Cricket Coaching Resource Fielding

The single most important issue when coaching or being coached is to encourage a player's love of cricket.

Owen Steverson

John Parker

Contents

Fielding Program Specifics

1.0	Basic Techniques /	Non-Negotiables

- 1.1 Head Leads Movement
- 1.2 Head Forward
- 1.3 Slightly Bent at Hips
- 1.4 Knees Only Slightly Bent
- 1.5 Head Still

2.0 Catching Technique

- 2.1 Fingers Overlapped
- 2.2 Fingers Spread
- 2.3 Direction of Fingers
- 2.4 Reverse Cup
- 2.5 Hand Positioning
- 2.6 Arms
- 2.7 Head / Feet

3.0 Throwing

- 3.1 Technique
- 3.2 Types of Throws
- 3.3 Over the Top Throwing
- 3.4 Side Arm Throwing
- 3.5 Under Arm Throwing (Flicks)
- 3.6 Where to Throw

4.0 Fielding Roles & Strategies (Defensive and Aggressive)

- 4.1 Strategies of Close in Catchers
- 4.2 Strategies of Out Fielders and Inner Circle Fielders

5.0 Backing Up

- 5.1 Roles
- 5.2 Examples of Backing Up

6.0 Looking After the Cricket Ball

- 6.1 Keeping the Ball Hard
- 6.2 Relaying
- 6.3 General

7.0 Technique Monitoring

- 7.1 Cue Cards
- 7.2 Example Cue Cards
- 7.3 Cue Card Development

Fielding Program Specifics

1.0 <u>Basic Techniques / Non-Negotiables</u>

Fielding, like batting and bowling will be performed more effectively if basic techniques are performed precisely and consistently. There are a number of technical issues that apply to all fielding as they do to batting and bowling. These techniques apply to everything you do while fielding in cricket; they are the non-negotiable and are as follows;

1.1 Head Leads Movement

The head initiates/leads the fieldsman wherever the fieldsman needs to go and the feet will follow. This is the same for all aspects of fielding including close in catching.

1.2 Head Forward

Focusing on getting ones head forward will ensure one is bent at the hips and able to better react to what is happening.

1.3 Slightly Bent at the Hips

An alert fieldsman is slightly bent at the hips. This allows the head to lead a fieldsman wherever they need to go. If you watch all top athletes the head leads therefore they are slightly bent forward and are better able to cope with most opportunities.

1.4 Knees only slightly bent

Knees should be only slightly bent as when knees are bent too much the fieldsman's weight is more likely to be on their heels and the result will be the need to dive or make excessive movements with the head to try and correct things. To correct this most fieldsman will straighten their legs and the head will automatically lead and moving will be easier – however time is lost. To have ones head forward yet have knees significantly bent negates the value of being bent at the hips and having ones head forward.

1.5 Head Still

Head should be as still as possible for as long as possible. Is it easier to catch a ball standing still (head still) or on the move (head bouncing around)? If one is not sure where the ball is going the fieldsman should stand still and make decisions rather than move in one direction and risk running in the wrong direction.

2.0 <u>Catching Technique</u>

The basic technique for catching a ball is:

2.1 Fingers Overlapped

For catches that will be made waist height or below the fingers should be overlapped — if a catcher is right handed then the third and fourth fingers of the right hand will overlap the third and fourth fingers of the left hand. This limits the occasions where the force of the ball will burst the catchers hands apart. If the catcher's hands and fingers are side by side rather than slightly overlapped the force of the ball often forces the hands apart and is the most common cause of catches being dropped.



2.2 Fingers Spread

Fingers slightly spread providing as big a catching area as possible.

2.3 Direction of Fingers

- 2.3.1 Fingers point down if the ball is travelling straight to the catcher (either in the air, waist height and below or along the ground).
- 2.3.2 Fingers pointing to the side if the ball is coming slightly to one side or the other.
- 2.3.3 If the ball is above waist high in that awkward rib area/height, the fieldsman can move slightly to the side and catch the ball with fingers pointing to the side (parallel to the ground) or reverse cup if the catcher prefers the ball to come straight to them.



2.4 Reverse Cup

Reverse cup is where the fingers are pointing to the sky with thumbs inter-locked behind the cup made by the fingers and palms of both hands. Another method of reverse cup is to catch the ball with the catcher's dominant hand and have the other hand supporting that hand, generally with fingers at right angles to the fingers of the dominant hand that will be pointing directly upwards.



