



Maximizing Your Team's Catch Routine

It's time to change your team's paradigm when it comes to "playing catch." We no longer use the words "playing catch," or "warming up." We only use the phrase "throwing program."

The purpose of our throwing program is to work on specific skills at each individual position while improving our ability to play catch. Teach your team these options, pair them up by position, and allow them to work on them as they see fit during their throwing program.

Stay close to monitor their techniques and to assure they aren't just "playing catch"

Catchers

Transfer - Catchers can work on their quick transfer on just about every throw to them during throwing program. They do not need to return the throw quickly, but should get the ball out of the glove quickly, then regroup and return the throw to their partner.

Tags - In addition to working on transfers, catchers can work on tags at the plate when receiving the ball.

Throws - When catchers get to 90 feet in their program, they should turn so their partner is to their left at an angle, crouch, put the ball in their glove, and practice throws to third base. When they get to about 127 feet, they should square up to each other and practice their throws to second base from the crouch.

Receiving - After they complete any long toss or throwing they are going to do for the session, they should come back in to about 40 feet and work on their

receiving with their catcher partner. An advanced catcher or program would bring two throw-down plates with them during this phase.

Infielders

Transfer - During the initial part of the throwing program (inside 60 feet), infielders should transfer the ball out of their glove without closing their glove. As they move back, they can close the glove around the ball, but should keep their barehand by the glove and transfer quickly at all times.

Tags - As the distance increases, infielders can work on applying tags on incoming throws. This will allow them to work tags on throws in a variety of different spots.

Cut-offs/Relays - When infielders get a large distance apart (120 feet or age appropriate distance), they can work on relays without the throw. The infielders should move their feet to the throw, turn glove side as they are receiving the ball, and transfer the ball to the glove quickly simulating a relay.

Throws from fielding position - When the infielders are at their position distance (to 1st base) away from one another, they should set up with their partner to their left, put the ball in their glove, get in fielding position, and work their footwork and throws to first base.

Quick hands - After infielders have thrown as long as they are going to for that day, they should come back to about 60 feet and work a quick hands drill for about 30 seconds at a time.

First Basemen

Stretches - First basemen can simulate their stretches on any throw to them. They can bring a throw down base with them, or imagine where the base should be.

Tags on pickoffs - This is one skill that players usually only get to work on in games, but it can be the difference between out and safe. The throwing program is a great time for first basemen to work on tags on pickoffs from the pitcher. .

Cut-offs/Relays - First basemen should practice cut-offs and relays in the same manner as other infielders.

Outfielders

Throwing from ground balls- Outfielders can work throwing from ground balls by putting the ball in their glove on the ground by their glove foot. They should long step (crow hop) and throw to their partner.

Throwing from fly balls - Outfielders can work on throwing off fly balls in a similar manner to throwing off ground balls. They should start with the ball in the glove over the head and their glove foot forward. They should long step (crow hop) and throw to their partner as the cut-off man. They can also toss the ball straight up in air, get behind it, catch it with their glove foot forward and throw to their partner.

Pitchers

At any level of baseball, pitching is THE MOST important aspect of the game. It should be treated as such in practice. We have our pitchers throw separate from the non-pitchers during practice, and they do their own set of drills called the “Daily Dozen.”

This drill series is not outlined here, but will be available in our Coaching Athletic Pitchers Program that will be coming out next fall.

Conclusion

Playing catch is an everyday occurrence in baseball, but most teams don't maximize their catch time. Set a minimum amount of time for the “Throwing Program” and monitor them as they are doing it.

This can be a very productive time for your team or program.