

Picket Fence Offense:

The Hybrid System That Produces and Pressures

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge three great baseball men who helped shape my career and my philosophy.

Gary Anglin and Don Adams—both Ventura College and California Baseball Hall of Famers—and Dave Dangler, longtime college coach and current professional scout.

Gary and Donnie taught me the game when I was young. They laid the foundation. Years later, when I moved from Ventura, California, to the Pacific Northwest, Dangs welcomed me, trusted me, and generously shared the knowledge that only decades in baseball can provide. I am forever grateful to all three.

Baseball teams do three things: they pitch, they defend, and they hit.

Do two of those three well, and you're a good team.

Do all three well, and you're a great team.

I believe pitching and defense travel. They win consistently. Good pitching beats good hitting more often than not. That's why our offensive philosophy isn't built on chasing batting averages or waiting for the three-run home run. It's built on producing runs while applying relentless pressure.

Our goal is simple: create an offense that scores consistently while developing hitters who play the game the right way. We want players with the grit to fit our culture.

Great offenses aren't built solely on hits. Batting average alone doesn't produce runs. Teams score by getting runners on base, advancing them intelligently, and capitalizing on every opportunity.

Athletic baserunners without productive hitters don't score enough. Productive hitters without baserunners can't drive in runs. The two must work together.

That's why we value on-base percentage, quality at-bats, walks, hit-by-pitches, intelligent baserunning, productive outs, and relentless pressure.

To become more than just a good hitter, a player must embrace the walk, wear the hit-by-pitch when necessary, and refuse to accept the strikeout.

Too often, strikeouts have become normalized. Somewhere along the way, we stopped treating them like failures and started making excuses for them. Our game changed because we accepted something we shouldn't have.

Don't misunderstand me—I love the crooked number, the three-run homer, and the excitement that comes with explosive innings as much as anyone.

But there are days when the opposing pitcher has his best stuff. Those are the days championships are won. When hits are hard to find, you still have to manufacture offense.

That's where the Picket Fence Offense separates itself.

It's a hybrid system built on the old baseball philosophy of "Get him on. Get him over. Get him in." But we've adapted it to today's game by combining traditional fundamentals with modern offensive analytics.

Our offense creates pressure—mental and physical. It forces pitchers to throw more pitches, forces defenses into uncomfortable situations, creates better counts for our hitters, and produces more opportunities for extra-base hits and big innings.

Pressure creates mistakes.

Mistakes create runs.

Runs win games.

I've been coaching for nearly five decades. I'm 65 years old, and yes—I still carry a yellow legal pad.

It never needs a battery.

It remembers everything I write down.

And nobody can hack it.

The game can still be played with old-school toughness and modern understanding. Players love playing an aggressive, intelligent brand of baseball because it allows them to compete every pitch.

We still embrace the new school.

We just leave the unnecessary strikeouts behind.

Picket Fence: The Hybrid Offense that Produces and Pressures

Picket Fence Offensive Principles

On-base percentage, slugging percentage, and runs batted in—collectively reflecting run production—have greater offensive value than batting average and slugging percentage alone.

1. Walks are wins.
2. Hit-by-pitches are wins.
3. Stolen bases, dirt-ball reads, and purposeful baserunning are wins.
4. Successful bunts are wins.
5. Run production is the most important offensive measurement.
6. Strikeouts are losses.

If hits were more important than runs, every scoreboard would read **Hits, Runs, Errors** instead of **Runs, Hits, Errors**.

Control the Pitch Count

Our goal is to force the opposing starting pitcher to throw **75–85 pitches by the end of the fourth inning**.

1. Force the opposing manager and coaching staff to go to the bullpen early. This can change the outcome of a game or an entire series.
2. Make the opposing pitcher throw at least 15 pitches per inning.
3. Draw more walks than we record strikeouts.
4. Treat walks and hit-by-pitches as offensive wins.

Example: If an opposing pitching staff allows five hits, issues five walks, and hits two batters, that creates 12 offensive wins and 12 opportunities to produce runs.

5. Play for one run per inning. Force the opponent to play from behind and operate outside its comfort zone. Many innings that begin with the goal of scoring one run develop into crooked numbers.
6. Score first.
7. Emphasize the importance of the leadoff hitter: **When he gets on, we score.**

Create Scoring Opportunities

1. Use the Picket Fence Offense to create as many of the following situations as possible:
 - Runner on second base with no outs.
 - Runner on second base with one out.
 - Runner on third base with one out.
2. Make winning an extra 90 feet without giving up an out a central part of the offensive plan.

