



2005 COACHING CLINIC

Introduction
Team Management
(Philosophy, Attitude, Rules)
Defensive Mechanics
(Throwing, Fielding)
Offensive Mechanics
(Hitting, Bunting, Slapping, Baserunning)
Practice Plans
Resources

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LeeAnn Taylor is currently in her first season as the Head Softball Coach at San Diego City College. Prior to City, she returned to her alma mater in 2003 & 2004 and helped lead Cal State Northridge to consecutive NCAA regional play-off appearances. LeeAnn was the Assistant Softball Coach at Point Loma Nazarene University from 1998-2002 and was honored to be a part of the 2002 NAIA National Coaching Staff of the Year. During those five years, PLNU qualified for consecutive post-season play and made two trips to the College World Series, finishing runner-up in 2002.

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Cheryl Schaefer, formally Cheryl Bolding, was drafted by the Arizona Heat Professional Softball Team in 2004 and was selected to the All-Star Team. She is currently the Assistant Softball Coach at Point Loma Nazarene University where she played short-stop from 1999-2003 and was named two-time NAIA National Player of the Year, three-time GSAC Conference Player of the Year, and was a three-time 1st Team All-American. Cheryl will be playing professional softball with the Arizona Heat again next summer.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

➤ **Personal Philosophy**

"Provide an environment in which my athletes can shine." The environment is positive, structured, safe, and focuses on the process rather than the outcome.

➤ **True Servant Leaders**

1. Put others ahead of themselves
2. Posses the confidence to serve
3. Initiate service to others
4. Are not position conscience***
5. Serve out of love

➤ ***Feeling appreciated brings out the best in people***

➤ **Competent People**

1. Committed to excellence
2. Never settle for average
3. Pay attention to detail
4. Perform with consistency

➤ **What you do with your real estate is important (kids remember it for the rest of there lives.**

➤ **Attitude discussion**

1. Importance of a positive attitude
2. *If your mind can believe it, your body can achieve it.*
3. Be respectful, listen (look at who is talking to you), be good teammates, practice sportsmanship (respecting the game), make sure they are having fun!!!

➤ **Goals**

1. Process goals
2. Outcome goals
3. Problem-solving

➤ **Expectations:**

- Be on time (5 minutes early)
- Be prepared (proper equipment)
- Greet one another
- A good, positive attitude:
- *If your mind can believe it, your body can achieve it!*
- **WORK HARD!!!**
- Full Attention & Full Effort
- Hustle
- Be helpful
- Always treat your teammates, coaches, others, and equipment with respect
- Don't let your teammates down



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THROWING MECHANICS

Rule #1: Always catch the ball with 2 hands!!! ☺

A. Proper Hand Positioning

1. Hold ball on seams (backward "C")
2. 2 to 4 fingers on the ball
3. Touch with fingertips (should see light between your and the ball)

B. Five Steps *10-15 minutes*

1. One Knee-Wrist Flips *- Sharper balls 10*

- a. Glove knee down facing your partner
- b. Hold elbow at 90 degrees in front of you
- c. Cock wrist back and snap wrist to partner
- d. Using only your wrist—not forearm
- e. Perfect backward spin (12-6)
- f. Make as many rotations as possible. More rotations = more velocity

2. One Knee-"Break and Hold" *Lead with the elbow!! 10*

- a. Glove knee still down (partner backs up a little)
- b. Line up shoulders into "Break and Hold" position* *Shoulder follow through*
*Point glove or elbow at partner. Look to see if fingers are on top of ball and ball away from you. Back elbow should be slightly above shoulder.
- c. Pull glove/elbow down to hip
- d. Drive elbow straight over the top
- e. Lead with the elbow and wrist snap (from first drill)
- f. Follow all the way through to opposite side of your body. Throwing shoulder should go to opposite side of knee

3. No Step-Toe to Toe (start with 5 "Break and Hold") *10*

- a. Stand up facing partner sideways. Glove or elbow pointed at your partner
- b. Big circle—weight shifts back (front heel comes up, on your toe) *Check to see if fingers are on top of ball and ball is away.
- c. Lead with hips
- d. Arm swings all the way around straight over the top (close the door with shoulders)
- e. Good wrist snap
- f. Good follow through (opposite side of body)
- g. Weight shifts to front foot and back heel comes up, on your toe—"Toe to Toe"

4. Long Toss (warming up shoulder)

10

- Partner backs up (far)
- Take first step with throwing hand foot (right foot if right handed) step should be sideways—not pointed at partner (helps open up hips and shoulders) "Coming Through the Ball" step.
- Take next step with glove foot
- Big circle—straight over the top
- Throw ball high in the air "rainbow"
- Good wrist snap
- Good follow through, opposite side of body
- It is ok if it bounces

5. Replace-Coming Through the Ball

10

- Partner comes back to regular distance (a base away or shorter depending on age)
- First step with *right* foot pointed sideways "coming through the ball" step/Drive Step
- Drop hand down with ball
- Point glove or elbow at partner
- Hips and shoulders should be a lined
- Lead with hips
- Pull down glove/elbow
- Big circles—over the top
- Close shoulder
- Good wrist snap
- Good follow through
- Throw to partner's throwing side shoulder
- Partner moves body to catch ball on her throwing side shoulder

C. Throwing Drills

- ♦ Infield: Quick Toss
- ♦ Outfield: One Hop
- ♦ Both: Four Corners



Talk the ball to the glove



Seat





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FIELDING MECHANICS

Five Steps:

1. Ready Position

- a. Knees bent- Feel it in your legs!
- b. On balls of feet--shoulder width apart
- c. One foot can be slightly in front of other foot
- d. Glove on the ground
- e. PRE-STEP! "right, left, hop" (as pitcher is releasing the ball)

2. Charge!

- a. Stay low: knees bent, chest down
- b. Always take at least one step (depending on how hard of a hit)

3. Triangle

- a. Field the ball with a good base, drive in with left foot (jab step)
- b. Field the ball out in front of you- middle of body to left foot—never on right side
- c. Take knees to the ball helps keep backside down

4. Alligator/Push Through

- a. Glove fingers pointed down
- b. Cover ball with other hand (eat it up)
- c. Soft hands—push through/scrap fingers on ground.
- d. Bring it to your chest
- e. Keep chest down and knees bent
- f. Watch where you fielded the ball and replace the ball with your foot (right foot if right handed) to the top of the triangle
- g. Come through the ball, one motion-never stop

5. Replace/Come Through

- a. Make sure when you come through the ball with foot that it is pointed sideways, not straight to target. (right foot if right handed) "Coming through the ball step"
- b. Line up shoulders
- c. Point glove or elbow to target and step and throw

Fielding Drills:

- ♦ Short-Hops: front and back hand
- ♦ 2 Ball Drill (Quick stay low and shuffle/cross over)
- ♦ Back Hand Angle Roll



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OUTFIELD

Ground Balls

One Knee:

No one on base. Play it safe, keep ball in front of you.

