

Tips, Practice Plan and Drills

Tips:

- Keep practice fun and moving along – assess your teams/players weaknesses and concentrate on consistent improvement
- Spend more time on defense than offense – it's slow pitch. Your team will hit if you teach basic hitting technique, strike zone, etc. but you will always be competitive if you work hard on the various aspects of defense.
- Own 2nd base on defense – concentrate on getting outs
- Develop your pitchers to throw strikes and don't worry about letting the opponent hit the ball.
- Learn to run the bases with the initial intent we always are looking to advance 2 bases on a hit

Practice Plan

- 1) Warm-up/Throwing/Catching – Team (1/3)
- 2) Multiple Station Drills (1/3)
- 3) Interactive Game/Drills (1/3)

Always come to practice with at least one goal in mind that you want to accomplish. Then build on that every practice thereafter. Remember to make practice fun and keep players moving. Incent players with treats if they do something outstanding (i.e. Mites & Squirts - popsicles for the first flyball caught in a game, etc.)

Mites –60 Minutes; Squirts – 60-75 Minutes; Intermediates – 60-90 Minutes

Throwing/Glove Work Drills

- Demonstrate proper grip of the ball – Four seam with middle finger down the middle of the ball; index and ring finger on the side; Thumb and Pinkie on the bottom
- Arm Position Check – Circle up the team and have them show the coach a proper throwing position
- Drop Step/Skateboard Drill
- Team “Dry” Fielding and Throwing Drill – Separate the team into 3 lines – one row at a time have the players step forward with right left field and then right left throw. Repeat at least 4 times checking the players each time. Then have the next row go.
- Hula Hoop Drill – Hang two hula hoops at a height that is about the same as where your players would catch the ball. Pick a distance for the players to throw from. You can do this as a group drill or work it as an individual station.
- Z Drill – Make two equal perpendicular lines. Start with all of your balls at the end of a row. Start with the player with the balls throw across to the next player. That player throws back to the next player in the other row. Continue back and forth until the ball reaches the end of the line. Place in a bucket. If the ball gets behind the line let it go. Focus on receiving the ball and throwing properly. All balls that get behind the lines result in the group running 1 base for every ball.

Tips, Practice Plan and Drills

- 2 Line Drill – With 2 lines facing each other have the players throw the ball back in forth; concentrate on proper footwork and receiving the ball properly – good drill for infielders
- Right Toe Down/Left Foot Up – This is used to teach players that want to step with the wrong foot when throwing
- Long Throw Drill – Set a bucket at SS or 3B – have the players grab a ball; act like they are fielding and then have them transition into a throw across the diamond – emphasize that a one hop throw on line is better than a lob throw (this is a good drill for Mites/Squirts/Players with weaker arms)
- Around the Horn Drill – Suited best for older players – Set players in a line at home, 1st base, 2nd base and 3rd base (you can move the players in closer to make it easier) – Start by having the player at home throw to 3rd – 3rd throws to 2nd – 2nd to 1st -1st to home – Stress good footwork and quickness – After the player throws they go back to the end of their line – Repeat
- Circle Flip – Good drill if your team is struggling with executing the flip at 2nd – circle the girls with 8-10 feet between them – start with 2 balls at equidistance within the circle and have them start by flipping the ball to their left – emphasize the flip and catch – make it fun by setting a goal for # number of successful flips before dropping, etc
- No Glove Catch – Good drill for players who are consistently placing their glove in the wrong catching position – with no glove on have the player catch lightly tossed balls with their catching hand – have them note which direction their fingers are pointing on each catch – after a number of catches have them put their gloves on and repeat the drill – the results should be dramatic

Hitting Drills

- Review each players hitting style, stance and swing – make sure they are efficiently getting the bat through the zone – if they are dragging the bat through the zone the bat may be too heavy
- Explain the Strike Zone – Squirts and Intermediates
- Team Batting Practice – Not a big fan of just having a player take a bucket of continuous swings – it is boring and it unrealistic for the hitter – If you do a team batting practice have three or four players rotate through with each getting 3-5 swings in and then have them rotate; run out their last hit; this can be repeated a couple of times for that group.
- Tee Drill – Good for all ages – have them start at the point of contact, pull the bat back and then go back to contact; pull bat back and then swing throw – check the players stance after they have hit the ball – make sure they properly drive the back leg, etc.
- Tee Drill with Deflated Soccer Ball – Place a semi-deflated soccer ball on a hitting tee; Have the player do the tee drill above; The soccer ball will give the player the feel of good contact
- Flip Drill – Stand to the side of the player – flip the ball at around lower chest level – player should swing and drive ball

Tips, Practice Plan and Drills

- Develop Concept of 3 Balls Wide Strike Zone – place a ball inside, down the middle and outside – stagger them so the hitter understands that an inside pitch should be hit out front with hips opening, ball down the middle – drive up the middle and ball outside let it get deeper and go the other way
- Full Scrimmage – Really like to use this at all levels as it is a great combo drill – Divide the team out in thirds – play a normal game – keep score – move your fielders around to different positions each inning – try to play 2 or 3 innings – play 3 outs or 3 times around the order for any given 3-4 player team – after each batter ask the defense where the play is – talk to the runners about what they are going to do next
- Directional Hitting Scrimmage – Draw a line in the sand anywhere you wish on the field; pick teams; team in the field plays on whatever side the coach decides you want the hitters to aim; batter has to hit the ball safely to the side of field selected; if they hit to the wrong side they are automatically out.
- Wiffle Ball Drill – This is good for players that are shying away from pitched balls
- Hit Stick Drill – Static or Slow motion ball movement
- Punch Drill – Without a bat have the player get into a batting stance. If the player is RH have them throw a punch with their right hand (LH for Lefties). Note how the player shifts their weight through the punch and how that same feel happens when they swing properly

