

SPMBA Coaches Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to Sherwood Park Minor Baseball and thank you for stepping up to coach one of the Rep Teams. SPBMA is committed to supplying our coaches at each level with a foundation of information that we would like to see our coaches implement during the baseball season. These foundations will aide the coach in their knowledge base, as well as give them vital information that will help them in fundamentals of pitching (throwing), hitting and fielding, that we want to be consistent with all our teams throughout the Association. You will also receive team defences that will be age appropriate. All of this information will not only help you as a coach, but more importantly help to ensure that the athletes in the program learn a lot and have an enjoyable experience.

Before we get into any of this information we all must understand why we are all here. Even though this is the Rep (AA & AAA) programs, and we are dealing with “High Performance” Athletes at each level, it is still all about development. Wins and loses are a lot lower on the spectrum of importance. The thing we must remember is that wins will happen based on the quality of players you have and how well we develop them. You will win the amount of games that that group of players was meant to win, so don't put as much emphasis on that during your season. Our job as a coach is to take those athletes and improve their individual skills that will in turn help the team's success. Work on team defences as a group which will in turn teach them how the game is played and also help in the team's success.

With all that being said, one of the hardest things we must do as a coach is check our own egos at the door. Remembering that the only reflection coaching has on us is how enjoyable the athlete's year was and do they want to continue playing for years to come. There also must be a buy in from all of our coaches throughout the Association to follow through with the plan that is outlined for them at their specific age group; knowing that this is a specific progression plan from one age group to the next.

Philosophy & Expectations

We are going to outline expectations of Coaches, Parents and Players that will be verbalized to everyone at the beginning of the year at the Parent's and Player's Meeting before the season starts. This is a very important meeting that needs to happen in the beginning of the year so that everyone is on the same page before field activity begins. Once expectations have been outlined and everyone is in agreement, it is up to “EVERYONE” to follow through with those expectations over the course of the year. This is one way to avoid conflict during the season.

Coach

- Kids gain confidence and a love for the game through positive feedback from parents, coaches and other players. Skill level develops at different rates for kids, but effort and having fun can always be achieved. Try to always provide positive feedback for effort.
- It's important that a coach takes more than a casual interest in the players. Strive to talk with all the players on a 1 on 1 bases at some point during practices and games. You may not be successful at getting to every player each day, but you should want them to know that you

are interested in what they have to say and more importantly, you want them to know their coach likes them as a person.

- Try to make practices as fun and engaging for the kids as possible, while providing the practice and instruction they need to improve. Kids expect and respond to well structured and organized practices.
- Teamwork and developing friendships is an important part of any team sport. Always tell the kids how important it is for them to support each other and to always be positive towards their teammates.
- Competition is an important element of any sport and as kids grow, they naturally become more competitive. Don't talk to the kids about "needing to win the game" or "how important it is that we win". Your role as a coach and that of the parents is helping kids develop the ability to deal with competition in a healthy way. Effort and attitude should be the focus. If you can achieve that, then chances are your team will win the number of games that you were capable of winning.
- Work on teaching the fundamentals and skills during practice, but let them play during the games. There is such a thing as over coaching. Instruction can be given during the game if you feel it will help with their performance, but in general, try and let them enjoy the game. Most kids don't like being told continuously what they do wrong during games. Parents should be encouraged to do the same. Strive to make them feel good about their contribution.
- Act responsibly when dealing with players, umpires and your opposition. Lead by example, if you lose your cool in these interactions then it is difficult for you to expect your players to not do the same.

Social Media

The culture of our society has dramatically change in the past few years. One thing that coaches have to understand is that they are a coach and role model who has been entrusted with being responsible for a group of minors. There are a bunch of social media outlets available to everyone such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Coaches need to have a definitive line drawn when it comes to their personal life and the personal lives of their players and parents. We want to have a good relationship with all our players, but we as coaches must be careful as to the extent of those relationships.

We as coaches cannot expect children to understand this. It is up to us as the adults to take responsibility for our own social media outlets. Coaches should understand that players (minors) do not always need to know what they are doing with their personal time. Coaches also need to be careful when it comes to players in their personal lives, as most of that responsibility should fall onto their parents. Too many negative things can arise from linking these parts of our lives with players.

Coaching Objectives

- Help players develop the skills necessary to be successful at the level they are at, and to prepare them for the next season.
- To have fun and have the kids develop a love for the game and everything it has to offer.
- Learn about the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship.
- Give positive reinforcement based on effort rather than results.

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for all the kids on the team.

Playing Time

Playing time should be as equal as possible. Circumstances always arise that sometimes make this difficult, but that should never happen because of a need to win. Your goal should be to ensure the enjoyment of all the players have playing and working at the game of baseball. A good coach tries their best to put their players in positions to succeed, thus creating a positive environment for everyone. Kids at the lower levels should be playing as many positions as possible as this help them gain a better understanding of the game, and give the coach a chance to learn individuals strengths and weaknesses.

Playing time guidelines are outlined in Mosquito and must be followed by all coaches within the Baseball Alberta umbrella, which SPMBA does.

- **Unlimited Substitution** - every player present will be placed on the line-up card in the batting order, and will all bat in order. Players are allowed to move in/out defensively without restrictions except if the pitcher leaves the mound to play another defensive position; that pitcher may not return to the mound or catch in the same game. Any player who becomes injured or must leave the game will be skipped in the batting order with no penalty.
- **All players who are present for a game and in uniform** (unless injured and unable to play or suspended for that game by the league or team) **must be listed on the batting order/line-up card - any coach who sits a player to gain a competitive advantage will be subject to discipline by Baseball Alberta.**
- **FAIR PLAY RULE - A player may not sit more than 2 consecutive defensive innings (one pitch constitutes an inning sat)**

The mosquito level is an important level in a child development, we would like to see kids playing as many positions as possible (including pitcher). This is an important task for a coach as practices must be structured so kids have a chance to work on multiple positions. Everyone should have an opportunity to pitch. Remember, **you can never have enough pitching!!!**

At the Pee Wee AAA level we still want to develop players at different positions. Players should be playing multiple positions at this level also. Coaches at the Pee Wee AA & AAA, Bantam AA & AAA and Midget AA levels must abide by the following playing time parameters with the mindset that we are developing every one of these players to their utmost potential. With the season being 3 months long, we have split it up into 3 phases. Phase 4 is in reference to your Provincial weekend.

Phase 1 (May)

Every player plays in every game with a rotation that is developed by the coach. This is your developmental month and this allows every player and equal opportunity to play in game. Now with this being said, players must earn playing time. As an example, if they are skipping practices or continually showing up late for games then playing time can be altered accordingly. But just because they are a weaker player does not mean they sit more than the stronger players. The rotation will consist of players playing 1 & 1/2 games in a row and sitting for 1/2 a game out of every 2. If a player pitches in a game, then they play the entire game that follows.

Phase 2 (June)

Before this month begins it is important to have a meeting with your team to discuss the direction this next month will take. In this meeting you will give them 2 choices and they must collectively pick one that everyone is in agreement with. The first being to continue to divide playing time up the same way as the first month, and everyone sits every second game. The second (and usually the more popular one) is that the starting line-up plays the whole game, but if you are on the bench you are available to pitch, pinch hit, pinch run or go in for defence. If you are on the bench for a game, you are guaranteed to start the next game. This gives the coach a chance to manage a game with options available on the bench. Kids (teams) tend to choose this one, as they are allowed to get into a little bit of a groove because the fear of knowing they are being replaced half way through the game isn't there. They also play with a little bit of pressure knowing that if they aren't performing, they can be replaced in the later stages of the game. The important thing to remember here is that you are allowing the kids to decide how things are structured to some extent. They don't choose the line-ups, or the substitutions, just the structure. This alleviates pressure from the coach as well because they have empowered the players to a certain extent. To finish up the meeting, it is important for the coach to emphasize to the players that they have made the decision and keep their parents up to date as to the structure THEY chose so no one is caught off guard when their kid doesn't get into one game.

Phase 3 (July)

This phase consists of a lot of communication. Individual player meetings are held at the beginning of this phase to let the player know where they sit in relation to comparable players on the team (ie. players who play a similar position). The coach needs to communicate to the player where they are on the depth chart. If provincials were to start next weekend, would they be starting, if not who is ahead of them. As that message is given it is important to let them know that they have a month to improve and earn that spot. If a player is in a position where they earn a spot at that point, then they need to understand that they can lose it. This creates a little competitiveness and inner drive within the player to make a really good push during the last month to improve and become as consistent as possible. Playing time works the same way as the previous phase. Continues with players playing the whole game or equal playing time by sitting every 2nd game. It is up to the players.

Phase 4 (Provincial Weekend)

This becomes the only weekend that we as coaches have a chance to play every game to win. With that being said the ultimate choice again will be left up to the players. They have 2 options; the first being to continue in the same manner that the season finished with equal playing time or playing full games. The second is to play every game to win, but when this option is brought forward, the coach must outline what exactly that means. If the team chooses to play to win then the coach has the ability to play the best starting 8 or 9 players available, based on who is the starting pitcher for every game. That means that some kids may not play that much during the provincial weekend, but again the decision is theirs.

This whole phase plan must be communicated to parents during the parents meeting as again we want to be as transparent as possible as a coach and an Association. If there are issues with the plan then that is the time to discuss it. The message of how it will be the kids decision cannot be stressed enough, and all the coach has to do is **follow through** with the wishes of the team (players).

Coaches who coach in SPMBA must be willing to abide by these principals. The best way of avoiding conflict with players and parents is by following through with what you say you are going to do.

Parent Expectations & Philosophy

The emotions that a parent feels when watching his/her child play in organized sport can range from pure joy and pride, to anger and disappointment. Most believe a lot of parents don't realize how emotional they become when they get caught up in the moment of watching their child in a competitive environment. Majority of parents start their children in sport for a number of great reasons:

- An opportunity to spend time with their child
- To help their child form friendships
- To provide a safe and supervised activity
- Provide regular exercise
- To develop skills and confidence

That's only a few of the many reasons to get a child involved in youth activities. Parents deeply love their children and have a strong emotional bond. They want to help their children when they fail and stick up for them if they believe their child isn't being treated fairly. The intentions are good, but that strong emotional bond can also lead to parents not behaving in a rational way.

As we expect a coach to act responsibly, the same should be expected from the parents. The last thing we want to see is a parent or group of parents yelling at or confronting an umpire from the sidelines. Please try to avoid confronting a coach during or after a game in an aggressive manner. Chances are you're just embarrassing your child. It often doesn't take much for your child to be mortified by the behaviour of his parents. In addition to how you make your child feel when you can't control your emotions, think about the example you are setting. You wouldn't want your child to talk back or yell at the umpire. You also want them to be able to handle difficult situations without resorting to anger and yelling. If that's how you want your child to behave, then you need to be able to act in the same manner.

This is really a continuation of the point above. Some parents want to blame losses on the coach or tell their kid that the reason they struck out was because the umpire blew the call. A better approach is to help them deal with the disappointment and let them know that it isn't the end of the world if they strikeout or lose a big game. They need to know that umpires and coaches are trying their best and part of playing is that things aren't always going to go your

way. It's easy to be a good sport when you win, but helping your child deal with disappointment and losing can be the most important lessons that a young athlete can learn.

Let your child know that you are proud of the effort they gave on the field. This can be done whether they played a good game or made a few errors and didn't get a hit. If you only compliment them when they play well, then that's how they will tend to judge themselves.

The success of a child doing well in athletics can be exciting and intoxicating for the parent. The fantasy of what could possibly be can enter into the mind of parents of very young children. Maybe the parent was a good athlete and thinks, "If I only worked harder and was more dedicated, who knows what might have happened." It's easy to transfer your regrets into a plan of action for your talented young child. When this happens, its time for the parent to take a good hard look at what the child wants and adjust their own actions to fit with the goals and desires of their child. Statistically your child doesn't have much of a chance of playing professional baseball, or even receiving an athletic scholarship to college. If they do, it should be their desire that allows them to achieve that level of success.

Student Athletes	Men's Basketball	Women's Basketball	Football	Baseball	Men's Ice Hockey	Men's Soccer
High School Student Athletes	538,676	433,120	1,086,627	474,791	35,198	410,982
High School Senior student Athletes	153,907	123,749	310,485	135,655	10,057	117,423
NCAA Student Athletes	17,884	16,186	70,147	32,450	3,964	23,365
NCAA Freshman Freshmen Pool/Boys	5,138	4,625	20,042	9,271	1,133	6,676
NCAA Senior Student Athletes	3,995	3,597	15,588	7,211	881	5,192
NCAA Student Athletes Drafted	46	32	254	678	7	101
Percent High School to NCAA	3.3%	3.7%	6.5%	6.8%	11.3%	5.7%
Percent NCAA to Professional	1.2%	0.9%	1.6%	9.4%	0.6%	1.9%
Percent High School to Professional	0.03%	0.33%	0.08%	0.56%	0.37%	3.09%

Coaching is not an easy task. But it is easy to criticize when standing on the sidelines watching what is going on; it's another thing when you are actually coaching. Be aware of the difficult situation the coach is in. If a coach tries to please all of his players and all of their parents they are going to be in for a long year because it is an impossible task. Parents must be aware of the last statement because the role of the coach is to ensure the enjoyment of the all the players, not the parents.



- **READ THE ABOVE PICTURE**

- Try to get your child to games and practices on time. It can be difficult at times, but they need to understand it becomes really hard to conduct a practice or get ready for a game when players continuously show up late. If you know you are going to be late or absent, please let the coach know in advance.
- Help out with team volunteer opportunities. There are always a number of items that require parent help.
- Encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches and officials at every game and practice. Cheer for your child during games, but try to keep from yelling instructions to them. Remember this is their opportunity to enjoy the game. Much of the fun is lost if Mom and Dad is always yelling instructions.

Players

Kids don't want to play if they are not having fun. Again, we must consider the personality and age of the player. Practices must be engaging and interesting. They must have freedom in games to make and learn from mistakes. Winning and losing most often means a lot more to the coach and the parents than it does to the kids.

All kids want to be accepted and liked by their peers. Playing on a team gives kids the opportunity to form friendships and interact with other kids in a setting other than school. The team gives the individual child a group identity and a common purpose. It is fun sharing the experience with their friends. Many kids will only play because their friends are playing. That often is the main draw for them to be involved.

Kids want action and excitement in organized sport. It is up to the coaches to put them in situations where that desire will be fulfilled. Many kids get involved in sports because their parents sign them up. By playing the sport and doing well they receive special attention from their parents and others close to them. Kids want to please their parents and by performing well they see that their parents are proud of them.

Some kids like competing against their peers, but some do not like the increased pressure of the competition that they feel from parents and coaches. That increase in pressure can take away from the enjoyment of the sport. Learning how to deal with competition and disappointment is important. It's also important that coaches and parents realize the desire for competition and the importance of it for the child will develop as their skills do...slowly.

What is the definition of "FUN"? Some people equate fun on the baseball field to a coach that has little control and provides a supervised recess instead of a baseball practice. For parents and players alike, that atmosphere is frustrating and while it may provide moments of joy, most players hate playing in a non-structured environment. Your definition of "FUN" out on the field should be "having structured and organized practices where players are challenged and are **allowed to enjoy playing and learning the game**". The second part is highlighted because many coaches are very organized; run well structured practices; teach great fundamentals; provide positive feedback; but do it in a way that doesn't promote fun. Drills are great, but they can be boring. You may be proud of your 12 station batting practice that runs smooth as silk,

but if the kids aren't enjoying it, then chances are they aren't trying hard to master the skill either. While the practice may be organized, it may not be challenging the players to improve. This is often where coaches will become frustrated and begin to rely on yelling and punishment to get players motivated to play harder. If players aren't willing to practice hard, then they either don't like baseball and are just playing because mom or dad signed them up, or they are bored.

Coaches expectations of players should simply be that the players always give their best effort. We should all promote a positive coaching environment, but there are also times you have to be honest with your players about the effort they are giving. If the goal is effort, then you have to let players know when they are not meeting those expectations. Don't embarrass or belittle the player in front of his family or teammates, but let him know that he needs to always give his best effort. Winning and losing is a result that can't be guaranteed, but good preparation and effort are things that everyone can achieve regardless of talent.



If you could have a team that gives a great effort and isn't afraid to fail either individually or as a team, then you have a team that will play loose and with confidence because they aren't afraid of what will happen if they don't win. Fear of failure is a major reason why many players fail in critical situations. Try to get your players to understand that the best baseball players in the world fail on a regular basis and one aspect that makes them special is their ability to learn from the failure and make adjustments.

