

## OBA BASEBALL OUTFIELD FUNDAMENTALS

### Every Pitch Expectations

- know the count, situation, defensive alignment, pitch
- COMMUNICATE
- **Know that baseball tails to the foul lines**
- **Expect a bad throw and be in position for a backup situation**
- Anticipate prior to every pitch what your assignment is
  - know inning, outs, count, type of hitter, situation
- Pay attention to the catcher set-up to get a better jump on the ball, type of hitter, and game situation

### Pre-Pitch Preparations

- Stance must be comfortable and hands must be in front of body
- Use preliminary steps as pitcher begins to throw home → 2 ½ steps
  - a. feet should be glove foot in front and throwing foot = to arch of glove foot
  - b. first step should be with glove foot first
  - c. creates faster feet, better vision, focus on game

### Throwing Mechanics

- Always throw the ball across 4 seams with 2 fingers
  - a. reach into glove with four fingers and spin the ball to the proper position to throw
  - b. using three fingers may decrease velocity as wrist/hand will be tighter
- Glove (Front) arm should be out to create better follow-through
- Make sure to get chest over front knee and EYES STABILIZED ON THE TARGET
- Outfielder must throw with a high elbow to create a straighter throw (**throw down hill**)
- OF ball that tails, look at elbow position when the ball is thrown
- Crow-hop should be close to the ground and not high in the air
  - a. back foot always steps in front of the body for better alignment to target
  - b. our terminology is **Catch-Grip-Throw**
  - c. we want the fielder to decrease steps by stepping once in front and throwing

### Throwing Rules

- **A ball hit directly to outfielder, throw out the lead runner**
- **If the ball is hit a few steps to your side and you are moving in as you catch the ball, play is on the lead runner or throw to second base/cutoff**
- **If you field the ball moving away from your target, play is at second base**
- **If the ball gets past you, the throw is to the cutoff**

*In some cases, throwing to second base is an excellent play as it keeps the double play in order.*

### Fielding Positioning

- Begin at approximately 280' from home plate. Walk off the distance from second base
- LF and RF should look to start approx. 85' off the foul line (32 steps) (use the bases to gauge)
- CF should start approx. 140' from the foul lines – straight away positioning
- Make adjustments in 10' increments – count charts, wind, scouting, ability of INF and P,
- Late in the game you play deeper
- Know the hitters ability. Is he a Pull, Punch, opposite field, or straight away hitter?
- Know your own ability and position yourself accordingly. Know your arm strength, ability to go right and left, and your ability to come in or go back on the ball

## ***Ground Balls***

### **Regular Ground Balls**

- charge the ball under control and be aggressive to get the ball back in immediately
- use two hands and field in front of body, and one of two ways:
  - a. method one is to field the ball similar to infielder
  - b. method two is a semi-knee drop
- when throwing to a base, throw through the cutoff

### **“Do-or-Die” Ground Balls**

- be aggressive, understand we use short choppy steps prior to fielding ball -this will keep the body under control and balanced
- the outfielder must bend at his knees and waist and watch the ball into the glove - the ball needs to be fielded out in front of glove foot with that foot in the lead approximately 10-18 in front of glove foot heel – see the seams on the ball go into the glove

### **Ground Ball Hit to Right or Left**

- must take approx. a 45 degree angle to the ball and round the ball off to cut down the distance
  - a. when rounding the ball, get body in proper throwing position to target
  - b. watch the ball all the way into the glove and make sure not to come up too soon as the throw may be wild
  - c. knowing situation prior to pitch will help keep body under control and make throw better

### **Reverse Pivot Glove Side Ball (Plant-Pivot Play)**

- ball has been hit sharply in gap to your glove side
- take a straight line to the ball and field with your back to the target
- once the ball is in your glove, bring hands together, plant and throw
- this play is very similar to the double play feed by the second baseman

## ***Catching Fly balls***

### **Basic Fly ball**

- always catch the ball with the glove foot in front - puts OF in better fielding and throwing position (Catch-Grip-Throw)
- catch the ball above the nose and eye level with two hands unless extending on play - if above throwing arm will shorten arm for throw and above glove shoulder will make vision on ball difficult
- run to the spot where ball will land, catch with body square to target - base, cutoff
- sight on ball should always be in front of bill of cap - keeps ball in front
- make sure body is moving forward when catching the ball and not drifting backwards – play through the ball
- Run on your toes for a smoother approach to the ball

### **The Low Fly Ball**

- This is the toughest to catch because it is dropping fast
- You must find the ball and lock in on it
- You have to decide quickly if you want to catch the ball on a hop or make a shoestring catch
- Once you make the decision go with it do not change your mind or have indecision

### **Line Drives**

- You must understand the way the ball will curve. Ask yourself if it will curve away or in.

