
GAHANNA JUNIOR LEAGUE SPORTS

COACH'S MANUAL

2009



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Basic Workout Ideas.....	4
Hitting.....	6
Bunting.....	14
Infield Drills.....	17
Outfield Drills.....	24
Catcher Drills.....	28
Throwing Drills.....	33
Pitching Drills.....	38
Base running drills.....	42

Introduction

The Board members of Gahanna Junior League Sports determined that to better serve the youth involved in the program, an effort to familiarize volunteer coaches at all levels with basic principles of baseball is necessary. This manual is meant to aid coaches in developing a practice regiment that trains the youth player in the fundamentals of baseball, promotes proper technique and creates a fun environment.

The ideas contained herein are suggestions and ideas taken from many sources and are not meant to be all inclusive or the final word on the teaching of baseball theory. Many of the ideas however, if taught will help the youth player become a well rounded and fundamentally sound baseball player.

As Billy Ripken points out baseball is a simple game played with bats, balls and people. It is important as coaches to not lose sight of this basic truth. The team that plays catch the best is usually the team that comes out on top. The better your players play catch the better they will play the game. The most difficult play in baseball, the double play can be broken down into three catches and two throws which can be accomplished by learning the fundamentals of the game.

Learning and utilizing the skills outlined at early stages of player development will create fundamentally sound players at the high school level and beyond. A well run practice will allow the players to learn and have fun. Please remember the primary goal as a coach at this level is to teach and develop baseball players. Winning is both secondary to and, a result of this development. Best of luck for a successful, enjoyable season.

We are very grateful that you have elected to participate in guiding and molding the youth of Gahanna. We hope you find these ideas helpful.

Basic Workout Ideas

Sample Practice Plan –

Ages 12 and under:

10 minutes:

BASERUNNING

- Dynamic warm up: run bases using proper base running techniques

20 minutes:

STRETCH AND THROW

- Stretch around the mound or in centerfield
- Go over the practice plan in detail

45 minutes:

PRACTICE IN STATIONS (small groups)

15 minutes per station and rotate

- Hitting stations; (one player on the field hitting, and soft toss, tee work utilizing hitting net off the field)
- Fielding and throwing stations during live hitting.
- Fly ball and throwing station during live hitting.

10 minutes:

BASERUNNING

Common sense should always prevail. For ages 4 to 6, a practice should not last much longer than one hour. Shorter if the players are having trouble paying attention or are having difficulty with the work out. Older players usually can maintain attentiveness for a longer period of time. Still, consideration should be given to the individual player's ability to remain focused.

Sample Practice Plan-

Ages 13 and up

20 minutes:

STRETCH, RUN, THROW

20 minutes:

GROUND BALLS and FLY BALLS

(Use buckets and systems to minimize throws and maximize repetitions)

-Two infield fungo stations

-One outfield fungo station

20 minutes:

TEAM FUNDAMENTALS

- Bunt defense

- First-and-third defenses

- Cutoffs and relays

- Pick offs and rundowns

- Team baserunning plays

60 minutes:

TEAM BATTING PRACTICE

Four stations, 15 minutes each (or 10 minutes each if you wish to have another team fundamental drill)

-Stations can be changed/rotated daily but should always include free hitting.

Once the season starts, coaches should prioritize which issues need to be addressed during team fundamental sessions. Please note that infield fungo stations do not mean taking full infield. During batting practice pitchers should be throwing on the side and running.

HITTING



KEY POINTS

1. Stance – starting point, vision, balance, and plate coverage.
2. Grip- loose grip in the fingers with the “door knocking” knuckles lined up to unlock the wrists and allow greater bat speed.

3. Weight shift-weight shifts to the backside, gathering energy, before being taken forward; verbal cue: "You have to go back before you go forward."
4. Stride- short and soft, toward the pitcher.
5. Swing- short and quick, using hands, wrists and forearms.
6. Follow through- takes care of itself with correct swing elements.

FAST BALL DRILL

Purpose: Develop a sense of what quality of pitch to swing at depending upon the count.

Count: (0--, 1-0, 1-1) hit only fast ball in "your zone."

(2-0, 3-1) Fast ball in zone that you hit the best.

(2-1) most cases ... a fast ball. However, take into account the pitcher's ability and previous 3 pitch selections; you may based upon this look for a curve or change up.

