

# Marine City Baseball

## Throwing

### Fundamental checklist and drills

#### PART I – Throwing / Playing Catch

##### **First**

I honestly believe this (throwing / warming up) needs to be done with a purpose. Think about it, as a coach or dad how many times have we said hey, “do you want to play catch” or “alright go get loose” and the players walk down the foul line drop the ball 5 times on the way and when they start “warming up” it ends up being fetch?

##### **Second**

Do not ever under estimate the importance of making sure kids receive / catch the ball with their arms bent, glove close to body, and hands together. This allows them to get rid of the ball quicker.

##### **Third**

Try and incorporate fielding and position related drills to warming up / playing catch. This forces players to focus more and gets them moving and understanding the sense of urgency they need to have when a ball is put in play.

#### *Throwing*

1. We always try and utilize four seams of the baseball. When you do, the throw is going to be “the most true” toward the player it is intended for. Also when you utilize four seams of the baseball you are able to hold the widest part of the baseball.
2. When throwing:
  - a. Make sure the ball is as close to finger tips as possible. We don’t want the ball back in the hand against a players fingers. This is often referred to as “choking” or “cupping” the ball and often times when a player does this the throw is short because it has no carry. Choking or cupping prevent good wrist snap, which is essential.
  - b. We want to do the best we can to keep our shoulders in line with where we want the ball to go. DON’T point glove this will cause the front side (especially shoulder) to open and the front shoulder to be undisciplined. We teach to have a bent front arm (obviously at elbow and make 90 angle with forearm and upper part of arm.
  - c. We want try and keep our fingers and wrist on top of the baseball and behind it. A lot of times a player will have his hands around the baseball and the spin from the way the ball is released will cause the ball to work its way up the right field line.

- d. We want to try and keep the elbow up. This allows a player to get better wrist action, better carry, and incorporates the shoulder relieving stress. Additionally the ball will stay on the same plane / height as it travels through the air. If the elbow isn't up, the ball will take off and gain height as it is released and travels.

One of the most important things to address when throwing is, eventually players need to understand the importance of release points, getting rid of ball quickly, and throwing from the position they fielded it at.

For example, infielder field the ball is stable, bent, athletic stance. They need to get accustomed to throwing the ball from the same position. Fielding a groundball with a low center of gravity and standing up wastes time. They need to understand the philosophy field low – throw low.

### 3. Drills to incorporate:

#### ***Drill notes:***

1. *Drills such as these (LETTERS A-G) listed below should take about 15-20 minutes. Obviously they will take a little longer the 1<sup>st</sup> few times you do them, because of instruction time to ensure players are doing them correctly.*

#### **A. Wrist**

- a. Sitting down, hold your forearm upright with non - throwing hand, place ball properly in throwing hand and simply snap wrist preventing forearm from moving to get good wrist action and rotation on ball. A good distance to start this drill is have partners 8' or so apart and adjust accordingly.

\*While players are doing this drill it is good to make sure ball is on finger tips, not back in hand against fingers. (This will vary based on size of players hand.)

#### **B. Upper half #1**

- a. Stand up spread feet shoulder width or slightly more depending on size of player, have them slightly rock back and throw ball to partner without moving feet.
- b. Need to have bend in knees to incorporate hips
- c. Make sure ball is being released out in front of face. Players should be able to see ball when it slides off finger tips

#### **C. Upper half #2**

- a. Have the two players stand facing one another, having feet shoulder width apart, with knees slightly bent
- b. When player a throws to player b he needs to rotate his hips and torso so the shoulders are parallel to where he is throwing the ball.

#### ***Drill notes***

1. *Do not let them use lower half / legs. The point is to make sure when the players are playing catch they are getting their shoulders in line with the target or where the ball is intended to go.*

2. *It is also good to work off a straight line and straddle it so the players can rotate their shoulders so they are straight down that line. For lines on any of these drills you can use rope, chalk, garden hoses etc.*

#### **D. Lower half**

- a. Stand square to partner and simply have them say right – left throw or left-right throw based on what hand they throw with.
- b. Make sure knees have some bend / flexibility to use and incorporate lower half of body while throwing.