- Charge ball
- Drop throwing knee to the ground
- Glove on the ground

Do or Die:

Throwing a runner out!

- Approach ball at full speed (charge!)
- Quick short steps in order to get feet in good position
- Field ball off of glove foot
- Stay low, knees bent
- Scoop and bring the ball to your throwing side shoulder
- Drive step with right foot and throw

Fly Balls

Drive back (drop step) to get all the way behind the ball and sprint full speed through the ball. Avoid standing underneath the ball and waiting for it to come down unless there are two outs or no one is on base.

Fly balls in front of you:

- Stay behind ball
- Sprint through ball at full speed
- Catch on throwing side shoulder with TWO HANDS!

Fly balls to the side (in the gap):

- Drop step or open up
- Keep ball in front of your chest
- Sprint to the ball!!!
- If catching it over your glove shoulder use the balls velocity to turn your body around to throw
- If you can get around it and come through it, always do so!

Fly balls behind you:

- SPRINT full speed back!
- Always keep your eye on the ball looking over one shoulder
- Keep the ball to one side of you, NEVER try and catch it over your head
- If you have to change sides just turn your head, do not turn all the way around

Rules for calling the ball:

- Be the first one to call the ball off the bat! Be aggressive! Always think it is your ball until someone calls you off. When you call it, commit yourself 100%. If you never call it, you never commit to it. Call the ball with conviction!
- Keep your eye on the ball. Go 100%! Listen for someone to call you off, don't look!
- If two people are calling for the same ball, use priority system or have 2nd base/short-stop call a name of the person who is responsible for catching the ball.
- Affirmation: Everyone else calls that person's name.
- No ball should ever drop without someone calling for it and diving for it! FULL EFFORT!
- If you can't catch it and there are runners on base still call the ball to hold the runners.



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HITTING MECHANICS

A. Ready Position:

1. Plate coverage
2. Grip-line up knuckles
3. Set up-lower and upper body
 - a. Toes pointed toward plate and inline with pitcher
 - b. Weight on the balls of the feet
 - c. Lead arm 90 degrees
 - d. Elbows down
 - e. Bat at 45 degrees
 - f. Bottom hand at top of strike zone
 - g. Relax front shoulder (very soft)
 - h. Eyebrows level

B. Five Steps:

1. Trigger

- a. The trigger is a timing device (at top of circle)
- b. Weight shifts back
- c. Hands in proper position

2. Stride

- a. The stride must be soft, short, and soon enough
- b. Front foot is closed
- c. Stride on inside part of foot
- d. Front knee towards plate
- e. Front hip towards plate
- f. Keep weight centered
- g. Balance!!! Don't shift weight forward!

3. Drive

- a. Start hip drive, keep front shoulder in and pointed to pitcher (degree of hip turn will depend on ball position)
- b. Hands begin to drive, stay in, lead with elbows, then drive knob to pitcher
- c. Keep wrists cocked. Don't let hands get out away from body. (Front elbow stays bent)
- d. Back shoulder stays up and level with front shoulder, does not come with hands.
- e. Maintain balance
- f. Keep barrel pointed back and above hands at an angle
- g. Hit against a firm front side

4. Snap!

- a. Knob inside the ball
- b. Snap top hand to contact point, snap hips to full rotation at same time
- c. Barrel above hands, don't let it drop!
- d. Make square contact with elbows bent, then push through to extend
- e. Wrist roll is a follow-through motion—NOT a contact motion

5. Follow Through

- a. Wrist roll
- b. Head should be down near back shoulder
- c. "Shoulder to shoulder"
- d. Bend front elbow, finish high (all the way) and balanced

C. Put It All Together:

- 1. Short, compact swing (don't let hands/arms get long away from body)
- 2. Maintain balance and good head positioning
- 3. Level shoulders!
- 4. Backside knocks out front side
- 5. Hands inside the ball
- 6. Barrel stays above hands
- 7. Keep weight centered
- 8. The degree of hip turn is greater for an inside pitch than an outside pitch



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BUNTING

A. Stance

1. Up in the front of the box
2. Look like your hitting
3. Square around early—before pitcher is at the top of your circle. Rotate hips, shoulders, and toes facing pitcher
4. Pivot back foot—open up hips

B. Plate Coverage

1. Hands out in front of your body
2. Bat and hands at the top of the strike-zone
3. Keep bat close to your eyes
4. Make sure the bat is covering the whole plate
5. Keep bat head above your hands "angle the bat"

C. Hand Positioning

1. Top hand "pinch the bat" up higher on the bat, index finger pointed up on barrel helps to maintain the angle
2. Bottom move up to top of the grip with top hand
 - *hands apart—better control
 - *hands together—better touch, ball dies

D. Contact

1. Hands are out in front—arms are bent and act as shock absorbers
2. Make contact with ball with the last three inches of the bat (helps to deaden the ball)
3. "Catch it." Bring hands and bat back to soften the contact
4. Maintain angle of the bat
5. If pitch is low, DO NOT drop bat down, bend your knees. Hands and elbow should stay even with your chest
6. Don't reach out for the ball—"catch it"
7. Hands start at top of the strike-zone. If it is above your hands pull back! It's not a strike.

