

# **How to Play Second Base (the Right Way)**

by Olan Suddeth

This article - How to Play Second Base (the Right Way) - is part of our "How to Play" series aimed at helping youth league coaches properly instruct their players on the fundamentals of each position. Many times, coaches will place their best players on the field and simply let them do what instinctively comes, sometimes even coaching other players to stay out of the way of the stars.

This kind of coaching does a huge disservice to the team as a whole and even to the star players themselves, who tend to develop very bad habits because of this. Never underestimate the power of a well-coached team - time and time again, at every level of competition we see that teams who function as a team outperform those who do not, even when the opposition supposedly has more talent or ability.

Of course, in order to properly prepare the team, you must understand each position!

## **Requirements for the Second Baseman**

Your second baseman must be mobile and quick on his feet. While raw speed is not an absolute requirement, the faster he is, the more range he has; among infielders, only the shortstop has more need of speed. Naturally, your second baseman must have a solid glove, as must all of your infielders. Second basemen are rarely required to make throws anywhere but to first base or to the shortstop; therefore, arm strength is not a concern as it is at third or short. Above all, a second baseman must be able to make decisions and think on his feet, as he has many responsibilities.

## **Basic Responsibilities**

On any contact, the first step should be toward the ball. The player's momentum will carry him either to the ball, or toward his base.

The right side of the infield is the second baseman's domain - anything hit between second base and the right foul line is his responsibility. If he can get to the ball, he should do so. If the ball is hit to the first baseman, it is his job to back up the play. If the ball gets into the outfield, he should sprint out onto the grass and act as a cutoff man.

If the ball is hit between second base and the left foul line, the player should always cover the bag in the event of a throw from short or third. If the ball goes into the outfield, he should be prepared to receive a throw at the bag.

It is vital that the second baseman and the shortstop communicate and clearly understand when each will be covering the base! If they get into one another's way, outs will be lost.

## **Advanced Responsibilities**

With a runner on first and less than two outs, the top priority should always be to attempt a double play. If fielded near the bag, the player should know whether to step on the bag himself or to make the throw to second base via the underhand toss. However, the player should always bear in mind that the first responsibility is a sure out - make the throw to first if he does not think he has a chance to get the runner at second.

In the event of a bunt, the shortstop will be covering third base, where the third baseman will be charging the ball. This leaves second wide open, meaning that the second baseman must cover the bag at second.

If a runner attempts to steal second, both the shortstop and second baseman should break for the bag. Usually, the shortstop will cover the base, while the second baseman will back up the play a good ten feet deep. However, if the shortstop does not make it (for whatever reason), the second baseman *\*must\** take the bag.

Second base is absolutely vital, and should be filled by one of the best defensive players on your team. If coached correctly, it can be a keystone of your defensive effort.