

# Regina Minor Softball



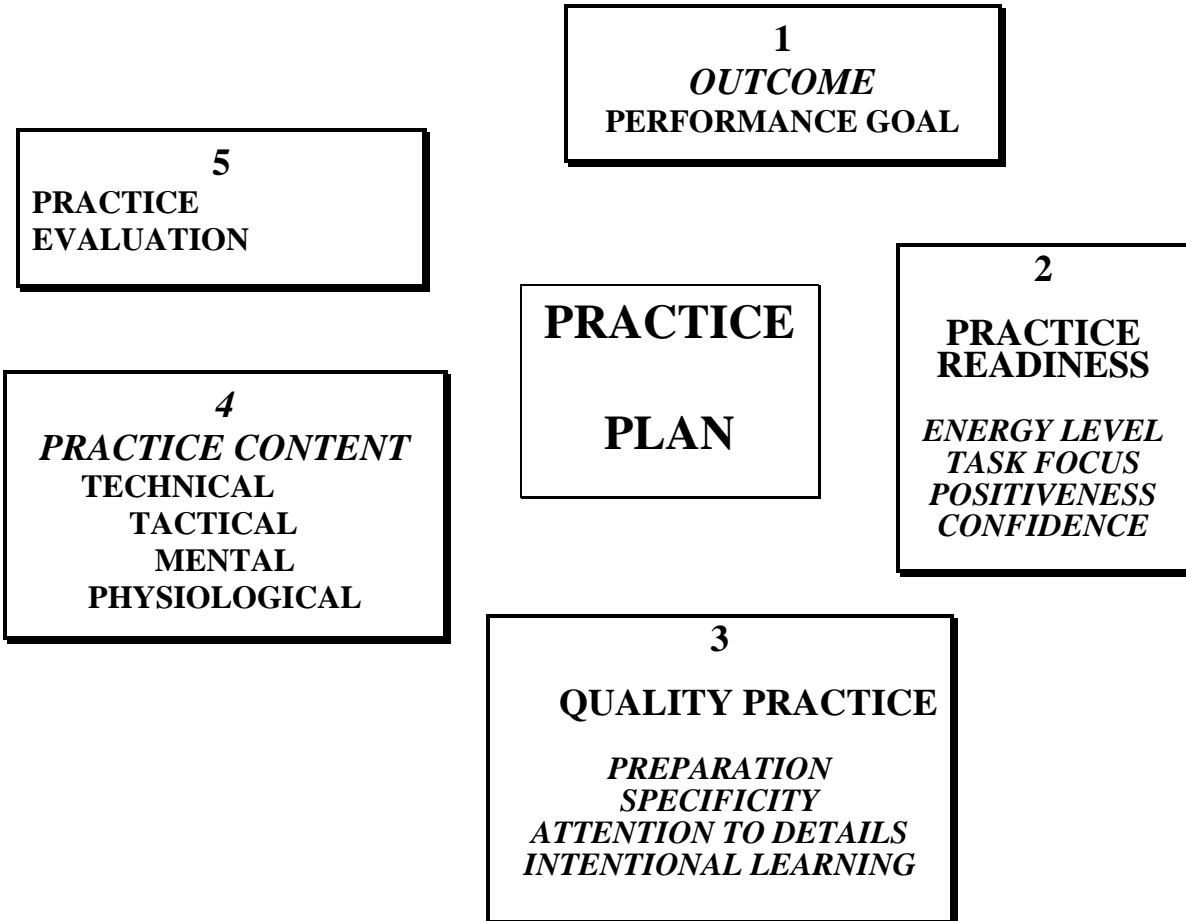
## LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## COACHING HANDBOOK

**COPYWRITE : DAVE PEARCE - GOLD MEDAL SOFTBALL  
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# QUALITY PRACTICE

*This model illustrates the conditions required for quality practice.  
The closer you can come to the ideal, the higher the practice quality.*



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1. Practice starts with some type of goal or objective to provide focus and direction.
  2. Elements of player readiness include high energy, total focus, positive approach and total readiness to learn.
  3. The practice needs to be well planned, specific to the game with attention to detail and abundant positive reinforcement. All players should be committed to the idea of “Intentional Learning”.
  4. Practice should include work on technical skills, game tactics, physical and mental preparation. The time proportions on each of these will vary with the age and experience of the players.
  5. Evaluation of the practice results completes the process, leading to the next goal and the cycle continues.
  6. The central feature of the model is a detailed written practice plan.

