

2017 BLLB Coaches Clinic 9-12 Year old players

● **Throwing and Catching**

- Teach the proper grip, Two fingers on top, thumb on bottom. The important thing is to grip the ball with the fingers and not the hand.
- As a coach, stay positive and focus on form and technique rather than results.
- Two step release is what you should ultimately be striving for, try to stop the multi-step release as soon as possible.
- We want to make the catch and the throw into one motion.
- To develop arm strength and after arms are properly warmed up you will want to spend time working long toss.
- Throwing progression drills are a natural starting point for any throwing practice. Start with two lines positioned across from each other. The players start fairly close together and on one knee. They will throw across to their partner while coaches check for proper grip and upper body rotation as well as follow through. They will eventually get to their feet and spread a little farther apart. Technique is the focus. It may seem boring to some of your players but all players can improve technique including the ones who may have advanced skills. One other drill that deserves mention is called the sock drill. We have modified it and use a terry cloth rag. Utilize this rag in place of a baseball and have your player try and hit a target out in front of them. On the practice field this is usually a coach but at home you can use something like a chair. Have them try and hit the

target with the rag and coach them on their throwing motion.

This is a very easy drill and useful for the player who has extra energy they need to get rid of.

- As coaches we will also teach the proper position of the non-catching hand during the catch. Teach your players to have the throwing hand up comfortably near the glove in order to make an efficient transfer to the throwing grip and motion.
- Remind players not to “stab” at the ball with their glove during the catch
- The player should try to maintain a good athletic position throughout. Do not stand in one spot, keep the knees flexed and keep moving. This will help them adjust to last second variations of ball flight.

- **Baserunning**

Batters should be taught to run on contact. Do not look for the ball or assume that it is hit foul. Run.

- Run all the way through first base and finish in foul territory breaking down as though they have a parachute on their back. Another thought would be to have them look to foul territory. This will help them see an overthrow and it also affords some protection for their face on an errant throw situation. Remind them that this is the only base they can run past and not be tagged out for doing so.

- When teaching players to run to second, they will make a wider turn around first base and touch the bag on the inside portion with their right foot, not on the top of the bag.
- Teach the players to pay very close attention to their baserunning coaches. They will help the players determine if they should advance or not. Remind them to do their best. They may get thrown out when a coach tries to advance them but once again, as a coach, look at effort and technique rather than results.
- Another baserunning drill to teach aggressive advancement is called the no fear drill. When the opportunity comes to do any kind of scrimmage, have them ALWAYS turn a hit into a double. If the defense gets the out at first, they get the out. No big deal. If the baserunner actually has a single, the idea is to always turn it into a double. If the out at second is in the bag, so to speak, the base runner is allowed to still go back to first base. The defense should still be sure to get the out at second.
- A base running/warm up drill that we have used is the pickle drill. Depending on the amount of players you have, set them in two lines at two bases. Have them rundown a ghost base runner as though they have the base runner in a pickle. Go through each line a couple times. This will warm up their arms as well as their whole bodies. It goes with the theme of throwing only throws one would make in a baseball game. All throws should be ones made in a game situation. Don't let them develop bad throwing habits.

- **Hitting**

- At the younger ages you may find that most players can hit a baseball pretty decent already. Take caution not to

over coach hitting. You will find that confidence is the most important thing for the young players.

- Be sure that the bat is sized correctly for the player.
- Corrective coaching should be done in practice, not during a game plate appearance. You can coach up a player once he finishes running the bases but try not to do it during his or her at bat.
- Essentially, you'll want to mainly coach that balance from the start of the swing to finish is the most important thing for the young players. As players get older more points of detail can be taught. Confidence and having fun are elements we want to promote. We want them to play again when the next season comes around.
- The athletic position we want to coach for hitting is very similar to playing defense on the basketball court. Most of these players play basketball as well as baseball. Find the players that do if you need a good example for your team. In coaching points of the swing coaches will teach a couple main points/positions. First is the Stance. It must be wide enough to allow them to maintain balance as well as generate power. From here the next position is the Launch position, also referred to as the Separation. In this position the hands travel toward the rear and our stride foot is planted. The bottom half of our stance separates from the top half. From here we want to keep our swing compact and drive our hips open toward the pitcher with our palms coming through the zone flat. Guard against

rolling the wrists over. This is referred to as Point of Contact. From here we want to finish our swing in good balance. At this age group there are many players that have had more extensive training from sources outside of our league. It can be a difficult situation as a coach to teach consistently with the training they have already received. We really do not want to send any mixed signals while we are coaching. Keep it as simple as you can.

