



# Defensive Positioning in Baseball

By Coach Bob McCreary

A [BaseballByTheYard.com](http://BaseballByTheYard.com) creation.

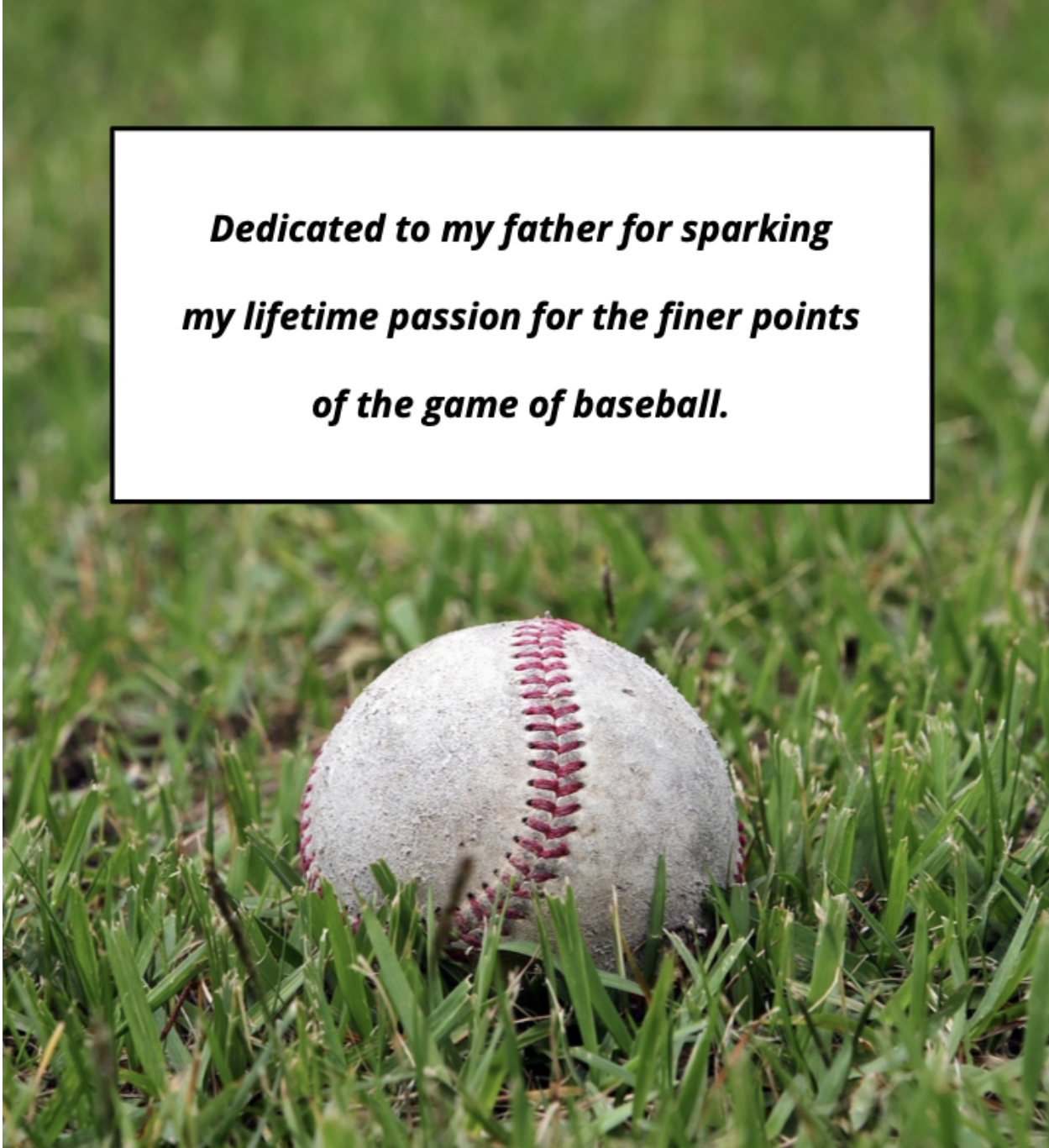
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***Dedicated to my father for sparking  
my lifetime passion for the finer points  
of the game of baseball.***