2.5 **Hand Positioning**

- 2.5.1 We must have our hands in position before the ball arrives so we are in effect interrupting the path of the ball with the ball fitting nicely into our catching unit whichever one that may be.
- 2.5.2 When catching we need to present a solid, firm, determined catching unit that catches the ball even when the half chance comes along.
- 2.5.3 An absolute non negotiable is that the hands need to be in the appropriate position as early as possible so the ball fits into a solid but stationary catching unit. Most catches are dropped due to the hands coming together at the very last second causing mistakes in the positioning of the hands, enabling the force of the ball to burst the hands apart.

2.6 <u>Arms</u>

When catching, the arms should be slightly bent allowing the impact of the ball to push the catcher's hands back slightly thereby automatically providing the cushioning effect. Arms that are bent too much and arms that are too straight provide a catching unit that may be too firm and cause the ball to bounce out. As the ball rarely comes to exact positions we need to be flexible and able to cope with all occasions and stick to the core principles of catching – fingers overlapping, pointing to the ground to the side or straight up and in position before the ball arrives.





2.7 Head / Feet

- 2.7.1 At the point of making a decision about where we will catch (or stop) a ball our feet should be approximately shoulder width apart allowing the head to easily lead us to where our catching unit will interrupt the path of the ball.
- 2.7.2 We rarely need to catch a ball one handed (or dive) as if we move our head first the body including our hands will follow and be able to cover a much greater area than if we have our focus on other less effective moving techniques and/or diving.

3. 0 Throwing

3.1 <u>Technique</u>

Getting technique right when throwing is important and good technique minimises injury while maximising potential results. The risk of injury when throwing is considerable so while technique, physical preparation etc are important so too is managing the number of throws that are made. When practicing throwing one needs to become aware of the amount of elevation you the thrower needs to ensure the thrown ball reaches its destination in the shortest possible time. The amount of elevation required is relative to the power of the thrower, the technical proficiency of the throw, the distance of the throw as well as the weather conditions.

3.2 Types of Throws

There are three main methods of throwing a ball – Over the Top, Side Arm and Under Arm throwing.

3.3 Over the Top Throwing

3.3.1 The over the top throw is used generally to gain distance and minimise injury and is the technique used by most American Baseball players who are the athletes that make the most throws in their careers.





- 3.3.2 As with all skills in sport the techniques that make up a skill are very important. As with bowling a cricket ball when one throws;
 - a. The ball should be lightly held across seam to throw maximising grip and minimising the amount a throw will swing. Like bowling the ball should be held on top of the ball by the first and second fingers a comfortable distance apart and underneath the ball by the thumb. The correct grip of the ball

- needs to successfully occur between picking the ball up and releasing the ball in the throw and can be assisted by the non-throwing hand.
- b. The backswing or preparation for throwing should have the throwing arm extended back as far as possible (arm straight) and hand with ball in it sitting in a natural position preferably facing away from your chest. For a short distance (less than 20metres) the throwing arm may be taken back half way to allow for a quicker release.
- c. Have ones back foot at right angles to where you want the ball to go.
- d. Weight on that back foot when in the throwing back lift or preparation position.
- e. Left arm/shoulder up with the left arm working just as in the bowling action leading forward then rotating forward and down past the left leg.
- f. As the left arm starts to lead the throwing arm comes through at the same time as the throwers weight transfers from the back leg to the front leg with the throwing hand and the ball passing the head at about top of head or ear height and just outside the line of the shoulder (not too close to the ear).
- g. The point of release will vary but generally be just in front of the head.
- h. Follow through should be as in bowling a cricket ball, throwing shoulder coming through to the front and the throwing arm going down past the left leg.



3.4 Side Arm Throwing

- 3.4.1 As with the over the top throw, the side arm throw is similar but designed to save time in the hope of running a batsman out and is performed on the run generally and on the attacking side or throwing arm side but also can be executed on the defensive side. The major benefit of the side arm throw is that time will be saved and a run out more likely to be achieved.
- 3.4.2 Where time will be saved is where instead of the body straightening up after pickup/fielding a ball and the arm being raised above the shoulder to throw over the top, the preparation or throwing backswing is all below waist height (generally), the throw is made off either leg and the follow through is on a similar plain to that of the throw parallel to the ground and around or below waist height.

