



Berlin Youth Baseball – Defensive Awareness Drills

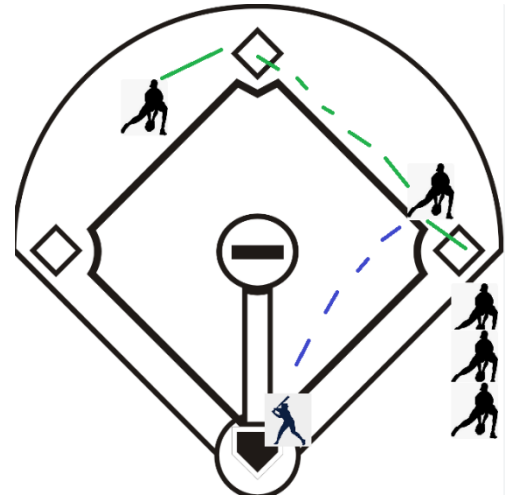
Goal of this document: One of the most important aspects on a young baseball team is ensuring players are aware of what to do if the balls hit to them, and what to do when it's not hit to them. These drills help enforce what to do in some of the more common and critical defensive situations. Please note in all these drills, adjust based on age accordingly. For example, even though the drills calls for "hitting" groundballs, it may be simpler or better suited to "roll" groundballs instead.

Getting an out:

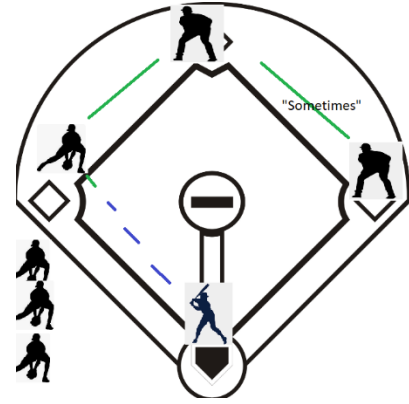
With a very young team, as a coach you should not discourage or get upset at a defender for getting an out, even if it wasn't the ideal situation (example: they should've got the lead-runner but instead they got the batter, they should've turned a double play but instead only got 1 out). Instead, with a very young team, just be happy with getting a single out during a play, regardless of which one they got. For example, on a very young team, if the bases are loaded with 0 outs and your defensive player mistakenly throws to first for an out instead of home, be happy that they got an out and move on to the next play. Most of the time on a young team, trading a single run for an out is actually a great trade.

With the older youth baseball players, they should already know the 3 "B"s concept (although it's always good to remind them at the beginning of the season), so you can start focusing on some of the more advanced and critical situations that they'll encounter in a game. Below are a few drills that touch some of those extra situations. Keep in mind, with an older team, you may be able to accomplish these same "concepts" by doing standard full infield practice instead of breaking it down into individual drills. But for a young team, having these individual drills per topic is critical.

DRILL - 2 OUTS “Easiest Bag”: As a coach on defense, you’re always trying to get out of an inning as soon as possible. It’s important for young players to know, when they have 2 outs, how getting that ever-important 3rd out is critical. One concept to help the young players is remembering when there are 2 outs to go to the “easiest bag”, and if there are less than two outs go for the lead runner. For this drill have a line of players along the first base fence and one player taking the first turn at first base. Have a single SS and a coach at home. The coach explains that for each groundball, we are to assume there is a runner on first. The coach will then cycle through hitting to all the first baseman choosing one of the following 2 random options for each turn 1.) “Yell” 2 outs, hit a groundball to first, the first baseman should tag the base and throw it back to coach. This simulates inning over because he got the 3rd out. 2.) “Yell” 1 or 0 outs, hit a groundball to first, the first baseman should get the lead runner so he throws to the SS who then returns the ball to first base for the double play. Each time the ball is returned back to the coach.

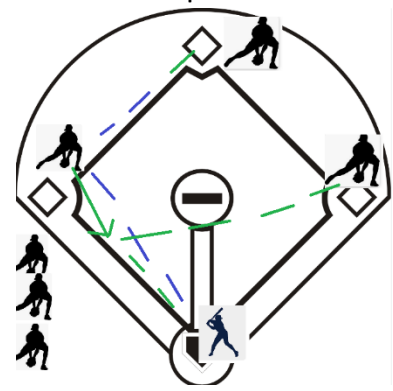


DRILL - NO FORCE “Must Tag”: When a runner is forced to go to the next base, the defense can get the runner out simply by touching that next base with their foot while holding the ball. When the runner is not forced to go to the next bag, then they must be tagged out. One common mistake young defensive players make however, especially on 3rd base, is when an un-forced runner is on 2nd heading to 3rd, they field the groundball and touching the bag instead of tagging the runner.



This can be frustrating for a coach because, all the defender had to do was put the glove down and tag the runner and they would've been out. For this drill, have a line of defenders against the 3rd base fence, and an initial 3rd baseman ready for the drill. Have a runner on 2B, and another runner standing on 1B, and the coach hitting the ball from home plate. The coach will then cycle through each 3rd baseman, hitting the a grounder 3B. Each time the groundball is hit the runner on 2B will run to 3rd. Randomly, the runner on 1B will either 1.) Start in 1B and run to 2B thus creating a force play where 3B must touch third base or 2.) The runner at 1B backs off the field, out of the play completely, thus creating a situation where the third baseman must tag the runner coming from 2B. Each time the ball is returned back to the coach.

DRILL - Slow Grounder (Charge the ball) & the “Easy Throw”: Another important lesson to re-iterate at all levels is you only have a limited time to get the runner out, so if it's a slow, short groundball you cannot wait for it, you must charge that ball and get to it as quickly as possible. When it's a short, it takes the player longer to get to the ball and it creates odd throwing angles, so at this young age it's advisable on a slow grounder to third, for example, for the third baseman to charge the ball and throw to first instead of trying to toss it to 2B and likely ending up throwing it into the outfield for an error. This



drill has a line of third baseman up against the left field fence, and one 3B out ready to perform the drill. You'll also need a 2B and 1B player, plus the coach at hitting the ball from home. The coach should explain that we are simulating having a single runner on 1B each time who is forced to go to 2B. The coach will cycle through each third baseman, giving them randomly one of the following 2 situations 1.) Slow grounder, the 3B charges the ball, picks it up (bare-handed if possible) and throws to 1B to get the out. 2.) Normal/Hard grounder, the 3B fields the ball without really moving much and throws to 2B to get the lead runner. Each time the ball is returned back to the coach.