

## **2016 Rookie Minors – Session 3**

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# Practice Overview

- **Throw Review and Drill (Group Drill – 15 minutes)**
- **Covering a Base (Group Drill – 10 minutes)**
- **Three 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: Infielding - Grounders to P and Covering a Base**
  - **Station 2: Catching - Back up the Coach**
  - **Station 3: Hitting – Minor work on flaws**
- **Mini-Games / Hitting (15-20 minutes)**
- **Take out Drill – Last Man Standing (5 minutes)**

# Group Drill 1: Throwing – Coach Review



Review proper grip (probably three fingers for kids this small)

Make sure they aren't "death gripping" the ball

Ball should roll off the fingers at release



## **READY** - *Athletic balanced position*

- Tips like "stand like you're riding a skateboard" for foot position
- Start with ball in mitt to get used to transfer from glove to throwing hand



## **BREAK** - *Swing arms out like a bird – thumbs down*

- They should see their fingers when looking back, this creates proper throw motion.
- Be sure they aren't tucking ball behind head at base of neck
- Pause at this step, have coaches walk along behind them and make them tap the ball against your open palm to ensure proper grip and position

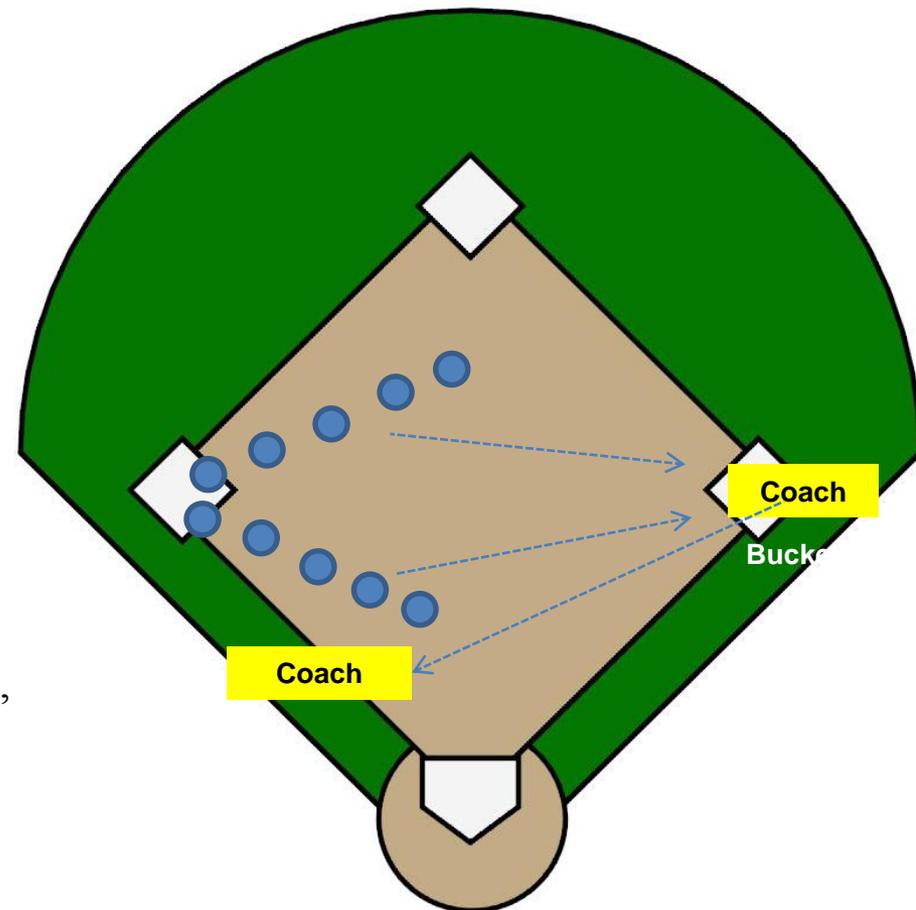


## **STEP and THROW** - *Step towards target and follow through to target*

- "Don't be a spaz" – cut down on all the motion kids try to put into the throw
- Calm step and follow through towards target, flick wrist at end towards target
- **Repeat motion with no balls several times**

