

NorCal Conference Coaching Development

John Hudson

Agenda

- Introductions
- Philosophy Common to ALL Age Groups
- Key Skills and Knowledge – 6U
- Key Skills and Knowledge – 8U
- Key Skills and Knowledge – 10U
- Key Skills and Knowledge – 12U
- Key Skills and Knowledge – 14U
- Wrap-Up/Q&As

Introductions

- Myself
 - Involved in Girls Fastpitch for 12+ years
 - Coach, Board member, Umpire
- Others
 - Name and League Affiliation?
 - Role: Coach, Board Member, Parent, etc.?
 - What would like to takeaway from this breakout session?

Philosophy to instill at ALL Levels

- Softball should be FUN! (Keep it that way)....
- Fundamentals, fundamentals, fundamentals.....
- Safety (both physical and mental)
- Coach in role as TEACHER
 - Focus on PLAYER development
 - Teach the rules and skills
 - Motivate the player to always give best effort and strive for improvement
-

Key Skills and Knowledge – 6U

- **Rules:** Basepaths, Force out/Tag out; 3 outs per half inning; Introduce fielding positions; staying on base prior to “pitch”
- **Communication:** Number of outs; Situation
- **Throwing:** Grip; Feet position; Basic throwing mechanics (elbow position, strong front side, step with lead foot etc.); “pull” ball to target; wrist snap; Introduce shuffle step
- **Fielding:** Athletic starting position, Glove position for fielding grounders, throws, fly balls; introduce fielding fly balls (begin with rolled up socks)

Key Skills and Knowledge – 6U *(cont'd)*

- **Hitting:** Grip, Feet position, hitting “through” the ball; eyes stay on ball; DROPPING bat after contact
- **Baserunning:** where to run; running through first base; consequences of running past base other than 1st

Key Skills and Knowledge – 8U

- **Rules:** Reinforce Force out/Tag out; 3 outs per half inning; Knowing fielding positions; leadoffs after pitch is delivered, Caught flyball; Balls, Strikes, & Foulballs
- **Communication:** Number of outs; Situation
- **Throwing:** Grip; Feet position; Basic throwing mechanics (elbow position, strong front side, step with lead foot etc.); “pull” ball to target; wrist snap; Introduce shuffle step; Use throwing progression
- **Fielding:** Athletic starting position, Glove position for fielding grounders, throws, fly balls; fielding fly balls; round and charge through grounders; transition from fielding to throwing (footwork is critical);

Key Skills and Knowledge – 8U *(cont'd)*

- **Hitting:** Grip, Feet position, bat position; hitting “through” the ball; concept of tracking the ball, proper hand path; eyes stay on ball through contact
- **Baserunning:** Leadoff techniques at every base; introduce sliding (Figure 4)
- **Pitching:** Grip; starting feet position, staying long through the circle; land position, wrist snaps, wrist snaps, wrist snaps.....standing, one knee, etc; hand position at finish
- **Catching:** Familiarity with equipment; proper crouch; staying in crouch while receiving the ball

Key Skills and Knowledge – 10U

- **Rules:** “Hesitation” rule, Infield fly rule; dropped third strike
- **Communication:** Number of outs; INF situation/OF situation (“Hit ... , Fly ...”); Position responsibilities for communication, Introduce flyball communication
- **Throwing:** Reinforce good mechanics – use throwing progression program; proper ball spin; introduce cut-offs/relays; introduce crow-hops and long toss; introduce “throwing to the bag”
- **Fielding:** Position responsibilities (different situations); bunt defense; defensive rotations; proper backhand mechanics; fielding short hops; fielding a bunt; Outfield: introduce drop steps, running through the catch; back-up responsibilities

Key Skills and Knowledge – 10U *(cont'd)*

- **Hitting:** Reinforce grip and bat position, weight transfer; hand path (hands “inside” the ball, palm up/palm down at contact) hitting “through” the ball; reinforce tracking the ball, proper hand eyes stay on ball through contact; proper contact points; introduce proper bunt techniques
- **Baserunning:** Steals; master sliding; first base situations (“through”, “Turn and look”, “Go 2”); Reinforce proper leadoff techniques; Introduce tagging up; proper way of running the bases
- **Pitching:** Grip; starting feet position, staying long through the circle; land position, power line; walk throughs; wrist snaps; fastball mastery; introduce change-up; fielding positions; plate coverage
- **Catching:** Introduce blocking; introduce framing; proper way to receive the ball; throwing footwork; throws on steals; catching foul pops

