

# 2026 Sluggers Winter Team Practice- Week 1



## Middleton Facility Rules

- a. [Review Sluggers Indoor Facility Rules](#)

## Practice Focus - MECHANICS

- a. **Balance and Coordination in each drill**
  - Every fundamental in baseball/softball requires balance and coordination through a rotational movement.
  - Stay grounded with feet (feel the ground under your feet)
  - Keep your head centered
    - Between feet during swing
    - On the target to throw
    - Face and eyes behind the ball in fielding/catching
- b. **Indoor Practice Standards (Transitions and Drills)**
  - Each Drill is a challenge and every player should set high enough standards to struggle through the challenge.
  - Short/Crisp Practices with quick transitions to/from each station
  - Move fast - Sprint to the ball with quick feet at all times

## Goals for Week 1:

- a. **Learn names of teammates**
  - Goal for 1st practice is to learn names of teammates. Players may be tested at the end of practice.
- b. **Learn the rules and how to use the space at the facility**
  - Players and coaches quickly adjust to new spacing.
- c. **ALWAYS-** Think Fast / Move Fast

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## STRATEGY / MENTAL APPROACH - ATTENTION TO DETAIL (ATD)

***"Practice like you know nothing, play like you know everything!"***

***"Keep it simple, but do simple great"*** Ex) Glove Position in fielding, Head position in Hitting, Front side action in throwing

There is no greater common denominator in successful people than attention to detail. Great players and all successful people pay attention to the details in nearly everything they do. What does this mean to a baseball/softball player? Attention to detail looks like this –

1. The player observes and listens with detail. During clinics and practices, when coaches explain drills and mechanics, successful players listen with focus and intent, visualizing exactly what they are listening to and going to do next. Great players know the How, Why, and Feel of the drill (How do you do it, Why are you doing it, and How does it feel to do it).
2. The player moves with attention to detail. Each drill is a challenge to get each rep correct and consciously tell your body specifically what to do.
  - a. Study the drill



- b. Visualize the action
  - c. Know the purpose and focus of each movement.
3. Every throw, swing, or catch is done with purpose and intent. Getting from one station to another in clinics and practices, the player moves with energy and direction to the next action.
4. The player plans/anticipates with attention to detail. Great players plan for each practice, coming to practices rested and energized, ready to learn and improve with specific goals. For Silver Sluggers, a great example of this is to read the practice plan, watch each video and know what we are going to do before each practice.
5. The player learns and adjusts faster than other players. Great players are constantly assessing, evaluating, and analyzing each rep in drills. They are observing and understanding each pitch in games. They strive to understand where their body is in space and exactly what kind of result they are getting from each swing, throw, or fielding play. From this information, they make quick adjustments where necessary.
6. Successful players are the first to make detailed observations to use to their advantage in games (pitcher trends, hitter tendencies to adjust defensive positioning, etc.)
7. Successful players use both success and failure to their advantage. They have a running list of successes and failures, using every experience as an opportunity to improve. Successes are used for understanding a player's strengths and advantages on the field. Failures are used as motivation and an opportunity to learn the adjustment, get to work and improve.

**Players Homework:** Attention to detail can be practiced and improved over time.

- In our clinics and your own practice time at home, work at being more attentive to details and focus on each rep, each drill with attention to detail.
- Identify the specifics of How, Why, and feel of each drill or rep.
- Learn to have a goal for each practice, and use the practice (successes and failures) to set goals for your next workout. For example, every player succeeds and fails at something every practice. If you start to identify these more precisely, build confidence from your successes, and make a list of failures to correct before the next practice, you are organized for success over time.

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## DAILY ROUTINES - FIRST 30 (Players lead - Everyone Together in cage 5-6 near weights)

### *"Embrace your routines"*

- Our routines are what makes us consistent
  - Our routines are what trains our body for great instincts on the field.
- a. **Dynamic Power Warmup- 5 minutes**
    - Over the Fence Hip Openers- Lateral
    - Knee/Hip Circles - 10 each side
    - Under the Fence - Wide Stance
    - Lateral Power Shuffles
    - Diagonal Single leg hops
    - Quick to Slow High Knees
    - Power High Knee Jumps
    - Power Shuffles to Sprint
  - b. **Resistance Band**
    - Pull Aparts, Overhead Pull Aparts, Diagonals, External Pulses
  - c. **Towel Drills**
    - Shoulder Turn (Head Still)
    - Power Position/Rocker
    - Hop Stride Throw (1 Hop → Push → Punch)
    - One Foot Throws with balance at finish (glove side foot on ground)



