


DEFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Black Book of Drills

A portrait of Morgan Stuart, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a blue turtleneck sweater. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and textured.

*Morgan*

MORGAN STUART

DEFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Black Book of Drills

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

 MORGAN STUART

Black Book of Drills  
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# INTRODUCTION

## THIS LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF DRILLS is Home Training In Your Pocket!

It's for the player, parent, and coach: a player's guide to quality reps coaches demand of them. It will help a parent help her daughter achieve her goals, and it will give coaches a way to assign homework to their players for FAST results and buy-in.

### WHO IS MORGAN?

A full-time coach specializing in defense, Morgan has listened to her students and their parents about the pains of home training. This book was created to give softball families the confidence they need to take their development into their own hands.



- *2009 National Champion (Washington)*
- *2009 All-World Series Team*
- *2010 Pac-10 Champion*
- *2011 Academic All-American*
- *2012 Riverside Sports Hall of Fame Inductee*
- *2013 Professional Player (Switzerland)*
- *2013-2014 College Coach (UCR, LMU)*
- *2014 Established Lessons at The Workshop*
- *2014 UW Hall of Fame Inductee*
- *2015 & 2019 Filipino National Softball Team*
- *Co-Founder of The Packaged Deal*
- *Team Easton Ambassador*

# WHAT'S INSIDE

**What is in this book?**

DRILLS, yes... but more importantly, it contains a plan to be more motivated to practice and a way to program your own workouts with reps you'd get if a coach was watching. Drills are nothing without a plan!

**This book is divided into 3 parts:**

## 1. Tune In

>>Get Your Mind Right To Overcome Obstacles<<

Whether that's lack of time, space, energy/motivation, or knowledge of what you need to work on. The best kept secret to confidence is preparation. If we can nail down HOW to best prepare, we can continue to build on our confidence.

## **2. Tune Up**

>>Correct Like a Coach<<

If we can make adjustments, we can feel a difference in our movements and learn. In this section, you'll see corrections for posture, glove work, and throwing that will change your game. This is also where you'll get the DRILLS.

## **3. Auto Tune**

>>Your Long-Term Plan<<

How you will stay on track: Included is a template for how to program a workout yourself and never be without a plan!

# **QUALITY REPS DEFINED**

## **What is a quality rep?**

These are practice repetitions that reinforce good habits or that promote adjustments by the player.

The more quality reps you take, the better you get and the faster you learn.

## **Why are quality reps important?**

Softball families are BURNED OUT from practices and lessons and games and travel.

They don't have time for another thing on their plates. By being laser focused on quality reps, players are able to maximize their time at practices they are already at or during sessions at home where they are putting in extra work.

Quality reps are the only way our practice will lead to better performance!

# IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING AT HOME

## Why is at-home training a must?

Even though softball families are *doing* more than ever... All of those things on your schedule doesn't always add up to skill building!

## Be the master of your own journey.

Mastering a skill takes 10,000 hours. Softball has many skills involved and 10 minutes per day of training adds up when done the right way.

Don't you want to be the one in control of how good you get and how long that takes?

You can use the concepts in this book to do that!



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# TUNE IN

## Overcoming the Obstacles

Overcoming obstacles means getting beyond those things that are holding us back like **not having enough time, or feeling a lack of motivation, or not being confident in understanding what we should be doing at home.** Not knowing the number of reps, not knowing the amount of time that we should be practicing seem like small things but could be what's actually holding us back from getting the practice we need.

A lot of times we leave the mental until last. We leave the mental until something's not working. And I want to encourage you and your players to flip the script on that. So in this section, we're talking about mindset. We're going to switch our mindset from "having to" or "needing to" to "**wanting to.**"

Now more than ever, I'm hearing that players are getting anxious, they're getting overwhelmed, they're getting burned out. And we want to get away from that mindset of feeling like all of these things have to happen, and get into a place where we are aligned with our goals, we're aligned with our purpose in the sport. And we're doing

this because we want to. We're doing it because we love it. We're doing it because it's fun, and it makes us feel more like us.

Once you're there mentally, you're going to find that training at home is easy and doable. And the consistency is going to come because that commitment is already made.

### **HOW do we get into this head space?**

We take out your obstacles one by one: lack of time, limited knowledge, no confidence, no motivation. Which of these sounds like a reason that holds you back from training?

How you see & deal with each obstacle should tell you your training plan and goals... So let's get started!

## **THE KEY TO OUR MENTALITY: MOTIVATION**

The motivation piece is where we start.

**Understanding what motivates you will lead us towards conquering your other obstacles.**

## So... Why do you play?

Do YOU love it or is it something your parents want you to try?

Do you want to get better or are you OK staying the same?

Do you want to start every game or are you OK not being one of the best on your team?

These are questions I hope you take seriously.

Let's move on to GOALS:

*Your "why" determines your goals and your goals should determine your time, energy, and money commitment...*

## What's your long-term goal?

Here's where you see who you are "chasing." Are you trying to throw as hard as a college player or are you trying to make a high school varsity team?

Here's an example of how goals relate to time commitments (minutes of practice refers to time outside of team events):

**LONG-TERM GOAL****MINUTES OF PRACTICE**

High School Team	30 mins/week
College Scholarship	1.5 hours/week
Professional Softball	2.5 hours/week
Olympic Team	4 hours/week

**What's your short term goal?**

This is where you focus your plan. We can't practice everything every day, so what specifically will you work on for your 10 mins/day?

So let's write this out:

**What will you commit to time-wise?**

---

---

**Why will you commit to that?**

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It's very important to know where you want to go. The majority of people I have talked to want their kids to start on a travel ball team and to have a chance at going to school and playing college.

That's why I say that 10 minutes a day is a really, really good place to start. Those 10 minutes a day are to focus on those short-term goals, and eventually you change those goals, they don't have to be the same.



Read the below from Kobe Bryant on his dedication:

*"Every day for 20 years. It was an everyday process and trying to figure out strengths and weaknesses. For example, jumping ability. My vertical was 40". It wasn't a 45-46". My hands are big, but they're not massive. So you have to figure out ways to strengthen them so your hands are strong enough to be able to palm a ball, and do the things that you need to do.*

*Quickness: I was quick, but not insanely quick. I was fast, but not ridiculously fast. So I had to rely on skill a lot more. I had to rely on angles a lot more. I had to study the game a lot more. But I enjoyed it though. So from the time I can remember when I started watching the game, I studied the game, and it just never changed."*

Kobe was incredible and he had an insane work ethic. He was very, very motivated and driven. And I'm not asking you to be like Kobe, but that mindset of not being the best, not having all of the crazy physical skills that some people might naturally be born with will apply to softball.

### **Let's recap:**

Our "why" is our motivation. Be honest with yourself and commit to what you can.

Some days we won't feel like practicing, we won't FEEL motivated, but this is about staying true to that commitment; it's about remembering why you signed up for softball in the first place.

Still don't have enough time for work at home? I guess you don't have time for your goals. REMEMBER, it's not about the time...you can find time by replacing Tik Tok

scrolling with wall ball or throwing. This is about doing what you said you would do.

Now let's tackle your confidence in what you will be practicing....

# TUNE UP

## YOUR TRAINING SPACE

All you need is a 6' x 6' space. If you have more, great, but use what you have!