E. Directional Bunting

1. Ideal bunt in 10 feet away from home plate
2. Knob in (close to body)—3rd base
3. Knob out (away from body) 1st base
4. Runner on First—bunt toward the pitcher/1st base
5. Runner on Second—bunt toward the pitcher/ 3rd base



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Fundamentals of Left Handed Slapping

Stance:

- Bend knees-think creep (not run up fast.)
- Feet should be shoulder width apart (balanced.)
- Stay on balls of feet.
- Start in the middle of the box.

Steps:

1. Right foot starts with a small step back (away from plate AND towards the catcher.)
2. Left foot steps forward and across right foot (point toe toward 5/6 hole.)
 - Hips can open slightly (belly button pointed at shortstop.)
 - Keep hands with back hip and up by left ear.
3. Contact ball at the same time left foot hits the ground.
4. Right foot steps towards pitcher/first base.
 - Don't run until after contact.
 - These are steps (NOT running.)
 - The key is timing.
5. SPRINT after contact.

Hands:

- Choke up on bat for extra control.
- Focus on staying on top of the ball.
 - Index finger of left hand pointed up on the bat helps to stay on top of the ball (maintain angle of the bat.)
- Keep hands high (by left ear.)
- Hands stay with back hip.
 - Make contact back by your hip (NOT out in front.)
- Hands are high so think pull down hard with bottom hand to get that high bounce.
- Be careful not to angle too much with your swing (chop down too much.)
- THINK "hit the top half of the ball."
- Keep left wrist strong and hold angle of wrist until you snap straight to the ball.
- Hands and elbows should stay compact but then throw your hands/arms out straight to the ball for full extension.
- Bat head always stays above your hands.

Think hit through, step through, and smooth (all one motion) straight to the ball.

Ideal slap is a high chopper between the 3rd baseman and shortstop (5/6 hole.)

WORK HARD!



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BASERUNNING

1. Know the situation
 - a. score
 - b. number of outs
 - c. count on the batter
 - d. inning
2. Take the sign
3. Check the outfielders
4. Check the infielders
5. < 2 outs, freeze on the line drive

***ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL!**

Running

- stay low & run hard
- use your arms (pump)
- always check your coaches

Lead-offs (Load & Go)

- "load" with the pitcher
- lead off hard and stay low
- one, two, three, shuffle
- dive back to the backside of the bag
- 3rd base – lead off in foul territory

Stealing

- study the umpire (is he paying attention to you ☺)
- "load" with the pitcher
- go hard & stay low
- after 3rd step, check to see where the ball is (in catcher's glove, on the ground, in the backstop, etc.)
- DIVE!

AUTOMATICS

- Infield fly (check fielder)
 - * Fair – off as far as possible
 - * Foul – stay on the base-tag up

- Outfield fly
 - * 1st base – always go halfway. If it is to right field, go as far as possible
 - * 2nd base – in front of you, as far as possible behind you, tagging up
 - * 3rd base – always tag
- When there are runners on 2nd & 3rd, they must be going on any ground ball.
- If the pitcher or nearest fielder doesn't have the ball, there is no reason to be standing on the bag.

Passed Balls

- want to go
- if the coach has to tell you to go it is already too late

Circle Rule

- once the pitcher has the ball in the circle, you must decide immediately which way you are going to go.

Rundowns

- run right at the receiver
- try to stay in one as long as possible to advance the other runners
- DO NOT run into an out!
- NEVER give up!

Practice Check List

Defensive

To force the opponent to get 3 hits in an inning to score a run. To get the lead-off batter out (77%). To know the line-up and tendencies.

Throwing (5 step)
 ♦ 4 corner/relays/one hops
 Flips
 Fielding (5 step)
 Tagging (position on bases)
 Fly balls
 Sun balls
 Defensive Diving
 Priority
 Calling the ball/affirmation
 Foul ball situations
 Cut-offs
 Illegal pitches
 Steal coverage
 Rundowns
 Bunt coverage/slap coverage
 Black "D"
 1st & 3rd (1,2,3,4,5,6)
 Pick offs
 Individual position drills
 Pregame

Offensive

To put pressure on the defensive. To hit hard line drives and OTG (they must make 3 plays to get us out)

Swing (5 steps)
 Contact points
 Pitch selection
 Situational hitting
 Bunt (sac/sneaky)
 Slap (sac/power)
 Lefty slap/drag
 Squeeze (< 2 outs, 2 & 1 count)
 Hit and run
 Mental Hitting
 Baserunning
 ♦ Rules (where are the fielders?)
 ♦ Lead-offs
 ♦ Steals (when pitcher needs to throw a strike)
 ♦ Turns (dip inside shoulder)
 ♦ Question marks
 ♦ Tagging up
 ♦ Picking up coach
 ♦ Sliding (feet-first, diving, hook)
 ♦ Baseline rules
 Signals

Team

To think in terms of I can and I will. To work hard, sacrifice, and keep fighting down. To give full attention and full effort. To not let our teammates

Attitude
 Sportsmanship
 Our team philosophies
 Rules
 Expectations
 Commitment
 Travel Rules

WEEK STARTING _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Infield	Infield	Infield	Infield	Infield
Outfield	Outfield	Outfield	Outfield	Outfield
Team Defense	Team Defense	Team Defense	Team Defense	Team Defense
Hitting	Hitting	Hitting	Hitting	Hitting
Pitchers/Catchers	Pitchers/Catchers	Pitchers/Catchers	Pitchers/Catchers	Pitchers/Catchers

DATE:

DAILY PRACTICE SCHEDULE

1:15	Stretch/Agilities
1:30-	
3:00-3:30	Conditioning:
	Announcements:



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RESOURCES

www.clairemontgirlsfastpitch.org

www.nfca.org

www.positivecoach.org

www.thesportscoach.com

www.eteamz.com

*<http://softballsearch.eteamz.com/coach.html#all>

www.sdcity.edu

www.ptloma.edu

Why sports for girls?

