



Absolutes of Practice Time

- “Create” and “Control”
- Practice strategy and practice organization skills rated (1-10) by coach and players.
- When game starts, there are a lot of things you can't control: bad umpires, talent level, etc... Once thing you can control: “to out prepare the other team”.
- There is tremendous advantage having your team believe that have out prepared the other team.
- How effective and how real are your practices? How close is it to real “game conditions”.
- Fantasy baseball vs. “virtual reality”. Fantasy baseball is swinging 15x with no helmet on (doesn't happen in game, why allow them to do that in practice).
- The first absolute is “there are no absolutes”.

The ultimate evaluation of your team is wins and losses, and are you developing your players, and are they getting better.

Base the practice on yesterday's events

- How not to duplicate a problem
- What part of our game needs to be improved
- Prioritize
- No rule that says 1/3 of practice fielding; 1/3 hitting; 1/3 pitching. (Lazy preparation)
- Doing the same thing over and over again is not the way to prepare

Present solution in 3 different ways

- Show 'em, tell 'em, let them feel it
- 3 Modalities: auditory, tactile-kinesthetic, visual. All people learn differently
- It's easy to say “He didn't get it”... let it be a challenge for you. Find a way to get through.
- Just because you (the coach) learn best by hearing, don't assume that by you talking, all the players will understand completely. Be aware of 3 modalities.
- Show them, tell them, and have them feel it.
- Stay away from labeling: “head case”, “gamer”, etc... Show them about the game, teach them about it; present all 3 approaches to help him/her understand; teach them how to relax, concentrate or focus better.
- Simulate “the game” in practice



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Focus and concentration in practice

- Games lost last year....mental lapses, failed to execute, got too tight, panic on 0-2 pitch.
- Games are lost, not on mechanical breakdowns, but on a team's inability to concentrate and focus.
- "The first team to relax wins", this applies to all levels.
- Relaxation, concentration and focus are skills. If they are skills, they can be improved upon.
- Telling your players phrases like "relax", "concentrate more" and "focus better" is meaningless. Instead, "What are you concentrating on today?" "When are you concentrating?", "How hard you're concentrating"
- Are you concentrating on getting the batter out, or are you concentrating on slowing your delivery down, leading with your leg and going nice and slow until your stride leg lands.
- Give them something specific to concentrate on (that they can control)
- Instead of "Let's focus today", how about, "tell me what you are looking at when: the pitcher's not moving; at balance point; and focus on slowing are feet down, because all good hitters have slow feet early on in their swing. Also, let's focus on your breathing: see if you can control your breathing so it's slow and under control; that the only thing you are doing is reading and reaching to the pitch.
- Now you've given them something real that they can control, practice; this doesn't happen magically in a game... it needs to be practiced. You must spend the time working on it in practice so it can be transferred to the game.
- "Showtime Training" skills: relaxation; concentration; focus; confidence; attitude. Define these for your players; present it so they can understand it. Losses can be attributed to a failure to execute, a lapse of concentration and focus.
- The ability to concentrate and focus: When are they concentrating; What are they concentrating on; How hard are they concentrating; Why are they concentrating.
- Players can over-focus/concentrate. Ex: Wild pitcher focusing on the glove... "Got to throw a strike". A smart coach is going to have to get him to focus on something different...Getting into a good balance point and slowing yourself down.
- Be positive; put a great image in that struggling players head. Get away from the execution and spend more time on being under control, and at that point of release, thinking "sally" (girlfriend's name). Emphasis taken away from where balls going.
- "Game Gaps". In a typical game, a hitter will get 3-5 swings in an at-bat. If this is true, how can we possibly let our hitters take 15-20 swings at a time without stepping out (Aerobic hitting!)? Working real hard ≠ real good; "Game Gaps" come in a game and have a tendency of unraveling hitters.



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- Create “Game Gaps” in your practice. Have a 10-15 second interruption between swings, simulating a real game.
- Pitchers: The same thing applies to them. Create the “Gaps” in practice when they’re getting their mound work in. Create “Game Reality”, or you’re preparing them to fail.
- Wind up or stretch: How much time is spent on each? The typical amount of time in a game for a pitcher is from the stretch. Why is practice time and bullpen time disproportionate?
- Making it real. Practice from the stretch more often than the windup.

Acknowledge the dynamics of the game.

- The pitch right down the middle of the plate is not the pitch that’s beating most of your hitters in a game.
- Why allow the hitter to see a majority of pitches in an area where they won’t see it in games.
- If up and in; low and away; and change of speeds is beating your team, they need to see more of this come practice time. (Tee, soft- toss, front side L-screen, or full batting practice).
- Preparation!
- Traditional batting practice needs to be modified and made more realistic.
- Most outs are made at first base and second base. As fielders, 75-85% of outs are made at 1st and 2nd base. If this is where the majority of outs are recorded, work on this proportionately to other bases. Don’t give 3rd and home equal time.
- Make your infielders real comfortable about throwing to 1st and 2nd base.
- Bat speed: how important is bat speed to hitters? It’s over-rated! Great bat speed but no control of barrel, no understanding of “less is better”.
- If you convince your team that as a group, if we reduce team strikeouts, we’ll be a better team than last year. Putting the ball in play. Bat speed is important, but “timing” when to get the swing started and having a little bit more control as to where your barrel is from the beginning to the end of your swing. “Getting flat” sooner, will allow you to keep the bat in the strike zone longer, giving you a better chance of making contact.
- Spend more time emphasizing putting the ball in play, keeping the barrel in the zone longer.

