

## **2016 Rookie Minors – Session 2**

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# Practice Overview

- **Running THRU First Base (Group Drill – 10 minutes)**
  - If pressed for time, you can set up the stations while another coach takes this over
- **Rotating Stations (30 minutes, 10 minutes each station)**
  - Rotating drills in three groups of 3-4 players each.
  - This requires parents and other coaches helping.
  - Stations prevent kids standing around and gets everyone lots of reps.
  - Break the kids into skill level groups. This allows you to make the drills more challenging for more advanced kids and more basic for younger or less skilled kids.
  - Rotate every 10 minutes
  - **Station 1: Ground Ball Fielding and Decision Making**
  - **Station 2: Catching**
  - **Station 3: Hitting**
- **Fox and Rabbit (10 minutes)**
- **Take out Drill (5 minutes) (two options):**
  - **Last Man Standing**
  - **Base Races**

# Group Drill 1: Running THRU First Base

- Coach Review:

- First base is the only base you can run past (you don't have to stop on it)
- Running to 1<sup>st</sup> Base is like a race
- We don't run "TO" 1<sup>st</sup> Base, we run "THRU" 1<sup>st</sup> Base (get the kids saying it out loud with you)
- NEVER SLIDE INTO FIRST BASE (10 pushups if you do!)

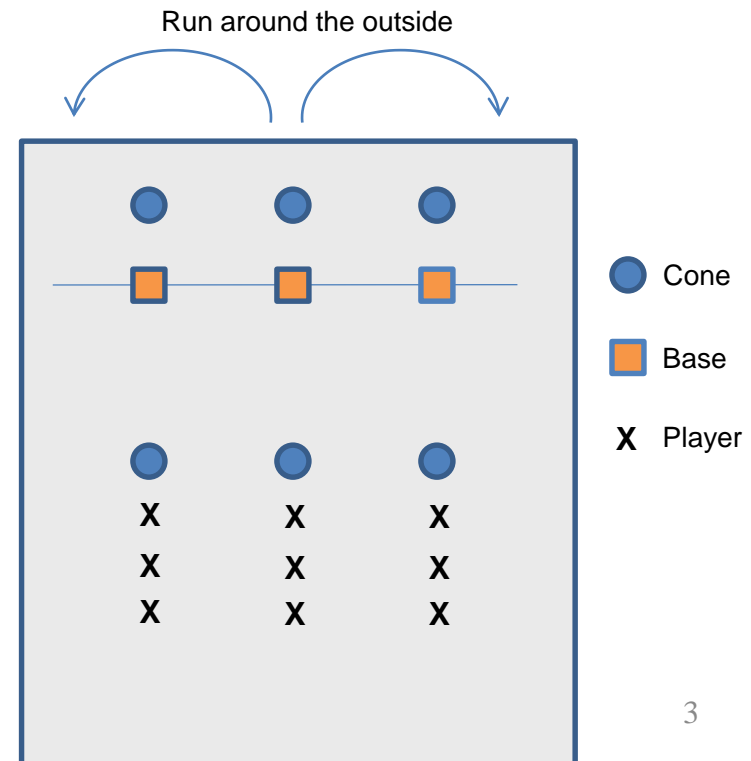
- Coach demonstrate by running THRU first base

- Drill:

- Line the kids up behind three cones
- Tell them it is a race to the cone PAST the base (located about two strides past the base), where they have to touch first base
- Yell "Go" and see who gets there first. Repeat quickly.

- Game:

- Have them start with the bat (make sure cones are spaced far enough apart for safety) and the first cone is home plate.
- Yell "Swing", they have to swing, pivot, and come out like sprinters (no balls)
- Keep score between the teams of who wins the races
- Automatic loss in the race (be tough):
  - NO THROWING THE BAT
  - Missing 1<sup>st</sup> base, sliding, not reaching back cone
- Other fun stuff – race the coach, etc.



