

Start with the Right Throw on the DP

When a player fields the ball, it's how they deliver the first throw that starts the complicated task of completing a double play. Many parts are equally important to complete a double play. The initial fielding of the ball, the throw to retire the first out of the play, the reception and pivot to go for the second out, the throw for the second out and the reception to record the second out. That's a lot of handling of the ball to complete the double play.

Let's look at the first throw to be made and let's focus on the ball that is being hit to second base throws. A coach could look at it two ways: 1) Let's just be sure to get one out, 2) Let's get both outs. I prefer the second way of thinking.

Of course, this takes practice. The teams just play game after game and spend very little time actually practicing the skills of the game, had better make sure of one out only. But, what a thrill to pull off a double play and all it takes is to just practice the skill to have a chance at pulling it off.

What throw to do is determined by where the second baseman receives the ball:

1. The ball is fielded within 20 feet of second base.
 - a. Field the ball and while staying low, take a step toward second and use a toss coming out of the little finger side of the hand. The palm side of the hand is facing the ground holding the ball, bend at the elbow to get some snap, push the ball to second with the first finger and thumb being behind the ball.
 - b. **KEY MOTIONS:** The power comes from the legs not the arm so make sure the player is shifting the weight from left to right toward second base. Also, make sure the right hand on the follow through has the fingers going straight to second base. If the fingers follow through to the sky, the ball will go up, if the fingers go to the side so will the ball. The ball will go where the fingers point on the follow through. Aim between belt and chest high on the player covering the base. Again, the player stays low and uses their legs for the power.

Drill:

To save time in practice, start with everyone in two lines and have them work with a player in the other line. You can work on two drills at once from this position.

Player A – The player making the toss should have a ball on the floor in front of them. On command or working at their own pace, the player stays low, scoops the ball and makes the toss to the other player. Start at about 10 feet and work out to 20 feet. **As the player gets farther away from the target, they have a tendency to try to use too much arm and not enough leg on the toss.** This will cause them to pull the ball behind them and away from the fielder catching the ball. The player receiving the ball works on quick tags (as discussed in the article from last month).

1. Ball is fielded half way (30 feet) between first and second
 - a. The above toss is too slow from 30 feet away for most players. If the ball is fielded behind the runner's line, the second baseman could lean back on their right foot and flip the ball overhand to the player covering second. This takes a strong flip of the wrist. The other way, which is also used if the ball is fielded in front or even with the bags, is to field and **jump** a quarter circle and throw three quarter/sidearm to the base. Jumping means both feet are off the ground when making the turn. This is a very quick motion.
 - b. Agility really needs to be added to practices especially preseason practices. A player's feet have to be quicker in almost 100% of the players that we see. The player should **JUMP** to the position not field,

stand up, turn and throw. That's too slow. Really work on fielding and jumping to a quarter-turn position. Once they get it, add the throw. The throw is a quick three quarter/ sidearm throw. Really work on the players to flip their wrist when they throw with a follow through not a fast drawback of the hand.

2. Ball is fielded in the hole between first and the second baseman. When a player has to really reach for the ball or dive, the easiest way is to go with the ball. That means when really reaching to their left side to field the ball, the first step after fielding the ball should be to plant the throwing hand foot and pivot to make the throw to second. The body, when doing this, is actually facing the outfield. Again, a quick throw, which will probably be a three quarter or sidearm throw, is used.

These tosses need to be practiced for the player to turn the double play and the feet/body has to be taught to be quicker. Take the time to work on agility and take the time to practice each part of the throw.

Drills:

Start with the wrist snap/flips (two lines 10 feet apart with partners, work you way to 15 feet). Just flip the ball only using the wrist. A player can hold their forearm back so that they do not use it-only the wrist. A player can also throw from one knee however; the same applies to the forearm not moving. It's only the wrist that is used.

Work on the quarter turn jump by telling them when to jump. Coaches need to individually help the players if they are not leaving their feet while jumping. When they understand the jump, start adding a sidearm/three quarter flip.

Then progress to rolling the ball to them working on all of the throws discussed.

Then progress to hitting the ball to them making all of the throws discussed.

NOTHING takes the place of practicing the skills needed to be successful. Players cannot learn to do these throws efficiently by just playing games. The time has to be taken to work on these and on all other parts of a double play.

Good luck and please realize that snap tag can make a huge difference between safe and out.

Good Luck!

Look for Cheleste's article next month.

For more from Coach Knierim click on [Coaches Corner](#) on the [JUGS® website](#).