

## Practice Routine and Drills

Practice Plans – Based on 60 minute practice

### 10 minutes

Warm Up

- \*\*Spread out with enough room to do an exercise.
- \*Stretching exercises – example: toe touches, etc
- \*Calisthenics exercises – example: high knees, butt kickers, etc
- \*Short Jog around the field to conclude

### 27 minutes

Station Drills (focused on the fundamentals)

- \*Divide the team into three groups (if possible). Rotate every 9 minutes.
- \*Station 1 -Hitting (see list of drills)
- \*Station 2 -Fielding -Infield/Outfield (see list of drills)
  - \*\*After a couple practices introduce the outfield, and start to combine infield and outfield into practice (i.e. throwing to 2nd base, backing up 1st base, etc.)
- \*Station 3 –Throwing/Catching (see list of drills)

### 3 minutes

Water break

### 20 minutes

Batting & Infield Practice

- \*Team takes the field in various positions
- \*10 pitches per player – run on final pitch
  - \*\*Player gets 10 pitches good or bad, remember they will see both in a game. It is good to teach them the difference between balls and strikes
- \*Rotate players in to bat. Recommendation -3 players batting with the remainder in the field.
  - \*\*This puts on player batting, one in the on deck circle working on timing, and the third getting ready
  - \*\*Although this is batting practice, the fielders should be taught the make the correct play

End

Water break/closing comments

## The Basics of Softball -- Learning the Positions

- \*Review the positions with all players

- \*Start with 1st Base, 2nd Base, Short Stop, 3rdBase, Pitcher, Catcher, and Outfield
- \*Discuss important points of each position.
- \*Communicate name of each base and position
- \*Where the actual position stands in relation to the base
- \*Area to cover when ball is hit.
- \*With younger Divisions Over emphasis to only cover their area.
- \*What to do if ball is hit to their position (Assume the play is throwing to first base –other situations will come later)
- \*What to do if the ball is “not” hit to the player. What do they do? Where should they go?
- \*Importance of always paying attention to the batters and runners
- \*Return back to position after each play.
- \*Discuss backing up other positions when ball is in play
- \*Where to go when runners are running
- \*When to hold the ball
- \*If in outfield who do they throw the ball to-Cut offs
- \*Who covers each base on a steal

## Fielding Technique and Practice Drills

Proper stance:

Feet shoulder width apart  
Knees bent -weight should be forward on the balls of feet  
Their head is up facing the ball  
Keep eyes on the ball until ball is in the glove  
\*The glove and hands are not on their knees (See proper glove and hand position)

#### Proper glove/hand position:

Glove hand should just be touching the dirt at a 45 degree angle  
Throwing hand should be above the glove with the palm facing the ball  
Once the ball reaches the glove the top hand should cover the ball inside the glove

#### Basic Grounder Drills:

Form one line just behind shortstop position  
Have one player at a time step up into the SS position.  
Roll grounders to the player and have them field ball and throw back to you (\*\*Once they can do this correctly you can hit the ball instead of rolling it)  
\*\*Emphasis the importance of proper stance, keeping glove on the ground, and making a quick but accurate throw back

#### Side to Side Grounder Drills

Same as Basic but roll the balls left and right of the player to make him move to get in front of the ball.  
(\*\*Once they can do this correctly you can hit the ball instead of rolling it)  
%o \*\*Emphasis the importance of moving to get in front of the ball instead of reaching out with the glove

#### Soft Hands Drills

Put the glove down and have the kids field the ball with their bare hands  
Roll the ball then have them focus on using their hands to get the ball

#### Alligator Drill-great for younger players

Roll grounders to the kids and have them make an alligator out of the arms  
Bottom arm with glove is the jaw and the top arm without glove is the head  
When the ball rolls in have them act like the alligator is biting or eating the ball  
Both arms come together

#### Triangle Drill

With 2-4 players have them form a quarter circle.  
Each player should stand with their feet just outside shoulder width.  
In the dirt draw a triangle using their feet as the base.  
Have them put their hands together and extend out in front of them touching the dirt. This will create the triangle.  
You roll a ball to each player and have them field the ball and toss back to you. Keeping the triangle intact (feet in place with hands in front)  
Attempt to roll the ball quickly and request a quick return.  
Continue around the group for about 5 minutes.  
Finish with everybody fielding correctly and throwing correctly.  
Speed this drill up as the players advance.  
\*\*Note: You can play a game to see which player's fields the most correctly.

#### Throwing Technique and Practice Drill

##### Proper Throwing Motion

Players start by facing the target.

