



softball

Fun & Exciting Softball Practice

There's nothing worse than a boring softball practice. Those tedious and unfulfilling moments can drain the fun right out of a youngster's season. They can also infringe on their learning and skill development.

As a coach, it is your job to keep the drills challenging and the excitement level high. Following are some drills you can incorporate into your practices to help keep your team from slipping into the abyss.

SPEED BALL - Put your infielders into their regular positions. Place a ball on a tee or soft toss it to the hitter. Once she hits the ball she must run to as many bases as she can before all the fielders touch. This will help your infielders work on making quick and accurate throws. Next, divide your team into two groups. For every base a player reaches before all the fielders touch the ball, give the team a point.

GARBAGE CAN TOSS - Place one large plastic garbage can on its side near second base and another near third. Have the pitcher throw the ball to the catcher, who then throws the balls at the cans alternating between second and third base. To increase the drill's difficulty, have a player stand in the batter's box so the catcher gets used to throwing around her.

AROUND THE BASE CHALLENGE - Kids love the opportunity to challenge and beat the coach. Race around the bases and give your players a chance to win. To begin, you start on one side of home plate and a player on the other. One of you will run clockwise, the other counterclockwise around the bases. To avoid collisions on second base, the runner coming from first should touch the outside corner of second, while the runner coming from third touches the inside corner. For team fun, turn the exercise into a relay by having the runners tag another runner at second base.

WINDMILLS - This will help increase arm speed with soft ball pitchers. From the pitcher's normal starting position have them make three revolutions. But don't have them release the ball until the third revolution. Start by doing a series of these throwing lightly and working their way up to full speed.

TWO STRIKES - While holding intra-squad scrimmages have each player bat with a two strike count. This will help kids learn to choke up to shorten their swing and concentrate on putting the ball in play.

BOUNCE IT - This will help your outfields develop proper throwing techniques. Pair off the players and make them stand approximately 30 yards away from each other (the younger the player, the shorter the distance). The object: each player should throw the ball on one bounce to their partner. See who can make the longest bounce. Make sure each player uses the proper form on each throw. If a player's throw veers to the left or right after the bounce, check their grip, which may cause the unwanted spin.

WILD PITCH - This will help your catchers learn to retrieve wild pitches and make accurate throws. Have the catcher take her normal position behind the plate in full gear, then roll the ball toward the backstop. The catcher should turn and run toward the ball, slide beside it, pick it up with their bare hand and throw it back to the pitcher, who should be covering home plate.

TEXAS LEAGUER - Toss the ball over the head of the first player in line. As the player reads which side the ball is over, she should step to that side, cross over, and sprint back to make the catch. Encourage players to run on the balls at their feet so the ball doesn't "bob" with each step they take.