Long Term Athletic Development
Active Start Stage - Ages 0 – 6
from ages 0-6 years, children need to be introduced to relatively unstructured play that incorporates a variety of body movements. An early active start enhances development of brain function, coordination, social skills, gross motor skills, emotions, leadership, and imagination. It also helps children build confidence, develop posture and balance, build strong bones and muscles, promote healthy weight, reduce stress, improve sleep, learn to move skillfully, and learn to enjoy being active.

- FUN and part of daily life
- Fitness and movement skills development
- Focus on learning proper movement skills such as running, jumping, wheeling, twisting, kicking, throwing, and catching
- Not sedentary for more than 60 minutes except when sleeping
- Some organized physical activity
- Exploration of risk and limits in safe environments
- Active movement environment combined with well-structured gymnastics and swimming programs
- Daily physical activity

6U Softball Coaches

You are very important in the development of these kids, but remember that kids learn with their EYES and MOVING, Not by what you say to them!

Equipment Suggestions:
Fun Bag
Softie/safety balls
All different types of balls
Flat Disk CONES – Lots!
Targets – hand made/creative
Bag of candy
Dry erase board to "show"
Portable net
Soft Frisbee
Throw down bases/carpet

Hitting – Moving Things – get creative!

Throwing ANYTHING

Glove work – extension of the hand

Positions on the field

Hitting from the "T"

Running for fun things

Running in the correct direction – relate it to something for them

MUST intro them to Sliding/Diving! – find a way, start from the knees. – It's so much easier for them at a younger age. If they wait to long to try, they will NEVER do it.

Long Term Athletic Development
FUNdamental Stage - Ages 6-9 in Boys & 6-8 in Girls
From ages 6-9 in boys and 6-8 in girls, children need to participate in a variety of well-structured activities that develop basic skills. However, activities and programs need to maintain a focus on fun, and **formal competition should only be minimally introduced.**

- Overall movement skills
- FUN and participation
- General, overall development
- Integrated mental, cognitive, and emotional development
- ABC's of Athleticism: agility, balance, coordination, and speed
- ABC's of Athletics: running, jumping, wheeling, and throwing
- Medicine ball, own body strength exercises
- Introduce simple rules of ethics of sport
- No periodization, but well-structured programs
- Daily physical activity

Equipment Suggestions:
Fun Bag
Softie/safety balls
All different types of balls
Flat Disk CONES – Lots!
Targets – hand made/creative
Bag of candy
Dry erase board to "show"
2 or 3 portable nets
Soft Frisbee
Throw down bases/carpet

8U Softball Coaches:

You are very important in the development of these kids, but remember that kids learn with their EYES and MOVING, Not by what you say to them!

Hitting Moving Things – stay creative!

Any sport that helps learn the extension of the arm – ex: badminton

Track ball game

Throwing the ball – Don't OVER TEACH – just throws and moves fast

Throw at targets – get creative

Glove work – extension of the hand

Fielding technique – but again, don't OVER teach – they have to DO to learn!

Running bases-but don't make them track stars – 60 ft is a LONG way for this age. Teach each base by starting half way to that base.

MUST intro them to Sliding/Diving! – find a way, start from the knees. – It's so much easier for them at a younger age. If they wait to long to try, they will NEVER do it.

Long Term Athletic Development
Learning to Train Stage - Ages 9-12 in Boys & 8-11 in Girls
From ages 8-11 in girls and 9-12 in boys, to the onset of the growth spurt (usually around the ages of 11-12), children are ready to begin training according to more formalized methods**, but the emphasis should still be on general sports skills suitable to a number of activities.** While it is often tempting to over-develop "talent" at this age through excessive single sport training and competition (as well as early positioning in team sports), this can be very detrimental to later stages of development if the child is playing a late specialization sport: it promotes one-sided physical, technical, and tactical development and increases the likelihood of injury and **burnout**.