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*“After having played Division 1 baseball myself, and thinking I knew a lot about the game, in 9 years alongside Coach Bob McCreary, I realized I still had much to learn, and through working with him I learned a ton. I am lucky to have enjoyed considerable success with the teams I am now coaching as well, including one American Legion State title and two High School State titles - teams comprised of many players who have gone on to enjoy great success at the next level. As I have continued as a head coach, I still continuously use Coach McCreary as my own #1 resource for all baseball questions, drills, and situations that arise, and he is the first call I make whenever I need an instructor for a camp. Coach McCreary respects the game, and he truly understands how to communicate it to coaches and players.”*



*Coach Kevin Manero  
Head Coach - North Penn High School  
Lansdale, PA  
4A State Champs - 2013, 2015*



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## About the author

*I'm Coach Bob McCreary and I am the creator of [BaseballByTheYard.com](http://BaseballByTheYard.com), the website that teaches players, coaches, and parents how to play the great game of baseball.*

*To put it mildly, I come from a baseball family. My grandfather was a pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies in the 1930's and my father was a college player and coach. Needless to say, I was learning some pretty high level stuff at an early age. In December, 2010, I started Baseball By The Yard as a way to pass on as much as I could about the game to those who were not as fortunate to be surrounded by the great baseball people I had in my life.*

*I went on to play high school, college, and professional baseball which was a direct consequence of learning how to properly play the game at a young age. After finishing my professional career, I jumped right into teaching and coaching. For the past 20+ years I have coached at the Little League, middle school, high school, college, and professional levels. I have also been involved in numerous camps, clinics, speaking engagements, and private/group lessons for all age groups and ability levels.*

*Having played and coached at just about every level in baseball combined with my 20+ years in education, I think I have a unique skill set that allows me to pass on the game to all age groups in a clear and easily understood manner. I have many comments from readers of my site that I think can attest to that.*

*If you'd like to see more about me and my career in baseball, you can check out the [Coach's Bio](#) page on my website.*

*I hope this eBook provides more usable information than you expected. That is always my goal when I create them. If you think I did, please tell others and direct them to [BaseballByTheYard.com](http://BaseballByTheYard.com).*

*Enjoy the eBook and best of luck wherever your baseball journey leads you!*

*Should you ever have questions or comments about this eBook (or anything else baseball related for that matter!), feel free to contact me at [BaseballByTheYard@gmail.com](mailto:BaseballByTheYard@gmail.com).*

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## The Importance of Defense

In today's game, it seems like the only two things that matter sometimes are throwing 95mph and hitting the ball 400 feet. Although these two things get all the attention, the importance of playing good defense has never changed.

Winning has a lot to do with what the other team does and unfortunately, you cannot control most of what the other team does. You cannot control who the opposing coach decides to pitch that day. You cannot control how that team practices or what their coach teaches or emphasizes. This is why at every level I have coached (youth, middle school, high school, college, and pro) I have preached to my players the importance of focusing on only those things that you have total control over. Things like base running, your attitude, your awareness on the field, and most importantly, your DEFENSE!

Your team's success on the hitting side of the ball will depend largely on how good the other pitcher is on that day. If he has great stuff, you are in for a tough day no matter how good your hitters are. In short, your success in hitting will go up and down like waves depending on the other team's decisions. This is why paying most of your attention to the parts of the game that you have control over is so important. Paying attention to your pitchers throwing strikes, your base running, and your overall defense will enable you to keep the score of the game close enough where your team will not have to score ten runs or more to win.

If you coach at the younger levels, half the battle on defense is getting your players to be in the right spot at the right time. Knowing where to be on the field at all times can also overcome a lot of deficiencies in talent. Things like pitchers breaking towards first base on every ball hit to their left. Like middle infielders lining up properly in the outfield on a double relay. Like a first baseman getting to the mound area when lining up a centerfielder's throw to home plate. Like a left fielder moving towards third base to back up a throw coming from right field. All these things require frequent practice, reps, and attention to detail. Unfortunately, many youth practices consist of hitting in the cage and pitching in the bullpen. To many, defense is treated as an afterthought. This not only hurts



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a team's ability to consistently win, it also severely limits a player's ability to continue playing as they get older and transition onto the larger size fields.