Examples include:

- Advancing from first to third on a base hit.
- Stealing a base.
- Advancing on a dirt-ball read.

A runner who advances from first to third on a single has earned an additional 90 feet without the offense surrendering an out.

3. Create nine games within the game and compete to win every inning. Treat the game like a nine-round street fight.

4. Stop playing for one run only when the number of runs you are chasing exceeds the number of innings remaining.
5. There is nothing better than a three-run home run, and the Picket Fence Offense creates more opportunities for it to happen.
6. Use pressure and pace to force opponents into situations for which they may not be prepared.
7. Play fast while forcing the opponent to rush. We want to be quick and under control while making the opposition uncomfortable.
8. Draw more walks than we record strikeouts.

Establish a Two-Strike Plan

1. Every hitter must develop and believe in a consistent two-strike approach:
 - Work **out to in**.
 - Think **hard to soft**.
 - Never get beat by a fastball.
 - Use no stride or a shorter stride.
 - Reduce unnecessary movement to create a repeatable approach.

- Treat every two-strike at-bat as the greatest one-on-one confrontation in sports.
- Never take a hittable fastball for strike three.
- Adjust to the plate and protect **the River**—the area over the plate that must be covered with two strikes.

The catcher plays an important role in this plan. Each inning, he communicates the umpire's strike-zone tendencies to the bench, especially on questionable calls.

For example:

"He is calling the inside pitch tightly, but he is giving the pitcher a ball off the outside edge."

Once that information is communicated, there is no excuse for taking strike three in the River.

2. Belief in the two-strike plan creates an effective **two-strike run-and-hit offense** built around working out to in and adjusting from hard to soft.

3. The two-strike run-and-hit offense pressures both the opposing pitcher and defense.
4. It allows runners to move with protection in 3–2 and selected 2–2 counts.
5. It reduces double-play opportunities. Double plays are rally killers.
6. It creates additional opportunities for base hits by forcing middle infielders to move out of position.
7. Because runners are already in motion, it creates more first-to-third opportunities.
8. It forces pitchers to be quicker to the plate, which may lead to more hittable pitches.
9. It increases the likelihood of earning walks by forcing pitchers to execute under pressure.

Build the Lineup Around the System

1. Create a lineup that fits both the offensive system and the strengths of the players.

“Where there is no vision, the program perishes.”

2. Build three lineups within one lineup. Always remember that everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth. Be willing to adjust, adapt, and make the system work for your personnel.

Sample Lineup Structure

- **Leadoff hitter — 1/4:** On-base percentage, speed, runs scored, and RBI.
- **Two-hole hitter — 2/5:** OPS, power, speed, runs scored, and RBI.
- **Three-hole hitter — 3/6:** OPS, power, and RBI.
- **Cleanup hitter — 4/1:** OPS, power, speed, runs scored, and RBI.
- **Five-hole hitter — 5/2:** OPS, speed, runs scored, and RBI.
- **Six-hole hitter — 6/3:** OPS, power, and RBI.
- **Seven-hole hitter — 7/1:** On-base percentage, power, speed, runs scored, and RBI.
- **Eight-hole hitter — 8/2:** On-base percentage, speed, and runs scored.
- **Nine-hole hitter — 9/1:** On-base percentage, speed, and runs scored.

The 44 Club

Create a **44 Club** in which membership is determined by run production. A player must produce 44 runs to earn membership.

The purpose of the club is to promote two core values:

- **Unselfishness**
- **Effort**

Points are awarded as follows:

- **Run scored:** 1 point
- **RBI:** 1 point
- **Baseball play that contributes to a run:** 0.5 points

Examples of an assist include:

- A sacrifice bunt that advances a runner into scoring position before that runner scores.
- A dirt-ball read that moves a runner from second to third before the runner scores on a sacrifice fly.

Formula:

Runs Scored + RBI + Run-Producing Baseball Plays = Total Runs Produced

- Update the 44 Club leaderboard after every series to create healthy competition within the clubhouse.
- Players will become excited about executing sacrifice bunts, advancing runners, and making unselfish plays.
- Teammates will learn to recognize the player who helped create the run, not only the player who scored or recorded the RBI.

For example: "That's your run, Gibby!"

Over time, this mindset becomes part of the team's identity and culture.

Safety Squeeze: Baseball's Option Offense

Basic Safety Squeeze

Situation

- Runners on first and third base.
- Fewer than two outs.
- The safety squeeze is a core part of our offense and immediately applies pressure to the defense.

