



COACHING HANDBOOK

A Tool for Practice



2024 SEASON

AKBA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
IAN MACDONALD – VP, BASEBALL DEVELOPMENT

MISSION

Welcome to the Aurora King Baseball Association Handbook - A Tool For Coaching! The AKBA is striving to support grassroots baseball by supporting its coaches. This handbook aims to give coaches practice ideas for youth house league players from ages 5 to 15. We have tried to use activities you can scale up or down based on skill level and age. The handbook is geared towards developing young players and emphasizing **SKILLS THAT SCALE!**

Most importantly, **PRACTICE SHOULD BE FUN!** That's why we are all here: to have fun while learning. We encourage coaches to highlight life skills involved in these learning processes and let players know how the things they learn through sport, apply to real life. The "HOW" is just as important as the "WHY".

SKILLS THAT SCALE

The idea behind skills that scale is to identify traits of baseball players that help them as competition gets stronger, faster and more skilled. Skills that scale translate to ALL levels of baseball, from house league to the Major leagues. If you can develop these skills, you will succeed at any level of baseball you reach. Skills that scale involve athleticism, strength, hand-eye coordination and moving quickly while in control of your body. As players mature, these skills will emerge at different times with 'lightbulb moments' that should be expressed directly to the player while describing how they found success so it can be repeated.

Offensive Skills That Scale: Bat Speed, Contact Quality, Swing Decisions
Defensive Skills That Scale: Health/Arm Care, Throwing Accuracy, Velocity

MAKING PRACTICE PURPOSEFUL

It's an old cliché, but the saying "Practice Perfect, makes Perfect Practice" is true at any level of sport. Having purpose and intent behind what players are doing is extremely important. It involves focus, determination, alertness and self-reflection – All things that people at a young age are developing. The question then becomes, how do we, as coaches, motivate and guide players to practice with purpose and intent behind their actions? Answer – **WE SUPPORT THEM by HAVING A PLAN** before we show up to the field. Think about what players need to improve on, start simple and introduce challenges when they succeed.

Making practice fun is **CRITICAL** to practice planning. How do we make practice fun? **KEEP THEM ENGAGED!** This book intends to give coaches games that keep players moving and avoid the standing around that gives kids time to become distracted. **POINT SYSTEMS** and **COMPETITION** (Team & Individual) provide practice with a reason to try hard and want to succeed. **RULES** and **CONSTRAINTS** help scale games up and down to challenge players **AFTER** they find success. **TARGETS** help players focus, boost intent behind their repetitions and stay focused during a drill. Finally, **TRACKING PROGRESS** helps to show athletes that they are improving, encouraging them to buy into the process and continue working hard towards their goals. Always **REWARD EFFORT** and **PROCESS** over outcomes/results. Keeping these things in mind when creating your own drills or modifying the games in this handbook will help drive player improvement. **REMEMBER: BUILDING SKILLS, BUILDS CONFIDENCE! INTRODUCE SUCCESS, THEN INTRODUCE A CHALLENGE!**

BASEBALL – MORE THAN JUST A GAME

Take the time with your players to tell them the "why" behind each drill. At times, players can lose purpose, and coaching means more than telling a player what to do; they also need to know **WHY** they are doing it. What does the drill work on? How does it apply to a game? What times during the game does this apply? Not only does this teach a skill, but it also teaches the nuances of the game and builds baseball IQ.

At appropriate times and with appropriate ages, it is important to use the game of baseball as a vehicle for life learning. Many parallels exist between baseball and life that can be highlighted during practice and games.

Most importantly, everyone fails at some point in their life! Baseball is a game built around failure and gives coaches a unique opportunity to emphasize **PROCESS over OUTCOMES**. Players who hit .300 fail 70% of the time, Reggie Jackson (was nicknamed after a month in the playoffs – Mr. October) is the MLB all-time leader in strike-outs, and you can hit a line drive 110mph that gets caught. One result **DOES NOT** determine who a player is as a whole. Practice is not just about baseball; what we learn intrinsically can be applied to real life. REMEMBER: **PRESSURE IS PRIVILEGE**; failure is a great way to learn.

FEEDBACK

Throughout practice, ask players for feedback on games you are running. Is this drill working? Is it worth doing again? Is there a way to modify the drill to create a better learning environment? Baseball is all about adjustments. We, as coaches, need to adjust to our players to help them succeed. It also provides young players with a way to practice their voice and self-advocacy, which will be an important life skill as they get older.

Just like coaches can't be successful without feedback from players, the AKBA wouldn't be a successful organization if we didn't listen to our coaches. Please feel free to reach out to the AKBA about any ideas, unique games, strategies or ways that we can improve our support process for you as a coach. We are here to support you and your players and always look for ways to enhance player development and the league as a whole. IF WE DON'T KNOW, WE CAN'T HELP!

NEED HELP?

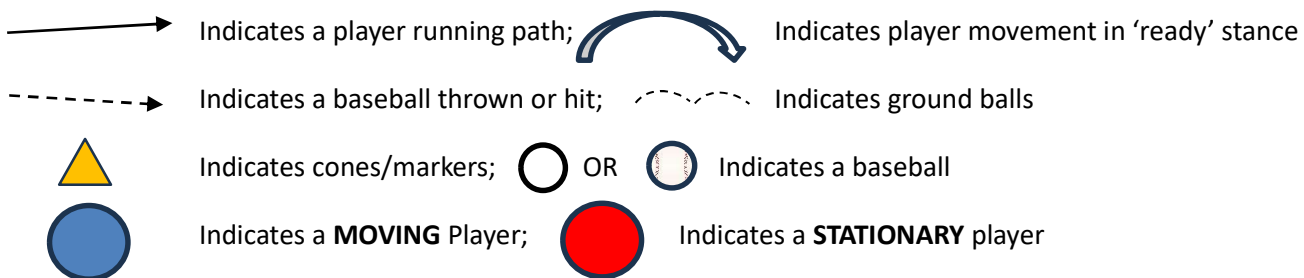
At any time during, before, or after the season, please feel free to reach out to the AKBA Board of Directors with any questions you may have. Below is a list of contacts involved with house league operations. Please use the appropriate resources when seeking answers to your questions. We are all more than happy to help in any way we can; we simply want to be efficient in our process of finding solutions.

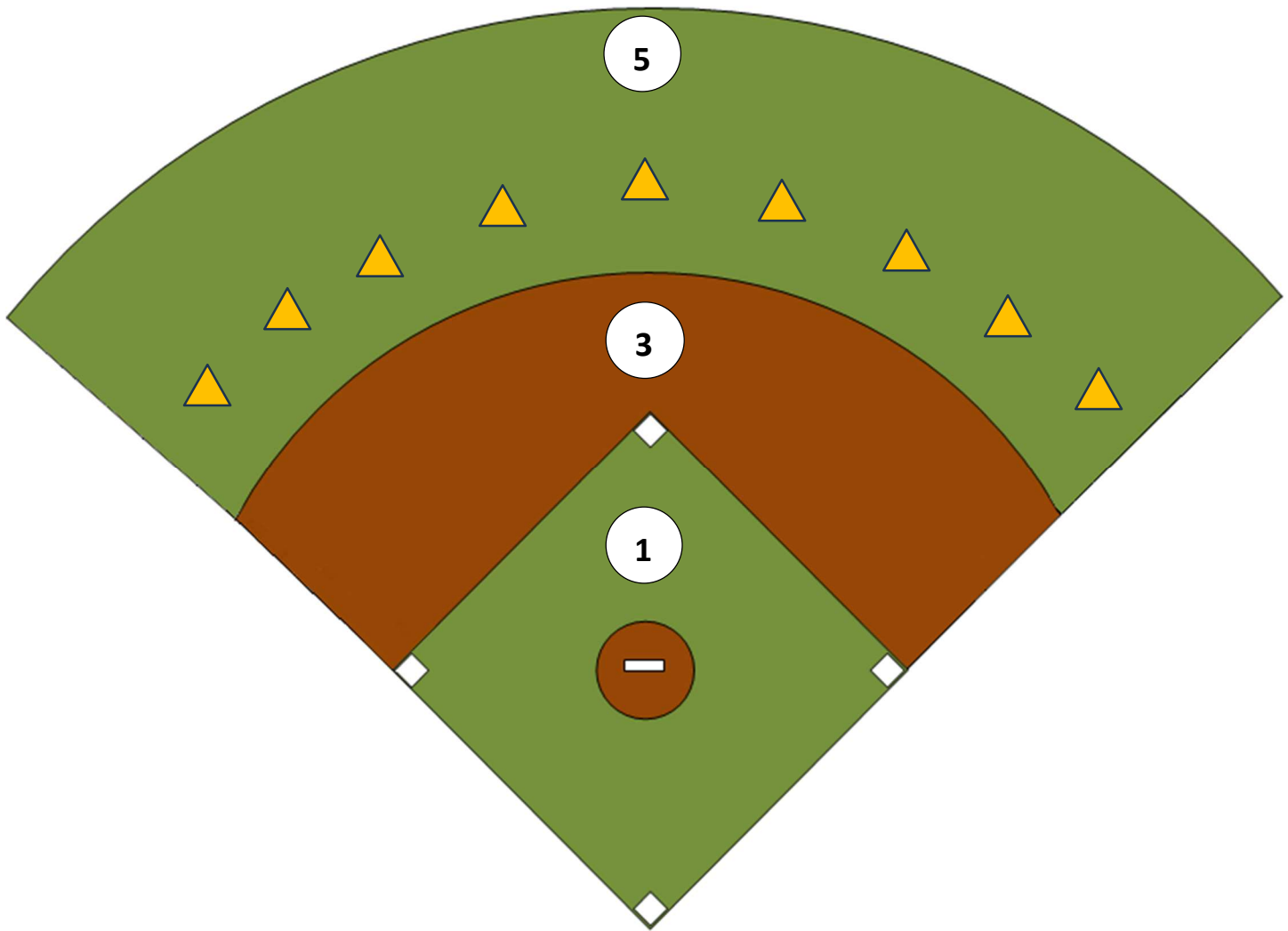
Ian MacDonald – VP of Baseball Development – development@akba.ca

