



SITUATIONAL BUNTING

General Strategy

Except when there is a runner on third, the offensive is willing to give up an out in order to move a runner along. The overriding defensive strategy is to make sure you get that out. It's nice to get the lead runner and in certain situations you will try hard to get the lead runner, but if there is any doubt, you must get the out at first.

Catcher

In all bunting situations, the catcher is in charge. He must be fully aware of the ability of his defense to field a bunt and make a quality throw. He must take that into account along with the speed of the runner and the direction of the bunt to determine where the play must go. He has the play in front of him and can see the whole field. It's his responsibility to call out where the ball is to be thrown. The catcher is the coach on the field and must enforce the team strategy to get an out.

Pitcher

The pitcher must focus on multiple tasks during any bunt defense.

- Keep the runner close. There will be no opportunity to get a lead runner in a bunt situation if the runner is not held on base.
- Make a good pitch. Many times the pitcher is too concerned with getting off the mound quickly instead of making a good pitch. The opposing team is willing to give you an out to advance the runner. Don't let them advance the runner for free by walking the hitter or making a wild pitch.
- Field your position. Once you have made a quality pitch, you must become a fielder. Remember your responsibility and don't be a spectator.

First Baseman

The first baseman must first hold the runner on first and then break towards home as the pitch is delivered. With a runner on first and second, you will want to cheat in on the grass as the play will be made at either third or first, so holding the runner close is not as important.

Second Baseman

You will be covering first on all bunt plays. Watch for the runner stealing second. You must alert the team that the runner is going since the first baseman is charging to cover the bunt. On a missed bunt attempt, make sure you continue to first, as the catcher may be able to make a snap throw to first and get the runner.

Runner on First

With a runner on first, the main objective of this defense is to get an out. Most likely this will occur by throwing the ball to first base. Making a play at second is risky due to the length of the throw. A poor throw or trying to make a play at second when the runner has a good chance of beating the throw can end up in two runners on and no outs. Unless the catcher calls for the play to go to second, the player fielding the ball should assume the play is at first base.

A play at second will most likely be successful on a ball that is bunted right in front of home plate where the catcher can field the ball quickly and make the throw. The only other time a play should be attempted at second is on a ball that is bunted hard directly at one of the fielders charging the ball. The catcher will have to judge the speed of the ball, the position of the fielder and the jump of the runner to determine if the play can be made at second. If there is any doubt, the catcher should call for the play to go to first.

Responsibilities: Catcher

Field any ball that is in front of you that you can get to before or at the same time as the pitcher or first baseman. You have an easier throw since your momentum is moving you towards the field. Unless you can clearly get to the ball before the third baseman, you will want to yield and let him field the ball. His angle will give him a better opportunity to throw the runner out at first than you. Remember, the key in this play is to get an out. If you're not sure that the lead runner can easily be thrown out, call for the ball to be thrown to first.

Third Baseman

You will break towards home as the pitcher delivers the pitch to the plate. Go in under control and make sure the hitter doesn't fake the bunt and then swing away. If the bunt is fielded by anyone else but you, it's your responsibility to immediately return to 3rd to cover the bag.

Pitcher

If the third baseman fields the ball, it's your responsibility to cover third base.

First Baseman

You must first hold the runner on first and then break towards home as the pitch is delivered.

Second Baseman

You will be covering first on the play.

Shortstop

You will be covering second base. Make sure the hitter doesn't fake bunt and swing away before breaking to cover second. If a fake bunt is used to help cover a steal, you must break to cover second even if the second baseman was determined to cover second on a steal before the play. If he reads bunt, he will be heading towards first and will not be in position to cover second on the steal.

Left Fielder

On a bunt down the first base line, you will first break to back up second base in case of a bad throw, once you have determined the ball will not be thrown to second, run towards third base. You may be required to cover the base if the third baseman or the pitcher fails to cover.

Center Fielder

Back up second base.

Right Fielder

Back up first base.

Runners on First and Second - Goal: Get the out at third base

With this play, you're going to try and get the force out at third base. A good bunt will make it difficult for this play to succeed since there are only two players charging. If in doubt, get the out at first.

The key to the play is again the pitcher and shortstop working together to decrease the lead of the runner at second.

As the pitcher completes his stretch he will look back to second base, the shortstop will make a break toward second to get the runner to take a couple of steps back. If he doesn't move the shortstop should continue to second and the pitcher should step off or attempt a pickoff at second. This play can be used as a daylight play if the runner doesn't move back towards second base. The shortstop can be more aggressive in driving the runner back since that's his main responsibility in this play. When the pitcher sees the runner move back towards second, he should deliver the pitch.

Responsibilities: Catcher

Field any ball that is in front of you that you can get to before or at the same time as the pitcher or first baseman. You have an easier throw since your momentum is moving you towards the field. Chances are if you and any fielder are going to arrive at the bunted ball at the same time, then there will most likely only be a play at first base. Remember, you are in charge of where the ball is to be thrown. The goal is to try and get the out at third, but on a ball that is bunted well, you may have to call for the ball to go to first.

Third Baseman

You will break towards home early as the pitcher is completing his stretch. The idea is to make the hitter think that the third baseman is coming in hard. As the pitcher delivers the pitch to the plate, the third baseman will stop and start backing up towards third. He can't run straight to third because he will still have to field any ball that is bunted hard enough that the pitcher can't get to it. Once the ball is bunted, he will get back to cover third base.

Pitcher

Pitcher will charge on the third base side of the infield. That half is his responsibility.

First Baseman

In this situation, position yourself as if you're holding the runner at first. As the pitcher takes his stretch, start creeping in toward home and break as he starts his delivery. Since the pitcher is covering the third base side of the infield, you will need to cover from the foul line to the mound.

Second Baseman

You will be covering first on the play.

Shortstop

Described above. Covering second base.

Left Fielder

Back up third base.

Center Fielder

Back up second base.

Right Fielder

Back up first base.