

Throwing Drills

Effective throwing drills are essential for the development of any softball team and especially for your team since you have chosen to build a winning fastpitch team. I'm sure you have the team throw the ball to get loosened up, but are the players developing good habits or engraining poor habits? Teaching a girl to throw the ball correctly is the most fundamental and important skill a coach can provide to his player. If the player can't throw the ball, it really doesn't matter if she stopped the ground ball or not. I cannot EMPHASIZE the importance of this skill enough. Plan on devoting a significant amount of time to these drills, ESPECIALLY with younger or new players.

No matter the age of your softball team, throwing the ball is a skill that must be practiced and perfected. The age and skill level of your team will be the determining factor as to how much time and emphasis you must place on it. In my first year as a 10U coach, we would spend almost half of our fielding practice time just working on throwing drills. However, by the time we were in 12U this was down to about 10-15 minutes. Make no mistake about it, the throwing habits a player learns early on may make or break her career as a softball player. Bad throwing habits are almost impossible to break, and the player's body has to be constantly reminded of good throwing habits.

Throwing Drills - The Wrist Flip

Have your players partner up and get about eight feet apart. Have them take a knee facing their partner, for righties have them put their right knee on the ground, for lefties have them put their left knee on the ground. Then have them hold the ball in their throwing hand with their arm pointing forward and a 90 degree bend in their elbow, and their wrist cocked back. Essentially, they are in a position to flip the ball to their partner. Now, using only their wrist, have them flip the ball to their partner. This will teach them, and their muscles, to flip the ball for extra power when they throw, and also to put the correct backward spin on the ball when they throw. The correct spin is critical to giving the ball lift and to keep it from tailing off. If all goes well, you should only spend 3 or 4

minutes on this drill. You probably think this is too basic, however, I am constantly amazed at how many girls push the ball when they throw. Also, I recently attended a Coaches Clinic put on by the Baylor coaching staff, and they have their fully scholarshiped NCAA Division 1 College players perform this drill prior to every practice and game. If College players need to work on this throwing drill, I strongly suspect every 10U player should spend time on it as well.

Throwing Drills - Throwing Pose

Again, have your players partner up and get about 10 feet from each other. The partner with the ball will place the ball between her own feet. When the coach says go, the player will squat down, pick up the ball, and position themselves (QUICKLY) in a proper throwing pose to throw to their partner. At this point, the players glove should be pointing at their partner, their body should be facing 90 degrees to the right of their partner, their front foot should be pointing at a 45 degree angle towards their partner, and their throwing arm should be back into the correct throwing position with the arm essentially level with the shoulder, bent 90 degrees upward at the elbow, and their hand and ball facing away from their partner (feeding the monster). This is the coaches opportunity to view and correct their throwing position. The coach will again say "go" and the player will throw the ball to their partner. Have the girls position the ball in different spots around their body so as to get used to picking up the ball and snapping their bodies into good throwing positions. If done correctly, this drill should only take about five minutes. But it is truly a great softball drill for teaching the correct throwing position. Having the girls pose gives the coach the opportunity to look at each player and make corrections.

Throwing Drills - Around the Horn

Divide your players as evenly as possible at each base. It's okay to have 2 at one base and 3 at another, and typically it works out this way. Then, starting at home plate, have the girl throw the ball to the player at first base who will then throw it to the player at second base, etc. After the girl throws the ball, she then runs to that base. This helps keep girls out

of the way of errant throws, keeps them busy, and keeps them fit. The girl receiving the throw counts out loud the number of successful throws and catches. So the first girl to catch a throw yells "One", and the next girl will yell "Two", etc. This will build excitement with the girls as they get to higher and higher numbers and they will know they are improving. It will also give the coach a quantifiable number to help him measure his team's progress. Be sure to run this throwing drill in reverse as well. Throwing in a clockwise manner is much easier than throwing counter-clockwise. This is also a good time to have them practice tagging out ghost runners. Catch the ball, make a swipe take and then throw to the next base.

Throwing Drills - Chain Throw

One of my favorite throwing drills is the **Chain Throw**. This drill focuses on throwing longer, throwing to the glove hand side, receiving the ball correctly, and receiving and throwing the ball in one fluid motion.



Line up your girls, with four players to a line, stretching from one foul line to the other. Make three or four lines depending on how many players you have at practice. The ball starts at the left field line, is thrown to a player in left-center, then thrown to right-center, then to the right foul line and then the sequence is reversed. When the ball makes it all the way back to the left foul

line, the player drops the ball and all of the players rotate up one position with the girl who started on the left foul line running all the way to the right foul line. Once all of the players have rotated through each position in the chain the drill is done.



Be sure to have the player receiving a ball focus on catching and turning to her glove hand side to make for a faster and more accurate throw to the next player in the chain. It also teaches the player throwing the ball to throw to her teammate's glove hand side.

We always run this drill as a race between the lines to teach them the importance of getting rid of the ball quickly. Catch and throw, catch and throw. **DON'T** catch and HOLD.