

## **-Baseball/Softball Idea Swap! – Vol. 2**

Idea Sharing With Like-Minded Coaches

### **From Sarah...**

One of my favorite drills is the 1 on 1 cone drill. Two lines each player runs a figure eight down the floor, the person with the ball is trying to get to the basket before the defender for a lay-up if the defense is able to keep up then it is a one on one to the basket. Ball starts on the outside line. After two possessions we switch to the left side.

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### **From Pam...**

THis is a sliding mechanic that can be added to the other "feels like" mechanics, but seems to be somewhat more simple to do on the floor of a gym. This seems to be especially easy for older players (girls that are fearful), coaches in training, and demonstrators that may be uneasy about performing the bent knee slide on a gym floor. It provides the feeling of what sliding feels like for those that are fearful of it in the first place.

- 1) to be done in sock feet.
- 2) start in the push-up position.
- 3) bring both feet forward through arms
- 4) bend one knee up in the process, so side if foot is under the other knee.
- 5) when your "bottom" is through arms lie down while bringing arms up towards head

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### **From Paul...**

The following is a very effective infield drill that I use at every practice. It allows the infielders to take a large number of ground balls in a short time and really develops muscle memory.

I call it the "bucket drill".

Players take their position at 1B, 2B, SS, and 3B. There are two coaches at home plate, each with a bat and a bucket of balls. There is an empty bucket at each base. The drill consists of three rounds.

Round 1 - Coach #1 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to 3rd baseman who field and throws to 1st baseman who puts balls in empty bucket. At the same time, Coach #2 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to shortstop who fields and throws to 2nd baseman covering 2B, who puts balls in empty bucket. Next, coaches turn and Coach #1 hits other 1/2 of bucket to 1st

baseman who fields and throws to 3rd baseman who puts balls in empty bucket. At the same time, Coach #2 hits other 1/2 of bucket of ball to 2nd baseman who fields and throws to shortstop covering 2B, who puts balls in empty bucket. Players then bring in buckets and refill coaches' buckets.

Round 2 - Coach #1 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to 3rd baseman who fields and throws to 2nd baseman covering 2B. At the same time, Coach #2 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to shortstop who fields and throws to 1st baseman. Next, Coach #1 hits other 1/2 of bucket to 1st baseman who fields and throw to shortstop covering 2B. At the same time, Coach #2 hits other 1/2 of bucket to 2nd baseman who fields and throws to 3rd baseman. Players refill coaches' buckets. (make sure that corners play up and middle infielders plays back during this round to avoid anyone getting hit with throw).

Round 3 - Coach #1 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to shortstop who fields and throws to 3rd baseman. At the same time, Coach #2 hits 1/2 bucket of grounders to 2nd baseman who fields and throws to 1st baseman. Next, Coach #1 bunts other 1/2 buckets to 3rd baseman who fields and throws to shortstop covering 3rd base. At the same time, Coach #2 bunts other 1/2 bucket to 1st baseman who fields and throws to 2nd baseman covering 1st base.

This sounds much more complicated then it actually is. It's a great drill that takes less than 15 minutes and each of the infielders get about 40 grounders, throws, and catches.

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### **From Jeff...**

did a throwing drill this season where I taped paper plates to the backstop about 6 feet off the ground. I had the girls throw from 15ft, then from 30ft, then back to 15ft. These are 6,7,8,9 year old girls playing with an 11 inch ball. I was trying to get them to throw more accurately and to stop throwing a rainbow. They loved it and asked me every practice to do it. And it helped.

Also I coached a 14 year old girls fastpitch softball team and I was working on their hitting. A good drill we used was to have the batter stand facing or parallel to the backstop and get 1 bat length away from the fence. Then the batter swings without hitting the fence. Then we turned the batter so that she was perpendicular to the fence. We put her back foot 2-3 inches from the fence. The batter has to swing without hitting the fence. The idea of both was to get those hips turned & to take the end of the bat to the ball. We had been striking out a lot and we were swinging late. This drill or instruction helped out a lot since it got the bat to the hitting area a lot quicker.

