



## **BASE RUNNING PRESENTATION NOTES**

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## **BASE RUNNING PHILOSOPHY**

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The art of base running is, and will continue to be, an integral and important part of the game of softball. Yet, at the same time, it is often taken for granted.

Arguably, the single-most important factor in being an excellent base runner is the ability to “think” while running the bases, often at full speed. It is this single ingredient, coupled with other intangibles and learned base running skills, that will inevitably determine the base running abilities of any player.

Running speed is a tremendous advantage, but only if it is controlled. Whether a player has above average or below average speed, they should be required to be alert, attentive and knowledgeable of their own abilities (including speed, quickness, reaction time etc). By taking these responsibilities, they give their team a better chance of winning by not “running into outs” or taking their team out of a big innings.

If every player commits to running hard, it will not only “condition” umpires, but will ultimately force outfielders to make mistakes by hurrying their throws or not fielding cleanly.

## BASERUNNING FUNDAMENTALS CHECKLIST

	Date					Comments
<b>F</b> <b>ir</b> <b>s</b> <b>t</b> <b>B</b> <b>a</b> <b>s</b> <b>e</b>	Running through 1B					
	Rounding 1B					
	Taking Signs					
	Checking Defence					
	Taking Lead					
	Finding the ball					
	Return after pitch					
	Tagging Up					
	Ready for batted ball					
	React to ball in dirt					
<b>S</b> <b>e</b> <b>c</b> <b>o</b> <b>n</b> <b>d</b> <b>B</b> <b>a</b> <b>s</b> <b>e</b>	Slides into 2 <sup>nd</sup> Base					
	Rounding the base					
	Taking signs					
	Checking the defence					
	Taking lead					
	Size of lead					
	Return after pitch					
	Tagging up					
	Ready for batted ball					
	React to ball in dirt					
<b>T</b> <b>h</b> <b>i</b> <b>r</b> <b>d</b> <b>B</b> <b>a</b> <b>s</b> <b>e</b>	Slides into 3 <sup>rd</sup> Base					
	Rounding the base					
	Checking the defence					
	Taking lead					
	Return after pitch					
	Tagging up					
	Reading ball off bat					
	React to ball in dirt					
	Hits to the Right Side					
	Squeeze					
	Slides into home					
	<b>OVERALL</b>					
	Aggressive base runner					
	BR Practice habits					
	Times to 1 <sup>st</sup> Base					
	Time Stealing 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup>					

## GENERAL BASE RUNNING RULES

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1. When on second base with less than two outs, ball in front of the base runner must go through the infield before advancing. Unless it is a slow roller or a ball the third base player has to charge.
2. When on third base, be ready for the pass ball or wild pitch, runner may be able to score.
3. When on third base be ready to run on any ground ball unless told not to by the coach. Tag up on all routine fly balls, on shallow ones go half way down the line so that runner can score if it is not caught.
4. Touch the front inside corner of all bases when rounding them; it makes no difference with which foot. Base runners should watch themselves touch the base; there is no excuse for missing a base.
5. Always know where the ball is; base runners should never get picked off by the hidden ball trick.
6. If base runner is not sure they are safe or out, they should always assume they are safe, until the umpire tells them they are out.
7. When there are two runners on the same base the lead runner is entitled to the base. If one runner is slower than the other, the slower of the two, should let the opposition tag them. If both runners are equal, both stay on the base until the umpire tells one to go.
8. The catcher and the base runners ability to get back to the base safely should determine the distance of the lead.
9. A base runner should never get picked off by the catcher, if they are not stealing.
10. Force the catcher to throw to first base early in the game so we can all see their move. You should use a one-way lead when doing this.
11. Always slide on close plays except at first base, unless it is a tag play.

## **BASERUNNING FUNDAMENTALS**

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Base runners should be aggressive and make every effort to put pressure on the defence at every opportunity. A base runner should eliminate "the routine play" from their mind. They should expect the field to make errors and run the bases accordingly.

Base runners will be taught to use their own judgement. They know how fast they can run and their physical limitations. Coaches will be aggressive in relation to base running so the runners should always be looking for the extra base.

There are a few rules, which apply to base running irrespective whether the player has just hit the ball or are on base:

- ☑ Base runners should run with their head up so they can see what is happening at all times.
- ☑ After hitting the ball or running from 1B to 2B the runner should glance at the ball simply by turning their head enabling them to pick up the ball and make an assessment whilst maintaining the direction to where they are running. This is applicable on ground ball, Hit and Run, Run and Hit and straight steal.
- ☑ Base runners should always touch every base.
- ☑ In all cases the base runner should pick up the trajectory of the ball to enable them to obtain a better break on a bad pitch. Their concentration here should be second to none.

