

## **PART IV:** **Coaching Development Objectives**

### ***Coaching Development Objectives***

These objective are being developed as a guideline only. Each player must be taught based upon his or her talent level as well as their personality and ability learn. Further, it is assumed that the objectives and fundamentals learned at each level will be reinforced at each succeeding level of play.

You will notice that the objectives become more mental as the player gets older and more mature. Age appropriate and sequential teaching techniques are imperative to maximize the success of each player. Players learn and acquire skills at different rates. Coaches and parents need to be aware that learning does not have a time clock. Patience and the willingness to repeat skill acquisition drills is key in keeping young players interested and involved in the game. The ultimate objective is to get players to “feel” the activity/skill and be able to translate that feeling to performance. In other words – be their own coach.

### **T – BALL/COACH PITCH**

1. **Rules –** By the time that the player has finished their first two years they should understand the basic rules by which baseball is played.

- Where is each position and how are they numbered
- How many outs in an inning
- How many innings in a game
- The different ways a runner/hitter can be called out
- Which direction to run the bases
- How teams score runs ( not points or goals or trys)

2. **Team spirit - Sportsmanship** Each player should understand the basics of sportsmanship – root for their team and not be negative towards the opposing team.

- Respect the rules of the game
- Respect umpires
- Respect your teammates
- Respect for their coaches
- Respect your opponents
- Respect for yourself

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3. **Fun** – Each player needs to be reminded that baseball is a game and should be fun. Well organized practices where all the players are kept busy, involved and treated with positive behavior by the coaches is vitally important. Coaches need to emphasize that mistakes are OK – fill the emotional tank of young players and they will have FUN. Feeling part of the team and being able to contribute will keep them coming back to the ball park – this season and the next. Let players experiment with all the positions and learn about the entire game.

4. **Basic, Basic Fundamentals** – The double use of “basic” means do not complicate matters. Players at this level are just beginning to develop motor skills and strength. Therefore, what is most important is that they understand :

- Which hand to wear the glove on
- Which foot goes forward when they throw
- Which hand is positioned on top when they grip a bat
- Which direction to run around the bases
- Which base to throw to for an out

This beginning level might just be the most important when it comes to promoting a continued interest in playing at older ages. So, the coaches at this level need to know as much about teaching young kids as they do about baseball fundamentals.

## JUVENILE LEVEL – AGE 8–12

1. **Throwing mechanics/catch playing** – After two years at this level all players should be throwing the ball with the following mechanics:
  - Throwing elbow consistently at shoulder height or slightly higher at release of ball
  - Body in efficient position in relation to their throwing target
  - Average throwing distance for an 8 = 95ft.; 9 = 105ft.; 10 = 123ft.; 11 = 135ft.; 12 = 141ft.
  - Able to employ the across the seams - 4 seam grip 90% of the time in games and practice
  - After two years at this level the players should know how to use two hands to catch most balls – the bare hand to secure the baseball in the glove.
  - After two years the player should be able to know when to catch the ball with the glove fingers pointing up or down in an appropriate fashion.
  - After two years the players should be able to play catch up to a distance of 80 – 90 ft. with 90% accuracy.

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## 2. Fielding Objectives –

- Ready position – All players should have mastered the ready position as the pitch is released by the second year at this level. They should also understand the importance of this concept.
- Infield fielding position – All players should be able to field a ground ball with a proper – fundamentally sound fielding position by the end of their second season at this level.
- Outfield fielding position – all players should be able to set up to catch a fly ball by the end of their second year at this level
- Players should know what foot to use on the base in force out situations.
- Basic cut – off/relays – by age 12 all players should understand the purpose of the cut off/relay man when throwing to each of the bases and be able to throw the accurately to the appropriate player.
- Basic back up responsibilities – all players by the age of 12 should know the appropriate base or position to back up on all defensive throws.
- Catcher's receiving stance and proper use of catchers gear – by age 10 players interested in being a catcher should be able to wear and use the catchers protective gear and the coach should ensure that it fits properly. The player, by age 10, should be taught the proper pitch receiving stance, proper use of the catcher's glove and basic blocking techniques for pitches in the dirt.

