

A wide-angle photograph of a softball field. The green grass of the field is in the foreground. In the background, a dark blue outfield fence runs across the frame. On the fence, the words "WASHBURN" and "SOFTBALL" are written in large, light blue letters. Above "WASHBURN", the number "220" is visible. To the right of the fence, a building with a central tower and clock face is visible, surrounded by trees. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

WASHBURN UNIVERSITY SOFTBALL

BRENDA HOLADAY, COACH

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PRACTICE PLANS

“You can’t get where you want to go if you don’t know how to get there!”

*** Practice is your road map to your destination, so start with your destination in mind.**



WHAT IS THE BIG PICTURE?

- Construct practices from the end, back to the beginning
- Where does your team need heading into post-season?
- Break your practice plans down into months, then weeks, then days



MONTH BY MONTH

- **May (example)**

- Pitchers are ready for high leverage situations, have built endurance to go multiple innings, have command of all pitches which allows us to call to the weakness of hitters or the strength of our pitchers. They can start or relieve, can warm up quickly, are comfortable pitching around hitters if necessary.

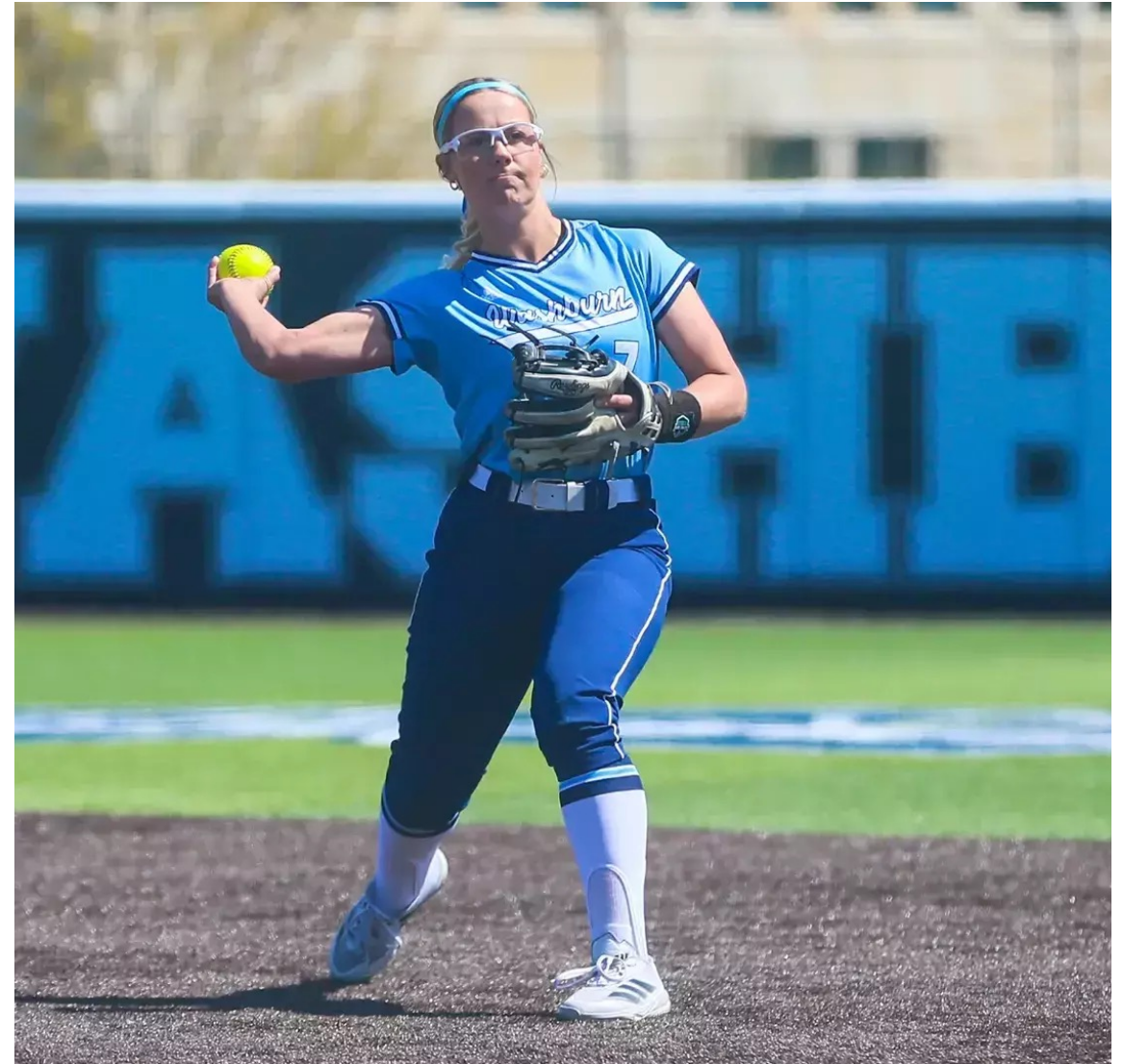
- Catchers are comfortable with all pitchers, have command of the infield, are comfortable with throwing in front of and behind baserunners, are dialed in on situations that call for short game or running game, have great relationship with all pitchers and can communicate effectively with coaches about game situations.



