

Lions Baseball Notes

*Every player is responsible for knowing all of these notes.

OFFENSE

Successful at bats include:

1. Hit
2. Sacrifice
3. RBI
4. Walk
5. HBP
6. Force at least eight pitches

Hitting Rules of Thumb

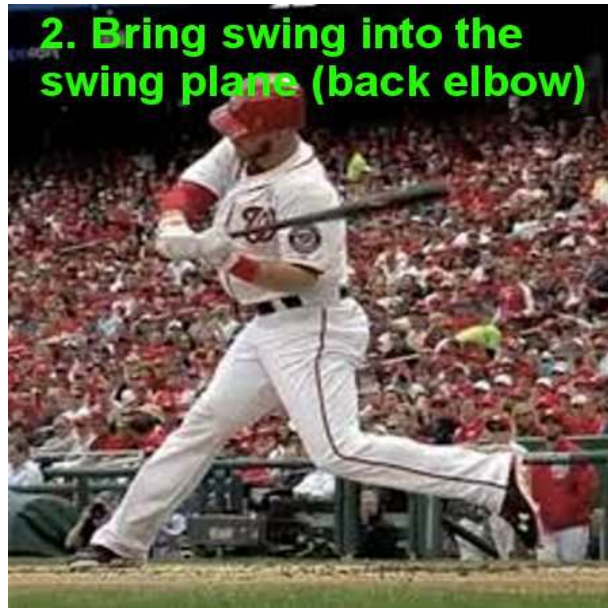
- Always step toward the pitcher unless the ball is inside.
- Always watch the ball clear through striking the ball.
- With 2 strikes, ALWAYS expand the strike zone and just make contact. (Bring hands closer to your chest and shorten your swing).
- Not swinging at the first pitch is often a good idea. We are trying to work the count on every at bat. In addition to forcing more pitches, it gives the batter a look at a pitch before swinging.
- If third base is playing back, consider bunting, but never on two strikes. Exception: If third baseman is very fast, don't bunt without a signal.

A proper swing consists of three successive motion groups which combine to create a stretch that unleashes into a high speed swing. This is necessary for maximum bat speed, a requirement at this stage of baseball. You can also hold the stretch in the case of off speed pitches, allowing you to preserve power to hit curves/change ups/etc.

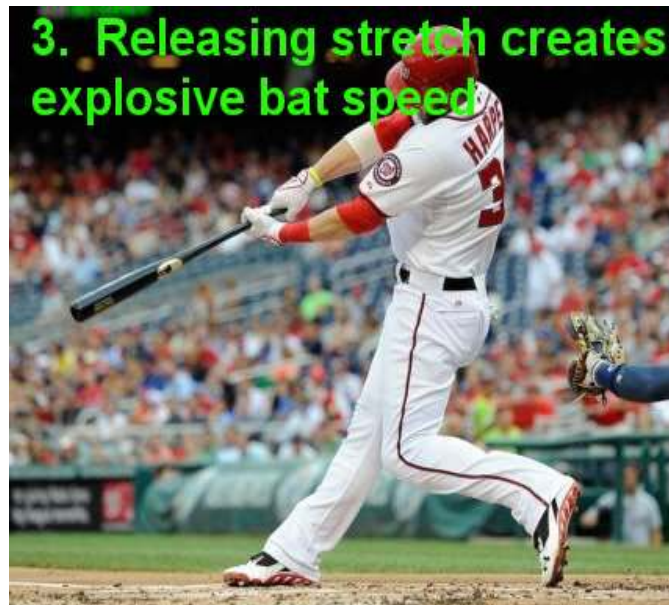
- Motion Group 1 - Front foot and hips move quickly forward (slight back hip sway before moving forward is okay) while back shoulder rotates back. This creates STRETCH.



- Motion Group 2 – Back elbow (the trigger) drops to your back side before swinging, unleashing the STRETCH into a 4 to 10 swing plane for righties, 8 to 2 swing plane for lefties (slightly upward). Just remember, the bat doesn't move forward until the back elbow rests against your side.



- Motion Group 3 – As the stretch unleashes, the torso turns, head stays still, bat whips FAST through the zone with eyes laser focused on the ball. Head does not move.



Proper bunting

- Move to the front of the box
- Leave your back foot behind your front foot (not side-by-side), but turn both feet to point toward pitcher

- Position bat at the top of the strike zone, angled toward third or first (usually third)
- If the ball is above the bat, draw back.
- If the ball is well out of the zone or in the dirt, draw back. Otherwise, make contact.
- If a sacrifice, make contact and ALWAYS hit it toward the ground (hit top of ball) no matter what.
- Angle your bat to third or first (usually third) so you NEVER bunt back to the pitcher.