Baseball is a game of sprints.

- The nation’s ball players don’t know how to sprint anymore.
- The nation’s 60 yard dash, statistic (courtesy of MLB scouting bureau), have gone down in the last 10 years. (Nintendo). Young players don’t run enough. Sprint in game like situations: Home to first, to second Etc.
- Have them sprint with glove on, simulating most of the sprinting they do in a defensive position; “running with a purpose”.



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More or less drills

- Everyone wants more drills. Drills are important. The “player-coach conversation” should be every coach’s top drill. A meaningful conversation with your team.
Ex: “*What are you going to work on today, Billy?*”
“*What do you want to get out of practice today?*”
“*Tell me how you’re feeling when you’re throwing the ball over the backstop?*”
- We’ve gotten away from hands-on-instruction due to all of the gadgets and instructional aids, (when used properly, are outstanding; when used as a crutch, are counter-productive). Drill with a purpose.
- Drill into your players to have “a plan” in practice. Also, drill into hitters’ and pitchers’ heads that there is “nobody better than they are”, build their confidence.
- The ultimate drill, engaging your player in conversation, getting feedback, then determining a drill that might make sense.
- A favorite instructional toy is the “eye patch” there is something that hitters can do with the help of coaches/fathers, on the field, that will help the hitter recognize pitches sooner and clearer. (Visual Mechanics).
- Can use the eye-patch for pitchers also. The eye patch will help stabilize the head (preventing the bucking, excessive jerking motion) which in turn controls and stabilizes the body. They will begin seeing a world they have never seen before. The same can be applied for infielders... shutting down “one camera” increases that concentration and intensity level. Hitters that don’t square up with their head to the pitcher, the eye-patch is a useful tool (also to prevent the head skewing, or head down on swing). Human beings cannot track a moving object with their head skewed (or down).
- If you square the head up, the rest of the body has a tendency to be square and straight, if you apply an eye patch to that backside eye.

Slide Presentation

- Note where hitters are looking at the most crucial point in their swing. Where are the eyes? Not slammed down on the bat.
- If your hitters are facing 82 MPH and up, the decision to swing is done way before the ball arrives at home plate, the eyes actually are about 20 feet in front of home plate on a 90 MPH fastball.
- Be careful telling your hitters, “watch the ball hit your bat”... over-teaching this can put them in a tough position to track a ball (skewing of head).
- Bernie Williams’ face started the way it finished...head stayed square, and his eyes moved. His head and eyes are out about 20 feet at contact. He realizes that good hitters have to make that evaluation. not on home plate, but out in front.
- Tony Gwynn: Head out in front, driving ball opposite way, he trusted his swing and he trusted his eyes.



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- In all slides: Head doesn't move throughout swing. The only thing that does move is eyes. A good square head gives the good swing plane necessary to put the ball in play:
- Square head = Square to the ball.
- The head (camera) never moves and the eyes (lens) make adjustments as ball comes in.
- Instead of "head down", try saying "eyes on the ball!". This gives the impression that the head needs to move an awful lot from beginning to end of swing. "Eyes on" should stabilize the head, giving the eyes a much better chance of tracking the ball.
- Visual game plan should be practiced and applied in game.

Demonstration on Improving Hitting Drills

- Never let players look down at a tee. (Not visual reality).
- Have hitters look out 60 ft. 6 in. visualizing pitcher and a last second look down at tee. If soft tossing, look 60 ft., as soon as you see movement from hand feeding you, track the imaginary ball and hit it.
- The 3rd component of batting practice: short toss from behind the L-screen... players don't hit from 20 ft. away... have hitters looking 60 ft., and when coaches hand moves to throw, hitter takes eyes from 60 ft. and tracks ball out of hand and then swings. On every practice swing, hitters have plugged into their brain 60 ft., and now it's similar to the game.

Create the situation the guys are going to see in the game.

No more fantasy baseball. Head down on tee. Get your hitters to "look long and practice short".

- Markers on the back of a cage (hula hoops) indicate two things: a hitting target and a place to begin your pitch tracking.
- Banging balls into the side of the net (pulling) is fantasy ball. Use the whole cage, especially targeting the back of the net.

Control and Create

Coaches will have more fun coaching and will prepare their players better by putting that game uniform on, and you know in your heart that you've out-prepared the other team. This is the ultimate confidence booster for your players, knowing that their coach has out-prepared the other team.

- Most losses are breakdowns in concentration and confidence. This is a major advantage to a team that has prepared for this and has a plan.
- This carryover from "game practice" to the real thing becomes easier.