

**TGCA SUMMER CLINIC 2004 – Softball Subvarsity Presentation**  
**“What to do when your head coach says, ‘Take the JV by yourself’”**  
**Defensive Strategies & Drills that can be used in a 1 coach practice situation**  
**By Billy Hicks, Sweeny High School**

I. Introduction

- A. Yes, this is a sub-varsity presentation, but this can be used on the varsity level also, (I have to do this same ritual just about everyday.)
- B. No, I'm not the guru of drills – I have begged, borrowed, and stole many of the ideas that I will speak about today from other coaches
- C. Don't be afraid to use drill books to help out. I use Dianne Baker's (TWU) practice drill book to get some of my ideas, and have adapted many drills from her ideas.
- D. Don't be afraid to ask questions. You may not always get the answers that you want, but keep asking, and you will soon find out the answers that you need.
- E. Don't be afraid to use your players to help run the drills. In fact, you must have them help out running the drills in order to get more work done during your practice time.

II. Philosophies

- A. I run, at an average, a 2-hour practice. A little more at the beginning – a little less near the end (whether we are in the playoff hunt or not). After 2 hours, you start to lose the focus of your players, your assistant coaches (who may not even like softball), and even yourself.
- B. I hate to have players standing around. I would rather then help run a drill because they are still using softball skills during this time they otherwise would be standing around.
- C. Don't overdo it!! Don't have so many things going on at one time where you can't observe and supervise the practice properly. Two things can then happen – your players won't get the instruction they need and deserve, and since they don't see you as often, they will try to slack off (remember – they are kids).

III. Stretching / Warm up

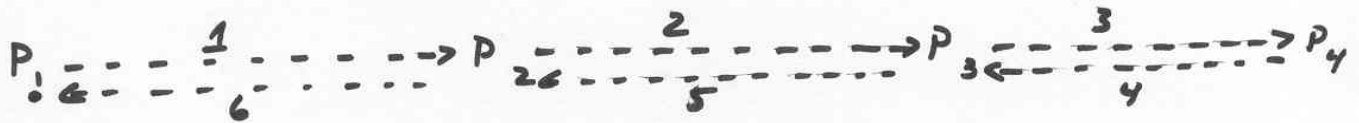
- A. Everybody basically does about the same thing. We do what we have to do to prepare the body for practice. We perform the same stretches as everyone else does, but we do have a few extra little things to simulate different motions in throwing, move the blood around, or just do something different.
  - 1. Lawnmower pulls (and move up to throwing position)
  - 2. Mix mud
  - 3. Wax on / wax off
  - 4. Marine jumping jacks
  - 5. Dive drills
  - 6. Seat rolls (with and without softballs – works on agility and with balls it adds concentration).
- B. Again, our throwing warm up is probably the same as everyone else, but we don't throw first if we are going to do hitting stations first. Things that we do everyday when we throw are as follows (remember this is not burn out).
  - 1. One knee short toss.
  - 2. Throwing from 40, 60, and 80 feet.
  - 3. Long toss (over 100 feet)
  - 4. Multiple ball throwing – SPEED / CONCENTRATION (I feel that these two drills make the players concentrate and focus more on being accurate and to make sure they don't get hit with a ball from the other player.)
    - a. 2 balls
      - i. Each pair of throwers has two balls, one for each person. When the first player throws, the second player catches the ball and throws the 2<sup>nd</sup> ball as she catches the first.
    - b. 3 balls
      - i. Each pair of throwers has three balls, two for one player and one for the other. It is the same as two balls, but is quite a bit faster.

