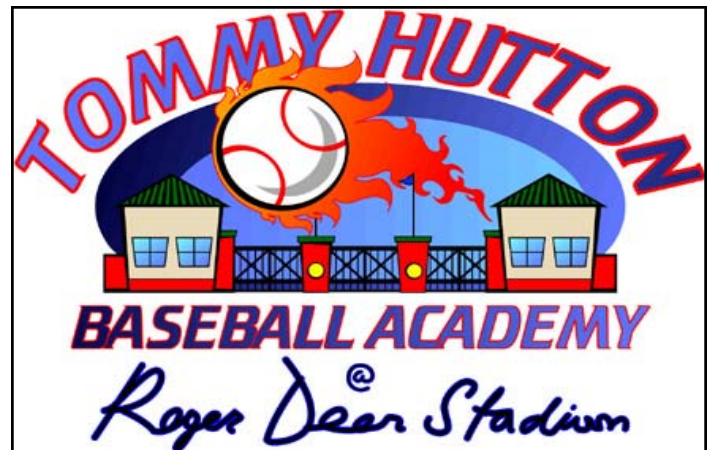
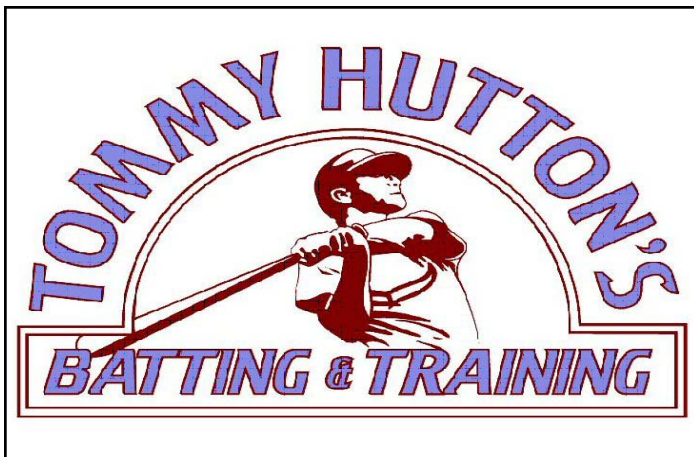


MASTERING THE 2-HOUR BASEBALL PRACTICE

***WRITTEN BY AND COMPLIMENTS OF
TOMMY HUTTON BASEBALL:***

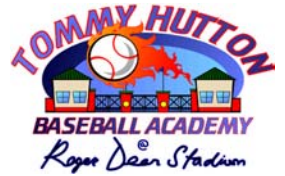


**INSTRUCTION, DRILLS, AND TIPS TO MAXIMIZE
PRACTICE TIME!**

**HELPING YOU MAKE PRACTICES FUN, EFFICIENT,
AND INNOVATIVE!**



TABLE OF CONTENTS



1. Schedule

- 1.1 General Practice Itinerary
- 1.2 Schedule Template

2. Warm– Up

- 2.1 General Stretching and Running Routine

3. Throwing

- 3.1 One Knee Drill
- 3.2 Standing Game of Catch
- 3.3 Long Toss

4. Individual Infield Fundamentals & Drills

- 4.1 Ultimate Infield with Perry Hill Instructional Video

5. Individual Outfield Fundamentals & Drills

- 5.1 Football Passes
- 5.2 Two Line Communication Drill
- 5.3 Drop Step/Coming Through the Ball
- 5.4 Ground Ball/Fly Ball Fungo
- 5.5 One Man Fungo/Tracking Drill

6. Team Defense

- 6.1 Multiple Fungos
- 6.2 Cuts/Relays
- 6.3 Pop Up Priority
- 6.4 Pre Game Infield/Outfield
- 6.5 21 Outs

7. Hitting

- 7.1 Mechanics
- 7.2 Tee Work
- 7.3 Soft Toss
- 7.4 Front Toss

8. Pitching

- 8.1 Basic Mechanics
- 8.2 Mirror Work/ Dry Mechanics
- 8.3 Balance Point/Hand Separation– Transition Drill
- 8.4 Weight Transfer Drill
- 8.5 Bullpen Sessions

9. Catching

- 9.1 Stance
- 9.2 Footwork
- 9.3 Throwing
- 9.4 Receiving
- 9.5 Blocking
- 9.6 Drills

10. Base Running

- 10.1 Running to first
- 10.2 Stealing bases
- 10.3 Secondary Lead
- 10.4 Practice Suggestions

11. Credits

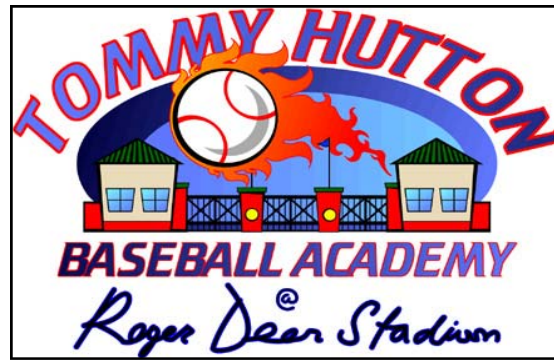
Glossary of Terms

Bullpen: Area designed for pitchers to practice. Defined more closely in chapter 8.

Cut off man– On plays requiring long throws from the outfield, and infielder will serve as a cut off man. His role is to position himself close enough to outfielder to receive a strong throw in an effort to quickly “relay” the ball to the appropriate base. Also referred to as **Relay Man.**

Fungo– Long, thin bat designed for coaches to hit ground balls and fly balls.

If new to coaching, these terms may be unfamiliar. Used throughout guide.

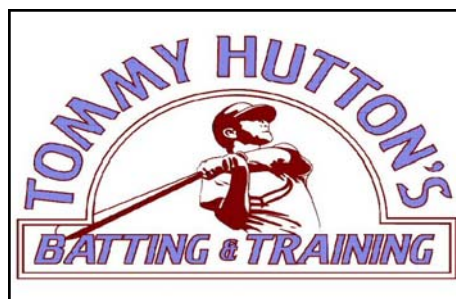


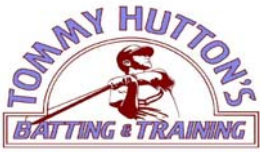
1.

SCHEDULE

Introduction

Like most coaches, you've probably experienced practices that didn't meet your expectations. Reasons such as: lack of enthusiasm, too much standing around, too much to cover & not enough time, etc. This happens to even the best coaches with the best teams. To avoid this becoming commonplace, we've developed a practice routine that will assist in making practices more fun and productive. The itinerary provided in this chapter is only a template and must be brought to life using the drills and instruction set forth in this guide. This format works best with 2-3 coaches so all stations/activities can be monitored. Once players become familiar with the "routine", practices will run themselves and coaches main responsibilities will be: laying out the practice, monitoring time, and reinforcing good mechanics and work ethic. Copy enclosed template and tape in visible area so players get in the habit of reading schedule before each practice starts.