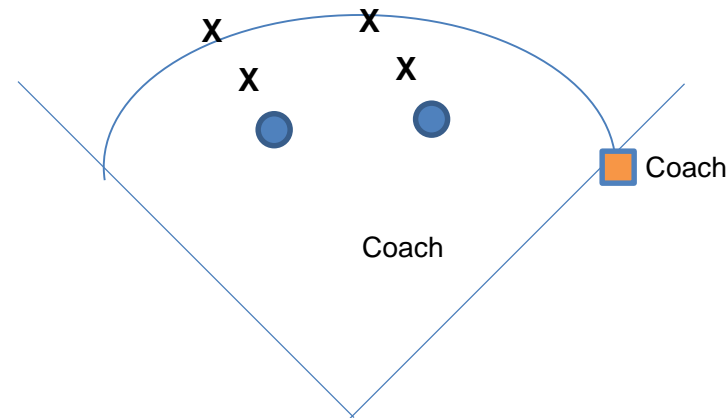
# Station 1: Fielding Grounders – Coaching Review

- Remind players of proper positioning for fielding a grounder (repeat this every time they prepare for a ball until they are saying it with you)
- **FEET WIDE – BUTT DOWN – HANDS IN FRONT**
- Have a coach/parent roll a ball to you, receive the ball, **PAUSE**, then pivot and throw to first.
  - The **PAUSE** is to make sure they don't fling it without looking and so they can have a moment to decide whether to run to a base to force out or to throw to first. We'll come back to this in the drill.
- Stress to *field the ball cleanly first, then throw*. Kids will always rush. We want to slow them down and be accurate.
- This drill is about fielding grounders more than throwing. Throwing is important, but we want to focus on receiving the ball and not waste time with chasing throws. Praise the fielding.



# Station 1: Fielding Grounders: Drills

- **Setup:** Two cones (“A” and “B”). Set depth for success, i.e. for strong players make them deeper and weaker players shorter. The drill is about fielding, so make the throw easy for them (okay if both cones are on the right side of infield).
- One coach/parent on 1<sup>st</sup> Base. One with a bucket of balls a few feet ahead of home. If you have a tennis racket, use that to hit balls rather than throwing (optional)
- **Drill #1: Fielding Only, No Throws**
  - Hit to first player at Cone A. Repeat “**FEET WIDE – BUTT DOWN – HANDS IN FRONT**” every time
  - Player fields, no return throw, player runs to your bucket, drops ball and runs to back of line.
  - Switch to Cone B while this is happening. Same.
  - This keeps kids running, not standing, and gets lots of reps, no worry about throws.
- **Drill #2: Field, PAUSE, Throw**
  - Same routine, but after they bring the ball up they have to PAUSE. This teaches them to take a moment for (a) an accurate throw or (b) decide if they should go for force out (we’ll do this later). Coach catches and rolls back to other coach.
  - You can make this a game of A vs. B. 2 points for cleanly fielded ball, 1 point for throw that is caught, game to 10.
  - If your players are ready, introduce force outs as an option. Probably in a repeat of this drill later in the 5<sup>th</sup> season. If so, tell them before the play “Runner on First” and then they have to do the right thing. Mix it up.



# Station 1: Fielding Grounders: Drills

- Last one can be “Dive Drill” kids love this – make it something they have to stretch for and let them be silly

## Station 2: Hitting – Coach Review

- Show them where to stand; no kid wants to look silly in the game. My routine for them:
  - Walk to plate.
  - Point toes to Home Plate.
  - Touch the bat to the middle of the plate – that shows them how far to stand away and looks cool.
  - Have them actually repeat this a few times (use cones).
- Then review a proper stance (see at right and demonstrate). Wide FEET, HANDS by your back ear, ELBOW up, and HEAD looking at the pitcher.
- I repeat FEET—HANDS—ELBOW—HEAD.
- Have all players do the stance and walk around fixing them. Keep this brief, better to watch them actually hit.
- This is most difficult to predict how to coach, because it is so dependent on the kid. Mostly, we just want them to get as many repetitions as possible.
  - Don't put too many ideas in their heads, they will get confused or annoyed.
  - Just be sure they start with the right stance.
  - Try to avoid big loopy uppercut swings.
  - Try to avoid spinning around – keep feet set.