- 3.4.3 When side arm throwing one should remember:
 - a. As in throwing over the top the ball should be held across seam to throw maximising grip and minimising the amount a throw will swing. Like bowling the ball when throwing the ball should be held on top of the ball by the first and second fingers a comfortable distance apart and underneath the ball by the thumb. The correct grip of the ball needs to successfully occur between picking the ball up and releasing the ball in the throw and can be assisted by the non throwing hand.

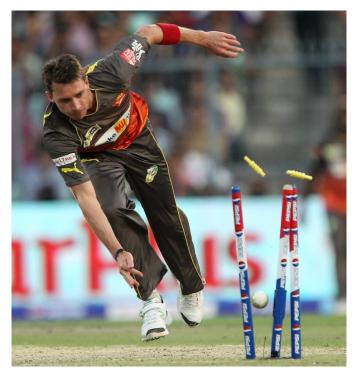


- b. The backswing or preparation for throwing should have the throwing arm extended back as far as possible (arm straight) and hand with ball in it sitting in a natural position preferably facing away from your chest.
- c. Have back foot at right angles to where you want the ball to go.
- d. Weight on that back foot when in throwing back lift /preparation position.
- e. The secret to accuracy with side arm throwing is after successfully picking the ball up to then get ones head up as level as possible as quickly as possible so the eyes/brain can settle on a line of throw taking into account possible curving of the throw due to this side arm action.
- f. The follow through will be on a similar plan to the backswing position and release point.
- 3.4.4 Often when this throw is made from the throwing arm side of the fieldsman, the skilled side arm thrower has both feet off the ground (or off their right leg) when executing this throw. When throwing from the defensive or non throwing side both feet will be on the ground and the throw can be made with minimal steps after the ball is fielded and weight will be on the left or non throwing side leg.



3.5 <u>Under Arm Throwing (flicks)</u>

- 3.5.1 Under arm throwing is mainly used close to the wicket when trying to run out a batsman and is used as this method of throwing should take the least amount of time to perform.
- 3.5.2 When executing a run out by throwing under arm the fielder should;
 - a. Perform this underarm throw on the move.
 - b. Firstly ensure if possible, that you are running directly towards the target stumps by the time you pick up the ball. If that is not possible then adaptions will have to be made to release points and follow throughs.
 - c. The fieldsman should pick the ball up underneath the shoulder of the arm that will perform the underarm throw and on the outside of the moving feet.
 - d. The underarm throw will be performed in the same bent over position in which the ball is picked up.
 - e. When the fielder has the ball successfully positioned in their throwing hand the fielders head should look at the target as early as possible and be kept as still as possible so the best possible decisions are made to complete the underarm throw.
 - f. The ball should be picked up while the hand is moving backwards in the start of the backswing similar to a lawn bowler's back swing.
 - g. A follow through should be completed, again similar to a lawn bowler.
 - h. All this is done bent over, on the move and at speed.
- 3.5.3 Underarm throwing can be widened to include back flicks and side flicks that are based around close in catchers chasing balls that don't roll very far and flicking them back to either stumps with minimal backlift or preparations, potentially enabling the unsuspecting batsman to be caught unawares.
- 3.5.4 The major technique points for the underarm throw are:
 - a. Pick the ball up and have little or no preparation or backswing.
 - b. Flick/propel the ball in the direction you want the ball to go by moving vour hand in direction immediately after pickup. (To flick is to add wrist movement with arm movement both in the direction you want the ball to go). That direction may backwards or sideways if executed effectively will at least keep a batsman 'on their toes'.



c. As always keeping ones head as still as possible will help with both calculations and execution.

3.6 Where to throw

- 3.6.1 There are two main decisions that need to be made by a fieldsman when they field a ball and are about to throw the ball; is the throw a defensive throw or does the potential exist to execute a run out?
- 3.6.2 A defensive throw will have slightly more elevation and take slightly longer to arrive at the destination but will always land in the hands of the targeted person and more often than not be on the full.
- 3.6.3 If the throw is an attacking throw then a decision needs to be made by the fieldsman whether they have time to run the batsman out by throwing the ball into the hands of the intended receiver or does the fielder need to throw the stumps down to effect a run out. For either of these run out options the ball may get to its destination quicker if the ball bounces.
- 3.6.4 These are decisions that fieldsmen must make understanding that most run outs that aren't made that should have been made are due to throwing at the stumps when there was time to throw the ball into the hands of the appropriate fieldsman and still perform the run out.