Base Running Rules of Thumb

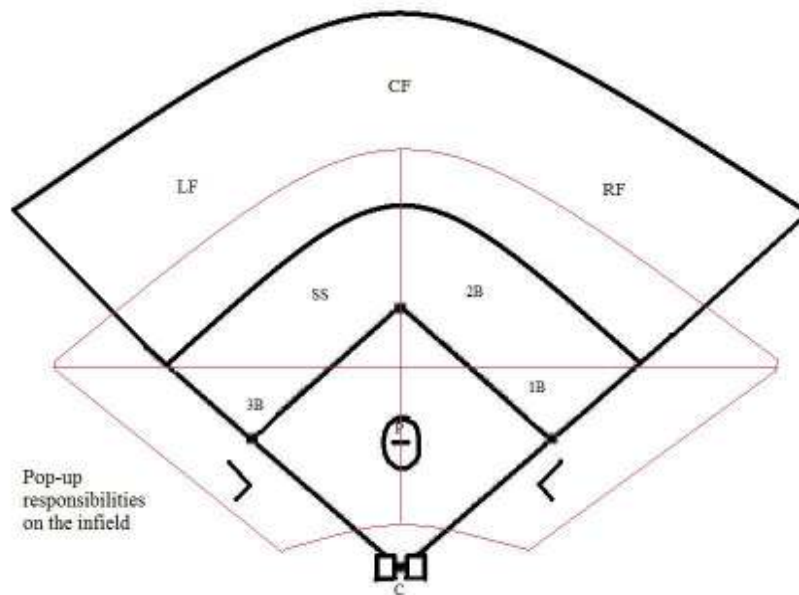
- As a batter, always start to run to first on third strikes. Assume it is dropped.
- When walked, run quickly to first and look for a signal from the first base coach.
- Always run full speed through first and into foul territory unless making a turn.
- While running to first, remain in foul territory to the right of the line.
- Do not watch your hit, but listen for base coaches.
- Your lead should be as big as possible without risking getting thrown out.
- Do not lead off until the pitcher is on the rubber.
- Whether left or right handed, steal only once the pitchers front foot passes the vertical plane of the pitching plate (rubber) OR he makes forward motion to the plate with his hips or front leg.
- The pitcher does NOT need to step off the rubber to throw to first.
- Do not lean. Keep center of gravity in the middle.
- When stealing, you should expect to slide every time unless base coaches say "YOU'RE UP."

DEFENSE

Infield Rules of Thumb

- Priority on every play is getting the lead runner out. Exceptions: We have no play on the lead runner, we are leading substantially or a double play is available and we already have one out.
- Unless warming up or making a quick toss for a double play or other similar close throw, we always throw hard.
- CATCH EVERY BALL THROWN TO YOU – No matter how bad the throw, if you can reach the ball, you need to catch it or keep it in front of you. This is ALWAYS the expectation for competitive baseball players. On short hops, keep a laser focus and watch the ball into the glove. Get your head as close to the glove as possible on back and forehand catches. Absorb balls thrown toward your body. Always make catches in an athletic stance, with knees bent and both hands available for use to catch or stop the ball.
- ALWAYS THROW FROM POWER-T: Whenever possible, before throwing you will plant into a closed power-T position (throwing leg back, glove leg front, glove side elbow and leg pointing toward target, throwing side elbow pointing away from the target, throwing hand inside of glove against your chest), then take one back step, fire to the target stepping directly toward the target with the front foot.
 - This is only impossible when you have a bang-bang play developing. In that case, try to make a great play (quick read, quick react, preserve fundamentals if possible). Otherwise ALWAYS throw from the power-T, even when warming up, doing infield or throwing the ball around the diamond.
- KEEP YOUR GLOVE DOWN – When fielding grounders, keep your glove on the ground if you are not certain it is off the ground.
- Never throw off balance unless it is a bang-bang play.

- Never throw panicked. Get your feet set, take Power-T stance and make a hard throw.
- Make sure you cover your area of responsibility for pop ups. See chart below.



How to play a rundown: You want to make as few throws as possible. Throw the ball like you would a dart, with a quick and short wrist flick. End at the base where the rundown started. Fielders circle back after throw. Here's are examples.

- Between first and second – If the runner is caught off first base, 1B runs down the runner, the P covers first. The SS receives the ball at second base from 1B and runs the runner back to first. The 2B covers second. The 1B backs up 2B. The running fielder gets in line to cover the base he throws to for the rest of the rundown.
 - Run with the ball in your throwing hand, holding it above your head ready to make a quick throw, like you would throw a dart.
 - Get the runner out by throwing to the earlier base once the runner has committed (first base in this case). Don't try to make the out at second base, but 1B should throw early enough to force the runner to run back to first.
- Between second and third: SS runs down as 2B covers second, P backs up third. Make the out at second base.
- Between third and home: 3B runs down, SS backs up third base. P backs up home. 3B gets behind P once he throws to home. C covers third once he throws to 3B. Make the out at third base.

