One of our articles this month talks about how important first base play can be at all levels. A good first baseman makes an average defensive infield good and a good defensive infield great. When an infielder knows that he or she doesn’t have to make an absolutely perfect throw every time to record an out, the pressure is reduced and guess what happens? The infielder’s throws become more accurate.

There are many players with soft hands who have the natural ability to become quality first basemen. But you can’t just throw them out there in a game situation and expect them to get the job done.

First base play should not be taken for granted. You can make an argument, especially at the youth levels, that first base may be the most important defensive position on the field. You have to be able to catch and throw well as a team to be good defensively. So, it stands to reason that a weak first baseman is going to severely hinder the catching part of that equation.

First base is more than just receiving throws, however. First and foremost, the first baseman must be able to field ground balls just like any other infielder. If the ball is not hit to him or her, the first baseman must be able to catch accurate throws, pick balls out of the dirt, stretch to off-target throws using proper footwork and come off the bag when necessary to prevent overthrows. In order for a player to get comfortable with the position, time must be taken in practice to allow the first baseman to receive all kinds of throws – first in a controlled environment and later in game-like situations.

This drill is very simple, but it is necessary. If you spend enough time working with your first basemen, we guarantee that your team defense will improve.

**Objective:** To develop proper mechanics when receiving throws at first base.

**Set-up:** Bucket of balls, empty bucket, player or coach to throw, first basemen.

**Execution:** Players line up in foul ground. A coach positions himself in the middle of the infield with a bucket of balls. An empty bucket is placed near first base. The first player comes to first base and puts the heel of the throwing-side foot on the base. The coach throws a ball to the player, who sees the first ball coming across the diamond and takes the glove and glove-side foot directly toward the ball together. The ball should hit the glove and the foot should land at the same time, preventing the first baseman from stretching too soon. Stress that the first baseman gets to the bag quickly, stands tall, squares the shoulders to the infielder making the throw and takes the glove and glove-side foot toward the ball once the flight of the throw is determined. Make sure that they don’t stretch too soon! Coaches also can have players work on receiving errant throws and short-hops. Players receiving throws should place balls in the empty bucket and get back in line awaiting their next turn.

**Age Appropriate Ages 7-15+.**