

STOP ACTION TRAINING

Tai Chi for Baseball

Tai Chi is an ancient oriental technique for disciplined control over body dynamics. It's perfect as a stop-action tool for breaking down the fluid moves of baseball into their proper sequence. A reminder stop-action is a teaching tool not a throwing style – the actual full throws or swings in practices or in games should not have any pauses in them.

Here's how you use it.

- In each baseball event—swinging at the ball, picking up a grounder, throwing to a base – there's a certain rhythm and sequence. During the event, certain muscles are brought into play; certain leg, body and arm angles work best.
- With the tai chi approach...
 - You stop the action at each critical point.
 - You check your angles.
 - You feel which muscles are pulling or pushing in the right direction.
 - You adjust if necessary.
 - Then you move to the next check point.
- It's important to check visually – maybe with a mirror – and to check muscle forces (like isometric training).
- The rhythm is move – hold – check – adjust – move. That gives you about a 3 – second stop – action at each point.
- Once you have the tai chi points in your muscle memory, move on to the next technique...

Slow-Mo Plays and Replays

- Once you have the stop action down, make the sequence fluid, but at 1/4th speed. This helps you discover if the steps give you dynamic balance – control while in motion. Repeat several times before going to full speed.

Learning It Backwards

- One of the new ways to learn is to spend more time on the key point of the action – release of throw, bat hitting ball – and then work backwards by adding the step before that. It's sometimes called back shaping or backward chaining.

Heel Taps and Other Feedback

- As a final tip, to get your timing right, try to create 'feedback' opportunities – balance check points.
Example – at the start of a fielding throw or bat swing, you should be on the inside balls of your feet. A little heel tap (both heels) will give you proper feedback.

-Rick Church and Ron Wolforth – Can-Am Baseball/Softball Academy