Kevin Charbonneau – President of Aurora Baseball – president@akba.ca

Tammy Orlando – VP of House League – houseleague@akba.ca

LEGEND





Pitch Selection Derby

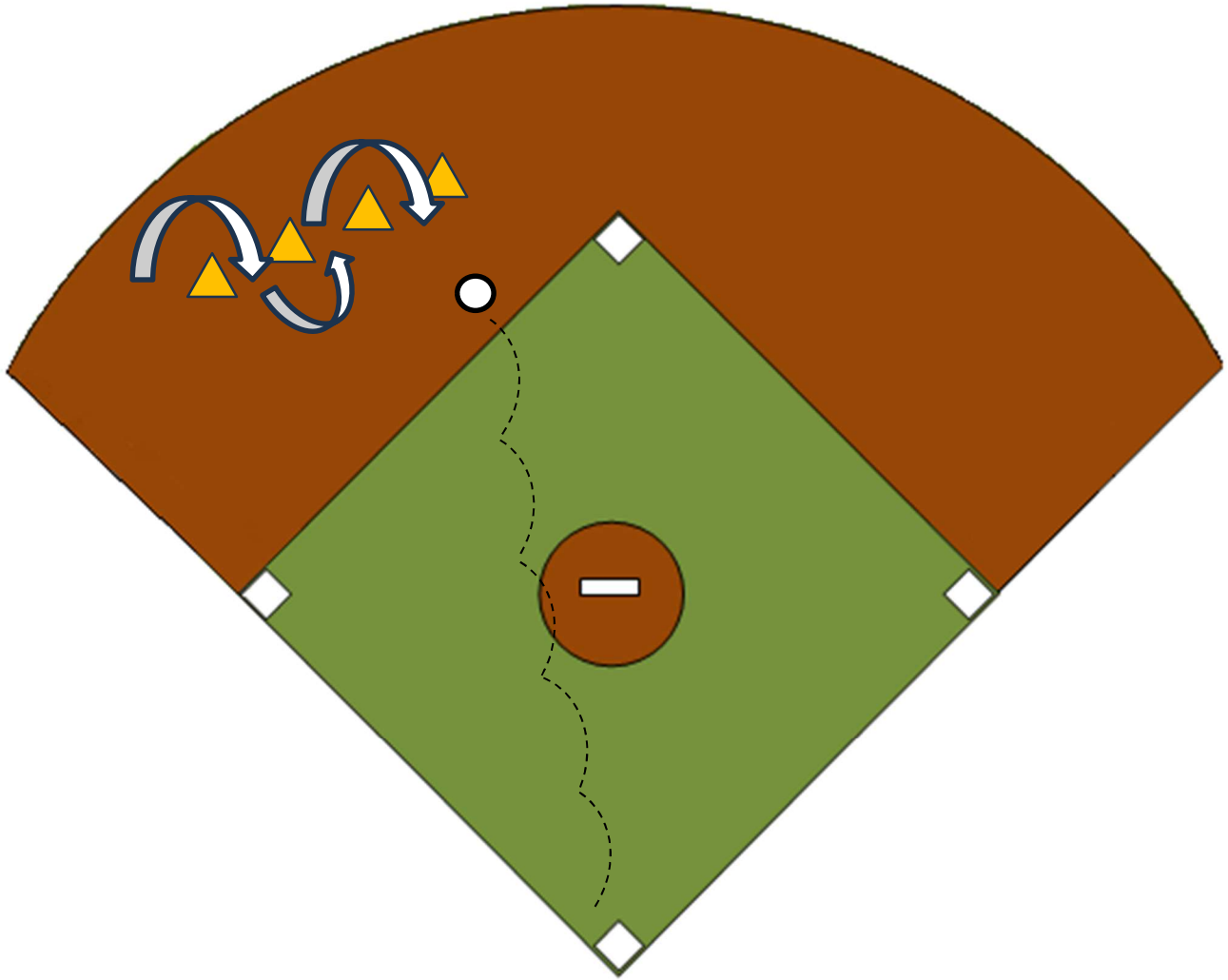
Set-Up: Create **TWO** teams with **EQUAL PLAYERS** for a round of batting practice. Teams get **EQUAL TURNS** in the field and at bat. The team in the field can spread out and retrieve batted balls. Optional cones/markers can be set up in the outfield as targets for older/stronger players.

Instruction: The hitting team is given a **LIMITED NUMBER** of **MAX EFFORT SWINGS** per round (3-5), earning points for line drives/fly balls that reach different targets in the field based on skill level and age. Markers can include the pitching mound, outfield fringe, and cones/markers set up in the outfield. More difficult/further targets are worth more points. Points can be combined for a team score or per player for individual competition. Coaches should give positive feedback on swing decisions (Good/Better/Best).

Purpose: Pitch Selection & Swinging Hard – Players’ decision-making to find their **“BEST pitch”** to hit, with limited swings encouraging patience. This game simulates a live at-bat in which the batter has a new count or is ahead in the count. Cones/markers on the field encourage players to swing hard and move fast, focusing on hitting **“their pitch”** as hard as possible.

Progression/Accommodations: Eliminate points for the pitching mound area, using outfield fringe and outfield markers only. Move the distance of outfield markers back or use multiple levels of markers for added points. Coaches can create game scenarios rewarding success with extra points (sac fly, hitting behind the runner, scoring the runner from 2nd base, or creating hitting alleys to simulate gaps).

Added Difficulty: Minus points for swings outside the strike zone, ground balls, pop flies, foul balls, or balls caught by outfielders.



Out Of The Gates

Set-Up: Deep at shortstop, set up 4 cones/markers like gates for players to run through. A coach will be standing at home plate, hitting ground balls. 2-3 fielders will be at 1st base to catch throws, accompanied by a bucket to gather balls. Players will rotate clockwise from each position once players have fielded at least 5 ground balls, or more if time permits.

Instruction: Players receiving ground balls line up outside the cone/marker closest to 3rd base. **ONE PLAYER AT A TIME**, players start by moving through the cones in a ready position moving forwards, shuffling sideways, then backpedaling through the next cone, finishing moving towards home plate to receive a ground ball. Players should focus on continuous movement, staying low in a fielding position, staying balanced, and using their legs to help throw to their target. Once a ball is fielded, movement and footwork should move toward their throwing target, **NOT** Home Plate. Players receiving the baseball at 1st Base rotate after each throw and place baseballs in the bucket. Once a coach is low on baseballs, they can call for the baseball bucket from a player not occupying 1st base. Add players to 2nd base to practice double plays.

Purpose: Body Control, Quick Feet & Charging Ground Balls – This drill practices several aspects of fielding, including footwork, balance, directional approach to the ball and using one's legs while throwing. Players should be learning how their bodies move and to make adjustments at game speed.

Progression/Accommodations: This drill can be moved all over the infield, ideally at SS and 3B, to practice longer throws. Movement through cones can be reversed to practice moving backward/backhand plays. Additional cones can be set up to help a player's direction toward the throwing target after the ball is fielded.