## **DIMENSION PREPARATION**

Many players have the will to win, but only a few are willing to prepare, which means paying attention to each of these four areas of development. Younger players need to spend more time on the technical parts of the game to build a strong skill base. As they mature they should shift emphasis to more tactical training with a gradually increasing focus on mental and physical preparation to develop the “complete” player.

*Who is willing to prepare to perform their best?*

### ***THE WILL TO WIN IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE WILL TO PREPARE***

#### **1. TECHNICAL PREPARATION**

Players must be able to execute all the Fundamental Skills of the game, which are: Fielding, Throwing, Batting, Bunting and Baserunning - and be able to apply these in game situations.

They must also master all position specific skills for their primary and secondary defensive positions and all offensive positions, consistent with their skill and competition level.

#### **2. TACTICAL PREPARATION**

All players must be able to execute all defensive plays associated with their primary and secondary positions and all offensive strategies, consistent with their level of competition.

#### **3. MENTAL PREPARATION**

All players must know and be able to achieve and sustain their individual Ideal Performance State during major competition. This includes the skills of Breathing, Centering, Relaxing, Imaging, Energizing, Controlling Arousal Levels and Staying Positive, Focused and in control under pressure.

#### **4. PHYSICAL PREPARATION**

All players must be in optimum physical condition for peak softball performance, through appropriate training of Energy Systems, Strength, Power, Agility and Flexibility consistent with their age and competition level. Squirt players should focus on flexibility and agility while Pee Wee and Bantam players need to learn about strength and power. They should be able to achieve a physiological "PEAK", for major events and know how to sustain that peak through the competition.

**WINNING IS THE SCIENCE  
OF BEING FULLY PREPARED  
WHILE  
LOSING IS THE ART OF MAKING IT UP  
AS YOU GO ALONG**

## SUGGESTED PRACTICE TIME BREAKDOWN

	<b>SQUIRT</b>	<b>PEE WEE</b>	<b>BANTAM</b>
<b><i>TECHNICAL TRAINING</i></b> BUILD THE FOUNDATION WITH FUNDAMENTALS	BASIC FUNDAMENTALS GENERAL POSITION SKILLS PITCHING-CATCHING HITTING BASICS 80% = 48 MIN/HR.	BASIC FUNDAMENTALS SPECIFIC POSITION SKILLS 50% = 30 MIN/HR	FUNDAMENTALS ADVANCED POSITION SKILLS 25% = 15 MIN/HR
<b><i>TACTICAL TRAINING</i></b> GAME PLAYS DEVELOP TEAMWORK AND INTEREST	BASIC TEAM PLAYS 10% = 6 MIN/HR	MORE TEAM PLAYS + STRATEGIC HITTING 30% = 18 MIN/HR	ADVANCED TEAM PLAYS STRATEGIC HITTING 40% = 24 MIN/HR
<b><i>PHYSICAL TRAINING</i></b> ENHANCE PERFORMANCE & REDUCE INJURIES	FLEXIBILITY & AGILITY GENERAL STRENGTH  MENTAL TRAINING BREATHING % CENTERING GOAL SETTING THINKING BASICS	SPECIFIC STRENGTH/TUBING ADVANCED STRETCHES 10% = 6 MIN/HR	FREE WEIGHT TRAINING P.N.F. STRETCHING 10% = 6 MIN/HR
<b><i>MENTAL TRAINING</i></b> MAINTAIN STABILITY AND CONTROL UNDER PRESSURE,	5% COMBINED = 3 MIN/HR	IMAGERY RELAXATION STRESS CONTROL STAYING POSITIVE 10% = 6 MIN/HR	ATTENTIONAL FOCUS GAME PLANNING & ANALYSIS I.P.S. 25% = 15 MIN/HR

***OUR GOAL IS TO HAVE THE BEST TRAINED AND EDUCATED BANTAM PLAYERS IN THE PROVINCE.***

To achieve that we need our Squirt and Pee Wee players to have a solid foundation of basic skills in Throwing, Fielding, Batting, Bunting and Baserunning. This is probably the most important contribution any coach can make in any sport - develop a strong base of fundamental skills upon which players can build their future in the sport.

