

Offensive & Defensive Tactics

Plan Development & Analysis

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Head Coach – Creating a Lineup

- **A lot goes into making up a starting lineup:**

Who are we playing against?

Where are they in the standings?

Will we be facing their ace?

Is it a League Game or a Tournament/Playoff Game?

Who from the bench deserves a start?

Who from the starting lineup deserves to sit?

Has any of the weaker hitters (7-9) earned the right to move up?

Are any of the top 4 in a slump and deserve to move down?

DP/Flex? Should we hit for our pitcher or weakest hitter?

Gut Feeling?

Characteristics of a Batting Order

Leadoff Hitters:

- They are fast and can bunt for base hits! Score a lot of Runs.
- They are contact hitters, who can take pitches without striking out!
- They will usually lead the team in OBP!
- They typically play up the middle (2B – SS – CF – LF)!

Second Hitters:

- Typically are a team's best bunter! Great to Sac Bunt with!
- Don't have to hit for a high average, but higher OBP!
- Are not known for their power!
- Like the leadoff hitters they tend to come from the middle defensive positions, including catchers!

Characteristics of a Batting Order

Third Hitters:

- Best “all round” hitter, combining power, average and speed! They are known to hit to all fields! Can lead in most Off Statistics BA, HRs, RBIs & Runs Scored!
- They do strikeout, but also receive a lot of walks!
- They tend to play 1B – 3B – RF!

Fourth Hitters (Cleanup):

- Tons of power, tons of RBIs and lots of Ks! Not known for a high OBP. BA can be high or low.
- Provides protection for the 3rd hitter!
- Typically plays 1B – 3B – RF – LF - DP

Fifth Hitters:

- Same characteristics as a 4 Hitter...just not as good!

Characteristics of a Batting Order

Sixth & Seventh Hitters:

- The Grinders. They don't excel at any facet of the game, but get the job done.
- Some will steal. Some can hit for power. They tend to have decent OBP, with not a lot of strikeouts.
- They typically play LF – C – 2B – SS

Eight & Ninth Hitters:

- Usually the worst hitter. They tend to be slow and are usually known for their defense...C – 2B – SS!
- Ninth batters are sometimes called “2nd Leadoff Hitter.” Same characteristics as Leadoff, only not as good! They typically play CF – 2B – SS! Can also be your worst hitter!

Exercise #1 - Stats Don't Lie!!!

#	Ave	OBP	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	K		
34	.214	.278	2	3	1	0	0	3	4	1	2	1	2
24	.467	.556	3	7	3	0	1	5	13	3	3	0	1
38	.000	.000	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	1	0
26	.389	.612	7	7	2	2	0	1	15	4	0	0	4
28	.357	.412	4	5	0	1	1	4	10	2	1	1	2
30	.313	.389	6	5	2	0	1	2	10	1	3	3	1
22	.500	.722	8	5	2	0	2	7	13	5	1	0	1
32	.300	.563	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	2	2	0	0
36	.167	.333	1	2	1	0	0	1	3	2	3	0	0

Exercise #2 - Charting Hitters

- Club teams play the same teams year in & year out. Come playoff time, it's a big advantage knowing where the opposition hitters "are likley to hit the ball!"
- Bench players like doing it! Keeps them in the game.
- From the data, Coach can create a hitting chart on every player. **Why is it good to ALSO know where your own hitters are hitting the ball?**

****See Handouts...**u>**

Starting Players – Position Profiles

- “Infielders can always play the OF...it’s an easy transition! Outfielders find it much harder to become infielders!” **Why is this?**

“Cornermen – 1B & 3B”

- “1 step players,” typically big, strong and quick!
- Offensively, they are typically your power hitters. Usually slotted in the 3-6 holes of the batting order.

Starting Players – Position Profiles

Middle Infielders – 2B & SS

- Usually of a team's best defensive players! Known for quickness, agility and range. SS will always lead team in defensive chances... and most likely errors.
- Not known for their offense. Their gloves usually do their talking! Contact hitters, more than power hitters, who can steal a base when asked.
- In the majority of team lineups, you can typically find these guys batting in the 1st, 2nd, 7th, 8th & 9th spots.

Starting Players – Position Profiles

Outfielders

- **Left Fielders** - Typically, the weakest defender of the three OF positions. Can bat anywhere in the lineup, depending on their strengths & weaknesses.
- **Center Fielders** – Known for speed, range & tracking ability. Among the best athletes! Off, the CF usually gets slotted 1-2, 6-9!
- **Right Fielders** – Known for their “big” arms. Should lead team in defensive assists. Usually bats in the power spots, 3, 4 & 5. **Why will they (most likely) lead the team in OF assists?**

Offensive Tactics

“Small Ball”

- Coaches must know:
 - Who are my bunters and slappers? Who is not?
 - Who are my contact hitters?
 - Where is my speed?
 - Does the opposition catcher have a good arm?
 - How good is the opposition first & third baseman?
 - Do their middle infielders cheat or hold their ground on bunts & steals?

