

## 2026 Sluggers Winter Team Practice- Week 5



### **Mental Approach**

10,000 hour rule of becoming an expert

### **Mechanical Approach**

**Hitting:** High Velocity Timing / Bat Speed Training / Head Positioning

**Fielding:** Tag Mechanics

**Throwing:** Head positioning - Nose and chin to target

**Pitching:** Change Up Focus

**Team Defense:** PFP Situations (if time allows)

### **Fundamental of the Week- Tag Mechanics**

Good tags are a result of body positioning, weight transfer, and bringing a tag down to the right place quickly.

Read the following document and view the video –

- [Tag Mechanics Document](#)
  - a. [Video: Orioles Coach Pre-Game Work on Tag Mechanics](#)
  - b. [Brandon Phillips: Tag Mechanics](#)

### **Mental Approach- Correlation Between Work Ethic and Success (10,000 hour rule)**

**If you want to be good at something, it takes a lot of work!!**

***“All players want to win, but those that prepare to win are successful. Our preparation takes a lot of time over days, months, years of practice. Whether it is 5 minutes or 3 hours, each minute of practice counts”***

A coach's job is to give you the tools (fundamentals, mechanics, drills) to practice. A player's job is to put in the work to become an expert. Hard work turns into opportunity, then that opportunity leads to more hard work, then more opportunity. The cycle keeps going until an expert is born!!

1. Step 1: A player puts in the work to make a travel or all-star baseball team.
2. Step 2: He/she has the opportunity to train at a high level with expert coaches, other dedicated players, and compete against other good players in tournaments.
3. Step 3: Player puts in more Work than his competition from ages 9-14, improves at a faster rate than others in his age group.
  - a. 3,000 hours= 6 years / 50 weeks per year = 10 hours per week
4. Step 4: As a sophomore, the player earns an Opportunity to play on the varsity level on his high school team.
  - a. During High School, the player works harder than others on the varsity high school and his travel team (his competition).



- b. 3,000 hours= 4 years / 50 weeks per year = 15 hours per week
5. Player earns the Opportunity to play baseball another 4 years in college.
  - a. During College, the player works harder and smarter than others at the collegiate level (his competition).
  - b. 3,000 hours= 4 years / 50 weeks per year = 15 hours per week
6. Player earns the Opportunity to play baseball at the professional level.
  - a. And it goes on.....

The lesson here is that all of our work and dedication to something accumulates and adds to our skill set. You cannot build skill without work, and you cannot hone skill without struggle in practice.

#### **Obscure Rule or Game Strategy**

1. If a runner runs into a fielder set up to field a ground ball or fly ball in the base line, who has the right to that space and what is the ruling on the field.
2. If a runner is in a run down and makes contact with a fielder in the baseline, who has the right to that space and what would be the ruling on the field?
3. What former major league baseball pitcher has the record for most consecutive scoreless innings, and how many innings?
4. What former major league pitcher has the record for consecutive innings without a walk, and how many innings?
  - a. Hint that does not help – He was my pitching coach for many years..and the number 2 pitcher on that list was my teammate.

#### **Goals for Week 5:**

- a. **Compete in every drill**
  - Find new ways to compete in practice.
    - Against each other
    - Set Mini Goals for each drill or station

## **DAILY ROUTINES - FIRST 30 (Players lead - Everyone Together in open areas)**

### \*\*\*\*\*Dynamic Warmup

- 20 foot wakeup (20 feet up and back- 5 times for each movement)
    - Forward/backward run
    - Side Shuffle
    - Karaoke (big steps forward and back)
  - Knee/Hip Circles - 10 each side - [Video](#)
  - Over/Under the Fence - [Video](#)
  - Single Leg RDL Airplane - [Video](#)
  - Walking Lunge with Reach and Rotation - [Video](#) (add reach up to sky on lunge with back foot side)
  - Lateral Power Shuffles- [Video](#)
  - A-Skips - [Video](#)
  - Single Leg Diagonal Hops - [Video](#)
  - Power High Knee Jumps
  - Power Shuffles to Sprint
- b. **Resistance Band**
    - Pull Aparts, Overhead Pull Aparts, Diagonals, External Pulses
  - c. **Towel Drills**
    - Rocker
    - Shoulder Turn (Head Still)
    - Hop Stride Throw
    - Pivot Pick
    - Shuffle/Quarterback Throw Pull Downs- 10
  - d. **Heavy Ball Throws**
    - Flips
    - Shoulder Turn
    - Rocker Drill