You can get a lot done because it's the small things that I want you to commit to and be an expert at... and by expert, I mean you've done it so many times and it feels as easy as breathing.

- Equipment that would help:
  - Catch Net
  - Bucket of Balls
  - Cones
  - PVC Pipe
  - A wall to toss tennis balls against would be helpful.
- Fun extras you've seen in my videos...
  - SKLZ ladder squares
  - Flat glove or trainer
  - Jump rope

## COMMON THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN PRACTICE

These are fixes I make every week to players at lessons. By taking these common mistakes out of your game, you easily get out of the “beginner” level :

- Throwing
  - Back Elbow Fixes
    - Front side opening (hips go first)
    - Head leaning forward
    - Breaking with ball, facing up instead of down
  - Crazy Glove Arm
    - Pinch
    - Turn
    - Tuck/Pull In Glove
  - Grip, Feel, Earning The Comfort of “Lazy” Catch
- Posture
  - Rounded Back
    - Butt back, chest down
  - Glove behind eyes
    - Comes from squatting first

- Glovework
  - Glove to ear
    - Separate middle
  - Stabbing
    - Beat the ball the ground

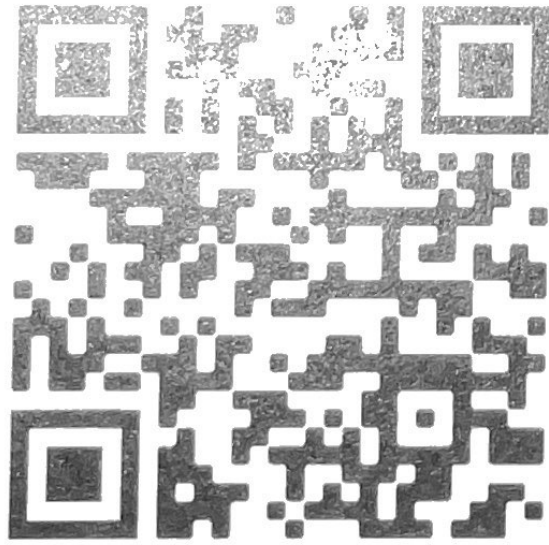
### **Drills Where You Need NO ONE or Just One Person:**

- Throwing Mirror Work
- Posture Mirror Work
- Rhythm Mirror Work
- Transfers (No Legs) - Find Grip
- Transfers With Legs
- Throwing / Playing Catch
- Ava's Drill - Dry
- Tennis Ball Knee Picks + Variations
- Tennis Ball With Legs + Variations
- Pitch Back/Net



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# WARM UP DRILLS



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# WALL BALL

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Use a tennis ball and bare hands to practice hand-eye coordination, balance and soft hands. Players line up and the first player throws the ball to the wall.



Player that is next up catches or deflects the ball after the ball has bounced 1 time or less. Player then throws the ball into the wall again and the cycle goes on. This drill can become a competition once mechanics are down. If they bobble or drop the ball, they're out and if the ball bounces more than once, they're out.

## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

3-10 Minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Feet constantly moving... The focus is more on competing, getting warm and loose!

## COMMON CORRECTIONS:

If the throwing form is off, I will correct (normally this has to do with the glove arm not staying in front of the body).

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Normally at the beginning of a lesson or practice, players are nervous or sore (or just not quite ready to jump right into listening and learning). This drill is a good way to get blood pumping, girls communicating and having fun.

# 10/10/10

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

A way to practice your backhand glove pattern and a good way to get reps on your own. You will perform 10 reps on your knees, 10 on your feet, and 10 moving your feet to get to “elbows up.”



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-3 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Elbows stay bent, wrist stays flat. Head and chest stays in one position with eyes behind the ball!

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Girls sometimes don't give themselves a good feed or they start with their glove hand above the ball instead of underneath it (this will lead to their glove-hand being late to field the ball).

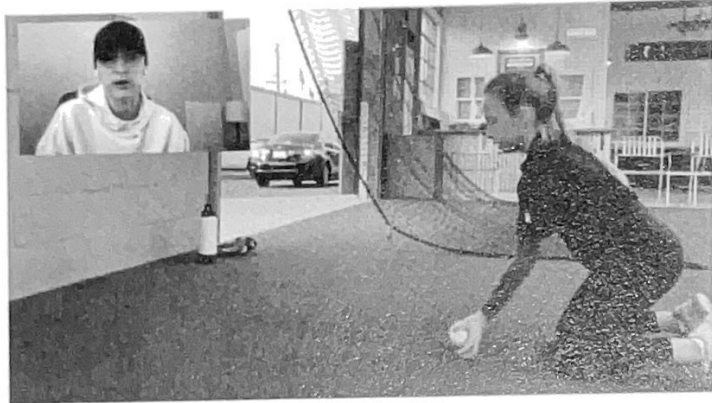
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

I like to introduce this drill early on to check a player's understanding of backhands and body position. After this drill is learned, this is used as backhand practice.

# KNEE PICKS WITH TWO TENNIS BALLS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

At the beginning of a lesson, girls grab two balls and find a spot on the wall. They give themselves an underhand toss with their throwing and field the ground ball barehanded with their glove hand only. 10 balls middle and 10 balls backhand.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Chest stays down, glove hand always in front of eyes.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Girls will sometimes sit back on their feet- which brings the glove hand closer to their body and not in the ideal position.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Hand-eye coordination and to check for progress at the beginning of the lesson.

# POSTURE DRILLS



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# FIELDING POSITION WALK

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

A slow walk backwards with players starting in a fielding position and taking angled steps back while keeping glove out in front.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

A little burning in legs and butt. If back hurts- make the below adjustments.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

As fatigue sets in, some players will bend back and bring glove underneath the body instead of out in front. Focus on posture to correct.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

I like this drill to check for understanding of fielding position and to see where we are in maintaining positions we work on.

# TENNIS BALL PICKS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Reaction picks for tennis balls hit with a racquet by a coach, thrown by a parents, or teammate.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

They are challenged to react with the correct glove pattern quickly. If the glove is coming up, the ball will tell them immediately (either will bounce off their glove or will go underneath the glove). The glove should also only have subtle movements. I will often say "have a quiet glove." This means the glove shouldn't be moving up, down, in or out with huge movements.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Mostly, players who have trouble with this drill don't have their chest low enough to be able to have elbows bent on contact with the ball or they will pick their chest up while the ball is on the way and this moves their eyes and makes it hard to see the ball.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To provide a test with some speed of the ball. Balls are hit harder to be able to see how efficient a player's movement pattern is. Hitting tennis balls takes some of the danger and fear out of hard hit ground balls and allows girls to stay lower and practice the correct mechanics.

# STAGGERED PICKS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Feet are staggered to simulate the position you'd be in when receiving a throw for a tag OR after taking an angled step back on a hard-hit ball. Coach or a partner will toss short hops to a player for them to field out in front.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Eyes behind the ball, knees stay bent- back leg is slightly more bent to make it easier to keep the eyes in the right spot.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

As time goes on, some players will straighten their knees and get out of position.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Used to get players comfortable in a tag and a hard hit angle position.