- Take one drop step back and hold your ground until you can locate movement and direction.
- Sprint to the spot where you can best intersect the ball and follow it all the way into the glove.
- Know when to and when not to gamble - game situation.

### **Rounding a Fly ball**

- rounding gets the OF in the proper throwing position
- take shorter steps upon ready to catch the ball
- learning cue for rounding is to have shoulders square to target
- must get to spot and move forward when catching the ball

### **Fly ball Over the Head**

- whichever side the ball is hit, you must open that way with a drop-step
- keep sight on the ball, and get back so when catching the ball your movement is coming back into the field of play
- On balls to your right and left in the alleys keep your eyes on the ball as long as possible
- Make one or two quick glances over your shoulder to help you judge the ball and make adjustments
- if caught going away from the field, plant and throw to lead base
- Never backpedal on the ball because it is the slowest way to move after the ball and causes body balance problems as well as forces you to catch everything on your heels
- NEVER drift to catch the ball!!!

### **Reverse Pivot**

- on a ball hit over the head when you must change direction
- you can use three techniques to be successful:
  - a. break back with eyes fixed on ball
  - b. break back and take a quick glance at the ball
  - c. ball hit way over head, turn and sprint to spot
- remain in a straight line as you reverse pivot, do not look at ground, do as quickly as possible
- if the wind blows the ball back the other way, turn back to ball and find immediately; same as done previously

### **Playing the Fence**

- Know fence setup prior to game
- Baseball at Base of Fence
  - a. have throwing side closest to the fence - gets body into the proper throwing position
  - b. drive the ball into the ground and pick up the ball centered with the body
  - c. number one job is to get the ball to the middle infielder immediately
    - use the shuffle step instead of the crow hop
  - d. ONE GOOD THROW LEADS TO ANOTHER!
- Catching Fly ball at Fence
  - a. use the throwing hand whenever possible to find fence
  - b. if you must jump, jump vertically (basketball lay-up)
  - c. other outfielders must always communicate fence location, where to throw
  - d. if ball is high over head, pull up and play ball off fence - other OF must communicate where to throw
    - the second OF must get to the spot to play the caromed ball off the fence
    - play the angle that the ball hits

## **Sliding or Diving**

- Preference is to slide feet first whenever possible
  - a. must go feet first into (by) fences
  - b. will get body up immediately to make second play
  - c. creates better vision
  - d. technique for feet first resembles a pop-up slide into a base
- Head first slides work when you know you will catch the ball – slide on belly with arms up

## **Fly ball Priorities**

- Look in the fly ball priority section of manual
- CF has priority over LF and RF
- Priority must not take away an easier catch
- Always want the player working in on the catch

## **Assignments**

- Outfielders are vital for the success of the team; outfielders will be expected to perform the following on every pitch:
  - a. back up bases
  - b. communicate with other OF on situations, outs, etc.
  - c. must be moving every pitch
  - d. anticipate every pitch
    - an OF may only catch 1 or 2 balls per game, but those catches can determine the outcome of the game
    - know situations

## Communication

### *Ball hit in the gap*

- The center fielder is the captain, if he calls the ball it is his. Never take a ball that another fielder has an easier play on.
- The other outfielders assume the ball is theirs until the center fielder calls them off and then they back him up.
- Be loud and clear on calls – MINE, MINE, MINE
- Communicate with each other on where the fence is and where to throw the ball.

### *Short fly balls*

- Always be aggressive and charge the ball hard.
- If the outfielder can make the catch he calls the infielder off.
- If the infielder is waving his arms the outfielder knows he is under the ball and can make the catch easily, so he breaks down and backs him up.

