

Base Coaching 101

There are two base coaches when our side is batting (one near 1st base and one near 3rd base).

These base coaches are there to help assist the runners in knowing when they should run and when they should stay on the base.

First Base Coach will guide the runner into 1st base and advise whether they should keep going to 2nd base, or stay at first – and then providing the oomph to go from 1st to 2nd when a new batter hits the ball.

Third Base Coach has a bit more to do.

They will need to look after the runner coming from 2nd to 3rd, and also the runner from 3rd to home.

General Principles

Kids are Kids!

They will quite often be excited to have hit the ball, and there is a lot to take in, so sometimes they might not hear you, or won't really know what they should do.

There can't be 2 runners on the same base – so some runners will have to run if they have a runner coming up behind them (even if they will get out unfortunately).

Also means that you can't tell a runner to go to the next base if there is going to be someone stopped on it.

If in doubt, tell the runner to stay on the base when they reach the base.

The Best Base Coaches that children respond to are vocal (Loud), animated in their hand signals/movements, and provide positive encouragement.

First Base Coach

Batter will hit the ball and then run to 1st base (where you are standing) – this runner has to run to 1st base after hitting the ball.

Motivate/encourage them to run hard and to run through the base so they don't slow down as they are approaching the base

If the ball has been hit hard and you feel like the runner can make it safely from 1st to 2nd (and if there is no one staying on 2nd) then when they are approaching 1st, tell them to touch the base and go (point out where they need to run). If they don't hear or listen and they stop at 1st, it's all good. We're all learning.

If the batter stopped at first - when the coach is setting up the next batter to hit the ball, just tell the runner they did a great job, and that when the batter hits the ball, that you (base coach) will tell them to run (the runner on first needs to run to the next base as there will be a runner behind them *Forced Runner*) to the next base (point it out so they know where to run).

Also tell them when they get to 2nd base, to look at the 3rd base coach (again, point this person out to the runner so they know who to look at) for instructions.

Once you have told the runner at 1st base to run to 2nd base, you will need to make sure that you focus on the new runner coming to 1st base who just hit the ball. Again, if a good hit and they can go to 2nd base (assuming the 3rd base coach has been able to get the incoming runner at 2nd base to go to 3rd base), then let them know as they are approaching 1st base.

You will need to also keep an eye out on the runner heading to 2nd base to see if they are going to be going to 3rd base (depends on whether the 3rd base coach is able to get the runner going to 2nd to then go to 3rd), so you know if you can send the runner heading to 1st through to 2nd.

Third Base Coach

Once the runner on 1st base is told to run to 2nd base (by the 1st base coach), you will need to assess whether to tell the runner to stop on 2nd base, or to run to 3rd (where you are).

The runners might not be able to hear well, or are too excited or distracted, so if they stay on 2nd base instead of continuing to 3rd base, then that's all good.

Make sure you get the runner on 2nd base's attention to let them know that when they need to run, to run to where you are and to touch the base and to listen to you when they are getting near "When you get near here, I will tell you to touch the base and run, or to stop".

You can also give any runner on 3rd base a pep talk about how they can get to Home Plate and score a run – to run fast and make sure they touch the home plate with their foot.

Will need to pay attention as to whether runners are forced to run, or don't need to run during a particular play, as depending on where the ball is hit, you may not want to send an unforced runner to the next base.

Forced Runners / Unforced Runners

A runner is forced to run when they have someone who has to run to the base that they are currently on.

Example:

Batter 1 – Batter 1 HAS to run to first base after hitting the ball – this runner stops on 1st base for this example.

Batter 2 – New Batter 2 HAS to run to first base after hitting the ball, therefore, Batter 1 HAS to run from 1st base to 2nd base (and stops on 2nd base for this example)

Batter 3 – New Batter 3 HAS to run to first base after hitting the ball, therefore, Batter 2 HAS to run from 1st base to 2nd base AND Batter 1 HAS to run from 2nd base to 3rd base.

If the runner behind is forced to run, then so is the runner in front – if a runner is forced to run to a base that you are looking after, there isn't much you can do to control what is happening. All you can do is encourage the runner to run fast and then advise what to do when they get to the base.

An Unforced Runner is someone who does not have to run when the batter hits the ball.

Example:

Batter 1 – Batter 1 hits a long ball and runs all the way to 2nd base.

Batter 2 – Batter 2 hits the ball and HAS to run to first base.

Batter 1 however doesn't have to run, as when batter 2 goes to hit the ball, there is no one on 1st base forcing the runner on 2nd base to have to run.

In this example, if the ball is hit by Batter 2 down the first base line/area, there could be enough time to safely tell the unforced runner on 2nd base to run to 3rd base - so you would tell the runner on 2nd base to run to you at 3rd base.

One way we can communicate to an unforced runner whether they can run or not is by hand signals.

We tell the runner at 2nd to stay where they are (put on hand in the air like a stop signal – palm facing the runner to stop or hold) but to watch and listen to the 3rd base coach for if they give the signal to then run to 3rd base.

If the 3rd base coach (with their hand in the air) determines that the unforced runner at 2nd base can run to 3rd base, they can then tell the runner to run to 3rd (various vocal phrases used – “Yep Yep Yep” or “Run Run”) combined with both hands in a gesturing motion to come here.

If the 3rd base coach leaves their hands in the air, the runner SHOULD stay at the base they are at – but you will also need to tell the runner to stay where they are at (as the younger players tend to just run when the ball is hit).

Kids will get out running when they shouldn't and not running when they should (especially in the younger age brackets), so if that happens to a kid near you, just give them a pat on the helmet, tell them it's all good and direct them back to the tent.