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**From Melinda...**

This was something I did mid-season, when I noticed my players were not really “into” practice anymore. I took clothespins and hung up treat bags on the fence with each player's name on it. Once we hung up goofy colored socks. And every time a player made a good throw, catch, hit, etc. I would call out their name and what they did and a team mother would put a piece of candy in their bag. It really put some spunk and excitement back into our practice because they really had to think about making good plays just like in the game. Also, when we were having batting practice if a batter hit a ball and a fielder missed it, the fielder had a piece of candy taken out of their bag and put into the batter's bag. Boy, was that fun! Competition got pretty intense and you should have seen those fielders diving on the balls. We generally had treats the practice before games but they seemed to understand that to be their best for that practice they had to work equally as hard at every practice. After that the girls were excited about practice and I was able to get them to practice with an intensity and concentration that I was really only seeing in the games. It doesn't seem like much but it works on 8 year olds!!

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**From Jon...**

This is a favorite of my varsity girls and mine as well because it allows the coaches to get involved at the end.

We play a game called "Thunder" You split your squad up into two equal teams (randomly) One team hits first from a tee at home plate, the other team splits up half to 1B and half to 3B. The team at bat hits in order from the tee. They may hit anywhere on the field. Once they hit the ball, the hitter runs the bases. Once the ball is hit off of the tee, the team in the field sends 1 "runner" from both 1B and 3B to touch the ball as fast as they can. Once both players have touched the ball, the hitter stops and you count the total number of bases that she got to before both players touched the ball. Keep track of the total number of bases once everyone has hit and then bring in the fielding team to hit and send the hitters out to 1B and 3B to field. The team with the most total bases after a set # of innings is the winner. To get the coaches involved, assign a coach to each team and let them hit last for each team and run the bases. This is a fun and competitive game that the kids love!

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## **From Angela...**

### Outfield Quick Throw Drill

**Purpose:** To improve the outfielder's ability to field a ground ball and throw it quickly to a base

**Directions:** The drill uses three tossers and three shaggers. Each tosser is near a base and has a shagger, who is at the base. The drill has one or more outfielders at each of the three outfield defensive positions. The outfielders are pulled up in order to get a force play at a base.

The tosser throws or hits a ground ball to the outfielder, who fields the ball and quickly throws it to the respective shagger.

### V Throwing Drill

**Purpose:** To improve the infielders' throwing accuracy.

**Set-Up:** The catcher, first baseman, and third baseman are at their respective bases while the second baseman and SWS are at their defensive positions.

The ball should be thrown continuously in the following sequence: C to 1st to 3rd to 2nd (Covering bag) to C to SS (covering 2nd), SS to 3rd then back to C.

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## **From Chuck...**

This is a great drill for keeping the competitive juices going and working on fielding and throwing accuracy. Split the team into two equal groups with one group lined up at short stop and the other group at 2nd. Stack two buckets one on top of the other on home plate. Coach will start the competition on the left side hitting ground ball to each of the players one at a time. The player then makes a throw home trying to hit the bucket. The player gets 3 points for knocking the top bucket off, 2 points for hitting either bucket in the air, and one point for hitting either bucket on a bounce. Go through all of the players at short stop and total points. Follow the same for the players at second base. Now players switch positions and continue the drill. We usually say the first team to 15 points wins depending upon the time you want to spend on this drill. As players develop throwing accuracy it actually goes pretty quick. This drill encourages the girls to charge the ball (shorter throw to home) and they figure that out pretty quick! As they develop in their skills, we incorporate good fielding by subtracting 1 point for not fielding the ball properly. Obviously we call this the "Bucket Drill". Our girls love this drill and don't want to stop!

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### **From Kyle...**

this drill emphasises using the body during your swing. (FASTPITCH SOFTBALL SWING, NOT A BASEBALL SWING!)

stand in the batters box with a tee and a ball ready to be hit. the batter holds a boat paddle (or row paddle) with his left hand on the end and the right hand as far up the handle. the both hands should be on top of the paddle, just like you are rowing in a boat. hold the paddle at your waist with the wide part of the paddle facing towards the catchers position and parallel to the ground. to swing, rotate the hips, bringing the paddle around and make contact with the ball.

variation #1: hold a bat using the same grip as above, closely resembling a bunt grip but with the right hand over the bat instead of under. rotate the hips and body to hit the ball off of the tee.

variation #2a: hold a bat using a regular hitters grip. place bat against the hip bone facing towards the catcher. rotate the body around, leaving the bat at the hip position.

variation #2b: same as 2a, but place a soccer ball or basketball on the tee to really emphasise rotating the hips and using the legs on the swing.

