

2016 Rookie Minors – Session 4

Practice Overview

- **Game Knowledge – Know Your Positions (Group Drill – 10 minutes)**
- **Rotating Stations (36 minutes, 12 minutes each station)**
 - **Station 1: Soft Toss Hitting for Contact with Fielders**
 - **Station 2: Throw Motion Review and Drills**
 - **Station 3: Grounder Review with Face Off Drill**
- **Catch – Back up the Coaches (10 minutes)**
- **Fox and Rabbit (10 minutes)**
- **Take Out Drill – Long Throw Competition (5 minutes)**

Group Drill: Know Your Positions

- Put cones in the proper positions for infielders, P and C
- Split kids into two sides, put them along the first and third baselines (tell them they are sitting in the dugout)
- Jog around the field, stopping at each cone and have the kids yell out what position you are at

Game #1

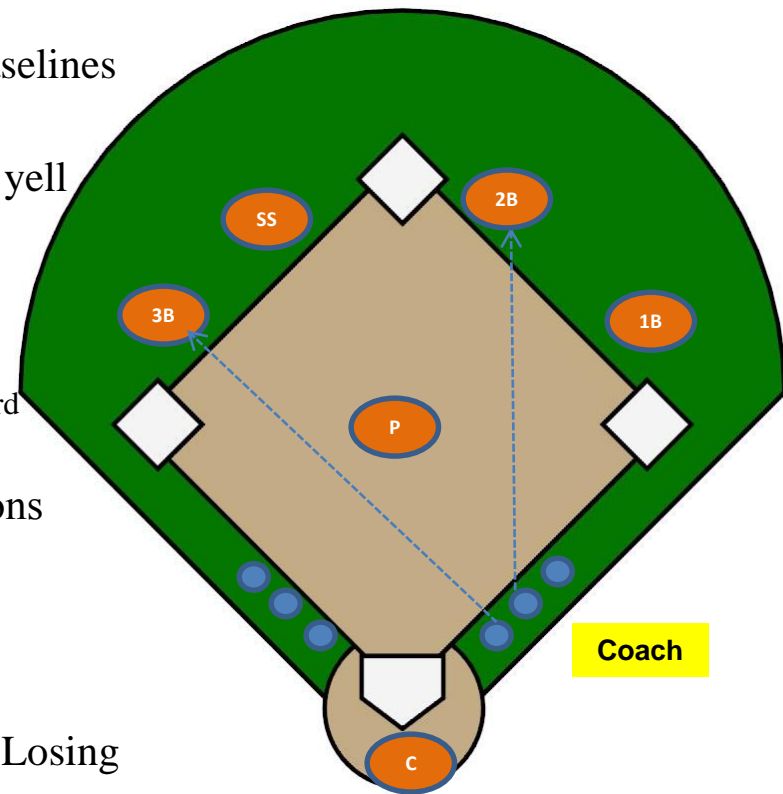
- Start with one side at a time. Tell six players their positions
 - Better if you have something to give them, like a baseball card or index card
 - The whole idea of the drill is to get them to read a roster and take positions
- Yell “Go” or “take the field” and they have to RUN to positions
- Last one in their position does 5 push ups
- Do both sides a few times

Game #2

- Time how long it takes Team 1 and Team 2 to take the field. Losing team all does 5 push ups. Do a few times.

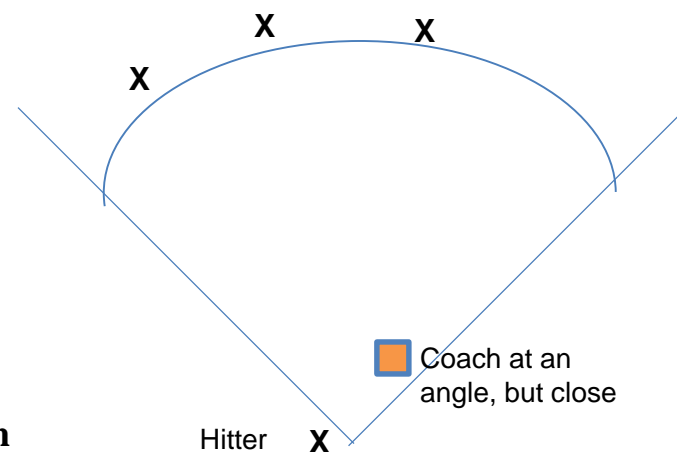
Game #3

- Pick a reasonable time to complete based on what they have done so far
- Take away the cones
- Tell them if they can all get to positions correctly under the time, the coaches will do five pushups
- Correct accordingly, encourage them to help each other