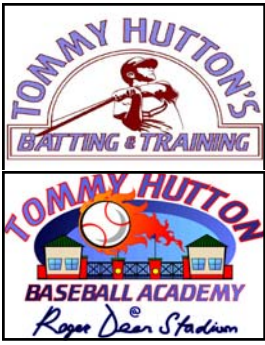
1. SCHEDULE



1.1 General Practice Itinerary (based on 2 hour practice)

5-5:10	Team Stretch/Run
5:15- 5:30	Throwing
5:35-6:10	Defense- Individual & Team
6:15-6:40	Batting Practice/Bullpens
6:45-6:55	Base running (conditioning)
6:55-7	Review, praise/discuss mistakes

**Copy next page and use as template to organize each practice.*



1.2 Copy template and use at each practice

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

DATE: _____

__ : __ TO __ : __

STRETCH/RUN

LED BY: _____

__ : __ TO __ : __

THROWING
 ONE KNEE DRILL
 STANDING CATCH
 LONG TOSS
 QUICK HANDS/FEET

PARTNERS

 &

 &

 &

 &

 &

__ : __ TO __ : __

DEFENSE

INFIELD DRILLS

1. _____
2. _____
3. LIVE FUNGOES

OUTFIELD DRILLS

1. _____
2. _____
3. LIVE FUNGOES

TEAM DEFENSE

1. _____
2. _____

__ : __ TO __ : __

BATTING PRACTICE/PITCHERS & CATCHERS

1. TEE WORK (1 PLAYER)
2. SOFT TOSS (2 PLAYERS)
3. LIVE ROUND OFF ARM/MACHINE ON

FIELD

**EACH PLAYER IN HITTING GROUP ROTATES THROUGH ABOVE ITEM WHILE OTHER GROUPS SHAG. MAKE SURE PITCHERS AND CATCHERS GET THEIR BULLPEN/DRILL WORK IN AND HAVE CATCHER CATCH ONE GROUP LIVE ON FIELD.*

GROUP 1 (2 PITCHERS & 2 CATCHERS)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

GROUP 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

GROUP 3

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

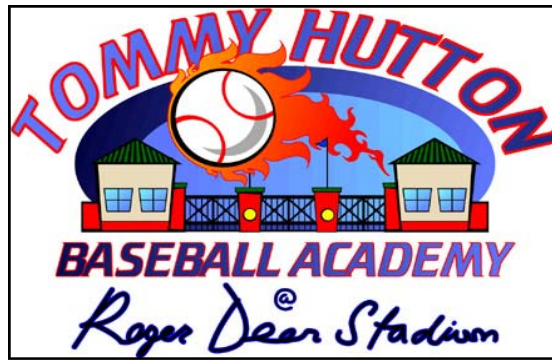
__ : __ TO __ : __

BASERUNNING

1. _____
2. _____

__ : __ TO __ : __

TEAM MEETING

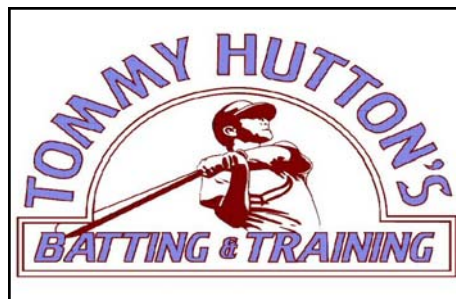


2.

WARM UP

Introduction

A consistent warm up and stretching routine is a must to get players ready to practice, mentally and physically. Limit how much “goofing around” takes place during this time. Use the same routine for every practice and game as baseball players are creatures of habit. Give every player an opportunity to lead stretching in an effort to build team chemistry and get all players involved. Use variations of the following stretches on the next page as a guide.



2. WARM-UP

General:

- Neck Rolls
- Arm Circles
- Trunk Twists



Legs:

- Toe touch (don't bounce)
- Standing quad pull
- Seated Hurdler stretch (keep legs straight)

Arms (see above photos):

- Pull arm across chest (hold for 10 seconds, both arms)
- Pull arm behind head (encourage players to reach for middle of back, both arms, 10 seconds)
- Forearm stretch (straight arm, fingers pointed up & down, both arms, hold for 10 seconds)

Running Drills (use foul line and use base length as distance):

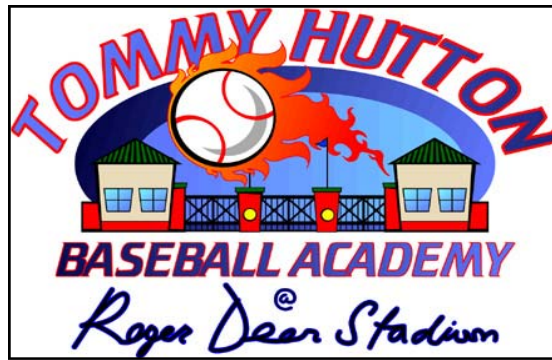
- Light jog, there and back
- Backwards, there and back
- High Knees, there and back
- Full sprint, there and back



High Knees



Seated Hurdler Stretch

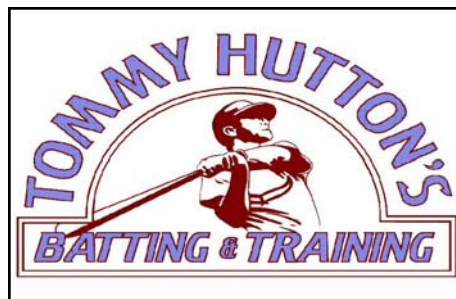


3.

THROWING

Introduction

Stress the importance of playing quality games of catch. This will set the tone for the rest of your practice. Players need to focus on: hitting each other in the chest at a high percentage rate, receiving the ball with two hands, and moving their feet. No flat-footed games of catch! **Make sure players choose a partner with similar abilities.** Enclosed is a great throwing program to use each practice and before each game. This is the most important part of practice for young players!



3. THROWING

3.1 One knee drill (See below sequence)- Always start on one knee, between 25 & 30 feet apart. Do this for 3-5 minutes with the focus on quality, not quantity. Instruct all players to use a loose, four seem grip. Players need to be in a balanced, upright position with their landing foot out in front (most common mistakes in this drill are wrong foot in front & poor posture). Players main focus is mastering correct throwing mechanics of upper body. 3 major points of emphasis:

ONE KNEE DRILL:



Emphasize long, loose arm and lead arm pointing to target.



Make sure a good "pull" from lead arm helps player get good extension, chin over knee.



Finish on balance with top half working over front side.

3. THROWING



Lead arm- Most young players struggle with this. Instruct players to concentrate on pointing glove directly to target, concentrating on their thumb leading the way. To generate leverage, glove should get shoulder high. At this point, players need to “pull” lead arm into body to generate more velocity and consistency. Lead arm is crucial for proper alignment. See diagram.



Throwing arm- Stress the importance of ARM ACTION. Young players typically have the following bad habits with regard to arm action: “short arm-ing”, “side-arm”, “pushing”, and “overthrowing”. Preach the importance of a LONG, LOOSE ARM. A great visual is creating two half circles with arms. Hand should separate with thumbs pointing downward, promoting looseness and fluidity. Players need to be encouraged to get the ball in a strong slot before release. This is accomplished by allowing elbow to get at least as high as shoulder with ball pointed away from head. Players hand should remain “on top” of the ball throughout.



Release/Extension- If “good” arm action is accomplished, release becomes almost effortless. As discussed before, lead arm will “pull” throwing arm through. The most important aspect of the release is the players ability to “snap” down on the ball with a loose wrist. This creates good “carry” on the ball and greatly aides in consistency. Upon release, players need to be reminded not to stop acceleration. Achieve this by telling the group to “reach out” or “get chin to go over front knee”. See diagram.

3.2 Standing Game of Catch

After one knee drill, stand players up and back group, not on foul line, up to 50 feet. After 3 minutes from this distance, back group up to 60 feet and throw for 3 minutes. Distances will increase/decrease according to age and ability of player. Challenge older, advanced players and lessen the difficulty for novice players. Emphasize to team that “we are simply adding our lower half to what we just worked on during one knee drill”. Stress importance of playing “athletic” games of catch with feet always moving. NO FLAT FOOTED GAMES OF CATCH! To incorporate lower half movement, teach the crow hop (See diagrams below). It’s never too early to crow hop during your games of catch. Also, make sure players are constantly reminded to receive the baseball with two hands and always “going to get” the ball.