Practising correct mechanics and techniques when running the bases will not only teach the players properly but will also add to their physical conditioning. It is therefore important that base running is taught well and practised often.

## **AROUND THE BASES**

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### **HOME TO FIRST BASE**

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#### Ground ball to the infield:

A runner should maintain speed through the base. They should also:

- Hit the middle front of the safety base simply because it's the nearest point from home plate. On a bang-bang play, hitting the base on top or back could result in a sure out.
- A forward lean on contact with the base could help to convince an umpire (conditioning). This principle is similar to that of a track star (sprinter) who leans into the tape at the finish line.

- Use short quick jab steps to decelerate, and glance up the line to look for an overthrow.

## **HOME TO SECOND**

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Clean single (possible double) to the outfield:

A runner should:

- The athlete does not want to slow down in their approach to touching first base and to maximize their route to second base. So again, markers or visual cues (cones) should be placed to allow the athlete to get a “feel” for their base running route and technique in their approach to first base. A batting tee should be placed in front of home plate and the batter should be told that their swing is a game time performance swing. When breaking out of the batter box the batter this time should be angling out toward the line to the visual marker (cone).
- The angle of approach should be about 700mm to 1m outside the baseline and the visual cone will be put out about 4m from the base in order for the batter to make their approach to the base and get in line to touch first base and break toward second.
- In dealing with the mindset of the athlete it is important to reinforce to them they are always looking to go to second base and to take advantage of any misplayed balls in the outfield. Again this type of mindset will put constant and sustained pressure on the defence both mentally and physically.

## **THE LEAD AT FIRST BASE**

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### **RUNNER ON FIRST BASE**

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Thinking process:

- Trajectory of ball (dirtball)
- Ground ball (down angle)
  - Break up double play
  - Beat throws to second base
  - Advance first base to third base on hit
    - Need third base coach on base hit to right field
- Score on double

Freeze on line drive

Fly ball

- Half way
- Possible tag in big park
- Texas league hit

### **Primary Lead**

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In softball, because the base runner is on the base and can only come off that base as the pitch is delivered, then the base runner needs momentum to make up the difference in gaining a lead that will amount to a primary lead of 12 to 14 feet off the base and still maintain control, to get back to the base by diving back which would probably be the case when playing a team that has excellent fielding and throwing skills.

When the runners are in their set up, getting ready to come off the base and read the pitch and play; the base runner will be facing toward second base with their (left foot) in front of the base and their right foot touching the base. So, in effect the set up with the feet is staggered with the weight on the balls of the feet and the knees and arms in a flexed position with the head over the belly button. They will initiate their timing and action on the motion of the pitcher. The timing of this action will be when the pitcher initiates their arm swing at the top of the arm swing the base runner will be rocking back and then when the base runner sees the elbow disappear they should explode off the base and get into a primary lead. This lead should be between 12-15 feet depending upon the catching, throwing and fielding ability of the opposition. For a team that has exceptional skills, then a more conservative approach should be taken and the standard should be set at 12 feet. For a team with average skills a more aggressive approach will be the order of the day.

Also, in teaching the set up with the footwork in a staggered position then the critical factors will be the timing of the pitcher in gaining momentum and acceleration off the base. From teaching the set up to a primary lead off, to a straight steal of the base to a fake steal of the base. The initiating action of this movement is crucial each and every time to insure that the defence is constantly reacting to what the runners are doing and there by are dictating an aggressive offensive stature of the game.

The lead cannot be taken till the pitcher releases the ball. The runner should adjust to when the pitchers' delivery is at the bottom of the arc.

Here's a guide to use:

- With eyes on the pitcher and left foot on the base, and feet apart with the body parallel to the baseline. **The body is parallel to the baseline (facing the infield. not facing directly the direction in which the runner is heading .e.g 2<sup>nd</sup> base).**

**NB:** This is in direct contrast to what has been previously taught, where the runner was taught to start in a crouched position with the body facing the direction to which they are headed (e.g. 2<sup>nd</sup> base). Then as the pitcher released the pitch, the runner would take a lead towards 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The danger

of this type of lead is that the runner's body motion is all towards 2<sup>nd</sup> base and must then be brought under control prematurely to return to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Otherwise a return to 1<sup>st</sup> base can be quite difficult.

