

## Maintaining Proper Mechanics In-Season

### *Mechanics vs. Result in Practice*

One of the most challenging tasks for a player is to stay committed to fine-tuning their fundamentals and mechanics this time of year, when we a majority of our workouts are with the team. Many young players will take batting practice or throw a bullpen and focus solely on the result of how far the ball goes or the velocity/location of the pitch. While they devote time during controlled drill work to learn the proper technique, these correct mechanics often do not show up during our batting practice or bullpen sessions. There is often a vital step left out between our drill work and our live hitting or pitching sessions.



We can bridge the disconnect between our drill-work mechanics and our game mechanics. This is done by focusing our attention on a specific movement or technique within our mechanics during a portion of our live practice sessions. For example, a player who is working on utilizing his back foot correctly in drills should take the first ½ of batting practice to concentrate on that specific movement in batting practice. I will often tell a player during a batting practice session not to focus at all on the result (how far the ball goes or quality of contact) but to commit 100% attention on the mechanic we are trying to correct. By doing this, the player is teaching his body to perform the proper technique in a live batting practice setting. Once this is accomplished, we can then transfer our attention to the result (e.g. line drives or doubles in the gap). Going through this process will improve our mechanics in a live action setting.

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This type of approach to a work session is extremely valuable to pitchers. Young pitchers often start their bullpen work sessions with full pitching mechanics at 60 feet 6 inches. While logic tells us that we need to get repetitions at this distance (and we do), there is a progression that a pitcher must take to fine tune their mechanics and release point prior to pitching at game speed from standard distance. If we try to jump right on the mound and expect to execute our mechanics and pitches right away, it will not work. In order to train their bodies to execute the mechanics and release point correctly (and consistently), pitchers should perform a progression from drill work (balance drill, power position drill) and pitch to 56 feet at 65% effort at the beginning of their bullpen session. This initial step to their bullpen prepares their body sufficiently to execute their mechanics and pitches at normal distance.

I was able to watch some of the best players in the world on a daily basis and learned that nearly every one of them devotes a great deal of time fine-tuning their mechanics and execution at slower speeds to prepare themselves for game speed result. If you watch batting practice at a major league game, you will notice that almost all of the hitters take their first few rounds of 7-8 swings at less than game effort. They are going through a daily “progression” to get their swing ready for game speed.

It takes this type of dedication to a hitting or pitching progression on a daily basis to teach our bodies the proper mechanics so that we do not have to think about them on the field in competition. I once had a great coach tell me that during your work sessions, you either need to focus on mechanics or result, but not both. If you focus too much on result in practice, your mechanics will not be there in the game. If you have to focus on mechanics in the game, it is too late. You should have taught your body the mechanics in practice so that your body just does it right in the game.

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This is definitely easier said than done but if players dedicate a good portion of their practice on teaching their bodies the mechanics, they are more prepared to perform in the game. By utilizing the right practice progressions that help us fine-tune mechanics, we truly learn the mechanics to use them correctly for success in the game.

Good luck. Practice smart. Practice consistently.

- Brad Woodall; *Owner, Woodall Training-Baseball*  
*Former Major League Pitcher and Professional Coach*

### Brad Woodall

Brad Woodall's baseball instruction experience spans nearly two decades and has reached players across the country. Since its inception in 1999, *Woodall Baseball Instruction* (now known as **Woodall Training**) has grown from a few individual pitching lessons at the local park to a thriving, all-encompassing baseball consulting business providing baseball instruction to players and coaches across the nation. Additionally, Brad authored the successful book: A Parent's Guide to Pitching in 1999.



In 1993, Brad earned his B.A in Economics from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill where he was a pitcher, outfielder, and first baseman. He played in the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska (1989), was an All-ACC performer (1990, 1991) and a two-time summer league All-American as a pitcher and outfielder.

Brad's professional baseball experience comprises of ten years as a pitcher and two years as a coach. As a professional baseball player, he quickly climbed the ranks in the Atlanta Braves Organization and joined one of the most talented pitching staffs in history. After being named the (AAA) International League Player of the Year in 1994, Brad joined Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, Chipper Jones, John Smoltz, and others in Atlanta for parts of 3 seasons. He was a member of the Atlanta Braves World Championship and National League Championship teams in 1995-1996. Brad subsequently spent the 1998-1999 seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers and Chicago Cubs, respectively, appearing in 40 games (23 starts) during that period. Brad transitioned into coaching and served as a pitching coach in the Tampa Bay Rays organization for the 2002 and 2003 seasons.

After re-locating to Madison, WI, Brad earned an MBA in Entrepreneurial Management (2005) from UW-Madison. Brad and his wife, Kari, are co-owners of Woodall Training. Woodall Training provides fitness training, baseball and swim instruction to fitness enthusiasts and athletes throughout the country.