3. THROWING

3.3 Long Toss

The best way to strengthen and prevent injury to young arms. Must use a **good crow hop** (see diagram below) on EVERY throw. Have entire team play long toss 1-2 times per week. After standing game of catch, back group up to 70 feet. Emphasize the importance of “throwing the ball on a line”, and how you don’t want to see any “pop ups” if distances become too far. Instead, have players one or two hop their partner to ensure they’re “staying on top” of the ball. A great goal is to have players able to complete a game of long toss from 100 feet. Advanced players should strive to play long toss at a distance twice that of the distance from base to base in their league. Try to have at least two distance intervals (ex. 70 and 85 ft.) and use increments of 15 ft. when backing players up. Use 10 throws or three minutes for each interval. Encourage stronger, advanced players to “let it rip”. Finish by bringing players back to 35-40 feet for at least one minute. Have the emphasis during this time be quick hands and feet, not holding on to the ball. This will most closely simulate game-type throws.

CROW HOP:



1. Start by stepping with opposite foot of throwing arm, in rhythm as hands come together.



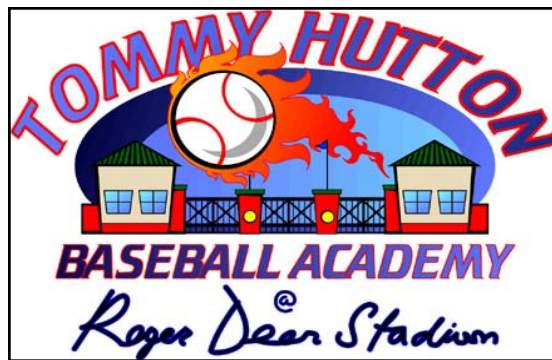
2. “Hop” onto back foot, allowing weight to transfer to back leg. When weight reaches back leg, “drive” and begin to separate hands with good lead arm and proper arm action.



3. Feel momentum help carry ball to target, almost as if “arm is along for the ride”. Maintain balance and smoothness, **DO NOT MUSCLE UP!**



4 Follow through in a relatively balanced position, covering as much ground as the height of the player. (A 6 ft. tall player should cover about 6 ft. with crow hop)



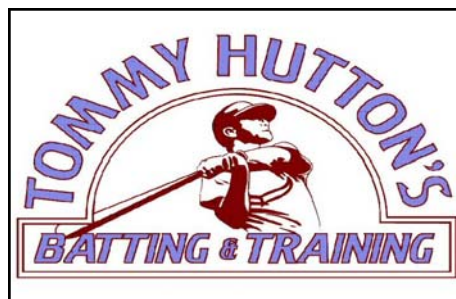
4.

INDIVIDUAL INFIELD FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS

Introduction

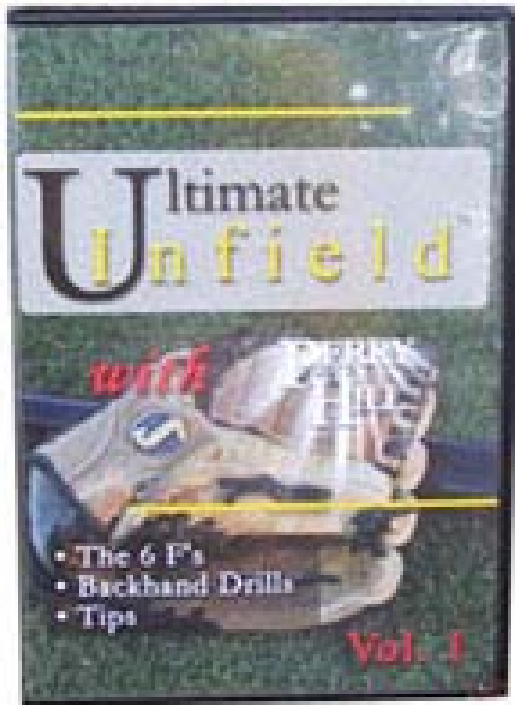
In 2001, Tommy Hutton Baseball partnered with Florida Marlins infield coach Perry Hill and former Major League shortstop Craig Shipley to produce *Ultimate Infield with Perry Hill*. This 45 minute video has had rave reviews and contains the same instruction Gold Glove winners Luis Castillo and Orlando Cabrera received under Hill's tutorage.

Because we believe so strongly in exposing as many players and coaches to this information, we've enclosed a **FREE VHS copy of the video** for you to review. Use this as your guide to instruct your infield and you won't believe the results. The 6F's, all the drills, and Ship's tips are sure to make a huge impact on youth baseball in this area. Hope you enjoy!



4. INFIELD

4.1



**ENJOY YOUR FREE COPY OF ULTIMATE INFIELD
WITH PERRY HILL!**

**USE BELOW SECTION TO TAKE NOTES TO APPLY
TO YOUR NEXT PRACTICE:**

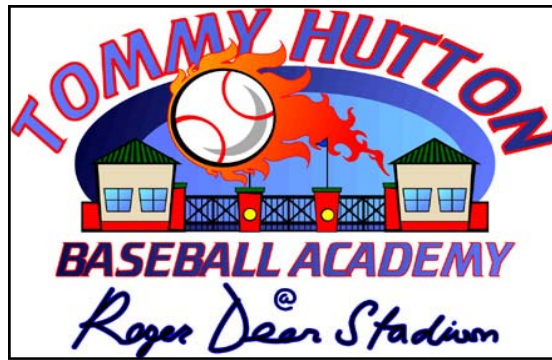
NOTES

6 F'S:

DRILLS:

POINTS OF EMPHASIS:

REPLACING YOUR FEET:

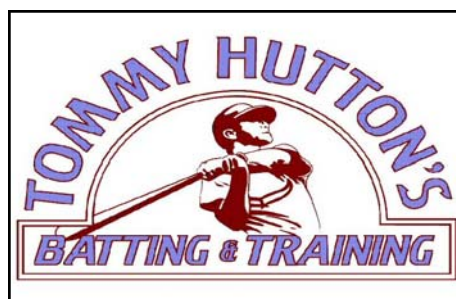


5.

INDIVIDUAL OUTFIELD FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS

Introduction

Playing the outfield at the youth level at times can feel like “punishment.” In most cases, coaches will use their best athletes to play key infield positions and to pitch and catch. Chances are, most of your outfielders will need a considerable amount of simple fundamental instruction. The drills set forth in this section make playing the outfield fast-pace and exciting. More importantly, they prepare players for game situations. If used on a regular basis, these drills will ensure your outfield makes a high percentage of the routine plays. They will also make practices more fun!





5. OUTFIELD



5.1 FOOTBALL PASSES

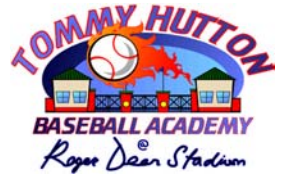
Form one line on either foul line facing centerfield. Use a cone or other object as a mark approximately 20 yards away. Give each player one ball. When their turn comes up, player will hand you his ball. Instruct player to “go”, at which time he will “sprint” toward cone. As player is about to reach cone, you will throw a routine fly ball in his vicinity. It is now his job to find the ball and take a straight, direct line to the ball. These are two extremely important fundamentals a good outfielder must master. Stress the importance of sprinting to the cone and to the ball. Never “drift” to the ball. Challenge advanced players by throwing more difficult fly balls. End drill by leading each player a couple of times with balls that will take a great effort to run down, possibly even a dive. A fun drill that helps players “go get” the ball.

