

# BUNTING BASICS

## FOR A HIT!

1. SQUARE TO BUNT (FACE THE PITCHER) WHEN THE PITCHER LIFTS THEIR FRONT LEG UP.
2. FEET POINTING AT PITCHER AND FEET IN FRONT OF PLATE. THIS WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO PUT THE BALL INTO THE FIELD OF PLAY AND TO PREVENT THE BALL FROM BOUNCING OFF THE PLATE.
3. HOLD BAT IN FRONT OF YOU AND ANGLED UP. POINT END OF BARREL TO FIRST TO BUNT THE BALL DOWN THE THIRD BASE LINE OR FOUL. POINT END OF KNOB TOWARD THIRD TO BUNT THE BALL DOWN THE FIRST BASE LINE.
4. MAKE THE 3<sup>RD</sup> BASEMAN FIELD THE BALL TO INCREASE THE LIKLIHOOD OF A BASE HIT.

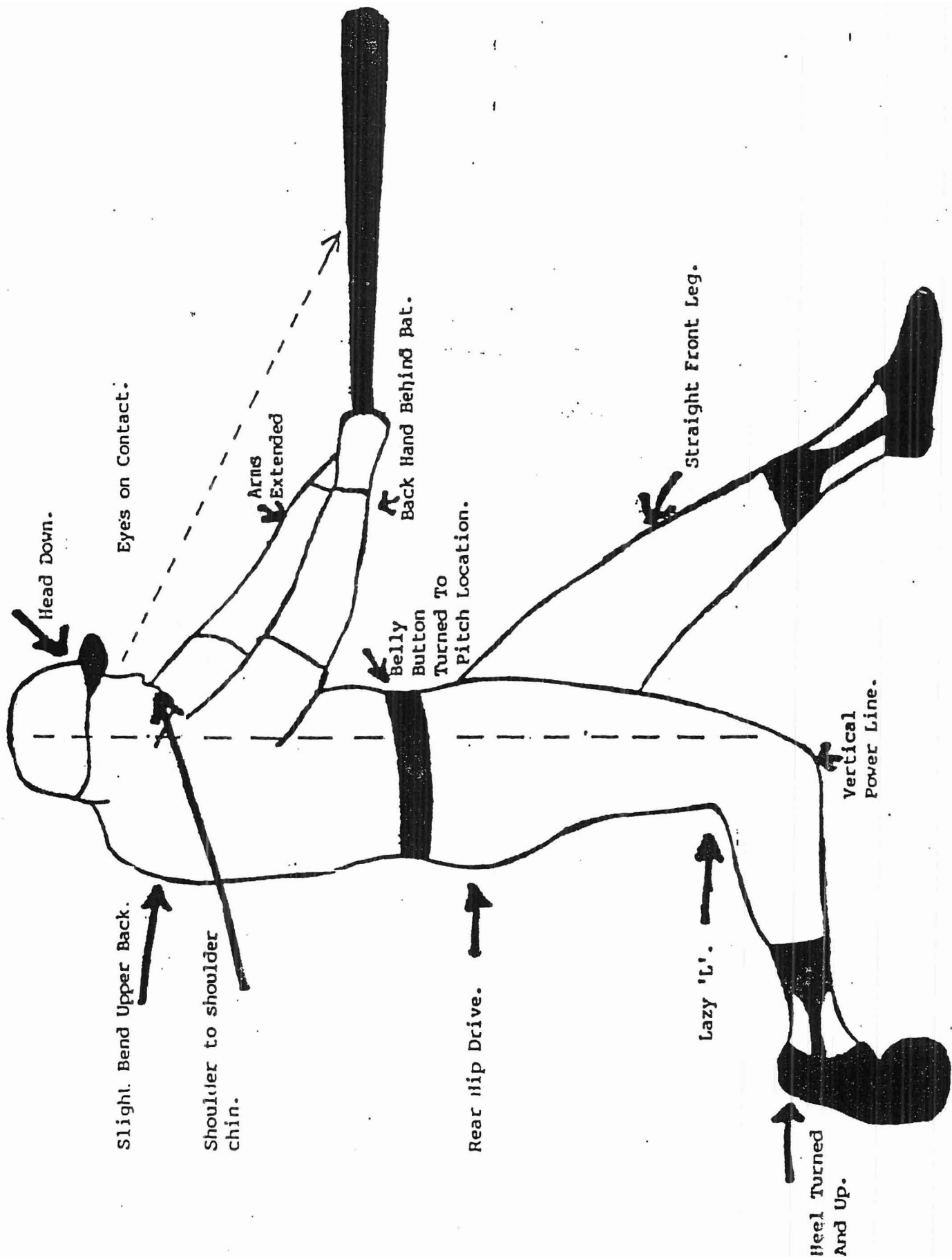
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Baserunning

1. Philosophy
  - a. Be aggressive
  - b. Be aware
  - c. Anticipate
  
2. Sliding
  - a. Head ~~start~~ first
  - b. Bent leg
  
3. Home to First
  - a. out of the box with ~~both feet~~ back foot
  - b. 4 routes
    1. ground ball
      - a. straight to bag, keeping eye on bag area
      - b. hit front of bag and lean (break the tape)
      - c. only slide if first basemen's feet come off bag
      - d. DO NOT jump at bag
      - e. After crossing bag look at right for ball.
    2. ground ball in front of plate
      - a. stay outside of baseline
      - b. c,d,e same as above
    3. ground ball single
      - a. button hook (start straight and round when you know the ball is through)
      - b. THINK DOUBLE
      - c. Dip shoulder to aid in turn
      - d. Hit inside corner with either foot
    4. ball to outfield.
      - a. banana
      - b. c,d,e same as above
  
4. From First Base
  - a. take signs on base
  - b. primary lead with eyes on pitcher
    1. left right shuffle shuffle
    2. crossover and dive
  - c. secondary lead
    1. 2 shuffles
      - a. read ball in dirt
      - b. read ball off bat
      - c. delay steal

