

Dynamic Warm up for Baseball Players Allows for Maximum Performance

By Matt Daily

One of the beautiful aspects about the game of baseball is that it is deeply-rooted in its traditions. When players arrive at the baseball field, one of their first actions as a ballplayer is to begin some sort of stretching routine in order to prepare their bodies, mentally and physically, for the contest in which they will be competing.

Many of us familiar with the game of baseball have seen the routine time and time again - players take a soft jog around the baseball field then ultimately end up in a circle performing a series of stretches. Some experts call these stretches “static” stretches, or the concept of holding a stretch at a chosen point for 20-30 seconds at a given time (Orland Kurtenblog, 2007).

Unfortunately, baseball is not a slow or “static” sport. When playing baseball, the playing actions are centered around power, acceleration, explosiveness, and movement (Kurtenblog 07). So if the game is one that demands so many different types of movement from its players, why do we continue to allow players to stretch in a stagnant, slow, or “static” manner?

At several camps last summer I was exposed to what is termed a “dynamic warm up” for baseball. At first, I was not sure what to make of the exercises, as I was used to more traditional methods. Over the course of several camps, though, I realized that this type of warm up benefited the participants greatly and better prepared them for the rigors of playing baseball for the day.

Simply put, putting players through a dynamic warm up involves constant movement of chosen joints and muscles. With this type of warm up, each coach seeks to add flexibility, loosen all muscle groups and warm up the core body temperature of players. Instead of stretching for 30 seconds at a time, the dynamic warm up, in contrast, consists of having players perform more dynamic tasks.

Finally, these types of stretches lend to developing more foot speed, power, and explosiveness. (Kurtenblog 07) If done correctly, the exercises allow for added range of motion within the important muscles used in game situations. The dynamic workout will help to limit cases of injury among players due to muscles being properly exercised on a regular basis before participation.

In order to get a sense of a typical dynamic warm up for baseball, it might be helpful to have an example that can be used for your own players. The workout listed below has been used and implemented for our own baseball camps at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California (www.scubroncobaseballcamps.com). This workout was originally designed and written by Gary Mayes of equip4baseball.com. I feel the workout is one that is very useful for the coach seeking to implement such a workout for his own players.

Setup: Place cones at starting line and at ten yards. Athletes line up five across per line at the starting line and perform each exercise down to the ten yard mark unless otherwise noted below.

| Exercise | Description |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Jog Out Backpedal In</i> | Jog forward (down) emphasizing pocket-chest arm movement with good knee punch; backpedal (back) with same emphasis; repeat. |
| <i>Knee Pulls</i> | Walk forward pulling knee to armpit every other stride; everyone down, everyone back. |
| <i>Toe Pulls</i> | Walk forward reaching down placing heel on ground and grabbing toes pulling back every third stride; everyone down, everyone back |
| <i>Walking Lunge</i> | Walk forward lunging with square shoulders placing elbow to ground planting opposite hand; everyone down, everyone back. |
| <i>Hurdle Kicks</i> | Walk forward kicking leg every other stride with shoulders on top of hips and reaching out front; everyone out, everyone back. |
| <i>Slide & Stretch</i> | Side to side stretch with two infielder shuffles in between; everyone down, everyone back |
| <i>High Knees</i> | Run forward emphasizing knee lift, pocket-chest arm movement, and forward lean; everyone down, everyone back. |
| <i>Butt Kicks</i> | Run forward emphasizing calf to hamstring movement setting off cycling action; everyone down, everyone back. |
| <i>Double Touch Skips</i> | Skip forward touching each foot twice emphasizing stepping off power pad, good arm movement, and knee punch. |
| <i>Lateral Side Skips</i> | Skip sideways touching each foot twice emphasizing stepping off power pad, good arm movement, and knee punch. |
| <i>Skip & Swing</i> | Skip forward (down) with rotational arm swing forward; skip backward (back) with rotational arm swing backward. |
| <i>Slide & Glide</i> | Heel to heel shuffle (don't cross feet) sideway down and back with side to side arm swings. |
| <i>Carioca</i> | Carioca sideway down and back keeping shoulders square. |
| <i>Tapioca</i> | Tapioca sideway down and back keeping shoulders square while emphasizing fast feet and fast hips. |
| <i>Fast Feet</i> | Run forward emphasizing putting feet up and down as fast as possible; everyone down, everyone back. |
| <i>Starts</i> | Run forward from crossover start emphasizing staying low, stride length, and chewing up ground; everyone down, everyone back. |