- Have fun and always give their best effort in practices and games
- Always show respect to coaches, officials, parents, teammates and opponents.
- Always show up on time wearing the proper attire and equipped with everything they need for that day

Handling a Pitching Staff

This is something, especially at the lower levels that needs to be addressed. I understand that there are pitch counts that coaches have to take into account when trying to make it through a weekend, but we want to try and develop a system where we develop more pitchers and also stretch them out so they can go deeper into games.

NEW FOR 2016

A pitcher who has pitched on 2 consecutive days and whose total exceeds the low category maximum allowance will not be able to pitch again on the second day.

1. Pitchers and managers shall follow the following guidelines for the Baseball Alberta Provincial League:

Baseball Alberta Provincial League Pitch Count

	Mosquito	Pee Wee	Bantam	Midget	Rest Required
Low	1 – 20	1 – 25	1 – 30	1 – 30	None
Medium Low	21 – 30	26 – 35	31 – 40	31 – 44	1 day
Medium	31 – 44	36 – 54	41 – 59	45 – 64	2 days
Medium High	45 – 54	55 – 64	60 – 74	65 – 79	3 days
High	55 – 70	65 – 80	75 – 90	80 – 100	4 days
Maximum	70	80	90	100	

Too many times at the lower age levels coaches are so concerned with keeping kids under a certain number so they can use them as many times as possible. We want to try and get to a point where we use a few pitchers throughout a game, give them proper rest and allow them to pitch longer in games. This gives them more opportunities to work through trouble or continue to go if they are throwing well.

Especially at the lower levels, we want as many kids to pitch as possible. As far as managing your staff, you will have your upper tier, middle tier and lower tier of guys who are capable of throwing off the mound. Group them accordingly and then take one from each group and place in secondary groups so you have one from each, or a combination of the three in these secondary groups. These now become your game groups. Give kids the opportunity to start games knowing that you have coverage behind them. Start your weaker pitchers against teams that are more suitable to their skill set and the stronger pitchers against the stronger teams.

At the Bantam and Midget level you can begin to designate pitchers as relievers and starters. Starters are on a rotation and that rotation will usually consist of 4-5 players. The others can be mixed in throughout the game, but also dividing those innings up somewhat evenly.

Early on in the season coaches should have the mentality of building up pitchers and their pitch count. That usually is done with an innings limit or pitch count. You will need more relievers in the beginning of the season, but this also builds those pitchers up. Once relievers are built up then they can also be used on back to back games or days according to the pitch count rules.

Developing Pitchers

Pitchers need to be able to perform in games. Performing at the lower levels is slightly different than at the older levels. Young pitchers need to be able to throw strikes with a fastball, older pitchers also need to throw strikes, but also locate a fastball and throw a secondary pitch for strikes consistently. Giving them the time within a practice is the most important thing a coach can provide to help improve this.

Coaches need to be conscious of pitchers during the week of practices. When did they last throw, how many pitches did they throw, how many days should they have off and when do they throw again? When throwing a bullpen during practice they should have at least 1-2 days off since their last appearance and they should get at least 2 days off before they throw in a game again after their bullpen. The number of pitches thrown in a bullpen can vary from player to player. Usually starters will throw a little longer than relievers. Starters should build up to about 30-40 pitches per side session and relievers can stay around 20-25.

We will get into how to work bullpens into your practice when we go over how to structure a practice. When players are throwing bullpens we want to make sure that they are getting quality work in without throwing an obscene amount of pitches. The next few pages will outline a routine that can be used as a reference for coaches.

Bullpen Routine (Starter)

Play catch to make sure the pitchers arm is ready for mound work.

Set Position (25-30 pitches)

5 FB's Middle

5 FB's Extension side

5 FB's Arm side

5 Change Ups Middle

5 Pitches alternating FB's & Change ups

5 Breaking Balls (if this applies)

Full Wind Up (10-12 pitches)

2 FB's Middle

2 FB's Extension side

2 FB's Arm side

2 Change Ups Middle

2 Pitches alternating FB's & Change ups

2 Breaking Balls (if this applies)

Bullpen Routine (Reliever)

Play catch to make sure the pitchers arm is ready for mound work.

Set Position (20-24 pitches)

4 FB's Middle

4 FB's Extension side

4 FB's Arm side

4 Change Ups Middle

4 Pitches alternating FB's & Change ups

4 Breaking Balls (if this applies)

This routine may vary slightly based on the age level and the number of pitches a player has. We want pitchers doing most of their work from the set position as it simplifies things, and unless they don't allow base runners, they do most of they're throwing from the set position during a game. The amount of throws to each side of the plate from the set position can be slightly altered also to compensate for working on a certain pitch or location a little more if the coaches deems necessary based on past performance. During a practice you will usually get through 4-5 pitchers with the time allotted.

Pre Game (Starter) 7:00 Start Home Team

6:25-6:35 Light Jog & Dynamic Stretch

6:35-6:45 Play Catch

- **10-15 Throws at 40-60 Feet**
- **10 Throws at 70-90 Feet**
- **10 Throws at 100-Max Feet**
- **Start working back in and throw pitches to catcher (FB, CH, Etc...)**

6:45-6:55 Bull Pen

Set Position (19 Pitches)

- **3 FB Middle, 3 FB Away, 3 FB In**
- **3 CH Middle, 1 FB Away**
- **3 BB Middle, 1 FB Up, 1 BB Down & Away, 1 FB Down & Away**

Full Wind Up (11 Pitches)

- **2 FB Middle**
- **2 CH Middle**
- **2 FB Away**
- **2 BB Away**
- **2 FB In, 1 FB Middle**

6:55-7:00 Rest Before Game

Relievers

When a coach decides that they might want to get another pitcher ready in the bullpen, they have to make the decision of sending someone to the bullpen early enough to allow them to get game ready. They must also consider when they might want this pitcher to come in (the current inning or possibly the next inning), and communicate that to the pitcher. They need to throw (play catch a little bit before getting on the mound). So the coaches message to that player should be to go down and get your body and arm loose. To often kids go down to the bullpen and just start throwing off the mound before they are ready to do so. Once they are done warming up, and that should only take a few minutes, the coach can instruct them to begin throwing off the mound.

The main focus of a reliever is to get their fastball ready. Once the fastball is ready, they are ready to go into a game. Realistically this should take anywhere from 5-15 pitches. They need to let the coach know when their fastball is ready, and then throw their next best secondary pitch.

Fundamentals

Phases of Pitching

The Set Up

- Relaxed
- Hands together in the middle of your body
- Feet around shoulder width apart or slightly wider
- 75% of weight into the back leg
- Weight on the inside part of the back foot
- Back knee inside the back foot
- Slight flexion in the back knee & the back knee inside the back foot



Leg Lift

- Lift Front Leg into the centre of your body (lift leg through Quad)
- Hands move up as leg comes up
- As knee gets to the top of lift, sit into back heel and drive back hip pocket to the catcher
- Upper body stays over back foot creating upper body and lower body separation
- This is the beginning of the speed and momentum of our delivery
- Back knee stays inside the back foot, and never over the back foot



Seperation

- Hands separate around the belt as front leg starts down
- Weight on back leg is felt through the Hamstring & Glute (slight sitting action)
- Slight flexion in back knee
- Upper body lags behind as lower drives in a linear direction towards the catcher
- Front shoulder is slightly closed as hands begin to separate
- Back heel remains on the ground with body weight on the inside part of the back foot



Stride & Arm Path

- Continue to drive the inside of the back foot (Heel still on the ground)
- Still flexion in the back knee and knee is facing the same direction as the chest
- Arms separate on a similar path (Equal and Opposites at the elbows)
- Shoulders are still closed to the target
- Head is still behind the centre line of the body
- Front foot reaches towards the plate
- Extend back leg & drive hip to the plate right before the front foot lands



Front Foot Strike

- This is the Key Snap Shot for coaches!!!
- Back leg extends through ankle, knee & hip which drives hip to plate and back foot turns all by itself
- Upper body makes its way back to centre line and shoulder are still slightly closed to target as hips open (Reverse Spring Action)
- Ball needs to be up in the cocked position
- Elbows are below the shoulders and start to go back & down



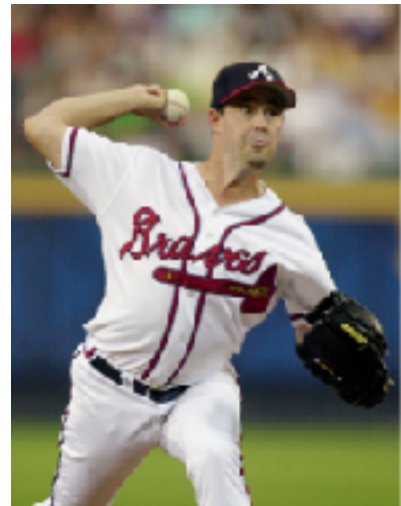
Scap Load & Beginning of Rotation

- Arms will disconnect for an instant to initiate rotation of upper body
- Glove starts making its way into body
- Faster you rotate front side the faster your trunk and arm rotate



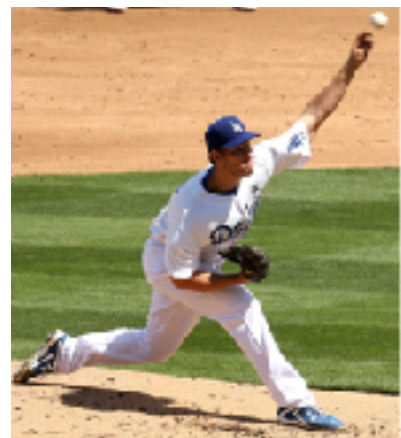
Rotation & External Rotation

- Glove side elbow continues to pull back into the body and glove makes its way to the glove side chest
- Ball lays back behind the head and arm rotates within the shoulder socket which lessens the stress on the elbow
- Throwing elbow will get above the throwing side shoulder through rotation
- Humerus should be in line with the shoulder blades through rotation
- Upper body (chest & chin) make their way towards the catcher by getting over the front leg



Release

- Elbow is above the shoulder
- Ball is released out in front of front foot for maximum extension
- Front leg braces forward momentum for maximum force



Follow Through

- Complete the rotation to allow the maximum amount of time for the arm to decelerate. Back of throwing shoulder to target
- Hand and arm should work in a north to south motion. Never east to west



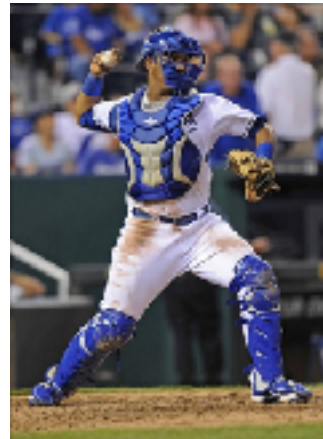
Throwing

The action of a throw regardless of the position being played is very similar to the phases of pitching. Footwork usually determines if the arm works in a longer arc or a shorter arc. Positions like infield, including catcher require faster moving feet which result in a shorter arm action. But in order to throw accurately with something on it, we focus on the position at front foot strike. Here are some good examples of what to look for.

Derek Jeter



Salvador Perez



Mike Trout



Phases of Hitting

The Stance

- KNEES ALWAYS STAY INSIDE THE FEET!!!
- Balanced with weight 50-50 between feet
- Weight on the inside of the back foot and knees bent
- Hands somewhere around the back shoulder
- Elbow up or down, but barrel should be up and inside the hands



Stride & Load

- KNEES ALWAYS STAY INSIDE THE FEET!!!
- Weight shifts to the inside of the back foot (75-80%) and the bottom hand takes the handle of the bat back, pointing down to the catcher as hitter strides towards the pitcher (hitter may not have a stride)
- Hands should track back so they are behind the back shoulder with elbow up in the back
- Barrel should be over the back of the head and still be inside the hands



Activation or Slot

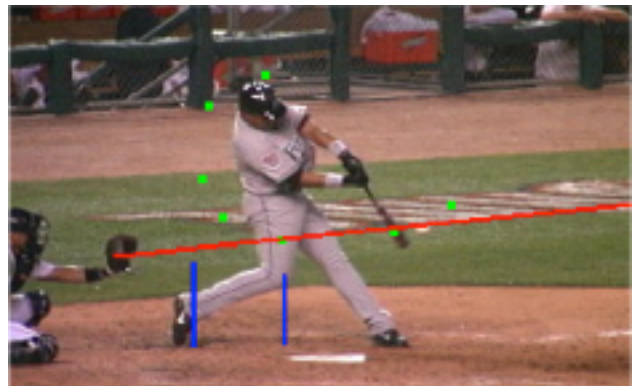
- Hips start and hands move
- Back elbow begins to drop down as back knee drives under the body. Drive off the inside of the back foot, and drive back hip from the ball of the foot and big toe to activate the back hip drive
- Hands remain up and behind the back shoulder
- Bat flattens out and barrel stays inside hands
- Front leg is stable as upper half gets back to centre





Swing Path & Lower Half Drive

- From the slot position, the hitter continues to drive the back knee under the back hip
- Barrel flattens out so that you can get it on plain with the ball quickly and for a long time
- Hit the ball with the lower half drive and hands & barrel follow
- Knob of the bat tracks to the inside part of the ball
- Swing plane should mirror the plane of the ball (ie. flatter plane the higher the ball is. More upward plane as the ball gets lower)



Point of Contact

- Never squish the bug. Back hip drives through the ball and back foot may come off the ground or at least be on the tip toe
- Back knee, hip and shoulder should be in line
- Angle of the barrel should match that of the shoulders
- Palm up, palm down position with hands
- Belly button faces the pitcher for maximum drive
- Barrel follows the path of the body
- Front leg braces up for something to drive against (back leg is the gas pedal, front leg is the brake, together that equals balance and drive)





Fielding

Infielders -

When fielding a routine ground ball we as coaches are looking for certain things.

- Catch the bottom half of the ball
- Field ball in-between feet in the middle to glove side of the body
- Wide feet with left foot slightly forward
- Butt down to make it easier to get glove down
- Glove out in front of head with throwing hand above
- Shuffle in the direction of the base you are throwing to



This is a little advance from some of the younger ages, but still good information. When the ball is hit to an infielder the most important step they take is their first one. To help put them in a better position when fielding a ground ball they should focus on the first step, and more importantly

getting their left foot in line with the bouncing ball coming towards them. This aides them in their direction to the ball, and helps them keep the ball on their glove side when they get into the fielding position.

Whenever a player has to go a longer distance for a ground ball or catch a ball in the air, they should be encouraged to do so with one hand. "Catch the ball with one hand". When a player tries to catch a ball that is in the air with 2 hands it really decreases the range they have with their arms. Build up confidence in the glove because you never really use your other hand to catch, you use the glove. With that being said, when they try to catch a ball where the fingers of the glove are pointed up, the player should focus on catching the top of the ball. If they do that, the ball has more of a tendency to go into the pocket of the glove.

Outfielders -

Outfielders have one job when it comes to balls hit to them, and that is do everything you can to keep the ball in front of them. Not always possible, but we want to avoid routine fly balls going over their head when they should be caught. Remember it is always easier coming in on a ball than it is to run back on it. Catch balls with one hand and try to catch routine fly balls in front of your face and body.



Structuring a Practice

When structuring your practice it is important to focus on the quality of work, as opposed to the quantity. This is better understood if you realize the length of the season and categorize things you are going to work on into what is more important. When the season starts you need to make sure the team has an understanding of team defences and also have time to work on individual skills. This is easily accomplished if you understand how to structure your practice.

Too many times coaches try to have way too much going on their practices and that usually sacrifices the quality of work being done by the players. Realize you have 4 main parts to your practice, and those are the Warm Up (including catch and long toss), Main Part, Batting Practice and Cool Down. Understand that the Main Part of the practice is usually the only portion of the practice that really changes because you always need to throw and play catch, hit in batting practice and do a cool down. So you will use the main part of your practice in different ways to teach team and individual concepts, doing that as a team or in specific group work.

Team concept that you can work on during a practice are as follows...

- Cut Offs & Relays
- Pick Offs & Run Downs
- Pop Up Priorities
- Bunt Plays
- 1st & 3rd Defences
- Pitchers Fielding Practice (PFP)

- Pre Game Infield & Outfield

What portions of these concepts you include with your team will depend on the level that you coaching. But that still leaves you with a lot of things that you and the team can be working on. Here is an example of what a typical 2 hour practice would look like for a team of 14 kids.