- Pivot Pick
- Quarterback/Shuffle Throws
- d. **Short Hops- [Ron Washington Short Hops](#)**
  - 10-10-10 from knees
  - 10-10-10 on feet
  - 10-10-10 Drop step and drive short hops
    - One left, one middle, one right
    - Work with forward momentum through every short hop
- e. **Quick Catch (focus on catch and release efficiency and timing)**
  - No feet/stride- Partners at about 25 feet apart (width of 2 cages)
    - 1- Straight Catch, no stride, 20 each (feet stay planted)
    - 2- Short Hop (20 each player) - One player take 20 in a row, switch
  - One foot throws
    - Balance on throwing side foot, catch, throw, finish all on one foot
- f. **Partner Drop Step Fly Balls**
  - Tennis ball, no glove

## Throwing Segment

1. **Partner Throwing and Catching Detail (5 minutes)**
  - Depending on numbers, coaches can decide whether to have everyone throw at the same time or do staggered throwing (2 groups) or lines
  - Everything is easy (60%), no hard throws - focus on easy release and catching with face behind catch.
  - Catch out front, Face behind catch, Short Shuffle, Shuffle Throw
    - Athletic positioning at all times
  - **Heavy Ball Throws**
    - Flips
    - Shoulder Turn
    - Rocker Drill
  - **Baseball/Softball Throws**
    - **Sideways step and throw**
      - Focus on front side mechanics and staying sideways through stride
      - Front shoulder on target until foot strike
    - **Power Shuffle to Throw**
      - Drive off of back foot (power shuffle) to get momentum
      - Finish long to the target (nose and throw shoulder to target)
      - Follow throw with feet
    - **Sprint through Pull Downs**
      - Drill moves very quickly - Keep players moving fast.
      - Player 1 is 30 feet from player 2 with ball basket
      - Player 1 tosses a ball to hit ground about 10 feet from player 2
      - Player 2 sprints through the short hop, and throws on the run (pull down). Week 1 is easy throws, working on footwork and momentum to target
      - Player 2 follows throw to ball basket, quickly get ball and tosses the ball to next player in line
      - Option 1 - Create angles so that fielder must sprint around the ball to get in position to throw
      - Option 2 - Thrower is closer, throwing true short hop to fielder
        - Fielder steps into ball with left (glove side foot) to “catch in rhythm)
        - Explode to target with right/left footwork to throw



## Fielding Segment

1. **Short Hop Triangle Drill**
  - Players in groups of 3 around turf
  - All players in extra low fielding position
  - Quick hand short hops clockwise for 90 seconds, then switch directions
2. **Fielding Machine- Double Play / Follow the Ball Drill**
  - Fielding machine is placed on mat in cage 1 or 2
    - Players get in three lines (behind machine, back corner of cage 5 or 6, and top of cage 1)
    - Player 1 puts ball in machine then sprints to next station
    - Player 2 fields and throws to player 3 (top of cage 1), then sprints to next station
    - Player 3 turns double play (as if playing second base) to Player 4 next to fielding machine, then sprints to next station
3. **Fielding Machine - Sprint to catch**
  - Configure 2 lines so that players can sprint to a short pop up/line drive
  - This should be an almost dive and reach to catch play
  - After catch, set feet and throw to the next line
4. **Fielding Machine - Step and Dive Drill**
  - 2 lines - player dives for ground ball then hops up and throws to next line near fielding machine
5. **Diagonal TCU Short Hop Drill**
  - 2 Lines at opposite ends of the facility
  - One ball - first player tosses ball to the opposite corner of facility
  - Player 2 runs to the short hop and plays through it, quick release toss to the next player at the opposite end of facility
6. **Sluggers Run Down Chaos Drill**
  - 3 groups of players (2 groups of fielders, 1 group of runners)
  - Run down starts on one side and players compete through run down to finish
  - Immediately on finish on one run down, ball is thrown to the next fielder and run drops into baseline for the next rundown.
  - No hesitation / constant movement and communication
7. **Position Specific Drills**
  - i. Pick a partner and choose 1 or multiple options below
    1. Pitchers Shadow Work
    2. Pitcher Pick Off Practice
    3. Catcher- Partner Blocking and receiving Drills
    4. 1st Basemen- Wall Ball scoops or partner 1st baseman short hop scoops
    5. Outfield - Short fly balls, sprint through the ball (shoelace catch) and crow hop to set feet to throw
    6. Middle Infield - Double Play Feeds