- Teen-age female athletes are less than half as likely to get pregnant as female non-athletes (5 percent and 11 percent, respectively), more likely to report that they had never had sexual intercourse than female non-athletes (54 percent and 41 percent, respectively), and are more likely to experience their first sexual intercourse later in adolescence than non-athletes.
- The Women's Sports Foundation Report: Sport and Teen Pregnancy, 1998
- Women who are active in sports and recreational activities as girls feel greater confidence, self-esteem and pride in their physical and social selves than those who were sedentary as kids.
- Miller Lite Report, 1985; Melpomene Institute, 1995
- Exercise and sport participation can be used as a therapeutic and preventative intervention for enhancing the physical and mental health of adolescent females. It also can enhance mental health by offering them positive feelings about body image, improved self-esteem, tangible experiences of competency and success and increased self-confidence.
- Physical Activity & Sport in the Lives of Girls, 1997
- Physical activity appears to decrease the initiation of high-risk health behavior in adolescent girls. According to a 1995 survey of boys and girls ages 12-16, female adolescents high in leisure time physical activity are significantly less likely to initiate cigarette smoking than those in moderate, low leisure activities.
- Aaron, et al., Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, 1996
- Research suggests that girls who participate in sports are more likely to experience academic success and graduate from high school than those who do not.
- Women's Sports Foundation, 1989
- Women student-athletes graduate at a significantly higher rate (68 percent) than women students in general (58 percent).
- 1997 Division I NCAA Study on Graduation Rates, 1997
- One to three hours of exercise a week over a woman's reproductive lifetime (the teens to about age 40) may bring a 20-30 percent reduction in the risk of breast cancer, and four or more hours of exercise a week can reduce the risk almost 60 percent.
- Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 1994

Who's coaching girls' sports?

A gender coaching breakdown on the number of women and men coaching Indiana high school girls' sports.

Sport	Women	Percentage	Men	Percentage
Basketball	63	29%	156	71%
Cross Country	22	26%	63	74%
Golf	49	43%	63	57%
Gymnastics	31	84%	6	16%
Softball	43	26%	123	74%
Soccer	14	18%	66	82%
Swimming	33	53%	29	47%
Tennis	21	36%	41	59%
Track	24	59%	17	41%
Volleyball	186	63%	111	47%

Source: Indiana coaches of Girls Sports Association, January, 2002



Here is some food for thought.....

The following was written by Breezy Humes and published in the March/April 1996 issue of USA Softball Magazine.

I keep a copy of it hanging on my wall and thought I'd pass it along to those of you that have not seen it.

Stuff I've seen....and didn't like

IF YOU'RE A PLAYER

Don't come to practice. That way, you will prove to everyone that you were born knowing how to play and you don't need to work as hard as the rest of us.

Bad mouth the coaches so you can undermine their authority with our team and other teams. Everyone knows coaches don't really have feelings.

Make fun of those of us who say cheers during games. It makes you look cool, unlike those silly college and Olympic teams who cheer all the time.

Say bad things to the players on the other teams so they will hate us. We don't want to give anyone the idea that we're good sports.

Be a slob. Keep your dirty uniform stuffed in your bat bag and then wear it for the next tournament. And whatever you do, don't tuck in your shirt until the umpire orders you to.

Be a bully and pick a victim on your own team. Shun her and don't let her into your cool clique. Make fun of her when she makes an error or strikes out. Just ignore it if she makes a good play. It makes you look mature and grown up.

Throw a baby fit, if you have to sit out or don't get to play "your position." Your antics are very entertaining; we wouldn't want to try to keep focused on the game anyway.

Eat a lot of greasy, fast food on tournament days when it's over 100 degrees outside. That way, you can barf in the dugout and feel rotten the rest of the day.

When (and note the when) you strike out, act like it's the first time it ever happened to you and be sure to throw your bat and helmet in the dugout. There's a good chance it will bounce back up and hit someone.

Whatever you do, don't take the coaching. Glare at the coaches, talk back, walk away, throw down your glove, be disrespectful. Show them who's boss. Remember, unlike players such as me, you were born knowing how to play this game.

IF YOU'RE A COACH

Don't have organized practices. That way, we will bounce around randomly from place to place, position to position, activity to activity and be completely confused when it's over.

Better yet, don't have practices. We won't be confused then, just completely incompetent.

You played Little League, so you know everything. Don't study fast pitch. We like looking like a bunch of idiots on the field.

Be sure to make a big production out of taking one of us off the field in the middle of a game after making an error. But don't forget to yell at us out there first. It makes a great impression on the spectators.

When we lose a game, be sure to point out the one player who lost the whole game for us. Humiliate her really good in front of all of us. It makes you look so powerful.

Get in the umpire's face over a call. That way, everyone will see that our coach isn't scared to get thrown out of a game.

If your daughter is on the team, let her make up the lineup, pick the starter from among her favorite friends and choose the assistant coaches. She will save you lots of time.

Don't let on to the parents and other spectators that they shouldn't ride players on either team

or the umpires. It is so much fun to listen to all the dirty words from the stands.

Make sure you take care of your player and parent problems in front of the whole team. We want to know all the dirty details. While you're at it, open a beer, light up a cigarette, and throw in a bunch of four-letter words we are trying so hard to learn. What are role models for anyway?

Hold a grudge. Hold it tight and forever against any girl who quits your team. Make her a nervous wreck when her new team plays yours. After all, why would anybody want to quit your team anyway?

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How to Run a Youth Softball Practice

For the most part, a little knowledge and a lot of good will are what you need to get involved in coaching youth softball. But some practical tips can be useful too.

Steps:

1. Have some playing experience yourself, or spend some time researching the game and coaching. There are books available for coaching that can help you structure practices and teach the rules in an appropriate way for the age group you're coaching.
2. Keep the atmosphere flexible. If the players are bored or not having a good time, they'll be more likely to lose interest. If one drill doesn't grab their attention, have another one ready and switch to engage them.
3. Teach them the rules of softball without overwhelming them. Maybe teach different concepts in separate sessions instead of doing it all at once. Walk them through the different positions, then let them play the positions to solidify the ideas.
4. Start with a warm-up. This will make the kids less prone to injury and will promote a good habit for them before games. Stretching and small throwing drills can warm up players effectively.
5. Gauge the skill level and attention span of your team before running them through a lot of drills. You want to keep them engaged. If they're looking tired, switch to a less taxing drill. "Have a lot of patience with the players," says Ray VanderMay, women's softball coach at Seton Hall University.
6. "Make practice fun," suggests VanderMay.
7. Get the kids used to playing with each other through scrimmages. Games keep them engaged in the activity while practicing their skills. You can even give out small prizes or other incentives.