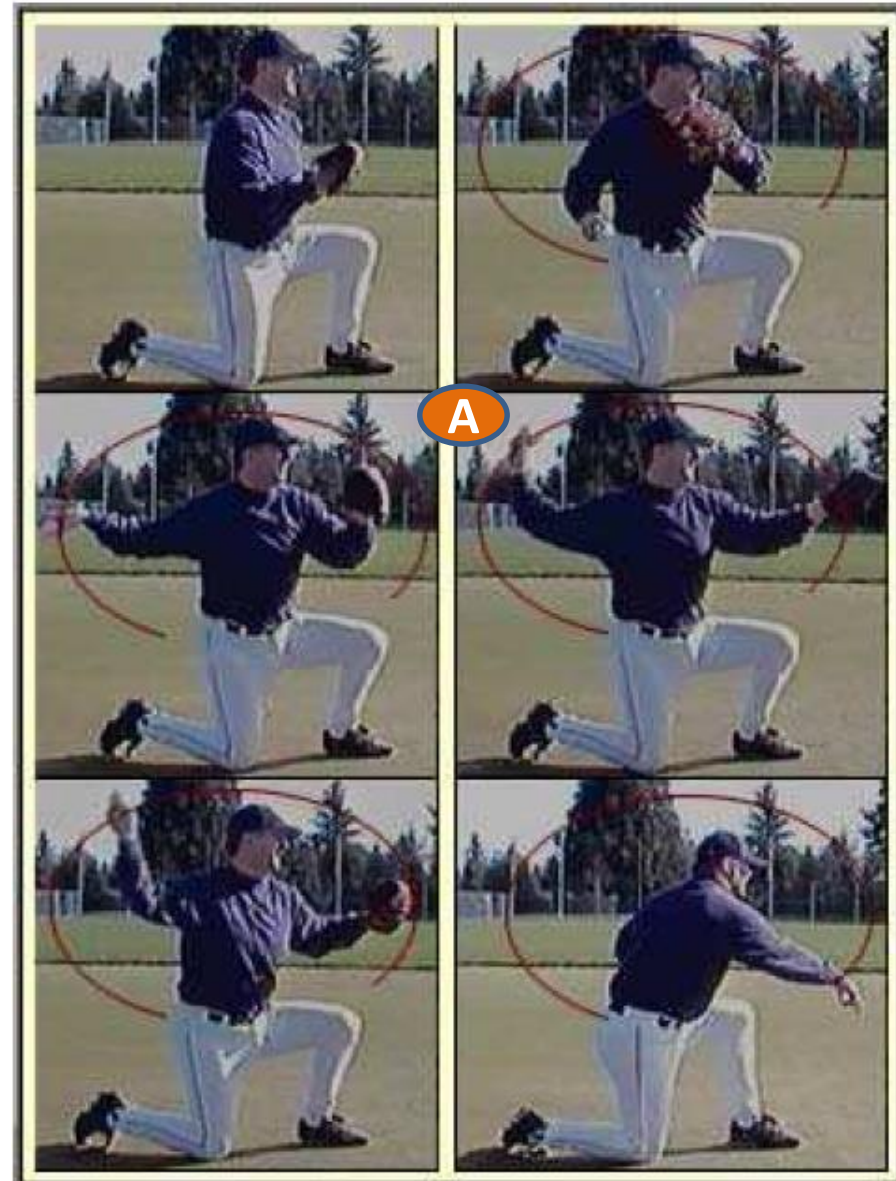
Station 1: Soft Toss Hitting with Fielders

- **Setup:** Coach in soft toss position (either sitting on a bucket or on a knee, off at an angle to the hitter, but much closer than normal) with 10 balls
- One hitter, three to four fielders. No first baseman, unless you have a coach/parent to cover it.
- Each kid gets 10 quick soft tosses.
 - We want to stress putting the ball in play with solid contact.
 - Do some coaching, but pretty much have them move through the balls quickly.
 - Give pointers at beginning and end.
 - Have them reset their stance for each swing
- Points: 1 point for a ball put into fair play. 2 points for a ball that gets through the infield
- Fielders have to PAY ATTENTION because balls might be coming quickly.
- If you don't have a first baseman, just have fielders roll balls back to the infield or off to the side. You want the balls coming quickly to the hitter.
- No chasing balls to the outfield, get those at the end. (Alternatively, have two infielders and one Roamer in the outfield to chase down long hits. Depends how good the hitters are)
- If you're not getting through the balls in under two minutes, you're stopping too much.
- Collect balls and rotate to next kid. *Stress to them the slower they transition, the less hitting they get.*



