

First And Third Situations

All defenses start with the same thing - *learning the fundamental skills and practicing them every day*. Breaking the glove in correctly, turning the toes in for quickness, using the pre-hop, working on the quick tags, using the cat-hops, and learning the little things first which makes every defensive situation easier.

There are a few options with the first and third situation that we teach the players. Everyone learns to read the speed of the runners and the way that they jump off the bases. Are they aggressive, are they lazy, how many steps will the runner on third go off the base, how good is the hitter, can your pitcher throw a pitch out, does your pitcher have speed, how good of an arm does your second baseman have, how good an arm does the catcher have?

1. Check the toe positioning of your players. For quickness, the toes should be slightly in versus out when standing. Try standing with your toes straight, then shift them out and then shift them in. You will notice that your weight goes forward when the toes are shifted in. This makes the player quicker and lighter on their feet.
2. The infield has to be ready to do their job instead of just reacting to a called play, the catcher reacts and the infielders respond. When you call a specific play on a first and third situation and it doesn't develop ... then usually your players will **not** go to another play unless they can adlib a little. What we would call is whether the second baseman should be in the baseline or between the pitcher and second base. After a couple of times, the players will make the call on their own. When you teach the players what to do and why, they learn how to actually be little coaches on the field. That's fun to watch when they start thinking like you do.
3. When the second baseman stays in the baseline:
 - a. The basic play is if you have a medium to slower runner on first with a medium to quicker runner on third, it is possible to keep the second baseman in the baseline between first and second about 20'-30' from second base. This allows the second baseman to catch and tag the runner or if the runner stops, the second baseman can run her back to first. If she decides to run her back to first, it should be done with the second baseman in a position to fire the ball home. **Never should the second baseman throw the ball to the first baseman, that leads to errors and the runner scoring more times than not.**
 - b. If the runner on third stays and the other runner slows down going into second, flip the ball to the shortstop. This is a short throw and sometimes you can catch that runner off guard. The takes timing and needs to be practiced to smoothly execute this skill. Another option is to tag her quickly as she passes.
 - c. If the runner on third strays too far off third, the second baseman should **run as fast as possible straight at the runner**. This will make the runner decide to go back or go home. The third baseman slips behind the runner and moves down the line away from third base and the catcher moves up from the plate. This is called "boxing the player". **As the third baseman and catcher move away from their bases, it takes the dive back away from the runner**. When the runner makes a decision, the second baseman makes a snap throw to the get the runner.
4. When the second baseman goes between the pitcher and second base:
 - a. The second play option for the second baseman is to go halfway between the pitcher and second base. Their body should not be in the straight line between the catcher and second base because they will block the view of the shortstop fielding the throw. Only their glove is close to the straight line and should be up ready to snag the ball out of the air. If she hears "cut" from the pitcher, shortstop, and/or first baseman she should cut the ball and throw home. The outfielder's need to be watching also and helping the infield by talking. The second baseman's body should be in a position to go directly to the

plate. Use this if the runner on first is fast.

- b. The shortstop should be ready no matter what the second baseman does to take the throw at second base to retire the runner. Her focus should be on the ball and getting the runner. She has to think that she will be catching the ball.
- c. The third baseman is always ready to take the pick off throw to get the runner on third. This play is effective if the runner on third is fast and takes a big jump. The catcher acts like she is throwing to second base and all-in-one-motion pivots and goes to third. What makes it is the third baseman's reception of the ball. From the normal ready position as if the hitter was going to hit, the third baseman simply pivots on her right foot and takes a huge crossover step. Her left foot will actually crossover and land behind her body parallel with the line. This allows her to have her glove right on the back of the runner who is retreating to the base. The glove is open and is moving back toward the runner. The catcher throws the ball directly down the line and the third baseman catches and tags the runner on the back. She may have to receive the ball and dive for the runner but her momentum is going that way so it isn't hard to do. **Again, she pivots and takes a huge crossover step and her glove follows the runner back toward third. The throw needs to be thrown right down the line toward the back of the runner.**
- d. The pitcher and first baseman have got to watch the runner on third and scream "cut" if she breaks so that the second baseman can cut and throw home.
- e. The outfielder's need to be in the game at all times. They should be moving in toward the infield in line to backup the play. They need to be converging on the infield so that if the ball does go past the infielder, they are close enough to field the ball and throw to get the runner or keep the runner from advancing

NEVER GIVE UP ON A PLAY, ALWAYS BE THINKING OF THE NEXT PLAY, AND NEVER GIVE A TEAM A FREE PASS TO THE NEXT BASE.

Look for Cheleste's article next month.