOU: Freeze and read, step to the ball with your glove foot.

Throwing accuracy: LINE DRIVE TO HOP - hitting your cutoff square in the chest, four seam grip, 12-6 rotation, over the top ALWAYS!!! CROW HOP, ROLL and THROW.

Throwing to a base – rules for ground balls:

1. On sharply hit balls at fielder – throw out lead runner
2. On balls that force fielder to run toward the play, look to the lead runner adjust
3. On balls hit left or right moving away from the infield throw to 2B, odds are the lead runner is going to score.

Educated reaction: KNOW your pitcher, the count, outs, WHAT are you going to do with the ball, Anticipate the pitch for the situation, KNOW your environment, Recognize the speed of the ball, Understand the abilities of the opposing team – TENDENCIES. CONSTANT EVALUATION!!!

Playing the Wall: Know your environment! Using your throwing hand to help brace for impact – also gives you an indication when you've reached the wall. If warning track feel the texture change. Plant, Reach, and Extend! IF FENCE is chain link learn how to use your cleats to give you the advantage.

Diving: don't dive unless you are going to catch it! IF the ball gets by you've given up a triple for no reason or if it's a close game you could set up the potential tie or winning run. Proper diving technique: Extend your arms straight out, as you catch it, slide on the top of the ground like a head first slide. Your torso should absorb much of the impact; the rest should dissipate down through your body. Bent leg slides – Pop up slides.

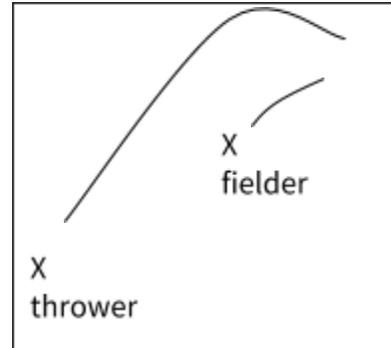
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DRILLS:

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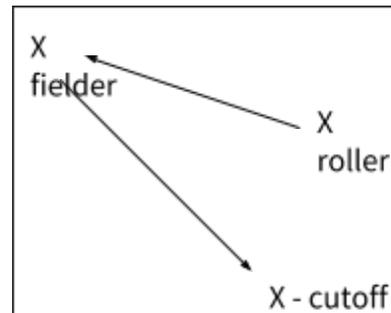
• **Drop Step** – no gloves – partners

- ✓ Throwing yells-BALL! Holds up L/R arm
- ✓ Player drop steps depending on L/R
- ✓ Throwing lobs ball to that position
- ✓ OF steps to catch to crow hop



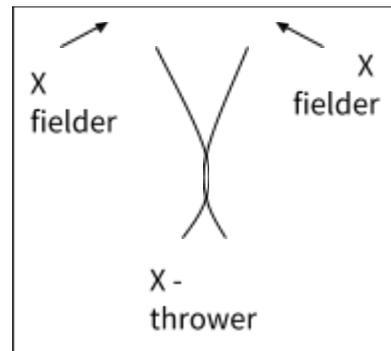
• **Roll and Go** – gloves - rotation

- ✓ Players set up in a corner
- ✓ Throwing rolls ball
- ✓ Player charges and scoops (run through the catch)
- ✓ Crow hop to cutoff man
- ✓ Players rotate from roller to fielder to cutoff to roller



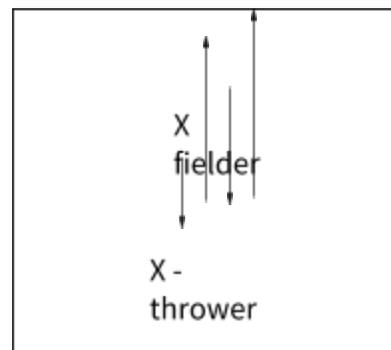
• **Gap Drill** – gloves - rotation (communication)

- ✓ Players set up in two lines
- ✓ Throwing rolls or throws a ball in the gap between
- ✓ Players communicate who has the ball
- ✓ Backups
- ✓ Outfield Steps