"In The Dirt" Rule

AFTER CONTACT CHECKPOINTS



# MIDDLE INFIELD

Richard Hofman, Director of Baseball Operations  
Westminster Academy  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

- I. Identify a Middle Infielder
  - A. Physical
  - B. Mental
  - C. Emotional
  
- II. Routine Ground Ball
  - A. Ready Position
  - B. Movement to Ball - Read Speed
  - C. Last Two Steps
  - D. Follow Through
  
- III. Back Hand Play
  - A. First Step
  - B. Glove Placement
  - C. Foot Placement
  - D. Throw
  
- IV. Forehand
  - A. First Step
  - B. Glove Placement
  - C. Body Position when Fielding
  - D. Throw
  
- V. Slow Roller
  - A. Read Speed of Ball
  - B. Round into Ball
  - C. Field off Right Foot - Possible Left Foot Approach - Time Each One
  - D. Follow Through

# Outfield Play

		Key Points
<b>Ready -</b>	<b>Ready action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- tennis sway</li><li>- shuffle step</li><li>- Open to the ball</li></ul> <b>Drills :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Compass</li><li>2 step</li></ul>	"as if"
<b>Set -</b>	<b>Basic catch (tennis ball – no mitts)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- forehead, - left foot landing,</li><li>- 2 hands vs. 1 handed</li></ul> <b>Drills :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Self flips</li><li>Find the ball</li><li>Willie Mays</li><li>Over-run</li></ul>	Positioning
<b>Go + Wait</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Open fast / finish slow</li><li>- Call late and answer</li></ul> <b>Drills :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4 way work up **</li><li>Wrong way and recover</li><li>On the run</li><li>Slicing / Hooking</li></ul>	Go hard Early
<b>Get Rid of It</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Help each other / rotate</li><li>- Throwing actions (3)</li></ul> <b>Drills :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coordination</li><li>Triangle</li><li>Crow hop</li><li>Cuts / Relays (in warm-up)</li></ul>	Hit the cut/ relay man
<b>Go + Go</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Football Pass (left / right)</li><li>(flies – ground) - dive and roll</li><li>- do or die, - wrong turn</li></ul>	Modified situation is best for OF

General tips : Pitch position, highest point, wind, liners, sun  
fence, scramble, depths, pre-game

- \* KISS Always
- \*\* But I can catch/what you can get to
- \*\*\* Break up skills/ walk before you run

Ray Sharnsky  
Gilmour Baseball

## **BASEBALL WARM-UP AND STRETCHING ROUTINE**

### **WARMUP:**

- Inside: Take 5 laps around gym. Good pace but not too fast.
- Outside: Take 4 laps around baseball field.

### **Lineup:**

- Arm Rotations: forward 10 times Reverse 10 time
- Neck rotations: Left 10 rotations and Right 10 rotations
- Hip twists: 20 total With or without bat

### **STRETCHING: Hold all stretches for 15 to 20 seconds**

#### **Upper Body:**

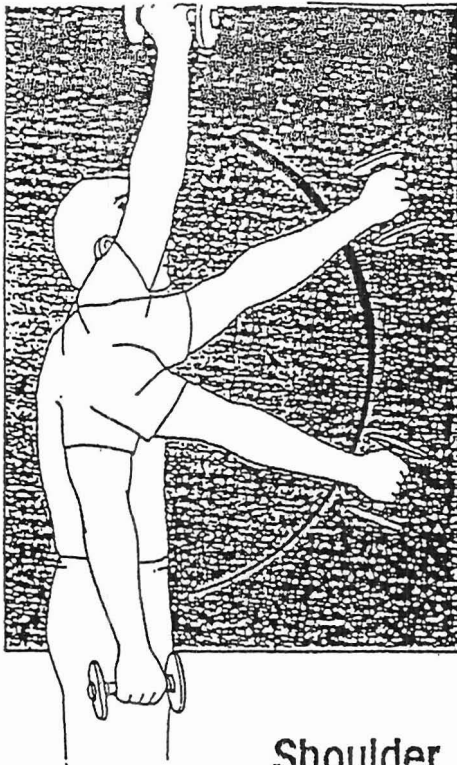
1. Lat stretch (right and left)
2. Shoulder stretch (right and left)
3. Tricep stretch (right and left)
4. Upward Interlock
5. Partnered shoulder stretch (right and left)

#### **Lower Body:**

1. Standing Pike stretch
2. Standing straddle stretch (right, left, middle)
3. Partnered quad stretch (right and left)
4. Seated hurdler stretch (right and left)
5. Seated spinal stretch (right and left)
6. Seated tuck stretch (right and left)
7. Calve stretch against wall (right and left)

**Jobs**

**Exercises**



## Shoulder Flexion

This exercise strengthens part of the deltoid muscle as well as other muscles in the front of the shoulder.

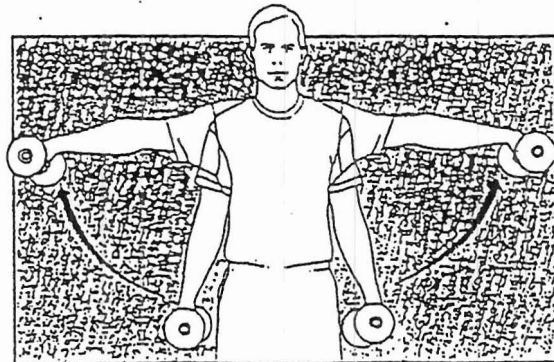
1. Stand or sit with your arm at your side; palm toward your thigh.
2. Keeping your elbow straight, raise your arm, leading with the thumb.
3. Continue slowly until your arm is overhead.
4. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat.

(1)

## Shoulder Abduction

This exercise strengthens the deltoid muscle, one of the most powerful muscles in the shoulder. To increase efficiency and decrease the risk of injury, work to 90° elevation.

