

## INFIELD MECHANICS AND FUNDAMENTALS

### Five A's for Success

- |                           |                                                             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Attitude               | work ethic, want the ball, leadership                       |
| 2. Anticipation           | ready on every pitch, expect the ball, situation            |
| 3. Aggressive             | under control, go get the ball                              |
| 4. Always Create An Angle | work body to target, V-Cut to ball (AGGRESSIVE)             |
| 5. Attack                 | play aggressive and under control, field as close to hitter |

### Glove Use

- Pocket - The pocket is used when catching fly balls, making tag plays, and on all plays where you must extend fully to make the play.
- Palm - The palm is used on all Double Plays and all relays from the outfield.
- The "V" - The "V" is used on all routine plays.
- Glove break in – pocket is open / biggest pocket
- How to wear glove – heel of hand out of glove for flexible hands

### Ready/Setup Position

- 2 methods – R/L/Hop or Tennis Feet – start when pitcher starts- prefer tennis feet
- must be ready to move when the ball enters the hitting zone
- elbows must be in and relaxed (glove at 6-7 o'clock; relaxed wrist/softer hands)
- glove presented to hitter (open)
- middle infielders slightly higher than corners – must be able to move ALL 4 directions
- pivot and cross over step

### Infield Throwing Mechanics and Teaching Principles

1. Must have body in "Get On Skateboard" position
2. Feet must keep moving and should never be dead
3. Arm action is shorter than OF and P
4. Pull ball out of the side of the glove and never allow the ball below the waist
5. Teaching cue is to keep the thumb underneath the ball – backspin and mechanics
6. **Down- Out- Up- In-** principle will put player in proper throwing position  
**Hands will separate at midline of body with feet moving to target**
7. Follow through is to keep eyes/nose on target until the ball is caught and the body is moving to target after release.
8. Throwing on the run,  $\frac{3}{4}$  arm action, back of target (play tail of ball), MUST keep fingers on top of ball and thumb underneath ball

### Fielding Groundballs

Each different type of groundball will listed below with the proper mechanics for each type of ball. The teaching cues we will use are; **ball - glove - eye**. Other key phrases are; chin down, out front, balance, create an angle, separate hands early to quicken feet (pull hands to midline of body to throwing position). These teachings are taught by using **down-out-up -in**. We will focus on 5 types of groundballs.

1. At Fielder
2. Forehand
3. V-Cut
4. Backhand
5. Slow Roller

## **At Fielder**

**Our goal is to field this ball 100% of the time. This is the hardest ball to field due to tendency to freeze, judge the hop, tendency to stand up, and judge the speed of the ball.**

- The good infielder works to field the hop he wants.
  - Top of hop
  - Down hop
  - Short hop
  - We avoid the up hop or in-between hop
- Approach
  - create angle and field ball as close to hitter as possible
  - the ball needs to be fielded on the glove side of the body in front of eye
  - finish with R/L field (right foot in front of left foot to step in front)
  - read ball off the bat to determine how to charge
    - ⇒ down angle go hard and controlled (dirt / grass first hop)
- Fielding Position
  - Lower Body
    1. feet – toe-instep alignment (throw side in front of field side)
    2. feet wider than shoulders
    3. knees slightly bent (flexed)
    4. knees inside feet
  - Upper Body
    1. chin down / bill of hat down
    2. hands out front; field ball in front of hat (open glove with fingers)(6/7)
    3. hands will make jaws to field ball
    4. field the ball on glove side of body
    5. elbows must be in and slightly bent
    6. back parallel to ground
- the glove stays at knee level or lower
- the glove should always be fingers down; fingers on ground and not the back of glove
- separate hands by pulling ball out of side of glove and keep feet moving
- to get to a proper throwing position, throwing side foot will step inside of glove foot
  - ⇒ this will put the fielder in a more balanced position, closes front side, and puts fielder closer to target

## **Progression**

1. stance
2. move forward – ready position to approach
3. move forward to field the ball – no ball
4. move forward to field the ball – stationary ball
5. move forward to field the ball – rolled ball with partner short distance
6. move forward to field the ball – rolled ball with partner long distance
7. fungoes hit right at fielder – reinforce correct and poor fundamentals
8. live fungoes

