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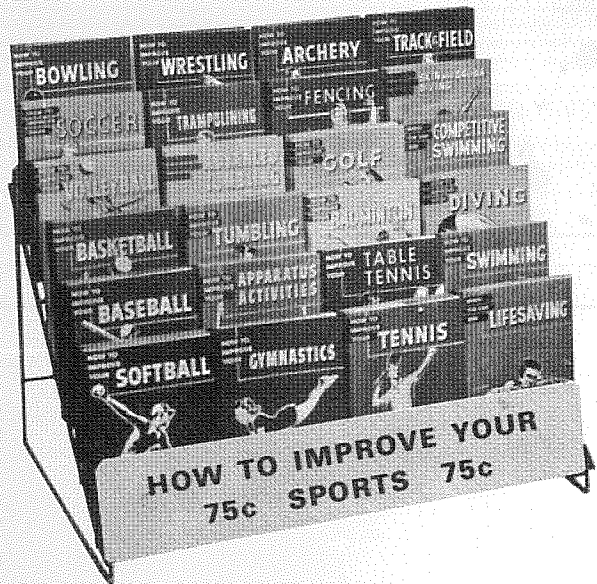
SOFTBALL



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OF ATHLETICS, RECREATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR

SOFTBALL

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A non-profit organization devoted to the
advancement of athletics, physical education
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SOFTBALL

Foreword

"How To Improve Your Softball" is but one item in a comprehensive list of sports instruction aids made available on a non-profit basis by The Athletic Institute. The photographic material in this book has been reproduced in total from The Athletic Institute's sound, color slidefilm, "Softball." This book and the slidefilm are parts of a program designed to bring the many benefits of athletics, physical education and recreation to everyone.

The Athletic Institute is a non-profit organization devoted to the advancement of athletics, physical education and recreation. It functions on the premise that athletics and recreation bring benefits of inestimable value to the individual and to the community.

The nature and scope of the many Institute programs are determined by an advisory committee of selected persons noted for their outstanding knowledge, experience and ability in the fields of athletics, physical education and recreation.

It is their hope, and the hope of the Institute, that through this book, the reader will become a better softball player, skilled in the fundamentals of this fine activity. Knowledge, and the practice necessary to mold knowledge into actual ability, are the keys to real enjoyment of playing softball.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

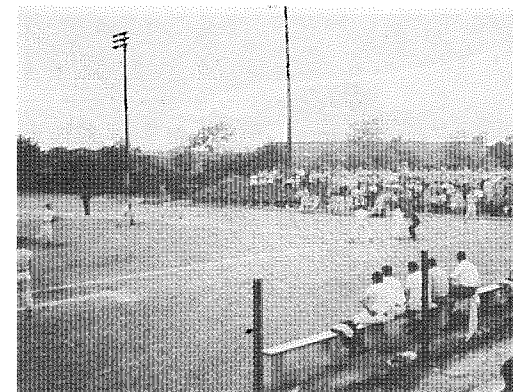
Unit One	— <i>The Game</i>	Page 5
	— <i>The Game's History</i>	Page 5
	— <i>The Game Today</i>	Page 8
Unit Two	— <i>Throwing</i>	Page 17
	— <i>The Overhand Throw</i>	Page 18
	— <i>The Sidearm Throw</i>	Page 27
	— <i>The Underhand Throw</i>	Page 28
Unit Three	— <i>Fielding</i>	Page 29
	— <i>Fielding Ground Balls</i>	Page 30
	— <i>Fielding Fly Balls</i>	Page 36
Unit Four	— <i>Hitting</i>	Page 40
	— <i>Bunting</i>	Page 49
Unit Five	— <i>Base Running</i>	Page 53
	— <i>Sliding</i>	Page 58
Unit Six	— <i>Pitching</i>	Page 64
	— <i>The Windmill Delivery</i>	Page 68
	— <i>The Slingshot Delivery</i>	Page 71
	— <i>Types of Pitches</i>	Page 74
Unit Seven	— <i>Base Play</i>	Page 77
Unit Eight	— <i>Defensive Team Play</i>	Page 89
	<i>Infield and Home Plate Diagrams</i>	Page 99
	<i>Common Softball Terms</i>	Page 101
	<i>Additional Facts on Hitting, Pitching, and the Defensive Positions in Softball</i>	Page 113
	— <i>Softball Tips</i>	Page 113
	— <i>Hitting</i>	Page 113
	— <i>Pitching</i>	Page 114
	— <i>Catcher</i>	Page 114
	— <i>First Base</i>	Page 115
	— <i>Second Base</i>	Page 116
	— <i>Third Base</i>	Page 116
	— <i>Short Stop</i>	Page 117
	— <i>Outfield</i>	Page 118
Bibliography		Page 119

UNIT ONE

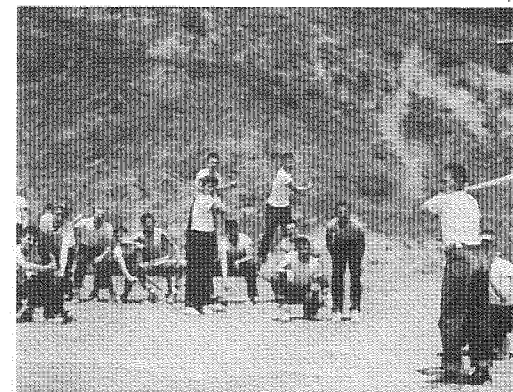
IMPROVE YOUR

GAME

No other team sport has enjoyed such phenomenal growth as softball. In a comparatively few years, softball has developed from a novelty into a national institution.



No other major sport has remained so completely an amateur game. Softball started as a game to be played for fun, and it's stayed that way.



No other major sport is so well suited for **women** to play. Softball is just as good a game for girls as it is for boys.

And what's a picnic without a fathers' and sons' softball game? Softball is a game for all ages—a game to learn when you're young, and to keep on enjoying when you're older. Yes...

... Softball has become a truly national pastime... in many ways even more so than baseball. Take the number of participants. Last year...

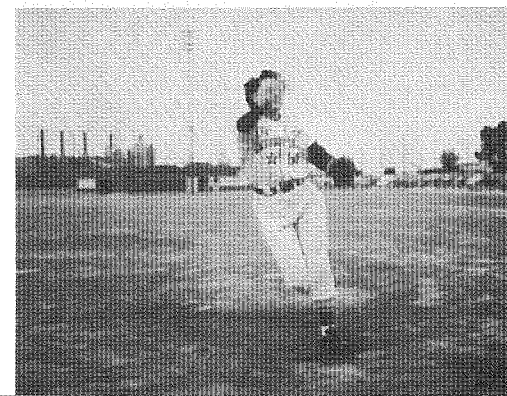
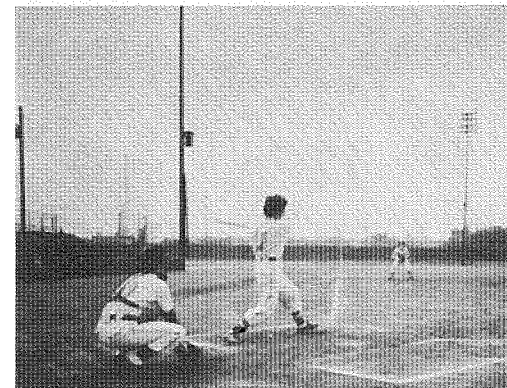
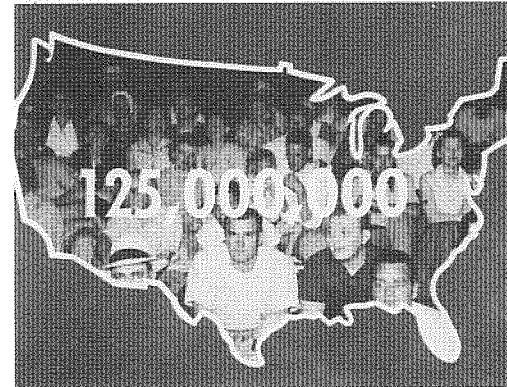
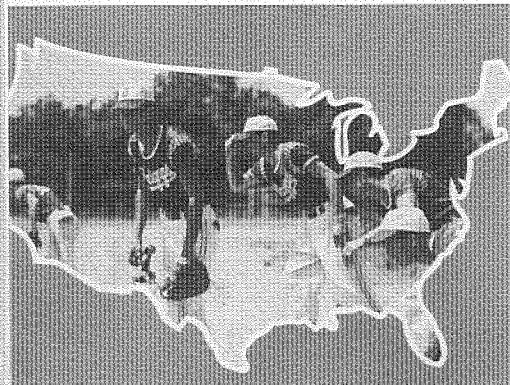
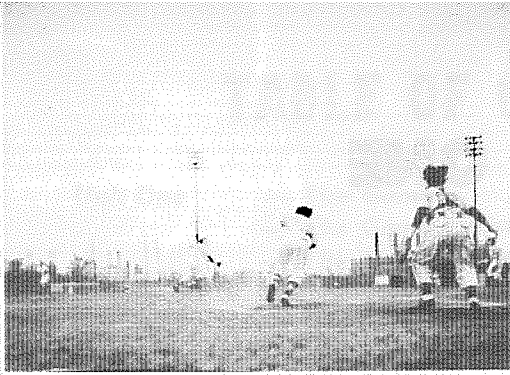
... an estimated 3,750,000 players belonged to more than 250,000 teams registered with the Amateur Softball Association. That doesn't include countless thousands of others who played with teams that aren't affiliated with the A. S. A.

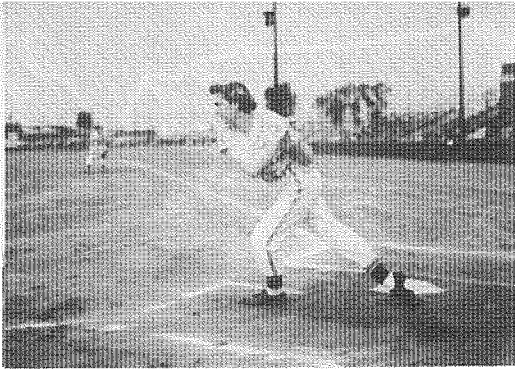
Or take the number of spectators. Softball is such a great game to watch, that, last year...

... nationwide attendance was estimated at 125,000,000. There are many reasons for the steadily growing popularity of softball.

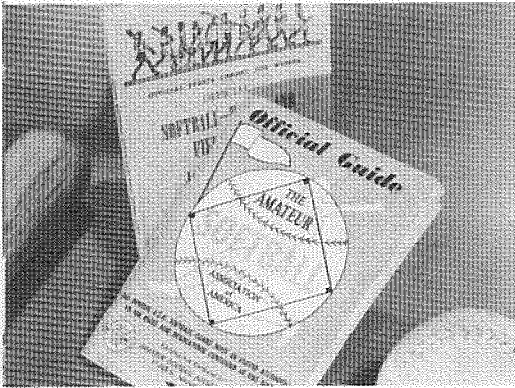
The game itself has improved greatly since it was first played indoors back in the 1890's. Changes in rules have kept pace with the increasing skill of the players.

The pitcher still must deliver the ball with an underhand motion. But other than that, there's very little resemblance between modern softball and the early games of indoor-outdoor, kitten ball, or mush ball, as it was called in different parts of the country.

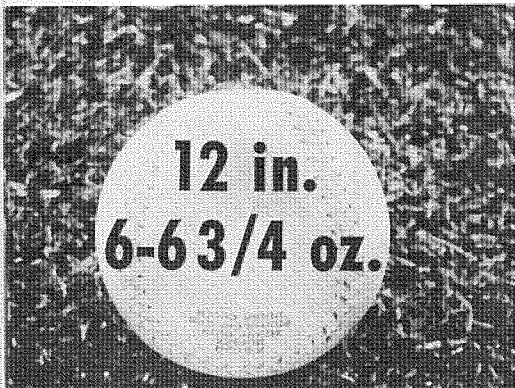




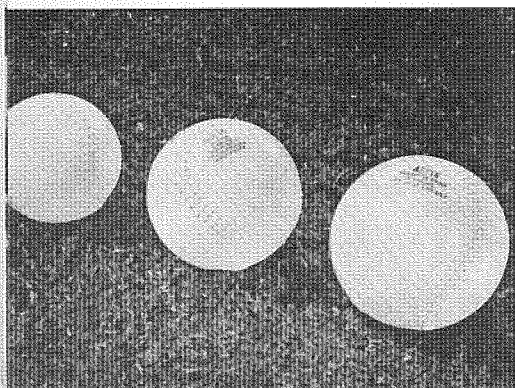
Today the game of softball is the same throughout the country, with uniform rules and playing conditions. Up until 1934, there were almost as many sets of rules as there were leagues. But all that was changed when a permanent Joint Rules Committee on Softball was organized.



The official rules of softball, revised annually, are published by the Amateur Softball Association and the National Section on Girls' and Women's Sports. Under these rules . . .

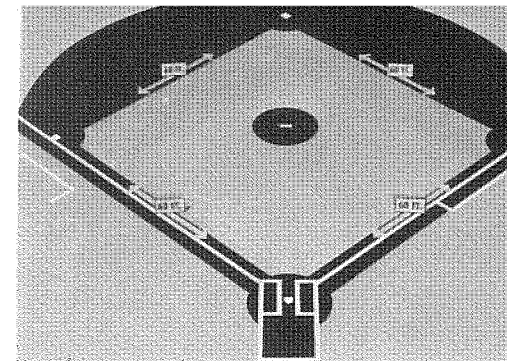


. . . the official softball is a 12-inch ball . . . that is, 12 inches around. And it must weigh between six and six-and-three-quarters ounces.

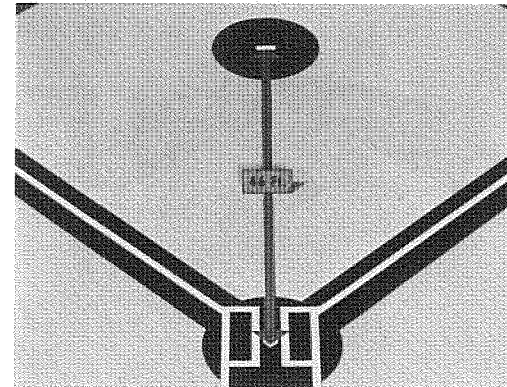


Besides the 12-inch ball, softball is sometimes played with 14 and 16-inch balls, with slightly different rules. The larger balls, softened up, can be used for exciting indoor games, with the rules depending on available space.

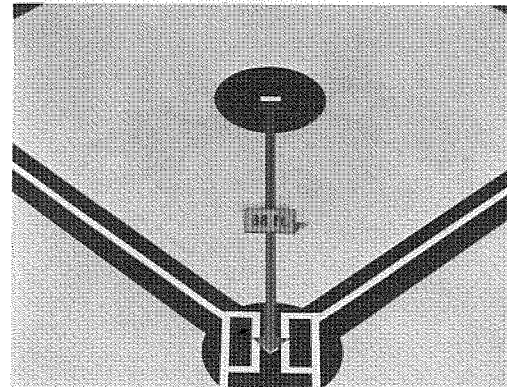
But the official outdoor playing field for softball is the same wherever you go. Home plate and the three bases form a diamond with sides 60 feet long.



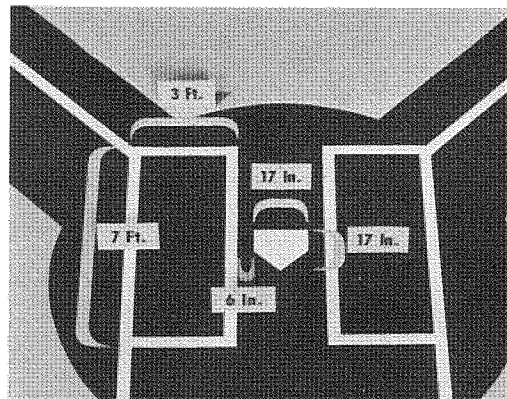
The distance between the front of the pitcher's plate and the back corner of home plate is 46 feet. That's in men's softball.

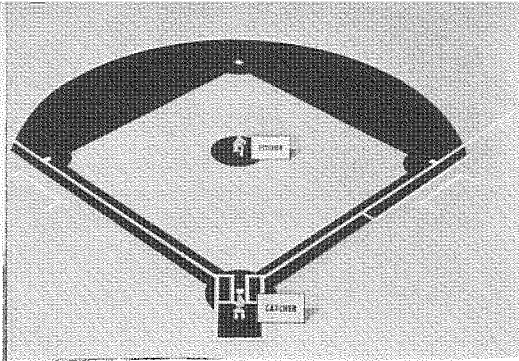


Under women's rules, the pitching distance is 38 feet. Otherwise the playing field is the same, including 60 foot base-lines.

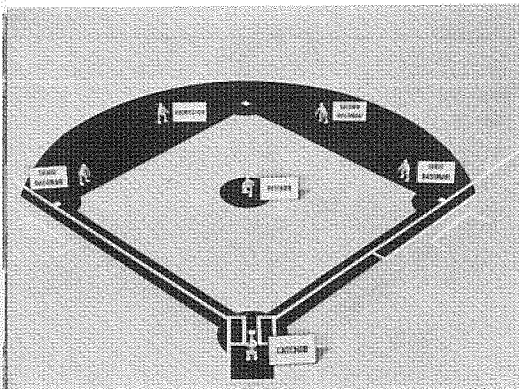


Each batter's box measures three feet by seven feet. And each starts six inches from home plate. The plate itself is 17 inches wide and 17 inches from the front to the back corner.

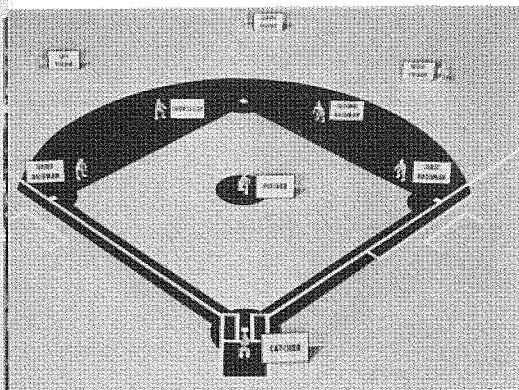




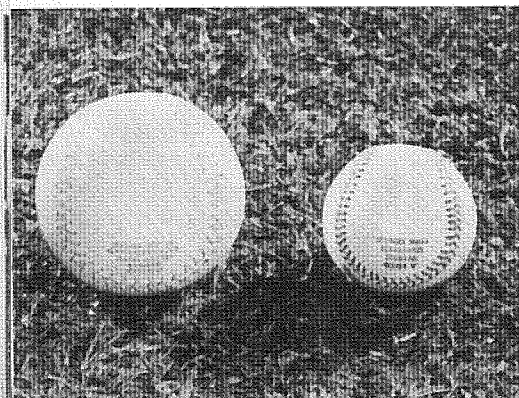
The pitcher and catcher together make up what's called "the battery." They're the backbone of the team's defensive lineup.



And there are the infielders: the first baseman, the second baseman, the shortstop, and the third baseman.

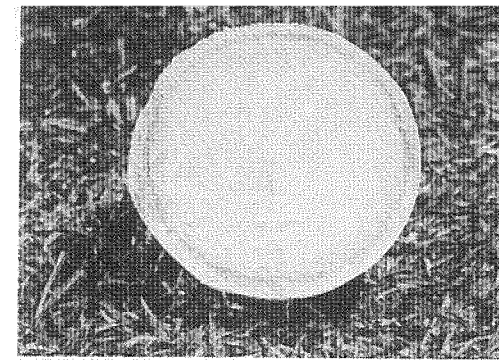


Three outfielders—the left fielder, center fielder, and right fielder—complete the nine-man team. Standard rules and playing conditions have had much to do with the increasing popularity of softball. But there are many other reasons. For one thing, don't let the name "softball" fool you.



A softball is anything but soft. Compared to a baseball, it's only three inches bigger around. And the construction of both is very much the same.

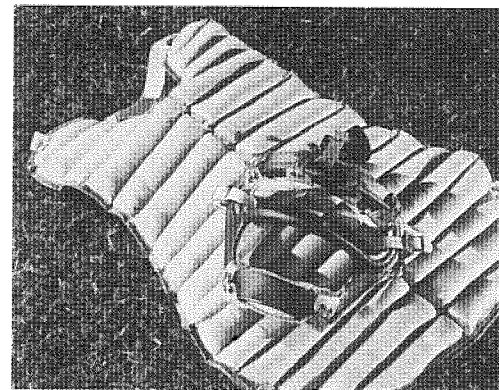
An official softball is made with a core of tightly packed and molded kapok. It's wound with cotton winding—first heavy, then light. After it's dipped in rubber cement, it's coated with horsehide and hand stitched. This construction makes the ball very lively and too **hard** to catch with your bare hands.



Gloves are worn by every player on a softball team . . . except that some pitchers prefer to work without a glove. Mitts can be worn by only the first baseman and the catcher.

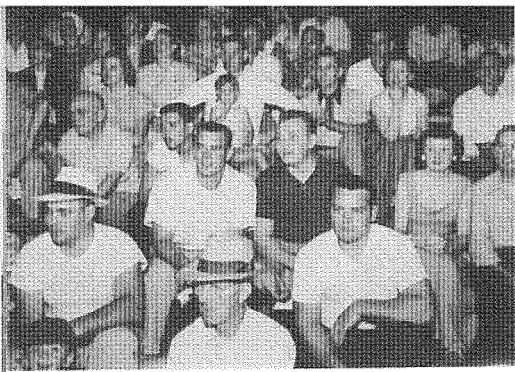


The catcher also must wear a mask, and a body protector is recommended. Women's rules say the catcher **must** wear a body protector. Other than that, the game requires very little special equipment.



Softball, then, is a game that can be an important part of the recreation program in any community. There's no costly equipment, and you need only a relatively small playing area.

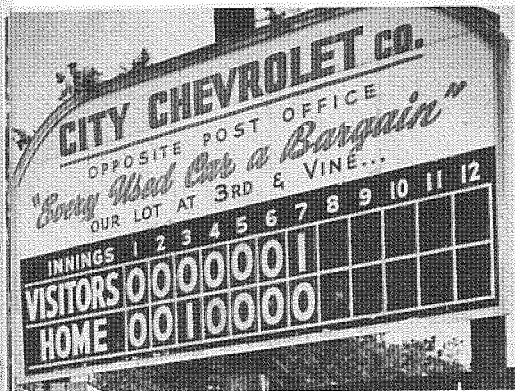




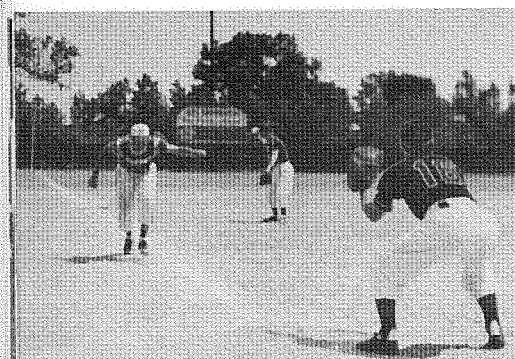
But there's another factor behind the great popularity of softball... a factor that makes it **almost** as much fun to watch as it is to play.



That factor is speed. A softball game is a symphony in speed. The smaller playing area makes it one of the fastest of all sports. Not only that...



...but softball is a low scoring game. You're always playing for the one big run that can mean victory.

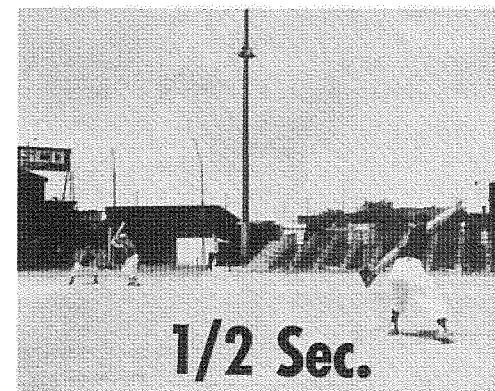


It takes a speedy offense to score that run... and an even quicker defense to keep it from scoring. Speed measured in split seconds puts a premium on skillful, alert play.

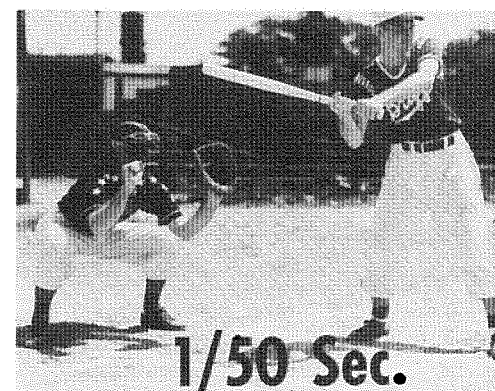
The fast action begins with every pitch. Not only can a good pitcher put the kind of "stuff" on the ball that makes it do tricks...



...but he has blinding speed that sends the ball 46 feet in less than half a second. In a fraction of a second, the batter must look over the pitch and decide whether he wants to try to hit it.



Actually, the ball is within reach of his bat for only about one-fiftieth of a second. It takes a keen eye and perfect timing to meet the ball in exactly the right place during that fiftieth of a second.



After he hits the ball, the batter heads toward first base with all the speed he can muster. A good runner can make it in about three seconds.

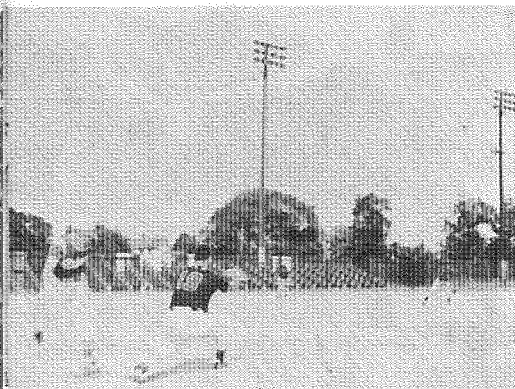




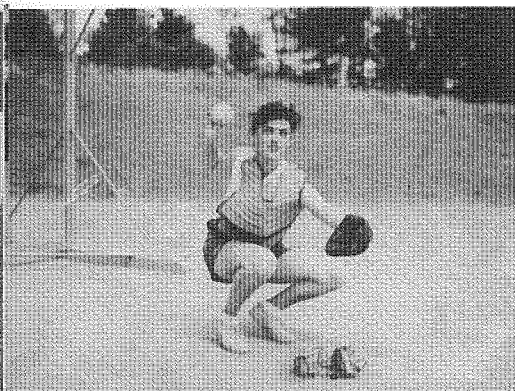
During that three seconds, the defensive team must get the ball over to first base. In just three seconds—one, two, three,—an entire play is completed in softball.



The fielder must field the ball quickly and surely. There's no time for a moment's hesitation.

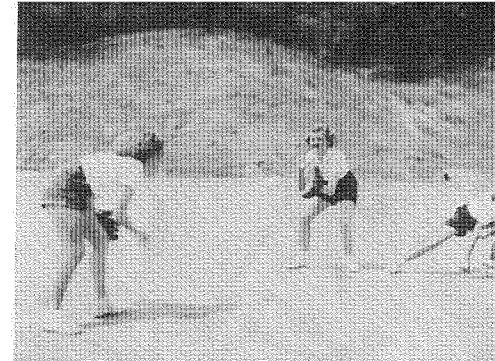


Every throw must reach the target fast enough and accurately enough so there's no wasted motion in making the putout. Split seconds can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

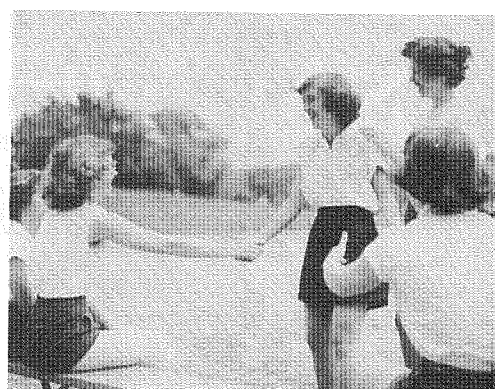


That's why every softball player learns to **think** quickly and calmly. You develop mental alertness as well as physical skill.

You develop individual skill as well as team cooperation.



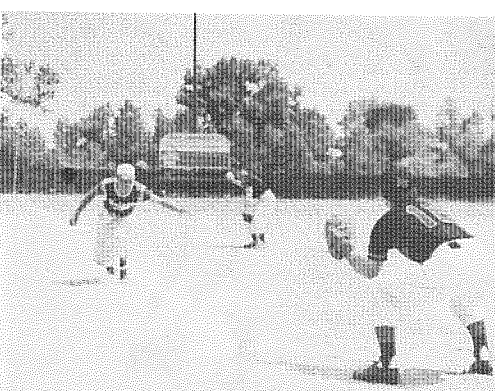
You develop the lasting friendships that can come only when you work with others as a team... with teammates who respect each other's ability. And most of all...



... you have fun! Four million softball players can't be wrong.



Softball is a combination of many fundamental skills. And they're not just skills you're born with. They're skills you can develop if you get the right start.



First, learn the fundamentals... study the basic elements of every skill until you know them thoroughly.

Then practice these fundamentals... steadily, consistently, every chance you get. With constant practice, you'll develop the ability of a winning softball player.

...

...

IMPROVE YOUR

THROWING

Anyone who wants to play softball and who wants to be a valuable member of his team, must be a good defensive player.

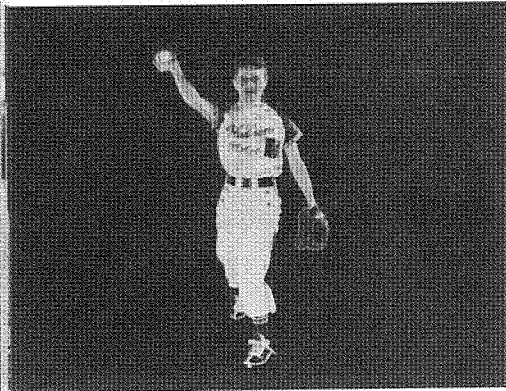
And since it takes just three seconds to complete a play in softball, there's one basic skill that can mean the difference between a putout and a man on base. This important fundamental skill...

UNIT TWO

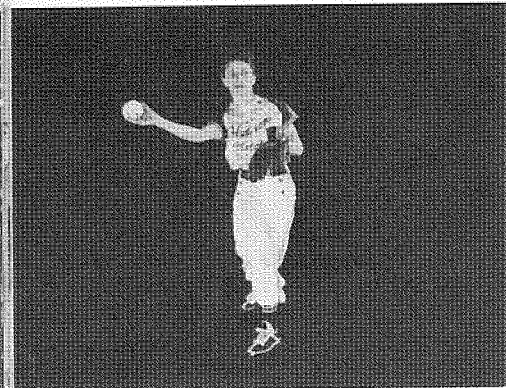




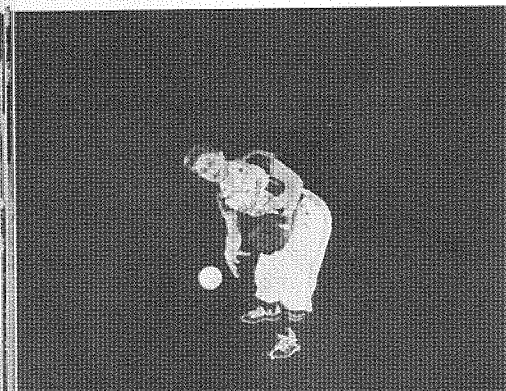
... is throwing ... being able to throw quickly and accurately. No matter what position you play, you have to know how to throw to be a winner in this fast moving game.