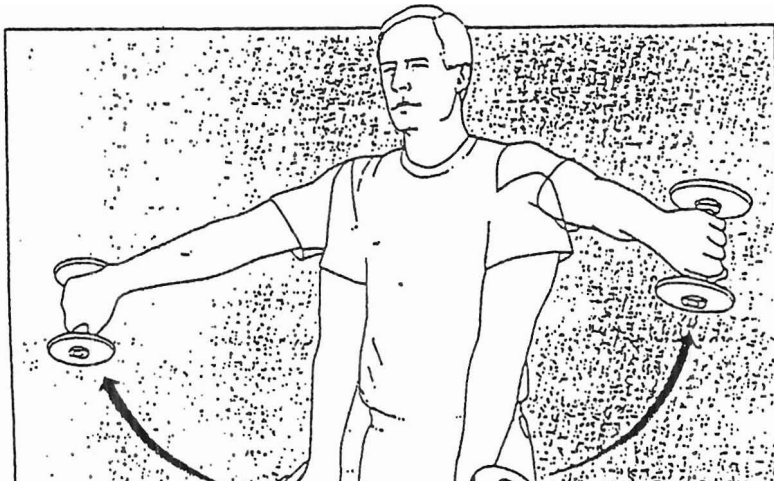
1. Stand with arms at your sides.
2. Lift arms to shoulder height, keeping elbows straight.
3. Lower arms slowly to starting position and repeat.



(2)

## Rotator Cuff Elevation (Supraspinatus)

1. Stand with arms at your side and weights in hand. Keeping your elbows straight, turn arms in so that the thumbs are pointing downward.
2. Bring your arms forward, slightly in front of your body.
3. Raise your arms to 80°, keeping your elbows extended and thumbs pointed toward the floor.
4. Slowly lower your arms to starting position and repeat.



(3)

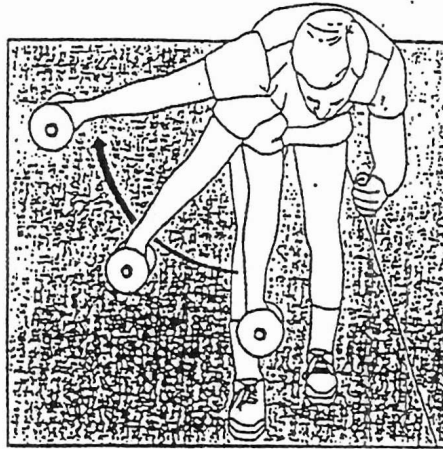


## Horizontal Abduction

This exercise strengthens the posterior shoulder muscles, which contribute to proper positioning during overhead athletic activities.

1. Stand next to a table or bench, leaning forward from the hips, with your arm perpendicular to the floor.
2. Lift your arm up and to the side, keeping your elbow straight. Continue lifting until your arm is parallel to the floor. Make sure you don't lift your hand higher than your shoulder.
3. Return slowly to the starting position. Begin the next repetition right away to avoid unnecessary traction on your shoulder.

You may also do this exercise on your stomach, on the edge of a table or workout bench.

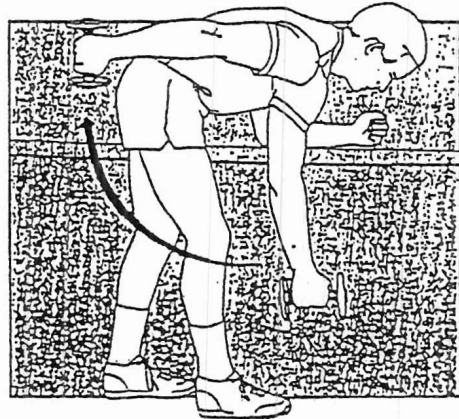


(4)

## Shoulder Extension

The muscles of the posterior portion of the shoulder are sometimes neglected in athletic workouts. These muscles are essential for proper control of the arm during the follow-through phase of many overhead sports.

(5)



1. Stand next to a table or bench. Lean from the hips, using the arm closest to the bench for balance. Allow the other arm to hang perpendicular to the floor.
2. Holding a weight, lift the arm backwards until it is level with your trunk. Keep your elbow straight and arm close to your trunk.
3. Return slowly to the starting position. Begin the next repetition right away to avoid unnecessary traction on your shoulder.

You may also do this exercise while on your stomach, on a table, with your arm over the edge.

## Internal Rotation (Subscapularis)

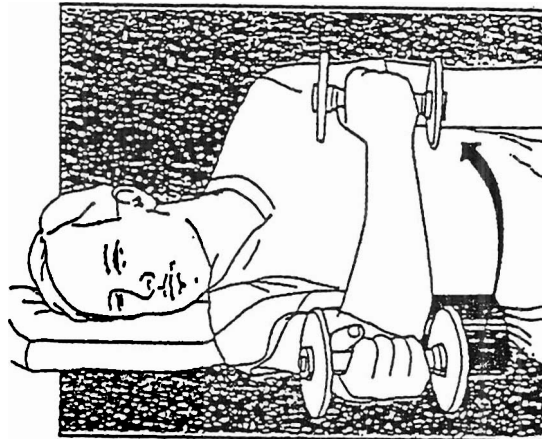
1. Lie on the side of your dominant arm. Make sure your elbow is pulled out from underneath your side slightly in front of your trunk.

2. Bring your dominant arm slightly forward and bend the elbow 90°.

3. Place a pillow or bolster under your chest.

4. Slowly lift your arm toward your chest, keeping the elbow bent 90°. Do not move your trunk. The movement should be confined to your shoulder.

5. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat.