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### **From Dan...**

I end 95% of practices with this drill:

Players form 2 equal lines, facing first base - Line 'A' beginning in the right batters box, and Line 'B' about 15' up and to the right of the first base line. On my 'Go' command, the first runner in each line runs, 'A' to first, and 'B' through first and on to second. Once the first two runners are on base, my commands become, "Primary", "Secondary", and then either "Go" or "Back". On "Go", the runner on second scores, the runner on first ends up at third, B ends up on second and A on first. As a runner scores, they go to the rear of the opposite line from where they started that lap. I run this drill for about 15 minutes or more, until I'm satisfied that they're giving maximum effort. It's a great conditioning drill. Players caught dogging it are given extra laps around the complex. Things to focus on in doing the drill: proper rounding of bases, especially first to second; proper primary and secondary leads, and no crossing over steps; reaction time returning to base or breaking for the next; speed and endurance.

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**From Mike...**

I don't know how novel this idea is, but it works from T-ballers all the way through 9-10 yr olds. And it's a great drill for summer that always turns into fun!

I have them play catch with small water balloons, using their gloves, to teach them to have a "soft" glove on catches. It really works, then I move them farther and farther apart until they start breaking. That's when the fun starts!

The night before, I'll fill about 100 balloons, about the size of a baseball, carry them in a Rubbermaid tote. I usually also call the parents to let them know to bring a towel or change of clothes, the parents get into it also.

That's it. Nothing too magical, but a lot of fun, and you can see them "give" with their glove catching their next fly ball. Hope it helps!

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**From Leigh...**

A fellow coach showed me an idea on teaching girls to bunt and to work on bunts with a large number of girls at a time in a short amount of time.

materials: each girls needs a bat or they can rotate in small groups  
coach needs lots of softballs  
possible helper or assistant coach

Line the girls up in a circle with their bats. Demonstrate the proper techniques of bunting quickly. Start with the girls you know know how to bunt. Toss each girl 3 or 4 balls having them bunt them correctly (this is were the assistant can help). Quickly move around the circle. I usually do this drill til I get tired. You can mix it up with directing them where to bunt it. The key is to make sure they are not jabbing at it, but allowing the ball to simply hit the bat. You can get a lot of repetitions in and the girls can see how each other is doing.

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### **From Scott...**

2 coaches- 1 at home and 1 at 2nd base. The half of the kids make a line at 3rd and the other half at first. Each coach has a bucket next to them. The first player at 3rd base moves out to shortstop position and gets a ball hit to him from the coach at home. After he fields the ball, he runs behind the coach hitting the balls at 2nd and drops his ball into the bucket, and continuing to run to the end of the line at first.

Simultaneously, the coach at 2nd is hitting the balls to the first person in line at first base who is standing between 1st home. After he fields the ball, he drops it in the bucket behind home and gets into the line at third. Each coach grabs the balls from the buckets

ANother twist is to have someone catching for each coach with each player fielding a ball, throwing it back to the spot it was hit from.

This drill helps the kids focus, field, and helps their endurance.

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### **From Wade...**

This is a very good drill for throwing accuracy, catching, quick footwork, and tagging the runners. Have a catcher straddle home plate facing first base, first baseman straddles 1st base facing the catcher, second baseman straddle 2nd base facing first, and third baseman straddle 3rd facing second base. Let the short stop and second baseman alternate at second base. Catcher will throw the ball to first, first throws second, second throws to third, and third throws to home. Repeat several times around the bases and then reverse by going from catcher to third, third to second, second to first, and first to home. Also repeat this direction several times. This is a good every practice drill for ball handling, and quick foot speed as they have to spin and throw to next base. Idea is for the players to not let the ball touch the ground. Coaches will definitely see the improvement as their ball season starts and the ball handling will be even better by the end of season.

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### **From Rob...**

Here's a fielding drill that we like to use to warm up and give our catchers a little extra practice at the same time.