IV. More throwing drills

- A. Why Relay Drills? – Very important for all players, not just outfielders. We emphasize that the player making the relay throw follow a couple of strategies. Doing this skill correctly can help your players throw out players trying to get an extra base on you.
  - 1. Move your body to catch the ball on the glove side of your body.
  - 2. Always turn to throw towards the glove side.
- B. Stationary Relay Drill

1. Use this to work on the basic skills of making a relay throw. You can alternate positions of players as you see fit.

## STATIONARY RELAY DRILL

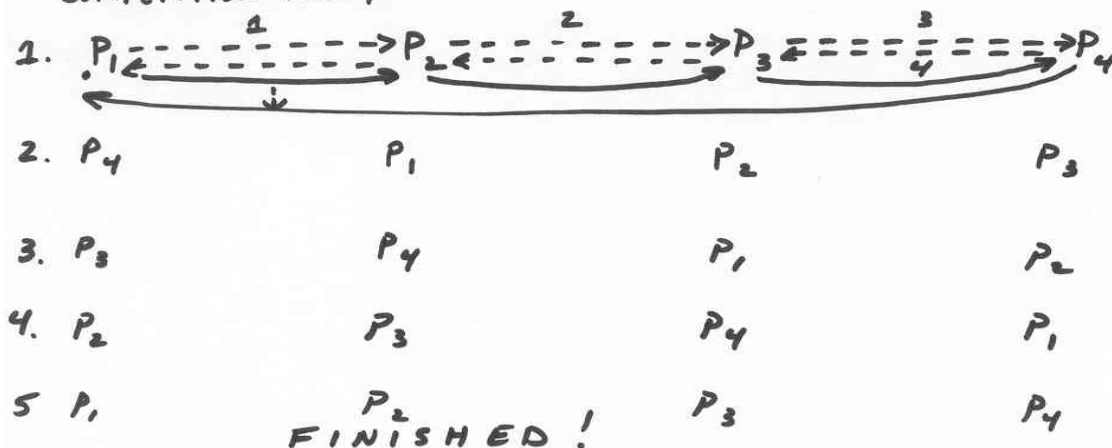


$P_4$  is optional if you don't have room.

### C. Competition Relay Drill

1. The kids love to compete, so give the winning team a reward for winning the drill, or for just doing it with the correct skills.
2. Once the player makes the second throw in the drill, they run to replace the person who threw the ball to them, except for the player at the end of the line, who sprints to replace the player at the other end. The only throw that is different is the toss or hand off from  $P_1$  to  $P_4$  coming from the other end of the line (get a little conditioning in also).
3. Once the 4<sup>th</sup> rotation is complete, the players sit down. The team that sits down first is the winner (all players must be in their original spots!!)
4. This is how the players will be positioned after each rotation.

### COMPETITION RELAY



### D. Relay Drills from Positions

1. In my program now, on all balls hit to the outfielders that are fielded in front, if there is a play at home plate, we relay or cut-off with the pitcher with the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman as the catcher's backup (because my pitcher is one of my best athletes and is the leader of the team and I have her already in position to make the plays). On anything hit to the fence, we set up relays with our shortstop or 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman with the pitcher as their backup.
2. As part of the regular fielding practice, I (or players who are not in the drill) will hit balls so the outfielders can field in front and make the proper throw to the pitcher for the relay. As the pitcher is catching the ball, I will yell where I want the ball to go (Home, 1, 2, or 3). I also add, a call to throw the ball to another base after the initial tag is made to remind the fielders that there might be other runners on base and not to fall asleep. Then I will hit balls in the gaps and over the fielders to the fence so the SS / 2B can work on their relay throws in the same manner as the pitchers did before. Finally, I can add base runners to make the drill as live as possible.

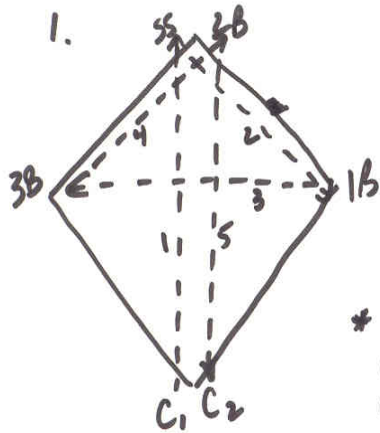
### E. Infield Throwing Drills

1. When I am by myself coaching, I put the outfielders in the infield positions to work on their short accuracy and to keep them throwing.