## 5 BALL DRILL

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

5 balls are tossed or rolled by the coach in varying directions to one player. Object is for the player to field all tosses by staying low and moving feet- not just reaching. Fielders must PUSH off of the



inside part of their opposite foot (foot farthest from ball) in order to center up to the rolls being tossed. Player deflects the ball to the throwing hand and rolls the ball away from them. Players waiting for their turn are in a plank hold or a wall sit.

### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

A little burning in legs and butt. If back hurts- make the below adjustments.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Player might feel rushed and want to reach with glove without moving their feet. Trigger the right movement by trying to field the ball in the middle of the body as much as possible.

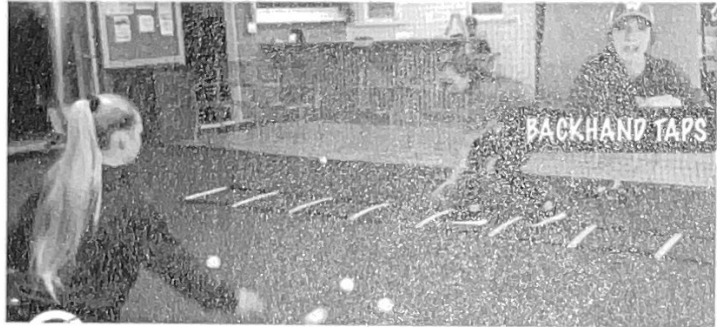
### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

A good drill to work on the outside foot and to keep the feet active.

# BACKHAND TAPS IN LADDER

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Tap tennis balls with bare hand while using the ladder is a visual aid for where the feet should go and where the glove hand should be (out in front of eyes).



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Knees bent in order to get low enough to keep elbow bent when making contact with the ball.

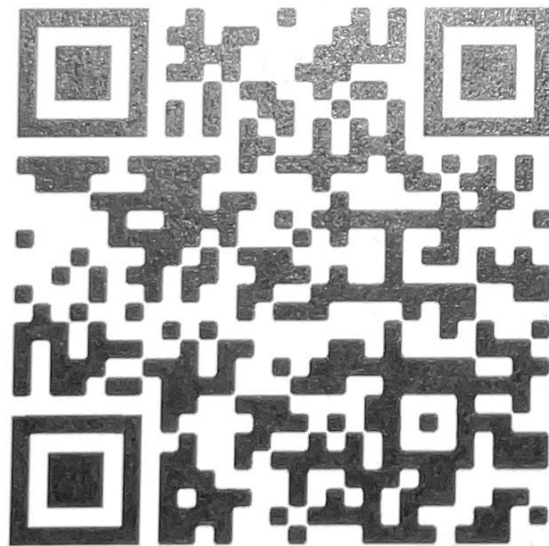
## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Hand too far back inside the ladder.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To create reps for the backhand and drill in the fact that the glove needs to be out in front.

# APPROACH FOOTWORK DRILLS



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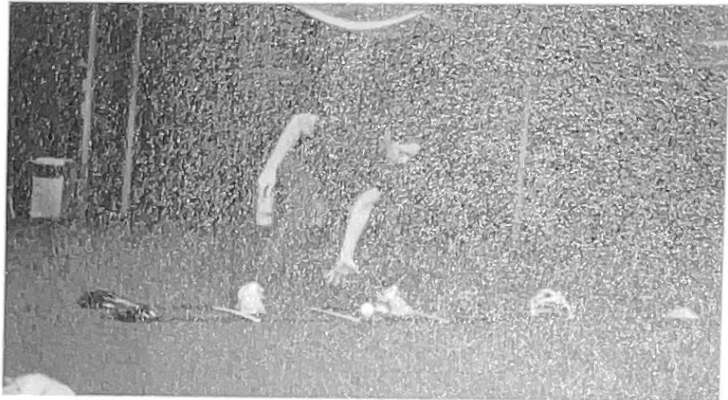


## AVA'S DRILL

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

One dry rep and then one "real" rep of our last two steps before we make contact with the ball.

You can do as many DRY reps as you'd like if it helps to do more or less!



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

As they are moving, players should have glove out in front without the glove moving positions forward or back. The feet move the glove into position.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Girls will roll or flip their gloves instead of keeping them in one spot. Girls will also field the ball in between their feet instead of out in front.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To practice the rhythm of the last two steps before fielding the ground ball.

# TENNIS BALL TAP

(Also called: Ava's Drill in the Ladder)

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

A simulation of the last two steps before we make contact with the ball; players tap a tennis ball with their bare hand (glove hand) so that it stops before rolling past the tosser.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

As they are moving, players should have hand out in front of the ladder. The feet move the glove hand into position.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Girls will roll or flip their hands instead of keeping them in one spot. Girls will also tap the ball in between their feet instead of out in front.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To practice the rhythm of the last two steps before fielding the ground ball.

# CIRCLE FOOTWORK PROGRESSION

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Step in a circle around a cone starting the direction of your glove hand side and field a rolled ground ball after going through your approach steps.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WAYS TO PROGRESS:

1. Start with glove and freeze when you field to make sure your posture and balance are correct.
2. Do this drill with a flat glove with a throw.
3. Try the drill barehanded and get to “elbows up”.
4. Glove on with firmer toss to practice deeper angles and quicker feet.
5. Finish with the drill in live balls.

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

As they are moving, players should have glove out in front without the glove moving positions forward or back. The feet move the glove into position.

## **COMMON CORRECTIONS?**

Girls will skip steps and fall off balance. Aim to step 8-10 times to get around the cone to keep the feet under hips and body stacked to move from your center.

## **WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?**

To get in the habit of moving the feet first before reaching for the ball and to get our eyes to the side of the ball and move through the ball instead of sitting on it.

## POLE DRILL

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Hop over the pole and back only using one foot at a time. Field the ball after hopping back and continue momentum through the ball.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Pushing off the outside foot to change directions and getting in front of the ball when possible.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

As girls hop back over the pole, some will keep toes facing the tosser (or hitter)- try to correct by turning toes to face the direction of the ball.

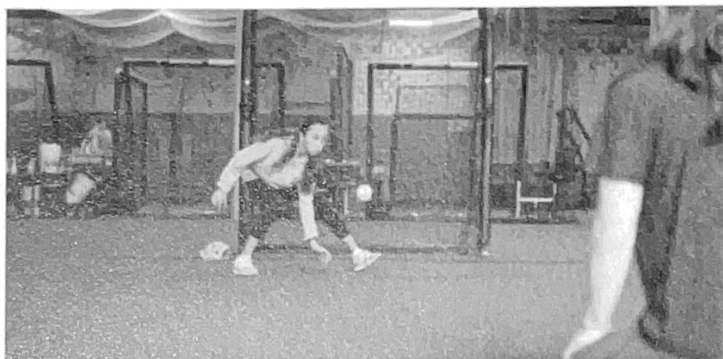
### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To create a feeling of acceleration through the ball.

## GOOD HOP/ BAD HOP (GH/BH)

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Player fields the ball on the 2nd short hop. Coach or person bouncing the ball must throw the ball down to ground with force to create realistic hops for the fielders.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

They are “measuring” how far their body needs to be away from the ball before attacking the hop they want.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Fielding the ball on the wrong hop, fielding the ball too close to the body, fielding the ball on the “in between” hop instead of the short hop.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

The drill is intended to get the fielder to move her feet to get into position to field the correct hop. Make sure the fielder understands that the timing of their approach will greatly affect if they can field the ball out in front or not. Fielder must give themselves enough room to field the ball out in front, but with bent elbows.