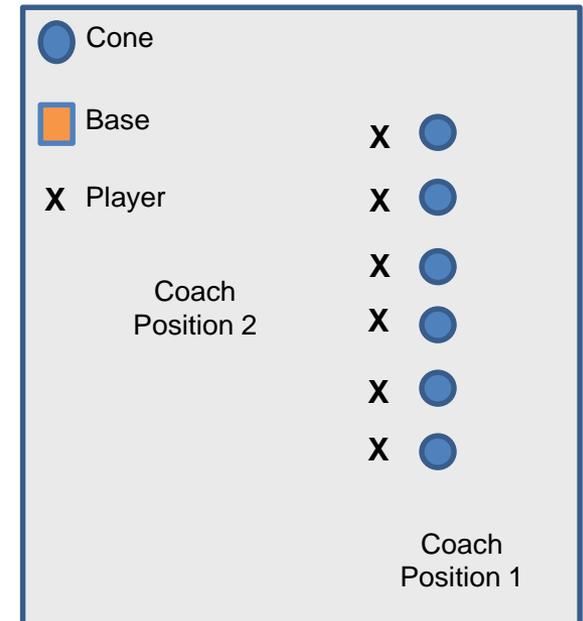
# Group Drill 1: Throwing Practice to Base

- Two lines of cones in a V starting at 3B, half the kids on each side - best to do this in the field with bases so it gives them context
- Strongest throwers in back (closest to 3B)
- Coach on first, with empty bucket
- Balls at kids feet (have as many balls as possible)
  - Ball on ground makes them go through the steps of bringing the ball up and getting in proper throwing position and keeps them from goofing off with balls while waiting
- Teams alternate throwing, using the step throw
  - Coach on 1<sup>st</sup> base drops balls in bucket to avoid wasting time on return throws OR have second coach to receive throws and give back to kids
- **Scoring:** If the coach can catch the ball without coming off first base: 2 points for on the fly and 1 point if it rolls in
- Keep the score during the game, really talk it up.
- Keep it moving very quickly (don't chase bad throws, collect them at the end)
- Try to get each kid at least 15 throws, switch sides, etc.
- *Could be done in a small group but is a fun group drill if you can get them cheering/competing. Also lets you use a lot of balls because only one station*



# Group Drill 2: Covering a Base

- **Coach Review:**
  - Want to increase confidence in covering a base in the field
  - Reduce boredom in the field if they know they have a job *on every play*
- **Start with foot position (foot on edge of bag) and arm pointing to the “action” (wherever the ball is)**
- **Drill at Coach position #1:**
  - Line the kids up in a straight line facing you, two steps off of their cones
  - Yell “HIT”. They take two quick steps, put one foot on base (cone), step towards the thrower, and put mitt up for ball
  - For the first several times do it with them (facing in the same direction as them). Stop and ensure they are in the proper position to receive a throw.
- **Drill at Coach position #2:**
  - **A:** After calling “HIT”, move somewhere. Hold the ball in throwing position and remind them to be facing you as the thrower.
  - **B:** Throw a ball at someone to make sure they are ready and paying attention. Obviously this is skill based, but try to throw so they have to make an palms up catch and not a basket catch (use tennis balls if you need to).
  - Use multiple coaches to throw balls to end, middle and other end of line so everyone stays active.



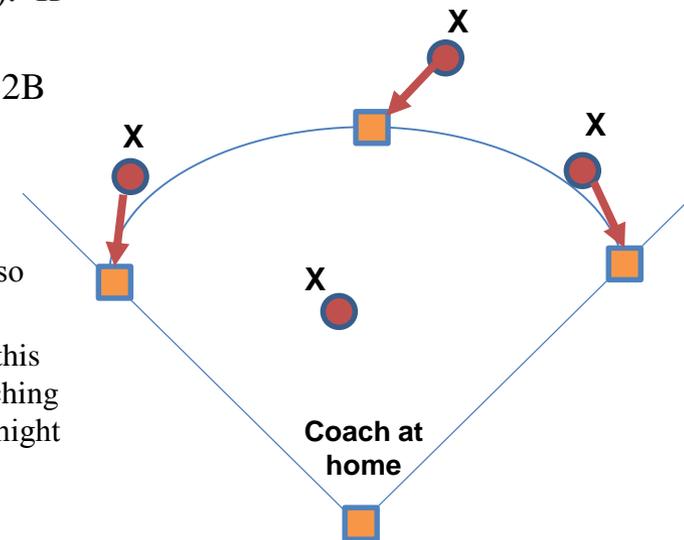
In a future week we can introduce covering 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