*Tips:

- Coach with a lot of love, showing players you care. Try to maintain open lines of communication with both the parents and the players. If there are problems, make it clear that they can come to you and discuss them.

Related eHow's:

- [Order Uniforms for Softball Team](#)
- [Buy a Softball Glove](#)
- [Throw a Softball](#)
- [Join a Youth Softball League](#)
- [Hit a Softball](#)
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Give constructive criticism and don't yell. Remember that these are kids playing for fun, and that coaching should be fun. You can support your players and instruct them at the same time.

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Things You'll Need:

- [softballs](#)
- [softball equipment bags](#)
- [softball bats](#)
- [softball cleats](#)
- [softball fielding gloves](#)
- [softball batting helmets](#)

Project Details:

Skill Advisory: Moderately Easy

Questions Answered and Topics Addressed:

- [Learn to coach youth softball](#)
- [Teach softball practice](#)
- [How do I teach kids to play softball](#)

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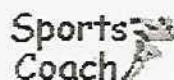
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Gaining the Winning Edge

Introduction

[Coaching](#)[Conditioning](#)[Endurance](#)[Ergogenic Aids](#)[Evaluation](#)[Mobility](#)[Nutrition](#)[Planning](#)[Physiology](#)[Psychology](#)[Skills](#)[Speed](#)[Strength](#)

The following article has been reproduced by kind permission of the author, Rick Newkirk. Rick is the founder and Head Coach of the St. Louis Comets AAU Girl's Basketball Club.

Mental Attitude

What makes a good player great? Sound basics? Size? Strength? Shooting ability? Speed? I believe its Attitude. The ability to except situations and make them work in their favor. Losers never seem to know why they lose. They blame the referees for bad calls, the gym conditions, the court surface, their teammates, etc. Winners on the other hand play above the problems. A wise man once said, " It's not what life hands us, but what we do about it". I was once asked, what is the most important measurement on a basketball court? With out a doubt, it is the six inches between your ears. Winning and losing comes down to who can stay focused. Great players never let their opponent or outside conditions control their game. They are mentally tough, mentally conditioned. Its easy to get frustrated when pressure and mistakes happen. The more you dwell on it, the more mistakes you'll make. I cant count the times I've seen a player get the ball stolen and then commit a personal foul because they were out of control, or becoming outraged because someone was talking about their ancestors. If an opponent can pull you out of your game, who wins?. Once you're mad, you're though! Referee calls, turnovers, Fouls, missed lay ups, are like the Civil War. Once they happen, they become HISTORY!

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Sportsmanship

Show sportsmanship! Its easy to be a good winner, but it takes real class to hold your head up after a tough loss. Great players never take losing well. If you gave 110% during the game, and you were beaten, there is no shame in having lost. Give credit to the team who played better on that given day. Learn from it and let it go. The respect you'll gain from opponents and fans on both sides are well worth it.

Conditioning

Stay in shape! A hero is no braver than the ordinary person, but they are braver five minutes longer. Spend as much time caring for your body as you put into your game. Eat well, get the correct amount of rest, run three times a week, most of all stay away from drugs and alcohol. working out on your own isn't easy, but as Coach Lombardi said, fatigue makes cowards of us all. To lose a contest because you run out of gas in the fourth quarter is unforgivable. If you lose a contest, make sure it was because they were better players, not in better shape.

Until the fat lady sings

Never give up! Winners never quit. "The person who wins may have been counted out several times, but they didn't hear the referee" (Jansen). Finding a way to win is the mark of a great team. I have watched as our team made up nine points in ten seconds. Nothing is impossible when you believe. "Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle" (A. Lincoln). You will be surprised what can happen when you never give up.

Commitment and hard work

Work hard and be aggressive. Never be out hustled or out fought. The team who is persistent usually comes out on top. Show enthusiasm! Nothing is ever work, unless you would rather be doing something else. Make a commitment to excel, you never stop improving. When things you did yesterday still look big to you today, you haven't done much today. There is no substitute for practice. Don't count the days.....make each day count! The only person that keeps you on the bench and from being a starter.....is you!

Teammates

Strong players criticize themselves, not their teammates. Everyone has room for improvement no matter what the level of play, and talking about someone else's shortcomings never helps improve your game. Take an interest in your squad and friendships will grow along with the success of the team. Remember, there is no "I" in team. It takes five players working together to become successful.

Leadership

Never be afraid to take charge. When a teammate gets down pick them up with some encouragement and get it back on track. At practice be the first one on the court and the last one to leave. Talk on the court, direct traffic, let people know when someone is open or when there is a flaw in the defense. What you see plain as day may be hard for someone else to see. Never take any opponent for granted, respect every one's ability. Be a player who says "can" not "can't". Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. Be a total player!

Final Thoughts

Play hard! But never take yourself so serious that you forget to smell the roses. Enjoy the game, many lessons about life are taught from your adventures on the hardwood. Take what it has to give you and apply it to what life throws your way. Remember, we cannot always control what goes on outside, but we can control what goes on inside. Be mentally tough, Never let what happens during a contest take you out of your game. Concentrate on what is important, experience, learn. Be the best you can, and the best will come back to you. Champions are made, never born. Ability can get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.

What Winning Coaches Know!

By Bill Redmer

Bat and ball games like fastpitch softball require smart, well-trained athletes more so than many other sports. The great number of individual skills to be learned and the great number of strategies of play require well-schooled players who have spent considerable chalk-talk time learning theory. In addition, the explosive nature of most of the on-the-field game situations requires well-conditioned athletes with quick reflexes capable of instant athletic execution. Too many youth players, just don't know the game, nor are they in shape to play it.

Fastpitch Softball —

Winning Keys to Think About

1. Good fastpitch softball is a very quickly played game. At mature levels, pitching speeds are equivalent and usually faster than in baseball and the ball will break (curves, drops, rises etc.) more dramatically.
2. Making contact and putting the ball into play in fastpitch is equal to a base hit in baseball — it increases the chances the defense will misplay it because of the overall quickness of the game (i.e.... the shorter basepaths and speed of the players, the athletic difficulty of the specific play etc...).

