

COACHING CONSISTENCY & CONFIDENCE

MH WARRIOR BASEBALL



ANCHORS

1. **Respect...** for other coaches, players, umps, fans
2. **Integrity...** encourage excellence in the little things, even when no one is watching
3. **Proactive communication...** both to parents AND our players
4. **HIGH expectations...** is there any greater gift for a young athlete?
5. **Work hard...** we will play how we practice
6. **Listen...** exemplify curiosity and patience
7. **HAVE FUN...** show up with great intent and positivity... the kids WILL follow!!!

PRACTICE PLAN BASICS

1. Expect everyone there on time
2. Ideal order
 - a. **Set the stage for the practice**
 - i. Revisit the anchors – inspire hard work and great listening!
 - ii. Tell the players what to expect in today's practice
 - iii. Appropriate age-based warmup
 - It's NOT about stretching... it's about warming up
 - Do it with structure, be organized, expect attention to this from players
 - Ex: high knees, butt kicks, shuffles, karaoke (crossovers), front squats, messie squats, arm circles BEHIND body and below ears (forward and back), planks
 - b. **Baserunning**
 - i. **PACE IS VERY IMPORTANT...** keep it moving to set the stage for the practice!
 - ii. Baserunning first creates efficiency as a teaching moment AND a warmup
 - iii. Home to 1st
 - Run STRAIGHT through the base... shortest distance is a straight line
 - Hit the FRONT part of the base
 - Break down in foul territory
 - Can be called OUT if we turn or make a move toward 2nd base
 - Third time through have a coach at SS with 1 or 4 fingers up
 - "Find the ball" to determine if they round or run straight through 1st
 - #1 means straight through 1st... #4 means make an aggressive turn
 - iv. Rounding 1st
 - Set up the turn at roughly the halfway point from home to 1st
 - Hit the INSIDE corner of the base (put a glove on the top of the base so they can't step there... ideally right foot, but not necessary)
 - Have a coach or cone just outside the 1st to 2nd baseline so they must lean left as they round toward 2nd and stay tight to the baseline
 - Push the defense to make them stop you on your turn
 - v. Leadoffs
 - 9-11's... be aggressive in your shuffle... DO IT EVERY PITCH!
 - 12's and up... right, left, shuffle, shuffle... be low... be athletic... be aggressive
 - vi. Hit a double
 - Same "rounding" fundamentals, but complete the double
 - Generally want to slide FEET first into the base as this is faster than going in standing up and safer than going head first
 - vii. Race with half at 2nd and half at home
 - Coach yells "GO" and they race... encourage great turns and competition
 - Encourages SCORING from 2nd on a base hit (say something like this in game... "make me stop you, be aggressive!")

- viii. Finally, discuss tagging up and pro play reads
 - Tagging up
 - Half-way if on 1st or 2nd (unless very deep and obviously going to be caught)
 - ALWAYS back to third on ANY ball in the air... remind them OFTEN
 - **Side note with 2 outs** to all baserunners (say something like this before the pitch... “Hey Joe, two outs, pro play on the ground, NO hesitation on a ball in the air, pick up my eyes, I’ll help you”)
 - “Pro Play”
 - Defines ground ball read with guys on 2nd only or 2nd and 3rd for the runner on 2nd
 - If at them or behind them, break to third (if guy on 3rd, ensure they go)
 - If in front of them, maintain lead, but wait for ball to be thrown to 1st and then break for 3rd
 - Ask them to explain to you during practice, before games, etc... remind them OFTEN in games from 3rd base coach (say something like this... “Hey Charlie, one out, pro play on the ground, make a good read in the air”)
 - Remember, this applies with 2 outs as well for a ball on the ground (say something like this... “Hey bud, two outs, pro play on the ground, NO hesitation on a ball in the air, pick up my eyes, I’ll help you”)

