

Four Easy Drills to Build a Complete Catcher

Every team needs a sound defensive catcher behind the plate, and a plus defensive catcher is a major asset. With the emphasis on developing consistent, effective play behind the plate, Brockton (Mass.) Little League coach James Jefferson shared four catching drills he uses with his team.

The Pirate

What you'll need: Pitcher, catcher, mini Wiffle balls, eye patch

How to do it: The catcher should get down in his stance and have one hand behind his back. One of his eyes should be covered by an eye patch. A partner — about 5-10 feet away — should have a bucket of mini Wiffle balls and toss the balls underhand to the catcher, who will attempt to catch them with one hand (and one eye opened). Catchers should do an equal amount for each eye.

Coach's take: "I like this one a lot," Jefferson said. "Not only does the guy need soft hands, but he needs to work hard to see the smaller ball, and his vision is limited. Definitely a good way to improve catcher's vision behind the plate."

The Quick Transfer

What you'll need: Catcher, coach, catcher's mitt, bucket of baseballs, baseball field

How to do it: Have a coach/friend flip balls to a catcher from the side. The balls should be aimed toward the catcher's chest, and the catcher should catch the ball with his glove. From there, he will then make the throw to either a first baseman or second baseman.

Coach's take: "I like this one because you can control the pace," Jefferson said. "If a kid's a beginner, you take it nice and slow. You just go a little faster as time goes on. It seems like some just neglect their kid's transfer issues. This should be a nice fix for that."

The Foul Line

What you'll need: Catcher, catcher's mitt, baseball field, baseball, a partner with a glove

How to do it: Have the catcher and partner both on the outfield foul line about 85 or 127 feet apart — the distance from home to second in Little League and at a full-sized field. The catcher can start this drill in his stance with the ball in his mitt and make throws to the partner as if they are trying to throw out a base runner. The foul line serves as a visual indicator.

Coach's take: "You give the kid a nice visual here of how to throw straight," Jefferson said. "You don't even have to do it at full speed as long as you're practicing good form. The whole point is the kid can see what they're doing."

The Offensive Lineman

What you need: Catcher, catcher's gear, bucket of baseballs, partner

How to do it: Have the catcher and his partner about 15-20 feet apart. The catcher should be down in his stance, and the partner will toss him balls in the dirt, switching up the locations.

Coach's take: "So often we see catchers trying to catch balls, it not working, and the ball getting by them," Jefferson said. "So if they practice just staying in front of the ball and blocking it, they should take that skill and transfer it to the games.

"It's simple, but it's something that will help any catcher," he added. "You can very easily change the pace of it and add other aspects like throwing down the line after the block."

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