

## Special Base Running Situations



### **1. Situation: The base runners responsibility on the hit and run**

Some coaches want the runner to shorten his lead and not worry about a great jump. They feel it is the batters job to make contact. Their reasoning is if the batter doesn't put the bat on the ball the base runner is "hung out to dry". The base runner should be conditioned that when the hit and run is on he is trying to steal the base. The only difference is after his third step he needs to take a good look at the batter to pick up the flight on the ball and make the necessary reaction. The only true exception to this is for the pitcher that has a great move to 1<sup>st</sup> base and it is difficult to steal 2<sup>nd</sup> base. In this situation the base runner breaks to 2<sup>nd</sup> only when he knows the pitcher is delivering the ball to home plate. If the base runner can't pick up where the baseball was hit he should look directly at the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach. The coach shouldn't YELL at the base runner, but arm signal him what he wants him to do. For some reason many players loose there sense of hearing when they are running full speed. The coach should point back to 1<sup>st</sup> base if the ball was hit in the air and he wants him to return, arm circle signal if he wants the base runner to advance to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, or point to 2<sup>nd</sup> base if he wants the base runner to stay there.

### **2. Situation: In a hit an run situation if an infield line drive is hit the base runner should keep running vs. stopping and going back to 1<sup>st</sup> base**

If an infielder catches the ball the base runner will not have a chance to get back, so the runner should take a chance the ball goes through the infield and have an opportunity to advance a base. The only time that this is not true is with nobody out and the runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base are running and a line drive is hit. With both players running a potential inning ending triple play could happen. The trail runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base should retreat back to 1<sup>st</sup> until he sees the ball go through the infield or is caught.

### **3. Situation: The keys to a successful delay steal**

The delay steal is an effective method of stealing and moving up base runners. Unlike the regular straight steal, natural speed isn't a key ingredient. An effective delay steal is executed off lazy middle infielders that don't cover the base. It really isn't the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman's fault as he is breaking off of the base as the base runner is only simulating a secondary shuffle lead. It's also usually not the catcher's fault, unless he doesn't make a throw at all. Many times he sees no middle infielder is covering 2nd base, so he doesn't make a throw. And the delay steal isn't stolen off the pitcher, as well. The 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach should be looking for middle infielders that turn their heads between pitches or that don't "pinch the middle" after pitches. Infielders that do this will not have time to get to the base on a delay steal. The coach should also be looking for a catcher that drops to his knees when he throws the ball back to the pitcher. The delay steal will not work if the infielders "pinch the middle." (Take a few steps to 2<sup>nd</sup> with their heads up after every pitch) The keys for the base runner are:

- a. The base runner gets a regular leadoff from 1<sup>st</sup> base or a little shorter lead. The base runner wants to make it look like he isn't going anywhere.
- b. The base runner takes two or three aggressive shuffles until the catcher receives the ball. Getting distance on the shuffles is important. The number of shuffles depends on the size and speed of the base runner and the type of pitch thrown. The shorter, faster base runner will probably have time to take three shuffles. A good fast pitcher will probably only allow time for two shuffles. Whatever the case, the secondary shuffles need to be the same as a regular secondary lead. A common fault is crossing the feet on the shuffles, which allows the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman to realize the delay steal is on. Another fault is not keeping the shoulders parallel with the ground. This "hopping" method will also allow the 1<sup>st</sup>

baseman to let everybody know the base runner is going. A successful delay steal is accomplished with the 1<sup>st</sup> baseman not knowing the base runner is delay stealing.

