



UP YOUR GAME – February 2026

February Edition Topics

- Training regimens to increase swing speed, power, and stamina
- Hitting fundamentals, including approach to the plate and positioning for success
- Two new Rule changes for the CCSSL in 2026

Countdown to the 2026 Softball Season

We are now just one month closer to the start of our 2026 softball season. Have you gotten off the couch yet? If not, there is still time to get started. Even if you have not begun working with the conditioning stretches we published in January, you can still prepare your body for the upcoming season, **GET STARTED!**

Building on Conditioning: Focus on Power, Swing Speed, and Stamina

This February, **Up Your Game** continues the journey that began last month with conditioning and training. The focus now shifts to activities designed to increase your swing speed, power, and overall stamina.

Power Training: The Importance of Leg Strength

Power in softball starts from the ground up, beginning with the legs. Many players may not realize that generating hitting power is rooted in strong legs. As highlighted in the Bob Woldyk video, pushing off your back leg into a full-body stride and hip rotation is initiated by strong legs. While timing is essential, leg strength is the crucial element for creating thrust and propelling your body rotationally through the hitting zone.

Training Tips: Building Leg Strength

Squats

- Squats are an effective way to build leg strength. You do not need weight to benefit, though adding them can enhance the routine. To begin, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and keep your back as straight as possible. Bend your knees and squat low and slow, holding the position for ten seconds. Then, push up to a standing, straight position. Aim for 10 to 15 repetitions.
- To modify, add weights such as a kettle bell or dumbbell if available. To increase the challenge, perform lateral side steps—moving one leg at a time—for an additional 10 to 15 repetitions.



Lunges

Lunges are another key exercise for developing leg strength. Incorporate them into your routine to further build power for your swing.

- Walking Lunges: Step forward into a lunge, alternating legs. This dynamic stretch engages the hips, quads, and glutes, enhancing lower body strength and flexibility.
- To modify, utilize light weights (Kettle Bell or Dumbbell)

Leg Press and Extensions

- If you have access to gym equipment you can augment your leg strength program by doing Leg Press, Leg extension, and Hamstring extension on accessible machines.

Training Tips: Building Upper Body Strength

Core focus – improves swing speed, enhances rotational balance and control

- Planks (front and side) – hold for a minimum 2 minutes
- Sit Ups – (15 to as many as you can do)
- Torso Rotation – hands across the chest or hold light weight with hands in front, rotate side to side slowly (15 reps each side)
- Leg Lifts – Lying flat on the floor or bench, raise both legs 6 – 10 inches and hold for ~ 15 seconds (or more if capable)

Shoulder and Arm focus – Keeps the Rotator Cuff strong and reduces strain

- Resistance band (available at Dick's Sports) - utilize different arm positions to retract and extend your arms and shoulders (EG: side pull each arm, behind the head pull each arm)
- Light dumbbell shoulder raises
- Triceps extensions
- Bicep curls
- Wrist Curls



Upper Body Strength – You don't need heavy bench press to hit with more power, you do need balanced Strength!

- Push ups (20+) – you can modify utilizing a waste high table or counter if you can't go all the way to the floor
 - Try doing both a wide and close grip to enhance strength
- Dumbbell Bench Press (light to moderate weight) or full bench if you have access
- Cable Cross (if you have access to equipment) – Chest Press/Lat Pulldown
- One Arm Row – (light to moderate weight) 10 -15 reps)

Speed, Agility, and Balance – Often forgotten but Cardio is critical to success

- Short Sprints → (10-25 yards)
- Ladder footwork or cone drills (get the feet moving)
- Single leg balance holds (1-2 minutes each leg)
- Cardio, Cardio, Cardio!

Stamina: If you want to increase your stamina with any of these workouts (or your own routine) consider moving from your standard 7 – 10 reps for each activity towards 12-15 reps.... this may require less weight but will help you increase your ability to push through and prepare for more durability

Some safety tips when completing these Conditioning Stretches and Training activities:

- Warm up for several minutes before engaging these exercises
- Prioritize form over weight
- Avoid exercise that causes joint pain
- Use controlled tempo vs jerky motion

Note: There are many different stretches and training regimens to support improved performance and health. Our goal is to provide visibility to a few experiential activities that could enhance performance and reduce injury. We suggest that you establish a Pre-Season routine and a Pre-Game routine for yourself.



Hitting Fundamentals

There are several topics that we will be attempting to cover for you as we mentioned in our introductory newsletter.

- Approach to the plate
- Positioning for success
- Opposite field hitting techniques
- Situational hitting

We will be focused on the first two topics during this segment.

Approach to the Plate:

Are you the batter that simply steps into the batter's box and hope you get the right pitch to get a hit? Hopefully not, but, if so, our goal is to try to change that!

Preparation:

Your approach to the plate should start **before** you get to the batter's box! Understanding who the Pitcher is, what their pitching tendencies are (High, Low, Deep, Short, inside or outside pitches) is essential while you are in the on deck circle. Knowing where the fielders are playing as well as understanding the situation (# outs, men on base, score, etc.) is critical as well. Having a plan **BEFORE** you get to the batter's box should dictate how you want to position yourself in the box.