This is the overhand throw. It's the only throw used by outfielders, and it's the basic throw for all other members of a softball team.

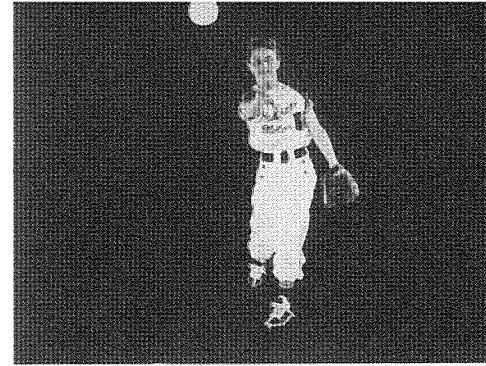


The sidearm throw is the one more often used by infielders to get the ball away in a hurry.



The underhand throw is another one used by softball infielders when there isn't time to straighten up.

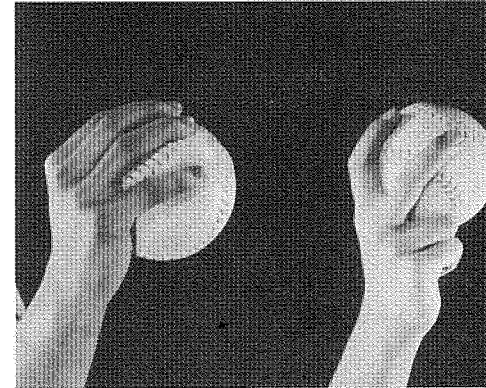
But learn the overhand throw first. Like any other skill, there are many wrong ways and one right way. When you learn the right way to make the overhand throw, and practice it until it comes naturally, you'll develop the power and control you need. And once you know the overhand, other types of throws will develop naturally.



Using the right grip is the first requirement for good control. It's important to start with the correct grip, and use the same one for every throw, even in practice.



Beginners are sometimes tempted to use the grip shown on the left. But if you "palm" the ball like this, you'll never be able to develop real control. Start with the right grip, even if it feels a little unnatural at first.

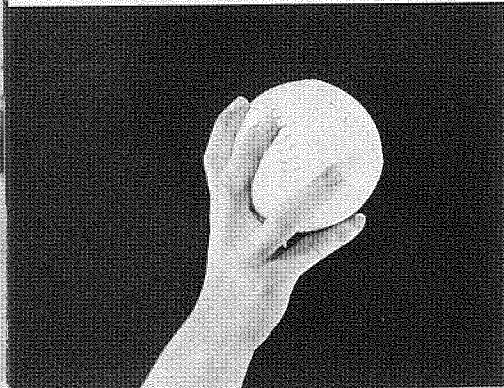


Hold the ball between your thumb and first two fingers, with your third and fourth fingers resting against the ball as far around toward the bottom as you can reach comfortably. If your hand is large enough, you can use this standard grip.

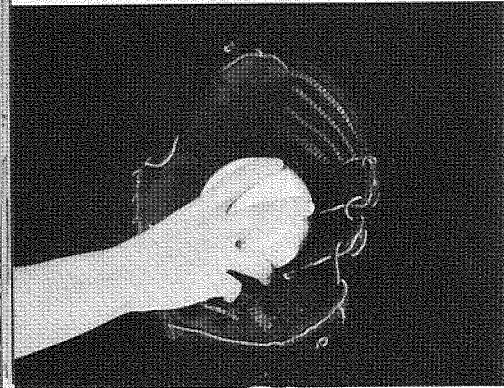




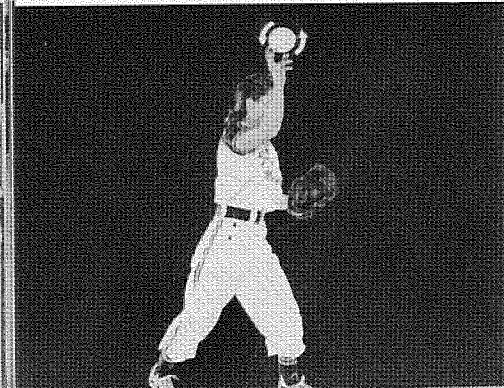
Players with smaller hands can modify the grip slightly, spreading the third and fourth fingers around the side and bottom of the ball. Whether you use the standard grip or this modified grip . . .



... make sure you can see daylight between your hand and the ball. The important thing is to control the ball with your finger tips . . . not with the palm of your hand.

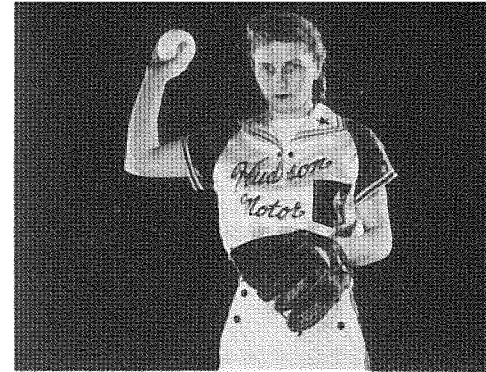


Practice getting the feel of it until you can quickly pick the ball out of your glove with the correct grip, without looking at it.

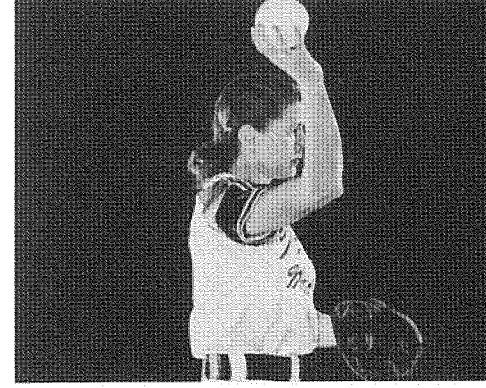


As the ball leaves your hand on the throw, it rolls off your finger tips. This gives it a spinning motion. With the right grip and the proper throwing motion, the spin will help the ball travel in a straight line. And it will bounce straight when you have to make longer throws on the bounce.

Let's analyze the fundamentals of the overhand throwing movement. As your arm comes forward in the throw, your upper arm and your forearm are about at right angles to each other. And your upper arm is nearly level with the ground.



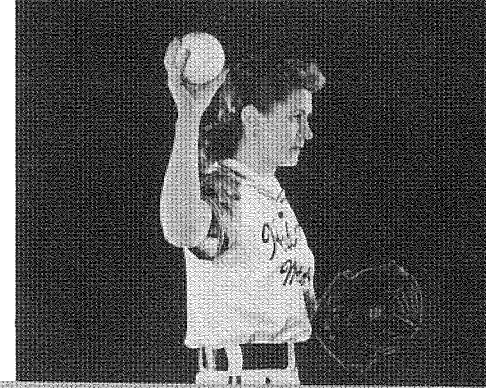
This is the crucial point in your throw . . . just before you're ready to release the ball. Notice the wrist is cocked back as far as it will go. That's important, because your final action before releasing the ball . . .

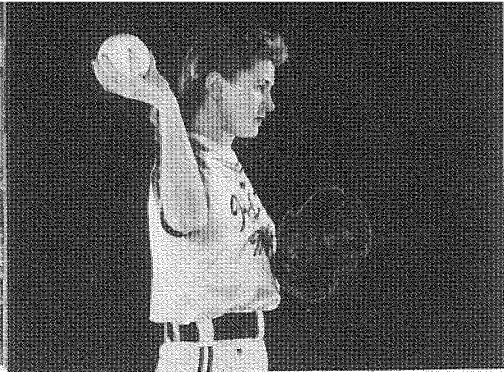


... is a snap of the wrist that gives the throw your last ounce of power. This snap action is an essential part of every throw. It can mean the difference between a mediocre and an outstanding defensive ball player. So let's learn it first.

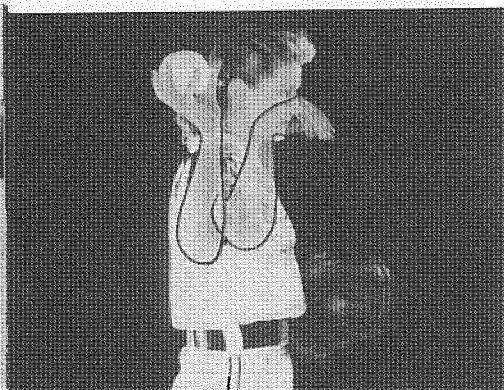


Practice the snap alone for a while. Stand up straight, but comfortable and relaxed. This gives it a spinning motion. With the right grip and the proper throwing motion, the spin will help the ball travel in a straight line. And it will bounce straight when you have to make longer throws on the bounce.

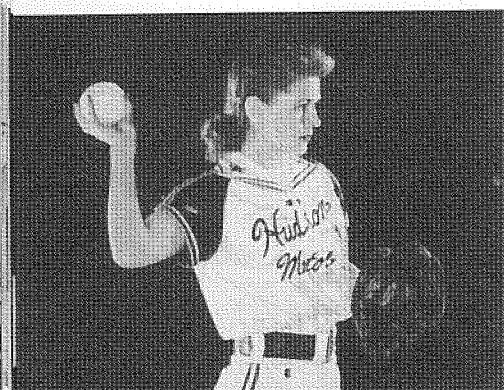




Lay your wrist back as far as it will go, without taking your forearm back with it. Now throw the ball without moving any part of your body except your wrist and hand.



Just snap your wrist forward with all the power you can put into it. Throw the ball as far and as straight as you can. Practice this snap, without moving your arm, until you feel your wrist settling down into an easy, rhythmic, forceful throw.

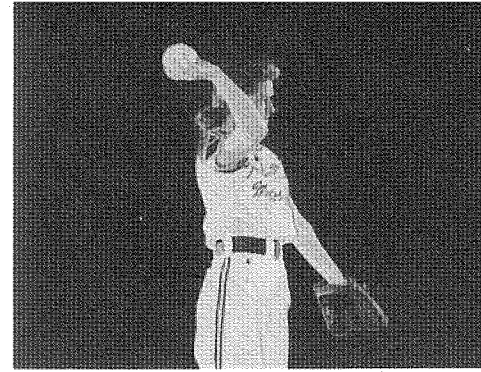


Now let's add more power by putting some arm action into it. Keep your body erect. Keep your upper arm about level with the ground, and your elbow bent at a right angle.

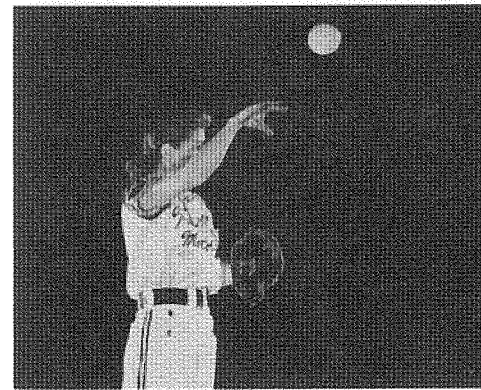


Stretch your arm back until you can feel the pull across your chest . . . arm back from the shoulder . . . forearm back from the elbow . . . hand bent back at the wrist . . . all back as far as they'll go.

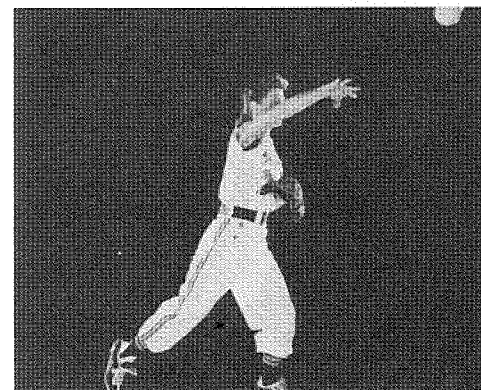
Start bringing your arm forward like a whip. At first the only movement is at your shoulder. Your forearm stays back at the same angle, and your wrist tends to hang back even farther. When your elbow gets up in front of your shoulder . . .



. . . continue the whip action with your forearm, and snap your wrist as you whip the ball out of your hand at the release position. Then your whole arm follows through. Practice this whip action for a while, throwing the ball as far and as straight as you can.



Then you're ready to put your body into it, to get your full weight behind the throw for maximum power. Let's analyze the basic body movements that complete the full throw.

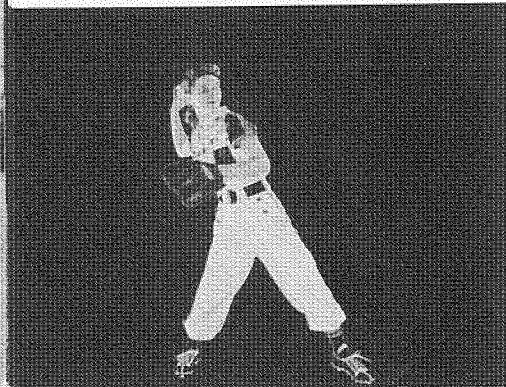


As soon as you catch the ball—whether it's a grounder, fly, or thrown ball—your first object in getting ready to throw is to get your whole body and arm in the full layback position. So the instant you have your grip on the ball . . .

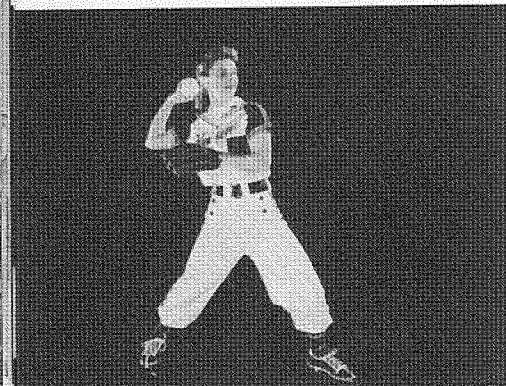




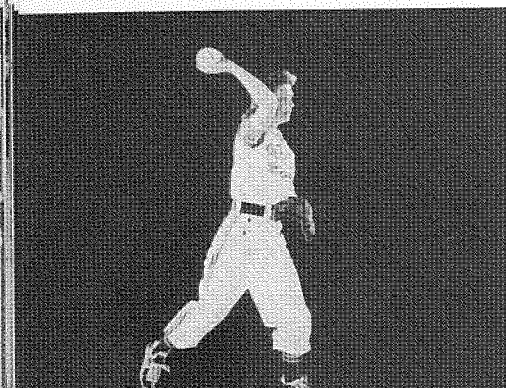
... you shift your weight to the back foot and start swinging your arm toward the layback position. At the same time, your front foot starts moving forward in the direction of the target.



In the full layback position, your weight is entirely on your rear foot, and your front foot is a long stride toward the target. Your body and throwing arm are stretched back as far as possible, reaching to get every last bit of power behind the throw. You're poised like a whip ready to snap forward.

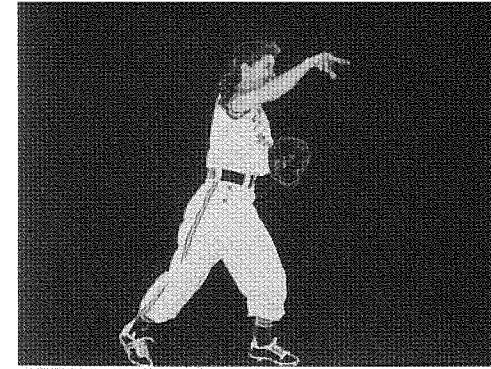


Your weight starts moving onto your front foot, and your front leg braces to act as a firm support for the throw.

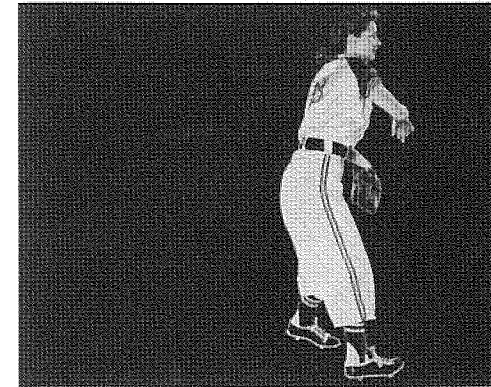


As your forward leg braces, your whole body comes forward and pivots around square with the target. And the whiplike motion goes on through your shoulder and into your arm. The arm movement is exactly the way you practiced it before. All the power of your body is moving against the braced leg. And every bit of that power is released...

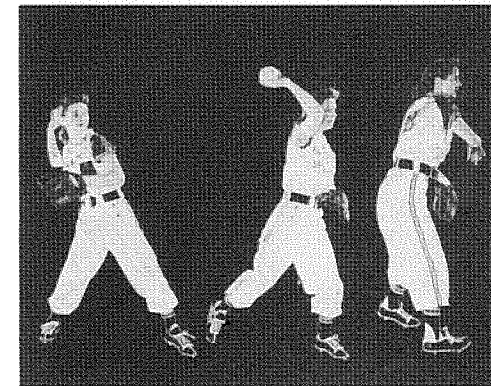
... as you snap your wrist and let the ball go. But your throw still isn't completed. Throw your hand forward as if you're trying to reach your target.



And let your arm and your whole body keep moving in a full follow through. Your back leg swings around into a balanced position, where you're ready for anything that comes up.

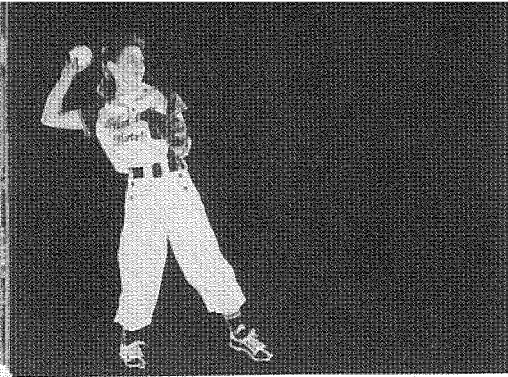


These are the steps in the basic throw of softball... starting with a full layback position... then uncoiling all the power in your body with a whiplike motion... and a full follow through. These basic fundamentals apply to **all** throws.



Infielders don't always have time for a full overhand throw. From the fielding position, you then have to get into throwing position as fast as possible. So instead of shifting to full layback...

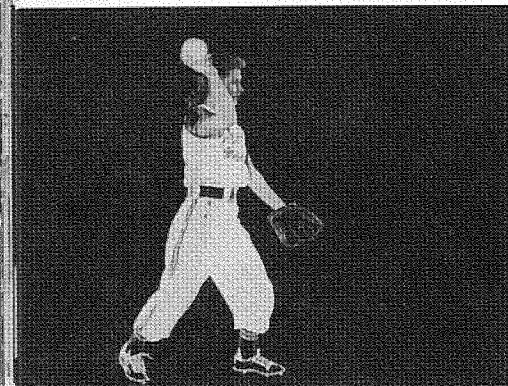




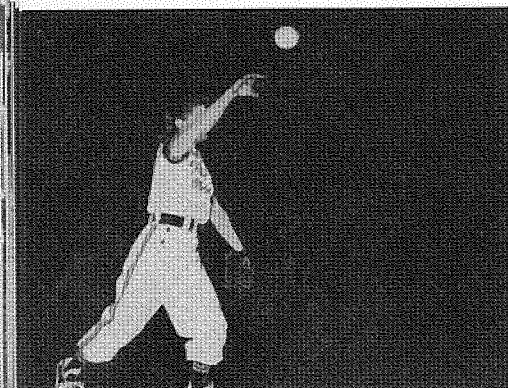
... you get into position for a **snap** overhand throw, bringing your throwing arm up to the layback position the shortest and fastest way. From this position, your throwing motion is very much like the full overhand throw.



Your weight shifts forward onto the braced leg, to begin the same motion as in the full overhand.

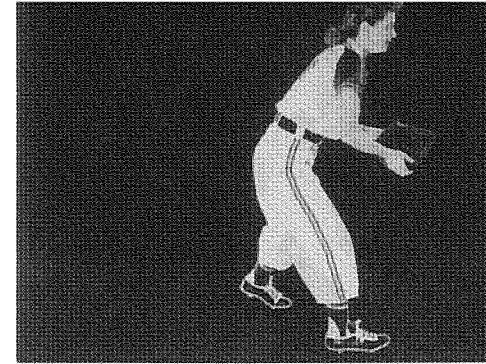


Your body pivots around toward the target, with the same whipping arm action...



... that ends with a snap of the wrist as you release the ball. There's the same full follow through...

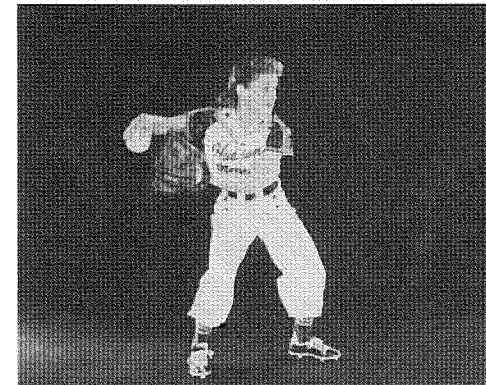
... that puts you in a balanced position, ready for a return throw or any other action that comes up.



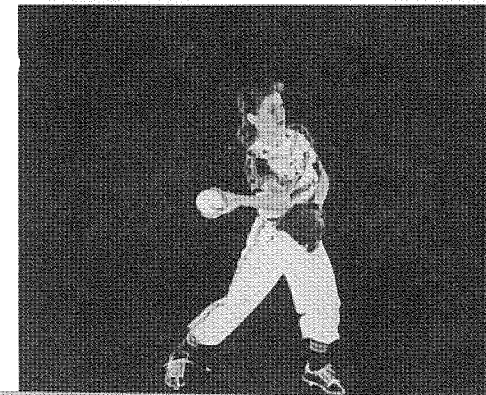
The sidearm throw is the one used most by softball infielders, because it's good for short, quick throws. Here again, the fundamental movements are much the same as in the overhand.



After you receive the ball, your body pivots around to layback position, and you bring the ball back to a point straight out from the right shoulder.

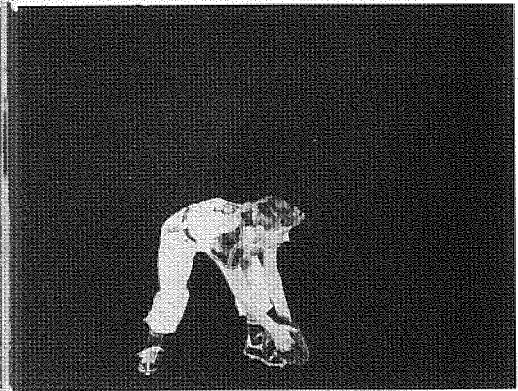


Your weight shifts onto the braced front leg, and there's the same whipping motion, except your arm is almost straight out to your side.

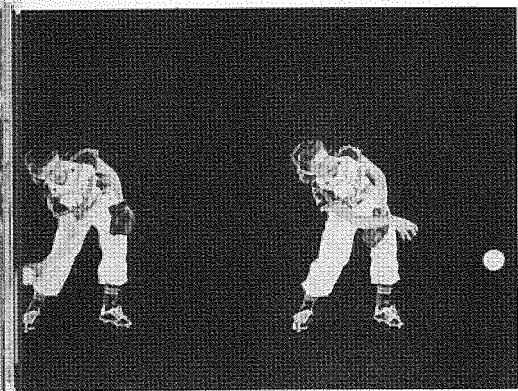




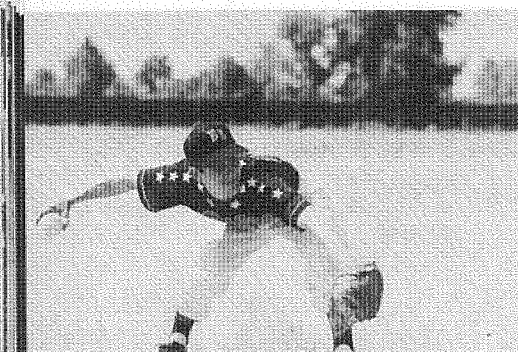
The same powerful snap of the wrist and the same full follow through complete the sidearm throw.



On some plays an infielder doesn't have time to use any of the throws we've seen. Maybe you've come in to field a very slow ground ball. In this case, you might use the underhand throw.



Here are the two steps in the underhand throw. A quick layback without taking time to straighten up, and the whipping motion that ends with a snap of the wrist and a follow through.



Throwing is one of the most important basic skills of softball. No matter what position you play, skill at throwing is your obligation to the team. And it's not just a natural ability. You can develop a good throwing arm with consistent practice and by carefully following the fundamentals.

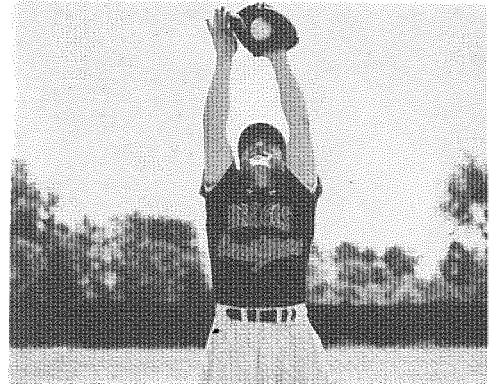
UNIT THREE

IMPROVE YOUR

FIELDING SKILLS. This unit will help you learn the fundamentals of fielding. You will learn how to field ground balls, fly balls, and line drives. You will also learn how to catch a ball.

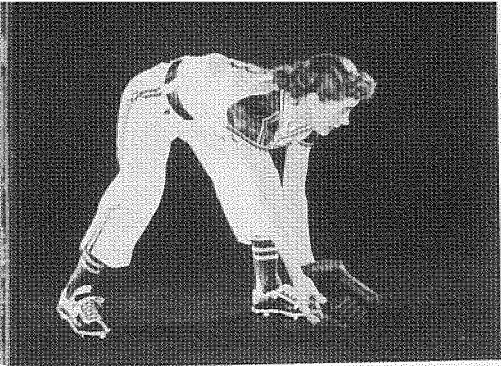
FIELDING

Softball is largely a defensive game. So no matter what position you play, you have to be a good fielder. Every member of a winning team must be able to field both ground balls and fly balls.

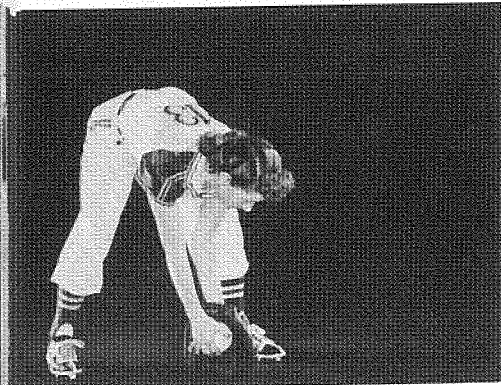


Like all the other skills of softball, skill at fielding takes more than natural ability. You have to know the fundamentals and you have to practice them constantly.





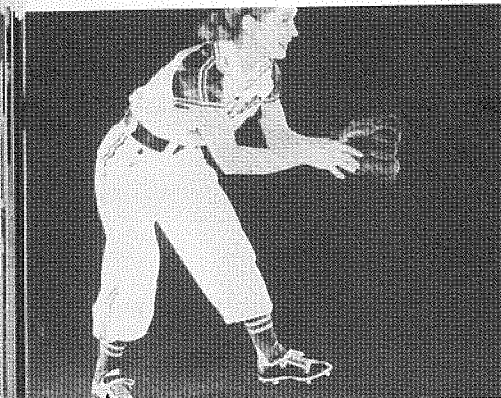
This is the basic fielding position for ground balls. Your glove waits for the ball just inside your front foot. And keep low . . . close to the ground . . . so close that your hands touch the ground when hanging naturally. It's easier to come up for a ball than drop down for it. So keep low for ground balls. To get the feel of it, take this position and have someone roll a ball to you.



Let the ball roll into your glove, and immediately roll your throwing hand over to trap it in your glove. After you've practiced this basic fielding until it feels natural, you're ready to field ground balls as you will in normal play.

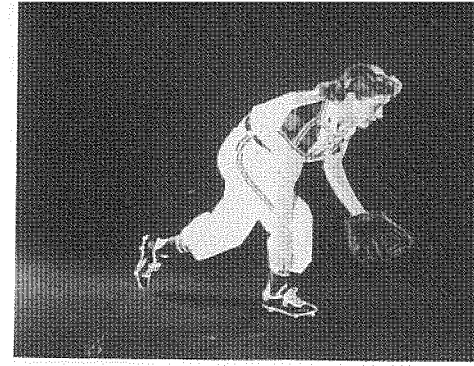


This is your position waiting for the pitch . . . facing the batter, feet comfortably spread, knees bent, weight slightly forward. Your eyes are on the pitcher, watching for the ball. As the ball is pitched . . .

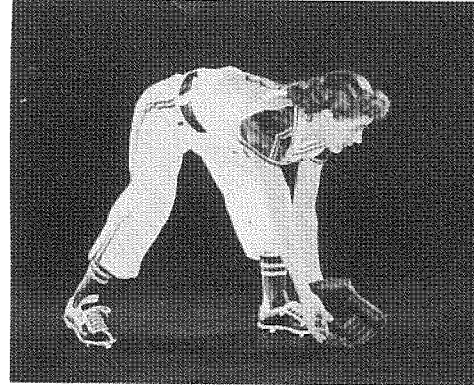


. . . your weight shifts forward, so you'll be able to get a fast start in any direction. If the ball is hit toward your position, you'll have to get in front of it as fast as you can.

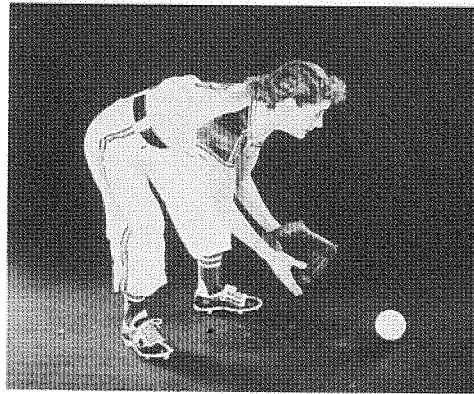
If the ball is hit directly at you, come in on it if you have time. You're trying to save split seconds. So play the ball. Don't let it play you.