This applies to all levels of play, but particularly to Squirt and 1st year Pee Wee coaches because those are the years when that foundation is laid. If the LTAD is to have any success at all, we absolutely need Squirt and Pee Wee coaches to focus on building those basic skills. From there, players can learn to execute the various strategies of the game.

This chart, which should be viewed as a guideline only, indicates that for every hour of practice, Squirt players should spend about 48 minutes on these basic skills and Pee Wees about 30 minutes. Players graduating to Bantam level can then concentrate more on higher level game strategies for a longer future in the game. The skills manuals provided to players reinforce this approach.

## PRACTICE PLANNING & EVALUATION

**COACHES:** Use this exercise to acquaint players with the need to come to practice with the proper mind set and energy level, “ready” to practice. Although this will eventually be a mental exercise, it might be helpful in the early stages to walk the players through the questions and even have them write out the answers.

### PART 1. PLANNING

1. What specific goals do you have for this practice? Consider weak areas, new skills, strategies, special techniques, workloads, focus etc. If uncertain, see a coach.

GOALS \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is your level of readiness for this practice?

Energy	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High
Positiveness		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Task Focus		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

3. What level would you consider ideal for you?
4. What do you need to do to improve your readiness?

### PART 2. EVALUATION

5. Rate your overall performance in this practice.

Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Outstanding

6. What were you thinking, saying or doing before and during the practice, that might have affected your performance?

THINKING

SAYING

DOING

7. To what degree did you achieve your specific goals in this practice?
8. Were you able to maintain your task focus, enthusiasm and energy level throughout the practice? If not, why not?
9. What adjustments would you like to make to improve your preparation and/or performance in the next practice?

### ADJUSTMENTS

10. What would you like the coach(s) to do differently to help you perform better next time?

## COACHING TIPS

Here are some of the coaching tips to help make your practices more effective. These are practical, simple ideas from experienced and successful coaches.

1. ***Teach something new at every practice.*** Young people thrive on learning and challenge. Learning something new every day motivates them to continue.
2. ***Get a commitment to “Intentional Learning” from all players.*** There is a coaching hand out on this which outlines why “Intentional Learning” is important.
3. ***Take yourself out of the practices as much as possible.*** It’s difficult to teach, coach and correct technique when you are tied up batting balls to players. Free yourself up to watch, supervise and give feedback.
4. ***Teach all players to fungo the ball.*** This is becoming a lost skill, but there is no reason players should not learn to bat ground and fly balls to each other. This frees up the coaches to do more important functions. The sooner you teach this skill, the better for everyone concerned.
5. ***Try to cover all 4 dimensions of development at every practice.*** The time allocations will change as players mature and develop, but covering all four dimensions will round out the education of the players. (See coaching hand out)
6. ***Insist on full effort from every player (some type of player contract)*** Then compliment them for the effort. Once players learn the satisfaction of giving 100% they will have taken a major step in their own future.
7. ***Spaced practice is more productive than massed practice*** i.e. 3-10 minute sessions on a skill is better than 1-30 minute session on that skill. This eliminates boredom from doing the same thing for too long and also takes advantage of “latent learning”; the ability of the brain to continue learning in the absence of practice. “Kids learn to skate in the summer and swim in the winter”.

## STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

What is excellence in executing the fundamentals skills? Here are some examples of what to look for to assess the degree of excellence. Encouraging these standards will improve the quality of play by your team.