Warm Up

5:30-5:40 - Jog & Dynamic Warm Up

5:40-5:55 - Play Catch & Long Toss

5:55-6:00 - Water Break

Main

6:00-6:15 Cuts & Relays

Water Break

6:20-6:40 Run Downs

Water Break

Batting Practice

6:45-7:25 Batting Practice (3 Groups of 5, 5 & 4 hit for 13 minutes each)

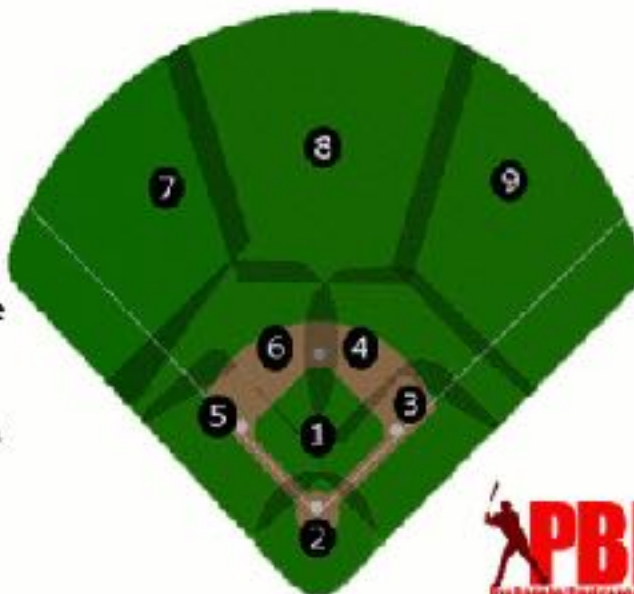
As one group hits, one works on individual defence & the other shags baseballs that are hit. This is the time that pitchers throw, so your group of pitchers and catchers should be the last group to hit as this will allow them to get their work in.

7-25-7:30 Cool Down and Clean Up

Pop Up Priorities

Pop Fly Priority Cheat Sheet

- **Outfielders** have priority over the infielders.
- **Centerfielder** has priority over the left and right fielders.
- **Shortstop** has priority over everyone in the **infield**.
- **Middle infielders (SS and 2nd base)** have priority over the corner infielders (1st base and 3rd base).
- **Corner infielders** have priority over the pitcher and catcher.



Pitcher's Fielding Practice (PFP)

This is a good team fundamental that can be worked on during a practice as it is easy to get everyone on the team involved. You have the option of using infielders or rotate pitchers to the infield position after they have completed their throw. This works on everything that a pitcher and infielder need to be concerned with from a defensive stand point on the field.

- **Comebackers with a throw to first**
- **Routine bunts down the 3rd baseline**
- **Good bunts down the 3rd baseline**
- **Routine bunts down the 1st baseline**
- **Good bunts down the 1st baseline**
- **Groundballs to 1st with the pitcher covering 1st base**
- **“Tweeners” where both the 1st baseman and pitcher go for the ball. If the pitcher picks up the ball they continue to the bag. If they can't pick up the ball the 1st baseman is there to field it and toss it to the pitcher covering**
- **3-6-1 double plays**
- **Comebackers to the pitcher with a throw to 2nd for a double play**
- **Bunts to the 3rd base side, fielded by the pitcher with a throw to the 3rd baseman**
- **1-2-3 double plays**
- **Squeeze plays**

Run Downs

Before working on Run Downs players must understand that this is done with a high level of intensity. What that means is that the defence must be the one that dictates the pace of the run down. If a defensive player runs the base runner in one direction with pace it makes it easier for the defence to generate an out in the situation with one throw, and ultimately that is the goal of the defence. It becomes very difficult for a runner to run full speed and then change directions when the defensive player is already running towards them.

Setting up a run down drill during practice consists of 2 pitchers on either side of the mound, 2 infielders at each position and base runners. Pitchers on the 1st base side of the mound start with a pick off to 1st to initiate the run down between 1st and 2nd. The pitcher on 3rd base side receives a comebacker and the runner at 3rd leaves on contact and gets stuck in a run down. Pitcher should try and get them going back to 3rd base.

Receivers should try and create a similar lane that the player with the ball is on, which is either inside or outside the base runner. Run them hard but under control.



Pre Game Infield & Outfield

Outfield

- Ball to the LF right with a throw to 2nd base
- Ball to the CF right with a throw to 2nd base
- Ball to the RF left with a throw to 2nd base
- 2 Balls to the LF left with a throw to 3rd base
- 2 Balls to the CF with a throw to 3rd base
- 2 Balls to the RF with a throw to 3rd base
- 2 Balls (a ground ball & then a fly ball) to the LF with a throw to Home
- 2 Balls (a ground ball & then a fly ball) to the CF with a throw to Home
- 2 Balls (a ground ball & then a fly ball) to the RF with a throw to Home
- Outfielders meet in CF for fly balls from a coach

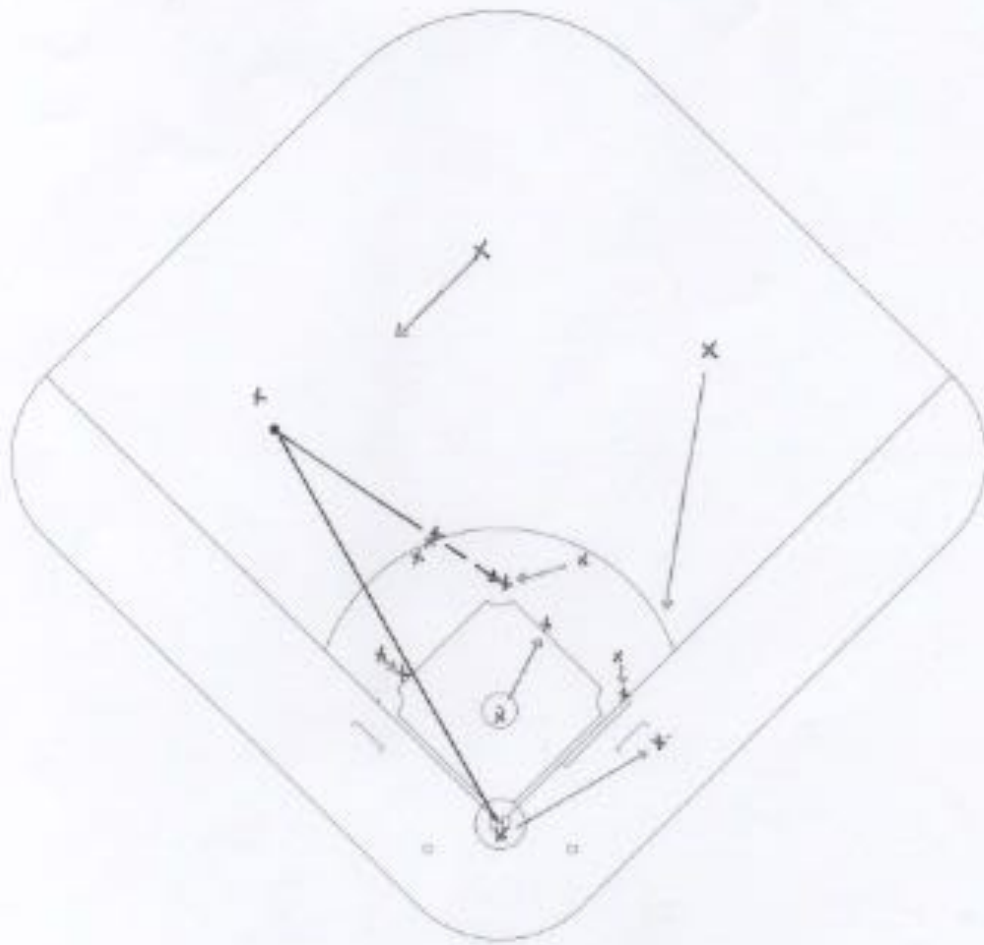
Infield

- Infielders move into an infield in depth. Last throw comes into home from RF, catcher throws the ball to 3rd, 3rd to 2nd, 2nd to SS, SS to 1st and 1st to Catcher. Do this twice if you have more than one infielder at a position
- Infield in, groundball hit to each position starting at 3rd base with a throw home for a tag play at the plate
- Infield regular depth, groundball to 3rd throw to 1st, 1st to catcher who returns a throw to the 3rd baseman at the base for a tag, then 3rd to 2nd baseman at second, 2nd base to 1st, 1st to catcher
- Groundball to SS with a throw to 1st base, 1st base to Catcher who throws the ball to SS at 2nd base for a tag, SS to 3rd base bag, 3rd to Catcher
- Groundball to 2nd baseman with a throw to 1st, 1st to catcher, catcher to 2nd baseman at the bag for a tag, 2nd to 3rd base bag, 3rd to catcher
- Groundball to 1st baseman playing in, throw to the catcher for a double play back to the 1st baseman at the bag, 1st to 2nd baseman, 2nd baseman to SS, SS to 3rd baseman, 3rd baseman to catcher
- Repeat that round by hitting ground balls to the infielders glove side, they throw to 1st base with no return throw from the catcher. 1st baseman throws to the plate for a tag play, catcher fields a bunt and throws to 1st base. catcher to 1st, 1st to 2nd, 2nd to SS, SS to 3B, 3B to catcher
- Infielders move to double play depth, groundball to the 3rd baseman who throws to the 2nd baseman at the bag, 2nd to 1st, 1st to catcher, catcher throws to 3rd baseman at the bag for a tag, 3rd to 2nd baseman, 2nd to 1st, 1st to catcher
- groundball to SS's glove side, flip to 2nd baseman, 2nd to 1st, 1st to catcher, catcher to SS for a tag at 2nd base, SS to 3rd baseman, 3rd to catcher
- Groundball to 2nd baseman's arm side for a flip to SS, SS to 1st, 1st to catcher, catcher to the 2B for a tag at 2nd base, 2nd baseman to 3rd, 3rd to catcher
- Groundball to 1st baseman who is holding runner on, 1st to SS, SS to 1st, 1st to catcher
- Repeat that round by hitting ground ball that takes them away from 2nd base to turn double plays. No return throw from the catcher. 1st baseman holds runner on, coach hits ball close to the bag, 1st baseman touches the base and throws to the SS for a tag, SS to 3rd, 3rd to catcher. Catcher fields a bunt and throws to SS for a double play, SS to 1st, 1st to catcher
- Infield moves back, coaches hit balls to infielders backhands for long throw to 1st base. 1st baseman plays back, fields groundball and throws to SS, SS to 3rd (backdoor), 3rd to catcher

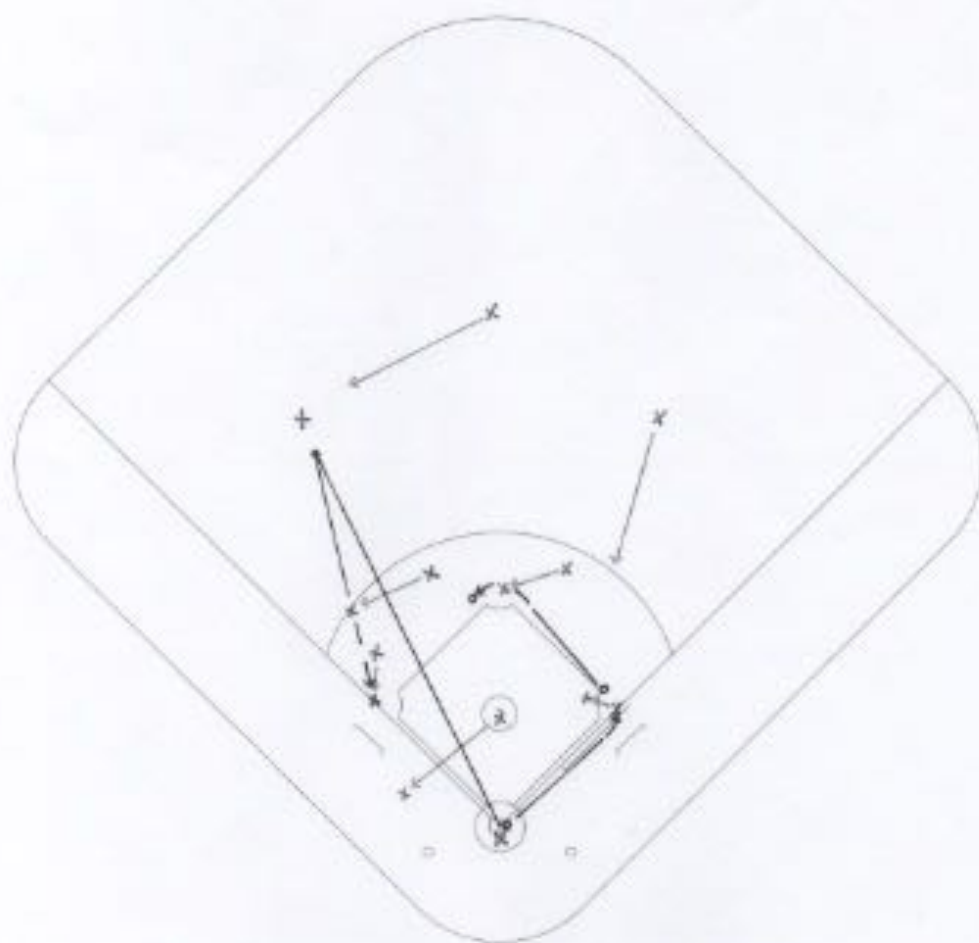
- Coach hits slow rollers with throws to 1st base, all players leave the field after they are done except the 3rd baseman who is at the bag for the 1st baseman's throw
- catcher pop up for the catcher

Cut & Relays

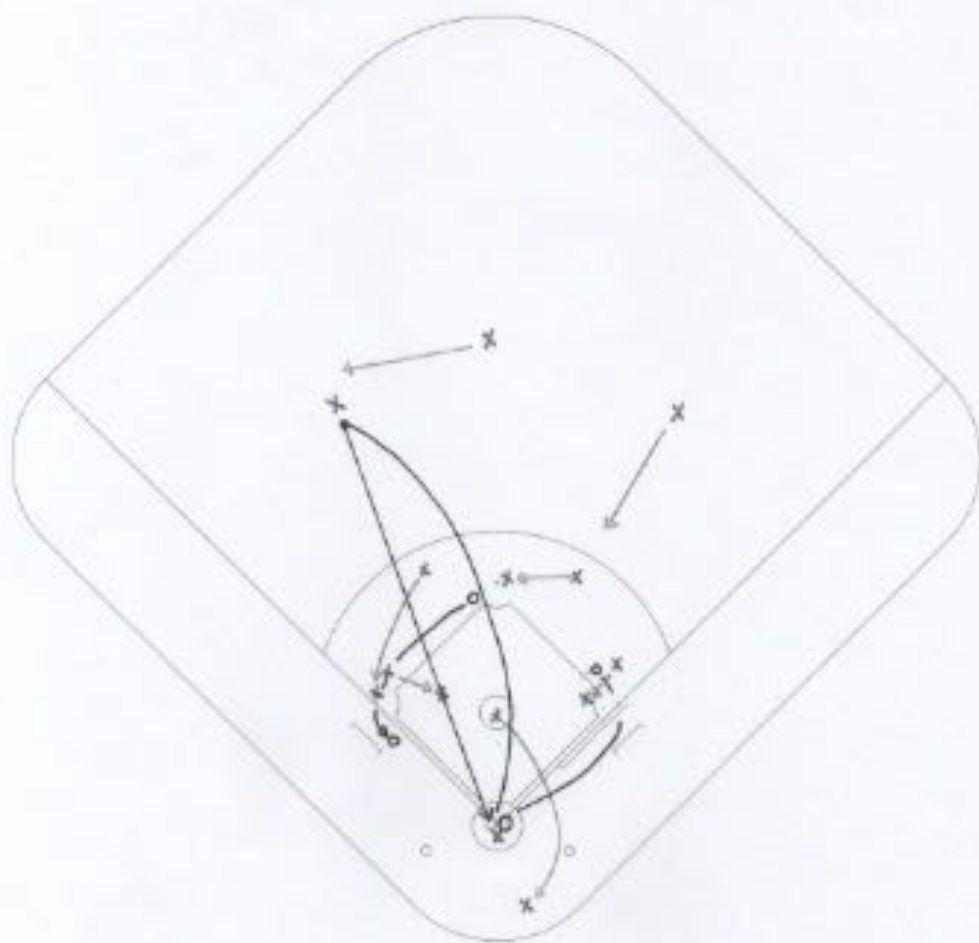
NOBODY ON - BASEHIT TO LEFT FIELD.