MONTH BY MONTH

MAY (example)

- Fielders have developed chemistry with each other with great communication skills, can anticipate situations, understand game timeframe in terms of risks they can take, are skilled in short game, baserunning, relay and fly ball situations that can occur.
- Hitters know who they are at the plate, understand their role in the lineup, are able to have consistent and quality at bats, can handle both success and failure, understand ways they can help their team, can read balls off the bat and by watching fielders, understand when they can take risks on the base paths, can move runners.



DEVELOP THE ROAD MAP FOR YOUR TEAM

- Put together a plan for each month
- Check it weekly to evaluate where you need to put more focus
- Share it with your players so they know the plan
- This is a great motivator for extra individual practice time



PRACTICE SCHEDULES

- We want our players to look forward to practice, not dread it
- Our practices are fast-paced, purposeful and competitive
- We want our teams to play this way, so it is essential we practice this way
- A bad practice is always the fault of the coaching staff. We can build a plan with energy, focus and intensity. If practice is slow, sloppy, low energy – it's because your plan was bad. Fix it.



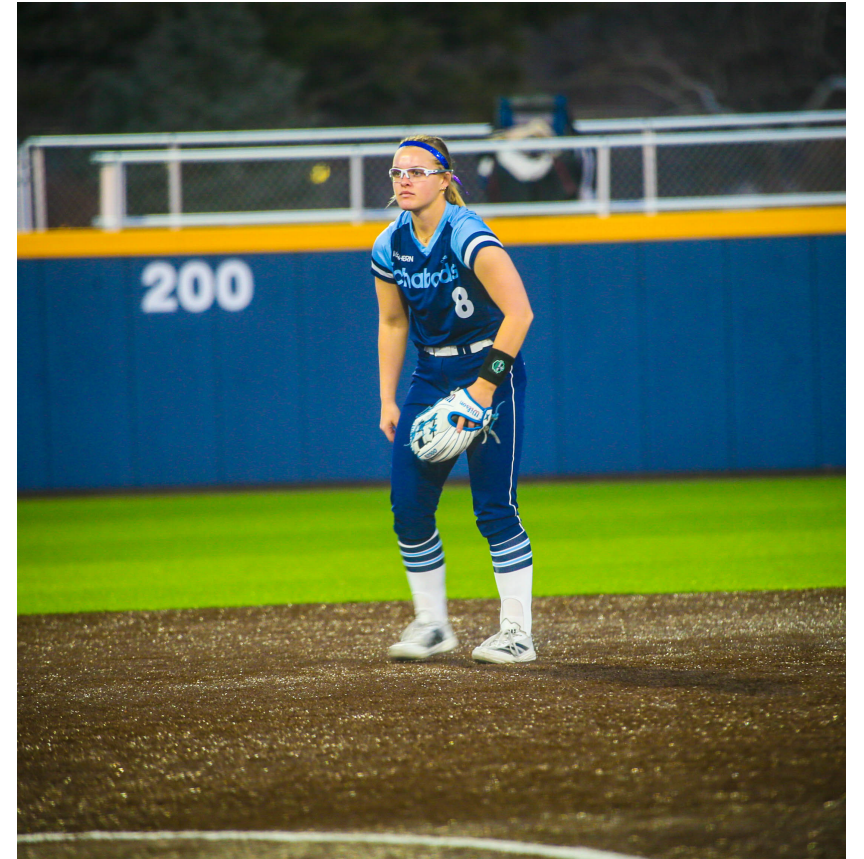
PRACTICE SCHEDULES

- Utilize your staff, this includes coaches and student managers
- Divide your time equally, all players want to feel they are important
- Be organized so that time is not wasted. Players will respect this.
- Share the plan so everyone is on same page - GroupMe
- Stay on time. Don't get sidetracked because something isn't working
- If everyone doesn't get equal time – guess what, they won't in a game either – move on.
- Limit the number of reps, especially hitting. Build focus and an understanding that this game doesn't give you endless opportunities.