After the youth levels, usually around 13 years old, any weaknesses a player has gets exposed. Players who physically mature faster as young kids compared to others also find that the other players are now starting to catch up. The big, slow, powerful little leaguers that dominated at age 10 start to find that their success no longer translates as well to the larger field. In fact, many are out of the game by age 14 because they never learned how to play the game correctly, especially on the defensive side of the ball. Their hitting suffers because the pitching improves and on top of that, they now have no position on defense since they never placed any value on practicing that part of the game. A downgrade in hitting, no position on the field where they are not a liability, and no knowledge of how to run the bases. Put all that together and the player is out of baseball before they even get to high school.

This is a big reason why I wrote this book.

Ultimately, a player's value on defense (as a pitcher or fielder) will usually determine how far the player goes. One might argue with this by saying, *"If you can hit, a team will always find a spot for you in the line-up."* However, there is no argument that there are 9 players on defense and only one designated hitter. Also keep in mind that every premiere Major League designated hitter - David Ortiz, Edgar Martinez, Jim Thome, Harold Baines, Frank Thomas, etc. - entered the big leagues as a position player and then gradually moved into the DH role. Defense may not have been their strength but they had to be "good enough" on the defensive side of the ball to be considered a Major League defender.

I am hoping this book will result in more players being able to continue playing the game of baseball. However, that can only happen if they start learning the information in this eBook at an earlier age. If we wait until they get to the big fields, the game will start to squeeze them out.

Let's do what we can do to change that.

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## **Little League vs Regulation field dimensions**

I said earlier that any deficiencies a player has starts to get exposed on the larger fields. As kids get older, the game gets faster and the distances of the game grow significantly. Any problems with footwork, arm strength, throwing mechanics, and/or knowing where to be on the field in every situation will greatly diminish a player's ability to succeed. For example, a 12 year old Little League shortstop's longest throw to first base may be in the area of 90 feet. One year later as a 13 year old, that throw all of a sudden can become a 120 foot throw. This increase is also the case for every other position on the field. This is why it becomes so important for players to know exactly where to be on the field in each situation. The proper location minimizes the distances of all their throws. It also places teammates in better locations to share in the responsibilities of getting a ball from Point A to Point B in the shortest amount of time possible. This attention to detail and teamwork allow players to keep up with the increased speed and distances of the game and at the same time give their bodies precious time to catch up and grow with the game.

## **Defensive Positioning**

A team on defense that knows exactly where to be can succeed even in situations where none of them have above average abilities. They work together as a team and end up minimizing any of those individual deficiencies.

This defensive teamwork does not just appear overnight. It requires a lot of practice and attention to detail. It also requires a commitment on the part of coaches to demand that their players pay more attention to this side of the game. At every level, my players quickly realized that this side of the game was not at all optional when it came to their level of focus and attention. The focus and attention needed was mandatory. If they didn't have it, they didn't play.

The defensive scenarios that are presented in this book can apply to any level of the game with only a couple of exceptions. A standard Little League that has an outfield fence will

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usually not require the middle infielders (shortstop and second baseman) to do a “double relay” as shown in a few of the diagrams. This is because of two main reasons. 1) the throwing distances are shorter on the smaller fields and, 2) there will usually not be enough time for the middle infielders to get into the double relay position since outfielders will be getting to the ball (and getting rid of it) much more quickly than on a larger, regulation size field.

That being said, any field that does not have an outfield fence might require middle infielders to do a double relay if the ball is hit far enough beyond the outfielders. Knowing this, it is not a waste of time to start teaching this prior to players reaching the level where regulation size fields are the norm.

Each situation presented in the field diagrams will show where all players on the field need to be. The “Three B’s” on defense are certainly in effect during each play. The “Three B’s” refer to the three different locations every player on the field needs to be moving towards depending on their role. On every play, all nine players are either moving to the **B**all, to a **B**ase, or to a **B**ack-up area. There is always a place to be on every defensive play. Standing still and not moving somewhere is *NEVER* an option. Players not directly involved should also be looking to see if all the base runners touch the bases.

Nuances of the play, possible exceptions, and other details are presented as needed under each diagram.

