

## **Juniors BB Curriculum**

- 1. Baserunning**
- 2. Catcher**
- 3. Batting**
- 4. Infield**
- 5. Outfield**
- 6. Pitcher**

### **Baserunning Curriculum (Juniors Level)**

#### **Objectives:**

- Learn to take extra bases on a batted ball or an error
- Focus on basic baserunning fundamentals for competitive baseball
- Reinforce proper technique for the set position at a base as a base runner
- Develop ability to round bases and to slide
- Recognize what to do in situations when the ball is hit in the air with less than two outs
- Learn to listen to and work with base coaches when running bases
- Use ability to think of situations before each pitch is thrown

#### **Expectations:**

- Players should be practicing at least one new baserunning fundamental (knowledge) or skill as a part of each practice
- Integrate baserunning skills into the warm-up each practice for more efficient use of practice time
- Players should be focusing on thinking ahead and anticipating situations on every play
- Players will master the fundamentals of running from home to first on a batted ball

#### **Curriculum**

- How to leave the batter's box when the ball is batted
- Understanding base coaches' role and taking direction from the base coaches while advancing
- Running to first base
  - run through the base, turn head towards foul territory to look for overthrow, stay in foul territory

- when & how to round the base
- Consistently reinforce thinking ahead on the bases
  - Players should be quizzed on the number outs
  - Base coaches should discuss potential situations before every pitch
- What to do if a ground ball is hit
- What to do if a pop fly is hit
  - Recognizing a safe distance to be off a base
- How to round each base (bellying out)
- Sliding
- Explain the rules of tagging up
- ADVANCED SKILLS:
  - Secondary leads
  - Tagging up
  - Going “half way” on balls hit in the air

## **CATCHER TRAINING (Juniors level)**

### **Objectives:**

- Learn proper set-up & stance
- Develop proper receiving techniques
- Learn to become a fielder when ball is in play
- Learn to be the field leader, including communication & responsibilities
- Improve ability to calm pitcher and to work one-on-one with the pitcher as a team

### **Expectations:**

- Each team should have a minimum of 3 catchers who adequately master the Jr.’s curriculum
- Catchers are to be given individual or small group instruction on some portion of the fundamental skills outlined in this curriculum at least 1x per week.
- Catchers should be working in full gear with pitchers as a regular part of each practice

### **Catcher’s Curriculum**

- **Set-up & stance:** Set-up should be low & wide with both your legs & feet. Weight should be distributed on the inside of your feet with concentration of weight at the balls of your feet.
  - low stance & target with throwing hand behind back for safety.
- **Receiving:** When receiving good pitches your body needs to be “quiet”. Avoid rotating the shoulders, and also avoid excessive movement up & down and side to side. Catching the ball with your glove hand smoothly and gently.
  - Receive the ball with “soft” hands

- Go out to the ball with the glove, rather than receiving it in close to your body
- **When the ball is put in play:** Once you have identified where the ball is remove face mask and become a fielder.
  - Cover home for any play to the plate
  - Back up the pitcher on balls thrown back to the pitcher from all fielders when there is no one advancing to third base.
- **Throwing:** Stand up after receiving the pitch and step out in front of the plate to throw the ball back to the pitcher. Reinforce good throwing form on every throw back.
- **Communication & Responsibilities:** Encourage and reinforce good pitching. Take trips to the pitcher's mound to talk to the pitcher when the pitcher is upset or struggling to throw strikes. Tell him that you are going to catch his pitches and get him some strikes. Back-up 1<sup>st</sup> base on ground balls with no one on base.
- **Being the field leader:** Let the team know how many outs there are with every new batter.

**Advanced Catcher ability:**

- Learn to block balls in the dirt
- Fielding bunt like hits that are between the catcher and pitcher and then throwing the runner out at first

## Hitting Training (Juniors level)

**Objectives**

- Develop a consistent batting stance
- Learn to properly (safely) get out of the way of a pitched ball
- Learn the rules for getting in and out of the batter's box
- Reinforce hitter discipline in recognizing the dimensions of the strike zone and identify strikes for hitting
- Proper positioning in batter's box for hitting all pitches in strike zone
- Learn what pitch counts are and improve ability to make contact and expand zone as necessary for two strike counts

## Expectations

- Goal of 20 swings at every practice (tee, soft-toss, &/or BP)
- Development of stance and swing fundamentals as to hitter's curriculum below
  - (All players should master #'s 1 & 2 below)
- All players will understand the rules that apply to being in the batter's box and when it is appropriate to step out of the batter's box
- All players will learn to properly advance to first on a batted ball as the hitter (getting rid of the bat without throwing it)
- Advanced player skill: hitting with two strikes

## Hitter Curriculum

1. Grip and hand position
  - Bat in finger tips
  - Line up knocking knuckles
  - NOT in palm
  - Loose hands
2. Stance and Position in box
  - There is no wrong position
  - Feet shoulder width apart (athletic position)
  - Preferably a straight/neutral stance
  - Balanced position achieved by "getting rhythm" (light bounce in knees)
3. Stride and weight transfer
  - Slow take back – "bow and arrow" approach
  - Reach with front foot – toe first (DON'T move weight forward) Power transfer thru hips
  - Stay Straight – head & eyes level
  - Transfer weight – hands go straight to ball
  - KEEP FRONT SHOULDER DOWN ON BALL (chin to shoulder)
4. Swing & follow through
  - Level swing (for liners and grounders)
  - Do NOT look up! Again, shoulder down!
  - Head Down.