Notes:

4.0 <u>Fielding Roles & Strategies (Defensive and Aggressive)</u>

There are two methods of fielding a ball – defensively or aggressively. For the purpose of this resource there are also three separate roles, relating to areas of the field:

- a. Close Catching
- b. Inner Circle Fielders (saving ones)
- c. Outfielders (saving fours or on the boundary).

4.1 Strategies of Close in Catchers

4.1.1 Catchers need to be aggressive therefore preparing themselves for all sorts of situations. The most aggressive yet focused close in fielders take the most amazing catches where those who are a bit apprehensive wouldn't even attempt as they don't visualise (or want) an opportunity occurring. "If you try you might, if you don't you never will".



- 4.1.2 In addition to the above close in catchers need to;
- 4.1.3 Always expecting a catch to come to them. To do this the catcher must always line themselves up with the potential contact point of the bat and the ball for the stroke that is about to be played. So often close in fielders think the ball will never come to them as, for example, the ball is going down the leg side and they are fielding in close on the off side. On the rare occasion that a catch does end up on the off side that dismissal would be a bonus and could change the course of a game.
- 4.1.4 More bent at the hips (head forward) so that you can easily bend slightly more and catch a catch at 'boot lace' height. It is easier to come up than go down so a close in catcher's ready position should be more bent over than upright.
- 4.1.5 Eyes watching the edge of the bat nearest the fielder. This is the case for all in close fielders with the exception of first slip and of course the wicket keeper who watch the ball from the bowler's hand.

4.1.6 Focused on catching all catches within comfortable reach. This means the area from their feet to their head and approximately 50 centimetres either side. Accept that any catches made outside this area are a bonus and perhaps the fielder was in the



wrong place anyway.

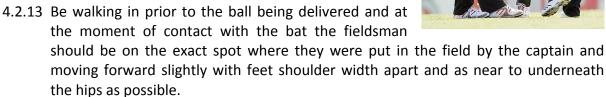
- 4.1.7 Need to be able to read at what height a catch is likely to come therefore having their head at the height where the catches are most likely to come comfortably into their hands when their arms are slightly bent and relaxed. This head position is dependent on the stroke that is about to be played and is relative to the performance of the pitch, condition of the ball and delivery specifics of the bowler. An example for a slip fielder is that if a delivery of a ball is full and a drive is about to be played and the ball is new and therefore harder and the bowler is tall and gets more bounce that others, most catches will come knee or waist height therefore the catchers head would stay down in the initial crouched position. If that same scenario occurred later when the ball was older and the pitch more worn (and bowler more tired) then the catch might come slightly lower so in anticipation the head might move slightly lower just before contact is made. If the ball was short and a cut, pull or hook was about to be played then the close in catchers (slips for example) head would come up slightly as most of the catches will arrive waist height and above.
- 4.1.8 Even if you think the stroke about to be played will rarely if ever result in you being able to successfully make a catch or field a ball you should still be prepared for the unusual as those catches will assist greatly in your team's chances of winning games.

4.2 <u>Strategies of Outfielders and Inner Circle Fielders</u>

4.2.1 In the inner circle or one saving positions the method of fielding a ball is generally aggressive and requires appropriate technique whereas the method of fielding a ball in the outfield is often more defensive and requiring of a somewhat different method/approach.