- At 1<sup>st</sup> Base it is permissible, (as the pitcher releases the ball to the plate) to use a shuffle and/or a glide. When the pitcher's arm is at the bottom of the arc, if the base runner starts their move to leave the base, by the time they have left the base the ball will be at the catcher. This usually is one crossover and two shuffles will put a runner in position dependant upon their physical size, and allow them to extend the size of their lead while ball is in the air.
- There should be no rush on the runner's part. They need to time their lead so the ball is at the plate when they complete their second crow hop/shuffle. This will give them the momentum required in case of a hit or pass ball.
- When the pitchers hand is at the bottom of the arc, step away in an imaginary line drawn from the back of first base to the back of second base, bring your left foot forward and even with the back edge of the base. To complete your lead, while staying in a balanced and ready position, take a slide step to the right by replacing your right foot with your left. Remember, to stay low and be quick, readying yourself for a quick pick-off move. In this position you should:
- Be in a balanced position, with feet slightly wider than shoulder width. Shoulders should remain square to the base line, giving equal chance to explode in either direction.
  - Have weight evenly distributed on the instep of both feet. This is your "power position" and should be felt on the inside of both quadriceps.
  - Have your arms either comfortably out in front of your body or on your knees.

On a "Steal", the lead taken as the pitcher releases the ball to home plate. Timing becomes important on the steal. As the pitcher's hand reaches the bottom of the arc, the runner should start their movement (on the theory that by the time they actually leave the base, the pitcher will have released the ball).

- The body is parallel to the baseline.
- The first movement is to "pivot" or turn the right foot as the body turns to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. If on grass, the right foot may have to be lifted slightly (if so make sure the foot does not then move backwards towards 1<sup>st</sup> base) the runner uses a crossover step with the left foot.
- The body is kept low for the first 2-3 steps as the runner gains full momentum to 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
- The weight is mostly on the right foot but inside the knee. This gives the momentum towards 2<sup>nd</sup> base, but enables you to return more easily to first base on a called pitch or a swing and miss. If this



happens, take an initial **hard step** back to first base with your eyes on the catcher for a potential pick off throw.

- **Be looking for a down angled ball off the bat. A line drive tells you to freeze and a fly ball gives you time necessary to retreat.**
- **As a general rule, a low pitch = Ground ball, a high pitch = fly ball**

### **FIRST TO THIRD**

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This is sometimes called the most exciting play in softball and requires agility, body control, quick thinking and good calculative skills to be successful.

As a general rule the only time a runner needs their third base coach is when the ball is hit behind them (right field) and their back is to the play. Any other ball hit cleanly to the outfield (third base line to right center field) is the responsibility of the runner. They must trust their judgment and evaluate their chances of reaching third base safely. If the ball is hit to right field the runner should:

- Pick up their third base coach halfway to two-thirds of the way to second base. In some cases the ball has yet to reach the right fielder and you may still be waved to third base.
- Look down to hit second base on the inside corner while consciously making as sharp a turn as possible.
- Immediately look up to receive a second sign from the third base coach **while running at full speed**. If they stop you, put on the brakes and break hard back to second base. If they wave you on, continue to third base and receive another sign to either stand up, round the base (and pick up the ball) or slide.

On a hit and run, while the hitter's responsibility is to hit the ball on the ground the runner should:

- Relax, not be overanxious, and get the best jump possible as if stealing the base.
- After breaking hard two steps, glance in to see the hitter make contact.
- If the ball is in the air, read it and go as far as possible.
- Keep going on a line drive. If an infielder catches the ball, you won't be able to return safely.
- If a hitter misses the ball, try to steal the base (or get back if you had a bad jump).

### **THE RUNNER ON SECOND BASE**

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Trajectory of ball (dirt ball)

Ground ball (down angle)

- 5 ways to advance to third base (less than 2 outs)

- Line drive: freeze
- Score on base hit
  - Need third base coach
- Fly ball
  - Evaluate chance to tag
- Short fly ball
  - Evaluate chances to advance - may not score

Check the positioning of your outfielders and infielders. The same applies with the runner having their body parallel to the baseline, facing into the infield toward the pitcher. When the pitcher delivers the ball begin your lead the same as if at first base. Also:

- Be aware of how far you are from second base once you finish your lead. Don't get caught in "no man's land".
- Your abilities will tell you how much distance you can get. Stay within yourself. Don't be too conservative yet don't be over-aggressive.
- Do not forget to give yourself a mental check of the game situation. If there are less than two outs and only you at second base, remember not to run into an out at third base by being sure the ball is through the infield on the shortstop-third base side or any ground ball on the first base-second base side of the field.

