

BASERUNNING: Runners Tagging up on Fly Balls

STRATEGIES WITH RUNNERS ON THIRD BASE

There are two different theories or strategies that are being taught to base runners on tagging up. Runners should be educated on what coaches want them to do with fly balls as a base runner. Obviously, with two outs, runners will not tag up and should advance aggressively without fear of being doubled off on fly balls. For fly balls that occur with less than two outs, a few strategies need to be clarified. First of all, every runner on base should be tagging up on any ball that is clearly foul. This includes short pop-ups from bunts or foul tips to the catcher or infield foul-ball areas. There are many opportunities to advance on a caught, foul fly ball. Sometimes, defenders are running with their backs away from the infield or making diving catches. These are prime opportunities to potentially advance a base ahead or score. Younger or more inexperienced runners will often stand and watch the foul fly ball or walk back to the base without tagging up and miss out on the tagging opportunity. Instinct and reaction for tagging up should be practiced every time they have a chance. Having runners on base during batting practice is a great opportunity to work on reaction and timing for tagging up on fly balls, fair and foul.

Basic tagging up on all fly balls:

The basic strategy calls for runners to tag up on all fly balls that are hit. The runner will tag up and attempt to advance, or they will tag up to draw a throw from the defense. The hope is that attempting to draw a throw will cause an error or bad throw. The disadvantage here is that some runners will be on the base on shorter fly balls, attempting to draw a throw instead of coming off and reading the play. In this philosophy, there are several situations where runners are asked to go halfway and read the play—but most times, they are tagging up on the base for every fly ball.

Tagging up only on balls that the athlete will advance on:

With this theory, runners will make educated decisions, prior to the catch, on which fly balls are deep enough to advance on. For fly balls or pop-ups that are fair, runners should do one of two things:

Option 1:

Move off the base as far as possible, without jeopardy of being doubled off, and read the play in case the ball tips or falls to the ground. Here, runners are looking for a ball that is dropped or not caught; and they are as far off the base as safely possible, in anticipation.

Option 2:

Tag up and take off with the first touch of the ball to the glove. Runners should only tag up on balls that they will have a chance to advance on safely. If a runner knows she cannot safely tag up when the ball is caught, she should, instead, use option 1 and lead off as far as possible. Many runners tag up on fly balls that they would never be able to advance on when the ball is caught—and then when a ball is dropped or bobbled, they are not in a position to advance to the next base because they were tagging up and standing on the base.