## BASIC OUTFIELD RULES

- (1) Hustle at all times while on the field.
- (2) Back up every throw and base if possible.
- (3) Take all fly balls that can be reached rather than have an infielder make a tough play.
- (4) Call for all fly balls loud and clear –*MINE, MINE, MINE*
- (5) Never give up on a fly ball.
- (6) Always know what play to make when the ball comes to you.
- (7) Catch all fly balls and grounders with two hands whenever possible.
- (8) Know your pitcher and play accordingly.
- (9) Check the wind at the start of every inning. (Use Grass)
- (10) Concentrate on every pitch and be ready to move in any direction.
- (11) The center fielder handles all questionable balls between fielders.
- (12) Never let the tying run move into second base or third base by trying to throw out a runner at the plate.
- (13) Return the ball to the infield as quickly as possible.
- (14) Always keep your throws low and on line and be sure to hit the cut-off or relay man.
- (15) Keep in mind the running speed of all base runners as well as the hitter.
- (16) Work on getting a good jump on all fly balls.
- (17) Play deeper for the hard swingers and best hitters; shallower for smaller players lower in the batting order.
- (18) Block the hard hit balls by placing one knee on the ground.
- (19) Back up bases on run down plays and help if needed.
- (20) Communicate with the other outfielders on where to throw the ball when not making the play.
- (21) Make all long throws to the bases low so that the cut-off man can handle it.

**WANT THE BALL HIT TO YOU ON EVERY PITCH!!!!!!**

## OUTFIELD DRILLS

- Players are expected to hustle after all balls in practice
  - ⇒ if the player does not hustle, the coach needs to remove him from the drills; this high expectation lets the players know how serious our team is with outfield play
  - ⇒ the drills should be game like as possible; the players should use the proper footwork for every ball hit
  - ⇒ drills should be performed in different areas of the outfield - better vision, new area, saves field from wear

### **Kaizan Series**

- Kaizan is a word that means ‘incremental’ development; each drill will be done at the minimal level and progressed to the most advanced level

1. Jump Lines Right and Left
  - ⇒ begin without ball, coach will point right or left and outfielder opens to side and sprints back
  - ⇒ stress here is with the drop-step and running with glove
  - ⇒ teaches OF to not bounce eyes when running and mastering proper footwork
2. Flyballs Right and Left
  - ⇒ same drill as 1., now add baseballs - first throw then hit
  - ⇒ objective is to get behind ball and catch with glove foot in front and facing target
  - ⇒ if caught over shoulder, quickly plant and get ball to shagger
  - ⇒ footwork is Catch-Grip-Throw (1-2-3)
3. Reverse Angle Right and Left
  - ⇒ never back pedal, turn back on ball and immediately find the ball
  - ⇒ reinforces losing sight of ball and finding it quickly
4. Rounding Flyballs Right and Left (Circling same word)
  - ⇒ teaches getting behind ball and moving in to catch ball
  - ⇒ stress proper footwork; Catch-Grip-Throw (1-2-3)
  - ⇒ position cutoffs in different spots to simulate game conditions
  - ⇒ teaches to get proper angle on ball
5. Grounders – At Player, Right, Left
  - ⇒ use as many game situations as possible
  - ⇒ first tell players which ball to play, then mix it up
  - ⇒ do or die, semi knee down, 2 handers, one hops, moving right and left to get proper angle on ball
6. Line Drives - Hard and Soft
  - ⇒ coach will tell OF to begin, and as the OF begins sprinting, the coach should throw the line drive
  - ⇒ teaches to catch ball below the knees or one hops
  - ⇒ throw first then hit (hitting is hard, so make sure to find the best way to get reps)
7. Ball Past You
  - ⇒ sprint back to where ball ends up
  - ⇒ step over ball to get ball in midline of body
  - ⇒ quickly get ball back in to cutoff
  - ⇒ push down on ball to pickup; have glove next to ball (simulate 2 hands)
    - ⇒ keeps body down

## 8. 3 Ball Drill

- ⇒ have players partner up and number off 1 and 2
- ⇒ 1's will go first and they will catch 3 balls in a row on the run
- ⇒ 2's are shagging behind the 1's and will pick up the balls after 1's drop the ball
- ⇒ objective of the drill is to teach run-reach-catch; drill also stresses to run with glove

## 9. Wall Drill

- ⇒ get to wall, throwing hand is finder, eyes never leave the ball
- ⇒ once caught, Catch-Grip-Throw (1-2-3)

