

Brian Moran | Train Baseball

18 Sneaky Baseball Plays

Respect as a Coach by Getting the Edge on Every Play

DEFENSIVE TRICK PLAYS

“CF Pick-Off”

With a runner on 2B, have your CF come in slowly to pick the guy off. The SS and 2B play in their regular positions and when the CF gets there, the pitcher turns and throws to 2B. To get even more sophisticated, practice having the catcher signal to the pitcher when it's time to throw to the CF covering 2B. You can have the catcher toss dirt to his/her side, signaling the pitcher, which allows the pitcher to not stare at the base runner, resulting in an even bigger surprise. Develop a “call-off” for this play in case the opposing team sees it coming or yells to the base runner to get back. This will allow your CF to run back to his position and not delay the game too badly.

“3B Pick-Off”

With a runner on first, have the pitcher pitch from a stretch but never look over there but instead look at the 3rd baseman. The 3B counts the steps on the runner's lead. Usually each pitch the runner takes a bigger lead than before. When the runner takes a big enough lead, the 3B signals the pitcher to pick him off.

“The Fake Pick-Off”

With a runner on second the pitcher picks to second but instead of throwing the ball he leaves it in his glove. The short-stop and second basemen dive for the “fake throw” and run into the outfield after it. The outfielders can play along too. As the base runner takes off, have the pitcher sprint at him while the first basemen runs to cover 2B in case a run-down starts.

“The Phantom Catch”

Fly ball to any OF, deep enough for the guy to tag. Hold your glove up like you're going to catch it above your head, but at the last second, drop your glove down to make a basket catch. If the runner was timing your catch and watching the baseline instead of watching the OF, he will leave early and the defense could appeal at third.

“Trick Bunt Defense”

With runner on 1st and a bunt situation, the first baseman charges for the bunt catcher calls a pitchout and the second baseman leisurely walks behind base runner without him being aware. The first baseman is in front of the runner so he gets lazy going back to the bag where the second baseman is waiting to get the SURPRISE throw from the catcher on the pitch out.

“3B Bunt Fake-Out”

With a runner on 3B, have the third basemen charge in as if expecting a squeeze bunt. The base runner takes a much bigger secondary lead because the third baseman has left the bag. Have the SS sneak over towards third base behind the runner and the pitcher throws a pitch-out. The catcher fires down to 3B behind the base runner for an easy pick-off. Advanced: have the 3B duck after the catcher catches the pitch-out. Call the play when a lefty is hitting for a more direct line-on-sight for the catcher. Set up the base runner for a few pitches by having the 3B sneak in just a little bit a couple times in a row.

“1st and 3rd Defensive Cross”

Classic 1st and 3rd situation. When expecting the runner on 1B to steal, call the "cross play." The SS (for a left-handed hitter) or the 2B (for a right-handed hitter) crosses in front of 2B to cut off the throw from the catcher if he sees the runner on 3B breaking for home. If the runner stays put, he lets the throw go through to 2B for the tag.

“The Phantom Pop-Up”

With a speedy runner on first base, if the runner steals, two players on the bench crack two bats together making the sound of the ball hitting the bat. The catcher then throws a soft pop up to the second baseman at his normal position. Everyone yells "back" as if the runner needs to return to first base (because he thinks the ball was popped up). The Second baseman catches the “fake pop-up” and tags out the runner heading back to first base. Another play to consult your conscience on.

“The Phantom Wild Pitch”

With an aggressive runner on 1st, if there is an attempted steal, have the catcher come up and throw to the 1st baseman and then turn and run to the backstop acting like he can't find the ball. You can also have everyone yell and point towards the “fake passed ball.” In the mean time, the runner rounds 2nd and possibly runs towards 3B. Have the 1B throw to the 2B behind the runner or the 3B if the runner advances. You have to watch the runner earlier in the game to see if he looks in when stealing. This is a dangerous play if your catcher throws the ball into right field over the first basemen's head.

“The Trick Windup”

With runners on second and/or third, have your pitcher pitch from the windup. The pitcher has both feet on rubber but steps back with wrong foot, simulating his real windup. When the base runners think he's starting his wind-up, they'll take their secondary lead and the pitcher can break his wind-up and pick them off.