We have two catchers so we start with one of them behind the plate with everyone else in the third base coaches box and one other player on first base. Our second catcher is the

last person in line at third base. The first fielder takes the third base position and fields a ground ball throwing the ball to first base and then sprints to second base while the player at first throws home. The catcher catches the ball and throws down to second base to the player who was just playing third base. The ball is then thrown back to first and then home. The person at first base runs behind the field and gets at the end of the line at third base. The player at second now runs to first and becomes the first baseman for the next fielder. The next player in line now takes the third base position and the drill is repeated.

We go all the way through the order until our second catcher (last in line) occupies first base. After the last throw home the second catcher takes the place of the first catcher and goes through the order. This can be done very quickly and everyone gets an opportunity to experience situations at all three bases. It's also a great drill for figuring out positional strengths in young teams.

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### **From Gene...**

#### **Rapid Fire**

Players need to learn to practice at game speed this drill starts out slow and then picks up speed.

What you need: Two coaches with gloves and two buckets with balls.

How this drill works: Break the team into two groups with their backs to the backstop. Have one player step out of each group and roll them a ground ball. Have them field the ball, snap their feet, throw the ball back to the coach, and run to the back of the line. The coach has a ball in their hand and one in their glove. As soon as the coach catches the first ball roll the next one.

Stress to the players to get in good fielding position, set their feet before they throw, and stay focused on the ball. Roll the ball soon enough to hit the feet of the player making the throw. |If there is a bad throw grab another ball out of the bucket and keep the drill going.

Results: Players need to learn to field the ball with things going on around them as you speed up the drill you will create confusion just like in a game. The faster the better.

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### **From Wout...**

4 teams (A, B, C and D) of 3 players each

Batting-T on 1st base, 3rd base and on pitcher plate

3 large protective screens to be placed at 2nd base and each facing a batting-T

Purpose: Hit through the centre

Team A in L-field, Team B in C-field, Team C in R-field

Each player of team D is hitting from a batting T (placed at 1st, 3rd, plate).

Take 15 swings each

Goal: Hit the screen (-> level swing right through the center)

After the 15 swings: team A -> batting T, team B -> L-field, Team C -> C-field, Team D -> R-field

Extra:

1. When you hit the screen you earn 10 points

When you make 100 points (10 out of 15) you are the "T-Queen" and you are free of duty after practice

2. as above plus: If one of the T-hitters hits a fly-ball caught by any outfielder: the complete team is 'out' and moves to R-field and everybody moves to the next position as if you made your 15 swings

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### **From Chris...**

For Players who tend to have long swings....

Place a Bath Towel across their chest and have them hold the bath towel under their arm pits.

They are then to take a swing with full extension through the ball only letting the towel fall after impact and extension through the ball. Promotes a compact swing and a proper wrist release...

You can do this during any single tee or two tee drill, to help with inside and outside pitches, soft-toss or any batting drill period ... This is a cheap and easy way to promote a more compact swing ...

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### **From Denise...**

Here is another drill that my girls like and is competitive.

Divide your group into 3 even teams.

One group at home plate, one group between 1st base and the right field pole and the third group between 3rd base and the left field pole.

Coach picks up a ball and hits it to the outfield. That signals the girl at home plate to start running the bases while the first two girls in the outfield take off to pick up the ball that has been hit by the coach. The first girl who reaches the ball picks it up so the other girls can touch the ball. (You can not move if you get the ball first.) As soon as both girls have touch the ball, the girl on the bases gets a point for every base that she touches. Competitive and if you have more coaches, they can pick a team to hit too.

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### **From Roger...**

Have two players get on a knee with out a glove about five feet apart. They will throw the ball to each other ten times. Then back them up five feet and repeat until they need a glove. Do this until they can not get the ball to each other in the air. This will help with getting the ball to each other and not being scared of the ball.

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### **From Ed...**

“Mix ‘em up soft toss”

Equipment: Jug’s Soft Toss Machine, Jugs screen (Instant or Sock Net), Softballs, Wiffle softballs, Tennis balls, Golf ball wiffles and 2 coaches.

Set the Toss machine to throw softball wiffles from behind the plate. Stand a coach (or player) behind and over the Toss machine with a bucket of tennis balls. Locate a coach forward and outside of the batter about 8-10 feet with softballs and golf sized wiffles. Locate the net to receive the batted balls.

