

2026 Sluggers Winter Team Practice- Week 9



Mental Approach: Easy vs Right

Mechanical Approach

- **Baserunning:** Secondary Leads and Dirt Ball Reads
- **Hitting:** Pull Side Power
- **Fielding:** Footwork and Follow (active feet for accurate throws)
- **Throwing:** Throwing Practice / Five F's of Fielding Throwing Focus
- **Pitching:** 1-2 Count Execution

Easy vs Right

Mental Approach - Easy is Not Always Right

As we look at our path through life, our outcomes (or results) come from our decisions and choices along the way. Much like the compound effect mentioned in an earlier week, our long term outcomes come from a series of daily choices and decisions.

In sports (and life), making the right choice is not always the easiest. Going to the weight room to lift is not easy. Going to hit or throw in your basement by yourself is not always the easy choice. Declining an invite to hang with friends to train/practice/lift is not always the easy thing to do but many times it is the right decision to make progress toward your goals.

Commitment to be the best you can be comes with sacrifice and difficult decisions. I realized early in my life that committing to be successful in baseball came with a mixture of unique challenges, failure, wins and losses along the way. Getting to work after failing or losing was not always the easy decision, but it was the right one. Waking up early to lift, or staying after practice for hours to hit alone in a batting cage was not the easy decision, but the right one to align with my goal of seeing how good I can be at baseball. This journey included passing up many opportunities for other activities, including choosing friends that had the same type of goals to be on the journey together.

Player Homework: Evaluate your daily actions/decisions this week to determine whether they were the easy decision or the right decision to achieve your goals. Having your actions align with your goals is not always easy, but the right path to take on your journey to achieve your goals. Are your friends supporting your goals, or getting in the way of your goals?

Taking inventory of the things you do on a daily basis is a good exercise to make sure your actions are in line with your goals. When your daily decisions, actions, and who you spend your time with all fall in line with what is right,



or in line with your goals, the right thing to do can also be the easy thing to do. That is when you are on the right path!!

Obscure Rule or Game Strategy: Defensive Communication

1. At the end of each play, infielders remind outfielders how many outs there are and what they will do with the ball once they get it.
 2. Example -- after a double, first baseman turns to right fielder and tells him -- "1 out, you have me as cut off to home on a base hit.
 - a. 3rd baseman- same thing to left fielder
 - b. Catcher/Shortstop: Reminds pitcher to look runner back to second on a comebacker.
 - c. Second Baseman/shortstop communicate with each other on who is holding runner on.
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DAILY ROUTINES - FIRST 30 (Players lead - Everyone Together in open areas) via

- 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
 - One Leg forward hops
 - Quick High Knees / Form Run
 - One leg side jumps
 - Power High Knee Jumps
 - Power Shuffles to Sprint
- b. **2 (or 3) ball juggling - 120 seconds**
 - Switch directions after 60 seconds
- c. **Resistance Band**
 - Pull Aparts, Overhead Pull Aparts, Diagonals, External Pulses
- d. **Towel Drills**
 - Rocker
 - Quick Shoulder Turn (Head Still)
 - Hop Stride Throw
 - Quick Pivot Pick
- e. **Heavy Ball Throws**
 - Flips
 - Shoulder Turn
 - Rocker Drill
- f. **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
- g. **Quick Catch (focus on catch and release efficiency and timing)**
 - **Always throw lengthwise (not toward windows or drywall)**
 - No feet/stride- Partners at about 25 feet apart
 - 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



- h. **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
- i. **Partner Ground Balls- Backhand Focus**
 - Partners throw 20 backhands to each other- Fielders focus on proper backhand mechanics
- j. **4 Person Gauntlet Drill (Short Hop Pepper)**
 - <https://coachesinsider.com/baseball/infielders-gauntlet-drill-with-tyler-gillum-sa-vannah-bananas/>
- k. **Partner Drop Step Fly Balls**
 - Tennis ball, no glove
- l. **Tennis ball run downs**
 - 3 groups, play “hot box” (rundowns) on the basketball court
 - No hesitation between plays.
- m. **Two line tag and throw drill**
 - Get in two lines...catch, tag, throw as quickly as you can to your partner.
 - Focus on perfect tag mechanics, quick feet and hands
- n. **3 person (short swing) pepper - with tennis balls**
 - No gloves
 - Hitters choke up, and watch ball hit bat
 - Short, easy swing (not much more than a bunt)

