



Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation Coaching Clinic

“The Ripken Way”

- **Keep it simple**
 - Simple does not mean easy or lack of substance
 - Break everything down into its components (double play example)
- **Explain the why**
 - Help the kids understand how the fundamentals help them develop
 - Coaches build credibility when they can explain the reason behind something
- **Celebrate the Individual**
 - Every kid is different and will have different abilities
 - Find a way for each kid in your group/team to succeed and celebrate that
- **Make it fun**
 - Kids will learn more when they have fun
 - Teach the fundamental, play a game or have a contest

THROWING/PITCHING

- Teaching kids how to play catch
 - Safe lines, teamwork, partners
 - Maintain order – throwing can get out of control quickly and turn unsafe – explain the why
 - Play a game - “21”
- Grip
 - Four Seam – keeps the ball flying straighter longer (“c” or “horseshoe”)
 - Develop a good habit by reinforcing grip at every drill
- **Pitching mechanics – *Five links of the chain***
 - **Feet**
 - Start with heels on rubber – Baby step back at 45 degree angle
 - Pivot (turn the foot) so that it becomes parallel with rubber
 - **Balance Position**
 - Controlled leg lift, with back pocket pointing toward target
 - Slight bend in back leg
 - Hands together slightly above belt and away from body
 - Front shoulder pointing towards target
 - **Power Position**
 - Get ball out and up, with hand above ball
 - Strong front side, no limp front arm
 - Keep weight back slightly to allow for generation of torque
 - **Rotation**
 - Elbow slightly above shoulder, even if throwing from ¾ delivery
 - Both feet on ground as you release ball to generate torque
 - **Follow through**
 - Allow follow through to happen naturally
- **Pitching Drills**
 - One Knee Drill
 - Tee Drill
 - Balance Drill
 - Toe-Tap Drill
 - Power Position Drill

INFIELD

- **Ready Position**

- Athletic Position used in almost every sport
 - Feet and shoulders square to home
 - Balance-weight distributed evenly on balls of feet
 - Be comfortable

- **Basic Groundballs - *Wide base, butt down, hands out front***

- Wide base – balance
- Butt down – butt goes down, eyes come up
- Hands out front – everything happens in front of you
- Basic Groundball Drill

- **Backhands**

- Use same principles – wide base, butt down, hands out front
- Start on your knee, build strength/balance and progress to off the knee
- Two types of backhands
 - Regular backhand
 - Crossover backhand
- Backhand Drill

- **Throwing After the Catch**

- Always four seam grip
- Create momentum toward target
- Point shoulder toward target
- Follow the throw
- Shuffle, Throw, Follow Drill

- **Underhand flip**

- use your momentum, move towards your target
- Teamwork – helping your teammate, higher chance for success
- Where your hand goes, the ball goes
- High Five Drill
- Box Drill

- **Infield Drills**

- Basic groundballs Drill – *wide base, butt down, hands out front*
- Backhand Drill
- Shuffle, Throw, Follow Drill
- High Five Drill
- Box Drill

***Life lesson – Teamwork**

- The underhand flip is used by virtually every player in the infield and succeeds only when we work as a team
- In life, we need to learn to work together to succeed (e.g. sharing work, using our strengths)

***Life lesson – Developing good life habits**

- We need to develop good habits through practice and repetition to field a ground ball.
- In life, we need to recognize that building good daily habits will help us succeed and avoid potential barriers to our success (e.g. homework each day, brushing your teeth)

