

Understanding Baseball Speed Training: Part 2

By Shawn Moody

Those spring days that I spoke about in Part I of this series are fast approaching. I can only assume (which you shouldn't do) that the gloves are being oiled and that we've been swinging the stick in the cages and working out hard for our up-coming season.

In the last article, I had given you a starting point to speed training with various drills to assist in the development of your agility and first-step quickness.

Before diving into a sample program that I have used with athletes, let's take a look back at a few of the points that I made last time, just to ensure we understand our goals.

First, you are not training for a track meet. If you run track that is fine, but in this case we are looking to improve our speed for the benefit of our sport. When you are waiting to steal a base or get that jump that is needed from the outfield to run and dive for that fly ball, you don't have the luxury of getting into a perfect stance and waiting for the gun to fire.

Second, aerobic endurance work will do nothing to enhance speed. I don't care how fast you run the mile, it doesn't mean you can get from Point A to Point B fast. Take a look at the difference in body composition between a top marathon runner and a world-class sprinter.

Ok, with those two points hammered home let's take a look at a sample workout that I have used with some of my athletes. This speed session is going to focus on the development of the 30 and 60-yard sprint work that is often incorporated into baseball camps.

Before I have my athletes or clients engage in any type of physical training I always prescribe some type of dynamic warm-up. This time is used to elevate the body's core temperature and prepare the joints for the up-coming session.

Because of the movements required in baseball, we must make sure that we warm up the rhomboid (back of the shoulder) muscles. These muscles are responsible to keeping the shoulders healthy because of all the forward over-hand throwing motions when playing. We will also want to make sure that our lower body is activated in the warm-up to help with hip and leg mobility.

Contact me if you don't know how to prescribe or set up a proper warm-up. If you are just jogging a lap and static stretching before your games, then your wasting time.

The Session:

This is a sprinting rotational ladder that I have used with some of my athletes and I have varied the distances and the amount of the volume or total sprint work depending on their age and their current athletic level.

- Your rest periods will be 1 minute between each sprint.

- You will need 4 cones (or something just to mark off the appropriate distance)
- You will only be sprinting to either a 15, 30 or 60 yard marked distance.

Set your cones up giving yourself a starting point and then place one cone at 15 yards, one at 30 yards and the final cone at 60 yards.

- When sprinting 15 yards you will start from a push-up position lying flat on your stomach.
- When sprinting 30 yards you will start from a lateral position (similar to stealing ` a base.)
- When sprinting 60 yards you will start from a normal two point athletic stance.
- You will complete all of the 15 yard sprints before moving onto the 30's and so on.

Bracket 1.

15 yard sprint = 5x (times)

30 yard sprint = 3x

60 yard sprint = 1x

Bracket 2.

15 yard sprint = 1x

30 yard sprint = 5x

60 yard sprint = 3x

Bracket 3.

15 yard sprint = 3x

30 yard sprint = 1x

60 yard sprint = 5x

After your final rest time, finish the workout session with a static stretch routine.

A couple of key points that I would like to make.

- First, when taking off from a push-up position make certain that you are looking into the ground. If you are looking upward this causes the head to pull the rest of the body up too fast during the acceleration phase of the sprint. 15 yards is about acceleration!
- Second when running the 30-yard sprints alternate the lateral direction you are facing.
- Third, when running the 60-yard sprint, RELAX! You won't be fast if you are all tensed up.
- And finally, don't lie down between sprints. I actually prefer my athletes to walk around or back to the starting point.

Once again this is just a sample of something that I use. It's not the end all, but it works. Give it a shot and let me know how it works for you. I will outline a weekly program in the future.