

## FOREWARD

This Handbook for Coaches is the culmination of years of learning the sport of kickball, primarily as an umpire, but with some stints as a coach. Through all those years, I was privileged to watch coaches from all leagues. I learned much from all the coaches. Some were truly exceptional in their knowledge of the game, how to impart that knowledge and inspire their players. Some were very new to the sport and struggled to learn the game while teaching their players. Some have loved the sport so deeply that they continued to coach, even though their children have long graduated from Little Miss Kickball. Others were pressed into duty as a coach because their child or children needed a coach for their team. The one characteristic that each and every coach shared was a desire to work with children and help them grow. This Handbook is an effort to provide coaches a reference as they go about learning and teaching the game of kickball. It is the distillation of all I have learned about the sport, from personal observation and participation as well as long, productive conversations with kickball coaches from around the state.

Coaches are truly the backbone of the sport. Through the years, there has been a need to help coaches learn and teach the game. Without coaches, the sport cannot survive. Yet, too many coaches have had to learn the game through trial and error and with the informal assistance of other coaches within their leagues. There have been leagues that have produced a Coach's Guide, but as is true with all too many volunteer efforts, once the originator of the Guide left the game, so did the Guide. Yet the writers of those Guides left something tangible which was so very helpful in writing this Handbook.

It is my hope that this Handbook will help all coaches, new and old, as they teach their players about the game and life.

Luther Kim  
2011

## **PLEDGES**

### **THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

I pledge allegiance  
to the flag  
of the United States of America.  
And to the Republic  
for which it stands,  
One Nation,  
Under God,  
Indivisible,  
with Liberty and Justice for all.

### **LITTLE MISS KICKBALL PLEDGE**

We give you thanks Almighty God  
For the land in which we live.

We will obey our laws,  
Honor our flag,  
Respect our teammates,  
Play fair and  
follow the rules of the game.

## **CHAPTER ONE - GETTING STARTED**

### **Preseason Preparations**

1. Read the Rule Book thoroughly. Understand how the rules apply.
  - a. New coaches should attend any and all coach's clinics.
  - b. Coaches should attend umpire clinics.
  - c. Questions about any of the rules and how they apply should be directed to the league rules director.
2. Become familiar with the league website. The websites contain important information which coaches should be aware of.
3. Know tryout and draft dates and times for the appropriate division. New coaches should try to attend tryouts for other divisions and talk to coaches to see what they are looking for in a player. TAKE NOTES!
4. Know league procedures for naming teams, selecting team colors.
5. Study the rulebook.
6. After a team is formed, have a team party and sign up parent volunteers. The team will need:
  - a. Head coach
  - b. Assistant coach
  - c. Assistant coach
  - d. Team Parent
  - e. Team Scorekeeper
  - f. Official Scorekeeper
  - g. Umpire(s)
  - h. Depending on league requirements, team may also need:
    - i. Field Marker (person to mark field before games)
    - ii. Concession stand help. Where applicable, teams will be scheduled to work the concession stand during the year, both during league or tournament play.
  - i. Volunteers listed in a-g should understand that they will need to attend every game.
  - j. At the team party, have players choose numbers they want on their shirts. Strongly suggest that names (either first name or commonly used nickname) be printed on the uniform shirts. Names help spectators cheer on a player by name and provide positive reinforcement.
7. Coaches and Team Parent should compile and send to each parent and/or player the following:
  - a. Team roster including addresses, phone numbers and email addresses
  - b. Preseason practice schedule and location of practices
  - c. Game schedule
8. Send out email/twitter/text reminders at least one day before every game.

9. Re-study the rule book. Understand how each rule applies during a game. If coaches do not know the rules, they cannot protect their team.

## **CHAPTER TWO SKILL EXPECTATIONS**

At each division, by the time a player is ready to move up to the next division, at a minimum, they should have learned these skills.

### **1. PEE WEE DIVISION**

- a. Catching
  - i. Not being afraid to catch a ball.
  - ii. How to make a “basket” to catch a ball.
  - iii. Moving to the ball to catch it.
  - iv. Pulling the ball to her body as the ball hits her arms.
- b. Throwing
  - i. Two handed throw (chest pass)
  - ii. One handed throw
  - iii. Developing accuracy
- c. Kicking
  - i. Staying in kicking circle
  - ii. Bunt – striking top of ball with bottom of the foot
  - iii. Full Kick – Step, kick with toe pointed, follow through
  - iv. Introduce to directional kicking
- d. Running
  - i. How to run
  - ii. Know which base to run to
  - iii. Touching the orange part of first base
  - iv. Overrunning first base and home
  - v. Stopping at other bases without overrunning
  - vi. Watching/listening to coaches while running bases
- e. Pitching
  - i. Staying in pitcher’s box
  - ii. Release below the waist
  - iii. Control
- f. Game knowledge
  - i. Defensive positions
  - ii. Covering bases
  - iii. Where to make plays

### **2. JUNIOR DIVISION**

- a. Catching
  - i. Basket catching
  - ii. Moving to the ball
  - iii. Judging fly balls
  - iv. Cradling ground balls
- b. Throwing
  - i. Throwing the ball from where it is caught instead of running toward the target and then throwing

- ii. Running toward the target while making a chest pass
  - iii. Developing power with one handed throw
  - iv. Developing throwing accuracy
- c. Kicking
  - i. Staying in kicking circle
  - ii. Bunt – striking top of ball with bottom of the foot
  - iii. Full Kick – Step, kick with toe pointed, follow through
  - iv. Developing kicking power
  - v. Directional kicking
  - vi. Learning to kick ground balls
- d. Running
  - i. How to run
  - ii. Know which base to run to
  - iii. Touching the orange part of first base
  - iv. Overrunning first base
  - v. Stopping at other bases without overrunning
  - vi. Watching/listening to coaches while running bases
  - vii. Touching inside corners of bases
  - viii. Making the turn at bases to prepare to advance to the next base
  - ix. Making a running arc while going around bases
  - x. Staying on the base on fly balls until the ball is first touched
  - xi. Watching/listening to coaches while running bases
- e. Pitching
  - i. Staying in pitcher's box
  - ii. Release below the waist
  - iii. Developing power
  - iv. Varying speed of pitches
  - v. Putting spin on a pitched ball
  - vi. Control
  - vii. Pitching to different sides of the plate
- f. Game knowledge
  - i. Defensive positions
  - ii. Understanding the necessity for everyone to move when the ball is kicked
  - iii. Knowing where to move when the ball is kicked
  - iv. Understanding backing up other players
  - v. Covering bases
  - vi. Where to make plays – begin to teach getting the lead runner

### 3. SENIOR DIVISION

- a. Catching
  - i. Basket catching
  - ii. Moving to the ball
  - iii. Judging fly balls
  - iv. Cradling ground balls
  - v. Catching balls going away from the player
- b. Throwing

- i. Throwing the ball from where it is caught instead of running toward the target and then throwing
    - ii. Running toward the target while making a chest pass
    - iii. Developing power with one handed throw
    - iv. Developing throwing accuracy
  - c. Kicking
    - i. Staying in kicking circle
    - ii. Bunt – striking top of ball with bottom of the foot
    - iii. Full Kick – Step, kick with toe pointed, follow through
    - iv. Developing kicking power
    - v. Directional kicking
    - vi. Learning to kick ground balls
  - d. Running
    - i. How to run
    - ii. Know which base to run to
    - iii. Touching the orange part of first base
    - iv. Overrunning first base
    - v. Stopping at other bases without overrunning
    - vi. Watching/listening to coaches while running bases
    - vii. Making the turn at bases to prepare to advance to the next base
    - viii. Touching inside corners of bases
    - ix. Staying on the base on fly balls until the ball is first touched
    - x. Knowing to run on ground balls when a force out is possible.
    - xi. Knowing when to run and when to stay.
  - e. Pitching
    - i. Staying in pitcher’s box
    - ii. Release below the waist
    - iii. Developing power
    - iv. Varying speed of pitches
    - v. Putting spin on a pitched ball
    - vi. Control
    - vii. Pitching to different sides of the plate
    - viii. Pitching to corners
  - f. Game knowledge
    - i. Defensive positions
    - ii. Understanding the necessity for everyone to move when the ball is kicked
    - iii. Knowing where to move when the ball is kicked
    - iv. Understanding backing up other players
    - v. Covering bases
    - vi. Where to make plays - emphasize getting the lead runner whenever possible
    - vii. Knowing when to throw the ball and when to hold it

#### 4. TEENAGE DIVISION

- a. Catching
  - i. Basket catching
  - ii. Moving to the ball

- iii. Judging fly balls
  - iv. Cradling ground balls
  - v. Catching balls going away from the player
- b. Throwing
  - i. Throwing the ball from where it is caught instead of running toward the target and then throwing
  - ii. Running toward the target while making a chest pass
  - iii. Developing power with one handed throw
  - iv. Developing throwing accuracy
- c. Kicking
  - i. Staying in kicking circle
  - ii. Bunt – striking top of ball with bottom of the foot
  - iii. Full Kick – Step, kick with toe pointed, follow through
  - iv. Developing kicking power
  - v. Directional kicking
  - vi. Learning to kick ground balls
- d. Running
  - i. How to run
  - ii. Know which base to run to
  - iii. Touching the orange part of first base
  - iv. Overrunning first base
  - v. Stopping at other bases without overrunning
  - vi. Watching/listening to coaches while running bases
  - vii. Making the turn at bases to prepare to advance to the next base
  - viii. Touching the inside corners of bases
  - ix. Staying on or immediately returning to the base on fly balls until the ball is first touched.
  - x. Knowing to run on ground balls when a force out is possible.
  - xi. Leaving the base when the ball crosses the plate then watching the ball to either continue running or returning to the base.
- e. Pitching
  - i. Staying in pitcher's box
  - ii. Release below the waist
  - iii. Developing power
  - iv. Varying speed of pitches
  - v. Putting spin on a pitched ball
  - vi. Control
  - vii. Pitching to different sides of the plate
  - viii. Pitching to corners
  - ix. Pitching the ball to first hit the ground as close to the three foot line as possible.
- f. Game knowledge
  - i. Defensive positions
  - ii. Understanding the necessity for everyone to move when the ball is kicked
  - iii. Knowing where to move when the ball is kicked
  - iv. Understanding backing up other players

- v. Covering bases
- vi. Where to make plays - emphasize getting the lead runner whenever possible

## **CHAPTER THREE PRACTICES**

1. There should be at least two adults at all practices. One of these adults must be a female, but does not have to be a coach. Need to have two adults in case a player is injured and has to be taken home or needs medical attention. If there is only one adult, he/she can't minister to the injured child and watch over the other players at the same time.
2. If possible, have three adults at practices. With three adults, the team can be broken into more manageable groups that can keep everyone involved. Players can be grouped into those that have advanced skills, those that need improvement in some areas and those that are new or need more individual attention.
3. Use Effective Teaching Techniques:
  - a. Tell them what to do.
  - b. Show them what to do.
  - c. Let them try.
  - d. Make corrections using positive reinforcement
  - e. Repeat c and d until they are proficient
4. Use positive reinforcement when teaching. Tell and show them how to do it right. For example, a girl is using her hands to catch instead of "making a basket." Rather than saying, "Don't catch with your fingers because you will jam them," try something like, "Let the ball come to your forearms and hug it into your body." Always provide a cue for the player to focus on that emphasizes on performing correctly. Tell and show them how to do it right.
5. When teaching players, do not use negative reinforcement for those who are just learning. Running laps or similar punishments for those who are just learning how to play the game does not make the player learn. Positive reinforcement for the things they do well will encourage the player to keep trying.
6. Kickball skills are a culmination of a lot of small skills that are incremental and have to be taught in stages. For example, you want a player to catch a ball then throw it to first. The player catches the ball, then stands there looking around, smiling with the accomplishment of making the catch. Praise the player for making the catch, then remind her to throw the ball to first.
7. Never embarrass or humiliate a player. If a player makes a mistake, tell them what the mistake was and then tell them how to do it better the next time. Follow-up with encouragement.
8. Taking video of practice or games can be a good learning tool and is fun for the players to watch.
9. Necessary equipment:
  - a. Balls – as many as possible and a bag to carry them in. Try to have at least five or six balls. Balls should be inflated to 6 pounds.

- b. Three bases and a home plate if not practicing at league fields. Bases can be made from carpet squares, rubber dish drainers, floor mats or other durable material.  
Dimension for bases are:
    - i. Home plate - 36" by 6"
    - ii. First base -15" by 30" Paint half (15" square) of the base a contrasting color
    - iii. Second and third bases – 15" square
  - c. Rule book for field dimensions
  - d. Long tape measure for measuring field
  - e. String or tape for laying out lines (optional)
  - f. Flour to mark lines (optional)
  - g. Clipboard to take notes and attendance records.
    - i. Keep accurate attendance records so you will know which girls missed what and in case you need to bench a player for missing practices.
    - ii. Keep notes on players to record their strengths and areas where they need additional work.
  - h. First Aid Kit – band-aids, adhesive tape, 3x3 or 4x4 gauze pads, spray antiseptic is plenty.
  - i. Miscellaneous supplies: Water, ice, towels, rubber bands for hair, treats.
10. Get to practice early to mark the field and set out bases.
11. Have a plan of what you are going to work on and how long you plan to spend on each part. By having a plan, practices will be organized and coaches can measure progress. If necessary, the practice plan should be modified to fit the particular needs of the team.
12. Keep practices moving and have everyone involved. Standing in line waiting for a turn is boring and unproductive. (Here is where a third or fourth adult is invaluable.)
13. For young or new players, prior to the first team practice session, schedule a short practice session, 20-30 minutes, with them and their parents. Can either schedule them individually or two girls at a time. Use this practice session to get to know the girl and put her at ease with the sport. This also lets the parents know what is being taught and enables them to work with her at home.
14. First Practice:
- a. Warm-up. Stretch arm, back and leg muscles. Jog a lap or two. Remember, show them how to do the warm-up exercises. Warming up is essential because many of the players will either have never used the muscles necessary for kickball or have not exercised them for many months. Warming up prevents injury.
  - b. Work on basic skills – stress fundamentals. See Chapters on Practice Drills and Running for more detailed instructions.
    - i. Throwing –
      - 1. Underhand - hip and shoulder rotation, eye on the target, step and follow through to the target. Accuracy is more important than power.
      - 2. Chest pass – both hands on the ball, step toward the receiving fielder, extend arms forcefully, follow through

- ii. Catching – ready position, move to the ball, make a basket with the arms, cradle the ball in the basket.
- iii. Kicking – ready position, small step to adjust, stride toward the ball, aggressive kick and follow-through.
- iv. Running – reaching out, not up, with feet, touching bases
- v. Pitching – releasing the ball below the waist, rolling or throwing the ball toward home plate so that it crosses the plate below the kicker’s knees.
- vi. Use lots of drills (see Drills Chapters)
- vii. Assess players to determine what needs to be worked on the most and begin to think of positions for each girl.

