

Positional Mechanics for Infield Positions

FIRST BASEMAN

- The #1 job of the first baseman is to keep the ball in front of him
- The first baseman must go after any ball that is thrown his way

Basic Positioning to Receive a Throw

- Sprint to the base and square up to the ball
- Start with both heels on the inside of the base and step to the ball
 - Only step to the ball once the ball is seen
 - Stepping too early will decrease mobility and range
 - Use as a form of increasing the jump to receive a high throw
 - Step to the ball with the glove foot on a normal throw
 - A ball that is wide to the throwing side may be easier to receive keeping the glove foot on the base

Holding Runners on Base

- Right foot is closest to base for RH
- Stand approximately 1.5 ft. from the base, closer to the pitcher and runner
- First job is to catch the ball and second job is to tag the runner
- The tag should be a sweep tag that goes directly to the inside of the base
- Never look for the tag, first catch then tag

Feed to Pitcher's (Second Baseman)

- The first baseman must get whatever he can get; pitcher will break to cover on all grounders hit to the first base side of the field
- Underhand Feed
 - Teaching cues are stiff wrist, follow the ball all the way to the base, show the ball early, keep hand below the waist, focus on target, throw should lead pitcher to base, keep body low and remember to keep running to the base (helps with throw)
- Overhand Feed
 - Dart throw when close to receiver, lead pitcher to base, if the pitcher is already there throw the ball to his chest

Double Play Feeds

- Field the ball in front of the body with the body slightly open to 2B
- Throw the ball where you field the ball (inside = inside / outside = outside)
- Never throw across the runner
- Use a reverse pivot when needed; fielding on glove side, deep ground ball, any ball taking first baseman away from 2B (think about getting 1 not 2)
 - Critical to have on inside of back leg for balance on the throw

The first baseman should:

- (1) Sprint to the bag to give the infielders a target to throw to.
- (2) Develop a pick off sign with the pitcher for when he feels the runner is too far off the bag.
- (3) Develop a no pick off sign for when a bunt is in order and he must charge so that he can get a better break toward the plate.
- (4) Learn all cut off responsibilities and how and where to line himself up.
- (5) Learn how to trail the runner going to second base on the sure double or possible triple. The ball hit into the gap.
- (6) Work with the pitchers on flipping the ball to them chest high on plays at first base.
- (7) Work on move off the bag to get distance between himself and the bag when holding a runner on base.
- (8) Work on his throws to second base when starting the 3-6-3 double play.
- (9) Work on throwing to all bases as well as cut-off and relay throws.
- (10) Work on tagging the runner on pick off attempts.
- (11) Work on tagging the runner on throws up the line.
- (12) Work on catching all bad throws.

SECOND BASEMAN

- When a double play is possible positioning is 3 in and 3 over
 - Must communicate with other fielders regarding situation
 - We will show four basic feeds:
 1. underhand
 2. $\frac{3}{4}$ feed / jump pivot
 3. reverse pivot
 4. flip
1. Underhand
 - Ball that is hit on the base side of the second baseman or a ball that is close to the base
 - Get the ball out of the glove immediately and make sure to hide the glove
 - Show the ball
 - Ball should be flipped chest height to the SS
 - Wrist must be stiff and must stay below the waist to keep the ball low
 - Keep palm behind the ball and fingers to the ground
 - Reach the arm to the target
 - Follow the throw – keeps velocity on the ball and improves accuracy, run past base to follow ball
 2. $\frac{3}{4}$ Feed / Jump Pivot
 - Ball hit at second baseman or a ball hit to the glove side
 - Keeps second baseman from moving toward 2B on grounder
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ must have hips open to target and the throwing arm is $\frac{3}{4}$ not over the top
 - Stay low and snap the throw to the back of the base (create a triangle)
 - Utilize the V-cut technique when fielding the ball
 - Jump Pivot is for the second baseman to jump pivot to line up the throw
 - May be easier for younger players and weaker arms
 3. Reverse Pivot
 - Ball hit on the glove side with fielder moving away from the base
 - Lead with the glove to the ball
 - Once the ball is fielded reverse pivot and make sure post leg has the weight on the inside of the leg – balance and positioning
 - Body should be in proper throwing positioning
 - Throw is regular infield mechanics – target is back of base (triangle)

4. Flip

- Not a high priority due to risk of play
 - Use when ball is hit softly and in front of base/baseline
 - Get the ball out of the glove immediately and show the ball to SS
 - Cue with mechanics is to “Roll the ball across the table”
 - Elbow is critical for success of the play; must stay in same spot and not move
 - Hand stays on the side of the ball and move hand to target on release
- Other Plays
 - Ball in front of runner
 - Try to tag him if possible, do not chase, get out at 2B otherwise go to 1B
 - If runner begins back to 1B – make throw to 1B then rundown for a force out
 - Ball fielded up the middle and SS cannot get to the base to cover
 - Double play pivot using push off or step across
 - Make sure to be balanced