## **INFIELDER INSTRUCTION (Juniors level)**

### **Objectives:**

- Understand why fielders get into the “set position”
- Improve ground ball fielding technique
- Develop basic knowledge of cut-off roles and back-up responsibilities
- Increase understanding of when to apply a tag and when there is a force out
- Learn the basic responsibilities of all of the infield positions and take repetitions at each position regularly

### **Expectations:**

- All fielders should be fielding a minimum of 20 ground balls per practice
- All players will develop the infielding knowledge and skills defined in the curriculum

### **Infielder Curriculum**

- **Set position and situational positioning**
  - Ready Position – glove at waist facing up, steps in as pitcher delivers, bend at knees and waist
  - Safe positioning when covering a base that a base runner is advancing to
- **Receiving ground balls**
  - Proper ground ball fielding technique (head low, glove out front, button of cap)
  - Sense of urgency to get to the ball quickly
  - The throw – plant feet and make strong accurate throw
- **Receiving balls in the air**
  - Calling the ball
  - Get to ball fast, don't float
  - Plant feet and throw ball back into the infield quickly
- **Throwing**
  - Throw with a solid base by setting feet and throwing over the top, follow through
  - Crow-hop on longer throws from left side of infield
- **Communication & Responsibilities:**
  - Let outfielders know the number of outs before each batter
  - Back-up on every play
  - Cut-off responsibilities for middle infielders

### **Advanced Infielder skills & knowledge:**

- Learn to cover a base for tagging out baserunners properly and safely
- Learn body positioning and how to line-up a throw when receiving cut-offs

## Outfield Training (Juniors)

### Objectives:

- Learn proper positioning & the outfielder's "set" position
- Learn to hustle to the ball and get the ball back into the infield quickly
- Develop proper fielding techniques for receiving both ground balls and fly-balls
- Improve ability to "crow-hop" in game situations
- Properly judge the flight of a batted ball
- Throw to the appropriate cut-off man

### Expectations: (Outfielders have 3 major assignments)

- All players should practice outfielding skills regularly in practice
- All players should field a minimum of 10 fly balls or pop-up at every practice
- Players should be aware of the 3 major assignments (below for outfielders)

1. **Take a base hit away** from a batter whenever possible. (Catch the fly ball).
2. **Cut down the length of base hits.** (Hustle and work together to hold the batter and/or runners to the minimum number of bases).
3. **Keep runners from advancing** whenever possible. Get to the ball fast and get it in fast! (Throw to the right cut-off or base; throw strongly and accurately).

## Outfielder's Curriculum

### ON EVERY PITCH – an outfielder must:

- Be in the correct position. (see positioning below)
- The outfielder should watch the batter and **not** the pitcher, as the ball is being delivered to the plate
- As the batter strides to hit, the outfielder should be moving forward slightly in the set position.
- He should **listen to the sound of the bat meeting ball**. With a little experience it will tell him how hard the ball is hit.

- The outfielder *always* breaks FAST! (*Drop-step, crossover step & pivot step*)

#### **ON BALLS TO THE OUTFIELD** – an outfielder must:

- **Fly balls:** Get to the ball fast and wait for it. Never drift to a ball.
- **Ground balls:** Try to get it off an early hop. The longer and slower it rolls the trickier the hops become. Get to grounders FAST!
- Run on your toes, not your heels. Running on heels makes your head bounce and makes tracking a fly ball more difficult. Especially important on balls hit over your head where you have to turn and run.
- Use your bare hand to block the sun. (if necessary)

#### **POSITIONING**

- Players should recognize where to go when assigned to a particular outfield position by the first game of the season

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Calling the ball
- Outfielders should **back each other up on every outfield play.**
- Each outfielder should **back up the base in front of him on every infield play.**

## **PITCHER INSTRUCTION (Juniors BB)**

#### **Objectives**

- Develop proper methods for warming up prior to pitching in a game
- Learn proper way to grip the ball
- Learn proper positioning of feet on the pitching rubber
- Improve mechanics so that the proper motion, release and follow-through are exhibited consistently on every pitch
- Recognize the importance of finishing all pitches in manner that puts the pitcher in a position to safely field his/her position

#### **Expectations**

- Pitchers should be working regularly in practice with the team's catchers
- Reinforce the importance of a mechanically sound delivery (preferably from the set position) and be sure to also reinforce the importance of consistency with the delivery.

