

Making Practice Real

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Using Games to Teach Baseball Sense and Keep Practice Interesting

Games Approach to Practice Design

- One of the most difficult tasks facing a coach is not only keeping players focused during practice, but also ensuring that practice is as game-like as possible.

The Games Approach...

- Is Athlete centered
- Gives ownership for improvement to the player
- Gives players decision making experience...
 - In other words it promotes “baseball sense”

The 3 Elements of the Games Approach

- SHAPING
- FOCUSING
- ENHANCING

How to SHAPE practice?

- Change rules
- Change # of players
- Change size of the field
- Modify the goal of the game and scoring
- Modify the equipment

KEY is to Redesign the Game

How can a coach FOCUS play?

- Explaining
- Stop Play and correct -- IMMEDIATELY
- Use Questioning Method
- Use Freeze Replay

How can a coach ENHANCE play?

- Present Challenges within the game
- Handicap the drill to keep results competitive

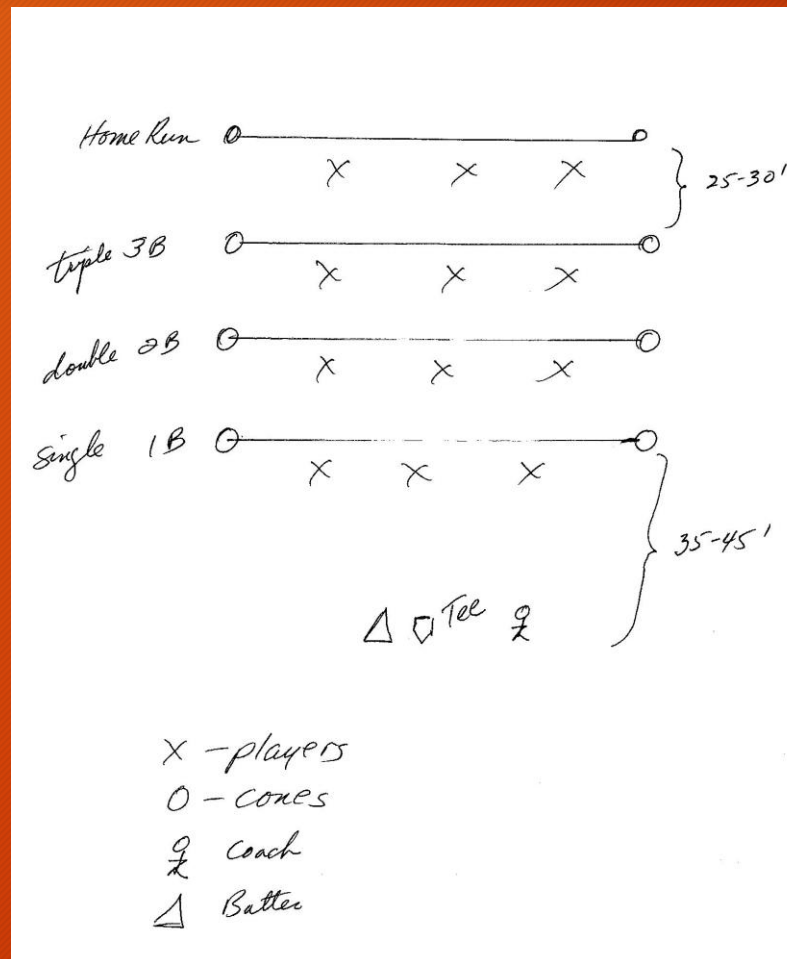
Putting the Games Approach to Work

- Begin practice with a game
- Redesign drills to make them more game-like
- Try freeze replays and let the players come up with the answers
- Design drills to help players grasp tactical principles

What John Wooden Said:

“You haven’t
taught until
they’ve
learned”

Some Games to Try - Over the Line



Through the Line

- Three teams of equal numbers of players
- 1 bats; 1 fields between 1st and 2nd; 1 fields between 2nd and 3rd base.
- Offensive players hit in order; continue as long as they score points; each player gets a turn (coach pitch; machine)
- Objective: keep swings short; make contact; hit hard ground balls or line drives.

Through the Line...

- Scoring:
 - 3 - ball to fence or a predetermined spot on fly or one hop
 - 2 - ball that goes through the line to opposite field
 - 1 - ball that goes through the line to pull side
 - 1 - weak ground ball that gets bobbled
 - Line drives are balls low enough for the infield to jump for
- 15 minutes; players between the bases.

Dueling Bull Pens

- Like “horse” in basketball
- Makes the practice session competitive and game-like
- P #1 calls pitch and then throws that pitch.
- If the pitch is a strike (or what was called), then P #2 must follow successfully with the same pitch. If not successful, P #2 gets a “letter.”
- If P #1 is not successful, then P #2 gets to choose a pitch, call it and make P #1 throw the pitch.
- Game continues until one P has 5 letters.

Long Tee

- Need hitters paired; each one has a tee
- Each tee hitter has a partner with glove
- Tees 50m apart
- Use cones to define an area
- Players hit to other tee
- Forces concentration and keeping hands in zone
- Raise level of difficulty by bringing tees closer.

The Bunt Game

- Divide team in half
- 4 infielders, catcher, pitcher on one team
- Other team bats
- No strikeouts, no walks, no steals
- Pitchers must throw fast balls
- Infielders must stay on dirt until ball hits home plate

Keystone Cops