- c. A split second after the catcher receives the ball is when the base runner breaks hard to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. A common fault is breaking to 2<sup>nd</sup> base before the catcher receives the ball. This allows the defense to realize the delay steal is on. Another fault is the base runner not running at full speed. Sometimes players think of a delay steal as a half speed steal, which is definitely not the case.
  - d. The slide at 2<sup>nd</sup> base should be a pop up slide, which is the quickest slide to get back to your feet. The properly executed delay steal has the catcher throwing to 2<sup>nd</sup> base with nobody covering the base and the ball going through to center field allowing the base runner to pop up and run to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
  - e. Don't ever have the batter bunt or fake a bunt when the delay steal is on and there is only a base runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base. The reason for this is the shortstop is taught to cover 2<sup>nd</sup> base on a bunting situation with a base runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base. The shortstop is one of the players that are trying to be decoyed. He will be in position for an easy put out if the batter misses the bunt. One great situation that allows for a fake bunt-delay steal is with base runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base. The coach can put on a fake suicide squeeze bunt-delay steal. Many times the distractions of the batter fake bunting and the base runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base fake suicide squeezing the defense forgets about the base runner delay stealing.
- 4. Situation: A bunting situation with base runners in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base**  
How many times do you see a base runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base get too big of a secondary lead and get picked off from the catcher when the batter fails to get the bunt down? The base runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base should never get picked off from the catcher. The base runner needs to get his regular primary lead and react to the bunt. How many times do you see the defense throw to 2<sup>nd</sup> base in this situation? Many times 2<sup>nd</sup> base isn't even being covered defensively. If it isn't a good bunt the defense will get the out at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. If it is a good bunt they will attempt to get to 1<sup>st</sup> base. Defensively, the out is taken at either 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base the majority of the time.
- 5. Situation: With base runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base the catcher attempts to throw to 1<sup>st</sup> base after receiving the pitch**  
In this situation, the base runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> should steal 3<sup>rd</sup> base on the catcher's throw to 1<sup>st</sup> base. The key is getting a regular secondary lead and reading the ball out of the catcher's hand, and not assuming the catcher is just going to throw the ball back to the pitcher. Obviously, the speed of the runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> base is important. However, the base runner with a solid secondary lead only has to move about 75 feet. Defensively, they have to throw the ball 90 feet to 1<sup>st</sup> and then another 127 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> feet from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, while making two good throws and two good catches. After executing this base running tactic the offensive team is now in an attractive 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> situation with the defensive team shaken.
- 6. Situation: The contact play with base runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base and one out**  
The base runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base should break to home plate on any ground ball hit, unless it's a game winning run on 3<sup>rd</sup> base or a slow roller that the base runner feels that he can't score on. All other ground balls are potential inning ending double plays. If the base runner is thrown out at home plate, at the very worst, the offensive team will still have runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The base runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base should take a quick look back to see if the defensive team is making a play at home plate. If they are the base runner should stop and get in a run down situation. Hopefully, if he stays in the run down long enough the original base runner on 1<sup>st</sup> will be able to move to 3<sup>rd</sup> base and the batter turned runner will move up to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. At any event, the offensive team is putting pressure on the defense and making them make some plays.

7. **Situation: The contact play with runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base**

With base runners at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base the contact play (having the base runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base break on the contact of an infield ground ball) should be used the majority of the time. Obviously, when losing or when having a slow base runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base this play shouldn't be used. This aggressive offensive play puts pressure on the defense by making them make plays. They have to successfully catch a ground ball with knowing the base runner is breaking to home plate and make a solid throw to the catcher. The catcher then has to successfully receive the ball and apply the tag out. Many things can go wrong with this. And at the very worst case situation with the base runner being thrown out at home plate the offensive team still has base runners at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base with many offensive options. Additionally, when the base runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base breaks towards home plate he should take a look back at the infielder to see if he caught the ball and will be able to make a solid throw to the catcher. If he does, the base runner should stop in his tracks and get in a run down situation where again, many things can go wrong for the defensive team. The hitter turned base runner should sprint to 1<sup>st</sup> base and if the run down takes more than two throws he should advance all the way to 2<sup>nd</sup> base leaving base runners again at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base.

8. **Situation: Communication between the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach and the runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base**

The base runner's responsibility is to read the pitcher. The base runner's eyes shouldn't leave the pitcher, assuming he has the ball and is on the pitching rubber. The 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach's responsibility is to read the shortstop and 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman's actions and communicate them to the base runner. The method of having the base runner keep an eye on the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman now gives him two responsibilities. This also gives the pitcher and shortstop an opportunity to pick him off. If the base runner only has to keep his eyes on the pitcher, and not also the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman, it will be easier for him to hear the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach. Another method of having the 1<sup>st</sup> base coach watch the 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman and the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach only have to watch the shortstop isn't as effective either because it makes the base runner listen to two different people from two different directions. Having the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach as the only verbal communicator is the most effective method. The coach should move to the end of the coach's box that is closest to home plate. This will provide a good angle to see the middle infielder's actions. The verbal language to the base runner is as follows: As the base runner gets his primary lead the coach says "all right". If the middle infielders are not making any movement the coach continues to say "all right, all right". Some coaches use three consecutive verbal calls to signal the green light for stealing 3<sup>rd</sup> base. If either middle infielder makes a taken move to the base the coach says "careful". The base runner just stops his movements to 3<sup>rd</sup> base. He doesn't retreat to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. If the base runner hears a loud "careful" or two consecutive "carefuls" he should take a step or two back to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Obviously, at any time if the pitcher makes a move to 2<sup>nd</sup> base the base runner should retreat. The base runner should never retreat on a verbal call from a middle infielder. Good middle infielders can get a base runner to retreat by saying "back, back". If the base runner hears the "back" call from the coach he needs to retreat. Another effective method that is more silent is having the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach just say "careful" and "back". The base runner gets his primary lead and when the pitcher is not looking at him he takes steps off the base. When the pitcher does turn and look the base runner stops his movement. He still listens to the "careful" and "back" calls from the coach. There are numerous other effective methods. The important thing is having consistent communication. If the base runner gets picked off at 2<sup>nd</sup> base it is just as much the coach's fault as the player.

