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Hi, I'm Coach Jeff Mercer. We're here today to take you through our Outfield Workout and I'm ably assisted by a few of the kids in our program, from the lower league all the way up to our high school. Austin Gorrell, Brian Bidlin, and Brian Doherty.

You know, so often times as we work with young kids eight-, nine-, 10-years old we get the connotation with outfielders that the weaker players are put there kind of for the duration of the season and they're left in the outfield.

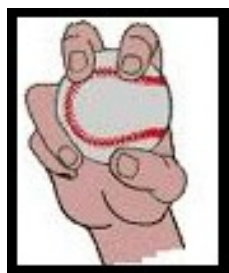
And in reality, some of your greatest players throughout the history of the game have played in the outfield and, in fact, many of the highest paid players are in the outfield. Eight-, nine-, 10 years old – recognizing and I would not argue the case whatsoever – most of the plays take place in the infield; however, bigger mistakes are made in the outfield than they ever will be in the infield.

A mistake by an outfielder results in a two- or three-base error versus the infield where it's a one-base error. So we want to make sure that we take time with all kids, but especially young kids, to teach them some of the techniques of outfield play to make sure that they know how to move their feet, they know what they're supposed to do and when they're supposed to do it.

I think a lot of times young outfielders feel a little bit slighted. They're used to, daily, watching infielders go through their drill work, catchers and pitchers, and yet there's nothing for them. And their drill work consists generally of shagging flyballs. And quite honestly, that's not enough.

So what we're going to do today is put together a program, a workout program that anybody can do, whether they're eight years old, 18, 28, that will allow them to learn how to move their feet, how to use their body, how to catch the ball properly, and be able to work that through to a higher level so that the advanced techniques come out throughout.

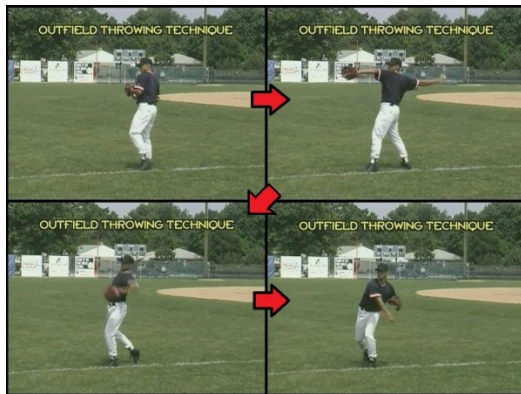
The beginning of any discussion with regard to throwing for an outfielder has to begin with the way that you grip the ball.



And as youngsters we've been taught to grip across the seams. An across-the-seam grip would be one where we grip across the two wide seams almost like a horseshoe, this way. You see the horseshoe? Just turn it sideways and we grip this way. The reason that we do that is because it actually allows a ball to travel a little bit faster that way.

And we've been told over and over, grip the ball across the seams. We didn't really know why. The baseball is in what we call an air pocket. The air travels around the ball and creates a pocket around the ball, and as that happens it allows the ball to travel through the air a little bit easier. In fact, it allows the ball to travel through two to four miles an hour faster than if you didn't grip it across the

seams. If you grip with the seams, you don't get that air pocket effect. So we want to make sure that we grip the ball across the seams.



An outfielder throws a little bit different than the other positions on the field. Pitchers parallel outfielders, but infielders and catchers throw completely different. And we want to talk a little bit about what we need to do for an outfielder to allow us to take complete advantage of whatever arm strength he has.

When an outfielder makes the move to throw, after he's received the ball and it's in his glove, an outfielder drops his hand down below the waist. We call that going down and back and up in this fashion.

So we're going to create kind of a circle going around. That movement down allows an outfielder's arm to gain velocity. And that velocity gain translates into a faster throw. He's got a longer throw. It's not quite as important he gets rid of it as quickly as an infielder so consequently he's got a chance to do that. Pitcher does the same thing. Infielders and catchers, again, they don't. It's a little bit different technique.

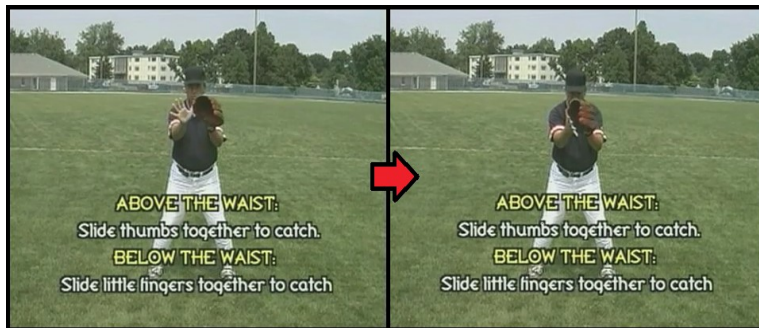
So when an outfielder splits his hands, we want this kind of a motion. We want a split of the glove, down, back and up this way. We want the glove to out and what we teach our kids is what we call a scarecrow.

This looks like a scarecrow standing in the field. Glove is out, fingers are on top of the ball in this fashion, and then as we begin to throw, that glove's going to come back to my chest and the arm will rotate up into a 90-degree angle and allow us to make a good strong throw.

If I'm facing my partner, I'm going to always point my shoulder, my hip, and my knee at the target. Again, my hands are in front of my chest, and when is split, I'm going to point right at him, right here. Into the scarecrow, my glove is open facing backwards, fingers on top of the ball.