#### a. Star Drill

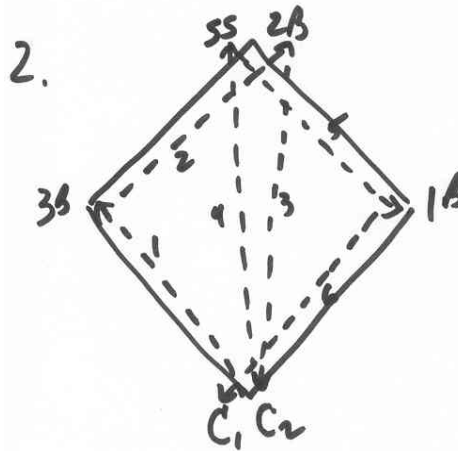
- i. Here are a couple of examples of various star drills and you can make up your own!!

## STAB DRILLS



1. C<sub>1</sub> - SS
2. SS - 1B
3. 1B - 3B
4. 3B - 2B
5. 2B - C<sub>2</sub>

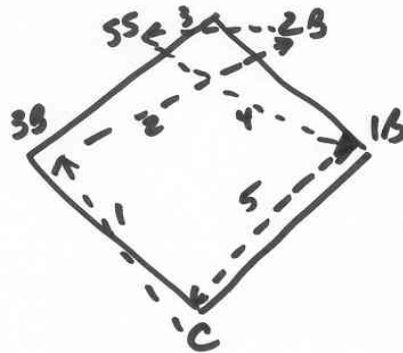
\* You can run the drill in reverse or with 2 balls.



1. C<sub>1</sub> - 3B
2. 3B - 2B
3. 2B - C<sub>2</sub>
4. C<sub>2</sub> - SS
5. SS - 1B
6. 1B - C<sub>1</sub>

### b. Round the Horn

## ROUND THE HORN



1. C - 3B
2. 3B - 2B
3. 2B - SS
4. SS - 1B
5. 1B - C

### c. 2 Ball Around the Horn

i. This is the same as the previous drill, but you add a ball. Once the first ball goes around the first time, add the 2<sup>nd</sup> ball when the 2B throws to the SS. **IMPORTANT!!!** – If a ball is dropped, leave it alone – just add another ball when the 2B throws to the SS on the next rotation!

### d. 3 Ball Around the Horn

i. We might try this drill one day!!!

## V. Infield / Outfield Drills

### A. Full Infield / Outfield "Everybody in a hurry drill"

1. In the old days, we used to take full infield/outfield before each game. In order to get everybody in the game enough warm up during the allotted time (usually 10 minutes), we would use this drill. This drill will wear you out if you are not used to it. It basically goes as follows:

a. Coach is near the pitcher's circle with a bat and full bucket of balls.

b. When starting, the coach will hit balls to the LF, then CF, then RF, in order. As soon as the coach hits the ball to LF, then right away you must hit another to CF, and then right away to RF, and continue until the bucket is empty.

c. When the LF catches her ball, she throws it to 3B and the 3B either throws it to C<sub>1</sub>, or tosses it to E<sub>1</sub> who gets it to C<sub>1</sub> and she puts the ball in her bucket.