15. Second and subsequent practices:

- a. Warm up
- b. Work on basic skills using more drills
- c. Explain the various positions, where each one plays and her responsibilities. (See Principles of Defensive Play Chapter)
- d. Put girls in positions and simulate game situations.

16. As you have more practices, you will probably have fewer drills and more game situations. Always let the players know the specific situation, i.e. # of outs, where the runners are and where the play should be made. In the younger divisions, virtually all practices should include drills of basic skills.

17. The league coach or other league official should visit at least one of your practices.

## CHAPTER FOUR PRACTICE DRILLS

1. The coach's main concern is to teach and coach all the girls on the team. Each player should have the opportunity to play and contribute to the team. The biggest challenge will be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each of your players and then help each player to use her strengths and improve her weaknesses so she can play to the best of her abilities. This chapter of the handbook is intended to provide some techniques to assess and build kickball skills.
  
2. The primary skills needed for kickball are:
  - a. Catching
  - b. Fielding
  - c. Accurate throwing
  - d. Kicking
  - e. Base running
  - f. Pitching
  
3. Catching
  - a. Players should be taught to move in front of the ball and that all balls should be caught in a "basket." As the ball is approaching the fielder, the player should move so that she is in front of the ball. Player must move her feet, not just reach, to get in front of the ball. By moving in front of the ball, even if the catch is missed, the ball is usually blocked and will remain in front of the player. It is easier and faster to pick up a ball in front of the player than it is to chase a ball that has gotten behind her.
  - b. Catch the ball first, then look to see where the play is to be made. Prior to having control of the ball, some players attempting to field a ball or catch a thrown ball will look to see where the play should be made. As a result, she fumbles the ball. Looking up/away is especially true on either fast developing plays or close plays. **Catch the ball first!**
  - c. Catching Balls in the Air (Fly Balls and Direct Throws)
    - i. The basket is formed by holding the arms in front of the body, elbows bent and close together, palms facing upward.
    - ii. As the ball reaches the basket, the player should "cradle" the ball into her body, looking at the ball until it is caught.
    - iii. If the ball is a hard throw, kick or high fly ball, the player should "give" with the ball.
    - iv. The player's body should always be relaxed and slightly bent to ease the impact of the kick or throw.
    - v. If a player is consistently dropping fly balls she is either:
      1. Taking her eyes off the ball before it is firmly in her "basket,"
      2. She might be afraid of the ball which makes her either close her eyes or look away as the ball approaches. Practice drills 1, 2 and

- 4, beginning by being close to each other until she can look the ball into her body.
  3. She may be looking to make the next play before she has caught the ball. Remind her to do things sequentially – must catch the ball before she can throw it. Remind her to look the ball into her body and finish the catch before making the next play.
  4. Not keeping her elbows pulled in against her body, or
  5. Not closing her “basket” by pulling the ball into her body as it hits her arms and body.
- d. Catching Ground Balls
- i. Catch a ground ball using the basket. Avoid trying to catch ground balls with just the hands. Many ground balls will either have lots of spin or be kicked with great velocity. Either condition will generally cause the fielder to miss the ball if they try to grab it with her hands.
  - ii. Bend at the knees while reaching down for the ball.
  - iii. Cradle the ball into the body.
  - iv. “Short-hop” ground balls (balls that bounce very close to the fielder) should be caught by cradling the ball and pulling it up and into the body. It is a common practice for a fielder to “push” the ball down and away from the fielder. Coaches should discourage this practice as the ball will probably bounce away from the fielder.

#### 4. Throwing

- a. Long distance – when throwing the ball a relatively long distance (from outfield to infield or across the infield) the player should use a full body throw, either sidearm or overhand. It would be useful to experiment with each throw to determine which is more effective or natural. Due to a number of factors, including the size of the ball and the physiology of a female body, generally the sidearm throw is easier for younger players. The player should
  - i. Look directly at the person she intends to throw to.
  - ii. Rotate throwing side hips and shoulders away from the target, extending throwing arm back. Shoulder opposite throwing arm should be pointing toward target.
  - iii. Step toward target with foot opposite throwing arm, simultaneously forcefully rotating hips and shoulders and hand holding the ball toward the target. Hips and shoulders should start the throwing motion, leading the throwing arm.
  - iv. Release the ball just after the ball passes the hips. Releasing the ball early will cause it to go to the right of the target. Releasing the ball late will cause it to go to the left of the target.
  - v. Follow through completely. Entire throwing side, shoulders, hips and leg should be pointing at or past the target and the throwing arm completely across the body.
  - vi. If throwing a shorter distance, reduce the forceful hip, shoulder and arm rotation and reduce the follow through so that the throwing hand is pointing at the target.

- vii. It is important to keep her eye on the target until after the ball is released.
    - b. Short distance – when throwing the ball a relatively short distance, the player can use a “basketball” pass, “chest pass” or “push” throw. The player should
      - i. Face the fielder to whom the throw is being made.
      - ii. Have a hand on each side of the ball, elbows pointing down.
      - iii. Simultaneously, step toward the target, push off the back foot to drive the body forward and push the ball toward the target with both hands.
      - iv. Follow-through until the arms are fully extended, palms facing the fielder.
      - v. Target the ball at the fielder’s chest or midsection.
5. Catching and Throwing Drills – There are several drills that will help assess and develop a player’s catching and throwing capabilities. When using drills, the coach must assess the capabilities of the players and scale the drill for the players. For example, with a new player, start throwing short distances and easy tosses. Coaches may consider grouping players of similar skill levels to work on specific drills.
- a. Drill #1: Divide the team into groups and have each group make a circle. Place a coach in the center of each circle. Have the coach throw a ball to a player and have the player throw the ball back to the coach. The player should be instructed to call the ball and then catch it using her basket and throw the ball back to the coach targeting the coach’s chest/midsection. This drill can be started with the girls in a relatively small circle and using the basketball throw and then increasing the size of the circle and using the full body throw. Watch for the range in which the players can accurately throw the ball. To vary this drill, throw balls into the air so they can practice catching fly balls. (Useful for Peewees, Juniors and beginning players)
  - b. Drill #2: Have the girls pair up, stand facing each other a few yards apart and throw a ball back and forth. Begin with the basketball throw. After each girl has successfully thrown and caught the ball, have each of them take a large step backward to widen the distance between them. Allow them to use the basketball throw or full body throw as the distance requires. Make sure they can accurately throw and successfully catch the ball before they widen the gap between them. Have them continue to widen the gap until they reach a point where they can no longer either accurately throw or successfully catch the ball. Watch for the range in which the players can accurately return the ball. This is also a good warm-up exercise. (Useful for Peewees, Juniors and beginning players)
  - c. Drill #3: Divide the girls into two groups and have them line up, one group facing the other. Start the ball on one end and have the girls throw to each other in a zigzag pattern. Begin with the two lines close together, using the basketball pass and gradually increase the gap. During this drill, stress accuracy and quickness. After they have done this drill several times, it may be fun to time them and see if they can improve on their time as the season progresses. (Useful for Peewees, Juniors and beginning players)
  - d. Drill #4. Divide the team into two or three groups with one coach for each group. Have them make a semi-circle facing the coach. Coach throws the ball straight up into the air, at the same time loudly calling out a girl’s name. Step back quickly to allow the girl to run into the middle of the circle to make the catch. Continue

this, randomly calling out girl's names until each girl has caught several balls. This drill develops quickness and teaches the girls to be alert. (Useful for Peewees, Junior and beginning players.)

- e. Drill #5. Divide the team into two groups and have the girls pair up. Have each pair face a coach, one of them about 6 feet behind the other. Coach is about 25 feet away from the pair. Coach throws a ground ball to the girls. The girl in front runs in to field the ball. She should position her body right behind the ball with her legs close together. This position enables her to block the ball with her body if she misses it with her hands. Her partner should stay behind her to field the ball in case the first girl misses it. Tell the girls that this is called "backing each other up" and that this is an important skill in a team sport. Repeat this drill until each girl has several opportunities to be the fielder and the backup. (Useful for Peewees, Juniors and beginning players.)
  - f. Drill #6. Divide the team into two or three groups with one coach for each group. Have the girls spread out and kick balls to them. Vary the kicks, including pop flies, line drives and ground balls. On ground balls, be sure to have the girls charge the ball. This drill helps the player's reactions and also teaches them how to work together and call the ball.
  - g. Drill #7. Have all the girls spread out about 6-8 feet apart near the outfield fence. Kick fly balls. Girls should call for a ball in her vicinity and make the catch. After a girl makes a catch, she backs up to the fence. Continue this drill until all girls have caught a ball. When they have all caught a ball, bring them in for a break. If a girl misses a ball, everyone takes their original position. Begin again until all girls have caught a ball without a miss. Girls should encourage each other during this drill.
  - h. Drill #8. Have the girls line up to the right of a coach. Start a girl running away from the coach, looking back at the coach. Coach throws a fly ball in front of the girl so that she has to catch it while running. When a girl has had her turn, she returns and lines up on the left side of the coach to do the same drill. If there are two coaches, use both coaches. Be sure that each player has an opportunity to catch a ball over their left and right shoulders.
6. Kicking – Kicking can be divided into three sections, pre-kick preparation, bunting and kicking.
- a. Pre-kick preparation - During a game, from the time the umpire calls "Kicker Up," a kicker is allowed 20 seconds to take her position in the kicker's circle. Prior to the kicker getting into the circle, if the team uses signals, teach the player look at the coach giving signals. Teach them to look at the field to see where the defensive players are stationed and where the runners are. Most players have their own individual rituals while preparing to kick. These rituals should not interfere with the coach's signals or their preparation for their kick.
  - b. Bunt – The bunt is used by faster girls to get on base, but is it primarily used to move runners. The bunt does not involve striking the ball forcefully with the foot. To execute a bunt:

- i. When bunting to move runners, take a position in the middle of the kicking circle, feet spread shoulder width apart, legs and waist slightly bent, weight on the toes, arms slightly bent but not tense.
  - ii. As the ball approaches the plate, raise the kicking foot slightly off the ground by bending the knee. Keep watching the ball. A good way to practice watching the ball is to keep the chin down. The toe is pointed up and the heel is down.
  - iii. Hold the foot in this position and watch the ball hit the bottom of the foot and bounce off. The bottom of the foot should hit the top part of the ball. The ball can be directed by pointing the bottom of the foot in the direction that the kicker wants the ball to travel. The amount and direction of spin on the ball will also affect the direction of the bunted ball.
  - iv. If the pitch is slow, the bunter may have to slightly “push” the ball as it hits her foot. If the pitch is fast, a good bunter will give with the pitch as it hits her foot. To be most effective, a bunt should go approximately 3 to 5 feet towards first base.
  - v. When bunting to move a runner, it is more important to get a good bunt into play than it is to try to bunt and run.
- c. Kicking – Kicking is defined as the act of aggressively kicking her foot at a pitched ball.
- i. Kicker should take a position in the rear of the kicking circle, feet spread shoulder width apart, legs and waist slightly bent, weight on the toes, arms slightly bent but not tense.
  - ii. Timing is the most crucial element of kicking.
  - iii. Depending on the speed of the pitch, the kicker should start her motion when the ball is within four feet of the plate, or just in front of the 3 foot line. Kicker must watch the ball until it hits her foot. A good way to practice watching the ball is for the kicker to keep her chin down. If a kicker is looking up before she kicks the ball, have her hold the bill of her visor or cap between her teeth while kicking. If she raises her head, the visor will prevent her from seeing the ball.
  - iv. As the kicker starts her motion, she should take a step toward the ball with her non-kicking foot while pushing off her kicking leg.
  - v. With the kicking knee slightly bent, forcefully swing the kicking leg through toward the ball, leading the leg with her hip and straightening the kicking leg so at impact the toe is pointed down and the knee is almost straight. The object is to strike the ball with the laces of the shoe on the kicking foot.
  - vi. Both legs should be bent until just after striking the ball. Kicker must follow through completely, letting her kicking leg rise to at least waist high, toe still fully extended.
  - vii. Kicker should keep her head and upper body down and leaning slightly forward until the follow through brings them up naturally. Leaning backward during the kick takes the power away from the kick and makes the ball go straight up.
  - viii. Ideally, this process is one fluid motion, but is difficult to master.