Bring the glove to my chest which in and of itself will help you gain another three to five miles an hour because we're helping pull the arm through. We get into that 90-degree angle. Notice my fingers are behind the ball and I've got a four-seam grip, and then I make my throw. And that's the outfielder's technique in throwing.

We get kind of picky when we talk about how we receive the ball. You know, warming up prior to a practice or a game is a time for you to get something done. It's not a time to horse around. It's a chance for you to perfect your technique. And I know a lot of times we don't like to think about it like that and young players don't like to do that, but it's important that the coaches or you as a player take enough pride in what you're doing to get it done right.



When we receive the ball, we want to make sure that our partner, number one, knows we're ready to receive the ball; and number two, we show him what to throw at. And that's a middle of our body.

So when we set up to make a catch, we want to spread our feet about shoulder-width apart and we want to flex our knees a little bit. This puts me in a position to anticipate a poor throw from my partner. Even if he doesn't make poor throws very often, I should be set up to receive every time he lets go of the ball. So we always anticipate a poor throw.

Flex position, be ready to receive the ball. Hands go up and we show him a target right here. This is the box that we're showing the target on and we want to make sure that each time the ball's received, we're in our box. That allows me, number one, to show him where I want it; and number two, it also reminds me that I want to catch that ball right here in this box. So if he happens to make a throw to my left, I'm going to have to slide my feet a little bit and get my chest in front of the ball. If he throws it to my right, I'll do the same thing.

Any time you can catch the ball in the middle of your body it's going to translate into a quicker release when you go to throw the ball. If you catch it out in here because you didn't move your feet, or up over your head or places, it takes you a longer amount of time to be able to pick it out and go.

So we want to make sure that we bend our knees and get set into a position where we can receive the ball. Once his throw's made, we move to meet the ball, put the chest in front of the ball, receive it with two hands. Above the waist, I'm just going to slide my thumbs together and trap it in. If it's below my waist, I'll put my pinkies together and trap it in there. And that's catching technique for outfielders.

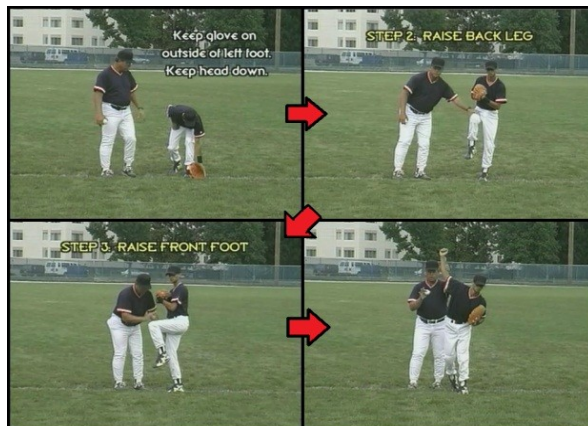
PART 2

Brian's going to help me teach the crow hop. Crow hop's the essential part for any advanced outfielder's ability to play that particular position. The crow hop is important for two reasons. Reason number one is it helps us gather ourselves after having run across the outfield to pick up a ground ball or to catch a flyball. It allows us to get rid of the ball very quickly. The second reason is it allows us to put something on it.

You may have seen from time to time kids going after a ball and it seems like once they pick it up they run forever before they let go of it, or they let go of it off what seemingly is

the wrong foot and they don't have anything on the ball, and that's just lack of preparation. It's a fairly simple technique to teach, a little bit harder to learn, but you can do it in the living room or anywhere with regard to technique.

So Brian's going to help me go through the technique of a crow hop. Crow hop is nothing more than picking up the back foot – and for a right-handed player that's going to be Brian's right foot – picking up the back foot, getting the knee high in the air, and allowing the front side, or his left side, to come around and get him in position to throw. So as we break it down with players, we do it this way first.



Okay, Brian, if you would, drop your glove to the ground. Notice he's got the glove outside his left foot so he doesn't have to slow himself down. He's also got his head down so it allows the glove to stay down, which means we're going to get the ball up in our glove. He's going to take that right leg and he's going to release it and come straight up in the air. It's important to go straight so his momentum goes straight. If he goes this way, his momentum's going here.

So go straight up in the air with his knee, now he's going to drop that foot to the ground, and he's going to pick up the left foot. He's going to drop it to the ground. That squares his shoulders to his throwing target. Allows him to get on top of the ball and to make a good strong throw.

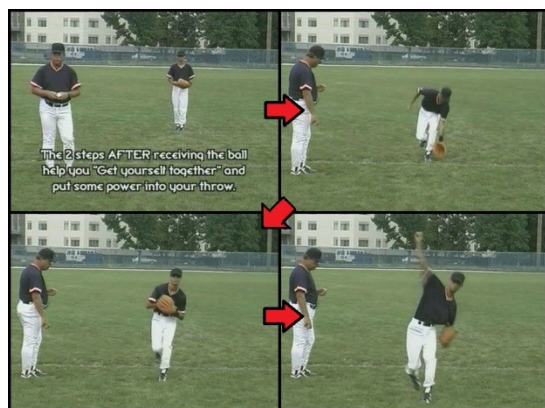
Okay, now. From that point when we've gone through the actual technique and they know what it looks like and how to do it, then we back it up and go half speed and then we'll back it up and go full speed. So we'll walk through. Don't anticipate trying this the first time and making it work. It's a fairly difficult thing for a player to master, but it's also something that can be worked on virtually anywhere to get better at it.