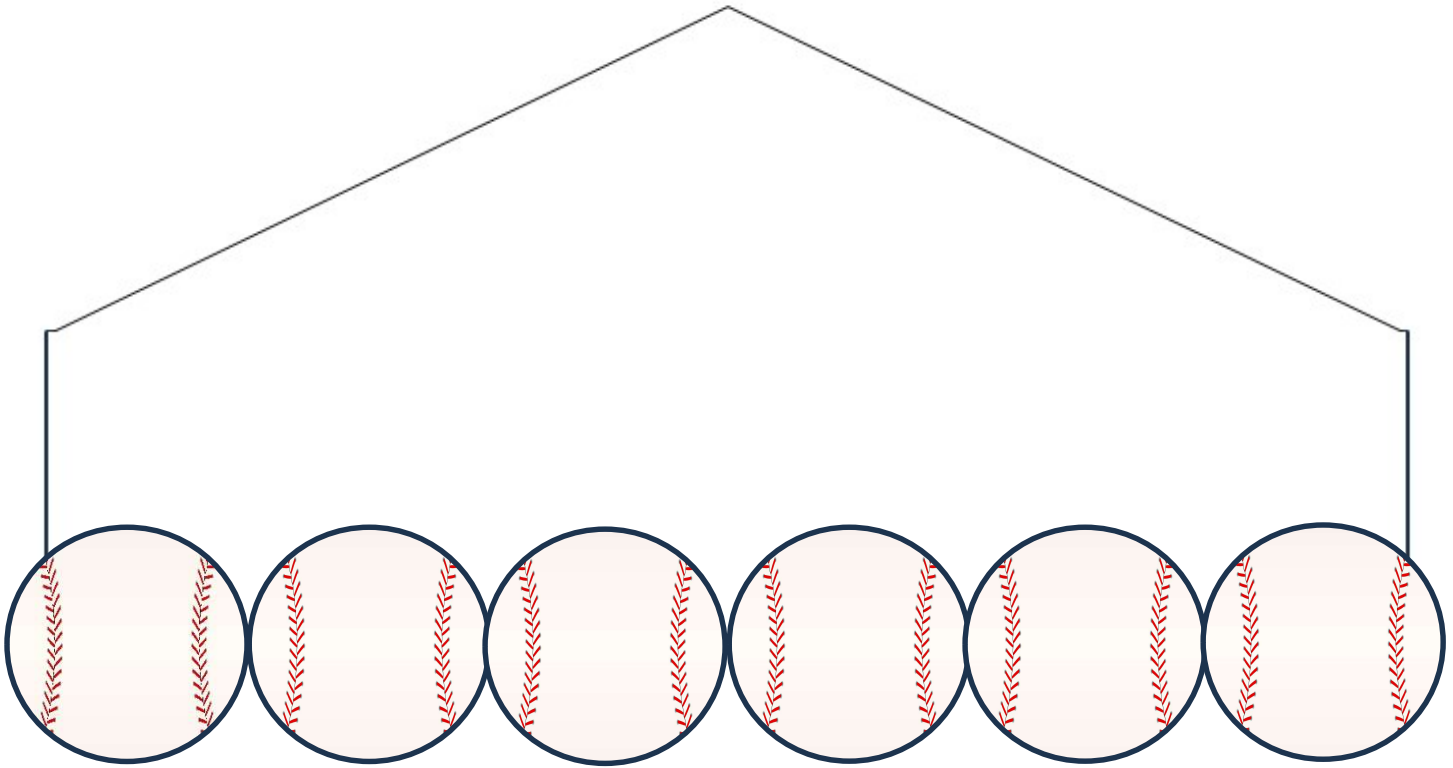


Plate Awareness Add-On

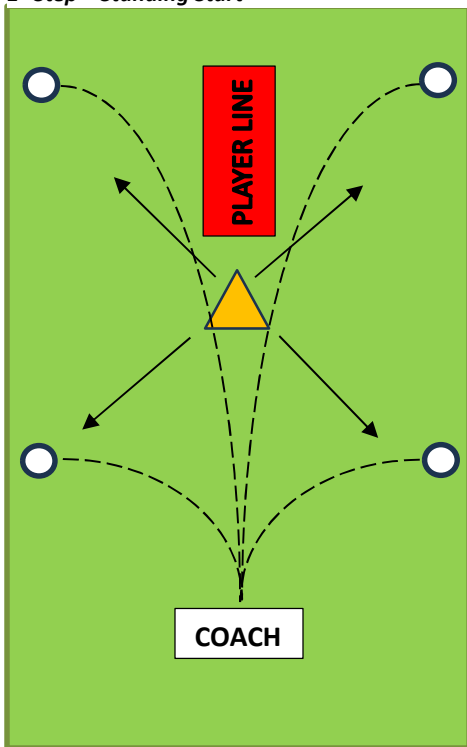
Set-Up: During batting practice or a coach-pitched hitting drill, set up 5-6 baseballs **ACROSS THE FRONT EDGE** of Home Plate. Advise players that each ball will have a number during the drill. Ensure the coach pitching has a bucket of balls to throw with and a catcher to practice receiving. Give the catcher a bucket to place balls into when caught. Coaches should assist each player with a **PROPER SET-UP** method to stand **CONSISTENTLY IN THE SAME SPOT IN THE BATTERS BOX**.

Instruction: Number each ball 1-6, starting with the closest to 1st base. While throwing batting practice, **AFTER EACH PITCH**, ask the batter where they think the location of each pitch was in relation to the numbered balls and their body. For example, if a ball (while crossing the plate) is located at the player's knees on the edge of the 3rd base side of the plate, the player should answer "#6, at my knees". If the player does not guess correctly, advise the player of the proper ball location so they can make visual adjustments. **IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT PLAYERS HAVE A CONSISTENT STANCE/POSITION IN THE BATTERS BOX – HELP THEM RE-ADJUST EACH PITCH IF NECESSARY.**

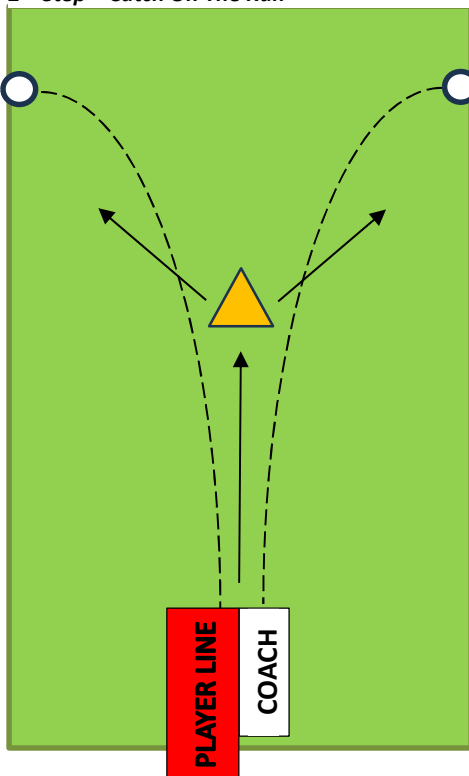
Purpose: Learning The Strike Zone – Visuals help players develop an understanding of the strike zone in relation to their stance. This drill allows players to adjust and learn where their body is in space. The better players know the strike zone, the better they will understand how to work counts, select the best pitches to hit and enhance their plate discipline. Players will also learn their strengths and weaknesses when attacking the baseball by using batted ball results.

Progression/Accommodations: Baseballs in front of the plate can be added or taken away to focus on specific areas of the plate (outside corner, inner half, heart of the plate) and incorporated into hitting drills. Coaches can award points to players who identify pitches correctly. Combine this with different batting drills to emphasize the approach in count-specific situations; focus on the middle of the plate when ahead and expand to protect the plate with 2 strikes.