(6)

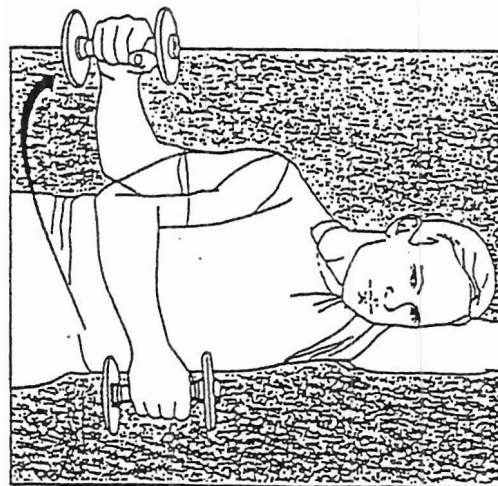
## External Rotation (Infraspinatus and teres minor)

1. Lie on the side opposite your dominant arm.

2. Bring your arm to your side with the elbow bent 90°.

3. Lift your hand toward the ceiling, keeping your arm and elbow close to your trunk.

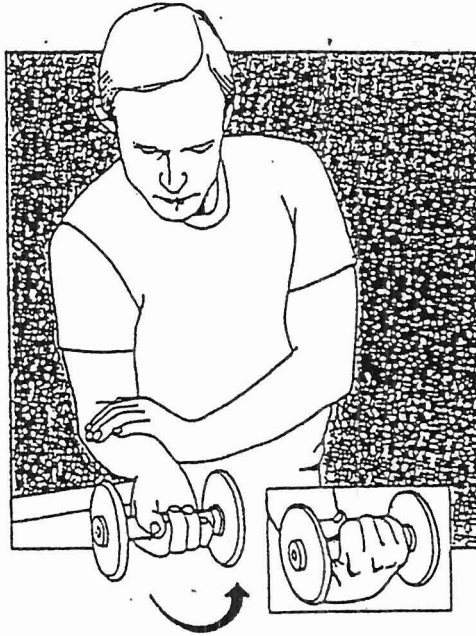
4. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat.



(7)

## Wrist Flexion

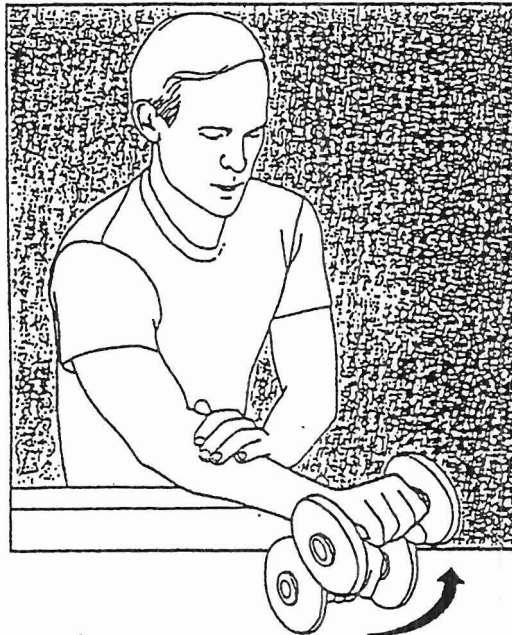
1. Sit with your arm supported on a table or bench. The palm should be facing up.
2. Stabilize the forearm with the opposite hand and lift the weight slowly, only flexing the wrist.
3. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat until you complete the set.



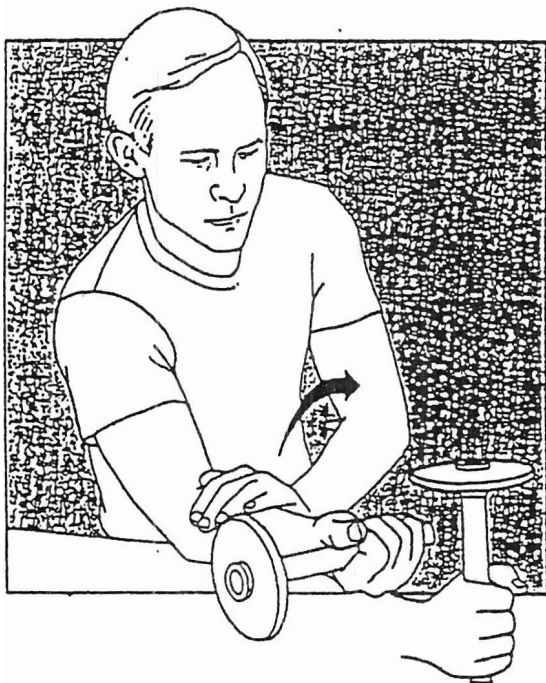
(1)

## Wrist Extension

1. Sit with your arm supported on a table or bench. The palm should be facing down.
2. Using your opposite hand to stabilize the forearm, lift the weight slowly by extending your wrist.
3. Return to the starting position and repeat until you complete the set.



(2)



## Forearm Pronation

You can do the second forearm exercise while seated in the same position. Again, keep the elbow as still as possible.

(3)

1. Sit with your arm supported on a table. With your palm facing up, hold a weighted bar.
2. Rotate the bar until the weight is pointed toward the ceiling.
3. Return to the starting position and repeat until you complete the set.

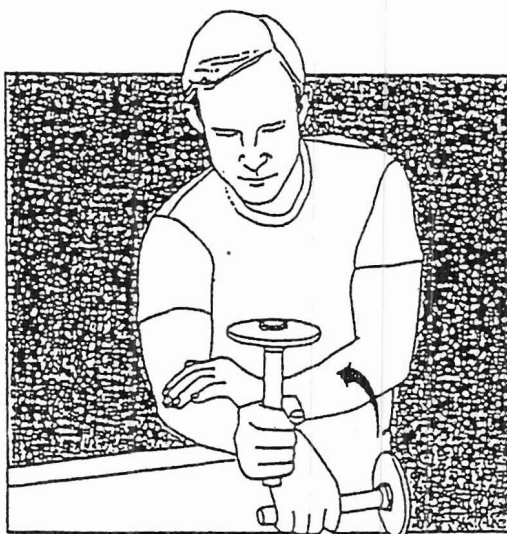
## Forearm Supination

The muscles of the forearm and wrist play an important part in controlling a ball, racquet, or golf club.

