

1. Base Running

1.1. **Base running (basic rule):** A good base runner is never thrown out on the bases. *Almost* never. (See the exceptions mentioned below). The runner takes the extra base whenever possible and makes right decisions as to when to run and when not to run.

1.2. Fundamental Base Running Concept

The basic running concept is: Both coaches and players always know the situation; i.e. the inning, the score, the number of outs, the speed of the runner, the abilities of the people on the opposition who are involved in the play (if possible, know them well from having scouted them --- for the purpose of trying to **beat** them when we play them) --- so that we never lose a game because we aren't playing the way we should be --- *intelligently*.

1.3. Knowing the Situation

Here are some iron-clad basic rules to live by (and win by):

1.3.1. **Take No Risk Running to 3rd, Except with 1 Out.** No base runner should **ever** be thrown out at **3rd** with anything other than 1 out. There is no justification for risking an out on the bases trying to get to 3rd with anything other than one out.

There is no justification for risking an out on the bases trying to get to 3rd with no outs or with two outs.

1.3.2. **No Outs, Runner on 2nd.** If we are on 2nd with no outs, were in good shape. We should score because the next two intelligent hitters will advance the runner by making sure to either:

- a) hit the ball to the right side of the infield, which moves the runner from second to third, or
- b) hit the ball on the fly to either right or right center which will accomplish the same thing. (We're trying to get a hit, but making sure to get it out of the infield)

1.3.3. **Two Outs Runner on 2nd.** With 2 outs and a runner on 2nd, you go to 3rd if you **know** you can make it, but never risk making the 3rd out at 3rd when you are already in scoring position at 2nd. You are already in scoring position at 2nd. It takes a hit to score you from either 2nd or 3rd. Also, in a critical situation with the game on the line, we want the fastest runner possible trying to score from 2nd.

1.3.4. **When we're behind.** Remember that we've been discussing mainly late inning situations, in close games. If the other team has a big lead, we take no chances on the bases. We must **know** we can make it in order to take the extra base. Whereas we don't want to give the opposition any more than is absolutely necessary, the last thing we want to do in a game, where we have a large deficit to overcome, is to give away an out on the bases.

The objective is to have big inning to get back into the game, not to risk an out for the possibility of adding one run. One run is a small percentage of what is needed in that situation; with two outs we might score many runs. In slow pitch softball, because so many runs are scored, outs are precious. We don't want to give them away. We want to make our opponents work hard for them.

1.4. **Avoid Getting Thrown Out on the Bases.** A good base runner is sometimes thrown out on the bases. That "sometime" is when an offensive player helps the other team's defense, which should be approximately once every 10 to 15 years!

An example of a time when it is proper to risk such a happening would be:

- b. Making the last out of the game on a close play at the plate,
- c. when with two outs,
- d. less than good hitter up next
- e. And a one run game.

- 1.5. **With Two Outs - Win the Game or Tie it by Scoring.** The runner tries to either tie or win the game by scoring. He knows that it is going to take a perfect throw or relay to get him, and he is much more likely to be safe, than the possibility that the next hitter will score him from third. You wouldn't take the chance of trying to score one run if you needed two runs.

1.5.1. Scoring With Less Than Two Outs

Note: I said above "with two outs." With less than two outs, the objective in a close game is to get to third (with one out) or second (with no outs) – from which point the run should subsequently score.

It's up to the hitter or hitters (in the case of a man on second with no outs) to advance the runner.

The runner should **never** be thrown out at the plate with less than two out. The coach should never risk losing the valuable base runner who would be on third from which point, with only one out, the next hitter needs only to hit a fly ball to tie or win the game.

1.6. Base Running – Additional Thoughts

- 1.6.1. **We run with our legs.** We should try to strengthen our legs. If we never use them except on weekend mornings, we are likely to have injuries due to lack of conditioning. However, we'll be in better shape later in the season than we are early in the season. It isn't an unpleasant experience to walk or run on a daily basis. Because we are getting older, we require more maintenance than when we were young. In addition to possibly improving our quality of life, if we have better speed than our more inactive opponents, it helps us to win.

I've read that we lose strength naturally at a rate of about 3% per year. If that's the case, we shouldn't find it difficult to become stronger with the passing of time. We can all gain strength using light weights and walking/running as much as we can. I believe that as little as a mile per day can make a noticeable difference in our leg strength.

- 1.6.2. **Base running starts at the batter's box.** We should go as hard as we can from home to 1st, regardless of where we hit the ball. If we "bust it" out of the batter's box, on a base hit that is fumbled by the outfielder we'll be sitting on 2nd.

We've all seen players who get a hit, trot down the first base line, then when the outfielder boots the ball, tries to hustle to 2nd, only to be called out on a close play. STUPID! If he was putting forth the kind of effort that it takes to win, he'd go into 2nd without a play.

Where to Look. Putting forth the effort doesn't mean going down the line with my head pointed toward left field as I watch the ball. I should focus on 1st base and listen for the 1st base coach's instructions.

Extra base production. Another important tip in slow pitch softball is that if we get to 1st in a hurry and round the bag with momentum, if we see that the throw back to the infield is not on line to 2nd, but will require a relay, we might be able to take 2nd on what should have been only a single. We need to know our own speed and capabilities, but there are many times when our effort will produce an extra base.

- 1.6.3. **Running from 1st.** We're on 1st and the batter gets a hit. The same principle applies. HUSTLE! For all runners with average or above average speed, if the outfielders are playing deep and are required to make a long throw, go to 3rd. At least 90% of the time, there won't be a play at 3rd. The throw will normally go to 2nd base to hold the batter to a single.
The small percentage of the time that the outfielder tries to throw the runner out at 3rd, the hitter should go to 2nd as soon as he knows the throw isn't being cut off. You end up with runners on 2nd and 3rd because the outfielder made the mistake of trying to look like Rocky Colavito or Dwight Evans.

