



1ST STEPS, AGILITY AND RANGE

Amanda Buchholz

Assistant Coach

DePaul University

abuchho3@depaul.edu



Chicago, IL



1st Steps

Fundamentals:

- * using the outside foot is quicker, powerful and more efficient
- * “Push – Point – Cross”
 - load the outside foot
 - point inside foot to set your angle and open hips
 - take a stride about shoulder width apart
 - it will be a couple quicker smaller steps to get going



Drills:

- * Quarterbacks = opening to both sides
 - can do some ‘dry’ reps with no ball to develop a good feel
- * Flamingo Starts = start on the inside leg (one leg)
 - you have to plant outside foot to go the direction you want





Agilities – “Zig Zags”

Thoughts:

* chest will face the same direction

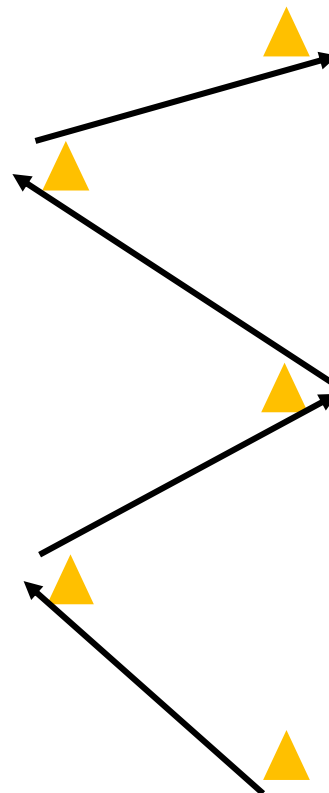
* do some reps dry to focus on footwork and controlling core

* add a ball for last 2 cones

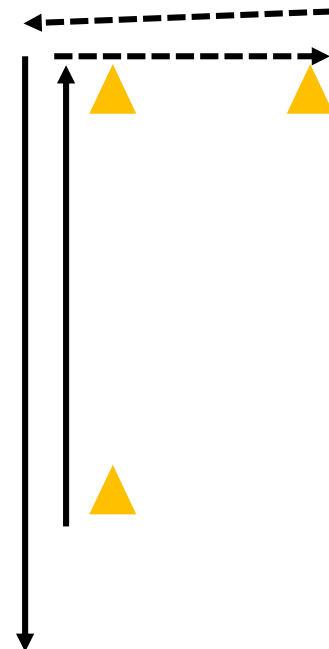
* ball first, then next cone

* sideways (forehand-backhands)

* front & back (shoestring, drop step)



Agilities – “L Drills”

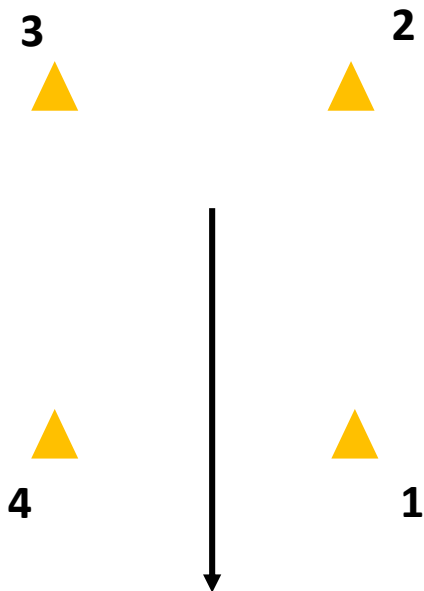


Thoughts:

- * top 2 cones are what you can change
- * sprint – shuffle – shuffle – sprint
- * sprint – shuffle – back pedal – sprint
- * sprint – sprint – sprint – sprint
- * move starting cone to work other way
- * tight around each cone



Agilities “Corner Reaction”

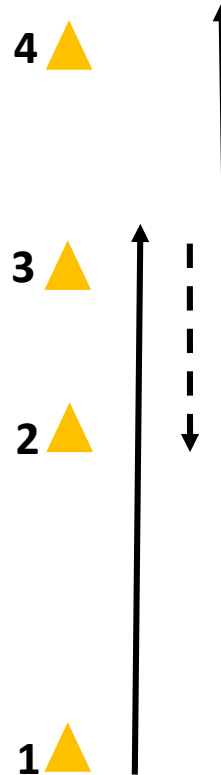


Thoughts:

- * always return to the middle
- * fast feet while waiting in middle
- * sprint to finish
- * call a number they need to touch
- * can go any amount of time (~1 min)
- * efficient footwork, angles, etc.