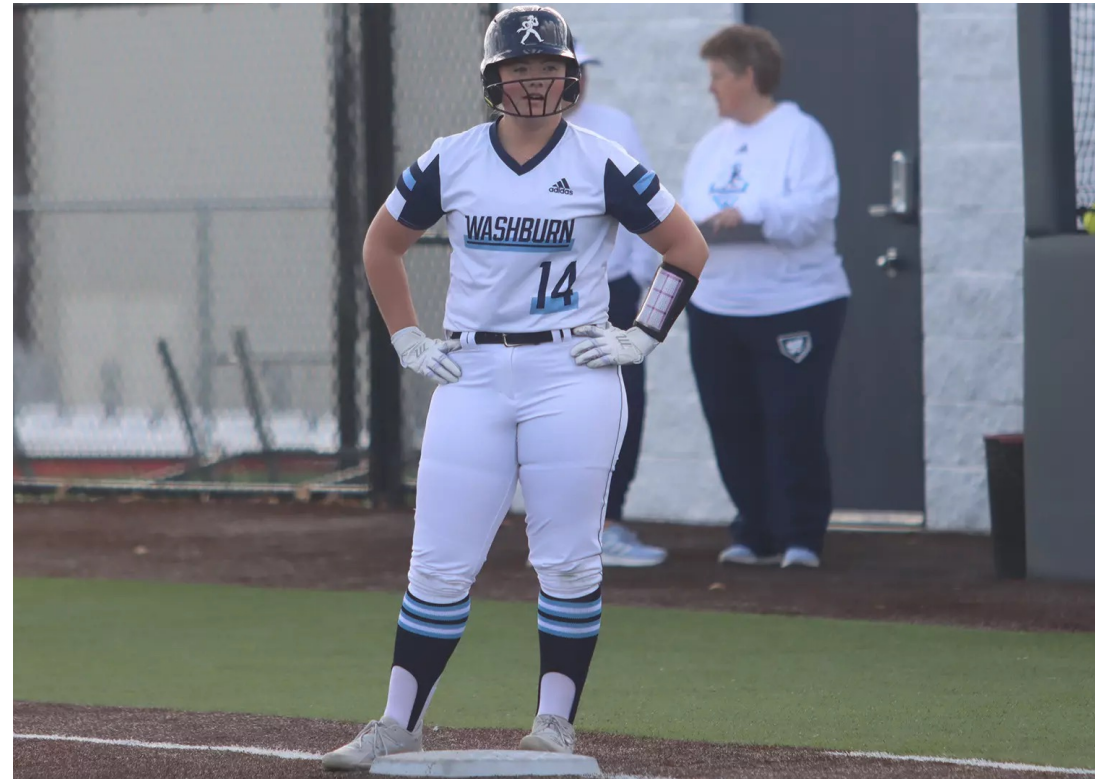
PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

- Pre-practice (stretch, partner catch, fundies)
- Stations
- Position specific work
- Small group work by position
- Large group work by position (IF/OF/Bullpen)
- Hitting Groups/live at bats
- Specialties
- Team Defense



PRACTICE SCHEDULES

- We do our strength and conditioning outside of team practice
- Start with fundamentals for everyone, we call these stations. This allows you to see athleticism and versatility and challenges players to not be so position-specific.
- Examples – Field 3 (outfield drill), Extension drill (infielders), Quick hands, Ladders with ground balls, fly balls, line drives
- You only need 2-3 minutes per station and maybe four stations. Can complete four fundamental drills in 10-12 minutes. Great use of practice time.