9. **Situation: Base runner reaches 1<sup>st</sup> base**

Immediately look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach to get the signs. This keeps the tempo of the inning going and also makes it more difficult for the opponents to pick up the signs. The base runner should have also looked at the position of the outfielders. He should already know the strengths of their arm by watching them in pre-game infield and by the scouting reports from previous games

played. The runner also needs to know the situation: How many outs, what's the score, the inning, etc....

**10. Situation: Base runners getting their primary leads off at 1<sup>st</sup> base**

Base runners should NEVER get their leadoffs until the pitcher has put his foot on the pitching rubber. This will eliminate any hidden ball pickoff plays from the defense. The pitcher must have the ball if his foot is on the pitching rubber. It is a balk if he doesn't. Primary lead offs should be taken the same way every time, as each cut out area around 1<sup>st</sup> base is different. With the base runner taking the same footwork every time it won't matter if he thinks he's too far off the base because the cut out area is shorter. One basic footwork method is to step RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT and then SHUFFLE and half a SHUFFLE for the quicker base runners. Whatever style used it should be the same every time.

**11. Situation: Getting a secondary lead**

One of the most common mistakes in secondary leads is players wanting to get aggressive, long secondary leads. This shouldn't be done at any base with less than two outs if the baseman is playing close to the base. Infield line drives will end up being easy double plays if base runners always get big secondary leads. The secondary lead should be very similar to the "shuffle" steps in a delay steal. The feet shouldn't cross and the shoulders should stay level. The other main point in secondary leads is landing balanced and not leaning to the next base. This also causes double plays.

**12. Situation: Deep walking lead vs. a straight up lead at 2<sup>nd</sup> base**

While on 2<sup>nd</sup> base the base runner can have a deep walking lead or a lead similar to that at 1<sup>st</sup> base. The general rule of thumb is when ever there is base runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base the base runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> base should have a deep walking lead because he won't be able to steal 3<sup>rd</sup> base. This will provide a better angle in rounding 3<sup>rd</sup> base and possibly scoring. With zero outs and a base runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base the base runner should have a straight up lead with 3<sup>rd</sup> base, so he has a straight line to the base on bunts. All other situations vary with team to team.

**13. Situation: The base runner's primary lead at 3<sup>rd</sup> base**

With less than two outs the length of the base runner's lead should be proportional to how far the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is off the base. The farther the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman gets off the base the farther the base runner can get off the base. With two outs the base runner should get a more aggressive, longer lead. With the pitcher in the stretch position the base runner's lead should be very similar looking to that of a base runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base. But with the pitcher in the wind up position, the base runner should get walking lead with the hips pointed towards home plate. He should be aware of a step off move from the pitcher and the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach letting him know where the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman is playing.

**14. Situation: The base runner's secondary lead at 3<sup>rd</sup> base**

With the pitcher in the stretch position the base runner should turn his hips to home plate after he knows the pitcher is delivering the ball to home plate. As the ball is in the air the base runner should turn towards home, take a step with his left foot and then land on his right foot as the ball is being hit or caught. He shouldn't be taking five or six out of control steps and not be in the ready position to react to a hit ball. Again, he is as far off the base as the 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman. With the pitcher in the wind up position the base runner should already have his hips turned towards home with a short primary lead and then take a few steps with again having the right foot land the time the ball is being hit or caught. Practicing this the same way during batting practice will help condition the base runner to get the proper reaction on balls hit.

**15. Situation: The proper method of rounding the bases**

How many times have you seen the completion of an inning and possibly a game change with a base runner thrown out at a base? Saving a step or two by properly rounding bases can obviously help. It is not always how “fleet of foot” a base runner is, but the angles he gets. The base runner should attempt to hit the inside corner of the base with preferably the left foot. He should tuck his left shoulder slightly down as he is hitting the base. This will give him momentum and the proper angle between bases. This will help eliminate rounding 1<sup>st</sup> base and “shaking hands with the right fielder or rounding 3<sup>rd</sup> base and “saying hi to the players in the 3<sup>rd</sup> base dugout! Hitting bases with the right foot (the outside foot) naturally takes out rather off line to the next base. Some people think it is best for the base runner to hit the base with the foot that comes natural. This is alright when running through 1<sup>st</sup> base, but to get better angles the left foot

**16. Situation: The batter hits a double that is a possible triple**

More importantly than making the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> out of an inning at 3<sup>rd</sup> base, base runners need to know the score and the inning. This is important if you are teaching aggressiveness. Also, it should be the base runner’s decision to go to 3<sup>rd</sup> base if the ball is in front of him (left field to right center) the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach should only make the decision if the ball is hit behind the batter. (Right field line) Having the base runner look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach while he is trying to run full speed will slow him down.