7. Kicking Drills- When performing kicking drills, it is a good idea to have the girls run at least a few feet out of the circle when they kick. This emphasizes kicking and running. Allowing a kicker to kick pitch after pitch and never leave the circle conditions the kicker to watch the ball instead of taking off for first base immediately after kicking the ball. Remember, players will play what they practice.  
NOTE: For new players, see the ROOKIE PEEWEE Chapter for step-by-step kicking instructions.
  - a. Drill #1. Place girls in the pitcher, first base catcher and left short positions. The remaining girls line up by the circle to bunt. Each girl gets two tries to get a fair bunt, just like she usually would in a game. As the girl bunts, she runs to first and the defense tries to get her out. This drill is useful for letting the left shortstop and catcher get used to each other. To keep the entire team involved, rotate players, either every kicker or as the coach sees fit.
  - b. Drill #2. Place players at base positions and outfield positions. Have the remaining players line up to kick. Have each girl kick and run through first base. Emphasize running as soon as the ball is kicked. They should practice a fast take-off after kicking the ball, but not at the expense of not taking a full swing and follow through. They should NOT look at the ball but run as fast as they can, in foul territory, through first base. As the girls progress, they should practice the placement of their kick as well. As each girl completes her kick, have them rotate through the fielding positions.
  - c. Drill #3. A good way to practice kicking form is to kick into the fence. A girl should place the ball about 10-12 feet away from the fence and stand about 6 feet behind it. She then kicks the ball as she would if it was pitched, focusing on kicking technique.
  - d. Drill #4. Place players in fielding positions. Have the remaining players line up to kick. Have each girl kick toward the left side of the field and run to first, overrunning first base. She takes the field and another girl takes her place. Kicker stays “up” until she kicks a fair ball to the left of the pitcher. Continue until all girls have kicked. Then start again, this time kicking to the right side of the field.
  - e. Drill #5. Bunting practice. Divide the team into two or three groups and have them line up within their groups. Each group must have a coach or a parent. Standing about 4-5 feet in front of the girl, roll a ball to her and have her bunt the ball back to the coach.
  - f. Drill #6. Have girls line up facing each other. Make as many pairs of lines and there are available balls. Have them bunt the ball back and forth to each other. After each pair bunts, they move to the back of the lines.
8. Kicking and Running
  - a. The kicker should keep her eye on the ball from the time it is released by the pitcher until it leaves the kicker’s foot.
  - b. Once the ball is kicked, the player must turn her attention to her new target, first base. Players often have a hard time resisting the urge to watch their kicks, but it is often the difference between being safe or out.

- c. Should the ball go foul, the kicker should start the process over entirely. Check the coach for a signal, survey the field, enter the circle, prepare to kick, follow the ball until it is kicked, then run to first.

See Running Bases Chapter for Baserunning Techniques and Baserunning Drills.

See Pitching Chapter for Pitching Techniques and Pitching Drills.

## CHAPTER FIVE PITCHING

1. Pitching is the act of throwing or rolling a ball by a designated player (pitcher) in such a manner that it initially hits the ground prior to reaching the three foot line and crosses the plate below the kicker's knee.
2. Types of pitchers
  - a. Power pitchers throw the ball very fast. The ball typically hits the ground near the three foot line, may have lots of spin, but the ball velocity keeps the ball from curving very much. Will rarely curve the ball over the front corner of the plate.
  - b. Off-speed pitchers throw the ball with much less velocity. The ball hits the ground much further from the plate and curves much more. This type of pitcher is frequently able to curve the ball over the front corners of the plate.
  - c. Both types of pitchers must learn to vary the speed of the pitch without significantly changing their pitching motions. Changing speeds keeps kickers off balance and prevents them from sitting back and timing the kick.
3. While in the act of pitching the ball, the pitcher must:
  - a. Take a position completely within the pitcher's box.
  - b. After taking a position, remain motionless for at least one second prior to delivering the ball to the plate
  - c. Release the ball while it is completely below the pitcher's waist. The top of the ball must be below the pitcher's waist when the ball leaves her hand.
  - d. Remain completely within the pitcher's box until the ball leaves her hand.
  - e. Pitcher should adjust her starting position in the box so that she is within a couple of inches of the front line of the pitcher's box when the ball is released.
  - f. Some pitchers use the entire pitching box during their delivery, which sometimes causes them to step on or slide over the front line. To prevent sliding across the front line and to provide a reference point for her stride, a pitcher can kick out a shallow trench about an inch from the front line.
4. Pitchers must develop a consistent routine. A consistent routine includes taking the same stance, position in the pitching box, stride and pitching motion. The only variables in the routine should be the point of release, velocity, type and amount of spin. Some pitchers change position in the box depending on the pitch they intend to throw. This practice must be discouraged as it telegraphs the pitch.
5. Pitching Variables
  - a. Velocity – the speed of the pitch.
  - b. Spin – how much the ball curves when the ball is pitched. A pitched ball with a lot of spin will affect the direction a kicked ball will travel. The amount and type of spin will also affect the bounce.
  - c. Control – being able to pitch the ball to different sides of the plate

- d. Bounce – Ball may bounce, but the top of the ball must be below the kicker’s knee when it crosses the plate.
6. Pitch velocity
- a. Pitchers should vary the speed of the pitch while maintaining the same apparent arm speed.
  - b. Varying pitch speed will affect how much a ball curves and will keep kickers from being able to “time” their kicks.
  - c. A high velocity pitch may bounce once near the three foot line, skidding enough to cross the plate below the kicker’s knee.
7. Pitch Spin
- a. Rolled, straight pitch
    - i. Has topspin
    - ii. Goes straight
    - iii. Generally a relatively slow pitch
    - iv. Sometimes used for a very slow pitch to a power kicker.
  - b. Right side spin (Left side spin for left handed pitchers)
    - i. Right spin created by the pitching hand coming under the ball immediately prior to release
    - ii. Right spin causes ball to curve to the right.
    - iii. Amount the ball curves is dependent upon speed and depth of the pitch. The faster the speed of the pitch and the closer to the three foot line that the ball first hits the ground reduces the amount of curve.
    - iv. Spin and velocity affect how high a ball will bounce.
  - c. Left side spin (Right side spin for left handed pitchers)
    - i. Left spin created by the pitching hand coming over the top of the ball immediately before release.
    - ii. Left spin causes the ball to curve to the left.
    - iii. Amount of the ball curves is dependent upon the speed and depth of the pitch. Because this pitch is typically thrown at a slower velocity than the Right Side Spin Pitch, it will generally curve more and create a change of pace.
    - iv. Spin and velocity affect how high a ball will bounce.
8. Pitch Control
- a. Initially, the ability of a pitcher to throw the ball across the plate
  - b. Eventually, the ability of a pitcher to throw the ball to cross the right and left edges or corners of the plate (hitting corners).
  - c. Ability of the pitcher to throw the ball at a low trajectory so that it first strikes the ground on the fair ball side close to the three foot line.
  - d. When learning to “hit corners,” pitchers must know how much a ball will curve. Knowing how much a ball will curve at various velocities, will enable the pitcher to pick out a spot in front of the plate and try to hit that spot so the ball will curve over the plate.

9. Rookie and PeeWee Pitchers
  - a. Teach to release the ball with one hand
  - b. Teach to release the ball below the waist. Releasing below the waist requires that the pitcher bend at the knees and waist while releasing the ball.
  - c. Teach to roll a straight ball directly over the plate.
  - d. Pitchers at this age are too young and physically undeveloped to try to teach them to put side spin on the ball.
  
10. Junior Pitchers
  - a. Reinforce releasing the ball with one hand.
  - b. Reinforce releasing the ball below the waist.
  - c. Begin teaching how to put spin on the ball.
  - d. Begin teaching how to pitch to the edges and corners of the plate
  - e. Teach how to increase velocity
  - f. Some pitchers will have the physical ability to throw hard enough to make the ball initially hit the ground close to the three foot line.
  
11. Senior Pitchers
  - a. Emphasize putting spin on the ball
  - b. Reinforce pitch control – pitching to edges and corners of the plate
  - c. Teach changing speeds and changing spin.
  - d. Reinforce increasing velocity and initially hitting the ground close to the three foot line
  
12. TeenAge Pitchers
  - a. All pitches should have lots of spin
  - b. All pitches should be aimed at edges and corners of the plate
  - c. Pitchers should be changing speeds, amount and type of spin
  
13. Pitching drills
  - a. Drill #1 – Rookies and Peewees – Space gallon jugs, half gallon jugs, water bottles or similar objects across the plate. Roll the ball and knock down bottles. Jugs and bottles provide a three dimensional target for the pitcher and give positive reinforcement when they are knocked down. Pitchers can also practice away from the fields by rolling the ball on a sidewalk. A typical sidewalk is four feet wide. A gallon milk or water jug is six inches wide. Set a gallon jug on each edge of the sidewalk and have the pitcher roll the ball between the two jugs. When training new pitchers, start them close to the plate. As their accuracy improves, gradually move them back until they are at regulation distance.
  - b. Drill #2 – Set water bottles on edges of the plate. Initially use large bottles like gallon or half gallon or one liter bottles. As pitcher accuracy increases, use smaller bottles. Have pitchers knock over the bottles. Use straight rolling pitches, pitches with right and left spin. The object of this drill is to avoid throwing the ball between the bottles.
  - c. Drill #3 - As pitchers develop their strength and velocity, draw a chalk line six feet from the plate parallel to the three foot line. Throw pitches so they

consistently land in the space between the two lines but don't bounce higher than the knee when they cross the plate. As the pitcher develops consistency in hitting between the two lines, decrease the space, a foot at a time, between the two lines.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**RUNNING BASES**  
**JUNIOR DIVISION**

1. Base Running Principles:

- a. The length of the running stride should be at least twice the normal walking stride. Teach players to stretch out legs while running.
- b. Runners should primarily depend on a coach telling them when to run or not run.
- c. More experienced and knowledgeable players may be given greater latitude in deciding when to run.
  - i. Runners should be aware of situations and know when they should run and when and where they should stop before advancing.
  - ii. By leaving the base when the pitched ball crosses the plate, the runner may gain a step or two which may make the difference between being safe and out.

2. Home to First:

- a. After kicking or bunting the ball, the kicker's momentum may carry her into fair territory. Teach the kicker-baserunner to get into the basepath about one-third (1/3) of the way to first. It is important to run in the basepath because if the kicker is hit above the waist by a thrown ball and is in the basepath, she is safe. If she is in fair territory, she may be called out, interference is called and all runners on base have to return to the base they previously held.
- b. When running to first base, the runner has three options:
  - i. Option 1 - Run through the base, overrunning it at full speed while touching the orange part of the base closest to home plate and not slowing down until one or two steps after touching the base.
    1. Runners should practice hitting the base at full stride, not leaping or shortening her steps to touch the base.
    2. Practice hitting the side of the base closest to home rather than the middle of the base.
    3. Runner should continue to listen for the coach telling her to go to second due to an overthrow. Runner does not have to return to first base prior to advancing to second base.
    4. If the coach does not tell the runner to advance, runner should turn toward the fence and return to first base.
  - ii. Option 2 – Make a turn toward second base.
    1. First base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, “Turn” and point toward second base with one arm. This signal should be made about the time the runner gets halfway to first.
    2. Runner should slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward second base, advancing four or five steps while listening to the coach and looking to see if it is safe to proceed.
  - iii. Option 3 – Continue running to second base.
    1. Coach should signal going to second as soon as possible by shouting, “GO”, or “TWO” and making big circles with her/his arm.

2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out about 3-4 feet from the foul line, hit the inner corner of the base and continue on to second at full speed. By swinging out from the foul line, the angle for making the turn at first is reduced and running speed through the turn is not significantly reduced.

### 3. First to Second Base

- a. Stand facing second base, one foot on the edge of the base closest to second so the base can be used to push off when starting to run.
- b. Look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. Wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving. Coach should tell the runner to go if the ball is a ground ball or stay if the ball is a fly ball.
- c. If the kick is a ground ball, keep running to second base. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way to second, look at the third base coach for either a stop at second signal or advance to third signal. *Less experienced players may not be able to run to the base while looking at the coach. They should be taught to stop at the base, then look at the coach to see if she can continue on to third. However, by the end of the season, all players should be able to run to second while looking at the third base coach for running instructions.*
  - i. Stop at second signal is a hand (or two hands) raised in the air, palm out.
  - ii. Advance to third is a vigorous circular waving motion of one arm.
- d. If the kick is a fly ball in the infield, remain on first base. If the ball is not caught, run to second base.
- e. If the ball is a fly ball in the outfield, remain on first base. *More experienced players may be taught to advance toward second about  $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  of the distance between first and second.*
  - i. If the ball is caught, quickly retreat to first base
  - ii. If the ball is not caught, run to second base.
- f. When running to second base, the runner has three options.
  - i. Option 1 – Stop at the base.
    1. Stopping at the base without overrunning it is done when a play is being made at the base.
    2. Overrunning the base places the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out.
  - ii. Option 2 – Make a turn toward third.
    1. Slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward third or home, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed.
    2. Third base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, “Turn” and point toward third base. This signal should be made about the time the runner approaches second.
  - iii. Option 3 – Continue running to third.
    1. Coach should signal to advance to the next base as soon as possible by shouting “GO” and making big circles with her/his arm.
    2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out toward the outfield about 3-4 feet from the direct line between bases, then touch

the inner corner of the base before continuing on to the third base at full speed.

#### 4. Second to Third Base

- a. Runner should stand facing third base, one foot on the edge of the base closet to third so the base can be used to push off when starting to run.
- b. Coach and runner should look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. Runner should wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving. Coach should tell the runner to go if the ball is a ground ball or stay if the ball is a fly ball.
- c. When there is a runner on first base:
  - i. If the kick is a ground ball, keep running to third base. About 2/3 of the way to third, look at the third base coach for either a stop at third signal or advance to home plate signal. Signals will be the same as for second base.
  - ii. If the kick is a fly ball, remain on the base until the ball is first touched. Coach should tell the runner whether to run or stay.
- d. If there are no other runners:
  - i. If the kick is a ground ball
    1. Toward the right side of the infield, keep running to third base. About 2/3 of the way to third, look at the third base coach for either a stop at third signal or advance to home plate signal. Signals will be the same as for second base.
    2. Toward the left side of the infield, slow down to see if the fielder will make a play at first or hold the ball to prevent the runner from advancing. If the fielder makes a play at first, continue running to third base.
  - ii. If the kick is a fly ball toward the left side of the infield, remain on second base. If the ball is not caught and the ball bounds away from fielders, run to third base.
  - iii. If the fly ball is kicked toward first base, the right shortstop or in the outfield, remain on second base, prepared to run to third base. Watch the third base coach, who will give the signal to either advance or remain. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
- e. When running to third base, the runner has three options.
  - i. Option 1 – Stop at the base.
    1. Stopping at the base without overrunning it is done when a play is being made at the base.
    2. Overrunning the base places the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out.
  - ii. Option 2 – Make a turn toward home.
    1. Slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward home, advancing four or five steps while listening to the coach to see if it is safe to proceed.
    2. Third base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, “Turn” and point toward home with one arm. This signal should be made about the time the runner approaches third base.
  - iii. Option 3 – Continue running to third base.