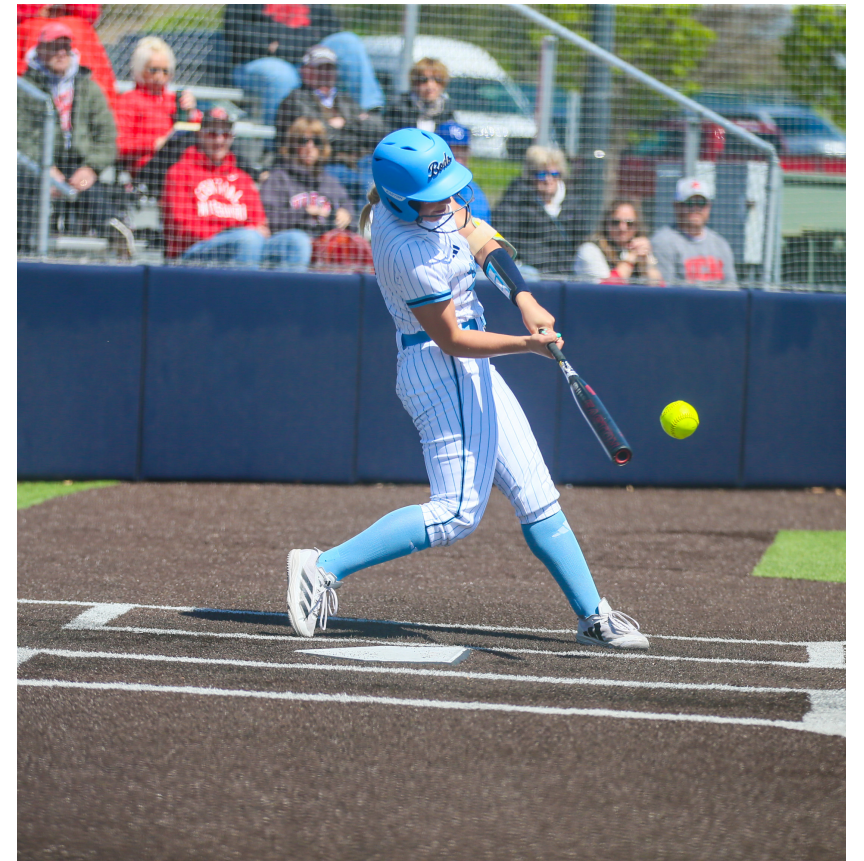


POSITION SPECIFIC WORK

- Position-specific drill work (this will change as season advances)
- Allow 10-15 minutes per day
- Pitchers – long toss, leg drive drills, fast arms, balance drills
- Catchers – long toss, leg work, framing/blocking work, bunts
- Corners – short hops, picks, drop step fly balls, charging bunts
- Middles – exchanges, quick hands, picks , backhands, short hops
- Outfield – line drives, short hops, over shoulder, dives, wall/sun balls