The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.

Reach back with the throwing hand with elbow bent hand up and wrist straight.

Glove hand should be in front of the body (and move forward around the body as the ball is thrown)

Once in position to throw the ball the glove hand foot should take a step toward the target and the back foot should pivot.

Release the ball at the point the arm reaches extended point.

After release the body should bend forward, with the throwing arm following through to the outside of the glove hand knee. The back foot should step forward as the throw is complete leaving players square to the target.

It is real important that the player sees the target, gets into proper throwing position, makes the throw toward the target while still keeping eyes on target, then continues with follow through.

### Proper Form Drill

Without a ball –have the players get into throwing position and talk them through each step.

Repeat with the ball. Do not be too concerned where the ball goes. During this drill the form is most important

### Throwing Drill #1 –Helmet Drill

Use a basic grounder drill, but set up a t-ball T with a helmet on it. Once the player fields the ball have them make a solid throw to hit the helmet.

The helmet is used because it gives the player a small target at their level which helps with their accuracy.

### Throwing Drill #2 –Kids Throwing to Coaches

Get a bucket of ten balls and have the player stand with the bucket Start at 10 feet away and have the players throw all ten balls to the coach. The coach should reinforce the proper technique during this drill. The goal is get the player to throw a straight ball toward the coach. In order of importance. Technique, on target versus left or right, straight versus lobbed. Eyes on target is very important \*\*Extend the distance based on skill level

### Throwing Drill #3 –Kids Throwing To Kids

This is a great drill to do as the players improve. This provides them with experience both catching and throwing the ball from other players.

Have the players start at distances which they can be successful. 10 feet away is a good starting point Tennis balls work well when starting

### Throwing Drill #4 –Fielding Grounders and Throwing

Line up a small group of players facing the coach –pick a distance that is suitable for the group One at a time have the players receive a grounder and stand up and make a proper throw.

Roll 3 balls to the player before rotating

The player should work on the proper technique while throwing.

Extend the distance as the players improve

Increase the pace of the drill as players improve

### Batting Technique Basics

#### Proper Stance

Feet -shoulder width apart,

Square the feet to home plate –you can draw a line in the dirt to show the players where to stand

Bend the knees slightly ,Grip the bat with the fingers, not tightly with the palm of hand. A relaxed grip is preferred

Square the shoulders to the feet, chin should be closer to the front shoulder.

Elbows should be slightly bent with the hands just outside the back armpit.

#### Proper Swing Motion

Load and transfer -Begin the swing with a little to no step toward the pitcher. Do not pick the foot up high. It's a very subtle lift and move forward.

The stance should remain closed –do not step out towards third.

Throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to hit the ball.

Squash the bug. As the hands come through, turn hips at the same time. The player should turn on the ball of back foot. Squashing the bug

Eyes should remain on the ball through impact.

Proper stance and swing should be balanced.

#### Fence Drill

Place "T" stand 4' from the back stop

Line up players so they would hit the ball into the back stop

Toss the ball at them from the open side of the players stance

Have the batter drive the ball into straight into the fence

Focus on fundamentals of the swing

Good stance, proper hand position, good swing through contact and correct finish

You can use wiffle balls or tennis balls

\*\*Set up 2 or 3 stations to allow multiple batters at once

#### Directional Hitting

This drill is done in the softball field

Once the players have progressed and are making good swings direction is the next step

Have the player line up to the plate with proper stance

Provide the batter with a direction to hit the ball –3rdbase, 1stbase, etc

Make sure they rotate their body around the plate and square their hips and should to the direction they are hitting

Have the player hit to each position once before rotating

#### \*\*The Cone Contest

Game/Contest to help improve batting while having FUN!

Place 4 cones at 4 different positions in the field

First Cone –At just in front of the pitchers mound –1 Point

Second Cone –At the front grass just before the dirt in the infield –2 Points

Third Cone –At the back of the infield dirt –3 Points

Fourth Cone -Ten yards past the Third Cone. -4 Points

Each player gets 4 hits and records their score based on the point system.

The player with the highest total wins

This can also be played in a team format -record points from each player –use team total to declare winner

#### \*\*Batting / Infield Practice

Each player takes a position on the field –with remain players going to bat –need 4 batters

One batter makes 4 hits –on the fourth hit the batter will run to first.