### WATCH FOR THESE FEATURES

THROWING	To get power on the throw look for full shoulder rotation and follow-through. The ball should rotate backwards. The straighter the better. The trajectory should be downwards. Never throw the ball upwards. The throw must be on target. Throwing accuracy is critical to success.
FIELDING	Insist on a low set position on every pitch. Players must be alert and ready to field the ball in any direction. Players, especially infielders, need soft hands for fielding. Practice with a board glove or with bare hands to develop proper recoil technique. Make sure feet are well spread to provide a firm base of support. Ground balls should be fielded slightly towards the throwing side.
BATTING	Players must have a positive attitude and be mentally ready for their time at bat. The basic swing should be slightly downward with a complete follow-through. Preparatory to every pitch, the batter must; A) start with a comfortable, workable stance for good balance. B) make an aggressive move to hit every pitch. C) take a short, controlled and soft step to start the swing D) load up the hands before starting the swing. The first movement in hitting is always back. E) take the hands straight to the ball on every swing.
BUNTING	Bunting is more successful if executed from in front of the plate. We have been encouraging an inside pivot to achieve this position. The bat must be extended away from the body, out towards the pitcher. The bat should be level with the ground or sloped slightly upwards. The (sacrifice) bunt should be directed to the glove side of the pitcher.
BASE RUNNING	Runners must explode off the base on every pitch. Encourage aggressiveness to force defensive mistakes. On every hit, runners should be thinking of going for the extra base. Runners must follow coaching instructions and play for the team. Challenge the catcher, especially early in the game.

## **PRACTICE FORMAT**

Using a standard practice system increases practice efficiency because once players learn the system and routines they be better prepared to move from one activity to the next without elaborate instruction. All players should use the "Practice Planning & Evaluation" form to establish specific goals before each practice, then evaluate their performance and achievement at the end of the session. The important thing is to have balanced practices that include all aspects of the game.

### **WARM-UP**

A practice warm-up should be the same as the team pre-game warm-up. It should included an easy jog, stretch with focus on throwing arm, throwing drills, some type of fielding drill, swing repetitions with some bat-ball contact and sprints. 20 - 25 min.

### **SKILL TRAINING**

This part of the practice is for building basic skills. Focus should be on basic or advanced fundamentals depending on the level of the team. It could also include some time on the pre-game drill.

### **POSITION TRAINING**

At this point, players separate and work on skills unique to their respective positions, i.e. Pitchers & Catchers, Infielders, Outfielders. Coaches work separately with the assigned group. Specific skills and workloads are assigned by the head coach. Players should practice all position skills with extra work on their weak areas. (see Master Practice Plan & Position Skills Check List)

### **TEAM TRAINING & STRATEGY**

The focus during this part of the practice is on the team play book. Time allocation depends on the age and ability of the players, but this is the area where teams can build their game. As teams mature and gain experience, this portion of the practice requires increasing time.

### **HITTING**

In batting practice, players will work on all aspects of their hitting, using one of the following systems;

- a) All Purpose Drill, where the team practices all aspects of the game simultaneously. This technique is for more advanced teams.
- b) Offensive circuit, focusing on various hitting/bunting skills, or
- c) Scrimmage, either complete or modified.  
Squirt teams and 1st year Pee Wees will likely prefer options (b) and (c), while older teams can implement option (a) to advantage

### **MENTAL PREP**

Some time should be devoted to the mental aspects game. This could be rule applications, game theory and tactics or a formal program of mental skills training.

### **CONDITIONING**

Practices should also conclude some conditioning work compatible with the age. Experience and competitive interests of the team. For softball, the focus should be on anaerobic system training, agility flexibility and dynamic strength/power.

## **PRACTICE SUPPLEMENTS FOR SOFTBALL**

### **COACHES:**

WHEN YOU ARE PREPARING YOUR TEAM FOR A TOURNAMENT OR OTHER MAJOR COMPETITION, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL PLAYERS DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THEY ARE IN TOP SHAPE PHYSICALLY AND THEIR SKILLS ARE AS POLISHED AS THEY CAN BE. IT FREQUENTLY HAPPENS THAT YOU CAN'T GET ENOUGH PRACTICE TIME TO ENSURE THE REPETITIONS THEY NEED. SO AS A SUPPLEMENT TO REGULAR TEAM PRACTICES, ALL PLAYERS SHOULD MAKE A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO ACCOMPLISH THESE WORKLOADS. THEY ALSO REPRESENT REASONABLE WORKLOADS FOR PEE WEE AND BANTAM PLAYERS DURING DOWN TIMES (RAIN, HOLIDAYS, ETC.)