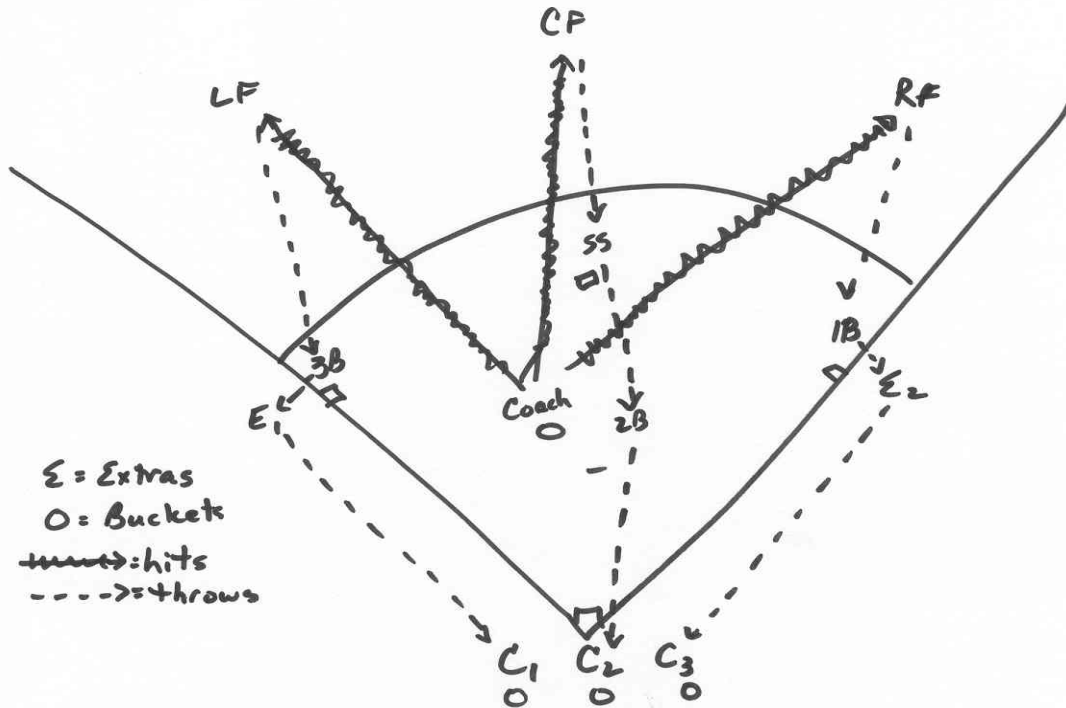
d. The same goes for CF, but she throws to the SS at 2<sup>nd</sup>, who throws to the 2B near the circle (that way there won't be any balls thrown over the coach), and then to C<sub>2</sub>, who puts the ball in her bucket.

e. Finally, the same goes for the RF, who throws to 1B, who then goes to either E<sub>2</sub> or C<sub>3</sub> and it goes in C<sub>3</sub>'s bucket.

**YOU WILL BE AMAZED AT HOW MANY BALLS YOU CAN HIT IN A SHORT TIME!!!**

f. Then bring the outfielder up to back up the infielders and go through your infield work.

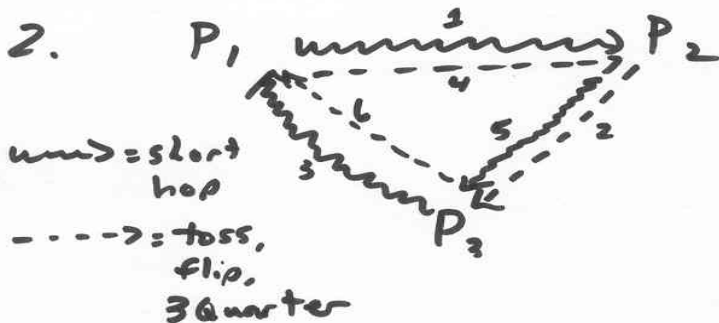
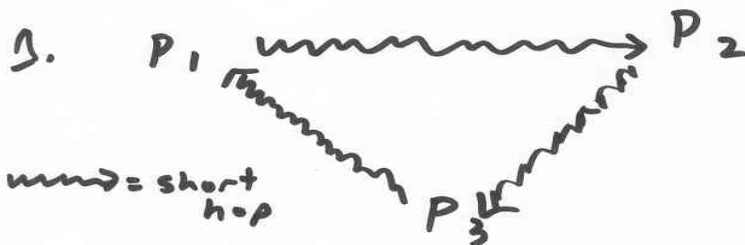
# FULL INFIELD/OUTFIELD "IN A HURRY"



## B. Toss/Flip/3 Quarter Short Hop Drill

1. We use this drill (odd numbers in each group) to work on our tosses, flips, and 3 quarter throws after receiving a short hop.
  - a. Short hops to every one around the group.
  - b. Short hops to toss.
  - c. Short hops to flips (reverse direction)
  - d. Short hops to 3 quarter throws (spread out)