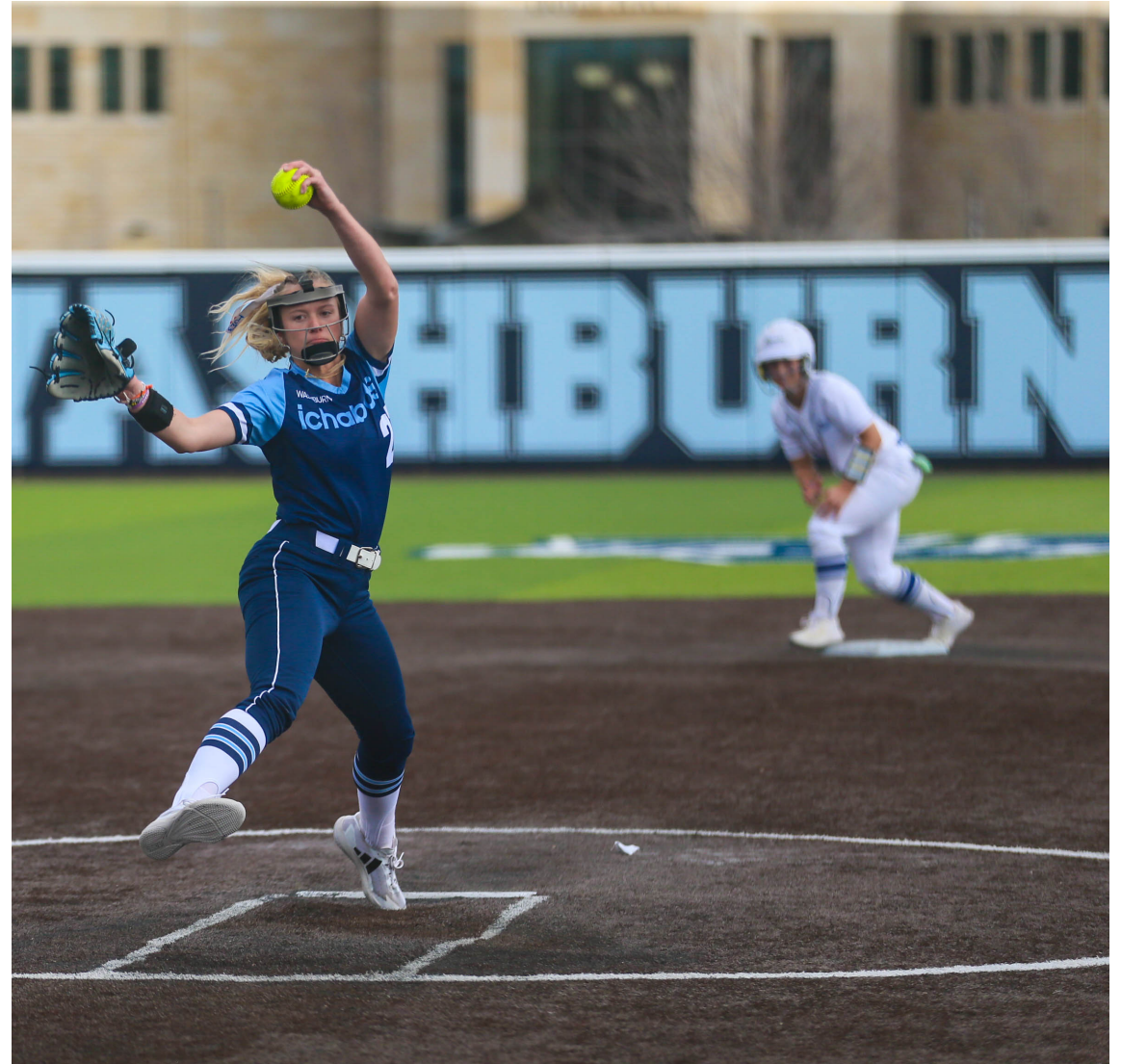
SMALL GROUP WORK

- Infield work – short game defense, rounds, tweeners, backhands, short infield
- Outfield work – communication drills, rounds for all types of balls, ladders, wall/sun balls
- Combined IF/OF – relay throws, picks/tags, tweeners, communication
- Catchers – throw downs, foul balls, pick offs
- Pitchers – spin work, defensive work, coverages



BULLPEN WORK

- Pitching/Catching Workouts
 - Allow 10 minutes to warm up, make them adapt to that (game like)
 - Give a focus each day (keeping the ball low in zone, two ball drill, particular pitches, command/repeating a pitch). This focus will make up about 20 minutes of their bullpen time.
 - Competitive element – important you do this each day. Maybe it's live pitching, siting w/charting, 9 hole competition, play BODS, put them in set counts and see how often then can work out of it, pyramids, etc. (this will take another 20 minutes)
 - Do not allow them to just throw or work on what they want, make them compete with pressure!