### **ALL PLAYERS**

JOG/RUN 6 TO 10 KMS./WEEK  
SWING BAT 300 TIMES/WEEK (PITCHERS OPTIONAL)  
PLYOMETRICS - 250 TOUCHES TWICE/WEEK  
MENTAL IMAGERY - 10 MINUTES/DAY REVIEWING STRATEGY PLAYS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS.

### **PITCHERS - IN ADDITION**

BAT SWINGS OPTIONAL  
THROW 300 PITCHES/WEEK  
ARM STRENGTH PROGRAM 4 SETS/WEEK (MINIMUM - SPEED CIRCLES, ISOMETRIC AND ISOKINETIC CONTRACTIONS & DYNAMIC TENSION)

### **CATCHERS - IN ADDITION**

150 SQUATS/WEEK

**N.B.** THESE WORKLOADS CAN BE ADJUSTED UP OR DOWN ACCORDING TO THE AGE, MOTIVATION, MATURITY AND SKILL LEVEL OF THE PLAYERS. THE MAIN GOAL IS TO GET PLAYERS TO REALIZE THAT IF THEY WISH TO EXCEL AT THE GAME THEY NEED TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT.

## DRILL CONTINUUM

This suggested drill continuum for minor softball, should be viewed with flexibility. Some of the drills will carry over to the next older category, but performed at a more intense or complex level. To accelerate development, young players should be challenged to perform the most complex and demanding drills they can handle.

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<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>FIELDING</u>	<u>THROWING</u>	<u>BASERUNNING</u>
<u>SQUIRT</u>	SHADOW DRILL REBOUND DRILL (WALL) SHUTTLE DRILL SOFT HANDS GOAL	SHADOW THROWS BODY DRILL WITH SCORES TARGET THROWING ONE KNEE THROWING	OUT OF THE BOX HOME TO 1ST TURNING DRILL START AND JAM DRILL
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<u>PEEWEE</u>	SHUTTLE DRILL COMPETITION REBOUNDS FLY BALL FEET FLY BALLS RUNNING CATCH DRILL BASIC FIELD DRILL	TARGET THROWS FOLLOW THE BALL DRILLS AROUND THE HORN ONE & TWO KNEE THROWING ISOKINETICS	RUNNING TECHNIQUE - HIGH KNEE MARCH - WITH SKIP - HIGH KNEES - HEEL KICKS - HEEL TO TOE - CARIOKAS  SPRINTS - BREATHING - LEG DRIVE - KNEE ACTION - ARM PUMPS  HOME TO 1ST, 2ND, 3RD, HOME TIGHT TURN DRILL LEAD-OFF DRILLS STARTS & STEALS
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<u>BANTAM</u>	ONE ON ONES RUN & CATCH INFIELD POP-UPS CRISS-CROSS MAKE THE PLAY ADVANCED FIELD DRILL	AROUND THE HORN 2 BALL DRILL D.P. SHUTTLE RELAY THROWING POSITION THROWS CUT-OFF THROWS SPEED THROWS ISOKINETICS DYNAMIC STRENGTH DRILLS W/TUBING	ONE AND TWO LEG PLYOMETRICS RESISTANCE SPRINTS WITH TUBING BODY LEAN DRILL EXPLOSION STRIDES STEAL SPRINTS STEAL W/DELAY

## **HIGH PERFORMANCE FIELDER**

This suggested home practice program will improve fielding technique and contribute to conditioning for games. The balls can be delivered by either a batter or pitching machine. Coaches might want to introduce the program at a regular practice.

### **WARM-UP**

- PURPOSE** Stretch major muscle groups. Prepare body for exertion and mental
- WORKLOAD** 10 minutes - slow deliberate stretch - all major muscle groups.  
Rotate shoulders, wrists, hips, knees and ankles.  
10 minutes - easy throwing at half speed. Start at short distance.
- ROUTINE** Perform static stretches, no bouncing. Hold stretch 10 to 20 seconds  
During stretches, visualize making all the plays within current skill level.