## TOSS / FLIP / 3 QUARTERS



1. Short hop P<sub>1</sub> - P<sub>2</sub>
2. Toss P<sub>2</sub> - P<sub>3</sub>
3. SH P<sub>3</sub> - P<sub>1</sub>
4. Toss P<sub>1</sub> - P<sub>2</sub>
5. SH P<sub>2</sub> - P<sub>3</sub>
6. Toss P<sub>3</sub> - P<sub>2</sub>

### C. Infield Tandem Drills

1. You get your outfielders and the nonstarters (put them back in the drill later for their work) to run this drill. Below is the positioning of everyone on the field. The positions labeled as "O" are your outfielders and extras to run the drills. Later there are drills for the infielders to run for the outfielders. (One observation – the 1<sup>st</sup> time I did this, the outfielders didn't make the infielders work real hard until the infielders ran the outfield drills and ran their tails off. Then next time we did this work, the outfielders made the infielders work much harder to pay for the day before, but it made us better as a team!)

a. Catchers (They work independent of everyone else here. All balls thrown to the catchers are from O1 and the C gets balls back to O2 to put into their bucket.)

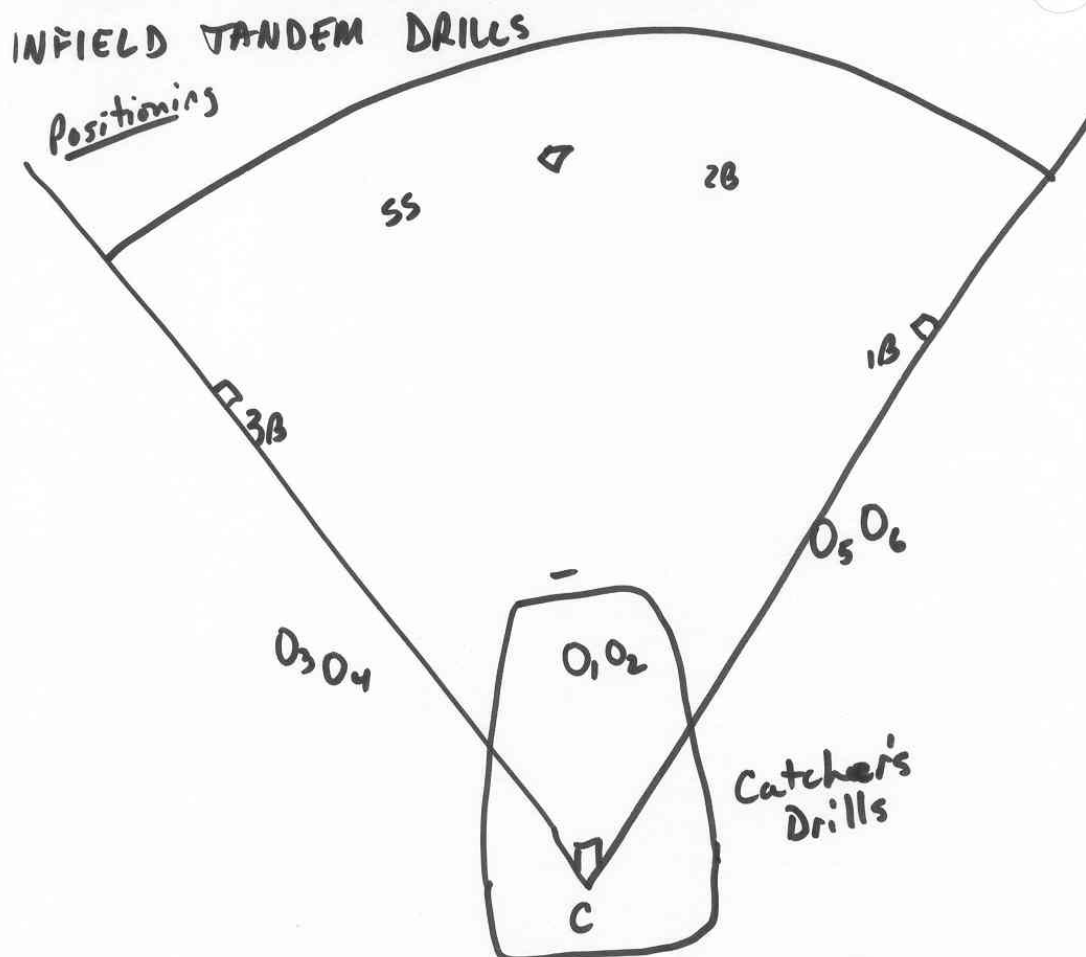
- i. Block balls in front
- ii. Block balls to right side
- iii. Block balls to left side
- iv. Block balls to side (alternate)
- v. Slide drills to fence on right side
- vi. Slide drills to fence on left side
- vii. Slide drills to fence with pitcher covering home (right, left, alternate)
- viii. When the rest of the infielders are finished, then they can work on their pick off throws to the bases.