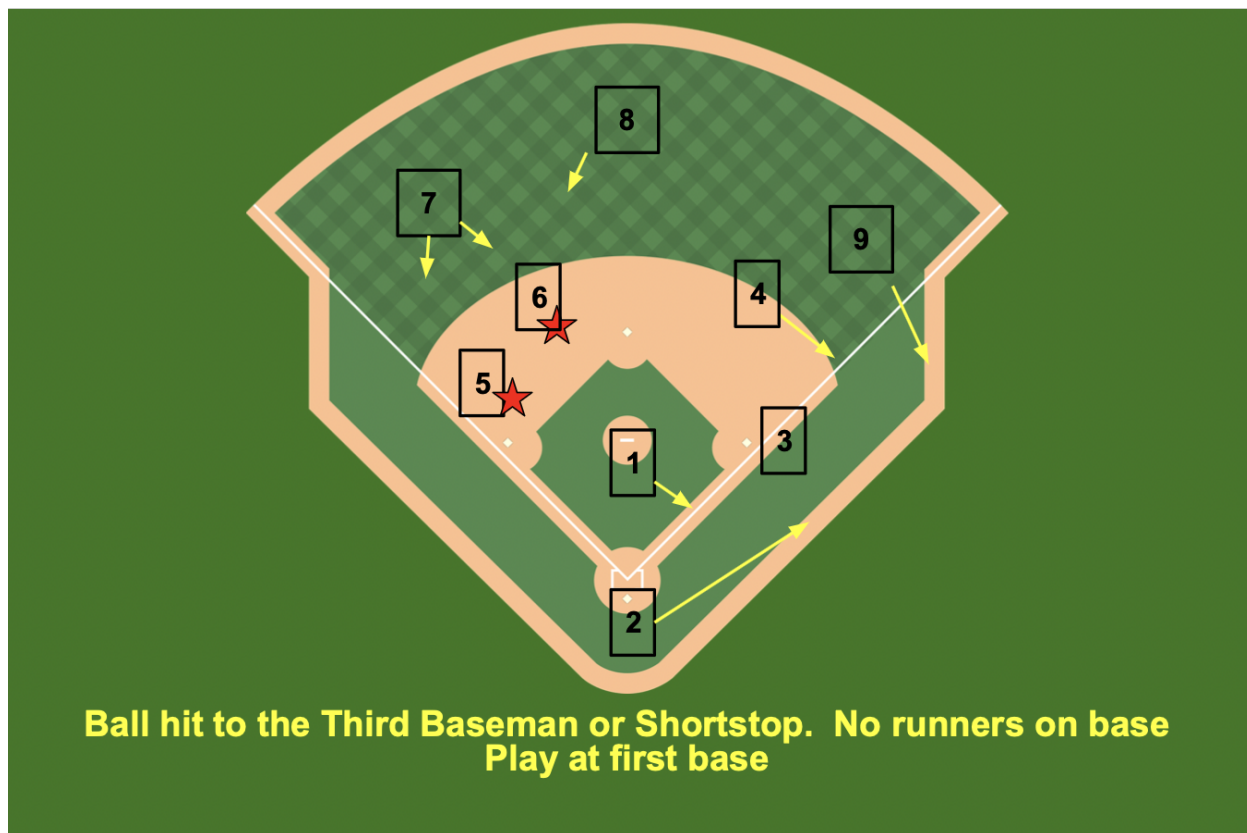
Later pages of this book dig deeper into some of the many finer points related to these scenarios. I am hoping that all this information not only improves your playing or coaching knowledge but also sparks an interest on your part to seek out additional finer points of the game. I created the *Baseball By The Yard* website to be a hub for that type of information.