# Station 1: Grounders to P and Covering a Base

- This might be a later season drill, but I like it early as it keeps kids active and thinking on every play. Also, if you set up this drill early in the year, you can use it over and over again when introducing new concepts.
- Setup:
  - Cones for P, 3B, 2B and 1B fielder positions, kids split up and lined up behind them
  - Coach at home with bucket of balls and tennis racket or bat
- Coach will always hit to P, P always throws to 1B. Challenge based on skill
- When ball is hit, players run and cover their base. They should be pointing mitts to the P position. Stop the play and make sure they are standing on the base correctly.
- Let even weaker players try to catch at 1B so you can see what they can do, but don't have them chase balls (have a coach or parent back up the play). If they just aren't there yet, you can have a parent play 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Rotate (sprint) 3B to back of P line, 2B to back of 3B line, 1B to back of 2B line, P to first base.

## Tips

- Don't bother with a SS yet so you don't have to get into who covers 2B as that's too complicated at this point (and in this league the 2B's don't get nearly as many balls, so better to let them have something to do)
- Even though we are practicing covering bases, we still want to encourage players at this level to run to do force outs in general at 3B and 2B unless there is a very strong catching player at that base. Later we'll redo this drill for balls into the outfield and a throw might come in to them or SS.
- Remind P to make good throws, step into it, reuse what was reviewed earlier.
- Don't have 1B chase balls on bad throws, wastes time, gather them after each round.
- Keep track of how many "clean" plays and give a point for a clean pickup by P and two for a clean catch at 1B.



## Station 2: Hitting

- Same as last week, just get them lots of reps. One on tee (or as many Tees as you have) into a fence with several balls and one taking coach pitching.
- Poor contact hitters:
  - If you have someone not making much contact, you can practice on soft tossing just having them tap it back to you with a quarter swing about 5 times. Once they make contact repeatedly, go to half swing for 5 times. Then go back to full swing.
- Big uppercutters:
  - Put something behind the Tee (another Tee, a couple of buckets, etc.) that is slightly lower than the Tee. This forces them to level the swing and not dip the bat too low. Also remind them to keep hands up at beginning of swing.
- “Stepping in the bucket”
  - When the player always steps out to the 3B side with the front foot (for right handed hitter)
  - Put a bat, bucket, glove, etc. behind the front foot and tell them they cannot end up stepping on or over that object. Step towards the pitcher
- As the season goes on, you can work more on directional hitting, but early on just get them lots of swings.
- Encourage them to take (let pass) bad pitches



# Station 3: Catching – Coach Review and Drill

- Review catching with PALMS UP again
- No BASKET CATCHES!
- **Review Catching Wheel (below, position 1 to 3)**
  - All kids in a line in front of the coach (coach face the same way as the kids for the demo)
  - Call out number and have them go to the position (no ball). Check their position. Tell them you should be able to see the writing on the palm of their glove.
  - Throw balls OVERHAND to one position at a time (call the position to let them know). If you have to throw it right into their mitt, do it to get them used to it.
  - Mix it up and call out numbers right before a throw so they know where it is going.
  - *Notice how the player in the demo is catching the ball IN FRONT WITH A STRONG ARM, not behind or to the side with arm extended straight (you will see this a lot from kids). Meet the ball out front, don't treat your glove like it's on the end of a stick (your arm) and point it out there to meet the ball.*



# Station 3: Catching – Game

## Move My Cone / Back the Coach Up



- A cone for each player; start very close, only a few feet away, easy tosses
- Every successful catch the cone goes back one step. Every drop it goes forward one step.
- Have them roll the balls back to your bucket of balls. Only allow your top players to throw back because you will waste time chasing and catching balls.
- See who can get you back the furthest.
- If you have two parents at this station, make it a contest between two teams
  
