

Outfield Chatter 7/13/2020 with Bobby Scales (Pittsburgh Pirates Outfield Coordinator)

- As coaches we all should understand our strengths and weaknesses.
- Work on and improve your weaknesses while maintaining your strengths.
- “Whatever system you choose to use you better know it.”
- The quality of people within the sport you are in will influence the next generation.
- **You create buy in by honoring the past and showing the weight of the responsibility that each player has to hold.**
- **Tell your athletes that they have the same opportunity as those that have had success in the past.**
- **As coaches we need to understand what the game is telling us.**
- **There are less line drives, less ground balls, more strikeouts, and significantly more fly balls.**
- **A four seamer in the top of the zone is a fly ball pitch.**
- **A straight change and 12-6 curve are fly ball pitches.**
- **Coaches are telling their players to hit the ball in the air with emphasizing line drives.**
- **“The outfield is the last line of defense.”**
- **Great outfielders take no detail for granted.**
- **You want your outfielders to be excellent in every aspect of outfield play.**
- **“3 Man, 1 Unit, Nothing Falls.”**
- **You want your outfielders to be in sync and to always communicate.**
- **“Everybody has to move whenever an outfielder moves.”**
- **You want your outfielders to be excellent in their mental preparation.**
- **Understand the pitch mix and sequences that your starter and relief guys have.**
- **Sun, Sky, Surface, Wind, and the Wall (Use this sequence to understand the environment for the day).**
- **Check this periodically during the game to make sure you are prepared for any and every situation.**
- **You need to understand the wall and material of the wall. Find out how the ball will bump off the wall.**
- **“You can’t have your guys thinking. They need to know.”**

- **The players need to understand how many steps it takes to get to the wall.**
- **Understand the opportunity cost of every action you take.**
- **Example: Understanding what diving will do if caught and if missed.**
- The athlete needs to understand what he does and doesn't do well.
- The coaching staff should understand what the data is telling them about each player's abilities.
- **If we make excellent first step reactions then our route efficiency should be good because of the good first step.**
- **Speed is the last thing that matters.**
- **There must be movement as the ball is in the hitting zone.**
- **As the ball enters the hitting zone do a tennis step and hop.**
- **The player needs to have their cleats landing as soon as the ball has been hit or hits the catcher's mitt.**
- **"In order to move laterally the abdominal muscles must be at optimal length."**
- **The best athletes take the slack out of their bodies and get their abs at the optimal length.**
- **Every tennis player masters getting the slack out of their bodies and gets their abs at the optimal length.**
- **V Drill: Player stays at the middle, the coach points and the outfielder moves.**
- **What is being simulated is a quick reaction and creating a good first step.**
- **More often than not most fly balls will be hit to the left or right of the outfielder.**
- **Great outfielders shutdown the opportunity for an extra 90 feet.**
- If a base runner takes an extra 90 feet then we will throw out that base runner.
- **Japanese outfielders throw to the bases every day.**
- **They often do not use cutoff men.**
- **The outfielder must get the ball on a hop and within an arm's length.**
- **If the ball is not within those parameters then the outfielder will have to go get the ball.**
- **Focusing on the target and trusting your training is crucial.**
- Players need to understand what the situation is calling for.
- Example: Is this a bunting situation?
- If you do the fundamentals correctly then we will be better than most.
- There must be a reason for everything that we do.
- Players and coaches need to have reasons for what they do.
- The outfielders need to understand the angles and space of foul territory.

- The first time you play at a specific field hit fungos off of the wall and the player needs to understand how the ball is played off the wall.
- **The idea behind the tennis hop is for the player to take the slack out of the body and be as athletic as possible.**
- **Allow your players to experiment with their ready step.**
- **Some outfielders will sway side to side to be relaxed and be athletic.**
- **“If the player has poor rhythm at the plate then he will do the same out playing defense.”**
- **As a coach we must understand who we are talking to.**
- **“Know your personnel.”**
- The player will tell you how they like to learn. It is up to the coaches to build those relationships.
- Getting to know the player on a personal level will help them relax and trust you as a coach.
- **Players want coaches to be honest and authentic.**
- **They respect coaches who own up when they are incorrect.**
- **As a coach don't be afraid to use trial and error.**
- **You learn a ton from trial and error.**
- **Frisbee Hitting Drill:**
- **Have a player throw a frisbee through the goal post.**
- **This activates the proper lower half mechanics of a hitter.**
- **Delay Drill:**
- **Throw a ball and then once the ball is in the air the outfielder goes after and makes up the space to make the play.**
- **It's our duty as coaches to make the players as good as they can be with the skills they have.**
- **“When you are playing you are working plan B.”**
- **What can you do to improve and impact plan A?**
- **Plan A is what you do for the majority of your life.**
- **You want your players to throw a lot.**
- **If their arms are hanging then they will need to do arm care.**
- **You don't want to back off on catch play.**
- **You want a culture of openness and honesty.**
- **The arm care program has to be used for every baseball player not just pitchers.**
- **The arm care program is vital for maintaining healthiness.**
- **The best way to work on routes is either during Batting Practice or a ball thrown or hit off a fungo bat.**
- **Have your outfielders work on catching the fly ball in the “sweet spot” as often as possible.**

- Have the outfielder use an outfield and infield glove to find the proper sweet spot for both.
- The outfielder needs to understand the sweet spot of each glove so they will transition the ball out of the glove easier.
- If you don't execute well on relay and cuts, it's the fault of the outfielder.
- On double cuts work on hitting the front man.
- Periodically have the outfield play catch with infielders to work on the cut and relay relationship.
- The foul lines are outliers in regards to where a hitter hits the ball mostly.
- Do not get beat where the hitter will hit the ball most often.
- "If your eyes are telling you something, do that."
- Sometimes data won't tell you for instances such as a hitter is consistently late on the velocity of the pitcher on the mound.
- To practice getting on time with the pitch, throw a ball in the air. When the ball hits the ground the cleats of the outfielders need to be starting to sink into the ground.
- **You want a leader who is intelligent, who gets the best jumps, and has the best routes in Center Field.**
- **The CF has to be the Quarterback of the outfield.**
- This player must not be afraid to make calls and just so happen to make the wrong call.
- **You need players who can play all over the place on the baseball diamond because of defensive shifting.**
- Being athletic will help the player to be successful on the baseball field.
- Encourage your players to play multiple sports. This will only help them become a better athlete.
- **Footwork is crucial for a successful outfielder.**
- **Catching the ball is easy, the footwork is the hard part.**
- **To learn a skill, do the whole skill and practice it quite a bit. An athlete actually learns quicker when the athlete practices the whole skill.**
- **Ladder Drill: Do a ladder exercise and once the athlete is through the ladder he will use his tennis hop and then the coach will point and the outfielder will work on his first step.**
- **Bad Read, Switch: Start with the wrong first step, then the second step will be towards the right route.**
- **Spider Drill: Point to the direction of where you're throwing the ball. Once the ball is caught point to another area and the outfielder will take another first step so they go after the ball properly.**

- **Use a slick and slide at practice. You can practice sliding for the bases and for making catches using this.**

Biggest Takeaways

- 1. You want the players to be on time and ready to take their first step as the batter has made contact with the pitch.**
- 2. Use the tennis hop mechanic to relax the outfielder and to stay athletic.**
- 3. You want a center fielder who is intelligent, a leader, and takes the best jumps and routes in the outfield.**
- 4. Throughout the game the outfielder must watch for the sun, sky, surface, wind, and wall.**
- 5. You want your outfielders to have the mentality that there will be no extra 90 feet being taken. A single is a single and nothing more.**