5.2 TWO LINE COMMUNICATION DRILL

Make two lines, one in left center field gap and one in the right center field gap. Go over the importance of communicating when playing the outfield and also the importance of backing up for one another. Explain the purpose of this drill is to work on those two areas. Hit ground balls and fly balls as close to the “middle” of the two lines as possible. Player’s job is to field the ball, communicate by calling it early, and backing up for one another. Remind both players to “go after the ball” and call it as soon as they know they can make the play. If possible, have a cut-off man thirty feet from the lines so outfielders can work on “hitting the cut” in the chest using a good “crow hop.”



5. OUTFIELD

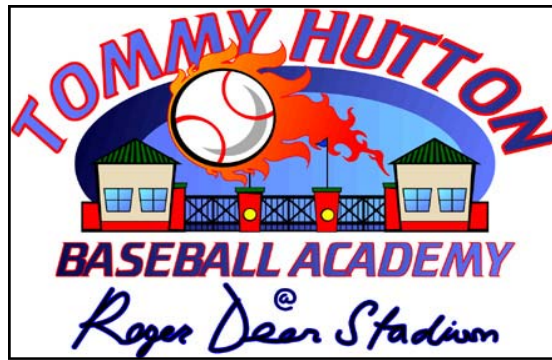


5.3 DROP STEP DRILL/ COMING THROUGH THE BALL– “Nuts and bolts” of properly fielding a fly ball. First, demonstrate the proper way to go back on a fly ball by teaching the “drop step.” The drop step is best taught by explaining to players to take a quick step at roughly a 45 degree angle based on the flight of the ball. FOR EXAMPLE: If ball is hit over players left shoulder, they would take a drop step with their left foot, allowing their body to “open” toward the path of the ball and sprint to the spot the ball will land.

Begin drill by giving each player one ball. Make a mark 10 feet from the foul line and have players line up facing the line. Stand facing players directly on foul line. Throw balls “slightly” over either shoulder with allot of arc. This will allow players to master drop step. Make sure players are attempting to catch ball over throwing shoulder with momentum coming through the ball. Mix in balls players have to come in on as well. Stress “reading” the ball flight and sprinting to the landing spot.

5.4 GROUND BALL/FLY BALL FUNGO– Have players lineup in deep centerfield. Hit “game speed” fly balls and ground balls and have players make strong throws to a cut off man. If possible, have players go to their position and hit from second base, rotating between left, center, and right. This takes more precision on the coaches part but is a great way for players to see ball from same angle they will in the game.

5.5 ONE MAN FUNGO/TRACKING DRILL– Only for advanced outfielders. Hit from foul line or second base and position outfielder accordingly. Mix in ground balls and fly balls. Instruct outfielder to “stop” each time a play is made. Purposely hit balls outfielder has to run hard for, occasionally mixing in a routine ball so he can rest. Take a couple of seconds in between swings. Drill should last 5 minutes or about 25-30 reps, whichever comes first. Don’t allow outfielder to give into fatigue.

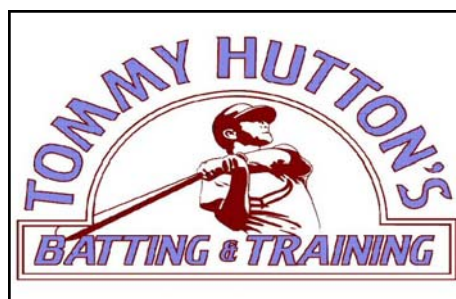


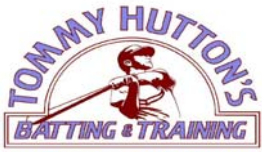
6.

TEAM DEFENSE

Introduction

Team Defense must be worked on each and every practice. To avoid staleness, we've provided some basic drills/games that produce results and keep things fun and moving. The key to all the drills and activities set forth in this guide is the coaches ability to properly explain the goals of each activity and to keep work ethic and enthusiasm high. If properly integrated into the schedule each practice, results will be tremendous! This will help eliminate "standing around" and keep everyone practicing simultaneously. Don't "dummy down" anything if players struggle with organization at first. If you continue to challenge them, they will respond and level of play will improve!





6. TEAM DEFENSE

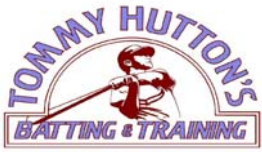


6.1 MULTIPLE FUNGOS—A great way to increase the number of repetitions all of your players receive. Must have 2-3 coaches who are capable of hitting “routine” ground balls and fly balls. Each coach will focus on working a different area simultaneously. Make sure all infielders throw to first and work double plays. Hit fungos from either side of home plate to create the same angle a batter would.

Game— If time permits, play a game of Golden Glove with all infielders. If an error is committed, player is out. Last man standing wins. Have all infielders take ground balls from same position, waiting in line for their turn.

6.2 CUTS/RELAYS— Have entire team take the field. Explain all cut off/relay scenarios. Purposely hit balls in gaps to see if cutoff/relay is performed properly. Pay attention to spacing, making sure cut man is not too deep or too shallow. Stress the importance of knowing how strong/weak each teammates arm is as this will dictate “how far” to go out for the cut. Use extra players as base runners and instruct them to try to take an extra base to challenge defense to throw to the right base with accuracy.

Game— Break entire team up into two teams. Form two lines on either foul line. Instruct players to spread the lines out with approximately 30 feet in between each player. Give the first person in each line a ball. On your signal, teams will race to throw ball all the way down and all the way back without making an error or skipping a person. If an error is made, ball must be returned to front and relay must be started over. Stress the importance of having hands ready to receive the ball and the importance of using their lower half to throw.



6. TEAM DEFENSE



6.3 POP UP PRIORITY– First, explain who has priority over who using the below information if needed:

Priority list:

- Shortstop has priority over entire infield
- Left fielder over shortstop
- Centerfielder over all other outfielders
- Pitcher over catcher
- First base over pitcher/catcher
- Third base over pitcher/catcher
- Right fielder over first base
- Left field over third base
- Centerfielder over shortstop
- Second base over First base

Hit or throw “in between” fly balls and make sure player with priority is making play when possible. Mix in routine fly balls to make sure players with priority aren’t being “over aggressiveness.” Stress calling the ball early, and encourage player with priority to “call off” teammate.

Game– Try to record 21 consecutive outs, all pop ups.

6.4 PRE-GAME INFIELD/OUTFIELD– Practice makes perfect! Infield/Outfield can set the tone for the game. For this reason, it is extremely important to take consistent, high-energy rounds of infield/outfield. Establish goals, for example:

1. Sprint out to positions together
2. Allot of talking/encouraging one another-no quiet rounds!
3. Outfielders need to hit cut off man
4. Infielders need to hit each other in the chest, etc..

Make sure, from a coaching standpoint, only routine fungos are hit. THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO CHALLENGE PLAYERS!. Establish a consistent routine and stick with it. Here is what we suggest:



6. TEAM DEFENSE



6.4 Infield/Outfield Continued

Outfield Portion

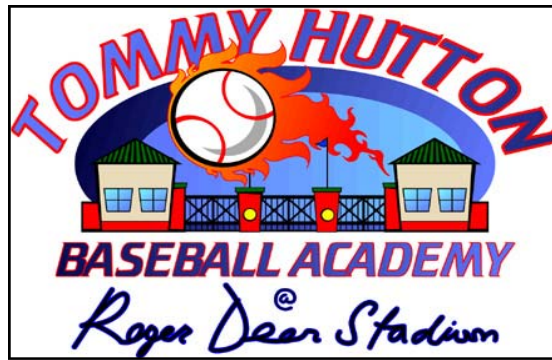
Each outfielder should get two throws to second, third, and home. Make them use the cut off man to ensure they are throwing the ball on a line. Except for the last round to home, coach should hit from right around the pitchers mound. After each outfielder has completed their three rounds, have them all sprint to deep centerfield to take additional fungos from an assistant coach who should be waiting with a fungo and baseballs on your foul line.

