

2026 Sluggers Winter Team Practice- Week 3



Mental Approach- Practice to Fail and Figure it Out

1. **If you are not failing in practice, you are not trying hard enough!!**
2. **Great players challenge themselves in everything they do. They embrace failure and struggle. They fail and struggle to build toughness and skill.**
3. Our goal in practice is to train for adversity and the challenges that come to us in the game.
4. We must train ourselves to be prepared for adversity in games. We will fail in practice and in the games.
5. It is how we respond to adversity that wins or loses games and creates success in the long run..
6. How do we prepare for adversity?
 - a. Challenge ourselves in practice so that we fail often, then learn how to overcome. Learn from failure to make the adjustments into success.
 - i. Example) Are you learning from each pop up or strike out..., or are you feeling sorry for yourself and letting your negativity take over..
 - ii. Are you able to clear your mind, make adjustments, and get to the next batter after giving up a 2-run double, or are you fixated on the fact that you gave up a double?
 - iii. If you are pitching, and your shortstop makes an error to cost you a run in the 1st inning, do you get angry with him, or do you tell him that we will get him another ground ball and we can turn a double play
 - b. **Can you get to the next play**, or do you get stuck in the past and ruin your future?
7. How do we prepare for this?
 - a. **Win (or lose) every play in practice:** Put yourself in tough situations in practice. Treat batting practice pitches as if the game is on the line and you win or lose with each pitch. Field as if it is the last out in a one run game. Pitch as if you have to get the best hitter out with a runner on third.
 - b. **Practice Strategy:** Challenge yourself -- Fail -- Correct -- Try Again -- SucceedRepeat over and over again. Allow yourself to get frustrated, but dig in, get tough, and stay positive. Know that you will eventually figure it out.

Obscure Rule or Game Strategy

1. If you are asked to bunt with a runner on 1st base only, where (what line) is the best place to bunt?
Same question with runner on 1st and 2nd?
2. If you are asked to hit and run, do you have to swing at every pitch? And where should you hit the ball?
3. Infield Fly Rule: If infield fly is called, the hitter is automatically out. Can the runners still tag up and advance if the ball is dropped?
4. What is the width of the strike zone (or home plate)?

Goals for Week 3:

- a. **Dig in and Compete**
 - Do not let your energy decrease. Get tougher after you fail or find something difficult in practice.
- b. **Practice Faster than Game Speed**
 - When appropriate, play faster in practice than a game situation. If we speed up in practice, the game slows down for us.



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

- **Dynamic Warmup**
 - 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
- a. **Resistance Band**
 - Pull Aparts, Overhead Pull Aparts, Diagonals, External Pulses
- b. **Towel Drills**
 - Shoulder Turn (Head Still)
 - Power Position/Rocker
 - Hop Stride Throw
 - One Foot Throws with balance at finish (glove side foot on ground)
 - Pivot Pick
 - Quarterback/Shuffle Throws
- c. **Heavy Ball Throws**
 - Flips
 - Shoulder Turn
 - Rocker Drill
- 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 back 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. **Two Line Quick Catch**
 - Split up into two teams
 - Run quick catch from a line
 - Catch - Quick Release throw - follow throw to the opposite line
- g. **Two Line Quick Catch- Short Hop Version**
 - Split up into two teams
 - Run quick catch from a line
 - Drive through short hop- Quick Release throw - follow throw to the opposite line
- h. **Partner Drop Step Fly Balls**
 - Tennis ball, no glove

Throwing Instructional

(Coach discuss during Resistance Bands and Towel Drills)

- Theme: 1) **Solid Front Side mechanics**
 - **Front side (or glove action)**
 - a. Once ball separates from glove, the glove turns thumb down to the target
 - b. Glove leads the way to the target, with the front forearm positioned so that if you had a watch on, you could tell the time as you look to the target.



- c. After front foot is down, shoulders turn by front elbow coming back to body, moving past glove side hip, with glove setting (palm up), somewhere between glove side hip and armpit.
2. **Nose/Chin to Target**
 - a. As shoulders start to turn and glove comes in to body, nose and chin go to the target.
 - b. Taking nose and chin to target creates drive and momentum to target (velocity) and keeps the body on the centerline to maximize power through body alignment.

Rundown- 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

Throwing Segment

- **Partner Throwing and Catching Detail (5 minutes)**
 1. Depending on numbers, coaches can decide whether to have everyone throw at the same time or do staggered throwing (2 groups) or lines
 2. Focus on throwing a catchable ball, accuracy and catching with face behind catch.
 3. Catch out front, Face behind catch
 4. Move feet into catch
 - Athletic positioning at all times
- 5. **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 Short Hop 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 3 is easier throws, working on footwork and momentum to target (100% lower half, 65% Upper Half/ arm)
 - 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

- **Short Hop Triangle Drill- Backhand Focus**
 1. Players in groups of 3 around turf
 2. All players in extra low fielding position
 3. Quick hand short hops clockwise for 90 seconds, then switch directions
 4. 75% backhand focus
- **Position Specific Drills**