## RDL DRILL (AKA FLAMINGO DRILL)

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Player starts on one leg and times up when their heel lands on the ground and when the ball hits the glove.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Upper and lower body timing up together

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Often if girls don't understand the purpose of the drill, they won't grasp the need to land the heel first as opposed to the whole foot. These players will land their foot too soon or take multiple steps before fielding the ball.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Fielding a ball should feel like we are walking through it- it shouldn't feel like we are stopping to pick up the ball. This drill breaks the steps down it takes to get low enough soon enough.

## FIGURE 8 DRILL

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Similar to Circle Footwork- the player makes an additional circle with her feet before completing the drill.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Player is able to be balanced throughout the drill and not “out of control”.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Players might throw off balance in order to get to the next circle- have the player make a full throw instead of a “fade away” throw

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

This adds a layer of difficulty to Circle Footwork and demands that the body resets and explodes into the next task.

## POLE DRILL FOOTWORK

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Hop over the pole and back only using one foot at a time.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1 minute

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Pushing off the outside foot to change direction.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

This is not a hopping drill- only one foot at a time.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Just like jump rope, this creates quick, quiet feet.

## BACKHAND RAKE THROUGH

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Player sets back foot up in the direction of the intended target before backhanding and throwing the ball.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL

Pushing through the ball on contact. Back knee bent and powerful.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Fielding the ball behind the eyes instead of out in front.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To practice another way to set up behind the ball and prepare to make a consistent and powerful throw.

# ANGLE FOOTWORK DRILLS



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# HARD HIT BALL PROGRESSION

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

In order to create enough time and space to field a ball that's hit HARD, we take a step BACK at an angle. In this progression, players start practicing the concept of the step back and then incorporate a ball and more steps.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

10 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

While they are stepping, eyes should always stay behind the glove. Knees should remain bent; toes and hips should turn in the direction of the angles you're creating to get to the ball.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Some players will not feel comfortable stepping back (it is an advanced concept that takes some upper level understanding). These players will reach or step directly to the side instead of committing to a deeper angle.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

As players get older, balls get hit hard. The game doesn't change—it just happens faster. This is a drill that helps players prepare for how to play defense at this higher level.

# WALL ANGLES

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Girls react to a thrown ball at the wall. They practice reacting to a ball's speed and creating the proper angle to get there.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Pushing off the outside foot to change directions and opening up toe and hip to create their angle.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

If the ball is not thrown hard enough some girls will run straight across instead of practicing a deeper angle.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To get reps with hard hit ball angles.

# JUMP DOWN DRILL

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players start on top of a plyometric box (or any elevated surface- this should be 12 inches high or lower). When the coach says "go," players jump down onto both feet and push off of only one foot in the direction of the ball. Players catch the ball with one hand.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

The foot they are pushing off of is the "opposite foot" or the foot furthest from the ball. Hips and toes turn to point in the direction of the ball to create an athletic movement to the ball.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Some will jump down in the direction where they think the coach will toss the ball- players should be jumping straight down so that after they land, they can create power with their opposite foot.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To practice how to balance and use the ground and our opposite foot to gain ground toward the ball.

# TRIANGLE DRILL

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players push off their outside foot and practice a quick transfer out of their glove to be able to get to the next ball.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Legs staying bent, chest staying low to be able to move and keep head in the same position and stay quick to get to the next ball.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

If players move up and down with their bodies, this drill isn't able to be executed because the balls will get under the gloves and the players will be "chasing" the balls down instead of fielding underneath them.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Reps for the outside foot and quickness.

# ZIG ZAG CATCH

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players sprint, backpedal and then sprint in the direction of the ball and catch with one hand.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Get moving the whole time and an explosive push or “punch step” off of the outside foot to get to the ball.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Instead of turning hips and toes in the direction they need to run, players will sometimes shuffle to get there and need to reach.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To get us in the habit of using our feet to get to the ball and to practice turning toes and hips when we explode to the ball.

# **TRANSFER & GLOVEWORK DRILLS**



*—mg*

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## BAREHAND ROLLS

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Player focuses on the movement of the hand to practice getting fingers around and underneath the ball. Can be done on the knees or feet.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

5 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

The fingers beat the ball to the ground so that the hand isn't "chasing" the ball down (which creates a stabbing motion).

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

If hands are late to get to the ball, the drill will be practicing bad habits of the wrong movement patterns. Make sure fingers are underneath the ball to start.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To make sure we are mastering the fundamentals of glove work before we move on.

# WALL PICK PROGRESSION

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Short hop drills you can do on your own with a wall.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

4 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Chest down, butt back, hands out in front of the eyes with every rep.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Players can be lazy with this drill because it's on their own. Make sure butt stays off their heels when doing knee picks and they are pushing themselves to pay attention to their movements.

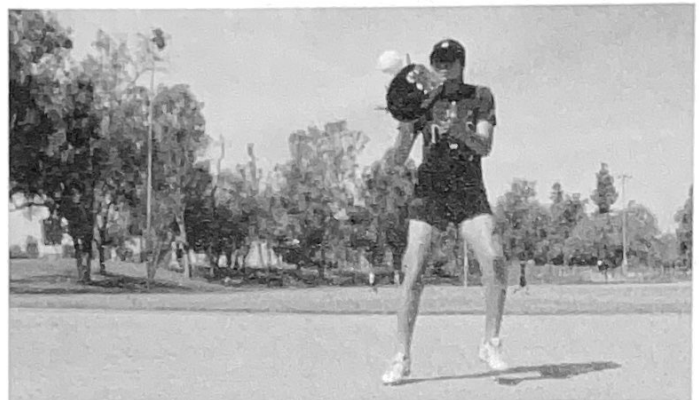
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Focused reps to practice correct posture and a way to slow down and feel where your hands should be when making contact with the ball.

# GLOVE DEFLECTION

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Hitting the ball off the shallowest part of the glove in order to practice quick transfers.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

4 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

The glove does not close. Fingers face up.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Younger players will keep their fingers facing down even when the ball is above the waist. Work to turn the fingers in the direction of where the ball is.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To speed up your transfer time and to get clear on where the ball hits the glove to create the faster times possible.

## QUICK TRANSFER DRILL

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Timing up the upper and lower body to get rid of the ball as fast as possible after receiving it.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

4 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Back foot hits the ground at the same time that the ball hits the inside part of the glove.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Often people think of transfers as upper body only, but to be able to throw after receiving, the lower body needs to be timed up too.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To break down the pieces of the transfer into more manageable and replicable.

# SWIVEL BACKHANDS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Backhand rolls for hard hit balls where the feet don't move.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

For righties, the right knee stays bent to keep the fingers close to the ground.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

If the legs straighten, the back will bend more than it should and the eyes will be out of position to be behind the ball.