- Overall sport skills development
- Major skill learning stage: all basic sport skills should be learned before entering Training to Train (next stage)
- Integrated mental, cognitive, and emotional development
- Introduction to mental preparation
- Medicine ball, Swiss ball, own body strength exercise Introduce specific capacities
- Talent Identification
- Single or double periodization (the process of varying a training program at regular time intervals.)
- Sport-specific training 3 times week; participation in other sports 3 times a week

10/12U Coaches:

THESE KIDS ARE NOT TOO OLD TO STILL HAVE FUN!
And guess what? Neither are you!

Hitting Live

Hitting moving things thrown from the FRONT of them.

Throwing for accuracy

Throwing for different distances or positions

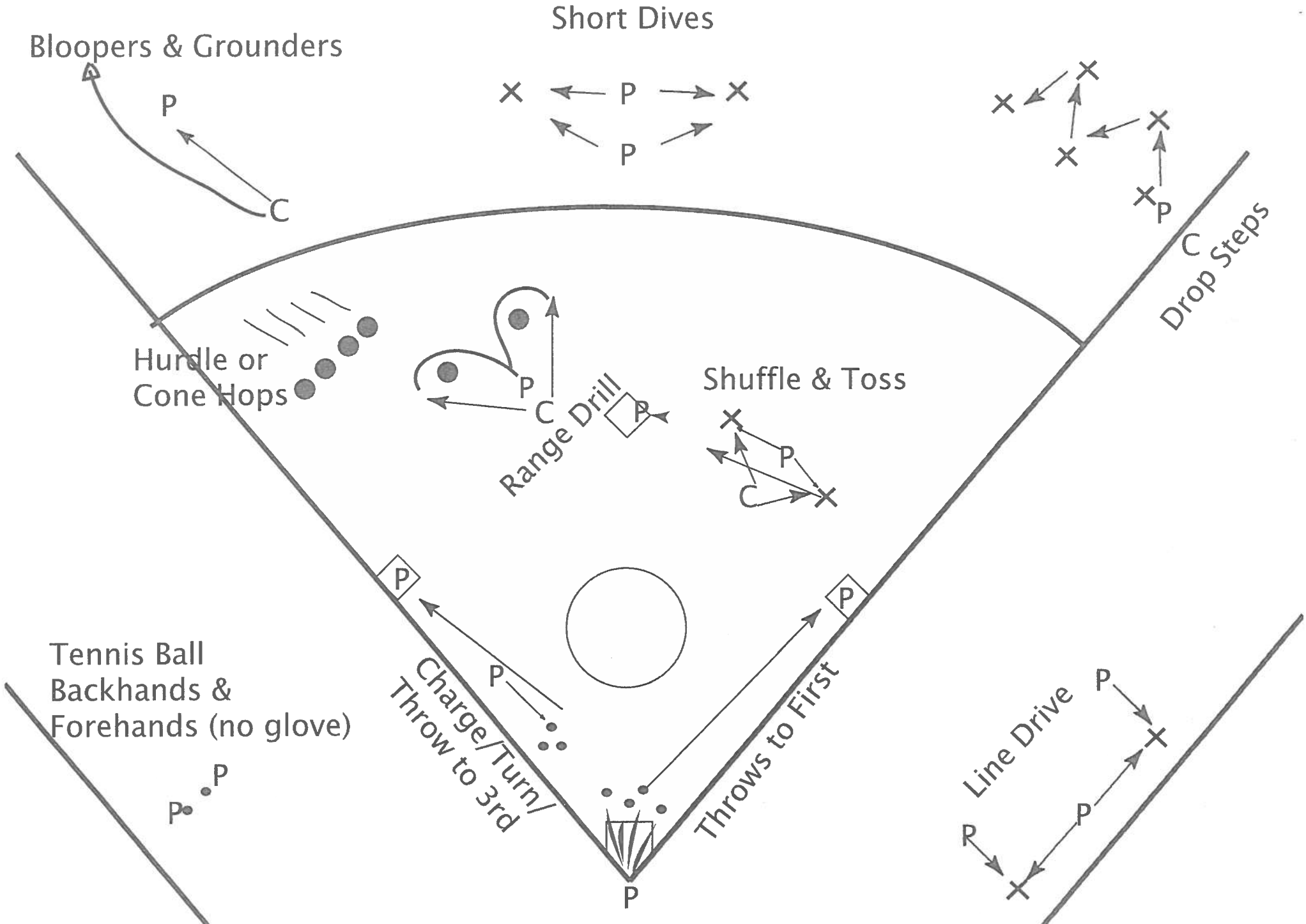
Throwing while moving or on the move

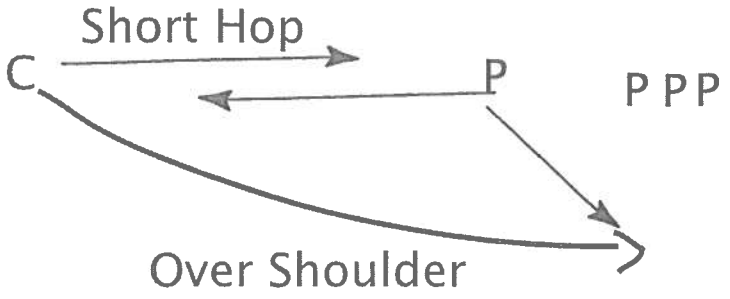
Fielding skill work and glove work

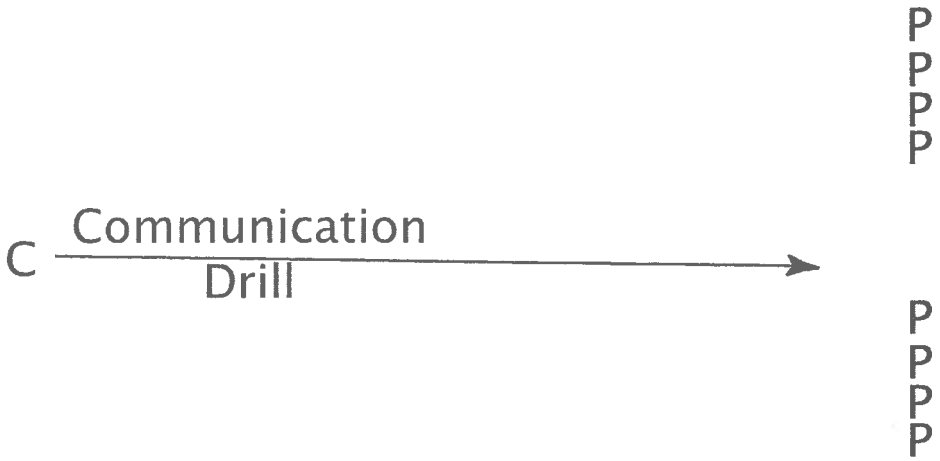
Stealing/sliding/diving

These kids must be sliding and diving to further in the sport

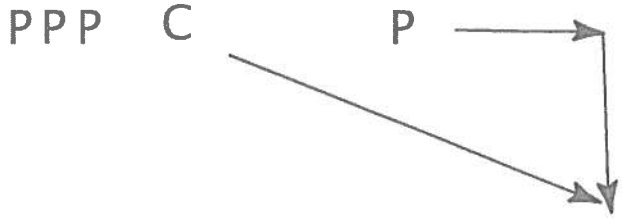
Equipment Suggestions:
Fun Bag
Softie/safety balls
All different types of balls
Flat Disk CONES
Targets – hand made/creative
Bag of candy
Dry erase board to "show"
2 or 3 portable nets
Soft Frisbee
Speed ladder
Throw down bases/carpet


Bloopers & Grounders
P
C
Short Dives
P
P
P
Drop Steps
C
Hurdle or
Cone Hops
P
C
Range Drill
P
Shuffle & Toss
P
C
P
P
P
Charge/Turn/
Throw to 3rd
Throws to First
P
Tennis Ball
Backhands &
Forehands (no glove)
P
P
Line Drive
P
P
P