1. Pick a partner and choose 1 or multiple options below
 - Pitchers Shadow Work
 - Pitcher Pick Off Practice
 - Catcher- Partner Blocking and receiving Drills
 - 1st Basemen- Wall Ball scoops or partner 1st baseman short hop scoops
 - Outfield - Do or Die field to throw footwork (sprint through the ball)
 - Middle Infield - Double Play Feeds
- **Fielding Machine- Tag Play / Follow the Ball Drill (Backhand focus)**
 1. 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 sets feet and tags as quickly as possible then delivers throw to Player 4 next to fielding machine, then sprints to next station
- **Fielding Machine - Sprint to catch**
 1. Configure 2 lines so that players can sprint to a short pop up/line drive
 2. This should be an almost dive and reach to catch play
 3. After catch, set feet and throw to the next line
- **Fielding Machine - Step and Dive Drill**
 1. 2 lines - player dives for ground ball then hops up and throws to next line near fielding machine
- **Diagonal TCU Short Hop Drill**
 1. 2 Lines at opposite ends of the facility
 2. One ball - first player tosses ball to the opposite corner of facility
 3. Player 2 runs to the short hop and plays through it, quick release toss to the next player at the opposite end of facility

Hitting Clinic- Front Foot and Hands at Stride

Theme: 1) Stance/Posture 2) Weight Transfer /Bunting 3) Front Foot and Hands Mechanics

Mechanic Overview- Hand and Bat Positioning (getting bat back)

- “Getting into your hands” is the most powerful tool to increase bat speed.
- Hands need to move, but they need to start the forward swing from a powerful position to increase consistency and speed to the ball
- Hands can really start anywhere in stance, as long as they are in the right position at foot strike
 - Hands back– Over back foot
 - Knob of the bat down, pointed toward catchers feet
 - Do not let bat get flat - Need to be up/down position
 - Create athletic distance between front foot and knob of the bat (stretching the rubber band)
 - Back elbow is back (scap load)
 - Once bat is in the correct position...
 - Pull with bottom hand, turn and punch through the ball with top hand

Strategy Overview- Swing Light is always on!!

- You are expecting your pitch to hit (know your pitch)
- Be aggressive to learn how to hit - You will not learn from taking pitches
- Go into every at bat with a plan for the first 2 pitches then see where you are
 - What to look for or expect early in the count

Swing Build Routine

- Windshield Wipers- 10 each arm
- Forward/Backward Bat Raises- 8 each arm
- Pendulum Swings- 10 each arm
- Contact Pulses- 20 seconds



- Stride and Separate - 30 reps
- Contact Position - 5 oppo, 5 middle, 5 pull
- Donaldson Swings with Balance hold at finish

Bunting Pepper (5 minutes)

- Groups of 3 players
- Fast moving and athletic (1 bunt every 2 seconds!!)
- Off balance throws- catch and release

Hitting Drill Set

1. Tee 1- Wide Stance, No Stride, Hands Back
 - a. Focus on hands in the right position and swing path to the ball
2. Tee 2- Stride Pause Swing
 - a. Hands back and pause at foot strike
 - b. Pull and punch through the ball with hands
3. Tee 3- Separated Hands (½ swing / full swing)
 - a. ½ swing to the ball (focus on pull and punch)
 - b. Reset - full swing through the ball
4. Heavy Ball (Low Pitches, Launch Angle hit to top of net)
5. Light Ball (Light bat, hands to the ball, head still/Quick Hands)
6. Short Toss Hit Downs (wiffle balls)
 - a. No stride, hands above ball, hit the top of the ball
7. **Pitchers Pitch to Hitters- (long cage) 60% max, all strikes (15 pitches)**
 - i. Hitters- 3 takes, 3 hit and runs (must swing)
 - ii. Catchers catch if available
7. **Pitcher BP (short cage)**
 - i. After long cage pitching, Pitchers rotate to short cage.
 - ii. Rocker Drill BP
 - iii. Hitters Dig in and compete

Competition Set

Coaches come up with creative competitions in hitting, throwing, fielding

(Triangle) Diagonal ground ball to throw drill

1. Divide into 3 groups
2. Group 1 is first baseman
3. Group 2 are shortstops
4. Group 3 Catching for coach
5. Coach hits (or throws) ground ball to forehand or back hand of shortstop.
6. Shortstop makes quick and accurate throw to first baseman.
7. Shortstop follows throw to get in line for first base
8. First baseman catches throw, quick shuffle to flips ball to player catching for coach
9. First baseman rotates to line catching for coach
10. HANDLE THE BALL!!!

Body Control Running throws

11. Start in one line
12. First player runs to the cone about 40 feet away
13. At about 20-30 feet, the player turns and throws to the next person in line
14. As fielder 2 catches the ball, he/she throws the ball back to fielder one, then fielder 2 runs toward the cone.
15. At about 20-30 feet, fielder 1 throws the ball back to fielder 2
16. Fielder 2 catches and immediately turns and throws to fielder 3 in line.
17. Create 2 teams and compete against each other



Game Speed Finisher: Drop Step Fly Ball Contest

1. Player starts in corner of facility
2. Coach throws fly ball to other corner
3. Player sprints to catch it
4. Last man standing wins

Rapid Fire - Two Goal Fireball Contest

1. Set up 2 smaller goals about 15 feet apart on each end of facility
2. One team player throws ball to try to score goal in one of the goal
3. 1 player from opposing team has to cover both goals to make diving or running stops
4. Goalie catches and quickly tries to throw ball into goal of opposing team
5. Players switch to new goalie after each throw

Last Drill: Player Name Game

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