Do it again. Okay. Knee up. Go. Knee up. Okay. We're going to send Brian back a little bit and allow him to move through the ball half speed. We tell our outfielders this. It should never take you more than 2½ steps to get rid of the ball. So the goal for Brian, once he's learned the technique of how to move his legs, the goal for Brian is to field the ball and get rid of the ball within 2½ steps.

Anything beyond that, you take an extra step, the base runner gets two extra steps, minimum six feet, that you've given him. Regardless of your arm strength, regardless of any technique that you've undergone, regardless of dropping or bobbling the ball, he gets that extra step just because you took too many.

Okay, we're going to go half speed. We're going to come right to line, Brian. Okay. Go through it. Break down. Knee up. And over. And you'll notice that he took

approximately 2½ steps in terms of getting rid of the ball. Let's do it again. Ready? Go. Break down. Up. And away he goes.

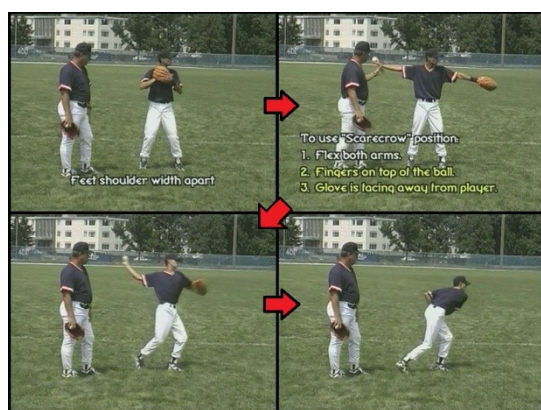


We don't need to break down into a crow hop position the minute he fields the ball. Okay, if we do that we're going to have nothing on him. He's got to have a couple steps to gather himself to get himself into throwing position before he makes that good strong throw. Okay, again. Break down. Up. And gone. Ready? Go. Break down. One, 2½, there we go. Good. Go. Break down. Very nice. Okay, Brian, if you would, stay put for just a second.

Now that we've gone through the technique, starting a player down, teaching it how to be done and we go half speed, now we can come back and go full speed. And when we go full speed, a lot of times you'll notice that we make some mistakes. And that's just because, boy, the mind's having to operate really fast here and you may not be used to doing that.

So if we have to repeat it every day for two months, then we repeat it every day. If you have to go home and do it in the living room five minutes a day, go home and do it in the living room. It will pay that type of dividend if you know how to do this right.

Okay, Brian, we're going full speed on my command. Ready? Go. Down. Crow hop. Boom. Notice how he gathers himself. He's able to get himself under control pretty rapidly and he's also able to gather his strength. Go. Break down. Keep the head down. Boom. Very nice. Go. Okay, make sure we get that right knee in the air. Go. There we go. And again, you can do this anywhere. You can do it in the back yard, you can do it in the front yard, in the living room. If you've got enough room, you can do it anywhere.



The three-part throwing drill is a drill that allows us to isolate parts of the throwing technique at a time and put it back together in some meaningful fashion. You'd be surprised how many older players need some help with their technique and throwing. We just want to take advantage of what we have. If we can pick up a couple miles an hour by gripping the ball right, if we can pick up a couple miles an hour by making sure we get a good glove tuck, we want to do that. And by slowing things down, backing

up and doing it one at a time, it allows us to be able to do that. Brian's going to help me here with regard to our techniques.

This is our break position. You'll notice that we're into the scarecrow position with the arms. This arm's out and flexed just a little bit. This arm's flexed just a little bit. Fingers are on top of the ball. Glove is turned and facing away. This is going to allow us to isolate and work just strictly on the glove tuck.

Which, if you watch players, if you go to a Little League diamond or if you go to a high school field and you watch how many give you a glove tuck, bring that glove back into the body, you're going to find less than half do it properly. Maybe even less than that depending on where you're at. So this is our chance to teach how to do that. And we do this with high school players. It's great to do with eight-, nine-, 10-year-old kids.

This is our break position again – break, Brian. That's our break and from here, I'm just going to say throw. When I say throw, Brian's going to bring that glove back to his chest, he's going to get the arm into a 90-degree angle, and make the throw to his partner. Ready? Throw.

And you'll notice that he gets a nice follow-through. He's going to finish up. Okay, feet spread at least shoulder-width apart. Break. Throw. Notice his grip on the ball. Break. His fingers are on top of the ball. He also has a four-seam grip. Throw. Tucks the glove and a nice follow-through. Break. Throw. Again, we're just isolating that glove and allowing it to come back into the body.

That's an extra two to four miles per hour if you learn how to do that properly as opposed to if you don't do it at all. Break. Throw. We also want to make sure that Brian's looking down a gun barrel. He's got that glove pointed directly at his partner and that's going to increase his accuracy when he does release the ball, not to mention the velocity he's going to pick up with that glove tuck.

Part two of the drill will be to take it from the break position and work backwards. We're going to work to what we call our ready position. Hands in front of the chest, hands here. When I say break, we're going to take a small step with our front foot and we're going to split our hands back into that scarecrow position. Break. Throw. So what we're doing is just inching our way back to a normal throw. Ready? Break. Throw. And a nice follow-through. Ready? Break. Throw.

The third and final portion of this drill is what we call ready and throw. We're going to put the whole thing back together again without any stops. There'll be no stop in between. No break position on this one. Okay, we'll go back through the glove tuck, but he's not going to stop this time.

