

Here is the link to the varsity schedule. We'd love to see you guys at games!

<http://www.unioncountyconferencenj.org>

Below are some drills that I thought you all might like. I am including all grade levels in this email because you can very easily alter each of these drills to make them age appropriate....so really, with a little creativity and modification, you can infuse all four of these drills in your practices!

Kindergarten and 1st Grade Drill:

Egg Toss

What you will need: Eggs

When to use the Drill: Use this drill after the basics of catching are understood. You should use this drill if you see that the girls are having trouble "giving" with a thrown ball. Often, young players will hold their gloves out and leave it in that same spot when the ball enters – they need to learn how to give with the ball so it doesn't pop out as easily.

What the Drill Focuses on: The drill focuses on soft hands while catching.

Directions:

1. Line the girls up across from each other.
2. Coach should control which side the eggs start on and when the girls throw.
3. With each successful catch, have the girls on one side take a step back.

Variations: You can do this drill with water balloons when it gets warmer.

2nd and 3rd Grade Drill:

Charging Drill

What you will need: Softballs

When to use the Drill: This drill is useful after the girls have a basic understanding of fielding a ground ball.

What the Drill Focuses on: This drill will begin to add on to basic fielding understanding by having the girls to charge the ball. Too often I see young players standing still, waiting for the ball to reach them. This drill reminds players that they need to move to the ball even if it's hit right to them.

Directions: (This best works in small groups – if you have 2 or 3 coaches to help out, it would be better).

1. Group the kids into 3 different groups – Group 1 at 3B, Group 2 at short stop and Group 3 at second base.
2. Coaches should line up facing their line, out in front of home plate.
- 3.

Group 1 at 3B: You are in charge of teaching charging a ball that is hit right at you. Players need to get in ready position, you can give them a slow rolling ball, have them charge, field and throw to you. Make sure they set their feet. They can rotate to the back of your line.

Group 2 at SS: You need to teach the girls how to charge a ball laterally, to their glove side. Players will get in their ready position, you roll them a slow ball up the middle (for a righty, this would be their glove side). Have them charge the ball, getting behind the ball if they can. Have them set their feet and throw back to you.

Group 3 at 2B: You are in charge of teaching charging a ball laterally, to their non-glove side. Players will start in their ready position at second base (the position, not the bag) and a coach will roll a slow ball toward their non glove side (up the middle for righties). Player will charge, try to get behind the ball, set their feet and throw it back.

For this, it's important that the roll is slow enough that they can feel themselves moving to get the ball. If it's too easy for some players, try not to increase the speed of the roll, try and give them a further toss at the same pace. If at all possible, they should be getting behind the ball to field it – no backhands or standing and reaching. They also need to plant their feet before they throw it back.

4. After each group has worked with their station for a few rounds, they can move to the next one.

Variations: You can do this drill with or without gloves. You can place markers or cones on the field if players are having trouble visualizing where to go. You can use a soccer ball if you feel like they need an easier target. If they get really good at it, you can hide from them which direction the ball will be rolled.

4th and 5th Grade Drill:

Zig Zag Throw

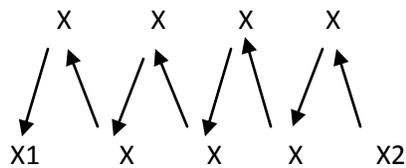
What you will need: Softballs.

When to use the Drill: This drill is useful after players understand the mechanics of throwing and throwing footwork. It's a good warm-up.

What the Drill Focuses on: This drill is great to practice quick release, footwork, throwing off the run (setting your feet).

Directions:

1. Set the girls up in a zig zag pattern (see below). The first girl in line throws to the next girl in line who is diagonally across from her. The girls follow their throws. When you get to the end of the line, the last person with the ball sprints all the way back to the beginning of the line, sets her feet (don't let them throw off the run) and makes a good throw to start the zig zag back up again.
2. Pay attention to footwork. Their feet should be moving BEFORE they receive the ball, not after. They should be catching the ball in a position that makes the next throw quick and easy.



X1 runs all the way to X2's spot to restart the zig zag.

Variations:

You can reverse the direction of the zig zag throw. You can change direction in the middle and have the girls adjust their feet on the fly. You can increase and decrease the distance between players.

6th, 7th and 8th Grade Drill:

Bunting Game

What you will need: Softballs, bats, helmets, bases.

When to use the Drill: This drill is best used after the basics of bunting and bunt defense is understood.

What the Drill Focuses on: This drill focuses on executing bunts and executing bunt defense. It's really helpful to create game-like bunt situations both offensively and defensively. I would use a live pitcher if you can....if you don't have anyone who can throw strikes, then make it coach pitch. Each team can get as many turns as you think they need.

Directions:

1. Make two teams. Have one team take the field while one bats.
2. Players at bat can attempt to get on base by sacrifice bunting, bunting for a base hit or slapping (righty and lefty). By allowing the girls to slap, it forced the defense to play truer...if you only allow bunts, your corners will play ridiculously close to the batter and bunt defense will be too easy.
3. Depending on how many players you have, you can have a girl from the offense base-run to practice that as well. Rotate the base runner after each hitter so everyone gets a chance.
4. Team with the most runs or with the most total bases wins.

Variations:

You can change this up by coaches giving signs to batters. That way they will be practicing their signals as well as executing their bunts.

You can mix up where the runners start to change the bunt situation. For example, when there is a runner on 1B, SS covers 2B and Left Field Covers 3B. When there's a runner on 2B and they bunt, the SS covers 3B and center field covers 2B. Players playing 2B always cover first on a bunt.

You can also keep score rather than counting runs. Every bunt and slap that is properly executed, they can get a point. I would subtract a point for a popped up bunt. You can make the rules to be able to challenge them as you see fit.

GOOD LUCK! Let me know how it goes if you use any of these!

-Caitlin MacDonald