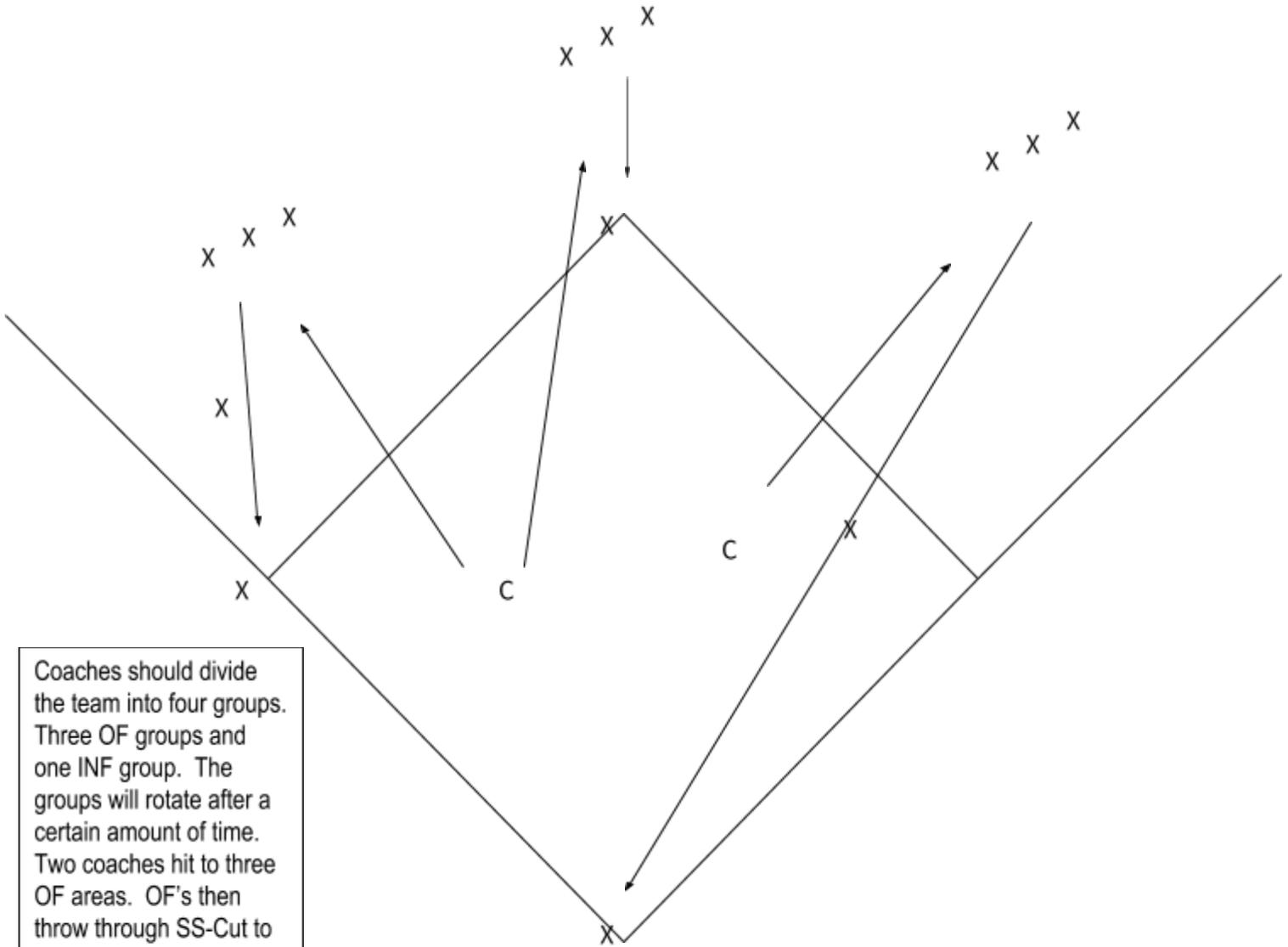


• **In out double double** – gloves - rotation (communication)

- ✓ Players set up in one line
- ✓ Fielder overhand flips the ball to thrower and takes off
- ✓ Throwing toss a high pop-up over head to Fielder
- ✓ Fielder after catching fires ball with crow hop back to Throwing
- ✓ Fielder then runs in again to Throwing, who tosses a low line drive to Fielder who does whatever they can to catch it
- ✓ Fielder then tosses ball to Throwing
- ✓ Fielder then takes off deep for a over head high pop by Throwing again, after catch Fielder tosses ball to next Fielder in line.



DRILLS (continued):



Coaches should divide the team into four groups. Three OF groups and one INF group. The groups will rotate after a certain amount of time. Two coaches hit to three OF areas. OF's then throw through SS-Cut to 3B, Straight throw to 2B, and then through 1B-Cut to HOME. These cuts also rotate with each OF position throwing to 2B, 3B, and HOME.