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Practice 7: Outfield Defense



PRACTICE 7

GOAL: Introducing proper technique of fielding live pop flies and throwing to the bases.

First 5 Minutes

Talk to the players and encourage them to work hard and have fun. Concentrate on better technique today and tell the players what will be done during this practice.

Next 5 Minutes (Stretching)

Stretch legs for two minutes and stretch arms for two minutes. Stretching prepares the muscles to prevent injury. The last minute should be used to jog around the field once.

Next 10 Minutes (Throwing Warm-ups)

Players should be getting more accurate with their throws. Pair off the players with each other and line them up 10 to 12 feet apart. Make sure there is enough room to consider errant throws. Have them toss the ball back and forth; 20–25 throws should be sufficient.

Coaching Point

- *Using adults as back-ups to cover errant throws would be helpful. Remember, the more throws, the better.*

Next 3 Minutes (Water Break)

Give the players time to break for water. It is extremely important for the players to remain hydrated at all times. But have them hustle back to the field.

Next 25 Minutes (Outfield Positioning and Catching)

Based on the previous practice, the coach will recognize which players are best suited for the outfield (but don't be too judgmental because you want players to experience a variety of positions).

There should be infield players located at all bases. The coach may choose to hit or throw pop flies to the outfield players and have each throw back to both second or third base. With younger players, you may want to use tennis balls to help them gain confidence catching fly balls above their head. Make sure your players are catching the ball between their shoulders and not off to the side.

Eventually, you will incorporate cut-off throws. It's pretty simple, the shortstop takes all the cuts to the left of second base and the second baseman takes everything to the right. If there's any doubt – like a ball to dead center field, the shortstop takes charge and will go for the cut.

Coaching Points

- *Make sure the outfielders are catching the ball properly above their face.*
- *For balls behind them, the outfielders must take a drop step after their first step.*
- *Stress the importance of calling for the ball. Teach the players to scream "Mine!" because "I got it!" can sometimes sound like "You got it!"*

End of Practice

End practice with a lap around the bases. Then, while the players are drinking water, huddle them together for a talk. Take this time to recognize the work that was done well, but also discuss what needs improvement. Tell the players the next practice time and follow up with an email to their parents.