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## Hitting Segment

### Hitting Practice Setup

- Machines in Cage 1 and 3 (may substitute live hitting from coach in one of these cages)
- Tees or short toss in cages 2 and 4
- Leave cages 5-6 open for next group

### Bunting Pepper (5 minutes during setup)

- Groups of 3 players



- Fast moving and athletic (1 bunt every 2 seconds!!)
- Quick catch and release throws to hitter

**Theme: 1) Stance/Posture 2) Attacking the inside of the ball**

Instructional Points:

2. **Stance/Posture:** All players need to be aware of their athletic posture during the swing. If their head/nose/chin gravitates to the ball during the swing, the player's hips and shoulders become disconnected and we lose power.
  - a. Keys to keeping good posture
    - i. **Keep head level during stride.** If head gets off of the center line through the pitcher during the stride. Think of a string attached from your head to the pitcher. The string should not move as you take your stride. Head may move to the pitcher, but not offline.
    - ii. **Lead with the back hip:** If the hitter drives the back hip to the pitcher, this keeps the power line of the back knee, back hip, back shoulder connection. If you see video of all great hitters, you can draw a straight line from their back knee, hip, shoulder.
3. **Attack the Inside of the Ball:** This is the essence of staying inside the ball. Hitter should zone in on the inside of the baseball and attack the inside half of the ball with the most powerful swing possible.
  - a. Keys to Attacking the Inside of the Ball
    - i. **Knob/Hands Past the Ball.** Hitter should think about driving the knob of the bat past the ball during the swing. Hitter is controlling the knob of the bat first (with bottom hand), getting the knob of the bat past the ball, then top hand drives the barrel of the bat through the ball.
4. **Swing Build Routine**
  - a. Windshield Wipers- 10 each arm
  - b. Forward/Backward Bat Raises- 8 each arm
  - c. Pendulum Swings- 10 each arm
  - d. Contact Pulses- 20 seconds
  - e. Stride and Separate - 30 reps
  - f. Contact Position - 5 oppo, 5 middle, 5 pull
  - g. Donaldson Swings with Balance hold at finish
5. **Drill Set (Groups of 2 players at each station)**
  - a. **Tee 1: Bottom Hand (small bat)**
    - i. Focus on the simple movement of controlling the knob of the bat through the ball with the bottom hand.
    - ii. Quiet body -- Good Posture -- Knob through the Pitcher -- Long finish
    - iii. Ball should be hit through the second baseman
    - iv. Video: <https://youtu.be/KAaVirs7UcM>
  - b. **Tee 2: Close Tee**
    - i. Set Up for this drill is most important. Tee at the top of the strike zone even with the belly button. Put knob of the bat on front hip, and the barrel of the bat on the ball (on the tee). Hitter moves through the ball, keeping hands past/through the inside of the ball.
    - ii. Ball should be hit through the second baseman
    - iii. Video: <https://youtu.be/LaFZpFPeQ44>
  - c. **Tee 3: Out Front Tee (Bottom Hand/Back Hip)**
    - i. Tee is positioned for an off-speed pitch, toward the pitcher
    - ii. Hitter focuses on bottom hand and back hip to extend swing through the ball with long finish to the pitcher
    - iii. Ball should be hit up the middle through the pitcher.
    - iv. Video: [https://youtu.be/FxUXo\\_jVM9g](https://youtu.be/FxUXo_jVM9g)
  - d. **Short Toss 1: Stride- Pause- Swing (Heavy Ball- Into Cinder Block Wall)**
    - i. Thrower shows ball to Hitter -- Stance
    - ii. Thrower lowers ball into underhand throwing position -- Stride



- iii. Thrower tosses ball up to about hitters shoulder height -- Pause
- iv. Hitter waits for the ball to get into the hitting window -- Swing
  - 1. Thrower should toss ball so that the ball drops on the front edge of home plate
- v. Video: <https://youtu.be/gwllce32SYk>
- e. **Short Toss 2: Quick Hands (Wiffle Balls)**
  - i. Thrower throws ball firmly through the front hip of the hitter
  - ii. Hitter focuses on beating the ball to the spot by driving hands through the inside of the ball.
  - iii. Video: <https://youtu.be/VEwr1bhphjl>
- f. **Live Hitting: Cage 1 (smash factor balls)**
  - i. Above average velo for quick hands
  - ii. Make sure players are staying behind L screen
- g. **Live Hitting: Cage 3 (standard machine balls)**

### Last Drill: Player Name Game

Coaches test players to learn names of teammates. Every missed name is 5 burpees.