

## Safe Zone – I will reference 90' bases (a little math for 75')

“safe zone” or “zone” – term used for BASE RUNNING

- It refers to how far off base you can be and still return safely if a play is made to you
- Examples:
  - If I hit a single to the outfield, run through 1B and round the base, I can probably be:
    - 35' off 1B if LF has the ball
    - 30' off 1B if CF has ball
    - 15' off 1B if RF has ball
  - Conversely, if I'm bluffing a tag from 3B on a fly to the outfield, I can probably be:
    - 15' off 3B if LF has ball
    - 30' off 3B is CF has ball
    - 35' off 3B if RF has ball
- Don't stay attached to a base if the ball isn't near you. If the defense makes a mistake, better that you are 70' away from the next base than 90'
- Your base running philosophy should be, “I'm taking the next base until the defense stops me,” not “I'll take the next base if the defense gives it to me”
- Understanding and implementing the “safe zone” philosophy is probably the biggest factor in making you a good runner.

# Home to 1B

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## Mechanics

- After hitting the ball, you want to become a runner as soon as possible
  - Body lean forward
  - Short steps to reach maximum speed
  - Elbows remain close to body
  - Arms pumping (not across the body)
  - Knee pumping (critical for 90' speed)
  - Quick peek to see if ball went through IF
  - At 40' line you must be in foul territory
  - Eyes on target (1B), and
  - Watch 1B coach
    - Pointing at 1B = play will be at 1B
    - Making circular motion with finger = round the base, find ball, and "safe zone"
    - Pointing at 2B with left arm circling = go to 2B
  - Step on front of base
  - Do not leap at base
  - Slide only to avoid tag
  - Full speed straight through base (do not turn to foul territory – basic)
  - After base, break down quickly while looking right to see if there is an overthrow.

# Home to 2B

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There are two situations where you might run from Home to 2B:

- A ground ball that makes it through the infield
  - In this case, you're using your Home to 1B mechanics until you realize the ball has made it into the outfield
  - At that point, you will make a "question mark" turn to round the base
- A line drive or fly ball that clearly is heading to the outfield
  - In this case, you will immediately run into foul territory toward the 1B coach
  - You want to complete most of your turn before 1B
  - You want to step on the inside of the base
    - Using your left foot is slightly better, but not so much that you want to change your stride
  - Anytime you are advancing two bases, you want to be running a straight line to the second base.
    - Home to 2<sup>nd</sup>
    - 1B to 3B
    - 2B to Home

# Leading off 1B

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## Before leaving the base

- SDS – Check Sign, read Defense, know Situation
  - Sign – KNOW THE SIGNS. A missed sign can cost us a base, an out, a run, a game.
  - Defense – look around you to see where the defenders are playing. It will help you make quicker, better decisions if you know where they are before the ball is hit.
  - Situation – How many outs? What's the score? What inning? Who's at bat? Who's on deck?
- Make sure the pitcher is on the rubber before leaving the base

## Leading off

- Lead off in a straight line from the back of 1B to the back of 2B
- Take your lead quickly in an athletic position
  - Pitcher tip: if runner is casually taking his lead, a good time to throw over, especially if he crosses his left leg over his right leg.
- Step sequence: Left, right, shuffle, shuffle
  - Lead should be close to 9' depending on your steps and shuffles
  - You should be able to dive back safely from a 9' lead (most players can fall down and reach 8'). But YOU KNOW YOUR SAFE ZONE.
- NEVER look to see how far you are from 1B – you must know that your left, right, shuffle, shuffle keeps you in your safe zone.
  - Pitcher tip – If runner looks to 1B, a good time to throw over.
- If pitcher throws over:
  - Dive to back of base with right hand while looking left
    - Always look in direction OPPOSITE of where throw is coming from
      - To avoid being hit in the face
      - To see if ball is overthrown
- Once pitcher has committed to the plate, take secondary lead with shuffle, shuffle
  - Never have both feet off ground simultaneously
  - Time second shuffle so you are ready when pitch reaches the hitting zone
  - At that point, you are too far off to stay there – you must quickly retreat or quickly advance – while watching the ball.