- Soft toss with whiffle balls or baseballs into a net is a good way to get reps. Hitting off the T into a net is another. Hitting in the cage/tunnel from coach pitch seems to be the go to drill for hitting but keep in mind there are plenty of drills where you wouldn't need the cage/tunnel.

Defensive Fundamentals

- In training, you want to keep as many players as possible engaged in drills that have them moving. You will want to have two or three additional coaches (dads or moms) helping you. Try to use competition within your rec team as a training motivator. Almost every drill you have available to you can be done with teams within your team.
- Start out by getting them into a solid defensive position. This would include knees bent, wide base, weight on the balls of their feet rather than flat footed. Glove presented forward and open. Most coaches teach their players to

“creep” from their ready position. “Creeping” would be taking a couple balanced steps toward the the batter during the batter’s swing. A visual cue you can teach is to tell them that there is an eyeball in the palm of their glove and it is looking for the baseball. Roll ground balls to their fielding position in lieu of the fungo bat. You will be more accurate and your drills will be more efficient. There are videos of this on the Brownsburg Little League website. Keep it fun and fast paced.

- Fly balls for outfield work should also be thrown rather than hit off of the fungo bat unless you are proficient with the fungo bat. As with fielding ground balls on the infield, be sure to coach the player to have their throwing hand up and near their glove-ready to transition to the throwing part of the motion. One of the fun drills that you can do is to have your outfielders go one at a time in the prone position about 30’ in front of your position. From here throw a series of three fly balls that they have to track and catch. The first one is tougher as they need to get up off the ground first, track the ball and catch it. As they are tracking and catching the first ball you throw the second one and repeat the sequence with the third. Challenge them with range and location. Keep score and play a game of knockout. The players have always loved doing this drill. There are many drills available on YouTube or from other coaches in the league.

- The four corner throwing drill is a great drill for players in this age group. Utilizing all the bases as well as the plate, have them properly throw to players set up to catch on the outside of the bag and position their feet for a proper throw to the next bag. This drill will keep going from position to position. It is fast paced and requires a more precise execution. From here you can now have them throw in the opposite direction. Your job is to be sure their feet are in the proper position and their form does not break down. Once again, it is fast paced and the players like doing it.
- When transitioning from the younger age groups to the older age groups there have been issues sometimes with where the outfielder should throw the ball to. The issue in the past has been that second base was a kind of “default” position to get the ball to. In reality, the ball needs to get in front of the lead runner in order to stop them. That is not always second base. Outfielders should be taught to evaluate the current situation and utilize cutoff fielders as they have been coached. Typically on the infield, the pitcher gets to a backup position to support the third baseman or the catcher. The cutoff tasks are assigned to infielders on respective sides of the diamond. This is a good opportunity to utilize the fungo bat and give your entire defense some good situational reps.
- Some other basic drills that the players enjoy are bare hand underhand toss/catch from opposing staggered

lines. It's simply a hand eye drill that is beneficial at all ages. Place a coach and a bucket of balls on end of the drill to get them started and just toss a ball to the opposite line and they continue tossing back and forth working their way toward the other end of the drill. Challenge your team to get all the way through the bucket without dropping a ball. Remind them that if they fail, which they will do, to let it go and get onto the next play, just like in an actual baseball game.

- Another hand eye drill is simply juggling baseballs. Start as basic as you have to even if it's with a single baseball. Make it a competition. Just help them continue to develop the hand eye coordination.
- YouTube is another great resource for drills. Have a great season. Go Bulldogs!!!!