“The Decoy Fly”

The decoy fly routine is one of the most frustrating plays to work against. A batter hits a high fly ball towards the gap in RF. The shortstop breaks behind the bag, tracking an imaginary ball, loudly calling off the 2B. If the runner reacts to the acting, he'll either retreat towards 1B or hang up between the bases. It sounds simple, but the runner often just sees the ball coming off the bat and doesn't track it to the OF; he can be set up if he's not watching the 3B coach.

“The Hidden Trailer”

Another play on an OF hit is a trailer play. I code name these "hippo" and "rhino" so the boys can communicate about them. These plays are only possible with no one on base or with a runner at 3B (who will score anyway). On an OF hit, the C goes down the line. The SS calls the code, which orders the 1B to leave his spot and go out to double relay. 1B looks empty as the runner rounds the bag and the ball comes in, so he takes a few extra steps. The SS then yells yes or no; on yes, the IF throws the ball to 1B as the C (hiding behind the base coach) covers the bag. Rhino applies to 2B hits; there, either the 1B or the RF acts as the trailer. These plays can go wrong in spectacular fashion, but when they're done right, they put the runners' heads on a swivel.

OFFENSIVE TRICK PLAYS

“The Outfield Walk”

With a runner on 3rd...If your batter draws a walk have him/her jog to first base and keep jogging out into the outfield. There is no rule whatsoever about how far you can round a base. Have the runner sit in the outfield and wait for a fielder to go make the tag. If they go after the runner, send the other runners to advance and score. If they leave your runner there, have him/her easily steal 2B on the next pitch. Make sure, once the runner is in

position, his/her FIRST MOVE is towards 1B or 2B in a straight line. The base runner will be called out if he/she "wanders" instead of making a direct running path to the next base.

"Base-running Magic"

With a runner on second, the batter hits the ball (must be a hit that could potentially score the runner from second), as both umpires are watching the play, the runner from second cuts through the grass near 3B, heading for home plate. Your runner will surely score, and if the umpire doesn't see it, he cannot call the runner out. Another risky/dirty play.

"The Double Suicide"

With runners on 2nd and 3rd, call a squeeze play. The runner on 2nd gets a huge lead and just keeps running all the way home. When the 3B fields ball and realizes there is no play at home, he will throw to first to get the batter. If the runner from 2B continues to run straight home without hesitation, this play almost surely works. Most of the time the 1B is sleeping and there is no play at the plate.

"The Trick Lead Off"

The unique thing about this play is where the 1B runner takes his lead. The first base runner will take his lead in the outfield. In this play the first base runner will take his lead 15-20 feet out on the "outfield grass" half-way between first base and second base. This lead location will put the runner approximately 65 feet from both first base and second base. The runner will simply turn and sprint to this "spot" when he takes his lead. When the first base gets to his "lead location" the runner will "hold the spot" until a defender, with the baseball, approaches him and is within 15 feet. He should make sure that when he makes a move, he goes directly toward first base or second base. He must not take a step back under any circumstance. A step backwards will make him in violation of the "base path rule". The "base path rule" is not enforceable until a runner is attempting to avoid a tag or play by the defender. If a runner leaves the base path to avoid a tag or play by a defender, he is out. Many people misinterpret this rule. This rule in no way restricts where a runner may take his lead. He can legally take his lead anywhere he wishes. The runner's base path to first base

or second base is determined by where he is when the defense begins to make a play on him. If the defense makes no play on the first base runner, he will sprint directly to second base as quickly as he can on the next pitch. He has used the play to easily steal second safely. If the defense makes a play on the runner he will not panic but will rather hold his spot and will break at the last possible moment. The third base runner will take a safe but aggressive lead and will read the actions of the defense. When the third base runner or coach feels that the defense has moved out of position or has taken the ball too far out to make the play at home, the runner will break and attempt to score.

“1st and 3rd Base Running”

Classic 1st and 3rd situation: Have the runner on first start walking to second and get in a rundown. The runner on third will score. If the opposing team doesn't throw to get the guy on first in a rundown, the runner gets a stolen base.

“The Instant Balk”

With runners in scoring position (preferably 3B) have the batter step out of the batter's box WITHOUT CALLING TIME and act like he has dirt in his eye, trying to get pitcher to hesitate in his delivery of the pitch. When the pitcher hesitated in mid-motion yell "BALK!" Now I believe there's a rule that you can't do anything intentional to cause a balk, illegal pitch, etc. This is a risky play, so consult your rulebook...and your conscience.