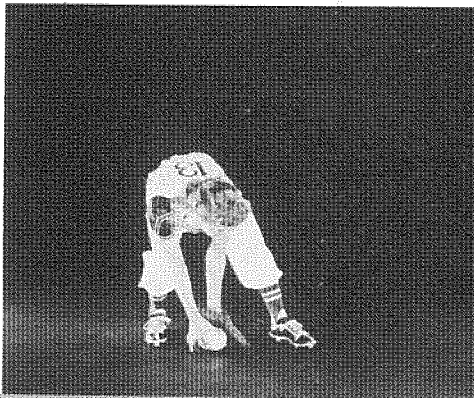
As the ball gets near, plant yourself firmly in fielding position . . . feet comfortably spread, right foot slightly behind the left, body low with knees bent, and eyes "glued" on the ball . . . the basic fielding position you learned before.

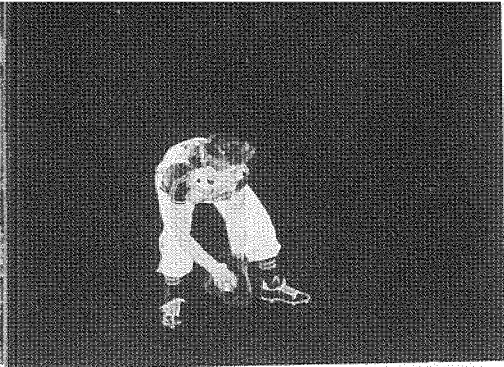


This is the crucial point in fielding any ground ball . . . the last split second when errors occur. Beginners may be tempted to glance up at the base runner or their target. But never take your eyes off the ball, not even for an instant.

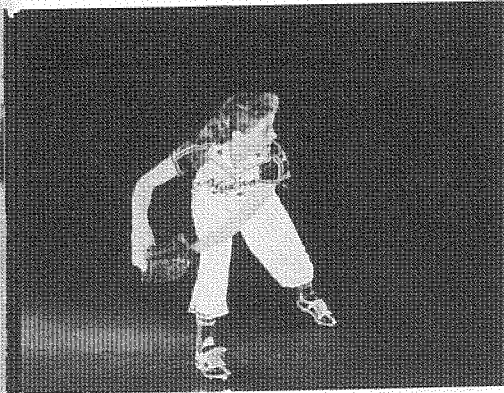


Watch the ball all the way into your glove, and bring your throwing hand over it to trap it securely. After you see the ball firmly settled in your glove and covered with your hand . . .

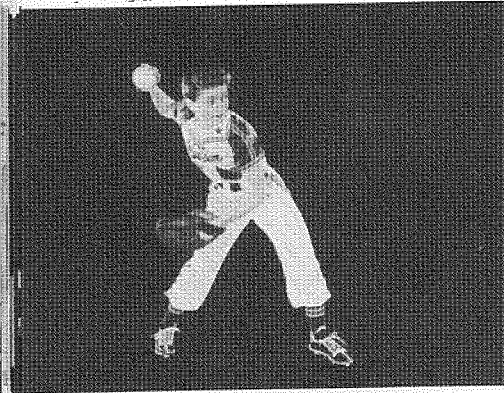




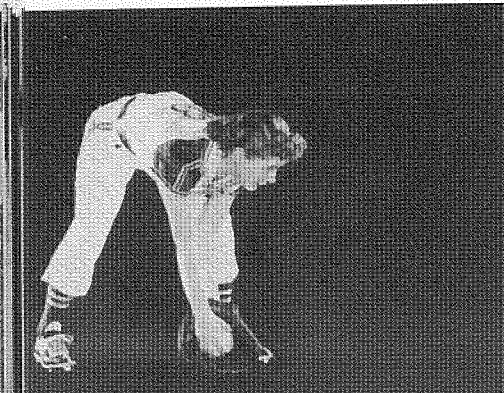
... then, and only then, do you look up at your target, at the same time you're feeling for the proper grip on the ball ...



... and starting back toward the layback position. Continue this backward and upward motion ...



... and with a stride toward the target, you're in layback position. With practice, fielding the ball and getting set for the throw becomes one smooth, continuous motion.

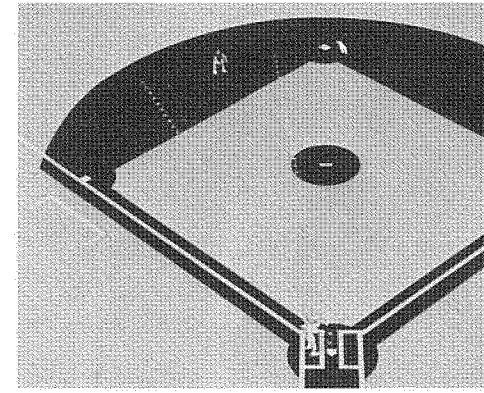


Most ground balls will be fielded below the waist. And here, of course, you hold your glove with the fingers pointing down.

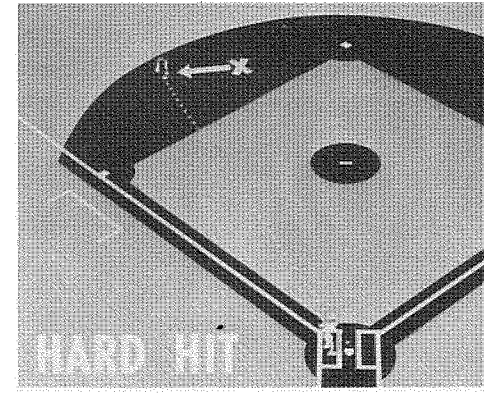
But you also have to be ready for balls that bounce above the waist. Here you hold your glove with the fingers pointing up. Practice fielding both low and high bouncing balls by having someone hit balls straight at you.



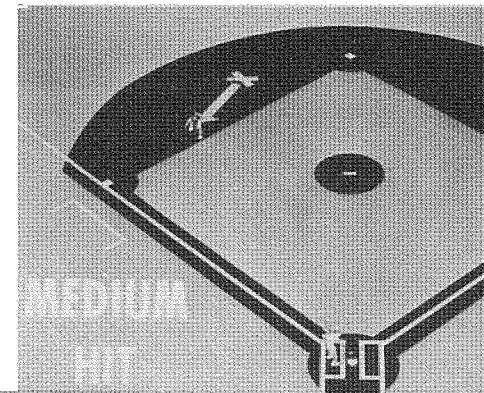
Of course, not all ground balls are hit directly at the fielder. Some are hit to the left, others to the right. Your job is to get in front of the ball as fast as you can. The exact direction you run depends not only on which side it is, but on how **hard** it has been hit.

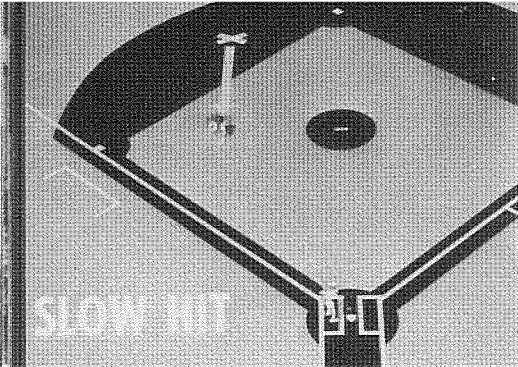


Let's take a hard hit ball to your right. Here you'd cut either straight across or diagonally back to meet it, depending on just **how** hard the ball has been hit.

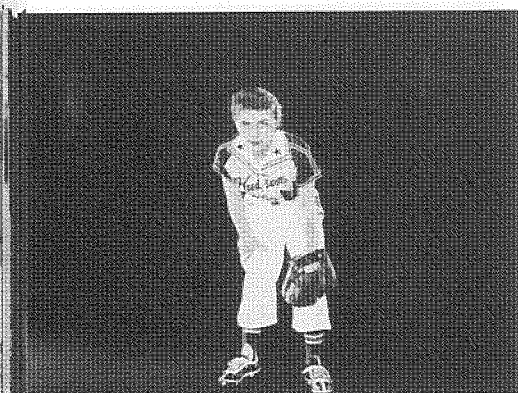


For a **medium** hit ground ball to your right, you run diagonally in toward the ball to cut it off as soon as possible.

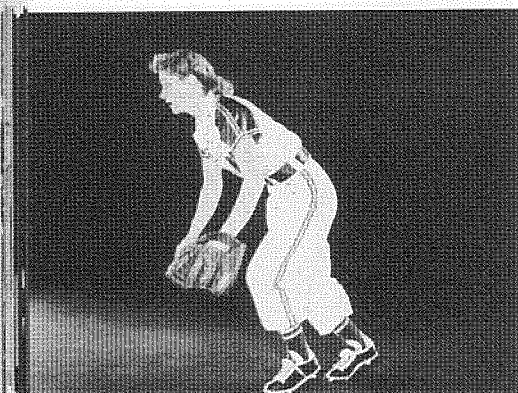




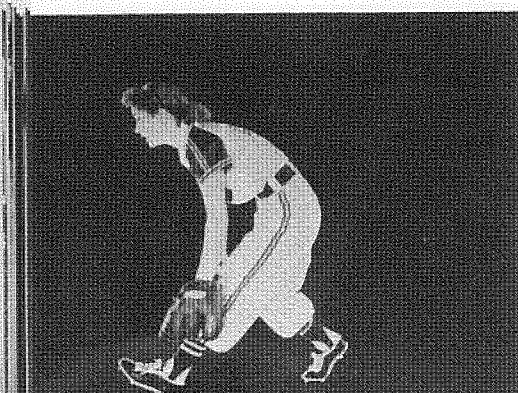
For a **slow** hit ball to your right, you come in fast almost straight in toward home plate. With practice you'll be able to judge the speed of the ball and get in front of it as quickly as possible.



From your waiting position before the ball is pitched, let's see how you'll field a ball hit to the side. You're poised and alert, ready to go in either direction. Never think you have lots of time.

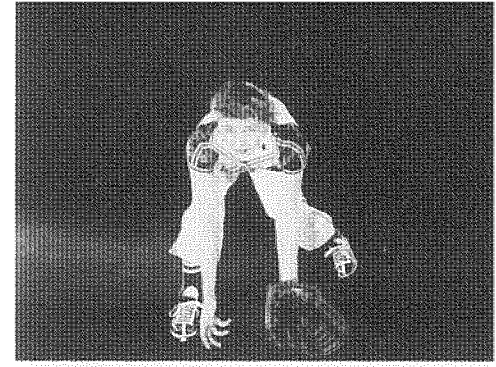


Turn in the direction of the ball the instant it's hit, so you can get in front of it as soon as possible. Don't straighten up. Keep your body low

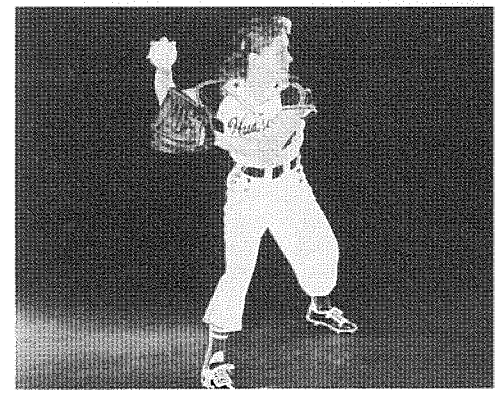


During your run, never take your eyes off the ball. Most throws by infielders are to their left. So if you're running for a ground ball to your right, you'll have to stop and get set for a throw in the opposite direction. In this case . . .

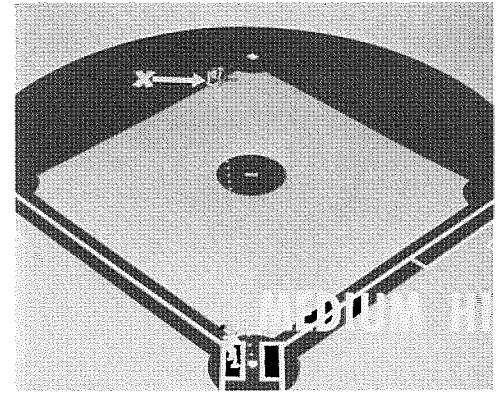
. . . stop squarely in front of the ball by jamming your right foot against the ground. Field the ball just inside your front foot, with your legs apart, right leg braced.



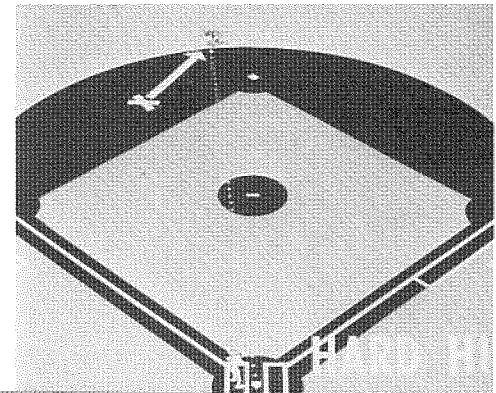
Your braced leg, jammed against the ground, gives you the support you need for your throw back toward your left.

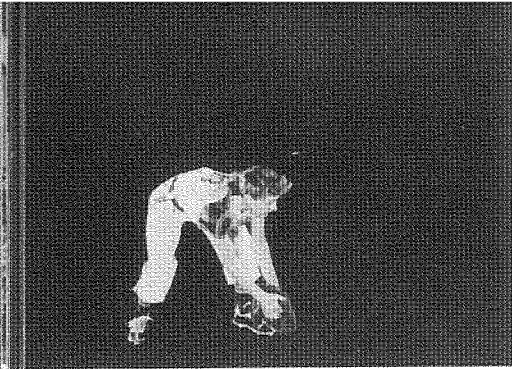


Now let's try cutting off a ground ball to your left. If it's a medium hit ball, and you have time to get set in front of it, your fielding motion is the same as before.

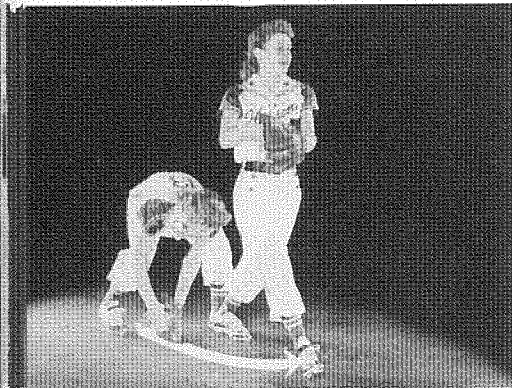


But if it's a hard hit ball, you may have to field it on the run. And this takes a different pattern of footwork.

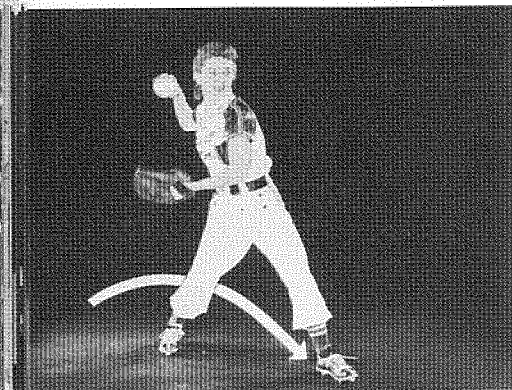




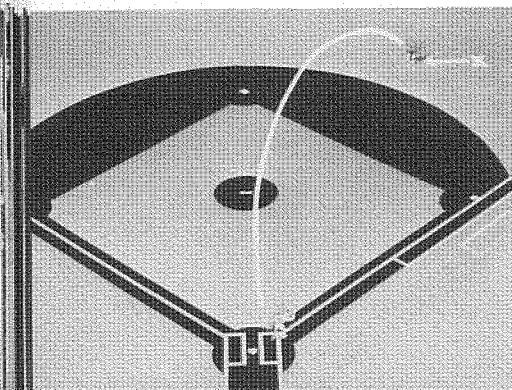
Here you've just fielded the ball on the run, picking it up off your left foot. But your momentum is still carrying you off to your left. Instead of trying to jam on the brakes with your left foot . . .



. . . after fielding the ball, take one more step with your right foot. This checks your momentum without causing you to lose your balance. Then to get set for the throw . . .

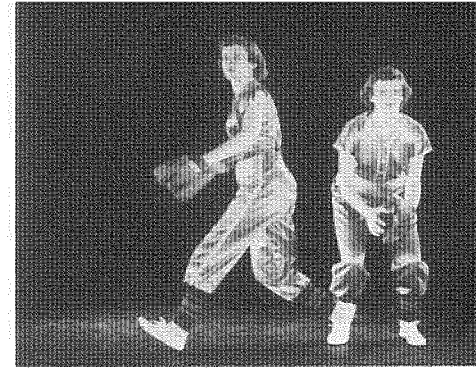


. . . take one long stride toward the target with your left foot as you swing around into layback position. Don't hurry your throw any more than you have to. Whenever possible, get set for a good throw, then give it everything you have.

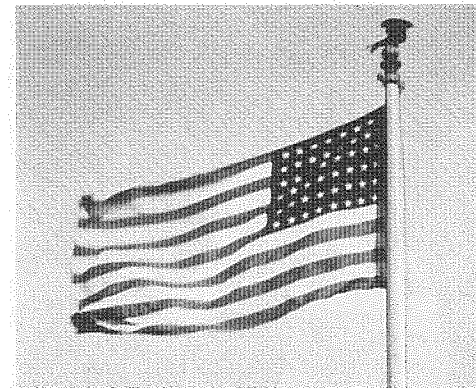


In fielding any fly ball, there is one very important rule—get under it fast. Get under it and wait. A good fielder makes the play look easy.

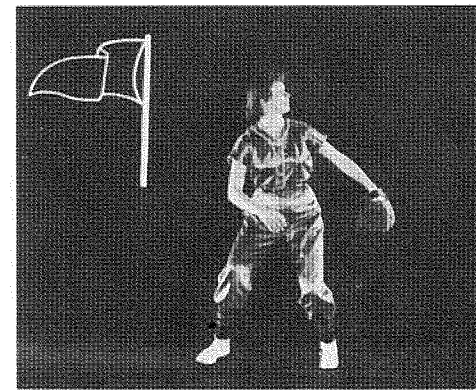
For a fly ball hit to either side, you should be able to turn it in that direction quickly, using whatever footwork comes naturally to you. For a fly ball hit directly over your head, there's another factor that affects which way you turn.



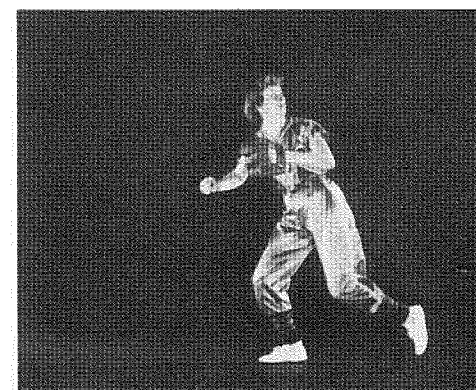
That factor is wind direction. Never take the field without checking which way the wind is blowing.

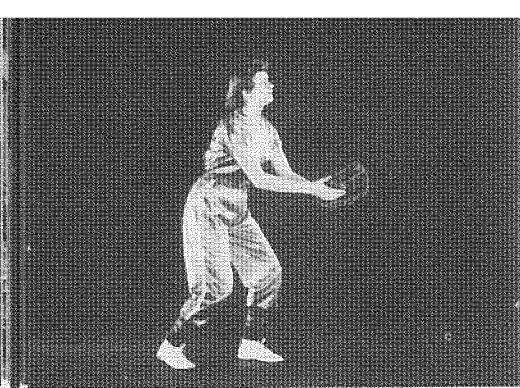


For a fly ball hit straight over your head, turn in the direction the wind is blowing. Here the wind will cause the ball to drift toward your right. So make your first step diagonally backward with the right foot so you'll be moving in the direction of the drift. As soon as you've started back . . .



. . . try to pick the spot where the ball will fall. Then run to that spot. Never run backward if you can help it. Turn and run after the ball, glancing at it over your shoulder as you run.





Get under the ball as soon as you can. Be sure you're back far enough. It's easier to take a step or two forward than it is to back up. Get set for the ball and wait. Stand with your legs comfortably spread . . . right leg slightly to the rear, so you'll be ready to start your throwing motion as soon as you make the catch. There are two positions for your hands in catching fly balls.



You can hold your hands like this, with your little fingers together . . .

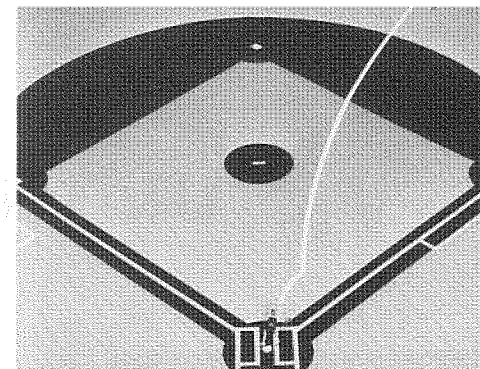


. . . or like this, with your thumbs together. Whichever way you hold your hands, stay relaxed while waiting for the ball.



And let your hands "give" a little as the ball drops into your glove. That acts as a shock absorber and helps keep the ball from bouncing out of your glove. At the same time, of course, you trap the ball with your other hand. Then make your throw as fast as you can.

If you have to make a long throw, such as from the outfield to home plate, throw the ball so it will bounce—at least one long bounce—before it gets to the receiver. This will eliminate overthrows. And with a throw to home plate, it can be cut off, if necessary.



So far, you've learned only the fundamentals of fielding. If you study these fundamentals, and practice them until they come naturally to you, you'll be the kind of alert, skillful fielder that helps your team win ball games.



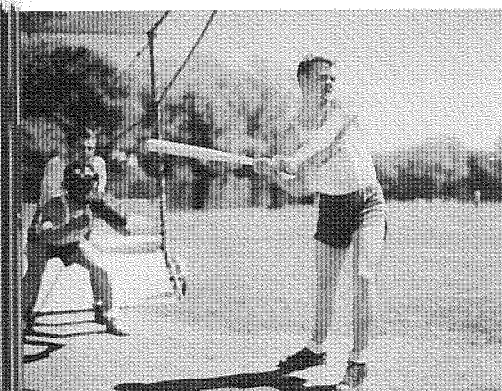
UNIT FOUR

IMPROVE YOUR

HITTING



Good hitting in softball is a skill you can learn. It does take a certain amount of natural ability.

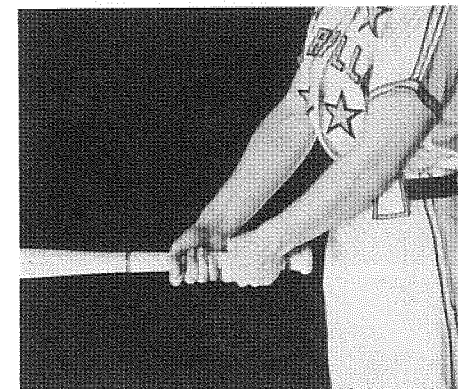


But more important is a thorough knowledge and constant practice of the basic fundamentals. Although there are many individual batting styles, every good hitter learns these fundamentals.

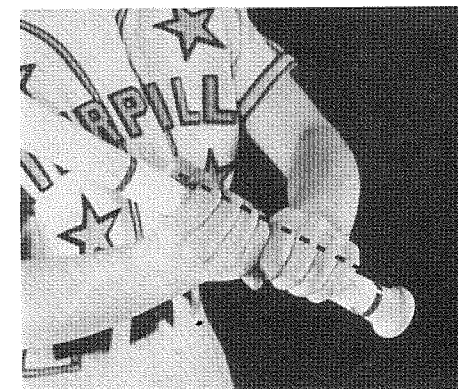
First, choose the right bat. Use one that's the proper length and weight to give you a feeling of control. It should be heavy enough for a good solid swing, but light enough so you can whip it around using just wrist action.



Grip the bat with your hands together or only slightly spread apart. Wrap your fingers and thumbs well around the handle, but don't grip it too tight.

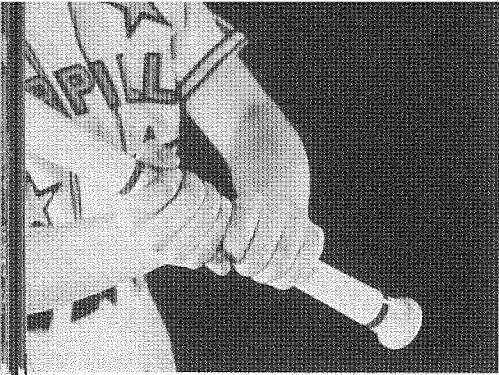


The second knuckles of your upper hand are lined up somewhere between the base knuckles and the second knuckles of your lower hand. If you're a left handed batter, your left hand, of course, would be on top. But otherwise the grip is the same. There are three types of grips.

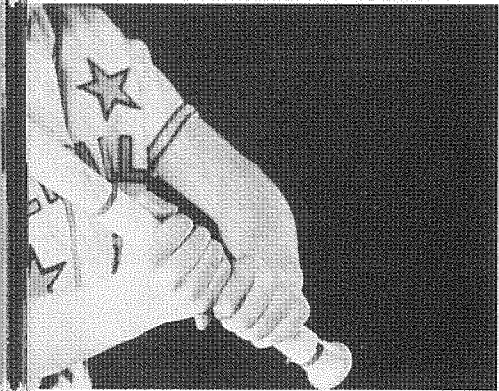


This one is called the "end" or "long" grip, with the hands down close to the knob of the bat. It's used by power hitters to get the leverage of the full bat length into their swing.

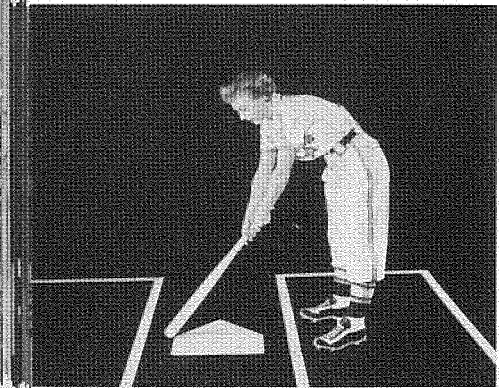




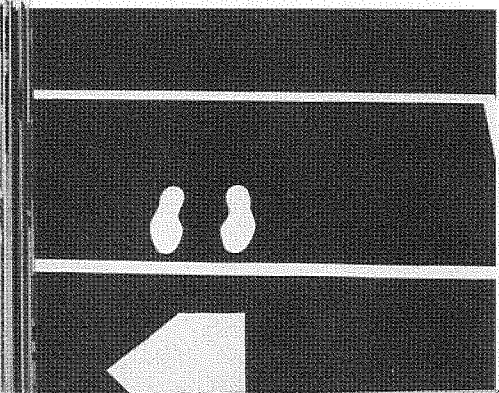
This is the choke grip, with the hands moved well up on the handle. Hitters who use this grip feel it gives them better control, especially for place hitting.



This is the standard or modified grip, with the lower hand an inch or two from the knob. It's by far the most popular grip, because hitters feel it gives them the best balance between control and power. Through most of your swing, your grip is firm but relaxed. You don't tighten up until the moment you connect with the ball.

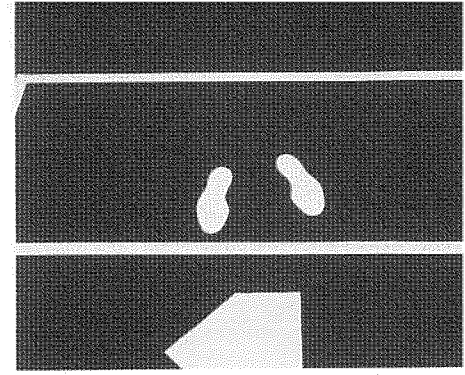


This is the way to take your stance. Stand just far enough from the plate so that, using your regular grip on the bat, you can touch the outside corner of the plate by bending over slightly. In placing your feet, there are three basic stances.

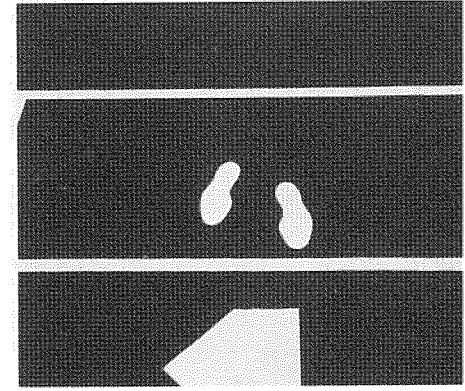


This is the position of your feet in the parallel stance. Both feet are about the same distance from the plate.

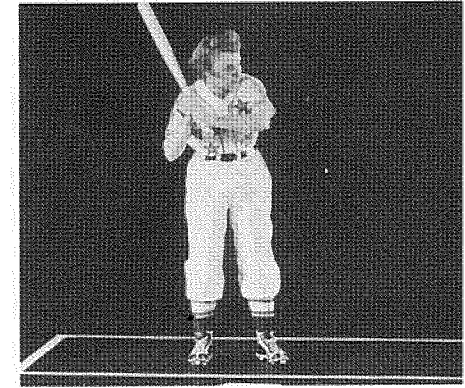
In the closed stance, the position of your feet would be like this . . . with the front foot closer to the plate than the rear foot.



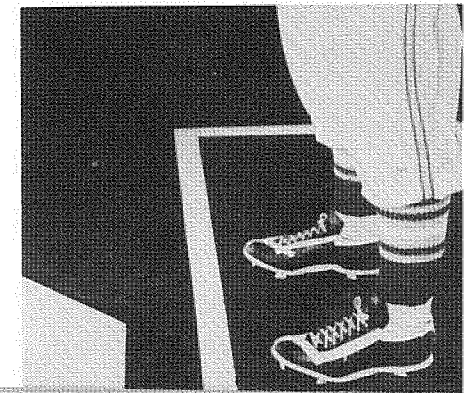
The open stance is the third basic position. Here the front foot is farther away from the plate. As you develop your own most comfortable position, you may want to use an open or a closed stance. But it's best to start with the parallel stance.

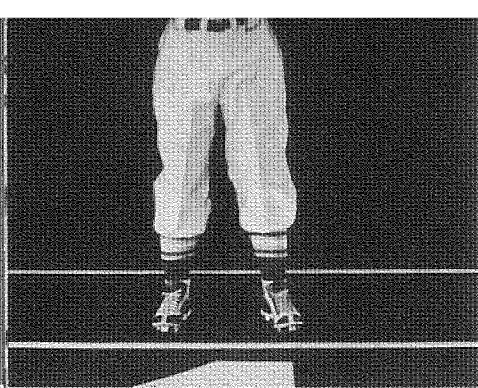


Place your feet in the correct parallel stance, with your front foot turned slightly toward the pitcher. Stand with your legs comfortably spread, about shoulder width or a little wider. Now you're in the ready position, just as the pitcher is about to deliver the ball.



Your knees should be relaxed . . . bent just a little bit, not locked. The important thing is to feel comfortable.

