



GAA Rounders

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael

Coaching Manual

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CHAPTER 1 – Why Coach?

A team and a coach are a unit. One does not function well without the other. A happy, united and sincere approach to learning the game is essential, and a good coach can nurture this. A coach is also responsible for motivating a team and ensuring it goes to play with the right attitude. The skills and techniques we impart to our young players and beginners will be their foundation as older and more seasoned players.

Why do we coach Rounders? In answer there are several reasons. Firstly, Rounders develops and uses all the ball skills together with co-ordination of hand and eye. It teaches how to catch and throw, using both underarm and overarm throwing; how to stop and field balls which fly through the air and come as direct catches. It teaches how to run, both when fielding and when batting. It also develops the ability to judge and hit balls pitched at a variety of heights and speeds.

Secondly, Rounders is a team game. Each player's skills must be put together with those of eight other players and they must combine to get the best overall performance. When the side is fielding they all have to work as a unit. When the team is batting, each batter knows that how he hits will affect the others on his team.

Thirdly, Rounders appeals to both male and female and can be played as a mixed game. It is not a contact sport: ladies and girls can often compete strongly with men and boys.

Okay, Rounders develops all these skills, is a great team game and is suitable for both sexes, but why do we have to coach it? Why can't we just play?

It is only with careful coaching that players can develop and improve their skills and techniques. It is no fun playing Rounders if you do not know how to hit, catch and throw; or where to run and throw. By coaching these aspects separately and during match situations, players will learn more and therefore enjoy more playing the game. It is important to make your coaching interesting and well organised to enable the players to get maximum benefit from the session. I would recommend about one third of the time at a coach's disposal be spent on the skills (catching, throwing, hitting, running and sliding) and the rest on a game.

To be a good coach you must have a first rate knowledge of the rules, skills and techniques of the game. This manual aims to provide you with this knowledge. At present there is a great need for guidance in teaching the basic skills to players. Many Rounders sessions are unorganised and unprepared which is no help in promoting the game. This manual gives ideas and practical advice on coaching and practicing the many various skills of Rounders. Strategies and tactics are also dealt with. If you disagree with them and therefore make up your own, so much the better. At least you are interested enough to think about the game. Here's hoping that you can LEARN IT RIGHT, PLAY IT RIGHT and ENJOY IT.



CHAPTER 2 – Throwing



Figure 1: Throwing Grip

Knowing how to throw the ball is one of the first things you must learn if you want to play An Cluiche Corr. This is true for every position on the field. If you cannot throw well, you cannot help the team.

Overarm Throwing

HOLD THE BALL CORRECTLY: Hold or grip the ball as you would hold any ball. Ideally, your first and second fingers should be placed over two seams of the ball where they come together, with the thumb also over a seam. [See Fig. 1]

POINT YOUR SHOULDER AT THE PLAYER who is going to catch the ball, with the weight on the back foot, (right foot for right-handed throwers, left foot for left-handed throwers). [See Fig. 2a]

BRING YOUR THROWING ARM STRAIGHT BACK OVER YOUR SHOULDER with your elbow bent and away from your body. (You may lift your other arm to give balance.) [See Fig. 2a]

THE THROW IS MADE WITH A STRONG TURN AT THE SHOULDERS, thus bringing the throwing arm up and over. As the arm is nearly vertical, the forearm and wrist flick through, don't turn your wrist or throw the ball from the side, because it will soon curve and not go straight to the target.

LET THE BALL ROLL OFF THE TIPS OF YOUR TWO FINGERS: You should learn to release it the same way each time. If you release it while your throwing arm and hand are above your head, you probably will throw the ball high (as you might need to in long throws). If you release it after your arm and hand have fallen below the level of your shoulder, you probably will throw the ball low. The best point to release the ball is somewhere in between. The exact point depends upon how tall you are, how strongly you can throw and how stiff your wrist is. Finding out which suits you comes only with practice and guidance from the coach. After you find the best release point, practice until it becomes second nature to you.

Follow Through

ALWAYS FOLLOW THROUGH: If you don't, your throw will be jerky and may not be straight. You should finish your throwing action with your weight of your left foot. [See Fig. 2b]

A good throw consists of the smooth coordinated execution of the above points. A good coach must be careful not to point out too many mistakes at once or this will discourage smooth co-ordination. It is not physical force, but rather technique, which enables you to throw long and accurate. A high lobbing ball is slow; so, if possible, coach good throwers to throw straight at about shoulder level. Again, outfielders will need to give the ball more height on longer throws.

Underarm Throwing

The following will be of help to the pitcher but pitching will be dealt with separately. Unless you are pitching, the underarm throw is usually used only for short distances and must be performed rapidly in order to save time.

Grip the ball as in overarm throwing; between the fingers and thumb. The weight is on the back foot as the arm is swung easily backwards. [See Fig. 3a] As the arm swings forward and as the player steps on to his front foot, the ball is released with a flick of the wrist. The arm follows through in the direction of the target. [See Fig. 3b] The ball is rolled off the fingers, not thrown from the palm. Unlike the overarm throw, you do not point your shoulder at the target, you FACE THE TARGET.

If the ball hits the ground too soon, the release point is too soon and conversely if the ball goes high in the air the release point is too late. It is important to keep the arm fairly straight, because if the elbow is bent when releasing the ball it will cause the ball to rise.

Practices: See Chapter 8



Figure 2a: Overarm Throw



Figure 2b: Follow Through



Figure 3a Underarm Throw



Figure 3b Follow Through

CHAPTER 3 – Catching



Figure 4a: Catching a Chest High Ball – present hands



Figure 4b Catching a High Ball



Figure 4c Catching a High Ball

The golden rule for catching – whether you are a base minder or fielder – is to **KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL**. Watch the ball from the moment it leaves the pitcher's hand and follow it as it travels towards you.

Chest High Ball

Hold your hands out in front of your chest, thumbs pointing at each other. [See Fig. 4a] As soon as the ball arrives, close your fingers over it and pull it in. **YOU CATCH WITH YOUR FINGERS** and not the palm of your hand. The ball may bounce out from your palm.

Highball

It is very important to get into the correct position [See Fig. 4b]. More catches are missed by failure to do this, than by failure of the hands to close on the ball.

Once you have sighted the ball, move as quickly as possible to get in line with the flight of the ball. When you get into this position keep your body balanced and watch the ball closely. Aim to catch the ball level with your face and then pull it to your chest. [See Fig. 4c]

USE **TWO HANDS** when possible. Make a cup with little fingers together, thumbs apart. Point longest fingers at the ball or just under it and relax. Give with the drop of the ball and pull to your chest. If the ball is travelling fast more 'give' is needed to retain it in your hands. Relaxing your hands and arms cannot be too strongly emphasised in all catching.

Be Ready To Move

You may have to run forward to meet a short ball or backwards if it is going over your head. Bend, stay near the ground with your weight on your toes. Short, quick steps are best if you have to move to your left or right. You may have to jump or dive. If the ball is going over your head move back quickly, keeping your weight forward. If it is a very long hit, turn around and run hard so that you may at least be able to field it on the first bounce. Make sure that you keep the ball on your throwing-hand side. Pick the ball off the ground before turning, then turn, look and throw.

Practices: See Chapter 8

CHAPTER 4 – Pitching

Technique

The technique for pitching is the same as for underarm throwing. Remember that the ball is held between the finger and thumb and not in the palm of the hand. Grip the ball over the seams as mentioned on page 6.

Strategy

The pitcher should aim for the catcher's hands and should be able to vary the speed and direction of his throws, to keep the batter guessing. The pitcher should make full use of the pitcher's stand. The pitcher must deliver the ball through the centre of the batters mat. If the batter is standing too far away from the side of home base, then the pitcher should pitch the ball over the far end of it. If the batter is standing too close to the side of home base the pitcher should pitch the ball over the near end aiming for the batter's fingers. In both these instances it is harder for the batter to hit the ball and even if he/she does hit it, he/she will tend to hit it into foul ground.

A good pitcher should also be able to vary the speed at which he/she throws the ball. The distance between pitcher and batter is:

- **Under 13 boys & girls** **9 metres**
- **Under 14 boys & girls** **9 metres**
- **Under 15 boys & girls** **10 metres**
- **Under 16 boys & girls** **10 metres**
- **Minor Ladies** **11 metres**
- **Minor Men** **11 metres**
- **Minor Mixed** **11 metres**
- **Senior Ladies** **11 metres**
- **Senior Men** **12 metres**
- **Senior Mixed** **12 metres**

This means that the faster the ball travels the less time there is for the batter to adjust his stance, and to time his/her swing and hit the ball. He/she has

Pitching



Figure 5a: Pitching

less time to see the ball and therefore less chance of a good hit. This is why fast pitching is an integral part of Rounders.

It is not the only form of pitching. A pitcher should try to cultivate slow balls which rise when they leave his/her hand but pass over the front and back of home base between the knee and shoulder of the batter. This is particularly useful when a batter steps back from the pitcher to give himself/herself more time to see fast pitches. If he/she stands too far back, the ball can be a good one over the front of home base and hit the ground by the time it comes to the batter.