There are five ways to get to third on a ground ball:

- 1) Ground ball to shortstop's left
- 2) Ground ball the shortstop charges
- 3) Ground ball the third baseman charges
- 4) Ground ball the third baseman goes deep to their left in the hole
- 5) Ground ball down the line, deep, to the third baseman's backhand and on the throw to first base.

On a clean single and an attempt to score, continue to run hard and hit the inside corner of the base. Once you have made contact with the base, immediately look up to find your third base coach and note their signal to continue home or stop and return quickly to third base.

With two strikes on the hitter, and two outs, break on the swing, intending to score.

## **THE LEAD AT THIRD BASE**

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Execution and concentration become paramount when discussing the lead at third base. The lead should put you at three and one half steps of the end of your lead in foul territory. As the pitch reaches the hitting zone, open up with your right foot as the ball passes through the strike zone. The last step should bring you down in foul territory, feet parallel to the foul line. Timing is very important here.

Communication is important when scoring from third base. Oftentimes a third base coach will communicate with their runner on third. They may relay several instructions or plays that could occur. These are:

- Contact play: the coach wants you to “go on contact”, taking a chance that the hitter will hit a ground ball. Don’t forget to freeze on a line drive.
- Tagging up: on a fly ball hit routine deep with less than two outs, return to base and tag up.
- Halfway: on a shallow-hit ball where you cannot tag and score, go halfway and return to the base if caught.

## **SLIDING**

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Every player should be knowledgeable of the different slides used during the course of the game. Because bang-bang plays are common on a steal or a throw from the outfield, how and where you slide becomes important.

- The headfirst slide is popular but still proves to be risky. A jammed shoulder or finger, or worse, occurs often during a season because of this slide. Caution should be taken and alternatives used more often. If you use this slide, don’t forget to find the ball immediately after reaching the base. You may have to pop up quickly and advance on an errant throw. Try holding your batting gloves in your hands. This will make you keep a “fist” and therefore prevent the fingers from being jammed.
- The hook slide is used mostly when the ball has either beaten the runner and/or is off the line but still playable. The runner should slide away from the ball and hook the base with their foot. If, in sliding hard, the runner slides past the base they should be ready to grab a corner with their hand.
  - a) If the ball is to the left of the base, slide to the right and use the left foot to hook.
  - b) The opposite occurs when the ball is thrown to the right of the base.
- A normal feet first slide is acceptable but the condition of the dirt around the base comes into play. If the dirt is soft or wet, you won’t travel as fast and may even slide short of the base. Players should

be aware of the conditions of the field before the game starts. Don't forget to communicate this to your teammates before it happens.

- The pop-up slide is probably the best slide. If done correctly, it can intimidate fielders and enables the runner to be ready to advance more quickly because they are already standing. The slide should be hard and the shock absorbed by changing the direction of the force upward. Don't forget to find the ball and look for an opportunity to advance.

Breaking up the double play is an important part of the game and could make a difference on the outcome of the score. A runner should anticipate which side of the base the fielder will go and head in that direction.

- With legs bent they should slide through, not to the base or fielder. They should make contact with the fielder's feet with the top of their own feet, the ankle, or even the shin.

## **STEALING A BASE**

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### **GOLDEN RULE: if you don't get the break, don't go**

Information is a key to stealing a base. It is sometimes more relevant than speed. That is why a runner with average speed and quickness but outstanding ability, is sometimes more effective than a runner with outstanding speed and quickness, but lacking intricate information, thus causing self-doubt and instilling fear of getting thrown out or picked off.

This information is realised through either self-observation or communication between teammates. By studying pitchers, some points that will give a runner an advantage are:

- What is their best pitch? If it is their curve ball or change up, will they throw it with a fast runner at first base? An average runner at first base?
- Do they have poise? Some pitchers become unsure or unnerved with runners on base.

Relaxation and concentration are skills that usually take time to learn effectively. Because it goes hand in hand with confidence, game-situation drills can be helpful.

- The key is to relax and focus, then to trust your response-time and quickness in either direction. These skills, along with the information you may have about any given pitcher, give the runner a much better chance of success.