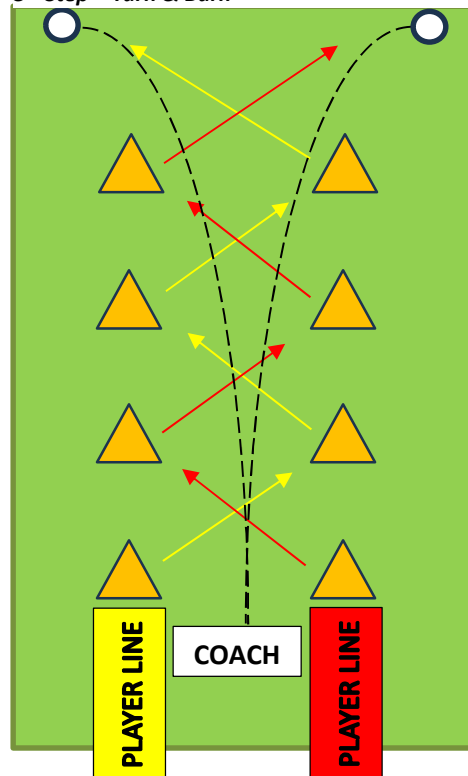
1st Step – Standing Start



2nd Step – Catch On The Run



3rd Step – Turn & Burn



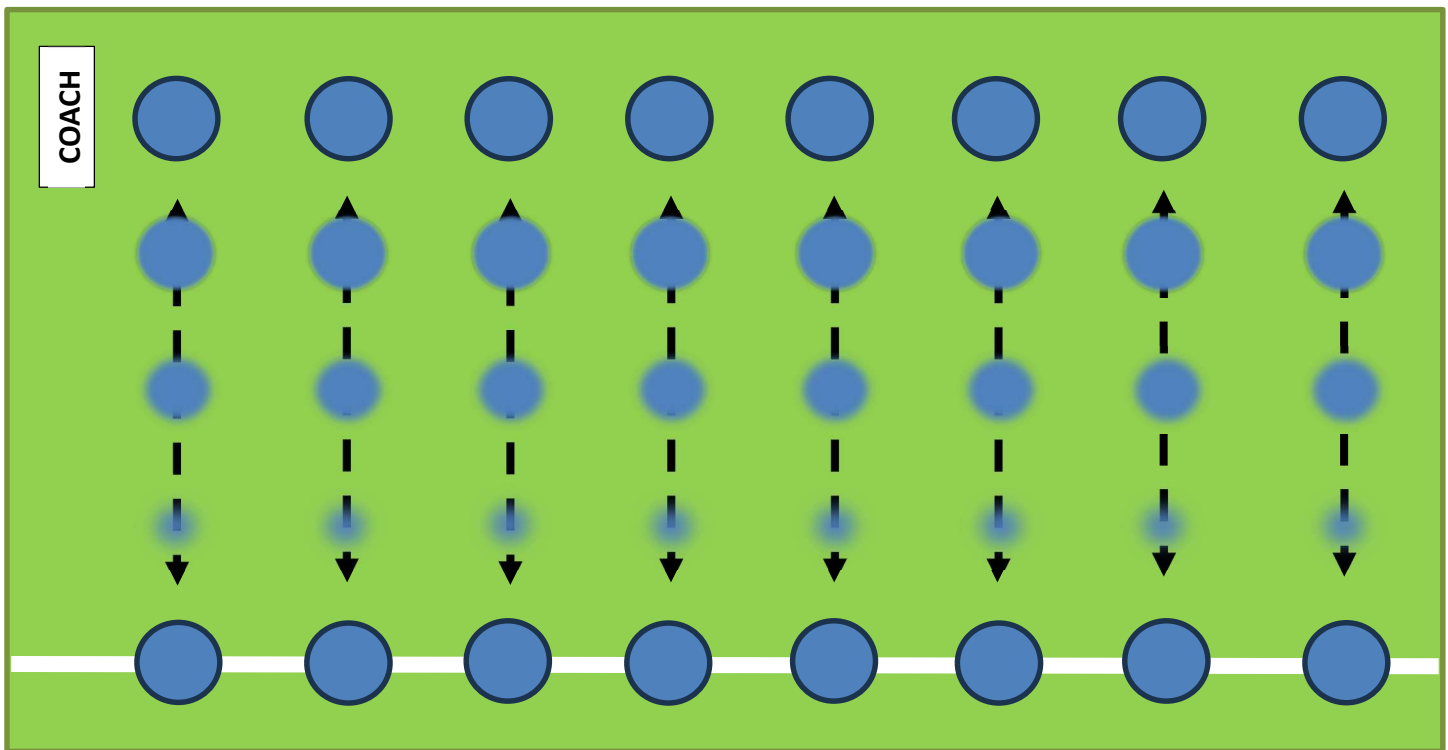
Turn and Burn - Pop Fly Progression

Set-Up: This drill takes place in the outfield or any safe grass area near the diamond. Place cone(s)/marker(s) to coordinate players to starting points and movement through the drill. Players will follow the arrows to receive a fly ball. The dotted lines in the examples are fly balls the coach throws to players. Cone distances should replicate difficulty appropriate for the participating age level. Attempt to challenge players while replicating in-game distances for fly balls.

Instruction: Players begin Step 1 by receiving a fly ball in 4 different directions. This ball should be “**routine**” in effort and difficulty. Players should focus on attempting to catch the ball in front of them, at or beside their chest; a glove in front of their face will block them from seeing the ball. Step 2 progression begins with players running to the cone/marker and turning 45 degrees to receive a fly ball. The player should catch the first attempt with some effort and thrown high enough that they are camped under the ball when caught. Progress through Step 2 by throwing balls farther away from the cone/marker so players make their catch on the run or over their shoulder. Help players keep consistency in speed throughout the drill. Step 3 intends to challenge older/higher-skilled players. One at a time, players begin facing their coach. Players move diagonally to cones/markers, keeping their eyes on their coach. Players will open their hips and cross their feet to get to each target; when changing directions, players should continue without turning their back to their coach. Once a player reaches the final cone, they will receive a **MAX EFFORT** fly ball they should catch at top speed. Players switch lines after each attempt to practice both directions.

Purpose: This drill progression works on pop fly reads/routes while simulating game movement and adjustments while a ball is in flight. Athletes should focus on balance, footwork, eye contact with the baseball, and moving at full speed in control.

Progression/Accommodations: This drill can be adjusted to different age/skill levels by changing distances, height of fly balls, and effort needed to complete a catch. For players of low skill levels, bring catching distances closer to avoid injury and build confidence. Add ‘picking a spot’ in Step 2, attempting to judge where the ball will land after it is thrown and heading directly to their guess without looking at the ball in flight. Step 3 coaches can hold up a number for a player to shout out to encourage trust in footwork and keeping their eyes up. Make this drill competitive by adding point systems, splitting players into teams or incorporating highlight diving catches. Reward effort **NOT** outcomes!



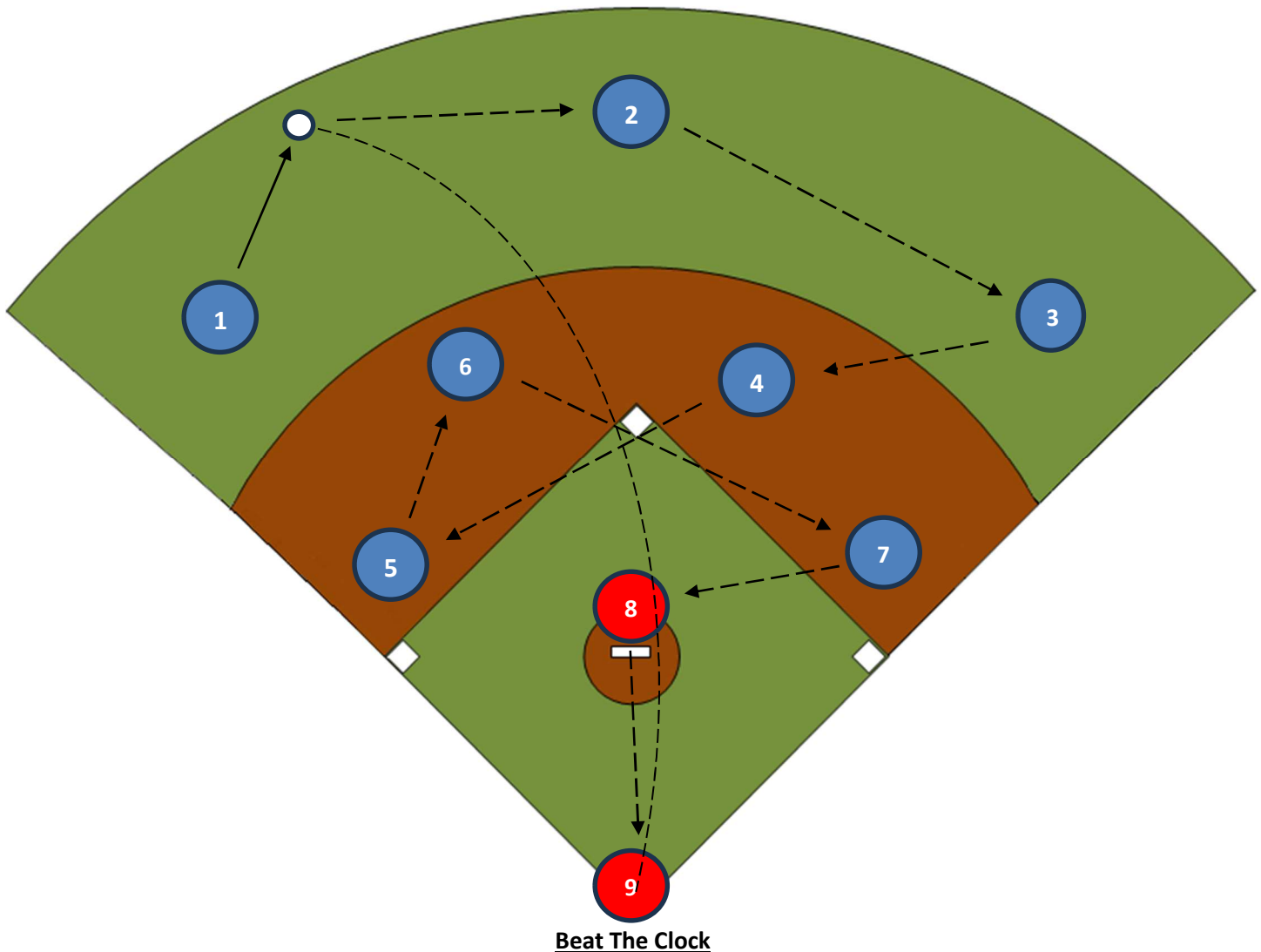
Catch Play (With Purpose)

Set-Up: Pair players off and line one partner up on/behind the foul line, the other across from their partner. The coach should be in line with the group **NOT ON** the foul line, assuring all players are equal distance from their throwing partner when releasing the ball. Players should have enough room from the player standing next to them so they are not interfered with during catch play. Coaches can also use a cone/marker instead of the foul line if it is in use.