## 10. Off Wall Communication

- ⇒ stresses communication and teamwork
- ⇒ teaches to play funny bounces off of wall and to read proper angle of ball off wall
- ⇒ second OF will play ball off wall as part of drill as well

## 11. Sit Downs

- ⇒ teaches confidence of catching ball on run and 'diving'
- ⇒ coach will tell OF to begin sprinting and will then throw ball so it is caught on sitting down
- ⇒ once caught, pop-up ASAP and look to where second throw will be
- ⇒ begin drill close and have coach lob ball to be caught, go to more advanced stages of drill by locating cutoff players in different locations to throw to

## Fundamental Drills

### Machine Drills –

- ⇒ have players run left, right, front, back to stress running mechanics, eyes, tracking, technique
- ⇒ work on height of ball with very high and very long fly balls
- ⇒ mechanics drills
- ⇒ Cone Drill - working left and right to catch ball on the run (use buckets)
  - ⇒ Same drill with OF throwing to cut person
- ⇒ 9.5 ball machine with high fly ball
- ⇒ incorporate the players having to run in, back, left, right and use any other drill
  - ⇒ Communication Drill, Running Drill, Lost Ball Drill

### Spartan Relay (Cutoff Drill)

- ⇒ key thought, a good 1<sup>st</sup> throw leads to good 2<sup>nd</sup> throw
- ⇒ stress mechanics of proper 1-2-3, crowhop, proper arm angle, and follow ball

### Rapid Fire Drill → has been the most favorite drill used with OF

- ⇒ have 3 lines with extras – simulate LF, CF, RF
- ⇒ hit grounders and flyballs in both gaps
- ⇒ keep the drill moving fast and stress everything to be done properly
  - ⇒ reps will be force-fed and done properly
  - ⇒ teaches game situation and game pressure
- ⇒ objective is to teach communication, ball angles, read ball off of bat, and every game situation
- ⇒ use a stopwatch to time cutoffs, throws, and length of drill

### Communication Drill

- ⇒ have 2 lines of players; one catches ball the other is the communicator
- ⇒ have communicator speak loud and use - in, in, in or back, back, back, back

### Lost Ball Drill

- ⇒ have player stand with his back to shagger
- ⇒ upon contact, the player will turn around and find the ball
- ⇒ should be done about 90-100 ft apart (safety)
- ⇒ hit both flies and grounders

### Live Batting Practice

- ⇒ play the ball live in practice
- ⇒ importance is on reading the ball off bat, playing live, making practice game-like

### Teaching to Get Behind Ball (ABCA Drill Book)

- ⇒ use tennis balls for this drill
- ⇒ have fielder sprint to spot where ball will be caught
- ⇒ glove will come through the back of legs so that the ball is caught in front of crotch
- ⇒ teaches players to get behind ball, not drift, and square up to target for the throw

### Ball-in-the-Sun Drill

- ⇒ position players to be facing sun
- ⇒ teaches to use glove/hand and hat to not lose sight of ball
- ⇒ make sure to hit all types of balls that may be seen in games

### Rolling Catch

- ⇒ player will do a front somersault and get to feet and catch a flyball
- ⇒ the drill is fun, but must be taken seriously as it stresses agility, vision, and hustle

### 4 Corner Drill

- ⇒ set-up an area large enough to make a square (90 ft between cones or more)
- ⇒ each cone will stress different skills
  - ⇒ Cone 1 → start with back to shagger and catch ball with back to shagger
  - ⇒ Cone 2 → catch a line drive to the left side
  - ⇒ Cone 3 → sit down catch; pop-up ASAP
  - ⇒ Cone 4 → catch a line drive to the right side
  - ⇒ have a bucket or something at each cone to collect baseballs or have player hand ball to shagger to use
  - ⇒ be creative and make fun, but serious

### Line Drill at Wall

- ⇒ chalk down lines from warning track to fence; starting place is same for all lines
- ⇒ have lines make 0, 30, 45, 90 degree angles
- ⇒ teaches and shows that balls hit at angles gives OF more steps to reach fence
- ⇒ stresses confidence for OF to be aggressive to catch balls at fence

### Target Throwing

- ⇒ set up something for OF to throw at; trash can, shirt on screen, tees, etc.

### Use all Skills possible to reinforce skills (use Kaizan Drills)

- ⇒ shagger hits fungoes to OF and players will only do one skill at a time