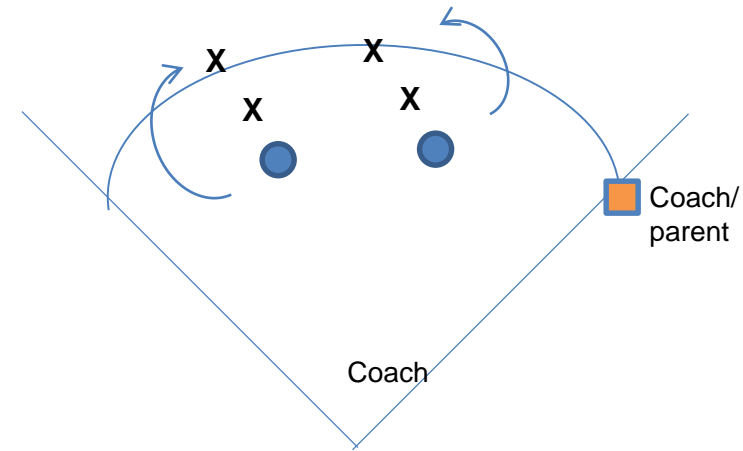
Station 2: Full Throwing Motion

- Demonstrate this throwing motion from one knee: **circular motion of down, back (fingers facing in), over the top, and follow through to target.**
- **Have them do it with no ball.**
- **Having them take a knee removes all the noise out of the throw that kids this age often introduce.**
- **Drill #1:**
 - Players on one knee a few feet from the fence, a few feet apart, balls on the ground next to their knee.
 - If possible, tape two lines or a box on the fence (hula hoops work too) at about eye level for them when kneeling.
 - Put hand in mitt, no ball, and have them sweep the hand down to pick up the ball as the start of the throwing motion. This really gets them feeling the right starting motion for the throw.
 - About 10 reps each, correcting motion as you walk the line.
- **Drill #2:**
 - Turn them around, away from the fence.
 - Do same motion, but before throwing, they have to tap the fence with the ball when in position A.
 - Throw to coach, moving down the line, getting each 10 reps.
 - This teaches them that the ball should be facing out with fingers in at the back of the throw motion.
 - Get them to increase distance by flicking wrist at end of throw.
 - Be sure they are not “death gripping the ball”, should be in fingers, not palm.
- If they are all over this, get them up in the last few minutes and do step throw, reinforcing this motion they just practiced



Station 3: Fielding Grounders Drills #1

- **Setup:** Two cones (“A” and “B”). Set depth for success, i.e. for strong players make them deeper and weaker players shorter.
- One coach/parent on 1st 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)
- Demonstrate stepping into the throw after fielding
- **Drill #1: Field, PAUSE, STEP, Throw**
 - Hit or roll grounders. After they bring the ball up they have to **PAUSE and then STEP towards the target.** This teaches them to take a moment for (a) an accurate throw or (b) decide if they should go for force out. Coach on first keeps balls (drops in bucket hopefully) so the drill can move quickly. No chasing overthrows until the end.
 - 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.
 - Do at least ten for each player, varying difficulty.

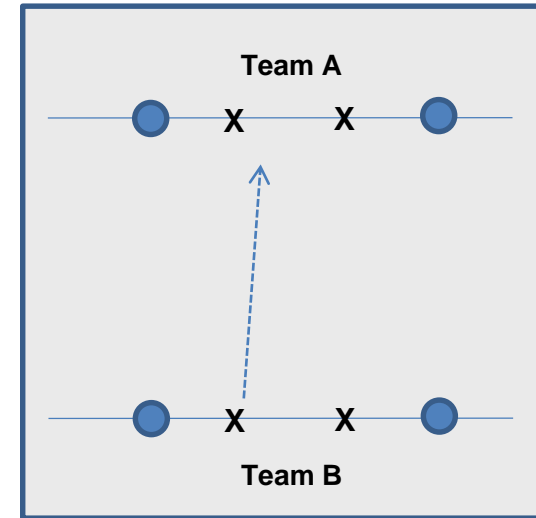


Station 3: Grounders with Face Off

- **Warning:** I like this one, but depends on maturity of your players and actively monitoring it to work
- **Setup:** Two cones to make an imaginary line for each team, two players standing within the cones (if you only have three in your group place the cones closer for the single player)
- Team A starts with the ball. They have to throw a ground ball at Team B.