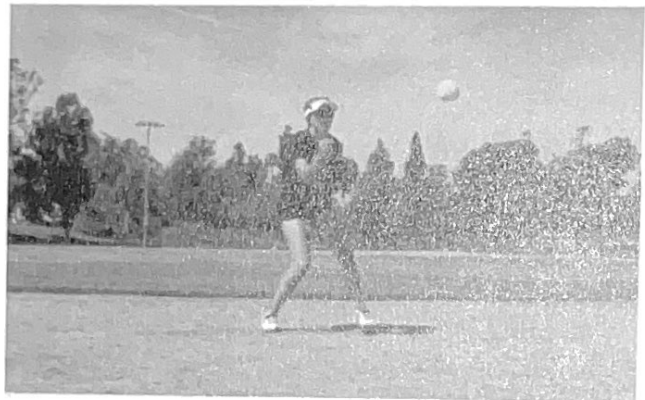
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To practice quick reaction backhands and to learn the importance of bend in the backhand.

## DYNAMIC PICKS

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Short hops or rolls with a move to get to “elbow up” after the player fields the ball.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

4 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

She will be putting skills together and creating a more game-like feel to short hop drills.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Some players will stand straight up instead of keeping knees bent when shuffling to get to “elbows up.”

# TENNIS BALL REACTION

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Tennis balls are thrown in different areas to make the player react by moving fingers and hands in the direction of the ball.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Eyes staying behind the hand and fingers turning instead of palm staying facing up.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Make sure the height of the ball is dictating if fingers are facing up or down while the player is catching.

# DROPSTEP DRILLS



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# LADDER DROP STEPS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players use a ladder to illustrate the direction our toes should be when we are running to catch a fly ball. Toes should be facing the direction you are running to get to the ball. Coach will toss a ball to lead the player out of the ladder.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Whether they are putting one or two feet in each square of the ladder, feet should be moving quickly through and then exploding out of the ladder to get the ball.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Some players will still turn and start backpedaling when the ball gets thrown in the air. The toes should continue to point back unless the ball is under thrown and the players can get behind the ball and get into a throwing position.

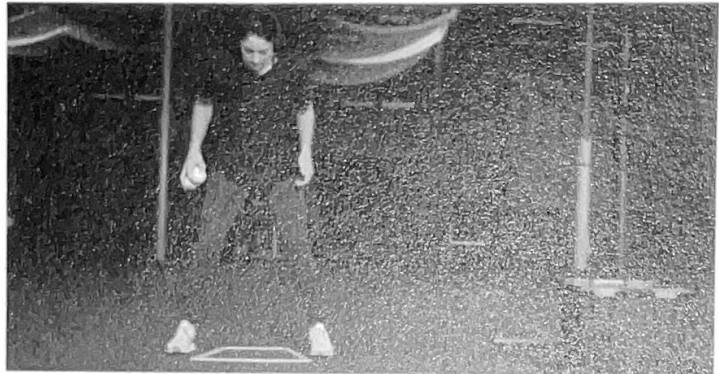
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

For players who have an issue with backpedaling with drop steps.

# DROP STEPS WITH SQUARE

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Coach points in a direction for the players to open up for a drop step. Player performs a punch step with one foot and sprints back to catch the ball.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Toes and hips turning back in the direction they are running.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Backpedaling is common.

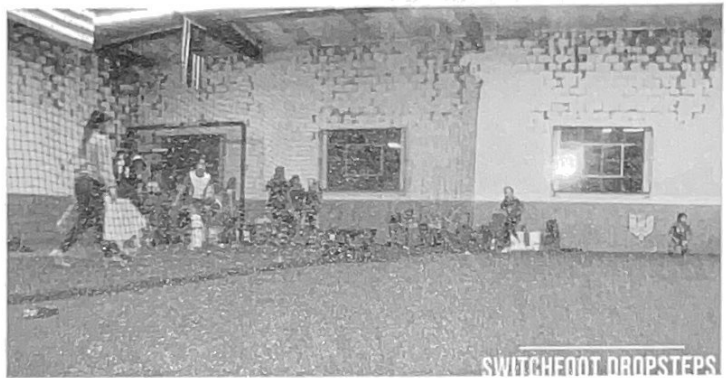
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To exaggerate the first explosive step needed to start a drop step.

# SWITCHFOOT DROP STEPS

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Regular drop step to start and after 3-4 steps, coach says "Switch." Player either flips feet or just the head to catch the ball on the other side of her body.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Feet continue to move and if the feet flip, the toes get turned all the way so that they are facing back (in the direction of the ball) after the switch.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

At the time of the switch, many players get stuck in a backpedal.

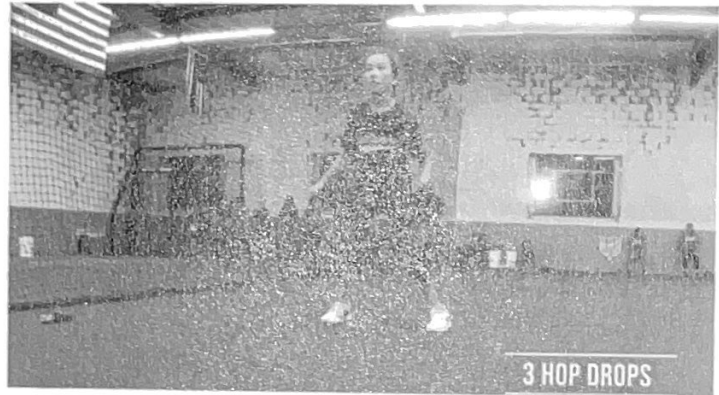
## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

For balls that we misjudge or balls that we need to switch directions on when they are in the air.

## 3-HOP DROP

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Starts with "active feet." Coach points three times, side-to-side. The first two points, player turns feet and then resets. On the third point, player drop steps to that side.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Quick feet. Each time the feet turn, the hips also turn.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

The points from the coach can be in random order, so the player should make sure she is responding to each direction independently.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To start our dropsteps with the feet instead of leaning back with the body and to start the dropstep by turning to the direction of the ball instead of just a step backwards.

## 5/10/5 DROPSTEPS

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players stand face to face and turn feet and bodies in order to change directions and catch a drop step.



### HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

### WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Toes and hips turning back in the direction they are running.

### COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Backpedaling is common.

### WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To exaggerate the first explosive step needed to start a drop step.

# DROPSTEP OBSTACLE COURSE

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

An obstacle course is set up with cones, ladder (or squares). Girls can use tennis balls barehanded or regular balls with gloves.



## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Toes and hips turning back in the direction they are running, constant movement.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Backpedaling is common.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To exaggerate the first explosive step needed to start a drop step, conditioning.

