



Forty Nine Square Feet, Changes the Game

2022 was a great year for college softball, the effects of the pandemic were coming to a close and the sport continued to gain momentum nationwide. In fact, softball surpassed baseball in the most viewed game in their respective World Series in 2022. The Women's College World Series average viewership was 1.7 million -vs- Mens World Series of 1.6 million. Peak viewership for the Women's College World Series was 2.1 million -vs- Mens World Series of 1.9 million. The stats are impressive, but a deeper dive into the reasoning can be reveling. The differences between softball and baseball are indefinite, but the underlying difference between the games is the quickness in which it is played. Softball is a sprint and baseball is a marathon. At the highest levels of baseball, they're actually altering the game with one goal in mind. You guessed it, make the game quicker. The bunt in baseball is typically used only to advance the runner with no chance of the bunter being safe at first. The bunt actually goes against the "unwritten rules" of baseball and is frowned upon with a defensive shift. The bunt has virtually become extinct in baseball, is softball next?



Today's softball world is one of overpriced bats on steroids designed to launch balls hundreds of feet with the simplest of swings. The long ball has started to consume the game. Sure, it's fun to watch a ball skyrocket over the fence. The joy on the face of the hitter as she rounds third is priceless and the cheers of the crowd are exhilarating. However, the simple truth is there isn't a way, other than pitching, to defend a home run. In other words, one defensive player can defend a homerun.

A softball field consists of 31,416 square feet and I contend the first 49' square feet are the most important. If you can't defend the 7' x 7' square in front of home plate, your chances of losing the game are dramatically increased. Conversely, if you offensively control that same 7' x 7' square your chances of winning are greatly increased. As I said earlier, defending the homerun takes one person and that person doing one thing right, pitching. Defending the bunt takes 5 positions, pitcher, catcher, third, first and second, working as a group doing four things right, covering first, picking up the ball, throwing the ball, and catching the ball. A runner beating out a bunt, creates doubt and anxiety in every person on the defensive team, including the coaches. Have you ever watched a coach's reaction when their defense can't get a bunt defended? **Continued on next page**

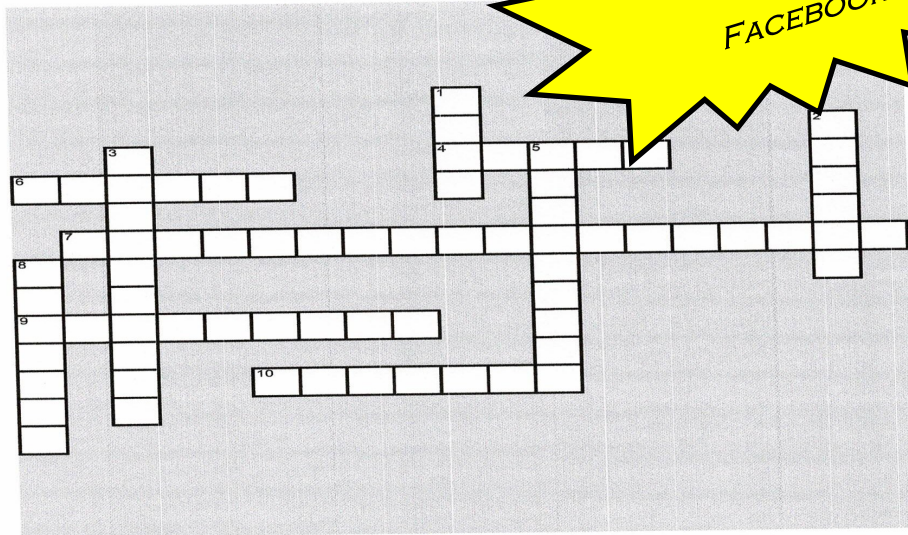


Forty Nine Square Feet, Changes the Game continued

It is quite humorous. A bunt can create all kinds of chaos and momentum if executed correctly from the right side, but bunting from the left can create mass confusion and a full blown implosion from the defensive team. I've heard coaches say, " if you go left side, I know you're bunting". My response, you go ahead and defend the bunt, I'll slap, power slap or hit, but please make sure your first base player is wearing a mask. A perfectly executed bunt 7' down the first baseline is very difficult to defend and completely changes the momentum of the inning and game. Finally, let me ask you this, how many times have you witnessed back to back home runs, doubles or triples? Sure it happens, but not that often. Now think how many times you've witnessed



Defense 1



- Across**
- 4 Fake throw to first is called?
 - 6 Catcher throws ball to third base person.
 - 7 Where does catcher throw the ball on Bella?
 - 9 Who covers third on Bogie?
 - 10 One of our founding principles?

- Down**
- 1 Catcher throws ball to first.
 - 2 Who covers second on Brecker?
 - 3 Who call pitches for Smoke?
 - 5 One of our founding principles?
 - 8 One of our founding principles?