Instruction: Start players 6-12ft away. Receiving players should present a clear glove target to their catch partner at chest level. After 5-10 complete exchanges, ask players **NOT ON** the foul line to take a **BIG** step back – The coach should move with the players, being a marker for correct distance. After 5-10 complete exchanges, increase the distance; repeat this process, stopping when throws become wild or inaccurate, until players are sufficiently warmed up. Repeat this process of catching, this time prompting players for a competition. Players will start 10ft away; once a catch exchange has been completed, the coach will increase the throwing distance. Incomplete exchanges result in shortening players' throws by 1 step. Players will have 3 outs; if the ball is dropped, overthrown, or thrown offline further than the player standing to their right or left of their partner, they will be charged with an out. Ask players to turn their hats sideways for 1 out, backwards for 2 outs, with 3rd out resulting in elimination to declare a winner. Coaches should make clear to their players the difference in intent/purpose/results in their throws from regular catch to the competition. Encourage players to use this drill when warming up before games. Explain the **“WHY”** behind the drill!

Purpose: Coaches will notice players throwing without purpose or intent in warmup – this drill is a correction. Using competition, players intrinsically focus on the process and put more intent into their actions. Intent is what drives improvement and skill acquisition. Players must see the difference between regular catch play and the increase in throw quality during the competition.

Progression/Accommodations: Coaches should determine throwing distance based on skill level. Coaches can incorporate teams of three to simulate relays/cutoffs to home. Introduce ground balls or pop flies to the drill for added skill development. Coaches can also let players play catch on their own before intervening with this game – This will help exhibit the difference in practice quality when incorporating intent/purpose.

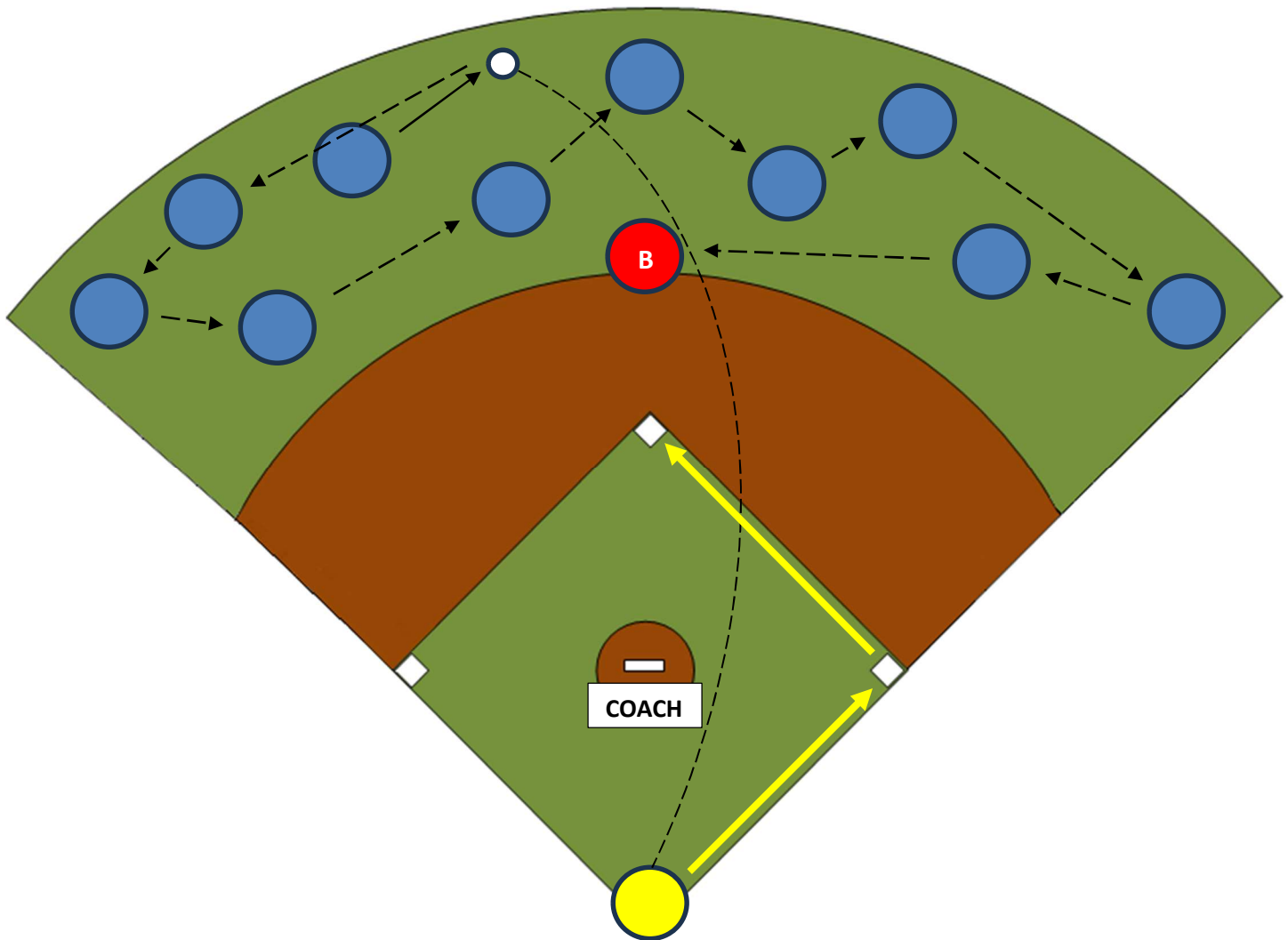


Set-Up: Send players out to positions on the field; if more than 9 players are participating, distribute extras evenly throughout the outfield – Allow only 1 player at the pitcher and catcher positions. A coach will be needed at Home Plate, equipped with a timer, bat and ball to begin the drill.

Instruction: The game's objective is for each player to touch the ball and relay it to Home Plate as fast as possible. Once players are in position, a coach will start the game by hitting a baseball to a random, unoccupied field location and starting the timer. Players must field the ball and throw to each of their teammates until **EVERY PLAYER ON THE FIELD** has caught the ball, finishing with the catcher. Once the catcher has **CAUGHT** the ball and **TOUCHES HOME PLATE**, the coach will stop the timer and keep a record. Try to beat the record each practice!

Purpose: This game incorporates athleticism, throwing, catching, relays, backing up throws and critical thinking skills. It also stimulates the sense of urgency during game situations. You will find that players will create strategies and new ways to beat the clock; encourage this practice, allowing players to plan, leaders to emerge, and team chemistry to grow.

Progression/Accommodations: Create/remove restrictions based on their success/challenges during the game. If players have trouble making long throws, place more players in the outfield to cover more ground. Allow players to move fluidly in/out of their original position (except the catcher) or allow a set time for players to strategize before beginning the game. Coaches can also abolish positions altogether or increase restrictions such as not allowing players to move from their base; remember, the clock doesn't stop until the catcher has the ball **AND TOUCHES HOME PLATE!**