3. All fastpitch pitchers are hittable. No one throws that fast that they can't be hit to put the ball in play. If you can hit a thrown tennis ball with a racket held in your off-hand, you can hit the fastest pitch. Getting the ball into play creates the opportunity to score. Knowing this is the key to fastpitch softball offensive success. It also goes a long way to diminish pitcher intimidation.

4. Bunting in all its varieties is an important skill to teach because as a skill technique, it increases the chance of a hitter making contact with the ball. There are any number of different bunting techniques, i.e. slaps, drag, sacrifices, square away, knob, etc. The point here is to use the bunt to surprise the defense and take advantage again of being quick.

5. The speed of the pitches and skill of experienced pitchers dictate angle and pivot bunting techniques be taught as opposed to squaring up baseball style. Control of the bat is essential. Don't forget to teach your kids how to bunt the change-up.

6. Fastpitch hitting styles feature that contact quick trunk rotation hitting bat launching styles be taught to younger players. Weight shifts are accomplished mostly without strides. As players gain experience,

strides and weight shifts will mature with them for more power hitting styles.

7. Each hitter must get to know "her pitch," that pitch which she can hit any time she sees it. In or out, high or low, breaking or not, and at a preferable speed are all a part of this learning process. Too many hitters get to the plate and have no idea what kind of pitch they look for to swing at or what triggers their bat. A tangential here is that most players don't really understand or know the "strike zone" when they advance to the plate. They just go up there with a "hope and swing" attitude.

8. It is amazing how many fastpitch playing girls can't throw correctly or know the difference between the different kinds of throws. (Infield, outfield, underhand tosses, side arms, etc.) Too many have poor ball catching and ball blocking skills as well. Cross over steps and diving for the ball are unknown skills to too many as well. These skills should be worked on in every practice session, every one.

9. It's amazing how many players have bad vision

See *Winning Coaches*, Page 26

Winning Coaches

Continued from page 25

or are handicapped because of contacts and glasses. Make sure your players have a vision test at the beginning of each season.

10. Winning players and winning teams pay attention to the game. They watch the game action and the players' reactions. They develop a mental "book," cataloging all the important details, some of which may prove beneficial at some future point. Getting into the game is essential to winning softball.
11. Fastpitch softball is not baseball. It's different. It has different plays and strategies and players have to make play decisions faster and execute more quickly. Too many old baseball dads make lousy fastpitch coaches without the required retraining.
12. Too little practice time is spent by teams and individual players learning and repeat practicing the specific skills. You cannot use or just play games to teach fundamentals. Losers don't get this simple fact. Practice, practice, practice — teach, teach, teach is still the way to consistently win. Repetition practice (conditioning motor memory) helps take the thought out of the action and consequently eliminates 75 percent of all errors.

Key Fastpitch Strategies

- A. Bunting, baserunning, sliding, putting the ball into play to make the defense make the mistake. Conversely, pitching and proper player positioning on defense are critical to countering these offensive strategies.
- B. One that can't slide on command every time cannot play fastpitch at an experienced level. Sliding is one of the most important skills to be taught very young players. It's easier to learn at age six, seven or eight and 70 lb. than at age 15 and 150 lb.
- C. Baserunning skill, getting a good jump on the pitch, lead-offs, and learning how to run the bases (how to round a base and advance) are critical components of winning softball. Stealing bases is the ultimate key to scoring.
- D. The running style used in fastpitch is "sprinting." Every aspect of the game from playing the outfield to running the bases incorporates this all important skill.
- E. Counter defensive strategies have been developed to compete with all offensive skills and must be learned. More importantly, players must be taught when and how to use them. For instance, teams of all ages must know how to defense bunts because they will see them a lot in fastpitch. Most games at experienced levels are won and lost on bunts and bunt coverage errors. Too many teams don't understand bunt coverages and cannot field bunts as a result. Too many young or inexperienced teams have the pitcher covering bunts when she shouldn't.

A best percentage strategy: First and third need to play up the line towards home a minimum of half way. Second base person makes the play at first and the shortstop covers third if needed on bunts. Centerfielder covers second base if needed. Pitcher covers only the balls hit or bunted into her immediate area (the circle).

- F. It's important to teach your pitchers how to cover home plate on passed balls and wild pitches.
- G. It's important to teach your outfielders how to back up infield plays and baserunning situations.
- G. The team that gets along as individuals is a sure winner. When coaching girls' sports, morale and compatibility are more important in most cases than great skills attainment. Girls are social first and ballplayers second. Coaching communication needs to be done in positive terms, even in negative situations.

There are a hundred more tips and important things to implement in winning fastpitch. If you have some to add to this list, please e-mail us at <fastpitch@fastpitchusa.com> and we will continue to add them to our Strategic Softball articles.

Bill Redmer is editor of *FastPitch USA On Line Journal and Library*. He has been publishing softball articles specializing in winning softball and pitching topics for more than 15 years, including many published in the former *FastPitch World* magazine. His *Ground Power* pitching style has received wide national acceptance. Recently he published the handy reference guide, *Pitching Smart in Girls' FastPitch*, *How to Pitch to Batters*. Bill Redmer can be reached at <fastpitch@fastpitchusa.com>. The web site for *FastPitch USA On Line* is <www.fastpitchusa.com>.

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Players and Mental Discipline

So you want to be a Softball Player.
First you have to consider one big question.
Why do you want to play or Why are you playing?

Most players really have fun playing this game.
Some can't think of playing anything else.
Some want to continue playing in college.
You all have different reasons for playing, but if you are going to spend all this time at
practices and games, you might as well develop an attitude to get better.
This is where your coach cannot help you !
This is where your parents cannot help you !
This is where your team mates cannot help you !
This is where you must help yourself

Your dedication comes from within.
You cannot become the best you can be if you find excuses not to improve.
You cannot improve if you find excuses not to practice at home.
You cannot improve if you do or can not honestly evaluate your mistakes, take responsibility for your
own deficiencies and work to improve them.
We have seen the "Dedicated" players on the field, then as soon as the game or practice is over, the
thought of softball never enters their minds.
We are not saying that you should do nothing but think softball, we all have many other interests and
responsibilities, but, you must train your mind and make the time to do your softball related homework
as well as your school work.
As stated before, preparation for a game begins the night before.