A pitcher should also learn to spin the ball, gripping the ball between the thumb and the first two fingers and **TWISTING** them on releasing the ball.

A fast pitcher should try to put more variation into the line of flight of the ball. A difficult ball to hit is one where the pitcher drops his hips, bends his knees and releases a fast ball with his hand almost at ground level. The ball is aimed upwards so that it passes the batter at chest height which makes it very difficult to hit.

On an overthrow at home base, the pitcher should proceed close to home base while the catcher chases the ball.

Tips On Control

A number of things can affect a pitcher's control. A common error is taking his/her eyes off the target. From the time a pitcher begins the throwing motion, the **EYES SHOULD BE KEPT ON THE TARGET** until it reaches its destination. The pitcher should always grip the ball and release it the same way every time a particular type of pitch is thrown - such as fast pitch or slow pitch.

Practices

1. Hang an old rug, blanket or canvas over a fence or clothesline and outline a strike zone in chalk or paint. Place a pitcher's stand the correct distance from this and practice different throws.
If you mark a strike zone on a wall you may need to use the synthetic sliotar. [See Fig. 5b]
2. Make a strike zone target training area.
Pitcher and catcher can use this to practice together.
3. Set up home base and pitcher's stand as per match and get the pitcher to pitch to the catcher - the catcher or coach calling the good balls. They can also use this to practice signals, i.e., high, low, fast, slow, in-swinger or out-swinger. A good pitcher should be able to hit the strike zone at least 6 or 7 times out of ten.

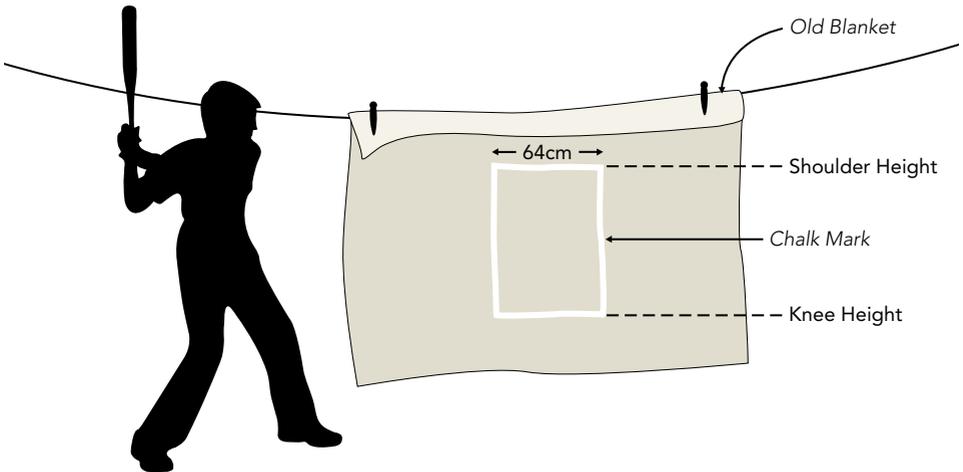


Figure 5b Strike Zone Target Practice

CHAPTER 5: The Catcher



Figure 6: Squat Position

Characteristics

Good teams need a good catcher. Pitchers could not be good pitchers if they didn't have good catchers. The catcher is the only person on the team who can see the whole field and all the players at once. He/she should check before each play that all the fielders are in the right places and that changes are made to allow for big hitters, left-handed hitters, etc. Catching requires more strength and endurance than any other position - your catcher must have pluck, ruggedness and also be lively. He/she often sets the pace of the game. If he/she is slow and acts as if he/she doesn't care whether he wins or loses, the rest of the team may act the same. He/she must have a good throwing arm and be able to throw the ball accurately and strongly to all the bases - especially to second base.

Technique

A catcher should be CENTRED BEHIND HOME BASE to give the pitcher a good target. You should STAY ABOUT AN ARM'S LENGTH from the batter. Be sure that the batter can not hit you, as he/she swings the bat. Do not move forward to meet the ball until after the batter swings. LET YOUR HANDS BE THE TARGET. You should alter this (and give a signal) if you wish the pitcher to throw in-swingers or out-swingers, high, low, etc. Be sure if you are giving signals that they are clearly worked out beforehand and that the batting team does not see them. Do not move your hands around, once presented to the pitcher, keep them steady.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

Do not turn your head away from the ball or close your eyes! When you do these you cannot see the ball! You need to be alert to protect yourself with your hands. If you turn your head you may get hit on the ear.

SQUAT POSITION [See Fig. 6]

Stand up with your feet spread apart, slightly wider than the width of your shoulders, your weight on the balls of your feet. Your left foot should be slightly ahead of your right foot (about 7-15cm). Your body should be bent forward with your hands presented to the pitcher as a target.

CHAIR POSITION [See Fig. 7]

Alternatively you may sit as if on an imaginary chair. The main difference here is that your feet are in line. Be careful that you do not crouch too much or sit on your heels because you must be ready to move up, down, left or right. If your weight is on your heels you will not be ready to move and you could fall over. Some catchers try to catch while kneeling on one or both knees. This is not recommended because you cannot get up fast enough to reach the higher pitches, or to make a good throw.

Remember, as soon as the ball is in play in the infield or outfield the catcher leaves the catchers box and becomes a base minder. **The best position for him/her to stand is at the front of home base. If he/she stands on the centre of the base without the ball then he/she will most likely cause obstruction. If he/she stands at the back of home base then the runner coming in could interfere with his catch or the flight of the ball.** In this position he/she is also further away from the thrower and at a disadvantage when there is a close decision. If the ball is overthrown to home base, then the catcher should leave the base to retrieve it. The pitcher should then take up a position near home base, waiting with hands outstretched for the throw from him/her.

Practices: See Pitching Practice.



Figure 7: Chair Position

CHAPTER 6: Hitting

Hitting is the heart of Rounders. Winning teams usually win because their players can hit the ball. If you can't hit, you can't help your team much and you won't enjoy the game very much.

Hitting is the heart of Rounders. Winning teams usually win because their players can hit the bat. If you can't hit, you can't help your team much and you won't enjoy the game very much.

Choose The Right Bat

Good hitting starts with the bat. It is better to use a light bat. The lighter the bat the faster the batter can swing it and the speed of the swing puts power into the hit. It is more a question of timing and speed of swing, than of brute force. The older and taller players should use the longest bats. Younger and shorter players should use shorter bats. The shorter the bat the faster the swing. Use a bat you can swing easily - not too heavy nor too long for you. The bat is really an extension of your body. It must feel as comfortable in your hands as your arms feel when they swing.

Hitting Area

This is not as large as you might think. The best hits are made when you strike the ball between the two marks placed on the bat in Fig. 8 (which we will call the fat of the bat). If you hit the ball above or below the marks you will not get a good hit. The tendency is to hit the ball foul on the side of the mark you hit the ball.

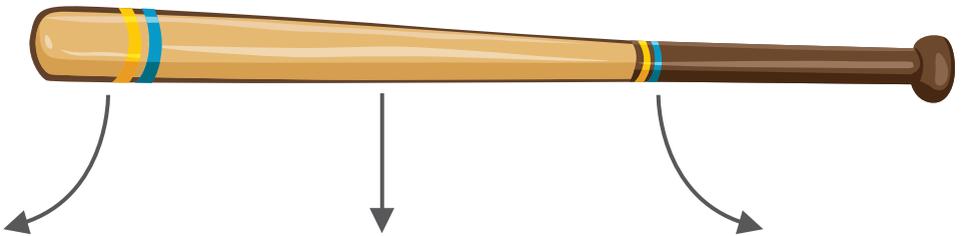


Figure 8 – Hitting Area: Between marks on the bat.

The Grip

If you stand on the left hand side of home base (as the catcher looks) you put your right hand on top, if you bat from the other side you put your left hand on top. This means that you can push through with your top (strong) hand rather than pulling through with your weak hand and also improves your wrist action. [See Fig. 9a & 9b]

The following are recommendations, however if you find an alternative more comfortable, you are free to use it.

It is essential to join your hands on the bat. Your hands must actually touch because even the smallest space decreases the distance you will hit the ball. The second knuckle of your lower hand should be lined up between the first and second knuckles of your top hand. [See Fig. 9b] If your knuckles are in any other position, it will not feel as good when you swing the bat to hit.

GRIP THE BAT FIRMLY

If you hold it loosely it may sting your hands when you hit the ball – especially on a cold day. You should feel the bat in your fingers rather than the palm of your hands. If you hold the bat too tightly then you won't get a full swing.

CHOKE THE BAT

This means to move your hands a little way up the bat. [See Fig. 9] Many good hitters place their bottom hand up to 8cm above the end of the bat. This helps them to swing faster. This is good advice no matter what size the bat is. If you feel the bat is too small when you do this, then change to a larger size and choke that. It is easier to hit a nail with a hammer by gripping it a few centimeters from the end of the handle. The same thing is true where bat and ball are concerned; it also gives you a faster swing and a better aim. If the pitcher is throwing very fast balls, then try choking up more on your bat. It will help you swing faster. If you are first up to bat and wish to hit into the left field then choking up more should help you achieve this (it improves aim).