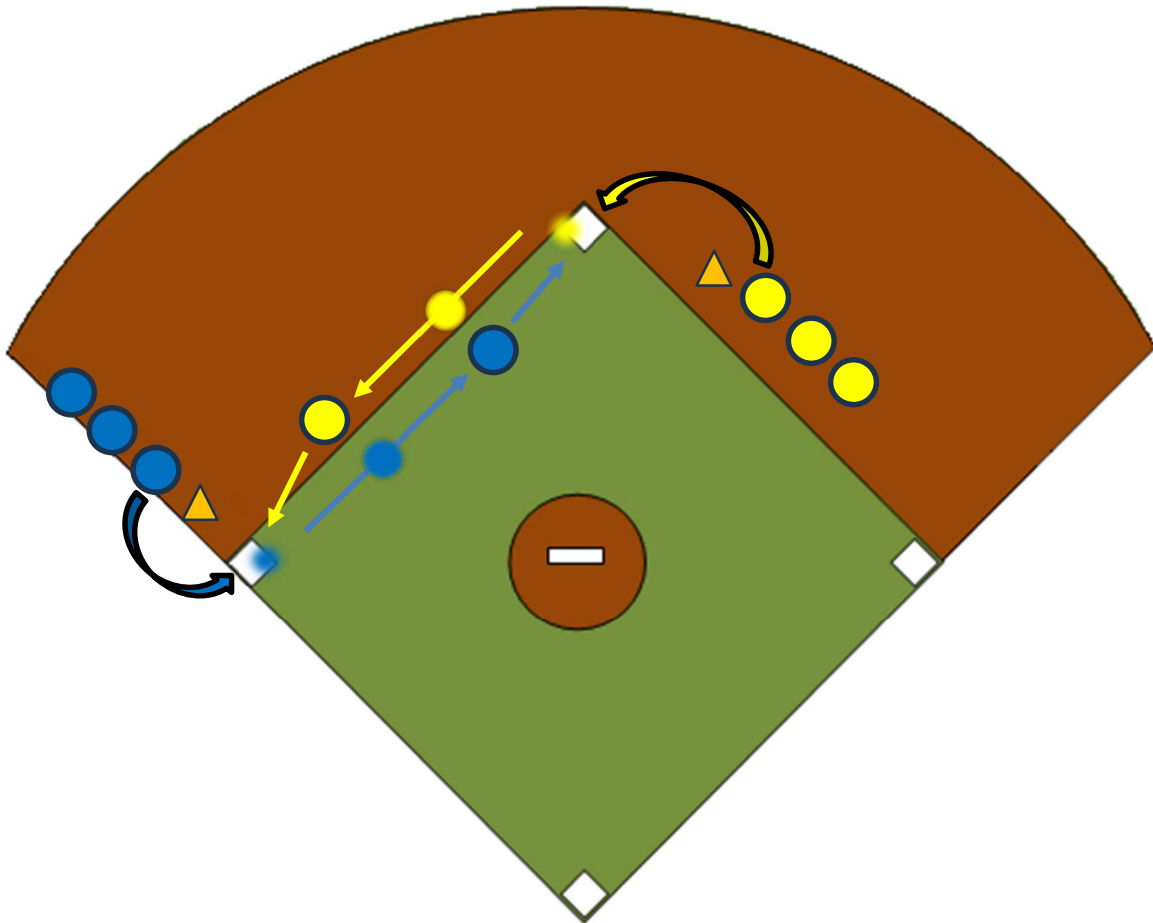
Outfield Relay – Beat The Runner

Set-Up: Split players into two teams, designating one to hit and the other to field. Players on the hitting team will line up in the dugout, with one player allowed on deck; the hitting team will rotate into at-bats. ALL PLAYERS on the fielding team WILL BE IN THE OUTFIELD. One player will be designated to **THE BUCKET** and stationary on the outfield fringe behind 2nd base. A coach will throw batting practice equipped with a bucket of balls. Bases must be in proper position for batters to run the bases.

Instruction: All batted balls must be hit **INTO THE OUTFIELD** to be deemed **“PLAYABLE”**. Batters (YELLOW) are limited to 1 hit each unless deemed **NOT PLAYABLE**. On contact of a **PLAYABLE** ball, the batter will run the bases and receive 1 POINT for each base until **EVERY OUTFIELDER** has **CAUGHT** the ball and it is returned to **THE BUCKET**. **IMMEDIATELY** after **THE BUCKET** catches the ball, the coach is allowed to pitch to the next batter. Repeat until every player on the hitting team has batted; at this point, it is the fielding team’s turn to hit. This game can be played with an innings limit; tie games are decided by choosing 3 players to hit for each team.

Purpose: This game incorporates throwing, catching, relays, situational hitting, and conditioning. It encourages fielders to complete throws with urgency and hitters to barrel balls while using the entire field. For added skill development, hitters may make physical adjustments and hit balls to different field locations unoccupied by outfielders.

Progression/Accommodations: Running distances can be changed based on age/skill level/conditioning or scores running too high/low (Ex: Home directly to 2nd base = 1 point OR return trip from 2nd base = 1 point. More/less time between **THE BUCKET** and the coach’s pitch can be given. Coaches can deem a player **OUT** if he does not successfully hit a **PLAYABLE** ball. With limited players, coaches can become the hitter and modify scoring based on success.



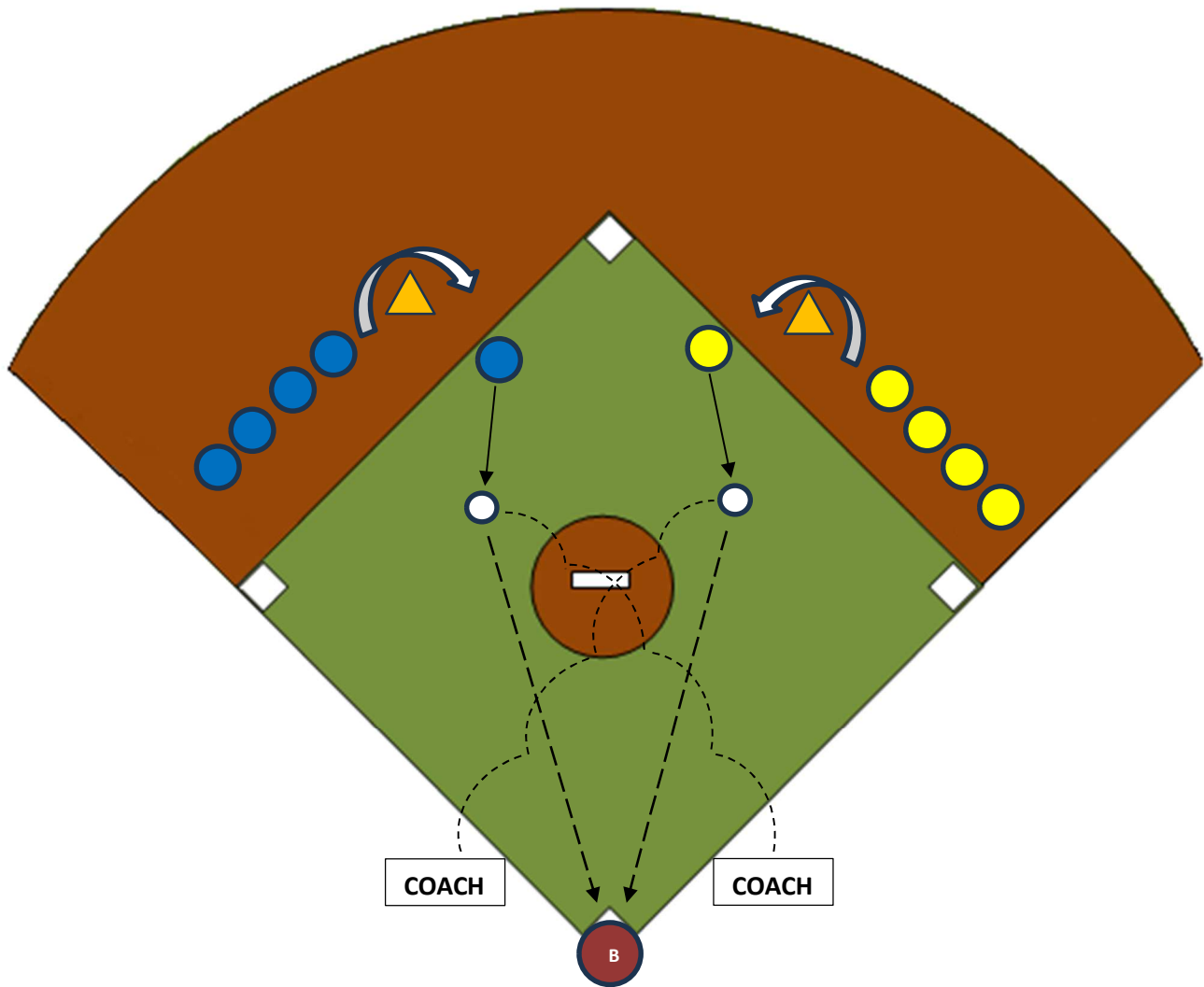
The Rundown

Set-Up: Set up the bases at the appropriate distance for the age group. Decide on 2 bases to execute run down (2nd & 3rd base in example) and split players into 2 groups, dividing players equally at each base. Use a cone/marker to create a line behind/beside each base for players to wait in queue for their turn. Coaches will give players only 1 ball at a time to facilitate this drill.

Instruction: Players will simulate a rundown **WITHOUT** incorporating a runner to learn the fundamentals of the process. The first player in the drill will catch a ball a coach throws to initiate the play. After taking the ball out of their glove, they will hold it in their throwing hand, raised in a throwing position, while running towards the advancing base. Players are instructed **NOT to FAKE THROWS** to receiving players, as this can confuse amateur players and cause unnecessary errors during play. Players with the ball should also be instructed to run **BESIDE THE BASELINE** so the receiving player has a good view of the throw. Once the player in motion is roughly 10 feet from the receiving base, instruct them to throw to the receiving player. The throwing target is waist height or belt, making a tag easy. A **TAG** should be applied **AT THE FRONT OF THE BASE**, not reaching for the runner. After catching the ball, the receiving player will repeat the same process in the opposite direction until the team is comfortable with the skill. At this point, create an additional team of runners (with helmets) to simulate a game situation. Encourage runners to only attempt the next base before moving onto a back-and-forth rundown.

Purpose: Build skills that translate to rundown scenarios and understanding the speed of the game. Throwing, base running, transfers, tagging and sliding are incorporated to teach both sides of the rundown.