Baserunning Instructional

- a. **Secondary Leads and Dirt Ball Reads**
 - 2 BIG Shuffles
 - Land in time for ball to cross home plate
 - React to ball
 - Dirt Ball - Go

Throwing and Fielding Instructional

Fielding Focus- **Five F's and Slow Rollers/Running or Jump Throws (Repeat)**

- **Throwing- 5 F's** Footwork, Field, Footwork, Fire and Follow Throw
 - A fielders footwork is the key to good throws
 - Quick footwork to the ball, attacking the target with quick shuffle or steps, and keeping momentum to the target by following throw.
 - **Mechanics of following throw**
 - Quick footwork after fielding ball
 - Think “follow throw with throwing shoulder” to the target
 - Continue moving feet to target (athletic move, not a hard stop)
 - Fielder can use two quick shuffles after fielding, or quick and aggressive right -left steps to the target to throw

Team Fielding

- **Touch Bucket Fly Ball Drill**
- **TCU - Quick release (quick hands to release and footwork)**
- **PFP Situations with runners-** Quick moving and faster than game speed (let the players make mistakes and correct quickly)
 - a. 1-6-3 double play



- b. Bunt plays
 - c. 3-6-1 double play
 - d. 1st and third double steal
 - e. 1st/3rd Comebacker to pitcher
 - f. Run through these plays as quickly as possible, almost like a conditioning drill
 - **Position Specific Work**
 - a. **1B** - Short Hop Picks
 - b. **2b/SS** - covering base on a steal to tag
 - c. **3b**- Covering Base on Steal / Reading Bunts with runners on 1st and 2nd
 - d. **Catchers** - Receiving and Blocking drills
 - e. **OF** - Running through the fly ball (getting behind the ball and sprinting to the short fly ball)
 - **Short Hop Triangle Drill- Quick Hands**
 - a. 3 player triangle drill for speed
 - 1- Short hop fielder, 2- catch/throw, 3- feeder
 - All Back hand short hops
 - **Follow Throw Long Toss Drill**
 - a. Feeder - Fielder (Option to create a slow roller or throw on the run version)
 - Feeder throws short hop to fielder
 - Fielder catches and explodes feet to throw (Right/Left/Throw), then rotates quickly to the feeder position (throw to the screen between turf and basketball court)
 - Drill moves very quickly - Keep players moving fast.
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Pitching Focus

- **Last Week - Articulate and Commit to your Pitches**
 - During Bullpens and Live BP all pitchers must describe to the catcher in detail the pitch that they are going to throw.
 - “Fastball Down and away to right handed hitter, 0-2 count”
 - “1st Pitch Curve ball - Called Strike”
 - “Fastball Up , Just above the strike zone”
- **Mechanics- Rhythm and Cadence**
 - a. Pitching mechanics are better when there is a flow or rhythm from one stage to the next
 - b. The best rhythm mechanics pitchers use leverage and momentum to create velocity and direction to the target
 - c. Rhythm starts with body positioning (head) so that our arms and legs can work in sync with each other with timing.
 - d. To work on this, pitchers can focus on flow and cadence in drills. Goal is to create mechanics where there are no pauses or stopping points from first step through release point

New:

[Shohei Othani- Bullpen](#)

[Max Scherzer- Discusses Pitching Mechanics](#)

Team Hitting

- 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 Clinic- Pull Side Power

Theme: 1) Stance/Posture 2) Weight Transfer /Bunting 3) Hitting Extreme Pitches 4) Push Off 5) Bat Speed Training/Hitting High Velocity 6) Back Side Path / Hit and Run 7) Hitting Off Speed Pitches 8) Power and Launch Angle **9) Pull Side Power**

- **Mechanics Overview- Pull Side Power**
 - Pull Side power starts with:
 - Hands In
 - Barrel to the ball early (in front of home plate)
 - Hands and back hip work together to create power and extension through the ball, not around it
 - Hands stay close to body
 - Think - Hands in, hip to the ball, attack the bottom ½ of the ball
 - Pull Side Hitting Window - Get the barrel of bat to the ball with top hand.
 - Think – Inside pitch needs to be hit in front of home plate
 - Video- [Mike Trout Home Run to Left Field](#)

Strategy Overview- Know your strengths as a hitter

- If you are a middle-in hitter, develop a strategy to attack middle in, and take other pitches unless there is two strikes.
- If we know our identity as a hitter, then we can adjust our strategy to align with our swing.
- [Shoulder Separation Drill](#)