HITTING

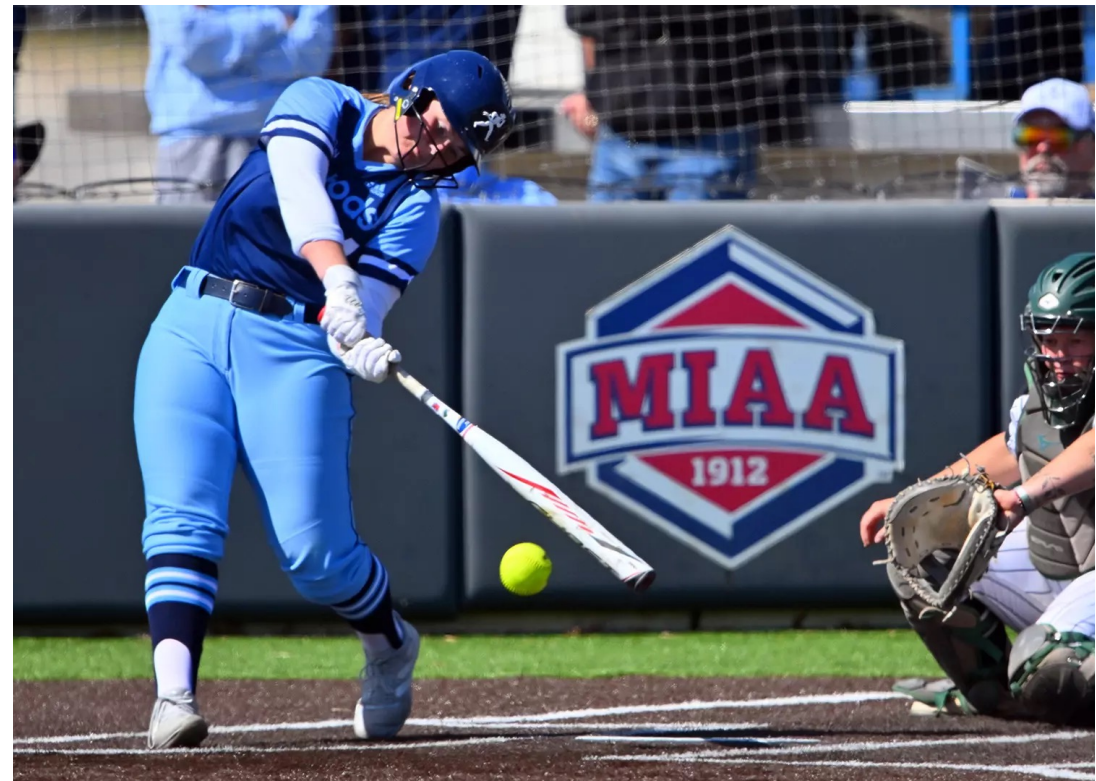
- Again, start with stations (fundamentals). We do tee work every day, but with a focus – high tee, low tee, inside, outside, load, heavy bat, bat speed, balance, leg drive, etc.
- Front toss – we do this every day, again with a focus. Give them 5 pitches at a time (avg at bat). Don't let them swing until it feels good. Focus might be driving balls up the middle, line drives, oppo, pull, moving runners, sac flys, etc. Give them consequences when they don't execute what they are supposed to – this is front toss, it's like a free throw – success rate should be high. No, you can't have one more!



HITTING

-When we hit on the field, always have shaggers field from their position. No greater practice than to field balls off a live bat. Teaches them how to read balls off the bat. Don't just shag balls. We make this a station.

- Machine hitting – another way to build hitting foundation just be careful. Machines are predictable in speed and movement and it can become very rhythmic. We use machine when we are going to see a pitcher with more velocity and to build some confidence



HITTING

- We also use tennis balls/colored balls – any variety that focuses on something purposeful.
- Live hitting – we do this a couple times a week, but never just scrimmage. Make the most of your time.
- Give hitters a focus when they go live – not just an at bat or hitting so many balls. Give them a count, runners on certain bases, etc.
- We have to practice hitting with pressure if we expect to hit in games when there is pressure.



LIVE HITTING/FIELDING

- Make this focused time, otherwise practice slows way down
- Pitchers – five batters at a time, start with specific counts, runners on base, what is the inning and score?
- Hitters – group of five, how many runs can you score before 3 outs; give the counts, put runners on specific bases, what is inning and score? Or maybe work just short game or just moving runners, etc.
- Defense – great time to play your position live
- Baserunning – treat it game like, work on leads and reading the ball



SPECIALTIES

- Baserunning w/catcher throws
- Live bunt offense/defense
- 1st and 3rd situations
- Defensive alignments based on hitter/game situation
- Tweeners
- Balls in the gaps
- Set these up based on the things your team needs work on



TEAM DEFENSE

- We like to end practice with this. We believe pitching and defense wins so we take a lot of pride in being great on this side of the ball.
- Outfield throws to bases – with or without baserunners
- Infield throws to bases – always with baserunners (P/C's do this too)
- Situational Fielding – live defense/baserunning with coach hitting
- Full Court Press – bases loaded and no outs, tying run on 3rd and winning run on 2nd.





MAKE EVERYTHING COMPETITIVE

- We want them to compete at their highest level with pressure, right?
- You have to practice the same way
- Some girls will surprise you when you put them in competitive situations, both good and bad.
- Competition also validates why some girls are on the field and others aren't - they need to see that practice and performance matters.