Infield Portion

1. Infield “in”. Catcher throws to each infielder, stressing good throws and quick feet.
2. Infield “in”- Get one.
3. Infield “normal depth”- Get one.
4. Infield “normal depth” -Get two.
5. Infield “deep” -Get one.
6. Infield “deep”- Charge slow roller, get one, and in.

Encourage team to strive for perfection. As team improves, mix in “one and cover”, letting the catcher throw to the base where the play originated. Stress rhythm . You can help create rhythm by having plenty of baseballs so there is no stall after a wild throw and by hitting fungos at a quick pace, not taking too much time in between each one. Practice this often.

6.5 21 Outs— A simple way to prove to yourself and the team that they can play a “flawless” game defensively. The object of the drill is simple. Record 21 consecutive outs without making an error. Every time an error is made, game starts from scratch. Each time three outs are made, have team sprint off the field. Make defensive switches at this time and have them practice sprinting back out to their positions. For younger teams, give them 5 errors without starting over. Hit only routine balls during this time.



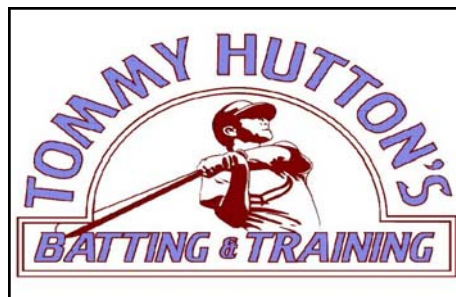
7.

HITTING

Introduction

Becoming a consistent hitter is a difficult task. To improve, a player must have the passion, drive, and time to put into drills and mechanics. Coaches and young players should make their focus be that of making consistent, solid contact. Hitter's must learn to focus on the process of the at-bat rather than the result. If an emphasis is placed on the process, the results will follow. A confident and positive approach is necessary for success. Hard work and preparation will allow a hitter to remain confident, regardless of results. In this chapter, we will go over basic swing mechanics and drills that will help develop consistency.

Note: While doing these drills the hitter will want to focus on the quality of swings rather than quantity. If the player gets tired have them stop. Tired swings promote bad habits and poor mechanics.



7.1 SWING MECHANICS

Hitting, in general, is a very difficult task. This is why the coach needs to stress the importance of keeping the mechanics simple. In order to be a successful hitter, a relaxed and balanced approach needs to be emphasized. During batting practice and tee work, the swing thought needs to be “down and through the baseball”. This reinforces a proper swing plane.



Stance

Feet should be shoulder width apart with a slight bend in the knees. Weight needs to be evenly distributed, staying on the balls of our feet. Hands should be shoulder high with a loose grip on the bat. To gain rhythm and relaxation discourage the hitter from standing completely still.



Trigger and Stride

To create rhythm and generate power, a trigger and stride must exist. When hands go back, feet must separate with the front foot only moving 2 to 3 inches toward the pitcher. Make sure the hitter keeps his front side on the ball and stay away from “flying open”.



Impact

To create a proper swing plane, the hitter needs to think swing down and through the baseball. This will produce a line drive swing through the hitting zone. Head needs to be down at impact, remind hitters to “watch the ball hit the bat”. Always think short and quick to the baseball.



Finish

Hitters need to finish their swing in order to utilize their whole body. A proper finish should have the hitter on his back toe and be in control. Encourage the hitter to finish in a somewhat balanced position, ideally with momentum taking hitter towards first base. (right hand hitter)

7. HITTING

7.2 TEE WORK

The tee is a great tool to use to perfect your swing and to work on being consistent. Using the tee, the hitter can work on pitches in any location. Begin tee work with ball in the “middle of the plate.” Make sure tee is “slightly” in front of home plate, simulating the perfect spot for hitter to maximize results. Make focus be that of driving ball up the middle, staying smooth and relaxed. After hitter shows proficiency with ball in the middle of the plate, move tee to outside part of the plate (see bottom right diagram for proper positioning of tee). After hitter shows mastery of outside pitch, move tee to the inside part of the plate, approximately 6-8 inches in front of the inside corner in an effort to get the hitter to be “quick” with his hands and “turn” on the ball. Practice the inside pitch sparingly as it can cause bad swing habits if not worked on 100% correctly. The **high tee drill** (below left photo) is another good use of the tee. This drill forces the batter to take their hands straight to the ball, and doesn't allow them to take a long swing. If they do, they will not hit the ball solid. Encourage players to work on taking the “perfect swing” off the tee. Smoothness and consistency should always be the focus. Many young players tend to “over swing” during tee work. Don't allow this to happen. The tee is the perfect training aid for players to work on a short, compact swing with an emphasis on getting the barrel of the bat through the hitting zone.



High Tee Drill– Tee should be slightly above waist, forcing hitter to stay on top of the baseball.

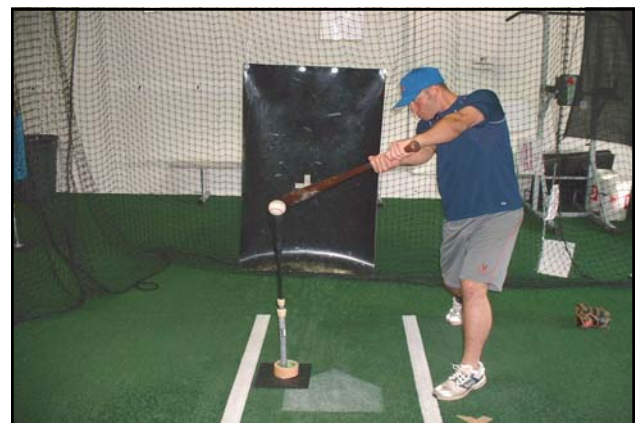


Photo illustrates player working on driving outside pitch to right field, hands and head in great position.

7. HITTING

7.3 Front Toss

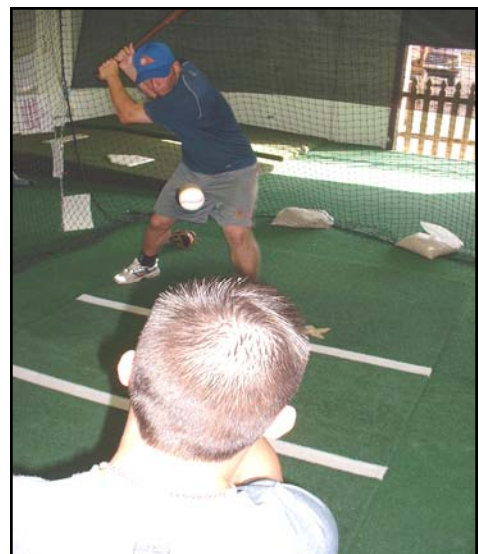
This drill allows the batter to see a pitch coming toward them in a controlled manner. The goal is to take the swing that they have been working on off the tee and get comfortable “grooving it” against a moving ball. From a coaches standpoint, this is the best way to throw consistent

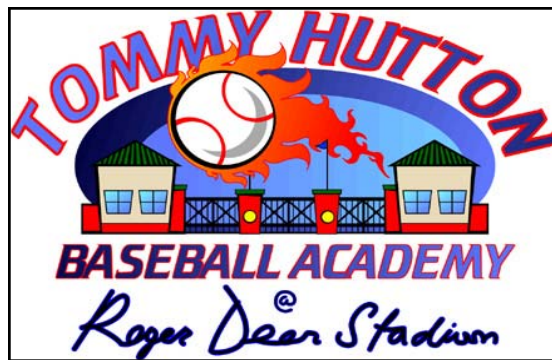


batting practice and save your arm. The coach or player tossing (see photo) the ball should set up about 20-30 feet in front of the batter. The batter should once again be working on driving the ball up the middle and the opposite way. Once in a while, toss one on the inside part of the plate so the batter can react to the inside pitch. This will keep the batter “honest” and prevent him from “lunging: As the feeder’s hand is getting ready to toss the ball, the batter should get into a “loaded” position. If you find that the batter is stepping and swinging in one motion you can do one of two things to keep the batters weight back. One is to hold the ball, acting as if you are going to toss the ball, but, right at the point of release, hold on to it. Also, you can throw a slower ball which will have the same effect. If batter is consistently out on his front foot, stress letting the ball “get deep” on him or immediately go back to the tee and emphasize staying back.