1. Coach should signal to advance to the next base as soon as possible by shouting “GO” and making big circles with her/his arm.
  2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out toward the outfield about 3-4 feet from the direct line between bases, then touch the inner corner of the base before continuing on to home at full speed.
5. Third base to Home
- a. Stand facing home plate, left foot on the corner of the base closest to home and the foul line. Right foot should be completely in foul territory.
  - b. Look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. Wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving off the base. **WATCH THE BALL!**
  - c. When there are runners on first and second base:
    - i. If the kick is a ground ball, run. Don’t stop until the plate is touched.
    - ii. If the kick is a fly ball, stay on the base until the ball is caught. Listen to the coach, who will tell the runner when to run. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
  - d. If there are no other runners, or just a runner on 2d or just a runner on first:
    - i. If the kick is a ground ball to the pitcher or left shortstop, take three or four steps toward home. If the fielder throws the ball to first, run for home plate. Some left shortstops will fake a throw to first, so wait until the ball leaves the fielder’s hand before running.
    - ii. If the kick is a ground ball anywhere else, immediately run for home plate.
  - e. If the kick is a fly ball, wait on the base until the ball is touched. Listen for the coach, who will tell the runner when to go.
6. Running Drills. While using these drills, it is important to make corrections as they are observed.
- a. Drill #1. Running the bases can be used as part of conditioning. Have a girl stand in the kicking circle, then run the full circle of the bases, touching the inside corner of each base. About two-thirds of the way to first base, runner should swing out about 3-5 feet from the foul line. After passing first, the runner’s natural momentum will carry her in an arc between bases. Running the bases as quickly as they can also gets the girls used to hitting the bases at full speed. With a stopwatch, time the girls. Timing them encourages them to run at full speed. Time them throughout the season to see how much they have improved. Do this drill three or four times. After the first time through, if they make running errors, stop them and make corrections.
  - b. Drill #2. Put a runner on the plate and another runner about two feet behind the kicking circle. Start them both at the same time and have them run all the bases. Runner in rear should try to catch the runner in front. Try to match up runners by speed. Emphasize making an arc around the bases.
  - c. Drill #3. Station a coach in the first base coach’s box. Put a cone or ball or other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object about 2/3 of the way to first base on the outer edge of the basepath. Place a kicker in the kicking circle and have her run through first base. Runner should stay between the two cones. Emphasize hitting the base at full stride, touching the side of the base closest to the plate and not stopping until after she has touched the base. Make

- corrections as necessary. As a variable, use a first baseman and left shortstop. Give the left shortstop a ball and when the kicker reaches the second cone, have her throw the ball to the first baseman.
- d. Drill #4. Station a coach in the first base coach's box. Place a cone, ball or some other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object about on the outer edge of the basepath about 2/3 of the way to first base. Kicker gets in the circle. Start the kicker, who should run between the cones. Just before the kicker gets to the second cone, the coach should signal her to make the turn to second. Runner should slow down slightly before making the turn.
  - e. Drill #5. Station a coach in the first base coach's box. Place a cone, ball or some other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object on the outer edge of the basepath about 2/3 of the way to first base. Kicker gets in the circle. Start the kicker, who should be in the basepath until she reaches the first cone, then "swing out" to go around the second cone while running to second base. Runner should hit the inner corner of first base while running at full speed.
  - f. Drill #6. Have the first base coach stand in the coach's box at first base and the girls line up behind home plate. (Can also use the cones to emphasize running lanes.) Put a player in the kicker's circle and have her run to first base. The runner is to watch and listen for the first base coach's instructions. The coach should:
    - i. Give no signal which tells the runner to overrun the base, in which case she continues full speed until she is about two steps past the base, then begins to slow down and turn to the right to return to first base. As a variable, after the runner crosses first base, tell her to go to second.
    - ii. Signal to make the "turn" toward second base. Runner slows down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, makes the turn, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed. This signal should be given while the runner is about halfway to first.
    - iii. Signal to go to second. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out about 3-4 feet from the foul line, hit the inner corner of the base and continue on to second at full speed. By swinging out from the foul line, the angle for making the turn at first is reduced and running speed through the turn is not significantly reduced. This signal should be given while the runner is about halfway to first.
    - iv. As a variable, have the player kick or bunt a stationary ball prior to running. Use a stationary ball because the object of the drill is not kicking, but running.
  - g. Drill #7. Put a coach in the first and third base coach's boxes. Put runners on base(s) and a kicker in the kicking circle. Start the kicker. Coaches decide if runners should advance and how far.
  - h. Drill #8. Put a runner(s) on a base or bases and fielders in positions. Coach stands in kicking circle. Tell runners to leave the base when the coach steps to kick a ball. Kick ground balls, fly balls, pop-ups so that runners can practice learning when to run and when to stay. Rotate players from runners to fielding positions.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**RUNNING BASES**  
SENIOR AND TEENAGE DIVISIONS

1. Base Running Principles:
  - a. Runners should be taught to not completely depend on a coach telling them when to run or not run.
  - b. Runners should be aware of situations and know when they should run and when and where they should stop before advancing.
  - c. By leaving the base when the pitched ball crosses the plate, the runner may gain a step or two which may make the difference between being safe and out.
  
2. Home to First:
  - a. After kicking or bunting the ball, the kicker's momentum will generally carry her into fair territory. Teach the kicker-baserunner to get into the basepath about one-third (1/3) of the way to first. It is important to run in the basepath because if the kicker is hit above the waist by a thrown ball and is in the basepath, she is safe. If she is in fair territory, she may be called out, interference is called and all runners on base have to return to the base they previously held.
  - b. When running to first base, the runner has three options:
    - i. Option 1 - Run through the base, overrunning it at full speed while touching the orange part of the base closest to home plate and not slowing down until one or two steps after touching the base.
      1. Runners should practice hitting the base at full stride, not leaping or shortening her steps to touch the base.
      2. Practice landing on the side of the base closest to home rather than the middle of the base.
      3. Runner should continue to listen for the coach telling her to go to second due to an overthrow. Runner does not have to return to first base prior to advancing to second base.
      4. If the coach does not tell the runner to advance, runner should turn toward the fence and return to first base.
    - ii. Option 2 – Make a turn toward second base.
      1. Slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward second base, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed.
      2. First base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, "Turn" and point toward second base with one arm. This signal should be made about the time the runner gets halfway to first.
    - iii. Option 3 - Continue running to second base.
      1. Coach should signal going to second as soon as possible by shouting, "GO", or "TWO" and making big circles with her/his arm.
      2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out about 3-4 feet from the foul line, hit the inner corner of the base and continue on to second at full speed. By swinging out from the foul line, the angle

for making the turn at first is reduced and running speed through the turn is not significantly reduced.

### 3. First to Second Base

- a. Stand facing second base, one foot on the edge of the base closest to second so the base can be used to push off when starting to run.
- b. Look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. When the ball crosses the plate, start running toward second base. Do not wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving. **WATCH THE BALL!**
- c. If the kick is a ground ball, keep running to second base. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way to second, look at the third base coach for either a stop at second signal or advance to third signal.
  - i. Stop at second signal is a hand raised in the air, palm out.
  - ii. Advance to third is a vigorous circular waving motion of one arm.
- d. If the kick is a fly ball in the infield, stop quickly to see if the ball is caught.
  - i. If the ball is caught, quickly retreat to first base.
  - ii. If the ball is not caught, run to second base.
- e. If the ball is a fly ball in the outfield, continue advancing toward second about  $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  of the distance between first and second. If the ball is in shallow right field, don't go much past  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the distance between first and second.
  - i. If the ball is caught, quickly retreat to first base.
  - ii. If the ball is not caught, run to second base.
- f. When running to second base, the runner has three options.
  - i. Option 1 – Stop at the base.
    1. Stopping at the base without overrunning it is done when a play is being made at the base.
    2. Overrunning the base places the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out.
  - ii. Option 2 - Make a turn toward third or home
    1. Slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward third or home, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed.
    2. Third base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, "Turn" and point toward third base or home with one arm. This signal should be made about the time the runner approaches second or third base.
  - iii. Option 3 – Continue running to third
    1. Coach should signal to advance to the next base as soon as possible by shouting "GO" and making big circles with her/his arm.
    2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out toward the outfield about 3-4 feet from the direct line between bases, then touch the inner corner of the base before continuing on to the third base at full speed.

### 4. Second to third base

- a. Stand facing third base, one foot on the edge of the base closest to third so the base can be used to push off when starting to run.

- b. Look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. When the ball crosses the plate, start running toward third base. Don't wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving. **WATCH THE BALL!**
- c. If there are no other runners:
  - i. If the kick is a ground ball
    - 1. Toward the right side of the infield, keep running to third base. About 2/3 of the way to third, look at the third base coach for either a stop at third signal or advance to home plate signal. Signals will be the same as for second base.
    - 2. Toward the left side of the infield, stop to see if the fielder will make a play at first or hold the ball to prevent the runner from advancing. If the fielder makes a play at first, continue running to third base.
  - ii. If the kick is a fly ball
    - 1. Toward first base, the right shortstop or to right or center field, immediately retreat to second base, tag up and be prepared to run to third base. Watch the third base coach, who will give the signal to either advance or remain. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
    - 2. Toward the left side of the infield or left field, stop quickly to see if the ball is caught.
      - a. If the ball is caught, immediately return to second base.
      - b. If the ball is not caught and bounds away from the fielders, run to third base.
- d. When there is a runner on first base:
  - i. If the kick is a ground ball, run to third base.
  - ii. If the kick is a fly ball
    - 1. toward the left side of the infield or left field, stop quickly to see if the ball is caught.
      - a. If the ball is caught, quickly retreat to second base.
      - b. If the ball is not caught, run to third base.
    - 2. toward the right side of the infield or to center or right fields, quickly return to second base to tag up. Watch the third base coach, who will give the signal to either advance or remain. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
- e. When running to third base, the runner has three options.
  - i. Option 1 – stop at third base.
    - 1. Stopping at the base without overrunning it is done when a play is being made at the base.
    - 2. Overrunning the base places the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out.
  - ii. Option 2 - Make a turn toward home.
    - 1. Slow down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, make the turn toward home, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed.

2. Third base coach should signal to make the turn by shouting, “Turn” and point toward home with one arm. This signal should be made about the time the runner approaches third base.
  - iii. Option 3 – Continue running to home.
    1. Coach should signal to advance to home as soon as possible by shouting “GO” and making big circles with her/his arm.
    2. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out toward the outfield about 3-4 feet from the direct line between bases, then touch the inner corner of the base while running toward home plate at full speed.
5. Third base to Home
- a. Stand facing home plate, left foot on the corner of the base closest to home and the foul line. Right foot should be completely in foul territory. When running to home, stay in foul territory.
  - b. Look at the pitcher and follow the ball when she pitches. Wait until the kicker kicks the ball before moving off the base. **WATCH THE BALL!**
  - c. If there are no other runners or just a runner on second or just a runner on first:
    - i. If the kick is a ground ball to the pitcher or left shortstop, take three or four steps toward home. If the fielder throws the ball to first, run for home plate. Wait until the fielder releases the ball as some left shortstops will fake a throw to first, then turn to try to tag the runner coming from third.
    - ii. If the kick is a ground ball anywhere else, run for home.
    - iii. If the kick is a fly ball, stay on the base until the ball is caught. Listen to the coach, who will tell the runner when to run. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
  - d. If there are runners on first and second base:
    - i. If the kick is a ground ball, run and don’t stop until touching home plate.
    - ii. If the kick is a fly ball, stay on the base until the ball is caught. Listen to the coach, who will tell the runner when to run. Runner may leave the base as soon as the ball is touched by a fielder.
7. Running Drills. While using these drills, it is important to make corrections as they are observed.
- a. Drill #1. Running the bases can be used as part of conditioning. Have a girl stand in the kicking circle, then run the full circle of the bases, touching the inside corner of each base. About two-thirds of the way to first base, runner should swing out about 3-5 feet from the foul line. After passing first, the runner’s natural momentum will carry her in an arc between bases. Running the bases as quickly as they can also gets the girls used to hitting the bases at full speed. With a stopwatch, time the girls. Timing them encourages them to run at full speed. Time them throughout the season to see how much they have improved. Do this drill three or four times. After the first time through, if they make running errors, stop them and make corrections.
  - b. Drill #2. Put a runner on the plate and another runner about two feet behind the kicking circle. Start them both at the same time and have them run all the bases.

- Runner in rear should try to catch the runner in front. Try to match up runners by speed. Emphasize making an arc around the bases.
- c. Drill #3. Station a coach in the first base coach's box. Put a cone or ball or other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object about 2/3 of the way to first base on the outer edge of the basepath. Place a kicker in the kicking circle and have her run through first base. Runner should stay between the two cones. Emphasize hitting the base at full stride, touching the side of the base closest to the plate and not stopping until after she has touched the base. Make corrections as necessary. As a variable, use a first baseman and left shortstop. Give the left shortstop a ball and when the kicker reaches the second cone, have her throw the ball to the first baseman.
  - d. Drill #4. Station a coach in the first base coach's box. Place a cone, ball or some other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object about on the outer edge of the basepath about 2/3 of the way to first base. Kicker gets in the circle. Start the kicker, who should run between the cones. Just before the kicker gets to the second cone, the coach should signal her to make the turn to second. Runner should slow down slightly before making the turn.
  - e. Drill #5. Station a coach in the first base coach's box. Place a cone, ball or some other visible object on the foul line about 1/3 of the way to first base and another object on the outer edge of the basepath about 2/3 of the way to first base. Kicker gets in the circle. Start the kicker, who should be in the basepath until she reaches the first cone, then "swing out" to go around the second cone while running to second base. Runner should hit the inner corner of first base while running at full speed.
  - f. Drill #6. Have the first base coach stand in the coach's box at first base and the girls line up behind home plate. (Can also use the cones to emphasize running lanes.) Put a player in the kicker's circle and have her run to first base. The runner is to watch and listen for the first base coach's instructions. The coach should:
    - i. Give no signal which tells the runner to overrun the base, in which case she continues full speed until she is about two steps past the base, then begins to slow down and turn to the right to return to first base. As a variable, after the runner crosses first base, tell her to go to second.
    - ii. Signal to make the "turn" toward second base. Runner slows down slightly, and hitting the inside corner of the base, makes the turn, advancing four or five steps while looking to see if it is safe to proceed. This signal should be given while the runner is about halfway to first.
    - iii. Signal to go to second. As soon as the runner sees this signal, she should swing out about 3-4 feet from the foul line, hit the inner corner of the base and continue on to second at full speed. By swinging out from the foul line, the angle for making the turn at first is reduced and running speed through the turn is not significantly reduced. This signal should be given while the runner is about halfway to first.
    - iv. As a variable, have the player kick or bunt a stationary ball prior to running. Use a stationary ball because the object of the drill is not kicking, but running.
  - g. Drill #7. Put a coach in the first and third base coach's boxes. Put runners on base(s) and a kicker in the kicking circle. Start the kicker. Coaches decide if runners should advance and how far.