- 4.2.2 Fieldsmen fielding in the inner circle need skills to save runs generally by making ground to their left, right and forward as well as actioning run outs and catching generally flat harder catches.
- 4.2.3 Outfielders need a similar set of skills to fielders in the inner circle but have more time to do things yet often have further to move to successfully execute their actions.
- 4.2.4 Therefore fielders need to understand certain issues about fielding as outlined between 4.2.5 to 4.2.10.
- 4.2.5 If a player is right handed they generally field defensively to their left and more attackingly to their right. Therefore if they are in the covers for example they cover more ground to their right than to their left and attempt to complete more run outs at the bowler's stumps than at the keeper's stumps. (Also this is influenced by the backing up batsman having less distance to run than the striker). If the fielder is at mid wicket and is right handed then most run outs would occur at the wicket keepers end unless the fielder has a wide range of throwing skills (under Throwing).
- 4.2.6 To field defensively to our less efficient side we move around the ball as best we can by having a slip step (right foot coming up to or behind the left foot not in front of and in the same line the left foot is moving) while bending and gathering the ball with weight on your throwing side foot and then make a side arm throw using the one step (if possible as the distance to the stumps is shorter from the inner circle) that takes you out of the position that was used to gather the ball. If you are fielding to your left in the outfield then a couple of steps might be taken and the over the top throw used for distance and accuracy.
- 4.2.7 To maximise a fieldsman's effectiveness when fielding to their left or to their right the fielder quickly needs to decide at which point they are going to pick the ball up or arrive at a point where the line they are running crosses the line the ball is travelling. This point should be the nearest to the batsman that it can be (the most aggressive point) so they have the greatest opportunity to run the batsman out and is determined by the speed of the fieldsman and the speed of the ball.
- 4.2.8 On our favoured side the point for a one handed pick up (contact with the line the ball is travelling on) should be on the outside of our right foot (if we are right handed throwers) so that our bending over to pick the ball up on the run is not impeded by the leg action of running. This position of pick up also allows us to have the maximum throwing preparation thus enabling us to throw as aggressively as possible. If we are fielding in the outfield and moving to our right we would pick the ball up two handed with the point of pick up just on our left side and take at least two steps and use the over the top throwing action as the distance will be greater.
- 4.2.9 If the fieldsman quickly decides a run out cannot be achieved then a more defensive point of contact with the ball (further away from the batsman) can be calculated as if a run out cannot be achieved then the priority is saving a run or a second run, as economically as possible.
- 4.2.10 The same points apply to catching in the inner circle as outlined above in the catching section and even though the fieldsman will be moving on most occasions keeping the head as still as possible and nose pointing to the ball is paramount.

- 4.2.11 Outfielders / Inner Circle Fielders need to do the following things, as outlined between 4.2.12 to 4.2.17.
- 4.2.12 Always be expecting the ball to come to them. To do this the fielder must always line themselves up with the potential contact point of the bat and the ball. So often outfielders think the ball will never come to them as, for example, the ball is going down the leg side and they are fielding on the off side. On the rare occasion that the ball does end up on the off side that dismissal or runs saved could change the course of a game.



- 4.2.14 At the moment of contact the fieldsman should 'set' themselves in the ready position which is the bent over position (head slightly forward) so they are able to move in any direction effectively including backwards.
- 4.2.15 The fieldsman should anticipate the speed and direction of the stroke (yet be ready for the unusual) through indicators of backlift height and movement of the batsman. If the height of the backlift is high and continues aggressively then the ball is likely to come quickly and therefore the fieldsman should be more inclined to move sideways rather than forward. If the intent of the batsman is defensive then the bat and other actions will eventually be slower, then the fielder may well be required to move forward depending on where they are fielding.
- 4.2.16 An outfielder or one saver should not make committing movements until they are sure where the ball is going. Anticipation is to be encouraged but committing movements are just that, they commit a fieldsman to a certain direction and should only happen when the fieldsman is sure where the ball is going. An outfielder or one saver is similar to a close in catcher, they need to ensure they successfully save runs, execute run outs and catch catches that come within their agreed 'area'. These agreed areas will depend on the athleticism of the fieldsman. "There is no use running if you are running in the wrong direction".
- 4.2.17 Understand and accept that each fieldsman has a role in saving runs directly from the bat, executing dismissals directly from the bat, backing up the actions of other fieldsmen and in some cases relaying the ball back to the bowler in the best possible condition.



5.0 Backing up

5.1 Roles

Each fieldsman has a role when it comes to backing up. Nearly all fieldsmen need to move somewhere each time there is even the slightest opportunity for a run out. Slip fieldsmen need to do a lot of running to back up the keeper, boundary fieldsmen need to be prepared to sprint in off the boundary to save over throws, one savers need to be prepared to run considerable distances left and right to back up all options where possible.