Offensive Tactics

Bunting For a Base Hit

- Coaches rarely call these plays...usually, it's up to the batter.
- Power hitters have an advantage in that the defense never expects the 3, 4 or 5 hitters to bunt for a base hit. **Why?**

When are the best times to bunt for a base hit?

- When the game is tied or a one run difference!
- When leading off an inning of a close game!
- When you see the first or third baseman are playing back!
- When the team has not had a base runner in a couple of innings...we call this, “making something happen!”

Offensive Tactics

When don't we want to be bunting for a base hit?

- When we are leading by a “lot of runs!” **Why?**
- When the bases are loaded. **Why?**
- When you have runners on base and 2 outs. **Why?**
- When you are a power hitter, your team is losing by 2+ runs and you come up with men on base. **Why?**

Offensive Tactics

Sacrifice Bunting

- Unlike bunting for a base hit, the sac bunt is always called by the coach. It's a strategy used to advance base runners.
- When done successfully, it has a very high percentage of success.
- Over the last ten years, there has been a shift in thought about the sac bunt. There are some in the baseball/softball communities who would never trade an out for a base.
- **What are your thoughts?**

Offensive Tactics

What are the optimum game situations for a sac bunt?

- Mid to late innings, game tied or +/- a run.
- The leadoff batter of an inning becomes a base runner.
- Close game and your 8th or 9th batters are at bat.
- If you have a batter that consistently strikes out, laying down a sac-like bunt can be a better option of reaching base!

When not to perform a sac bunt?

- Mid to late innings when you are leading by a lot of runs!
- When your batter is not yet polished as a bunter.
- Don't sac bunt if your best hitter comes to the plate with first base open? **Why?**

Offensive Tactics

Hit & Run vs Run & Hit

- Strategy always comes with risk & reward! **What** is the biggest risk associated with the H&R...and to a lesser extent, the R&H?
- What's the difference between a H&R and a R&H?

Offensive Tactics

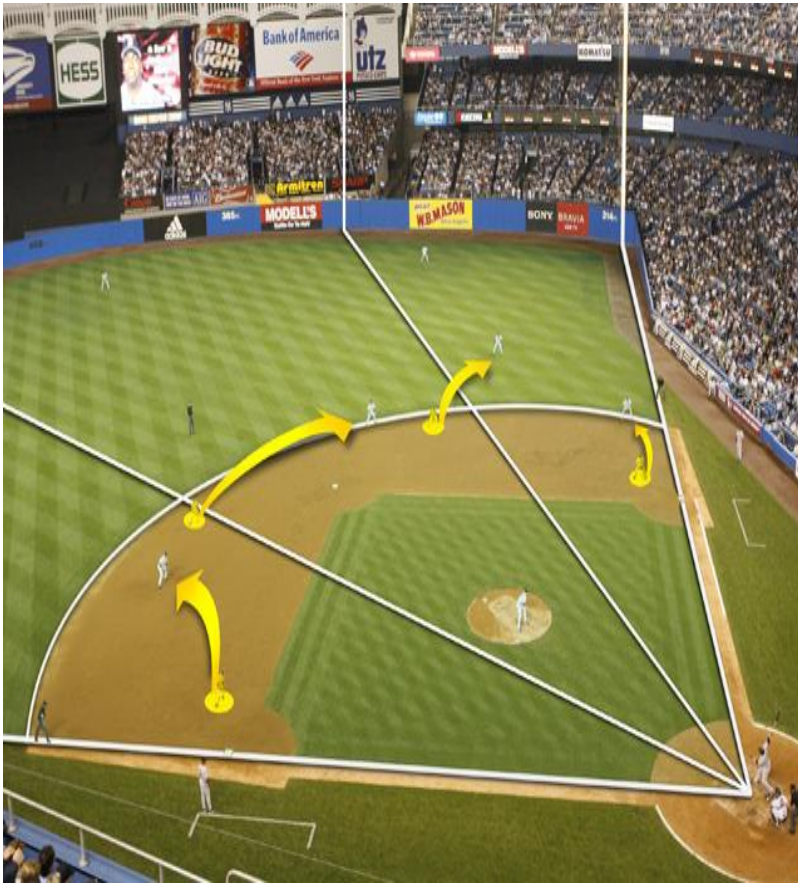
Base Stealing

- High Risk – High Reward! The data: “to be successful, a runner has to be safe on at least 75% of his attempts!” if a team does not steal 3 out of every 4 stolen base attempts, they are much better off not stealing at all!
- Stealing 2B is easier than stealing 3B! **True or False?**
Why?
- **When** stealing, does the runner have a better chance of success, if the batter bats from the left or right side?
- Don't steal when you are up by a lot of runs. Never steal when you are behind by a lot of runs!
- Don't steal with 2 outs and your best hitter at the plate.