Reviewing batting mechanics, fielding mechanics, situations and the like, in front of a mirror, in your back yard and **IN YOUR MIND.**

As long as you convince your brain that you can do things right you will be able to do them right. The more you practice at home the more you will convince your mind you can do these things.

Then once you get to the playing field you will be less stressed and more at ease.

When you are at ease you play better.

Did you ever wonder how the really good players always seem to never get rattled?

Is it because they have no emotions ?

NO

It is because they take the time to practice at home, they think of their mechanics over and over, they become relaxed and confident and sure of themselves.

They combat the stress at home or before the game, they do not wait until the situation presents itself like most players do.

When you wait for the situation to arise then try to combat it, you have uncertainty, fear of failing and some panic.

Then it is too late to deal with it and that is when the mistakes are made.

The dedicated players will find ways to recognize when they are getting stressed out and find a simple way to ease that stress quickly.

All players make errors but we have all seen players get so down on themselves they get moody, won't talk to others, throw things, cry etc. They very rarely let it go during that game and will usually be so set on making up for the mistake they unwittingly go into a panic when they are called upon to perform again and will make more mistakes.

A way to combat this situation is the bubble philosophy we firmly believe in.

When you are in position, you have a bubble around you where your head is clear and ready to react. You are not thinking of anything but the next pitch and where you are going to throw the ball if it comes to you.

After the pitch or play, step out of your bubble, glance around you, think about what you did wrong if you made an error, then say good bye to the error for ever.

Step back into your bubble take a deep breath and loosen yourself up again.

Get on the balls of your feet, stay loose and get ready to react to the next pitch.

Nothing is worse for a team than the player who says, I am harder on myself than anyone else could be during a game.

This brings your teammates down with you because they are spending too much time trying to get you over your madness and they should be trying to keep themselves focused.

Yes, you can be hard on yourself and expect more of yourself, but once you become carried away with it, you tear your team down.

After the game admonish yourself as much as you want, but review in your mind over and over the right way to make the play.

You do not throw your tantrums during the game.

Another particular item that really upsets us are the players, knowing we have games the next day, who stay out late with friends, have all night slumber parties etc, and show up to the game like zombies and have no desire to move.

This in our opinion is very self centered and inconsiderate to your team mates.

Many of these girls prepared themselves and are ready to play and you show up still asleep, joking how you stayed up all night and you are too tired to play.

Honestly, girls have done that on our team before and have found themselves cut or suspended from the team that very day.

Bottom line is you are only as good as your own personal drive and determination.

To quote one of the players on the Swiss National Softball Team

"The player who thinks she may lose, has already lost."

And that is so very true

You must make the commitment to yourself to be the very best you can be.

Mental Discipline, Dedication and Determination, we feel, is 90% of the player.

We will add more in time.

If you have anything you may feel would be good to add here, E-Mail it to me and we will
ad it.

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Avoiding the Biggest Mental Trap in Sports

By Dr. ALAN GOLDBERG
Sports Psychologist

There's no question that your mental toughness depends primarily on your ability to concentrate correctly. Faulty concentration will sabotage both your hitting and fielding. Any slumping ballplayer knows this all too painfully because the major reason slumps happen is because the athlete concentrates on the wrong things at the wrong time.

If you want to dramatically improve your ability to handle pressure, come through in the clutch and avoid performance slumps, you must learn to recognize the biggest mental trap out there. This trap is at the very heart of choking and hitting slumps. This trap has driven more players out of the game and undercut their dreams of playing in college or the big leagues. This trap is a nasty performance killer. What am I referring to? The dreaded UCs. The Uncontrollables!

What are the uncontrollables? Nothing more than all the things in softball that are directly out of your control. What's directly out of your control as a ballplayer? The playing conditions, the umpires, weather, temperature, field conditions, play of your opponents, a bad bounce, your coach and how much playing time you get. Also, anything in the past such as an error or the last time you faced this pitcher, winning the game or getting a hit, etc.

You might look at this list and say, "Wait just one minute! I can control getting a hit!" Actually you can't. You may hit the ball with power and get robbed by a great defensive play. What you can control when you step into the batter's box is staying calm, keeping your hands loose, seeing the ball clearly and taking a good, powerful cut. Whether you actually come up with a hit or not is in the future and therefore out of your control. Why does focusing on the UCs send a ballplayer down the road to destruction?

When you focus on an uncontrollable before or during performance, three things will most likely happen. First, you'll start getting nervous, which will leave your muscles too tight to play well. Second, your confidence will begin to spiral downward.

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Autographed Tony Gwynn Bat
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2nd Place: Tracy Lavarnay West Hills Pony BB Bat
3rd Place: Tom Bunker El Rio LL Baseball Cleats
4th Place: Bob Oliver Federal Way American LL Batting Gloves
Congratulations!

Third, how well do you think you'll play if you're uptight and have no confidence? You guessed it! Not very!

Last year I worked with a talented pitcher who could throw with speed and accuracy in the bullpen but would consistently fall apart on the mound. Why? In the bullpen he kept his concentration on things that he could control, such as the target, keeping his arm loose and throwing one pitch at a time. As he headed out to the mound in a game his mind would start entertaining the UCs. What if I let in a run (a future focus)? What if I lose control again (a past and future focus)? What's the coach going to think (the coach)? There are more pro scouts in the stands today. If I screw up I'll never get signed (scouts and the future). His focus on all these uncontrollables tightened him up so much that he rarely lasted more than an inning.

How should you deal with these uncontrollables? First you have to know which UCs get to you. Make a list of all the uncontrollables you tend to dwell on when you get in trouble. Becoming aware of your own personal traps is the first step in avoiding them. Remember, you cannot avoid a trap unless you can see it clearly. Second, practice the concentration rule if you find yourself giving too much air time to the UCs. That is, recognize that you're focusing on an uncontrollable and quickly and gently bring yourself back to something that you can control.

