



### **Coastal Stars Catching Philosophy**

Catchers, this document contains the critical information and techniques you must be aware of and capable of executing to be a successful catcher not only for our organization, but at the college level. Catcher is without a doubt the most difficult position to play in the game. If you don't think you can be the hardest working player on your team, then catcher is probably not the position for you. Please read through this entire document carefully as we think it will help you become a better catcher.

First and foremost, for our young catchers: **CATCH THE BALL AND KEEP THE BALL IN FRONT.** This is the foundation for being a catcher- you have to be able to catch the ball consistently and keep the ball from getting past you. If you cannot do this, then you might as well stop reading now.

Generally speaking, most of our more detailed expectations of our catchers can fall into the four categories below:

#### **1. Receiving/Framing**

The ability to receive pitches well is probably the most important quality a catcher can possess. Catchers are receiving pitches 100% of the time whereas they are blocking or throwing much less often. For our catchers, here are our basic receiving/framing points:

- Do not allow the ball to move your glove/arm- you use your glove to subtly move the ball closer to the strike zone as you catch it. You have to have strong forearm and shoulder muscles to do this.
- Catch the ball on the way back to the strike zone. The best catchers are able to use their glove to make pitches that are on the edge of the strike zone look like strikes by starting their glove outside the zone then catching the ball as the glove is moving back towards the zone.
- Work from the ground up. Your glove should drop/relax as the pitch is being released. The lower strikes are more commonly stolen than the higher strikes and pitchers are taught to throw the ball down in the zone. Start with your glove low after giving the target.
- Stay athletic- we do not require our catchers to have any particular stance. We want you to use whatever stance you are most comfortable and proficient with. However, if you watch the MLB catchers, many of them receive with a 1 knee down stance, especially with no runners on base. They do this because it is easier to stay athletic and allow your hands to work with one knee down. We want to encourage you guys to experiment using one knee down stances, as well as with a traditional stance. You should be able to do both.

A catcher's single greatest impact on every game is directly correlated with how many strikes they help our pitchers earn each game. In major league baseball, there are statistics now that allow us to know which catchers steal the most strikes. Watch the best major league and college catchers receive, and imitate them.

#### **2. Blocking**

Depending on the pitcher's skill level, blocking and keeping the ball in front is sometimes just as critical as receiving. If you are a catcher who is better at blocking from a traditional stance, then be sure to use the traditional stance when runners are on base or when it is critical to prevent passed balls. However, many of the best catchers in the world can block from a 1 knee down stance as well. Our basic blocking points:

- Lead with the glove. The first split second reaction to seeing a pitch in the dirt should be your glove gets down low. Your upper body and knees can follow your glove but your glove has to go first and be down on the ground.
- Replace your feet with your knees. As soon as your glove gets down, your knees have to drop and replace your feet. When doing this, the hips should push back as your chest comes over the top of the ball/home plate.
- Maintain good posture. When blocking, your spine cannot be straight up and down. Your chest angle should deflect the ball downward and close to home plate. Much like fielding a ground ball, you have to hinge at the hips some to create a favorable angle to prevent the ball from bouncing away.
- Fight to keep the ball near home plate. Blocking doesn't have to be pretty. As a catcher, you have to do whatever it takes to prevent runners from advancing and to keep the ball from getting past you. However, the chest protector is the best, most consistent piece of equipment to block with. Good catchers are able to make most dirt balls hit their chest protector.

### 3. **Awareness, Leadership and Hustle**

The easiest way to summarize the remaining characteristics we expect our catchers to possess would be to list the traits of elite catchers. Read this list. Study this list. Memorize this list. Live by this list.

Elite catchers..

- are leaders both on and off of the field, both vocally, and with their actions- they are the team's quarterback.
- are the hardest working players on the team.
- take ownership over THEIR team pitching staff.
- are the team pitching coach- they are constantly analyzing and learning more about their pitchers: their tendencies, weaknesses and strengths, mechanics, and are always looking for ways to help their pitchers be more successful.
- know their team and pitching staff better than anyone else on the team.
- know what pitches each of their pitchers throw.
- are always hustling and always working hard.
- back up first base on ground balls to the infield with no one on base- EVERY SINGLE TIME.
- take every pitch they receive seriously.
- steal strikes with their receiving ability.
- can block any pitch at any time.
- always respect the umpire and have good relationships with every umpire.
- make sure every pitcher on their team knows their signs- with runners on 2B and with no one on base.
- never get caught off guard by baserunners and delayed steals
- have the athleticism to use multiple receiving stances.
- catch every single pitch in the pocket of their mitt.
- understand the field conditions and are able to make adjustments based on what field they are playing at- (turf vs dirt, loose sandy dirt vs hard dirt, etc.)
- look for opportunities to back pick and exploit poor baserunning.
- have good hip mobility and are constantly working to take care of their hips and knees.
- makes sure the defense knows the first and third plays and how many outs there are
- turn their back to the infield on catcher pop ups and throw their mask out of their way once they see the ball
- can consistently and quickly throw the ball to each base on steal attempts- long hop or in the air.
- can quickly and athletically stand up to field bunts and their position.