Pressure on the Defense

- The bunt-coverage call must come from the dugout and be communicated to every infielder.
- The first-and-third defensive call must also be relayed throughout the infield.
- At the same time, the pitcher must receive the pitch sign from the catcher.
- All communication and preparation must occur within the pitch clock.

This forces the opposition to process information quickly. When the mind speeds up, the body often speeds up with it. The result is a defense playing at a faster pace than it normally practices.

The defense will typically begin at double-play depth, with the middle infielders pinching toward the middle. This alignment creates an advantage for the offense. When the safety squeeze is executed correctly, the defense is forced to move, communicate, and make decisions under pressure.

Baserunning Responsibilities

Runner at First Base

- Take a normal primary lead.
- See the pitch delivered before beginning the secondary lead.
- Do not get picked off.
- Run with your eyes up.
- Think first to third.
- If the third baseman vacates the bag, recognize the opportunity and advance to third base.

Runner at Third Base

- Take a nine-foot walking lead.
- Do not break until the bunt is on the ground.
- Use the same technique as the contact play from third base.
- Read the bunt, the third baseman, and the third-base coach.

Hitter Responsibilities

There are three basic bunt techniques:

- Show
- Late show
- No show

The safety squeeze uses the **late-show technique**.

The hitter must:

- Bunt the ball toward the **3–4-hole triangle**.
- Bunt strikes only.
- Focus on producing a soft, controlled bunt.
- Avoid forcing the bunt or attempting to do too much.

In our bunting system, bunts are numbered according to the defensive player or area we are targeting.

Desired Result

When executed properly:

- The runner from third scores.
- The runner from first advances into scoring position.
- The hitter reaches or records a productive out.
- Pressure remains on the defense.

The play produces a run while keeping the inning alive.

Safety Squeeze Against the Crash Defense

Recognizing the Crash

The defense may initially appear to be at double-play depth, but movement by the first baseman and second baseman may reveal a **Crash 3 bunt defense**.

In a Crash 3 defense:

- The first baseman charges and covers the first-base side of the mound.
- The pitcher handles the middle or front side of the mound.
- The third baseman may remain in a hard-bunt read or charge aggressively.

This movement is the offensive tell.

Baserunning Responsibilities

Runner at Third Base

- Take a nine-foot walking lead.
- See the bunt on the ground before committing.
- Use contact-play technique.
- Read the defense and the third-base coach.

Runner at First Base

- Take a normal primary lead.
- See the ball delivered before beginning the secondary lead.
- Do not get picked off.

- Recognize the crash movement.
- Once the crash is identified, break on a straight steal.

Hitter Options

The hitter must recognize the defensive movement and listen for the verbal call from the on-deck hitter.

Once the crash is identified, the hitter has three options:

- Take the pitch.
- Execute the slash.
- Continue with the safety squeeze when appropriate.

The slash, like the bunt, must be attempted only on a strike.

For every defensive action, the offense must have a reaction.

Steal-Slash Outcomes

Outcome 1: Take and Steal

- The runner from first breaks.
- The hitter takes the pitch.
- The defense must execute its first-and-third coverage.

- The offense forces the defense to play catch.
- The runner steals second base.
- The result is runners on second and third with fewer than two outs.

Outcome 2: Throw-Through and Break

- The runner from first breaks.
- The hitter takes the pitch.
- The defense throws through to second base.
- The runner from third breaks on the throw.
- The defense is forced to execute under pressure.

Outcome 3: Slash for a Base Hit

- The hitter executes the slash.
- The runner from third scores.
- The offense may again have runners on first and third.
- The safety squeeze remains available.

Outcome 4: Slash to the Outfield

- The hitter lifts the slash into the outfield.
- The runner from third tags.

- The offense produces a run.

Negative Outcomes

Possible negative outcomes include:

- The defense successfully executes its first-and-third coverage.
- The runner from third is unable to score.
- The hitter pops up the slash.
- The offense fails to produce the run.

When that happens, go home, take a shower, climb into bed, and prepare for your wife to tell you that you are exactly as smart as you looked on that play.

Safety and Run

The **Safety and Run** follows many of the same principles as a hit-and-run play.

Hitter Responsibilities

The hitter is expected to bunt the pitch unless:

- The pitch is in the dirt.
- The pitch is far enough inside to be worn.
- Attempting the bunt would create unnecessary risk.

The hitter must:

- Commit to the bunt.
- Bunt a strike.
- Keep the ball on the ground.
- Avoid popping the bunt into the air.

Runner at First Base

- Take the lead with a hit-and-run mentality.
- See the pitch delivered.
- Do not get picked off.
- Break aggressively.
- Think first to third.