Double Play Pivots

- We will teach three techniques
 1. Push Off
 2. Step Across
 3. Straddle
1. Push Off – mainly used on ball hit to SS
 - Get to the base and square up to the target
 - Left foot is on the base
 - Target is front of eyes and chest high (always expect a bad throw)
 - Once the ball is caught with two hands, push off the base and open the front foot to 1B – this is a for safety and not injuring the knee
 - A throw that is wild on the throwing side
 - Step to ball with the throwing foot and make sure of the out if possible
 - A throw that is too far on the glove side
 - Step to ball with glove foot and put throwing foot on base (straddle)
 - If throw is tough to make, place more weight on the inside of the right leg, when the left foot steps toward 1B more weight transfer can be used on the throw (velocity)
 2. Step Across – mainly use with pivot on throw from 3B
 - Pivot happens on the 3B side of second base
 - Great play when moving fast to the base
 - Get to base and have target chest high
 - Step to the ball with right foot and use left foot for the base
 - Once the ball is caught with two hands, step in front of the base and open the front foot to 1B
 - Critical to not throw the ball across the body – keep body open
 3. Straddle
 - Straddle the base and react to the ball
 - Step to ball with same foot as throw (left = left / right = right)
 - Helps with moving body to 1B, but may be more dangerous with runner sliding into base

The second baseman should:

- (1) Develop the ability to field the short hop.
- (2) Be able to hold runners at second base.
 - (A) Use two quick steps plant and return. These steps must be the same whether you are faking him or taking a pick-off throw.
 - (B) Decoy him so that the shortstop can sneak in behind.
- (3) Work to prevent the delayed steal.
 - (A) Stay alert at all times by always checking the runner.
 - (B) Always move toward second base after every pitch that is taken with a runner on first base.
- (4) Back up the pitcher on all balls thrown by the catcher with or without a runner on base.
- (5) Have an understanding with the shortstop as to who is covering the base on any given pitch with a runner on first base.
 - (A) The shortstop for left hand hitters.
 - (B) The second baseman for right hand hitters.
- (6) Know the proper timing to leave his position to cover the bag on a steal attempt.
 - (A) After the ball has passed through the hitting zone.
 - (B) Be sure to sprint to the bag and set up.
- (7) Know the proper way to receive the throw from the catcher.
 - (A) Straddle the bag.
 - (B) Let the ball come to you.
 - (C) Always leave the bag if necessary to catch the ball.
 - (D) Block everything. Nothing goes to the outfield.
- (8) Understand how to apply the tag.
 - (A) Lay the glove directly in front of the bag.
 - (B) Tag the runner on the feet whenever possible.
 - (C) See yourself apply the tag.
 - (D) Don't get tangled up with the runner. Get away from him and look for a secondary play.
- (9) Know how and when to position yourself where the hitter is likely to hit the ball.
 - (A) Know all the catcher's signals and position yourself accordingly. Never leave your position too soon so that the other team does not pick up the pitch.
- (10) Understand all pick-off plays. See pick-off play section.
- (11) Know your cut-off and relay responsibilities.
- (12) Know how to execute the double cut responsibilities.
- (13) Know when to receive the throw from the infield and outfield sides of the bag (never cross the runner).
- (14) Know the proper time to leave his position on the bunt and not leave his side of the infield unguarded too early.
- (15) Understand how to decoy runners, forcing them to slide and not give them the extra base. Also never show the runner that the ball is coming in, catch it at the last second and make a quick tag.
- (16) Know when to fake a throw and throw behind the lead runner.
- (17) Understand all your run down responsibilities.
- (18) Make every effort to make the catch on the short fly ball down the right field line.
- (19) Know all infield communication.
- (20) Know when to throw behind the runner on first after a long single to right or center field.
- (21) Determine in advance who will cut off the catcher's throw on a double steal situation. The position that takes the cut-off is determined by many factors, such as the hitter and how he will be pitched to; the running speed or ability of the base runners; the importance of the run on third and first; the arms of the infielders; the fact that you are at home or on the road; the ability of your pitcher to hold runners close; the limitations of your infielders. See first and third defenses.

On Double Plays:

- (1) Determine how and where the shortstop likes the throw and concentrate on making good feeds.
- (2) Realize in advance the importance of the play in relation to the situation and stage of the game. In key situations in late innings the play must be made. Therefore, speed and chances must be taken. In the early innings caution is used, because a bad first throw or play can lead to the big inning.
- (3) Always be aware of the interference play by the base runner and never shy away or become alarmed when the runner is approaching.
- (4) When tagging the runner - in the base path for the double play:

SHORTSTOP

- Communicate with pitcher and second baseman on every double play situation
 - We will show four basic feeds:
 1. Regular ground ball at fielder (V-Cut)
 2. Backhand
 3. Ball hit to left side of SS (base side)
 4. Unassisted
- 1) Regular ground ball at fielder (V-Cut)
 - Create the angle on the ball so that the hips are open and the body position is open to 2B
 - Throwing action is $\frac{3}{4}$
 - Square shoulders to the target → target is 2B chest
 - To square shoulders, open the throwing side to make sure of quick feed
 - Teach the same mechanics as a regular ground ball and V-Cut
 - 2) Backhand
 - Make sure of an out on this ball
 - We want our players to beat the ball to the spot; if so then use V-cut mechanics
 - Make sure to field ball with same backhand mechanics
 - Know situation and speed of runners; critical to get an out
 - 3) Ball hit to left side of SS (base side)
 - Lead body with glove to ball; keeps body down and moves fielder more quickly to ball
 - We teach the underhand flip with the same mechanics as the 1B
 - Show the ball early, hide glove, stiff wrist, wrist below the waist, follow throw, palm behind the ball/fingers down, run past base to follow ball
 - Follow throw by running past base – helps with pace of ball and accuracy
 - *“Catch, Clear, Flip, Follow”*
 - 4) Unassisted
 - This play should be the only automatic double play
 - Make sure to communicate that the play is unassisted
 - Mine, Mine, Mine
 - Best angle to throw from has been the outside of the base line
 - Step across base and get front side closed for the throw; make sure to follow the throw
 - 5) Other plays
 - Slow Roller
 - Do not be pretty, make sure of an out
 - If an out cannot be made at the lead base go to first base with the throw

The shortstop should:

THE SHORTSTOP MUST KNOW ALL OF THE SECOND BASEMAN PLAYS AND EXPECTATIONS!

- (1) Learn the ability of his arm and from what positions he throws best for speed and accuracy.
- (2) When time permits take a short crow hop for rhythm and not throw flat footed.
- (3) Never hold back on a throw.
- (4) Always hustle on a ground ball, so that he never has to rush a throw.
- (5) Always be alert and never caught by surprise on the delayed steal.
- (6) Understand the game situation and move according to the hitters strengths and by the count.
- (7) Know all the cut-off and relay responsibilities. (See defensive play charts.)
- (9) Know the double cut responsibilities.
- (10) Recognize the ball he must charge, the throws he must hurry and the throws he can take his time on.
- (11) Know all run down responsibilities.
- (12) Know when to fake a throw and throw behind the runner.
- (13) Know all the infield and outfield communication.
- (14) Know when to throw behind the runner at first on the long single to left or centerfield.
- (15) Attempt to give the second baseman the high throw that can be handled, from underhand or any angle. Do not hide the ball.
- (16) Distinguish between the ground ball he can tag the bag and turn the double play himself or the ball he must feed to the second baseman.
- (17) Learn to pick up the catchers signals and position himself and the outfielders accordingly.
- (18) Help call plays and coach his teammates on Texas League type balls, pop ups, etc. And recognize fly balls back of the infield that can best be handled by the outfielder.
- (19) He should make every effort to catch the short fly ball down the left field line.
- (20) Know the pick off plays and signs. Must communicate with the pitcher, catcher, and 2B on all plays.
- (21) Must back up all throws from the catcher to the pitcher and/or cover second base on every pitch.
- (22) Pay attention to runners on 1B and 2B to make sure a delayed steal does not happen
- (23) Know pick signs and plays with the catcher. Move in behind the runner and read the runner.
- (24) Understand when to move on bunt plays and steals so the field is not left open to the hitter.
- (25) Know when and how to use a decoy play with a runner coming into second base.

THIRD BASEMAN

- The third baseman has to have a strong and accurate arm. We are looking for a player that is fearless on groundballs and has tons of determination. This player must be able to knock down or block hard hit balls and have the presence of mind to still make a play.
- Double play technique is to replace the feet and follow the throw. The backhand play may be difficult but we will still stress the replace the feet theory. This puts the 3B in the proper throwing position every time. Forehand technique is to stay balanced and make an opposite foot throw. We will stress getting the hands to the midline if the player is more accurate with the throw. Accuracy is priority over velocity.

The third baseman should:

- (1) Position himself after considering the type of hitter he is facing.
- (2) Know the ball and strike count, the score, the number of outs and the inning.
- (3) Always be alert and ready for the bunt.
- (4) He must know all his bunt responsibilities.
- (5) Learn how to charge the bunt and field it in the best manner to throw and retire the runner.
- (6) Know all of his cut-off and relay responsibilities.
- (7) Learn to decoy the runner by making a snap catch and tag (deke catch from CF/RF).
- (8) Understand when to set up on the infield and outfield side of the bag for tag plays.
- (9) Know all run down responsibilities.
- (10) Keep his eyes on the hitter and not the pitcher. Read hands on bunt and box placement.
- (11) Know how to make double play feeds to the second baseman and shortstop.
- (12) Know how to move with the count on the hitter.
- (13) Learn all the infield communication.
- (14) Back up the pitcher on all throws from the first baseman.