

FIELDING POP FLIES

This is a very common play at all levels of softball, and should normally result in an out for the defence. All too often however, the ball is misjudged and/or the catcher is too slow getting to it, resulting in either a foul ball or a safe hit. Most pop-flies in the catcher's area are foul balls, and most of the time they should be a routine out. But it has to be practised.

To make the play, the catcher has four simple steps to execute.

- 1. PICK UP THE BALL AND JUDGE WHERE IT WILL COME DOWN.**
- 2. REMOVE THE MASK AND DISCARD IT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO THE BALL.**
- 3. CALL FOR THE BALL WHEN IT REACHES THE TOP OF ITS ARC, NOT BEFORE.**
- 4. GET TO THE SPOT AND MAKE THE CATCH AT CHEST HEIGHT WITH THE GLOVE POCKET FACING UP.**

The basket style catch is recommended, although some accomplished catchers use an overhead catch on these plays. But most of these hits are spinning quickly and catching the ball at chest height allows the catcher to trap the ball against the body for added security.

COMMON PROBLEMS

The most common problem experienced with this play is calling the ball too soon. The ball has to be at the apex of its flight before any player can be certain of where it will descend.

Another hint! Whenever a ball is hit up and back, towards the backstop, it will always curve inwards on its way down. How much it curves depends on the height of the ball and the wind direction. But the spin on the ball created by the bat, will always cause the ball to come back towards the catcher. Catchers have to learn to allow for that movement.

Use the following drill to develop this skill.

<i>POP FLY DRILL</i>	
1.	THIS IS A THREE PLAYER DRILL, THE CATCHER, A PITCHER AND A THIRD PLAYER WHO STANDS IN FRONT OF THE CATCHER, FACING THE PITCHER
2.	THE PITCHER THROWS A PITCH WHICH IS CAUGHT BY THE THIRD PLAYER.
3.	THAT PLAYER THROWS THE BALL BACK OVER HIS OR HER HEAD IN ANY DIRECTION.
4.	THE CATCHER MUST PICK UP THE CUES AND PRACTICE MAKING THE CATCH.