c. Throwing

- i. Ensure they do some “arm care” before throwing
- ii. Line up on the line... but DON’T stand on the foul line (standing on the line is bad form)
- iii. Proper 4 seam grip
 - “Open” part of the horseshoe should be on the index finger side
- iv. Order of operations
 - Hands together in front of chest
 - Glove hand... palm OPEN and toward your target, arm bent
 - Ball hand... should be “pointed toward SS” if you imagine this from the mound
 - Glove side pulls down
 - Throwing hand extends through the target and moves past the opposite knee
 - This gives the arm room and time to slow down... less injuries
- v. Throw long toss at least twice per week... encourage them to REALLY air it out
 - This is the best way to build arm strength
- vi. Starting at 11’s... start to mix in change-ups during throwing routine
- vii. Quick feet drill
 - Line up in the outfield across from each other... about 60 feet apart
 - Receive the ball deep with hands together... TEN fingers up
 - Throw the ball to the chest
 - Should be moving “through the ball” with feet moving as the ball is caught
 - Ideally, they catch the ball while landing on their back foot so the catch and throw happens in one motion
- viii. Flip drill (rundown play)
 - Same lines
 - Break toward the partner and run fast, SHOW the ball, flip when partner calls for it
 - Should receive the ball while moving toward the partner... closing the gap
 - If done correctly, rundowns will be done with ONE throw
 - Biggest mistake, the first player with the ball does not run hard at the baserunner

d. Defensive work

- i. All in infield
 - “Right left ready” to get ready for the ball to be hit... glove softly out in front
 - “Right left” through the ball... ideally with left foot landing as ball is received
 - Back of glove in dirt... work up, NOT down
 - This will help avoid the dreaded “flip” of the glove
 - Soft hands... it’s about “receiving” the ball, not “catching” it
 - Same for receiving a throw down on a steal: **get low... work up!**
 - Order of operations
 - Basic work with guys rotating to all positions (this may be limited at older ages)
 - Double plays
 - i. 2nd basemen, receive with left foot on base... quick step back
 - ii. SS, receive with right foot on base... gain momentum to 1st
 - iii. BOTH should work hard to get to the deep corner closer to 1st
 - iv. Receive deeply with “ten fingers up” to encourage quick transfer
 - **18 or 21 out drill... adds pressure to the practice**
- ii. All in outfield (maybe with a couple in the infield for cutoff work)
 - Catch the ball right above the face
 - NOT necessary to have two hands up
 - Run to ball WITHOUT glove up... then, put glove up as they close in on the ball
 - Coaches hit balls to the gaps so the guys have to talk to each other
 - Throw the ball on a LINE
 - Remind them that the ball WILL drift right for a righty!
- iii. Station work such as double plays, bunt defenses, catcher throwdowns
 - Could have pitching/catching (flat ground work is JUST fine) and hitting stations at the same time (ideally more soft toss than tee work)
 - Flip drills for middle infielders
 - Flip right from the glove... no separation
 - DRIVE with legs... straight arm pointed at your target (NO wrist flip)
- iv. Infield/outfield work **with baserunners**
 - Helps understand speed and timing
 - 1st and 3rd defenses (with signs)
 - Throw through to 2nd
 - Throw to 2nd baseman who closes in as the ball is thrown
 - Pump fake and look to 3rd
 - Throw straight to 3rd
 - Bunt defenses
 - Basic... 3rd baseman crashes with pitcher, 1st ideally stays home
 - i. Looking for the out at 1st
 - Crash play... 3rd baseman in, 1st baseman in, SS covers 3rd and 2nd covers 1st
 - i. Looking for the out at 3rd
 - Understand what the hitter is trying to do
 - i. If man on 1st... trying to bunt to 1st
 - ii. If man on 2nd... trying to bunt to 3rd
 - Teach “PRO PLAY” reads for baserunners and infield
 - Infielders on the left side should “look back” the baserunner at 2nd
 - Tag up plays from third... **MAKE SURE** their first read in the air is **BACK** to third
 - Remind outfielders to throw it on a line... faster than ball in the air
- v. Teach them to juggle!
 - Great challenge and great for baseball... for obvious reasons
 - Also great metaphor for life and the game!

e. Catching

- i. See [Catching Confidence PDF](#)