Ready? Throw. Out and back in a nice normal throwing technique. This is a great way to teach young players how to put their throwing technique together one step at a time. Ready? Throw. Out and back. Again, we want the players concentrating on getting that glove facing backwards and making sure they pull back hard to allow their arm to increase the velocity. Ready? Throw. Very nice.

Again, step-by-step approach teaching people how to throw the ball properly. And although the technique may differ from position to position, the drill never changes. And

we can work regardless of whether you've got a catcher throwing the way he throws or an outfielder like Brian throwing the way he throws, we can all do it together and all do it at the same time to help teach that glove tuck, a nice release with the hands to make sure that the technique we hold the ball with is where we need, and to put that whole thing back together step by step.

PART 3

Ground ball technique. Depending on where you're coaching or where you're playing, the outfield at times can be a little bit rough. So we want to make sure that our technique is good and that allows us a much better chance to field the ball cleanly. If we could do everything in our power to keep that ball in front of us, it's certainly going to help us.

Because if you make a mistake in the outfield you're looking at at least a two-base mistake, which puts somebody in scoring position; in some cases, a three-base or, heaven forbid, even a four-base mistake. So let's make sure that we know exactly what we're supposed to do.



Okay, ground ball technique. Brian'll help me out. With regard to the ground ball, there's about four or five different things that we want to think about. First of all, is a ground ball base hit into the outfield with no one on base. Now I'm going to give my outfielders the option to do one of two things. If it's not hit hard at all and it's not deep, maybe it's a ball that you have to move forward on, we can use an infield technique just like an infielder would field a ground ball. Go. Break down. Go. One more. Go. Good infield

technique.



The second type of ground ball with no one on base will involve dropping to a knee. Now I do this just a little bit different I think than some. Most coaches that have a player drop to the knee, or most players will drop to the throwing side knee. And I don't like to do that. Brian, if you'd move forward and set up on a glove-side drop.

Notice that Brian's dropped to his glove-side knee. The nice thing about having the glove-side knee to the ground is that any event that he gets a bad hop, which is really why you do this technique, he's got the ability to move. He can move anywhere he needs to go and he can do it very rapidly.

Brian, drop to your other knee. If he drops to a throwing-side knee and goes down to field the ball and happens to get a poor hop and it shoots to his left, he's obstructed by the leg. It's hard to get around. So we prefer to drop to the glove-side knee go ahead and switch, Brian. We prefer to drop to the glove-side knee. He'll pick the ball up, get himself in position to throw, and get rid of it. Okay, Brian, put it down if you would and back up. Go. Go. Go. That's a second type of ground ball with no one on base.

When we put people on base, for instance, a runner on first and a base hit into the outfield where there's a potential play at third, or it could even be a runner on second who's going to try to score, we field that just a little bit different. It's imperative that we run through the ball on this one. We don't slow down. We have the body in position to get to the ball as rapidly as we possibly can and yet still be able to get our self under control and make a throw.

So on this one, Brian, if you would, move to the ball. We've got a runner on base. He's going to field the ball outside the left foot. That will allow him to continue to run without having to stop and bend down. If he fields the ball in front of his body, there's a good chance the left foot's going to kick the ball out, and at absolute best you're going to have to slow down to get it down.



So as we field the ball outside the left foot, he doesn't have to do any slowing down, he can continue to run. And if we teach a good crow hop, then we've got a good chance to make a good strong throw without having to do any of the slowing down that's necessary when you field in front of your body.

Okay, Brian, put it back down if you would. I'm going to roll this one to him. Watch as he fields the ball off the outside of his left foot. You know, often we're lulled into thinking that when we work drills like this, we have to hit the ball. You don't have to hit the ball. He's working his technique and he's perfecting his technique.

And being this close, I can get a number of repetitions in to him very rapidly. Notice how he's getting that good crow hop. He's keeping his head down. He's running through the ball. He fields the ball and he's coming up throwing in a real hurry. Very nice.

The last type of technique that we use with outfielders is with a man on base, but this situation involves what we call a do or die. Man on second base, base hit into the

outfield, last inning of the game. If this run scores, the game's over. Brian has no margin for error. He has got to run as fast as he possibly can.

If he kicks the ball, we're going to get beat anyway. But if he doesn't come and get it hard, we're certainly going to get beat. So this is do or die. You've really got to bust your tail through the ball, making sure that you give everything you've got to get there as fast as possible.

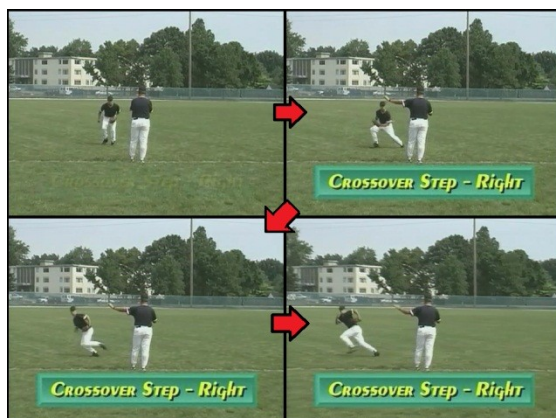
Come get it. Notice how the ball back almost under his feet and he still was able to make that play without having to kick the ball out of his glove or miss it altogether. Come get it. Very nice.

Those are our four techniques with regard to fielding a ground ball. Again, fielding a ground ball as an infielder would field it. Fielding a ground ball with the drop to the glove-side knee. Fielding a ground ball with a man on base, outside the front foot or left foot for a right-hander; right foot for a left-hander.