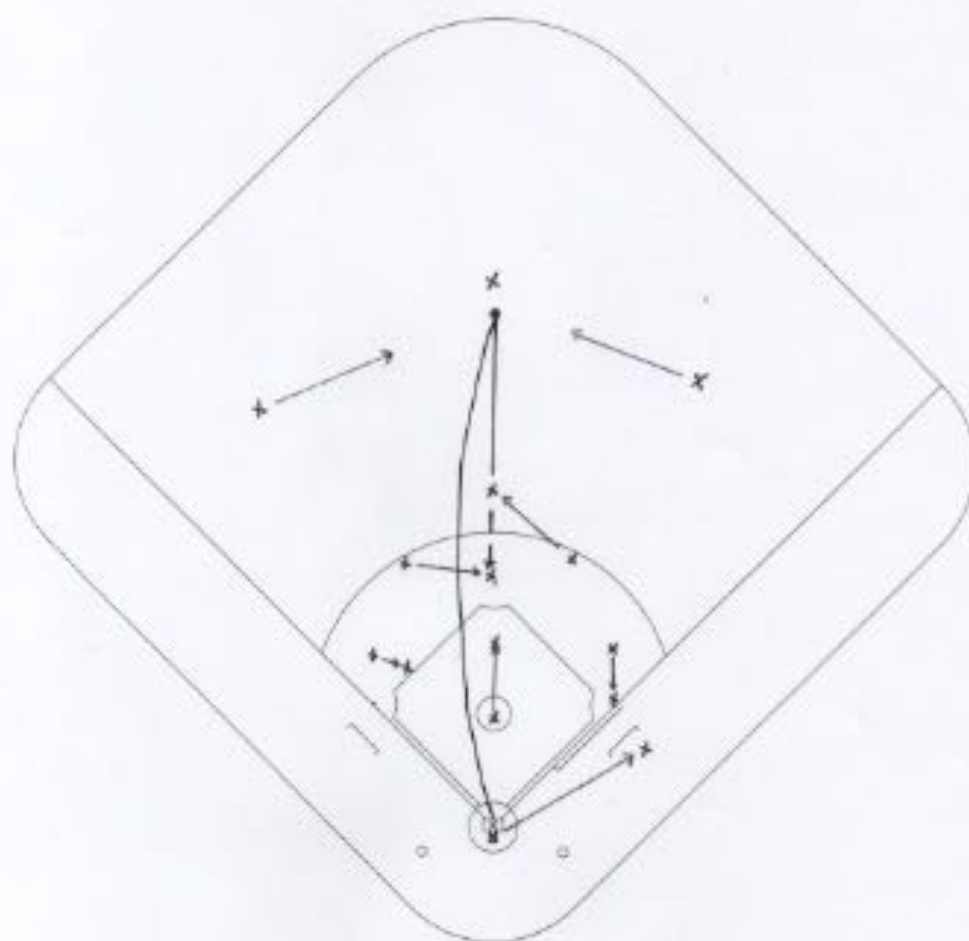
RUNNER ON 1ST. BASEHIT TO LEFT FIELD.



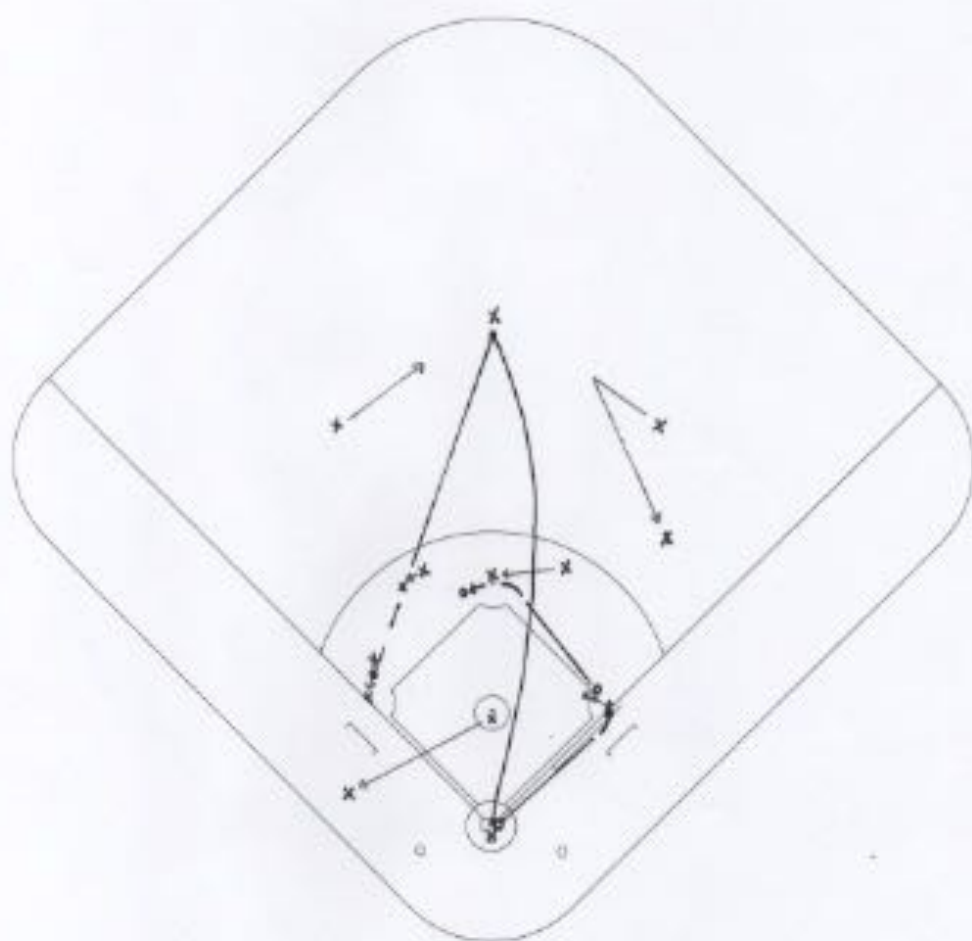
RUNNER ON 2ND BASE HIT TO LEFT FIELD



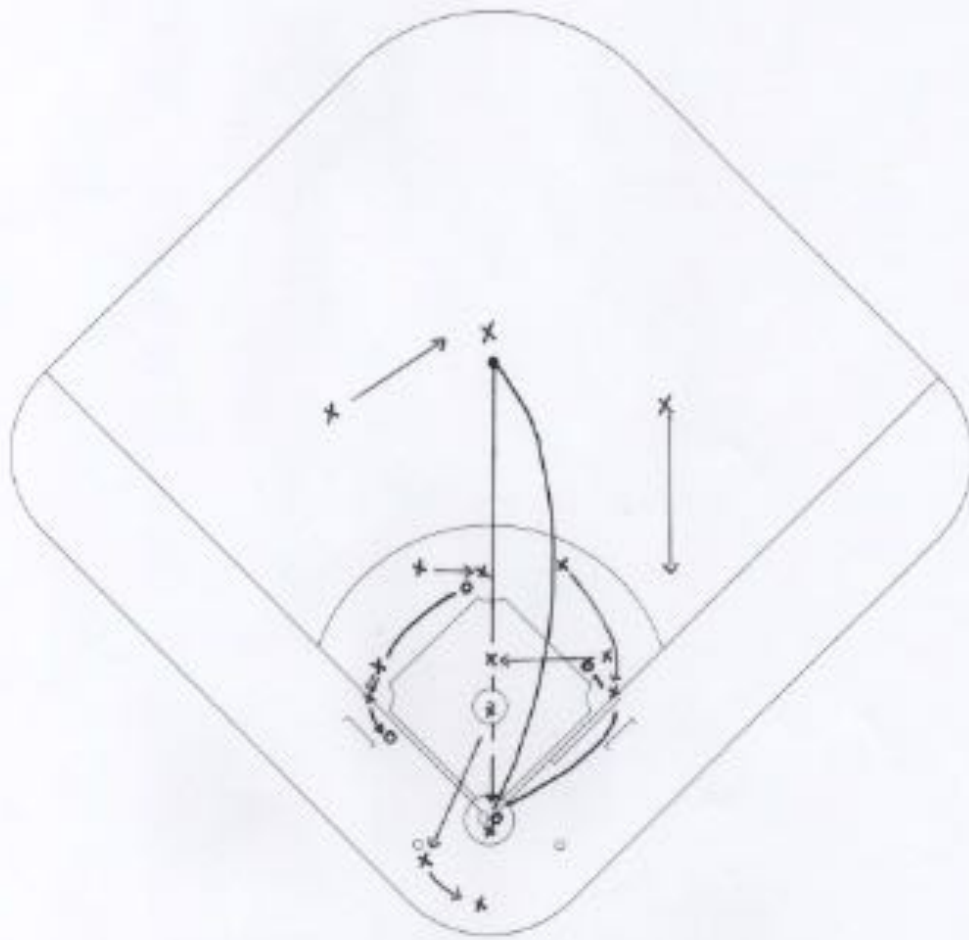
NOBODY ON-BASE HIT TO CENTER FIELD



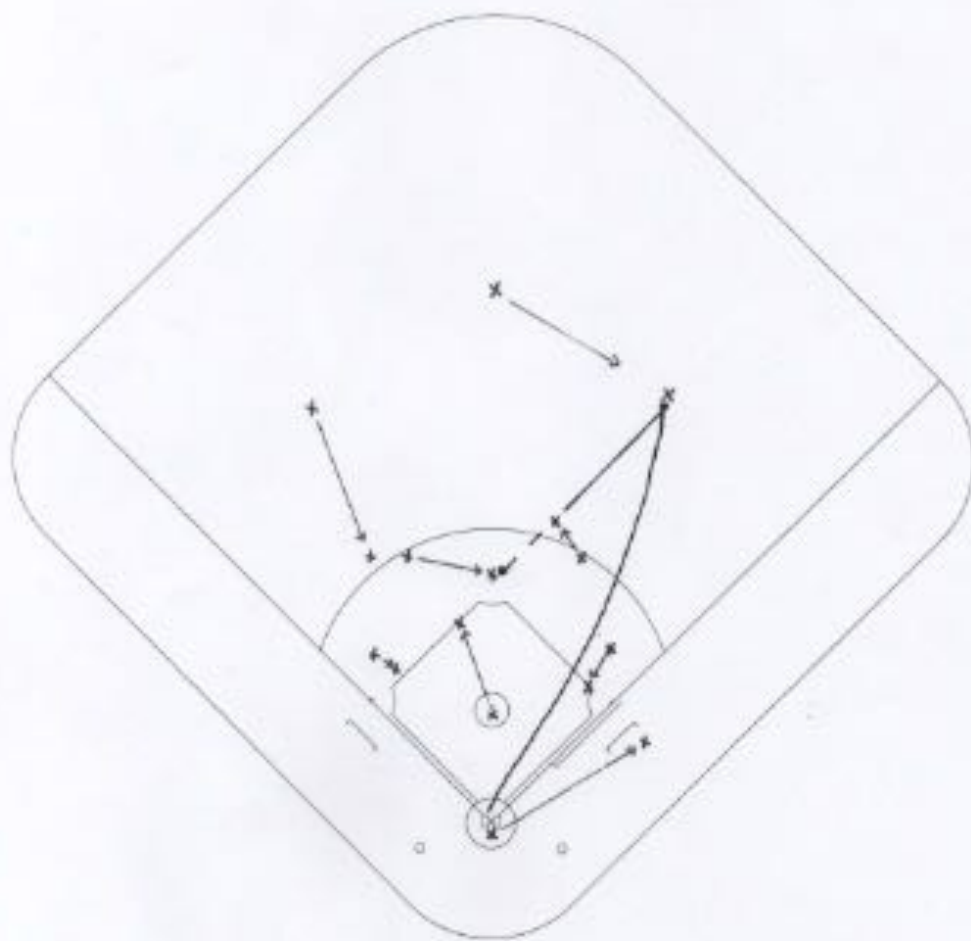
RUNNER ON 1ST BASE HIT TO CENTER FIELD.



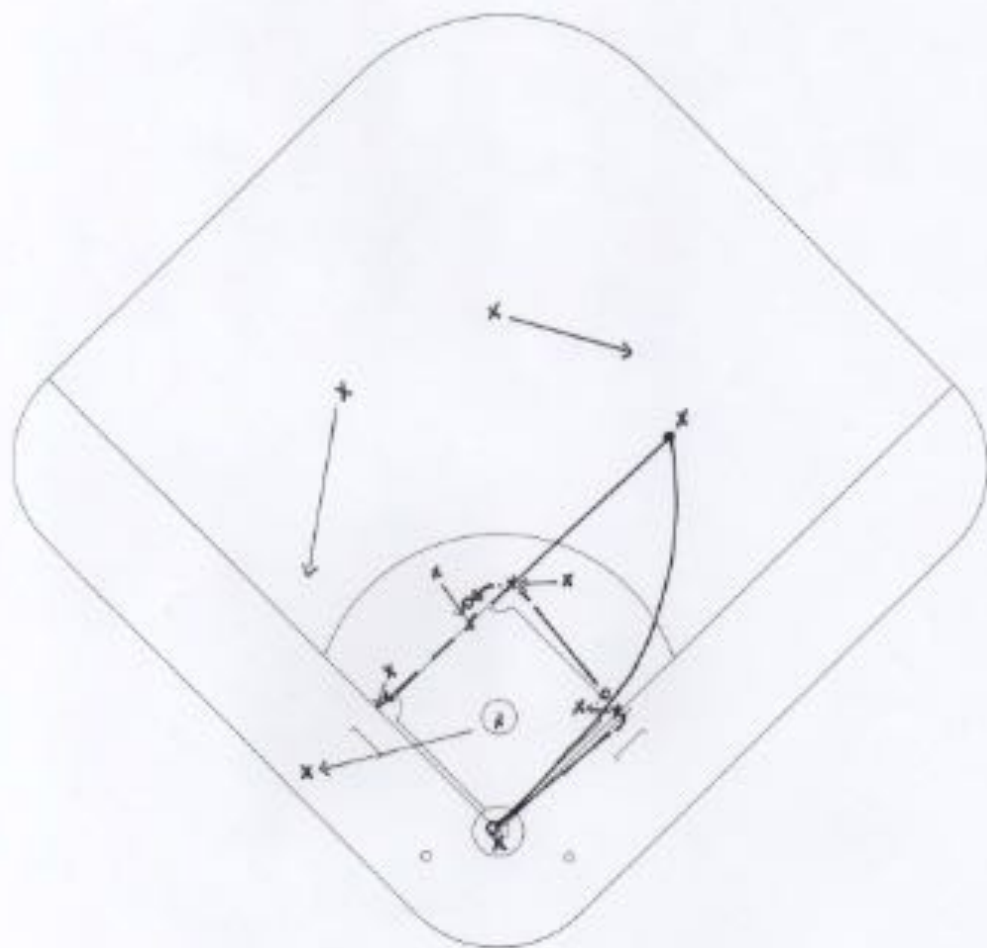
RUNNER ON 2ND BASE HIT TO CENTER FIELD



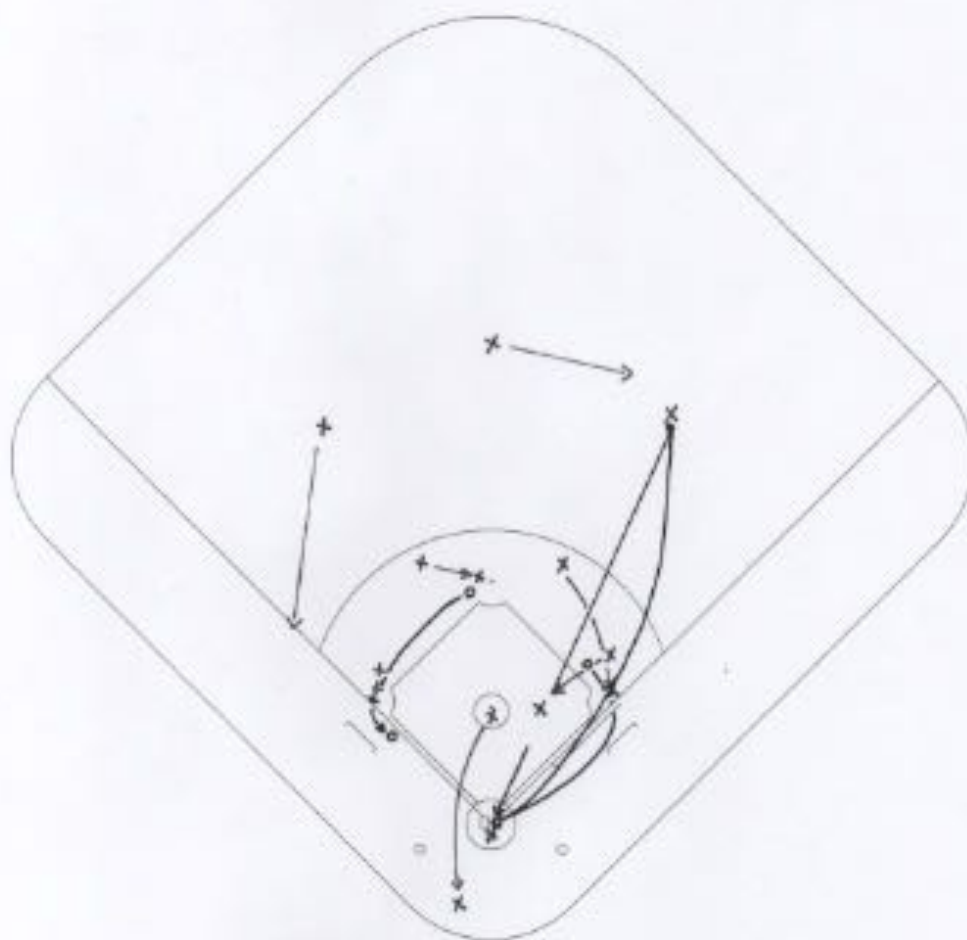
NOBODY ON BASE HIT TO RIGHT FIELD.