Proper footwork for infielders

- You should creep toward the batter on each pitch. When the pitcher begins his windup, walk toward the batter then plant in ready position.
 - Ready Position – Feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, relaxed, hands to either side of your knees. Be balanced and ready to instantly react.
- Read the ball off the bat. Move on each pitch, whether hit or not. It makes a difference in getting to tough balls.

- When fielding the ball, your body should be low to the ground. No lunging or stabbing. The closer your head is to any ball, the easier it is to read it and react to it.
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY, BE HUNGRY!** – You should want to make great plays! Great plays happen when fielders QUICKLY READ the ball off the bat, INSTANTLY REACT to the ball, and preserve fielding and throwing fundamentals throughout the play. You can only do this if you are hungry for making that great play!



Outfield Diving Catch (Kevin Pillar)



Leaping Line Drive Snag (Fernando Tatis Jr.)



Great forehand stop (Omar Vizquel)



Outfield Rules of Thumb

- Step back two steps, prepared to turn and run back, when you are uncertain of where the ball is going.
- Run with your glove to your side, NEVER in the air. When you are ready to make the catch, then the glove goes in the air.
- React to every pitch, anticipating where you need to run to field the ball.
- If at all possible, never let ball get by you.
- If you have forward momentum when fielding the ball, preserve it and use it to return the ball to the infield. Use a crow hop or back step.
- Immediately return the ball to the infield. Do not hold the ball.
- Call all balls (Mine/Yours) that are close to or have you moving toward another fielder.
- Outfielders always have priority over infielders when running in to catch a ball because they have momentum toward the infield. Call out loudly, “mine, mine, mine!” Infielders, always

give way to the outfielder calling the ball.

Proper footwork for outfielders

- Waiting for Pitch: Stand with your throwing side leg back, glove side leg forward, legs bent and relaxed, ready to read the ball and move instantly.
- Ball in Front of You: Crow hop when moving forward for maximum throwing strength.
- Ball Directly to You: When stationary, catch the ball, step slightly toward the infield with your back leg behind your front leg, then step forward with the front leg as you throw to generate forward motion to the infield. This is a “back step.” Front step is okay as well, where your back leg steps in front of your front leg as the first step.
- Ball Over Your Head: When running away from the infield, get the ball then plant with throwing side leg, do a back step, then fire toward the infield. Do NOT throw off balance.

Pitching with Runner(s) on:

- You should stay in your stretch for a few seconds looking directly at the runner to make the runner think.
- When you throw over, use a quick throw, where the throwing hand stays beside the ear. Don't draw your arm back to throw, but throw straight ahead from the ear. You can mix in a dummy throw before the quick throw if you wish, where you draw your arm back and throw slower to throw off the runner's sense of timing you.
- When pitching with a runner on, do not lift your leg but go quickly to plate with a slide step and quick release. Base runners steal on pitchers, not catchers. A quick pitch will often lead to throw outs. We need to be making these plays at this point.

RULES TO KNOW

You should know the basic rules of baseball. Here are just a few of the rules.

- A force exists when the runner must run to the base on a batted ball. Fielders only need to tag the base to put out a forced runner.
- A runner that is not forced to run must be tagged to be put out.
- A runner that leaves base before a ball caught in the air is caught can be put out by throwing to the base he left before he returns.
- The fielder has the right of way in the base paths when fielding a ball. If you are a fielder, take that right of way and make your play. Base runners should not impede the fielder. Defenders, forget the runners and make your play. If they run into you, they are out.
- If a batter hits the catcher's mitt, he is awarded first base for defensive interference. This is almost the only time when defensive interference is called.
- Pitchers must come into set position before pitching with the ball in his glove, remaining completely still. Once set, if the pitcher moves in any way other than a slight head turn (don't move shoulder at all), pitching or throwing to the base to pick off the runner, it is a balk.

Odd Rules

- Infield Fly Rule – When there are runners on first and second OR first, second and third, an umpire may call the batter out if he hits a fair pop up that can be caught with ordinary effort. If the umpire does not call the batter out while the ball is in the air, the rule is not in effect.
 - What it means: You don't have to catch the ball to get the out. Runners are not required to advance. There is no force out in effect. Runners must be tagged if they choose to run. The

rule is only in effect if the umpire calls the batter out while the ball is in the air.

- If the baseball gets stuck in the catchers mask or any part of the catchers gear, runners get to advance.
- Pitchers cannot spit on the ball. A pitcher also cannot wipe his face and then grip the ball, but if he wipes his face, must first wipe his hand off on his uniform before gripping the ball.