Rules:

- If the throwing team throws it outside the cones, the other team gets a point.
- If the throwing team throws something other than a grounder, the other team gets a point.
- If the receiving team fields it cleanly, 2 points.
- If the receiving team keeps it in front of the cones, but doesn't field cleanly, 1 point.
- Have about 10 balls ready, let each team do five throws (don't chase the ones that get through, get them at the end)



- **Tips:**
 - You'll definitely have to adjust the distance a few times to get this one right. Don't make it a shooting gallery, make it a distance where they have time to react to the throw. We want more fielded than getting through.
 - You need similar skill levels grouped together.
 - If your players are either not skilled enough to throw decent grounders or doing unsafe things, call it off or **have the coaches do the throwing**, with the same rules for points. You can also switch to tennis balls.

Why?

- You want them to learn to throw each other grounders eventually to warmup.
- Teaches different arm angles for throwing.
- Teaches communication of whose ball it is.
- More fun than just having coaches hit grounders.

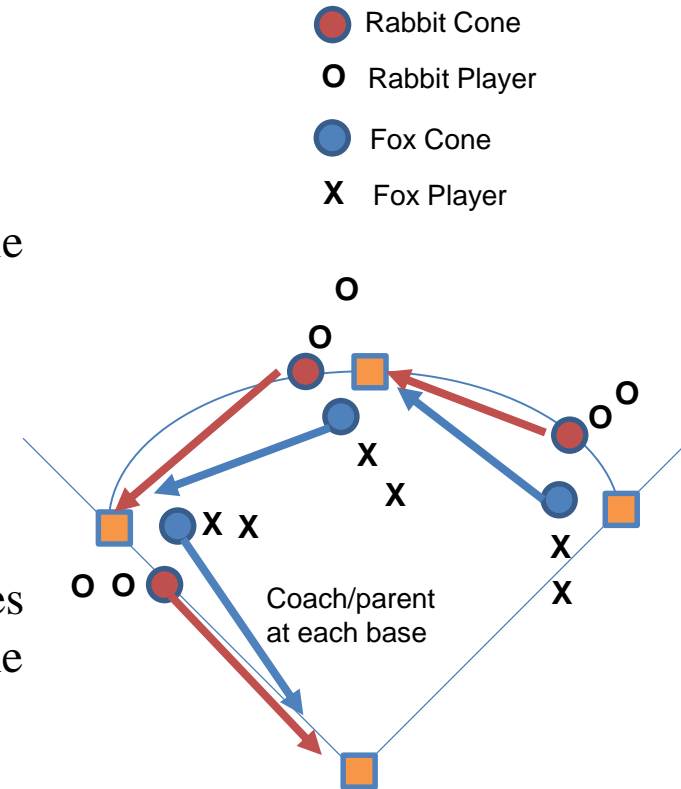
Group Drill #2: Catching

- Combination drill for all skill levels. As many coaches as possible: small groups
- Strong players:
 - If you have players that can play catch, pair them up and let them do it. Do triangles if you have an odd number that can catch.
 - Even with stronger players, I'd put out cones or something to keep their distance set. At this age they have a tendency to keep backing up (especially on misses) and that isn't the point.
 - Have them try to get 10 in a row with no drops and come tell you when they do. Challenge them to 20.
- For intermediate players (can make some catches):
 - More on the catching wheel. Go through positions 1,2 and 3.
 - 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, wastes time)
- Weaker players:
 - Just repeat, repeat repeat from short distance, making sure they are in the correct glove position (palms up, Thumb to Thumb above the waist, Pinky to Pinky below the waist)
- Games:
 - For the players still getting the mechanics, this is really about repetition, so while maybe not fun for them, they just need to catch lots and lots of balls in the correct glove position until it becomes natural.
 - 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.
 - Do this for one position in the catching wheel at a time, then mix up
 - Throw in some soft lobbs to get them introduced to pop ups. **NO BASKET CATCHES!**



Group Drill #3: 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 #3: 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)

Take Out Drill: Long Throw Competition

- **Setup:** Two cones or batting tees on either side of home, a few feet up the basepaths (the “GATE” or “DOOR”). Start at a distance achievable for most kids.
- Two or three lines of kids behind cones in the shallow outfield, coach out there to manage them
- Coach behind around home plate
- Throw one at a time, ball has to go through the cones/tees. On the fly to the coach even better.
- Coach throws ball back out to outfield coach who rolls/hands to kids
- Kids who make it through the gates stay in the game and the coach cone moves back (if no one gets it through move the cone up)
- When it gets down to three or less kids, go to one cone in dead center.
- Repeat a few times if time allows.

