

Off-Season Baseball

by: Todd Williams

With winter settling in over much of America (it's getting cold down here in Houston!), I thought I'd suggest a few cold-weather activities that'll help you keep your skills sharp while you wait for warmer weather. It's important to note that the best time to focus on individual skills is during the off-season. That'll leave you in a much better position to work on building solid team skills when the weather breaks and you can get out on the practice field.

-- PITCHING & CATCHING --

It's always desirable to continue improving the skills of your pitchers and catchers. And fortunately, you don't need a lot of space to work on those skills. You only need a space of about 70 x 10 ft to have a very productive practice. Most gyms have enough space to work several kids at once. Pitchers should work on the fundamentals of control and velocity. Catchers should work on good fundamentals as well as framing and blocking skills. If you've got the space, or can work outdoors; have the catcher work on a strong, quick throw to 2nd base. (See my eBook for many good drills that can be done away from the practice field. Here's the link: <http://www.baseballsbestdrills.com>)

-- HITTING --

Many local pro-shops have indoor batting cages with automatic pitching machines, and some even have netted areas where live pitching and soft-toss batting practice can be done. The price varies from place to place, but is usually very reasonable. Winter is a good time to build arm strength, and there are several excellent soft-toss drills that isolate and build strength in specific muscle groups. It's much easier, and usually less strenuous, to work through and correct swing problems in the off-season; than it is to try to make wholesale changes to a swing in the heat of a season or even during the first few weeks prior to opening day. (See my eBook, Focus On Hitting, and start improving your hitting fundamentals today. Here's the link: <http://www.baseballsbestdrills.com/focusonhitting/>)

-- PHYSICAL CONDITIONING --

There's a lot to be said for working on your physical conditioning during the off-season. It can't help but give you an edge when try-outs occur. In particular, work on building leg, arm, and cardiovascular strength. Get on a good weight training program that includes a regular cardiovascular workout, and you'll be set. You'll be quicker out of the chute, faster down the line, and stronger than those you're competing against.

-- MENTAL CONDITIONING --

Improving your physical skills will go a long way to increasing your confidence on the field. Similarly, improving your understanding of the mental aspects of the game will help you as well. Take some quiet time to study and understand the best strategies for different game situations on both sides of the plate. There are hundreds of different situations that you'll find yourself faced with over the course of a season, and each situation will likely require a slightly different strategy. The interesting

thing about baseball is that the situation potentially changes with every pitch. The best time to think through those situations isn't in the heat of the moment. If you've mentally gone through the situation before it actually happens, you'll have a much better chance of making the best strategic decision at crunch time, and avoid making that critical mental error that could hurt your team. (See my strategies eBook to learn the essential strategies for offense and defense.

Here's the link:

<http://www.baseballsbestdrills.com/strategies/>,

and my new eBook on Defense contains all of the defensive information you'll ever need, including those all-important cut-off coverages.

Here's the link:

<http://www.baseballsbestdrills.com/defense/>.)

These items are just a few things to think about as you wait for the mercury to start rising in the thermometer. I know there are many other things you can do as well. The point is doing something!

If you're not improving, you're falling behind.