Base Running

- Teach aggressiveness; proper rounding and turns; hitting the inside corner of the base when running bases; picking up the coaches; understanding how to run when the ball is in the air; tagging up; angle running; etc.
- Situations – Combo drill with fielding and base running – line up 4 players at home with the rest of the team in the field – setup various game situations and see how the team reacts both offensively and defensively
- Two Coach Drill – Line your players at home plate; One at a time have them run to first; Have the coach at first instruct them to “Get Here” meaning run through the base; “Round It”; “Two” meaning round first and run to second; Keep that player on the base and have the next girl go. Have the third base coach instructing the remaining runners
- Base Running Relay – Have half the players start at home and half the players start at 2nd. On “go” both groups take off running around the bases trying to catch the other girls from the other team. Emphasize that they all need to touch the bases as they are running. As a player is tagged they are out. Last team standing is the winner.
- Tagging Up – discuss how players need to tag up based on the distance to hit ball, trajectory of hit ball and which base or situation is play at the time.

Tips, Practice Plan and Drills

Fielding

- Emphasize Feet Wider than Shoulders, Bend at the Waist, Butt Down, Push Glove out and Throwing Hand by or over the Glove – Form a triangle with your legs wide and glove in front
- Ball Behind Drill – Have the player get in a fielding position – with coach behind the player have the coach roll the ball through the players legs and have the player go get the ball with good fielding technique – this drill emphasizes coming to the ball
- Static 3 Ball Drill – Place 3 balls in various spots at a position (i.e. SS) – put a cone or glove down – have the player go around the object in a counter clockwise motion and then have them move forward to the ball with proper fielding technique and make throw.
- One Hop/Fumble & Recover Drill – Line up the players at a position and have the coach throw easy one hop grounders – have them field and throw to designated base – if they drop the ball have them pick the ball up with their hand and throw to the designated base
- Flip Drill @ 2nd Base – Probably the most important drill to ultimately own 2nd base on defense - Divide the team equally between 2nd and SS – throw grounders to either the 2nd or SS for that player emphasize stepping toward 2nd base and flipping the ball underhand to the target – have the other player cover 2nd base emphasize that the player should find the base, set target, catch the ball, tag the base and get off
- Discuss in depth how to play each position
- Field & Tag the runner running to 2B & 3B – Hit a grounder to the player and have them practice tagging the runner that would be coming to their base
- 2 Coach Infield Drill – Hit to 3B and throw to 2B; Hit to 2B and throw to 1B
- Partner One-Hop – Select fielding partners – have them line up about 3-4 feet away from each other; have the players bounce one-hoppers back and forth – emphasize proper
- Slow Rollers
- Situations – this is a critical drill to spend time with each practice – you can add runners if you wish and you should setup up whatever situations your team needs work at.
- Team Infield Practice
- Ladder Cut Drill (Combo Drill Infield/Outfield) – Split the team into 2 or 3 lines – have the girls start about 20-25 feet away from each other – Start with the player at the end and have them throw to the next girl in line – the player catching the ball should raise their arms like they are a cutoff – emphasize that the ball be thrown to the glove side and have the receiving player go get the ball
- Hit Between 1st & 2nd w/Pitcher Covering – this is an important drill for higher levels
- Hit Ball back to Pitcher and take the runner at 1st, 2nd or 3rd – the base the pitcher will be determined by who is on base – for example: if you set the situation to be runner on 1st then ball hit back to pitcher should be thrown to 2nd base with the SS covering (SS

Tips, Practice Plan and Drills

always covers on this play) – if you set the runners on 1st and 2nd then depending where the ball is hit to the pitcher will determine if the player throws to first or third.

Pitching -

- Each player will progress at a different pitching pace; At the start of the year work with each player to help them pitch but find your best 3-4 pitchers to pitch in the initial games; Work the other girls into games as the season progresses; The goal is for all of the players to work at pitching and to have them pitch at least 1-2 innings during the season but at the same time we need the games to move along
- Make it Simple – Straight Back; Step Forward ; Chest Up; Release Up and Out – (Coaches should watch arm swing and stress consistent setup and motion)
- Target Practice – Use a target (i.e hula hoop, box, etc.) – have the players start at 20 feet – with proper motion have them hit the target 3 times and then move them back 5 feet and repeat – continue to move back until they are comfortable at 35 feet

Outfield

- Drop Step Drill – Have players over emphasize the concept of opening hip and drop stepping on each flyball – can be done in tandem with other drills or a dry land drill
- Backing Up/Moving in the Direction of the Ball – teach that on every hit everyone (infield and outfield) needs to do something and should move in direction of ball or cover their base
- Cutoffs – At the younger ages it is appropriate to get outfielders to throw the ball to 2nd – at older levels players should be instructed to get the ball ahead of the lead runner – SS and 2B communication is critical
- Two Ball Drill – Coach throws flyball to left or right of player with them demonstrating a good drop step – they catch and make a throw – coach then immediately throws a flyball in opposite direction – player should flip hips and drop step to catch ball.
- Run Up Drill (Hero Drill)
- Outfield Grounders – this can be coupled with a runner on first, ball hit to LCF or RCF and the player fielding and throwing to 2nd to get runner out
- Getting Behind the Ball and Finding Apex of the Fly Ball