- ii. Might be wise to do blocking/receiving work before or after practice

f. Pitching

- i. Will add notes net of February 24th call

g. Hitting

- i. NEXT PITCH!
 - The game is hard... life is hard... baseball is a great teacher
 - Remind them to stay positive, stay focused... NEXT PITCH
- ii. Will add notes net of March 10th with Coach Retka

h. Scrimmage

- i. Ideally with coaches pitching for reps and pace
- ii. Stop the game to teach
- iii. Try to find things you've practice and highlight them when done correctly
- iv. Encourage aggressive baserunning
 - If using a catcher, give signs at random to baserunners to ensure understanding and execution

i. Review the practice

- i. What we did well... what needs work
- ii. Discuss how practice concepts present themselves in games
- iii. Review signs!
- iv. Revisit anchors

IN GAME COACHING

1. Again, expect everyone there on time
2. Warmup routine
 - a. Should be the same as for a practice
 - b. Create consistency and excellence in how we prepare to practice and play!
3. Pre-game discussion
 - a. Remind them to be aggressive
 - b. Maybe revisit one or two things you worked on in practice
 - c. Revisit signs, pro play, tag on ANY ball from 3rd, and anchors
4. Catchers and pitchers
 - a. 9-11's... at least 4 catchers, ideally ALL pitch
 - b. 12's and up... at least 2 catchers and 6-8 pitchers
5. Great things to say when on defense
 - a. Reminder of outs (directing infield to communicate with outfield)
 - b. Back of the glove in the dirt
 - c. Help with positioning... especially outfielders
 - i. Give them something to reference... ie mound, a spot on the fence, etc
 - d. Attack the ball
 - e. THINK about where the ball needs to go BEFORE it is hit to you
 - i. **"THE GAME IS SLOW UNTIL IT IS REALLY FAST"**
6. Things you want to say that don't help
 - a. Throw strikes... let's assume they are ALL trying to do so
 - b. Just make contact... again, let's assume they are trying to do so
 - c. Yelling negatively from the dugout... the game is hard enough, they don't need our negativity, stress or pressure
7. Coaching the bases
 - a. 3rd base coach... BE SURE to watch the catcher throw down so you know what you have
 - b. Be dialed in to outs and depth of outfielders
 - c. Be sure to communicate often with baserunners (see examples from previous sections)
 - d. Be definitive and short in your signs and communication
 - e. Encourage AGGRESSIVE lead off and overall baserunning

- i. Example: move down the baseline with a guy rounding third to give him the longest and best change to score... you can always stop him late if necessary
 - f. ALWAYS steal with a full count and 2 outs
 - g. Look to steal with 2 strikes and 2 outs and one of your better hitters at home plate
 - h. Take bases on passed balls UNTIL the game gets out of hand
- 8. How to coach the hitters
 - a. In game discussion should be around INTENT not mechanics
 - i. Young kids, however, may need some direction
 - b. Discuss hitting “gap to gap”
 - c. With 2 strikes... see it deep and drive it the other way, or see it deep and react in
 - d. For slower pitchers (especially at younger ages) say “let it travel, see it deep” as opposed to “it’s slow, wait longer”
- 9. How to coach the pitchers
 - a. Slippery slope in game as we don’t want to offer too much, but want to inspire confidence
 - b. Unless mechanics are WAY off, stay away from recommending anything other than staying aggressive
- 10. Signs
 - a. Keep them simple
 - b. 1st and 3rd defenses should go from coach to catcher to infield
 - c. Encourage catchers to call their own signs... there is NO better way to learn the game

COMMUNICATION

- 1. Be positive
- 2. Be proactive
- 3. Have a parent’s meeting or call to establish expectations
 - a. Do this before the season and possibly during if necessary
 - b. Remind parents NOT TO COACH during the game
 - i. The dugout is for the players and coaches only
 - ii. Explain that coaching their kids throughout the game has the potential to be detrimental to their success
 - Example... you may be telling their son to through HARD and just let it rip. They might be telling them to “just throw it nice and easy”
 - Now, their son has to decide who to listen to... mom/dad or coach
 - The game is hard enough the way it is
- 4. Email
 - a. “Welcome to the team” email after tryouts
 - i. Begin to establish expectations
 - b. “Getting close to the start of practice” email in January or February
 - i. Reiterate expectations
 - ii. Talk about timing of practices, games, arrival times, dress, WATER, equipment
 - c. “End of season wrap up” email
- 5. Group messaging
 - a. Used for day to day communication
 - i. Such as Group Me or SportsEngine
 - b. Reminders of game time, jerseys, etc