Who has the advantage? In the pitcher-catcher Vs runner confrontation, certain things have to happen, in my opinion, to throw out a runner:

- The pitcher must throw a ball their catcher can handle. Against a faster runner, off speed pitches make a catcher's job more difficult.
- The catcher must handle the pitch cleanly and throw a ball to second base that is catchable and within a given area if they expect to be successful.
- The fielder must catch the ball and make an effective tag.

Given these events, the runner has the advantage. Put the pressure on the defense.

**Be aggressive, but calculate your chances according to the game situation** (inning, score, count, who is coming to the plate).

## **Intangibles**

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### **1. KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPPOSITION**

A player's knowledge should also relate to the opposition, this is, all nine defensive players. They should be particularly aware of the abilities of the outfielders:

- Who has the strongest/weakest arm? Most/least accurate?
- Who is more or less mobile than the others?
- Who does or does not field well?

**NOTE: A team should be required to view and become familiar with the opposition's outfielders during pre-game infield practice.**

### **2. MENTAL CHECKS/SELF-TALK**

Before and after every out, all runners on base, as well as the batter-runner, should anticipate their reaction to any given play or possible situation. This continual "thinking process" is fostered through mental checks and self-talk. After reaching base, finding the ball, and acknowledging your third base coach for a sign, a player should:

- i. Know the number of outs. If uncertain, call time out and ask your first base coach or umpire. Don't always trust the scoreboard.
- ii. Check the positioning of the outfielders (playing shallow, deep or shifted to one side of the field).
- iii. Check the positioning of the infielders for possible shifts.
- iv. Know what to do on ground balls, fly balls, line drives, etc.

**NOTE: When it comes to line drives, particularly through the infield, a player should "automatically freeze" and make certain the ball carries uncaught before continuing.**

### **3. CONCENTRATION**

Many base running mistakes are due to a lack of concentration. The ability to focus attention is not a natural instinct and should be learned and practiced by all players at all times. A player's "reaction time" in many parts of the game is particularly affected by concentration.

### **4. EVALUATION AND CALCULATION**

A skill of great importance, the ability to evaluate and calculate one's chances to reach a base safely cannot be underestimated. Together with concentration, these skills become imperative to becoming an excellent base

runner. Based on the knowledge of their and the opposition's abilities, a player must determine their chances. Some situation examples are:

- Taking the extra base
- Advancing on a passed ball, wild pitch
- Tagging up on fly balls
- High hops in the infield

Sinking line drives to the outfield

### **Natural Ability and instincts**

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#### Overall Speed:

Speed is an asset as a base runner. A player who can run well should exhibit that speed whenever possible by hustling down the first base line, on the bases on in the field.

#### Quickness:

Not to be confused with raw speed. This refers to the first few steps. Some runners, even those who don't possess great speed, are particularly good at getting a quick start on bases.

#### "The 6th Sense"

A base runner that is daring and aggressive on bases creates pressure on the opposition. That doesn't mean taking risks in running your team out of an inning, but rather knowing when to steal a base, how to slide, how to take an extra base on a base hit etc. The solid base runner can couple their speed, quickness, and instincts to make themselves a threat on the base paths.

#### Sliding Ability:

Can players slide effectively? Bent leg, hook & pop up slides and head first. All these add to their effectiveness.

#### Coaching Signals:

Must have ability to see and react to the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach. Do base runners run with their heads down? Do they run intelligently?

## **Drill Sequence for Running The Bases**

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Run "loose" with no tension. This does not mean not to run hard, it just means don't run tense. Shoulders are level. Hands and arms work in a "piston-like" manner-- the hands go no higher than the shoulders in front and no further back than the hips behind. Hips are level, like the shoulders. Knees come up to the level of the hips. The toes land before the heels. Run in a straight line.

### **Running to (through) First Base - (ground ball on the infield)**

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- Base running starts at the crack of the bat! Good hitting mechanics allow a player to get a better jump out of the batter's box.
- First step out of the batter's box - Right handed hitter will take their first step to first base with their right foot. A left-handed hitter would crossover with their rear foot (left) by opening up their stride foot (right) after contact with the ball.
- Quick Peek - On the third or fourth step, the batter may grab a quick peek to see if the ball is on the infield (and s/he's running through the base), or got through the infield to the outfield (and s/he's making a turn at first base), or got between the outfielders (and he's thinking double) Do not watch the ball after your quick peek -- it only slows you down.
- Run in a straight line for first base you must run in the restraining box that begins about 1/2 way up the first base line. If you are hit with a thrown ball and you are not in the restraining box, you can be called out.
- The runner must never leap for first base.
- The runner must attempt to touch the front of the safety base.
- The runner must touch first base every time. The runner must run full speed through first base.
- On ground balls on the infield think of first base as the finish line in a race. Good runners "run through" the finish line.
- After running full speed through first base, the runner then takes short jab steps to body under control and look toward foul territory for the overthrow.