## 3. Pitching objectives – Pitch counts are to be used With the sound throwing mechanics learned at this level

Introducing pitching should be a natural segue way to the higher levels of play. Depending on when your league/club or federation introduces pitching the following objectives should be involved:

- Ages 8 – 9 might want to pitch only from the stretch position so their lack of strength and coordination does not become a barrier to learning to throw strikes.
- Ages 10 – 12 can start to be introduced to the actual wind up.
- Emphasize efficient, mechanically sound pitching fundamentals – these will be discussed in another section. Balance and direction are the key factors.
- Fast ball strikes – the number one priority! Introduce a simple change up grip when the strike percentage with the fastball reaches a consistent 65%.
- Avoid the “win at all cost” mentality – develop the fastball and pound the strike zone – stay away from the curveball/slider until the next level.

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4. **Hitting Objectives** – Allow for success by having the player swing a bat of the proper weight and length to allow for bat control through out the swing.
- Stance – balanced, knees between the feet, weight towards the balls of the feet, feet approximately shoulder width apart, feet lined up in a straight away stance – after 2 years at this level a stance close to this should be developed by each player.
  - Develop a level swing that allows the player to make consistent contact with the pitched baseball – contact should be a line drive or firmly hit ground ball.
  - Players by age 11 year should have overcome a fear of being hit by a pitched ball that would cause them to shy away from the ball prior or during their swing.
  - Players by age 11 should be able to effectively use a batting T. Coaches are responsible for teaching “game” carry over use of the T and all safety factors that the players must be aware of while using the T.

## CADET LEVEL – AGE 13–15

This level is where leading off bases, stealing under normal baseball rules and pitchers needing to use both the full wind up and stretch aspects of pitching come into play. Catchers also will need to develop footwork and throwing technique to defend the steal. A major concern at this level is the move from a smaller field to the regulation diamond. Attention to the longer throwing and running distances is a key concern for coaches.

### Throwing Objectives –

- Crow hop – proper use of the feet and efficient foot work is a main goal at this level. It should be an extension of the throwing fundamentals presented at the juvenile level.
- Catcher specific throwing technique – footwork and framing of pitches introduced at the beginning of this level.
- Continued emphasis on position specific throwing fundamentals.

### Fielding objectives –

- Positional fielding – 1B – holding runners on; 2B/SS – double play foot work and feeds; 3B – fielding bunts; OF – catching fly balls in the sun, communication near the fence, Do or Die on ground balls for OF, catcher pop ups should all be introduced.
- Pop up priorities – introduce the communication as well as the priorities for fly balls in all sections of the field – catchers included.
- Run downs – all players should understand the basics of their responsibilities in a run down. Optimal run down scenario will be accomplished at the Junior level.
- Basic bunt defense – base coverages, R on 1B; R on 2B; basic communication between C and other infielders

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- Charging and proper angles on batted balls – for all ground balls
- Fly balls – All players should be able to position themselves behind a fly ball and catch the ball on their throwing side as they move through the ball.
- Fly ball – drop step – all players should know how to drop step and go back on a fly ball.
- Catcher back up of 1B, proper blocking techniques at HP
- Advanced cut off and relays – all players should know and be able to execute their responsibilities in all cut/relay situations.
- Position definitions – each player should start defining in relation to their skills, what positions they would like to learn in depth.

## **Hitting Objectives –**

- Grip – understand the most effective grip for bat speed and bat control
- Bunting – each player should know how to execute a sacrifice bunt towards 1B and 3B.
- Base running – all players should know how to run through 1B, make a turn on a base hit and be able to run from HP and return by touching the bases with a proper route
- Leading off at all bases – each player will be able to take effective lead offs at each base AND know how to return on a pick off attempt.
- Tag ups – each player should know the situations that require a tag up on a fly ball and how to tag and advance.
- Sliding – All players should be able to execute a bent leg slide, know when to slide and be able to dive back to a base on a pick off attempt.
- Stealing - leads, jumps, reads and technique should be introduced at age 13 and refined by age 15.
  