The runner should expect to advance from first to third when the bunt is executed correctly.

Runner at Third Base

- Take a nine-foot walking lead.
- Do not commit until the bunt is on the ground.
- Use contact-play technique.
- Read the bunt, the third baseman, and the third-base coach.

Reading a Poor Bunt

If the bunt is poorly placed, the runner from third and the third-base coach must decide whether to continue or hold.

The runner from first must read the play in front of him. If the runner at third holds or the third baseman stays home, the runner from first must recognize the situation and adjust.

Possible Outcomes

Outcome 1: Run Produced

- The runner from third scores.
- The runner from first advances to third.
- The offense produces a run and places another runner 90 feet away.

There are more ways to score from third base than from either first or second.

Outcome 2: Missed Bunt

- The hitter misses the bunt.
- The runner from first is already in motion.
- The defense must execute its first-and-third coverage.
- The offense may steal second and create runners on second and third.
- The offense may also execute the double steal and produce a run.

Negative Outcome

The worst-case outcome occurs when:

- The hitter pops up the bunt.
- The defense catches the ball.
- The runner is doubled off.
- The defense successfully executes its first-and-third coverage.
- No run scores.

If it happens a second time, go home quietly. You will not have to listen to your wife because she will have already changed the locks.

Game Changer: Two-Strike Run-and-Hit Offense

Situations

The two-strike run-and-hit offense may be used with:

- A runner on first base.
- Runners on first and second base.
- A 2–2 count.
- A 3–2 count.

This offensive plan requires a team that has established, practiced, and believes in its two-strike approach.

Two-Strike Hitting Approach

Every hitter must understand and commit to the following principles:

- Work **out to in**.
- Think **hard to soft**.
- Never get beat by the fastball.
- Never take a hittable fastball for called strike three.
- Know the strike zone.

- Understand the umpire's tendencies.
- Control what can be controlled.
- Determine the outcome through preparation and commitment.
- Treat every two-strike at-bat as the greatest one-on-one confrontation in sports.

A two-strike run-and-hit offense cannot succeed unless the hitters believe in their two-strike plan.

Benefits of Running on a 3–2 Count

Running on a 3–2 count:

- Forces the pitcher to control the running game.
- Requires the pitcher to use an efficient delivery to the plate.
- Creates more fastball opportunities for the hitter.
- Reduces double-play opportunities.
- Increases the likelihood of drawing a walk.
- Creates more first-to-third opportunities.
- Applies pressure to the pitcher and catcher.
- Forces the defense to move before contact.

- Creates additional openings within the infield.

Benefits of Running on a 2–2 Count

Running on a 2–2 count provides many of the same advantages as running on a 3–2 count.

It may be used when:

- The pitcher consistently throws strikes.
- The hitter has demonstrated strong strike-zone awareness.
- The pitcher has established a tendency to throw off-speed pitches in 2–2 counts.
- The hitter has confidence in the two-strike approach.
- The baserunner has demonstrated strong reads and instincts.

The 2–2 run should be used selectively and only when the personnel and scouting report support it.

The 2–2 and 3–2 Scrimmage

This competitive drill may be scheduled:

- During fall practice.

- On a bullpen day during the season.
- As part of a controlled live-batting-practice period.

Pitching Structure

For a 30-pitch bullpen session:

- The pitcher throws 15 pitches in the bullpen.
- The pitcher throws the remaining 15 pitches against live hitters.
- Each live situation begins with a runner on first or runners on first and second.
- The pitcher and hitter inherit a 2–2 count.

Baserunning Rules

- Baserunners may run on a 2–2 count.
- Baserunners must run on a 3–2 count.
- Runners must work on leads, reads, jumps, and first-to-third technique.
- Runners must maintain awareness of the pitcher, catcher, and defense.

Developmental Benefits

The drill requires:

- Pitchers to control the running game.
- Pitchers to compete with two strikes.
- Hitters to execute their two-strike plans.
- Baserunners to practice live reads and techniques.
- Defenders to receive live situational repetitions.
- Catchers to manage the game and communicate.
- The entire team to compete in game-speed situations.

Nuts and Bolts: Situational Hitting Batting Practice

The purpose of situational batting practice is to develop execution, accountability, and offensive discipline.

Each round requires the hitter and runner to complete a specific task before advancing.

Round 1: Sacrifice Progression

SAC 3

- Begin with a runner on first base.
- The runner works on the primary and secondary leads.
- The hitter executes a SAC 3.
- The runner advances to second base.

If the bunt is not successfully executed, the runner returns to first and the play is repeated.