Hitting Drill Set

- a. **Tee 1- Wide Stance/No Stride- [Close Tee Inside Pitch Drill](#)**
 - i. Set up Tee/Ball at inside corner in front of home plate (pull contact position)
 - ii. Keep hands in and Get barrel to the ball to pull ball in the air
- b. **Tee 2: Hands apart with Fungo**
 - i. Set Up tee middle Up in front of home plate
 - ii. Set hands approximately 3-4 inches apart
 - iii. Pull ball in the air using top hand and back hip
 - iv. Swing remains level, but hit bottom ½ of ball
- c. **Tee 3- Exit Velocity**
 - i. Set up in Pull Position - Get Maximum exit velo
- d. **Tee 4- Zagrodnik Scissor Swings Tee Drill (pull side swings)**
 - i. Normal Stance
 - ii. Front knee comes back as hands go forward, crossing over each other
 - iii. Hands and shoulders go back as you stride into swing
 - iv. Feel the sling shot effect of shoulders and hips working separately
- e. **Heavy Ball Short Toss**



- i. Pitchers throw ball in front of front hip (pull position)
- ii. Hitter hits ball as hard as possible, driving hands in, back hip and top hand through the ball
- f. **Wiffle Balls**
 - i. Pitchers throw ball in front of front hip (pull position)
 - ii. Hitter hits ball as hard as possible, driving hands in, back hip and top hand through the ball
- g. **Live Hitting - Pitching Machine Swings**
 - i. 2 Bunts - 2 Slash Hit (Fake Bunt and Hit) - 10 swings (Pull everything)
 - ii. Home Runs to pull side
- h. **Bunting Pepper**
 - i. 15+ Bunts (15 sacrifice)
- i. **Trigger Drill with PVC**
 - i. Partner tosses tennis/wiffle ball to hitter
 - ii. Hitter triggers back hip, knee, and foot into pitch while holding front shoulder still (pvc pipe at back of stance, held up with bottom hand)
- 1. **Pitchers Pitch to Hitters- Pitchers- Start with 1-2 count. (15 pitches)**
 - i. Hitters- Straight Compete - WIN
 - ii. Pitchers - Once you get the hitter to 1-2, put them away with your best pitch.
- 7. **Pick off Moves-** After pitchers throw, they must do 15 pickoff moves
- 8. **Pitcher BP- Work on what you need for the season**
 - i. After long cage pitching, Pitchers rotate to short cage.
 - ii. Rocker Drill BP- ½ of pitches are off speed
 - iii. Hitters Dig in and compete

Game Speed Finishers: Coaches choose 1 or 2

1. **Game Speed Cutoff and Relay Drill**
 - a. Set up Defense and baserunning situation
 - b. Run through situational cutoff and relays
 - c. Make it a game or competition of some sort.
2. **Wiffle Ball Game**
 - a. Divide up teams and play!!
3. **2- Ball Drop Step Fly Ball Contest**
 - a. First ball Diagonally across field
 - b. Second ball short, back into the line
4. **Triangle ground ball to throw drill**
 - a. Divide into 3 groups
 - b. Group 1 is first baseman
 - c. Group 2 are shortstops
 - d. Group 3 Catching for coach
 - e. Coach hits (or throws) ground ball to forehand or back hand of shortstop.
 - f. Shortstop makes quick and accurate throw to first baseman.
 - g. Shortstop follows throw to to get in line for first base
 - h. First baseman catches throw, quick shuffle to flips ball to player catching for coach
 - i. First baseman rotates to line catching for coach
 - j. HANDLE THE BALL!!!
5. **Diagonal Ground Ball Drill**
 - a. Two lines at opposite sides of facility (diagonal)
 - b. Player one throws ground ball to open end
 - c. Fielder runs to ball, fields and throws to opposite end of facility
 - d. Fielders continue to run/field/throw continuously.



6. **Run Downs with Runners-** [Run Down Rules Document](#)
 - a. Two run down stations- 4 players each if possible
7. **The Gauntlet Fielding Drill**
 - a. Five players spaced about 10 feet apart with ball in hand
 - b. Five players in line as first basemen
 - c. 1 Fielder
 - d. Five cones set up 10 feet away from each of the five players
 - e. Fielder must run around cone toward players with ball.
 - f. Players throw a ground ball to fielder
 - g. Fielder fields ground ball, throws to first basemen, runs around next cone
 - h. Next player throws ground ball to fielder as fielder runs around cone.
 - i. Fielder goes through all five cones and ground balls for time.