- h. Drill #8. Put a runner(s) on a base or bases and fielders in positions. Coach stands in kicking circle. Tell runners to leave the base when the coach steps to kick a ball. Kick ground balls, fly balls, pop-ups so that runners can practice learning when to run and when to stay. Rotate players from runners to fielding positions.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**PRINCIPLES OF DEFENSIVE PLAY**  
**Junior Division**

1. When having to choose between going for a ball or covering a base, ALWAYS go for the ball. Someone else should be moving to cover the base. Remember, *You are nothing without the ball!!!*
2. Coaches should anticipate where a play should be made by being aware of the situation at all times. Know:
  - a. How many balls and strikes are on the kicker.
  - b. How many outs,
  - c. What base(s) runners are on,
  - d. How fast the runners and kicker are.Once the coach assesses all of the above factors, coach should tell all the players where the play should be made. Do not get into the habit of automatically making the play at first base when a ground ball is fielded. For example, with a runner a first, players almost always say, "One three or First and Third." While that might be to correct play on a bunt, it is not always the right play. If the ball is kicked to the pitcher, left shortstop or second baseman, a better play might be to second base instead of first. Coach should tell each player whether to make the play at second or first.
3. When the ball is kicked, know where the play should be made.
  - a. Anticipate where any follow-up plays should be made,
  - b. Know where the runners are and where the ball should be thrown.
4. Communicate at all times. You cannot play as a team if you do not communicate with each other.
  - a. Call for the ball, even ground balls between players.
  - b. Tell each other where to make the play, where to throw the ball, when to hold the ball.
5. There should be a leader on the field. This leader should be very experienced, who knows the game and very vocal. As a play is developing, she should be shouting where to throw the ball, where to make the play. Generally, during league play, this leader can be the pitcher. During All-Stars, this leader can be the catcher, who is the only player always facing the entire field.
6. Whenever a ball is kicked, at least two players should be moving toward the ball. Everyone else should be moving to provide backup or to cover a base.
7. Keep your eyes moving. Watch runners, ball, other fielders by shifting vision through areas of responsibility.

8. An essential part of the game is “pegging” runners, i.e. hitting a runner below the waist with a thrown ball. As much as possible, pegging runners should be discouraged.
  - a. Even if a runner is hit, the ball is loose and must be retrieved. While it is being chased down, other runners are still advancing.
  - b. If it is necessary to peg a runner, the throw should be toward the infield. A missed peg toward the outfield allows runners to advance further than a peg toward the infield.
  - c. Whenever possible, a safer play is to throw the ball to a fielder at a base or tag the runner.

## **DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**NOTE:** These are “normal” positions and should be adjusted according to ability, wind speed and direction, kicker’s ability, situational factors such as numbers of runners on base, relative speed of the runners, number of outs, etc.

1. Pitcher: In pitcher’s box until ball is released.
  - a. On ground balls to the right side, start moving toward first in case it is necessary to cover first base.
  - b. On potential plays at the plate, move to provide backup on the first base side of the plate, about halfway between the plate and the dugout, close to the fence.
    - i. That means the pitcher must anticipate if a play is going to be made at the plate in order get into position **BEFORE** a play is made.
    - ii. If a runner is crossing third base, pitcher should move to back up a play at the plate.
  - c. Watch runners going past first base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
2. Catcher:
  - a. To take a good position, the catcher must wait until the kicker takes her position in the kicking circle.
    - i. Take a position about an inch or two from the kicking circle, behind the left shoulder of the kicker, but angled far enough forward to see the kicker’s left ear hole and left eyelash, but not the left eye.
    - ii. Feet should be spread about shoulder width apart, knees bent, shoulders over the toes, most of your weight on the toes. This position will enable the catcher to move forward quickly. Catcher should feel like she is leaning forward, almost off balance.
    - iii. Watch the pitcher. When she releases the ball, look at the kicker’s feet. As soon as the kicker begins to move forward to kick the ball, immediately start moving forward around the outside of the circle. React to the **KICKER**, not the ball. By moving forward when the kicker begins to move forward, the catcher can field bunts either in foul territory or close to the plate.

- iv. EXCEPTION: If the pitch is very slow, be prepared to move forward, but wait until just before the ball is struck or bunted by the kicker before moving forward.
  - v. EXCEPTION 2: Some kickers will take a position close to the plate. When the pitcher starts her windup, the kicker will suddenly back up, leaving the catcher in front of her.
    - 1. If a kicker takes a position close to the plate, the catcher should take a position behind the kicker's left shoulder far enough back where the kicker can't back up to leave her in view.
    - 2. If the kicker remains close to the plate, catcher should continue to watch her feet and as soon as the kicker moves forward, immediately rush directly forward to field the ball.
  - vi. When a kicker has two strikes, catcher should reposition herself behind the kicker's right shoulder about a foot from the back of the kicker's circle. Be prepared to catch foul tips or pop-ups. (If the umpire is in the way, politely ask him/her to move.)
  - b. Field bunts, attempting to stop the ball while it is in foul territory.
    - i. Should be able to field bunts within 3 feet of the 3 foot line.
    - ii. Coordinate with left shortstop for fielding bunts farther than 3 feet from the 3 foot line. Left Shortstop should call off the catcher on fast moving bunts. .
  - c. After the ball is kicked, stand on the plate, about 4 inches from the left side of the plate and be prepared to field any ball thrown toward home. If the ball is thrown to home out of the catcher's immediate reach, move to the ball, don't be rooted to the plate.
  - d. Know if the play at home is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, don't try to tag. Make the play and look for the next potential play.
    - ii. If a tag, tag the runner low – at knee height or lower, if possible.
  - e. Chase down and return non-kicked balls to the pitcher.
  - f. Watch runners as they go past home plate to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the plate is enough.
3. First Base: Position should be about four steps from the foul line and two steps behind the base. First baseman should have a strong arm as she will need to make throws to third base. Position can be deeper depending on the kicking power of the kicker.
- a. Be prepared to field balls kicked at or near first base.
  - b. If the ball is kicked to the right side of the infield, initially move to the ball. (Pitcher should start moving toward first)
    - i. If the ball is out of reach, let right shortstop field the ball and go to first base.
    - ii. If the ball is within reach,
      - 1. Field the ball. If close enough, make the play unassisted
      - 2. If too far from first to make the unassisted play, toss the ball to whoever is covering first base, generally the pitcher.
      - 3. If tossing the ball to a fielder or pitcher covering first base, try to get them the ball a step or two before they get to the base so the

fielder/pitcher has the opportunity to catch the ball, then look for the base to step on it.

- c. Cover first base to catch balls thrown to first.
- d. Watch runners going past first base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.

#### 4. Right Shortstop:

- a. Position will vary depending on skill of kicker.
  - i. Strong kicker - about 4-6 steps from second base toward first base and about 2-3 steps behind the baseline. Should have a strong arm as she will be required to make relay throws from the outfield.
  - ii. Weaker kicker – about four to six steps from second base toward first base and about two or three steps inside the baseline. Can even position on the nine foot line between the pitcher and first base.
- b. Field balls kicked toward the right side of the infield.
- c. Charge ground balls to make a play at either first or second.
  - i. If a runner is on first, then the play should be made at second.
  - ii. Throw the ball to second, try not to peg the runner. Even if the runner is hit, the ball is loose and other runners can advance.
  - iii. Remember, the runner has to avoid the fielder attempting to field a ball.
- d. Cover second base on ground balls kicked to the left side of the infield, i.e. left short, third baseman or second baseman. However, if stationed on the nine foot line, then the right shortstop will not be able to cover second base.
- e. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
  - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be. Don't waste time by tagging the runner.
  - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
- f. Back up first base on ground balls kicked to left short, pitcher or catcher. This backup is not feasible if the right shortstop is stationed on the nine foot line.
- g. Back up the second baseman at second base. This backup is not feasible if the right shortstop is stationed on the nine foot line.
- h. On balls kicked to right or right center field;
  - i. Move to the outfield to help back up the center fielder or right fielder
  - ii. Should give way to the outfielder to let them field fly balls when you hear them call for the ball.
- i. Take relay throws if the ball gets past the out fielder. When acting as relay, position self directly in line between the outfielder and home plate and about halfway between the fielder and the base line.
- j. On plays being made by second baseman, left or center fielders, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch second base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.

#### 5. Second Baseman: Position should be about four to six steps toward third base and about two to three steps behind the baseline. Should have a strong arm as second baseman can make outs at first base on ground balls or to make relay throws from the outfield.

- a. Field balls kicked to the left side of the infield.

- b. Charge ground balls to make a play at any base, depending on what bases are occupied by base runners. Should generally try to get the lead runner either at third or second.
  - c. Cover second base on ground balls kicked to the pitcher or to the right side of the infield.
  - d. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be. Don't waste time by tagging the runner.
    - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
  - e. Back up right short at second base.
  - f. Back up third base.
  - g. On balls kicked to left or left center field;
    - i. Move to the outfield to help back up the left or center fielder
    - ii. Should give way to the outfielder to let them field fly ball when they call for the ball.
  - h. Take relay throws in case the ball gets past the outfielder. When acting as relay, position self directly in line between the outfielder and home plate about halfway between the outfielder and the infield.
  - i. On plays being made by right shortstop, right or center fielders, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch second base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
6. Third Baseman: Position should be about 4 steps from the foul line and about two or three steps behind third base.
- a. Field ground balls kicked to third. On ground balls kicked to third with a runner on first, attempt to throw out the runner going to second.
  - b. Cover the base to make a play on any runner attempting to advance to third.
  - c. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be.
    - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
  - d. On throws to third base, go get the ball, don't be rooted to the base.
  - e. Watch runners going past second or third base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
7. Left Shortstop: Position should be about midway between the pitcher's box and the third base foul line, very close to the 9 foot line. With two strikes on the kicker, can move back about 2-3 feet (or more) from the 9 foot line.
- a. If there is a runner on first, take a position a couple of steps closer to the foul line, enabling the LSS to stop balls kicked down the third base line and giving a better angle to field bunts. Ground balls kicked between the LSS and pitcher can be fielded by the second baseman to get a force out at second.
  - b. If there are runners on first and second, move closer to the pitcher's box, opening up a space between the player and the third base line. That should encourage the kicker to kick the ball down the third base line, where the third baseman can field the ball and

- make a force out at third. Also cuts down the space between the left short and pitcher.
- c. Field all balls kicked in the general vicinity.
  - d. Work with catcher to coordinate fielding bunts.
  - e. Backs up third base for throws from first base or from the outfield. Back up position is between third base and the dugout. If the third baseman has to move from the base to field the ball, cover third base.
  - f. Backs up the catcher for plays at the plate. Back up position is between the plate and the dugout. If the catcher has to move from the plate to field the ball, cover home plate. (Depending on ability of catcher, may have to take throws to home plate.)
  - g. When possible, watch runners going past bases to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
8. Left Fielder: Position about midway between baseline and the outfield fence, approximately midway between the left field foul line and second base. Take into consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly.
- a. Field all balls kicked to left field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls the fielder thinks she can catch. Once calling for a ball, don't stop until the catch is made. The second baseman should give way when left fielder calls for a ball.
  - b. Coordinate with the second baseman and center fielder on balls kicked to left center field.
  - c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
  - d. Back up second base on throws from the right side of the infield. Should not be closer than halfway between the base and the outfield fence.
  - e. Back up third base on throws from left short, pitcher or first base. Should be between the foul line and fence and no closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  distance between third base and the outfield fence.
  - f. If not involved in fielding a ball, watch runners going past second or third base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
9. Center Fielder: Position about midway between second base and the outfield fence, approximately in line with second base and home plate. Take into consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly
- a. Field all balls kicked to center field.
  - b. Coordinate with left fielder, second baseman, right shortstop and right fielder for balls kicked to left center field and right center field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls you think you can catch. Other fielders should give way when the center fielder calls for a ball. Once you call for a ball, don't stop until you catch it.
  - c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
  - d. Back up throws to second base. Should not be closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  distance between second base and the outfield fence.
  - e. If not involved in fielding the ball, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
10. Right Fielder: Position about midway between baseline and the outfield fence, approximately midway between the right field foul line and second base. Take into

consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly.

- a. Field all balls kicked to right field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls you think you can catch. Once you call for a ball, don't stop until you catch it. Right shortstop should give way when you call for a ball.
- b. Coordinate with center fielder and right shortstop for balls kicked to right center field.
- c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
- d. Back up second base on throws from the left side of the infield. Should not be closer than halfway between the base and the outfield fence.
- e. Back up first base for throws from the catcher, left shortstop or pitcher. Position for backing up is between the foul line and the fence, and no closer than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance between first base and the outfield fence. Must immediately move to back-up position on all bunts or ground balls kicked to the left shortstop.
- f. If not involved in fielding the ball, watch runners going past first and second base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.

### **DEFENSIVE TRIANGLES**

It may be useful to consider covering a base as a defensive triangle, that is, 3 people moving to either make the play at the base or to provide backup.

First Base: The normal defensive triangle would be composed of the first baseman, the right shortstop and the right fielder.