- One Foot Throws
- e. **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
- f. **Partner Ground Balls- Getting Around Ball**
  - **Video- <https://youtu.be/R3gra149xjA>**
  - Partners roll ground balls to each other
  - Fielder works from outside of ball, field and set feet to throw, two low shuffles
  - Work on getting around the ball, Field through the ball, funnel, footwork to throw
- g. **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
- h. **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
- i. **Partner Drop Step Fly Balls**
  - Tennis ball, no glove

\*\*\*\*\*

## Turf Practice

### Partner Throwing and Catching Detail (5 minutes)- Nose to the target

- **Catch and Tag-** All players catch and tag, then set feet to make throw
- Depending on numbers, coaches can decide whether to have everyone throw at the same time or do staggered throwing (2 groups) or lines
- Catch out front, Short Shuffle, Shuffle Throw
  - Athletic positioning at all times

\*\*\*\*\*

## 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 Focus - Balance and Head Position

- When throwing from any position, head stays on the center line and travels to the target with throw.
- Our head is our directional beacon that allows us to drive to the target and rotate shoulders and hips quickly for power while still controlling the throw
- The big challenge in pitching is to create a big rotational movement with a still head
- If our momentum is actively moving to the target (last week), and our head stays in line, we will be balanced to throw.

### Partner Throwing and Catching Detail (10 minutes)

- **Power Shoulder Turn**



- a. Players 60 feet apart - Generate as much shoulder rotational velocity as possible
- **Power Position Long Toss**
  - a. Stay 60 feet apart - Generate as much momentum as possible from a still power position
  - b. Throwers allowed to release back foot to follow through
- **Catch - Shuffle - Throw**
  - a. Full distance throwing to partner
  - b. Catch - One drive shuffle - throw and follow throw
  - c. Thrower must get back to original position quickly to catch next throw
- **Catching Focus**
  - a. Step into catch - Face behind catch
  - b. Catch out front, Short Shuffle, Shuffle Throw
  - c. Athletic positioning at all times
- **Sprint through Short Hop Pull Downs**
  - a. Drill moves very quickly - Keep players moving fast.
  - b. Player 1 is 30 feet from player 2 with ball basket
  - c. Player 1 tosses a ball to hit ground about 10 feet from player 2
  - d. 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
  - e. Player 2 follows throw to ball basket, quickly get ball and tosses the ball to next player in line
  - f. Option 1 - Create angles so that fielder must sprint around the ball to get in position to throw
  - g. 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 Focus- Tag Mechanics**

Good tags are a result of body positioning, weight transfer, and bringing a tag down to the right place quickly.

Read the following document and view the video –

- [Tag Mechanics Document](#)
  - a. [Video: Orioles Coach Pre-Game Work on Tag Mechanics](#)
  - b. [Brandon Phillips: Tag Mechanics](#)
- **Short Hop Triangle Tag Drill**
  - a. 3 player triangle drill for speed
    - 1- Short hop fielder, 2- catch/tag/throw, 3- feeder
- **Follow Throw Long Toss Drill- Play off of Wall**
  - a. Feeder - Fielder
    - Feeder throws an easy toss off of the cement wall
    - Fielder catches ball with back to the target, run backward for 3-5 steps for momentum, then turns and throws toward basketball court. Goal is to coordinate momentum and turn from and awkward set up
    - Drill moves very quickly - Keep players moving fast.