### **TECHNIQUE**

- PURPOSE** Develop smooth, fluid fielding technique.  
Improve mobility in all directions.  
Develop concentration. See the ball into the glove.
- WORKLOAD** 10 ground balls - straight on with side spin.  
10 ground balls - left and right side.  
10 pop-ups in varying directions.
- ROUTINE** Set up Pitching Machine (Batter) at home plate area.  
Field from whatever position you prefer.  
Have the machine (batter) deliver ground balls in sequence shown.  
Use moderate speed only for technique.  
Ensure proper set-up on each repetition.

### **EXCELLENCE**

- PURPOSE** To simulate game conditions and perfect timing.
- WORKLOAD** 10 ground balls straight on.  
10 ground balls to each side.  
10 Pop-ups in varying directions.  
10 ground balls in varying direction.
- ROUTINE** Set up Machine (Batter) between home plate and pitcher mound.  
Catch net beside machine to retrieve balls.  
Field from whatever position you prefer.  
Field ground balls in sequence shown.  
Use maximum speed for current skill level.  
Ensure proper set position for each repetition.  
Visualize each repetition before executing.  
Repeat for pop-ups.

## MASTER PRACTICE PLAN

ACTIVITY	PRACTICE											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
WARM-UP - Stretch - Throw - Swing - Sprint PRE-GAME ROUTINE FIELDING/THROWING 1 ON 1 100 TECHNICAL SWINGS INFIELD DRILL BUNTING - Sacrifice - Slap - Drag BASE RUNNING - Lead-off - Technique SLIDING - ALL SLIDES  <u>TEAM DEFENCE</u> FORCE PLAYS - All Bases RUN DOWN PLAY DOUBLE PLAY SACRIFICE BUNT (R. 1 & 2) PICK OFF @ 1st & 3rd QUICK PICK - 1st & 3rd HOLDING 3RD BASE RUNNER CUT-OFF PLAYS - All RELAY PLAYS - All Areas OVERSHIFTS 5-MAN INFIELD  <u>TEAM OFFENCE</u> HIT & RUN FLY BALL ADVANCE STEALS - Straight - 2nd, 3rd - Delayed - Double - 1st & 3rd SQUEEZE OPTIONS - Safety - Suicide INTERSQUAD GAME SIMULATION TIE BREAKER ALL PURPOSE BATTING DRILL  PLYOMETRICS STRENGTH/POWER PROGRAM												

## MASTER PRACTICE PLAN

ACTIVITY	PRACTICE											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b><u>PITCHERS ONLY</u></b>												
DROP BALL W/CONTROL												
RISE BALL W/CONTROL												
OFF SPEED PITCH W/CONTROL												
PITCHING PATTERNS												
INTENTIONAL WALK												
PITCH-OUT												
FIELD BUNTS - ALL SIDES												
1ST & 3RD DEFENCE												
COVERING 3RD & HOME												
FAKE INTENTIONAL WALK												
<b><u>MENTAL PREPARATION</u></b>												
<b><u>ALL PLAYERS</u></b>												
Hitting Routine												
Pitching Routine												
Visual Dynamics												
Attention Focus												
Self Talk												
Parking												
I.P.S.												
Game Focus Plan												
Re-Focul Plan												
Affirmations												
Staying Positive												
OTHER SKILLS												

## ALL PURPOSE - PRACTICE PLAN

STATION	PLAYER	ROUTINE/WORKLOAD
1 BATTER		
2 ON DECK HITTER		
3 RUNNER (A)		
4 RUNNER (B)		
5. DEFENCE  A) PITCHER  B) CATCHER  C) 1ST BASE  D) 2ND BASE  E) 3RD BASE  F) SHORT STOP  G) LEFT FIELD  H) CENTER FIELD  I) RIGHT FIELD  J) INFIELD FUNGO		
6 PICK-UPS A) FIELDER  B) CATCHER		
7 SCREEN DRILL		
8 TEE A) BATTER  B) FEEDER		
9 SWING STRENGTH		

### NOTES