First baseman to make the play at first base.

Right short for backup close to first base.

Right fielder for backup in the outfield about halfway between first base and the outfield fence, but shading toward the first base fence line.

First Base: Another defensive triangle would be first baseman, right shortstop and pitcher.

First baseman makes the play on the ball, but too far to get to the base.

Pitcher covers the base.

Right shortstop provides backup.

Second Base: Defensive triangle normally consists of second baseman, right short and center fielder.

If a ground ball is kicked to the left side of the infield, right shortstop covers the base, second base is backup and center field is deep backup. Center fielder should not be closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the distance between the base and the outfield fence. Right fielder may also provide deep backup if the ball goes toward right field.

If a ground ball is kicked to the right side of the infield, second base covers the base, right shortstop is backup and center fielder is deep backup. Center fielder should not be closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the distance between the base and the outfield fence. Left fielder may also provide deep backup if the ball goes toward left field.

Third Base: Defensive triangle would consist of third baseman, left shortstop and left fielder.

third baseman to cover the base, left shortstop for backup between third and the dugout and the left fielder between third and the outfield fence. Left fielder should not be closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the distance between the base and the outfield fence and shading toward the left field fence line. If the third baseman has to leave the base to field the ball, left shortstop should immediately cover the base.

Home Plate: Defensive triangle would consist of catcher, left shortstop and pitcher.

Catcher to cover the base, left shortstop for backup between the plate and the dugout on the third base side and the pitcher for backup between the plate and the dugout on the first base side. If the catcher has to leave the base to field the ball, left shortstop should immediately cover the base.

**CHAPTER NINE**  
**PRINCIPLES OF DEFENSIVE PLAY**  
**Teenage and Senior Divisions**

1. When having to choose between going for a ball or covering a base, ALWAYS go for the ball. Someone else should be moving to cover the base. Remember, *You are nothing without the ball!!!*
2. Anticipate where a play should be made by being aware of the situation at all times. Know:
  - d. How many balls and strikes are on the kicker.
  - e. How many outs,
  - f. What base(s) runners are on,
  - g. How fast the runners and kicker are.
3. When the ball is kicked, know where the play should be made.
  - a. Anticipate where any follow-up plays should be made,
  - b. Know where the runners are and where the ball should be thrown.
4. Communicate at all times. You cannot play as a team if you do not communicate with each other.
  - a. Call for the ball, even ground balls between players.
  - b. Tell each other where to make the play, where to throw the ball, when to hold the ball.
5. There should be a leader on the field. This leader should be very experienced, who knows the game and very vocal. As a play is developing, she should be shouting where to throw the ball, where to make the play. Generally, during league play, this leader can be the pitcher. During All-Stars, this leader can be the catcher, who is the only player always facing the entire field.
6. Whenever a ball is kicked, at least two players should be moving toward the ball. Everyone else should be moving to provide backup or to cover a base.
7. Keep your eyes moving. Watch runners, ball, other fielders by shifting vision through areas of responsibility.
8. An essential part of the game is “pegging” runners, i.e. hitting a runner below the waist with a thrown ball. As much as possible, pegging runners should be discouraged.
  - a. Even if a runner is hit, the ball is loose and must be retrieved. While it is being chased down, other runners are still advancing.
  - b. If it is necessary to peg a runner, the throw should be toward the infield. A missed peg toward the outfield allows runners to advance further than a peg toward the infield.
  - c. Whenever possible, a safer play is to throw the ball to a fielder at a base or tag the runner.

## DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**NOTE:** These are “normal” positions and should be adjusted according to ability, wind speed and direction, kicker’s ability, situational factors such as numbers of runners on base, relative speed of the runners, number of outs, etc.

1. Pitcher: In pitcher’s box until ball is released.
  - a. On ground balls to the right side, start moving toward first in case it is necessary to cover first base.
  - b. On potential plays at the plate, should be on the first base side of the plate, about halfway between the plate and the dugout, close to the fence.
    - i. That means the pitcher must anticipate if a play is going to be made at the plate in order get into position BEFORE a play is made.
    - ii. If a runner is crossing third base, pitcher should move to back up a play at the plate.
  - c. Watch runners going past first base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
2. Catcher:
  - a. To take a good position, the catcher must wait until the kicker takes her position in the kicking circle.
    - i. Take a position about an inch or two from the kicking circle, behind the left shoulder of the kicker, but angled far enough forward to see the kicker’s left ear hole and left eyelash, but not the left eye.
    - ii. Feet should be spread about shoulder width apart, knees bent, shoulders over the toes, most of your weight on your toes. This position will enable the catcher to move forward quickly. Catcher should feel like she is leaning forward, almost off balance.
    - iii. Watch the pitcher. When she releases the ball, look at the kicker’s feet. As soon as the kicker begins to move forward to kick the ball, immediately start moving forward around the outside of the circle. React to the KICKER, not the ball. By moving forward when the kicker begins to move forward, the catcher can field bunts either in foul territory or close to the plate.
    - iv. EXCEPTION: If the pitch is very slow, be prepared to move forward, but wait until just before the ball is struck or bunted by the kicker before moving forward.
    - v. EXCEPTION 2: Some kickers will take a position close to the plate. When the pitcher starts her windup, the kicker will suddenly back up, leaving the catcher in front of her.
      1. If a kicker takes a position close to the plate, the catcher should take a position behind the kicker’s left shoulder far enough back where the kicker can’t back up to leave her in view.
      2. If the kicker remains close to the plate, catcher should continue to watch her feet and as soon as the kicker moves forward, immediately rush directly forward to field the ball.

- vi. When a kicker has two strikes, catcher should reposition herself behind the kicker's right shoulder about a foot from the back of the kicker's circle. Be prepared to catch foul tips or pop-ups. (If the umpire is in the way, politely ask him/her to move.)
  - b. Field bunts, attempting to stop the ball while it is in foul territory.
    - i. Should be able to field bunts within 3 feet of the 3 foot line.
    - ii. Coordinate with left shortstop for fielding bunts farther than 3 feet from the 3 foot line. Left Shortstop should call off the catcher on fast moving bunts.
  - c. After the ball is kicked, stand on the plate, about 4 inches from the left side of the plate and be prepared to field any ball thrown toward home. If the ball is thrown to home out of the catcher's immediate reach, move to the ball, don't be rooted to the plate.
  - d. Know if the play at home is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, don't try to tag. Make the play and look for the next potential play.
    - ii. If a tag, tag the runner low – at knee height or lower, if possible.
  - e. Chase down and return non-kicked balls to the pitcher.
  - f. Watch runners as they go past home plate to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the plate is enough.
3. First Base: Position should be about four steps from the foul line and four steps behind the base. First baseman should have a strong arm as she will need to make throws to third base.
- a. Be prepared to field balls kicked at or near first base.
  - b. If the ball is kicked to the right side of the infield, initially move to the ball. (Pitcher should start moving toward first)
    - i. If the ball is out of reach, let right shortstop make the play and go to first base.
    - ii. If the ball is within reach,
      - 1. Field the ball. If close enough, make the play unassisted
      - 2. If too far from first to make the unassisted play, toss the ball to whoever is covering first base, generally the pitcher.
      - 3. If tossing the ball to a fielder or pitcher covering first base, try to get them the ball a step or two before they get to the base so the fielder/pitcher has the opportunity to catch the ball, then look for the base to step on it.
  - c. Cover first base to catch balls thrown to first.
  - d. Watch runners going past first base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
4. Right Shortstop: Position should be about four to six steps from second base toward first base and about 4 steps behind the baseline. Should have a strong arm as she will be required to make relay throws from the outfield.
- a. Field balls kicked toward the right side of the infield.
  - b. Charge ground balls to make a play at either first or second.
    - i. If a runner is on first, then the play should be made at second.

- ii. Throw the ball to second, try not to peg the runner. Even if the runner is hit, the ball is loose and other runners can advance.
      - iii. Remember, the runner has to avoid the fielder attempting to field a ball.
    - c. Cover second base on ground balls kicked to the left side of the infield, i.e. left short, third baseman or second baseman.
    - d. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
      - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be. Don't waste time by tagging the runner.
      - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
    - e. Back up first base on ground balls kicked to left short, pitcher or catcher.
    - f. Back up the second baseman at second base.
    - g. On balls kicked to right or right center field;
      - i. Move to the outfield to help back up the center fielder or right fielder
      - ii. Should give way to the outfielder to let them field fly balls when you hear them call for the ball.
    - h. Take relay throws if the ball gets past the out fielder. When acting as relay, position self directly in line between the outfielder and home plate and about halfway between the fielder and the base line.
    - i. On plays being made by second baseman, left or center fielders, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch second base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
5. Second Baseman: Position should be about four to six steps toward third base and about 4 steps behind the baseline. Should have a strong arm as second baseman can make outs at first base on ground balls or to make relay throws from the outfield.
- a. Field balls kicked to the left side of the infield.
  - b. Charge ground balls to make a play at any base, depending on what bases are occupied by base runners. Should generally try to get the lead runner either at third or second.
  - c. Cover second base on ground balls kicked to the pitcher or to the right side of the infield.
  - d. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be. Don't waste time by tagging the runner.
    - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
  - e. Back up right short at second base.
  - f. Back up third base.
  - g. On balls kicked to left or left center field;
    - i. Move to the outfield to help back up the left or center fielder
    - ii. Should give way to the outfielder to let them field fly ball when they call for the ball.
  - h. Take relay throws in case the ball gets past the outfielder. When acting as relay, position self directly in line between the outfielder and home plate about halfway between the outfielder and the infield.

- i. On plays being made by right shortstop, right or center fielders, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch second base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
- 6. Third Baseman: Position should be about 4 steps from the foul line and about four steps behind third base.
  - a. Field ground balls kicked to third. On ground balls kicked to third with a runner on first, attempt to throw out the runner going to second.
  - b. Cover the base to make a play on any runner attempting to advance to third.
  - c. Know if the play is a force out or a tag.
    - i. If a force out, make the play, then look to see where the next play might be.
    - ii. If a tag play, tag low, at the knee or lower.
  - d. On throws to third base, go get the ball, don't be rooted to the base.
  - e. Watch runners going past second or third base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
- 7. Left Shortstop: Position should be about midway between the pitcher's box and the third base foul line, very close to the 9 foot line. With two strikes on the kicker, can move back about 2-3 feet from the 9 foot line.
  - a. If there is a runner on first, take a position a couple of steps closer to the foul line, enabling the LSS to stop balls kicked down the third base line and giving a better angle to field bunts. Ground balls kicked between the LSS and pitcher can be fielded by the second baseman to get a force out at second.
  - b. If there are runners on first and second, move closer to the pitcher's box, opening up a space between the player and the third base line. That should encourage the kicker to kick the ball down the third base line, where the third baseman can field the ball and make a force out at third. Also cuts down the space between the left short and pitcher.
  - c. Field all balls kicked in the general vicinity.
  - d. Work with catcher to coordinate fielding bunts.
  - e. Backs up third base for throws from first base or from the outfield. Back up position is between third base and the dugout. If the third baseman has to move from the base to field the ball, cover third base.
  - f. Backs up the catcher for plays at the plate. Back up position is between the plate and the dugout. If the catcher has to move from the plate to field the ball, cover third base.
  - g. When possible, watch runners going past bases to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
- 8. Left Fielder: Position about 10 steps from the outfield fence, approximately midway between the left field foul line and second base. Take into consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly.
  - a. Field all balls kicked to left field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls you think you can catch. Once you call for a ball, don't stop until you make the catch. second baseman should give way when you call for a ball.

- b. Coordinate with the second baseman and center fielder on balls kicked to left center field.
  - c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
  - d. Back up second base on throws from the right side of the infield. Should not be closer than halfway between the base and the outfield fence.
  - e. Back up third base on throws from left short, pitcher or first base. Should be between the foul line and fence and no closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  distance between third base and the outfield fence.
  - f. If not involved in fielding a ball, watch runners going past second or third base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
9. Center Fielder: Position about 10 steps from the outfield fence, approximately in line with second base and home plate. Take into consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly
- a. Field all balls kicked to center field.
  - b. Coordinate with left fielder, second baseman, right shortstop and right fielder for balls kicked to left center field and right center field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls you think you can catch. Other fielders should give way when the center fielder calls for a ball. Once you call for a ball, don't stop until you catch it.
  - c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
  - d. Back up throws to second base. Should not be closer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  distance between second base and the outfield fence.
  - e. If not involved in fielding the ball, watch runners going past second base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.
10. Right Fielder: Position about 10 steps from outfield fence, approximately midway between the right field foul line and second base. Take into consideration the ability of the kicker, wind speed and direction and adjust position accordingly.
- a. Field all balls kicked to right field. Loudly and continuously call for all balls you think you can catch. Once you call for a ball, don't stop until you catch it. Right shortstop should give way when you call for a ball.
  - b. Coordinate with center fielder and right shortstop for balls kicked to right center field.
  - c. Attempt to prevent any ball from going to the fence.
  - d. Back up second base on throws from the left side of the infield. Should not be closer than halfway between the base and the outfield fence.
  - e. Back up first base for throws from the catcher, left shortstop or pitcher. Position for backing up is between the foul line and the fence, and no closer than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance between first base and the outfield fence. Must immediately move to back-up position on all bunts or ground balls kicked to the left shortstop.
  - f. If not involved in fielding the ball, watch runners going past first and second base to insure they touch the base. A quick glance as the runner goes by the base is enough.

## **DEFENSIVE TRIANGLES**

It may be useful to consider covering a base as a defensive triangle, that is, 3 people moving to either make the play at the base or to provide backup.

First Base: The normal defensive triangle would be composed of the first baseman, the right shortstop and the right fielder.

first baseman to make the play at first base.

Right short for backup close to first base.

Right fielder for backup in the outfield about halfway between first base and the outfield fence, but shading toward the first base fence line.

First Base: Another defensive triangle would be first baseman, right shortstop and pitcher.

first baseman makes the play on the ball, but too far to get to the base.

Pitcher covers the base.

Right shortstop provides backup.

Second Base: Defensive triangle normally consists of second baseman, right short and center fielder.