Figure 9a Left Handed Hitting Grip



Figure 9b Right Handed Hitting Grip

Hitting



Figure 10 Stance & Bat Position

Bat Position

KEEP THE BAT AWAY FROM YOUR BODY

About 7-15cm should be enough. [See Fig. 10]

This enables you to swing the bat without getting your body in the way. It also enables you to get the fat of the bat to pitches over both extremities of home base.

YOU SHOULD HOLD YOUR HANDS CHEST HIGH AND IN FRONT OF YOUR REAR SHOULDER

[See Fig, 10] In this position the bat is far enough back and high enough that you can start swinging quickly.

Some players are inclined to hold their bat way behind their backs. In this position they have a hard time swinging around to hit the ball, and most of the time they miss it. Holding the bat on your shoulder or waist high over the mat, means that you will have to lift or move the bat to the top of your backswing. This gives you less time to hit the ball (especially on very fast pitches) and also means that the bat is moving at the time of pitch when it should be steady.

YOUR FRONT ELBOW SHOULD BE ON A LEVEL WITH YOUR HANDS HOLDING THE BAT

[See Fig. 10] If your front elbow is too high your shoulder and arm will hide the pitcher and you can't watch the ball. If it is too low you will have a tendency to swing under the ball and be caught out by a fielder.

The Stance

WHERE

You must stand where you can hit a good ball - that means being able to get the fat of the bat to all areas where a good ball will be called. The exact position to take up depends on your age, size and length of reach. Make sure you stand close enough to hit good balls over the opposite end of the mat but not too close where you can not hit properly a good ball which comes over the near end of the mat. COVER THE MAT.

If the pitcher is throwing slow pitches, stand to the front of the mat. If the pitcher is throwing fast pitches, stand to the back of the mat. This gives you more time to see the ball and thus increases your chances of hitting it. Be careful not to stand too far back where the pitcher can throw good balls which will hit the ground before they reach you. COVER THE MAT.

FEET

The batter's feet should be spread at a comfortable distance. If your feet are too close together you will not be able to maintain your balance and be ready to run if it is a good hit. The distance between your feet should be about the same as your shoulder span. Place your weight equally on each foot. This helps you to move all parts of your body to get more power into your swing. Your back foot should also be in line with your front foot, though it can be up to 5cm behind. [See Fig. 10] The line of your feet determines the direction your shoulder points. When you become a proficient batter you can change your feet to enable you to hit to a selected area of the field. [See Fig. 11a, 11b & 11c].



Figure 11a: The Line of the Feet Determines the Direction of the Hit



Figure 11b: The Line of the Feet Determines the Direction of the Hit

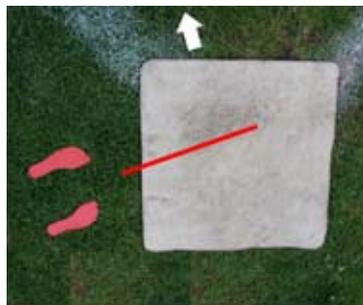


Figure 11c: The Line of the Feet Determines the Direction of the Hit

Hitting

How To Stand

This is just as important as where you stand. Bend your back and knees a little, but not too much. When you bend your back too much it may enable the pitcher to hit you when he/she throws good balls, while bending your knees too much reduces your batting power. On the other hand, if you have a straight back then you can't move your arms easily and straight knees mean you will not be ready to run, if it is a good hit.

The Stride

This is a short step towards the pitcher taken by the batter; as he/she starts his/her swing. It increases the distance the batter hits the ball because it gets all his/her back and neck muscles working. Keep your back foot in place while you step forward (7-15cm) towards the pitcher with your front foot. You push off the back foot hitting against a straight front leg. This body action coupled with a good wrist snap as the ball is met, will add power to all drives. Be careful to step towards the pitcher and not towards first or third base because this will take some power from your swing, as well as interfering with the direction of the hit.

The Swing

[See Fig. 12a, 12b, 12c, 12d & 12e]

Keep your front arm away from your body and your bat back and still as the pitcher starts to throw. As you swing the bat turn your hips (not your feet) so that your stomach is pointing right at the pitcher as you hit the ball. You push off your back foot keeping your front foot straight. Both feet must be firmly on the ground when you hit the ball. If you lift your back foot or hit while taking your stride you will lose both power and direction.



Figure 12a: The Swing



Figure 12b: The Swing



Figure 12c: The Swing



Figure 12d: The Swing



Figure 12e: The Swing

KEEP YOUR SHOULDERS LEVEL

If you lower your front shoulder as you start your swing it makes you swing under the ball. If you raise your front shoulder as you swing, you may swing over the ball.

AIM FOR THE TOP HALF OF THE BALL

If you swing under the ball you may hit it high in the air - an easy catch for the fielder. Keep your bat steady before you swing.

KEEP YOUR HEAD STEADY

Watch the ball, not where you hope to hit it. Try to see the ball as your bat hits it. Your back and shoulder turns but your head does not. Your head should be pointed in the same direction at the finish of the swing as it was when the pitcher released the ball.

HITTING AREA

Aim your bat so that the ball hits the hitting area (previously mentioned).

Hitting



Figure 13a:
Follow Through Hand Movement



Figure 13b:
Follow Through Hand Movement



Figure 13c:
Follow Through Hand Movement



Figure 13d:
Follow Through Hand Movement

FOLLOW THROUGH [See Fig. 12a to 12e]

Rounders is no different from many other sports, in that, if you stop your swing, the ball will not go very far. You lose your power and direction if your swing does not go all the way around. You must keep both hands on the bat without moving them. To do this your wrist must turn. Your top arm must roll over your bottom arm after you hit the ball. [See Fig. 13a to 13e] This is a natural, instinctive movement which most of us do without thinking, just remember not to twist your wrists or arms beforehand.

Practices: See Chapter 8

Bunting

A Bunt is when a batter just taps the ball or pushes the bat into the ball to make it roll in front of home base, where the fielders, the pitcher and the catcher have difficulty getting it. It is quite common in American Baseball and Softball but not so common in Rounders. The main reasons why it is not used in Rounders are:

- (a) It is difficult to coach
- (b) Rule differences between Rounders and Baseball
- (c) The difference between the balls used in Rounders and Baseball
- (d) positions of fielders in Rounders and Baseball

I hope (a) will be solved in this manual while (c) means the sliotar does not bounce off the bat as regularly as a Baseball (because of the type of seam on the sliotar). I don't wish to go into the rules or strategies of the different games, but suffice to say that bunting has more limitations in Rounders.

WHEN TO BUNT

In Rounders, it is ideally used to fill up the bases and cannot really be used to score a run. The batter should aim to bunt the ball about five feet from the foul line and about one third of the distance from home base to third or first base. It is particularly useful when the fielders are placed near or outside the lines between first, second and third base. It can also be used as a ploy to bring the fielders in from deep positions. Bunting your first good ball may make the fielders move in, so that you have a better chance to hit the ball past them or over them, on your next good ball.

HOW TO BUNT

Start at normal batting position - you do not want the other team to know until the last minute. When the ball is thrown, square around (feet also) and face the pitcher with your knees bent. Your arms should be extended - but not straight or stiff - so that the bat is at shoulder height. The upper hand on the bat slides up to near the hitting area, fingers bent. You then **PUSH THE BAT AT THE BALL WITH NO FOLLOW THROUGH.** [See Fig. 14a & 14b]

It is important that the ball be bunted onto the ground and not into the air. Do not bunt balls about your shoulder height. Aim to hit the top of the ball. This will ensure you do not pop the ball into the air.

Once you have decided to run on a bunt and have left the catchers box do not look to see what is happening but sprint for first base with your head down.



Figure 14a Bunting



Figure 14b Bunting

CHAPTER 7: Running



This is an important part of Rounders, which is often neglected. Good intelligent running can often win a game. There is the fast running when scoring a home run, the straight sprint from base to base and the running of the fielding side. The batter running from base to base runs in a much straighter line.

When running more than one base touch the outside corner of the base if the base minder is playing the inside corner - if not take the inside corner. Touch the base with the toe of your right foot and maintain balance so that you can make for the next base. You will find it easier to turn if you sling your arm across your chest in the direction of the next base. If you have stopped on a base be alive and ready to sprint. If there is no runner on the base behind you, you do not need to run when the next ball is hit. In this case, you shouldn't run unless you are sure you can make the next base, safely. **DON'T TAKE CHANCES.**

Once you leave the catcher's box, make sure you run! Run without looking to see where the ball has gone. Run hard even if you are sure you will be put out. The fielder might miss or fumble the ball. If you hesitate he/she might still have time to put you out. Something like this happens in nearly every game. Alert runners keep running and often make it to first base safely. When you hit don't turn your head while running because this reduces your speed. If you are under pressure, keep your head down and run right through first base (make sure you touch it). If it is second or third base, slide in and stay on the base. When running to home base **MAKE SURE YOU TOUCH THE BASE**, people often forget this point in the excitement of scoring, but no score can be awarded until contact is made with home base.

