

Hitting to Improve Your Infielders

I was watching a high school team recently taking infield practice and didn't really like what I saw. The coach seemed to think that balls whizzing by players and at players was going to improve their skills. I disagree. Don't get me wrong, I was not easy on my teams during my infield practices. But I was not brutal to those not ready for those types of hits yet. I had college players-all freshman and sophomores who came into our program and many came without scholarships or very little scholarship money if any. We didn't have readymade teams that knew the game. We had to teach every little aspect of the game to them.

Try this to have great defensive players:

-Change their hand in the glove, not an option for them, make them do it. Not an Option make them have two fingers in the last hole, one and one in the next two and leave the finger next to the web without a finger. they will hate it at first and love it shortly. Not an option, I guarantee that they will field more balls cleanly and love in after a bit. My former players coach now and change their player because they love that way of holding the glove now. See other JUGS article on holding the glove.

-Work very hard on hitting every type of ball they may see coming at them during the game

-Only repetition and teaching them to read each pitch/angle of the swing/stance used, teaches them to focus on the hitter

-read the hitter/how they are holding the bat, know the speed/type pitch our pitcher throws

-teach them to think, be able to read where the ball may go when hit

-teach them to throw to the correct base depending on the situation

How to hit to them without wasting time-one option:

-Hit to 3b who throws to first, next ball hit to SS who throws to 2B. Have a bucket for the fielders to catch the ball at 1st and 2nd and deposit into a bucket. Saves time!

-Hit to 2B who throw to SS covering 2B, next ball hits to 1B who throws to 3B, putting them in the buckets.

-Continue until all infielders have thrown to each base and home.

-Coaches do not wait for (example-the ball hit to 3B goes to 1B and is in the bucket-that's too slow. Hit to the SS right after hitting to 3B. Go back and forth quickly but fielders need

to get ready, coach can gauge that and encourage more hustle if they are slow getting ready.

-Must be careful but keep pushing them to get back into position so you can keep the rhythm.

-Hit all types of balls to them-soft, bouncy, hard, line drives, to their right, to their left over the head

-The balls need to get harder and harder but also farther and farther to the sides, over their head, bunt types-coach can see if player is hustling or slow getting back and when to hit another ball. Keep telling them to hustle back. Coach needs to know how to hit to spots that are reasonable though

-Keep encouraging them and keep hitting to keep them moving and on their toes and again hard/soft every type of ball. This will help their focus and movement of the feet also.

Note: Your players need to turn their toes inward a little. If their toes are pointed out, they will be slower and my team would bunt on that person. Toes turned inward a little will have their weight shift forward making them quicker. Toes outward makes them slower. Very important. We are bunting for a hit if we see 1B or 3B on heels.

Quick practices with the coach hitting the ball from player to immediately another player and throwing to different bases keeps them on their toes and thinking quickness.

Keeping players moving and the coach teaching/encouraging where to go with the ball and going from one play to another, keeps the team on their toes and in that quickness mode.

Hustle intimidates the other team, also.

The way your team approaches the game, carries themselves on and off the field matters in breeding the culture of the team.

The coach sets the tone for that with their enthusiasm and directions during practices and games.

Defensive needs an attitude-no ball is getting by me!