OUTFIELD

- Outfielders job description:
 - Catch the routine ball, last line of defense
 - Keep runners from taking extra bases
 - Always be in the Ready Position for every pitch
- **Groundballs**
 - Field same as infielder – **wide base, butt down, hands out front**
 - Do-or-die groundballs – catch ball on glove side, just in front of foot
 - Basic Groundball Drill
- **Fly Balls – Ball, Glove, Eyes**
 - Locate the ball and get to the spot early if possible
 - Position glove directly under ball; don't block your own line of vision
 - Follow ball into glove and move forward as you catch it
 - Fly Ball Drill with or without gloves
- **Crossover Step**
 - Most efficient way to get to balls hit to your sides
 - Pivot and crossover in direction of ball – no wasted movements
 - Crossover Step Drill
- **Drop Step**
 - Most efficient way to get to balls hit over your head
 - Drop foot back and open up in the direction of the ball
 - Drop step, then crossover
 - Drop Step Drill
- **Communication**
 - CF has priority over other outfielders; generally OF has priority over INF
 - Be loud and be clear – “I got it! I got it! I got it!”
 - Other outfielder backs up the play
- **Outfield Drills**
 - Groundball Drill
 - Fly Ball Drill (with or without gloves)
 - Crossover Step Drill
 - Drop Step Drill
 - Communication Drill

****Life lesson – Sportsmanship***

- We must realize that we cannot always change a situation; however, we can control our reaction to situation.
- The ball is not hit directly to us, and it is up to us to adjust and do our best to catch it.
- In life, things do not always go the way we want them to, but we must learn to control our reactions to situations and adjust (e.g. grades in school, chores).

****Life lesson – Communication***

- In the outfield we must work together with our teammates to catch the ball
- In life we communicate using both words and our actions; our body language, gestures, movements, and expressions speak as loudly as the words we use

HITTING

- Hitting is the most difficult part of game
- Setting up the station for safety – use dot cones and helmets to give the kids visual aids
- Set up a full set of all bat sizes for each group
 - Kids to choose bat that is not too heavy and ideal for short and compact swing
- **The Grip**
 - Placed in fingers
 - Line up knuckles – door knocking knuckles
 - Keep your hands loose, they tighten automatically as you swing through the zone
 - ***Loose hands, quick bat***
- **The Stance**
 - Just a starting position that is comfortable and has good balance
 - Athletic position – can look different for all players – *Celebrate the individual*
- **Weight Shift**
 - Body and swing must work together
 - Start in balanced position
 - ***“Go back to forward”*** – like a snake or a boxer
- **The Stride**
 - Varies for each individual
 - Shorter vs. longer – balance
 - Stride toward the pitcher
 - Short, soft stride is preferable
- **The Swing**
 - Hands in ready position near top of back shoulder
 - Short, quick swing using hands, wrists, forearms
 - Let the natural swing take over
- **Contact and follow through**
 - Short and Quick swing – don’t get too technical teaching hitting, focus on stance and grip
 - Contact made out in front of home plate – *everything in baseball happens in front of you*
 - Want maximum bat speed at point of contact
 - Swing through the baseball
- **Hitting Drills**
 - Tee Drill – *go back to go forward*
 - Big Ball Drill – soccer ball on a tee, hit through the ball
 - Soft Toss – *loose hands, quick bat*
 - Short toss from the front
 - One Arm Drill – lead arm
 - Lob Toss Drill – working on staying back

****Life lesson – Choosing our future***

- We all have the power to succeed in life, and we need to learn from our mistakes.
- In hitting, success is getting a hit 3 out of 10 times.

****Life lesson – Respect***

- *“You hit ‘em, you pick ‘em up”* – kids clean up their station to show respect for the next group.
- It is important to treat people and our belongings the way we want to be treated.

****Life lesson – Work Ethic***

- We learn the importance of following through in our swing, just like the importance of following through on a job or project in life.

PRACTICE

Tips for Planning and Running a Practice

- **Interactive, small groups**
 - Station work instead of whole team together whenever possible (better focus)
 - If no assistants, get parents to help (ask for assistance at a preseason meeting)
 - Keep the kids moving around – eliminate standing around time

- **Running/jogging**
 - Older kids can go for a short jog first (or “Big League” baserunning)
 - Younger kids do baserunning first and last
 - “Big League” baserunning – teaching component and a way to get rid extra energy
 - Home to first (through the bag)
 - First to third – get up with pitch and go (work on good turn at 2nd)
 - Run out a double (work on good turn at 1st)
 - Score on a hit – get up with pitch and go
 - Run out a triple / score from 3rd
 - Run out a home run

- **Stretching**
 - Serves physiological purpose for older kids / for younger kids – habit forming
 - Allows coach to go over practice plan for the day