If a ground ball is kicked to the left side of the infield, right shortstop covers the base, second base is backup and center field is deep backup. Center fielder should not be closer than 1/3 of the distance between the base and the outfield fence. Right fielder may also provide deep backup if the ball goes toward right field.

If a ground ball is kicked to the right side of the infield, second base covers the base, right shortstop is backup and center fielder is deep backup. Center fielder should not be closer than 1/3 of the distance between the base and the outfield fence. Left fielder may also provide deep backup if the ball goes toward left field.

Third Base: Defensive triangle would consist of third baseman, left shortstop and left fielder.

third baseman to cover the base, left shortstop for backup between third and the dugout and the left fielder between third and the outfield fence. Left fielder should not be closer than 1/3 of the distance between the base and the outfield fence and shading toward the left field fence line. If the third baseman has to leave the base to field the ball, left shortstop should immediately cover the base.

Home Plate: Defensive triangle would consist of catcher, left shortstop and pitcher.

Catcher to cover the base, left shortstop for backup between the plate and the dugout on the third base side and the pitcher for backup between the plate and the dugout on the first base side. If the catcher has to leave the base to field the ball, left shortstop should immediately cover the base.

## CHAPTER TEN THE GAME

1. Pre-game preparation:
  - a. Know which players will be there
  - b. Make at least 3 copies of your line-up. (Academy sells a line-up book that makes three copies of a line up at a time.)
    - i. One for the dugout
    - ii. One for the opposing team
    - iii. One for the official scorekeeper
  - c. Another helpful item is a Game Time Lineup clipboard made by Allstar.
2. Make sure the team umpire(s), scorekeepers, etc will be at the game. Check local league rules for umpire and other assignments.
3. Be at the field at least 30 minutes before game time. Bring the following equipment and supplies.
  - a. Balls for warm-up
  - b. Team scorebook
  - c. Line-ups
  - d. Clipboard
  - e. Rulebook
  - f. Pencils
  - g. Water and ice
  - h. Towel
  - i. Rubber bands
  - j. Bobby pins
  - k. Ziploc bag for jewelry
  - l. First aid kit
4. Line-ups establish the official kicking order. Field positions can be changed at any time without reporting to the official scorekeeper or umpire. The only time that the Umpire-in-chief or Official Scorekeeper needs to be informed of a line-up change is when a player is replacing another player in the kicking line-up. Changes are done either when substitutes enter the game in the fourth inning, when a player is injured and cannot continue to play or a player is ejected. An ejected player cannot be replaced, but the kicking order is affected.
5. Line-ups must include
  - a. Player number
  - b. Player name –first and last name (Some leagues allow first name, last initial)
  - c. Starting player position
  - d. List substitutes, absences and injured players when turning in the line-up to the official scorekeeper.

6. All players must play at least 3 innings. Substitutions must be entered in the game at the top of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning.
7. Making a Line-up
  - a. Kicker 1 – Fast runner, good bunter, good kicker – usually gets on base
  - b. Kicker 2 – Good bunter, fast runner, line drive kicker
  - c. Kicker 3 – Power kicker, kicks to the outfield, fast runner is a plus
  - d. Kicker 4 – Power kicker, kicks to the outfield
  - e. Kicker 5 – Can bunt, medium kicker, good speed is a plus
  - f. Kicker 6 – Power kicker, kicks to the outfield
  - g. Kicker 7 – Developing kicker
  - h. Kicker 8 – Strong kicker
  - i. Kicker 9 – Medium kicker
  - j. Kicker 10 – Developing kicker
8. When substituting, try to keep the kicking order strong. Substitute the player, not the position. Players entering the game can be assigned to any field position, regardless of where the player she replaced was playing.
9. Pre-game warm-up
  - a. Have the team warm-up in the outfield near their dugout.
  - b. The team listed first on the schedule is the visiting team and will be in the dugout by first base. The team listed second is the home team and will be in the dugout by third base.
  - c. Teams warming up should stay in the grass and out of the way of those marking the field. Keep players away from the chalked lines.
  - d. Left shortstop and first baseman can stay on the foul side of the foul line to practice.
10. Pre-game requirements
  - a. Generally, the home team is responsible for providing the official scorekeeper. In some leagues, the visiting team must provide a person to operate the scoreboard. Check local league rules for specific requirements. The official scorekeeper should retrieve official scorebook and pencils from wherever the league stores them.
  - b. Leagues have their own rules that determine which team is to mark the field. Check with league rules and by-laws to determine which team marks the field. Remember that the Peewee and Junior fields are marked differently than the Senior and Teenage fields. The field should be marked before every game, even if another game has just been played on the same field. (This information is in the Rule Book, Chapter IV.)
    - i. Set out bases.
    - ii. Scribe kicking circle. Beginning at one back corner of the plate, chalk the circle on the outside of the scribed line to the other back corner of the plate
    - iii. Chalk the three foot line. On the side furthest from the plate of the three foot markers, chalk straight lines between the markers. Do not make an arc.
    - iv. Chalk the foul lines. Begin at the three foot line (either third base or first base side) and chalk a straight line on the inside of the markers delineating

the foul lines. Extend the lines to about 3 feet past the base. At first base, the line should be on the inside of the orange half of the base. If there are no markers, use a string stretched between the 3 foot line to the outside of third base or the center of the double first base.

- v. Chalk the nine foot line on the home plate side of the markers delineating the line. Junior and Peewee nine foot lines should be chalked from foul line to foul line. Senior and Teenage nine foot lines can begin at the third base foul line and end in the vicinity of the pitcher's box.
  - vi. Chalk the pitcher's box on the outside of the markers delineating the appropriate box.
  - vii. NOTE: To make a friend of the umpires, lightly water the area around home plate and the pitcher's box to settle the dust before marking the field.
11. Get players in the dugout a few minutes before game time. Check to make sure all players have removed jewelry, secured their hats/visors, tucked in their shirts and unrolled the waistband of their shorts.
  12. Review the line-up, making sure that each player knows their place in the kicking order and the position they will be playing.
  13. Be ready to promptly take the field or send out the first kicker at the signal of the umpire.
  14. During the game.
    - a. Keep the players upbeat and moving in and out of the dugout quickly.
    - b. Encourage the team to cheer and have team yells.
    - c. Be ready to report substitutions to the plate umpire at the top of the fourth inning. When reporting substitutions, it is easier for all parties if the number and name of the player going in is related before the name of the player coming out. For example; 11 Michelle is going in for 34 Jennifer.
    - d. Coach the team. Before each play, tell players where to make plays. Be specific, especially in the Peewee and Junior Divisions.
    - e. If the team seems rattled, call time out and go out and talk to them. Be encouraging, point out what needs to be done, forget about past plays. Pick up their spirits.
  15. Don't be afraid to use time outs. Each team is allowed a time out without penalty during each half inning. Use time outs to calm team down, to talk about strategy, to give encouragement, help them regain their composure, etc. Calling more than one time out during a half inning will result in having to remove the pitcher from her position. She can remain in the game but will not be able to pitch for the remainder of the game. A time out to check on an injured player does not count against the team.
  16. Stress sportsmanship. Be an example by complimenting the opponents.
  17. Umpires are volunteers too. Treat them with courtesy. They are human and can make mistakes. If a coach believes that an umpire is missing an infraction, or is in error, call a

time out and ask the umpire-in-chief to watch for the infraction or question why the call was made. One umpire cannot overrule another, but if asked, can offer an opinion. Feel free to ask for an explanation for a call. Time-outs to talk to an umpire do not count against you. Be reasonable on how often you question calls – excessive game delays distract from the game and from the fun of competition.

18. After the game:
  - a. Line-up the players by the dugout to file by and high five the other team. This line includes the coaches and demonstrates the team's sportsmanship. Coaches should also thank umpires.
  - b. Assemble team by the dugout. Talk to them briefly about the game, return their jewelry and remind them of their next activity – practice, next game, team party, etc.
  - c. Get the team scorebook from the team scorekeeper.
  - d. Each team is responsible for cleaning the dugout and around their stands.
  - e. If there is another game scheduled, please vacate the dugout as quickly as possible.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

### 1. Offensive Strategies

- a. In a close game, if there is a runner on first base and/or second base, and there are less than two outs, have the next kicker bunt the ball.
  - i. Emphasize the importance of getting the bunt down. It is more important to move the runners into scoring position than it is for the kicker to get on base. The object is to move the runners into scoring position and take away the force out.
  - ii. If the kicker gets to a two strike count, have her kick the ball on the ground toward first base. She doesn't have to kick it hard, just kick it toward first base. Runners will be able to advance.
- b. If a kicker has a Ball 3 and No strike count, instruct her NOT to kick the next ball.
  - i. Even if the ball is a strike, DO NOT KICK IT!
  - ii. If the following pitch is a ball, the kicker advances to first base.
  - iii. If the pitch following the intentionally taken pitch is exactly what the kicker was looking for, she should kick it.
- c. Coaches should assess the defensive capabilities of the opposing team. If there are weaknesses, coaches should take advantage of them by having runners advance whenever feasible.
- d. Coaches can take advantage of faster runners by having them advance as frequently as possible. An unexpected advance by a fast runner may cause the defensive team to make errors.

### 2. Defensive Strategies

- a. With a runner on second and nobody on first, the defensive coach should consider intentionally walking the next kicker.
  - i. Walking the next kicker creates a force out at second and third.
  - ii. Prior to issuing the intentional walk, the coach should take into consideration
    1. ability of the defensive team
    2. speed of the baserunners
    3. kicking ability of the kicker following the player intentionally walked
    4. score of the game
- b. With a runner on third and nobody on first or second, the defensive coach should consider intentionally walking the next kicker and perhaps even the next two kickers.
  - i. Walking the next kicker creates a force out at first and second. While a run may score by making a forced out at second, at least an out is traded for a run. Without the intentional walk, the runner on third may score and no outs made.
  - ii. Walking two kickers creates a force out at home, which may prevent any runs from scoring.

- iii. Prior to issuing the intentional walk, the coach should take into consideration
      - 1. defensive ability of the defensive team
      - 2. speed of the baserunners
      - 3. kicking ability of the kicker following the player intentionally walked
      - 4. score of the game
    - c. With a runner on second or third and two outs, the coach should almost always intentionally walk the next kicker to create the opportunity for a force out.
- 3. Last ditch defensive strategy
  - a. If the score is tied in the bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning and a runner is on second, the next kicker should be intentionally walked to create a force out situation on any base. Getting an out is extremely important.
  - b. If the score is tied in the bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning and a runner is on third with less than two outs, the next two kickers should be intentionally walked to create a force out at home. Following the second intentional walk, the defensive team should be re-aligned to prevent a run from scoring:
    - i. Move LSS closer to the pitcher
    - ii. Bring third baseman onto the nine foot line between the foul line and the LSS
    - iii. Bring the left fielder in to play the third base position, no deeper than a couple of steps behind the basepath. If she has a strong throwing arm, she might be able to play a couple of steps deeper.
    - iv. Bring the second baseman in to a position between the pitcher's box and second base.
    - v. Bring the center fielder in directly behind second base.
    - vi. Have the right shortstop play on the nine foot line close to the pitcher's box.
    - vii. Have the first baseman play on the nine foot line between the RSS and the foul line
    - viii. Bring the right fielder in to play a couple of steps behind the basepath between first and second. If she has a strong throwing arm, she might be able to play a couple of steps deeper.
    - ix. All plays must be made toward home. Ground balls should be thrown to the catcher for a forced out. Caught fly balls should immediately be thrown to the catcher. The catcher must tag the runner coming in from third.
    - x. If the runner on third scores after a caught fly ball, make an appeal at third base.

To set up this re-positioning, the coach should call a time out, gather the team and tell them exactly where to play. The coach should also explain that this defensive alignment is necessary to keep a run from scoring.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE ROOKIE AND PEEWEE**

1. This section is a supplement to other chapters to address the special concerns associated with Rookie and Peewee teams.
2. Due to their ages, Rookie and Peewee players present a special challenge to coaches. Their attention span is very short, their physical abilities are just beginning to develop and they probably have not been introduced to organized team sports. Coaches must be aware of the limitations of this group of players as they teach them the game of kickball.
3. Above all, coaches and parents must remember it is all about having fun while learning how to play the game. Winning is not as important to the girls as participating and having fun. Don't be surprised if, at the end of a game, a player asks if they won! If they do ask and the game was lost, be positive. Tell them we lost but you played really well or something similarly encouraging.
4. Parent participation is especially essential in these divisions. Recruit parent volunteers to fill following positions:
  - a. Team parent
  - b. Two assistant coaches
  - c. One umpire (two, if possible)
  - d. One or two parents to help mark fields
  - e. Two scorekeepers
  - f. Two concession teams
5. The team parent may also fill the position of "dugout mom." A dugout mom is a parent who stays in the dugout to help with the needs of players while they are waiting their turn to kick. Some of the needs include tying shoes, getting a drink, finding if they need to go to the bathroom, finding hats, putting up hair, and anything else that a young child can find to care about. (For the sake of the sanity of the dugout mom, it might be a good idea to have several so they can rotate this job!)
6. It is essential for the coach to communicate early and often with parent volunteers. Remind them of practices, games and other events. Inform all parents that, with the exception of stud earrings, wearing jewelry during games is not allowed. Advise them that players should not wear jewelry to practices.
7. Set up a rotating snack schedule for practices and games. It's all about the snacks!!!
8. Schedule frequent water breaks during practice. The girls love them and the coaches need them!

9. Limit practices to no more than one hour. Remember, these are young girls with limited attention spans. Keep everyone involved in each practice activity by having at least two or three coaches.
10. Teach the players the Pledge of Allegiance and the Kickball Pledge. Have the girls line up on a foul line and recite each prior to every practice. This simulates the beginning of a game.
11. Practice Drill Suggestions. Begin by breaking the game down into the basic skills of kicking, running, catching and throwing. Teach the fundamentals first. Eventually, game situations can be added to practices, but don't rush it. Keep individual drill practices short. When frustration mounts or attention declines, it is time to take a break and change to a different drill.

