

Take the Extra Base

You cannot steal second with your foot still on first base!

That saying to me means to be aggressive on the bases. Players (and coaches) love to be aggressive. When taught the little things about being aggressive, your run production will increase and the players will gain confidence. I cannot tell you how much fun they will have when they are aggressive on the bases and making things happen also.

Teams seem to be waiting for the “big” hit now days. That’s great if you have a bunch of great players who spend a lot of time becoming stronger. But realistically, most teams have 2-3 hours a day and who knows how many days everyone can practice. Plus, most teams do not have the number of coaches nor the facilities with tons of fitness equipment to produce the strength and swing to consistently jack the ball.

So, what do you do to consistently win? Teach them to run the bases aggressive and to look to take the next base. It is the coach that sets the tone to do this. Teach baserunning, reading the defense, how to intimidate the defense just by the way the player breaks off the base. Teach them to be ready to take the extra step but be ready to dive back in the base, to be ready if the defense bobbles the ball even a little to take off and slide away from the tag.

This type of offense produces runs. It has to be taught, practiced and understood by the players. But once the light bulb goes off in their head, runs will come and the players love it and have fun with it. I hate watching a game with a slow offense or when even the Pro Baseball teams leave players on because they are not doing anything aggressive.

To teach them to be aggressive, teach the following:

- *Teach them to be light on their feet-toes should be pointed in instead of out so their weight is forward and not on their heels. Toes out means running on their heels and is slower.

- *Teach them their arms should be bent with a strong pumping motion while sprinting.

- *Teach them their hands should be open versus clenched. Clenching the hands tenses the upper body making it harder to run.
- *Teach them to watch the coach ahead of them for the sign to keep going or stop.
- *Teach them to run through the base at first base when the ball is hit on the infield, do not slow down on an infield hit.
- *Teach them to hit the inside corner of the base, dip the left shoulder and pump those arms when going to the next base-Pump those arms!
- *Teach them on an outfield hit, round the base and be prepared to continue to the next base if the ball is bobbled. If no bobble, round the base and do a slide step to get back to the base just obtained. If the ball is thrown at you, be prepared to dive back into the base. Dive away from the tag.
- *Teach them how to break off the bag-BE AGGRESSIVE breaking off, give the illusion that the steal is on, three aggressive steps and turn towards the catcher. Ball is bobbled, then take off and steal the base. If the pick off is tried, then dive back.

***Being aggressive off the bases puts pressure on the catcher. When the catcher is worried, the pitcher and all other players can see it and feel the pressure also. Create havoc on the defense by aggressive baserunning and breakoffs.

A solid knowledge of the fundamentals of baserunning is imperative to producing more runs. It not only teaches the offense to be aggressive but also puts pressure on the defense.

Coaching tips

*With a runner nearing third base and the ball being fielded in the outfield, the coach should move farther down the line to allow time to stop the runner rounding third if the ball is being thrown and the runner probably will not make it to home. Runner plants her right foot and does a slide step back to the base or goes quickly back/dives back if necessary. Do this even when as a coach you know the runner cannot score. The coach knows they are stopping the runner but the outfielders think the runner is going home. Runner is stopped and goes back to third, ball going home allows the batter to go to second.

If the ball is offline, the runner can continue home.

Again, when the ball is thrown to home with or without a play, it allows the batter/baserunner to go to second base. Another runner in scoring position.

*With a runner on first and second especially, have a signal to take a few more steps off the base. Easier if they know the slide step and how to efficiently dive back into the base. Keep the feet moving and never planted on the ground. **Dead motion is an invitation to be picked off.** Keeping the feet moving makes a player quicker.

If the defense doesn't address the players being farther off the bases, signal them to take an even bigger lead. Even halfway to the next base. Again, keep the feet moving and not stopped at any time. This will:

- Put a lot of pressure on the defense
- Make it easier to do a delay steal
- Make it easier to take off on a hit ball

The defense does not want the runner to score, so the pickoff throw will more than likely go to third before first or second. The more advanced the teams, the harder this is to do but very effective most of the time. With runners on first and third, the runner on first could go halfway to second on their leadoff. If the catcher tries to pick off the runner on third, the runner of first goes to second. The runner on third could score. If the catcher throws to first or second, the runner there can advance or get in a rundown. The runner on third can then take a bigger lead off and maybe even score. Either way, the pressure is on the defense. If the ball is hit and a fly ball, the runners on first and third need to hustle back, tag and advance if possible. If the batter swings and gets a hit, **all** three runners may score with the big leadoffs.

Being aggressive on the bases will score more runs, will definitely put the pressure on the defense and will give your team tons of confidence.

Preparing your team is the key. Make room in practices for learning the techniques of running and teaching all the little things to prepare your team to take the extra bases. The coach runs the show on the field during the game.

That means the coach is still in charge of when they do this and needs to be talking a lot to them during the process.

But it is well worth learning to be more aggressive during games.