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Dynamic Warm Up for Baseball/Softball

With all of the time and effort athletes put into their baseball or softball career, it is vital to ensure one performs at the highest level possible. One of the best ways to improve performance and avoid injury is including a warm up and cool down at practices and games. It can be difficult to find the motivation during a multiday tournament to warm up before a game. It can also be challenging to spend an extra few minutes performing cool down stretches at the end of a long hot day before jumping in the car to head home. These extra steps can help optimize performance and reduce sports injuries to hands, shoulders, elbows and legs – resulting in more time on the field and less time on the bench due to injury.

A dynamic warm up is vital when preparing for baseball or softball practice or games. Athletes must warm up the whole body. And give special attention to their arms and shoulders to prepare for the demands of overhead throwing activities. A dynamic warm up uses active motion and momentum with sport-specific movements. The goal is to raise the body's temperature, heart rate and respiration rate. This helps increase blood flow to muscles and gives them the oxygen and nutrients they need. Muscles become more flexible and ready to perform high intensity movements that are required during play.

Dynamic warm ups also involve the use of balance and coordination. This challenges the neuromuscular system, which is responsible for the brain communicating with muscles to perform specific tasks. Studies show that high load dynamic warm ups help with lower body explosiveness in baseball players. And can aid in upper body performance.

Start with the following types of exercises:

- Walking knee-to-chest
- Body weight squats
- Walking lunges
- Walking toe-touches
- Frankensteins

Advance into quicker movements such as:

- High knees
- Butt kicks
- Lateral shuffle
- Carioca
- Short sprints

Finally, spend time focusing on upper body movements:

- Arm circles
 - With your arms at your sides, make circular motions with your shoulders. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart without moving your arms or head. Try making circular motions forward first, and then do them the opposite way. This dynamic stretch is a good way to get started warming up and loosen your shoulders before doing baseball drills.
- Cross-body arm swings
 - Swing both arms out to the sides and then across in front of the chest, alternating palms up and palms down, loosening the shoulder capsule in the front and the back.
- Hugs
 - This stretch warms up your back as well as your rotator cuffs. Start by holding your arms out to your side at shoulder height. Then swing your arms across your body and hug yourself. Your hands should reach behind you and hold the back of your shoulders. Hold this position for a second and then repeat.
- Triceps stretch
 - For this stretch, you can use an item such as a towel or a band to help you if your shoulders are particularly tight. Holding the towel in one hand put your arm over your back, behind your head. Grab the other end of the towel behind your back with your other hand, and gently pull to stretch the triceps of the arm that is over your head. You shouldn't try to force the stretch, but after incorporating it into your routine, you will know that your triceps and shoulders are loose if you can interlock your fingers in this stretching position.
- Wall angels against a fence or wall
 - With your back against the wall or fence and your feet 6–12 inches away from the wall, slightly bend your knees. Tuck your chin in slightly to stretch your neck, and place the back of your head against the wall. Move your shoulders away from your ears and down. Bring your arms up to 90 degrees and place your elbows, then the backs of your hands, against the wall. Push your arms above you, maintaining contact with the wall.
- Bent-over shoulder Y, T, and W raises.
 - Try to incorporate wrist stretches, such as the prayer stretch. Move your arms/hands up and down, keeping your wrists together.

Transition into progressive throwing

After you complete your dynamic warm up, it is time to transition into throwing. This helps warm the arm and shoulder. One common mistake some baseball and softball players make is “throwing to warm up” and not warming up to throw.

These movements and exercises should start at a low intensity and ramp up slowly. Ending with 90-95 percent of maximum effort throwing. It can be helpful to start with wrist-flicks with elbows high. Then move into throwing with emphasis on technique, with a partner at close range. Focus on connecting the lower body and upper body while throwing lightly. Then increasing distance between partners followed by increasing in the intensity of the throws.