Agilities – “Change Directions”

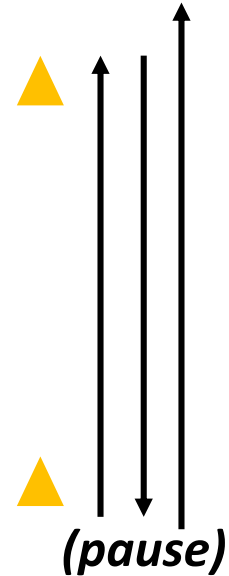


Thoughts:

- * sprint to #3, back to #2, finish through #4
- * middle section is what you change
- * chest face same way on all the turns
- * sprint – shuffle – sprint
- * sprint – back pedal – sprint
- * sprint – sprint – sprint
- * be sure to work both sides



Agilities “ I Drills”



Thoughts:

- * chest faces same way on all touches
- * start with short distance, then longer
- * only need to touch with feet
- * 2 quick touches, then sprint to finish
- * pause on 2nd touch (simulate tagging)
- * control the pause (body & trigger)



Machine Work – Ground Balls

Ground Balls:

- * adjust range depending on position or focus
- * closer to machine for 'reaction' work
- * helps to use cones for visuals
- * can always add a flamingo start
- * adjust how you drop the ball in the machine
 - make them react to ball, game-like

Partner Challenge:

- * they decide where to place the starting cone
 - they compete to see who can get to the ball
 - keep track of points for success



Machine Work – Fly Balls

Fly Balls:

- * adjust range depending on position or focus
- * closer to machine for ‘bloops’ over infielders
- * helps to use cones for visuals
- * adjust how you drop the ball in the machine
 - make them react to ball, game-like
- * make it a competition!

Line Drives:

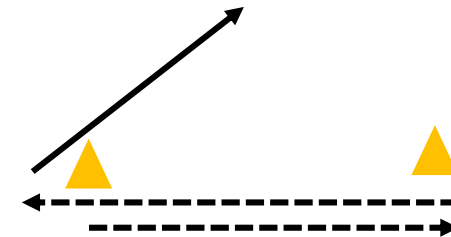
- * focus on 1st step angles to cover ground
- * run – run – run – reach
- * infielders can work close for reactions
 - just make sure it is off to the side!!
 - or use lite flites



Drills and Games

Shuffle to Field:

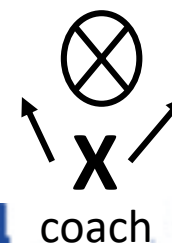
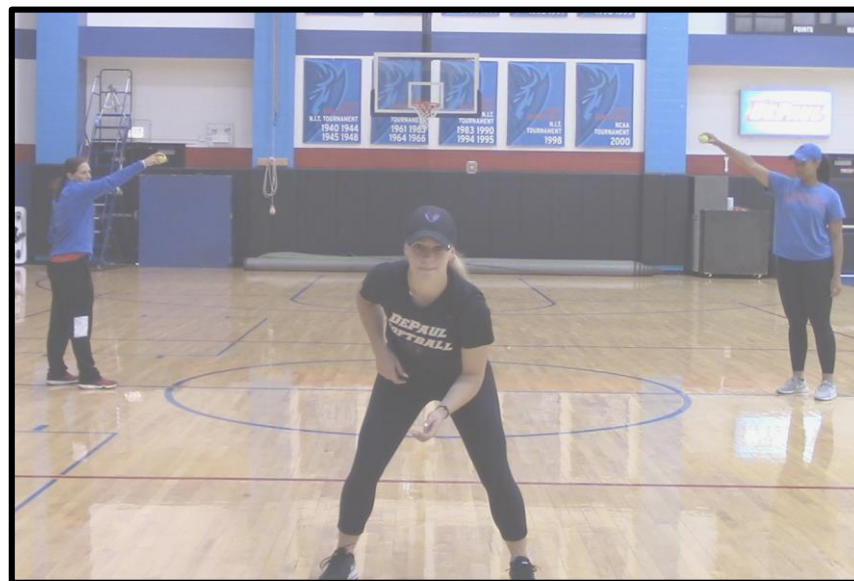
- * overload their momentum to feel exploding off the outside foot
- * be sure they load the outside foot and point foot/open hips to ball
- * start with a ball and just roll it
- * progress to a ball off fungo
 - have them shuffle one way then hit the ball to the other side



Drills and Games

Tennis Ball Drop:

- * 2 people holding tennis ball to their side
- * adjust height of ball to challenge the runner
- * runner starts facing the coach, then drop steps towards the dropped ball
- * coach points a direction and that person drops the ball
- * catch it before the second bounce



Drills and Games

Reaction of wall:

- * player faces the wall with coach behind them
- * bounce it off the wall high enough to make them drop step and run
 - usually throwing underhand generates an upward angle



- * they have to react to the direction of the ball
- * progress to harder tosses to make it more





Drills and Games

Eyes Closed Fielding:

- * player starts in a fielding position, with their eyes closed
- * on the sound of the hit, they open their eyes and react to ball
- * watch their 1st steps and see if they are efficient or off balance
- * hit the ball softer to start, so they get used to it
- * increase distance and power as they get better



Drills and Games

4 Corner Communication:

- * hit a ball so it drops in the middle
- * have a few rounds where just OF goes, then a few rounds where just IF goes
 - let all the players see each others range
- * establish proper communication and priority
 - * have them work together
 - * stretch the starting cones as they progress
 - always keep safety in mind

OF



OF



X



IF



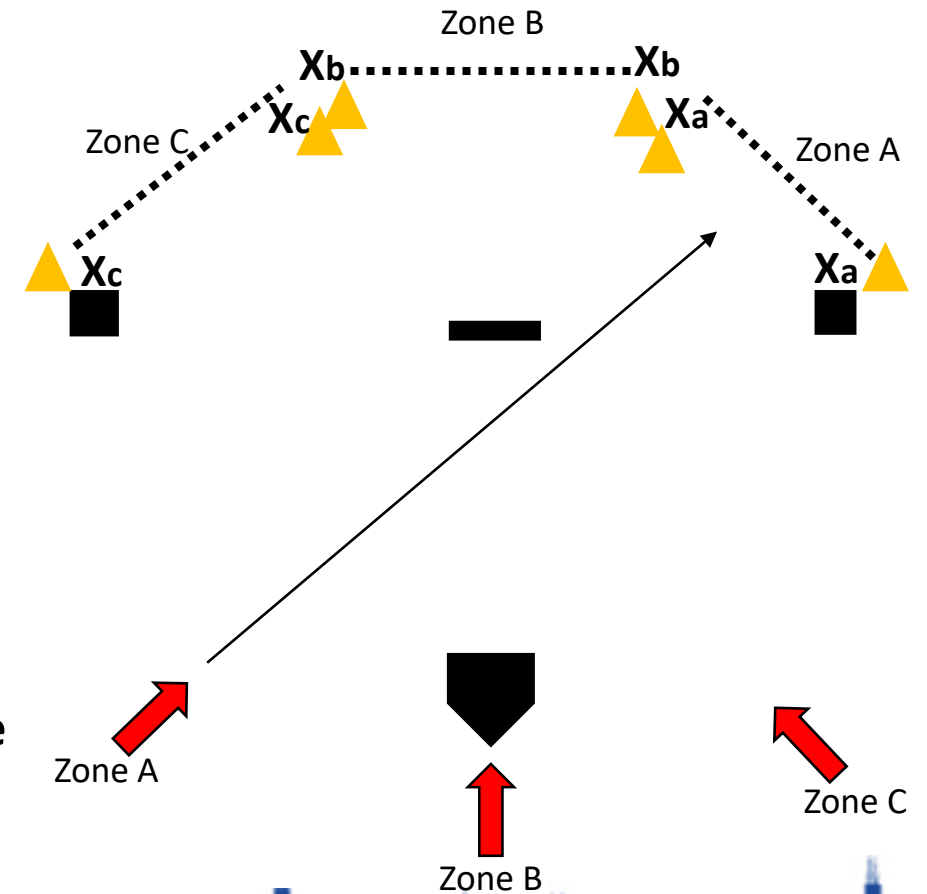
IF



Drills and Games

The Awesome Drill:

- * there are 3 'mini' challenges at one time
-- 3rd to SS / SS to 2nd / 2nd to 1st
- * 2 defensive players must cover their area without the ball getting through on the ground
- * 1 pair for each fungo group trying to hit it through
- * defense has to field it cleanly
- * give the hitters a certain amount of balls, keep track of how many they score through the defense
- * one group hitting at a time





Progressions or Things to Add

Find a way to incorporate any type of competition:

- * add a ball they have to catch at the end of a drill
- * make them have to catch so many to be done (either as an individual or as a team)
-- possibly even in a row to make it more challenging
- * add a throw to finish a play when you are tired and out of control
- * train your mind to think about perfection while you are performing
- * make it a race with a teammate, so they 'feel' pressure





Mentality

Thoughts:

- * we talk a lot about improving it, but rarely 'train' it
- * when you add a competition, teach your players to think in terms of 'gaining time'
 - where can I buy seconds on defense or base running
 - efficiency, strength, quickness, etc.
- * get them to 'enjoy' the competition and not get beat-down by it, because the game of softball has all sorts of small battles.....so learn the process of how to master competing
- * embrace adversity when it happens, seek it out and relish that you get a chance to rise up

Learn to love COMPETING in all things. Too many times we get caught up in the "losing" with competition and not enough in the "how can I win/improve" in small increments to be ready for the NEXT challenge





QUESTIONS???

Amanda Buchholz

Assistant Coach

DePaul University

abuchho3@depaul.edu

DEPAUL

BLUE DEMONS