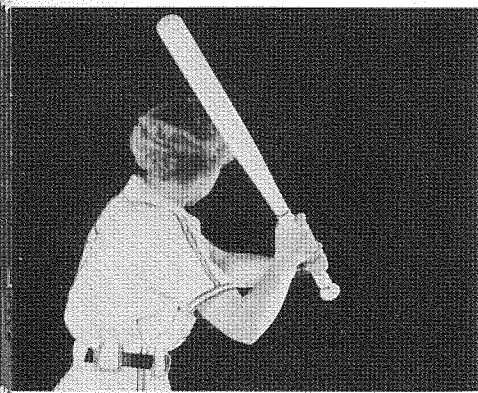




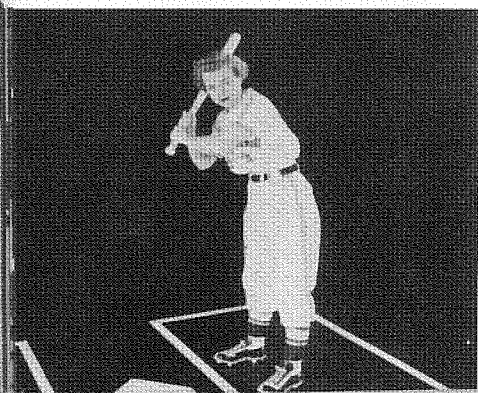
Hips should be relaxed too . . . square with the plate and level with the ground.



Your arms should be comfortably away from the body and bent at the elbows. Your forward arm will guide your swing, so keep it almost level with the ground. Your back arm puts the power into your swing, so you can let it drop a little into a comfortable position. But don't drop it too far, and don't pin it against your body. It must be free to move.

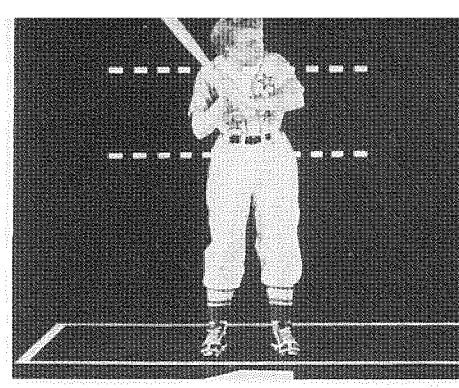


Keep the bat off your shoulder. Hold it well back at an angle about like this.

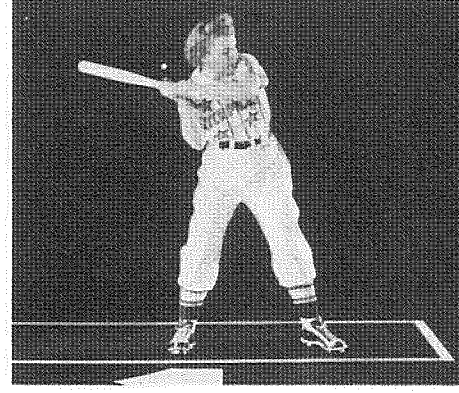


This, then, is your ready position, waiting for the pitch. You're standing firm and steady, yet comfortable and relaxed. Your eyes are on the ball, ready to follow it from the moment the pitcher starts his delivery.

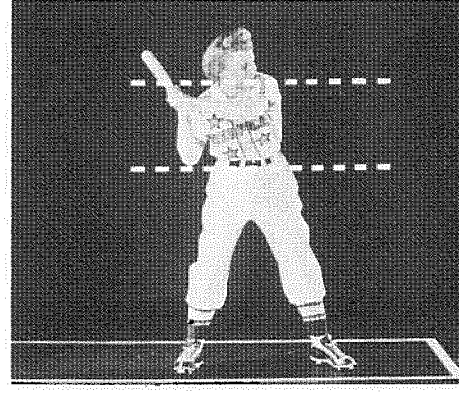
And notice both shoulders and hips are level. With your weight evenly balanced on both feet, you're ready for the swing. As soon as the ball is pitched . . .



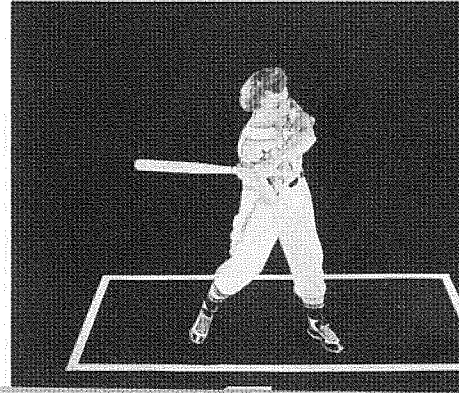
. . . your weight shifts to the rear foot, and your front foot moves forward in a glide to meet the pitch. The glide should be natural—neither too long nor too short. Barely lift your foot off the ground and let it move directly toward the pitch . . . not toward the plate or away from it. At the same time, the upper part of your body pivots back slightly.

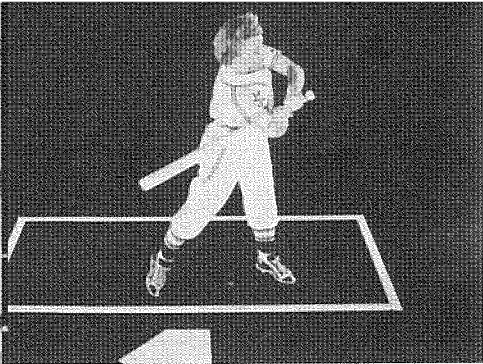


But your shoulders and hips stay nearly level, because you don't **bend** back . . . you **rotate** . . . like a powerful spring coiled around your backbone. And all your weight is on your rear foot as the pitcher releases the ball.

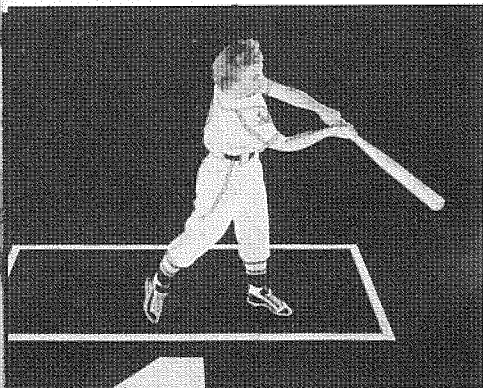


A quick push off the inside of the back foot, and you start uncoiling all that power. As your front foot jams into the ground, your front leg braces. The forward pivot of the hips has just started, and from this point on you swing against the braced front leg. Shoulders and hips remain level all through the swing.

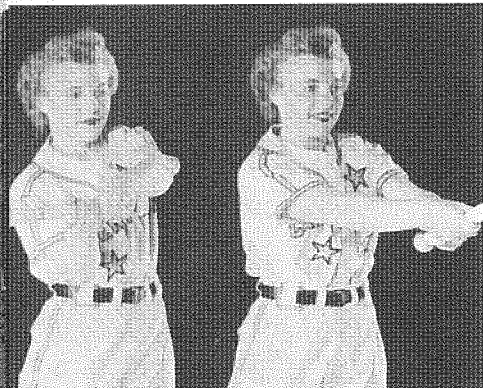




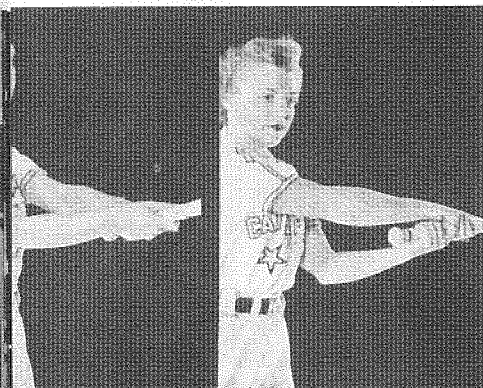
You time your swing so your hands are well in front of the body before the bat is squared around to meet the ball. Your weight is all on the front foot just before the ball reaches the hitting zone. Now your wrists come into action.



A quick snap of your wrists adds still more power as you meet the ball. This wrist action is a very important part of your swing. Let's take a closer look at it.

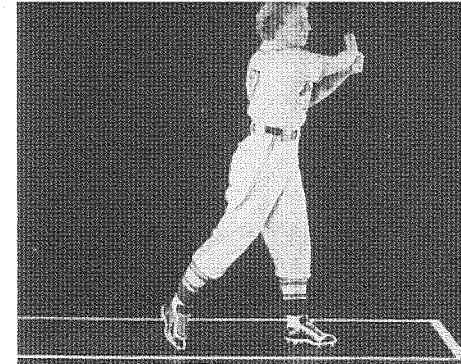


On the left you see the position of your hands and wrists as you swing the bat toward the ball. Just as your bat is about to contact the ball, you snap your wrists into the position shown on the right.

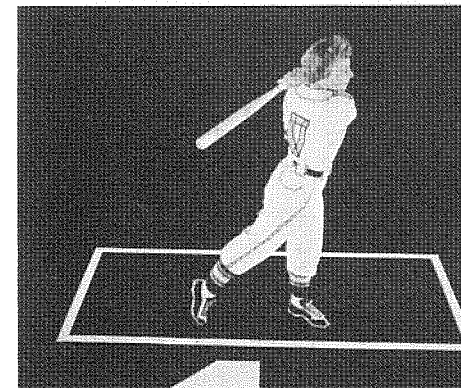


As soon as you've finished the wrist snap, as on the left, your hands and wrists roll over into the position shown on the right. This roll-over action is vital to a full, smooth swing.

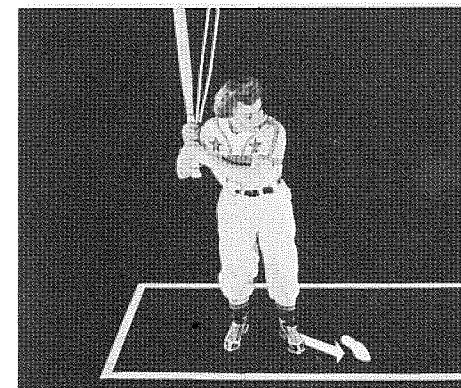
Here's your body action just after the roll-over, with your bat continuing in a powerful, level swing. Notice the toe of your back foot stays planted on the ground to keep your balance. Now you've hit the ball, but don't stop here.



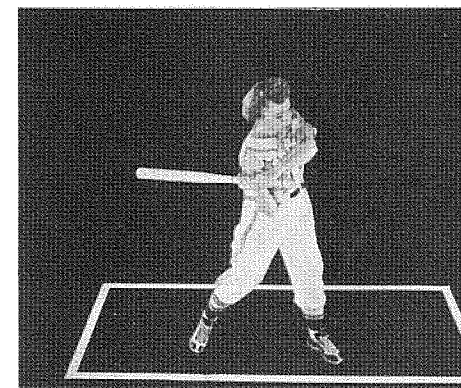
Let your bat swing around with your body in a full follow through. Don't try to stop it. Let it stop by itself. The full weight of your body presses down on your front foot as you finish the swing.

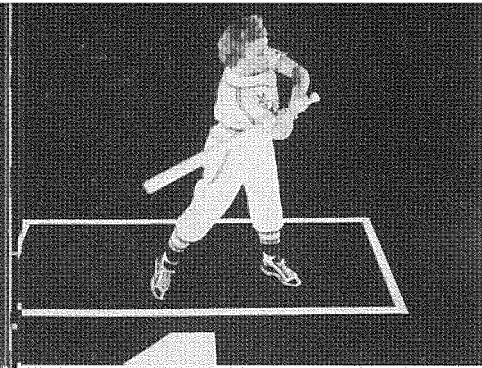


Here's the start of your swing again . . . your front foot gliding toward the pitch . . . your weight shifting to the rear foot . . . your bat rotating back with the upper part of your body.

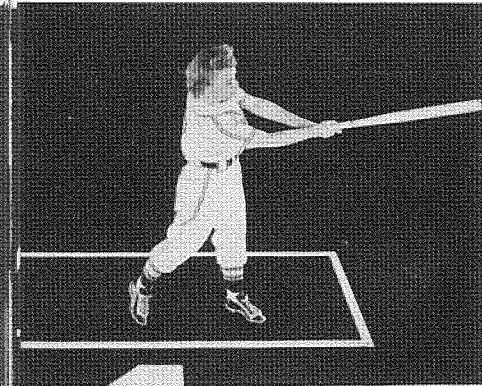


Then a quick push off the inside of the rear foot, with your front leg bracing against the swing.

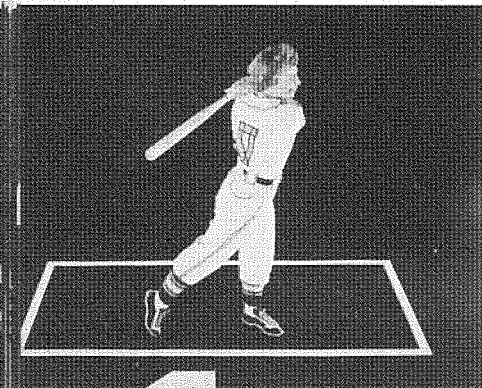




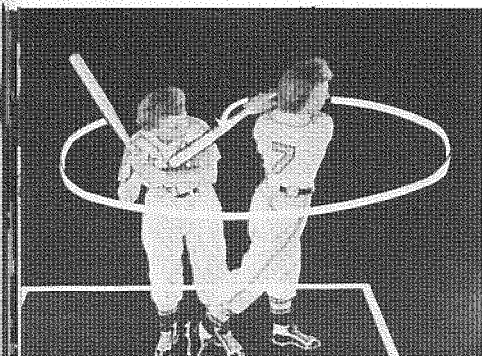
Your hands leading the swing, well out in front of your body just before the ball enters the hitting zone.



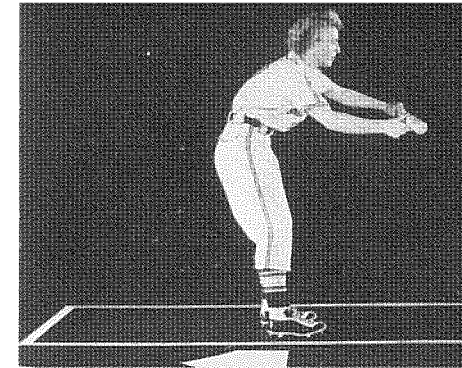
Then the snap of your wrists to put the last ounce of power into your swing. The wrist snap and the roll-over . . .



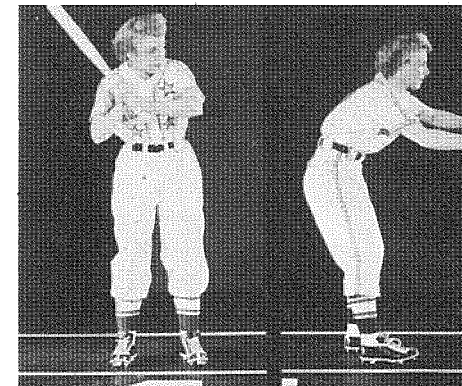
. . . with a full follow through . . . all your weight pressing down on your front foot.



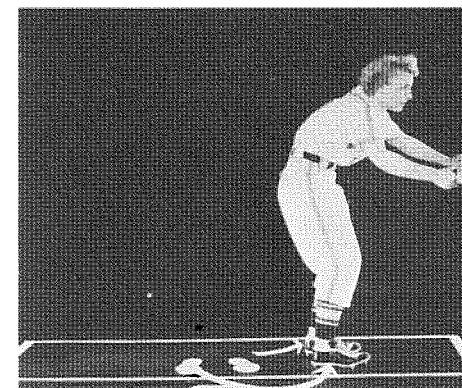
And there's the complete swing... a controlled, powerful movement of all your muscles to swing the bat through a flat arc, level with the ground. Notice your bat actually travels through **more** than one complete circle. Practice this swing, making sure you follow all the fundamentals, and chances are you're well on the way toward a fat batting average.



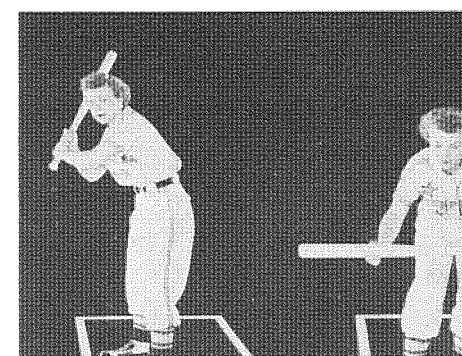
Bunting is another skill you'll have to master if you're going to be a valuable hitter on your team. And the fundamentals of bunting are entirely different from your other hitting motion.



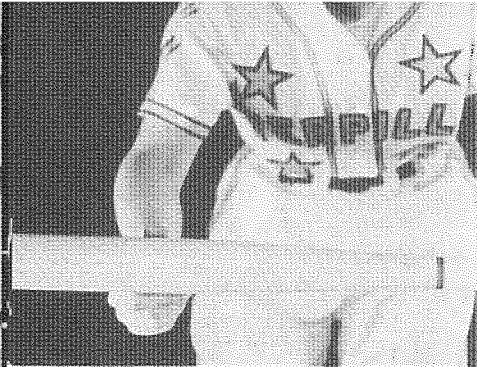
The shift from your normal ready position to the bunting position must be made just before the pitcher releases the ball. Whether you're sacrifice bunting or bunting for a base hit, you want as much deception as possible. So fast footwork is essential.



One method is to move your front foot back away from the plate, and your rear foot up about even with it. Speeded up, it becomes a jump shift. Your exact footwork depends mainly on where you stand in the batter's box.



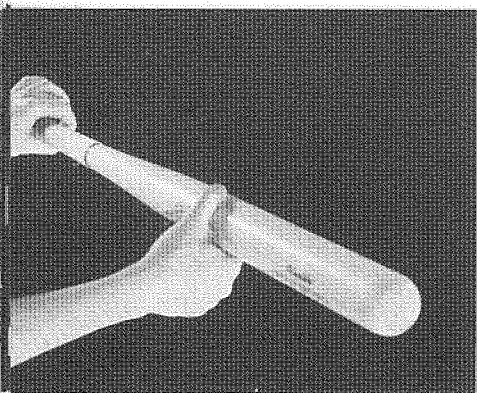
But whatever footwork you use, the important thing is to shift into a comfortable bunting stance as quickly as possible. And while you're pivoting, bring your bat out in front of the plate, sliding your upper hand into bunting position. Two types of grips are used in bunting.



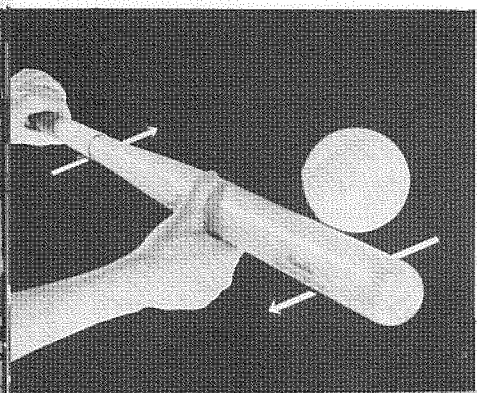
With either type, the upper hand grips the bat close to the trademark like this . . . with the thumb on top and the forefinger curled underneath.



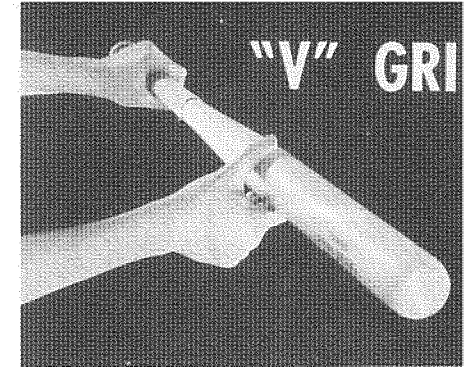
In the ring grip, the lower hand holds the bat lightly, with the thumb and forefinger meeting to form a ring around the handle.



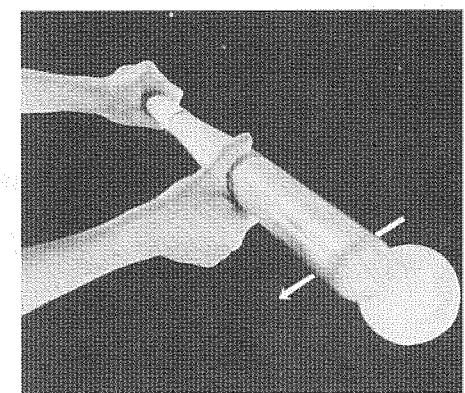
Using this grip, you hold the bat loosely with your lower hand and firmly with your upper hand.



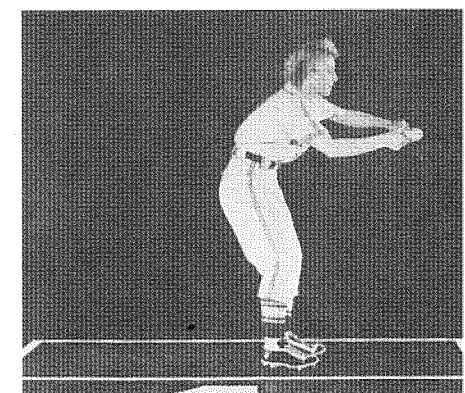
So when the ball hits, the bat pivots in your upper hand, with your other hand absorbing the shock. This deadens the impact, and keeps the ball from going too far.



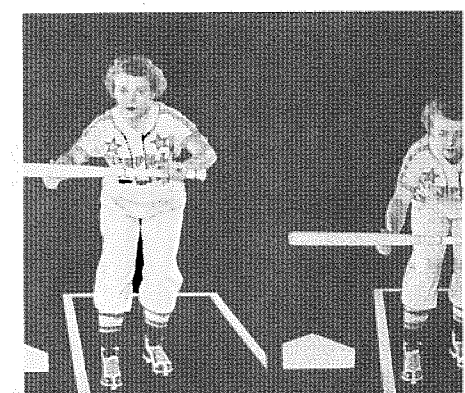
The "V" grip is the other type used for bunting. In this grip, the lower hand holds the bat firmly in the normal hitting grip. And the upper hand grips very lightly . . . leaving a "V" shaped space behind the bat, between the thumb and the curled forefinger.



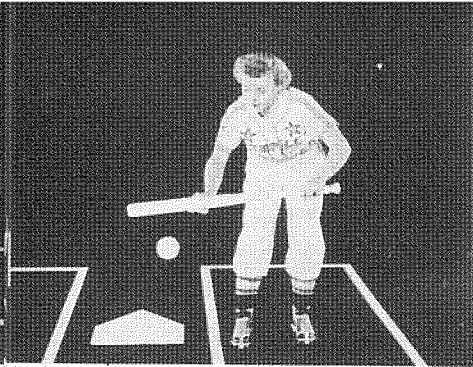
When the ball hits, the bat bounces back into the "V". Whichever grip you use for bunting, the important thing is to let the bat deaden the impact.



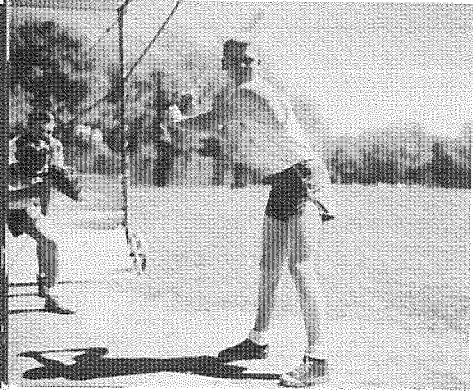
In the correct bunting position, your body is slightly crouched, weight a little forward. Your head is up, eyes on the ball. Your arms are relaxed and bent at the elbows. The bat is well in front of your body, and level with the ground. As the ball approaches . . .



. . . whether it comes in high or low, try to keep the bat as level as possible. Of course, you never bunt a really high pitch—one up around the shoulders—because there's too much chance of popping up. Get the bat in front of the ball by raising or lowering your body at the knees and waist. Move your arms as little as possible, trying to keep them nearly level with the ground.



A consistent hitter is a valuable member of any softball team. But the ability to bunt and hit safely isn't just something you're born with. It's a skill you can learn.



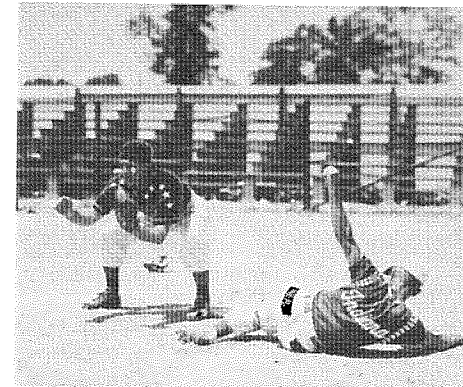
Even though you may develop your own individual hitting style, never violate the basic fundamentals. With careful study and constant practice of these fundamentals, you'll develop the confidence and the skill that wins ball games.

UNIT FIVE

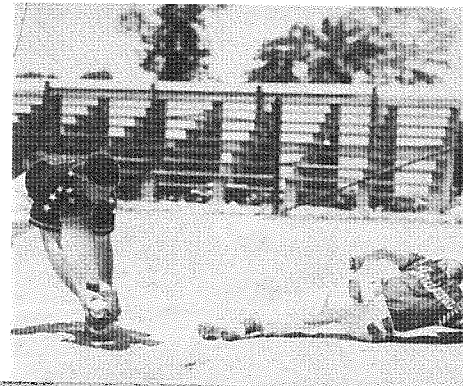
IMPROVE YOUR

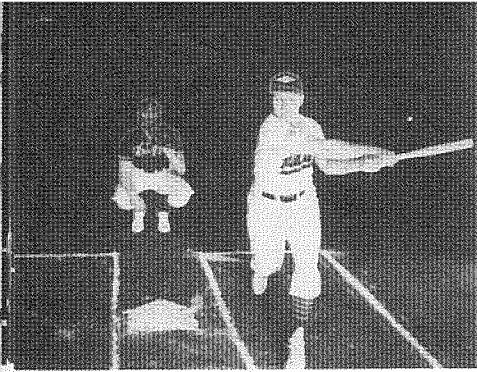
BASERUNNING

In a close, hard-fought game like softball, a single run is often the margin of victory.

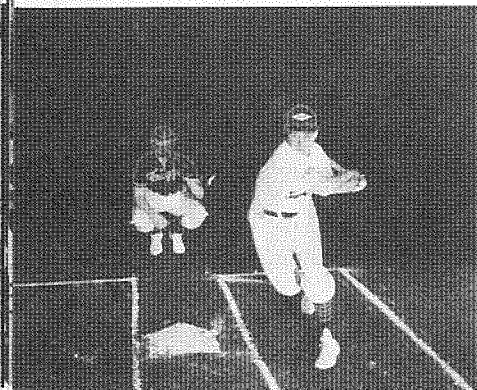


That's why a skillful, hustling base runner can mean the difference between a game won and a game lost. Good base running is a vital part of your team's offense.

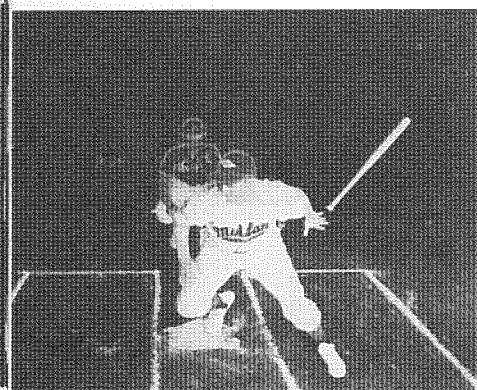




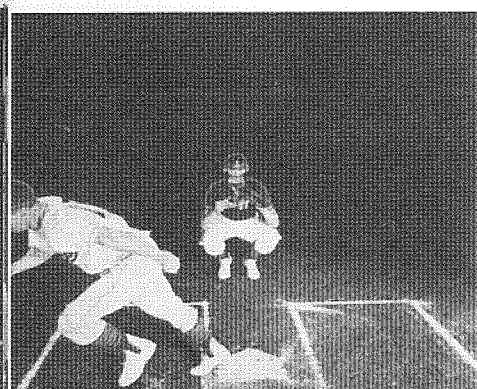
Your offensive play is only beginning after you hit the ball. After the hit, every split second counts in beating the throw to first. And you can save precious time by getting a good start.



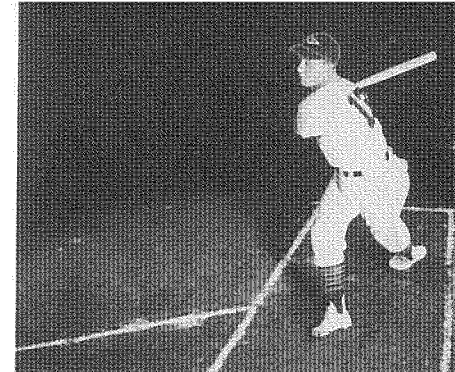
If you're a right handed batter, your swing carries you around and away from first base. At this point, your weight is concentrated on your left foot. So you can get your fastest start . . .



. . . by pushing off with your left foot and throwing your body toward first base. The left foot starts the drive.



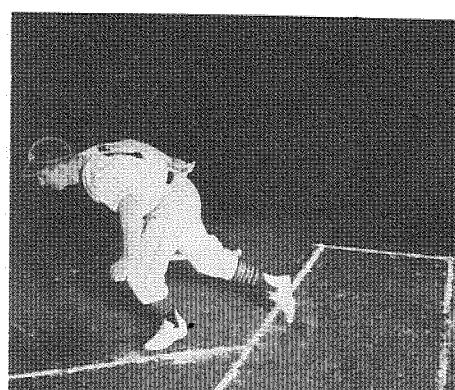
And your first step comes with the right foot. Now you dig hard for a straight run down the base line.



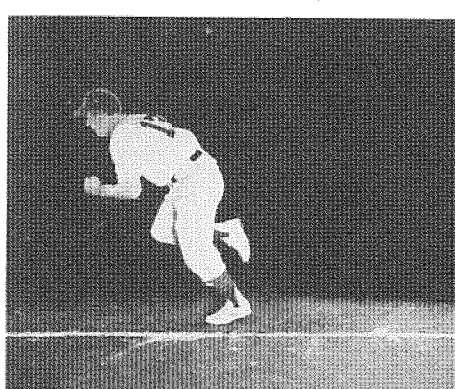
If you're a left handed hitter, your swing carries you around toward first base, and your momentum is sent in that direction. You can capitalize on that advantage . . .



. . . by pushing off on the ball of your right foot—where your weight is concentrated—and leaning your body in the direction of the run.



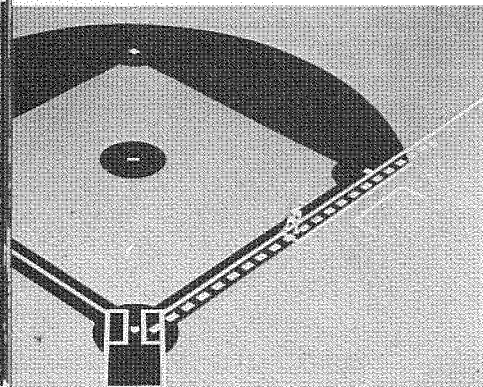
And—as a left handed hitter—you take your first step with your left foot.



