



Intermediate League Team Playbook

2024

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"The Metro Way"

Our Principles:

Team First

Metro players are not bigger or more important than the team. A team-first player always gives their all, but puts the priorities and goals of the team ahead of his or her own.

Hustle, always

Hustle on the field. Hustle off the field. Hustle during practice and while warming up. There's no excuse not to hustle, always.

Always give YOUR best

You don't need to be THE best, you need to give YOUR best effort. Baseball is a hard game – your level of effort and your attitude are the two most important things you can actually control.

Respect

Metro players are respectful to each other, their opposition, the coaches and the officials – on and off the field. Regardless of the result, after every game we shake hands and offer a sincere, "Thank you" to the other team. Then we shake the hands of the umpires and thank them. Then we thank the scorers.

We do all of this with class and sportsmanship. Before we leave any training or game, we shake the hands of the coaches and thank them. Always.

Respect for the game

We are also respectful of the game. This means never cheating, never wearing the uniform the wrong way, never using foul language, throwing equipment, arguing with umpires, showing up another player, not hustling, being selfish, or not being a team player.

We are always striving to improve

Metro players have a growth mindset. We are always learning and always working toward a goal. We know we can always get better and we use every opportunity to improve ourselves and help the team.

We are teammates

We win together. We lose together. We look out for each other. We pick each other up when we're down and we celebrate our successes together. We are not Pine Hills, or Carina, or Windsor or All Stars. We are all Metro and we've got each other's backs.

How others see Metro

We are the program, the team, players and parents who set the example by doing things the right way. We succeed through hard work, positive attitude, class and sportsmanship. We strive not only to win, but to grow mentally, emotionally and physically as young men and women.

Activation (warm-up) routine

These activities are designed to prepare for baseball activity and, more importantly, help improve movement skills over the long term. It is recommended that they are done before commencing any other activity (eg, throwing). Locomotion activities should be conducted over the indicated distance, which is appropriate to the developmental level of the players.

U12 & U14 Distance for each movement: 15-25m

Developmental movements:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1. a. Side shuffle with arm swing | out |
| b. Side shuffle with arm swing | back |
| 2. 360s (one in each direction) | out |
| 3. Ground touches | back |
| 4. Bear crawl | out |
| 5. Goanna (Spiderman) crawl | back |
| 6. Crab crawl | out |
| 7. Bunny hop | back |
| 8. Lunge walk ("toe over knee") | out |
| 9. High knees (and heels) | back |
| 10. Scissor run | out |
| 11. A-skip | back |

Speed work:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Beach sprint starts | 4x10m (mixed) |
| 2. 3-point starts | 2-3x15m |

Upper body limbering:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Scapula protraction & retraction | 10 |
| 2. Back slaps | 10 each side |
| 3. Woodchoppers to hip | 5 each side |
| 4. Woodchoppers to knee | 5 each side |
| 5. Woodchoppers to ankle | 5 each side |
| 6. Goalposts | 10 |

Throwing Program

1. Throwing programs should increase in volume, intensity, and frequency over a gradual period. Sudden increases in any of these variables exposes the player to increased injury risk.
2. These programs are to for the use of those with no niggles or injuries.
3. While working up to longer distances, players should throw at each distance with as little effort as possible
4. When working their way back in, throw hard and as flat as possible
5. Managers may vary the program according to the needs of the team and/or individuals
6. Athlete must remain pain free

Intermediate League:

- 20 throws at 45 feet (<15 meters)
- 20 throws at 60 feet (<20 meters)
- 20 throws at 90 feet (<30 meters)
- 10 throws at 120 feet (<40 meters)
- 10 throws at 60 feet (<20 meters)

Total: 80 throws

Pre-game Infield/Outfield Routine

The purpose of the routine is to establish familiarity with and expertise in the defensive plays that occur most frequently in the game. Players should not rush: the focus should be on making accurate throws and establishing good rhythm, not on being quick. Accuracy and consistency are the priorities; increased speed will naturally come as with repetition.

Outfielders: OFs at CF, coach fungoes flyballs (FB). If available, pitchers can form a line to relay the ball back to the fungo hitter. If no extras are available, OF should aside throw the ball to a safe spot where there is no danger that they will step on a ball.