Exercise them separately, as follows:

(4)

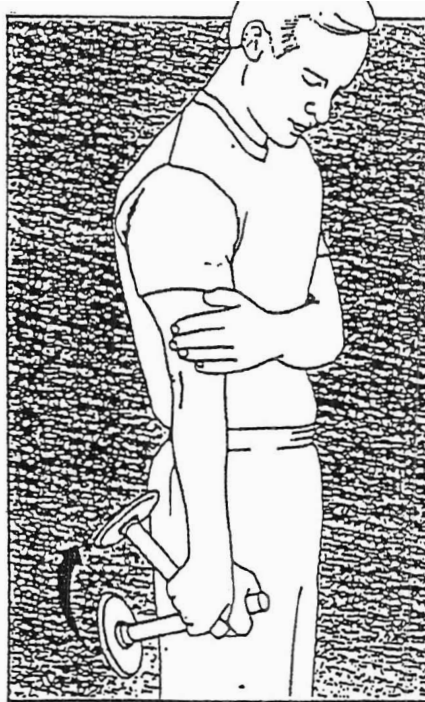
1. Sit with your arm supported on a table or on your thigh. With palm facing down, hold a bar, weighted at one end, as shown in the illustration.
2. Rotate your forearm until the bar is pointed at the ceiling, keeping your elbow as still as possible.
3. Return to the starting position and repeat.



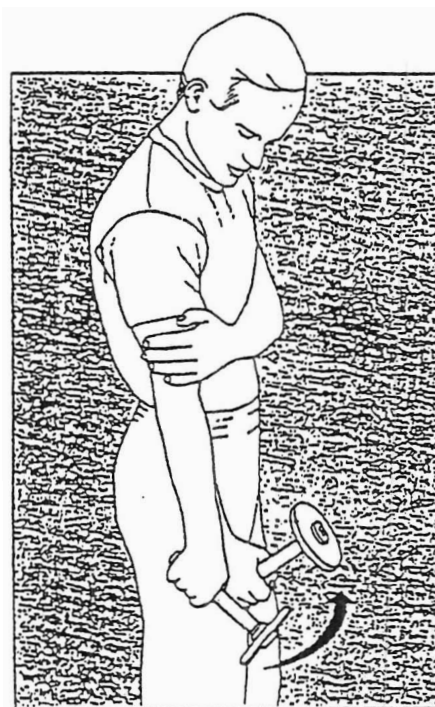
## Ulnar Deviation

You should strengthen the muscles controlling the side to side motion of the wrist with the following exercises.

1. Stand with your arm at your side. Hold a weighted bar, with the weighted end pointing backward.
2. Bending your wrist, lift the weighted end toward the ceiling. Do not move any other parts of your arm or trunk.
3. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat until the set is completed.



(5)



(6)

## Radial Deviation

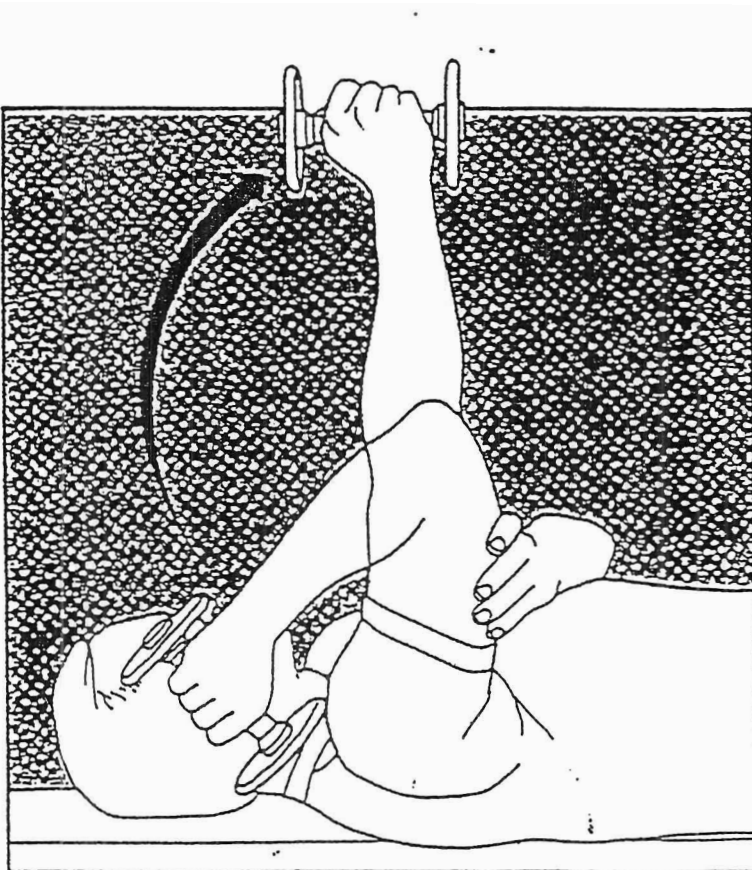
1. Stand with your arm at your side. Hold a weighted bar with the weighted end pointing forward.
2. Bending your wrist, lift the weighted end toward the ceiling. Do not bend your elbow.
3. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat until the set is completed.

## ELBOW EXTENSION

- A. Lie face up  
Raise the involved arm up to shoulder height directly above your chest  
Stabilize just above the elbow with the hand of the uninvolved arm  
Bend the elbow fully allowing your hand to approach the shoulder
- B. Do not move the upper arm  
Straighten the elbow by raising your forearm and hand  
Lower the forearm and hand

Do \_\_\_\_\_ sets of \_\_\_\_\_ repetitions starting with \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.\*

\*NOTE: When using the weights hold the weight in your hand



# Strengthening, flexibility, mechanics can prevent most injuries to shoulder

By Paul D. Artrip

*Editor's Note: Through the assistance of the National Athletic Trainers Association, the National Federation is providing an ongoing sports medicine column in selected issues throughout the year. Paul Artrip, M.Ed., A.T.C., Ocean Lakes High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, serves as the primary author of this column. Assisting Artrip with this column on "Throwing Sports and the Shoulder: Prevention is Worth the Effort" were David Lehan, assistant athletic trainer; Marco Thornton, sports medicine intern, and Jesse Vera, sports medicine intern.*

A well-thrown baseball or softball is a thing of beauty; it truly a performance. The entire body must perform as a single unit in order to deliver the ball on time, with speed and accuracy. When we work with athletes in throwing sports, we must, therefore, look at the complete athlete and not just the arm.

