

FIELDING DRILLS

CONES

Set out some small cones in an arc in the outfield and then hit grounders to the outfielders. They must round the cones before reaching the ball. This teaches them to go to the path of the ball and not directly at the ball.

1,2,3

One of my favorite fielding drill is what I call the: (1, 2, 3 drill). This drill is great for both infielders as well as outfielders.

This is a line drive and pop up fielding drill which teaches players to catch three types of fly balls.

- 1) a line drive right at them,
- 2) a line drive that they must stretch for,
- 3) and last a fly ball that they must sprint to catch. This is how the drill works.

Line your players up in a single file line, players should start on the fair line just behind first base at the edge of the outfield grass. The coach will be in right-center field with a bucket of balls. The players will be running in a straight line about 50 to 60 feet away from the coach. (Running from first towards second.) One player at a time and they need their gloves.

The coach starts by throwing a line drive right at the players, the player catches it and will still running the coach throws the second ball in front of the player making her reach to catch it, while the player is still running the coach throws the third ball, which is a high pop fly out away from the player that she must track down and catch it. After player one has been she returns to the back of the line and it is time for the next player.

Keys important to this drill:

- 1) Once the players starts running (she never stops nor hesitates) she sprints all the way, catching all the balls on the run.
- 2) Once the players catches a ball she quickly throws it down and

looks for the next ball.

3) After the player has finish she retreats and picks up the three balls and gets in the back of the line. (balls on the ground may cause a twisted ankle)

4) The coach needs to be quick and accurate with his/her throws. A line drive right at them starts it off, then the second throw must be where they reach out for, and the last throw is a fly ball out away from the player which they must hustle down and catch.

5) This drill really works on catches you may encounter during a game.

6) There is a big difference between running and sprinting we like our players to sprint while doing this drill.

BREAK DOWN

This drill is a "break down drill" Have your players get in partner.

On there knees they role each other the ball. While fielding with bare hands (enforce soft-hands, paddles can be good for this) they lift there feet of the ground behind them. This forces them to see the ball all the way in. After they have done about twenty of that tell them to put their gloves on. Do about twenty that way. Then have them work forehand and back hands the same way. When they are done with that tell them to stand up and do the same things while standing. Start with their gloves off and go back through the rotation. When they do backhands and for hands make them start with their feet already in the position they would be in when fielding the ball and make them concentrate on soft-hands.

While it can be really annoying it really does help you focus on the basics and make sure that they are right.

BARNEY BOP

The final thing we do at every practice is to have a game that teaches a skill. Here is of my very favorites and a favorite of my players.

The game is called "Barney Bop." Take a stool or high chair and place it straddling first base with a net or fence behind it to stop any errant throws. Place a stuffed animal on top of the chair (I use a Barney Doll, hence the name). Divide your team into two equal teams or as equal as possible. Both teams stand out by the shortstop position, with one

member of the first team ready to field a ball. The other members of her team are awaiting their turn in line, as well as the members of the other team.

Hit a grounder to the first member of the first team. She must field the ball cleanly and make a throw to first base attempting to knock "Barney" off the chair. If she does, her team gets one point. Then do the same to the first member of the second team. Alternate teams until every player of each team has had at least one throw at "Barney". The team with the most points wins!!

I also like to have the players also do this drill from center field with "Barney" at second base and also from second base throwing to first base. I have found this game to be a great way to involve competition with efforts to improve throwing accuracy.

BOBBLE BALL

Set up an infield with players playing 1st, 2nd, ss, and 3rd. Have two coaches at home plate, one to hit & one to catch in. Coach hitting the ball will be hitting quickly and randomly to the players on the infield. Player fielding the ball will throw to 1st base who will throw ball home to coach catching in. Other players are on the sidelines heckling those fielding the ball trying to distract the fielders to actually create a bobble or an error. If, and when this happens fielder will verbally admit to the error "Uh-oh my bad or my fault" and will leave the field and a player on the sidelines will take her place. The object here is to A:) Learn to focus no matter what noise is going on in the stands. B:) If you make an error- admit it, deal with it, get over it and continue on. C:) For my girls it is a competition as always and some of our best dives for the ball will happen.

Note: When the ball is missed and extra effort has been made such as a dive then this is not considered an error and fielder will continue.

CLOCKWORK

One drill I use with outfielders is called "clockwork".