Infield Routine:

1. Infield in, groundball (GB) tag play at the plate
2. Plays to 1B
 - a. GB on easy side to each IF (include catcher), no return throw from catcher. 1B, starting behind the runner, fields his or her GB then throws to 2B, then covers 1B for return throw.
 - b. GB on backhand side to each IF (include catcher). After getting the ball back from 1B, catcher throws to the base where the ball was originally hit; ball is then returned "around the horn". 1B, starting behind the runner, fields his or her GB then throws to 2B, then covers 1B for return throw.
3. Double plays
 - a. GB on easy side to each IF (this will be on the base side for 2B). Include catcher. No return throw from catcher. 1B, starting in "holding the runner position", fields his or her GB then throws to 2B, then covers 1B for return throw.
 - b. GB on longer side to each IF (this will be on the forehand side for 2B – practicing the reverse pivot to make the throw). Include catcher. After getting the ball back from 1B, catcher throws to the base where the ball was originally hit; ball is then returned "around the horn". 1B, starting behind the runner, fields his or her GB then throws to 2B, then covers 1B for return throw.
4. Long throw: each player relocates to a position close to where they would field the ball to make their longest throw to 1B. NB, the purpose is to practice their longest throw, not to have to run to that location, make a difficult grab and then throw.
5. Slow rollers: each fielder receives a weakly hit GB that requires them to come in and throw to 1B on the run. On their turn, 1B fields a bunt and goes to 3B.

Outfield Routine:

(Any throw that has to be cut is thrown to 2B)

1. No runner on base
 - a. GB to the easier side of each OF, throw back in to cutoff at 2B. Ball is returned via 3B.
 - b. GB to the harder side of each OF, one-hop throw back all the way to 2B. Ball is returned via 3B.
2. Runner on 1B
 - a. GB to the easier side of each OF, one-hop throw at cuttable height to 3B. Ball is returned to catcher.
 - b. GB to the harder side of each OF, one-hop throw at cuttable height to 3B. Ball is returned to catcher.
3. Runner on 2B
 - a. GB directly at each OF, one-hop throw at cuttable height to catcher.
4. Runner tagging up on 3B
 - a. FB directly at each OF, one-hop throw to catcher. If the ball cannot be caught, OF is still to play it as if it is a FB.

Catcher's popup (optional):

All players remain on field to catch any wayward flies, but vacate field in an upbeat manner as soon as catcher has caught one.

Responsibilities on Defence

(see attached National Playbook – Cutoffs & Relays)

Fielding:

No matter what position you are playing, you have a responsibility every time the ball is put in play.

1. If the ball is hit in your direction, you must:
 - a. Move to field it, or
 - b. Move to back up the player who is fielding it.
2. If the ball is not hit in your direction, you must:
 - a. Cover a base that a runner may try to advance to, or
 - b. Back up a possible throw to a base.

Pitching:

1. Concentrate on following a routine you have developed to help you consistently pitch at your best. Don't let the situation (e.g., a tight score, an important game, or a good hitter) interfere with your performance. Your job remains the same no matter what the situation.
2. Consistently stay ahead in the count. It's not always easy, but you and your team will have a lot more success if you can do it.
3. Know the situation and what your job is on the next pitch. Thinking about this should be part of your between-pitch routine.
4. Help manage the opposition's running game. While the most important thing is to make good pitches, you can also make it hard for runners to steal:
 - a. Mix up the length of time that you hold your set position.
 - b. Be quick to the plate once you commence your delivery.
 - c. Use your pickoff to keep the runners close to the base.

Responsibilities on Offence

Hitting:

1. Study the pitcher to help yourself prepare for your Plate Appearances
2. Know the situation and what your job is on the next pitch (usually it will be to hit the ball with as much authority as you can)
3. Most times, your job is to hit the ball hard. To give yourself the best chance of doing that:
 - a. Be prepared
 - b. Have a simple plan: "I am hitting this pitch". Once you get in the box, forget about technique and concentrate on seeing the ball well. Nobody can concentrate 100% on two things at once: if you are thinking about your technique as the pitch comes down, you don't have 100% concentration on the ball.
 - c. With this approach, there is only ever one decision to make, and that is, "No". You stop your swing if the pitch is not one to hit.
4. Execute to the best of your ability
5. After your Plate Appearances, assess your performance so that you can do it better or just as well next time:
 - a. Was I ready?
 - b. Did I see the ball?
 - c. Did I get a pitch I can hit?
 - d. Did I put a good swing on the ball?