- **Teaching Cues**

**Get on Skateboard**

body position

**Down-Out-Up-In**

to get into proper throw position, moving through ball / to target

**Palm On Ball (6-7 o'clock)**

relaxes wrist and keeps the palm on the ball

**Nose to Leather**

watch the throw all the way to target

**Follow Throw**

follow ball to the target with the eyes and body

### **Forehand**

- stay low and lead with glove - glove must be out front, open, and at knee level when moving
- crossover step with throwing side foot must be in front of body
- gauge the quickest angle to the ball to get the best hop
- get to fielding location and setup to field ball (goal is to beat ball to spot)
- need to get body lined up to throw
  - ⇒ close front side - glove side shoulder and hip point to target
  - ⇒ tell fielder to get on skateboard
  - ⇒ keep hand on top of ball
  - ⇒ Nose-to-Leather

### Progression

1. Cross-over steps - staying low - glove open
2. Cross-over steps to field - no ball
3. Cross-over steps to field - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps to field - throw - rolled ball
5. Fungoes
6. Live fungoes

### **V-Cut**

- used when a slower hit ball is hit to backhand side of body
- crossover step and stay low
- this play takes the backhand out that leads with the right foot
- anticipate where you can meet the ball and hustle to that position in a straight line and plant firmly with your right leg
- ball is fielded with glove shoulder pointing to target
- once fielded the feet will 'get on skateboard' for throw; step in front
- the throw must be quick as it will be a close play - throw over the top and drive the back leg
- field ball at midline of body - field the ball with the same principles as if it were hit right at you

### Key Principles

1. You always field the ball that is hit to the backhand side in front of the body if you can.
2. The "V" cut gives you an advantage over rounding the ball off.
  - This is a more aggressive approach
  - You can field the ball one hop earlier and closer to the target

### Progression

1. Cross-over steps in a straight line to meet an imaginary ball – field, gather, and throw - no ball
2. Cross-over steps - field - stationary ball
3. Cross-over steps - field - throw - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps - field - throw - rolled ball
5. Fungoes
6. Live fungoes

## **Backhand**

- stay low
- use a crossover step with glove side foot
- Reverse the glove and open the palm fully
- Keep the glove knee level or below
- Stay low and bend at both knees and the waist
- Open the glove fully by turning the elbow up and out and spread the palm of the hand to widen glove
- Field the ball 6-12 inches in front of the glove hand foot (reach for ball)
- field the ball at the base of the web (thumb and first finger pinch)
- Move the glove slightly into the ball
  - The ball stays in the glove better
  - It breaks the momentum and allows you to start to square your shoulders toward your target
  - The exception is the hard hit short hop because you have plenty of time
- swiping the glove into the ball you can take your chin to the target and point your shoulder to the target quicker
- Stay low and plant throwing hand leg hard on the inside of the foot
- Step toward the target and open your hips
- Throw with a high elbow across the seams if possible. Then follow your throw

## Progression

1. Cross-over steps - stay low - reverse the glove
2. Cross-over steps - field - no ball
3. Cross-over steps - field - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps - field - throw - stationary ball
5. Cross-over steps - field - throw - rolled ball
6. Fungoes
7. Live fungoes

## **Slow Rollers**

- must be aggressive on this play
- stay low and approach with palm of glove open
- glove stays lower than the knees
- bend at both the knees and waist as approach is closer to the ball
- make slight round of ball (slight banana)
- field the ball 10-18 inches in front of glove side heel of foot (easier play is 1 hand, but prefer 2)
- push the ball against the glove to get a proper grip when using 2 hands
- steps are not important, player needs to throw when balanced and off of throwing side
- point head and belt buckle to face target
- if body is going in different direction as target, throw to backside of target so ball will tail to target
- after throwing the ball, continue in same direction to avoid cutting off momentum

## Progression

1. Step by step movements without the ball
2. Step by step movements with a stationary ball
3. Step by step movements with a rolled ball
4. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw into a screen
5. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw to a partner
6. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw to different bases from different angles / distances
7. Fungoes
8. Live fungoes

## **Other Fundamentals**

## **Communication**

- always talk between pitches and move around
- know where you will throw the ball when it is hit to player
- discuss pick plays, special plays, bunt coverages, and runners
- know hitters and runners of opposing team
- discuss relay assignments

## **Pop Flies**

- know where the outfield is positioned and depth of play
- use a drop step to open to the same side as the ball → ball over right shoulder, open with right foot
- must go back until behind ball → visual location would be to look up and see ball in front of bill of cap and in front of face
- wave arms so outfielders and infielders know you have the ball

## **Priority System of Fly Balls**

- outfielders have priority over any infielder
- infield order of priority
  - shortstop
  - second baseman
  - third baseman
  - first baseman
  - pitcher
  - catcher
- all players attempt to catch the ball until a higher priority player calls off
- if you are not fielding the ball, point to ball, cover a base, ANTICIPATE another play
- ball should only be called at apex of flight and is definitely in front of infielder
- calls are made loud and a minimum three times (Mine, Mine, Mine)
- do not use priority when it is an easier play for the other players (SS going back/behind ball)!!!