b. Tandems (these are going at the same time as the catchers, so there should be 3 things happening at once.)

- i. O5 – SS – 1B – O6 /// O3 – 2B – 3B – O4
- ii. O5 – SS – 3B (flips & throws) – O6 /// O3 – 2B (tosses & throws) – 1B – O4
- iii. O5 – 3B – 1B – O6 /// O3 – SS – 2B (tosses & throws) 3B – 1B – O4
- iv. O5 – 1B – 3B – O6 /// O3 – 2B – SS (flips & throws) – O4

c. Tandems part 2 (double plays)

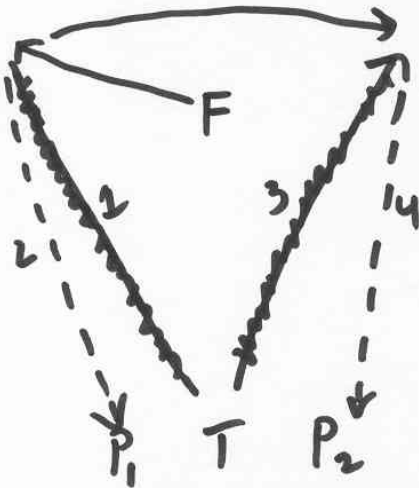
- i. O5 – SS – 2B (tosses & throws) – 1B – O6, O3 – 3B – 1B – O4
- ii. O5 – 3B – 2B – 1B – O6, O3 – SS – 1B – O4
- iii. O5 – 2B – SS (flips & throws) – 1B – O6, O3 – 3B – 1B – O4



#### D. 6 Ball Outfield Fly Drills

1. You have one person ready to catch fly balls about 30 feet away from the thrower (or coach). To begin the thrower will throw a fly ball to the outfielder's right and she will have to chase it down. When she catches the ball, she makes a throw to the player to the same side as the thrower. As soon as the fielder throws the ball back in, the thrower throws another fly ball in the air to the fielder's left and she has to chase it down. When she makes that catch, again she throws the ball back in to the player on the same side as the thrower. Continue until the fielder has caught 6 fly balls.
2. You can alternate which side the fly balls are thrown to, or throw consecutive balls to the same side, or throw balls over the shoulder and in front.
3. This is also a good grounder drill for the infielders.