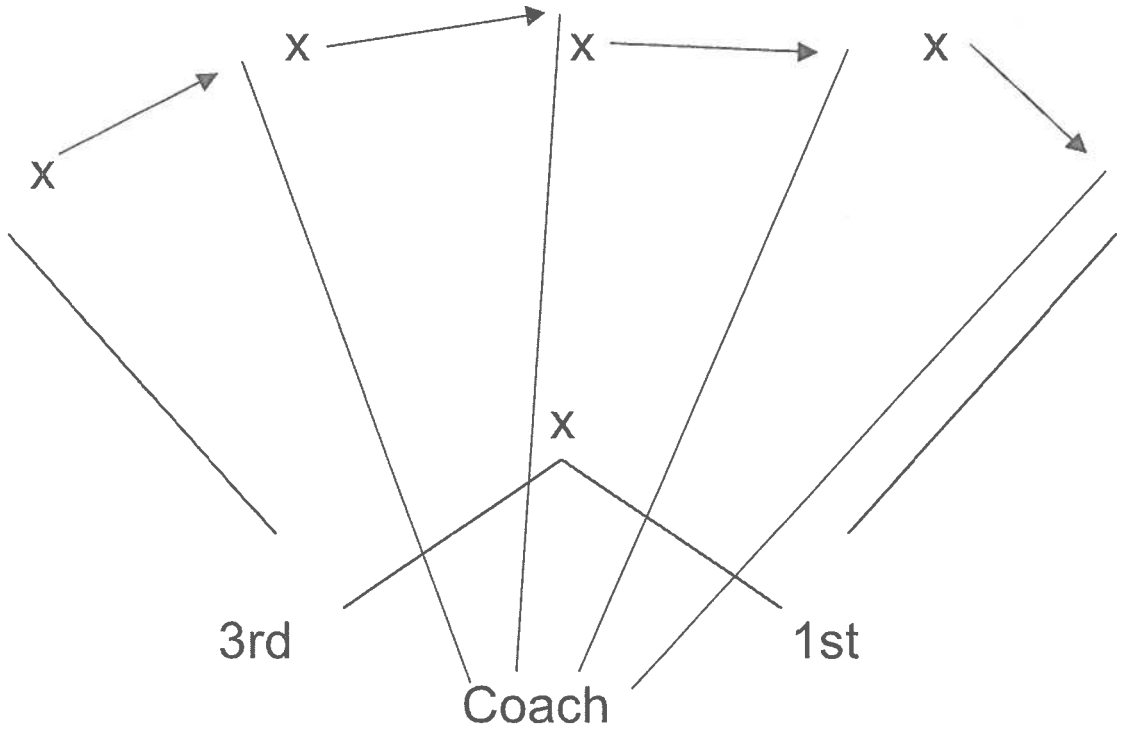

Short Hop
C
P
P P P
Over Shoulder


P
P
P
P
C
Communication
Drill
P
P
P
P

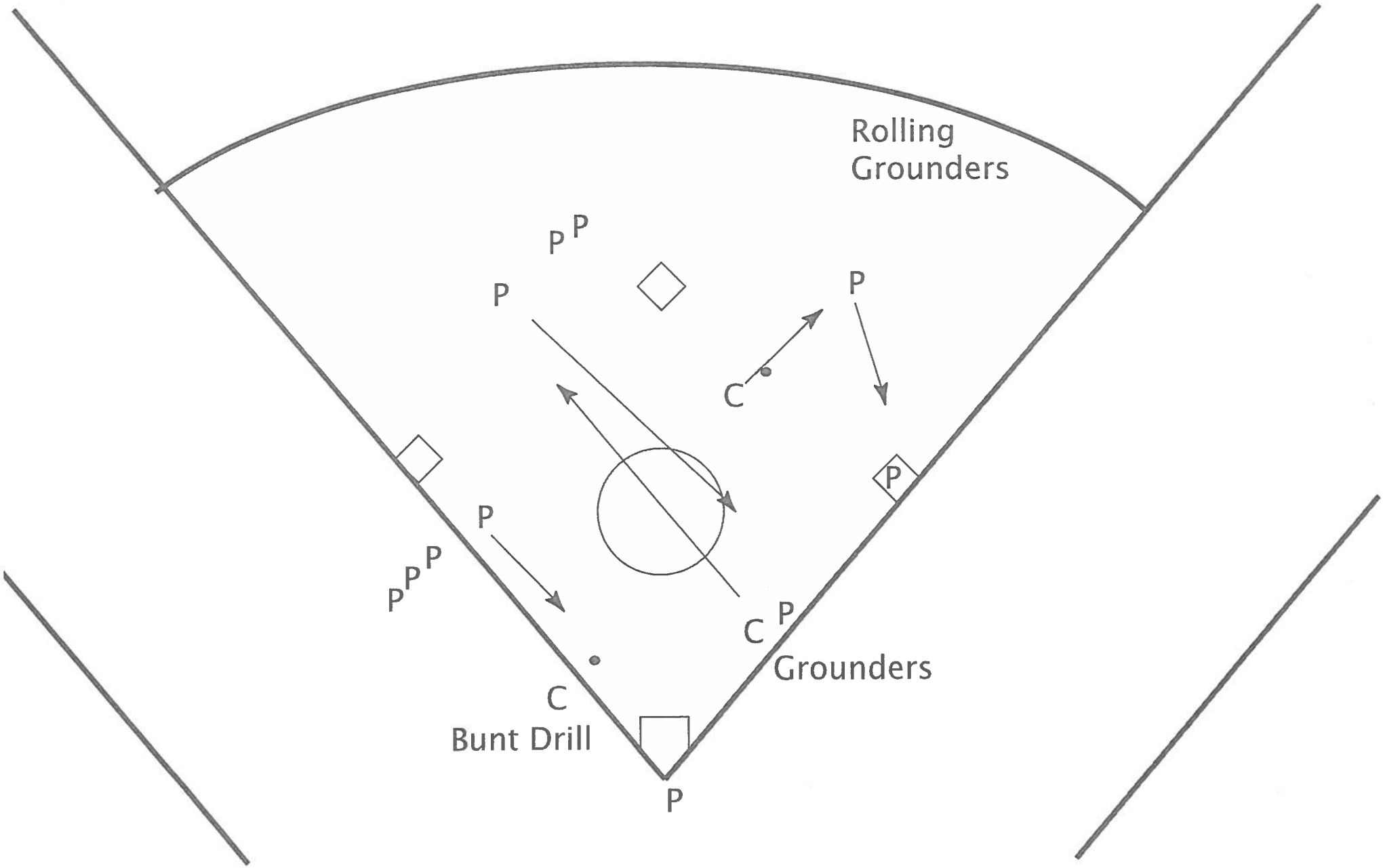

C
Range
P

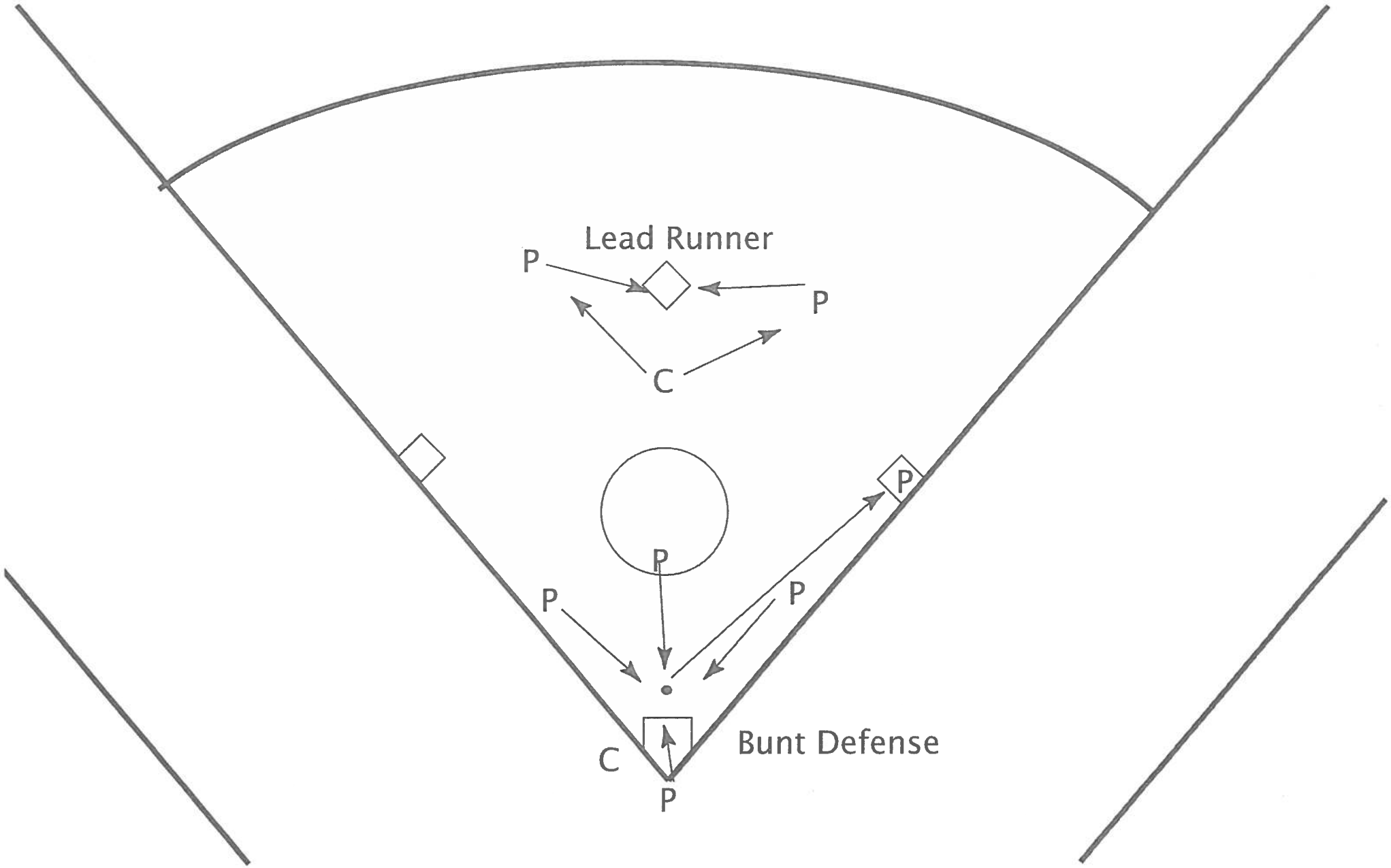

P P P
C
P

Lat Fly Ball Drill



Outfielder starts on left field line, coach hits ball making outfielder run to ball. OF catches ball and throws into player at 2nd base. Repeat until outfielder is at right field line.


Rolling
Grounders
P P
P
P
C
P
P
P
P P P
C P
Grounders
C
Bunt Drill
P


Lead Runner
P
P
C
P
P
P
P
C
P
Bunt Defense

6U GOALS FOR SEASON

Need to teach:

- Hitting off tee and coach pitch
- Fielding with throws to 1st
- Know the infield and outfield positions
- Catching with 2 hands
- Sac Bunting
- Getting under fly balls
- Lots of eye hand coordination (catch with different kinds of balls)