Many arm injuries result from a single flaw that undermines an otherwise good athlete. If we can evaluate our "throwers" in a simple, systematic and effective manner, then a lot of problems may be prevented.

The weakest muscle group in the shoulder tends to be a group of four muscles called the "rotator cuff." They are the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor and the subscapularis. Arising from the scapula (shoulder blade), these muscles perform three vital functions during throwing: 1) help lift the arm during the wind-up phase, 2) help support the arm during the throw and 3) help slow down the arm after the throw.

These muscles are relatively small and easily can be overloaded. They are vulnerable to injury because of mistakes in mechanics, or due to lack of strength and flexibility. Because most of the other shoulder muscles are much larger and stronger than the rotator cuff, it's important to get all of the muscles working together. Preventing injury should start with these muscles, and then proceed to correcting mechanical (throwing) flaws.

## Shoulder Strength

Strong muscles decrease unwanted joint and arm movement and handle lots of stress. Strength training will certainly not prevent all injuries, but it will decrease the likelihood of many.

A simple, effective strengthening program for the throwing athlete will consist of two parts: 1) work the rotator cuff and 2) then work the larger shoulder muscles.

The key to strengthening the rotator cuff is to isolate these muscles and use weights that are not too heavy. If the athlete is to "cheat" the weight upward, then the larger muscles are doing too much of the work and the rotator cuff will remain weak. Athletes should never lift the weight in a fast motion. Dumbbells, sand bags and rubber tubing are all acceptable

types of equipment and are relatively inexpensive. Rubber tubing made specifically for exercise may be purchased, or laboratory tubing and old bicycle inner tubes may be substituted cheaply. Let's look at some rotator cuff strength exercises; a simple guideline would be to try for two sets of 15-20 repetitions.

hand facing up. Lift the arm up and out in front of the body. Hold, then lower.

**Empty Can** — Stand with arms at sides, weight in hands and hands in front of thighs. Keep the elbows straight and the thumbs pointed toward the floor. Lift the arms up and slightly in front, as though emptying a drink can. Hold, then lower.

**External Rotation** — Either standing or laying on your side, hold the weight at your waist. Keeping the elbow slightly flexed, lift the weight up and away from your shoulder.

**Abduction** — Stand with hands at sides. Slowly lift the weight away from the side, pointing the thumb upward.

**Internal Rotation** — Lay on your back. Reach back and above your head for the weight and lift it up over your head.

Other exercises that will help the throwing shoulder are bench press, military (overhead) press, upright rows, shrugs, bent rows and pullovers down toward the front of the thighs.

## Flexibility

The throwing motion stresses all of the soft tissue of the shoulder. Proper flexibility is the second part of any throwing conditioning program. Here are a few basic examples:

**Towel Stretch** — Drape a towel behind the shoulders. Hold in front with the right hand, and behind the back with the left hand. Pull down with the left hand and hold, in order to stretch the right arm. Then, pull up with the right hand to stretch the left arm. Switch arms and repeat.

**Forward Stretch** — Bring one arm in front of your chest. Grasp the elbow with the other hand and pull the arm further across. Switch and repeat.

**Reach Stretch** — Reach behind your head with one arm and touch the hand between the shoulder blades. Grasp the elbow with the other hand, and pull it further behind the head. Switch and repeat.

**Turn Stretch** — Reach up, back and away from your head. Either grasp a door frame or the hand of a partner. Slowly turn the head and body away from the hand. Switch and repeat.

## Mechanics

When athletes throw a ball, the shoulder joint is thrown toward the target and has a natural tendency to follow the ball after release. Proper motion from foot to knee to hip to arm is vital for accuracy, speed and reducing stress on the shoulder joint. The mechanics of throwing can be broken into four areas: the wind-up, the stride, the delivery and the follow-through. It doesn't matter if it's a baseball, a softball or a dirt clod, the mechanics are the same. What should you look for?

**Wind-up** — The athlete should be starting his or her push off of the back leg. Lateral forward motion toward the target should happen at or after the front knee drops. If the hands are together at the beginning of this motion, they should break apart as the front knee drops.

**Stride** — The stride should be "closed" rather than "open."



# Conditioning & Training

**Start**

**Young,**

**Stay**

**Consistent**

**to Keep**

**Pitchers**

**Healthy**

What's the secret to a properly conditioned pitching staff? How do you get top performance out of your pitchers while avoiding injuries? Those questions are common to coaches at every level of play.

The answer is a fundamental approach that, although it seems like mere common sense, is all too often ignored, according to UCLA head athletic trainer Dale Rudd.

Rudd says players and even coaches sometimes lose sight of how important it is to consistently follow the five basic steps to conditioning:

**Stretching** — Stretching is one of the best and easiest techniques to prevent injuries for pitchers. Stretching exercises and loosens tight muscles and should be the first step in any workout.

**Strengthening** — Pitchers need to practice basic strengthening exercises focusing particular attention on the rotator cuff. Simple workouts with a small dumbbell or rubber tubing can help make arms stronger and less vulnerable.

**Warm-Up** — Warm up is a time when players should merely go through the motions in a relaxed way. Before pitchers start working strenuously, they need to get more blood flowing to muscles. While this is a simple exercise, players need to concentrate to assure they are working carefully and slowly.