## **Tags**

- learn all positioning, footwork, and why?
- take all throws from the side of the bag the infielder is throwing from
- take all throws from the outfielders on the outfield side of the base and allow the ball to carry to player – stay at the bag unless the throw is off line
- in straddle base
- catch first, tag second
- keep tag on runner until time is called unless there is another play
- cardinal sin is to not move body to keep ball in front of body
- always be ready for another play after tag
- tagging with one hand will make for a quick tag and place body in a more balanced position

## **Cutoffs/Relays**

- sprint to relay position
- relay depth is determined by outfielder's arm strength
- start the body square from the throw and have a target for the thrower to throw through
- once ball is in flight, turn to have glove side face target (MOVE FEET)
- catch ball in palm of glove with feet moving to target
- play the hops one of two ways:
  1. if ball is coming at feet- can step up to play or field off the bounce
  2. if ball bounces far away- go get ball; plant back leg on catch and throw

- catch with 2 hands always on glove side; move body to ball to get into proper positioning on catch
- when receiving the ball, keep hands up (better throwing position and faster exchange)
- know communication – cut, hold, number for base or plate (1, 2, 3, 4)
- three basic rules
  - everyone has job to do
  - all throws hit the cut off man
  - always throw ahead of the lead runner one base

**Tandem Relays** – used when ball is a definite double or more in the OF gap or in the corner of OF

- front man is approximately 120 feet from ball
- back man is approximately 20 feet from front man
- back man informs front man of play situation and where throw is to be made
- front man lines himself up with the ball and 3B or home (prefer 3B)
- cutoff fundamentals apply to tandem relay
- if using a tandem relay, second cutoff needs to be 20-30 feet away from first cutoff
  - ⇒ when first cutoff receives ball drop down (take self out of play)
  - ⇒ if the throw to cutoff is on money or on long hop, first cutoff takes
  - ⇒ if the throw is high or at feet of first cut, second cutoff takes

### **Bunts**

- similar to fielding a slow roller
- get glove down so that fielder gets body down
- terminology for a stationary ball is ‘glove touch’
  - ⇒ put glove down next to ball and have ball aligned with midline of body
- if ball is still moving, field with two hands and make throw to proper base
- anticipate a bunt from game situation
  - ⇒ the element of surprise will hurt success of defense

### **1 Hoppers**

- take glove to ball when at player or on forehand side
- pick through the ball
- understand how to play hops – top, bottom,
- on backhand, see ball into glove and work through ball
  - ⇒ spread fingers to stop ball in palm of glove
  - ⇒ elbow position is critical for largest pocket (points out)

### **Underhand Feeds**

- stiff wrist, follow ball, keep eyes on target, show ball early, run past target to help with speed of feed
- target should be belly button to chest

## Rundown Fundamentals

The basic principles:

- The backside tag player sprints to about 6 feet in front of the lead bag.
- The front side player must use speed pressure to make the picked off runner sprint to the backside force player.
- As you sprint the runner to the force base step from behind him to give you a clear throwing lane, the backside tag player must step over with the front side force player to receive the throw.
- You throw the ball like a dart when the backside tag player shows you the palms of his hands and steps toward you. After throwing the ball you follow your throw being careful not to cross the path of the runner.
- Make the play with the least amount of throws possible. One throw or less is best.
- Always make the tag with two hands and the ball in the throwing hand.
- The run down involves the three closest infielders. Pitchers have different roles.
- The outfielders move in and act as back up players and only get involved with the run down if something happens to one of the infielders involved.

***Never allow a picked off runner to be safe at the advanced base. If a mistake is made make it at the base from which the runner came.***

### Positioning of Infield – focus on a zone defense with the placement and alignment

- **Regular Depth**  
1st/3rd - 5 off bag 9 deep (approx. 22ft. from line)  
2nd/SS – 6-8 off bag 12-14 deep
- **2 Depth - Double Play Depth**  
1st holding runner, playing behind runner 6 off 7 deep  
3rd - 6 off 7 deep // 2nd/SS - 4 off 12 deep
- **3 Depth - runner on 3B and conservative situation**  
all infielders playing 2-3 steps behind baseline  
may tweak based on field, runner, inning, opp. Coach
- **4 Depth - infield in**  
straight in from 3 depth and to the baseline for depth  
make sure to know arm strength, runner  
may adjust and tweak based on situation