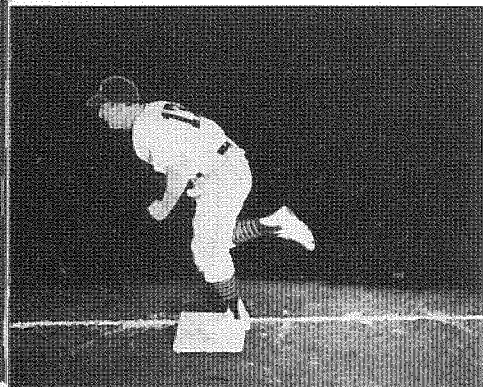
Then run, and run hard, for first base. In softball, where split seconds count, there's no such thing as an easy out. Real hustle will boost your batting average.



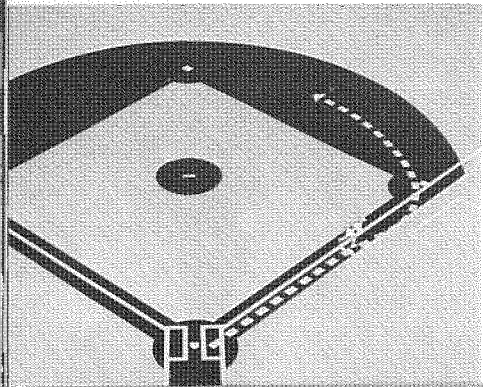
During the run to first base, take a quick look at what's happening to the ball, without slowing one bit. This will help you decide what to do when you get to first.



If it looks as though it will be close at first, follow a straight line to the bag, just outside the foul line. And don't try to stop. Run straight along the right field line . . .



. . . and keep running hard until after you've touched the bag. Don't try to hit the bag with a certain foot. Hit it naturally without breaking your stride.

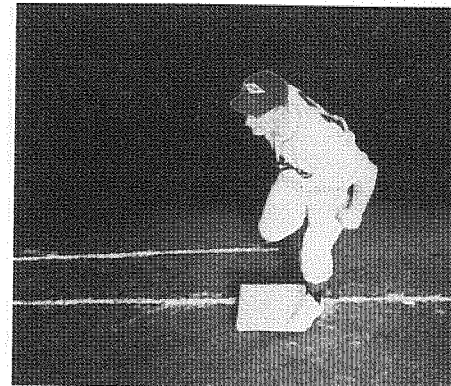


As you approach first base, you may see there's a chance of going on to second. As soon as you see this possibility, swing out toward the right to start curving, so you'll cut the inside corner of first base and continue in an easy curve toward second.

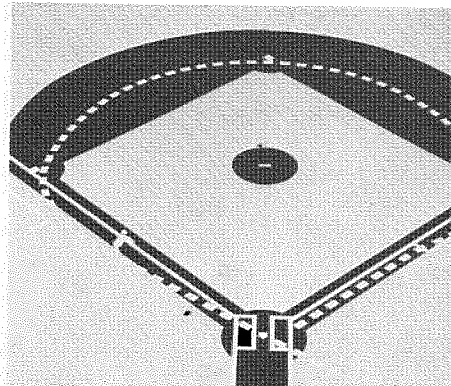
Here's how you start that curve coming down the first base line. Start by leaning a little to the right and taking a couple of steps at an angle away from the foul line.



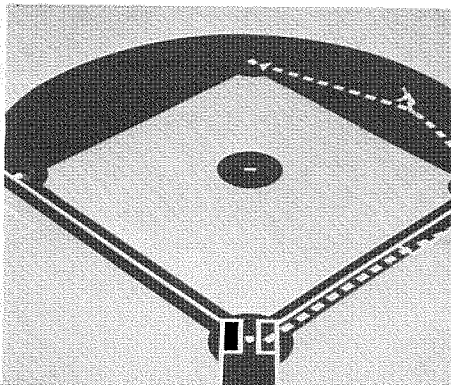
As you round the bag, hit the inside corner with whichever foot comes naturally in your stride. Then be ready to stop suddenly if necessary, or keep going if you can make it to second.

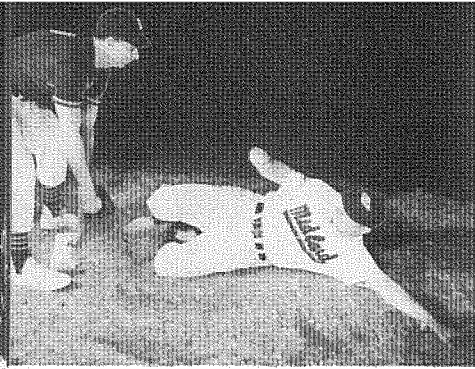


The run from first, through second, third and home is a continuation of the same flat curve you started at first base.

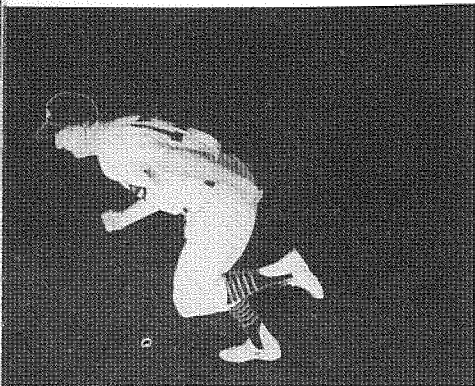
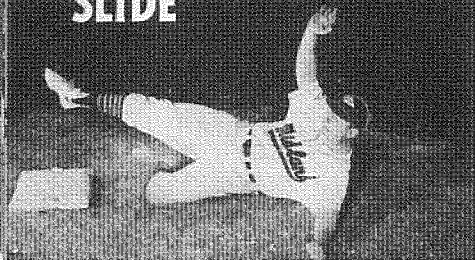


If you have to hustle to beat the throw into any base, straighten out your curve as quickly as possible and head directly for the base. If the play is going to be very close. . .





STRAIGHT-IN SLIDE



... you should slide. Sliding is a skill you can learn fairly easily. When you're learning, though, remember one very important rule: If you decide to slide ... **slide**. Never change your mind. It's when you change your mind that trouble begins.

The straight-in slide is the first of three basic slides. Let's see how you do it.

Don't slow down during your approach to the bag. Through practice, you'll learn how far away you should be when you take off for the slide. Take off on whichever foot is most natural to you. Here the runner is going to take off on his left foot. So he'll take one more step as he straightens up his body ...

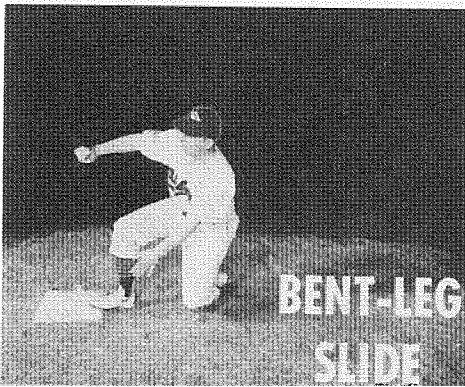
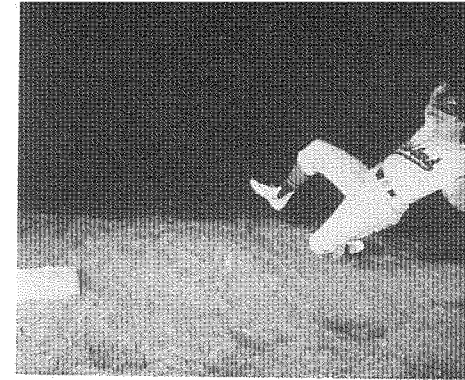
... and throws his weight back for the take-off on the left foot. Immediately after the take-off ...

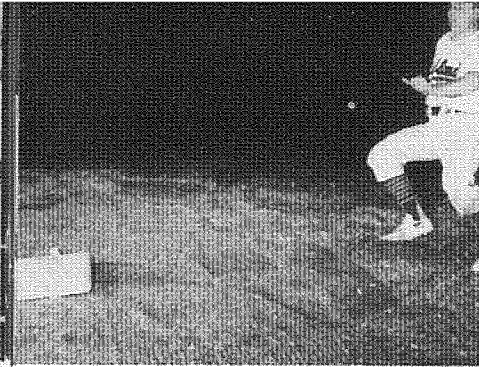
... bend the take-off leg under you. Lift the other leg well off the ground and stretch it toward the bag. Be sure you turn the foot of your bent leg sideways, so you don't catch the spikes in the ground.

The bent leg takes the shock of the fall, and you slide forward on it ...

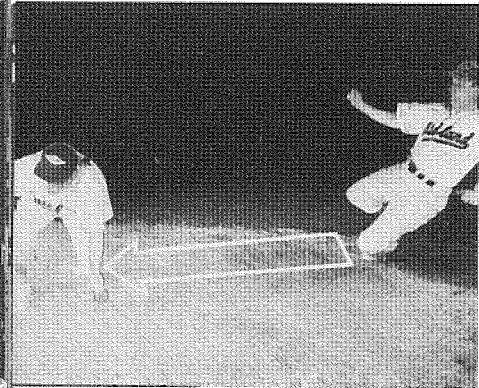
... until your leg hits the nearest side of the bag. That's all there is to the straight-in slide.

You use the bent-leg slide to reach the bag and then get back on your feet immediately, so you can go right on to the next base if you get the chance. This slide is much like the straight-in slide ...

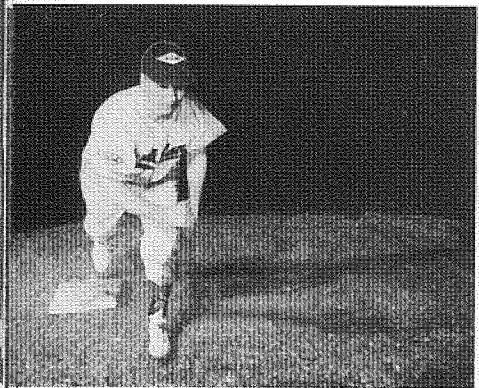




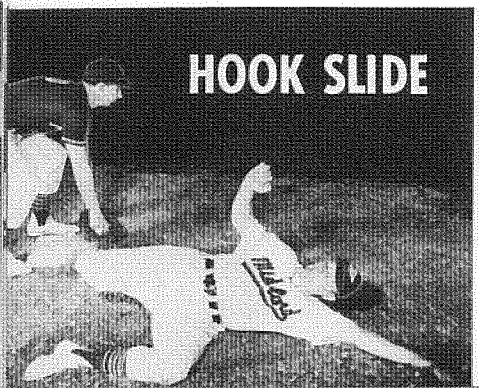
... except you take off closer to the bag, and you don't throw your weight back so far. Here the runner is taking off on his left foot.



Here's the full slide. Bend your take-off leg under you, and turn the foot sideways, just as in the straight-in slide. But keep your other leg bent at the knee. And as your foot hits the bag, throw your weight forward and upward until you're back on your feet.



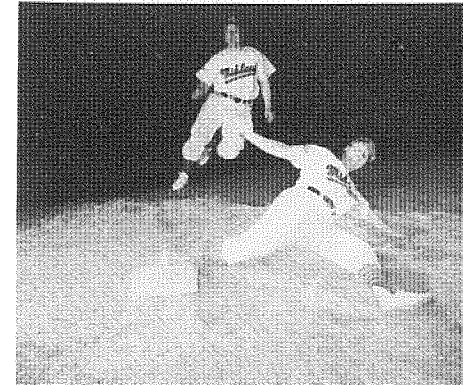
Then you're ready to keep right on going if you see the chance to advance another base.



The hook slide is the third basic slide. In this slide, one foot hooks the corner of the bag. You use it to keep from being tagged by giving the infielder as small a target as possible. You can hook slide to either the left or the right.



Here you're making a hook slide to your left, because you want to go into the bag on the side **away** from the infielder. During your approach to the base, you can see which way to slide to avoid the tag.



To make a hook slide to the left, this runner took off on his right foot . . . the foot most natural to him. After the take-off, bend both feet sideways to keep from catching spikes in the ground. Lean the upper part of your body back, and throw your weight to the left. As you slide in, the upper part of your left leg supports most of your weight.



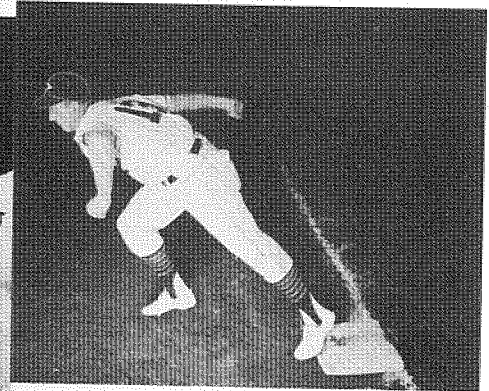
And you hook the corner of the bag with your right foot.



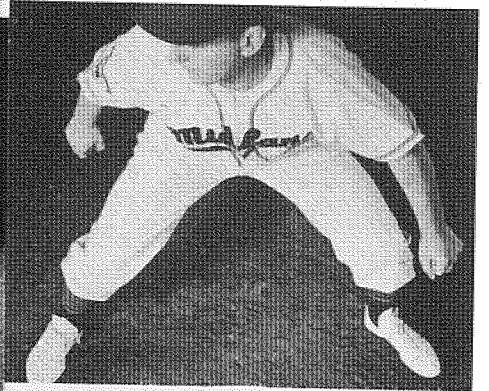
The hook slide to the right is made in the same way, except you throw your weight to the right, and slide in on the upper part of your right leg. And you hook the bag with your left foot. In sliding, just as in other skills, study the fundamentals, then practice carefully and steadily.



When holding a base, stand with your left foot against the edge of the bag, and your right leg one stride ahead, with your toe pointing toward the next base. Your knees are bent, your weight is forward, arms in front of you. Keep your eye on the ball. As soon as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand . . .



. . . go! But don't take more than two or three steps toward the next base if the ball isn't hit.

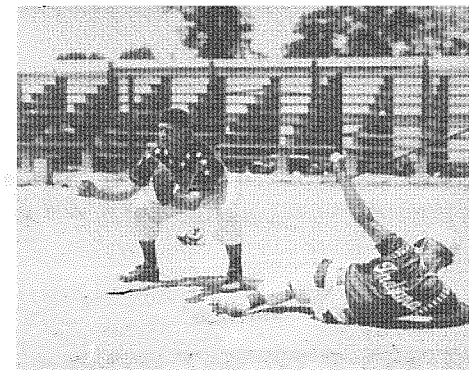


Be ready to jam on the brakes, pivot, and hustle back to your base, so you don't get picked off. But if you're going to continue on to the next base . . .



. . . dig, and dig hard, driving your body along the base line. Don't let anything stop you from beating the throw. It's never impossible until the umpire calls you out.

If you have the courage and the hustle that makes you want to win, you'll develop the skill that makes a good base runner. And if you're a good base runner, you're a big part of a winning offense in softball.



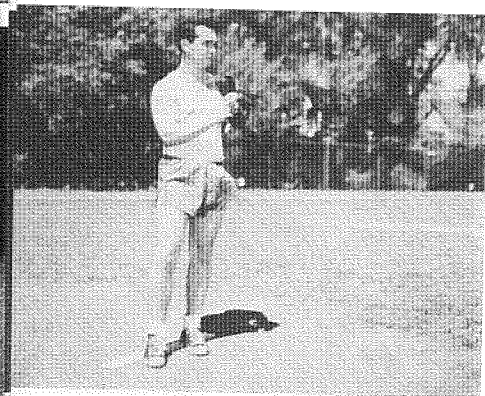
SOFTBALL

... dig, and dig hard, driving your body along the base line. Don't let anything stop you from beating the throw. It's never impossible until the umpire calls you out.

UNIT SIX

IMPROVE YOUR

PITCHING

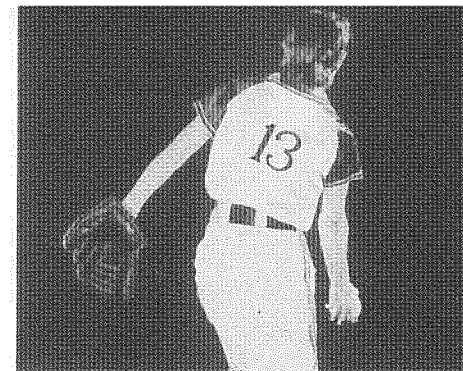


In no other team sport is one man more important than the pitcher in softball. The pitcher can make or break a softball team.

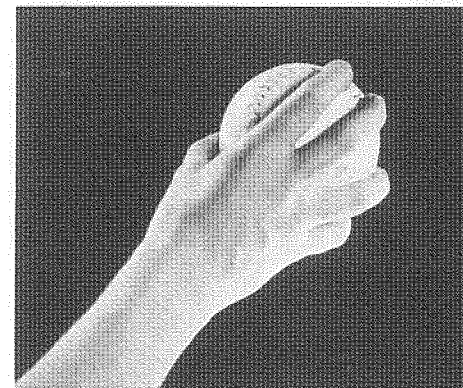


Pitching is the most highly developed of all the skills in softball. But if you're willing to study and practice the fundamentals, it's a skill you can learn. Let's examine the fundamentals.

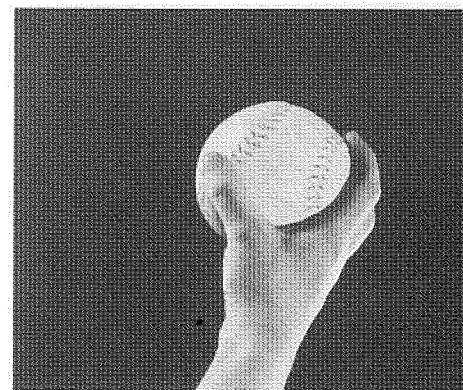
The ball must be delivered underhand, with the wrist no farther from your body than the elbow. Perfecting this underhand motion is your first job when you're learning to pitch.



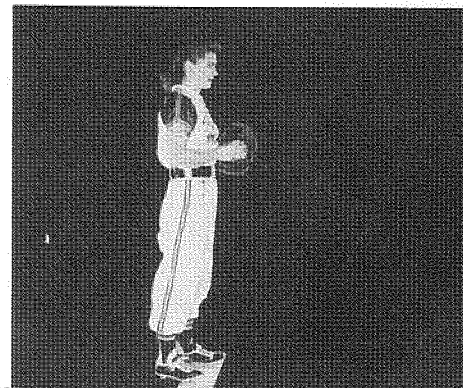
The right grip on the ball is essential. This is the basic grip for a softball pitcher . . . the one you'll use for fast balls. Your first two fingers grip the ball across the seam, and your third and fourth fingers rest against the side.

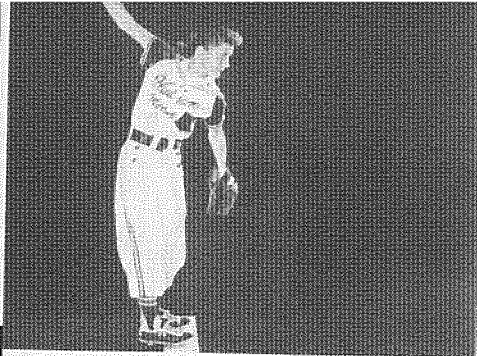


This is how the grip looks to you as you're getting ready to pitch. Your thumb grips the ball on top, across the seam if possible.

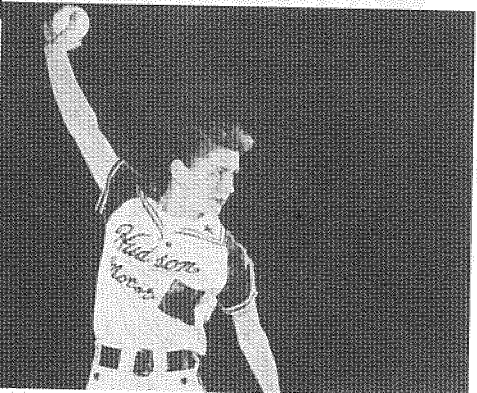


This is the correct starting position for every pitch. Stand with both feet in contact with the pitching rubber . . . feet comfortably spread, maybe 12 or 14 inches apart. Face directly toward home plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of your body.

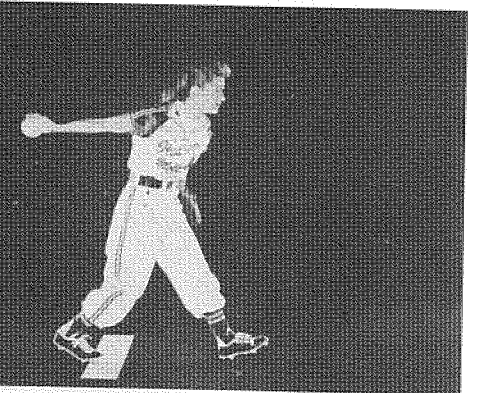




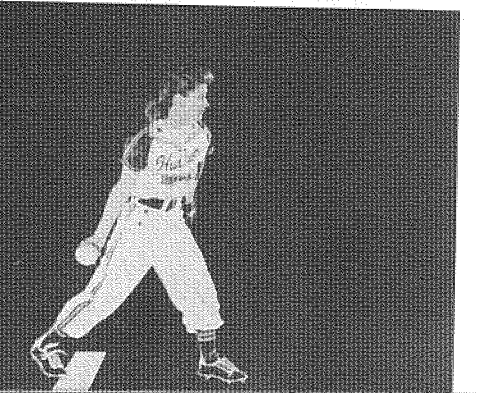
To get the feel of the underhand throw, just draw your arm directly back . . . as far back as you can reach comfortably.



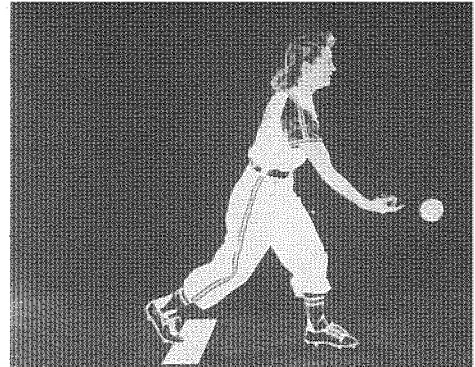
Your wrist should be cocked back like this. But don't strain. Just lay it back naturally, as if trying to reach an extra inch or two back and up with the ball.



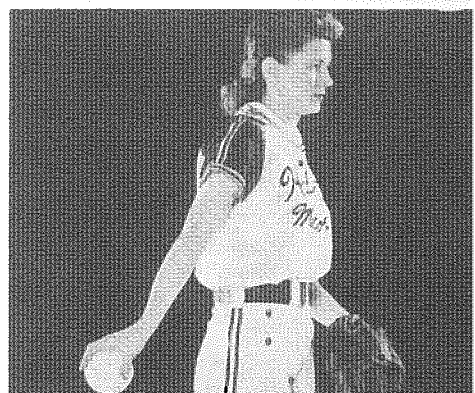
As you begin swinging your arm forward in an easy whipping action, take a natural stride with your left foot, directly toward home plate. Your arm is straight, but your wrist still is bent back comfortably.



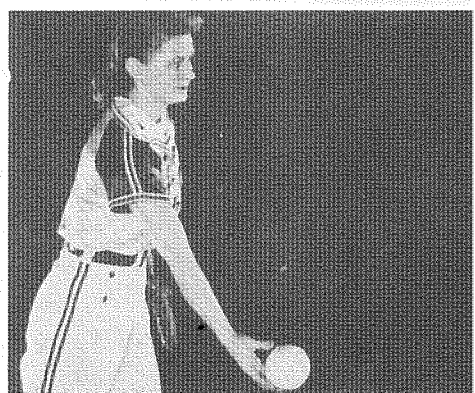
This is the crucial point in your throw . . . when your arm gets about even with your body, just before you're ready to release the ball . . .



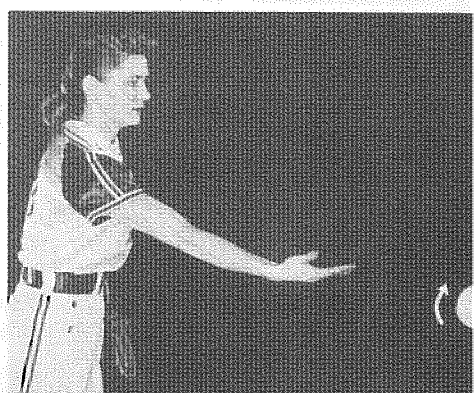
. . . because here you snap your wrist forward, to put the last bit of power into your throw before you release the ball. Practice this snap alone for awhile.



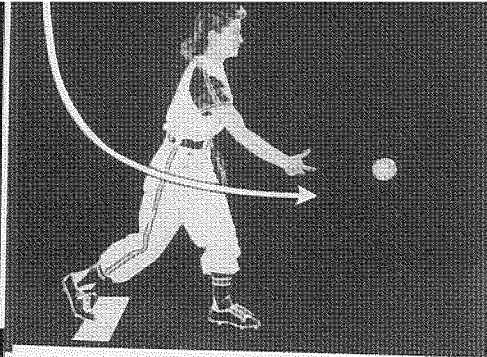
To practice the basic wrist snap, start with your arm hanging down at your side in this position, with your wrist cocked back comfortably.



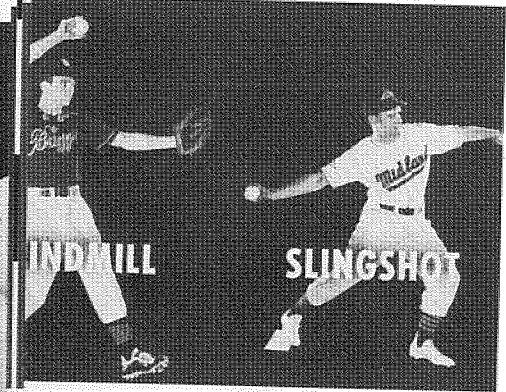
Then snap your arm forward, concentrating on your wrist action. Let your hand and fingers feel like the end of a cracking whip. You're trying to snap the ball as far and straight as you can.



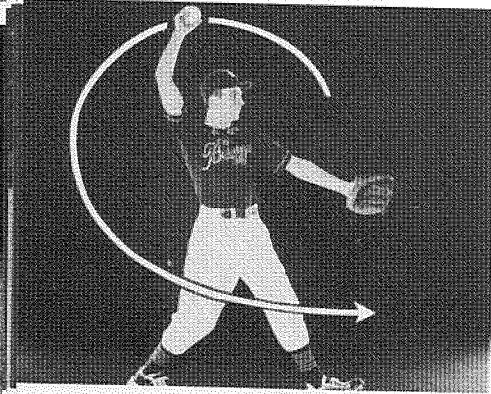
As you complete the snap, let the ball roll off your finger tips when you release it, and it will leave your hand with a forward spin. That's the wrist snap and release for the fast ball. After you've practiced the snap until it feels natural to you . . .



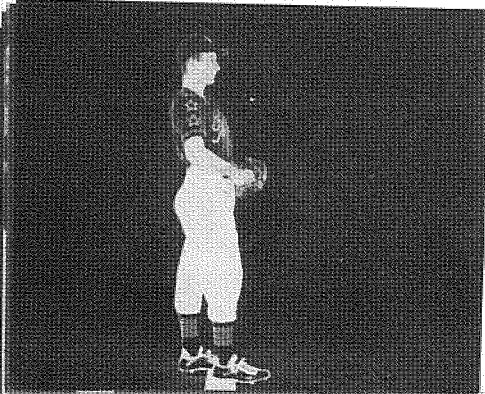
... use it with the full arm and body motion ... whipping your arm forward with the wrist cocked, and snapping the wrist as you release the ball. Practice this basic underhand delivery until it comes smoothly and easily. Then you're ready to go on to the complete pitching motion.



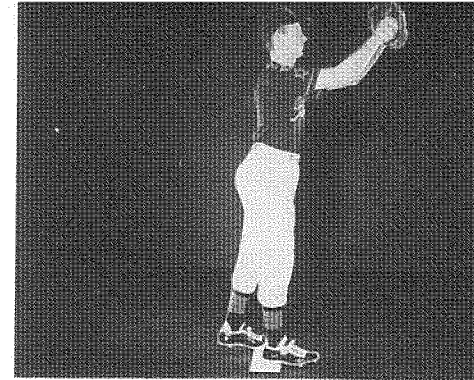
There are two types of motions commonly used by softball pitchers—the windmill and the slingshot. The purpose of both motions is to get the full power of your legs, body, and arm behind every pitch. Which one you use depends on personal preference. Try them both ... then stick to the one that works best for you.



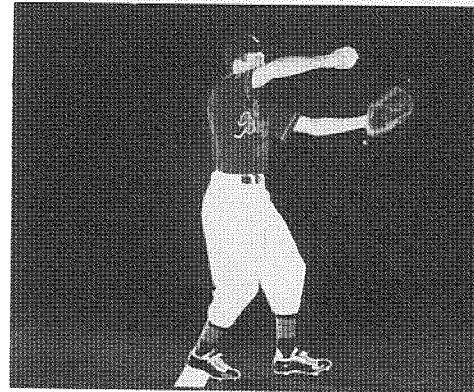
First let's analyze the windmill motion. In this delivery, the ball travels through almost a complete circle as you swing your arm up and around before you complete the pitch. Here's how you do it.



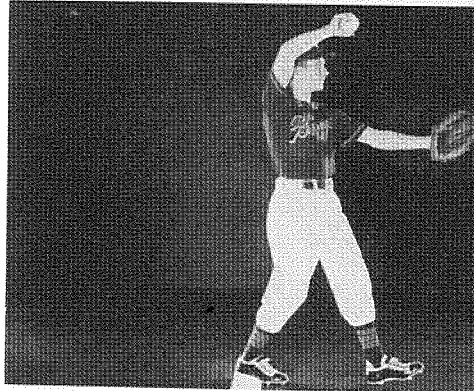
Begin with the same basic starting position ... holding the ball in both hands in front of you. To start your pitching motion ...



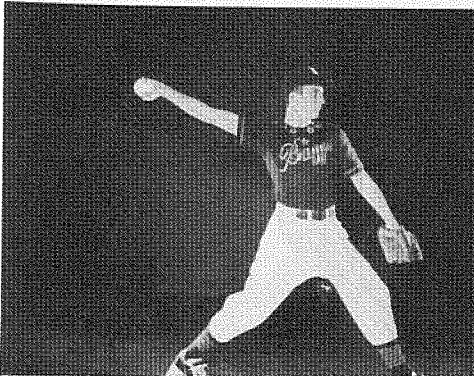
... swing both arms forward and upward, reaching out without straining. At the same time, your weight shifts over to the right foot. From this position ...



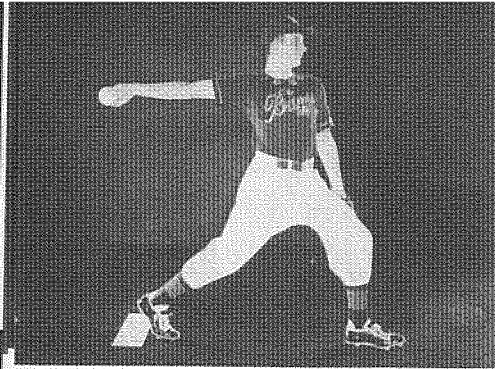
... you pull the ball out of your glove as your pitching arm continues swinging upward. Your left foot lifts off the rubber and starts moving forward to keep your balance.