Practices: See Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8: Skills Practice

1. Throwing and Catching Exercises: Very Young Players

The best way to start with very young players is to use a tennis ball and get them to practice throwing against a windowless blank wall. Start with underarm throws and progress to overarm throws. Coach the change of body position, transfer of weight and other techniques. As all these practices involve catching, you should watch this carefully and coach the proper catching technique.

Variations:

- i. Get the player to vary the angle or speed of the throws to increase the variety of catches.
- ii. You may then progress to the synthetic sliotar which will help the very young player 'get used to' the harder ball. It also sharpens his/her reflexes because he/she can not be sure how this ball will rebound.

BEGINNERS

(a) One ball each

Players can throw the sliotar up in the air and catch it themselves with both hands.

Variations:

- i. Catch with either hand. Even though you always encourage players to use both hands there will be times in a match when they have to use one hand only. They must be ready for this.
- ii. Throw the ball as high as possible into the air before catching it, then high to their left/right, high forward and slightly behind. This teaches them to catch while moving.
- iii. Drop the ball from head/shoulder/waist height and catch it again before it touches the ground.

(b) One ball per pair

Short underarm throws varying height, direction and speed, progressing to the same variation of overarm throws. This helps the players get 'the feel' of the sliotar and overcome any fear they may have, when they start playing.

(c) Practices in a circle

- i. The players stand in a circle with the coach (or another player) in the centre. Start with short underarm throws varying the height and speed. Progress to longer underarm throws. Lengthen the distance until you reach 20m (the distance between bases).
- ii. Same as above but the coach throws the sliotar to the 'left/right or in front of/behind the player. In this way he/she practices all the possible movements to a highball.
- iii. The coach throws ground balls at the players, progressing to left of, right of and across their bodies. This is an ideal opportunity to coach the fielding technique for ground balls (see page 45).
- iv. Same as above but if the player misses the ball he/she must chase it and field it as mentioned on page 53.

Skills Practice

- v. The coach throws very high throws to the players progressing to variations in direction and distance.
- vi. The players in the circle throw the ball over and back to one another, in the order and manner stipulated by the coach.

(d) Practices on the bases

- i. A line of players behind third base facing second base, where another line of players is lined up. A player throws the ball and runs to the end of his/her own line. The player at the start of the other line catches the ball, TAGS AND THROWS the ball back to the first line. He/she then runs to the end of his/her own line, and so on.
- ii. Same as above, except players sprint to the end of the opposite line.
- iii. If you have more than one ball you can do the same at home and first, and indeed on the lines between the bases.
- iv. Players line up near third base in foul ground. The coach stands near the pitchers stand and throws fast ground balls past a player standing on the line between second and third bases. The player turns to chase and field. He/she throws the ball to a player on third base and he/she himself/herself runs to third base. The player on third base throws home and then runs there himself/herself. The player on home base throws to the coach and joins the end of the line, and so on. This same practice can be performed with the fielder throwing to second or first base instead.

NOTE: The coach should initially demonstrate the skills and explain their purposes before undertaking any practices.

2. Running, Throwing and Catching

It is a good idea to start your coaching sessions with some running practices. Relays and timed runs are useful, though practices on the field of play will have more relevance to a match situation. The distance round the bases is 80/100 metres. A straight 80/100 metre sprint will not be as useful as an 80/100 metre sprint round the bases, practicing the turning technique mentioned in Chapter 7.

Here are some practices to be done on a Rounders pitch but, as I mentioned in batting practices, don't be afraid to make up your own practices.

SPRINTS

Line your players up behind home base with a runner on each base. Blow a whistle. The runners must sprint to next base. The runner who comes home joins the end of the line while the others remain on their new base, listening for the next whistle. Vary the whistle blowing to heighten reactions and alertness.

KNOCK OUT SPRINTS

After everyone has gone around once and has warmed up, have it as a knockout. The last runner into base (remember they are an equidistant from one another) is out. If this happens on arrival at home base, the runner does not join the end of the line. If it happens on any other

base, then he/she must stay running, trying not to be last and thereby knocking out some other runner. If you (the coach) are not sure who is last in, do not call anyone out. Continue. When only four runners are left, the first in is the winner. The competitive element, while increasing enjoyment, also puts some edge and purpose into this training.

THROW BACKWARDS, RUN FORWARD!

Line your players up behind home base with runners on home, second and third bases only. The runner on home base throws the ball to runner on third and runs to first base. Third base throws to second and runs home. Second throws to first who should have arrived and be ready. First throws to new runner on home and so on until everyone has had a full turn. This exercise helps base running and throwing. It trains your players to throw accurately, and well, the distance between bases and is a useful preparation for throwing in an actual match.

BEAT THE BALL HOME

This is another practice which combines running and throwing. The pitcher stands on his stand with the ball and pitches to the catcher. As soon as the ball passes home base the batter does not attempt to hit it but drops the bat and runs for first base - and so on until he/she reaches home base. The catcher throws to first base, first to second, second to third and third to home. Does the batter get home before or after the ball?

Variation: This may be easy (depending on age group and their experience) for the fielders. You can make it harder for them by making the second base minder throw back to first base and then continue as normal. Harder again would be two double back throws, or even get all base minders to throw back to the catcher and he/she throws to next base.

RACE YOU BACK!

One runner on home base, the other on third. On a signal from the coach they run to first and second respectively and then back to the base from where they started. They must touch the bases. This is a good exercise for sharpening reflexes and speed.

Variation:

Over and back twice/thrice.

BASE RUNNING DRILL

Here you can use the whole squad at once. With a pitcher and catcher in their regular positions, place one runner on first base (facing home base) and the rest of the players in front of the runner, an arm's length from each other. They should have their left foot on the foul line. The pitcher throws the ball to the catcher. As the ball reaches home base, the base runners all break towards the second to third baseline, running in parallel lines. They pivot towards second on the right foot and take the first step with the left foot, swinging the left arm toward second as they stride to get a good start.

Variation:

To add interest to this drill stand in a suitable place and call a winner as they cross the line between second and third base. You can work with smaller groups, too, and might use a stop watch to time and check them for improvement from week to week. The players can trot back to the foul line and repeat this drill several times.

Skills Practice

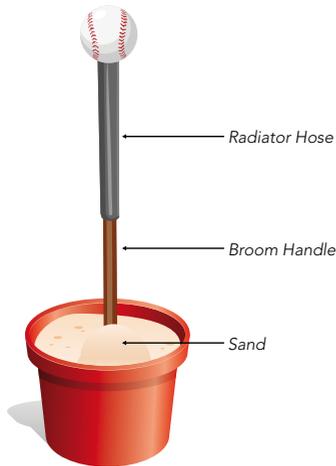


Figure 15: Batting Tee

3. Batting Practice Individual or Small Group Practice

When coaching novice players or young children it is important not to try telling them too much at once. Concentrate on one problem at a time. Remembering four or five instructional points at one time is difficult. 'Keep your feet shoulder width apart, your elbows away from the body, your legs slightly bent, your weight evenly distributed, the bat off your shoulder and your eyes on the ball' is a complicated set of instructions for any adult never mind a child. Keep explanations simple and repeat the exercise, one point at a time.

Start by getting the novice to stand correctly with the proper grip just swinging the bat so that he/she can get used to the weight and 'feel' of it. Remember how important 'shadow boxing' is to the boxer and how the gunfighter in the Wild West practiced his quick draw! Then you can progress to throwing very gentle pitches to him/her. The batter must watch the ball and hopefully the ball will then hit the bat. He/she should be reminded not to watch the pitcher's face but the ball in his/her hand. If he/she still has trouble hitting, then get him/her to choke up the bat and just try to block the ball.

BATTING TEE

These are made commercial and can be purchased from all good sports suppliers. Alternatively, you can make one from some old rubber hose and a broom handle.

[See Fig. 15] You may stick this into the ground in front of home base or set it in a bucket. The broom handle should be about 50cm long, depending on age group. The hose 15-20 cm. can be moved up or down along the handle according to each batters requirements.

It should be a fairly tight fit. You place the sliotar on top of the hose and the batter swings at it with the bat.

BATTING TEE RANGE

A net or canvas can be strung between poles or buildings. The size of the area is not too important but an area from 2 to 3 metres high and 10 metres wide is recommended. This would take care of 3 batting tees and 3 batters at one time. If you use the synthetic sliotar, the batting tee area could be set up beside a building. The tees should be placed about 5 to 7 metres from the net/wall so that you

can see whether the ball is being hit on line (which should be the aim) or hit over/under; and also whether the ball is being hit to the left or right. None of the above aids will cost too much and provide many more practice opportunities for every player.

TAP AND HIT SET

You tap a flipper with your bat and the ball pops up for you to hit.