A cutoff approx. 50 ft. from the catcher. And 5 or 6 outfielders-each spread out from right to left, approx. 50 ft. from cutoff. I start by hitting a ball to the girl farthest left, she throws to cutoff, cutoff throws home. After throwing to cutoff the fielder then runs to take her spot, the cutoff after throwing home, runs home to become catcher, and the catcher is to run to the open spot in the outfield. In a short amount of

time fielders get to field in all outfield positions, work on throws, and get some conditioning.

COLORED NUMBERS

This drill is to help the kids keep an eye on the ball. I write numbers on the balls in different colors 1-5. The girls have to field the ball and call out the color the number is written in. When they get the hang of that have them call out the number written. I use permanent marker and depending on the age I will determine what size to make the numbers.

FOOTBALL FLY'S

This drill has worked well for youth (U12). In order to have them practice catching running fly balls over the shoulder we use soft footballs.

They run out like a football receiver from the coach. The coach throws the football and they have to catch it over their right shoulder or left shoulder using both hands up and bringing in the ball. They cannot turn around and back up. This helps with hand-eye coordination also. After several successful catches we put their gloves on and they catch the football with the glove on. They always use both hands. After more successful catches we move to the softball.

This drill is fun and has really improved our fly ball catches.

FUNNEL

This drill was one of the most helpful drills as a player, and now as an assistant coach. Players can do this drill after warming up their arms, with their partner. One player keeps their glove on, the other takes their glove off. The partner with the glove rolls them the ball. The fielder must get down on the ball, or they will miss it.

They also learn they must get completely in front of the ball, and scoop or "funnel" the ball to their waist.

GROUNDERS

It allows for each fielder to see nearly 75-100 ground balls within 20 minutes.

You need 2 coaches (if girls are skilled enough let them hit the

grounders), 2 crates of balls (25 in ea.), & 2 empty crates to set at designated base.

The drill goes as follows: Grounders to 3B who throws to First; other coach hits to 2B who throws to SS covering second. Then: ss to 1B, 3B to 2b; 2B to 1B, SS to 3B; 1B to 3B, SS to 2B.

There are variations we mix in also with catcher throwing to bases.

INFIELD-OUTFIELD-RELAY

I found one drill that fits every level of play. It develops both the INFIELD mechanics, OUTFIELD mechanics, and finally RELAYS to HOME.

I divide the team into 2 groups. One group lines up behind third-base. The other group lines up in deep right-center. I have an assistant coach acting as my catcher as I hit hard grounders to the first in line at third-base. She fields the ball and quickly makes a sharp throw to home-plate. I then hit a deep fly ball to the first in line at right-center. As this player sprints to catch the ball, the fielder that was at third-base sprints to a relay position for home-plate. The outfielder hits the now relay fielder who should be properly positioned to receive and relay the throw to home-plate.

The cycle repeats as the infielder that was the relay joins the rear of the line of outfielders. The outfielder that caught and threw the ball to the relay then joins the rear of the line of infielders. This cycle should be repeated as to correctly get everyone to errorlessly field, catch, throw, and relay through an entire cycle.

OUTFIELD FLY

There is a drill I have been using for outfielders. Place half the team in left field and the rest in center. The coaches hit a fly ball in between the first two outfielders.

They both go for the ball with one catching it and the other properly backing up the fielder. If the ball happens to get by both fielders then they will use a relay throw to get the ball back to the coach.

This drill has helped greatly in backing up on all balls, and easy to do before games.

OVER-THE-HEAD

Have the players line up and have one of them selected to field a ball hit over her head. Hit or throw the ball over her head and to the right or left. Make sure that she does not run with her glove up, but rather put the glove down and run to catch the ball and then get her glove up and make the catch.

Also, when doing these drills, make sure the fielder catches the ball in front or to her throwing side so she can make a quick release of the ball to an infielder.

PADDLE

For this drill we made paddles with straps out of ping pong paddles and stapled a strap on to the back of the paddle. Have the players strap on the paddles and hit them tennis balls on the ground.

This teaches them to go to the ball with both hands and also to have soft hands. It also teaches them to watch the ball all the way to the glove.

READY FOR ANYTHING

Have someone to throw the ball and to catch. First you form a line about 30 to 40 feet away from the person that is throwing the ball. Tell the players just to charge the ball. Also tell them that they could expect almost anything. Grounder, Pop Fly, or a line drive right to them. Anything.

It teaches them to be ready for anything. And to always charge the ball.

RELAY THROW

Have the players line up in a line stretching to the outfield. Have the first player throw the ball to the glove side of the second player in the line. Do the same for the rest of the players.

This teaches the proper location for the relay throw and also teaches quick turn and release of the throw.