Begin with the Toss machine throwing softball sized wiffles. The batter hits the wiffles into the net and reloads. The coach in front soft tosses the golf sized wiffles to the hitter who hits them into the net and reloads. The coach (or player) bounces a tennis ball into the strike zone and the batter hits it into the net and reloads. The forward coach soft tosses a softball to the hitter who hits into the net and reloads. Repeat cycle and continue until the Toss machine needs replenishing. Replace the hitter and begin again.

Steps:

1. Softball wiffles from Toss machine hit into the net.
2. Golf sized wiffles from the coach hit into the net.
3. Tennis balls from player behind thrown into the strike zone & hit into the net.
4. Softballs from forward coach hit into the net.

Let the Toss machine lead this drill. If a hitter or tosser goofs up the timing of the drill, stop and wait for the Toss machines next toss.

The Toss machine emits one ball every 7 seconds. We get a lot of good swings with a lot of fun. If the quality of the swings diminishes eliminate one of the steps.

We have used 3 sizes of wiffle balls, softballs, baseballs, tennis balls, softies, shuttle cocks, basketballs (deflated), bottle caps, beans and popcorn in this drill.

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### **From John...**

One drill I really like which gets a lot of kids involved works like this.

The object is to run around the bases starting at 1st before the infield can throw around the bases.

There is a catcher, 1b, 2b, ss, and 3b.

Runner starts on 1st. Coach hits a grounder to 2b and the runner starts running. 2b throws to 3b, 3b throws to 1b, 1b throws to ss and ss throws to c trying to get the runner. Then another runner can start again.

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### **From Bill...**

You get your infielder's at their position (except the pitcher). The ball starts at the catcher, she throws to the second baseman, she throws to the third baseman, she throws to the first baseman, she throws to the shortstop, and she throws back to the catcher. The whole time this is going on you have a runner run the bases. They leave at the same time as the catcher starts the cycle.

It starts out easy for the fielders because they tend to start in kinda close and creep in. I let them do that for a while, till it get to easy, then I make them start backing up. After they get a few steps in the grass the faster runners start making it close. (the runners like to see a dropped or missed ball)

This helps the fielders learn to get rid of the ball quickly.

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### **From Dan...**

I end practices with this drill:

Players form 2 equal lines, facing first base - Line 'A' beginning in the right batters box, and Line 'B' about 15' up and to the right of the first base line. On my 'Go' command, the first runner in each line runs, 'A' to first, and 'B' through first and on to second. Once the first two runners are on base, my commands become, "Primary", "Secondary", and then either "Go" or "Back". On "Go", the runner on second scores, the runner on first ends up at third, B ends up on second and A on first. As a runner scores, they go to the rear of the opposite line from where they started that lap. I run this drill for about 15 minutes or more, until I'm satisfied that they're giving maximum effort. It's a great conditioning drill. Players caught dogging it are given extra laps around the complex. Things to focus on in doing the drill: proper rounding of bases, especially first to second; proper primary and secondary leads, and no crossing over steps; reaction time returning to base or breaking for the next; speed and endurance.

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### **From Steve...**

Here is a drill that can be used at all ages to get kids to drive through the ball. You need a tee, a toilet plunger and a half flat basketball or kickball. Place the plunger upside down in the tee and put flattened ball in place. Have the kids drive the ball straight ahead using their hips arms. Looks funny, works great.

### **From Len...**

drill: infielders - goal....to work on speed, accuracy of throws, base running equipment needed - full bucket of balls, at least 20 or more.

set up 5 balls randomly arranged , in and down the 3rd base line. Spread the balls about 2 to 3 feet apart and using no more than 10 feet in length. Example, start at the base, drop

1 ball, go about 1 foot, place another ball on the ground, drop a 3rd ball, 1 foot to the left of the 2nd ball, the 4th ball is dropped about 1 foot in front of the 3rd ball. The last ball is placed to the right of the 4th ball, down the 3rd base line.