(3-0) takes unless it is the pitch you came to the park to hit, if swinging do not jump at the pitch but rather look for the pitch in "your zone."

(0-1) no change in attitude, hit a fast ball.

(0-2) attitude change must occur, always look fast ball but adjust/react to curve or change.

REMEMBER:

The strike zone is widened to the black edges of the plate. The farther ahead in the count you get the small your strike zone becomes; the farther behind in the count you get the bigger your strike zone becomes.

SOFT TOSS DRILL

Equipment: Net to hit into, 12+ balls

Purpose: To improve weight transfer, body control, and timing

Description: This drill uses at least two players. Set up the hitter with a partner kneeling about 10 feet away, just off the hitter's front knee. The feeder triggers the hitter's swing by lowering his hands just before tossing the ball. The feeder should float the ball to the inside, outside, and middle part of the plate. The hitter must drive the ball into the net.

Coaching points: Use the drill to help players lose their fear of being hit by pitches. Have the feeder switch to safety balls and throw harder. Watch each batter's front foot and head. Work with players who bail out or pull their head off the ball. Give plenty of praise for good technique, especially on inside pitches.

TWO STRIKE GAME

Purpose: To train players in third strike situations

Description: The team is divided into two squads. Players go to the plate with two strike count. The player must choke up and shorten their swing to protect the plate and battle the pitcher until they can get a pitch in the middle of the plate. You can have base runners in this drill if desired.

TEE HITTING

Equipment: Batting Tee

Purpose: To help hitters develop a smooth, compact swing

Description: Set up a batting tee on the plate and place your hitting net about 5'-6' away. Using the plate will help the hitter orient their stance to the plate and not the tee. Move the tee to different locations on the plate so the hitter can practice hitting different pitches.

Coaching points: This drill is a great introduction for any young hitter. It develops all the skills required to make good contact. Stress concentration on the ball during the swing.

FENCE DRILL

Equipment: Bat, Fence

Purpose: Develop quick, compact swing

Description: Hitter should face the fence then put the end of the bat end against the fence lightly with the handle end making slight contact with the hitter's mid-section. Once the hitter is positioned they take their normal batting stance at that distance from the fence. The hitter then takes ten or fifteen swings. If the bat is making more than very light contact with the fence, the hitter is not bringing his hands through ahead of the barrel. To get the hitter to bring his hands through first, have them take their normal swing, but have them "throw" the end handle toward the ball. If the hitter continues to work at this drill it will increase their bat speed and cause them to hit the ball harder.

LEAD and FOLLOW HAND (one handed) SWINGS DRILL

Equipment: Bat, (Balls/Tee optional)

Purpose: Establish proper timing and power with the lead side of the body.

Description: Hit an imaginary ball, or off a tee or during soft toss. When executing swings with the lead hand, the hitter should concentrate on keeping the hand above the plane of the ball. If the lead hand is under the plane of the ball the result is usually a pop out, strike out, or fly out. The hitter must also turn the hips quickly for proper timing and power. The front elbow should not extend fully before contact with the ball since that produces a slow bat due to an excess of arm arc in the swing. ("Casting the bat").

By concentrating on keeping the lead hand on top of the ball and turning the hips quickly, a hitter can establish timing and power with the lead side of the body. Both hands should snap straight into the ball at precisely the same instant establishing proper bat speed and control.

MULTI-PHASE OFFENSIVE DRILL

Equipment: Bats, Balls, Gloves

Purpose: Develop offensive skills

Description:

First Round

1. Begin round with a runner on first base
2. Have defensive players at all positions
3. Runner on first takes a lead, the best they can get.
4. Pitcher goes to the stretch and makes one play on the runner at first, then throws a pitch to the hitter.
5. The first hitter bunts, (the runner on 1st will advance to 2nd on the bunt then rotate a defensive or to the end of the hitting line). On hit two the hitter will run it out, then stay at first. The pitcher will repeat one play on the runner, and then pitch to the next hitter who will bunt. This pattern repeats until all the players have rotated through.

Second Round

1. Begin round two with a runner on second.
2. Pitcher makes a play on the runner one time, using middle infielders to cover.
3. Hitter will bunt two pitches, the 1st sacrifices the runner to third, the bunt second squeezes the runner home, the hitter

goes to second and then repeat this process through all the players.