## **PEEWEE DRILLS**

1. Beginner drills
  - a. Lining up - Line up along a line or behind a mark or cone. Lining up on a line is necessary prior to and after every game. Lining up behind a mark or cone is necessary during practice to keep things organized.
  - b. Ready position – Feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, weight on balls of feet, arms slightly bent at the elbows, hands in front of thighs with palms facing each other, head up and looking forward. This position is used when preparing to kick and as a ready position for fielding a ball.
  - c. Move side to side like a crab. Teach moving left and right without crossing feet. Move left by sliding left foot to the left, followed by the right foot. Move right by sliding the right foot to the right, followed by the left foot. This teaches players how to move to get their body in front of a ball.
  - d. Teach attention signals such as rhythmic claps, whistles, stop signal, go signal. Coaches can incorporate attention signals with ready position and moving drills by making a game out of them.
2. Kicking is a complex series of actions that should be taught step by step.
  - a. Determine each player's dominant foot by placing a small, soft item in front of the player. A small sponge cut into the shape of a bug is perfect. Ask them to "stomp the bug." The foot they "stomp the bug" with is their dominant foot and should be the one they kick with. If you want to make it more fun, soak the sponge in water so water splashes when they stomp the bug.
  - b. Begin kicking with static kicks without a ball.
    - i. Take ready position.
    - ii. Take a small step forward with non-kicking foot, also called the "plant foot."
    - iii. Swing kicking foot forward, toe pointed down.

- iv. Stop when the kicking foot passes the plant foot.
- v. At this time, coaches should be looking to see that the toe is pointed and the kicker is “kicking with the laces.”
- vi. When the girls are proficient at that stage, add the follow through. Coach should hold her hand out at the girls waist high and have the girl kick her hand. Be sure the player uses proper kicking technique.
- vii. Gradually have them kick harder.
- viii. When they are proficient at the full kick, place a ball in front of them. Using the kicking technique they just practiced, have them kick the ball, focusing on striking the center or bottom center of the ball. To kick ground balls, practice kicking down to hit the top rear of the ball.
- c. When they are proficient at kicking a stationary ball, begin pitching to them by rolling the ball slowly. Have a coach take a position about eight-ten feet from the plate and roll the ball slowly to the kicker. Kicking a moving ball is all about timing. Teach the girls that they want to kick the ball just after it crosses the plate. As the kickers become more proficient, pitch faster.
- d. When they have become proficient kickers, teach them the finer points of kicking.
  - i. Staying in the kicking circle until they have kicked the ball
  - ii. Taking a small step to the left or right to keep the ball centered in front of the kicker.
  - iii. If they are able, directional kicking.
- e. Kicking drills
  - i. Fence kick – about four feet from a fence, set a ball in front of the kicker and have her kick it into a fence. Rotate everyone through several times
  - ii. Static kick – place a ball just behind the plate and have them kick the ball. Place other players in the field (generally just need infielders) so they can field the kicked ball. Rotate everyone through every position.
  - iii. Three pitches – Each player kicks three pitched balls. Run to first after the third pitch.
  - iv. Directional kicking – set up a couple of cones near the third base line and have the kickers try to hit the cones. Repeat with cones near first base line.

### 3. Base Running

- a. At first base, teach them to “Step on orange – stand on white.”
- b. Teach them to run through first base and home.
- c. Teach them to run to second and third
- d. Player must stay on the base until the ball crosses home plate. Teach them to stay on the base “until the ball is kicked.”
- e. Teach them to watch the coach, not the ball or other runners.
- f. Teach them to run or stay at the direction of the coach.
- g. Running drills
  - i. Have them run all the way around all the bases, calling out each base as they touch it. Can also use this drill as a warm-up at the beginning of practice.

- ii. Chase to first drill. After the kicker kicks a ball, the coach chases the player to first base. Really need to have more than one coach to make this drill work!
- iii. Station coaches at home, first and third. Plate coach starts a player to run to first, emphasizing running through the base. Leave the player at first and start another player at home. First base coach tells the runner on first when to run while the “kicker” runs to first. Runners advance only one base. At second and third bases, third base coach directs runner when to run. Occasionally delay telling the runner to go to simulate waiting for a fly ball. Coaches should have a signal to indicate when a fly ball is being simulated. As a variation, have the kicker kick a stationary ball before running to first.
- iv. Relay race – Split players into two teams. Line up one team at second base, the other team stays at home. Have a relay race. This is a great way to end a practice.
- v. See Chapter 6 or 7 for other baserunning drills.

#### 4. Catching

- a. Make a basket by holding arms out in front of her chest, elbows about shoulder width apart, palms up.
- b. “Hug” the ball as if it were a “little yellow baby.”
- c. Many beginning players will be afraid of the ball. Start very close and toss easy to get them over their fear of getting hit by the ball and to boost their confidence. When the fielder can catch every ball and gains confidence, slowly increase the distance.
- d. Practice, practice, practice. Include at least one catching drill into every practice.
- e. Have players simply throw the ball up into the air and catch it themselves. This is a great practice drill anytime. . .anywhere.
- f. Catching drills are incorporated with throwing drills.

#### 5. Throwing

- a. Underhand
  - i. Look at the person to whom she is throwing the ball.
  - ii. Step toward the person with the foot opposite the hand holding the ball.
  - iii. With the ball cradled in her hand and against her arm, swing the arm forward
  - iv. After releasing the ball, continue the arm swing (follow through)
- b. Chest pass
  - i. Face her target
  - ii. Have a hand on each side of the ball, elbows pointing down
  - iii. Simultaneously, step toward the target, push off the back foot to drive the body forward and push the ball toward the target.
  - iv. Follow-through – arms fully extended, palms facing the target.
  - v. Target the ball at the fielder’s chest or midsection.
- c. Teach players to run toward the fielder they want to throw the ball to until they get close enough to throw the ball accurately.

- d. Throwing drills
  - i. Bucket Brigade. Form two lines about 6 feet apart. Players in the lines are side by side and close together, Hand a ball to the player at the end of a line. Give a GO signal. Relay race handing the ball off to the girl next to her. Spread apart far enough where they have to throw the ball and repeat.
  - ii. Hit the coach. Separate team into two groups. Have each group make a circle around a coach. Throw a chest pass at the coach.
  - iii. See other throwing drills in the Practice Drills chapter.
  
- 6. Fielding
  - a. Keep the ball in front of the player.
  - b. Move side to side like a crab. Starting with the ready position, move left and right without crossing feet. Move left by sliding left foot to the left, followed by the right foot. Move right by sliding the right foot to the right, followed by the left foot. This teaches players how to move to get their body in front of a ball.
  - c. What to do after they have caught the ball. There are three options, throw, hand off and hold.
    - i. Throw – Player fielding the ball runs toward the fielder to whom she wants to throw the ball until she is close enough to throw it accurately. Will generally be making a chest pass to throw the ball. Can underhand the throw if she is very close.
    - ii. Hand off – Player fielding the ball runs toward the fielder to whom she wants to give the ball until she is close enough to hand her the ball.
    - iii. Hold – Player fielding the ball holds the ball and looks at the runner to prevent her from advancing.
  - d. Fielding Drills
    - i. Divide players into three groups with a coach for each group. Players take turns fielding three throws. Start with ground balls, then bouncing balls, then tossed balls. Throw the first set directly at them. Make them “crab” to field subsequent sets.
    - ii. Place players at catcher, first base, right shortstop, left shortstop and third base positions. Roll ball to right shortstop, have her either throw home or to first base. Roll ball to left shortstop have her either throw home or third base. Rotate all players through all positions.
  
- 7. Pitching – Pitching is essentially the same as underhand throwing except the ball must be released below the waist and rolling the ball is emphasized.

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN**  
**PRINCIPLES OF DEFENSIVE PLAY**  
**Pee wee Division**

1. When having to choose between going for a ball or covering a base, ALWAYS go for the ball. Someone else should be moving to cover the base. Remember, *You are nothing without the ball!!!*
2. Coaches must teach players to catch the ball first, then look to see where the play is to be made. Prior to having control of the ball, some players attempting to field a ball or catch a thrown ball will look to see where the play should be made. As a result, she fumbles the ball.
3. Coaches should anticipate where a play should be made by being aware of the situation at all times. Know:
  - a. How many balls and strikes are on the kicker.
  - b. How many outs,
  - c. What base(s) runners are on,
  - d. How fast the runners and kicker are.Once the coach assesses all of the above factors, the coach should tell all the players where the play should be made. While most of the plays will be made at home or third, the coach still needs to be specific about where a play should be made.
4. When the ball is kicked, know where the play should be made.
  - a. Anticipate where any follow-up plays should be made,
  - b. Know where the runners are and where the ball should be thrown.
5. Whenever a ball is kicked, at least two players should be moving toward the ball. Everyone else should be moving to provide backup or to cover a base.
6. A play is over when all action has stopped, i.e. the ball is held by a fielder and all baserunners have stopped their forward motion.
  - a. A play is not over just because the ball is returned to the pitcher.
  - b. Stopping the lead runner will generally be enough for a play to be over because all following runners will not be able to advance.
  - c. To stop the lead runner, have the fielder holding the ball move to a position in front of the lead runner so that the runner has to stop or be tagged out. It is not necessary to extend the ball out with both hands.
7. Coaches must keep their eyes moving. Watch the runners to be sure they touch bases, the ball and fielders by shifting vision constantly. Don't get tunnel vision.

## DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**NOTE:** These are “normal” positions and should be adjusted according to ability, kicker’s ability, situational factors such as numbers of runners on base, relative speed of the runners, number of outs, etc. **NOTE:** All steps are Peewee sized steps, not adult steps. Players in the “front line” defensive positions, (left shortstop, right shortstop, pitcher, catcher, third base and first base) cannot be afraid of the ball.

1. Pitcher:
  - a. This player should be able to catch almost all fly balls and ground balls kicked toward her. She should also be very experienced as she will have to choose from many options available to her after she fields a ball.
  - b. Pitcher must be able to roll the ball across the plate consistently. In some leagues, the pitcher is able to pitch the ball with both hands. Nevertheless, try to teach pitchers to roll the ball with one hand.
  - c. Pitcher must stay in the pitcher’s box until ball is released. In most cases, the pitcher will remain in the box during the entire play.
  - d. Field balls kicked toward her. After fielding a ground ball, she has several options:
    - i. Tag the kicker-baserunner going to first.
    - ii. Run toward first with the ball and either hand or toss it to the first baseman.
    - iii. Run toward home and toss the ball to the catcher.
    - iv. Run toward first with the ball and hold it to stop the runner from advancing.
2. Catcher:
  - a. A high percentage of plays are made at home plate. Therefore, the catcher must be able to catch a thrown ball consistently.
  - b. Catcher should take a position anywhere outside the kicking circle and behind the kicker.
  - c. Field bunts, attempting to stop the ball while it is in foul territory. **NOTE:** In some leagues, Peewees are not allowed to bunt.)
  - d. After the ball is kicked, stand on the plate, about 4 inches from the left side of the plate and be prepared to field any ball thrown toward home. If the ball is thrown to home out of the catcher’s immediate reach, move to the ball, don’t be rooted to the plate.
  - e. Chase down and return non-kicked balls to the pitcher.
3. First Base: Position should be about four steps from the foul line and two steps in front of the base.
  - a. Be prepared to field balls kicked at or near first base.
  - b. On every kicked ball, go to the base to catch balls thrown to first.
  - c. Chase down every ball, fair, foul or thrown that goes toward first base.
  - d. Should be able to consistently catch thrown balls.
4. Right Shortstop:

- a. This player should be able to catch almost all fly balls and ground balls kicked toward her. She should also be very experienced as she will have to choose from many options available to her after she fields a ball.
  - b. Position should be on the nine foot line about midway between first base foul line and the pitcher's box.
  - c. Field balls kicked toward her. After fielding a ground ball, she has several options:
    - i. Tag the kicker-baserunner going to first.
    - ii. Run toward first with the ball and either hand or toss it to the first baseman.
    - iii. Run toward home and toss the ball to the catcher.
    - iv. Run toward first with the ball and hold it to stop the runner from advancing.
5. Second Baseman: Position should be about four to six steps toward 3<sup>rd</sup> base and about two to three steps in front of the base line.
- a. Field balls kicked to the left side of the infield that go past the pitcher.
  - b. Cover second base when the ball is kicked. Realistically, there will be very few plays made at second base, but teaching the fundamentals for playing the base is important.
6. Third Baseman: Position should be about 4 steps from the foul line and about two or three steps in front of third base.
- a. Field balls kicked to third. After fielding the ball, tag third base and stop runner at second base. Teach to do this on every play so it becomes automatic.
  - b. Cover the base. Most plays at third base will be throws or hand offs from the left shortstop.
  - c. Chase down any ball going by third base whether fair, foul or a throw.
7. Left Shortstop:
- a. This player should be able to catch almost all fly balls and ground balls kicked toward her. She should have a strong throwing arm or be fast enough to run toward first and chest pass the ball to the first baseman. She should also be very experienced as she will have to choose from many options available to her after she fields a ball.
  - b. Position should be about midway between the pitcher's box and the third base foul line, on the 9 foot line.
  - c. Field all balls kicked in the general vicinity. After fielding a ground ball, she has several options:
    - i. Run the ball toward first base to stop the kicker-baserunner from advancing to second. Some left shortstops will have the ability to throw the ball to first base.
    - ii. Run the ball toward second base to stop the runner who has advanced from first to second base.
    - iii. Run the ball toward third base and either hand or toss the ball to the third baseman to make a force play on a runner trying to advance from second base.
    - iv. Run the ball toward home and either hand or toss the ball to the catcher to make a force play on a runner trying to advance from third base.
    - v. Tag the runner trying to advance from third base toward home.

8. Left Fielder:
  - a. Position about midway between second and third base, on the edge of the outfield grass.
  - b. Field all balls kicked to left field.
  
9. Center Fielder:
  - a. Position directly behind second base on the edge of the outfield grass.
  - b. Field all balls kicked to center field.
  
10. Right Fielder:
  - a. Position about midway between first and second base on the edge of the outfield grass.
  - b. Field all balls kicked to right field.