

## **SOFTBALL BASIC DEFENCE - THREE FIRSTS**

**COACHES:** If you want to increase your chances of winning games, teach your players to stop doing the things that cause you to lose. These are a) not bearing down on the first batter of each inning; a) continually pitching behind in the count, and c) allowing the batter-baserunner to advance to second base on a single. Stop doing these three simple things and you will win more games.

Keep in mind the three firsts of the defence. These are: *1st Batter*; *1st Pitch*; and *1st Base*.

### **1ST BATTER**

It is important to get the 1st batter out every inning. Statistics show that teams who consistently retire the 1st batter of the inning, win more games. It is very difficult to score a run with only two outs, so getting that 1st out every inning is critical to the outcome of the game.

### **1ST PITCH**

Pitchers who throw the 1st pitch for a strike are more successful than those who don't. Getting ahead in the count at; 0-1, 0-2 or 0-3, gives the pitcher and the defence a big advantage, because it forces the batter to swing at borderline pitches which are harder to hit solidly. Consequently the opposing batters get fewer hits, score fewer runs and are less likely to win.

### **1ST BASE**

1st base is the important base for the defence in softball. That's because when a runner reaches 2nd base, their chances of scoring increase significantly. Less than 1/3 of the runners who reach 1st base end up scoring, but more than 1/2 the runners who reach 2nd base score. So it's important to limit the batters to 1st base if at all possible. That's why, when there is a runner on 1st base and the batter hits a single to the outfield, you should throw to 2nd base to limit the batter to one base.

### **SCORING POSITION**

In softball and baseball, 2nd base is considered to be "scoring position". Base runners are expected to be able to score from 2nd on a single to right or center field and sometimes on a soft single to left field. The Steal play and the Sacrifice Bunt play are designed to advance runners from 1st base into "scoring position", which if successful, increases their chances of scoring considerably.

When you are at bat, the goal is to move as many runners to 2nd base as possible. But when you are in the field on defence, your goal is to stop runners from reaching 2nd base.

**KEEP THESE BASIC IDEAS IN MIND AND  
INCREASE YOUR TEAM'S CHANCES OF WINNING GAMES.**