SITUATIONS

One drill that our coaches use with us is where the infield takes their

positions and the coach makes up situations for us. Like...A runner on 1st and 2nd...2 outs...and then she hits the ball to us making us like its a real situation and we have to figure out what to do with the ball so we'll be ready for any situations like that in a real game.

She/he goes through every situation possible with us so we won't get confused in a game. She/he does this every practice. It helps out a lot and causes less confusion during a real game. The outfielders participate too. It's just like a real game going on except it's practice. It really helps improve the mental aspect of your fielding skills.

STAR

The fielder stands about 20 yards away from the thrower. The fielder runs to the right and makes the catch, then drops the ball and hauls it over to the far left, makes the catch, drops the ball, then runs away from the thrower for the long ball, catches it, drops it, and runs straight towards the thrower for the shallow ball and that's it.

THAT GAME

You split your team into 3 teams it works well with 12 players and 2 coaches. One team goes to the outfield, one team plays the infield and the other team is up to bat. One coach pitches and one catches, you can also use the tee if you only have one coach, he/she needs to play catcher, or you can play pitcher and catcher after the ball has been hit. The pitcher pitches 3 pitches and the batter hits the ball and has to run all the bases, the team who touches the ball first has to field the ball and pass the ball under their legs until the ball has been passed to every girls on their team and the last girl has to throw the ball to the catcher before the batter/runner makes it home. The throw home has to be a good throw and the coach receiving the throw home can stand on home plate and can stretch to catch the ball but cant leave the plate.

If the ball arrives before the runner then the home team has one out--three outs and they go to the outfield and the infield team is up to bat, the kicker is that the pitcher can pitch as soon as a batter is up to the plate with a helmet on so if your team was just at bat you better be running to position yourself in the outfield. We end up with girls not even taking their helmets off, but they also learn teamwork, they have each others gloves ready for their teammates on their way to the field and they usually have the girl with the best arm line up at the end of the line to assure a good throw home, coaches beware, this game has just pooped me out, especially when you are playing pitcher and

catcher!!!!

Oh yah, the batter only gets 3 pitches, if she doesn't hit a fair ball after 3 she is out. And no bunting.

TIGER

This drill is used to have everyone participate in fielding, catching and throwing.

Have everyone spread out evenly into a deep infield position. One player on first and I use another player for backup to the first baseman. Have an assistant be the catcher or you could use another player.

Start the drill by coach saying ready. This is a queue for getting all the players into a ready position.

You then hit grounder or fly balls to them. They will need to be sure and call it if it is a fly ball. On grounders make sure they setup in the PFP (Perfect Fielding Position) and keep the ball in front of them. Once the catch is made a good throw to first base is then made. The first basemen then throws the ball to the catcher.

If a ball is missed the player missing the ball runs and retrieves the ball runs back and rolls the ball into the backstop while everyone else continues on with the drill. After they all have received at least one ball hit to them I will then yell switch. At that time the player that is backing up the first baseman becomes the first baseman. The first baseman goes to where third would be and everyone else rotates toward first.

I usually have punishments for trying to correct certain aspects of the drill. For example not getting ready, not getting in front of the ball, not using PFP, making bad throws to first ect. have to run a short distance and return to the drill.

I also award players doing things correctly.

PFP - Perfect Fielding Position - Glove foot forward. Other foot shoulder with apart at the inseam of the glove foot. Glove out in front and on the ground. Back parallel with the ground. Shoulders square with the hitter.

TRIANGLE

You have to divide your team up into 3 groups. The first group stands between first base and second base. The second group stands at short stop. The third group stands at home plate. A coach and the catcher stand a little to the side of the plate. The coach hits the ball to the first group, then the first group catches it and throws it to the second group while running to the second group position. The second group girl that catches the ball throws it to home plate while running there. You just keep on rotating in all of the positions.

This drill gets you in shape and alert the whole time.

GAME

BARNEY

It is the most fun game we play and the players absolutely LOVE IT!!!

You get a Barney (or any other stuffed animal, but Barney works the best because they hate him) and put him on a chair by 1st base. If you have a net, put the net behind the chair to stop the balls, otherwise put the chair near home. Have a coach hit ground balls to shortstop.

The player fields the ball and makes a throw trying to knock Barney off the chair.

The ball must be fielded properly or no points. Have a time limit (about 5 minutes) and keep track of how many hits Barney gets. We have a rule that if the players can beat the previous record, we run.

BAT AROUND THE HORN

I call this drill BAT AROUND THE HORN. It works on every aspect of the game--Hitting, Fielding, Throwing, Base Running and requires two teams of 5 players. (It can be played with 6 players or more but each player scores for herself.)