SAC 5

- The runner begins on second base.
- The runner works on the primary and secondary leads.
- The hitter executes a SAC 5.
- The runner advances to third base.

If the bunt is not successfully executed, the runner returns to second and the play is repeated.

Squeeze

- The runner begins on third base.
- The runner works on the primary lead, secondary lead, and squeeze break.
- The hitter executes the squeeze.

If the squeeze is not successfully executed, the runner returns to third and the play is repeated.

Hard 90

- The hitter finishes the round by running a hard 90 feet.
- The runner must sprint through the bag and execute a controlled breakdown.

Round 2: Hit-and-Run Progression

Hit and Run

- The player who completed the hard 90 becomes the runner at first.
- The runner works on the primary lead and hit-and-run break.
- The hitter executes the hit and run.

- The runner advances to second base.

If the hit and run is not successfully executed:

- The runner returns to first.
- The hitter must execute a SAC 3.
- The drill continues until the task is completed.

Move Him

- The runner begins on second base.
- The hitter must advance the runner by hitting the ball behind him.
- The runner advances to third base.

If the hitter fails to move the runner:

- The runner returns to second.
- The hitter must execute a SAC 5.
- The drill continues until the task is completed.

Squeeze

- The runner begins on third base.

- The runner works on the primary lead, secondary lead, and squeeze break.
- The hitter executes the squeeze.

If the squeeze is not successfully executed, the runner returns to third and the play is repeated.

4. Double-Double Turn

- The hitter finishes the round with a double.
- The runner works on an aggressive double turn and proper breakdown technique.

Round 3: Slash-and-Run Progression

Slash and Run

- The player who completed the previous running assignment becomes the runner at first.
- The runner works on the primary lead and hit-and-run break.
- The hitter executes the slash and run.
- The runner advances to second base.

If the slash and run is not successfully executed:

- The runner returns to first.
- The hitter must execute a SAC 3.
- The drill continues until the task is completed. Move Him
- The runner begins on second base.
- The hitter advances the runner by hitting the ball behind him.
- The runner advances to third base.

If the hitter fails to execute:

- The runner returns to second.
- The hitter must execute a SAC 5.
- The drill continues until the task is completed.

Safety Squeeze

- The runner begins on third base.
- The runner works on the primary lead, secondary lead, and squeeze break.
- The hitter executes the safety squeeze.

If the safety squeeze is not successfully executed, the runner returns to third and the play is repeated.

Hard Double

- The hitter finishes the round by running a hard double.
- The runner works on an aggressive turn at first and proper approach into second base.

Round 4: Runner on Second Base

Move Him

- The player who completed the hard double becomes the runner at second.
- The hitter advances the runner by hitting the ball behind him.
- The runner advances to third base.

If the hitter fails to execute:

- The runner returns to second.
- The hitter must execute a SAC 5.
- The drill continues until the task is completed.

Infield In—Score Him

- The runner begins on third base.
- The infield plays in.
- The contact play is on.
- The hitter must produce the run.

If the hitter fails to produce the run, the runner returns to third and the play is repeated.

Gap to Gap

- The hitter drives the ball from gap to gap.
- The hitter finishes with a hard triple.

Round 5: Runner on Third Base

Infield Back—Score Him

- The runner begins on third base.
- The infield plays back.
- The read play is on.
- The hitter must produce the run.

If the hitter fails to produce the run, the runner returns to third and the play is repeated.

Gap to Gap

- The hitter drives the ball from gap to gap.
- The hitter remains at the cage and prepares for the next round.

Round 6: Competitive Batting-Practice Rounds

Complete the following rounds:

- Three balls through the middle.
- Four balls through the middle.
- Two balls through the middle.
- One swing to win it.

The final swing should be treated as a game-winning at-bat. The hitter must slow the game down, commit to the approach, and compete with purpose.

In closing, the most talented teams don't always win.

Too often, managers, coaches, and players rely solely on individual ability.

The most successful programs understand something different—they build a system that allows individual talent to serve the team.

Talent wins games.

Systems win championships.

The Picket Fence Offense isn't about playing small. It's about creating constant pressure, forcing mistakes, and producing runs in every possible way. It's about giving players a clear identity and teaching them to compete with purpose every pitch of every inning.

The greatest compliment a coach can receive isn't that his players hit home runs or steal bases.

It's hearing someone say, "That team plays the game the right way."

As the saying goes, "If Michelangelo wanted to play it safe, he would have painted the floor of the Sistine Chapel."

Have the courage to coach with conviction.

Have the discipline to build a culture.

And remember:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Thank you.

God bless you.

Dios los bendiga.