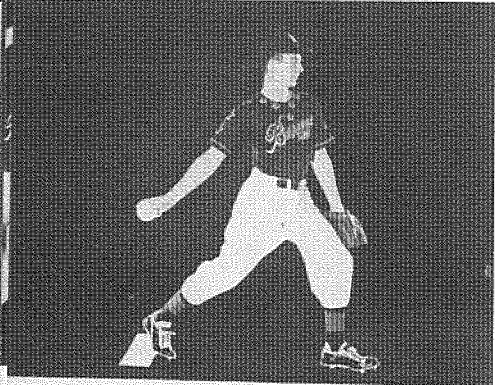
Your arm continues up and back, with your weight still on your right foot and your left foot still moving toward home plate.



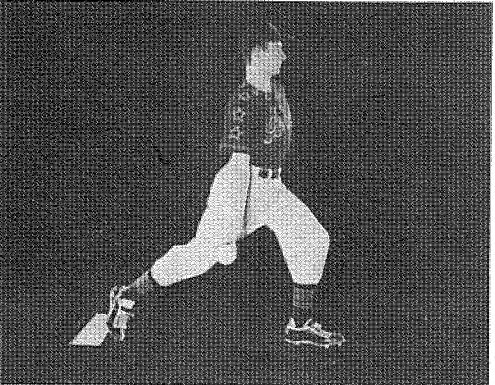
Your arm straightens out and your wrist cocks back, as your downward swing begins to gather momentum. Now your left foot has completed its glide toward the plate.



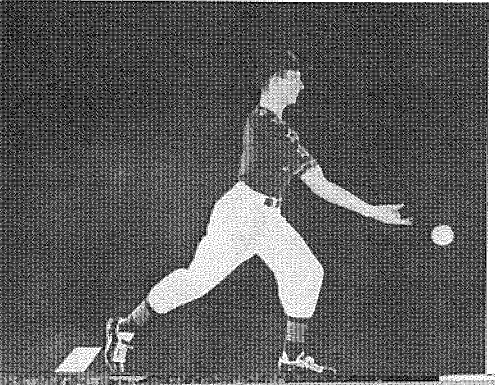
And your weight begins to shift onto your left foot as you push forward with your right.



Your whipping arm action is the same as you learned before, but you're adding all the power of your legs and body as you thrust your weight forward against your braced leg.



Just before you get to the release position, the upper part of your body is turning to face home plate, and your wrist is still cocked back . . .

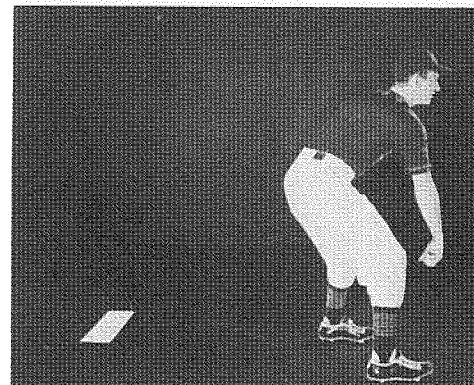


. . . for the final powerful snap, whipping the ball out of your hand, with your body turned directly toward the plate. Now you've released the ball . . .

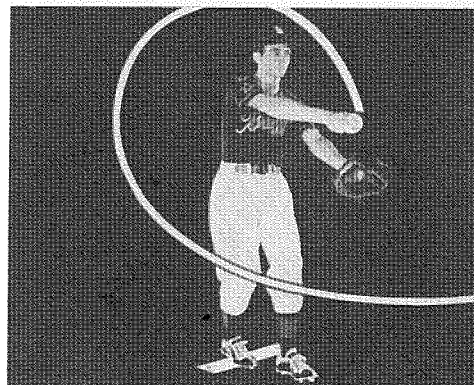
. . . but your pitching motion continues in a full follow through. All your weight is still on your left foot, but your right foot begins to swing forward naturally.



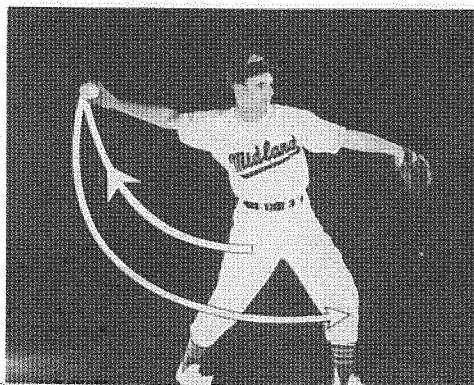
The follow through ends with your right foot up about even with your left, and your weight balanced, so you're ready to field the ball if it should be hit back in your direction.

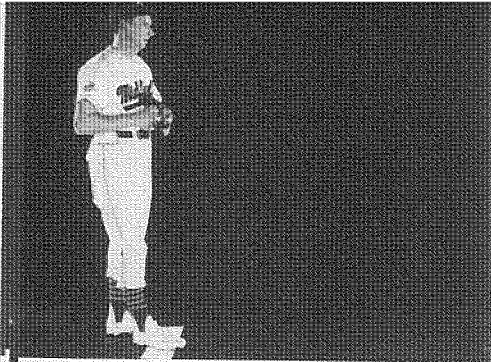


In the complete windmill pitching motion, the ball travels through a long, looping arc. The swing up, back, and down to gather momentum . . . the whip of the arm and wrist as you put the full power of your body behind the pitch . . . and the full follow through. If this is the delivery that seems most natural to you, practice it to develop speed and control.

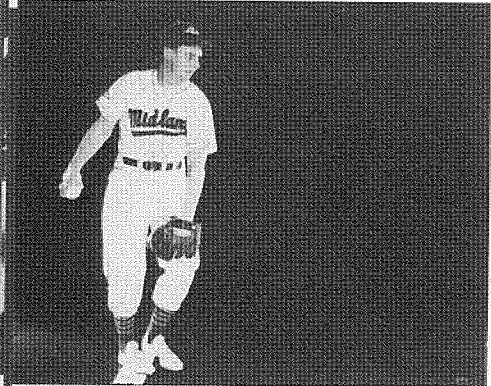


This is the slingshot delivery. Here the ball travels back and up to the layback position . . . then whips down and forward to complete the pitching motion. Let's see how you do it.

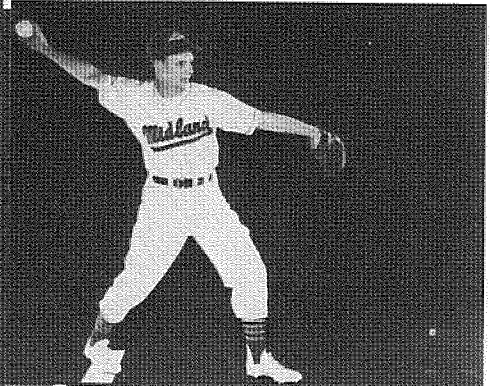




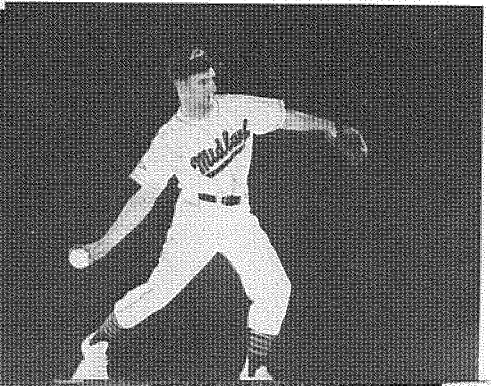
Again you begin with the same basic starting position, with your weight balanced on both feet.



Shift your weight to the right foot, pivoting your body to the right so your left shoulder faces home plate. Your left foot rises off the ground to begin the stride toward the plate. As you begin swinging your arm back, your wrist is bent loosely forward.

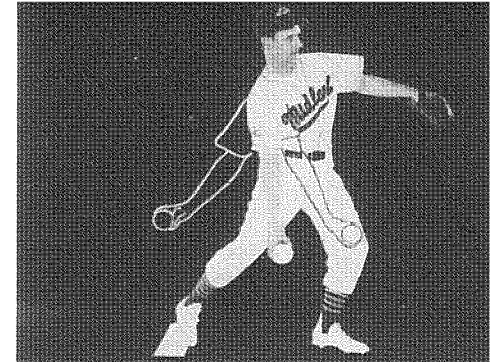


At the top of the backswing, your wrist bends back into the cocked position. You're reaching back and up as far as you can comfortably, just as in the basic delivery you learned earlier. Now you've completed your stride toward the plate, but your weight is still concentrated on your back foot.

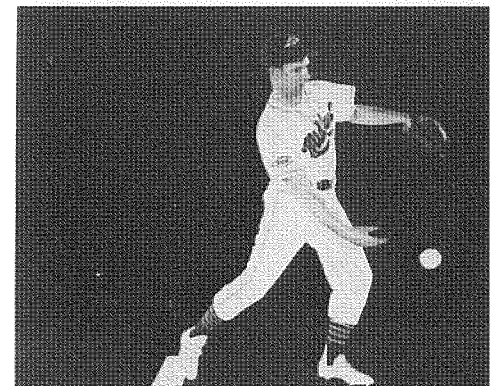


As you whip your arm down, your weight pushes forward onto your left foot, and your body begins to pivot toward the plate. Your wrist is cocked back, and your hand is turned out slightly at the wrist. But your wrist is no farther from your body than the elbow.

Here's the critical part of your delivery . . . the snap of the wrist as the ball reaches the release point . . . the same snap you've learned before. You continue pushing your weight forward onto your left foot.



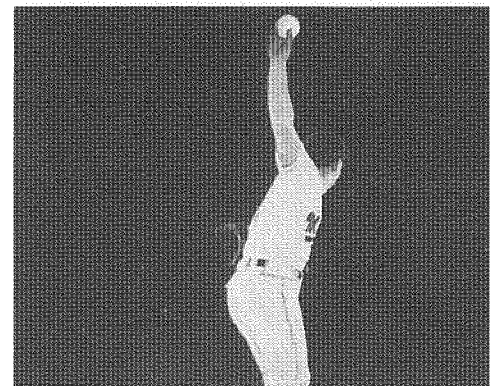
And as you complete the wrist snap and the whipping action, you've put all your weight and power behind the pitch. But don't stop after you release the ball.

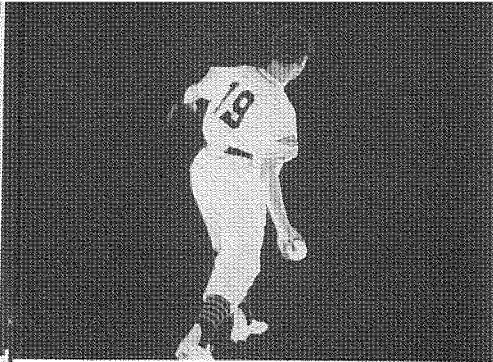


Follow through . . . letting your right foot swing forward into a comfortable position. When you complete the follow through, your weight is balanced on both feet, and you're ready to field the ball if necessary.

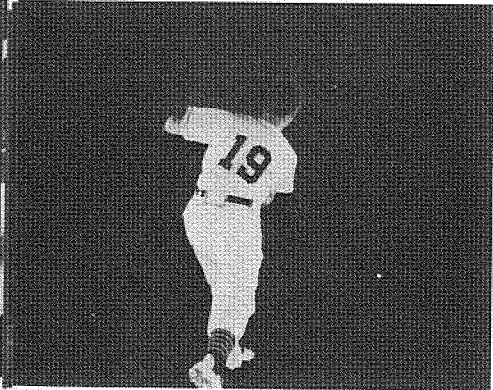


Here again is your layback position for the slingshot delivery . . . reaching all the way back and up with your wrist bent back, and your body pivoted well around. You're poised for the downward whipping action.

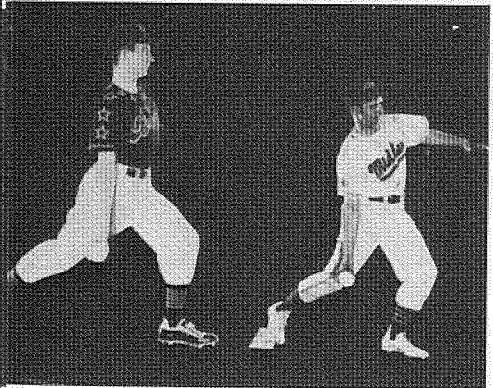




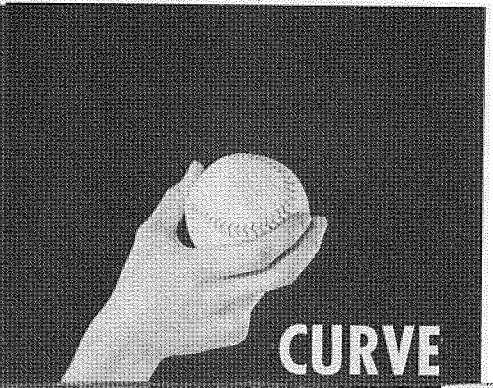
Here you are just before the wrist snap ... your hand bent back and turned out slightly at the wrist. Your body begins to pivot back toward the plate.



As you complete the pitch, your body turns to follow your hand toward home plate, and you begin your full follow through.



Whether you use the windmill or the slingshot delivery, the whipping motion, wrist action, and follow through are basically the same. Once you've found which delivery works best for you, practice, and still more practice, will give you the speed and control that are your most important weapons as a softball pitcher. After you've developed speed and control, you can easily learn other types of pitches.

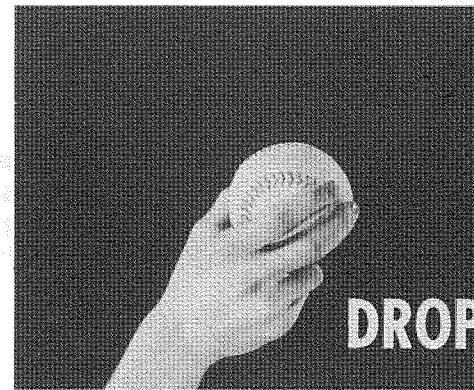


Your grip for the curve ball is the same as for the fast ball, except you grip it with your first two fingers in the narrow space between the seams. Your pitching motion is exactly the same, right up until the moment you're ready to release the ball. But just as you release it ...

... snap your wrist sharply to your left. This causes the ball to roll off the inside of your first two fingers ... so it spins horizontally, from right to left. That makes it curve to your left, away from a right handed hitter.



To pitch a drop ball, your grip is the same as for a fast ball, with your first two fingers across the seam. Your pitching motion is also the same ...

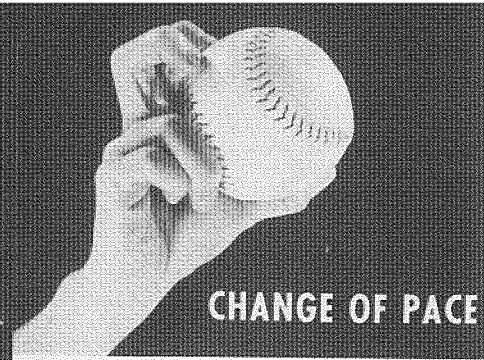


... except the instant before you release it, you first lift your thumb off the ball ...

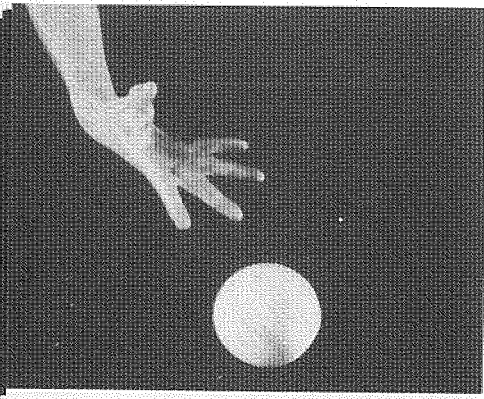


... then snap your first two fingers sharply upward. This gives the ball an extra fast forward spin, causing it to curve downward, or drop.

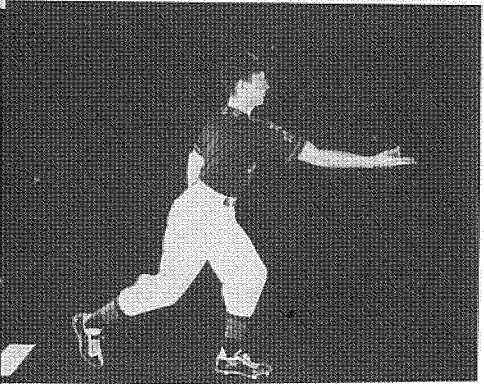




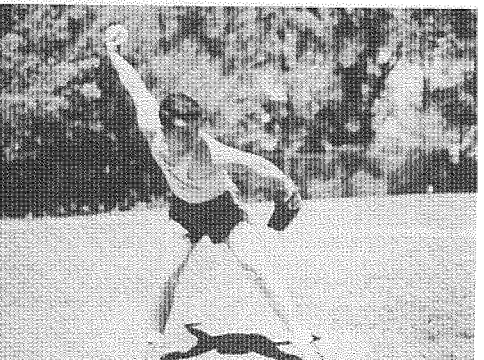
To pitch a change of pace, or slow ball, use this knuckle ball grip. Bend your first two fingers back, digging your nails into the ball. Your thumb and your third finger apply the same amount of pressure to the other sides of the ball. Using this grip, your pitching motion is the same as for a fast ball, except the instant you release the ball . . .



. . . open your hand by snapping all four fingers and your thumb straight out. When you release your pressure all the way around the ball at exactly the same time, the ball leaves your hand without spinning . . . so it seems to float up to the plate.



Use the same motion for every pitch . . . whether it's a fast ball, curve, drop, or change of pace. With these four pitches, wisely used, you'll have all the "stuff" you need. But even more important than an assortment of pitches is control.



And control comes only with practice. Learn the fundamentals, then practice them at every opportunity . . . and you're well on the way toward the pitching skill that can make you a valuable member of a winning softball team.

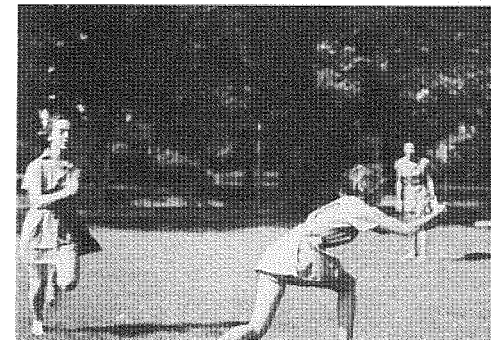
UNIT SEVEN

IMPROVE YOUR

BASE PLAY



Defensive skill is the responsibility of every member of a softball team. But fielding ground balls and fly balls is only part of a good defense.



Getting that base runner out is the real purpose of your defense. And to make a putout in this high-speed game, you have to know how to cover the base . . . the fundamentals of base play. Let's examine those fundamentals.



The first thing to learn in playing any base is receiving the ball properly... catching the throw of another fielder. Just as you learned in the fielding unit of this series, there are two positions for your hands in making the catch.



If the throw is coming in above your waist, point your fingers upward, with your thumbs close together.

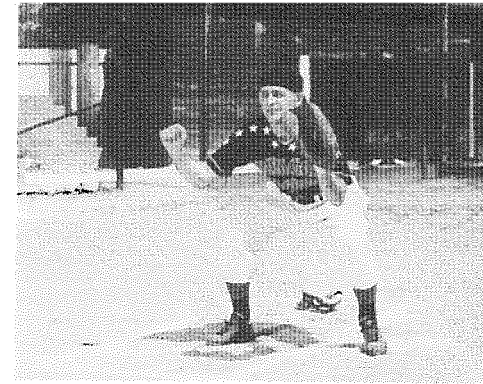


If it's coming below the waist, point your fingers down. And don't tighten up as the ball approaches. Stay relaxed. As the ball enters your glove...

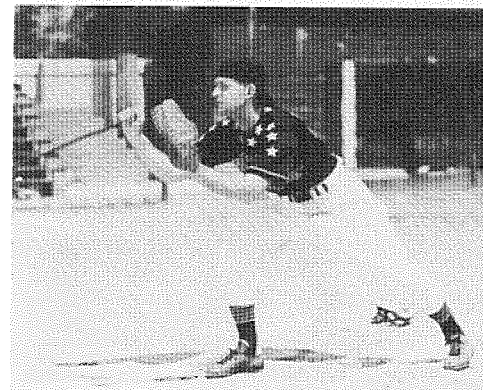


... let your hand move back with the ball to absorb the shock. At the same time, of course, your bare hand rolls over to trap the ball. When you stay relaxed with every catch, you won't find the ball popping out of your glove.

Now let's look at the basic method for completing a force play. This is the catcher's position in waiting for a force at home, but the fundamentals are the same at other bases. Since you don't have to tag the runner, just stand with your left foot on the front of the base, facing the direction of the throw.



Keep your left foot on the base and step forward with your right foot as you receive the ball. Stretch to get the ball as soon as possible, because every split second counts in making a putout. As soon as you've caught the ball...



... pull your left foot off the base, out of the way of the runner coming in. Then, if there's a chance to complete a double play...

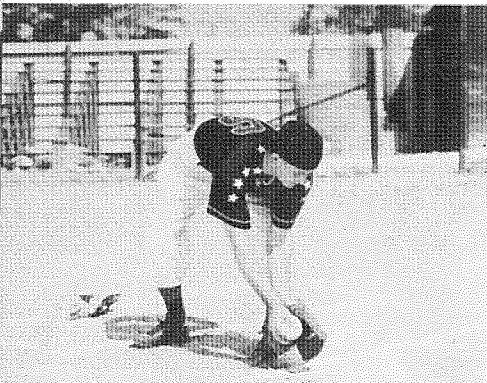


... continue swinging your left foot forward in a stride toward your target, as you pivot around on your right foot. At the same time, you're getting into the layback position the quickest possible way.





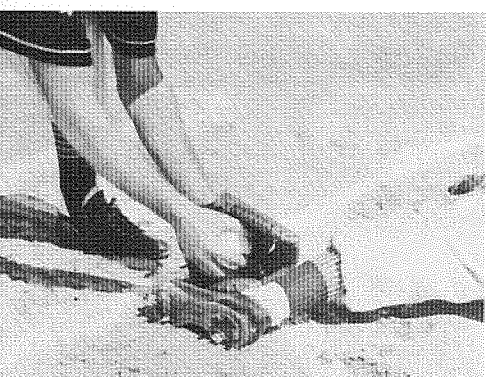
This is your position when you have to **tag** the runner trying to get to home plate. Stand with your legs comfortably spread facing the throw. Stay inside the baseline, keeping your feet out of the way of the runner coming in. As soon as you catch the ball . . .



. . . swing down into this position, using your bare hand to keep the ball firmly trapped in your glove. Never tag with only one hand unless there's no other way to make the play.

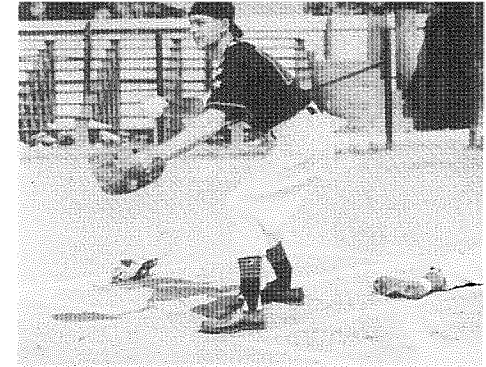


Don't reach for the runner. Wait for him. And hold your glove so it protects your bare hand from spikes. Waiting in this position . . .

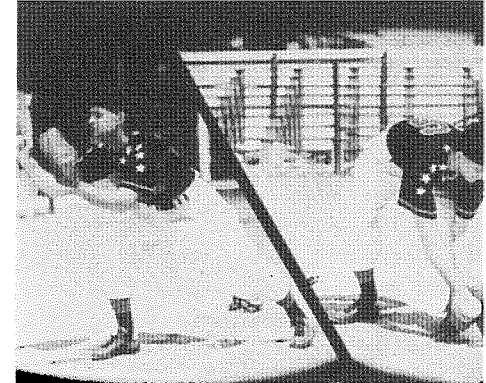


. . . let the runner tag **himself** out when his foot touches your glove. At the same time, you avoid body contact with the runner. As soon as you've made the tag . . .

. . . get right into throwing position, using whatever footwork is quickest and easiest. You want to get set for a play at some other base as quickly as possible.



Here again are the two basic methods of making putouts at home plate. Although you have to learn many variations for plays at other bases, the fundamentals are the same. In **all** forceouts and tag plays, you have three points to remember:

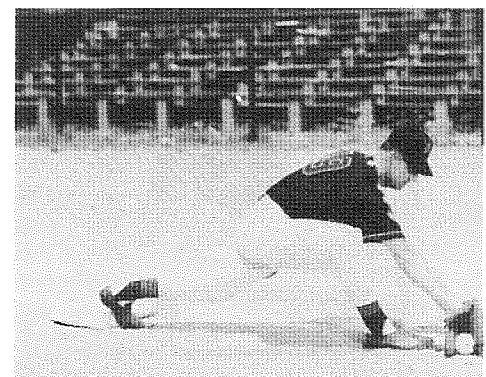


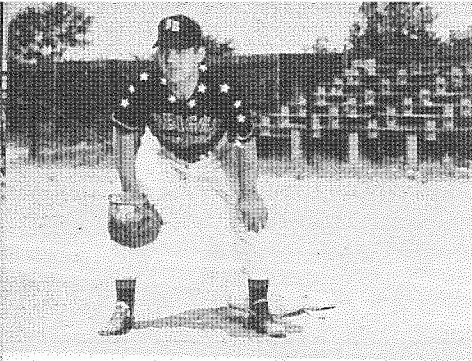
First, of course, make the putout. Second, while you're getting the runner, avoid body contact with him. And finally, be ready to make your throw if there's a chance for a play at another base. Keeping these points in mind, let's learn some of the variations in base plays.



1. Make Putout
2. Avoid Body Contact
3. Make Throw

In covering first base, you have to be ready for bad throws as well as good ones, because softball infielders seldom have time to get set before throwing. It takes nimble footwork to complete force plays at first base.





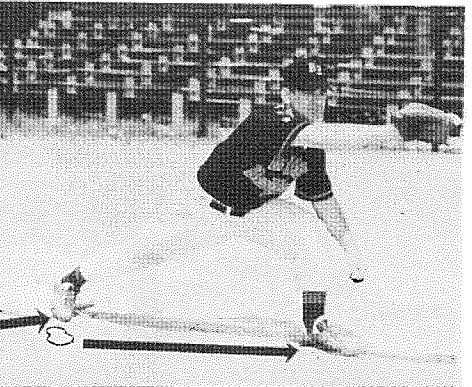
This is your position waiting for the throw at first. Stand with your legs comfortably spread, a foot or two from the base, facing directly toward the throw. If the ball comes straight at you . . .



. . . step toward the throw with your right foot and touch the edge of the base with your left as you make the catch. As you speed it up, this footwork becomes a jump shift. Notice your position is the same as the basic force play we learned earlier.

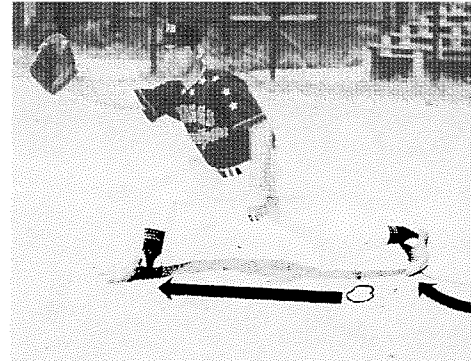


Now, again starting with your position waiting for the throw, let's see your footwork for a wide throw. If the ball comes in to your left . . .



. . . shift your feet like this as you make the catch . . . stepping to the left with your left foot, and touching the nearest side of the base with your right foot. If the throw is wide to the right . . .

. . . shift like this to receive the ball . . . stepping to the right with your right foot, and touching the nearest edge of the base with your left. In every force play, of course, as soon as you've made the catch, you pull your foot off the base and get set for a throw, if necessary. While most putouts at first are force plays . . .



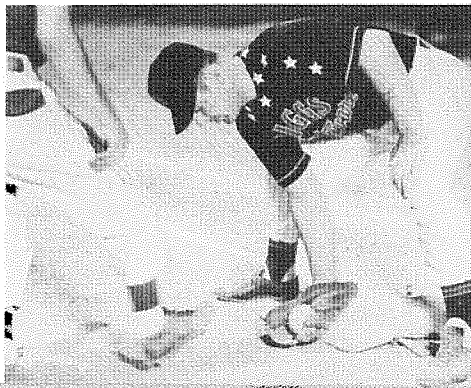
. . . with a runner on base, there's the possibility of a pick-off play, with a throw from the catcher. And here the first baseman must be ready to tag the runner.



This is the position of a left-handed first baseman waiting for the catcher's throw. Straddle the base, with both feet in fair territory, about six inches from the edge of the bag. Turn the upper part of your body to face the throw. When you receive the ball . . .

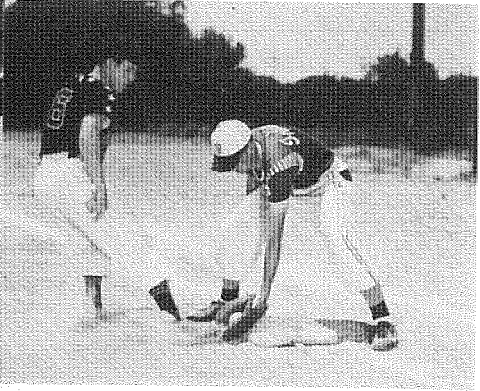


. . . swing your glove down to the inside of the base, so the runner must tag himself before he can get his foot back on the bag.

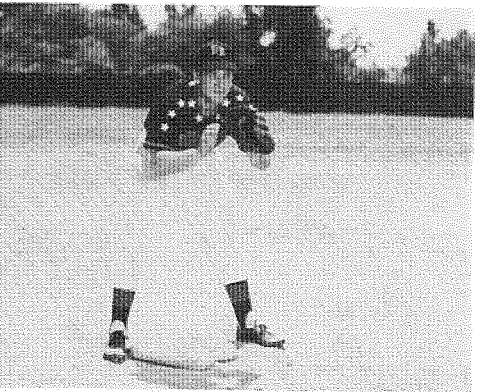




This is how a **right**-handed first baseman waits for the throw in a pick-off play. Straddle the bag, but with your left foot in foul territory, about six inches from the edge of the bag. Turn the upper part of your body to face the throw. When you receive the ball . . .



. . . just swing your glove down into the runner's path to make the putout.