SAMPLE PRACTICE SCHEDULES

- Early season practice schedule
- Mid-season practice schedule
- Late season practice schedule



Week Two

PRACTICE SCHEDULE			
JANUARY 20	WEEK TWO - SPRING SEASON		
TIME	ACTIVITY	LED BY	EQUIPMENT NEEDED
3:30 - 4:00	Pre-practice work (stretch, catch, fundies)	Seniors	Balls, bands
4:00 - 4:15	Stations		
3 min each	Bucket drill	Coach Zordel	bucket, balls, cones
3 min each	Throw on the run	Coach Stephens	balls
3 min each	Dive and reach	Coach Holaday	balls, cones
3 min each	Ladders into over the shoulder	Coach Anti	ladder, balls
4:15 - 4:25	Position Specific Work		
	Outfield - charging ground balls and line drives	Coach Anti	balls, bat
	Pitchers - leg drive drills, sprinting hills	Coach Stephens	none
	Catchers - duck walks, blocking	Coach Holaday	balls, full gear
	Comers - backhands, charging bunts	Coach Zordel	balls, bat
	Middles - charging short hops, slot throws	Coach Zordel	balls, bat
4:25 - 4:40	Small Group Work		
	Infield - covering the gaps, short game/short hops w/throws	Coach Zordel	balls, bat
	Outfield - fielding on the run w/throws	Coach Anti	balls, bat, target bucket
	Pitchers - fast arms, spins (curve, screw)	Coach Stephens	balls, spinners
	Catchers - framing tennis balls, diving for short foul balls	Coach Holaday	tennis balls, softballs
4:40 - 5:00	Large Group Work		
	Infield/Outfield - tweeners and relay throws to bases with picks	Coach Zordel/Anti	balls, bat
	P&C's - bullpen work - pyramid work w/fast, screw, curve (chart)	Coach Stephens	balls, plates, charts
5:00 - 5:15	Bullpen work competition - work counts with 5 batters using 3 pitches	Coach Stephens	balls, plates, charts
	IF/OF - bunting stations and siting bullpen	Coach Zordel/Anti	balls, cones
5:15 - 5:45	Hitting Stations		
7 min	1. Front toss on field - drive ball up the middle	Coach Zordel	screens, pads, balls, helmets
7 min	2. Front toss on field - work pull side first time/oppo second time	Coach Stephens	screens, pads, balls, helmets
7 min	3. Shag from your position		
7 min	4. Tee work - inside/outside and heavy bat /measure bat speed	Coach Anti	tees, balls, heavy bat, radar
5:45 - 6:00	Specialties	All coaches	
	OF throws to bases w/runners	Coach Zordel	balls, bat, helmets
	IF throws to bases w/runners	Coach Zordel	
6:00 - 6:15	Situational Fielding - two teams, switch every 6 outs - 10 seconds to transition	Coach Zordel	balls, bat, helmets
6:15 - 6:30	Announcements/Clean up	Everyone	

Week 9

PRACTICE SCHEDULE			
MARCH 19	WEEK NINE - SPRING SEASON	INDOOR	
TIME	ACTIVITY	LED BY	EQUIPMENT NEEDED
3:30 - 4:00	Catchers/Pitchers who hit - come in for hitting stations	Coach Anti	hitting pads, screens, balls, helmets
3:45 - 4:00	Stretch/Partner catch/Fundies	Seniors	Balls
4:00 - 4:15	Position Specific Work		
	Pitchers - Bands, leg drive drills, ground balls/bunts	Coach Stephens	bands, balls, bat
	Catchers - Bands, throwing from knees	Coach Holaday	bands, balls
	Infield - hitting stations (machine, FB/change, low and inside pitches	Coach Anti	machine, balls, mats, screens, cones
	Outfield - bunting stations, hitting the ball on ground to move runner	Coach Zordel	
4:15 - 4:30	P/C's - warm up pitches to pitch live	Coach Stephens	plates, balls
	Outfield - hitting stations - (machine, FB/change, low and inside pitches	Coach Anti	machine, balls, mats, screens, cones
	Infield - bunting stations, hitting the ball on ground to move runner	Coach Zordel	
4:30 - 4:45	Bullpen work continues - work counts to batters to prepare for live	Coach Stephens	plates, balls
	Infield - defensive work, rounds and short infield	Coach Zordel	balls, bat
	Outfield - defensive work, throws to cuts and bases	Coach Anti	balls, bat
	Live Hitting/Pitching		
4:45 - 5:00	Group 1 - live hitting on field - 1-1 count, move the runners	Coach Anti	pitching mound, screen
	Group 2 - live defense	Coach Zordel	balls, helmets
	Group 3 - sitting in bullpen (yes/no at cone), front toss tennis ball change ups	Coach Stephens	cone, plate, ball, helmet
5:00 - 5:15	Group 1 - sitting in bullpen (yes/no at cone), front toss tennis ball change ups	Coach Stephens	
	Group 2 - live hitting on field - 1-1 count, move the runners	Coach Anti	
	Group 3 - live defense	Coach Zordel	
5:15 - 5:30	Group 1 - live defense	Coach Zordel	
	Group 2 - sitting in bullpen (yes/no at cone), front toss tennis ball change ups	Coach Stephens	
	Group 3 - live hitting on field - 1-1 count, move the runners	Coach Anti	
5:30 - 5:45	Specialties	All coaches	
7 min	Baserunning w/catcher throws - steal, delay, dive backs		balls, bat, helmets
7 min	1st & 3rd situations into run downs		
5:45 - 6:00	Team Defense	All coaches	balls, bat, helmets
10 min	Situational Fielding - 7 innings	Coach Zordel	
5 min	Full Court Press		
6:00 - 6:15	Announcements/Clean up	Everyone	
Groups for Live		Pitcher/Catcher	Bullpen
Group 1	Mak, Kaylee, Lex, Erin, Dalaney	Sadie, Avery, Mac	Jenna, Kate
Group 2	Jaden, Kate E, Mariah, Maddie, Karlyn	Ava, Lex, Kaylee	Avery, Dalaney
Group 3	Gracie, Kate, Dani, Mac, Ash	Jenna, Sadie, Kaylee	Ava, Mac