## Station 2: Hitting – Drills

- Setup: One Tee with a bucket of ten balls (tennis balls, wiffle balls are okay for this), preferably set up in front of a fence (very close). One base/cone somewhere in an open space with ten balls. One coach/parent in each spot.
- Assuming four players: two kids at Tee, both with helmets on and two at open field, hitter with helmet on.
- Tee station:
  - One kid loads and one kid hits into the fence. Parent watches to make sure no one gets hit with the bat, but I feel this teaches teamwork and paying attention (if uncomfortable with this have parent load tee). Don't collect any balls until the end – then player who hit collects while other player gets helmet on and picks a bat.
  - Fix major problems, but otherwise just let them hit. They just need reps.
- Open field station:
  - One parent tossing underhand to a player stationed at a base or cone. Other player in the field, but deep. Player fields, but doesn't throw back to pitching parent, just collects and drops in a bucket or pile (use a cone or something)
  - If you can have another parent catch that would be great, otherwise just let them roll away.
  - At end, collect balls and switch position.
  - Before every pitch say "Check the plate" if they are not in the right place, and say "Feet – Hands – Elbow – Head" if they are not in the proper stance.
  - Move it quickly, again the idea is to get in lots of hits.
- In both stations, remind kids that the more quickly they collect balls, the more hits they get.
- Switch as time allows. Don't worry if one kid gets more reps than another, that's life.



## Station 3: Catching – Coach Review

- This is so skill dependent, so having groups based on skill is great.
- This is the best video I've ever seen, it's how I taught my kids and it works very fast. Never teach "basket catching".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mRuWPJS64E>

- After this, I would graduate to the "Catching Wheel" in a subsequent practice or in a single day. Watch this and then I would focus only on adding two point per practice (depending on skill level)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygmwTU6OO2k>

- My advice is to only do small progress each practice. Frustrating, but this is how the build to good catching skills.
- I also advise when practicing catching not to have the kids throw back to you (unless they are already accurate). Otherwise you will waste time chasing balls and getting distracted with throwing. We want many many reps of catching, focus on one skill at a time.

# Station 3: Catching – Drills/Games

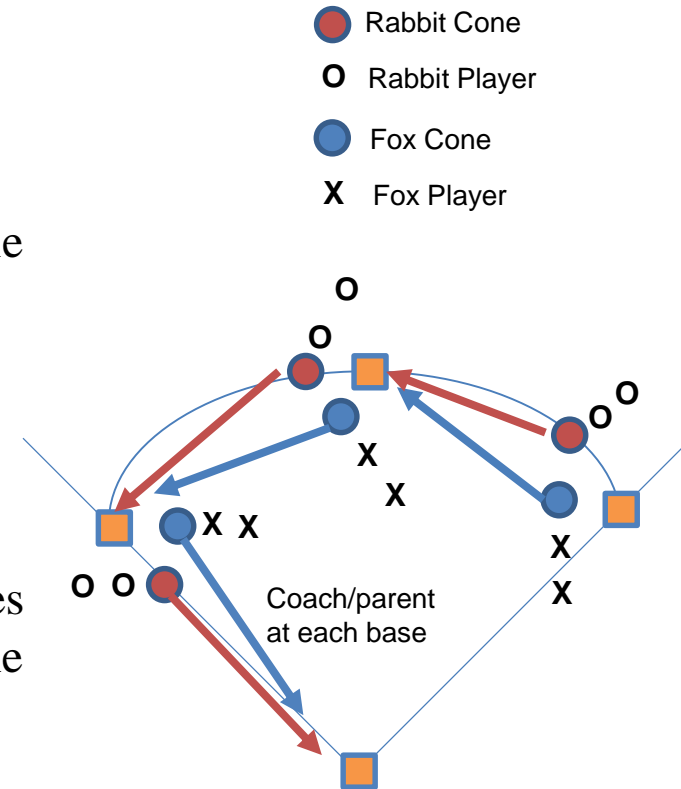
- Same setup for all skill levels: three to four kids in a line, one or two coaches.
- For Intro players (scared of ball, only basket catching, etc.):
  - Start with the first link and work through it like they do. Note – a kid with good hand-eye coordination may seem good at catch but have all the fundamentals wrong.
  - Roll the ball back to them. Alternate between kids / work down the line. **AS MANY CATCHES AS POSSIBLE.**
  - Don't toss underhand – use overhand throws. They need to learn this or they will never progress.
- For intermediate players (can make some catches):
  - Move on to the catching wheel (second link). Go through positions 1,2 and 3. Don't get to back hands yet (4, 5, 6).
  - Call out positions before throwing, throw right into their mitt in the right position to get them used to it and confident.
  - Still roll ball back slowly to you (no throwbacks)
- Games:
  - First to get to 3 in a row, 5 in a row, 10 in a row (either as individuals or teams by coach)
  - “Move down the line” – player makes successful catch then move to the front of the line. Then see how far the line can move (like a snake)