The only exception to the automatic 1st to 3rd rule is the ball that is hit like a bullet to a left fielder that is moving directly into the ball, which he is catching cleanly in relatively shallow left field, where he has perfect balance and leverage and might have a legitimate shot at throwing the runner out. Anything other than that – a base hit to right, right center, center or left center, any ball that the outfielder is catching on an angle which would require that he turn his body around before throwing, we should be on 3rd. Any ball that is bobbled by an outfielder we should be on 3rd.

All of this assumes two things:

- (1) We are willing to put forth the effort to hustle, and
- (2) We have normal to above average speed.

Remember that the better shape our legs are in, the stronger they are, the more we will “want to run.” Weak legs are lazy legs. The outfielders have 60 year old arms!

1.6.4. **Critical Fundamentals Regarding Running the Bases Properly**

1.6.4.1. **Objective: Get to 2nd with No Outs or 3rd with 1 Out.**

Without getting thrown out on the bases, we should make every effort to get to 2nd with no outs, or to 3rd with one out.

Also **with 2 outs**, there is justification for risking getting thrown out at the plate. This last rule applies in any game in which our team isn't behind by many runs early, or more than one in the last inning.

1.6.4.2. **Tagging Up from 2nd**

If I'm on 2nd with no outs, I should want to tag up and advance to 3rd on a fly ball so that with 1 out I can score from 3rd.

On 2nd base with no outs, any ground ball to the right side, I should go to 3rd immediately, without any hesitation or indecision, as soon as the ball gets past the pitcher. (We don't want to be trapped in a rundown on a ball caught by the pitcher.)

1.6.4.3. **Running from 2nd, No Outs.**

On 2nd with no outs, if a ground ball is hit to short or 3rd, don't run into an easy out by trying to go to 3rd before the infielder makes the throw to 1st. If after the shortstop or third baseman makes the throw to 1st you know you can make it to 3rd with being thrown out, then obviously, you want to take 3rd. But, be aware, you are already in scoring position at 2nd so don't get thrown out on the bases.

1.6.4.4. **On 3rd base, with less than 2 outs, the ball is hit on the ground**

Depending upon the situation, the score, the inning, the capabilities of the opposition, your speed, etc, you may (or may not) want to try to score **on a ground ball**.

Generally, a ball to the second baseman or short, the likelihood of scoring is good. For a ball hit to 3rd, unless the 3rd baseman is moving to his left substantially, you are an easy out at the plate.

A ball to the 1st baseman that doesn't require the pitcher covering 1st, you're probably out if the 1st baseman throws home instead of tagging 1st. If you are going to try to score, make the fielder commit, then go.

1.6.4.5. **On 3rd base, less than 2 outs, the ball is hit anywhere in the air:**

(This is very important) **Go to the bag immediately!**

The reason this is so important is obvious. If you are tagged up on 3rd base, you can score on the sacrifice fly. If the outfielder makes a diving, shoestring catch, you score. If the ball falls for a hit you score.

What should **never** happen is what we have all seen occur many times: a base runner (one who was never taught to immediately go to the bag any time the ball leaves the infield on a fly), comes down the 3rd base line. He expects the batted ball to fall safely for a hit, only to see the outfielder make a good catch. The base runner then has to (because he wasn't tagged up) go back and tag the bag before attempting to run home. By the time he goes back to the bag, the ball is on its way back into the infield.

Often the runner, after going back to the tag up, decides to not attempt to score because he isn't sure he can make it. At other times, the runner gets thrown out at the plate because of this delay. In either of those examples, the runner's poor base running cost his team a run. To avoid such a possibility, **go to the bag** on any line drive.

Summary: What to do when on 3rd with less than 2 outs, ball hit in the air to the outfield:

- (1) If you know that the ball is a long fly, a potential sacrifice fly, **go immediately to the 3rd base bag, tag up** and score after the catch.
- (2) If you **know** that the ball is going to be a hit, still, go immediately to the bag. Score after the ball hits the ground. The outfielder never throws home in that situation. The runner should be on 3rd tagged up, until **certain** that the ball won't be caught.
- (3) If you aren't sure if the ball is going to be a hit or be caught, go **immediately to the bag**. If it's a hit you score. If it's caught you score after the catch.
DONT GET CAUGHT BEING AWAY FROM THE BAG IF THE OUTFIEDER CATCH THE BALL. AS THE BASE RUNNER EXPECT THE BALL TO BE CAUGHT. That's what the outfielder is supposed to do – catch the ball.
Always - - tag up, then score. Don't leave too soon!

2. Situational Hitting - Directing the Ball to the Correct Place

Most of the time, we are trying to get a hit. There are times, however, when that isn't the number one objective.

2.1. Example #1: Man on 2nd, no outs, late inning in a close game.

As the hitter, our objective is to be sure to move the runner to 3rd. If we are trying to get a hit, swinging naturally, we may hit a line drive to an infielder. If we hit a line drive to an infielder, the runner can't advance. A fly ball to the right side (into the outfield) should move him to 3rd. A ground ball to the right side should to the same.

2.2. Example #2: Man on 3rd, 1 out, late inning, close game. (Actually, any time there are less than 2 out and a man is on 3rd - the lone exception being when your team is far behind and 1 run by itself isn't going to help).

You want to get that run in. Hitting naturally, the result might be a line drive to an infielder or a ground ball to an infielder. Neither of those is going to get the job done. You should choose a pitch that you can control, and hit the ball into the air (preferably over the fence). But far enough to be a sac fly. Get that run in!