

## Running a Quality Pregame Infield/Outfield

There are many different ways to structure an infield/outfield (a.k.a. the "in & out"). Each coach adds their own twist and personal touch to a pregame that makes it unique to their program. The goals for every infield/outfield, however, should stay the same:

1. Allow defensive players their final opportunity for "warm up". The in & out should be the most game-like preparation during pre-game.
2. Give players a chance to see how the field is playing on that day.
3. Allow scouts to see arm strength, footwork, and fielding ability.
4. Provide an opportunity for players to improve. Although it is not a practice and there will be no opportunity to coach, players will still get a number of repetitions during in & out's over an entire year.
5. The in & out is the last piece of a quality pre-game routine and should put players into the proper mental frame of mind to compete. Try to create some energy and tempo that can carry into the game.

### ***Overview of Outfield:***

- 2 throws to second
- 2 throws to third
- 2 throws home

### ***Detailed Breakdown of Outfield:***

- Throws to 2<sup>nd</sup>: Hit a ground ball in the gaps or down the line to simulate a "single, possible double situation". Outfielders will take aggressive routes, cut the ball off and throw the ball to second without using a cut.
- Throws to 3<sup>rd</sup>: Avoid hitting regular depth fly balls to the left fielder as a runner would never tag at second in this situation. All ground balls to the left fielder should be in the left-center gap to simulate a batted ball that would allow a runner to move from first to third.
- Throws to home: Hit one ground ball where the outfielder hits the cut off (catcher has the option to call a "cut 2" and change the direction of the ball). The second ball to the outfield can be a fly ball where outfielders "let it fly" and attempt to throw the runner out. This would simulate a sac fly situation with only a runner on third. With no other runners attempting to advance, outfielders can let it loose and try to throw the runner out without having to hit a cut off.

### ***General Tips for Outfield:***

- Catchers in full gear including helmets/mask. All tags and throws in a game are made with the helmet/mask on.

- To get the outfielders started quickly, hit the first ground ball to the closest outfielder (i.e. if you are in the first base dugout, hit the first ground ball to the right fielder).
- When hitting to outfielders, only give them one ball per round. Never hit one player back-to-back balls. The only time you might consider hitting back-to-back balls to one player is if you only have one player at each middle infield position and they are slow changing their relay positions as you move to different fields.
- Never hit fly balls when making throws to second base as this situation will very rarely, if ever, occur during a game.
- Encourage outfielders to attack the ball and make firm throws to the cut off (except on their throws to second and their last throw to the plate).
- All throws to second will be relayed to the third baseman after simulating a tag. The third baseman will then to a player who is receiving for the coach.
- While outfielders are making throws to second and third base, the catcher will be working on fielding bunts and dropped third strikes and throwing to first base.
- All players receiving a throw at a base will simulate a tag. Errant throws should be knocked down and kept in front.
- Emphasize CLEAR COMMUNICATION on all relays.

### ***Overview of basic infield:***

- Throw around the horn
- Infield in, throw to the plate
- Throw to first (ball right at fielder)
- Throw to first (ball on forehand), receive a throw from catcher
- Double play (ball right at fielder)
- Double play (ball on forehand), receive a throw from catcher
- Backhand throw to first
- Chopper and off
- Catcher pop

### ***Detailed breakdown for infield:***

- Around the horn: After receiving the last throw to the plate from the outfielders, the catcher will throw the ball "around the horn" including all infielders. Infielders will be playing in on the edge of the grass.
- Infield in, throw to home: Catcher will finish the double play to first base on the left side of the infield and will lay a tag when receiving throws from the right side of the infield.
- Throw to 1<sup>st</sup> (no throws from catcher): Focus on good footwork. Try to hit fielders firm, clean hops. First baseman will field a bunt and throw to third base to get a lead runner. Catcher will field a bunt in front of the plate and throw to first. After receiving the ball from the catcher, the first baseman will throw the ball around to give catcher enough time to reset behind the plate.
- Throw to 1<sup>st</sup> (throw from catcher): Hit the ground ball to the infielders forehand and they will make a play to first. After making the throw to first base, the

infielder will go back to their base to receive a throw from the catcher (except 1<sup>st</sup> baseman). After receiving each throw, the first baseman will try to throw a strike to the catcher who will be waiting behind the plate in their crouch. If feeding the catcher with a strike is too difficult for your first baseman, have the catcher receive the ball standing. After receiving the ball the catcher will *keep the ball in their glove*, set up in their crouch and make a throw to the appropriate base. Many catchers start in their crouch with the baseball in their hand. Without having to exchange the ball, their pop times are much quicker than they would normally be. Coaches should stand in the batters box while catchers make their throws to simulate game situations. First basemen will again field a bunt and throw to third base. Catchers will get a ball in foul territory (dropped third strike) and make a play to first. After receiving the throw from the catcher, the first baseman will throw the ball around to give the catcher enough time to reset. No throws back to first base.

-Double play (ball right at fielder): Focus on good feeds. First baseman will play behind the runner and turn the double play as if there are runners at first and second. Catcher will field a ball close to the plate and make a throw to second.

-Double play (ball on the forehand) with throw back to bag: Again, focus on good feeds and quick turns. Ensure that the defense gets the lead out. When hitting the ground ball to the first baseman, they will start holding the runner. All players will go back to their bag to receive a throw from the catcher as above. No throws back to first base. Catcher will field a ball close to the plate and make a throw to second base.

-Backhand with throw to first: All infielders will start deep. Hit a ball that challenges them on their backhand. Allow infielders to "show off" their arm strength. Hit each infielder a ball to the backhand side and do not hit the backhand and slow roller back to back.

-Slow roller: Each player will get a slow roller that they will field and make a play to first. After making the throw to first they will hustle off to the dugout. First baseman makes throw to the plate or you can have second baseman stay at first base to receive throw. Ensure that infielders start at regular depth and field the ball just past the mound. Middle infielders should not field a ball at or in front of the mound!

-Catchers pop: A well executed catchers pop will finish your infield/outfield with style. Coaches should only get one shot at the catcher pop.

### **General Guidelines for Infield:**

-Try to hit crisp, long hops so infielders can find their rhythm. Infielders should be able to get a feel for the speed of the infield.

-Hit the next ball as the last play is finishing to keep the tempo up throughout the infield.

-Complete your entire infield/outfield in 5-10 minutes.

-Have your catcher take extra baseballs in his pockets in case of errant throws.