One team takes the field at 1b,2b,ss,3b, and c. The other team is at bat. The batter hits a ground ball (from a tee, soft toss, or just toss the ball up and hit it). Fly balls are outs. An infielder catches the ball and throws to 1b. 1b then throws to one of the other infielders. That fielder throws back to 1b. 1b then throws to the other infielder (who hasn't touched the ball) who throws back to 1b. The ball then goes

around the horn (1b to ss to 2b to 3b) and then to the catcher.

Each fielder must touch her base before throwing except for around the horn and home. If the batter-runner can run all the way home before the ball gets home, 1 run scores. If the ball gets home first, one putout is made. Fielders rotate one position clockwise and next batter hits. Each Fielder has caught 3 ball and made 3 throws. Every catch and throw must be accurate or a run scores. Bat until 3 outs are made and change sides. Batters need to wear helmets. Play 3-7 innings. With more than 10 players - Fielders can rotate in at 3b.

Here's an example in case the explanation was not clear:

Ball hit to 3rd.

3b catches batted ball, steps on 3rd, throws to 1b

1b catches ball, steps on 1st, throws to ss

ss catches ball, steps on 2nd, throws to 1b

1b catches ball, steps on 1st, throws to 2b

2b throws to 1b (now around the horn)

1b throws to ss

ss throws to 2b

2b throws to 3b

3b throws to c and c steps on home plate

GLOVES OFF

We use this drill to teach aggressive base running, hitting, and fielding. The drill uses a whiffle ball and a plastic bat. First set the bases at about 40 feet apart. Divide your team in two. One half fields and the other bats. Fielders do not use their gloves. We want to teach them that the hands are the real tools in catching the ball.

The ball is pitched from about 20 feet away. The batter has only three chances to hit the ball. (There are no balls or walks in this drill.) Once the ball is hit, the batter must run the bases until she reaches home plate or is tagged out. The fielders must always try to tag the runner out at first. You bat the entire line up. Then you change sides. We

usually do this drill twice a week for about 20 minutes at a very fast pace.

GROUNDER FLY BALL GROUNDER

Line all of your players up at third base. Hit a hard grounder to the first person in line. As soon as they throw it in to the coach throw a high fly to first. Make the player hustle to get it. as soon as they throw it in hit another grounder to third, thus making them run back across to get it.

This drill is good for foot speed, fielding and personal effort. Speed it up as players advance.

GUTS

The girls have created their own names for this drill - guts, kill your teammate, the grounder game. Simply divide the girls into two teams. Have the teams form two lines about 40 to 60 feet apart, with players shoulder to shoulder three feet apart. Place something two feet from each girl at either end of both lines. These are the goal posts. The goal posts can be buckets, cones, balls, or the parents. Hand a ball to one of the players. To play the game, the girls take turns trying to throw grounders through the opposing line. They can throw as hard as they want (make sure they're spaced far enough apart).

The rules are fairly simple: The player who fails to prevent the ball from going past the imaginary line between goal post is out of the game. The team who loses all its players first loses. The ball must bounce in front of the players to count. If a player's ball is caught on the fly without bouncing she is out - if it is dropped, she stays in. If a ball goes through the line without bouncing, it has no effect. Any throw outside the goal posts has no effect.

As players are eliminated move the goal posts in until the last player has a goal roughly six feet wide. Hint: if the girls learn to charge the ball, it gives one of their teammates an opportunity to back them up. If there is a question as to which girl allowed the ball to get through the line, the opposing team decides.

KNOCK OUT

When my team is stuck in the gym for a couple of days it's hard to keep up their interest. I do an X-out drill where the team is divided into two teams and stands on the corner of gym on opposing corners.

Each coach stands on the opposite end at the corners and hit/throws grounders or fly balls to their team cross court. Each coach has a catcher who feeds the ball to the coach and also must catch all balls if possible. To complete the play the player must catch the ball successfully and make a catchable throw to their catcher for a point.

This goes on for about 3 minutes with the winner watching the others run or getting a treat. My girls like this drill the best.

PEPPER

The name of this game is Pepper. A coach gathers a small group of players which are only a few feet from him/her. The coach then hits or bunts the ball to the players in any random order, then the players must use quick reactions to retrieve the ball and accuracy to pitch, this pitch is only a toss, for the coach to hit again.

You do this drill to improve the players reaction time. You have to do this drill as quickly as possible and the pace will increase as time goes on, and the players improve. This can also be used to help players with bunting by having a player bunt the ball in place of the coach.