

## Question and Answer Session II

There are times at games or tournaments that coaches and parents will come up and ask me questions about softball. These are some of those questions that I am asked a lot. (These are in continuation to the Question and Answer article by Celeste posted last year.)

Q: My players are getting picked off the bases, what can I do?

**Answer:** We teach our catchers to watch the runners on base and how they break off that base and what they do after the pitch is thrown. We watch the following:

- When the runner breaks off the base does she turn to face the catcher or is she still facing second? If she is facing second, we watch how far she is going off the base. If it is more than three steps, we will try to pick her off since it will take her longer to turn around and get back to the base.
- How many steps does your player take on her break off? We take three steps starting with a rocker start so the push off the bag is with the left. Then it is right, left, right with a quarter turn to face the infield. Toes are pointing inward and the feet never stop moving.
- When the runner breaks off the base does she keep her feet moving or are her feet stationary on the ground? If her feet are stationary, she will be slower going back to first. If her toes are pointed outward, she will be slower going back to first. We will try to pick her off in either case. Also, the hands are in front of the waist area with the knees slightly bent like she is guarding someone in basketball. This is a balanced position and allows her to go back to the base or advance to the next.
- When the runner goes back to the base after a pitch does she keep looking or does she turn her back on the catcher who is the one with the ball? If she either turns her back on the catcher going back to the base or has her body facing the next base and is walking backwards to the base, we will try to pick her off. She will lose sight of the ball or be slower getting back since she has to turn around to get back.

The runners need to keep their feet moving and need to be in a position to get back to the base quickly. That position is usually facing in towards the infield with a hand toward the base they are on and a hand toward the next base.

Q: How do you want your players to slide?

**Answer:** The slide depends on the situation. If we are stealing a base, I like a headfirst avoidance slide. I think that is the faster slide than feet first and we avoid the tag by going to the outfield side of the base with our left hand grabbing the front outside corner of the base. The lighter and faster the player though, the easier it is to keep going unless they grab the base and have on to it.

If the infielder is going to block the runner, we may have to go feet first. An avoidance slide can still be used but is slower.

If the runner is going to the plate and the catcher is in front of the plate, we would either do a head first avoidance or a slide by away from the catcher. If the catcher because of the throw is going to the back side of the plate, we would do the same but on the front side of the plate. If the catcher happens to be on the third base side of the plate with her legs spread, we may go feet first through her legs.

Teach your players a variety of slides to where they feel comfortable with all of them and then watch videos of

the different ways a catcher may cover the plate so they can actually see if before they may face the situation.

Q: What is a good drill to use in teaching your infielders to catch balls in the air?

**Answer:** I like the drill that I call the “Football drill”. I would have the players on my right in a line and on “go” one at a time they would hand me a ball and take off on a designated route-first round-cut to the left, second right-cut to the right, third-go straight out for a ball over the head and fourth-come straight in for a short one they have to dive to get. Practice of this makes perfect so we would do this if not every practice then every other practice and each player got numerous repetitions. The more time they practice tracking the ball and looking it into the glove, the confident they will become when catching it.

**Organize and Practice, Practice, Practice!!**