Have a group of players start at home and one player will run from home to 2nd while the infielder is fielding & throwing the placed balls to 1st base. Object is to field all 5 balls, throw accurately to 1st base before the runner gets to 2nd base. Keep score so that each group performs under pressure. Coach determines what to do with the winning group, runners or fielders. An errant throw to 1st counts as a miss. Fielder must throw all 5 balls to 1st without an error to get 1 point. If the runner reaches 2nd base before the 5 throws are made, they get 1 point.

Fill/flop groups so that the fielders become runners and runners become the fielders throwing to 1st base. After 2 rounds the groups will become very competitive which is good. Fastpitch softball is about quick, accurate plays. You also get to practice running the bases correctly without the players realizing it. It is a fun drill if presented to the players correctly.

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### **From Perry...**

I'm coaching a girl's 10u fast pitch travel softball team with only 2 returning players. The following drill to help the girls to learn each others name and to re-enforce the using two hands when catching.

Have your team line up in two lines, facing one another approximately 10-15 feet apart with 8 – 10 feet between on another and staggered.

X      X                  X                  X                  X                  8–10ft between

10–15 ft apart

X      X                  X                  X

Have the first girl underhand toss the ball to the girl across from her while saying that girls name. The girl catching the ball catches on the back side of her glove, the back of the fingers and uses her throwing hand to hold it to the back of the glove. If a girl drops a ball they do not pick it up. The last player drops the ball in the bucket. Count the number of dropped balls. Have the girls switch places so they are throw to someone new. Give incentives for a perfect round, no dropped balls.

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### **From John...**

This drill is good to get the team running and catching the ball on the run indoors.

- **Fly Ball Run and Catch** Objective: Catch the ball on the run.

Two lines on opposite corners of the gym.

Coach throws the ball over the shoulder of the player on the run.

Change lines player throw ball to the coach who throws a pop-up that the player must run forward to catch.

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### **From Ray...**

During conditioning training last year, I noticed their attention and enthusiasm waning, I suppose the prospect of running more "suicide drills" was not high on their list of things to do.

My solution to this was the following and I offer this as a tip to other coaches finding themselves in a similar situation---I set up Three Stations in the gym:

Speed Ladder-Far end

Zig-Zag Cones-Half Court

Clothesline strung between 8" cones-Near end

The girls begin at the Speed Ladder (drills through the Speed Ladder vary)---shuffle to the Zig-Zag Cones ( sprint to each cone and Squat Jump)---Shuffle to the Clothesline (Double Leg jumps back and forth across the line till the end)---Sprint back to Speed Ladder.

Now to keep their interest during these sessions, I brought out a Boom Box and had the girls make high tempo discs. The girls had a great time picking out the music (all had to be reviewed for content) and their workouts were just as intense as they were in the fall.

I hope this tip is helpful for anyone facing the same situation, we all want our players to respond to our training programs with enthusiasm, however many of them are multi-sport kids and are probably approaching "burn-out" by the time our season starts. By adding a little bit of fun to a fairly intense workout brought the results I was looking for: intensity, improved coordination, and team building.

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### **From David...**

For the little ones (8 and under). Have the girls form a circle in their batting stance facing the center of the circle. The girls should be far enough apart to safely swing their bats. A coach stands in the middle of the circle and pitches (wiffles) randomly around the circle.

You can never do enough tie work. But tie work can get boring. We set-up the net about 30 feet away and have a competition (target practice) to see who can hit the most balls into the net. This drills is great for developing line drive swings. Multiple stations can be used depending on the number of players to avoid standing.

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### **From Eugene...**

#### Box Drill (Baseball and Softball)

Tape a box, like the old strikezone box you would put on the brick wall in school, across the gym.

Throw pop flies or grounders to your players and have them aim for the box for accuracy. You can do it in single file one at a time or what we do is have the same player receive 5 in a row running around the gym and keep a count for how many hits in the box. Make it a contest and the kids love it.

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## **From Todd...**

I coach young players started at 12u and now at 2nd yr 14u.... I look into my group of girls as a 3rd party looking in. I see things other don't or can't and I design, make, or find a way to correct and improve on them. The success has been wonderful and the girls see the improvement almost instantly. This leads them to trust me without question or hesitation and this saves time and time is very short and precious.