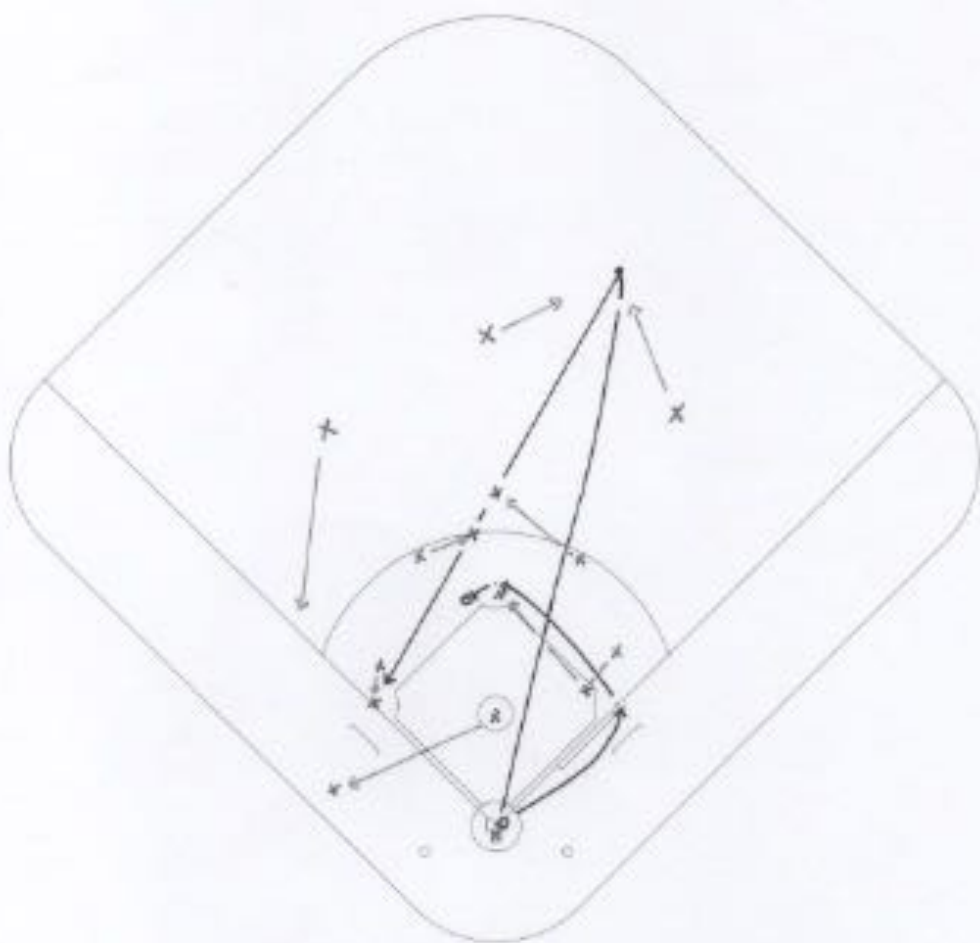
RUNNER ON 1ST - BASEHIT TO RIGHT FIELD



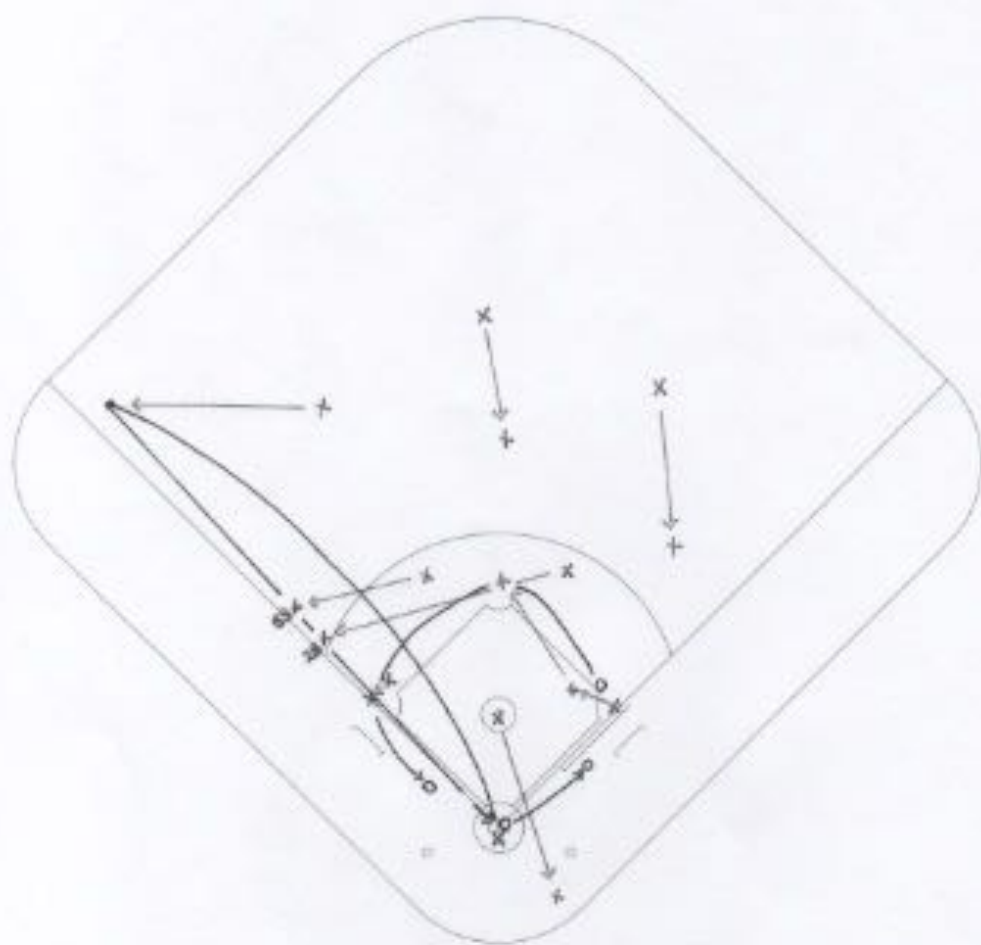
RUNNER ON 2ND BASE HIT TO RIGHT FIELD



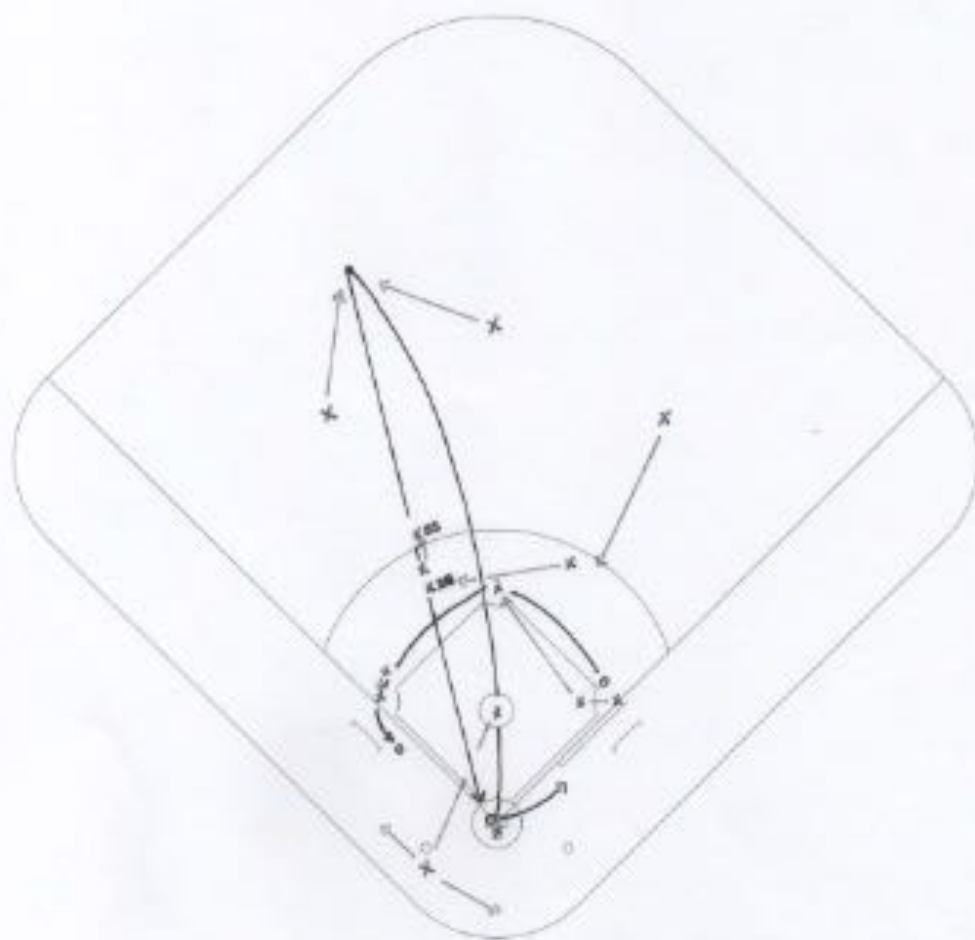
NOBODY ON - DOUBLE TO RIGHT - CENTER.



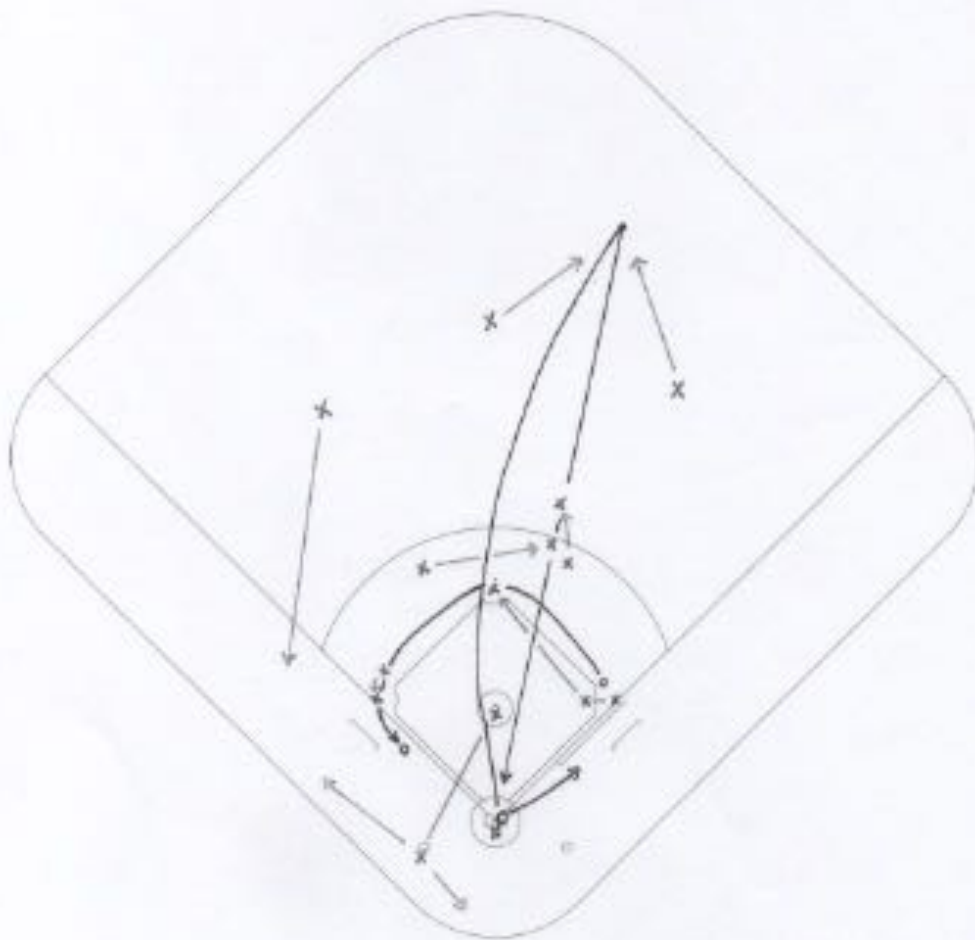
RUNNER ON 1ST - DOUBLE DOWN LEFT FIELD LINE



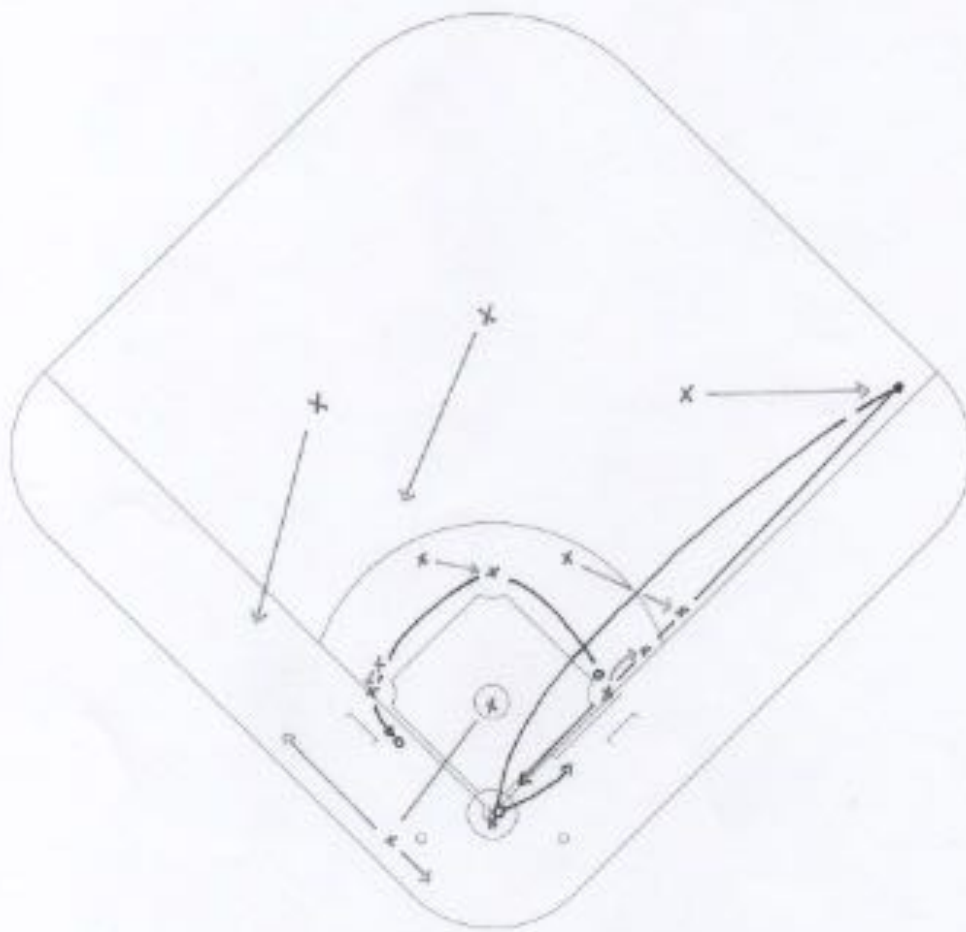
RUNNER ON 1ST - DOUBLE TO LEFT - CENTER



RUNNER ON 1ST - DOUBLE TO RIGHT - CENTER.