# Leading off 2B

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Before leaving the base – same SDS rules

Leading off

- Less than 2 outs
  - The only change from 1B lead is one extra shuffle
    - Slower pickoff move for the pitcher, so one extra shuffle should be within your safe zone
    - Be aware of a pitcher's "inside move" where he lifts his leg as if to deliver to the plate, but instead turns "inside" and throws to 2B
    - Pitcher tip: Inside move works best when the runner has a short lead. You should turn and look toward home plate and then use your inside move. On your first movement, a runner with a short lead is more likely to start moving toward to 3B. His momentum is going away from 2B allowing us to pick him off.
    - Lead should be close to 12' depending on your steps and shuffles.
- 2 Outs
  - The only change with 2 outs is you will take your lead about 4' behind the baseline rather than in a straight line from the back of 2B to the back of 3B.
  - You will be a little slower to 3B, but with 2 outs there isn't likely to be a play at 3B. However, you will be in a much better position to score on a base hit, and with 2 outs, you will be able to leave on contact.

# Leading off 3B

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Before leaving the base -- Same SDS rules.

Leading off

- Only change from 1B lead it to be in foul territory
- After secondary lead, return to 3B in fair territory to block throwing lane for catcher
- As with all secondary leads, you should be facing the infield so you are able to quickly move in either direction.
  - Catcher tip: If runner is facing home plate, a good time for a pickoff move to 3B.

# Running from 1B

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As mentioned earlier, after taking your secondary lead, you must immediately retreat to 1B or advance to 2B.

If a ball is NOT hit

- Catcher catches ball: retreat quickly while watching catcher (ALWAYS KNOW WHERE THE BALL IS)
- Wild pitch or passed ball that goes to the backstop: advance to 2B at full speed and pick up 3B coach about half way to 2B
- Wild pitch or passed ball that does not travel very far away from the catcher: KNOW THE SITUATION
  - With 2 outs, we want to get to 2B, so we are more likely to take a chance
  - With a teammate on 2B, you have to make sure they advance
    - Catcher tip: most catchers will attempt a play at 3B, but a play at 2B is a higher percentage play (based on arm strength)
  - With a teammate on 3B, you SHOULD advance because they are less likely to throw to 2B

If ball is hit

- With 2 outs, go hard on contact
- With less than 2 outs,
  - Groundball
    - Go hard in straight line to 2B and always slide
  - Line Drive
    - Freeze – find safe zone if possible
  - Fly ball
    - Go part way – find safe zone
    - Foul ball – always tag
      - You may not advance, but always give yourself the opportunity.
- ON a line drive/ fly ball to a charging right fielder, try to read his body language
  - If unsure, better to be forced at @B on a ball that bounces in front of him than to be doubled up on a ball that he catches.
    - Outfielder tip: If you are charging the ball in the same situation but won't be able to catch the ball, loudly calling "I got it" may freeze the runner and allow you to field the ball on a bounce and force him out at 2B

# Running from 2B

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## Ground ball

- If forced, go hard in a straight line to 3B and watch coach for directions
- If not forced
  - You will already have read the defense (SDS) so...
    - Advance on any ball hit to the shortstop's left provided the ball is not fielded by the pitcher
    - On a ball hit to your right, find safe zone and read the play on whether you can advance after throw to 1B
    - You may be able to advance right away on a ball hit to 3B depending on where he is playing and how hard the ball is hit.
    - Even though the school of thought is to go on contact with 2 outs, you still don't want to run into a tag from the third baseman, make him throw across the diamond for a tougher out.

## Line Drive

- Freeze – find safe zone if possible

## Fly ball

- With 0 outs, tag (remember get to 3B with one out)
  - Exception – if ball is too shallow to tag, find safe zone
  - On balls hit to left center, you can usually advance if it is caught by the LF going away from 3B, but not if it is caught by the CF going toward 3B
- With 1 out, find safe zone
  - Exception – if ball is certain to be caught and is in a location where you can tag, then tag.
- Foul ball – always tag
  - You may not be able to advance, but at least give yourself the opportunity.

# Running from 3B

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## Ground ball

- Don't make the first out at home (unless forced)
- You will already have read the defense, so you will know which ground balls you can score on.
- Never run into a tag. Get in a rundown to allow other runners to advance
- Contact play means go on contact

## Line Drive

- Freeze – find safe zone if possible

## Fly ball

- Other than with 2 outs, tag on all balls hit to the outfield.

