



Ball, Base, Back up

by MICHELE SMITH 

- Coach Sullivan's Notes- I modified the article to fit the 11U style of play, identified by this font color.

During my holiday camp and my other clinics around the country we work on all aspects of the game but one of the things we always teach on defense is if you're a fielder—if you're playing somewhere on the field—you should never be standing and watching...that's for the spectators. And as Linda Derk, one of our great fielding coaches says, if you're standing around, you're growing roots in this game and that just won't do for making it to the next level!

That's where "ball - base - back-up" comes into play. If you're on the field, you should be involved in every single play! There's always something you should be doing or somewhere you should be moving to on the field.

Ball

If the ball is hit to you, then you have a responsibility to field it and get the ball to a bag and record an out if possible. First things first—an infielder's chances of recording an out are normally best if she can make the play over to first base. However, every once in a while if the play is taking a shortstop or a second baseman up the middle, the surest out might be at second base if there's a runner on first. Whenever possible, we would like to get the lead runner. This will occur in special situations, only. Getting the lead runner out puts our team at an advantage and helps out the pitcher.

Remember our first responsibility is to get the ball. And GET AN OUT!

Base

Now let's say the ball is put into play but not to you. If you're an infielder, your next responsibility now that the ball is not hit to you is to cover a bag (**base**). Go to the bag that is your responsibility. For the second baseman that would be second base. On a play in which the batter puts a bunt down, **or the first baseman charges a hit**, as a second baseman the proper bag on a bunt play potentially could be first base. For the third base position, it would be third base. Shortstop would be second base or third, depending on where the runner or runners are.

Back-Up

So the first two responsibilities are ball and then the base. Let's say you're an outfielder and the ball isn't hit to you and you don't have a bag to cover. You're responsible for covering throws or backing up. Infielders not involved with the ball or a bag are responsible for backing up as well. Properly backing up a hit ball or throw saves games on many occasions. This is one of the most important duties of a fielder yet one of the least acknowledged.

Even infielders have the duty of backing up after they realize they're not involved in the primary play. When a ball is hit to the first baseman, the second baseman can move behind him to back up, if possible. Same for the third baseman - the shortstop can back him up. If a ball is hit to the pitcher, the second baseman and shortstop need to back him up in case she misses the ball. In that situation, the SS or 2B may be able to get the out.

Always remember there's a place for everyone on every play and the entire team should always be moving. BALL, BASE, BACK-UP. Using that simple slogan will help players and coaches build a team that is in constant motion and prepared to make the plays.

Good luck and play hard!

Michele Smith

Keep up with Michele at www.MicheleSmith.com!

Michele presented the awards recently in Clearwater, Florida, where the ASA Gold championship games were played.