Baserunning:

1. Know:
 - a. where the ball is (good baserunners always know where the ball is)
 - b. the game situation (inning, score, number of outs)
 - c. whether you are being given a sign
 - d. what your job is on the next pitch
 - e. where the outfielders are and what sort of arm each has
2. Stay in contact with the base while you check out the coach and the outfielders.
3. Keep your eyes on the player with the ball while you take your Primary Lead.
4. Get a good Secondary lead when the pitch is made, reacting quickly:
 - a. stop and get back into a safe zone if the ball reaches the catcher
 - b. advance whenever possible if the ball gets away from the catcher
 - c. accelerate hard if the ball is hit on the ground
 - d. if the ball is hit in the air, "halfway and read". This means move off as far as you can safely do, so that you can get back to your base if it's caught, or advance if it's not
 - e. break back to the base quickly on a line drive
5. Run hard every time until somebody (e.g., a player who may get you out, or your coach) stops you
6. Avoid collisions with any fielders: you will usually be called out
7. Slide hard and safely to the base on any close play

In-game Preparation

Baseball is not a continuous game. It is a series of high-speed contests separated by 15-30 seconds of preparation time. These contests are then grouped into innings, which give you more preparation time. If you master those preparation times, you give yourself a big advantage and become a much better player. Whether on defence, pitching, hitting or baserunning, there are a couple of areas in which you should make sure you are prepared:

Pitching

Physically:

- Do I feel completely healthy, or have I got some niggles? Big injuries often start out as small ones. You have to communicate with your coaches if you are worried that you may be injuring yourself (they are not mind readers!).
- Have you got a routine you use to physically prepare for each game, each inning, each pitch? Are you using it well?
- Are you maintaining good body language, acting like you know what you are doing (even if you don't!)

Mentally:

- What happened on the last pitch, with the last hitter or in the last inning and how does that effect my role on this pitch?
- Have I got a mental routine (pre-game, between innings and between pitches) to help me get focused and stay that way for every pitch? That might include:
 - a quick replay of the previous pitch,
 - mentally rehearsing what you are going to do with the next pitch,
 - communicating with your catcher
 - mentally rehearsing the pitch again
 - shifting your focus out of you head and onto the target at the right time
 - executing the pitch

On defence:

Physically:

- Am I in the right best location? That means, am I standing where I can cover what's most likely to happen next? Sometimes they will hit it somewhere else, but there's nothing you can do about that (except learn from it). You can't cover everything!
- Am I putting myself in an athletic posture so that I am 100% ready to go in any direction as the pitch reaches the contact zone?
- Have I got myself to the right level of excitement – not so over-the-top that I can hardly breathe but not so lazy that I am going to react slowly?

Mentally:

- What happened on the last pitch, and how does that effect my role on this pitch?
- Do I know the current game situation: inning, outs, score, our strategy, the opposition hitter, the baserunners, and what they are trying to do?
- Are my eyes and attention focused on the contact zone as I get into my "live feet" posture?
- Am I using a routine to prepare myself for every pitch?

Hitting:**Physically:**

- Am I staying awake to a possible foul ball when on deck? Have I got my bat, my gloves, my guards, my helmet where they should be?
- Did I get myself loose and ready to hit? Am I watching the pitcher and every pitch in flight so that I get to know his or her delivery and what his or her pitches do?
- Am I getting to a good launch position every pitch, and watching the ball all the way (right into the catcher's glove, if I don't swing).

Mentally:

- What happened on the last pitch, or with the last hitter and how does that effect my role on this pitch?
- Do I know the current game situation: inning, outs, score, our strategy, the opposition hitter, the baserunners, and what they are trying to do? Has the coach given me a sign?
- Am I using a mental routine every pitch to make sure that I am ready to hit and 100% focused on the ball as the pitch is made? That might include:
 - a quick replay of the previous pitch,
 - mentally rehearsing what you are going to do with the next pitch,
 - then shifting your focus out of you head and onto the baseball at the right time.

