

## Matt Lofstrom - ABCA Conference Drill

I wish I could remember who the presenter was, but he presented a lot of good infield progression drills to warm up and develop infielders.

The title was Racer Infield Drills & Competitions.

### **Ball in glove warmups:**

I found this topic to be very interesting considering I've coached initiation all the way up to U11 now.

Start the drill at whatever infield position you want reps at. Player grabs a ball and goes through their footwork as if they were fielding the ball, and makes the throw to first base. I think this is really interesting as we work on footwork a lot but if they don't field the ball cleanly, it throws off the rhythm and can result in rushed, off-balance throws. Starting this way has them properly executing footwork and getting a throw off as if the ball was fielded cleanly. This can move into double play warm-ups as well starting with the ball in the fielders glove.

Players can visualize different ways to field the ball with their footwork: slow roll, step back forehand, backhand, etc. while focusing on footwork into the throw.

### **Blind Fungo:**

Players start in an infield position with their back to the coach hitting fungo, or facing the outfield. They have to wait to hear contact of the bat before they turn around, locate the ball and use their footwork to field it. The turnaround hop can act like a prep-step for the infielder and works on the first jump they get to the ball.

### **Double Blind Fungo:**

Players at 3B, SS, and 2B. Two coaches will be coordinated and hit to one of the positions each, without the knowledge of the infielders. They locate, field the ball and throw to a net/target located on first base.

### **2-Ball with Throw:**

Establish lateral boundaries rough 5 yards apart. Coach who is hitting fungo fairly close to player hits to one side of the boundary where the player will have to field it, coach then hits second ball to other side/boundary where player will have to stretch/layout to make a play on the ball and make the throw to first base. It was described at a 'goalie' type drill that challenges the player not to let anything pass them.

### **Hop Count / Field:**

Practicing and reading the short hop is the goal of the drill. The coach is quite close to the player and throws/bounces the ball towards the player. As the coach is throwing, he/she calls out how many hops before the player can field it. It forces the player to learn how to read the short hop, and use their footwork to time it properly.

### **Slow Roll Progression:**

Attacking the slow roll is the goal to teach, but allowing initial success with the movement and getting progressively harder as they build confidence. Coach is fairly close to player. Player

initiates forward movement as if they have reacted to a slow hit ball. Coach throws the ball towards player in a progression of spots which include:

- underhand to their chest area

- to the thigh

- to the knee

- finally to the short hop

This will allow that they are properly fielding the ball on the run and getting throwing reps in with progressing level of difficulty.

Keeping the atmosphere fun and competitive was a goal of the presenter, so they implemented a Gold Glove award for each practice to push the players in a fun way. I will certainly be trying the progression of these drills out with my team at our next practice.

Thanks for the opportunity to attend the conference.

-Matt Lofstrom