



CATCHER'S TIP #3:



Question: "How do I get my catcher comfortable with the baseball hitting them when blocking pitches thrown in the dirt?"

Successful teams will consistently include a catcher that is proficient at blocking the ball in the dirt. Pitchers will often purposely bounce a pitch in an attempt to get the batter to "chase" and they must have a catcher that is confident and comfortable with getting their body behind the ball and allowing it to hit them. It is a natural reflex for a player to flinch or turn when a baseball is going to hit them and it takes a unique athlete to have no fear of the ball and to not flinch. If your catcher is inexperienced and is constantly flinching, turning and/or tries to catch the ball in the dirt instead of blocking, the first step is to get them comfortable with the ball hitting their body or mask.

This month's "**TIP**" will focus on **getting your catcher comfortable with blocking balls in the dirt.**

The key to consistently blocking the ball in the dirt is anticipation. A good receiver expects every pitch that is thrown to be wild so that when it does happen they are not surprised and they are ready to block. Achieving proper blocking position is also of utmost importance. Even with proper form and good anticipation, if the catcher has a fear of the ball, the chances of them successfully blocking the ball in the dirt go down significantly.

Proper form includes the following: knees wide, hips low, bare hand and mitt deep in between the legs, chest forward and chin tucked.

Even slight deviations from this form could result in failure to block and/or injury. Once your catcher has a good understanding of the correct form, the next step is to get them comfortable with the ball hitting them.



Proper Blocking Form



Incorrect – bare hand exposed



Incorrect – hand exposed & head turned

The **Sit and Get Hit Drill** is a great way to show your catcher that if they get into proper blocking position, and use their body instead of attempting to catch the ball, the likelihood of them failing to block and/or the ball actually hurting them is minimal.



The coach or partner stands directly in front of the catcher and throws the ball so it "short-hops" them, bouncing up striking the chest protector. The catcher should start by looking out at the thrower and then track the ball all the way into the chest, tucking the chin as the ball makes contact with the body. The only movement the catcher makes during this drill is tucking the chin and a slight roll of the shoulders is also acceptable. They should NOT lift their mitt in an attempt to catch the ball and should NOT turn their head. The cues to give are "mitt down, keep it down," and "tuck the chin."

"The Bottom Line" – If you catcher attempts to catch the ball in the dirt ("pick it"), they will miss more than they stop; if they attempt to block the ball in the dirt ("use their body"), they will stop more than they miss. Use the Sit and Get Hit Drill to help you catcher get comfortable with the ball hitting them which should help with the skill of blocking the ball in the dirt.

For more information on proper blocking technique, check out **Chapter 4** in "**The View From Behind the Mask.**"

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