Week 14

PRACTICE SCHEDULE			
APRIL 30	WEEK FIFTEEN - SPRING SEASON		
TIME	ACTIVITY	LED BY	EQUIPMENT NEEDED
3:45 - 4:00	Stretch/Partner catch/Fundies	Seniors	Balls
4:00 - 4:30	Position Specific Defensive work		
15 min	Infield - focus on short game defense	Coach Zordel	balls, bat
15 min	Outfield - focus on sun balls, wall balls	Coach Anti	balls, bat
15 min	Combined IF/OF - tweeners, relay throws, tags	Coach Zordel	
	Pitchers/Catchers - long toss (10 min), leg drive drills (10 min) sprint work (10 min)	Coach Stephens	plates, balls
4:30 - 5:00	Hitting Stations		
Station 1	Front toss on field - mix inside/outside - goal is line drives going with the pitch	Coach Zordel	screens, pads, balls
Station 2	Front toss on field - mix up pitches and low pitches, attack your zone	Coach Anti	helmets, buckets
Station 3	Tee work (load/explode) and tennis ball bounce (change ups)	Coach Stephens	tees, tennis balls
Station 4	Shag station		
	Pitchers/Catchers	Coach Holaday	
10 min	Two ball drill for east/west pitches		plates, balls, charts
10 min	Nine hole drill - working up and out/in and low out/in		
10 min	Change ups/fast balls - work on command and deception		
	Specialties		
5:00 - 5:20	Live bunting w/defense on field - if not bunting or on defense, site in bullpen	Coach Zordel/Anti	balls, bats, helmets
	Siting in bullpen (Ava, Avery, Mac)	Coach Stephens	
	P/C's live on field (Sadie, Jenna, Kaylee)	Coach Holaday	
	Team Defense		
5:20 - 5:30	Outfield throws w/baserunners	All coaches	balls, bat, helmets
5:30 - 5:45	Offensive Execution - on field - 5 minutes each group	Coach Zordel	balls, bat, helmets
	2 pts = hitting behind runners, 2 pts = line drive on change up, 3 pts = each run		
	-2 pts = fly ball out, -1 pt = weak ground ball or on pull side		
5:45 - 6:00	Situational Fielding - two groups - 7 full innings	All coaches	balls, bat, helmets
	consequences for defensive errors and baserunning errors		
Team 1	Ellie, Mak, Sadie, Lex, Kaylee, Erin, Jaden, Dalaney, Kate, Kate, Maddie		
Team 2	Gracie, Mariah, Dani, Karlyn, McKinley, Ash, Mac, Jenna, Ava, Avery		
6:00 - 6:15	Announcements/Clean up	Everyone	
	Groups for Offensive Execution		
Group 1	Ellie, Mak, Lex, Kaylee, Erin, Jaden		
Group 2	Maddie, Dalaney, Kate E, Mariah, Kate D, Dani		
Group 3	Gracie, Mac, Karlyn, McKinley, Ash		