

Warm Ups:

So many times a coach will show up and immediately tell the team to go run around the soccer goal posts and come back. As players get older they begin to understand that this is a warm-up. They know what it means to jog and get loose. Younger players usually do not grasp this concept. They will view this as a race and will run as hard as they can in an effort to win the race. Some players will not be able to complete the run at this pace and will get tired quickly. Others will push themselves to the very end and will exhaust their energy. Either way you are going to have a bunch of tired kids. It might take them 10 minutes or longer to recover, which is not a good situation to be in when there only is an hour, or two, block allotted for practice.

A better idea for the younger ages is to open practice with base running. Kids love to run bases. In fact, they love it so much you can begin and end practice with base running. There is a drill we call "Big League" base running that we really like. The players run from home to first as if they are trying to beat out an infield hit. The concepts of touching the front of the bag and running through the base are stressed. Next, the players run from first to third. After that they walk home and then run a double. Then they simulate scoring on a hit from second base. Beyond that, if the players are not too tired they can run out a triple or a home run. Each time specific base running fundamentals are stressed. As players get older (above the age of 13) the concept of a dynamic warm-up, including jogging, running, bounding, skipping, high knees, etc. can be introduced. The team should be able to arrive at practice and start this type of warm-up as a team on its own before beginning a daily stretching routine. Cold muscles should never be stretched, but it is important to introduce a stretching routine to any age group.

After the base running or dynamic warm-up, players can sit in a circle to begin their stretching routine. Younger players will not have a real physical need to stretch. They roll out of bed and are loose and ready to go. There is not much danger of them pulling muscles. However, understanding the importance of stretching and developing a routine will be habit forming and will help them throughout their athletic careers. So the earlier the concept of stretching is introduced the better. Team stretching also provides coaches with an opportunity to go over the practice plan that has been developed for that day, which will eliminate wasted time once the practice begins. (reference "Achieving Excellence in Coaching", by Bill and Cal Ripken)

Stretching Routine Plan Example

Walking Knee Hugs-Player walks from foul line to about 60-90 feet (base path distance) toward center field and back, each step, the player lifts the knee up, grabs it with both hands and gives a pull to bring knee up a little higher.

Side Shuffles - Players are to begin at the foul line, facing home plate, and side shuffle 60-90 feet. Players should keep their core lower to the ground. Knees should not be bent more than 90 degree, around 45 degrees. Players should practice not bouncing their body up and down during the shuffle and be encouraged to keep their head steady during the shuffle. This will encourage proper footwork when throwing a ball in the infield as a bonus. A good alternative, is to have the player reach down and touch the ground while they are keeping their head steady. This can be seen in the "Conditioning Drill 1"

Back Pedaling - Players should jog backwards from the foul line to about 60-90 feet away toward center field and back.

Lunges-Players are to take a stride, almost double of their normal walking step, after the stride foot lands on the ground, the player should bend the front knee down to 90+ degrees. This will be again from foul line to 60-90 feet away toward center field and back.

Karaoke-Players will face home plate on the foul line and jog sideways 60-90 feet toward center field and back. With each step, the player alternates the lead leg to go in front of the following leg and behind the following leg.

Stretching - After players have warmed up their legs and got the heart beating a little harder, you move into stretching.



5 seconds
2-3 times



8-10 seconds
each arm



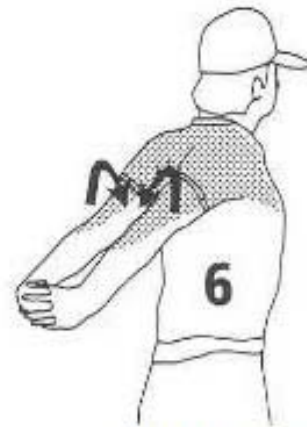
8-10 seconds
each arm



**10 seconds
each side**



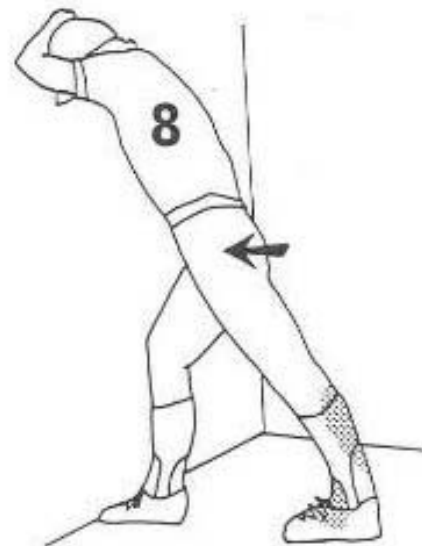
**15 seconds
each arm**



**10-15 seconds
each arm
2 times**



10-20 seconds



**15-30 seconds
each leg**



**10-20 seconds
each leg**



10-20 seconds



15-30 seconds



**8-10 seconds
each side**



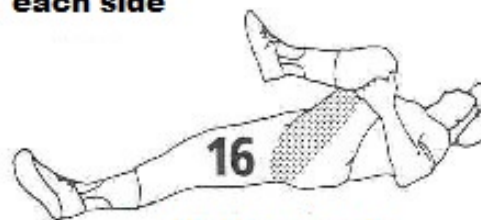
**8-10 seconds
each side**



**10-20 seconds
each leg**



**10-15 seconds
each side**



**10-15 seconds
each leg**