## **Position Specific Daily Drills**

- a. Pick a partner and choose 1 or multiple options below
  - Softball Pitchers
    - Daily drill progression
  - Baseball Pitchers Shadow Work - Focus on holding runners
    - Vary hold times
    - Quick step, reducing time to home plate
  - Pitcher Pick Off Practice



- Variations to first base and second base
- Change up grip catch
- Catcher
  - Partner Blocking and receiving Drill progression
- 1st Basemen
  - Partner 1st baseman
    - Good throw footwork - Short hop scoops - Off line right and left - High throws
  - Flips to pitcher covering first base
  - Pickoff tags
- Outfield
  - Drop step partner fly balls - Get behind the ball drill
  - Do or Die field to throw footwork (sprint through the ball)
  - Getting around the ball to get momentum to the base you are throwing to
- Middle Infield
  - Slow roller one foot throws
  - Double Play Feeds and turns
  - Quick feet - R/L catch - R/L throw rhythm footwork (gain ground to the target)

## Team Fielding

- **Fielding Machine- Runner on Second 3rd/1st option**
  - a. Fielding machine is placed on mat in cage 1 or 2
    - Players get in 4 lines (behind machine, front corner of cage %, back corner of cage 5 or 6, and top of cage 1)
    - On every ground ball
      - Player 1 (at machine) calls out 1-1-1 or 3-3-3 right before fielder fields ball
      - Fielder must quickly set feet and throw to the base called out
      - 3rd baseman tags and quickly throws to 1st
      - If throw goes to 1-1-1, 1st basemen comes off base and throws to 3rd for a tag.
      - Final throw to player at machine area for a tag
- **Fielding Machine - Sprint to catch**
  - a. Configure 2 lines so that players can sprint to a short pop up/line drive
  - b. This should be an almost dive and reach to catch play
  - c. After catch, set feet and throw to the next line
- **Fielding Machine - Step and Dive Drill**
  - a. 2 lines - player dives for ground ball then hops up and throws to next line near fielding machine
- **Diagonal TCU Short Hop Drill**
  - a. 2 Lines at opposite ends of the facility
  - b. One ball - first player tosses ball to the opposite corner of facility
  - c. Player 2 runs to the short hop and plays through it, quick release toss to the next player at the opposite end of facility
- **Pitcher PFP Hot Seat Drill**
  - a. Set up infield around pitcher
  - b. Each pitcher goes through a rapid fire segment of the following
    - Comebacker to first
    - Bunt - throw to third
    - Comebacker 1-6-3 double play
    - 3-1 cover first
    - Bunt - throw to first
    - 3-6-1 Double play
    - Squeeze play

\*\* Tag focus on all drills when possible

## **Pitching Focus- Change Up**

- **Mechanics Overview- Change Up**
  - a. Change Up has slower, and diagonal backspin (not side spin)
  - b. Grip: 2-Seam grip, with middle and ring finger between seams, thumb underneath
  - c. Keys to Release
    - Thumb stays down, index finger (circle) stays sideways
    - Reach out to target
    - Stay aggressive, and let the grip reduce speed/spin



[Change Up Demo](#)

[MLB Best Change Ups](#)

[Picture- Degrom Change Up](#)

## **Hitting Clinic- Bat Speed Training and Head Positioning**

Theme: 1) Stance/Posture 2) Weight Transfer /Bunting 3) Hitting Extreme Pitches 4) Push Off 5) **Bat Speed Training/Hitting High Velocity / Head Positioning**

### **Mechanic Overview- Head Positioning during swing**

- Face to the Pitcher- (nose goes from home plate to shortstop to pitcher)
- Eyes/vision goes from logo of pitcher cap to release point
- Good posture in athletic stance (head over hips and knees)
- Head Stays level and on track to the target
- Head moves forward on track into stride to center between feet
- During Swing, back hip drives forward catching up to head (Hip forward to line up with head and shoulder)
- During Swing, head stays completely still with body rotating around head (axis)