# THROWING DRILLS

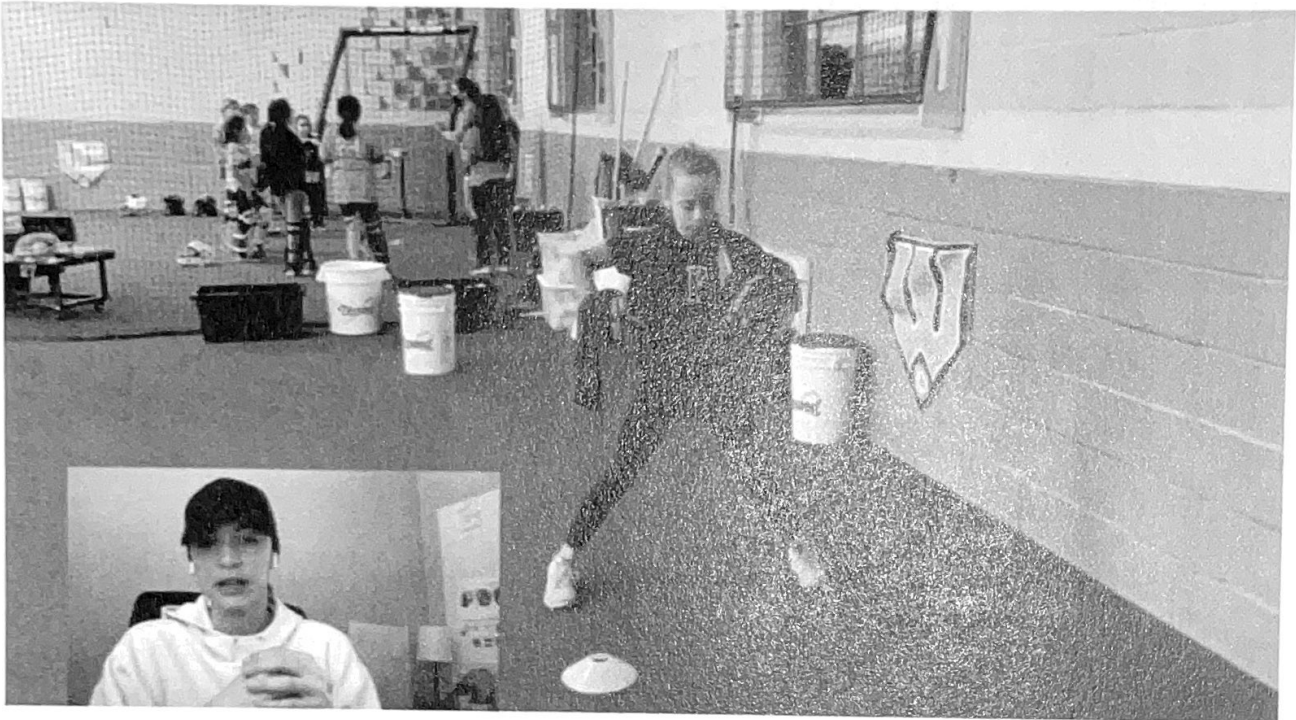
## Things to Remember...

*The little things matter.*

1. Glove and throwing arm are equal and opposite
2. Head position controlled and between feet
3. Create direction with your front arm
4. Arms and legs are timed up



# TOWEL DRILL



Measure to ensure you're not too close to the wall or your partner. Good rule of thumb is to start an arm's length away from your target and then add 3-4 steps away from that from the wall (see video).

1. Step to get your elbows up.
2. Hips turn while shoulders stay still.
3. Reach and throw (whip towel).

# SHUFFLE BACKS



## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players field a rolled ball, get back foot underneath head as they shuffle up, then get front foot under head, and finally shuffle up one last time before throwing.

## HOW LONG SHOULD THIS DRILL BE?

1-2 minutes

## WHAT SHOULD A PLAYER FEEL?

Balance and power with the feet before the throw.

## COMMON CORRECTIONS?

Many players will shuffle too many times.

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To feel the back foot getting under the head.

## WINDOW CATCH



### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

In this video, the girls look like they are just playing catch. Their goal is to be able to receive the ball in their “window.” They must move their feet to be able to catch the ball with elbow bent! The “window” is anywhere in front of them they can reach while keeping their elbow bent.

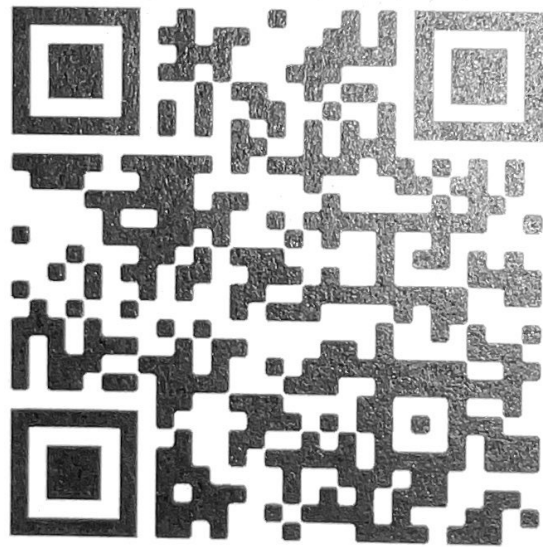
## SHUFFLE SHUFFLE THROW



### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Players shuffle twice to get their feet and hands synced up for their throw. After fielding the ball, I have my girls get their back foot under their head before throwing in order to generate power.

# SPECIAL SKILLS DRILLS



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# UNDERHAND TOSSES



## KEY POINTS:

1. Stay low
2. Show the ball
3. Push the ball
4. Follow with the feet after release

## COMMON CORRECTIONS:

1. Stopping body
2. "Pitching" the ball instead of pushing
3. Stopping feet

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

Many do not practice underhand feeds and normally these are easy outs!

# TAGS



## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

When simulating tags, it's important to make sure you're turning the correct way (keep your body open to the field).

Protect your feet from a player sliding in by keeping your stance behind the line of the base. And try to keep your eyes behind your glove.