### 6 Ball Outfield Drill



F - Fielder  
P - Player  
T - Thrower

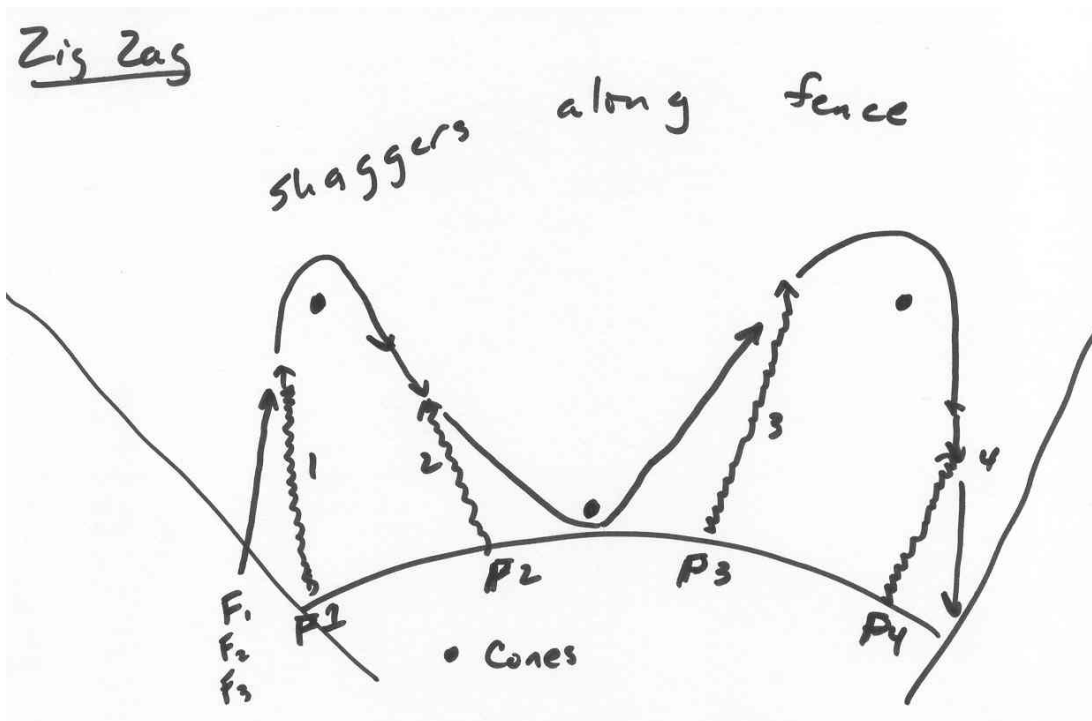
~~~~~> Fly ball  
————> Running Path  
-----> Throw

1. Fly ball to Fielder's Right
2. F to P<sub>1</sub> (same side as fielded fly)
3. Fly to Fielder's Left
4. F to P<sub>2</sub>
5. Continue until 6 flies are thrown.

When complete, F to P<sub>1</sub>,  
P<sub>2</sub> to T, T to P<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>2</sub> to F

#### E. Zig Zag Outfield Drill

1. Position your infielders around the infield to throw fly balls to outfielders. See diagram below for the set up and outline of the drill.
2. Throw 1 is over the left shoulder of the fielder. She should catch the ball and toss it to the fence. Continue running around the cone.
3. Throw 2 is in front of the fielder so she can charge the fly (do not stop). If she catches the ball, she can toss it to the infield as she rounds cone #2.
4. Throw 3 is the same as throw 1 and throw 4 is the same as throw 3.
5. When complete, reverse the drill to simulate the over the right shoulder catch.
6. You may add as many cones as you want.



#### VI. A couple of other things to do...

A. You can make live batting practice go much better when you train your players how to hit infield and outfield like you do. It just takes a little practice during offseason, or for a few minutes during practice to teach this. When I played a lot of softball, I hit the ball much better for line drives during the high school season when I was hitting balls to my players at every practice. When the high school season was over and I didn't hit everyday, my hitting for the team that I played for suffered greatly and I was hitting pop flies with regularity.

#### B. Live batting practice

1. Use your players to hit balls between pitches.
2. Set up a player and catcher on each foul line between home and 1<sup>st</sup> and home and 3<sup>rd</sup>. (Use nets or screens to be safe, or you had better be ALERT!)
3. Have the players hit balls across the infield between pitches and have them fielded and thrown back to the catchers before the next pitch.
4. This can also be done in the outfield at the same time with a player and catcher positioned outside the foul lines in the outfield.

#### VII. Conclusions and follow up

A. You as a coach can still be effective when you are by yourself. It takes planning and effort, plus a little training of your players to help out. There have many times as a head coach in the smaller schools or when I started a program where I have been the only coach and have had to run practices like this. The final thing to know is that you must also have some imagination to try new ideas and to evaluate those ideas to make your team better. Sometimes a new drill that you find doesn't just work with your players, but you may have to adapt to make the drills work for your players.

#### VIII. Contact Information (CURRENT AS OF FALL 2005)

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#### IX. NOTES