7.4 Soft Toss

Set up with bucket of balls to the side of batter, slightly less than a 45 degree angle (see photo). Make sure batter is “square” to where the pitcher would be, not you. Instruct the batter to “load” as your hand drops before you toss. Stress to batter the importance of waiting for the ball and not “lunging” at it. Attempt to toss the ball somewhat “flat” and in the middle of the plate. Hitter should be trying to hit everything up the middle with a smooth, controlled swing. Stress “short to the ball and long through it” during this drill.





8.

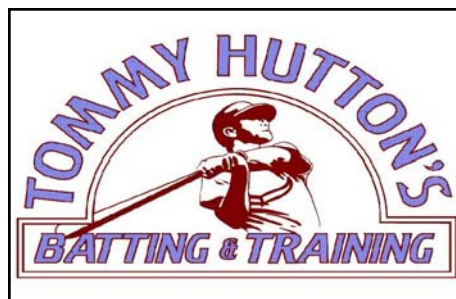
PITCHING

Introduction

Make no mistake about it, pitching is not for everybody. Between the physical and mental demands, it is arguably the toughest position on the field. For those reasons, it is vital young pitchers receive proper and simple instruction.

“Paralysis by analysis” has become far too common at the youth level. Coaches need to develop a consistent set of drills that promote proper mechanics.

“Quality over quantity” needs to be engrained into young pitchers minds. Very simply, it should be the goal of all coaches to develop a staff of pitchers that can consistently command the strike zone. Natural ability will often dictate the level of success a pitcher experiences. All pitchers, no matter what ability level, should understand their role is to command the strike zone, pitch ahead in counts, and compete on each and every pitch. **IT IS NOT THE PITCHERS JOB TO STRIKE EVERYBODY OUT AND SINGLE HANDEDLY WIN THE GAME!** Strikeouts and dominating performances will occur as a result of commanding the strike zone and superior ability over the opponent. Enclosed is an overview of sound pitching mechanics and a set of drills and activities to develop successful young pitchers. NOTE: This is a guide, there are many variations and advanced drills that coaches and advanced players will need to learn as development progresses and goals are met.



8. PITCHING

8.1 Basic Mechanics

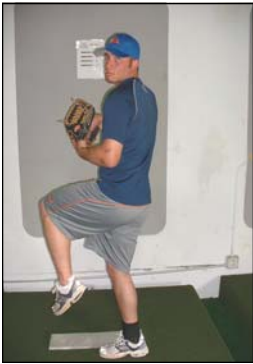
Young pitchers need to understand that **BALANCE** is the key to a comfortable and consistent delivery. A balanced, tension-free delivery will greatly increase a pitcher's chance of confidently commanding the strike zone. Many young pitchers work "too hard" to deliver the baseball as a result of poor mechanics. Below is a simple, 6 step illustration of a "sound" delivery. Please note that this is **NOT** the only way to deliver the baseball, only a guide to help promote balance and use of pitchers lower half. Natural ability and good arm action will play a major role in how quickly a pitcher develops and begins to succeed.



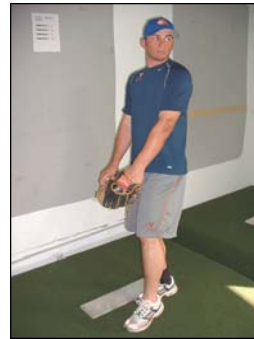
1. **SETUP**-Comfortable, tensionless, and balanced. Hands in the middle of body, arms and shoulders relaxed. Weight on the "balls" of feet with a little less than shoulder width space between them.



2. **JAB STEP**- Limit moving parts. Keep "upper half" relatively still as lower half triggers delivery. "Jab step" should be subtle, allowing pitcher to keep balance and pivot with weight beginning to transfer to back leg.



3. **BALANCE POINT**-A major key to consistency. Stress "lifting" front leg in an effort to transfer weight directly to back side. Eliminate "wasted" movement as main goal is to get in a "strong" and balanced position. Slight hand movement is acceptable for the purposes of "rhythm." Pitcher should feel a "one thousand-one" pause at his balance point to eliminate a "rush" to the plate.



4. **HAND SEPARATION**- To avoid a "rush" to the plate, hands must separate before weight transfer and release occur. This is accomplished by keeping "weight back" and allowing hands and front leg to work "down" in a synchronized fashion. Notice pitcher's hands have separated while weight is still 100% on back side. This will promote a powerful delivery and take strain off of young pitcher's arms.



5. **WEIGHT TRANSFER/RELEASE**- If proper "hand separation" is accomplished, this next step becomes fairly simple. Pitcher's weight will now be transferred toward target (watch for alignment, stepping too open or closed to target) by "driving" off back leg. Notice the strong lead arm, excellent arm slot, and athletic position. Stress importance of landing "soft" and staying off your heel. A good "pull" with lead arm also needs to occur to generate leverage and momentum. Ideally, encourage pitchers to release the ball "down hill" to promote movement and velocity. This step is very "natural" for players with above average ability.



6. **EXTENSION/FOLLOW-THROUGH**-This will occur as a result of sound weight transfer. Encourage pitchers to "reach out" or "get chin over knee" to encourage extension.

8. PITCHING

Drills

8.2 Mirror Work/Dry Mechanics– A great drill to help pitchers develop “muscle memory” and assist in making delivery “thoughtless.” Have pitchers do this routinely for five minutes before any other drill or bullpen session. Start by having them go through all 6 steps, pausing at each so adjustments/analysis can be made by coach. As soon as pitcher demonstrates a “solid” understanding of each step of the delivery, have them continue the drill “game speed.” Stress the importance of balance, rhythm, and tempo. Common mistakes are: rushing, poor tempo (too fast or too slow), and alignment problems. Drill is most effective done in front of a full length mirror.



8.3 Balance Point/Hand Separation -Transition Drill– The most difficult step of the delivery to master seems to be the transition necessary from BALANCE POINT to HAND SEPARATION. If this is not worked on, only exceptional athletes will succeed in this phase. This will help eliminate a “rush” and give pitcher great chance of consistent release point.

Have pitcher stand on slightly elevated surface (bench, bucket, etc.). Begin drill by instructing pitcher to allow landing foot to hang while weight is entirely on back leg. Tell pitcher to get to BALANCE POINT and hold. As soon as balance point is reached, instruct pitcher to separate hands while front leg works “down” If pitchers body begins to move forward, he will feel himself begin to fall from elevation. This is a great opportunity to point out how important it is to “stay back” until hands have separated. Encourage pitchers to separate hands near belly button with thumbs “down.” Have them do 2-3 sets of 5. Must be done under control to be effective!