**17. Situation: A line drive is a hit with runners on base**

The base runner(s) should be taught not to just “freeze.” They should be taught to take a shuffle step back until the ball goes through the infield or is caught. The only time the base runner should get doubled off a base is when the baseman is holding the runner and there is a hard line drive hit right at him. However, how many times do you see it happen at all levels? This again needs to be practice during batting practice.

**18. Situation: Base runners on base with two strikes and two outs**

The base runners on 1<sup>st</sup> base, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base or the bases full, should get more aggressive secondary leads by looking for a possible strike to get a great jump.

**19. Situation: The delay decoy steal of 3<sup>rd</sup> base**

A speedy base runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base that sees a lazy catcher that is throwing the ball back to the pitcher off his knees can steal 3<sup>rd</sup> base on his throw back. The base runner should casually get a bigger secondary lead and time his move the same time the catcher is lobbing the ball back to the pitcher. Even if he sees you breaking you will have enough time to get back to 2<sup>nd</sup> base, as he is on his knees.

**20. Situation: Stealing 3<sup>rd</sup> base on a catcher throw back to 2<sup>nd</sup> base**

A strong armed catcher that likes to show off his arm can be decoyed into trying to throw a heads up base runner out while getting a big secondary lead at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. After getting big lead and being in “no man’s land” the base runner should make it look as if he’s trying to get back to the base. As the catcher is throwing back to 2<sup>nd</sup> base the base runner plants a foot, reverse pivots and sprints to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.

**21. Situation: Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base in a bunting situation with two strikes on the batter**

Traditionally, the batter won’t be bunting with two strikes, but sometimes with a good bunter and a need to advance the runner(s) this is a good play. With two strikes on him the bunter will want to narrow his bunting lane to make sure he bunts the ball in fair territory. Because the bunt shouldn’t be a great bunt down either baseline the runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> needs to get a better secondary

lead to beat the ball to 3<sup>rd</sup>. Because you rarely see the trail runner thrown out at 2<sup>nd</sup> base he should get his same secondary lead.

**22. Situation: Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base with a popped up bunted ball**

The base runners shouldn't run until the ball hits the ground, as to be aware that there is no infield fly rule on a bunted ball. The fielder could purposely drop the ball to set up a potential double play or triple play.

**23. Situation: When to break on a suicide bunt vs. a safety bunt**

Base runners at 3<sup>rd</sup> base have a tendency to break way to early on suicide bunts allowing the pitcher to know its coming and he can relocate the pitch high making it difficult to bunt. Base runners should break towards home plate when the pitcher's arm slot is just starting to come forward, which won't allow him to relocate the pitch. Safety bunts should only be put on when there is a fast base runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base. He should break when he sees he batter successfully bunted a ball down the foul line.

**24. Situation: A runner(s) is stealing and can't locate the batted ball**

This sounds like a simple thing to do but many runners loose their senses of sight and hearing while they are running. This can obviously lead to potential double plays. Well-trained infielders add to this problem by decoying ground ball double plays that were actually fly balls. The responsibility in helping the runner lies with the 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach and the players in the dugout. The 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach needs to be calm use hand signals in this situation. If a fly ball was hit he should simply point back to 1<sup>st</sup> base and the entire dugout should be yelling "back." While retreating to 1<sup>st</sup> base the runner should pickup the ball to see if it will be caught or if he has the opportunity to advance. On a line drive or ground ball single the coach should either be pointing directly at 2<sup>nd</sup> base if he wants the runner to stay or he should be waving with his right are to signal the runner to advance. The dugout shouldn't say anything on a ground ball or line drive. Again, on an infield line drive the runner will not have the time to retreat back, so he should keep running.

**25. Situation: The contact play with base runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and zero outs**

The base runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base should break only on ground balls past the pitcher or when the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman throws the ball to 2<sup>nd</sup> to start a potential double play. None of these situations are "written in stone". Each situation is different, but traditionally a team doesn't want to make the first out of an inning at home plate on an infield ground ball that isn't a force out.