- Intro to sliding (even though can't slide in games)
- Spend extra time at practice with **pitchers and catchers** before or after practice 2nd half of season

CHOOSING A LINE-UP

- **The Batting Order Considerations**
  1. LEADOFF
     - Someone you want up to bat more than anyone else.
     - Has good speed and base-running skills.
     - Should have a high on-base percentage, which includes a good eye and bat control.
  2. SECOND BATTER
     - Considered another leadoff.
     - Your best bunter in pressure situations for advancing runners.
  3. THIRD BATTER
     - Your most consistent hitter with the highest batting average.
     - Does well with runners in scoring position.
     - Should be the team leader in RBI's (Runs Batted In)
     - Should have one of the highest batting averages.
  4. FOURTH BATTER or "CLEAN-UP"
     - Not necessarily a long ball hitter but can supply power when needed.
     - Considered a "clutch" hitter with runners in scoring position.
     - Third and fourth batter should lead the team in RBI's.
     - Should have one of the highest batting averages.
  5. FIFTH BATTER
     - Another "clean-up" hitter.
     - Should be consistent in the run production category.
     - Often times the 4th batter is walked, this hitter needs to be able to produce in this pressure situation.
  6. SIXTH BATTER
     - Should have good running speed.
     - A consistent hitter with a decent batting average.
     - Can be considered another leadoff hitter.
  7. SEVENTH BATTER
     - Similar to 6th batter, however, not as consistent.