8. PITCHING

8.4 Weight Transfer Drill— Great drill to develop an “explosive weight transfer.” Pitcher will start with hands separated, weight back, and lead arm & throwing arm in proper positions. Stride should be consistent with where it is when throwing “live.” Instruct pitcher to drive and release the ball out in front, touching on throwing the ball “downhill.” A small stride must be taken as pitcher starts weight transfer and pitcher cannot be flat-footed. Stress throwing to a target during this and every drill. Ultimately, if executed properly, pitcher will feel like arm is “along for the ride” as lower half will generate most of the power. Use a guide (throw down base, glove, towel, etc.) to block off “landing area” so pitcher masters alignment. See middle illustration.



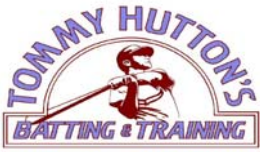
Hands separated as weight transfers back.



Weight transfer occurs, monitoring good alignment with throw down base as guide.



Explosive, balanced finish.



8. PITCHING



8.5 Bullpen Sessions

Stress the importance of “quality over quantity.” Endurance is an issue, but young arms still require limited mound work. Drill work and long toss will serve as endurance builders. If possible, have a batter stand in (no swinging) the box during bullpen sessions. The goal is to simulate game situation as much as possible. Be aware that bullpen work is a time for pitchers to “apply” what they worked on during drill sessions. With that being said, do not “over instruct” during this time as pitchers need to learn to work through mistakes and make adjustments. Have the emphasis be on getting into a rhythm by working quick and developing good tempo. Use simple mechanical reminders such as “stay back”, “stay tall”, “out in front”, etc. We want to avoid “paralysis by analysis” at all costs! Define the importance of ball to strike ratio and monitor pitcher’s ability to attain a favorable ratio. Have catcher set up in the middle of the plate for the first 5-7 and then move from corner to corner as session progresses. For older, more advanced pitchers, make sure they are working on their change up (all ages) and breaking pitch (high school pitchers only). Also, make sure pitcher works from both the wind up and stretch equally. Older pitchers need to develop a slide step when working from the stretch. As a coach, we want our pitchers to master their deliveries through drill/mechanical work so when throwing bullpens or in games, the focus is competing and hitting spots. Too much thinking about mechanics is a major problem for young pitchers. Use bullpen session to develop pitchers mentally as well. Use game mounds as much as possible as pitchers need to become comfortable with the mound they will be competing on.

Here are bullpen pitch count suggestions:

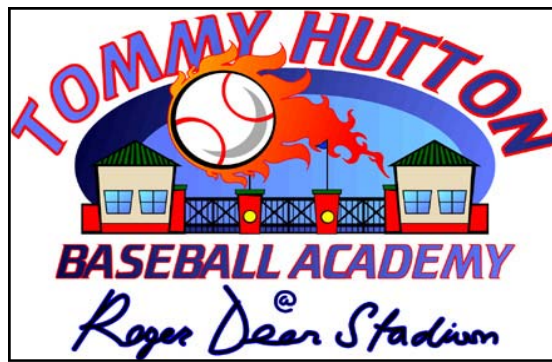
Ages 8& under (we know they aren’t in kid pitch yet): 15-25

Ages 9-10: 25-40

Ages 11-12: 35-50

Ages 13&up: 40-65

*use level of success/struggle or fatigue to determine whether or not to be on the high or low end of these ranges.

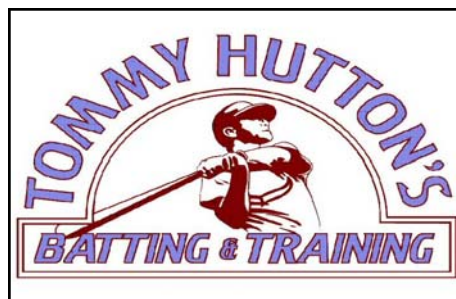


9.

CATCHING

Introduction

Arguably, catching is the most demanding position on the field. The leadership and toughness required to excel behind the plate is considerable. Young catchers often have the toughness required to succeed, but lack the preparation. The drills and mechanics provided in this chapter guarantee to make a positive impact your catchers performance. Make a concerted effort to work these drills into each and every practice and it won't be long before results are obvious. An effective catcher instantly makes the entire defense better. An above average catcher can "dominate" a game. We recommend spending an ample amount of time developing two consistent catchers. Young legs can fatigue in a hurry, causing "laziness." Stress the importance of a "take charge approach" and developing good rapport between pitchers and catchers.



9.1 Stance: (There are three different stances:)



A. **Sign Stance**-comfortable, well balanced, fingers must be visible to the pitcher, and deep in the crotch. Glove blocking the 3rd base coach view, and right knee obstructing the view of 1st base coach



B. **Receiving Stance**-feet a little wider than sign stance, well balanced, weight on the balls of feet. Give the target early to make pitcher aware to where you want the ball. Throwing hand behind back out of harms way. Glove hand loose and relaxed.



C. **Block-throw Stance**-Aggressive position, wider than receiving stance. Be able to move from left to right. Backside raised to knee level, not higher. Throwing hand behind or close to glove (in a fist with thumb inside near palm) to allow for quick exchange when throwing.

9.2 Footwork (triangle)

Catch the ball first. Bring the ball to throwing hand to quicken exchange, avoid flipping the ball from glove to hand. Bring the glove, ball, and throwing hand to back ear to get arm in good throwing position. Stay low, and explode out of your stance. Cut the distance down by using a triangle as a guide (line from left foot to right and one from each foot going in front to form a triangle), bring the right foot to top of the triangle as the left foot steps toward target. Staying on the balls of your feet at all times. Gain Ground— don't just replace your feet. Feet can be slightly open to avoid throwing across your body. Once ball is in throwing position stay on top of ball and follow through with your throw. As your catcher gets older he must remember, you can only do as much as you can do, don't try to do too much. If the pitcher is slow or the runner is fast, don't rush throws to try to get runners out. Follow steps and you will throw out the runners you should. They are called base stealers for a reason.



9. CATCHING

9.3 Receiving the baseball



Relax the hands so it will be easy to simply catch the ball. Be loose from the forearm down, the more tense you are, the more balls you will miss. Let the ball come to you, avoid “jabbing at the ball”, “sticking the ball” or pushing the glove forward to meet the ball. Watch the ball into glove, keep eyes and head behind the ball. Catch the ball with soft hands, allowing ball to get to you. Avoid jerking or pulling the ball to middle of the plate, just catch the ball where it is pitched. A ball is a ball. See in picture how ball is caught, not jerked, and eyes, head and body are all behind ball to assure a catch.

9.4 Blocking



Blocking is NOT trying to catch the ball on the bounce. When blocking, try to direct the ball in the direction of home plate with the angle of your body, attempt to deaden the ball. Make sure the glove is between legs, jammed in the 5 hole, throwing hand all the way behind glove. Use the upper body to cushion ball and reduce deflection of ball. Keep chin down, and don't turn head to either side. On a ball to the right, we want to push off the ball of our left foot and get body around ball to direct ball toward home. Same with a ball to the left, only we push off of the ball of our right foot to get us around the ball. A key to blocking is the catcher can't be scared of the ball hitting them, and trying to avoid “picking the ball”. Also, catchers must anticipate the off speed (curve ball, changeup) pitches to be in the dirt to give yourself a quick start to the ball.



9. CATCHING



9.5 Drills

There are many drills that a coach can do to improve his catchers ability and confidence. The key to these drills is to focus on good technique. Make sure that your player is into the drills and doing them correctly because if they don't , injury could occur!