### **Rounding First Base - (ground ball through the infield)**

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- On your quick peek you see the ball is through the infield.
- About half way toward first base, begin your banana turn but only veer out to 1 metre and then begin your arm about 4 metres from the base.
- Hit the inside corner of the base with your inside foot (left) Make the ball stop you. LEAN YOUR BODY INTO THE INFIELD.
- Follow the ball all the way back to the base.
- We're thinking "two out of the box." Doubles are made between home and first not between first and second.



## **You're a Runner on First Base and A Fly Ball is Hit in the Outfield**

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On fly ball to right, go 1/3 of the way between 1st and 2nd. You will have to turn yourself so you can see if the right fielder catches the ball. On fly ball to centre, go about 1/2 way between 1st and 2nd. On fly ball to left, you can go almost 2/3 of the way between 1st and 2nd. Your weight is on the balls of your feet. Your arms are hanging loosely in front of you. If the ball falls in, you're on your way to second base. If the ball is caught, you're scampering back to first base. If you see the back of the left fielder, consider tagging up and going to 2<sup>nd</sup> base on the catch. If a left fielder is running back to take the catch, they will find it difficult to throw you out at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. So often you see the left fielder make a good catch and struggle to then get a throw to 2<sup>nd</sup> base, and at the same time the runner is merely running back to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Read the play, if you can take advantage of it, tag up.

## **You're a Runner on Second Base and a Ball is Hit (no runner on first)**

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"Apply the Rule": On ground ball to right side (second base, first base), advance to third. On ground ball back to pitcher, hold and make sure s/he throws the ball to first (you can be a couple of steps off the base, just don't be so far off that the pitcher can pick you off), then if you've gotten a good jump, go over to third. On ground ball to left side, make the third baseman or shortstop throw the ball to first before attempting to go to third. (You can be a couple of steps off the base; just don't be so far off that they can pick you off.) Make a line drive go through. Don't get doubled off! On fly balls, if it's obviously going to be caught - go back to second to tag up. If the fly ball is kinda iffy (may be caught and may not be caught), you need to be far enough off the base so that you can score if the ball falls in for a hit, but not so far off the base that they can double you off if the ball is caught. Obviously, the coach doesn't have time to go over all of possible scenarios in a game. So, I'll just say: Apply the Rule.

## **You're a Runner on Third Base**

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- Scoring on a passed ball or wild pitch

As the ball goes by the batter, the runner at third will push off the base with their back foot and take two or three hard strides toward home plate in foul territory (if you are hit with a batted ball in fair territory, you're out), finishing with their weight going forward. Then, if there is a passed ball or a wild pitch, the runner is in position to score. If the catcher catches the ball, the runner retreats back to third base, but s/he does so in fair territory (so if the catcher throws to third the ball has a good chance of hitting the runner in the back, caroming into left field and we score the run).

- Tagging up on fly balls

Make the line drive go through. Don't get doubled off! On any fly ball to the outfield that isn't obviously a base hit (and less than two outs. With two outs, of course, you're off on contact), you go back to third base and tag up. Timing

is very important. If you leave the base too soon, they can appeal the play and you can be called out. If you leave the base too late, they may throw you out at the plate. If it's going to be a close play, the runner must leave the base at the exact time the ball touches the glove of the outfielder. The runner must be able to observe the catch him/herself, rather than relying on the third base coach to tell them to tag up. The only way the runner can clearly see the ball while tagging up at a base is to have the foot on the base that will allow them full sight of the softball as it is touched by the outfielder. Just as the ball touches the outfielders glove, the runner pushes off hard with their foot that is in full contact with the base, achieve maximum acceleration as quickly as possible, and slide at home plate. If you run into the catcher and don't slide, they will call you out. You must slide at home.

## **Sliding Drills**

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Sliding should be practiced regularly to increase each player's comfort level with the skills. The better you slide, the better, and safer, you will run the bases.