Baserunning:**Physically:**

- Am I picking up the coach's signs with my foot on the base? Am I focused on the pitcher when I get off the base?
- Am I getting a good primary lead? A balanced secondary? Am I getting back into a safe zone if the ball is not hit?
- Am I 100% ready to react as the ball crosses the plate?

Mentally:

- What is the current situation of the game? What happened on the last pitch, in the last inning, or with the last hitter and how does that effect my role on this pitch?
- Should I be extra aggressive, just run the percentages, or be extra cautious in trying for the extra base?
- How good is the pitcher's pickoff? What about the catcher's arm? Does either or both like to throw to bases, or are they tentative?

Pitching Strategy

Basic Pitching Strategy. Master this before you try to get too fancy.

1. Box until in front: Losers give the hitters the edge by working from behind too often. Be methodical and economical by staying in front all day: hitters hate always being behind the pitcher.
2. Half-Box when one in front: Work inside or outside only when in front (staying low in zone).
3. Go back to full box if the count evens up: Make it a golden rule to get back in front any time the count is even (and certainly when you are behind).
4. Tilt when two in front: Go hard “up-and-in” on 0-2: anxious hitter may swing (striking out or getting jammed); even a good hitter will hang off the plate a little afterwards, setting up a good pitch “low-and-away”.
5. You must learn to throw inside! Failure to do so means that the hitter can focus %100 on the strike zone. By developing in the hitter’s mind a concern about the possibility of being hurt, you lesson his concentration.

Variations to Standard Game Strategy:

1. Full box with a variety pitch when one in front: If you have a pitch which you like to use but which you can’t be sure of throwing for a strike, use the whole box as your target, even if you are in front. The crucial thing generally is to keep it down in the zone.
2. Reverse tilt when two in front: Throw a pitch which just misses the low-outside edge, then come high and inside hard.
3. Over-the-falls when in front: A very low, big-breaking curve (or even an effective, low changeup) will sometimes get a cheap strike on an anxious hitter.

Generally speaking:

- “Hard stuff inside, slow stuff away” is the key to upsetting a hitter’s timing.
- The fastball is the most important pitch in the game: if you can throw it to different locations at will, it becomes more than one pitch.
- Changeups are more effective early in the count when the hitter is aggressive: you will get lots of first pitch popups and groundballs if you can throw it for a strike. If you do miss, it makes the fastball you may want to come back with look a bit faster.
- It’s worth remembering that, in minor league baseball in the US, a pitcher who averages 13 pitches or less for a game wins 90% of the time. A pitcher averaging 15 or more loses 90% of the time. Be economical!

Starting pitcher's Warmup Routine

About one hour before start time, or even earlier in the day, it is a good idea to take a light jog, or even a walk, then do a gentle, overall stretching session. This is not part of your actual warmup, but does begin the loosening process, and help you to get rid of any tension spots.

Once you get to the park, you will be under the direction of the pitching coach. If we are home team, you need to commence the warmup 25 minutes prior to game time; if we are away, 20 minutes should do it.

Jog 3-4 minutes

Pitcher's stretching routine (this may be somewhat personalised)

4-6 easy 30m sprints

Play catch, stretching your arm out and getting well warmed up before heading to the bullpen.

Move to bullpen, starting on the mound with the catcher about 50 feet away: throw downhill from the start. At this stage, you are concentrating on getting the feel for good mechanics.

As you get warm, catcher moves back behind plate to commence sequence. Use the Location Bullpen routine contained in this manual.

Time your warmup to finish 5 minutes prior to start time if we are home team. This will allow you time for a short rest and a drink before starting. If we are visitors, you can throw right up to game time (unless you are hitting early in the line-up).

The important thing is to establish a definite routine for yourself which allows you to gradually get your body ready to go AND work each of your pitches, finishing off with 5-10 pitches with your best stuff.

Location Bullpen Routines

Location Bullpen Routine #1

After doing the full set of warm-up drills (including warming up the arm), move to bullpen and take 5-6 throws with catcher out in front of home plate. Catcher then moves back behind plate to commence sequence. Right-handers imagine throwing to right-handed hitter; left-handers to a left-handed hitter (you may occasionally reverse these).