Front toss

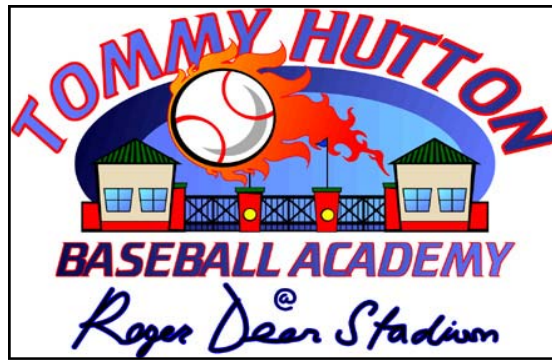
This drill can be done with or without a glove on, preferably without a glove to soften hands. The coach simply gets a bucket of balls and has the catcher in their receiving stance,. Then, the coach tosses balls in different locations on the plate. During this drill, the catcher should be focusing on watching the ball into the hand/glove and not jabbing at it. You can also do this drill with a machine throwing fastballs, or breaking balls. Another variation is to use a “rapid fire” approach to concentrate on staying loose, catching one ball, and getting ready for the next to come. This drill concentrates on receiving the baseball in a relaxed position, preventing the catcher from being tense behind the plate..

Footwork and throwing down

In this drill the coach can toss or pitch the ball to the catcher, with the emphasis on “catching the ball first” and “getting rid of the ball by using proper foot work” (as discussed earlier). Have infielder start short of the bag so catcher can concentrate on quickness instead of trying to “muscle up” on a throw. After good rhythm is established, move infielder back to bag. Have catchers throw to 2nd and 3rd. If catcher struggles with footwork, have them practice drill “dry” to get used to loading hands while being quick with feet.

Blocking

Place three balls in front of home plate, spread an equal distance apart covering a length 2 inches off both sides of the plate. Explain to catcher that that is the “range” he needs to cover when blocking. As you point to a ball, the catcher must use proper form to block a “phantom” pitch in that location. Give catcher a few seconds in between each rep. as proper technique is the key. As soon as catcher demonstrates good form, get a bucket of baseballs and throw balls “live” to these different spots. For beginners, use tennis balls or Incrediballs.

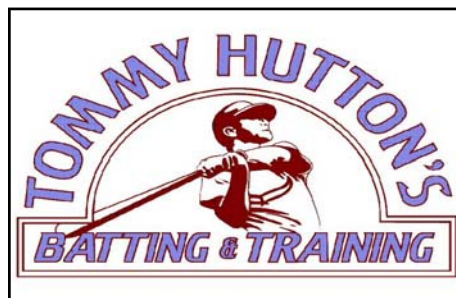


10.

BASE RUNNING

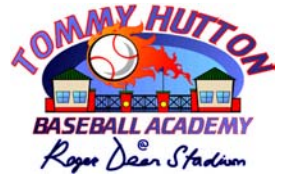
Introduction

Base running is a skill that has truly become a lost art in the game of baseball. Often times base running is the difference maker in a close ball game. So when teaching your players the different aspects involved with running the bases, also stress that it is just as important as anything that goes on during a game. Another important fact to make the player aware of is how one does not have to possess great foot speed to be a great base runner. Jeff Bagwell is a tremendous example of this at the major league level. The different aspects that will be touched on is how to run out an infield grounder, making a good turn, and base stealing.





10. BASE RUNNING



10.1 Running to first

First the player must “bust out of the box” with no hesitation. This is where you must make sure that the player is not watching the ball and losing precious steps toward the first base bag.

After taking four steps out of the batters box, the player must then “take a peek” to see where the ball is. If the ball gets through the infield, runner must start to take a turn. This is accomplished by making a “banana like path” from that point to the inside part of the bag. This creates momentum toward second using the least number of steps. It does not matter which foot the runner hits the bag with!

If the ball does not get through, continue sprinting toward first and hit the front part of the bag with your foot (either foot, whichever comes up). Breakdown as soon as the player touches the bag. This is done by creating short choppy steps. Make sure that the players are not slowing down before they touch the bag this is extremely crucial and often a mistake of young players.

Finally, the player must roll his head to the right to see if the ball has gotten by the first basemen.

10.2 Stealing Bases

The player should always start with their left foot on the bag. As soon as pitcher is on the mound, runner will lead by using the sequence of right, left to right, and right again. Player should be in an athletic position, not standing straight up. From there, the runner can take very small shuffle steps as he is facing the pitcher. And, at all times while doing so, the runner should NEVER take his eyes off the pitcher. Another important note is that the runner should take his lead directly in the base path so that they are in a direct line to the second base. Have the players get comfortable with the footwork so when it comes game time it is second nature to them. Never cross feet!

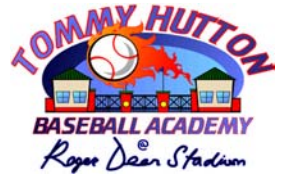
The Runner should have his lead foot slightly opened up and about 60% of his weight over that lead leg so that the he can use that leg to explode towards second base.

The first movement that is made by the base stealer is a simultaneous “pull” of the right elbow backwards and crossing over with the left leg. Stay low!

Finally, after three hard steps, the runner should take a peek back home (without losing any speed) to see what has happened with the pitch and act accordingly.



10. BASE RUNNING



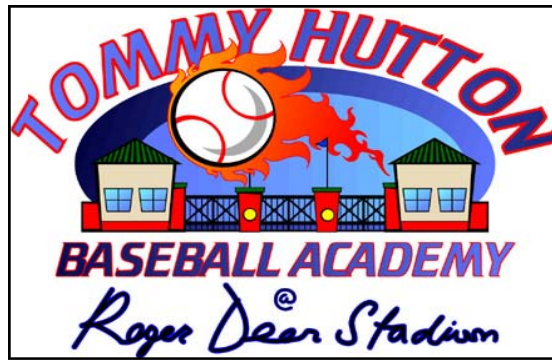
10.3 Secondary Lead

As the pitcher releases the ball, we must use a good secondary lead to shorten the distance to the next base and create rhythm in making our break. Instruct base runners to take three “bounces” off the bag and stop on the “balls” of their feet to read the ball. Make sure they keep a low center of gravity and stress sprinting back to the bag if no contact is made. Make sure base runners “plant” in an athletic, neutral position as the ball crosses the plate. This is the best position to “read and react” . Obviously, this applies more to players in “Kid Pitch” that use leads and steals.

10.4 Practice Suggestions:

Use one or two of the following at the end of every practice. These will also serve as conditioning:

1. One line, practice running through first
2. Taking a turn (use cones to show path desired)
3. Secondary lead, go from 1st to 3rd
4. Secondary lead, go 2nd to home
5. Relay– 2 teams, both start at home. One team runs toward first, one runs toward third. Both teams go all the way around. Divide speed equally to keep race close.

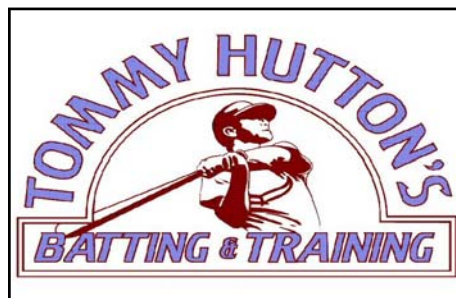


11.

CREDITS

We hope you enjoyed reading *Mastering the 2-hour Baseball Practice* and hope you use it as a reference throughout the course of this season and many more to come. Please feel free to call us with any and all questions regarding information in this guide.

Many thanks to the creators for generously donating their time to help promote the instruction of solid, FUNdamental baseball. See next page.





11. CREDITS



Brian Justine, General Manager

Tommy Hutton Baseball



Jason Hutton, Director

Tommy Hutton Baseball



Jason Motte, Instructor

Currently playing in St. Louis Cardinals organization



John Scaglione, Instructor

Currently playing at the University of Virginia