#### **Pitcher Curriculum**

#### **Warm-up --**

- Starting pitcher
  - Light Jog followed by running 2x from foul pole to foul pole in the outfield
  - Full body stretching focusing on legs, shoulders, arms and wrists

- Throw casually to take an inventory of how arm and body feels
  - Start at about 25-30 ft. and stretch out distance to at least 60 feet
- Once loose – begin with about 5-10 throws doing a casual delivery
- Progress to about 80% effort at regulation distance
  - Number of throws depends entirely on the pitcher and how they feel
- Finish with a few near game speed pitches that are thrown to specific locations

#### **Proper way to hold/grip the ball –**

- The farther apart your fingers are the weaker they become for throwing. The proper distance between fingers is just about an index fingers width apart.
- Grips:
  - 4 seam & 2 seam
  - Use 3 finger grip if hand is too small
  - Stress getting hand behind the ball and throwing with a downward motion
- When set hold ball in the glove with fingers up and be able to see the back of the hand while holding the ball

#### **Pitching from the Stretch – SportsMED video**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMgfz1X9bmc&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMgfz1X9bmc&feature=player_detailpage)

- Start position
  - Aligned with plate
  - Knees bent and relaxed
  - Feet spread comfortably wide
- Come set
  - Stay “square” to the plate – feet should stay in alignment
  - Bring feet to shoulder width by stepping in with lead leg
  - Hands come together with elbows now at sides and relaxed
  - Hands just below chin
- Leg lift/balance point
  - Turn hip and lift knee
  - Balance point – head over back leg
- Separate hands and drive
- Land at Power position
  - Hips and shoulder align with target
  - Get arm up and out – ball pointed back to SS for RHP, 2B for LHP

#### **Additional considerations**

- **Mental approach on the mound**
  - staying positive and throwing strikes
  - Work on slowing down and focus on every pitch
  - Pitching is not a sprint, stress not rushing
  - The best pitch in baseball is a strike
- **Proper positioning of feet on the pitching rubber**
  - Teach throwing from the rubber
  - At this level begin with foot against the rubber (pitching from the stretch makes mastering this fundamental more easily achieved)
- **Positioning the catcher/target**



- Teach focus – stress throwing from pitcher to catcher
- Catcher puts glove directly in front of left knee or right knee
- **How to take the throw back from the catcher**
  - The pitcher should position oneself at the foot of the mound giving the catcher a chest high target
  - Catch the ball with 2 hands
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> base or SS must backup the throw from catcher
  - Be aware of pitch count
  - Pitcher needs to focus on batter and not worry about runners on base because they cannot take a lead or steal
- **The correct way to turn back to the mound**
  - Teach head on swivel and be aware of the situation
  - When pitcher on the rubber, play stops at Instructional, Junior and Minor levels
- **Backup responsibilities**
  - Pitcher backs up 3<sup>rd</sup> on a throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> base
  - Pitcher backs up home on a throw to the plate from outfield or cutoff man

#### **The basics for instructing first year pitchers: Proper windup, release and follow-through**

- Early in the season begin pitcher training by stressing proper throwing fundamentals
  - Start throwing from one knee and stress accuracy – throwing to their partner’s chest (If right handed, then left knee up)
  - Look for elbows to be even with shoulder while throwing
  - Focus on release point
  - Look for proper spin of the ball
  - In the one knee position stress holding the ball with 4 seams, glove fingers up, arm in full circle motion or power position throwing motion
  - Stress getting fingers behind the ball and the wrist in a downward motion when throwing
  - Stress finishing throw with throwing hand finishing just below the opposite knee
- Pitchers should be consistently throwing from a variety distances: The following are recommended distances to have pitchers throw from. (the longer distances are NOT intended for working on delivery)
  - Standing throw: 30 feet, 45 feet, 60 feet, 75+ feet
  - Pitcher throws from rubber to catcher – 25 throws during the week at practices
- Start with Stretch position
  - Glove should have fingers up
  - Pitcher should be able to see the back of their hand in the glove
- Stress balance and leg lift
  - Lift leg to waist high with foot in neutral to down position
  - Back leg slightly bent and resting on toes and balls of foot (Not heels)
  - 25 repetitions of balance position without throwing – should be able to hold for 10 seconds
  - Work on breaking hands from glove with the stride
  - Balance position to stride

- Stride should be 80% of body length
- Teach pushing off mound
  - Draw a line from rubber to create a T
  - Stride to the same spot
  - Create muscle memory
  - Stress mechanics not just throwing with your arm
- Power and Velocity comes from your legs
- Focus on the follow through with throwing arm ending up on opposite knee
- Focus on pitcher finishing in a balanced ready position
- Look for elbow to be in line with shoulder and index and middle finger on top of the ball while throwing
- Look for release point to be in front of face