- Situational hitting – Hit and run techniques, base hit bunt techniques, squeeze bunt – suicide and safety, and using the whole field are areas that should be introduced at age 13 and refined through age 15.
  
- Hitting approach – more refined and advanced fundamentals should be introduced at each age. Tracking the pitch, how to protect yourself on the inside pitch, bat speed drills, T work and front toss, dry swings

## **Pitching Objectives – Pitch counts are to be used**

- Full wind up and stretch – proper/efficient fundamentals of each phase should be introduced at age 13 and continually refined through the end of this age level – The distance increases and many fundamentals will have to be revisited due to the increased distance and possible lack of strength.
- All pitchers will be able to throw an effective change up for a strike a minimum of 60% of the time.

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- Basic pick off moves to all bases – a basic understanding of holding runners on by changing timing and looks should be introduced by age 13 and refined by age 15.
- PFP – pitchers fielding practice – by age 13 the pitcher will be able to cover 1B in all appropriate fielding situations with proper technique. The pitcher will be introduced to fielding bunts , come backers and backing up bases.
- Pitcher – catcher communication- on balls in the dirt, wild pitches to the back stop AND game pitch calling should all be introduced at age 13 and refined by age 15.
- Breaking pitches (curve ball/cutter/slider) - As players become more mature both mentally and physically these type of pitches can be introduced. Proper, effective mechanics as well as prudent use of these pitches is important. *Command of the FB/CH should be at 62 – 65% strikes before you introduce the breaking ball*
- Other pitches – split, knuckle ball, fork ball, etc – Same command principles as FB/CH.

## **General conditioning and maintenance Objectives –**

- Dynamic warm up routines – should be introduced at age 13 and enhanced each year
- Injury prevention – all players are old enough to learn the basic concepts for injury prevention and arm care.
- By age 15 all players must know stretching, running, agility and throwing needs in order to participate in game and practice conditions safely.

## **JUNIOR LEVEL – AGE 16–18**

### **Fielding Objectives –**

- Advanced bunt defenses – incorporate pick offs, rotational defense for all potential bunt situations
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> defense – introduce the defense of the double steal and be able to successfully execute the various defensive plays
- Advanced run downs – introduce the one throw concept and multiple runners on base situations.
- Infield positioning – relating to pitches called by the C and type of hitter.
- Outfield positioning – relating to the pitches called (relayed by the infielders)and the type of hitter.
- Catcher – blocking pitches, throws to all bases, fielding bunts, communicating bunt defenses and calls on where to throw the bunted ball.
- Catcher – calling the game and communicating with pitchers – each year the concept becomes more involved.

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- Arm strength – throwing cords, long toss, med balls and related equipment and drills must be employed starting at age 15 and enhanced through out this age level.

## **Pitcher Objectives –**

- Effective bull pen and pre game warm up routines – All pitchers will need direction to optimize both practice opportunities and game warm up situations.
- Conditioning – relating to core strength, throwing cords, med balls, weighted balls and long toss. All pitchers will be trained in these areas.
- Pitch outs – for both P and C – technique and when to use.
- Advanced pick offs – As the game speeds up , it is important to nullify any advantages the runner has. Timed plays, use of the slide step, changing looks and timing.

## **Hitting Objectives –**

- Situational hitting- Players have matured to the point that they can accomplish game specific tasks. Continued practice and drills should be practiced regularly.
- Core strength, bat speed and advanced hitting techniques are imperative for this age group. Individual ability will dictate the level of involvement at this age.
- Strike zone awareness at this age is very important – practice, drills and visualization are key components.

## **Mental Game -**

A key component to player success – more on this to follow.