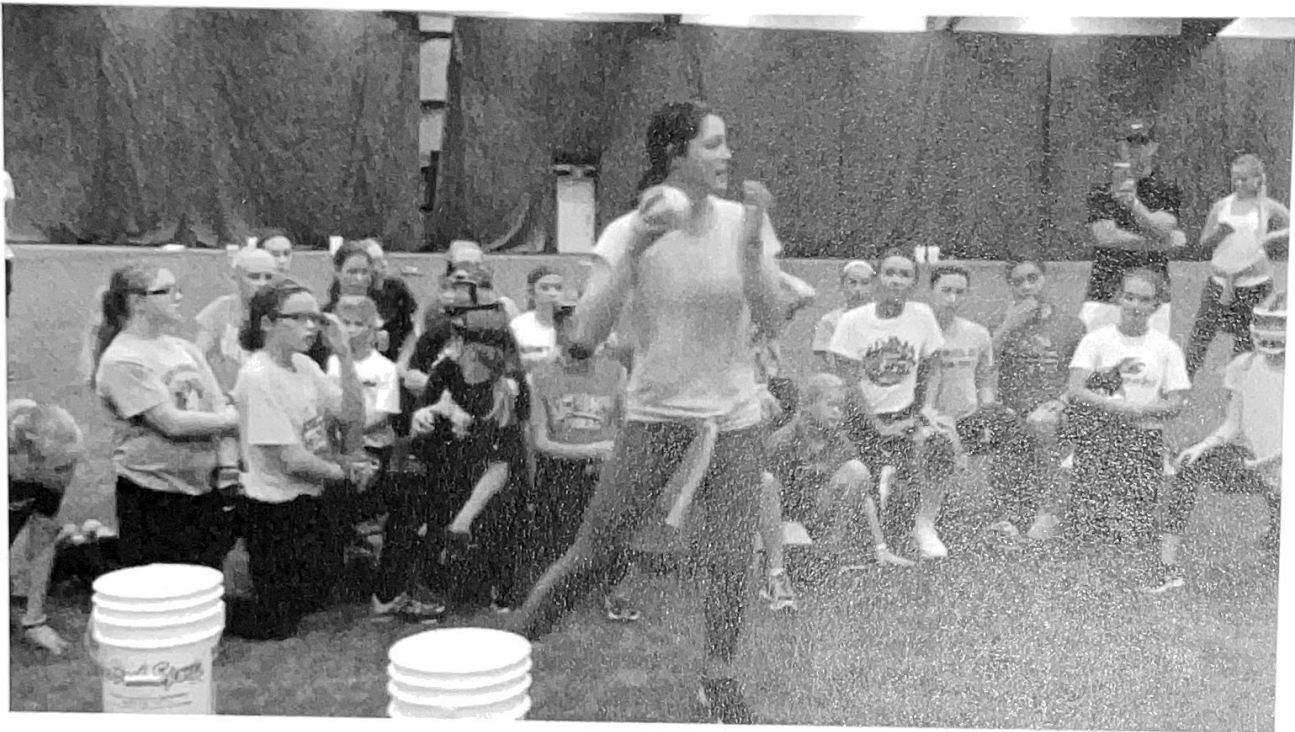
## RUNDOWN TOSSES



### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

Goal is to keep the feet moving and to cue a toss with “now” by the coach or another player. As players get older, work on maintaining a LANE and adjusting to the person with the ball.

## CUTS & RELAYS



As a cut, it's your job to keep the ball moving in the direction of the play as quickly as possible: We need to be ready for throws that are offline, actively help our outfielders to communicate direction to throw, & time up our feet and hands to transfer the ball without it stopping!

Use these as coaches cues:

1. Be loud
2. Hands up
3. Keep feet moving

## BUNT TOSSES



### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

This emphasizes the importance of practicing communication with bunt tosses.

With the toss:

- STAY LOW
- SHOW THE BALL
- PUSH THE BALL

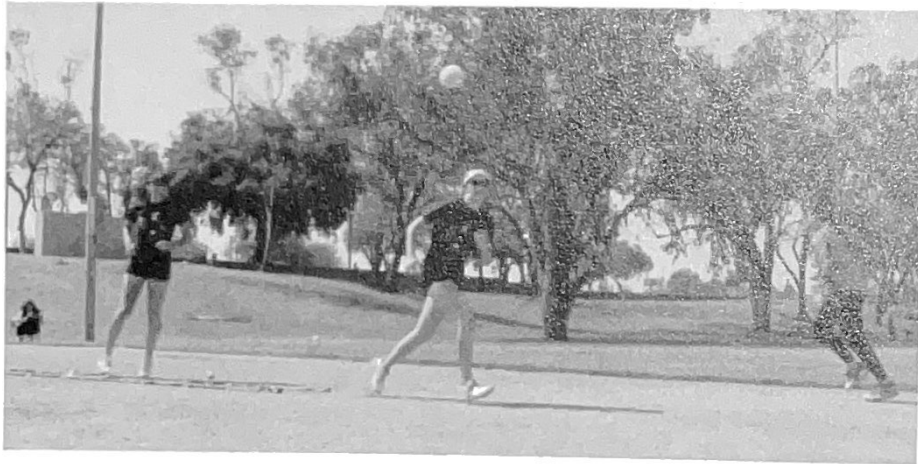
In order to give the person catching the ball the best chance of getting the out.

# LADDER CATCH

## WHAT IS THE DRILL?

We use a ladder to get our feet already turned in the direction of the ball.

## GLOVE WORK THROUGH THE LADDER



## KEY POINTS:

1. Glove stays out in front of the body
2. Eyes behind the glove
3. Quick, quiet feet

## COMMON CORRECTIONS:

1. Glove under body
2. Not keeping fingers facing down

## WHY DO WE DO THIS DRILL?

To get reps in for our fielding position.

# CORE/EXTRA WORK DRILLS

## PLANK TAPS

### WHAT IS THE DRILL?

A plank variation where you are trying to keep your hips facing the ground and keep your body as tight as possible.

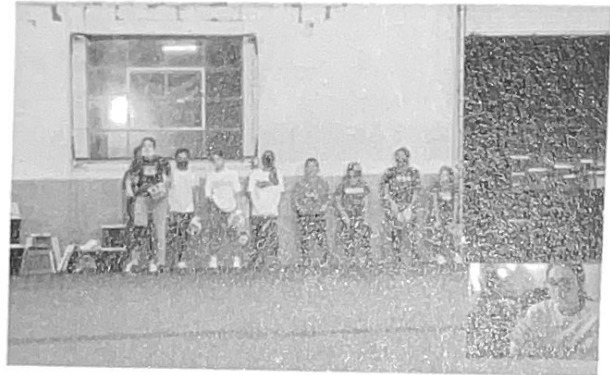


# COMPETITIONS & MORE

## 21 OUTS RULES

Each ball fielded and thrown in the net (or caught cleanly) is an out.

With any mistake, you have to start over from zero.



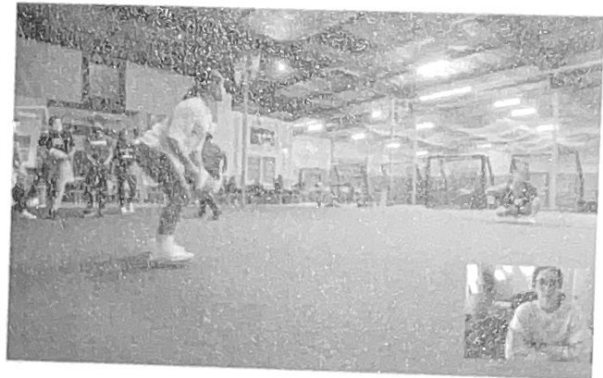
## GOOD HOP, BAD HOP COMPETITION RULES

If you bobble/drop it, you're out.

If you catch it above your knees, you're out.

If you catch it on the wrong hop, you're out.

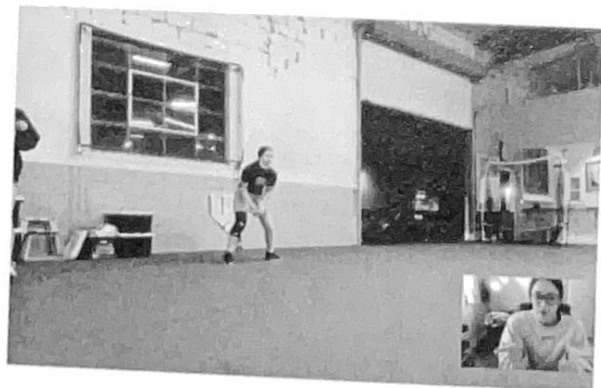
Last one standing wins.



## BURNOUT RULES

Go until you miss it!

High score of balls fielded (and thrown accurately) wins!



# AUTO TUNE

## YOUR LONG-TERM PLAN

A plan is needed to stay on track. 10 minutes a day is all you need to practice your defense and get prepared. I know that a lot of your daughters are pitching and catching and hitting and all of these things, and they're all different skills. Different coaches are asking to practice these different things, and defense, again, doesn't contain the hardest skills.

## *THROWING TRAINING FAQ*

**Can kids throw every day?** They can if they are using bands and weighted balls every day with proper warm up, strengthening, and cool down, AND good mechanics!