Fastballs	5 low middle (from windup) 5 low middle (from set)
3 x "Tilt"	1 at hitter's hands, then 1 low on outside half of plate
Change-up	3 low middle
3 x "Tilt"	1 fastball at hitter's hand, then change-up low middle
Curve	Catcher moves out in front and to outside of plate 3 easy curves Catcher moves back behind plate 3 curves, low outside
3 x "Tilt"	Fastball at hitter's hands, curve low on outside half of plate

(Same sequence- 3 pitches, then Tilt with fastball, may be added in for slider)

"Full count"	5 pitches – "MUST be strikes" Fastball, curve, fastball, change-up, fastball
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Location Bullpen Routine #2

For working on becoming a *“Command Pitcher”*: (make sure you classify yourself as a “pitcher” first; that is, you have mastered Routine #1)

Fastballs 3 low away, 3 low middle, 3 low in (from windup)
 2 low away, 2 low middle, 2 low in (from set)
 1 low away, 1 low middle, 1 low in (from set)

Rest 3-5 min

Catcher in front of plate Fastball low in, curve low away, Fastball low in, curve low away (from windup)
 Fastball low in, curve low away, Fastball low in, curve low away (from set)
 Catcher back repeat above
 Fastball “Tilt” 1 at hitter’s hands, then 1 low on outside half of plate (from windup)
 1 at hitter’s hands, then 1 low on outside half of plate (from set)

Rest 3-5 min

Curves 2 low away (from windup)
 2 low away (from set)
 Curve “Tilt” Fastball at hitter’s hands, then curve low on outside half of plate (from windup)
 Fastball at hitter’s hands, then curve low on outside half of plate (from set)
 Change-up 3 low middle
 Change-up “Tilt” Fastball at hitter’s hand, then change-up low middle (from windup)
 Fastball at hitter’s hand, then change-up low middle (from set)

Sequence Windup: Get ahead, Change-up, Up and In, Curve; vs 1 RH Hitter, then 1 LH Hitter
 Set: Get ahead, Change-up, Up and In, Curve; vs 1 RH Hitter, then 1 LH Hitter

Pitching Terms and Definitions:

Pitcher	Athlete who can throw at least two pitches for strikes at least 75% of the time	Control Pitcher	Athlete who can throw at least two pitches in the box at least 75% of the time
	Command Pitcher	Athlete who can throw at least two pitches through both the inside and outside half -box at least 75% of the time	
Box	The bottom third of the zone, full width of plate. The standard target area when even or behind in count.	Half-Box	Bottom third of zone, half width of plate. The standard target when one pitch ahead in count
Tilt	A combination of pitches: fastball at hitter's hands followed by some pitch low and away. Standard strategy on 0-2 count.	Reverse Tilt	Reverse of above: low and away followed by fastball at hands. Option on 0-2 count

NB: Velocity is extremely valuable: continue to work on developing it. But also work on becoming firstly a "pitcher", then a "control pitcher", and finally a "command pitcher"

Mechanics and Recovery Bullpen Routines

The Mechanics Bullpen will normally be done under the guidance of a Pitching Coach, but you may occasionally do one yourself. Keep in mind that the purpose is to refine your technique and this may lead to poorer performance in the short term. If short term performance is a priority it may be best to avoid too much work on mechanics.

The Recovery Bullpen is a light pen done to maintain the feel of pitching the day prior to and/or 2 or 3 days after an outing. It should be done after running and stretching, and should total no more than 30-35 pitches, just throwing a few of each pitch.

Pitchers' "Between outings" maintenance

Outing	Day	Running	Throwing	Other
Major	0 (immediately after pitching)	6 foul poles (75% pace) 6 x 30m sprints	Light throw to cool down	Stretch, and control exercises
	1	30 minutes long slow distance		Stretch, and control exercises
	2	Team warmup running, 10 x 100m sprints	Recovery Bullpen (30-40 thrown easy)	Stretch, and control exercises
	3	Team warmup running	Easy long-toss	Stretch, and control exercises
	4	Game		
Substantial	0	6 foul poles (75% pace) 6 x 30m sprints	Light throw to cool down	Stretch, and control exercises
	1	Team warmup running 10 x 60m sprints,	Easy Long Toss	Stretch, and control exercises
	2	Team warmup running	Play catch, using your pitches	Stretch, and control exercises
	3	Game		
Minor	0	10 foul poles (75% pace)	Light throw to cool down	Stretch, and control exercises
	1	Team warmup running	Play catch, using your pitches	Stretch, and control exercises