Next batter comes up and completes his/her at bats and runs to first (player at first runs to second)  
Continue with the batters until the first batter comes in to home  
Once complete the batter which just came home will rotate into the infield at pitcher. The pitcher will move to first base, first to second, second to short, short to third, third to LF, LF to C, C to RF and RF into the batting lineup.  
These drills give all the players a chance to bat and play a different position

## \*\*Catching Technique and Drills

### Proper Catching Position

Players start by facing the target.

The foot of the glove hand should be closer to the target with the foot of the throwing hand back in the stance.

The glove hand should be eye level and out in front of the body.

Fingers up and palm facing the target

Elbow should be bent slightly and arm should be in position to make a full circle in front of the body

Other hand should also up and close the glove to close the glove once caught

The goal is to practice with the palm face the target

Balls thrown to players above the belly should be caught with fingers up, below the belly fingers down.

### Proper Form Drill

Without a ball –have the players get into catching position and talk them through each step.

Show the players by making a full circle in front of your body with your catching hand

Have the players copy you.

### Coach to Player Catch

With younger players it is important to start slowly with catching. Confidence is key to the kids developing into good catching players

Have player stand in the proper stance about 10 feet from the coach

Line up 2 or 3 players per coach.

Coach throws ball at the glove and the player is asked to watch the ball into the glove

With a successful throw and catch –plenty of congratulations is needed. Encourage the players.

Important for coach to throw accurately. Tennis ball can also be used.

### Soft Toss Catch

Players start by facing the target with out a glove.

Coach softly toss a ball to player which attempts to catch with bare hands

The player should attempt to catch with two hands away from the body

Fingers up and palm facing the target

This drill is done at close distances

After a few successful tosses and catches, conclude this drill with a grove on.

Encourage player to catch as they did without the glove

Drill can also be done with a tennis ball

### Base Running

#### Base Running –Home to First

Runners should learn to run as fast as they can when running from home to first.

They can over run the base and should turn toward the fence when returning to first

Players should learn to run through the base

The should not slide –no matter what the circumstances are.

Players should be taught to touch the bag every time.

Runner to First Base for a Single

Line up the players at home plate

With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first

Make sure they do not throw the bat

The should place the bat down and run as fast at they can to first base  
Make sure they run through the base and return to first properly.

#### Runner to Second for a Double

Line up the players at home plate

With a bat (no ball) have the players take a swing and run to first

Coach at first base will instruct player to turn and run to second

Player should start to angle outside the runner lane so they can properly turn to second without slowing

Make sure to step on base at first by hitting the front inside corner of the bag.

Player may slide or stop on second base.

Make sure they do not run through base.

#### First to Third Base

Runners leaving first base should start to look at the third base coach at 2/3's the way to second.

The coach will indicate to stop (hands up) or continue to third (large circles with arm).

Players will need to learn to look for coach and react accordingly

#### First to Third Base Drill

Line up the players at first base

Coach at home plate with hit ball into field

Runner should start toward second and begin to look at third base coach

Coach will use either command and runner will react accordingly

Continue to run players around to home using same concept.

Player will return to first base and get back in line to run again.

Coaches will work to ensure players understand the signals and are executing accordingly

#### Hip Turn Drill

The hip turn drill helps in developing proper hip rotation needed for a good swing. It can be done individually or as a group. The player takes a bat and places it behind their waist with their hands holding near the ends of the bat.. Next, throw an imaginary pitch at the batter and have them take a stride and swing with the bat behind them. They should finish with the hips properly rotated with their back hand out over the plate area.

#### Watch The Ball Drill

Watch the ball involves three players and helps in keeping the batters eye on the ball. You have a pitcher, a catcher and the batter. The pitcher pitches to the catcher while the batter simply watches (Does not swing) every pitch all the way into the catcher's glove. This helps in picking up the ball from the pitcher as well as keeping your eye on the ball all the way through.

#### Hand and Eye

Two players are needed for this baseball hitting drill.

Take a bucket of balls and with a magic marker write numbers on the ball in 3-4 places. Have your player stand at the plate with or without a bat but he or she is not to swing only assume a batting stance. Coach or dad begin throwing the balls across the plate the player is to call out the number on the plate. When the player starts calling out the numbers regular increase the speed. You can't hit what you don't see. Hand and eye co-ordination is the secret to hitting, only use single digit numbers. SafetyLastly, we want to let all Coaches know that it is extremely important to stress safety to our players. Keeping their head in the game is very important to limit any injuries. As the kids move up from one league to the next, they have to be prepared to accept the challenge and understand the need for safety.

#### Equipment

\*All equipment (bats, helmets, gloves, balls, etc) MUST be keptoutside the fenced practice swing area to avoid injury.