## **Is taking a month off of throwing recommended?**

Taking a month off from activities is a good idea for kids who are burned out. If they can maintain doing their bands and weighted balls while taking a break from throwing that would be ideal to maintain strength.

Our arms are so important to keep healthy. Rarely is an injury purely "overuse." From throwing experts, the top reason for injury is weak shoulders and the inability for our muscles to support the work we want to do. I love the Crossover Symmetry bands to help combat this in every thrower!

## Workout Template for a 10 Minute Workout

Workout Breakdown	Time
ARM CARE	3 Minutes
MIRROR WORK	2 Minutes
HAND-EYE	100 Reps Or 2 Minutes
FOCUSED REPS	3 Minutes

Build on this and input specific drills for what you are working on with your short-term goals.

### **Example 10 Min. Workout:**

- Crossover Symmetry Bands Activation - 3 Minutes
- Throwing Dry Reps (1, 2, 3 Drill) - 2 Minutes
- Transfers Finding Grip - 2 Minutes
- Circle Footwork with Throw x6 Reps + 20 Jump Ropes In Between - 3 Minutes

When building workouts, it is important to have a foundation to fall back on.

Next you will find my **CORE CURRICULUM** used to create my lessons and workouts!

# CORE CURRICULUM

## **Balance + Posture.**

Poor setup will make fielding & getting rid of the ball harder than it needs to be and will put you in position for injury. Be mindful of the lines you create with your body.

## **Feet go first.**

If an infielder has good feet, she can work easier for the rest of the play.

## **If you can see the ball, you can catch the ball.**

Practice keeping your eyes behind the glove to ensure you're not just going through the motions.

## **Create a Functional Routine.**

The number one way to get better at defense is to come up with a 4 minute routine every single day that pushes you & works on coordination & body positioning.

# POSTURE

## Basic Setup | Fielding Positions

All limbs are bent. Fielder is bent at the knees & at the waist- this ensures that the butt is BACK and hands are able to be in front of the body.

KEYS: BUTT BACK, CHEST DOWN, HANDS OUT, ALWAYS ON THE BALLS OF THE FEET.

Fielder is hinged forward to have upper body over the ground. Back is flat. Fielder is on balls of her feet, palms facing up or in the direction of the hitter.

Many players struggle to maintain an athletic posture due to lack of strength.

Daily, girls should be practicing their defensive positions correctly to strengthen the muscles that will improve their game. CATCHERS (that also play another position) are prime candidates to place their weight in the middle of their feet OR on their heels.

By moving their chests forward, and butts BACK, these girls will create a better position to move side-to-side or otherwise to the ball.

# **FIRST STEPS & ANGLES**

## **Reading Bat Angle**

When the ball enters the hitting zone (total area where ball is able to be hit), infielders should have JUST arrived at their "Ready Position."

Their gloves may not be touching the ground, but they are able to move in any direction based on how the hitter makes contact with the ball. HARD FOCUS is critical on the bat angle. Great infielders are able to get their first steps based on the bat angle before the ball is even hit.

### **HARD HIT VS. SOFTLY HIT GROUND BALLS:**

On hard ground balls, the feet move soft, on softly hit ground balls, the feet explode forward. Every approach to a ball is different based on the speed and direction of the ball.

### **DIRECTION OF TOES AND HIPS:**

Turn the lower half to set up the rest of the body. Turning feet & hips quickly in the direction is the most efficient way to meet the ball.

### **APPROACHING THE BALL**

1. Vision: Eyes behind the glove.
2. Balance & Footwork: Feet lead the body. Right, left, field (for right-handed fielders). Beat the ball by getting the feet set.
3. Glove positioning: Fingers down.

With the exception of advanced infielders, it is best to always start with the fingers of the glove facing the ground so that the thumb- side can open up to field the ball instead of the fingers opening/ flipping "up" to "down."

Many have an issue with being LATE with their gloves due to a poor starting position. Fielder must have enough time to get BEHIND AND BELOW the ball in order to field the ball and not just meet it.

## **GLOVEWORK**

### **Deflect & Transfer**

The ball never stops, it only changes direction.

The shallowest part of the glove is the middle of the glove where you probably have a bruise from catching the ball the wrong way (the POCKET, not the WEB).

Have a goal to DEFLECT ground balls off of the same part of the glove every time to practice good habits and to decrease errors of balls “tipping off the end of your glove.”

Practice FOCUSED work by expecting to deflect the ball off that specific part of the glove. Aiming for a smaller target (even when catching the ball) is a more advanced way to train.

Forehands: Make sure eyes stay behind the glove to see the ball all the way in.

Fingers of the glove get around the ball to start to bring the ball back to center.

Backhands: Get underneath the ball & try to “beat the ball” to the spot when you can. When fielding from the ground up, the elbow will end UP so fielder does not stab down to get to the ball — when stabbing happens, the glove is LATE

Elbows Lead “The Break”: Directly following the transfer is The Break. This is an athletic stopping point to check fielders in. It occurs right after they transfer the ball to their throwing hand.

The inside part of their throwing-hand foot should be facing their target to get their body turned to throw.

Knees and elbows are bent, back is flat. Ball and pocket of the glove are facing down as the fielder is starting the arm path to begin throwing (Ball first rotates down towards the ground, then away, before facing the target).

THROW PINCH. REACH. THROW: Pinch muscles in the back to activate big muscles.

Reach towards your target and create an efficient path. Throw and follow through balanced & with glove in front of body.

Distance of the ball from head should not differ between arm angles.

Bring the upper body with the arm to get the core involved in the throw.

Keep your feet moving...

INSIDE PART OF THE BACK FOOT decides the line of your body — get that turned to your target to turn hips & shoulders for efficient direction.

Your throw starts from the ground up. Drive with your back side to improve power and line of your throw. By only using the shoulder, players are not able to get full power & risk injury.

Glove stays on glove side & in front of the body: Stay on line with your intended target.

Throwing on the run: One of the most advanced/ athletic skills on the defensive side of the game.

Head must stay low, and speed must be maintained through transfer. Field the ball inside your glove-hand foot, break with next step forward (throwing-hand foot), then throw (leading with the elbow) off of that same foot.

Work different arm angles.

The game will call for you to be off-balance, to throw from a position you may not be ready for. Prepare for that.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Pre-pitch talk: How many outs, where are the runners, where is the play?

During play: Call for ball, call the play.

### **Be a good teammate!**

Make sure to be aware of your teammates on and off the field, show respect by listening & giving thoughtful feedback.

## **MENTALITY**

Separation of defense from offense

It's possible to have the worst offensive game and the best defensive game.

Work to contribute to one side of the game even if things aren't going your way on the other. Be a force on defense. Your effort there is completely in your control.

- Take pride in your area.
- Before each pitch, prepare the dirt for the next ball.
- Be a good teammate.
- Give good eye contact with the fielders around you and your pitcher and catcher.
- A good teammate is a present and confident teammate.
- Be aggressive and assertive.
- Don't be afraid to make a mistake.
- After training and putting in the hard work, trust your body and knowledge to just play.

# YOUR NEXT STEPS

Make a commitment and use the tools in this Black Book of Drills to stick to it!



Visit [Morgan-Stuart.com](https://www.Morgan-Stuart.com) to unlock access to additional training, courses, and events!



*Morgan*

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...and always remember:

**DEFENSE  
WINS  
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