Progression/Accommodations: Call the play dead and reset the field if the drill becomes disorganized. Continue to explain the **WHY** in the drill and timing issues the players may need to adjust. Once the basics are mastered, progress into a rundown while players are in **REAL** baseball positions. Assist pitchers and position with responsibilities.



Bucket Barrage

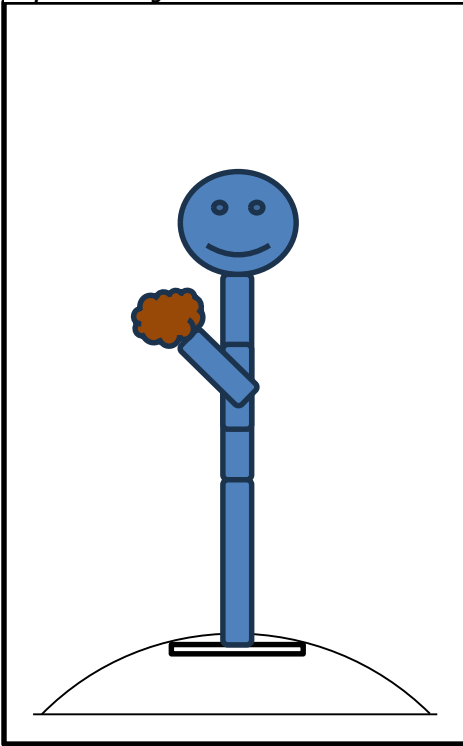
Set-Up: Split team into 2 groups, one at shortstop and one at 2nd Base positioned inside the baseline. Place an empty bucket upside down on a batting tee at home plate. Two coaches will stand on each side of Home Plate, about 10-15 feet up the baseline. Balls should be distributed evenly between the coaches.

Instruction: The coach on the 1st Base side will hit ground balls to shortstop, and the coach on the 3rd Base side will hit ground balls to 2nd Base. Ground balls will be hit simultaneously to each team; players take turns at each position receiving a ground ball and attempting to hit the bucket at home plate for points. There are no throws on missed grounders; fielders, instead must track down the ball and roll it into the 1B/3B area. Players not fielding a ground ball will stand behind/beside a cone/marker until their turn. When coaches run out of balls, they will signal their players to collect the balls and put them back beside the coaches. The teams will switch positions and continue the game. Most points win!

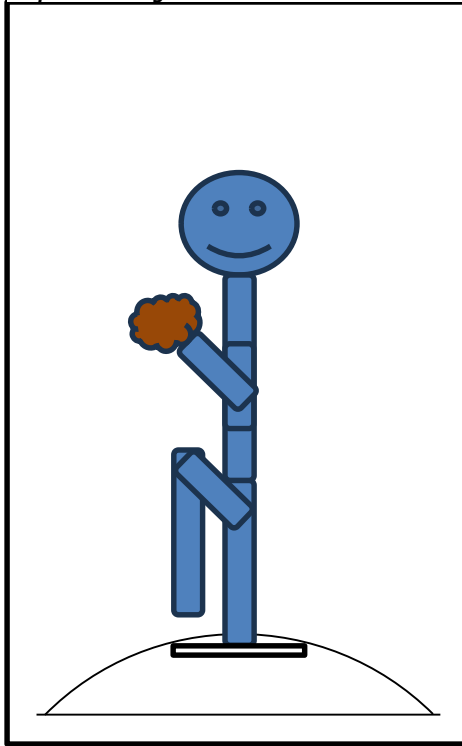
Purpose: Body Control, Quick Feet & Charging Ground Balls – This drill practices several aspects of fielding, including footwork, balance, directional approach to a target and using one's legs while throwing; Focusing on a target, moving quickly to simulate game speed, while players throw on the move. Simulating an 'infield in' scenario, the bucket is intended to give a low target to players throwing, while charging the ball to cut down on the length of the throw.

Progression/Accommodations: Ground ball distances and locations can be changed to adjust challenge/skill level. Additional ground balls can be added to the drill with multiple target locations (1B, then HP). Add baserunners and a catcher for a more realistic game situation. Negative points for missed grounders.

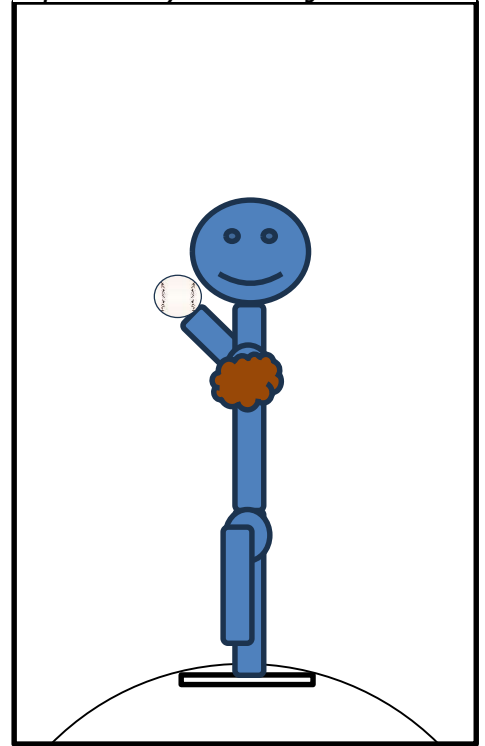
Step 1 – Coming “Set”



Step 2 – Finding A Balance Point



Step 3 – Delivery Towards Target



Easy As 1-2-3

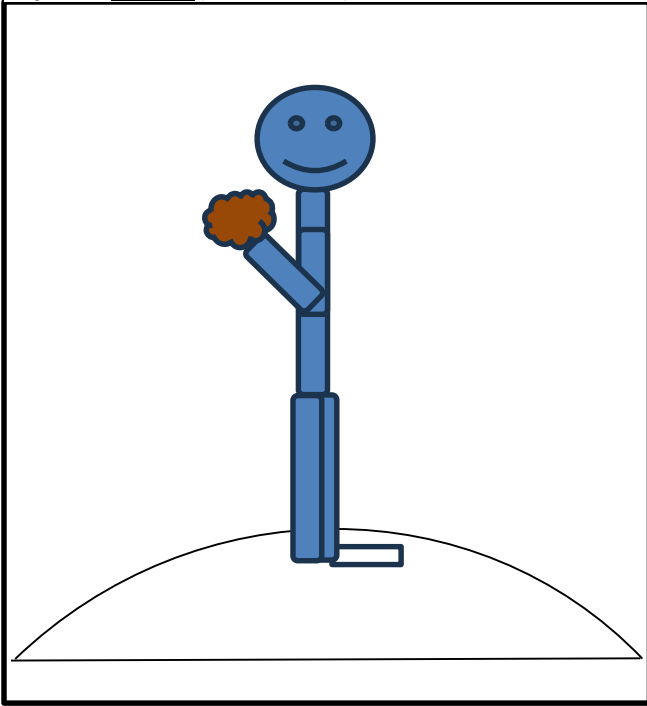
Set-Up: Using a mound (individual work) or a foul line (team practice), players line up with their back foot on the mound/line facing their catching shoulder towards the coach. Players do not need a ball at this point but can hold onto one at the coach's discretion.

Instruction: Players will begin loose and relaxed with their throwing side foot on the mound/line, catching shoulder pointing at their target and their hands apart at their side. **STEP 1:** Bringing their feet together (moving their front foot only) and their hands together in their glove; this is called **“THE SET”** position – Players can be encouraged to bring their hands together at their chest to minimize movement in their upper body during the drill, or their hands lower if more comfortable. Once set, proceed to **STEP 2:** Bringing the players' front knee towards the sky to roughly a 45-degree angle, find a balance point. If hands are in a lower position, they should move up with the leg to chest high. The lift between the player's hands and front leg should be connected to achieve proper timing at separation in the next step. Imagine a pole is attached from their wrist to their kneecap, moving in unison. In **STEP 3:** Separation of the hands occurs, and players stride towards their target while bringing their arm into a throwing position behind their head. At foot plant, players should have their throwing hand raised roughly ear height, pushing with their back leg to propel their body towards the throwing target. Their front arm should then clear their front hip, allowing the hips to rotate and their throwing arm to move into ball release. A proper finishing position should have players facing their target in a straddled position with both toes pointing at their target. This should look similar to a ready position on the infield, allowing players to defend themselves from line drives or field a ground ball.

