

# Strategy for Defense

## 2 Strategy for Defense

The purpose of this document is to discuss strategy for defense. Definitions are the most important part of any strategy. This document will name and define some terms that will be the basic objects for understanding goals and objectives and this language of terms will also provide meaning to tactics and their practice. In other words, strategy is what you are doing and why. Tactics are how you are doing what you are doing. We practice tactics, and we understand our practice because we understand our strategy.

### **Defensive Objectives:**

#### **Keeping runners from advancing to scoring position**

In Fastpitch, many bad things can happen when you throw to third to catch a lead runner allowing the following runner to advance to second. The angles are such that the runner going to third can easily get in the way of the throw. Plus, if you are successful in making the out with less than two outs there is still one runner in scoring position. By throwing to second, you stop the advance and there is chance the runners may still make a mistake in the ensuing first and third situation. Outfielders, keep the runners from advancing by charging ground balls when they are in front of you, and hitting the relay when you have to go back on the ball. On defense the objective in the first and third situation is to keep the runners from advancing, and take advantage of any running mistakes like leading off too far or falling down. Don't get too greedy and keep your balance for throwing.

#### **Defensive Sets: Covering bunts and bases**

When covering bunts, we cover the bases. The different bunt coverage schemes are defined by who covers which base. If the pitcher is covering third base, then the shortstop is covering second base and the second baseman is covering first base. The other two players (the first and third baseman) field the bunt. If the third baseman is covering third base, the shortstop is covering second base and the second baseman covers first base. When the third baseman holds the runner at third or is playing back, the pitcher and first baseman cover the bunt. When the shortstop covers third the second baseman covers second and the first baseman covers first. The other two players (Pitcher and Third baseman) cover the bunt. The thrower should never have to wait for the fielder to get to a base. Always throw in balance to a good stable target. Base coverage is very important. In the first and third situation, the best thing a catcher can do is pick the guy off third, so he looks there first before he throws to second. Whenever we have a first and third situation, the pitcher will cover the bunt and either the third baseman or the shortstop will cover third, almost always the third baseman.

#### **Defensive Sets: Left or Right Handed Batters**

Since most pitchers are right handed, the defensive sets in Fastpitch are radically different for right and left handed batters, plus they do not vary much side to side between right handed batters or between left handed batters. More specifically, when a batter is facing a pitcher from the opposite side (left hander vs. right hander), then we expect

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the ball more up the middle, leaving some space down the lines. When facing a pitcher from the same side (much of the time because there are more right handed players), we have to cover the ball hooking around either third or first base. When fielding these balls in the hot corners it is easier to be inside the hook, so both corners tend to guard the line. The same thing is true in the outfield, but less drastic.

### **Cutoffs, relays and backing up**

Fastpitch differs from Baseball in the area of cutoffs, relays and backing up. Except for the right fielder, there is not much need for backing up. The same is true for cutoffs, except for the first baseman there not much need for cutoffs, and no need for lining up. Unlike Baseball, it is easy to see the bases in Fastpitch. So, rather than lining up, the First Baseman intercepts the ball that is thrown to Home Plate, or the Shortstop intercepts the ball that is thrown to Third Base. Rather than backing up or lining up, it is better to cover all the bases and back people up from there. Just covering the bases will slow down the running game quite a bit. Relays in Fastpitch are very important. Because of the short distances, the relay man (normally the Shortstop) makes the long throw. Because the base coach makes his decision when the relay man gets the ball, the longer the shortstops throw the better.

### **Summary: Strategy for Defense**

The purpose of this document is to discuss strategy for defense. Definitions are the most important part of any strategy. This document named and defined defensive objectives like keeping runners out of scoring position and defensive sets for covering bases, bunts, and playing the way a ball curves off a bat. Defensive Strategy terms and the Offensive Strategy terms are the basis for heads up play, and this language of terms will also provide meaning to tactics and their practice. In other words, strategy is what you are doing and why. Tactics are how you practice doing what you are doing. We practice tactics, and we understand our practice because we understand our strategy.