1. **Crab drill**  
Each player starts out on the ground in the 'crab position' (stomach facing the sky), weight on all fours with the butt raised off the ground. The coach names a slide and claps their hands. At the clap, players drop into the form of the named slide and hold till the coach checks.
2. **Wet or mud sliding**  
This drill is great for rainy days. Have players wear a pair of long pants they don't mind ruining as well as some old socks. Wet an area of grass (checking to make sure it is clear of debris) or wet a tarp that has been secured to the ground. Have the players run 90 feet and slide into the wetted area.
3. **Cardboard sliding**  
With a piece of cardboard the size used for wrapping appliances, open it up and lay it on the ground. Have the players take their shoes off, line up and one at a time, run to the cardboard and practice their sliding techniques.

## **Sprint Drills**

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### **1. Leg Cycling Drill**

Lean against a wall or hurdle with both hands. Swing one leg through using the sprinting motion. Concentrate on not over extending the leg behind the body; instead allow the heel to touch the buttocks during the recovery followed by a high knee lift then pawing the ground to complete the cycle. Ten times with one leg constitutes one set. Do three sets with each leg.

### **2. Hip Kickers Drill**

While jogging Swing the heel backward until it bounces off the hip. Keep the upper leg relatively straight concentrating on moving the heel to the hip as quickly as possible. Ten kicks with each leg is one set. Do three sets with each leg.

### **3. Quick Stride Drill**

While jogging increase the stride rate and take as many steps as possible in fifteen yards. Jog for fifteen yards then repeat the drill. Emphasize the fastest possible turnover moving the legs in front of the body, not behind it. Sixty yards, fifteen yards jog then fifteen yards sprint. Up and back is one set. Do three sets.

### **4. Pull Through Drill**

Extend the front leg in front of the body like a hurdler, and then bring it down in a powerful motion through its contact with the ground. Ten repetitions with each leg is one set. Do three sets with each leg.

### **5. Quick Support Drill**

From the knee position emphasize dropping the foot to the ground then lifting it as quickly as possible. The foot pushes from the ground and lifts into the high knee position. Ten touchdowns with the leg is one set. Do three sets with each leg.

Alternate drills, doing one each day, make sure players are doing them correctly and not just going through the motions.
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## **Quickness Drills**

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### **1. Up and Go**

Have players lay on their backs, legs should be straight and arms at their sides. At your command they get up as fast as they can and sprint to you. Sprint should be no more than fifteen yards. As you walk back to the other side the players prepare to do it again. Repeat drill ten times. You should monitor their running form and quickness at getting up.

### **2. Three Hops and Explode**

Have players line up in a single file line. They should get into base running form and at your command hop on their back leg making sure that they are bending their knee, on the third hop they should push off their back leg and sprint to you. The speed at which they do the hops is not as important as making sure that they are doing them properly. Distance should be about thirty yards. Make sure that both legs are worked on. Repeat drill ten times.

### **3. Criss Cross**

Have players form lines of four or five. Players should be in base running form. At your command they cross one leg over the other and continue to criss cross their legs until they reach you. When all the groups get to you have them criss cross back to the starting point. Distance should be about twenty yards. Monitor footwork; make sure that they keep their heels off the ground. Repeat drill ten times.

### **4. Two Minute Run**

Have players run a distance that must be covered in two minutes. They should rest for three minutes and then repeat the drill. While they are resting they should be walking and taking deep breathes. Start at five repetitions and increase as conditioning improves. Should be done twice a week.

### **5. Up and Go Reverse**

Have players pair up and lie on their stomachs. Give one player a ball, at your command player with the ball should get to their feet as quickly as possible, get to the throwing position and make a throw to their partner. Good drill for working on throwing and developing quick feet. This drill can become a good competition for players.

### **6. Knees and Up**

Have players put their knees on the ground. The object is to get to their feet as quick as possible without dragging their feet. Upper body should bend forward and then extend upward with legs pushing up; feet should get to the throwing position. A good drill for catchers to help develop quick feet and strong legs.

## **7. Slo - Mo - Run**

Have players form lines of four or five and work on proper running form at slow motion speed. Distance should be about thirty yards. Make sure that they are getting their knees up, keeping their hands loose and pumping their arms using the full range of motion.

## **SUMMARY**

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On the way to becoming a complete softball player, don't forget about base running.

Take time to learn and implement vital information given you in order to achieve your goal of playing