

## **BASE RUNNING DRILLS**

### Tennis ball drop and run

The runner is on the base in her ready position (ready for her lead off). Another player or coach is a short distance from her, in the basepath from 1st to 2nd base. The coach holds a tennis ball at eye height. As the ball is dropped on a piece of flat wood, the runner leaves the base and attempts to catch the ball before it bounces off the wood a second time. The distance for this drill is determined by the skill level of the runners, but start out close so that she can easily catch the ball and slowly move back to challenge her.

### SCRAMBLED EGGS

A great drill for sliding!! Have 1/4th the players line up behind first base, 1/4th the players line up behind second base, 1/4 the players line up behind 3rd base, and 1/4th the players line up at home. You will need to have a dozen or so eggs (not hardboiled). Give 2 eggs (one for each hand) to the first player in line at home. She has to run to first base and slide, with her hands up so as not to break the eggs. The first player in line at first base, gets the eggs from the runner and runs to second base and slides. This continues until all the players have run and slid.

### Base running Situations

Split the team in half and form two lines at home plate, one staggered ahead and inside the other. The coach stands at the pitcher's circle. On the coach's cue, the lead runners in both lines take off. One runs straight through first base as if she is beating out a groundball, the other makes a turn and continues into second. You now have runners at first and second and two lines of runners still at home. At the next cue, the drill continues in the same manner but the runner on second now rounds third and scores while the runner on first takes third. Now every base should be occupied. It continues again, with the runner on third tagging up and scoring. Two runners will now score each time the coach signals. The runners will then return to the end of the opposite line and the bases will always remain loaded.

### BELT

Resistance Drills Equipment required: A belt and a short length of rope (about 10-12 feet long). Put the belt around the waist of a runner and tie the rope to the back of the belt. Have another player grasp the rope and stand behind the runner with the rope taut. Have the runner lean forward while the other player holds the rope to keep her from falling. The proper running position is at about a 5-10 degree angle off vertical with her feet pointing forward, the back foot about 6 inches behind and 6 inches to the right (or left) of the lead foot. With the help of the rope holder, have the runner get into her running position and when she is, say "GO". The runner runs about 10 yards with the rope holder applying resistance. You do not want too much resistance, just enough to keep the runner in the proper running position. Do this 2 times then have the runner "free" sprint over the same distance while the rope holder is putting on the belt. Then switch positions.

### OUT OF THE BOX

Out of the Box Drill: This drill is similar to the base drill, but this time the runner is a batter. The dropper is lined up a short distance from home plate in the base path to 1st base. Have the batter take a normal swing with a "bat" (use a fake bat, or top of a batting tee). As the "bat" enters the impact or contact zone, drop the tennis ball and have the batter run out of the batters box and catch the ball before it bounces on the wood a second time. Once again, start out at a short distance and increase the distance to challenge the batters.

NOTE: Make sure batters weight is balanced and not leaning forward or backward or she will take unnecessary steps to regain her balance before running for the ball. Also, watch the right arm and elbow (right handed batters). The proper movement is to drive the elbow back and outside the hip to initiate the running sequence. Finally, watch the "bat" to make sure she does not "whip" the bat back to the right side and then run. The "bat" should be dropped by the left hand after the right hand has released it. This drill teaches two things. The first is to get out of the batters box quickly and with the least amount of steps and wasted movement. The second thing it teaches is to hit the ball and run. Not to HIT THE BALL, ADMIRE YOUR HIT AND THEN SAUNTER TO FIRST BASE.

### BALLS OF THE FEET

First of all, you must realize that the game of softball is played entirely on the balls of your feet, regardless of what position you play. There are only 2 times when your heels should hit the ground: 1) In between pitches when you are relaxing 2) In the dugout in between innings.

To generate more speed you must realize the dynamics of running. If you are running with your heels hitting the ground first, you are actually pulling the ground toward you. This is not generating any speed. When you run on the balls of your feet and leaning forward, you are pushing the ground away from you and this generates power and speed.