And then the do or die situation where we don't have any choice, we've got to come get it in a hurry. If you can work on these on a daily basis or every other day, it certainly helps the technique. Because, again, what we're going to do is we're going to develop some memory in our body as to how we want that particular completed.

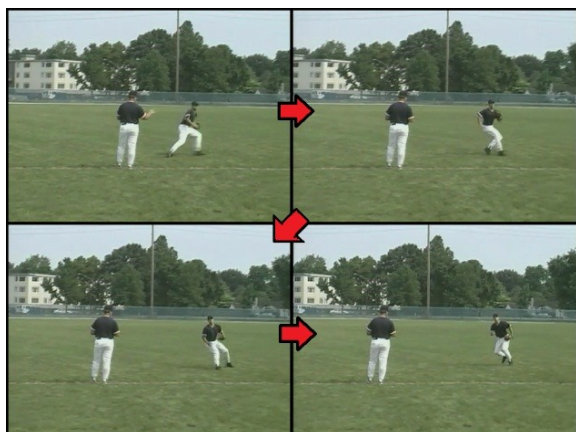
This is a stance and steps drill. We like to do this drill early on with outfielders to teach them how to move their feet and how to set themselves up properly. It's of great benefit to a young outfielder to learn the correct way to step and how to cut out excess steps that are not necessary.

One key point that I always try to give to our outfielders is every time you take an unnecessary step, the base runner who's in full stride takes two. So every time you make a mistake with any type of footwork, whether it's what we're going to do now or what we'll see later on, he's gaining at least six feet every time you make a single mistake.

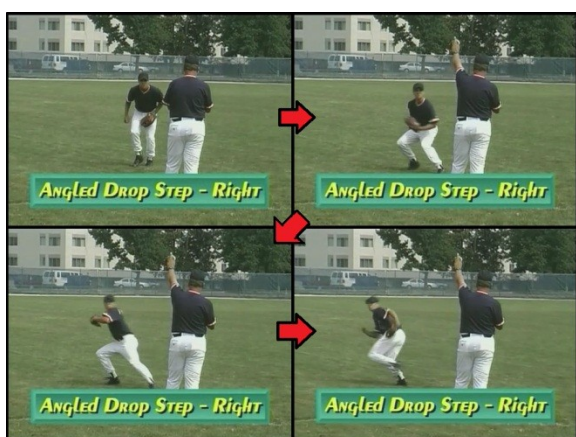


So it's imperative that we know how to move. As we go through the five parts of the stance and steps drill, you'll be able to see the crossover step, the drop step, and the angled drop step that we use in teaching our outfielders how to go after a flyball.

Creep. Creep. Notice how he gets body turned and set to be able to catch the ball and also to be able to get rid of it very rapidly. If you set yourself up with your chest facing the arrival of the ball, all we've done at that point is put ourselves in a position where it's going to take us an extra step to get rid of it. Creep. Okay, now we can alter it, go the other direction. Creep. Same technique. Just the other direction.



You may notice that Brian's calling the ball. We like to call the ball mine, mine, mine. Three times. Creep. We feel like that if we call the ball three times there's a better chance that an outfielder that's next to you will hear you on one of three attempts as opposed to just calling it once. Creep. Make the catch eye level, throwing side, with two hands. Runs back through the ball. Creep.



Now we're going to take our angled drop step. The important part of this drill is to make sure that whichever direction I go with the ball, he takes the same step with that same side foot. So if I go this direction with the ball to my right, it would be his left, he's going to take his first step with his left foot. If he takes the first step with his right foot, he's cost himself time and his ability to get to the ball. Creep.

So he's going to catch his angle, try to determine where the ball's coming down, making sure he's behind the ball so he can run back through it. Creep. Creep. We want to try to eliminate any small steps that don't get you anywhere when you take them. Brian's taking just a little bit of a small step in the same place that he's already at. So if we can get that first movement just with his left foot we're going to get to the ball that much faster. Creep. A little bit bigger step with the left foot.



Okay, we're going to switch and go the other direction. Creep. Right foot. Creep. For most right-handed outfielders, it's a little easier to go to the right than it is to the left. Creep. And you may notice that in the fact that he's taking a little bit bigger step with the right foot than he is with his left foot when he went to the left. Creep.

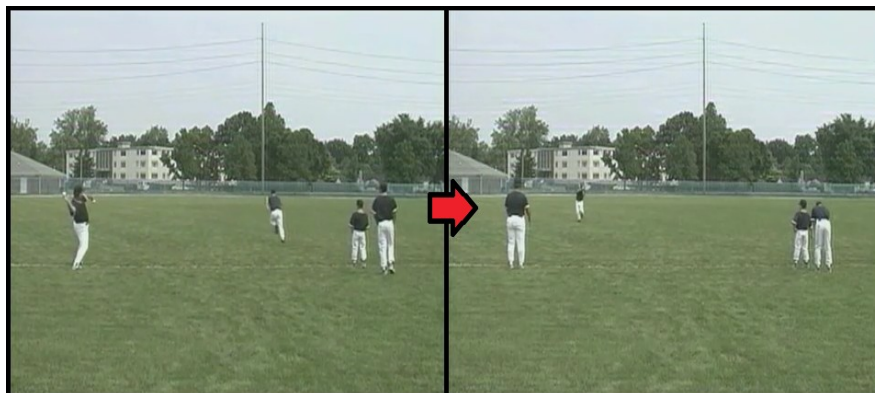


Now we go drop step straight back. We always instruct our outfielders on the drop step to make sure that they go straight back and we always drop to the throwing hand side. Creep. We want to drop to the throwing hand side so if they come in contact with the outfield fence they've got something to cushion their arrival. Drop step straight back with the right foot. We want to make sure that we go in a straight line. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Creep. Straight back. Good first step.

