

JOE WILKINS

Catching



Giving Signs with the proper knowledge and technique is often taken for granted in working with catchers. In the sign giving stance, the catcher should have his knees pointing toward the middle infielders, imagining he is giving the sign to the shortstop. The reason for this is the glove will block the third base coach's view and there is



nothing to block the first base coach's view, other than this slight shift in direction. The sign-giving hand should have the thumb on the cup so the signs aren't too high or too low and he should have the legs pinched so that the base-coaches can't see them. A key phrase, if the catcher is opening up too much in practice, could be "pinch your knees."

As far as foot position goes, the catcher should have his feet underneath his butt when squatting down. The weight should be on the toes but the catcher should be able to balance so that after the sign is given, he can easily step to his stance. Remember though, the wider the feet get, the more the knees want to open up. In the above-left picture, J.B. is too upright and should create a better pocket with his chest and knees like the above-right example.



Drill 1: With a combination of three catchers/coaches/players, have one catcher giving signs with the other two catchers/coaches/players at the angle of the base-coaches, at least 20-30 feet away. Have the catcher give signs and see if the "base-coaches" can see them. If you have another catcher/coach/player, have them get behind the catcher giving the signs to see if his fingers are showing from underneath. Giving your signs so that only the pitcher and the middle infielders can see them will keep the other team from gaining any edge that is simply unnecessary.



Drill 2: After each catcher has learned the proper sign-giving stance, it is now time to go from giving your sign to your primary or secondary stance. The catcher should be walking into these stances...not hopping. He should start with the lead foot, depending on which side of the plate he is moving to. If he is setting up down the middle, he can lead with either foot. Practice giving a sign and walking into your primary stance. Alternate the direction you are setting up on the plate to practice your footwork for each direction. Repeat this drill for walking into your secondary stance. 2 sets of 5 repetitions to each direction during each workout will create this muscle memory.