PITCHING MACHINES

These are available and though they are expensive, provide an unknown variety of pitches.

PEPPER GAMES

These are very useful if you are dealing with small numbers or if some players arrive early to practice. Have one player bat standing with back to wall or fence and two or three others lined up about 10 metres away. One of the fielders tosses the ball (overhand) to the batter who tries to hit it towards another fielder. As each fielder catches the ball, it is tossed to the batter, who tries to hit it to the fielders in rotation. The players take turns batting and fielding, changing after each fielder has fielded three or four balls. The batter should never swing hard, but should choke up and punch the ball.

Variations:

- i. Fielders keep throwing until the batter misses, then the first fielder becomes batter and batter becomes the last fielder.
- ii. If a fielder misses the ball as the batter hits it to him/her, he/she goes to the end of the line.
- iii. Move the fielders in to a distance of 7 metres and have the batter bunt the ball to them.

TEAM BATTING PRACTICE

In holding team practice have your players bat in their regular batting order. Extra players should be given numbers also. Number 1 bats, number 2 waits to bat and the others field in their fielding positions where possible. Each batter gets three good balls and runs on the third. After running to first base the runner should stay there and run for second when the next batter hits, and so on until he/she reaches home base. Then he/she becomes a fielder. If a batter is put out on third ball only, he/she becomes a fielder straight away. This will provide 'game type' situations in batting and running the bases.

Variations:

- i. Give batters who reach home safely 5 good balls next turn to bat.
- ii. All batters get 5 good balls.
- iii. Instead of running the bases on the last ball the runner goes all out to reach second for one extra good ball, third for two and home run for three extra good balls.
- iv. If the batter is 'caught' on any ball he/she becomes a fielder.
- v. One extra ball for hitting to a certain pre-designated area.
- vi. Make up your own.

Playing situations can also be simulated by the coach, e.g. last innings, two out, bases loaded, score tied. The aim of the batter should be to hit away from home and third bases so that the runner on third gets a score. Children especially enjoy this and the variations are quite numerous.

CHAPTER 9: Batting

Although hitting has been covered in a previous chapter, here are a few general tips for the batting side as a whole.

BATTING ORDER

When deciding your batting order, do not put your biggest hitter first. If he/she gets a home run you will get only one score. This is a waste of resources. Your biggest hitters should be at number 4 and 8 when a home run could yield four scores. As there are nine on the batting order it helps to put good hitters at 3 and 7 also, who would be in the same position when you go down the batting order the second time.

It is crucial that your first batter gets to first base. Pick a batter who keeps the ball on the ground and can hit away from first. Your first batter should also be a good sprinter. Make sure your fastest runner is not behind your slowest. Space your left-handed hitters with two or three other batters between them. They are particularly useful when the bases are loaded or when there is a runner on third base, as they tend to hit away from third base.

STRATEGY

If the ball is hit into the air, GO! You have nothing to lose by running because if the ball is caught by the fielder you are out anyway. On the other hand, if the fielder drops the catch, you have increased your chances of getting to first base. Also, the fact that you have been caught out does not stop the base runners from advancing - which they may not do if you do not run.

DO NOT HESITATE

Even if you hit a poor shot you might still make first base. Do not stop running and do not look around. The fielder might miss the ball or throw wildly to the first base minder. The base minder might drop the ball.

When standing up to bat you must have a positive attitude: 'I can, I will!'. If you don't think you are going to hit the chances are you won't hit. When your team mates are getting ready to bat you should encourage them. Let them know that you believe they can hit it.

YOU MUST WANT TO HIT

Some players come to bat hoping to get a walk on. You can't be a good hitter if you think this way. You should be hoping to get a good ball so that you can get a good swing at it.

CONCENTRATE

Concentrate on the ball the pitcher is going to throw at you and not on something else. Do not swing at high or low balls. These are bad balls and if you hit them you make them good.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

This means that you watch the ball from the time the pitcher gets it until you see it hit your bat. You can't hit the ball with your eyes shut! You can't hit the ball if you are looking at the pitcher or the place where you think you are going to hit the ball.

The faster the ball is being pitched the further back from the pitcher you should stand. This gives you more time to see the ball. Be careful not to stand too far back where the pitcher can throw in a ball that is good over the mat but bad by the time it reaches you. The slower the pitcher throws the ball the closer towards him/her you should stand.

THINK

If it is your first good ball and you hit it near a base, to which one of your team-mates will have to run, don't go. Wait for a better hit. If you hit a high ball remember the golden rule. If there are no fielders on the bases, remember all you have to do is get to first base, so it doesn't matter as much where you hit it, once it is not near first base. There is also little point in this situation hitting high where there is a risk of being caught out. Keep it ON THE GROUND. Don't be waiting to hit a home run, you might never get to first base. If the hit is good enough - go! Even if it is not as good as you expected. If you come in to bat and the bases are loaded it makes sense to try to hit high and long. Even if you are put out, the base runners may score.



CHAPTER 10: Fielding

It is important that fielders be flexible' and work as a team. If the first base minder is drawn away from his/her base to get the ball, then the pitcher should take the throw on first base. The same applies on the other bases, the shortstop to take second or third as the case may be. Too often you see base minders who are stuck to the bases when they should attack the ball knowing they have cover. The pitcher and shortstop as well as being cover players should also be back up players. If there is a ball being thrown to a base they should stand behind the base in case the ball is overthrown - this includes backing up the catcher. Too often you see the pitcher or infielders standing between the base and the thrower to help the ball home. This means that the ball often does not go straight to the target and because of the extra catch and throw the 'helper' ends up helping the runner get on base.

If the pitcher fields a ball, the throw to the proper base should be made as quickly and accurately as possible. Pitchers often delay too long in making the throw. If the base minder fumbles the throw, there is no time to recover the ball before the runner reaches the base. The pitcher - and indeed fielders - should have an idea where to throw the ball before it is pitched, having noted the positions of the runners.

The second base minder and shortstop should catch all the high balls they can without running into another fielder or each other. Again, the 'call' is all important. Remember that it is much easier to catch a high ball if you are running forward to it, than backwards. So they should catch all the high balls between their positions and the pitchers stand. They should also catch those that fall close to second base. Let the outfielders catch those which go over their heads more than 3 to 4 metres. If the game is close, and there is a runner on third base, the short stop and second base minder should play inside the line between bases. This will shorten their throw to home base if the runner on third tries to score.



INFIELD PLAY

Much of the game of Rounders is played on the infield. This is where most of the action is. Therefore all infielders should know the game well, be able to field a great variety of strikes and be able to throw well.

FIELDING GROUND BALLS

To field a ball hit along the ground it is important to stay close to the ground. A large majority of errors are made because infielders let the ball go under them. Bend your back and dig the ball out of the grass. It is much easier to come up for a ball than to bend down for one at the last moment. [See Figs. 16 and 17]

Most fielders will find that it is natural for them to start their feet spread about the width of their shoulders or slightly wider and with their hands hanging loosely in front of their knees. If your toes are pointed out a little this should help you to move faster to either side. Bend forward and come up on your toes as the ball is pitched to be ready to move in any direction, to field it.

You should move forward for every ground ball hit in your direction unless it is hit so hard that you do not have a chance to move. You must always have it in mind **ATTACK THE BALL** even though it may be impossible to do so. Play the ball; do not let it play you.

WATCH THE BALL

Watch the ball from the moment it leaves the pitcher's hand until it is hit and you field it.

The most important thing is to **STOP THE BALL**. Do not let it go through to the outfield, as that usually lets runners go to the next base and perhaps score a run.

Always try to get in front of the ball where you have a much better chance to catch it or knock it down. Very few balls will come straight at you. If the ball is hit very hard you will have to judge where the ball is going and run fast to get to that spot before the ball does. The main thing is to get in front of it.

WATCH THE HOP OF THE BALL

A ground ball usually hops or bounces. Watch how it hops. If it is taking little hops, you should field it close to the ground with your fingers pointing down, palm



Figure 16: FIELDING GROUND BALL
(Knees full bend)



Figure 17: FIELDING GROUND BALL
(Drop to one knee)

Fielding

FIELDING GROUND BALL

(Drop to one knee) [See Fig. 17] You should always be able to see your hands as you pick up the ball. Your wrists should be forward and your hands should go around the ball. The ball should be placed quickly into the throwing hand to be thrown. Remember to **STAND UP BEFORE YOU THROW**. If the ball is just skimming along the ground, drop to one knee and stop it with your hands in front of your body. Thus if the ball misses your hands or goes through them your body will stop it. Alternatively, you may use the knees-full-bend position. [See Fig. 16] If the ball is taking big hops or bounces run toward it and try to catch it at the top of a hop or bounce. Whatever way the ball comes to you, get in front of it, watch it into your hands and don't let it pass you out.

BE READY FOR THE NEXT PLAY

Making a good stop is not enough. Keep thinking all the time. Know where the base runners are and what they are going to do as soon as you get the ball. Be alert! Be ready for the next play. Forget about the runner until you have the ball in your hand.