### **Strategy Overview- Guessing pitches**

- If you are watching the pitcher before your at bat, you will be able to guess pitches
- Every pitcher falls into a trend and can be predicted
- If a pitcher is pitching to one location 80% of the time, we can look for that pitch

### **Mechanic Overview- Bat Speed to Exit Velocity**

- Bat speed + Quality Contact (swing plane) = Exit Velocity
- Balance/Using Ground for stability
- Core stability and head still- Creating body position so that head and spine is in line for rotational axis
- Head stays between feet
- Action Components -- All good swings from any set up have
  - Momentum to the target- Push from back foot into front with Front foot into the ground
  - Back hip and knee drive through the ball
  - Quick Hands and efficient bat path - Knob first (bottom hand) then strong top hand punch
  - Accelerate through the finish
- **Hitting Timing on High Velo Fastball**
  - **Key to hitting a Fast - Fastball- Get Loaded and the Front Foot down early**
    - Be early - If we are late getting started, our front foot may still be in the air when the ball gets into the hitting window...then we will be late getting to the ball.
    - Hitters should consciously work on getting their hands back and front foot down on time or early.



- At Pitcher release, the hitter should have hands back, weight loaded back and be ready to attack through the ball with power.
- Once the ball is in the air from the pitcher, all that is needed is swing/no swing decision. On Swing Decision, if our front foot is down, hands back and loaded, all the hitter needs to do is attack through the inside of the ball.

#### Strategy Overview- Default Aggressive with bat speed

- Do not let the pitcher take away bat speed with change of speeds
- We are all first pitch hitters until the pitcher shows us otherwise.
- Look for your hot zone and unload on the ball in that zone (Hunt it and Hammer It)
- Breaking balls up, fastballs middle up/down/away/in depending on your swing
- Do not let the pitcher dictate the at bat. Hitters are in charge of the at bat from pitch 1

#### Hitting Warmup

##### b. 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

##### c. 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

**\*\* All drills focus on head position between feet. Head does not travel backward during swing.**

1. Tee 1- **Wide Stance/No Stride: Tee starts at belly button**
  - a. Use bottom hand to control knob of bat, top hand to control barrel
2. Tee 2- **Wide Stance/No Stride: Tee at Front foot at stride**
  - a. Push from back foot to front foot
  - b. Chin and front shoulder moves to the pitcher
  - c. Drive top hand and back hip through the ball
3. Tee 3- **Ichiro - Leg Kick Hover to Hit: Tee at Back Hip**
  - a. Start in leg kick balance position
  - b. Front foot down, accelerate through the ball
4. Tee 4- **Big Papi - Leg Kick Hover to Hit: Tee at stride length in front of home plate**
  - a. Big move with front foot
  - b. Hands go down when front leg goes up, then arrive at launch position at foot strike
5. Tee 5 - Hook Em
  - a. Feet start crossed over and hands on front hip
  - b. Front foot accelerates forward at the same time hands go back
6. Short Toss Hit Downs
  - a. No stride, hands above ball, hit the top of the ball
  - b. Have hitters experiment with pre-loading into front leg with hands back
7. **Short Toss Hit Downs** (wiffle balls, hitting into cement wall)
  - a. No home runs or ground balls. Compete!!
8. **Optional - Heavy Ball Launch Angle**
  - a. Low pitch, hit the bottom of the ball for a long line drive to the outfield
9. **Pitchers Pitch to Hitters- 2 Fastballs/2 Changeups, all strikes from Stretch (15 pitches)**
  - i. Hitters- 3 takes, 3 hit and runs (must swing)
  - ii. Catchers catch if available



7. **Pick off Moves-** After pitchers throw, they must do 15 pickoff moves

## Game Speed Finishers

### 2- Ball Drop Step Fly Ball Contest

1. First ball Diagonally across field
2. Second ball short, back into the line

### Body Control Running throws

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

### 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.