Putouts at second and third mean still other variations. This is your stance for all tag plays at third base . . . and for tag plays at second when the throw is coming from the infield or from right field. Straddle the bag on the side away from the runner, with the upper part of your body turned toward the throw. But if the throw to second is from left field or center field, you'll have to face the other way.



If the throw is from left field, stand on the right field side of the bag, facing the throw. Your legs are comfortably spread, and your left foot is a few inches from the corner of the bag. When you receive the ball . . .

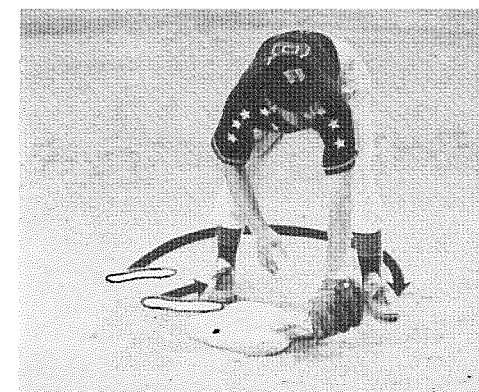
. . . pivot around to your left on your left toe, swinging your right foot into position at the other corner of the bag. Now you're facing the runner, with your glove in tagging position in the runner's path.



If the throw is from center field, stand on the left field side of the bag . . . facing the throw, with your legs comfortably spread. When you make the catch . . .



. . . pivot to your right on your right toe, and swing your left foot into a balanced position on the other side of the base, but out of the runner's path. At the same time, of course, you bring your glove down for the tag on the runner's side of the base.



Force plays are especially important at second base, because they're often the beginning of double plays. And since both the shortstop and second baseman normally play some distance from the base, they seldom use the basic force play technique we learned earlier.

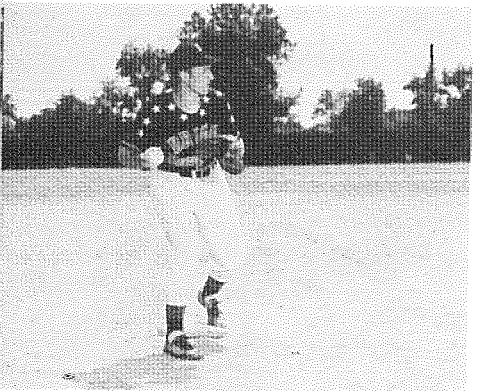




Let's see how the second baseman makes the putout. Through experience, you'll develop your own variations of this play. But this is the method to learn. Time your run so you'll meet the thrown ball at the base . . .



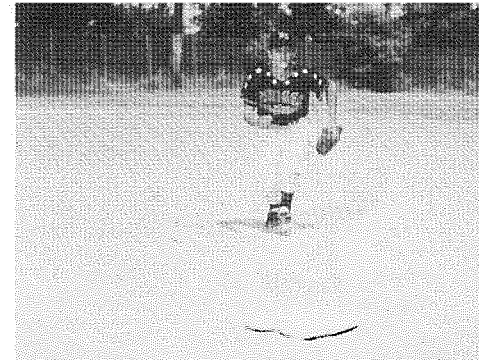
. . . at the same time you step on the bag with your left foot. This will come easily with practice. After you make the catch . . .



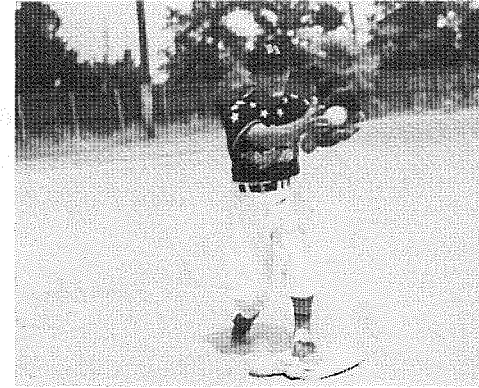
. . . take one more step with your right foot. Now when you pull your left foot off the bag, you're clear of the runner. If there's a chance for a double play . . .



. . . pivot on your right foot as you stride toward the target with your left foot, going into layback position. Now you're ready to complete the throw. That's how the second baseman makes the play.



The shortstop's footwork is much the same, except he starts from the opposite side of the bag. Again, time your run . . .



. . . to meet the throw right at the base, at the same time you step on the bag with your left foot.



Take one more step with your right foot to get clear of the runner.



For the throw to first, swing your left foot around in a long stride toward the target as you pivot on your right foot. When you practice these pivot plays, you'll find that they're **not** step-by-step patterns of footwork, but smooth, almost instantaneous motions that develop naturally.



Sometimes you have to make a putout in the baseline, when you receive a throw or batted ball in the runner's path. But don't jab at the runner.



Hold your arms out across the runner's path, with the back of the glove toward the runner, and your bare hand firmly over the ball. Let the runner tag **himself** out.



And let your arms and hands "give" as the runner goes by. This way you make the putout without having the ball knocked out of your glove. It also prevents injury. And you keep your balance, ready to make a throw if necessary. And you'll remember these are the points to keep in mind in **all** base play.



When you learn the fundamentals of base play, and practice them until they come naturally, you'll be able to cover any base smoothly and skillfully. You'll help your team convert potential runs into putouts. And that's a big part of winning softball.

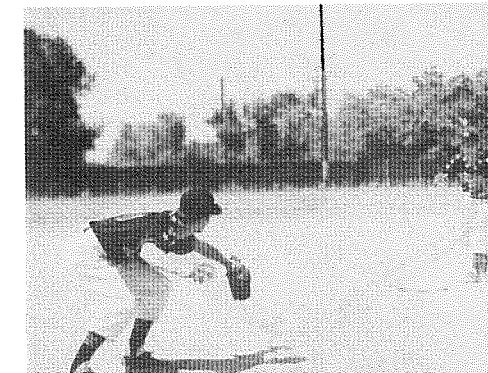
IMPROVE YOUR

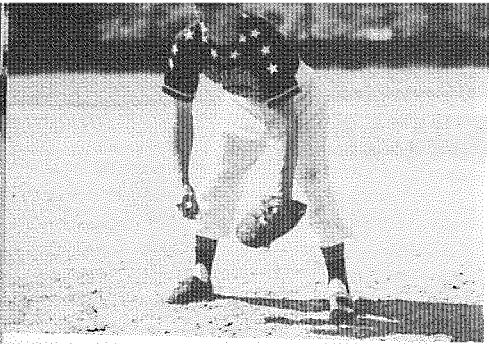
DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAY

Softball is a team game. And nowhere is teamwork more important than when you take the field on defense.

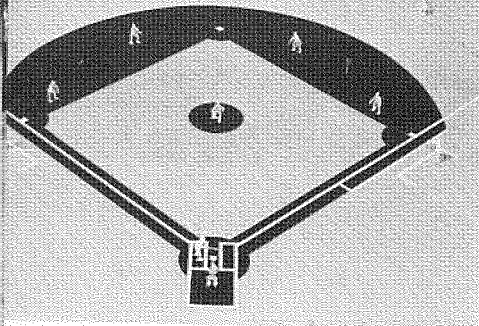


Any winning defense takes more than individual skill. It takes team play... a well coordinated, smooth running defensive unit, with every player knowing exactly what to do and when to do it.

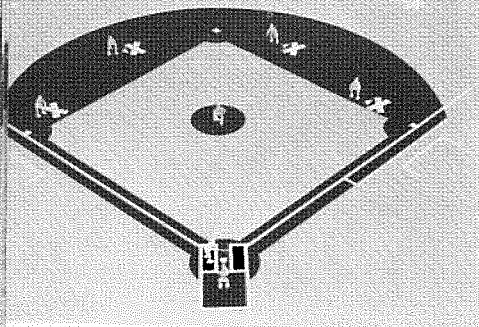




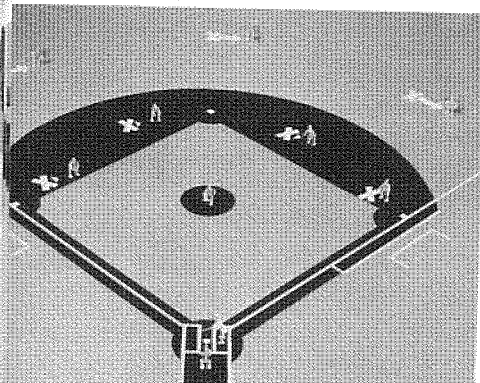
That means using your head... being able to anticipate every possible play. Before each pitch, decide what you'll do with the ball if it's hit to you... and what you'll do if it's hit to someone else. And make sure you're playing in the right position for the play that's most likely to come up.



This is the basic defensive pattern with no runners on base, and a batter who usually hits straightaway. That is, this is your position for a batter who's just as likely to hit to right field as to left field.

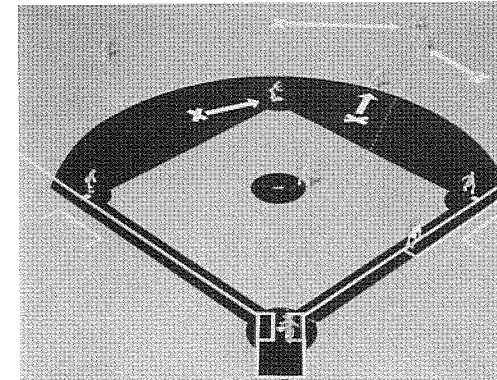
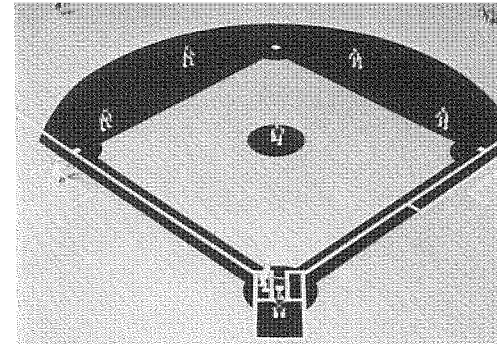


For a batter who usually hits to left field, your defense shifts around in that direction. For example, this is your position for a right handed pull hitter.

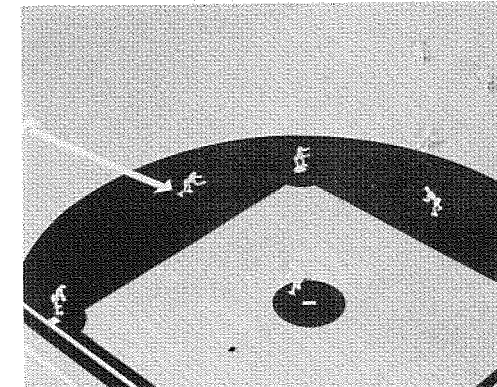


For a left handed pull hitter, or any batter who usually hits to right field, you shift around in that direction. With experience, you'll learn how to vary your position for different hitters.

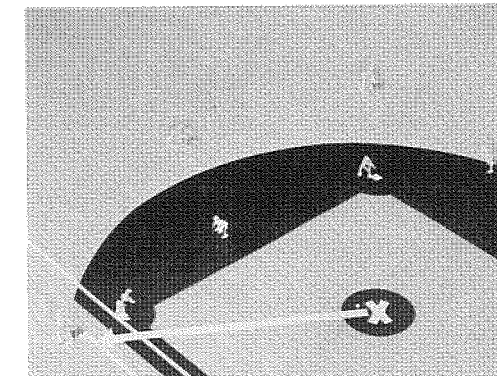
But let's start with your basic defensive pattern, and see what happens when the ball is hit.



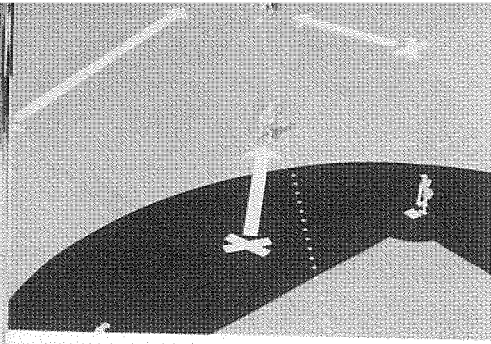
If it's hit into right field, the right fielder fields the ball and the center fielder backs him up. The second baseman goes out to relay the throw-in, if necessary. And the shortstop covers second.



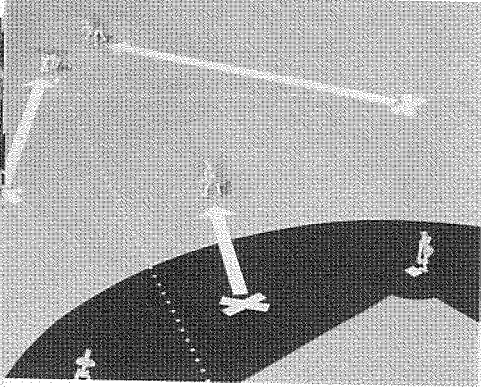
The left fielder comes in to back up the shortstop for a possible play at second base. As quickly as possible, he gets in line with the throw from right field.



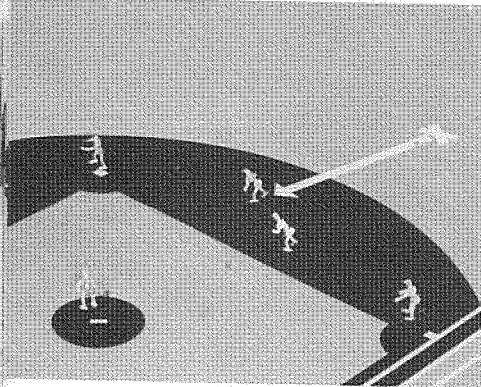
Whenever there's a chance for a play at third, the pitcher backs up the throw to the third baseman. If it's to home plate, the pitcher backs up the catcher.



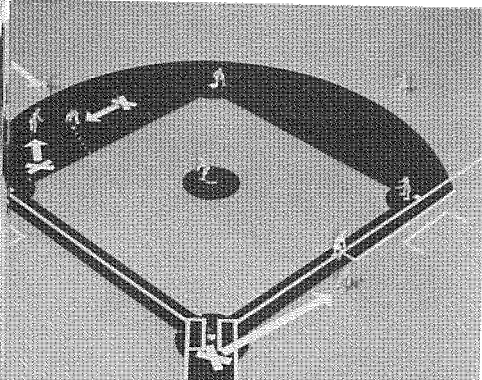
For a ball hit to center, the center fielder is backed up by either the left fielder or the right fielder, whoever's closer. And the shortstop goes out for a possible relay. The second baseman covers the bag. For throws to third or home, the pitcher backs up the play as before.



If the ball is hit to the left fielder, he's backed up by the center fielder, while the shortstop again gets set to relay the throw, if necessary.

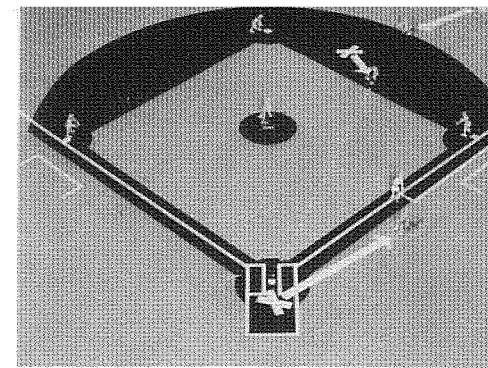


And the right fielder comes in to back up the second baseman covering the bag. The pitcher, of course, backs up plays at third or home. Now let's see what you do when balls are hit to the **infield**.

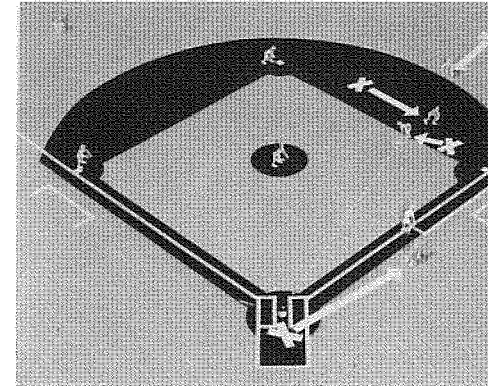


If the ball is hit to the left side, the left fielder, or the center fielder, comes in to back up the infielder. Sometimes the shortstop and the third baseman also can back each other up. The catcher hustles down toward first to back up the throw.

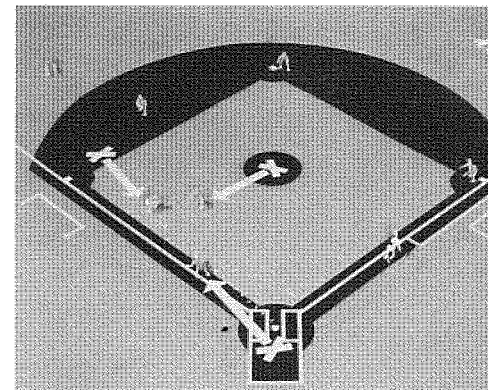
If the ball is hit toward the second baseman, the right fielder, or the center fielder, backs up the play. The catcher again backs up the throw to first.



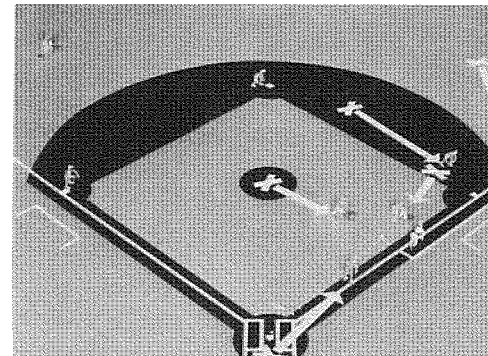
If the first baseman has to go to his right to field a ground ball, the second baseman may have to cover first. Since he's already moving in that direction, he can often get to the bag quicker than the first baseman. The right fielder, of course, backs up the infield, while the catcher backs up a throw to first.

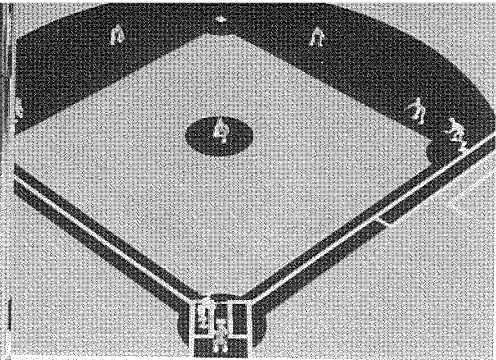


If the batter bunts, or if the ball is chopped close to the plate, the catcher tries to field the ball, and he can't back up first. So the right fielder comes in to back up the throw. This is your team play for a bunt down the third base line.

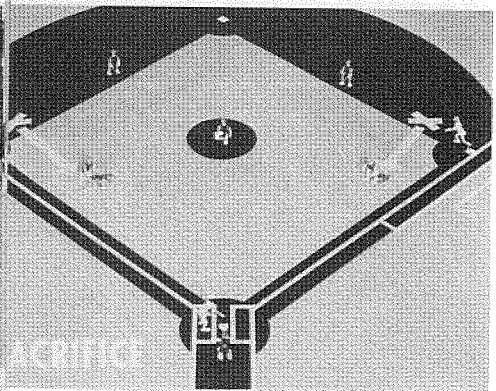


For a bunt down the first base line, the catcher, pitcher, and first baseman all try to field the ball. So the second baseman goes over to cover first, while the right fielder again backs up the throw. Now that we've seen the basic team plays with no runners on base . . .

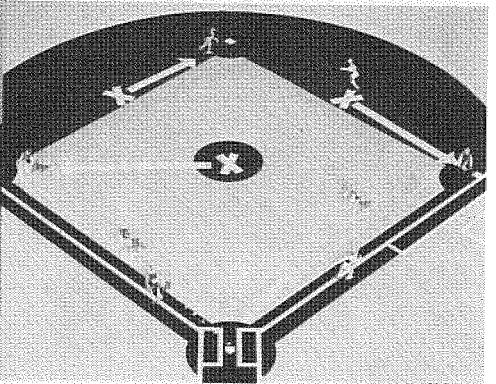




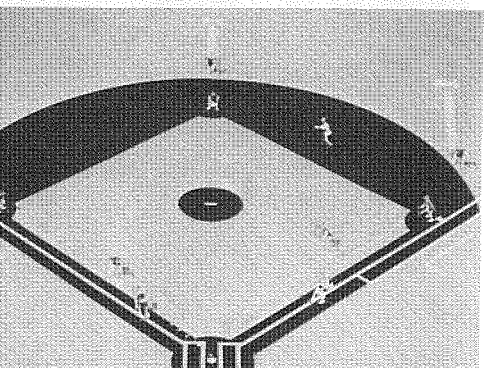
... let's study your defense with a runner on first. It would be the same with runners on first and second. If no sacrifice is expected, the infielders play at their regular defensive positions, depending on where the batter usually hits.



But if a sacrifice is expected, the third baseman and the first baseman play in closer to the plate, so they're in a better position to field a bunt. The shortstop also plays in a step or two, and the second baseman edges over toward first base, ready to cover first.

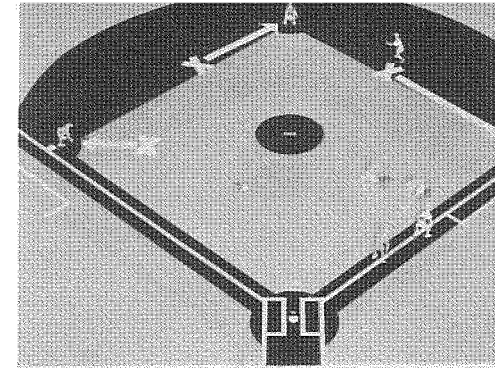


If the ball is bunted toward the third base side, the second baseman goes over to cover first, the shortstop covers second, and the pitcher covers third. If the pitcher fields the ball, the third baseman goes back to cover third. At the same time the ball is bunted ...

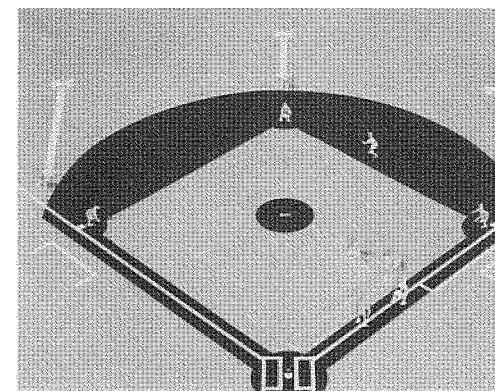


... the outfielders come in to back up throws to the three bases ... the left fielder behind third, the center fielder behind second, and the right fielder behind first. This is your defense for a sacrifice bunt toward third base.

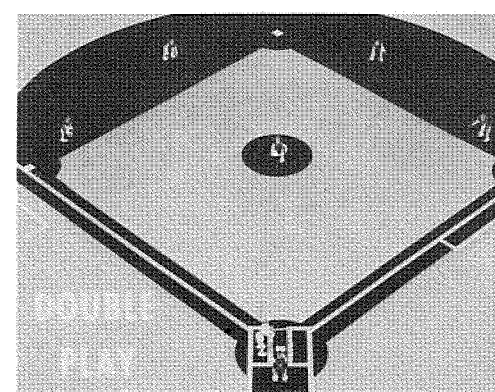
If the ball is bunted toward first base, the play is much the same, except that now the third baseman goes back to cover his base, while the shortstop again covers second and the second baseman covers first. And just as before ...



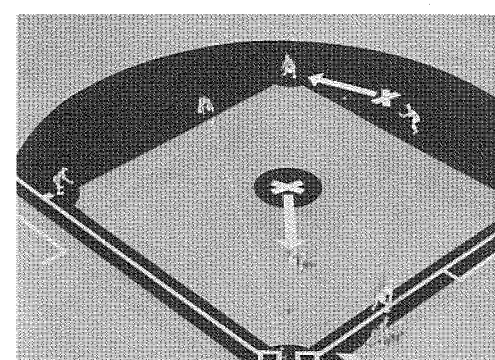
... the outfielders come in to back up possible throws to all three bases. With a defensive pattern like this, every base is well covered for any sacrifice bunt situation.

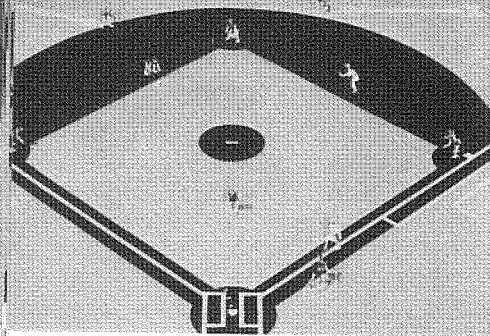


Sometimes a double play is possible with a runner on first base and less than two out. If you don't expect a sacrifice, the infield plays in its normal defensive position, or a step or two closer. Here your team play is much the same as it was with no runners on base.

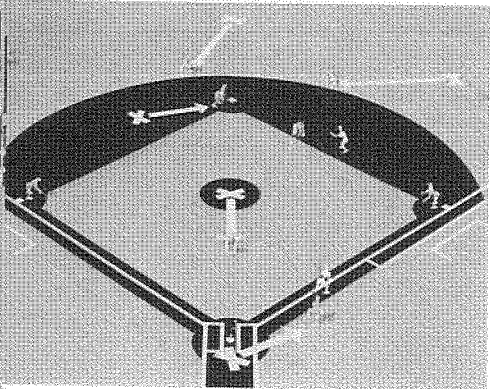


If the ball is hit to the left side of the infield, the second baseman covers his base to make the putout and relay the ball to first. The catcher goes down to back up the throw to first, and the pitcher comes in to cover home. At the same time, of course ...

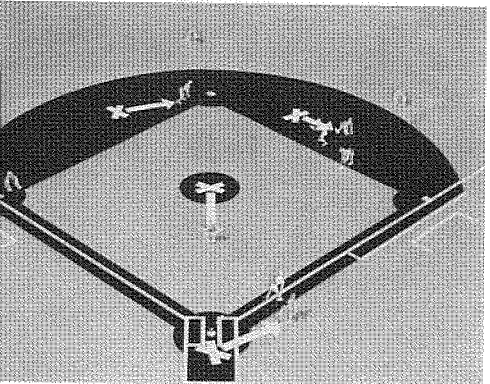




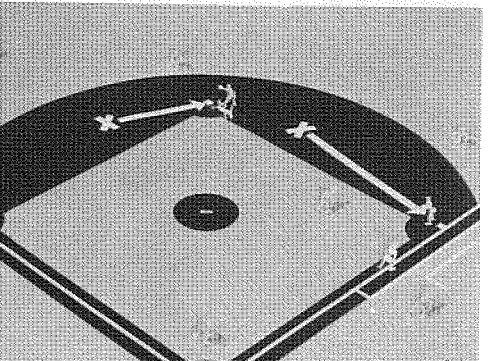
... the outfield backs up the infield for both batted balls and throws to second base, just as they did earlier with no runners on base. Here the left fielder is backing up the shortstop, while the right fielder is backing up the second baseman.



If the ball is hit to the second baseman, the shortstop covers second for the putout and relay to first. Otherwise the play is the same, with the outfield backing up the infield, and the pitcher covering home.

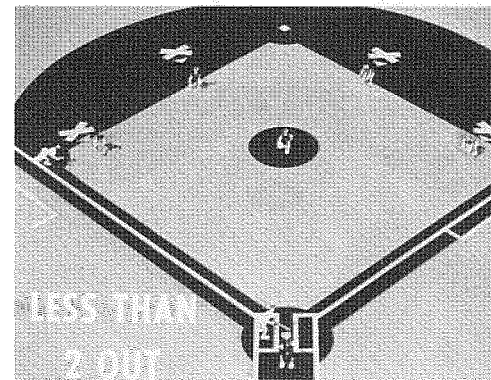
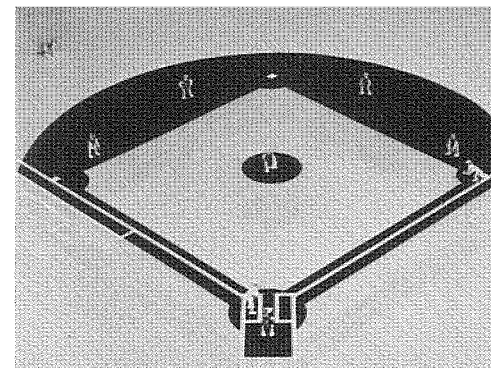


If the ball is hit to the first baseman, the shortstop again covers second. And the pitcher and catcher play the same as with any other double play. But after the first baseman makes his throw to second, he may not have time to get back to cover first.

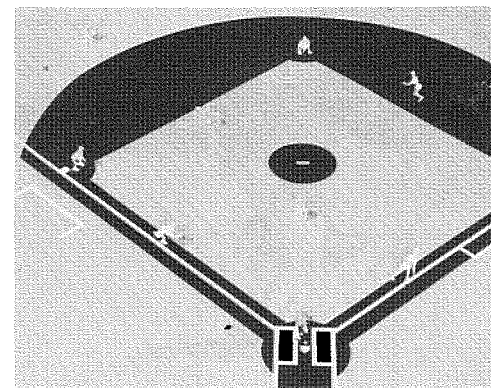


So the second baseman, who's already running toward first when the ball is hit, goes over to cover the base and take the throw from the shortstop. This completes the double play.

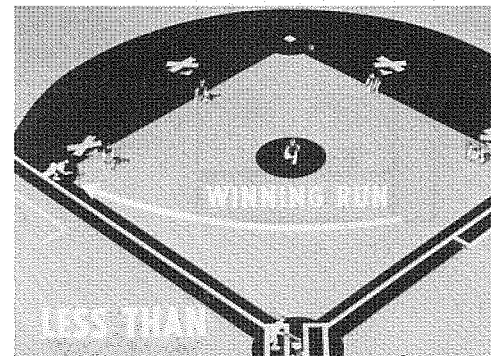
Here, again, is your basic defensive pattern ... the position you play when you don't expect a sacrifice ... or when there are two out, no matter how many runners are on base.



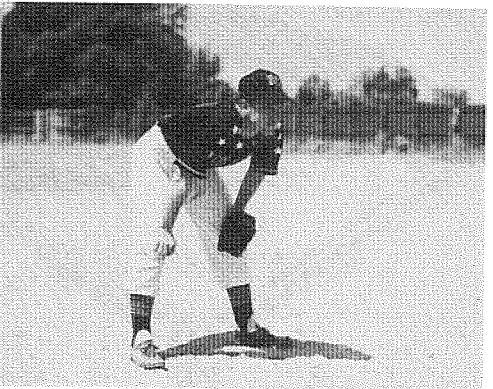
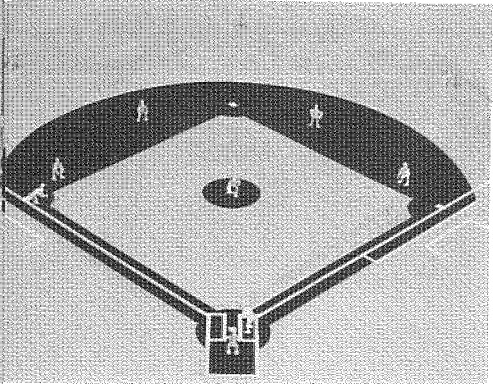
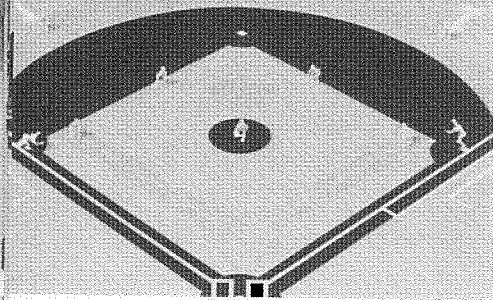
But whenever there are less than two out and there's a runner on **third** base, your defense changes. Outfielders usually play in their regular positions, but infielders move in a few steps toward home plate.