- **Batting practice – eliminate standing around**
 - If hitting on the field – small groups – 1 hitting, 1 in OF, 1 in INF, and 1 doing a drill on the side
 - 15 minute stations / more efficient use of time, space = more swings
 - Acquire as many baseballs as possible – maximizes swings / can do multiple drills at the same time

- **Dealing with limited field space**
 - Fielding/throwing station = incorporate fungos during BP on the field
 - T-work/soft-toss = use 3 set-ups in a batting cage (coach or parent tosses if possible)

- **Planning important – give this some thought ahead of time**
 - Stick to the plan – don’t dwell on a drill/skill if they don’t get it right away. Move on and come back to it another day.
 - Keeps kids under control

- **One-man coaching staff**
 - Preseason meeting just with parents – ask for assistance (not full-time, just occasionally) from all
 - Discuss philosophies of playing time
 - Goals / What you are trying to accomplish
 - Emphasis on positive experience
 - Supervision/safety

- **Perfect practice makes perfect**
 - Practicing the wrong way doesn't help
 - You practice the way you play
 - Be armed with a plan and fundamentals
 - Stations = more reps, efficiency
 - Don't compromise quality / Do it the right way every time
 - Develop good habits so game reaction is natural
 - Be disciplined, but still have fun (integrate fun = drills, games, contests)
 - Maintain the player' interest / Keep it interactive / Be creative

- **How much is too much?**
 - Common sense is always key
 - Younger players (4-6)
 - Small attention window
 - Accentuate fun in short periods of time
 - 1-hour practices (baserunning is fun)
 - If THEY want to stay, it's on THEIR terms
 - Shorter stations for younger kids
 - Build a love of the game
 - 7-9 age group
 - Same basic concepts as 4-6 year olds
 - Let their attention dictate the time (1-1/2 hour practices)
 - Have Fun - continue to build a love of the game
 - 10-12 age group
 - More traditional practice
 - Longer attention, more serious
 - Team skills – time consuming
 - Still teach in smaller groups
 - Don't try to accomplish everything at once
 - Build each time out
 - Have Fun - continue to build a love of the game

Sample Practice Plan – Ages 12 and under

10 minutes Baserunning (“Big League” baserunning)

20 minutes Stretch and throw

- Warm-up throw with a purpose (good technique and throw to a target every time)
- Go over practice plan/goals in detail

45 – 60 min Stations – small groups, 15 minutes per station and rotate

- Batting practice – drills (tee work, soft toss, front toss on field)
 - Could be just one station or two depending upon # of kids and what you have available for BP (cages, on field, extra adult helpers, # of baseballs)
- Fielding/throwing station (pick a skill or two to work on at each practice – don’t overload)
- Flyballs/throwing station (pick a skill or two to work on at each practice – don’t overload)

10 minutes Baserunning

As always, common sense must prevail. For ages 5-8, a practice lasting an hour is typically the limit of their attention span. Times should be shortened accordingly. Players should only stay longer if they ask to. Players ages 8-10 may be able to stay the full time and 11- and 12-year-olds might be able to last for even longer. Use this framework as a guideline and customize practices to fit your needs.

Sample Practice Plan – Ages 13 and up

20 minutes Stretch, run, throw (warm-up throw with a purpose – proper technique)

20 minutes Groundballs and flyballs – use buckets and systems to minimize throws and maximize reps

- Not taking infield
- Two infield fungo stations
- One outfield fungo station

20 minutes Team fundamentals

- Bunt defenses
- First and third defenses
- Cutoffs and relays
- Pickoffs and rundowns

20 minutes Baserunning or another team fundamental

60 minutes Team batting practice – four stations, 15 minutes each

- Stations can be rotated daily – always include free hitting
- Pitchers can throw on the side
- On third day of three-day series of practices this can be an intra-squad game

Once in-season, coaches should prioritize which issues need to be addressed during team fundamental sessions. Please note that the infield fungo station does not mean taking a full infield. Batting practice provides opportunities for pitchers to throw on the side and do their running.