### Skipping rope jumps:

One of the best drills I have ever seen to improve strength in your stride (running stride) is to do static jumps. This is done by stretching a length of rope between two chairs or people (hold the rope very loosely). Hold the rope about waist high and from a standing start, on the balls of your feet, jump over the rope. You may have to start out lower, but get to the point where you can jump over a rope at waist high, then add a second rope a couple of feet away from the first. Jump the first rope and when you hit the ground, immediately jump over the second. This will improve your speed the first day you do it. Every day after that, you will see more and more speed.

The first few steps toward first base should be short, choppy steps and you must be still in a bit of a crouch and leaning forward. After about 10 feet, begin to straighten up just a bit and lean forward. When you reach almost half way to first base, begin to pump your arms as fast as you can. This will make your legs move faster, and don't stop until you go past first base.

The key to faster times out of the box and to first base is to run on the balls of your feet. With this drill players will be faster runners.

## **RUNNING GAMES**

### THUNDERBALL

This game has been played ever since the start of time. It is played with 2 teams. One team is at bat with a tee or soft-toss, the other team has two or more fielders (one third base, one first base, one outfielder etc). The batter hits the ball off the tee, or from a soft-toss, or a pitch as hard as she can and runs as many bases as she can until all fielders have received the ball. The last to receive the ball shouts "Thunderball". Keep score by counting bases reached before "Thunderball" is called. After all batters have batted, switch sides.

### FIRST AND THIRD

Split up your team into two teams and have the catcher on each team make up signs for her players. One of the teams will play defense in the field, while the other team runs the bases. The team running the bases will begin with a runner on both first and third, with the object being to score a run. This becomes a game of competition, with the team scoring the most points winning. The runner on first has only three pitches in which she must attempt to steal second base. A successful steal of second base will be worth one point, and a run scored will be worth three points. If the girl scores at second base and the other is out at home then they get one point and have one out. However, if the runner scores at home and the girl is out at second, the out does not count because the girl scored.

Defensively, the object is to stop the runner from scoring while also attempting not to give the runner second base on an easy steal. The catcher calls the play before the pitcher pitches the ball. Usually we play one or two innings and the losing team has to run sprints. This drill really helps during the games and the girls feel more comfortable about the steal when there is a runner on third base. Additionally, the catcher feels more comfortable throwing the ball down with a runner on third base

### Multi-Purpose Base Running Drill

This drill is an effective method of teaching and developing great base runners. Incorporating base running into batting practice teaches your players to be aggressive, smart and alert base runners. This can be done very easily by dividing your players into groups of four to take batting practice. One player will hit. The next hitter will warm-up on deck. The 3rd and 4th players will run "circuits" on the bases. These circuits are designated circuits that are listed and attached to the first baseman protection screen. Players will always run after they hit. We normally hit three times with at least 10 swings each.

#### The circuits are:

##### Circuit #1:

@ 1st base - Fake steal and read the contact to get to 2b. @ 2nd base - Get a "bounce" and score on a base hit.

##### Circuit #2:

@ 1st base - Hit & Run. Stop at 2B. @ 2nd base - "Two Outs" Bounce off-read contact to get to 3B.

@ 3rd base - Call for a Squeeze by the batter.

##### Circuit #3:

@ 1st base - Straight steal 2b.

@ 2nd base - Two Outs, Bases Loaded, Full Count. Moving on the pitch. Look In.

@ 3rd base - Tag and score on a fly ball.

I suggest that you always run circuits. You may change circuits by adding your own "actions". I always have screens at 1B and 2B during BP. I have the "CIRCUITS for the DAY" sheet posted on the "ROLL AROUND BP CAGE" and on each screen. The runners can refer to the sheet to see what they do on each circuit.

This drill improves reaction time, reading skills, general base running skills and conditions you players. It is important that they stretch and warm-up properly before performing this or any other drill.