**Proper Mechanics or Pitching Form** — Coaches should make sure their pitchers are throwing properly. Poor form can produce inefficient results and injuries. A variety of books and brochures are available on pitching technique to help coaches become better instructors on form.

**Icing** — Pitching for any length of time causes trauma to the arm. The muscles respond with inflammation which, in turn, causes soreness. Icing the arm treats the inflammation and helps speed recovery time.

Coaches can help avoid creating problems for their pitchers by staying consistent with a reasonable pitching rotation. "Dropping a pitcher back into the rotation too soon can begin an irreversible process of wear and tear that slowly eats away at his ability to perform," Rudd says.

The most important thing to remember, according to Rudd: start early on conditioning. "It's a common misconception that 10- and 12- and 14-year-olds don't need as much warmup and conditioning as older athletes. Just the opposite is true. If you take care of those developing arms and teach proper mechanics early on, they have a much better chance of enjoying long, productive careers."



the off shoulder is somewhat toward the target. This prevents the forearm from overloading its muscles in order to aim the ball. The stride length should be a little less than body length.

At foot contact, the arm should be cocked or semi-cocked.

**Delivery** — The hip and trunk should be "closed" until the foot hits the ground. Elbow flexion should be loosely around 90 degrees. The throwing elbow should be parallel with the shoulder and even with/behind it.

**Follow-through** — Trunk flexion should be between 45 and 70 degrees. Too much trunk flexion will overload the shoulder and elbow, as well as cause a loss of control.

Throwing a ball is a lot like a tennis serve. If one little thing is off, you can't put it in the "sweet spot" just inside the line. It is truly a total-body performance.

#### After Practice

Throwing is a stressful, repetitive motion. It causes small tears in the soft tissue of the shoulder, resulting in pain, stiffness and occasional swelling. In addition, this soft tissue (the ligaments, muscles and tendons) will be vulnerable to injury for a few days after a bout of prolonged throwing. This is

also true for the "unconditioned" arm of the newer athletes. Judicious management will minimize this "down time" and get your athletes back to throwing with minimal discomfort.

Application of ice packs for 10 minutes is the first step. Next, the athlete should stretch for five minutes. If possible, follow this with gentle, slow rubber tubing strength exercises. Ice and stretch again before bedtime, and the athlete should notice a significant difference in the discomfort the next day. The key is ice, gentle stretching and gentle, slow, light exercise with rubber tubing.

#### Summary

The shoulder is not built for repetitive throwing. One of the most important muscle groups in the throwing motion is the rotator cuff, and it is usually poor in strength. Throwing is a total-body motion, and proper form throughout is required for accuracy and maintaining a healthy arm. Proper strengthening, flexibility and mechanics will prevent most throwing injuries to the shoulder. Proper care of the shoulder after throwing will decrease post-activity pain and the risk of injury to vulnerable and weakened tissue. Now, if your shortstop could only hit!







# CASEY STENGEL - "MOST BASEBALL GAMES ARE LOST NOT WON."

LET'S TAKE SOME TRAINING TIME AND PRACTICE THESE THINGS:

## FIRST INNING

DEVELOP CLEAR CUT GOALS FOR OUR TEAM & ATHLETES

## SECOND INNING

COMMUNICATE THE RIGHT KIND OF WORDS

## THIRD INNING

THINK THE RIGHT THOUGHTS

## FOURTH INNING

YOU MUST BE RESPONSIBLE AND DISCIPLINED

## FIFTH INNING

TAKE YOUR ADVERSITIES AND TURN THEM INTO YOUR STRENGTHS

## SIXTH INNING

YOU CAN NEVER GIVE UP | *Win Every INNING*

## SEVENTH INNING

FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION

## EIGHTH INNING

PRACTICE, PLAY, AND PASSION

## NINTH INNING

FAITH/BELIEF

TENTH INNING  
STAY BALANCED

FIRST WE WILL BE BEST AND THEN WE WILL BE FIRST

## HEALTH AND EDUCATION

# Learning the rules of the coaching game

By Karen S. Peterson  
USA TODAY

If you are a parent coaching in an after-school sports program, you may agree with Dave Augustavo, 37, a Seattle financial adviser who volunteers as a basketball and soccer coach. "It is the single most rewarding thing we can do with our children. They grow up all too quickly. This is a good way to spend time with them and their friends."

Or it may be an experience, as one Montgomery County, Md., mom puts it, that you would not repeat even if you got a big league salary.

As the school year advances, about 3 million such men and women in the USA will volunteer to coach more than 25 million young athletes in various after-school sports activities.

They can get the most updated research on how to do it well from *Way to Go, Coach!* (Warde, \$15.95, available at some bookstores or by calling 800-699-2733). The small paperback is written by Frank L. Smoll and Ronald E. Smith, two pioneering University of Washington sports psychologists who have studied youth sports for 25 years.

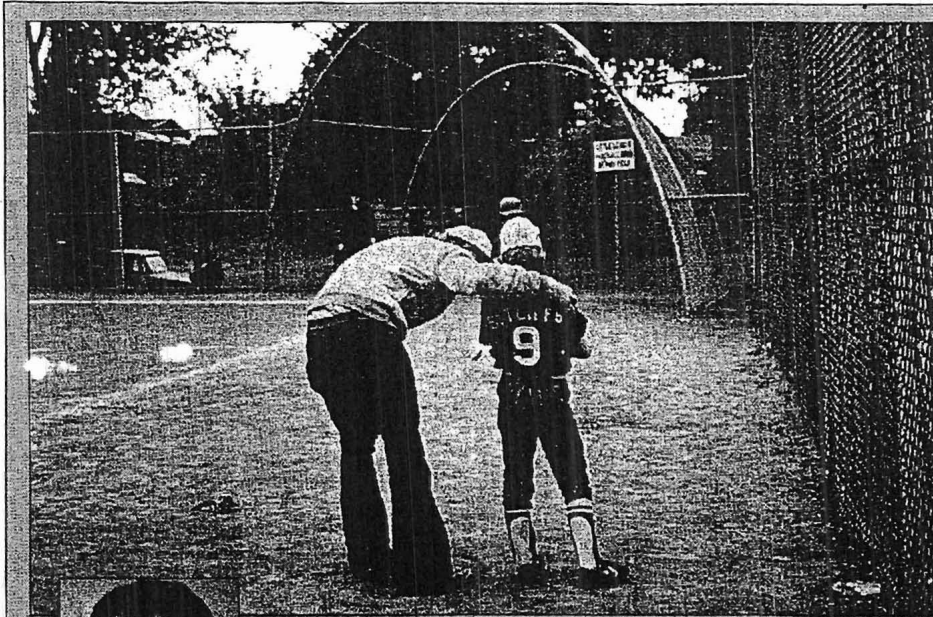
About 40% of volunteer coaches quit a year, they say. How successful the experience is for parents depends in part on how well they understand the job and time requirements.