Then if the ball is hit to the infield, there's a much better chance of getting the runner at the plate. Always try to keep the run from scoring first, even if there's a possibility of starting a double play at second base. Now, there's still one other defensive pattern to remember.



It's used when there are less than two out and the runner on third represents the winning run—that is, it's the last inning, and the score is tied. In this case, the infield moves in a few steps as before. But in addition ...



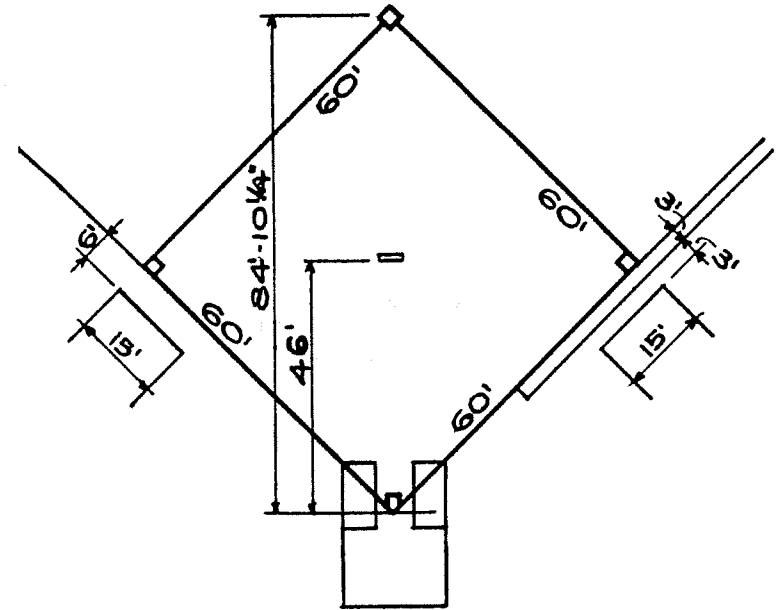
... the outfielders move in toward the infield. They play close enough to catch fly balls that might otherwise drop for base hits... and close enough to throw out the runner if he tries to score from third. After there are two out, of course.

... you return to the basic defensive pattern, for either a straightaway, left field, or right field hitter. So far you've seen only the fundamentals of team play. Many softball teams use variations of these basic plays. But study the fundamentals first. Once you learn them thoroughly...

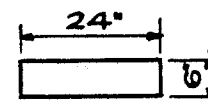
... you'll be able to anticipate the right play before every pitch. You'll be a **team** player... the kind of alert, heads-up defensive player every team needs for winning softball.

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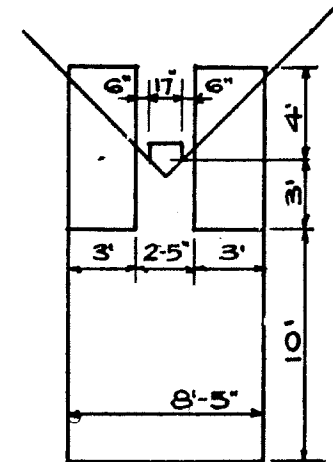
TYPICAL SOFTBALL DIAMOND LAYOUT



DETAILS OF PITCHER'S PLATE



DETAILS OF HOME PLATE



NOTE

Girls' Pitching Distance is 38 feet.

NOTES

SOME COMMON SOFTBALL TERMS

Aboard: A man on base is said to be "aboard".

Arbiter: An umpire.

Assist: A fielding credit earned by a player who helps a teammate make a put-out. Should the teammate fail to make the put-out because of a misplay, the first player is still given credit for an assist.

Away: The number of outs, such as "one away" instead of "one out".

Backstop: While a catcher is often called "the backstop", the term is more often applied to the fencing behind the plate.

Back Up: To take a position to the rear of a teammate in order to retrieve any balls which the teammate might fail to catch.

Bag: A base. Also called "sack", "hassock", "pillow", "canvas", etc.

Balk: Making any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.

Ball: The official softball must weigh between 6 and 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces and must be about 12 inches in circumference. It is made of a core of tightly packed and molded Kapok. It is wound tightly with cotton winding, dipped in rubber cement, covered with horsehide and then hand stitched.

"Ball": The term applied to a pitched ball which does not enter the batter's strike zone, and which the batter does not hit at with his bat. (See "Base on Balls".)

Base: The four "stations" on a ballfield which runners on the offensive team must touch in succession before scoring — first base, second base, third base, and home base, which is usually known as home plate. The three bases are each 15 inches square. Home plate is 17 inches wide.

Base Hit: A batted ball which allows the batter to reach a base safely, provided that he does not reach first base through a fielding error, or a fielder's choice, and provided that no other runner is forced out.

Baseline: A more-or-less imaginary space, 6 feet wide, in which a runner must stay while running bases. If the runner flagrantly moves outside of this lane, he can be called out, unless he is trying to avoid a fielder who is attempting to catch a batted ball.

Base on Balls: The penalty imposed on a pitcher who delivers four "balls" (which see) to a batter. The batter is allowed to go to first base.

Bases Full: Base-runners on first, second, and third base. Also known as "bases loaded", "bases jammed", "three men on", etc.

Bat: A regulation softball bat must be of one-piece wood, no more than $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter at its thickest part and not more than 34 inches long.

Batter's Box: The area in which the batter must stand. There is a batter's box on each side of home plate, and each is 7 feet long and 3 feet wide, and is placed 6 inches from home plate.

Battery: The combination of the pitcher and the catcher.

Batting Average: The number of hits divided by the number of times at bat. The result is usually expressed in three decimals.

Batting Order: The order in which players take their turn at bat. It is set before the game begins, and cannot be changed during play.

Beat Out: To hit a ball to an infielder and reach first base ahead of that fielder's throw, for a hit.

Bleeder: A batted ball which just trickles past the defensive players for a "weak" base hit.

Blooper: A batted ball which arches over the heads of the infielders and just drops in front of the outfielders for a base hit.

Bobble: Juggling the ball while attempting to catch it, or dropping it, for an error.

Bottom: The second part of an inning. For instance, the second half of the fourth inning is known as the "bottom" of the fourth. The first part of an inning is known as the "top".

Box Score: A description of the events of a game kept in condensed form by the use of certain symbols for the various types of possible plays.

Bunt: A ball which the batter just taps with his bat so that it rolls slowly out into the infield. Bunts are usually attempted in an effort to advance another base-runner, but they are often used to allow the batter to reach first base safely by catching the defensive team off guard.

Catcher: The defensive player who stands behind home plate to receive balls thrown by the pitcher.

Center Fielder: The defensive player who guards center field, the outfield area beyond second base.

Change of Pace: A pitcher's ability to cleverly vary the speed at which he delivers his pitches, thus confusing the batter.

Chest Protector: A device used by a catcher or a plate umpire to keep hard-thrown or hard-hit balls from injuring them.

Choke: To grip a softball bat closer to the hitting surface than is usual. "Choking the bat" is often done to gain accuracy in hitting the ball.

Circuit Clout: A home run, on which the batter circles all four bases.

Clean the Bases: To hit a home run with men on base, thus clearing all the bases of runners.

Clean-Up: The fourth position in the batting order, usually given to the best hitter on the team on the theory that he will drive in more runs with his hits while batting in this position.

Coach: A member of the team who stands near either first or third base in order to give base-running instruction to the team's players.

Complimentary Runner: A substitute baserunner, who by mutual consent of the opposing coaches or managers, does not prevent the original runner from remaining in the game.

Corner: Portions of home plate; thus, the part of the plate close to a batter is known as "the inside corner". The part farthest from him is known as "the outside corner". The other bases are known as "the initial corner" (first base), the "keystone" corner" (second base), and the "hot corner" (third base).

Count: The number of balls and strikes on a batter. A count of "1 and 2" means that the batter has one ball and two strikes on him.

Counter: A run. Also "tally", "marker".

Crowding The Plate: A batter moving close to the plate and refusing to back away with the pitch.

Curve: A ball pitched with spin imparted to it by the pitcher so that it moves in a curve rather than a straight path.

Cut: To swing at a pitched ball. Also, a ball which passes over a corner of home plate is said to "cut the corner", for a strike.

Cut-Off: To intercept a ball thrown to another teammate. A fielder will often cut off a throw aimed at home plate in order to trap a player running to another base.

Dead Ball: A ball no longer in play.

Deep: A defensive player who stands some distance beyond his usual playing position is said to be playing "deep". Opposite of "shallow".

Delayed Steal: An attempt to steal a base in which the runner does not start his dash until after the usual moment for a normal steal attempt has passed. (See Steal).

Deliver: To pitch the ball.

Diamond: The area formed by the four bases.

Die: To be stranded on a base as the third out is made.

Double: A base hit on which the batter is able to reach second base safely despite perfect fielding by the defensive team.

Double Play: Two consecutive put-outs made between the time the pitcher delivered the ball to the batter and the time the ball is returned to him again in the pitcher's box. Also called a "twin-killing".

Double Steal: A "double steal" occurs when two runners steal bases on the same play.

Down: Denotes outs. "Two Down" means that there are two outs.

Drive: A hard-hit ball which travels in a fairly straight line.

Drop: A type of pitch in which the ball drops downward as it nears or crosses the plate.

Earned Run: A run which was scored through offensive play rather than through a defensive error.

Earned Run Average: The average number of earned runs which a pitcher allows during a full game. To find the earned run average, divide the number of earned runs allowed by the number of innings pitched and multiply by 7.

Error: Any defensive misplay which allows a batter to remain at bat longer than he should, or a base-runner to remain on base longer than he should, or allows a runner to reach base or take an extra base. However, a base on balls is not an error, nor is a wild pitch or a passed ball.

Extra-Base Hit: A base hit on which the batter gets more than one base.

Fair Ball: Any legally batted ball which is touched or which stops in fair territory between home plate and first base or home plate and third base; or which is inside either foul line when bouncing past first or third base; or which first hits on or inside either foul line on a fly past the infield.

Fielder's Choice: A play in which a fielder, after taking a batted ball, elects to make a play on a base-runner rather than on the batter.

Fielding Average: To find a fielder's defensive average, add his total fielding chances (put-outs, assists and errors) and divide this number into the total of his put-outs and asststs.

First Base: The base to which the batter first runs after hitting the ball. It is 60 feet from home plate, along the right-field foul line.

First Baseman: The defensive player who covers the territory around first base, and who generally retires a large number of batters by receiving the throws of the other infielders after the batter has hit a ground ball.

Fly: A ball that is hit into the air, usually to the outfield.

Force Out: An out occurring when a defensive player in possession of the ball touches any base before a runner who *must* reach that base is able to touch it. Thus, the ordinary out at first base is a force out. However, the term is usually applied to situations in which there are men on base before the batter hits the ball. Thus, force outs can occur at any of the four bases.

Forfeit: An umpire may forfeit any game and award it to one team for a variety of reasons, such as delay of game, refusal to continue play, rule violation, etc. The score of a forfeited game is 7-0 in favor of the team not at fault.

Foul Ball: A batted ball which is touched or stops outside of the foul line between home plate and first or third base; which bounces past first or third base in foul territory, or which first lands outside the foul lines on a fly ball past first or third base. A foul caught on the fly is an out for the batter. The first two foul hits in a time at bat count as strikes; succeeding ones do not. However, a foul bunt attempt after two strikes is an out for the batter.

Foul Line: A 3-inch white line extending from home plate out to the boundaries of the playing field. The two foul lines form right angles at home plate. The foul line itself is considered fair territory.

Foul Tip: A foul ball which is caught by the catcher immediately after it has left the hitter's bat on a direct line into the catcher's hands. Any foul tip is a strike and the ball remains in play.

Full Count: A count of 3 balls and 2 strikes on the batter.

Fungo: A high fly, usually hit by tossing the ball from the hand and then hitting it, to give the fielders practice.

Game: A softball game consists of 7 innings. The team which has scored the most runs at the end of that time wins the game, unless they are tied, in which case the game goes into extra innings. If the team which is batting second scores more runs in six innings than the team first at bat, it wins the game without the necessity of playing the last half of the 7th inning.

Grand Slam: A home run with the bases loaded.

Grass Cutter: A sharply-hit ball which skims across the top of the grass.

Groove: To pitch the ball right in the middle of the strike zone.

Grounder: A "grounder" or "ground ball" is a batted ball which hits the ground as soon as it leaves the player's bat, and which bounces in the infield as it moves toward the outfield.

High: A pitched ball which passes the plate above the strike zone.

Hit: To take one's turn at bat, or, to make a base hit.

Hit-and-Run: An offensive play in which a base-runner starts running as soon as the pitcher starts his delivery. The batter then attempts to hit the ball, often through a spot vacated by the shortstop or second baseman who run over to cover second base. It is often used as a device for avoiding double plays.

Hit Batsman: A batter who is hit by a pitched ball. He is entitled to move to first base. However, he must make an attempt to get out of the path of the ball.

Hit the Dirt: To slide.

Hole: An area not covered by a defensive player. Fielders often shift positions against certain batters, leaving large "holes" open that normally don't exist.

Homer: Short for "Home Run", which is a base hit on which the batter runs around all the bases and scores a run. Most home runs result from balls hit over the outfield fences, although some result from fast base-running following a ball hit well out of the reach of the outfielders, yet still within the playing area.

Hook Slide: A base-running maneuver in which the runner, trying to reach a base on a close play, slides feet first into the base and twists his body away from defensive player, touching the base with his rear foot.

Infield: Generally, that fair territory bounded by, and including, the basepaths.

Infield Hit: A base hit, which does not go past the infielders to the outfield.

Inning: A division of a game. An inning is divided into two halves, and a team is allowed to bat during one half of each inning. Since each team is allowed to bat until it makes three outs, there are six outs in an inning.

Inside: A pitch which misses the plate on the side closer to the batter.

Lay One Down: To bunt the ball.

Lead: A base-runner "takes a lead" when he moves off a base in an effort to put himself closer to the next base. Naturally, his "lead" cannot be too great, or he may be tagged out.

Lead-Off: The player who first bats for his team either in the regular batting order, or at the start of an inning.

Left Fielder: The defensive player who covers the general outfield area beyond third base.

Line Drive: A ball batted so hard that it travels in a fairly straight line. Also a "clothesliner".

Losing Pitcher: The pitcher who is charged with the loss if his team is defeated.

Mask: A device worn by catchers and umpires to protect their faces against injury from a batted or thrown ball.

Mix Up: To vary the type and speed of pitches.

Move Up: To advance to the next base.

Muff: To drop a ball.

No-Hitter: A game in which the pitcher does not give up a single hit, and usually, but not always, no runs. A "perfect game" is one in which no opponent reaches first base on a hit, error, walk, etc.

One-Two-Three: Side retired without a batter reaching first base.

Out: An "out" is the retirement of a batter or baserunner during play. The ways in which a batter or base-runner may be put out are too numerous to list here. Each team is allowed three outs during its time at bat in any one inning.

Outfield: In general, the fair territory out beyond the infield.

Outside: A pitched ball which misses the strike zone on the side of the plate farther from the batter.

Over-Run: To run past a base, or to slide past (over-slide) a base, thus placing the runner in danger of being tagged out. However, the batter may over-run first base while attempting to reach there after hitting the ball.

Passed Ball: A legally pitched ball which the catcher fails to hold and control, and which has not been touched by the bat.

Pick Off: To trap a runner off base by a sudden throw, and tag him out.

Pinch Hitter: A player who is sent into the game to bat in place of another player, usually during a situation when runs are needed and it is felt that the regular batter would fail.

Pitcher's Box: The place from which the pitcher delivers the ball. In the pitcher's box is the "rubber" or pitcher's plate, a rubber or wood block set flush with the ground, 24 inches long and 6 inches wide. This "rubber" is 46 feet from the outside corner of home plate under men's rules, and 38 feet from the outside corner of home plate in girls' play.

Pitch-Out: A pitch purposely thrown wide of the plate so that the batter cannot hit it. Used in order to stop a possible steal or a hit-and-run.

Pop-Up: A short, high fly, in or near the infield, which can easily be caught.

Put-Out: The retiring of a batter or base-runner.

Relay: To return the ball from the outfield to the infield by using several short, fast throws rather than one long (and necessarily slower) throw. For most relays, an infielder moves out into the outfield, takes the throw from the outfielder, and in turn throws it to another infielder.

Right Fielder: The defensive player who covers the general outfield area beyond first base.

Run: A unit of scoring. A run is counted when a base-runner legally reaches home plate after touching the other three bases in order without being tagged or forced out, before the side is retired.

Runs Batted In (RBI): A batter is credited with batting in a run when a base-runner scores when he makes a base hit, a sacrifice, forces in a run by walking, or hits into a put-out.

Sacrifice: An advancement of a base-runner by the batter who deliberately hits the ball in such a way that the defensive fielders can only make a play on the batter.

Scratch Hit: A ball, usually weakly hit, which none of the fielders can reach in time to retire the batter.

Second Base: The next base after first base. It is the only base not touching the foul lines.

Second Baseman: The defensive player who covers, generally, second base and the area to the first base side of second.

Shortstop: A defensive player who covers, generally, second base and the area to the third base side of second.

Shut Out: To prevent the opposing team from scoring a run.

Single: A base hit on which the batter reaches first base and stops there.

Slide: Sliding along the ground toward the base in order to avoid being put out.

Squeeze: Advancing a runner, usually from third to home plate, by bunting the ball. The base-runner starts running as soon as the ball is pitched. If the batter hits the ball properly, the defensive team has very little time to retire the runner.

Steal: To advance to another base on the strength of base-running alone. A runner may steal any base but first.

Straight Away: The term used to describe the normal defensive position of a team, wherein each player remains in his usual fielding area rather than shifting to the right or to the left.

Strike: A penalty on the batter for either failing to hit a ball which entered the strike zone, or swinging at any pitch and missing it, or by hitting a foul ball which is not caught on the fly. In the latter case, if there are two strikes on the batter, a foul ball does not count as another strike. If a batter with two strikes on him bunts a foul ball, however, he is out. The strike zone is ordinarily described as that area bounded by the sides of home plate, and the batter's shoulders and knees.

Tag Up: The action of a base-runner in touching a base while a fielder is catching a fly ball. The runner must do so if he desires to advance to the next base without danger of being doubled out at the base which he leaves. If he leaves this base before the fielder catches the ball, he can be put out if a defensive player touches this base with the ball in his possession before the runner touches it.

Texas Leaguer: A weakly-hit fly ball which arches over the heads of the infielders and drops in front of the outfielders for a base hit.

Third Base: The next base after second base. Its outside edge touches the left field foul line. Next stop—home plate!

Third Baseman: The defensive player who covers the general area around third base.

Top: To hit the ball on the top portion so that it bounces downward sharply, resulting in a weak ground ball.

Trap: To catch a ball immediately after it has taken its first bounce.

Triple: To make a three-base hit.

Triple Play: The retirement of three offensive players between the time a ball leaves the pitcher's hand and is returned to him in the pitcher's box. It can only occur when there are at least two men on base and no one out, hence is rare.

Wait Out: An offensive strategy by the batter, who refuses to swing at the pitcher's throws until he either gets a base on balls or makes the pitcher throw a good ball which he can hit.

Walk: A base on balls. Also called a "pass", a "free-ticket", a "gift", etc.

Wild Pitch: An inaccurately-delivered pitch which the catcher has little or no chance of stopping or holding. It is not counted as such unless the batter reaches first base or a base-runner advances because of it.

ADDITIONAL FACTS ON HITTING, PITCHING AND THE DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN SOFTBALL

SOFTBALL TIPS

1. Keep your eye on the ball and your mind on the game.
2. Runs win softball games — practice your batting.
3. Be alert for signals — missing one could lose a game.
4. Always run out an "easy chance" — anything can happen.
5. Teamwork is the key to success in softball.
6. Remember, if it's good for the team, then it must be good for you.

HITTING

The long ball hitter may be the star of a particular game, but it's the man who can punch out singles and doubles consistently who is the real factor in making his team great. Often, too many hitters try to "swing from the heels" who do not have the physical build and ability to become sluggers.

A well-placed surprise bunt, an infield chop hit that bounces high and through the gap or a smash through the infield all pay off well in hits and runs.

It might be well to remember, too, that a shorter stride at the plate helps keep the batter under control. He maintains his balance and is ready to meet the ball squarely. Of course, you'll always want to keep your swing parallel with the ground and aim to meet the ball in front of your body. The full power of your swing will thus be utilized and you will gain a full wrist snap plus the necessary follow through.

Confidence that you can hit better than the fellow on the mound can pitch is an important factor and results from continued practice. You'll want to practice hitting every kind of pitch and as many pitchers as possible. A batter able to hit only curve balls is good only until his opponents discover the fact. He will find hurlers steer clear of the curve when he's at the plate. The only solution is to learn to hit all kinds of pitches and all kinds of pitchers.

Above all, when you're at bat, keep your eye on the ball at all times.

PITCHING

A good pitcher has a host of minor assets and two major ones — ability and control. Neither is any good without the other, and both are useless without practice. Constant practice is responsible for keeping a hurler in good shape and for improving his ability.

A good pitcher knows that he should aim for the corners of the plate rather than putting the ball right over the middle. And to keep his team in the winning column, he knows also that he must develop a good fast ball, drop, change of pace or curve that will hit the catcher's target every time. And of course, he'll remain cool and collected even when the going gets rough.

Then too, when he's tossing a good reliable drop pitch, he remembers that it should be broken at the knees for the most benefit.

Another important hint to the pitcher, often overlooked, is his role as an infielder. Practice handling bunts, fielding and shagging flies during batting practice to keep your arms and legs in shape for endurance. Back up the plate on close plays. And above all, don't beef if you think the umpire has called you wrong. Save your energy for the game.

CATCHER

The work horse of any ball club, a catcher constantly guides his pitcher and instills confidence in him while at the same time supervising the remainder of his teammates on the field.

It's his job to study and memorize opposing batters to enable him to call for pitches to their weaknesses. Because of his commanding position behind the plate, the good receiver strives constantly to keep his club on the hustle, and to make sure teammates are playing various batters properly.

The experienced softball catcher learns to stick close to the batter and the plate in order to scoop up low pitches more easily. Of course, he's always full of chatter and it is his special job to recharge the pitcher when the game appears to be getting out of hand.

Among the special skills he must acquire is the ability to throw off his mask quickly in the event of pop-ups. And he

practices guarding the plate constantly by developing a stance so that base runner will be forced to run into his tag.

While the receiver should remain relaxed at all times, he'll find it a good idea to keep the fingers of the bare hand close together, though not gripped tightly. Finally, a softball catcher must learn to abide by the decision of the umpire and not stand up after each pitch and block his view.

FIRST BASE

Playing first base involves a lot more than being able to catch and hold a thrown ball. Actually, the position is one of the busiest spots in the lineup. The first baseman figures in a large majority of his team's plays, either actively or in an assisting role. He must know how to handle bunts, where and when to throw the ball when he gets it, when and how to back up throws to home plate or other bases, how to take relays from the outfield, when to leave the bag with a runner on first and many other phases of the game.

As to fielding, it is naturally of prime importance that the first baseman touch the bag when receiving a throw. However, this does not mean that he should stay on the bag or keep one foot in contact with it practically all the time. A good first baseman will move around, shift his position as it appears necessary, foresee possible situations and be ready to meet them. Touching the bag when taking a throw must become a mechanical action, something done easily and subconsciously.

While the smaller men often make good first basemen, height is a definite asset. A tall man has more reach and offers a better target for the other infielders. A southpaw has an additional advantage in that he can throw to the other bases more easily on ground balls and bunts.

And here's a final bit of advice worth remembering. Sometimes it's impossible to make a two-handed catch and keep touch with the bag. But save your spectacular one-handed stabs for those occasions. Nothing is so disheartening to another infielder as to rifle a perfect throw to the first baseman and have the ball pop out of his glove. In other words, the old saying, "two hands for beginners", is a good one — and it applies to veterans as well.

SECOND BASE

As any other infielder, the second baseman keeps busy with grounders. With many softball teams relying on left-handed hitters, he will get his share of infield hoppers and bounders—either the slow ones you have to charge and snap throw to first, or the crazy hoppers that can be converted into outs by keeping your eye on the ball and fielding it cleanly.

Second base is often the pivot position on double plays. In order to execute them successfully, a second baseman must be able to shift his feet quickly and throw accurately. Speed and timing are the key factors in a double play. A snappy underhand throw also is essential for a good second baseman, since this should be used whenever the player covering the bag is near the thrower.

Briefly, here are the vital points a second baseman should remember:

1. The second baseman is expected to back up the other members of the infield and also be a relay man on throws from the outfield.
2. On stolen base attempts, the second baseman and the shortstop should inform one another as to who will take the catcher's throw. In making the put out, straddle the bag and let the opponent tag himself out by sliding into the gloved ball.
3. The second baseman handles a good share of Texas Leaguer pop flies. Practice infielding them properly, whirling around quickly and throwing ball to the proper base will usually prevent runners from advancing.
4. In softball, the second baseman also has an active role around the first base area, and constant practice and full cooperation between the two players will strengthen the defense of any team.

THIRD BASE

The third baseman guards the "hot corner" of the infield. He must handle everything from hot, sizzling liners to slow, rolling bunts. And he gets plenty of both. To do a good job he must be not only a versatile fielder, but must also know the situation at all times, anticipating the play, and yet keeping in mind the possibility of a cross-up.

A third baseman's best physical asset is his ability to field a ball and throw it "all in one motion." This is most important on bunts and slow hit balls, but double plays — and many of them are started at the third base corner — also demand the hurried throw.

Runners on first and second put greater pressure on the third base sack. In this case the play is usually made to get the runner closest to scoring position, then attempting to put out the batter or the other runner coming into second. Quick throws are needed here to get results.

The third baseman covers more territory than would seem apparent. Besides getting a good share of the pop fouls and flies to the infield it is also his job to back up plays in the second base area and on throws from the outfield, to back up the catcher for a possible overthrow.

The position of the third baseman depends on a number of things:

1. Is the hitter right or left-handed?
2. Is he a fast base-runner?
3. Does the situation call for a sacrifice, a squeeze or a bunt?
4. Does defensive strategy call for a double play or a force on the lead runner?

All in all, the "hot corner" is well named, for it demands the maximum in mental alertness and playing skill.

SHORTSTOP

Because he must cover so much territory and participate in such a wide variety of plays, the shortstop's position generally is considered the toughest in the infield. Hence, he must be able to take in every situation quickly, and automatically start the necessary action to go back for a short fly, go in for a slow grounder, cover second base or follow through in any other of a variety of ways.

On grounders, remember to play the ball. Don't let it play you. On medium speed ground balls, you can probably wait for a good hop to reduce the chances of an error. On slow hits, though, you must charge in and grab that ball as soon as possible, whatever the hop. Otherwise, a fleet-footed batter will beat your throw to first base. Hard hit grounders, due to the small size of the softball infield, also have to be fielded on

whatever hop comes along. There isn't time to jockey around or it will be past you.

On the double play ball, throw shoulder high to the second baseman. Or if you are playing the pivot man, hit the base with the left foot, complete the stride with your right foot, and throw to first base for the completion of the play.

The shortstop becomes the relay man on outfield throws and also a pivot man on cutoff plays. Be alert for such possibilities with runners on the bases.

When fielding, practice letting your hand "give" slightly as the ball strikes your glove. This overcomes fighting the ball and offers you better control.

OUTFIELD

Recent ruling lengthening the pitching distance have taken outfielders out of the spectator class and put them back into the game. In position to keep a sharp eye on the batter and catcher at all times, outfielders should be ready to sprint at the crack of the bat. A moment's delay may mean extra bases for the opponents, or what's worse, an extra run.

Alertness is a necessary trait of the outfielder. This means keeping track of the game — how many on, how many out. It also calls for advance thought on what you will do with the ball if and when it comes your way.

If you crave the respect of your opponents, develop a good throwing arm. Keep the ball on a low line so that the infielders may be able to stab it. On pegs to the plate, aim for the pitching mound and bounce the ball in.

To avoid needless and costly collisions, always *call* for fly balls if you're sure you'll be able to snag them.

Ground balls, on the other hand, are often tricky, taking wild hops in a variety of directions. Be sure to bend down and block them from going through. Also, don't make the mistake of throwing behind the base runner. It will insure him of an extra base if you do.

Of course, tip-top play calls for backing other players at all times and avoiding spectacular one hand stabs when they aren't necessary. In the case of shoestring catches, let the score be your guide. Finally, think before you throw. One bad toss can ruin the victory for your team.

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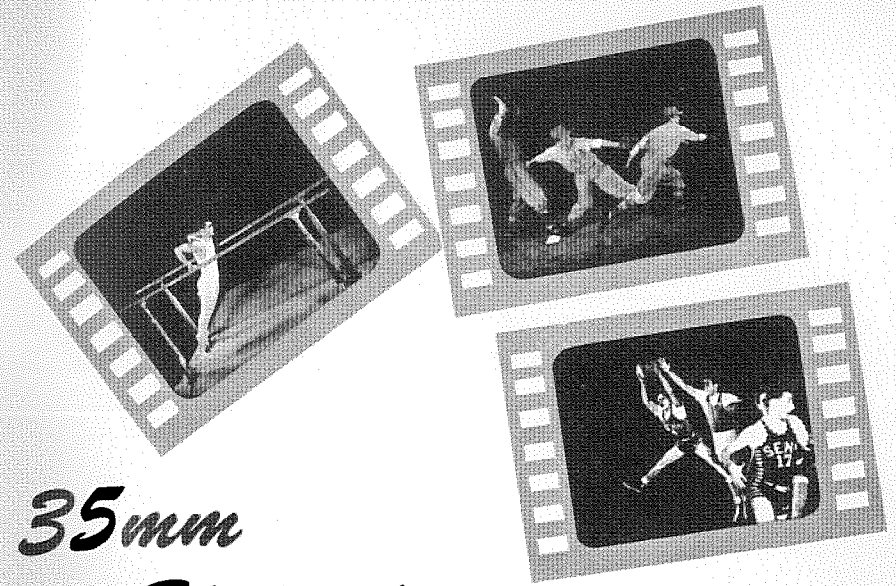
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NOTES



35mm Slidefilms

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