Key Skills and Knowledge – 12U

- **Rules:** “Hesitation” rule, Infield fly rule, dropped third strike
- **Communication:** Number of outs; INF situation/OF situation (“Hit ...”, Fly ...”); Position responsibilities for communication, master flyball communication; base coverage communication; catcher communication for infield
- **Throwing:** Reinforce good mechanics – use throwing progression program; master cut-offs/relays; crow-hops; flips and leads
- **Fielding:** Situational defense/defensive rotations; introduce first and third plays; bunt defense; fielding a bunt; footwork for infielders; back-up responsibilities; master short hops and fielding bunts; Outfield: introduce “do or dies”; reinforce drop steps, running through the catch; running with glove tucked; back-up responsibilities – both to infield and to each other

Key Skills and Knowledge – 12U *(cont'd)*

- **Hitting:** Reinforce grip and bat position, weight transfer; hand path (hands “inside” the ball, palm up/palm down at contact) hitting “through” the ball; reinforce tracking the ball, proper hand eyes stay on ball through contact; proper contact points; master bunt techniques; introduce slapping if applicable
- **Baserunning:** Steals; master sliding; first base situations (“through”, “Turn and look”, “Go 2”); Reinforce proper leadoff techniques; Tagging up; Proper angles and watching coaches running the bases; first and third plays
- **Pitching:** Grip; starting feet position, staying long through the circle; land position, power line; walk throughs; wrist snaps; continue mastery with fastball and change; introduce change-up; fielding position; back-up responsibilities; plate coverage
- **Catching:** Master blocking and framing; receive the ball; throwing footwork; throws on steals/pickoffs; catching foul pops; recognizing batter position for pitch selection; proper techniques for plays at the plate

Key Skills and Knowledge – 14U

- **Rules:** “Hesitation” rule, Infield fly rule, dropped third strike
- **Communication:** Number of outs; INF situation/OF situation (“Hit ...”, Fly ...”); Position responsibilities for communication, master flyball communication; base coverage communication; catcher communication for infield
- **Throwing:** Reinforce good mechanics – use throwing progression program; master cut-offs/relays; crow-hops; flips and leads
- **Fielding:** Situational defense/defensive rotations; master first and third plays; bunt defense; fielding a bunt; footwork for infielders; back-up responsibilities; master short hops and fielding bunts; Outfield: introduce “do or dies”; reinforce drop steps, running through the catch; running with glove tucked; back-up responsibilities – both to infield and to each other

Key Skills and Knowledge – 14U *(cont'd)*

- **Hitting:** Reinforce grip and bat position, weight transfer; hand path (hands “inside” the ball, palm up/palm down at contact) hitting “through” the ball; reinforce tracking the ball, proper hand eyes stay on ball through contact; proper contact points; master bunt techniques; continue work on slapping (if applicable); 2-strike approach
- **Baserunning:** Steals; master sliding; first base situations (“through”, “Turn and look”, “Go 2”); Reinforce proper leadoff techniques; Tagging up; Proper angles and watching coaches running the bases; first and third plays
- **Pitching:** Master pitch command; Introduce new pitches; Pitch location (especially with 2 strikes); fielding position; back-up responsibilities; plate coverage
- **Catching:** Master blocking and framing; receive the ball; throwing footwork; throws on steals/pickoffs; catching foul pops; recognizing batter position for pitch selection; plays at the plate

Wrap-Up/Q&As

Resources

- Internet:

<http://www.softballexcellence.com>

<http://www.eteamz.com/fastpitch/instruction/tips/>

- Books: (previewable on books.google.com)

“Coaching Fastpitch Softball Successfully”; Kathy Veroni

“Softball Coaching Bible”; National Fastpitch Coaches Association