FIELDING HIGH BALLS

One of the most difficult things for infielders to learn is when to take the high ball and when to let the player next to you take it. If the ball is coming to your position, you take it. Don't wait for anyone else, but make sure you call 'Mine!' 'Mine!' and keep calling until you catch the ball. If the ball is a little out of your area, try for it, but if the player next to you calls let him/her have it. Judge where the ball will land, get under it, and wait for it. Catch the ball about even with your chest and shoulders. Use both hands. [See Fig. 4]

THROWING THE BALL IN THE INFIELD

All throws in the infield are usually short, fast throws. One of the hardest is the short throw when you are only 2 to 3 metres away from the player who is to catch the ball. If you throw it too hard he/she might miss it and if you throw it too easy, the runner might beat the throw. It is best, in this situation, to use the underarm throw, with a firm flick of the wrist. Don't make any more throws than you need to. Each time you make a throw, you have a chance of making an error. If you have a choice, run with the ball rather than throw it.

PLAYING FIRST BASE

Many of the outs in a game are made by throwing the ball to the first baseminder. He/she must be able to catch the ball well. It is an advantage, also, if he/she is tall. If you wish to play first base the first thing you must learn is how to stretch from the base to shorten the throw. Take up your position on the corner of the base nearest the thrower and take a long step towards him/her. **PRESENT YOUR HANDS AS A TARGET FOR THE THROWER**. [See Fig. 4a] This shortens his/her throw and helps beat the runner to the base. As you catch the ball, push your foot back against the base, to make sure you touch it. You often get a wild throw to first so you must be ready to jump high or move to the right or the left. Sometimes it comes in on the ground. You must try to stop all balls that come to you, even if it means leaving the base area to do so.

The next thing you need to know is: where you play, when you are not catching batted balls thrown to you. You should not move very far away from the base. Let the second base minder

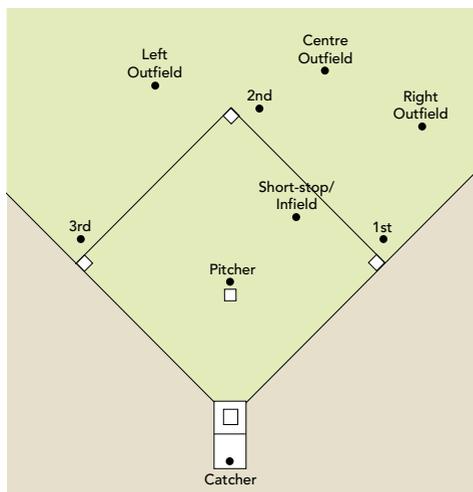


Diagram 1:
Suggested Positions for a left handed batter/hitter

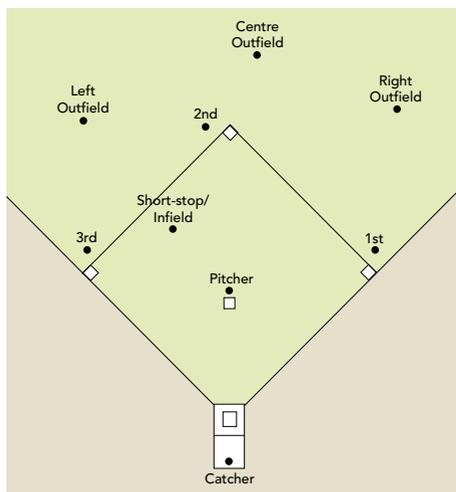


Diagram 2:
Suggested Positions for a right handed batter/hitter

take most of the high balls and ground balls that go between you and him/her. You should play outside the line between the bases, about 2 metres, in from the base most of the time. [See Diagram 2] If the batter is left-handed, he/she is more likely to hit the ball right over first base than a right hander, so play closer to the foul line. [See Diagram 1] You may also have to catch high balls hit into foul ground so make sure you are not standing in foul ground before the ball is hit or else the catch won't count. If you catch a ball in foul ground remember it is not a foul ball and the runners on base may advance. Be ready to make a throw after the catch. If you are throwing to second base, throw to the left or right of the base, to avoid hitting the base runner and to make it easier for the baseminder to catch.

PLAYING SECOND BASE AND SHORTSTOP

These two players work as a team. A right-handed batter will tend to hit the ball between the shortstop and third baseminder. So the shortstop plays about 3 metres from second base. The second baseminder plays 1 to 2 metres from second base, and takes the throws to the base. [See Diagram 2] For a left-handed batter the roles are reversed and the distance from the bases change accordingly. [See Diagram 1] If one or other has to field the ball the other becomes the baseminder.

PLAYING THIRD BASE

To play third base you must be able to stop hard hit balls and catch line drives. You must also be able to throw hard and fast to first base. For a right-handed batter you need to play outside the line between second and third and about 2 metres from third base. [See Diagram 2] For a left-handed batter you have to play a little closer to second base to help the shortstop. [See Diagram 1] With a runner on third base and the game close, you should move inside the line to shorten the throw to home base. As a general rule, TAG AND THROW. If you are playing the

Fielding

infield and there is no one running to your base, provided you are near the base take the extra few seconds to run over it before throwing. This provides you with insurance in case of an overthrow, and is especially important for the catcher minding home base. TAG AND THROW.

While waiting on a base for a throw, face the thrower and present your hands to him/her as a target. Your hands should be held apart in front of your chest, thumbs pointing at each other. Thus, if the thrower misses the target or you fumble your chest will prevent the ball from going any further. [See Fig. 4a]

NOTE: The distances from bases mentioned above are flexible, depending on age group and size of players.

OUTFIELD PLAY

Outfielders should be poised on the balls of their feet, with the toes pointed slightly outward, and ready to move in any direction as the ball is pitched.

CATCHING HIGH BALLS

Try to get under high balls at the earliest possible moment. By doing this you give yourself a chance to catch the ball if you have misjudged the distance or the wind blows it in a different direction. Attempt to catch high balls at face level, pulling it to your chest. [See Fig. 4b & 4c] This means you are ready to throw instantly and if you fumble the ball you may still be able to trap it against your body before it touches the ground. Be careful when taking up position to catch, that you do not run in under the ball and have to catch it over your head. If you miss, the ball will keep going and you will have to turn and chase. The catch that is missed up front of your chest will fall in front of you and you can pick it up and throw straight away. IF YOU CAN'T CATCH IT, STOP IT.

If the ball does pass you out, whether in the air or on the ground, you should turn and give chase. Remember to keep the ball on the side of your throwing hand. If you are right-handed, run to the left of the ball. Pick the ball up with your right hand and then turn, look and throw.

THROWING

All outfield throws should be made with the overhand motion and back spin on the ball. [See Fig. 2a & 2b] Always throw the ball to the base in front of the leading runner. If you have to throw a long distance to home and have difficulty, use a cutoff man/woman, i.e. one of the infielders or baseminders. He/she can then throw the ball the rest of the way home.

DON'T HOLD THE BALL

Watch the game very closely and know every second where the runners are and what they will try to do. When you get the ball, know where to throw it and do this as soon as you can. Don't rush your throw; take the extra few seconds to do it properly. Aim your throw at the chest of the baseminder. If you are too far out to throw to home base quickly, it often helps to throw to one of the infielders (cut-off man/woman), who then throws home - possibly even tagging a base on the way.

PLAYING RIGHT OUT FIELD

If you are playing this position [See Diagrams 1 & 2] and always be ready to HELP THE PLAYERS NEAR YOU. If the ball is hit or thrown towards the first base minder, then you should run fast to get behind him/her. If he/she misses the pass, you can get it and throw it quickly, to keep the runner from going to the next base. You should also help the centre fielder. If he/she misses the ball and you are right behind him/her, you can get the ball and throw it, to keep the runners from going to the next base.

PLAYING LEFT OUT FIELD

[See Diagrams 1 and 2] Again you should always HELP THE PLAYERS NEAR YOU. These are the third baseminder, the shortstop and the centre fielder. When a ball is thrown towards one of these players, you should run fast to help him/her if he/she misses the ball.

PLAYING CENTRE FIELD

[See Diagrams 1 and 2] The centre fielder should be able to run fast. Often the best fielder is chosen to play this position - especially in senior grade. You must always be busy and alert in this position. You should back up the fielders on your left and right as well as the shortstop and second baseminder. So you must be FAST and have a GOOD THROWING ARM.

Traffic Control: The centre-fielder has the right of way on all balls able to be caught, but to avoid collisions the ball should be called for. When one fielder calls for the ball the fielder nearest should back up the play in case of an error or misjudgment.

SHIFTING FOR LEFT HANDED HITTERS

Most hitters bat right-handed and tend to hit the ball to the left side of the field. So when they come to bat, the outfielders should be in the 'normal' position. [See Diagram 2] This means the left outfielder should be behind and between the third base minder and shortstop. The centre fielder should be slightly to the left of and behind second base and the right outfielder behind and between the second baseminder and the first baseminder.