- If/when it gets too far back, reset at the beginning and try to throw to a new glove position or speed up the throws. Low forehand side, backhands if they can handle it, mini-pop ups, etc.
- For motivation, I tell them I'll do push ups if they get all the cones behind a certain distance or something like that. Or give whoever gets it furthest back a candy bar.
- If you have a few strong players on the team that would be bored with this allow them to play catch with each other. However, even most of the strong kids in this league could use work on back hands or soft pop-ups or harder throws

# Mini-Games

- Split your team into three squads: Fielders (A), Hitters (B) and Off-Station(C).
- Fielding team takes only infield positions. Coach pitching and a coach at first.
  - If you have four kids per squad, put one at P or C. If C put them far back with an empty bucket (no return throws, they can just use missed balls as grounders practice). Otherwise use a parent or let the balls roll away. Quick reps, no waiting for catchers messing around.
- Keep pitching until they hit it out of the air (no Tee unless it gets ridiculous). Don't spend tons of time coaching the hitting stance, etc. to keep the game moving and get more reps for everyone. Kids get frustrated if they get ten instructions every time they hit, most just need more practice swinging at live balls. Do instruction at BP station.

## Rules:

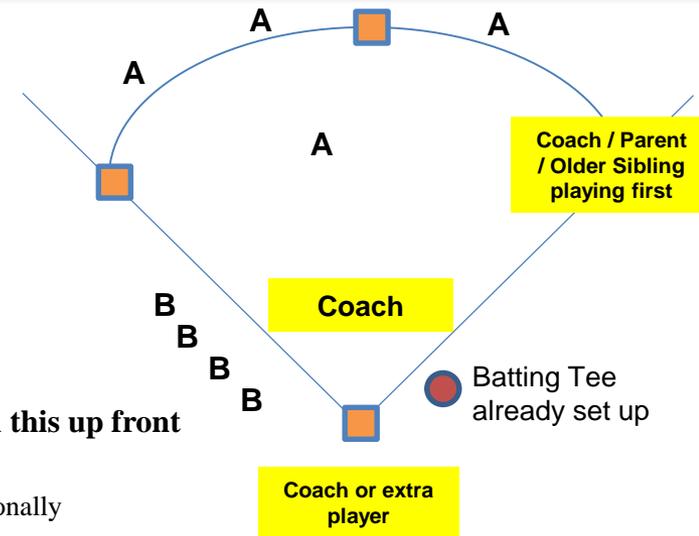
- **If a hit goes through the infield into the outfield it's an automatic double, tell them this up front**
  - (tell infielders not to chase ball into outfield)
    - For hitters, this encourages HITTING THE BALL HARD and thinking about hitting directionally
    - Trying to encourage infielders to prevent the ball from getting through the infield
- **If you don't run through first base YOU ARE OUT**
  - Be mercenary on this one. Nearly every kid is stopping at first base and I see several plays per game where they could be safe if they had just run it out. It also increases the chance they get hit with a ball on the throw in.
- Every kids hits and then you switch spots (fielders go off station for batting practice after collecting balls that went into the outfield, batting practice kids hit, and hitters go to the field)
- **Team with the MOST OUTS MADE WINS.** Try to get three rounds (innings) in the field for each team.

## Tips/Reminders:

- Hitters wear helmets
- Ask them where the force outs are before every play. Stop the play and explain if they forced or threw to the wrong base.
- Stress taking a PAUSE after fielding a grounder to set to throw or decide what base to force out
- Remind them of Fox and Rabbit, tag runners who go over the base at 2B and 3B
- If you have extra players on a team put an additional fielder at the P position.

## Other Off-Station Team takes batting practice or can do throwing to a target

- Hitting off tees (as many as you have) and taking coach pitch from a parent. Be fair when rotating in and out that everyone gets a chance to hit.
- But don't let them finish their pile of balls off the tee when the inning in the mini-game is over, just get them over to the mini-game.
- If you don't have full numbers and you can have the extra hitters be a smaller number, that is good so they can focus over there



# 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.