## Station 3: Catching – Drills/Games

- For skilled players (can catch in all positions):
  - Throw overhand to them from 10 feet
  - Allow them to throw back to you.
  - Work on positions 4, 5, 6 in the wheel (backhands)
  - Don't tell them the position in the wheel.
  - Don't be afraid to challenge them.
  - Introduce very short pop-ups where you angle the ball higher. Get them used to catching the ball above their head. Start easy
- Games:
  - Every successful catch, move back a step. If they miss a catch, move forward a step. They then get used to catching from further away and think this is pretty fun if they back you way up. You can also do this for successful throws to you.
  - First to ten successful catches works with advanced groups too.

# Group Drill 2: The Fox and Rabbit (or just “Rabbit”)

- Half the kids are Rabbits (runners) and half are Foxes (fielders, need gloves), lined up as above.
- The Rabbit (runner) has a slight head start (maybe three steps) over the Fox (fielder). The Rabbit should start in the basepath and the Fox can be on the infield or outfield side, but not directly behind (so they learn to take an angle on a runner) with ball in mitt. **NO THROWING THE BALL AT THE RUNNER** (I’ve seen it).
- Simple game, yell “Go” and they both go for it, Fox is trying to tag the runner. Rabbit is safe at second or third, but **CANNOT OVERRUN THE BASE**. Show the Fox that they should run the whole way in case the runner goes over (even if they are slower they may be able to make the play).
- Rabbits and Foxes go to the back of the next line at the new base (parent to call outs and organize kids at each base)
- No one runs from home to first (we want them to know they can overrun that base)
- **See next page for what to stress and what to look out for.**



# Group Drill 2: The Fox and Rabbit (review/tips/advice)

- Coaching points:
  - For runners, show how slow down going into a base and not overrun.
  - For fielders, stress this is a great way to make an out. Be persistent, they may overrun the base and you have a chance to make an out
  - For fielders, ball should be kept in mitt when making tag. We don't want to tag with bare hand as the ball might get knocked away. Demonstrate holding the ball tightly in mitt. I walk around walking the mitts to be sure they have a good grip.
- Fairness:
  - Adjust the cones a couple of times so there are successes for runners and fielders.
  - Try to match up kids so no major mismatches.
  - If you get uneven matchups, get silly. I sometimes hold a Fox's shirt for a second on a fast, overconfident player. If done right they think it is fun.
- Umpires/calls:
  - This is a great opportunity to teach not to argue with the UMP/call.
  - Whatever the parent at the base says goes, no arguing. Give a penalty for arguing (push ups, sit out a turn, etc). We want a league of hustling players not whiners.
- As said before, **NO THROWING THE BALL AT THE PLAYER.**
- If you can avoid having a station starting at third base it's better, because we're trying to stress the overrunning of the base. But with 11/12 kids it will keep more involved if you have three setups (although they like cheering and watching this drill)

# Wrap Up #1 - Last Man Standing

- Coach in the middle, kids in circle, all in Two Hand Target position
- Coach throws the ball, with increasing difficulty, to kids. Throws are random (can be over your shoulder, sideways, no look, etc.)
  - The level is completely dependent on skill level. Really trying to teach paying attention and quick hands, not ability to catch fireballs.
- Drop ball, you sit, you're out. No arguing with ruling of coach (you can rule it a "bad throw" if you really toss a bad one)
- If gets too easy, make the kids all take a step back periodically
- Actually a nice way to get a kid that is having a bad day or tough time a way to win something, give them slightly easier tosses and challenge your better players by surprising them or throwing high/low. Can cause tears, but usually fun.

## Wrap Up#2 – Home to 2<sup>nd</sup> vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> to Home

- Assemble half the kids at home and half at 2<sup>nd</sup> Base
- Put a cone behind each base a few steps away and have the kids line up there, not on the base (avoids collisions)
- Basic race from here – on your mark, get set go. You lose if you don't touch the base (first or third) on the way. Do an example of rounding the base rather than right angle turns.
- Back of the other line when finished
- Make it fun, really shout out the two players like a boxing match intro. Have sisters/brothers come on to race. Race the kids yourself. Have two coaches race (don't get hurt!)
- Tips, have a coach or parent at each base. After two seconds kids will be standing on the base, not the cone, and cutting line which makes for collisions.