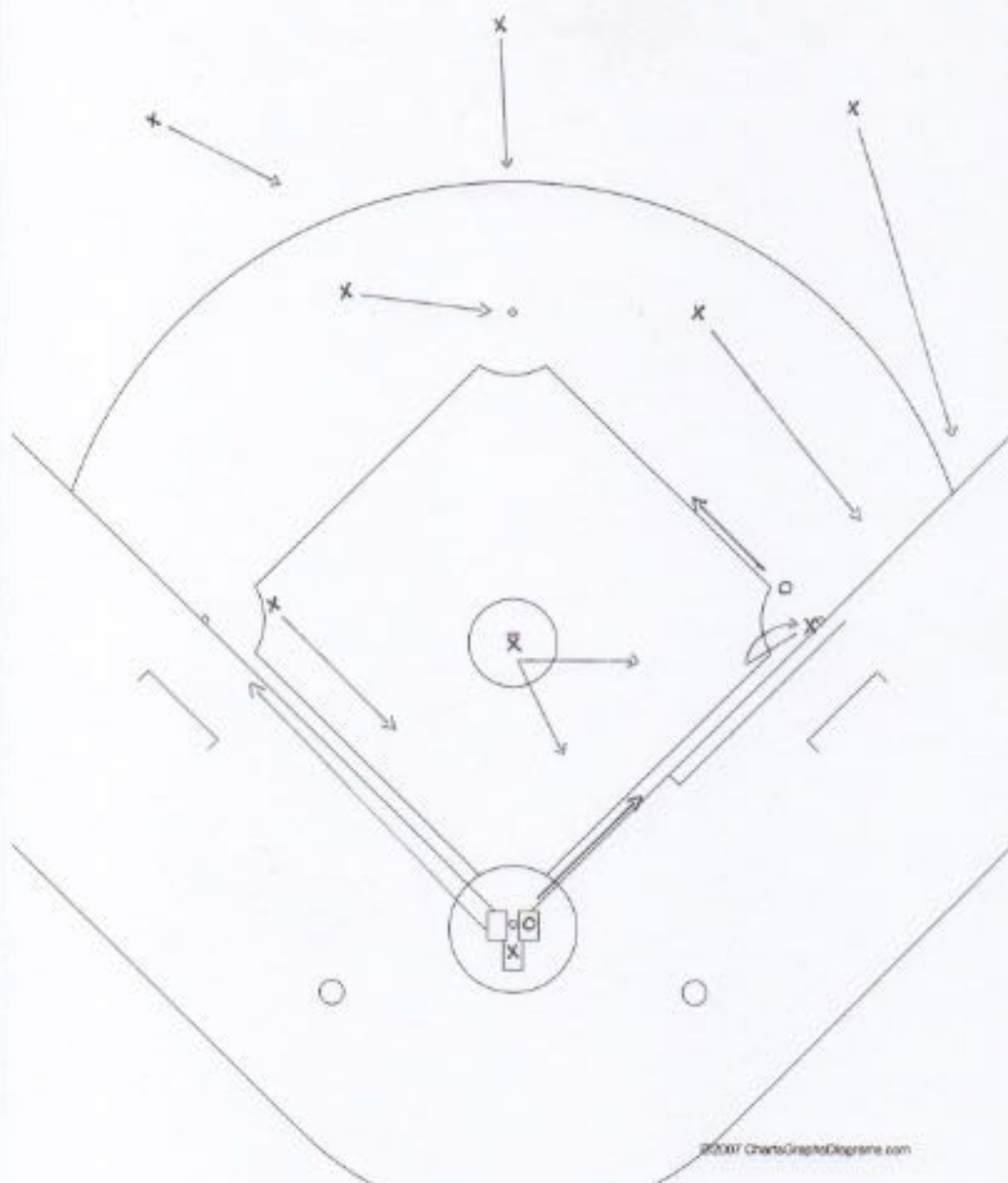


RUNNER ON 1ST. DOUBLE DOWN RIGHT FIELD LINE.



Bunt Plays

*1 REG BUNT PLAY RUNNER ON 1ST.



#1 Bunt Play- Runner on 1st.

Runner on First

With a runner on first, the main objective of this defence is to get an out. Most likely this will occur by throwing the ball to first base. Making a play at second is risky due to the length of the throw. A poor throw or trying to make a play at second when the runner has a good chance of beating the throw can end up in two runners on and no outs. Unless the catcher calls for the play to go to second, the player fielding the ball should assume the play is at first base. The catcher will have to judge the speed of the ball, the position of the fielder and the jump of the runner to determine if the play can be made at second. If there is any doubt, the catcher should call for the play to go to first.

Responsibilities

Catcher

Field any ball that is in front of you that you can get to before or at the same time as the pitcher or first baseman. You have an easier throw since your momentum is moving you towards the field. Unless you can clearly get to the ball before the third baseman, you will want to yield and let him field the ball. His angle will give him a better opportunity to throw the runner out at first than you. Once you determine the 3rd base man is going to field the ball you must hustle down the 3rd base line to cover the bag. Remember, the key in this play is to get an out. If you're not sure that the lead runner can easily be thrown out, call for the ball to be thrown to first.

Third Baseman

You will break towards home as the pitcher delivers the pitch to the plate. Go in under control and make sure the hitter doesn't fake the bunt and then swing away. If the bunt is fielded by anyone else but you, it's your responsibility to immediately return to 3rd to cover the bag.

Pitcher

Come set, hold the ball and check the runner at 1st. Deliver any pitch to home and break towards the 1st base line. The pitcher should never cross the direct line from the mound to 1st base as he is responsible for any ball in front of that line. If the ball gets by the pitcher then he continues onto 1st base and receives the underhand toss from the 1st baseman.

First Baseman

You must first hold the runner on first and then shuffle off the bag. Once you determine the ball will not get by the pitcher then you return to the 1st base bag and receive the throw.

Second Baseman

You will be covering behind first on the play.

Shortstop

You will be covering second base.

Make sure the hitter doesn't fake bunt and swing away before breaking to cover second. If a fake bunt is used to help cover a steal, you must break to cover second even if the second baseman was determined to cover second on a steal before the play. If he reads bunt, he will be heading towards first and will not be in position to cover second on the steal.

Left Fielder

Back up second base.

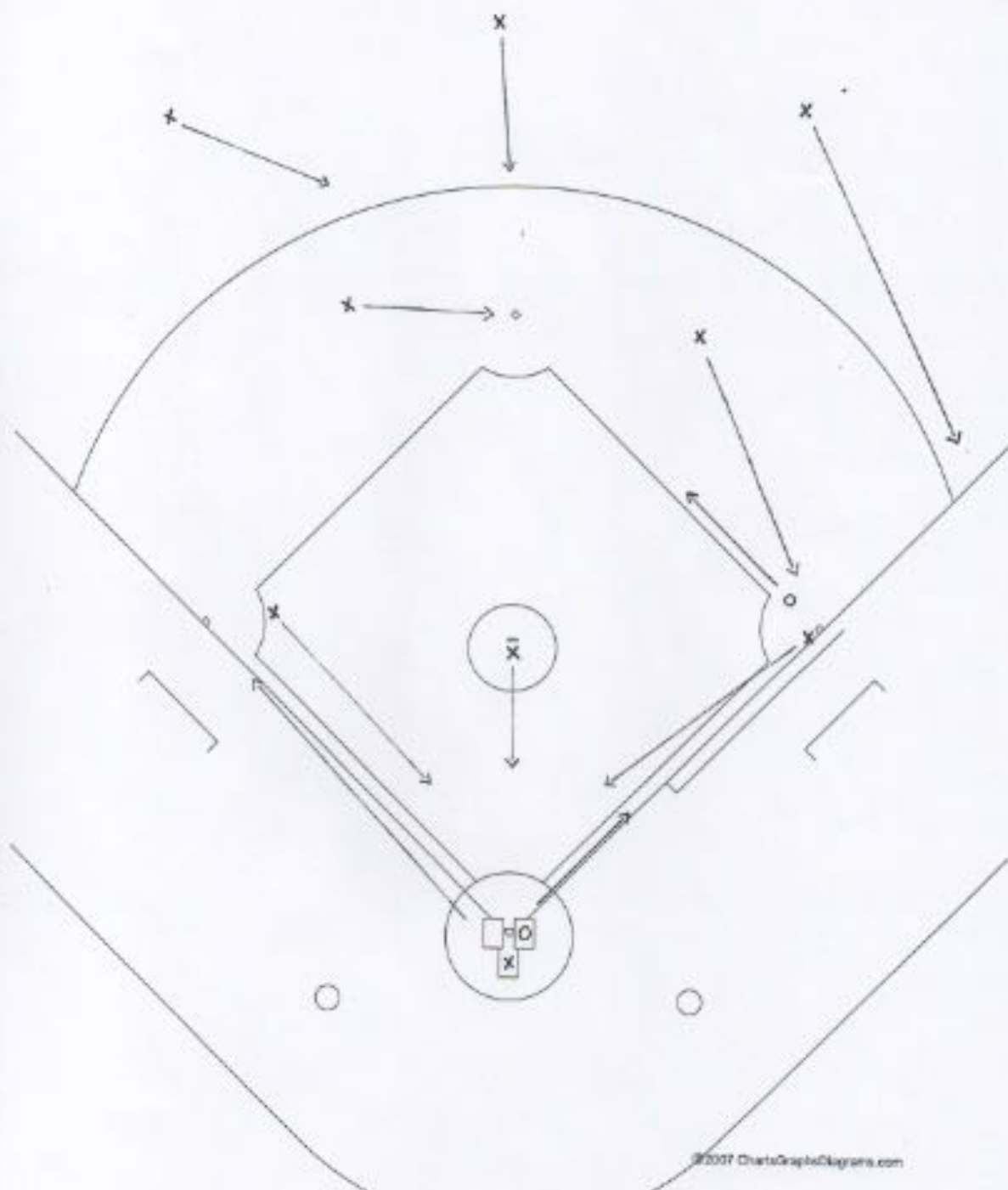
Center Fielder

Back up second base.

Right Fielder

Back up first base.

#2 BUNT PLAY WITH RUNNER ON 1ST.



#2 Bunt Play- Runner on 1st.

Runner on First

With a runner on first, the main objective of this defence is to get the out at 2nd base. The reason is we have both lines (1st base and 3rd base) covered and also the middle of the field. Corner defensive players and the pitcher crash the home plate with the intention of getting the out at 2nd unless told otherwise from the catcher.

A play at second will most likely be successful on a ball that is bunted right in front of home plate where the catcher can field the ball quickly and make the throw. The only other time a play should be attempted at second is on a ball that is bunted hard directly at one of the fielders charging the ball. The catcher will have to judge the speed of the ball, the position of the fielder and the jump of the runner to determine if the play can be made at second. If there is any doubt, the catcher should call for the play to go to first.

Responsibilities

Catcher

Field any ball that is in front of you that you can get to before or at the same time as the pitcher or first baseman. You have an easier throw since your momentum is moving you towards the field. Unless you can clearly get to the ball before the third baseman, you will want to yield and let him field the ball. His angle will give him a better opportunity to throw the runner out at first than you. Once you determine that the 3rd baseman is going to field the ball you must run down the line to cover the 3rd base bag. Remember, the key in this play is to get an out. If you're not sure that the lead runner can easily be thrown out, call for the ball to be thrown to first.

Third Baseman

You will break towards home as the pitcher delivers the pitch to the plate. Go in under control and make sure the hitter doesn't fake the bunt and then swing away. If the bunt is fielded by anyone else but you, it's your responsibility to immediately return to 3rd to cover the bag.

Pitcher

Hold the ball and check the runner at 1st. Deliver a belt high FASTBALL to the plate and break straight in towards home plate. Field any harder hit bunt back to you with the intention of going to 2nd base. If the catcher tells you 1st base then you get the out at 1st. If either the 3rd baseman or 1st baseman calls off the pitcher it is their ball to field.

First Baseman

You must first hold the runner on first and then break towards home as the pitch is delivered.

Second Baseman

You will be covering first on the play.

Shortstop

You will be covering second base.

Make sure the hitter doesn't fake bunt and swing away before breaking to cover second. If a fake bunt is used to help cover a steal, you must break to cover second even if the second baseman was determined to cover second on a steal before the play. If he reads bunt, he will be heading towards first and will not be in position to cover second on the steal.

Left Fielder

On a bunt down the first base line, you will break to back up second base in case of a bad throw.

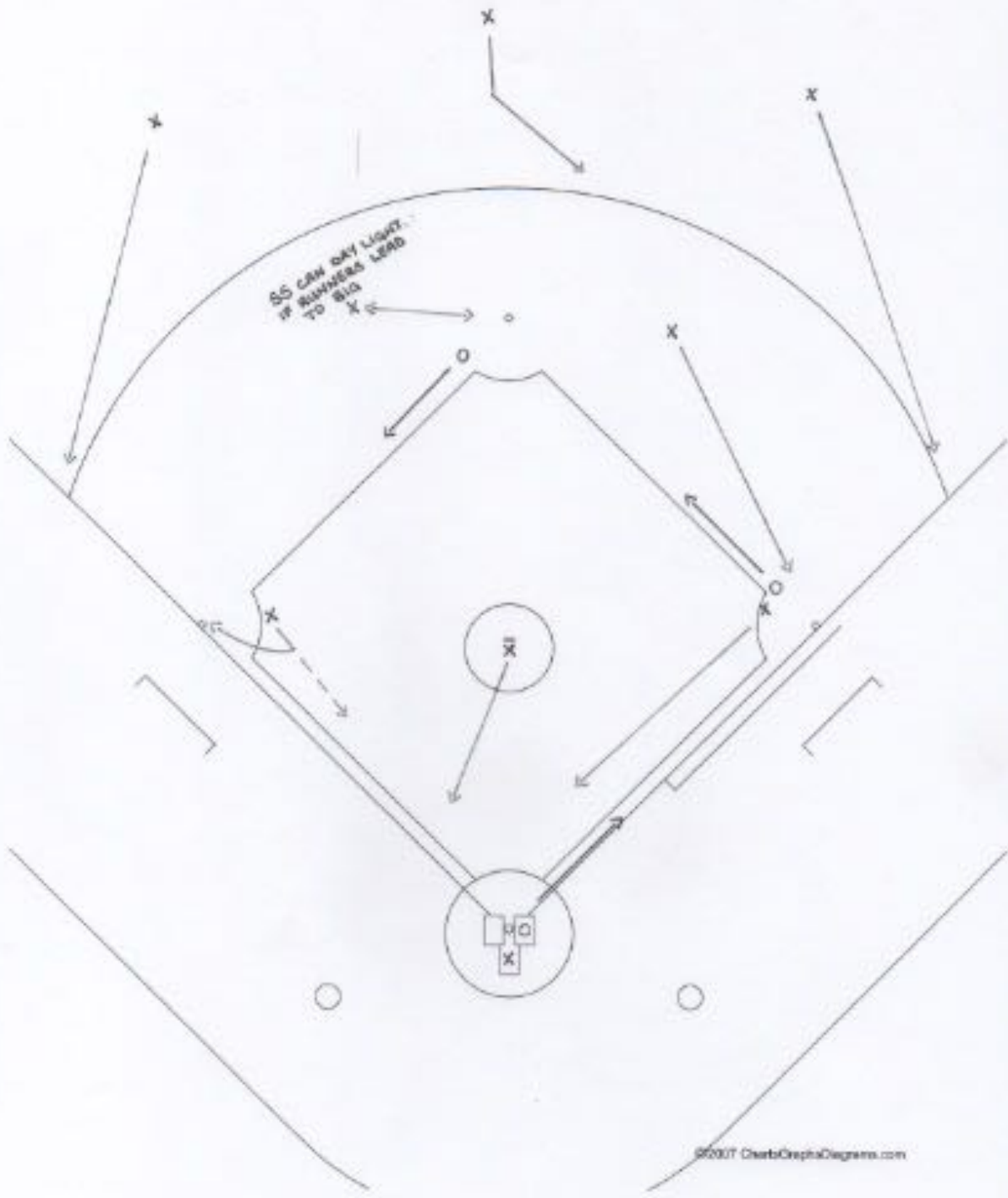
Center Fielder

Back up second base.