Defensive Tactics – “The Shift”

- If you have a good defense, you will never be the worst team!
- If you have the best pitcher, you will most likely be the best team!
- Coaches can move players in & out, left & right. Defensive alignment has been the same for the last 100 years.
- Things are changing...it’s called “the Shift!”
- In basic terms, “the Shift” moves both infielders & outfielders “heavy” to one side of the field...leaving the other side vulnerable and open!”

Defensive Tactics – “The Shift”



- In this case they are shifting everybody to the right side as a known pull hitter is batting left.
- Both my boys and girls use a similar version, **only we apply the shift when we know a hitter “can’t pull the ball!”**

Defensive Tactics – “The Shift”



- Here is another look at the box & one shift.
- We see the 2B in shallow RF. The SS is on the right side of the infield. The 1B is guarding the line.

Defensive Tactics – “The Shift”

- Why do we do the shift?
 - Because the data we have says your batter is most likely to hit the ball where we are now positioned!
 - What data? The data our bench players are compiling each game on where your players hit the ball. If you or your teams use “Iscore,” you will find a spray chart on everybody in the league.
 - Because we don’t believe your 7, 8 and 9 hitters will be able to pull the ball on our pitcher. For this you don’t usually need any scouting reports. There are reasons why players are batted in the 7-9 slots. They are not good hitters and thus, will have a hard time pulling the ball.

Defensive Tactics – “The Shift”

- Conversely, if you have a weak or slow pitcher in the game, there is a good chance the opposition 3-5 hitters will be pulling the ball.
- As you can see, there are many situations where the shift can be used as sound defensive strategy.
- To play “the shift” or “any shift” a team must practice it!
- Coach must work on all the different situations:
 - No runners on...runner or runners on base!
 - Right side shift or left side shift!
 - Bunt to the weak side...bunt to the strong side!
 - Post, base hit positions and base responsibilities!
 - What if the runner(s) attempts to steal!
 - Pitchers & catchers must also be in tune. **Why?**

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

Infield & Outfield Depth(s)

- *Standard Depth*: Also known as our regular defensive alignment, is mainly used when there are no runners aboard.
- *Playing In*: This alignment is used when trying to get an out at home plate...or to prevent a runner from 3rd from advancing on an infield hit.
- *Playing Deep*: This alignment is used when protecting a lead late in the game and you don't mind exchanging outs for base-running advancement...or even a couple of runs. Infielders will have a better chance of taking away hits.

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

- For OFs, playing deep will allow singles to fall in front of them, but will prevent balls going between them or over their heads for extra base hits.
- Another tactic when holding a lead is to play the corner men closer to the foul lines. The premise is once again to guard against the extra base hit – the double down the line!

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

Defending against the 1st & 3rd Steal

- As the defense, we all know what the offense is trying to do: Steal second, or get the 1st base runner into a run down, allowing the runner from 3rd to score.
- As the defense, we are trying to get an out while not allowing the runner from 3rd a chance of scoring.
- *Option #1 – Throw to 2nd Base:* A risky play with less than 2 outs. There is a good chance that if you get the out at 2nd, the runner from 3rd will score!
- *Option #2 – Throw to the Pitcher:* This play is designed to catch the runner from 3rd breaking for home as they think the throw is going to 2nd base.

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

- *Option #3 – Throw to shortstop (or 2nd baseman) well in front of the 2nd Base Bag:* Like option #2, this play is also designed to trick the runner on 3rd into going home as they think the throw is going to the 2nd base bag. Of the SS or 2B, use the one who has the strongest arm. If they have equally strong arms, use the 2B as he has the easier throw going home.
- *Option #4 – Throw to the 3rd baseman at 3rd Base:* To me, this is the worst option as there is no reason for the runner to go beyond his leadoff, thus taking the chance of throwing the ball into left field, with very little to gain!
- *Option #5 – Do nothing! Concede the Base at 2nd:* This strategy is done when you have a big lead...or have 2 outs with a comfortable lead.

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

- *1st & 3rd Defense - The Game within a Game!* – Coaches, the best defense is when the offense doesn't know what you are going to do. Change up your plays by using a few of the options presented, within each ball game.
- For example, if I have a lead early in the game, I will throw to the 2nd base bag, the first time the 1st & 3rd situation arises. I may get an out, I may not get an out and the runner from 3rd scores...but I have setup the offense into believing I always throw to 2nd. Later in the game, I will now have a good shot to get that runner from 3rd trying to steal home, when we throw to the pitcher.

Defensive Tactics – Conventional Strategies

The Intentional Walk

- This strategy usually comes to light when the offense has a base open (runner on 2nd...runners on 2nd & 3rd) and a good hitter at the plate.
- The theory says, lets setup a force play on the bases, while also taking the bat out of the hands of a good hitter.
- Statistically speaking, it is better suited when you already have 2 outs. Less chances for the intentionally walked batter to come around and score!
- **What** about when the bases are loaded? **Is there ever a good situation to intentionally walk in a run?**