#### **Drill notes**

1. *As players become more accustomed to positions, it is o.k. to have them separate the ball from glove at different slots. For example outfielders, we want them to be a little longer, so they are going to have a higher arm slot and longer release. Infielders and catchers need to be shorter and quicker.*

#### **E. Entire body / speed up be quick**

- a. Simply have players quickly catch and throw – get rid of baseball. Base distance on age, size, strength of players.

#### **F. 4 – corner drill (can use bases if outside)**

- a. Divide team into equal groups so each base is covered. Start at plate and have players catch and throw to next base. Make players receive the ball squared up to where it is coming from. This way they have to move feet and turn body to get themselves in proper throwing position.

\*To add to drill, time groups

\*Work drill each way. In other words start at home go to 1<sup>st</sup> base 1<sup>st</sup>. After a couple of reps start by throwing to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.

\*Again force the issue with catching the ball with hands together and knees bent. This will help them get rid of ball quicker and speed up the times.

#### **G. Star drill**

- a. Same intent as 4 – corner drill, but add a player on the mound. Each throw from each position has to come to mound as you work your way around field. Really forces issue with player on mound using feet, keeping hands together, staying square while receiving ball, and being true with shoulders.

#### **Other drills to consider**

#### **4. Build arm strength:**

To build arm strength we recommend doing a 7 series of 10 throws each. Base initial distance again on players age, size, and strength. For this it is important to match players up with somebody identical.

- a. Starting point 60’-90’ apart 10 throws and take 3-5 steps back
- b. Repeat this process 6 times.
- c. On the seventh, players come back to initial distance and throw the ball 10 times to partner as hard as they can making sure they really stay behind the ball, elbow is up, and they pull down to prevent ball from sailing

- d. You want to see good wrist snap and rotation of the ball. This will cause the ball to carry. If a player has lazy arm action, they will have no wrist snap.
- Important to remember and watch
- a. As players get farther apart they truly try to muscle ball and nothing is free and easy as it should be.
  - b. Players also will tend to throw the ball really high and gain relatively no distance. You do height, but don't allow players to over exaggerate it.
  - c. Will lock out knees and have no flex to use lower half
  - d. Force the issue with making sure players release ball out in front of face, otherwise they are just launching it like a grenade from behind their head / shoulders

\*For this to build arm strength it should be 3-4 times per week, and when available do it on football field. It gives players a good measuring stick.

## 5. Working on athleticism

- a. Have players run hard forward 5 steps on 45 to right and left stop, get shoulder in line and make throw.
- b. Do the same where players have to open hips and run on angle backwards on 45 to right and left stop, get shoulder in line and make throw. On this on also, we force a lot of players to take a step to get their body momentum going toward where they are throwing ball.
- c. Back player up and have him run 5 hard steps directly at person he is throwing ball to and throw it.
- d. Have player run directly at person he is throwing ball to and point with open hand or glove on way or the other and have player take a step that direction and throw ball.

**\*Note it is good to use lines or cones for landmarks so players have an idea when to stop and throw.**

### **Points of emphasis when doing these drills**

- a. In drill a and b it is very important players sink hips to stop, and if necessary take a small step or hop to ensure his body is in position to make solid throw and his feet are underneath him. A lot of players will want to drift away from where throw is suppose to go.
- b. In all the scenarios players will not want to have bent knees. They will be locked out standing straight up.

### **Reminders:**

- a. When playing catch, stress focusing on a certain area of partner as a target.
- b. Always incorporate catching with two hands.
- c. Incorporate body movement into throwing. Think about it, how many times is a player standing still to receive a ball hit at them, throw it, and catch it in the game of baseball.
- d. Use as many drills you can encourage competition as possible. This forces players to compete and work fast under pressure.

- e. Stretching is good before, but it is tough to stretch cool muscles. You gain more flexibility stretching after – this is more likely to help limit / prevent soreness.
- f. There is nothing wrong with requiring players to wear long sleeves (preferably not cotton) to stay warm and loose. With cotton, once you sweat and the movement slows down you get cold.
- g. Stress on how quick you receive and get rid of the ball. The word “transfer” is extremely popular in baseball. You don’t have to throw the ball hard to be quick and have good carry on your ball.

In conclusion,

Players / kids don’t understand the value of playing catch. I honestly don’t prefer to allow players to just play catch. Some train of thought and value needs to be involved, or your going to just stand their as a coach or parent getting extremely frustrated. This is part of the reason athletics at a young age have become so specialized.