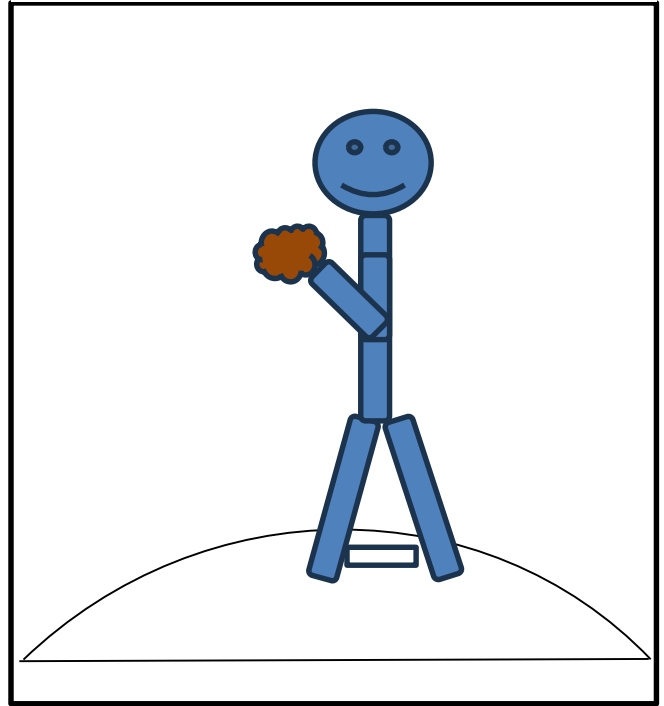
Purpose: To separate pitching mechanics into manageable teaching moments while practicing balance, focusing on a target, and moving quickly in Step 3 to generate velocity.

Progression/Accommodations: Practice pausing at the balance point to strengthen core and foot muscles. When players are showing coordination, break into pairs and use this drill to play catch – Use proper pitching distances from division rules. Create healthy competition by seeing who can hit their catcher's target the most in 10 attempts or the most strikes in a row; move targets to different sides of the plate to increase difficulty.

Player is a PITCHER (1st Base View)



Player Is A FIELDER (1st Base View)



Pitcher Vs Fielder – Introduction To Pick-Offs & Stealing

Set-Up: Gather **ALL PLAYERS** together around the mound. Coaches should demonstrate the mechanics of stepping off the rubber while explaining to runners the importance of a pitcher's back foot movement.

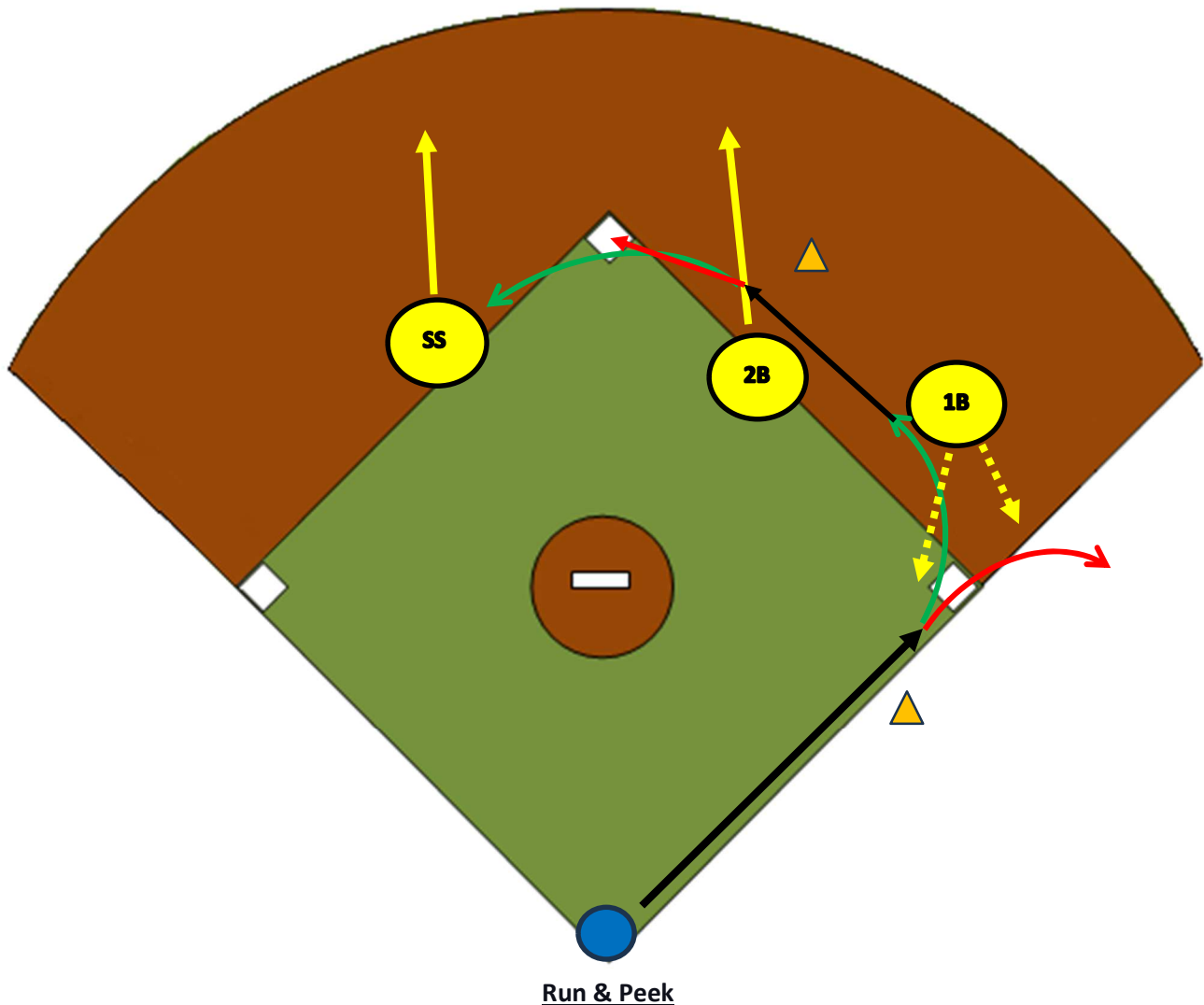
Instruction: Coaches will begin in a relaxed position with their back foot engaged on the mound. Coaches will then come into a set position, pausing in this position. It is crucial to emphasize the back foot as the **ONLY** moving part in this next step. Coaches will disengage their back foot by stepping directly behind the rubber, becoming a "fielder," allowing a pitcher to attempt a throw to any base or move around the infield. **IMPORTANT:** Once in a set position, a pitcher must stay still and has only 2 choices: **PITCH THE BALL** or "**STEP OFF.**" Any other movement by the pitcher once in a set position will result in a "**BALK**" and baserunners will be directed to advance 1 base as a penalty.

REMEMBER: STRIKES ARE ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF PITCHING; REWARD THROWING STRIKES WITH THE ABILITY TO USE PICK-OFFS!

BASERUNNERS: A **RIGHT**-handed pitcher must step off to throw to 1st Base; a **LEFT**-handed pitcher can attempt a pickoff by stepping directly towards 1st Base with their front foot.

Purpose: This is a teaching exercise for **BOTH** pitchers and baserunners. Knowing what a pitcher can and can't do allows pitchers to avoid giving away free bases, while baserunners will learn when they can begin their secondary lead or steal.

Progression/Accommodations: Add baserunners to simulate in-game actions; start with 1st Base and use other bases as skill dictates. Once pitchers and runners are comfortable, add a catcher and middle infielders, giving the pitcher the option of delivering a pitch **OR** pickoff – Give baserunners a chance to steal. Before practice during warmup, have players line up on the foul line and practice their jumps off of a coach's footwork. Combine this drill with "**THE RUNDOWN**" drill to negate massive leads at 3rd Base – This is a high-level exercise! Ensure players are comfortable with **BOTH** drills before proceeding; help players understand different lead lengths and what is worth using a pickoff.



Set-Up: Place bases at the appropriate distance for the age group. Leave the bases clear of any players, and infielders. Line up your players on the 3rd base side of home plate. Place a cone 2/3 of the way down the 1st Base line, with additional cones 2/3 of the way to each base when needed.

Instruction: Begin by letting each player run to and through 1st base -The intent should be to simulate a close play in the infield OR hitting a single. Each player will be prompted on a hit in the infield: **Red arrow**, NO ADVANCE. Outfield hit: **Green arrow**; ROUND 1st Base AND WATCH DEFENSE. Coaches should emphasize decision making with runners paying attention to their base coaches. Cones are intended as prompts to look at their coaches and make the decision to advance or not. **PLAYERS SHOULD NOT BE RUNNING WHILE LOOKING AT THE BALL, THEY SHOULD BE LOOKING AT THEIR DESTINATION OR COACH.** Players should be touching the closest edge of 1st Base while running through the bag, OR the inside corner of the bag when advancing. "If you doubt it, don't" mentality when advancing on their own.

Purpose: Learning to run the bases, route efficiency, trust in coaches & conditioning. Players will begin to learn the most efficient path for them. Players will learn their own speed in relation to the game and when to advance on their own.

Progression/Accommodations: Practice batter-runners hitting doubles with, runners going 1st to 3rd, etc. to get comfortable with paths to each base. Decision making with older players, advancing when the ball is in sight; when behind them they should look to coaches. Incorporate this drill into cutoff defense or infield practice. Instruct defensive players positioning to stay out of the way (1st base inside the baseline or foul line, middle-infield outside baselines for cut-off).