Right Fielder

Back up first base.

1 REG BUNT PLAY W/ RUNNERS ON 1ST & 2ND



#1 Bunt Play- Runners on 1st and 2nd.

Runners on First and Second

Goal: Get the out at third base

With this play, your going to try and get the force out at third base. A good bunt will make it difficult for this play to succeed since there are only two players charging. If in doubt, get the out at first.

The key to the play is again the pitcher and shortstop working together to decrease the lead of the runner at second.

As the pitcher completes his stretch he will look back to second base, the shortstop will make a break toward second to get the runner to take a couple of steps back. If he doesn't move the shortstop should continue to second and the pitcher should step off or attempt a pickoff at second. This play can be used as a daylight play if the runner doesn't move back towards second base. The shortstop can be more aggressive in driving the runner back since that's his main responsibility in this play. When the pitcher sees the runner move back towards second, he should deliver the pitch.

Catcher

Field any ball that is in front of you that you can get to before or at the same time as the pitcher or first baseman. You have an easier throw since your momentum is moving you towards the field. Chances are if you and any fielder are going to arrive at the bunted ball at the same time, then there will most likely only be a play at first base. Remember, you are in charge of where the ball is to be thrown. The goal is to try and get the out at third, but on a ball that is bunted well, you may have to call for the ball to go to first.

Third Baseman

You will break towards home early as the pitcher is completing his stretch. The idea is to make the hitter think that the third baseman is coming in hard. As the pitcher delivers the pitch to the plate, the third baseman will stop and start backing up towards third. He can't run straight to third because he will still have to field any ball that is bunted hard enough that the pitcher can't get to it. Make sure you call the pitcher off in this situation to avoid any type of collision. Once the ball is bunted, he will get back to cover third base.

Pitcher

Pitcher comes set, holds the ball and picks up the shortstop. If the runner has a big lead at second then the SS has the option to run a daylight pick off. If he does not have a large lead or decreases his lead then the pitcher delivers the ball home. The pitcher will charge on the third base side of the infield. That half is his responsibility. If the 3rd baseman calls off the pitcher at anytime it is his ball to field and the pitcher continues over to 3rd base.

First Baseman

In this situation, position yourself as if you're holding the runner at first. As the pitcher takes his stretch, start creeping in toward home and break as he starts his delivery. Since the pitcher is covering the third base side of the infield, you will need to cover from the foul line to the mound.

Second Baseman

You will be covering first on the play.

Shortstop

You will make a break toward second to get the runner to take a couple of steps back. If he doesn't move the shortstop should continue to second and the pitcher should step off or attempt a pickoff at second. This play can be used as a daylight play if the runner doesn't move back towards second base. The shortstop can be more aggressive in driving the runner back.

Left Fielder

Back up third base.

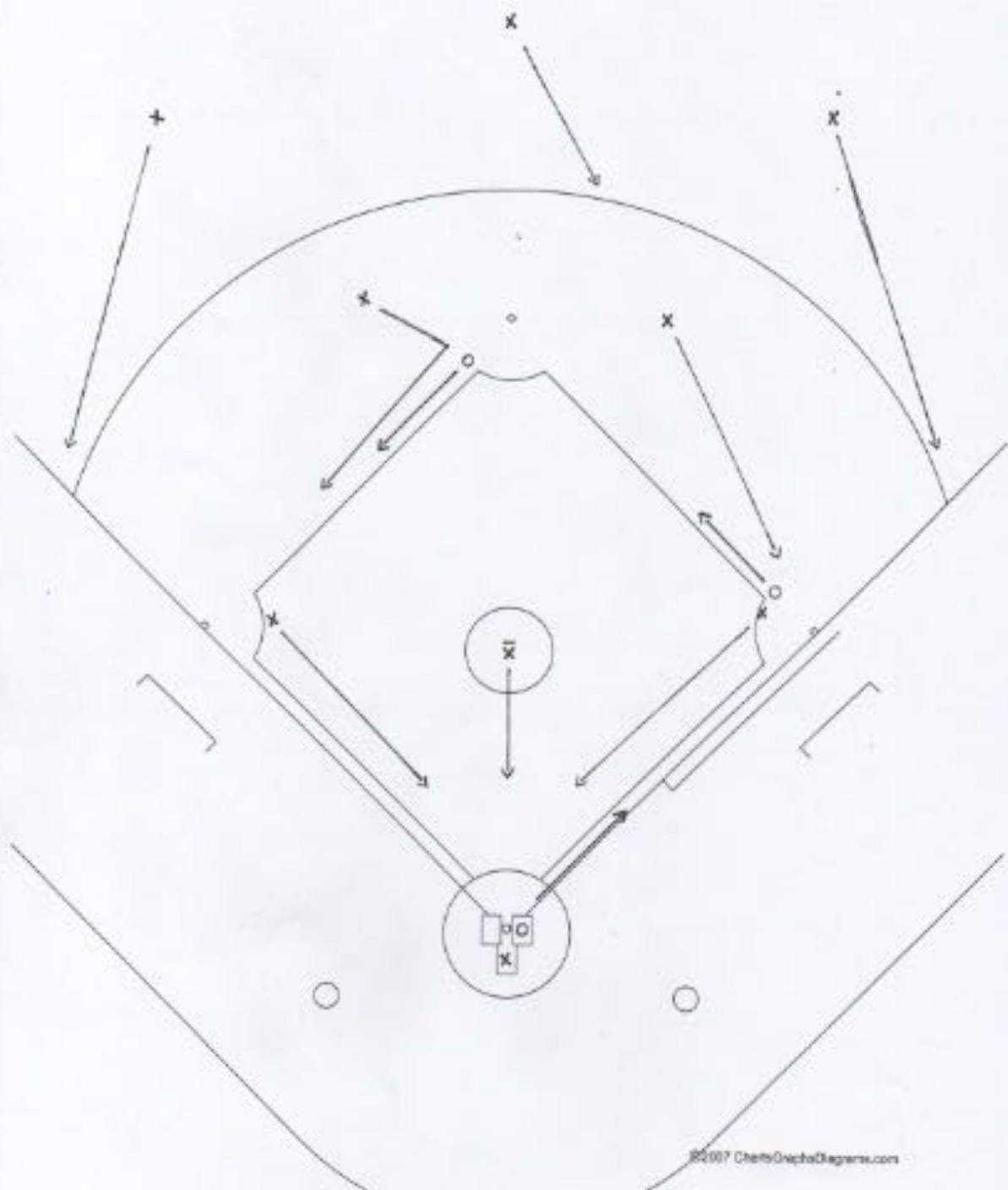
Center Fielder

Back up second base.

Right Fielder

Back up first base.

2 BUNT PLAY W/ RUNNER ON 1ST + 2ND



#2 Bunt Play- Runners on 1st and 2nd.

Third Base

You play inside the 3rd base bag and open up you stance so you have a view of both the pitcher and 2nd base. When the pitcher lifts his leg you charge towards home plate with the intention of getting the out at 3rd base. If the catcher tells you differently then you go 1st for the out.

Pitcher

Comes set, holds the ball and allows the short stop to come in behind the runner and get a good running lead towards 3rd base. Once the pitcher sees daylight between the short stop and the runner he delivers a FASTBALL ball home. Pitcher then charges straight in towards the plate and listens to the catcher for instructions on where to throw the ball.

First Base

Plays right in front of the 1st base runner. When the pitcher lifts his leg you charge towards home plate with the intention of getting the out at 3rd base. If the catcher tells you differently then you go 1st for the out.

Short Stop

Wait for the pitcher to come set and pick you up. Slowly come in behind the runner at 2nd base and as long as the runner DOES NOT increase his lead then you take off at full speed towards the 3rd base bag. Make sure you run with your eyes on the batter and if he decides to pull the bunt back and swing you must stop. You will be out of position but it better than continuing onto 3rd base.

Second Base

Once the short stop takes off to 3rd base you run to 1st base to receive the throw. Make sure you run with your eyes on the batter and if he decides to pull the bunt back and swing you must stop.

Left Field

Covers 3rd base.

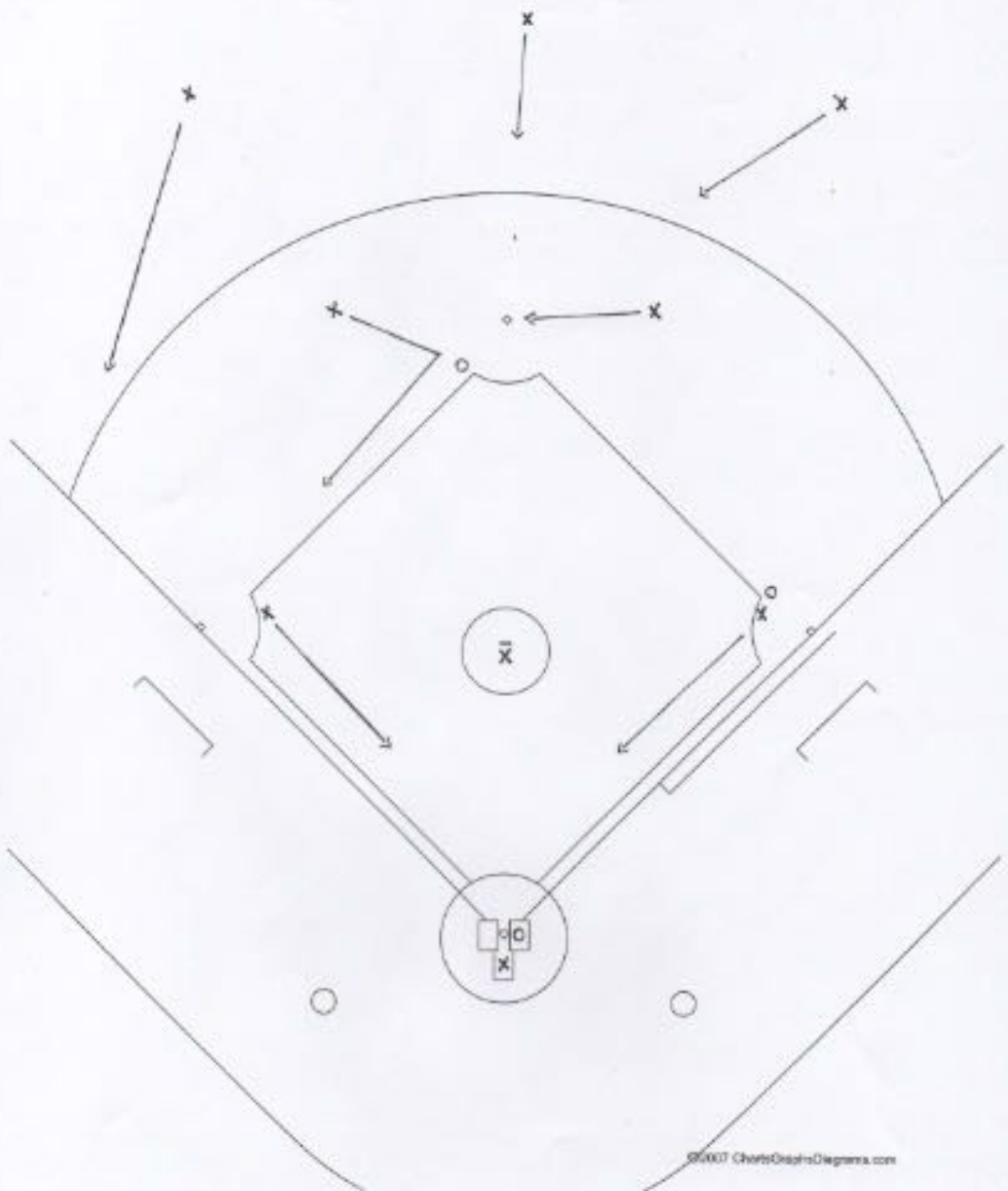
Center Field

Covers the right field side of 2nd base.

Right Field

Covers 1st base.

#3 BUNT PLAY - PICK-OFF AT 2ND BASE.



#3 Bunt Play- Pick off at 2nd Base.

It is usually best to run this pick off when you have just ran Bunt Play #2 and the ball has not been put into play. The reason is, it looks just like the same bunt play (#2), and hopefully the runner at second tries to go with the short stop and the second baseman comes in for the pick off attempt.

Third Base

Same as bunt play #2 but can't charge all the way in because in case of a rundown he has to be at the 3rd base bag.

Short Stop

Does the exact same thing as Bunt Play #2, and tries to draw the runner from 2nd away from the bag.

Second Base

Watches the short stop and when he begins to break for 3rd base the 2nd baseman goes to 2nd base for the pick off attempt.

First Base

Moves in towards home plate like it was Bunt Play #2.

Pitcher

Comes set, holds the ball and keys in on the 2nd baseman. When the 2nd baseman goes for the 2nd base bag then the pitcher spins and throws it for the pick off attempt.

Left Field

Cover behind the 3rd base bag.

Center Field

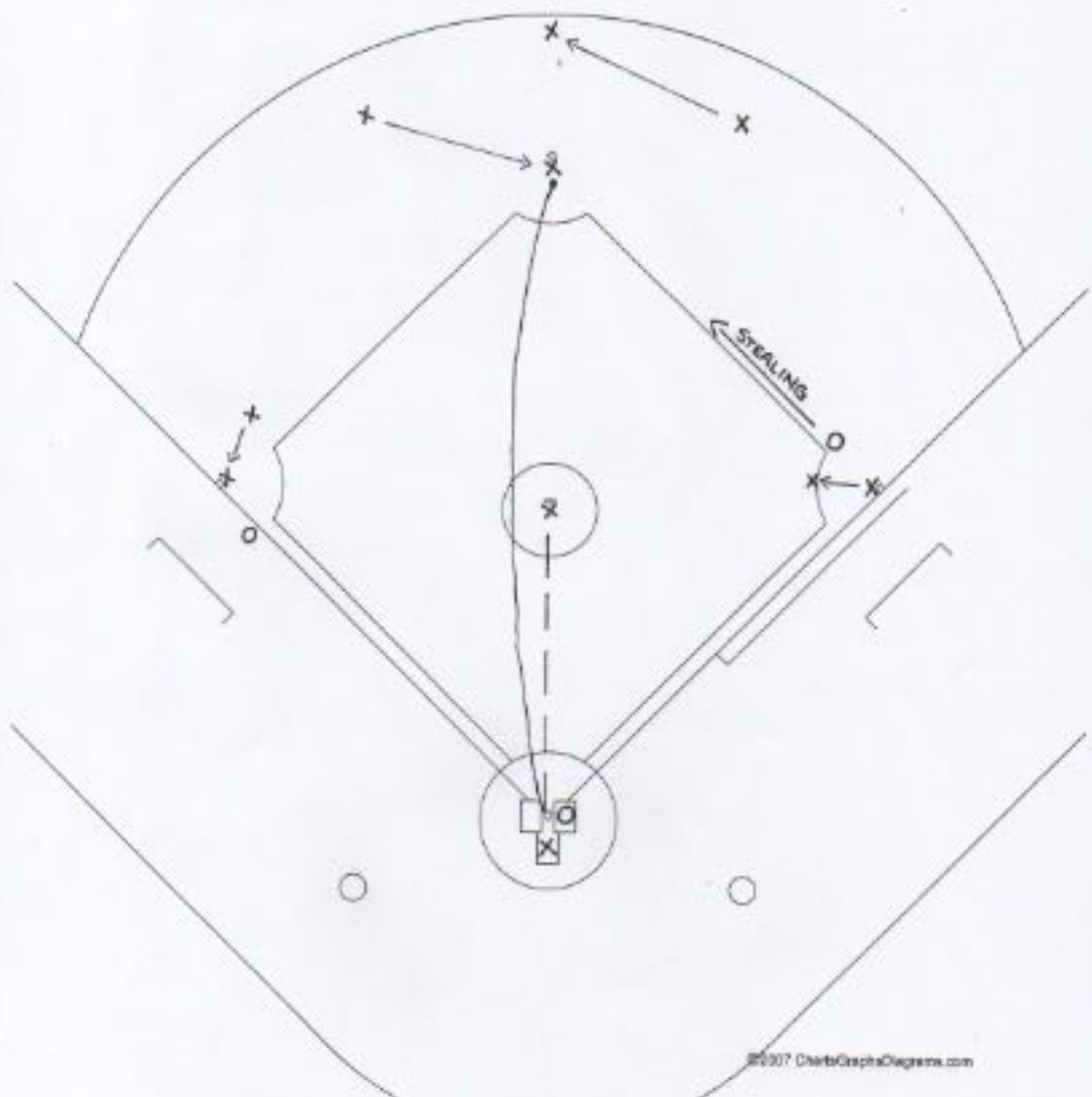
Covers behind the 2nd base bag.

