

Individual Defensive-Fundamentals Drills

These are the drills that we use on a daily basis to work on our outfielders' individual defensive fundamentals. Along with all these drills, there are some other minor details that we pay attention to.

One detail that we pay attention to is the first step. The first step must be quick and efficient. Arguably, the most important step in the outfield is known as the drop step. A good outfielder could be compared to a good wide receiver in that they both run good routes. A good route for an outfielder starts with the drop step. A drop step allows the outfielder to clear his hip, turn, and run down a fly ball. A proper drop step creates an angle that allows the outfielder to get from point A to point B, in a straight line. In this case, point A would be where the outfielder is playing, and point B is where the ball will land. The better the drop step, the straighter the line—which leads to more fly balls caught.

It is very important, on a drop step, that the outfielder turns his pivot foot (the foot that does not drop back to create the proper angle) to obtain a running posture. Some outfielders have a tendency to leave that foot pointing towards the plate. If he rotates his foot in the direction that he wants to sprint, he will automatically be in an excellent running position. This position will give the outfielder the best chance of running down fly balls.

Once the outfielder is in motion and sprinting after a ball, he wants to make sure that he uses his glove hand to run. A common mistake that young outfielders make is not pumping the glove hand when running after a fly ball. The glove arm tends to become inefficient and usually hangs down by his waist. A good outfielder will pump both arms, as if he is a sprinter, to run down a fly ball.

Individual Defensive-Fundamentals Routines:

Outfielders

Group formation (no balls)

2 step jumps — 3 to the right

2 step jumps — 3 to the left

5 step jumps / behind ball and thru — 3 to the right

5 step jumps / behind ball and thru — 3 to the left

6-8 mixed-jump reactions off the coach

4 ground-ball footwork reps — slow motion and stop at the ball

2 times in each direction

Dry fielding fundamentals (form two-man lines, 15 feet behind balls)

2 reps straight thru — up and back is one rep

2 reps angles — up and back is one rep

1 rep tagging fly ball — up and back is one rep

Football tosses (first step and running to catch)

2 to the right

2 to the left

2 straight back, open right

2 straight back, open left

Mix reps if time allows

Reverse-pivot/stop-and-plant drill

2 to the right

2 to the left

Line-drive drill (40 feet away and run at coach)

3 reps straight at coach—show string catches

CATCH-PLAYING ROUTINE

I. Arm Exercises

II. Warm-Up

III. Long Toss

IV. Hat Drill

V. Two Simulated Ground Balls, Fly Balls, Back Hand, Reverse Pivots, Ball against the Wall

VI. 60 Seconds of Focus Catch

Present. Positive. Process.