

# How to Run This Program

*by Jake Davis, Strength and Conditioning Specialist for DNA Sports Center*

I'm a pretty laid back guy, but when it comes to strength training for baseball players, I get pretty fired up.

That's because baseball players are particularly at risk for bad training from coaches whose only credentials are having played baseball themselves - often years before for the same school they're coaching now.

Way too often, I hear that baseball player are asked to do things like benchpress and wide-arm pushups - exercises that will actually HURT their ability to throw by ignoring important muscle groups and over stressing the rotator cuff.

I'm not a baseball player, so you wouldn't want me to teach your son baseball ... and you shouldn't want a baseball coach to teach your son strength training.

That's why this program is so important. Throwing a baseball is one of the most powerful movements in sports, and kids need to learn to respect it and prepare for it properly.

I'm sure you already know that strength training for baseball players is essential, which is why you bought this package. So, let's get started and talk about the program.

It has three main components:

1. **Flexibility and Mobility** - I call these exercises "pre-hab" because you do them BEFORE you need rehab. They are absolutely essential for injury prevention. Flexibility work outside of the flexibility exercises in the program can be prescribed as necessary. However, remember that lack of shoulder mobility is often times due to tight pecs. Typically, a player who is hyper-mobile and not stable will be at greater risk of an injury than a player who is too tight.
2. **Fitness** - Hamstring pulls are common for baseball players who are inactive, so this program includes sprints and other exercises whose sole purpose is keep players in shape. (After all, if you're injured, you won't be throwing at all!)
3. **Strength** - We'll focus on the the legs and core, because they're where everything starts, and then train the upper body to accommodate the increased power being generated. We'll strengthen the muscles in the arms and back - not just the ones that push the ball forward, but the ones that STOP the arm after the throw. Your brain subconsciously knows how hard it can actually throw before it does damage to the body. If the muscles in your back can handle the job of slowing the arm down after the throw, it will know that it's OK to throw harder. This program also focuses on various pulling exercises, because many athletes already do too many pressing variations, which leads to tightened pecs and diminished throwing flexibility.

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This program's main priority is for athletes to **STAY HEALTHY and AVOID INJURY**, both in the camp and during the season. We always weigh the risk vs the reward cautiously for any exercise. The goals are to increase total strength and maintain soft tissue quality and shoulder stability.

With that in mind, as you perform all the reps listed in the program, you should

1. **Start light and focus on technique** Start with no weights, if possible. The important part is to get the technique correct. The technique should be perfect before the athlete ever picks up any significant weight.
2. **Build exercises individually.** Work up slowly with individual attention to each athlete, and give options to progress or regress depending on the level and experience of the athlete. (For example: A goblet squat could be progressed to a front squat, or regressed to a body weight squat. Straps can be used if mobility issues arise. Push ups can range from modified pushups to weighted pushups.

I've built this program in three phases.

- The first phase, "anatomical adaptation," gets the body used to training.
- The second phase, "hypertrophy," is all about actually growing the muscle mass.
- The third phase, "power," is all about applying the new techniques and strength for explosive results.

**Every 5th session in this camp is a technique session, meaning that the athletes should actually throw with a qualified baseball instructor.** This is to help the athletes maintain and/or correct their throwing technique as they grow stronger, because their mechanics will change drastically throughout the course of the camp. Also, they risk tightening up if they don't continue to throw.

### Soft Tissue Work

This camp can also include soft tissue work that is not included in the program, because it's based upon the needs of the individual player. I'd suggest using foam rollers, bands, and lacrosse balls.

### Core Work

You may also want to customize the core work in this program depending on the time of year you hold the camp. If it's during baseball season, players are typically getting more than enough rotational training. However, if it's the off-season, core work is more important. (Landmine rotation and palloff rotation or cable rotations are good examples of core exercises that we'll use in the off-season.)

### **Manual Work**

This program also includes some gentle manual work, such as manual rear delt, to recruit those muscles. However the key word is GENTLE. The point is not to show off and see if you can stop your partner from moving.

### **Cleans and Snatches**

Depending on the athletes experience, you may want to prescribe some basic clean pulls and snatch grip deadlifts. I typically stay away from full cleans and snatches, as the risk vs. reward ratio isn't worth it.

I hope you get some good results from this program. I've seen as much as a 10 MPH increase, and other increases that have helped kids get into the D1 playing range.

A lot of baseball players wrongfully assume that they won't be able to throw as well if they get too strong or too big. But as long as they continue throwing throughout their training, they should be able to adapt and use their new strength in a way that increases their ability on the field and decreases their chance of injury.

Good luck!

Jake Davis

### **About Jake Davis**

Jake is the Strength and Conditioning Specialist at DNA Sports Center. He has a bachelor's degree in Athletic Training from Wilmington College, where he was also a student-athlete on the wrestling team. Jake is certified with the National Strength and Conditioning Association and is also officially trained through the Parisi Speed School.