5.2 Examples of Backing Up

- 5.2.1 Some examples of backing up might be included in the following examples, but each depends on what field placements are in place at any specific time. If a field is set with 2 slips, gully, third man, point, mid off, mid on, forward square leg and long leg and the ball is played;
 - a. Down to long leg then point backs up the throw to the keeper and mid off backs up the throw to the bowler's end with mid on being in position over the bowlers stumps. If there are rebounds off the stumps at the keeper's end then slips and gully are responsible and forward square leg and bowler keep an eye on rebounds at the bowlers end.
 - b. **Down to third man** then forward square leg backs up the keeper and mid off comes into the bowler's stumps and mid on backs up the throw to the bowlers end. Slips and point look for rebounds if the potential for rebounds exist.
 - c. **To mid on**, mid off tries to get to the bowlers stumps and point backs up the bowlers stumps while the slips and gully do the backing up of the keeper and keeping an eye out for rebounds off the keeper's stumps.
 - d. Into the covers then forward square leg tries to back up the keeper to save one over throw and long leg will save four over throws but will struggle to get up close enough to save one over throw. Mid on will back up the bowler's stumps, with mid off trying to get over the bowler's stumps to effect a run



5.2.2 Backing up keeps fieldsmen interested and active and shows how the role of fieldsmen is extensive and ongoing.

Notes:

6.0 Looking After the Cricket Ball

6.1 Keeping the Ball Hard

Every bowler prefers to bowl with a hard ball as a hard ball reacts more to the variances (unknowns) of a pitch than does a soft or old cricket ball. In general a hard ball bounces more, seams more as a hard object indents more into a softer surface than a soft object. A hard ball swings more as it is smoother and spins more as it is easier to grip around the seam. Therefore one of the roles of a fieldsman should be to try and keep the ball as hard/new as possible for as long as possible. Nobody knows how long a ball will stay 'hard' or how many advantageous bounces, swings, seams or spins a cricket ball will have, all we know is the better we look after it the more chance we have of gaining the benefits of what could happen. These assumptions are backed up by the opportunity for a ball to be replaced in test cricket after 80 overs and the use of a separate ball at each end in ODIs. Therefore how we look after a ball is important.

6.2 Relaying

Relaying the ball back to the bowler is a very important part of fielding and needs to be understood. We should ensure the ball bounces as little as possible when it doesn't need to bounce so that any hardness is retained for when the ball is bowled to a batsman by a bowler. Some examples of wasting of the hardness of the ball are:

- a. A bowler warming up and bowling a ball to mid off or mid on and bouncing the ball into the outfield between them.
- b. Needless bouncing of a ball when throwing back to the keeper or bowlers stumps when a throw on the full would save one more good bounce for a later delivery.
- c. You often hear bowlers saying that they couldn't bowl with that ball as it was out of shape as sometimes soft balls can go. Every fielder needs to understand they have a role in keeping the ball as hard as possible for as long as possible.
- d. Therefore when relaying the ball back to the bowler fieldsman should move into a position where the fieldsman with the ball can easily and successfully underarm to ball to them and then they can underarm the ball successfully to the next fieldsman or bowler.

6.3 **General**

Too often fieldsmen do not pay enough attention to these areas of fielding yet when understood the commitment to looking after the ball increases considerably. Shining one side of the ball is important to help bowlers swing the ball and legally keeping the seam clean is also very helpful in assisting the ball to seam/change direction.



7.0 <u>Technique Monitoring</u>

7.1 <u>Cue Cards</u>

- 7.1.1 These are your personal cards that keep key points upmost in your mind. They should cover the things that you think are most important mentally a good method of keeping focused on the correct information is to develop Cue Cards that ensure what we are thinking about is the information that has been decided is best for each one of us individually. Different Cue Cards can be developed for different situations.
- 7.1.2 The following Cue Card is one a player might keep to read on a bus or in a hotel room before setting off to the ground or when one is getting nervous the night before. Reading Cue Cards settles nerves as when we refocus on things we know will work for us we tend to relax more. What we are doing is replacing fears with things we know work for us.

7.2 Example Cue Cards

7.2.1 An example of a 'Close Catching' Cue Card might be that a fielder who fields in 'close catching positions' keeps in their bag might be;

Non Negotiables

- Slightly bent at hips
- Knees slightly bent
- o Head forward, still and leads movement

Close Catching

- Feet shoulder width apart
- Fingers overlapped and spread
- Finger positioning down, side or reverse cup
- o Arms slightly bent and relaxed
- Head leads movement and feet follow
- Hands in position early
- o Strong, firm, determined catching unit

Strategy

- Be aggressive
- Expect catch
- Watch nearest edge of bat
- Determine my catching area

7.3 <u>Cue Card Development</u>

<u>Full</u>

Close Catching Cue Card

-

.

•

Saving Ones (Inner Circle) Cue Card

•

Outfielder's Cue Card

•

•

•

_