

Pewaukee High School--Catching

1. Stance/Set-up

A good stance is essential for successful catching and instrumental in all aspects of catching. The catcher should set up about arms length away from the hitter's back elbow. The right foot(throwing foot) should be slightly farther back than the left foot(approximately right toe to middle of left foot). With no one on base, the catcher needs to be as low as possible, giving himself the best possible positioning to frame and receive comfortably. The glove arm needs to be flexed, but not too close to the face. The throwing hand should be placed behind the back or on the outside of the right knee to reduce risk of a foul tip-related injury. With runners on base or two strikes on a hitter, the catcher should widen his feet and raise up his butt, and the throwing hand should be placed behind the glove or against the inner thigh. This positioning will give a solid starting block for blocking and throwing.

2. Receiving/Framing

A good receiving catcher will help a pitcher gain strikes and have more control over hitters. With no one on base, staying as low as possible will allow the catcher to shift his weight back and forth easily and to properly frame pitches, all while staying under control. With men on base or two strikes on a hitter, the catcher needs to be in the ready position, but framing is just as important from this position as any other. When framing pitches, the goal is to convince the umpire that the pitch was a strike. Any major movement of the glove will signal to the umpire that the pitch was not a strike. Also, never turn the glove over to raise the ball up. Turning the glove over tells the umpire that the pitch was too low to catch with a normal glove position, and therefore that the pitch was a ball. A good receiving catcher will be smooth and quick in his movements. Framing does not consist of catching the ball and then moving the glove. Proper framing involves quick wrist actions made WHILE catching the ball. Work hard at framing. Catchers get to throw once or twice a game. Catchers get to block anywhere from 5-10 balls a game, depending on the pitcher. However, catchers need to frame and receive on EVERY pitch.

3. Blocking

Blocking is a very important aspect of the game. Every time a catcher blocks a pitch, it saves a base or a run. That could turn out to be the difference in a game. Every time a catcher blocks a pitch with a man on third base, he saves a run from scoring. Saving a run means just as much in the outcome of a game as hitting a solo home run when up to bat. Even with no one on base and the catcher in his "low" position to help his receiving, he should attempt to block every pitch. It will make him look like he is working hard, it serves as good practice for real situations, and it will protect the umpire from getting hit with the ball. Protecting the umpire can be instrumental in gaining the umpire's trust and winning borderline pitches for the pitcher. With men on base or two strikes on a hitter, the catcher needs to be in his "up" position. This will put the catcher in prime position to block a pitch or throw a runner out. When blocking, the catcher

should get down to his knees quickly in position to block the ball towards the plate. The hands need to block the hole between the legs and should never come off the ground. You have to block the ball with the chest protector, but should not attempt to glove the ball. Catching takes total concentration and effort. The catcher needs to work harder than every player on the field on every pitch.

4. Throwing

2nd Base

Catchers need to be in their “up” position with a man on first. When the runner breaks, the catcher needs to anticipate the ball coming. When the ball gets to the glove, the catcher’s right foot should have replaced his left foot, and his left foot should be in front of him pointing towards second base. The hands need to be together when catching the ball, and it needs to come straight back to the ear. After all this, the catcher should still be very low with his weight back and be ready to make a strong throw to second base. The catcher should pull down with his glove elbow and get a good strong push with his legs. The throw ideally will have a low trajectory and be caught by the infielder right on the 1st base side of second base. Quickness in getting rid of the ball is essential in throwing runners out. The time taken while getting rid of the ball has a lot more to do with throwing runners out than the speed of the ball.

3rd Base

Throwing to 3rd is different from throwing from 2nd. With a right handed hitter up, upon receiving the ball on an inside pitch, the catcher needs to step out with his left foot, clear himself behind the batter, and then make a good strong throw to 3rd base. On an outside pitch, the catcher needs to meet the ball on the outside of the plate, take a quick step with his right foot, clear himself in front of the batter, and then make a good strong throw to 3rd base. With a left handed hitter up, the catcher has clear throwing lane to 3rd base.

1st Base

Attempting to pick runners off of 1st base is best tried on a swing and miss or a missed bunt. When trying to pick a runner off 1st base, the catcher needs to make a quick, strong throw on the inside of 1st base. The throw should be around the 1st baseman’s knees so he can apply a quick tag to the runner. When throwing to 1st on a third strike that is not caught cleanly, the catcher needs to call “inside” or “outside,” depending on which way the ball has taken him, clear the runner, and then make a good throw to the 1st baseman on the side that the catcher has called.

5. Fielding Bunts

The catcher needs to react quickly when a batter bunts the ball. Since the catcher can see the entire field, he needs to call and get to any balls that he can, yell which fielder should field the ball if he cannot get to it, and direct the fielder as to which base to throw the ball to. When a catcher fields a bunt, he ALWAYS should pick the ball up with his bare hand, unless the ball has been popped up. Once the ball has been picked up, the catcher should quickly get

his body in position to make a throw to whichever base he is going to throw the ball to. When another team bunts, they are giving up an out, and the play NEEDS to be made.

6. Pop-ups

Pop-ups are a type of play for a catcher that take maximum focus and concentration. Pop-ups are easy outs that need to be caught, but are more difficult for catchers than any other position. The catcher must hop out of his crouch and find the ball. Once he has found the ball, he needs to first TURN HIS BACK TO THE FIELD. Then he should throw his mask far away from where the play is going to be made. Failure to do this can result in an injury or error from tripping over the mask.

7. Game Calling

For successful game calling, a catcher needs to know his pitcher and his opponent. Depending on the pitcher, opponent, or situation, the coaches may or may not call pitches during games. When a catcher is calling his own pitches, he needs to mix up the pitches and locations. He needs to remember hitters and call pitches accordingly. If a batter hit a home run on a fast ball his first at bat, and struck out on all curve balls his second at bat, the catcher needs to remember that and call a curve ball. Paying attention to detail and calling a good game can turn a good catcher into a great catcher.

8. Leadership

The catcher is the unquestioned leader on the field. He is the only player who can see everything that is going around the field. The catcher needs to be talking and yelling all the time. He needs to tell players where to throw the ball, say who should catch pop-ups, put plays on, and always hustle. Other leaders on the team can emerge as a result of their leadership qualities. Due to the fact that the catcher is automatically put into a leadership role, he needs to acquire some leadership skills if he does not possess any. The catcher should hustle on and off the field, he should make sure everyone is aware of what is going on in the field (how many outs, where to go with the ball, etc.), and he should help everyone keep focus in the dugout. A catcher who is a true leader will be a great help to a team and a great help to a coaching staff.

9. Final Thoughts

As catchers, each one of you guys has the chance to be a difference-maker in this program. No team will ever win a state championship without a catcher who is a leader both on and off the field. Think about that as you begin practice this year. Work hard in every drill during every practice. Even if no one is watching or the coach is working with someone else, you can still be working hard to make yourself, and in turn the team and the program, better.