

OBA CATCHING PROGRAM

Catcher's Individual Responsibilities

1. Strength training and conditioning
2. Fundamentals; fielding and throwing
3. Attitude and leadership skills
4. Knowledge of baseball

Working Guidelines for Catchers – The Big 5

1. To receive all pitches so that every pitch has a chance to be a strike. (Drills, Pens)
2. To eliminate passed balls and wild pitches. (Blocking Drills)
3. To control the running game. (Throwing Drills, Stance)
4. To properly field the catching position. (Kaizan, Fielding Drills)
5. To work the pitching staff with confidence and leadership. (Mastering all the guidelines, Earning Respect)

Other Guidelines for Catchers

1. #1 job of catcher is to help the pitchers, both mentally and physically
2. Must be defensive oriented
3. BE A LEADER
 - a. Catcher must outwork everyone on the team!
 - b. Catcher must always show confidence in self, coaches, and team
4. ALWAYS HUSTLE
 - a. Catcher is involved with every pitch of the game
5. Never show pain
 - a. If a pitch hits you from a ball in the dirt, show no pain
 - b. Showing pain will cause the pitcher to be afraid to throw the ball in the dirt

Stances

- 3 Stances:
1. Sign Giving
 2. Receiving
 3. Receiving with men on base or 2 strikes

Sign Giving

- a. feet close and sit on toes
- b. knees tight (point knees to pitcher)
- c. throwing side forearm and wrist on thigh – very little movement
- d. place sign deep on cup to hide as best as possible

Receiving

- a. feet flat
- b. shoulders upright/hips down
 - using knee savers will leave hips in constant position
- c. target out front, cock glove to right, point elbow out
- d. eye focus → as you get set in stance, glance away and then pick up the pitcher and ball, same as hard/soft focus

Receiving with men on or 2 strikes

- a. make two adjustments from receiving stance
 - unlock hips by raising them up 1-2 inches
 - keep bare hand behind glove
- b. keep both hands on the same plane for safety and quickness

Use of Glove

1. Catch the ball between the first finger and the thumb
2. Keep the glove thumb parallel to the ground

Framing

1. Keep strikes, strikes!
2. Catch the ball as close to the plate as you can; give the umpire a better view of the pitch
3. Must achieve quick hands
 - beat ball to the spot – if the ball is 1 inch outside, get glove 2 inches outside and catch coming in with glove
4. Control the ball
 - catch and stick ball – do not let ball play catcher
 - never hold ball and show up the umpire
 - relax the glove prior to catching the ball
 - ⇒ this is not a flip, but a relaxed motion where the glove hand will relax prior to catching the ball
5. Body movement is an ankle sway
 - nose starts in middle of plate and movement is to have nose go to the corners of the plate
 - keep shoulders square to the ball

Blocking

1. Never show pain or disgust
 - pitcher may lose confidence to throw off-speed pitch in the dirt
2. Expect 100% of the balls in the dirt
3. Use 1 basic blocking position:
 - glove on ground and perpendicular to the ground; glove moves first when blocking
 - hide the glove by keeping it as far back as possible
 - keep the head down so you can see the ball and protect the throat
 - shoulders are forward and back is in 'umbrella' position (exhale)
 - hips low and both knees on the ground
 - elbows in
4. Anticipate! You must be quick to get down and move body.
5. Body will go slightly forward to reduce angle on ball.
6. From receiving to blocking, turn glove over and get glove down first – lean forward
7. **Blocking balls in the middle**
 - keep the nose on the ball and lean forward
 - let ball hit off of you and place back on plate

8. **Blocking to the right (left)**

- goal number one is to get ball back to the plate
- moving to the right (left), get right (left) knee outside ball and keep shoulders up
- your body must be angled so when the ball hits you, it will go back to the plate and not skip away

Throwing to 2B

- 3 major steps:
1. Get feet underneath the body
 2. Close the front side
 3. Get body into proper (power) throwing position

Lower Body: 2 types of footwork

1. Pivot (Rock and Fire)
 - a. used when the ball is received close to the right shoulder and outside
 - b. allow the ball to close the body – catcher will already be closing as the ball is being received
 - c. turn and quickly load on back leg
2. Jump Shift
 - a. use this technique when the ball is inside or down the middle
 - sweep the ball back to the middle using one hand
 - b. replace the left foot with the right foot

Upper Body:

1. Use 2 hands when possible
2. Glove pushes shoulder closed and ball back to proper throwing position
3. Keep throwing elbow parallel to ground as arm and ball go back
4. Use 4 seam grip
5. **When the hand and ball come out of glove, thumb must always stay underneath ball**

Common Faults:

1. Step with a false step → where right foot goes back and not to left side
2. Throwing around corner → throwing sidearm and not from short L position
3. Feet coming together → moving only one foot at a time, move both at same time and quickly
4. Butt comes up too fast → keep butt below the ball; keeps body in proper throwing position
5. Not closing the body → ball will go to right field; throw will be sidearm and with no power
6. Balanced position for throwing → release ball as soon as front foot hits the ground

Throwing to 3B

1. Easiest throw to make
 - batter is blocking view of base and runner, not a problem only an advantage
2. If ball is received at the right shoulder or to outside of midline of body
 - step up forward and throw
3. If ball is received inside or at midline
 - replace left foot with right foot and throw

Throwing to 1B

1. Glove shoulder will automatically close the body
 - glove shoulder must point to the base
2. Inside pitch must be a sweep across the body so that the front side gets closed
3. Throwing arm must get into proper throwing position
 - sidearm will cause the ball to tail to the right

Bunts

1. Glove is made to field bunts easier
2. Look ball in the eye when picking up
3. Keep feet under body for control and throwing
4. Butt must stay low; will keep body in proper throwing position
5. Keep hands together until ready to throw; creates better control
6. 3 footwork fundamentals to picking up ball:
 - a. inside turn - for most bunts; step past ball and open up to face first
 - b. outside turn - step past ball with back toward first, keep butt low, face first, and keep hands together until ready to throw
 - c. down 1B line - sweep ball and power step back with right foot, stay balanced > same technique as a third strike that bounces away from the catcher

Force Plays

1. Doesn't happen that much, but when it does the outcome of the play is critical to the game
2. Straddle plate and always face the throw
3. Always anticipate a bad throw!!!
4. Step across plate to the ball; keeps catcher back
5. As you release the ball and throw to another base, make sure to clear the baseline.

Pop Flies

1. Turn toward side that pitch was thrown
2. The ball will come back into play; toward the infield, make sure the ball stays in front of the face of catcher
3. If you must dive for a ball near dugout and fence, go feet first

Tags

1. 2 types of tags:
 - punch tag
 - regular → keep the ball inside the hand and cover with the glove
2. Position the body in front of plate and point the toes to the runner (safety)
3. Keep butt very low when tagging
4. Leave mask on for safety
5. Reminder for 2. As you catch the ball, put left foot on 3B baseline and point toes to runner
6. After tag, pop up and get body in proper position for an immediate play at another base
7. If ball is coming from RF, stay back and be ready to tag

Pitchouts

1. Will be called from dugout
2. Target is outside (compare to glove shoulder)
3. Method for throwing is rock and fire

Pre-Game Routine (MAKE THIS PERSONAL – GIVE YOUR PLAYERS OWNERSHIP)

- A. Warm-Up
 - stretch and throw with pitcher
 - line jumps for 15 jumps
 - Dot Drill for 1 set – at practice do 2 sets of Dot Drills
- B. Receiving Drills
 - glove work for framing
- C. Blocking Drills
 - practice blocks to right, left, middle
- D. Bunts
 - retrieve bunts from all areas and stress proper fielding position
- E. Force Plays and Tags
 - make throws to 1B and 3B after tags
 - use sweep tags and punch tags
- F. Pass Balls
 - slide technique to field ball and throw to shagger
- G. Pitchout Footwork
 - mock game situation with this specific play
- H. Pop Flies
 - can be done at plate or in outfield
- I. Throwing Footwork Drills
 - start in stance and simulate throw (60-70 ft)
 - jump shift and pivot methods

Game Notes

Between Innings: Between innings rest your feet as much as possible. Keep fluids in you and keep the chest protector off as much as possible. Always have a towel handy to wipe yourself off. If you need to speak with the pitcher, keep it short and positive. Any concerns the catcher and pitcher have must be ironed out at this time. **It is imperative that the catcher stay positive with the pitcher and the rest of the team. You are the underlying leader of the team!!!!!!**

Post-Game: Look over charts and be prepared to set up a personal practice plan for the next practice. The charts are used to show the catcher what areas he is excelling in and struggling in. During the games, stay away from colas and caffeine.