

Dear Lady Braves,

The season begins officially the second full week of March. If you are not in a winter sport and want to get started, following this regiment. Those in a winter sport please wait until you are fully done.

You are expected to come to the first practice in playing condition. Our limited practice time needs to be focused on teaching skill development and game scenarios. We can't use too much practice time on conditioning- but don't worry, we will always make time for sprints and plyometrics.

This package should give you direction to get your muscle groups firing and your body moving in the right direction.

While you are working on getting prepared begin thinking about your goals for the upcoming season. Think in terms of individual goals, team goals and goals that promote efforts to serve our community.

You can find any forms that I share on the Benson Public Schools website under softball. I also hope to be starting a Facebook page so that pictures can be shared with each other.

Conditioning

Kudo's to you if you participate in a winter sport. You will get your cardio there. If you do not participate in a winter sport, or if your sport is done and you want to start up here is a plan to follow.

The conditioning plan has two components- base conditioning and intervals. The base conditioning begins building aerobic capacity. The intervals strengthen and add explosiveness to your core muscles. These combined elements will get you ready for the quick, decisive moves needed in softball.

Week	Days per week	Type of Exercise/amount
1	3	Cardio 15 min, Intervals 1 for 30 seconds
2	3	Cardio 15 min, Interval s 1 for 30 seconds
3	3	Cardio 15 min, Intervals 2 for 30 seconds
4	3	Cardio 15 min, Intervals 2 for 30 seconds
5	3	Cardio 20 min, Intervals 2 for 30 seconds
6	3	Cardio20 min, Intervals 2 for 30 seconds
7	3	Cardio 20 min, Intervals 2 for 30 seconds

Cardio can be running, elliptical, cycle, swimming etc. Raise your heart rate!

Intervals will include these **SIX exercises: Squat jumps, speed skaters, over and backs, mountain climbers, high knees and 2-step shuffle**. The number equals the number of sets, and the time is the amount of time doing (and then resting) each exercise. For example, week one you run for 15 minutes, then you do 30 seconds of squat jumps, rest for 30 seconds, do 30 seconds of speed skaters, rest for 30, et., etc. Video of all of the plyometric exercises can be found on my youtube channel (Softball, Barb Schwarz)

Strength Training

Strength training is focused almost entirely on developing your hands, wrists and forearms. No special training equipment is required. Having strong hands and wrists will greatly improve your catching, throwing and batting skills.

1) **Isometric Finger Presses** – Put your palms together and line-up all your fingers in front of your chest. Press your fingers together and push apart over and over again.

2) **Isometric Finger Pulls** – Cup your hands and lock your fingers together in front of your chest. Pull your fingers apart and together, curling your hands open and closed.

3) **Isometric Fist Press** – Put your hands in front of your chest. Make a fist with one hand and press it into the palm of your other hand. Each repetition is pressing hard for a 5 count. Make sure to alternate which hand is the fist and which is the palm.

4) **Finger Extensions** – Place a small rubber band around the outside tips of your fingers and thumb. Spread your hand open, causing the rubber band to stretch out.

5) **Hand Grips** – This can be done with hand grippers, a tennis ball or rolled up socks. It's good to switch between different objects. Simply close your grip slowly, hold for a 5 count and release slowly. Make sure all your fingers and thumb are engaged.

6) **Horizontal Wrist Curls** – Grab a bat with one hand and hold it horizontally in front of you. Do wrist curls.

7) **Vertical Wrist Curls** – Hold the bat vertically out in front of you. Do side wrist curls, keeping the bat on a vertical plane (remember your geometry). Depending on your wrist strength, hold the bat closer or further away from the end.

8) **Finger Tip Pushups** – This is a more advanced exercise. Start slow and only do what you are comfortable with, do not overdue it! Do a push-up with your finger-tips touching the floor. See if you can do one more pushup each time you exercise!

I know these exercises may be simple, and even a little silly. But, they can make the difference between catching or dropping a flyball, and they can add just enough to your hit to get over the head of the outfielder! They are easy to do while watching TV, or doing your homework. ***There is no excuse for not doing them.***

Plan on doing these exercises three days per week (never two days in a row.)

Skill Development

The most fun part of pre-season preparation is, unfortunately, the most difficult. We do need to get you started with your glove, bat and ball. You simply can't walk into the first practice having not picked up a glove for 6-8 months. This leads to injury of you or even someone else. Let's do our best to prepare and be ready for day one!

Skill development has three sections:

1. Basic Training
2. Advanced Skills

Basic Training

Find a place to **TOSS a ball**. Find someone to play catch with. You don't have to get all sweaty or mess up your hair to loosen up your arm for 10 minutes!

A couple of rules:

1. When throwing start with your wrists, then forearms, then shoulders. **DO NOT** throw hard. This is pre-season easy throwing to loosen up. If you have a full size gym, work on some long tosses across the gym after you have fully warmed up.
2. Don't drop the ball or throw it off the wall! This gets back to me. You are throwing easy, not as hard as you can.

Here is how to get started **BATTING**:

You have to swing. It's that simple. Make sure you're in a big enough room, start by gently twisting and loosening your shoulders and back without a bat. Pick up a bat and get some swings in. Ideally, you should do **100 swings, 3 days a week**.

Pointers on your swing:

1. Stand tall with a wide stance.
2. Front and back feet perpendicular to the plate (no duck feet!).
3. Knocking knuckles on the bat, grip with your fingers.
4. Hands close to your body and just past your ear.
5. Initiate the swing with your lead elbow- down and in.
6. Push forward toward the pitcher (remember you hit the ball out in front, toward the pitcher!)
7. Rotate your hips hard and pivot your back foot, laces forward, toe to China.
8. Power comes from your hit turn and strong behind!

Practice your set up and swing motion very, very slowly in front of a full length mirror. You can find some video links to help you focus on a proper swing on my youtube channel (softball Barb Schwarz).

Advanced Skill Development

There are opportunities out there to learn from college coaches. It is good to get pointers from different perspectives. These colleges have consistently offered opportunities: NDSU, St. Bens, UMM. You can either look them up or check our website, as I will post them as information is filtered my way each year. There are also experts in the field in our area. Feel free to make those contacts and learn different techniques and philosophies, it simply makes you a more rounded athlete by having those experiences. Building positive relationships through experts and clinics can be very rewarding. I encourage you to do so!