**Note: To see the videos, click the image and a new page will open to see the content.**

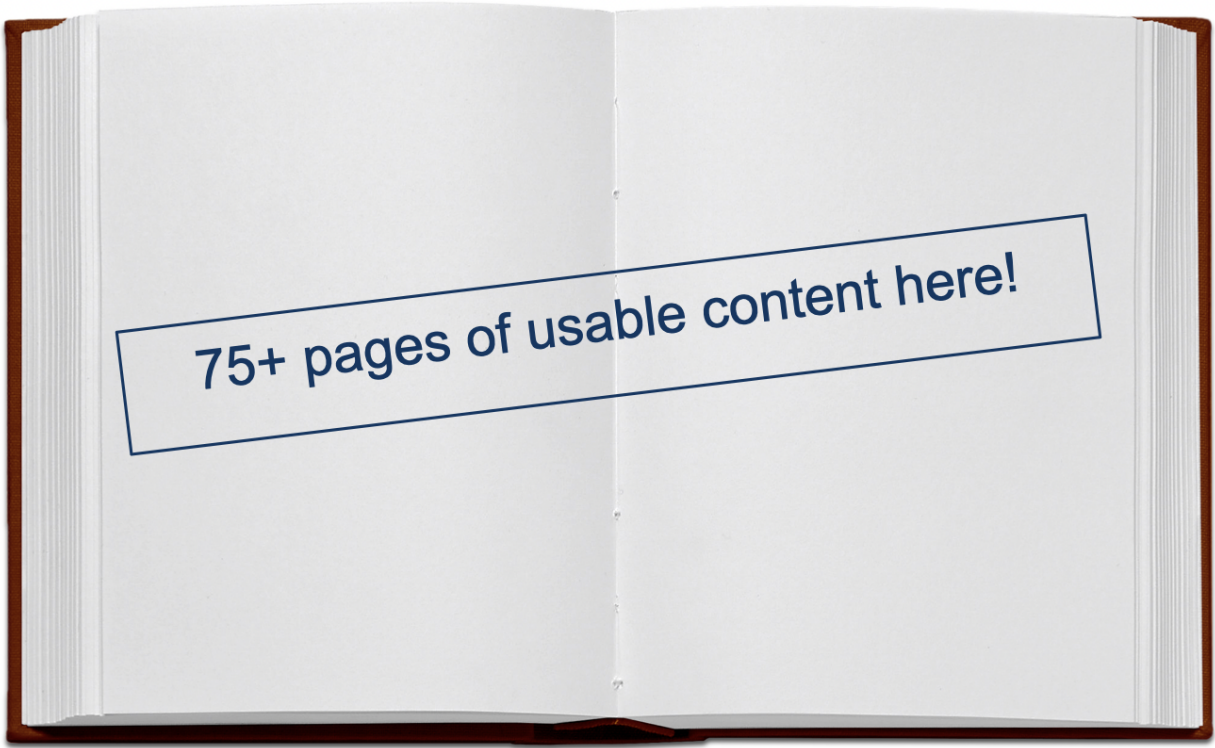
Best of luck on your baseball journey! I hope all the content I provide in this book, on my website, and in my podcasts helps to make that journey a little easier.

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## Infield plays to First Base



On this basic ground ball play to either the third baseman or shortstop, the players not directly involved are moving into a position to address a bad throw that goes past the first baseman or deflects away from him. After his initial reaction to follow the ball off the bat, the second baseman should move a few steps towards the first base foul line in case they are needed to track down a bad throw or deflection. The right fielder immediately moves towards that area as well. The pitcher should move towards the first base foul line as well for the same reason. The catcher should immediately sprint towards the “out of play” area behind first base (LINK?). After initially moving to backup on the ground ball, the left fielder and center fielder continue to drift towards the infield in case they might be needed to cover a base or get involved in a possible rundown.

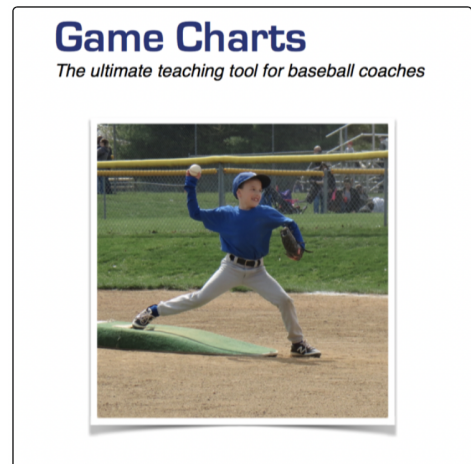


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## Other Baseball By The Yard eBooks and Seminars

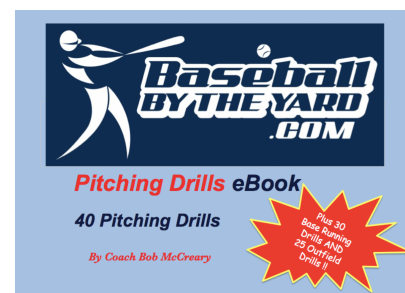
### [Game Charts: The ultimate tool for baseball coaches](#)

Game Charts are the single best way to improve your players' approach to the game of baseball. They are perfect for coaches, parents, and players (pitchers, catchers, and hitters!) who need to take their games to the next level. Analyze them with players of any age and watch them improve in the mental aspects of the game. Coach Bob McCreary, the founder of BaseballByTheYard.com, takes viewers on an extensive journey into the "game within the game." A FREE 32-page eBook to accompany the seminar is included as well. This course has seven modules and just under three hours of content that is broken up for Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. No matter what level you find yourself on, Game Charts can pave the way for better thinking on the field!