Stepping into the Batter's Box:

As you may recall from the Woldyk video, the sweet spot for hitting the ball lies between your shoulder and waist. Hitting the ball in this space allows a much more balanced and level plane swing which will produce results more aligned with line drive type hits. That said, positioning yourself in the batter's box to enable you to swing at the softball in this area is key.....too far back and you may be hitting the ball below your waist (easy ground ball or infield pop fly)... too far forward in the box could require you to swing at a ball above your shoulders. (Fly ball to shallow outfield or ground ball, right side typically). All



of this depends on the arc and speed of the Pitch.....This is why we want you to prepare before you get into the box!

The next concept for positioning is distance from the plate. This is also crucial to “Barrel up” the swing. You want to be at a distance from the plate where the barrel of your bat (if swung level) will connect in the “sweet spot” to provide the maximum impact on the ball. You can measure this simply by holding the bat level out approximately halfway thru your swing and verify that the barrel covers all of the plate plus 2-3 inches, (you can adjust this based on your personal swing mechanics).

My typical positioning goes as follows:

- Position to the plate: Back foot is about 1-2 inches from the very front of home plate
- Distance from the plate: Two and ½ shoe lengths from the side of the plate
- I will adjust this depending on the Pitcher and the situation

You all will need to adapt your positioning based on how comfortable you get with developing your swing mechanics. But keep in mind, the goal here is to position yourself with the ability to make contact with the pitch somewhere between your shoulder and waist.

Some additional considerations:

- Keeping your back elbow “up” during your swing is critical. What do we mean by this..... level swing mechanics will produce a harder hit line drive ball. Dropping that back elbow/shoulder will typically produce a lazy fly ball. Start your batting position with your elbows high! If you ever see my swing, you will notice that my starting position has my elbows up near my chin with the bat tilted down towards my backside. You will need to find your personal approach to create high **elbow muscle memory** to support your swing mechanics.
- Gripping the bat is also a means to affect the power of your swing. **Choking up** on the bat can provide a bit more control but will diminish



the power of your swing. Moving your hands down on the handle, even **overlapping** the knob of the bat will provide more WIP and therefore more power with your swing. However, this takes a lot of reps to get used to making a level swing plane so if you want to try this, find a way to get 50-100 swings to get the proper feel.

- Other factors that are more related to your personal preference for your consideration include, Batting Gloves, grip level, and knuckle alignment.

Some Rules changes for 2026:

The CCSSL Board has met in January and has made several changes based on the Rules Committee recommendations.... here are some of the changes:

1. Batter's Box Change-Change the current Batter's Box rule to align with that for SSUSA below:

(Rule effected Page 24 Rule 6 Section 3 Paragraph A) Refer to Exhibit 1A for copy of current CCSSL Rule, Exhibit 1B for a copy of Batting Positions from SSUSA Playing Rule and Exhibit 1C copy of clarification from SSUSA Message Board

*"The batter must take an initial position with his back foot no further forward than a line defining the front edge of home plate. The batter will be called **out** if the batter makes contact with the ball when the **back** foot is completely further forward than the line defining the front edge of home plate".*

This means that the front foot location is deemed in play UNLESS the front foot steps in front of or on the plate.

Rationale: The current Batter's box (Mat or turf) are not sized correctly and are often not placed or aligned properly, potentially causing an inappropriate OUT call, which was witnessed many times in league play as well as in the Classic. This change would fix the focus onto the stationary plate and eliminate the variability in Mat size and positioning. In addition, many umpires did not enforce the current rule because it is too difficult to manage, however, one Umpire made a commitment to start enforcing the rule only in the playoffs which proves the rule inconsistent with normal league play. Shifting the Batter's Box rule to align with the current SSUSA rule allows the umpire to more easily watch and enforce the rule and also prevents Batter's from advancing forward towards the Pitcher which addresses the safety issue.

2. Replacing Home Safety Home Plate with a line to be crossed (Rule Effected Page 36 Rule 8 Section 10

paragraph B) Refer to Exhibit 2A for copy of current CCSSL Rule, Exhibit 2B for existing scoring flat placement Exhibit 2C for placement of scoring line, Exhibit 2D1& 2D2 Diamond Layout per SSUSA and Exhibit 2E from SSUSA 2025 Rules Summary



"Runners must touch runner's home base scoring line or touch the ground beyond the runner's home base scoring line."

This rule change replaces Rule 8 Section 10 Paragraph B

Rationale: This will match tournament play easier call for the umpire and lessen the chance of injury

Topics for the next Edition of **UP YOUR GAME**:

- Hitting Fundamentals – Opposite Field and Situational hitting
- Base running techniques and guides

We Want to Hear from You!

Thank you for your continued interest in **Up Your Game**. We hope these topics have been beneficial to your training and preparation. Please feel free to share any comments or suggestions for future editions.