In stance and steps, repetition is the name of the game. If you precede each practice, either an individual workout or a team workout, with a stance and step drill it's just another factor that will go into teaching a young player how to move his feet correctly as it becomes a habit.

PART 4

This drill is designed, number one, to continue to get the legs loose at the beginning of an outfield workout, but also to teach the players how to run on the balls of their feet, and how to watch the ball into their hands. And if they run light, they're going to run a little bit faster. And if they run light, they're not going to do quite as much bouncing which, in some cases, causes the ball to pop out of the glove a little more than we like for it to. So we want to make sure that we run light at a bit of angle here and we want to watch the ball into our hands.

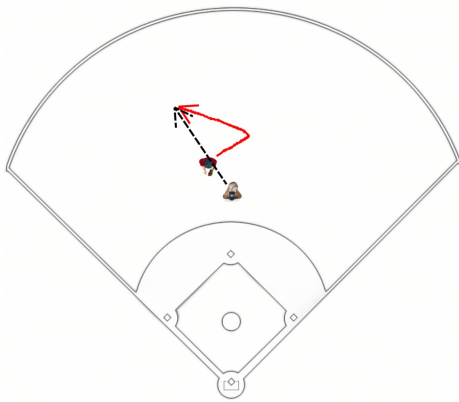


Go. Ball. Make sure we call the ball, Brian. Call the ball. Go. Ball. Go. Ball. Go. Ball. Go. Ball. We want to make sure that we take them in both directions because an equal number of balls are likely to be hit over the right shoulder as they are the left. Go.

Ball. And again, we want to make sure that we run light on the feet so we don't bounce, which causes the eyes to bounce, which causes a dropped ball. Go. Ball. Very nice. Very nice.

We get the bare hand in which really causes them to watch the ball into the glove, and then we go ahead and put the glove on. This is obviously the way they're going to do it in a game, so we want to make sure that we get that in too. And we'll go same technique. Right and left.

Go. Ball. Very nice. Very nice. You see we stretched him out pretty good there. Go. Ball. Making sure we call the ball every play. And if they don't, then just remind them to do that. Outfielders have to communicate. A lot of injuries occur because of lack of communication in the outfield. The guy next to you has to know that you're going to take the ball or that he's supposed to get it. Go. Ball. Go. Ball. And there's a nice backhand. Go. Ball. Go. Ball.



That's the over the shoulder drill with the glove. It's important that you make sure that the kids get an opportunity to do that on a daily basis or every other day. It not only, again, works their conditioning level but it also teaches them to run light on their feet and to make sure that those baseballs that get hit into the outfield find a glove somewhere as opposed to finding the grass.

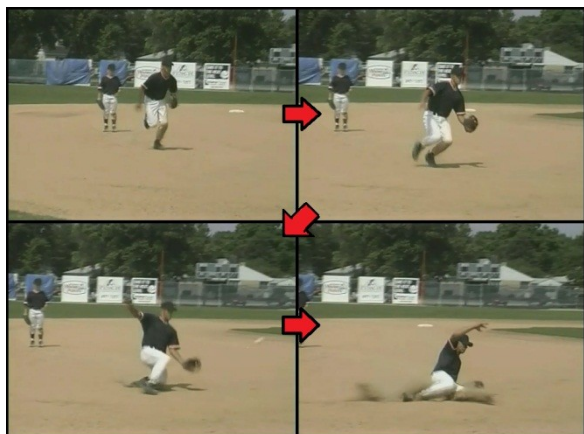
The quick feet drill is one of my favorites.

It's certainly an opportunity for us to work on our footwork and being able to change directions very rapidly, and what we hope to be very comfortably. Both from right to left and left to right. It also forces us to keep our eye on the ball, which I think is always a good thing. And we're trying our best in this drill never to turn our back.

So on the quick foot drill we're going to get going from one direction to the other as rapidly as we can and hopefully we'll be able to run under that thing. If you like to do it without a glove, I think that's good initially. We're going to show it with a glove today. And as we do it, watch how they make that cut from right to left or left to right, and see if they can do it right.

Creep. Quick feet. Switch. Ball. Again, the same techniques which apply throughout any part of outfield, we want to apply here. We always want to run light on our feet, nice and easy, making sure that we track the ball all the way into the glove. Creep. Quick feet. Switch. Ball. And notice how Austin calls the ball.

We always call it three times just to make sure that your partners can hear you and we don't end up with a collision. Creep. Quick feet. Switch. Ball. Notice how they're not turning their back. They're maintaining eye contact with me and the ball, which is what we want to do in the ball game as much as possible. Creep. Quick feet. Switch. Ball.



Bent leg slide is a drill that you can put in and you can do it once a week, twice a week, three times a week. I think you'll find that the kids kind of enjoy it. Especially if you can do it on a surface that's not going to tear them up. Nice tall grass in the outfield with a pair of sweats that mom doesn't care if they get grass stained.