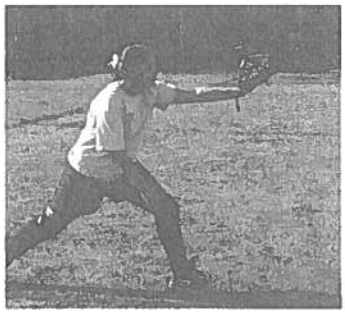
- Should have the ability to lay the bunt down.

8. EIGHTH BATTER
   - Your weakest hitter on the team.
   - May be considered a "scrapper". Someone who does whatever it takes to get on base (bunt, slap or walk).

9. NINTH BATTER
   - **Do not** put your weakest hitter here.
   - This hitter has the characteristics of a leadoff batter.
   - The advantage of having the 9th batter on base is that it brings up to bat the top of the line-up, which is considered the strongest or most consistent part of the batting order.

- **<u>Fielding Line-Up</u>**





1. PITCHER
   - Pitchers should be athletes who love the game and are committed to work above and beyond normal practice.
   - Every young athlete should be given the opportunity to pitch and see if it is a part of the game they enjoy.

2. CATCHER or "General" (leader on the field)
   - Someone who loves the position and wants to be on the field.
   - Should have a strong arm as they throw often.
   - Has a good understanding of the game.

3. FIRST BASE
   - Has the capability of catching the ball.
   - Glove control and footwork will help with her success.

4. SECOND BASE
   - Has good understanding of the game.
   - Must be able to cover 1st on a bunt, turn a double play and handle 1st and 3rd situations. (As a player gets older)

- Can be the position where you "hide" or "mask" a weaker player.

5. THIRD BASE
   - Has the "reflexes of a cat". Quick and instinctive reactions.
   - Moves quickly in all directions.
   - Has a strong arm and steady glove.

6. SHORTSTOP
   - Another leadership position.
   - Usually your best athlete.
   - Has a strong arm and good fielding mechanics and instincts.
   - Provides vocal communication and direction to teammates on the field.

7. LEFTFIELDER
   - Has a good glove and gets good reads on the ball off the bat.
   - Usually has the weakest arm.

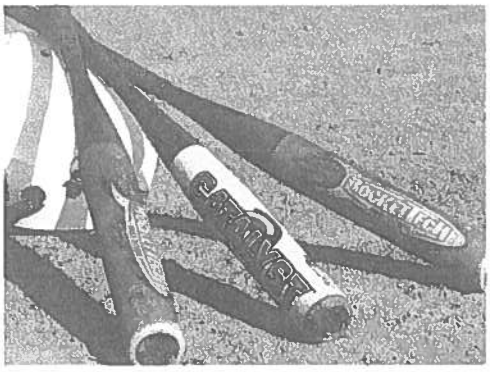
8. CENTERFIELDER
   - Leader of the outfield. Has good vocal communication.
   - Usually your fastest outfielder with the best glove.

9. RIGHTFIELDER
   - Usually the outfielder with the strongest arm.
   - Handles ground balls well and can throw to 1st base well.

"There's no substitute for guts."
-Paul "Bear" Bryant

EQUIPMENT

- **Bat selection.**
  - Make sure your athlete can control her bat.
  - As she gets better at hitting, she can use a heavier bat
  - Before you spend a lot of money on a bat, practice with her to get good at the swing. Any bat will do during the learning process.



- **Glove size**
  - She should be able to hold it up!
  - Fits her hand and she can hold it above her head (fingers up) and turn below waste (fingers down).
  - Just because it says "Softball Glove" doesn't make it a good selection for your player. There is nothing wrong with buying a "Baseball Glove" if the size is correct for her.

- **Helmet**
  - Need to have a helmet that fits every one of your players.
  - Each helmet needs to have a face guard.