What does this actually mean? If you're up at the plate and worrying, "I've gotta get a hit!" (an uncontrollable because it's in the future), shift your focus to your breathing, feeling your hands loosen or making sure you pick the ball up quickly from the pitcher's release point. If you find yourself really getting uptight because of that focus, briefly concentrating on your breathing will help you move away from the future into the "now" of the game. If you're in the field and thinking about the ball you just booted which caused a run to score (the past), bring yourself back to your ready position and making sure you get set as the pitcher goes into his motion.

Uncontrollables seem to have more power over you when you're under more pressure. Therefore, it is important to learn to recognize what these performance traps are so you can avoid them. In fact, you might even want to take this a step further and use the uncontrollables for your competitive advantage. How do you do this? Let's say the playing conditions are nasty, i.e. the weather is cold and windy. Most players will get distracted by this. Use the knowledge that these are uncontrollables to build your confidence by explaining to yourself that most people will be distracted, but you won't since you know how to handle the UCs.

Remember, if you want to bust out of that slump, avoid choking and play mentally tough, then you have to know what your UCs are and train yourself to give them almost no air time in your mind. You can't get uptight and lose your confidence in crunch time if you don't focus on the UCs. Keep your concentration on things that you can control. The one most important thing you

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Five Tips for Overcoming Adversity

By Jeff Janssen
 Sports Psychology, University of Arizona

Editor's Note: This is the first in a two-part series by Janssen on overcoming adversity.

Adversity abounds in every sport. Your opponents are an obvious source of adversity, but there are several other factors that can take you out of your game. Things like judgment-impaired umpires, wet weather conditions, long-term injuries, poor field conditions, and a lack of playing time are just some examples that can frustrate, aggravate, and de-motivate you. As most athletes realize, however, *it's not necessarily the amount of adversity you face, but more important, how you choose to handle it.*

How you approach adversity is one of the most important keys to your success. Why? Just about every coach can think of at least one highly talented player who crumbles under adversity. When players let adversity get the best of them by losing their focus, confidence and motivation to perform, they end up negating their talent and rendering themselves useless.

The basic key to overcoming adversity is to mentally move from focusing on the problem to focusing on the solution. Successful players understand that they have the power to overcome adversity because they can control how they react to it. They put their energies toward finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

The following five tips provide some simple yet effective strategies you can use to help overcome the inevitable adversity that will come your way.

1. View adversity as temporary, localized, and correctable. One of the most important differences between mentally tough players and mentally soft players is how they view adversity itself. Mentally soft

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Autographed Tony Gwynn Bat
1st Place: Brenda Dunbar Santa Susana BB Fielder's Glove
2nd Place: Tracy Lavarnay West Hills Pony BB Bat
3rd Place: Tom Bunker El Rio LL Baseball Cleats
4th Place: Bob Oliver Federal Way American LL Batting Gloves
Congratulations!

players see adversity as **ongoing, all-encompassing** and **unchangeable**. Taking a hitting slump as an example, they think it will affect them throughout the season (ongoing), they feel like their whole game is off (all-encompassing), and that they just were not born to be a good hitter (unchangeable). Mentally tough players, on the other hand, view adversity as **temporary, localized, and correctable**. They believe their hitting has been off a bit the last week, but they feel they are due for the next game (temporary), they have struggled only because they have had difficulty hitting the outside pitch (localized), and if they look to go with the pitch instead of trying to pull everything they can get back on track (correctable).

2. View adversity as an opportunity or challenge. Another key to overcoming adversity is to mentally frame it as a positive opportunity or challenge instead of seeing it as a negative threat. One of the biggest reasons All-American pitchers Susie Parra and Nancy Evans had such fantastic careers at Arizona is that they were challenged by adversity. If a runner got on first, they took it as a personal challenge to keep her from advancing to second. If a runner somehow made it to second or third, they accepted the challenge to keep her from scoring. Great players create challenges out of adversity instead of being threatened by it.

3. Control the controllables. Focus on what you can control in the situation—namely your reactions, focus, confidence and attitude. By controlling the controllables, you will be able to stay calm as you figure out the best way to overcome the adversity. Not surprisingly, the cause of the adversity is typically outside of your control anyway.

4. Take it one at a time. Play in the present moment by letting go of past problems and not worrying about future concerns. If you stay in the present moment and play the game one pitch at time, you make the game much more manageable for your teammates. Remember that you cannot change the past, but you can always do something about the present.

5. Persist. Coaches advocate a persistent approach to adversity, and rightfully so. The sporting world and "real world" are filled with numerous examples of people who suffered through losses, mistakes and problems before they ever achieved success. Typically, losers are the people who didn't realize how close they were to success when they gave up. Giving up is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and gives you absolutely no chance of being successful.

Remember, you've got a much better chance of being successful when you go to battle as a mentally tough player who knows how to overcome adversity.

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GUIDELINES FOR CALLING PITCHES

(Compilation of Information from Vanessa Glasscock, Jenelle Zook and Sharon Drysdale's
Complete Handbook of Winning Softball)

FASTBALL to a(n)/ when...

- Weak hitter
- Hitcher or late swinger
- Batter with an upper cut/
- Batter who stands up in the box
- Batter who holds the bat high or low
- Steal situation
- Need a strike in a particular location (usually pitch with most accuracy)

CHANGE-UP OR KNUCKLE to a/when...

- Pull hitter
- Hyper/anxious hitter
- Hitter with a long stride
- Batter who stands up in the box
- Batter who stands away from the plate
- Batter who bails
- 2-0 or 3-1 count

DROP to a/when...

- Chop swinger /slapper
- Batter who stands tall or upright
- Batter who stands back in the box
- Batter who holds the bat head high
- Runners in scoring position
- Need a ground ball

RISE to a/when...

- Hitcher
- Chop swinger/slapper
- Batter with an upper cut/ Baseball swing
- Croucher
- Batter with a long stride
- Batter who stands either up or back in the box
- Batter who holds the bat head high or low
- Bunt situation
- Need a fly ball/pop-up

CURVE to a/when...

- Batter who stands back in the box
- Batter who crowds the plate or stands away from the plate
- Batter who bails
- Batter with a closed or open stance

Screw

- brush back batter
- lefty slapper