Right Field

Covers behind the right field side of 2nd base bag.

1st & 3rd Defences

1ST + 3RD - THROW THROUGH
GOAL: GET OUT AT 2ND.



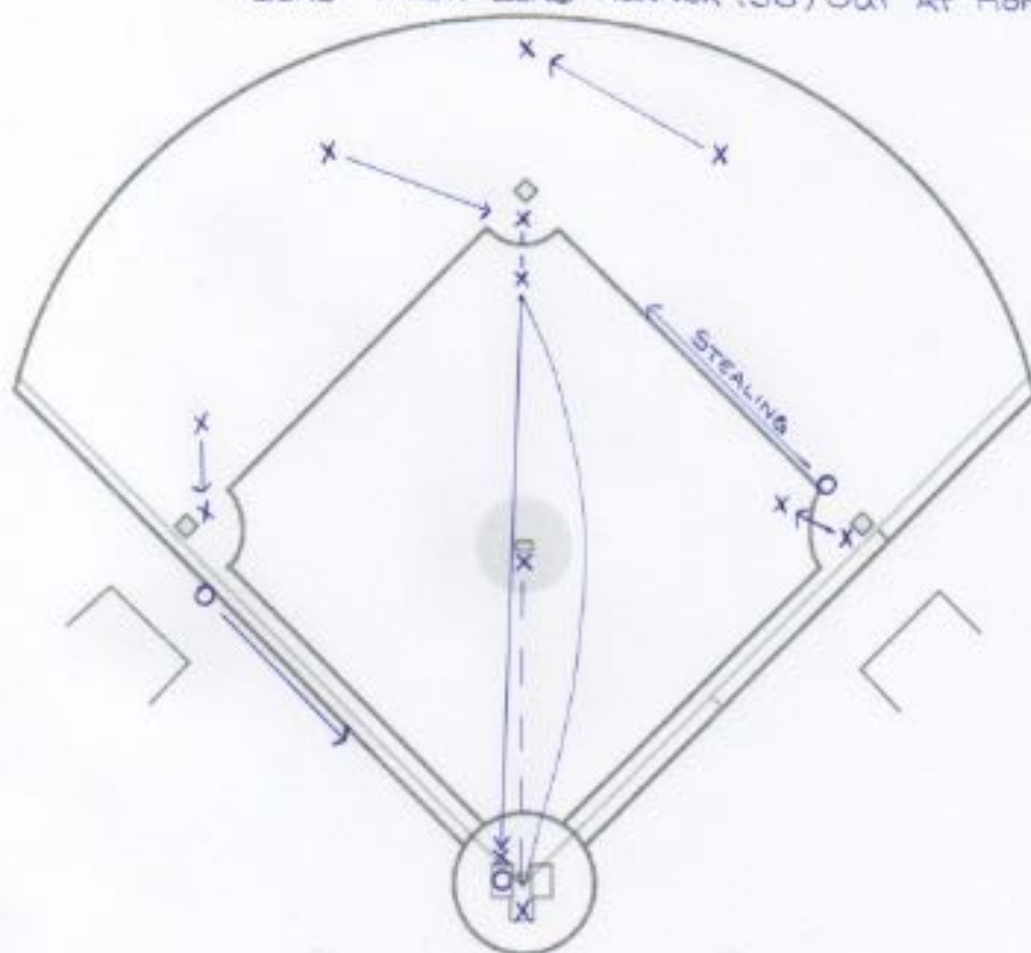
1st & 3rd - Throw Through

Goal: Get Out at 2nd Base

Normally you will call this play when you have a catcher that is capable of throwing out the runner stealing second and that potential run is more critical than the runner at third, meaning it's late in the game and you're up by 2 or more runs. Another situation would be early in the game where you would handle trading an out for a run possibly. So this play is designed to get outs when the run at 3rd base is not as important and you would rather keep the runner at 1st from getting into scoring position.

1ST • 3RD • THROW TO SS

GOAL: THROW LEAD RUNNER (3B) OUT AT HOME



1st & 3rd - Throw to SS (Bantam & Midget)

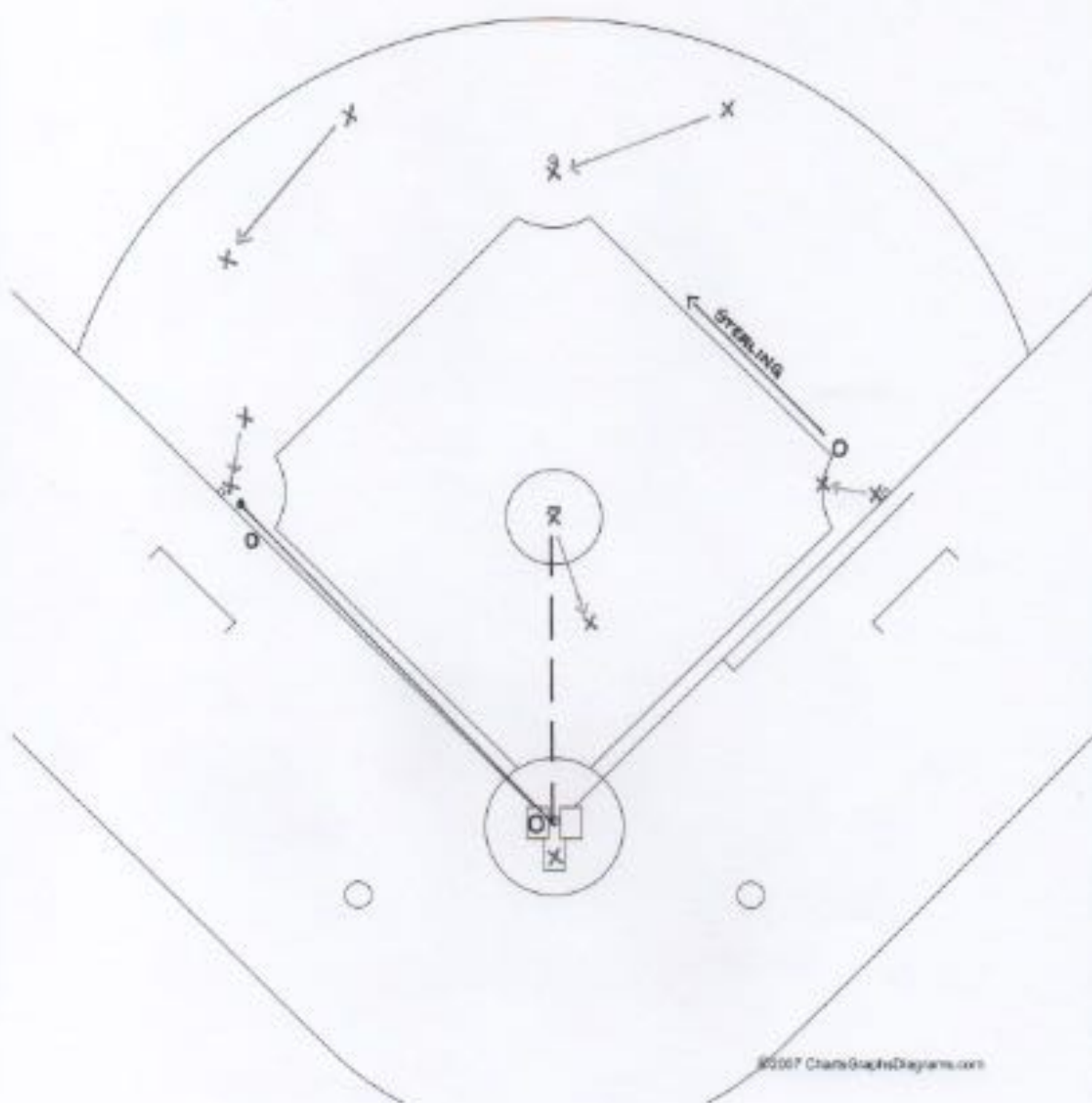
Goal: Get Lead Runner If They Attempt to Steal Home

This can be an effective play at getting the lead runner, and it doesn't require a catcher with a strong arm.

As the pitch is thrown and the runner from 1st steals, the SS breaks to the front of the 2nd base bag. If the SS sees the runner from 3rd break on the release from the catcher, he comes in towards the plate to cut the throw off and return the throw to catcher on the 3rd base side of home plate. 1st baseman must be vocal when the runner from 1st base takes off. Same with the 3rd baseman if the runner from 3rd base takes off for the plate. If the runner from 3rd does not break, then the SS stays at the bag for a possible tag at 2nd.

This play should be used when you do not want the runner from 3rd to score. You may be late in the game, up by 1 or tied. This play should not be encouraged at the younger levels because there a lot of things that can go wrong with 2 long throws across the infield. Instead of running this play at the lower levels, the catcher can come up and throw directly back to the pitcher who catches the ball and immediately checks the runner at 3rd base.

1ST + 3RD • THROW TO THIRD BASE
GOAL: GET LEAD RUNNER



1st & 3rd - Throw to 3rd Base

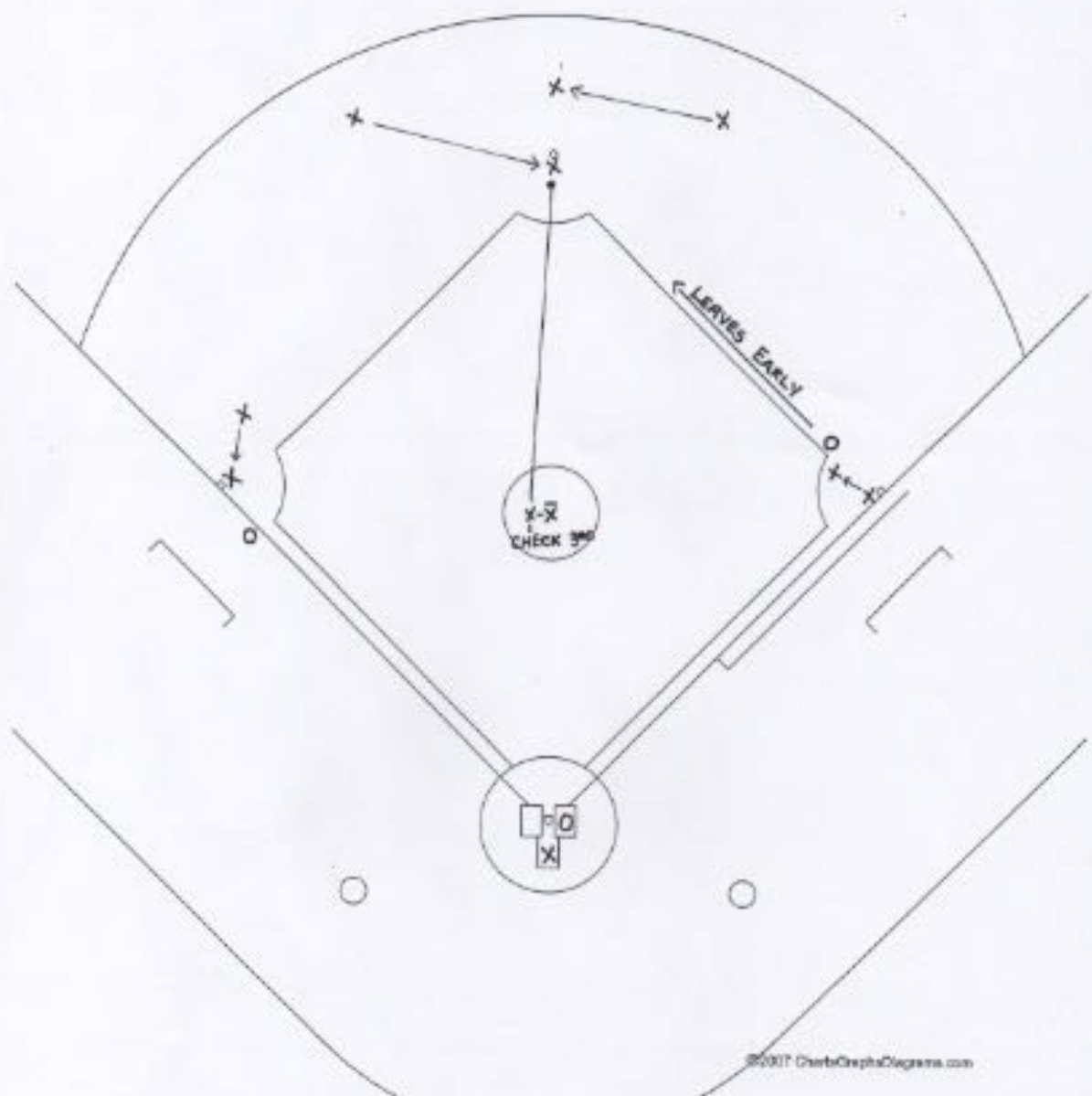
Goal: Get Out at 3rd Base

This can be a good play when the runner on third is an aggressive base runner. As the catcher catches the ball, he simply fires the ball to third instead of second. If the runner is trying to get a good jump from third and gets too far from the bag, it's an easy out.

Some coaches have the catcher fake a throw to second and then throw to third. This rarely fools anyone and simply throwing straight to third will give you a better chance of getting the runner.

1ST + 3RD - FORCED BALK

GOAL: GET 3RD OUT WITHOUT ALLOWING RUN



1st & 3rd - Forced Balk

Goal: Get 3rd Out Without Allowing a Run

This play is a good defence for a walk-off from first. The key to the play is getting the ball to the short stop at second base.

Once the runner at 1st leaves early everyone yells step-off, the pitcher steps off the mound, freezes the runner at third. If the runner at 3rd is to far off the base then the pitcher should throw the ball to 3rd. Once he has frozen the runner then he turns to the inside and throws the ball to the shortstop who is at second base. Once shortstop has the ball he can tag the runner who is coming to the bag or run at him under control if he has stopped half way between 1st and 2nd base. He must be under control with most of his focus on the runner from 3rd because if the runner at 3rd goes home then he must throw the ball home to get the lead runner.

An offence will usually try this play with 2 outs and weaker batter at the plate. The will send the runner from first early trying to induce a balk or confusion in the defence which would result in an easy run.

Conclusion

How do we create consistency and what is it that we want to be constant throughout our Rep Program? Everyone is going to have a different philosophy on how to achieve this. We want to implement more of a Minor League Progression throughout the Association. We believe this would make it easier for players and coaches who go from one level to the next. In the minor leagues players learn all of the organization's plays and signs in Spring Training. Low A teams learned the same things as the Triple A team would, so realistically a player could go from any team to another during the year and they knew the signs and plays. If we could build that sort of consistency from one level to the next in SPMBA then a few things can be achieved. The first being, the players having an understanding of all the team defences that are required at their level. So when they move up, those never change and the coach can review and possibly add to it as the game changes slightly from one level to the next.

Team Defences

1. Cut Offs & Relays
2. Bunt Plays
3. 1st & 3rd Defences
4. Run Downs
5. Pop Up Priorities
6. Pitcher's Fielding Practice
7. Pre Game Infield Routine

There is a lot of information to be taught to SPMBA Athletes, but the thing to remember is that they don't need everything until Bantam or possibly Midget. This will give our coaches a better idea of how to structure a practice and focus on specific things which they will be required to cover with their team over the course of the year.

The last thing we would like to see implemented is a consistent knowledge base for our coaches when it comes to the fundamentals. This involves throwing (pitching), hitting, infield, and outfield. So that when kids move from one level to the next and they have a different coach, they are learning similar things, but more importantly, building on skills they have acquired from the previous year. Our goal is to have each of our kids progress through the system so that by the time they reach Midget they have a good understanding of their own skill set and a full understanding of all the team defences used throughout the Association.

Hopefully this is a useful tool for you as a coach as you embark on your season this year. Please remember first and foremost why we are here as coaches. That is to ensure each and every child that signs up for baseball has a memorable experience and wants to continue playing. At the end of the day, if you can look in the mirror and say you did that, that will be the most gratifying thing that we can do as coaches and role models. Thank you again for stepping up and being apart of our vision at Sherwood Park Minor Baseball Association. Without your participation and commitment to the process, it would make it very difficult to get our Association to where we want to go and give our Membership the quality program they deserve.

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