

BARRHAVEN CHILDREN'S SOFTBALL – TRANSITION VOCABULARY

TRANSITION 101 – Key focus areas for parents and coaches to review with players.

Transition is exactly that - a transition between teeball and traditional softball. There are several things that our young players need to learn. One important aspect of learning any skill is to hear a consistent message that uses the same terms and key phrases. Try to use the same vocabulary with the players. We will focus on the following key skills and use this vocabulary.

BATTING

1. "Get ready to hit"

"Feet shoulder width apart and not too close to the plate"

"Back elbow up and bat off the shoulder"

"Hold on to the bat with both hands tightly."

"Lean back on the back foot"

"Eye on the pitch" ... "Don't close your eyes"

2. "Swing hard and through the ball" and try to hit every pitch. "Don't wait for the perfect pitch".

Waiting for the perfect pitch that never comes causes far too many batters to be called "out" in higher divisions. The strike zone is fairly large and seldom is the perfect pitch delivered to the batter. I'd rather see players swing at bad pitches than not swing at pitches that they could have hit. In Transition batters get five pitches and then are "walked" to first if they do not hit.

3. Players need to find their own way to locate the ball. Trying to "make contact" is the wrong message. Batters must swing through the ball. Making contact seems like a good idea but it will set the players up to be easily put out in higher divisions where a strong hit is required.

4. When the batter hits they "can't throw their bat". They must put it down along the first base path.

BASE RUNNING

1. The key to success in softball is to "make it safely to base". Players should try to "not get put out". One way to do this is to "watch the play". Runners should ask themselves two questions: "When do I run?" and "How far can I run?". Running to a base is always a race so: "Run fast and keep your eyes on the finish line".

2. One of the hardest lessons to teach and to learn is "when NOT to run". There are two obvious times not running is the best option:

a. "Runners cannot run on a fly ball that is caught". This is rare in Transition and one of the last skills to learn.

b. "Runners only need to run on a hit if they are "forced" to run" by the fact a runner is coming behind them. This is difficult to grasp.

3. When running to first base "runners touch the right side of the safety base (orange)" which is outside the base path." Fielders will touch the white side" of that base to avoid collisions.

4. Runners should “avoid running into fielders”. In higher divisions a runner hitting a fielder will be called out. Fielders cannot block the base path unless they are actively fielding the ball. In Transition outfielders will need to be constantly told to “not block the base path”.

5. Runners must stop at the base- “Keep a toe on it!”. They cannot overrun it or they could be tagged out.

6. Players running home players do not touch home plate - they run behind it – it is the finish line. In higher divisions catchers will make the play at home by touching the plate NOT the runner coming home. Touching a runner coming home will result in them being called “safe”.

FIELDING

1. All players should begin each play in the “ready position” – feet apart and ready to catch the ball.

2. Before each play every player should ask themselves: “ What they will do if the ball is hit to them.”

3. All fielders (both infield and outfield) have two jobs:

a.” Fielding the ball” and

b.“Backing up players who might need help making the play”.

In Transition this is very difficult to teach. Players tend to want to swarm the ball. “For every ball hit there is only one person who should try to get it...the rest of the team backs them up”.

4. Infielders try to get runners out in three ways:

a. Getting the ball and stepping on the base before the runner gets there.

b. Throwing the ball to a team member who is standing on the base. “Never throw to someone who is not looking at you and ready to catch the ball”. This is a problem with younger players who sometimes lose their focus and consequently are not ready to catch the ball. One solution is to encourage every player who is responsible for a base to ask themselves every batter “Do I have a chance and what do I have to do to put someone out on this base”

c. Touching the runner with their glove (with the ball in it) **below the runner’s shoulders** as they run down the base path. This is not a game of tag where the runner avoids the tag. Runners must stay on the base path.

CATCHING

1. “All catches are made with two hands” – one to catch and the other to make sure the ball does not roll out. This applies to grounders “Be an alligator” and balls in the air.