

OMG—I Cannot Believe This One

Last week in my hometown newspaper, there was an article about one of our Hall of Fame MLB players instructing one of the current starters. Now this starter is not a rookie and has been around about four years in the Majors. I was shocked to read that the HOF former player was teaching him to keep his feet moving as the pitch is being delivered to the batter. What? He is teaching a major league Professional player making millions, that to get to more balls he needs to keep his feet moving as the pitch is going to the plate? He is teaching the player not to be flat footed? What?

This should not be happening playing in the Pros. This should not be happening in any league of any sport at most ages for that matter. Needless to say, I was shocked and also irritated. How can a professional not know this? That is a fundamental skill taught to youngsters and should be taught to every youngster no matter what the sport.

Let's look at a checklist for your players to see if they are doing these things that will make them quicker to the ball. Coaches please have a checklist for each player and designate someone to watch the players not only in early practices but also games to see if they are doing the below skills.

1-Weight should be forward on the toes. Heels are lightly on the ground but the majority of the weight is on the big toe of each foot.

2-Foot position on defense-all players should have their toes pointed inward not outward. Try this coaches-Stand up straight with equal weight on each foot. Now turn your toes inward and notice where your weight is located on your feet. Then turn the toes outward and notice where the weight is located. In-the weight is on the toes, out-the weight is on the heels. Having players weight on their heels will make them slower to the ball. This is for all players-infielders and outfielders.

3-Hand positioning-players should have both hands in front of the body, First and third may be lower in their stance in order to be quicker to the hard hit ball but the hands still need to be in an athletic position in front of the body with the glove open towards the batter not the back of the hand towards the batter. Second base, shortstop and the outfielders should also have their hands in front of their bodies but their stance is not as low as the corners. Those players need to stand up more than the corners because they have to cut the angles going a farther distance to field the ball than the corners. If they are down in a low stance they will never get the balls to their sides that are a distance away like deep in the hole or up the middle. Their toes need to be in, hands in front of the body around the waist area and the outfielders stance is higher which means knees have only a slight bend while the corners have a lower stance for the hot shots.

4-Keep the feet moving. If the feet are not moving on any of the fielders excluding the pitcher and catcher, they will be slower to react to the ball and slower getting to the ball. Toes are inward a little, hands are in front of the body's around the waist and the player is, in their own way, moving their feet. A pronounced rocking side to side is

probably not the best. But a slight shifting of the feet or a small hop as the ball is being delivered will get the motion going. Players planted to the ground are a lot slower to the ball especially hit to their sides. Keep moving around in a small area before the pitch to keep moving and then a small hop as the ball is delivered will give the fielder a great advantage getting to the ball quicker.

These are three very simple tasks for the defense to know and do but what a difference it will make in their game and the pitchers ERA. Players will get to more balls for outs, which means less base hits and potential runs recorded against the pitcher.

Again coaches, please have someone watch your players especially at practices while you may be hitting balls to them. Toes in, weight forward, hands in front of the body, movement before the ball is hit. Doing this simple thing will make a huge difference in getting to the balls.