Or you can do it like we're going to do it today, on the infield surface so it doesn't tear up their legs and it doesn't tear up their

uniforms and things like that. It's an invaluable skill because you'll have somebody in the outfield virtually on a daily or by game basis that'll be into a bent leg slide. If they know how to do it, they're going to avoid getting themselves injured, number one. Number two, they're going to have a great chance of catching the ball.

There's no more technique on a bent leg slide other than it's a slide just as if you're going to slide into second base or third base, except you're going to extend your hand. So when the guys go out here and do it, you're going to notice them working on a regular slide. I put them about 25' away from me, I'll yell go, flip the ball, and they'll go into a slide.

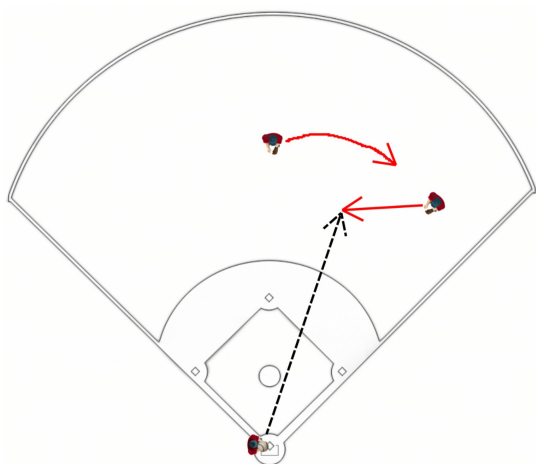
And then they get comfortable with that and then consequently when game time comes and the ball gets hit like that, they already know how to do it and they go right into it. It's a nice way to finish a practice on kind of a high note. Something they kind of enjoy doing.

Fellas, you ready? Let's do it. Go. Go. That's it. Go.

Bent leg slide. It's a great way to finish a practice on a high note. You can have some competition, whatever you like to do. It's also a very beneficial way to teach kids how to field that ball on either the short hop or in terms of trying to come to get the ball as hard as they can and having to go into a slide and try to catch it. So try it in your practice. I think you'll find it to be very helpful.

PART 5

Half of playing in the outfield is knowing whose ball is which and when you're supposed to go and where you're supposed to go. And we're going to work through inside-outside routes, or some people call them high-low routes, and making sure that we know where we're supposed to go when the balls are hit.



We also think a little bit about when the ball comes off the bat and the ball heads in a certain direction, we already know who's supposed to take it because we've worked through this in practice. Both my Brians are going to help me walk through this and help us think about where we're supposed to be.

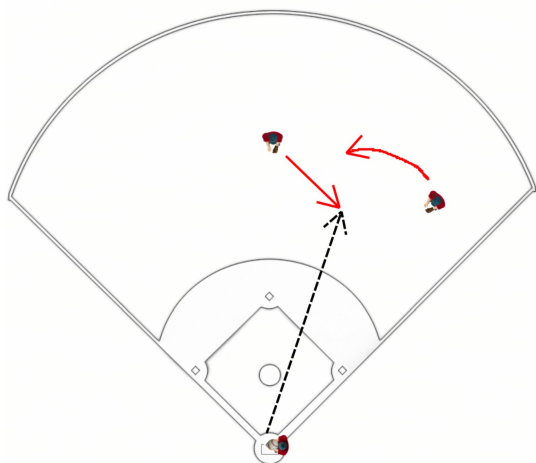
This Brian will represent my center fielder. This Brian will represent my left fielder. And on an inside-out route or a high-low route, we're going to work on a ball that's hit between the outfielders. Something that's hit right at

somebody, that's an easy one. We don't have to worry about that. The tough one is the one hit in between. So in order to avoid a collision and insure that we catch the ball, we have to have some idea as to who's going to go after the ball and who's going to back up to play.

So what we tell our outfielders is this, with regard to rules. If we have a right-handed hitter who pulls the ball down the left field line or into the gap into left field, the ball's going to tail a little bit to the line but not a great deal.

So when a right-handed hitter hits a ball between center and left, the ball's going to tail some but not a terrible amount. Consequently, our center fielder's going to take that ball. Brian would take what we call the inside route. With his glove in the air he'll take the inside, or the high, route; that's why they call it the high route. And Brian'll take the low route. Which means that if Brian misses the ball here and it drops down, we've got an outfielder left to be able to field it.

Okay, guys, back to your positions. We want to make sure that that off outfielder, or the low route in this case, gets 15-20 feet behind the other outfielder. That allows both outfielders to run full speed without having to worry about whether they're going to run together. The minute it comes off the bat, right-handed hitter hits a ball left field, center fielder's going to take that ball.



Conversely, if a left-handed hitter hits a ball to the opposite field, it tails hard to the line. And on that ball, we want this Brian to move to the ball. He's going to take the high route, and the other Brian will make sure that he gets the low route and backs us up. By doing that you don't overextend an outfielder into a situation where he's trying to catch a ball that just keeps running away from him. And if we do it this way, he can catch up to that ball, we avoid the collision, and we also make sure that we catch the ball.

I'd like to talk a little bit about how you work the fence as an outfielder. It's important for two reasons. Number one, in terms of being able to get rid of the ball, but also in terms of protecting yourself and not getting hurt.

