

Week 7

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather team into a single-file line. Players will run two distances, one longer than the other. Have the team run the shorter distance first and come back to the starting spot. Then have the team run the longer distance. "Do your muscles feel tired? Running farther, especially if you're a little bit tired, is called *overloading* the muscles. Running a longer distance adds more for the muscles to do. It's training the muscles to make them stronger and able to move longer before getting tired the next time you play. You'll get stronger and have more endurance every time you overload the muscles."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

"Tag"

Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base. The defense tries to hold the runner at second base.

Description

Play an intrasquad game by dividing players into three teams of five. One team bats while the other two teams are in the field. Rotate teams at bat and in field. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first.

The batting team always begins with a runner on second (see page 114 for a diagram). If the runner gets to third base safely, the offense scores three points, and that runner does not continue running. The batter should throw a fly ball into the outfield. A ball caught on the fly counts as an out, as does a runner being thrown out at third base.

PURPOSE

To defend against runners advancing to third base on line drives or fly balls hit to the outfield when runners are on second base. The focus is on proper technique in fielding fly balls and quickly returning them to the infield.

Equipment

- ☒ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ☒ Four batting tees
- ☒ Five balls per tee
- ☒ One glove per player
- ☒ One ball per player (minimum)



Coach: What did you have to do to hold the runner at second?

Players: Catch the ball and throw it immediately to the cutoff player.

Coach: As a runner, what should you do on a fly ball?

Players: Tag up.

Coach: When can you leave the base?

Players: As soon as the fielder touches the ball.

Coach: Where should you be looking after the ball is hit?

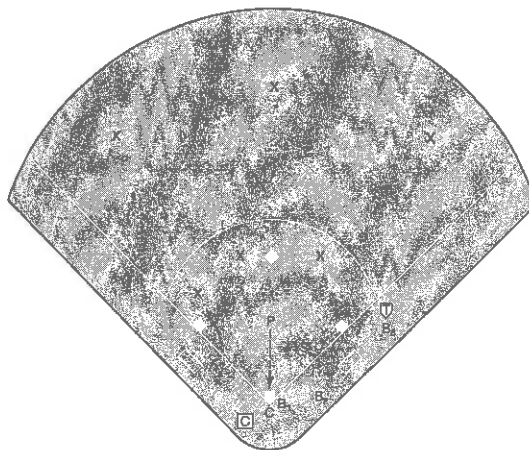
Players: At the third base coach.

Skill Practice (40 minutes)

Skill Practice 1

Description

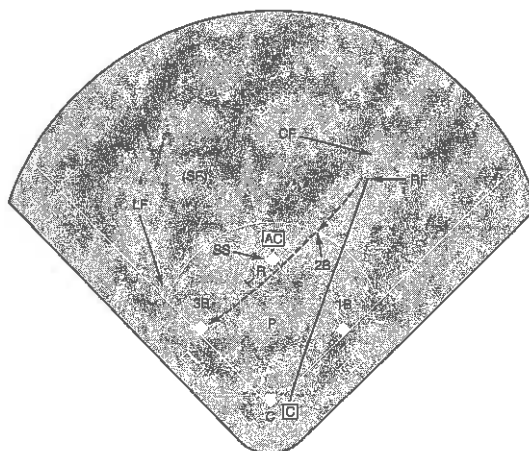
Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.



Skill Practice 2

Description

Outfielders practice holding a runner on second on a fly ball. Field a full team. Throw or hit line drives and fly balls to the outfield. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from second base as soon as an outfielder touches the ball. Fielders on the left side should throw to third, and those on the right side should throw to the second base player who then relays the ball to third. Players rotate after three trials in any outfield position. Position a coach at second



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base to help with proper baserunning technique as well as proper positioning of the shortstop and second base player as he or she anticipates a possible tag play or cutoff.

COACH's cues



For outfielders

- "Feet to the ball!"
- "Watch it in!"
- "Smooth transition from catch to throw."
- "Keep feet moving through the ball and toward the target."
- "Throw the ball quickly into the base or cutoff."

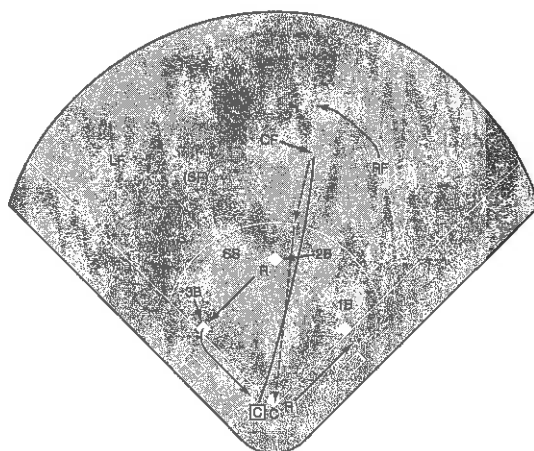
For baserunners tagging up

- "Watch the coach."
- "Go on the signal!"

Skill Practice 3

Description

Players practice making cutoff and relay throws. Repeat Skill Practice 2, except have an additional runner take off from home plate on your thrown or batted ball and have the runner on second attempt to score. This will set up relay or cutoff situations. Players should communicate when the ball should be cut and what base to throw to.



Skill Practice 4

(pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *moderately fast*. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

COACH's point



Some players will be ready to learn how to time an approach to a fly ball so they can use their momentum to get the ball in faster. Encourage all outfielders to catch and throw quickly into the infield.

Review *tag play* and *tag up* rules (see pages 259 and 275, respectively).

COACH's point



Review the *overthrow* rule (see page 298).

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group. "What are some examples of dangerous play for yourself or teammates during a practice or game?" Listen to their responses and identify whether they are dangerous. Discuss their responses. Ask players to agree or disagree with responses—are they a good practice or not? They can raise their hand to agree. Discuss three examples. "It's important to have respect for your body and your teammates' bodies. Practicing safe play is a way to do that."

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



Variations

Put players in lines of threes, about 40 feet apart. The first person in line starts with the ball. On the signal, player 1 throws to player 2, 2 to 3, then 3 back to 2, and 2 to 1. This is one rotation. Each team of three counts how many rotations they can complete in one minute. This will help them work on catching the ball in proper position and rotating the proper direction on a relay. Emphasis is on quick catch, quick pivot, and quick (but accurate) release.