### [95 baseball drills bundle: Pitching, Base running, and Outfield](#)

This bundle gets you access to 40 Pitching Drills. I also throw in ABSOLUTELY FREE 30 Base Running Drills and 25 Outfield Drills. That's 95 total! That's about 10 cents a drill! Each document gives you written (pdf form) information on the name of the drill, what the drill works on, and specific directions on how to do each drill. You can search online for hours to get all this. Save time and get the bundle today! Just click "I want this!" and go from there.



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## [Time to hit! 50 drills to improve hitting](#)

The *TIME TO HIT!* eBook describes 50 drills (plus 10 bonus drills = 60 drills!) that players and coaches can incorporate into their training and practices. Drills are ranked from 1 to 5 stars in terms of effectiveness and ease of doing. Each drill provides detailed information on what it specifically is designed to improve as well as instructions on how to perform the drill! A must-have for coaches and players who want to take their training and practices to a higher level!



## [50 infield drills for players and teams](#)

40 drills (plus 10 bonus drills = 50!) are included in this eBook from Baseball By The Yard. Each drill provides a detailed description of how to do the drill and what fundamentals the drill targets. All 50 drills are indexed by number and by the fundamentals it targets for easy referencing! Drills for every ability level - from beginners to the pros - are provided.



## [Off-season pitching guide: A four-week plan for developing pitchers for game #1](#)

This eBook provides an expanded look at a 4-week template designed to help coaches prepare their pitchers for the first game of the season. It includes 10 detailed goals of the program, a step-by-step procedure for how to complete the program and the pitching templates, and copies of four blank templates used for the program. Gradually build arm strength and develop a better mindset for successful pitching right from the first pitch of the season! Get the eBook and find out how!



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## [The guide to help prepare for baseball season](#)

This 87 page eBook is a compilation of articles, videos, and other resources from *BaseballByTheYard.com* for players and coaches who wish to maximize their off-season baseball workouts to reach peak physical and mental performance next season. Content relevant to the off-season months in the areas of fitness, pitching, fielding, outfield, hitting, catching, throwing, and base running are all covered. Coach Bob McCreary, the founder of *BaseballByTheYard.com*, has played and coached at every level from Little League to professional baseball and uses his vast experience to teach others how to better play and coach the great game of baseball.



### **The Off-Season**

The guide to help prepare for  
baseball season

## **Final Thoughts**

As you can see, baseball involves quite a few moving parts. The success of any team, and that of the individual players, will ultimately depend on their knowledge and execution of all the things contained in this book.

Due to the sheer amount of information, it becomes imperative that these duties, responsibilities, and tips be presented to young players as soon as possible. Unfortunately, many talented athletes who play baseball are never exposed to this information and suffer the negative consequences as they progress through the game of baseball.

Too many players are squeezed out of the game because they are unable to keep up with the pace of the game at each successive level. Players who learn this information earlier will have the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge of the game which often allows them to continue playing. It is true that very few players will reach the college and/or professional levels but hopefully, if we focus more attention on this side of the game, players can maximize their potential and play as far as their talents will allow.



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I appreciate the time and effort you put into the game as a player or coach. It is a very hard game. Being “good” as a player or coach requires a tremendous amount of work, dedication, and attention to detail, most of which will not get noticed by others. I have been fortunate to have success in both areas and know all too well the time and frustrations involved with playing and coaching the game of baseball.

I hope that you found the information in this book useful. If you are a player, try your best to carry this information out onto the field with you during practices and games. Over time, if you are patient, keep working hard, and start paying more attention to these details, I think you will find that this information will cause your game to improve in a variety of ways. If you coach the game, I hope this information will help to make your teams more competitive, even during times when the opponent is more talented.

A 95 mph fastball or a 400 foot home run might get all the attention and glory but it is the information contained in this book that often translates best when it comes to consistently winning over time.

If you have comments, questions, and/or suggestions, please do not hesitate to use the email linked below.

Thank you for reading and best of luck on your baseball journey!

**Coach Bob McCreary**

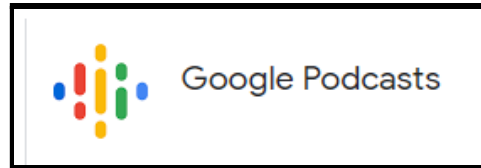
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