# Stealing 2B

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## Straight steal

- Steal unless you did not get a good jump, or if the pitcher takes a slide step (when his normal delivery is not a slide step)
- Don't guess on the pitcher's move – we've already time the P, C, and runner, and know the odds
- Slide straight into the base, unless the fielder is moving to one side of the base to field the throw, then slide to the opposite side of the base

## Early steal

- Take off as soon as the pitcher comes to a stop in set position
  - If pitcher delivers to plate, you will steal easily
  - Pitcher may balk
  - Used often in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situations
    - If they give you 2B, take it
    - Otherwise get in a rundown to allow runner from 3B to score
    - Runner from 3B can usually score when pitcher throws to 2B, or when 2B throws to a left handed first baseman

## Delayed steal

- Take off just after you land on the second shuffle from your secondary lead
- When does this work?
  - With 2 outs (remember we want to get to 2B with 2 outs)
  - With a catcher that drops to his knees after each pitch
  - With a catcher that frames a pitch too long
  - With middle infielders that don't take a step toward 2B after each pitch
  - With LH batter blocking catcher's view

## Fake steal

- Take a lead 3' shorter than your normal lead
- When you fake a steal with a shorter lead, you will end up at the same spot as your normal primary lead, with a normal secondary lead, you must then immediately retreat or advance
- Why fake a steal?
  - To learn who is covering the base
  - To get a ball called (a catcher will come up throwing and the umpire doesn't get a good look at the pitch)
  - This disrupts the pitcher when infielders yell "going!"
  - To create a hole for the hitter (middle infielder will move to cover 2B – very effective with 2 strikes)

# Stealing 3B

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- 3B is usually stolen off the pitcher, not the catcher
- Almost never successful with a LH batter (depending on arm strength)
- Know the pitcher's tendencies with a runner on 2B
- Best with 1 out (remember, get to 3B with 1 one)
- With 2 outs, maybe the catcher will throw the ball away and we can get a cheap run – particularly if the batter is behind in the count

# Stealing Home

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Only if the pitcher is using the full windup

- Take off as soon as the non-pivot foot moves
  - This is the left foot of a RH pitcher
  - Be aware that the pitcher may be decoying you and that he will step back with his pivot foot and throw to 3B
- Best with 2 outs and a RH batter
  - If the batter is behind in the count, a better chance that you might guess right on a curve ball (although many teams will throw fewer low curve balls with a runner on 3B)

# Base Running Strategies

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- When in doubt, SLIDE. Better to slide when you didn't have to than to not slide and be out by  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a step.
- Never make the first out at 3B or Home. You're already in scoring position with 0 outs and will score most of the time
- Never make the last out at 3B. You're already in scoring position, and with 2 outs, you will be able to go on contact and score on most hits.
- Goals
  - Get to 2B with 2 outs
    - Explained – many reasons. Scoring position – extra base hit from batter scores you. Think about your opponent using this philosophy as well.
  - Get to 3B with one out
    - Now you can score on many outs (fly ball or ground ball). Remember your opponent may be utilizing this strategy as well.
- Always be a base runner in an athletic position with 100% focus
- Always know where the ball is, but if there is a play on you, redirect your focus to the base you are going to
- Understand the “safe zone” and use it on every pitch
- Tag on every foul ball. (you may not actually go – but get ready to)
- Read downward angle of the pitch and anticipate an opportunity to advance
  - Catcher tip: if you come up with a low pitch cleanly, there may be an opportunity for a pick off
- If leading off 1B, as soon as you can tell the pitch will bounce BEFORE home plate, go!
- We will practice this – If you are picked off a base, go HARD to the next base if you get a good jump. Only if the fielder immediately throws to the next base will you be out. Usually a fielder is anticipating a rundown and will not throw right away. This is usually a higher percentage play unless we have runners on other bases.
- Whether you can advance or not is determined not so much by who is making the play as it is by which direction their momentum is taking them.
  - You may be able to score from 3B on a fly ball caught by the 1B going away from the infield, but not on the same ball caught by the RF coming in.
  - Use this as part of your SDS – Defense – plus whether they are right or left handed.
- Understand the infield fly rule
  - Self explanatory.