If the hitter is a left-handed hitter, all the fielders should shift towards right field, as most left-handed hitters tend to hit to right field. [See Diagram 1] This should put the right out-fielder a little closer to the right field foul line; the centre-fielder a little towards right-field and the left out-fielder nearer centre field.

Keep your mind on the game. There may be innings when you have nothing to do in the outfield. Even if your body has nothing to do, keep your mind working. KEEP THINKING about the game. Watch every pitch and BE READY. Talk to your team mates - encourage them. Talk to them about the game: "how many outs?", "left-handed batter", "call for the high balls" etc. Don't listen to the crowd or talk to anyone but your team mates. CONCENTRATE AT ALL TIMES

Fielding

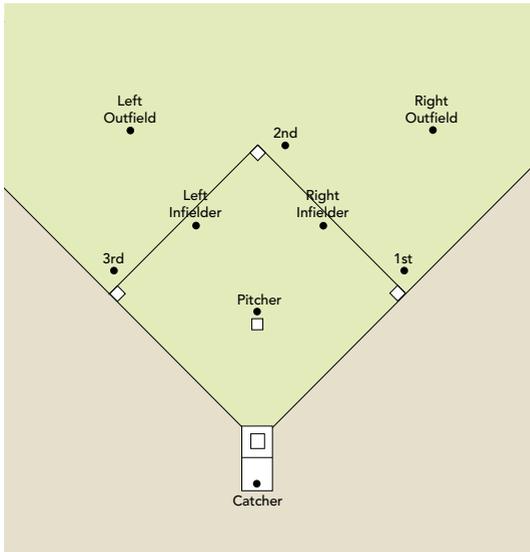


Diagram 3: Suggested Fielding Positions for Younger Players

SUGGESTED FIELDING POSITIONS FOR YOUNGER PLAYERS

The fielding positions in this chapter are more suitable for older players when the batters have the capability to hit more balls to the outfield. That is why you have three fielders in the outfield. For younger players it may be better - depending on the age and ability of the teams - to use the fielding positions in Diagram 3.

All the baseminders play closer to their bases. You have two fielders for the infield and two for the outfield. Thus you have an extra fielder in the infield where more play takes place.

FIELDING PRACTICE

Line all your players up in their normal fielding positions with the catcher at the front of home base. Bat various shots to your fielders calling out the base they must throw to when they field the ball. That baseminder then throws home. This is useful in training your fielders to TAG AND THROW, CALL, BACK UP and to ATTACK THE BALL. It is very helpful to train your baseminders to take up their positions on their base after the ball has been hit. You can, of course, make up your own variations but it is important to simulate match situations whenever possible.

CHAPTER 11: Sliding



Figure 20 the Slide

THE SLIDE

This is an integral part of good base running and can make all the difference in determining whether a player is in or out on a base. It is very difficult to run into a base at full speed and stop - it is much easier to slide the last few feet when there is a danger of the runner being put out.

WHEN TO SLIDE

You must remember that you can run faster than you can slide so you should run across first base - where you are permitted to over-run and also run across home base - where it is not necessary to maintain contact with the base. The slide is necessary on a close play at second or third base because the runner must maintain contact with the base. **NEVER SLIDE, UNLESS YOU HAVE TO.** If there is a possibility of getting to the next base (say on an overthrow by the fielding team), you are no good to your team sitting on the ground.

HOW TO SLIDE

The younger you are the easier it is to learn to slide, because you are closer to the ground. The same principle applies to small players in relation to tall players. The first thing you must learn about sliding is to land on your hip or rear end - where you have the most natural padding! Your arms and legs should be off the ground, but not in a position so as to injure a baseminder. Studs should always be pointed in a downward direction.

In sliding to the right of the base, which should be done if the baseminder is standing behind and on the left of the base, aim to hit the right side of the mat. Take second base as an example because most of the sliding is done there. If you are running from first base towards second base and the third baseminder is throwing the ball to the second baseminder you should land

Sliding

on your right hip with your legs turned sideways. Your right leg should be stretched out to the right and off the ground and your left leg pointing towards the base with your knee slightly bent so that your LEFT FOOT will contact the base at the earliest possible moment and remain in contact with the base as your knee bends and your body slides on past the base. [See Fig.20]

Keep both your eyes on the mat and make sure your arms do not hit the ground. Stay as low as possible and remember only the hip or rear end should touch the ground.

If the ball is coming to the baseminder from right outfield, he/she will be standing near the right side of the base so you should slide to the left of the mat. Land on your left hip keeping both feet turned sideways and keep your arms off the ground. You contact the mat with your bent RIGHT FOOT. .

If this slide is done right you won't get any broken bones. The idea is to hit the mat with the leg that is doubled up so that if you are sliding too fast your leg will bend as you hit the mat. If you do this with your straight leg the speed of your slide or the weight of your body may hurt your leg.

Variations:

- i. You may slide with both feet slightly sideways. You land on your rear end with both legs stretched out in front of you. This way your feet will not stay in contact with the mat. You must keep contact with your hands.
- ii. Head first slide: This slide should only be used when you have to dive back to a base after leaving it. The quickest way to get back is to slide head first to the base touching it with your outstretched hands. THIS IS A DANGEROUS SLIDE to use because you may get hit in the head with the ball or collide with the baseminder. It should be used for only short slides of less than one metre. If you have to slide further than this, use one of the other slides. Dive back to the base only when you don't have the time to use one of the other slides.

Practice:

Dress up in old clothes with an extra pair of trousers/slacks. Practice in long grass or soft sand - not on the Rounders pitch. It is important to have your legs covered to avoid skinning them.

CHAPTER 12: Mini-Rounders

This game is suitable for the under tens and beginners at Primary School level. Cumann Cluiche Corr na hÉireann, CLG hope that Mini-Rounders could be used to encourage persons with special needs to play.

Introduction

Young players and beginners find it difficult to pitch the ball accurately and the game slows down considerably if there are too many “walk-ons”. They also find it difficult to hit a pitched ball especially if it is pitched fast. Hitting the ball from a batting tee means that the beginner and young player benefit in several other ways also. They have the opportunity to develop EYE-HAND CO-ORDINATION and SWING TECHNIQUE without fear of being hit by a pitched ball. The fielding team is allowed more opportunities to DEVELOP FUNDAMENTAL FIELDING SKILLS.

Rules

A batting tee [See Fig. 15] is set in front of home base for four innings. As the game begins, the fielding team takes up their fielding positions with the pitcher on the pitcher’s stand. He/she may not pitch the ball but fields that territory. The rules are the same as normal with a few additions.

1. In playing off the batting tee, the batter must hit the ball as far as the pitcher’s stand, i.e., beyond the line from both foul lines across the front of the pitcher’s stand. If it does not pass this mark in fair ground it will be called a foul ball. If the batter hits the tee with the bat causing the ball to fall, it will also be called a foul ball.
2. If the batter swings and misses three times, or hits two balls deciding not to run, and then misses on the third swing, he is out.
3. If any player, plays the ball (even on the ground) before it passes the imaginary, it shall be deemed a fair ball.
4. When players have advanced as far as possible without being knocked out, the catcher places the ball on the tee. As soon, as all players are in their regular positions the umpire calls the next batter. No further play may take place until the next ball is hit into fair ground.
5. Base runners must remain in contact with their bases until the ball is struck.
6. Game is divided into 4 innings. 4 innings must be played irrespective of score going in to the second half fourth innings.
7. Instead of using 3 outs to determine a half innings the team stays batting until all 9 have batted.

Mini Rounders

- 8.** Panels are given batting numbers 1-12 before the start of a match. The twelve names are entered on the score sheet. They play as follows:

1st Innings: 1-9

2nd Innings: 10-6

3rd Innings: 7-3

4th Innings: 4 - 12

This ensures each player gets 3 innings. Changes can be made only at the end of an innings. Players can be arranged any way the team coach wishes, 10-12 need not be substitutes.

- 9.** Substitutions can be made only when there is an injury when the referee is satisfied that the player is unable to play on. Then the next number is taken, e.g., 1st innings. Number 4 is injured. Number 10 takes his place (and then becomes number 4). At the end of the innings order goes 11-7, etc. Number 10, is overlooked each time.

- 10.** The referee calls “last hatter” before the ninth batter, in each half-innings, bats.

Aim Of Mini Rounders

The GAA Rounders Council would hope that the competitive element would be kept from these matches and that the spirit of the Mini-Sport Movement would prevail.

The emphasis is on participation - medals, trophies, cups, etc., are not awarded - victory is a reward in itself. Every player gets a chance to play an equal part.

(a) Friendly Leagues/Blitzes:

All schools/clubs play each other. Teams are not disqualified for losing and prizes are not awarded to the team with most points.