### **Drill #1 The Outfielders Drill**

This is to correct poor tracking and slow starts to a ball in flight. Line your outfielders in any outfield position. We use a pitching machine to sail balls deep into the pocket or burn a line drive into the gaps. The girls must learn to take off just before the ball goes into play from a ready position. They stand at ready, both feet moving in anticipation. They must react to the ball as soon as it comes off the bat so they are locked on the strike zone with such concentration that when they explode toward the ball is a reaction not a thought.

Part 2 is an eye patch over their glove hand-eye

This makes them track the ball in the air all the way to the glove. They must move their head and glove to track the ball and make the catch. Since these 2 drills were put into our practice regiment we have had only 2 fly balls make it to the ground out of just over 30 fly balls in fair territory. The girls now call it the easy out drill.

### **Drill #2 Speed Kills--a Base Stealing Drill**

We teach all base runners to steal and to steal our way. #1 foot is outside the base along the side nearest the outfield at 1b and 2b and on the foul line at 3b, not placed on the bag or pushing against it or resting in front of the bag toward the next advancing base. The outside bag take off gives a couple of milli-seconds head start toward a safe steal. It is nearly impossible to be called for leaving early because your entire foot is resting against the bag as you take off and come fwd. Your foot at some point is still in contact with the bag and with proper tech you are 3 feet closer to being safe and still have contact with the bag. With break away bases or softy bags and the best cleat designs ever the push off to steal is as old as wood bats--way out dated and even leads to frequent injury and season ending ankle damage or worse.

Lastly the boom box practice

We use a boom box as a reward for achievement. When the team does well we crank up the boom box at practice and it plays loud and as long as their attention span lasts and the

drills are done correctly, and turned off once it takes over or hurts the practice. We burn our own CD's and watch what is played—clean, upbeat, fun music only, and Opera or Barry Manilow if they act up and lose their way. That brings them quickly back to a work is not over frame of mind. We tell them it is a reward but for us it is a tool; they don't talk as much between drills. They are watching and listening to coaches, so not to have the reward removed, teaching them to tune out sideline noise and concentrate. We always place the boom box in the visitor dug out.

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### **From Jim...**

Players-6

I got tired of the same old batting practice, you know the one where the fielders get bored. So this is what I did:

I put just the infield on the diamond, front toss to the hitters (25 balls), the infielders must make the play to first (there is a bucket by the first baseman). If a pitch is swung on and missed the catcher snap throws it to the first baseman, same thing with a strike that has been taken by the batter. Balls not in the strike zone get thrown back to the pitcher. The fielders try to get as many balls in the bucket as possible. BOBBLES AND BAD THROWS DO NOT COUNT! They get thrown against the fence.

The batter tries to hit one through or to the outfield, balls hit into the protective screen also count for the batter, because that is what you want hard hit balls through the middle.

We play 10U softball and other than the strikeout the play to first is most common.

The players rotate every batter, but we also have 3 stations, flips, golf wiffle front toss and bunt. To account for the twelve players...Balls get shagged when they rotate. The pitching bucket and 1<sup>st</sup> base bucket are exchanged. Everyone is busy.

The limited number of balls also helps eliminate the struggling player taking twenty minutes of practice time. The "point system" makes it pretty competitive. I also record pop times from shortstop during this "drill".

We can send a struggling batter to the hitting coach back at the stations

NOTE: Make sure all balls are out of the way of the fielders.

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**From Eileen...**

It's fun, messy, and helps develop soft hands. I have my girls pair off facing each other. They start fairly close together and toss an egg back and forth – moving a step back each time they successfully complete a set (one toss and one catch each.) After the eggs, bring out the water balloons and have them toss those – it helps clean up the egg!

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**From Roger...**

Here you go.

I have a player stand in between two cones about ten feet apart. The player breaks down and I roll a ball towards the player off to one side and the player has to slide over and get in front of the ball. The player must then get the ball back to the coach. As the ball gets to the player I throw a second ball to the other side of the player and they have to slide over in front of this ball and pop up and make a good throw back to the coach.

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**From Tina...**

We have found that the best as a team so far for us is batting practice with a game ideal. Meaning... we practice with 3 batters with 9 outs total and we count all balls and strikes. We coach per each hit etc. to help teach. With 9 and 10 year old girls who need to learn we find that works for us.

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