Round Three

1. Runners begin on first.
2. Runner breaks from 1st base on the 1st pitch to the hitter and goes all the way to 3rd base.
3. The hitter tries to take the pitch to right field. If they execute the hit and run properly, they may be rewarded with an extra hit. After they hit two or three successfully they run the next hit out and stay at 1st base.

The purpose of the drill is to teach situational hitting and give the player an understanding of how to approach these situations. Allows players to understand the team concept of baseball and how a team can manufacture runs.

HIP TURNING DRILL

Equipment: Bat, Glove

Purpose: Development of quicker hips and the relationship between hip speed and the entire swing.

Description: Place a bat behind the waist, horizontal to the ground, the glove is used as the home plate so the player can get the proper orientation. While holding the ends of the bat in the hands assume a normal batting stance and watch an imaginary pitch being delivered. Execute a stride and a quick turn using the bat to help turn the hips faster. Finish in the proper contact position.

HIT AND RUN GAME

Purpose: Give players specific game situation training.

Description: The team is divided into two squads. Runners are placed on different bases prior to each inning. The teams play an inner

squad game with each player going to the plate in a hit and run situation. Use regular defensive and offensive rules.

GOLF BALL TOSS

Equipment: Plastic golf balls, broom stick handles cut bat length appropriate for age. (29"-30" for little league, 32"-34" for older players).

Purpose: Develop eye-hand coordination.

Description: Have the players break up into groups of four, one player pitching, one hitting and two fielding, retrieving balls.

(Variation: use badminton Birdies)

BAT SPEED DRILL

Equipment: Bats, fungo bat, balls, bat donut

Purpose: Develop bat speed

Description: Put donut weight on a regular bat; hit eight pitches (overload). Hit eight baseballs with the fungo bat (underload). Hit eight baseballs with a regular bat.

Conduct this drill in soft toss situation. Doing two set 2-3 times per week. In about 4-6 weeks a positive increase in bat speed should occur.

HITTING MOTION DRILL

Equipment: Balls, Batting gloves, Hitting net

Purpose: To teach hitting mechanics, develop quick hands

Description:

STATION 1:

1. Top hand should hold bottom thumb to simulate holding a bat. Top hand should also hold a ball. Throw the ball into the net

simulating hits in all direction (pull, middle, opposite field). The throw should cause the arms to extend and roll the wrists to attain a down and out or in swing.

2. The “slap” technique involves two players. Have one player kneel in front of the hitter with a hand outstretched into the strike zone. The hitter then swings at the outstretched hand and slaps it with both hands. This drill helps the hitter keep the front shoulder in.
3. The hitter that “sweeps” the bat, stick a batting glove under the front arm pit to ensure that the swing stays closed and the batter does not fly open.

STATION 2:

1. Rapid fire: Use three balls and soft toss them immediately upon contact, one right after another. This develops quick hands.
2. Fastball Drill: Soft toss but from a distance and with more speed. Tosses stands to the side of the batter and about 10 feet away and tosses underhand with a little bit more on the ball.
3. Back feed extension: Soft toss from behind the batter. Tosses stands 5 feet directly behind the hitter and tosses the ball into the strike zone. The hitter can look at the tosser for the 1st few tosses, but then must look forward and hit “blindly”. This develops quick hands to the ball in the strike zone.

BUNTING



REACTION DRILL

Purpose: To aid players in moving quickly from the hitting position to the bunting position.

Description: Spread a number of hitters/bunters 4' apart in a semicircle around the coach. Players start in the hitting position, then on command drop into the bunting position.

Coaching points: Emphasize quickness, stop each time and check the fundamentals: feet position, knees, hands, barrel position. Later, the coach rather than a command can go into a pitching motion and the players can react to the delivery. Although "squaring" to bunt is still widely taught in a sacrifice situation, players should master the pivot bunting which is the preferred technique at upper levels.

ONE HANDED BUNTING DRILL

Equipment: Bats, Balls

Purpose: Improve bunting skills

Description: Players get into groups of 3 or 4 for bunting. The drill is to grip the bat with the top hand at the balance point of the bat, then bunt the ball that way. All the things the coach tries to teach such as