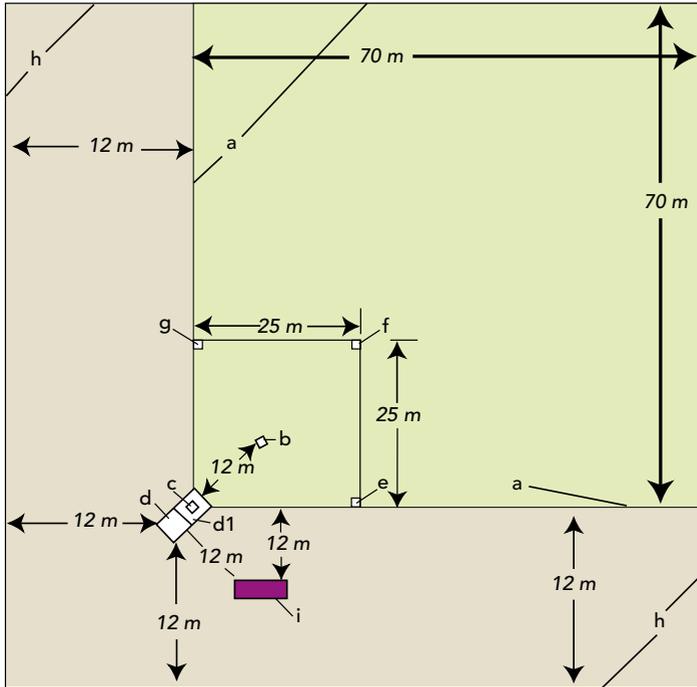
(b) Festivals:

Large numbers of children from different schools/ clubs come together. Teams are picked from the total grouping. At no stage do schools/clubs play against one another.

CHAPTER 13: Marking A Pitch

Dimensions

The field of play shall not be less than 70 metres long by 70 metres wide. There shall be four bases 20 metres apart (25 metres for minor and senior), and the lay of the ground shall be as shown in diagram 4.



- a: Foul Lines
- b: Pitcher's Stand
- c: Home Base
- d: Catcher's Box
- d1: Batter's Box
- e: First Base
- f: Second Base
- g: Third Base
- h: Field Boundary
- i: Batters' Bench (foul ground is shaded)

Diagram 1

A rectangular box, 4 metres by 8 metres, shall be placed at home base, with the centre of the back line in line with the centre of home base, the pitcher's stand and second base, and six metres away from the centre of Home base. The back corners of the catcher's box will be each 2 metres from the centre of the back line.

A line across the centre of the box will divide it into two equal squares, the section containing home base shall be called the Batter's box, the back section will be the Catcher's box.

The side lines of the batter's/catcher's box and the back line will be continuations of the foul lines.

Marking A Pitch

Marking A Rounders Playing Field

1. Pick a point at one side of the pitch (most people will choose the point at which the 21 metre meets the side line on a GAA pitch), at this point put down a peg/marker. You should choose a location which will allow you a minimum of 10 metres behind this point, to allow enough space to mark a batter's box.
2. Using string or light rope, walk 20 metres across the 21 metre line, when you reach 20 metres place a peg into the ground. This will be the location of first base.
3. From the first base peg, turn 90 degrees and measure 20 metres in a straight line. At the end of the 20 metres place a peg into the ground. This will be the location of second base.
4. From the second base peg, turn 90 degrees and measure 20m in a straight line. At the end of the 20m put place a peg into the ground. This will be the location of third base.
5. From the third base peg, turn 90 degrees and measure 20m in a straight line, back to your first peg. This will be the location of home base.
6. At this point you should have a length of string/rope going in a 100m square/diamond.
7. Return to the first base peg and measure diagonally across to third base, this should measure 28.1 metres. Do the same from second to home base and again you should measure 28.1 approx. This will ensure you have a diamond shape.
8. You can now mark your diamond with paint.
9. To complete the foul lines continue your line beyond first and third base for approx. 20 to 30 metres.

Batter's/Catchers Box:

10. Take a length of string and place it around the peg at second base
11. Bring the string back straight across the field towards and through home base.
12. Bring the string through the centre of home base and out the back of where the batter's box will be, peg the string into the ground behind the batter's box.
13. Return to your home base peg. Measure 2.9 metres from the end of the line towards first base. Place a peg at this point. Return to the original peg and measure 2.9 metres from the end of the line towards third base. Place a peg at this point.
14. Measure across between the two pegs you have just placed and you should measure 4 metres; this will be the front of the batter's box.
15. From your pegs on the lines at the front of the batter's box, measure two lines of 8 metres away from home base, towards the back of the batter's box. Place pegs at the end of the two lines.

GLOSSARY

ALUMINIUM BAT: This is an American bat which is popular in softball because you often get a 'sting' from the timber bat hitting the softball. There is no 'sting' from an aluminium bat. It is quite light, lasts much longer than a timber bat and is permitted in Rounders. The weight of a wooden bat is in the barrel but an aluminium bat is weighted towards the handle. This helps a player swing faster. On a wet day there is a tendency for the slotar to skid off this type of bat.

AMERICAN BAT SIZES: The lengths of American bats go in inches from 27 inches to 36 inches. The 27 inch one is stamped on the end of the handle with a '7', the 30 inch is stamped with a '0' and the 36 inch is stamped with a '6'. Thus they are stamped: 7, 8, 9, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

BAD BALL: A ball pitched by the pitcher, which in the opinion of the referee, does not pass over home base between the knee and shoulder of the batter. If the pitcher loses contact with his stand before the ball leaves his hand then this is also a bad ball. A bad ball is sometimes called a bad pitch.

BATTING TEE: An adjustable rubber tee which is used for batting practice and Mini-Rounders. [See Fig. 15]

BUNT: When a batter just taps the ball or pushes the bat into the ball, to make it roll in front of home base. [See Fig. 14a & 14b]. Bunting is a ploy normally used when third base is unoccupied, to make it difficult for the fielding team, to retrieve the ball quickly enough to put out a base runner.

CATCHER: The player on the fielding team who catches the ball thrown by the pitcher.

CATCHER'S BOX: A rectangular box behind home base, 4 metres by 6 metres. The 6 metres is measured from the intersection of the foul lines. A ball which lands in the Catcher's Box is in fair ground.

CHAIR POSITION: Position taken by Catcher to catch the ball as the pitcher pitches it. He/she looks as if he/she is sitting on an imaginary chair. [See Fig. 7]

CHOKE THE BAT: When the batter holds the bat up to 8cm from the end. It allows the bat to be swung faster and also enables the batter to put more direction into the strike.

CUT-OFF MAN/WOMAN: A fielder used to help the ball home on long throws from the outfield.

FAIR BALL: A ball hit by the batter directly into fair ground.

FAIR GROUND: The area between the lines drawn from home base to first base and to third base, which extend the full length of the field. The Catcher's Box is also fair ground.

FIELDER: A player opposing the batting team, on the playing field.

FOUL BALL: A ball hit by the batter directly into foul ground.

FOUL GROUND: The area outside the Catcher's Box and outside the lines drawn from home base to first base and to third base which extend the full length of the field. No play may take place on any ball which lands directly into foul ground.

GOOD BALL: A ball pitched by the pitcher, which in the opinion of the referee, passes over home base between the knee and shoulder of the batter. Also any ball struck by the batter. A good ball is sometimes called a good pitch.

INFIELD: Area of fair ground inside the line of the bases, i.e., from first through second to third base.

OUTFIELD: Area of fair ground outside the line of the bases.

PEPPER GAME: A game used for batting practice [see Page 42]

PITCHER: The fielder who throws the ball for the batter to hit.

SHORTSTOP: A fielder who plays to the left of second base [see Diagrams 1 & 2, pages 51 & 52] or infield

SQUAT POSITION: Position taken by Catcher to catch the ball as the pitcher pitches it. [See Fig. 6]

STRIDE: This is a short step towards the pitcher taken batter; as he/she starts his/her swing. It should be no more than 15cm.

STRIKE ZONE: The area over home base between shoulders of the batter.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: The Grip

Figure 2a: Overarm Throwing

Figure 2b: Follow Through

Figure 3a: Underarm Throwing

Figure 3b: Follow Through

Figure 4a: Catching Chest High Balls

Figure 4b & 4c: Catching High Balls

Figure 5b: Strike Zone Target Practice

Figure 6: Squat Position

Figure 7: Chair Position

Figure 8: Hitting Area

Figure 9a: Left-handed Hitting Grip

Figure 9b: Right-handed Hitting Grip

Figure 10: Stance & Bat Position

Figure 11a to 11c: The Line of the Feet determines the direction of the hit

Figure 12a to 12e: The Swing

Figure 13a to 13d: Follow Through (Hand Movements)

Figure 14a & 14b: Bunting

Figure 15: Batting Tee

Figure 16: Fielding Ground Ball (Knees Full Bend)

Figure 17: Fielding Ground Ball (Drop to one knee)

Figure 20: The Slide

Diagram 1: Fielding Positions for a left handed Hitter/batter

Diagram 2: Fielding Positions for a right handed Hitter/batter

Diagram 3: Suggested Fielding Positions for younger Players

Diagram 4: Pitch Dimensions

Diagram 5: Marking a Pitch – 20 metres for juveniles.

Diagram 6: Marking a Pitch – 25 metres for minors and seniors.

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