

Lead Runner Drill

Goal: To execute force plays at second base.

Setup: Place players at each infield position. The offense begins with a runner on first (see figure 9.27).

Description: Coach pitches balls that are easy to hit or has a pitcher simulate throwing a pitch or actually throw a pitch. Batters hit or coach hits balls fungo-style. The defense tries to make force plays at second. Each batter hits until he or she hits a ground ball. Each play begins with a runner on first. All six batters for the offense take one turn hitting, then they go through their rotation and hit one more ground ball each (so that they hit 12 ground balls in all). If you are hitting fungo-style, let each baserunner take the same number of turns going from first to second. At that point, switch the offense and defense, and repeat the game. Score one point for the defense for every force made at second; score two points if they turn a double play.

Stress that the player receiving the throw at second gets to the bag as quickly as possible to be a stationary target. The second baseman should place the left foot on the bag and take the right foot to the ball. The shortstop should do the opposite.

Multitasking: If your players are hitting, have your baserunners work on their fundamentals, too. Shuffle to a good secondary lead (if it is allowed), go hard on ground balls and go halfway on balls in the air. Runners also should practice a bent-leg slide into second base.

To make the game easier, do the following:

- Hit ground balls fungo-style.
- Roll ground balls to the defense.
- Don't allow leadoffs.

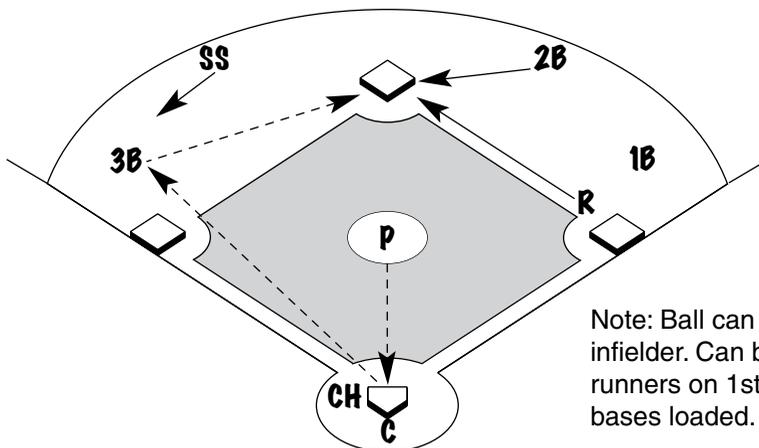


Figure 9.27 Lead Runner Drill.

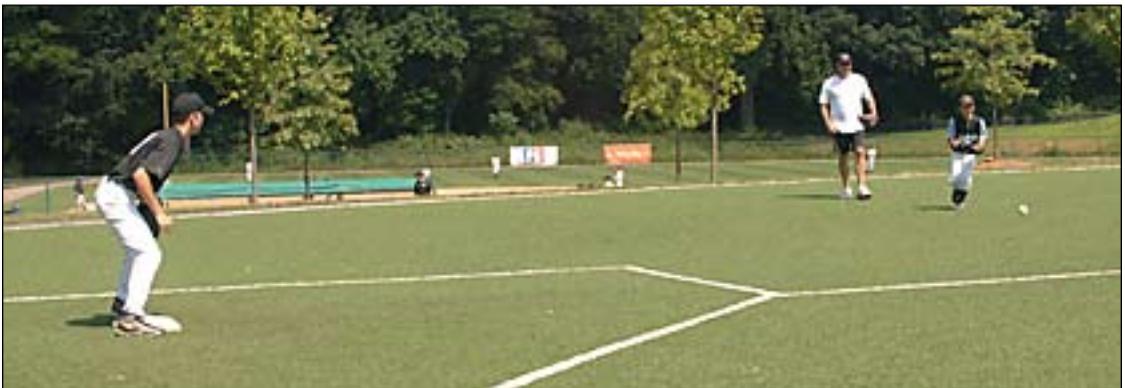
- Don't allow the runner to take off on the pitch. Instead, the runner must wait until the ball gets to the plate.
- Have batters hit off a tee or hit soft toss.

To make the game harder

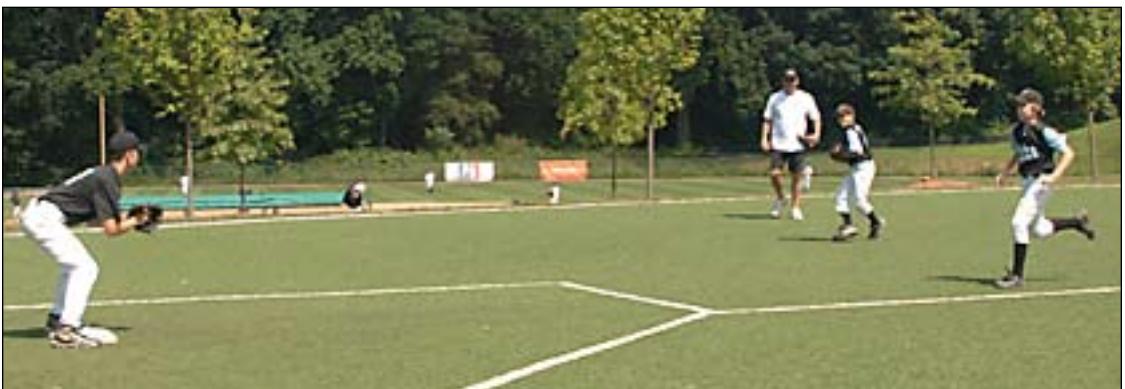
- Allow leadoffs.
- Allow the runner to take off on the pitch.
- Hit or roll ground balls to locations that will make the play difficult.

Tag Plays

The tag play is another fundamental defensive concept. A potential tag play situation occurs any time a runner is not in contact with a base and time is not out. For example, a runner overrunning second base can return safely to second by retouching the base before being tagged. To put out a baserunner with a tag play, the defensive player must tag or touch the runner with the ball, or with the glove holding the ball, when the runner is off the base (see figure 9.28).



a



b

(continued)

Figure 9.28 A tag play at third base.