

## Base Running: The Forgotten Art of Baseball



It today's game of baseball, the long ball has become more and more prevalent. You hear many coaches talk about launch angle, attack angle, swing plane, and exit velocity. As a coach and instructor, I completely agree with teaching these aspects of hitting, but also understand the importance of being a good base runner. How can you win many games without base runners? Base running gets washed away in the mix of practice as pitchers are throwing bullpens, hitters hitting batting practice, and practicing various defensive scenarios. Base running is an aspect that should be practiced every day in some facet every practice.

Throughout the history of baseball, we have been able to see many great base runners. You have Ricky Henderson, Ichiro Suzuki, Billy Hamilton, Jackie Robinson, Albert Pujols, and so many more. You may be surprised by the last name listed, Albert Pujols. Now your thinking, how can he be a premier base runner and named alongside these players. This is especially true since he has stolen 73 percent of his attempts to steal a base. As most of the rest of the players listed above have exceptional speed and base stealing abilities, but Pujols has honed certain aspects of being a great base runner to make him dangerous on the base paths.

When making up your practice plan, think of the different aspects of base running and pick out one or two for your team to work on for 10-15 minutes. It seems crazy to think that only practicing these 1 or 2 aspects for 10-15 minutes isn't the best way to maximize your players development, but the long-term effect can be substantial in a tight game at the end of the season or their future playing career. Below is a list on base running cues that can be worked on in practice.

Running through first and breaking down  
Rounding bases and where to hit the bag  
Leading off of 1<sup>st</sup> base

Leading off of 2<sup>nd</sup> base – less than 2 outs  
Leading off of 2<sup>nd</sup> base – 2 outs  
Leading off of 3<sup>rd</sup> base  
Secondary leads  
Straight and delayed steals  
Ball in the Dirt reads  
How and when to tag of a fly ball  
What to do on a line drive  
Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (What does each runner do?)  
Stealing 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Base

Base running is a fun aspect of the game in the sense of strategy. Do I have my player steal, should I be conservative with scoring my runner from second? Do I put the squeeze on and does my runner at third know when to break towards the plate? As coaches, we may think of these questions during the course of the game, but we can take some of that tension off if we know that we have practiced the topics above and others that are not mentioned.