"Many people go into coaching because they are asked to by an organization or because they like a sport such as baseball or basketball," Smith says. "Often they have no idea of what they are getting themselves into and how time-consuming and disruptive it can be to family life."

Smoll adds, "Youth sports are not viewed as a baby-sitting experience. They are more than a recreational experience for children: This is an important opportunity for children to learn lifetime coping skills."

Volunteer parents usually show up knowing the sport. But they fall short in two other categories, says Frank Cammarano of the Catholic Youth Organization, Seattle. "Our first-time coaches have some knowledge of the game and a lot of enthusiasm. But they don't know how to deal with players or parents, and that is something they really need."

Parents on the prowl for answers can find books, attend workshops sponsored by a youth league or go to the training and certification programs that some sports leagues require, says Donna Lopiano of



Up to bat: A volunteer coach offers his young athletes some encouraging words before going up to the plate. Coaches must know not only the game, but also how to deal with kids and parents.



"This is an important opportunity for children to learn lifetime coping skills."

— Frank L. Smoll

## Difficult athletes

The authors of *Way to Go, Coach!* describe problem kids including the:

► **Uncoachable athlete.** Acts out unresolved problems with authority figures. Needs firm but caring coaching style.

► **Spoiled brat.** Needs to learn no individual is more important than the team. There are no special favors.

► **Low self-esteem child.** Has inferiority complex. He or she needs achievable short- and long-term goals and positive feedback. Pride in sports skills can turn this child's life around.

► **Hyperanxious child.** Becomes "psyched out" in competition. Fears failure. Emphasize individual improvement and effort.

► **Withdrawn child.** Has been hurt and fears getting close to others. Demonstrating you care will gain his or her trust.

or bad, the coach should be the authority figure. Play the game the way the coach tells you to."

Smoll and Smith suggest ways for coaches to handle various problem parents:

► **Parents who scream.** Don't get into an argument with one. Ask other parents or league administrators to help. Give him or her a job that provides distraction.

► **Sideline coaches.** Don't confront them. Tell kids listening to more than one person can be confusing. Ask the parent if he/she wants to coach.

► **Overprotective parents.** They worry constantly their child will be hurt. Assure them the event is quite safe; explain rules, safety equipment, other cautionary measures.

► **Overcritical parents.** They are never satisfied with their kids. Explain how constant criticism causes turmoil and hinders performance.

► **Disinterested parents.** They are often absent from games. If the parents don't have legitimate reasons such as working, explain how sports draws children and parents together. Ask them if they can contribute to the program.

Joanne Steller salutes the coaches who struggle with both difficult parents and sensitive children. "I am just so grateful. It makes such a difference in kids' self-esteem."

## Parents' role is being a supportive team player

So you want your child to play league sports? Maybe you should first take a timeout. Your child may be ready for the competition, but are you? Ronald E. Smith and Frank L. Smoll suggest in *Way to Go, Coach!* that you ask yourself:

► **Can you give up your child?** Parents sometimes do not want to accept the authority of a coach, believing only they should direct their child.

Parents may also feel they are competing with the coach, who can reap "some of the admiration and affection that the child once directed solely at his or her parents," the authors say.

► **Can you accept your child's disappointments?** Parents must support a child even when he or she loses or cries in defeat. As a parent, you can change his or her disappointment into self-acceptance.

► **Can you give your child time?** Unfortunately, the authors say, some parents promise "more time than they can actually deliver." Parents need to show up at their child's sporting events.

► **Can you let your child make his or her own decisions?** "All parents have ambitions for their child, but they must accept the fact that they cannot domi-

nate the child's life," the authors say. "Sports can offer parents an introduction to the major process of letting go."

Those decisions may include dropping out of a sport or deciding not to participate in the first place.

► **Can you, as a parent, model self-control?** "It is not surprising to find parents who exhibit poor self-control in their own lives often have children who are prone to emotional outbursts and poor self-discipline," the authors say.

If you feel free to holler at the volunteer coach, don't be surprised if your child does.

the Women's Sports Foundation. At such training sessions, they learn "this is not just a little throw-away activity. People depend on you. You become heroes to little kids and kids need continuity."

Kids also need coaches who keep the most important thing in mind, says John Ouellette,

national director of coaching with the American Youth Soccer Organization. "This is a game. It may be a great game — but it is still only a game."

And it should be fun. To enjoy it, the child needs a coach with a positive approach, Smoll says. "We believe in the liberal use of positive reinforcement,

not just for actual performance, but for effort. We want coaches to get these athletes focused on something that is in their zone of control: their own personal effort. Doing your best is more important than being the best."

Often the kids shape up well. It is their parents who are the

problem, witnesses say. Joanne Steller, 47, Chevy Chase, Md., is amazed at "how obnoxious parents can be when they take things personally at games." Steller's 12-year-old daughter plays soccer and swims. Steller does not coach but does everything from driving car pools to judging swim meets. "Good