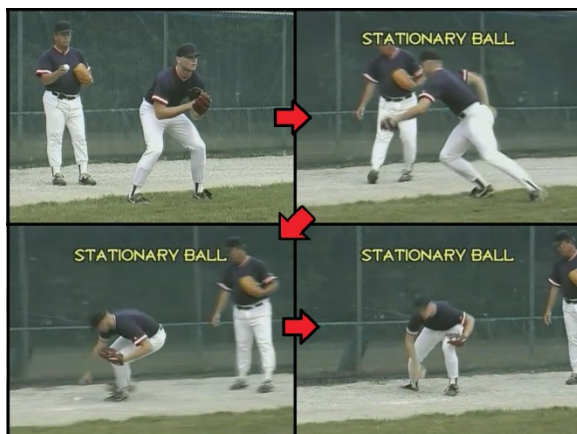
An outfielder, regardless of the level, unless you play at the same facility every game, the first thing that he should do after getting stretched and throwing, is to come out and take a look at the fence.

As you get a little bit older in high school and college, you're going to travel around and you're going to play at different facilities. This is fairly typical of what we see now. A chain link fence with some kind of a wind screen. This type of a surface kills a ball that'll hit it. If you play on a field that's got a wooden outfield wall or a concrete, brick wall of some sort, the ball's going to ricochet off much, much faster.

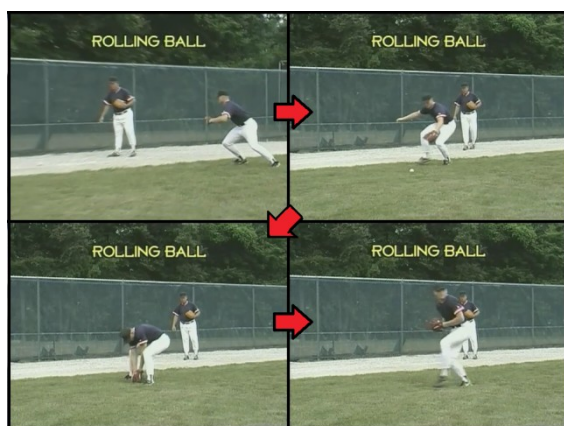
So an outfielder needs to take a ball and run out to the fence and throw a couple off and see what kind of a bounce you get. As you can see with that kind of a throw, we're not going to get much of a bounce. So we know at that point we can get a little bit closer to the fence.

Once it hits and we're in position to move it, pick up the ball and get it back in. A brick wall ball's going to bounce off a little further. We're going to need to be off the wall a little more so it doesn't bounce over our head and end up giving up an inside the park homerun unnecessarily.

We also want to talk a little bit about once the ball comes off the wall, how we handle it. What do we do? How do we get the ball? Things of that nature. Brian's going to help me do that. We're going to do it in two fashions. One is a ball that comes off the wall and is dead stopped. We pick that up in a certain way. And then the other one's a ball that comes off the wall and keeps on moving. You're going to have to field that ball in a certain way.



Brian, if you would, let's walk to the fence. This ball's dead. Ball is stopped completely. What we want Brian to do is we want him to go to his throwing side. So we're going to get around this side of the ball. He's going to square himself up. He's going to bend down with a bare hand, force his fingers onto the top of the ball, bring his hands back together, get a small crow hop, and hit his cutoff man.



Second option that we have is a ball that's continuing to move. It hits off the fence and it's rolling. Now we're going to set this up, even though it's stopped, we want to pretend just for a second that it's still rolling. The ball's still rolling, we want Brian to move to that ball, and with two hands, scoop it to the throwing side, pick it up, get a nice crow hop, and hit his target.

Those are our two techniques that we'll want to use on any ball that's coming off the fence. So let's take a look at a few of those opportunities. Go. Dead ball. Ready? Go. Dead ball. Good. Ready? Go. Dead ball. Ball. Ball's moving. Two hands. Scoop and throw. Ready? Ball. Ball's moving. Okay, we try our best to get around the ball. Pick it up on the throwing side. Ready? Ball. Ball's moving. Two hands. Scoop. And throw. You might notice Brian's picking up some rocks with that, which is fine. That means he's doing a good job of making sure he gets the ball.



Any great outfielder knows how to work the fence. He knows how to do so without injuring himself. He knows how to do so by instinct. A great outfielder, if you'll watch him on TV or if you go to the ball park and watch a game in person, when a ball's hit over their head that's either out of the park or going to hit off the wall, you'll notice that he'll turn and run without ever looking at the ball. He'll go. He'll just sprint. If he knows that ball's hit that hard. And it's instinct.

He'll try to pick out the spot that he thinks the ball's going to hit, he'll get immediately to the fence, and then he'll turn and find it. And we set up that situation with a drill that we call get to the ball and Brian's going to assist me with it. When I say go, he's going to turn and sprint directly to the fence, then he's going to turn and look for the ball.

Now occasionally I'm going to move him a little bit just so he gets comfortable being able to shift his body and move right or left or maybe it'll be right at him. Let's take a look at him.

Ready? Go. Good. See how he gets up and makes the catch. Ready? Go. Down to fence. Good. Now notice how he rounds the ball off just like he's been taught. Crow hops and he gets ready to make the throw. Ready? Go. Trouble.

That one's for posterity. Gone. Ready? Go. Ball's up. Good. He has a feel, an instinct about where that fence is at and once he gets there he's able to move to the right or to the left. He also knows how hard the ball's been hit off the bat and it's just instinct.

He knows the ball's out of the park or it's up on the fence. Ready? Go. Miscalculate a little bit. He's able to still come back in and make the play. Ready? Go. It's up. And outta here. Nothing he can do. Ready? Go. Gotta move a little bit. Good.