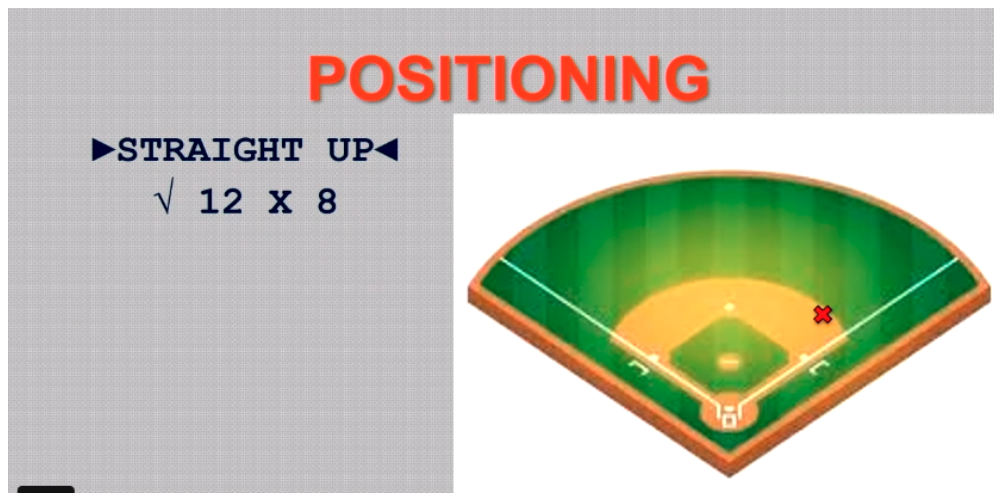


2023 ABCA Convention: Jim Chester

Developing an Elite First Baseman: Skills and Drills for a Neglected Position

Too often coaches at the 13U and 15U level (maybe 18u, I'll find out next year) don't do a lot of "position specific" drills. My son is a 1st baseman so the drill I would like to talk about involves 1st base.

The 1st part of this drill is positioning. When a coach of Jim Chester's pedigree says that he sees players that don't understand positioning at 1st, I know it isn't just in Saskatchewan that it is overlooked. I have been coaching this since I saw a video by Matt Antonelli on the same subject.



Kids can't seem to wrap their heads around this. You go back 12 steps along the foul line, then 8 steps towards 2nd. You are only 10 steps to 1st, but now you are covering a lot more area. You also have a pitcher to help you!

This positioning can be adjusted for different hitters, for righties you can move more towards 2nd and lefties more towards the foul line. The rule is simple; if the starting point is 12X8, for every extra step you take towards second, take one step closer to the base line. For every step closer to the foul line, take one step further towards right field.

If you have a hitter with speed you may want to shrink these distances.

Pick Drill:

- 1) Set up cones in a semi circle around 1st, from the foul line, at a distance that your 1st baseman can "step out" to receive a ball. Hit balls with a fungo at him at varying heights. This teaches him where he can move comfortably and gives him an idea of how to catch or pick balls that are off target.
- 2) When doing picks it's important to let your player know they need to keep their head down and behind their glove. They also need to work their glove towards the ball, not

swiping at. If you miss working towards the ball and miss, the ball stays in front of them. Swiping and missing leads to having to run after the ball.

Pick offs from the Mound:

Work with your pitchers and first basemen on picks to first. Use signs so that the first baseman knows the throw is coming. Pitchers can look at the 1st base dugout, touch his brim, etc. Vary the speed of the attempt, do the 1st attempt slow so that the runner maybe takes a little bigger lead.

Back Picks:

Depending on the age group and skill level these are harder to master, but work on them in practice. Some teams never expect that move, use it now and again to catch runners that are lazy.

Wild Throws:

Work on wild throws to 1st and have your first baseman catch the ball, number one, but also be thinking about tagging the runner as he goes by.

Double Play Work:

- 1) With feeds from 2nd, this is where the pick drill may be utilized as sometimes the throw from 2nd could be off
- 2) Balls hit to the 1st baseman, depending on where they are fielded, they may throw to 2nd first and then back to 1st or your 1st baseman may step on his bag first and then throw down to second.

Cut Off/ Relay in from Right Field

Work on throws in from the right fielder and have the 1st baseman throw home. They will learn their distances and whether they are going to throw a one hop or no hop into the catcher.

Working on all of these skills with your 1st basemen will lead to less runners on base and/or in scoring position which lead to less runs being scored. Some of these skills, like back picks and relays in from right field that get runners out can be momentum shifting plays.