

MAKE THE MOST OF THE WALL

MAINTAINING MECHANICS, INTENSITY KEYS TO SOLITARY PRACTICE TIME

BY MATT DaSILVA, PHOTOS BY JOHN STROHSACKER/LAXPHOTOS.COM

It's not enough to practice at the wall. It must be done with purpose and intensity, says former Maryland All-American Peter Worstell. Here, US Lacrosse communications department intern ZACH BRADLEY, soon to be a Tufts Jumbo, demonstrates a few drills.

Like the driving range in golf, a punching bag in boxing or the batting cage in baseball, "the wall" is a place where repetition breeds skill, and fundamentals are of the essence.

To a fault, lacrosse players oftentimes treat wall ball as a stationary activity. Bad habits can materialize just as easily as good ones when the moving fundamentals are not implemented. Peter Worstell, a former four-time All-American at Maryland and a high school coach in California, offers a wall-ball workout that is diverse and, if done properly, tiresome.

Worstell, who presented a live field demonstration in January at the 2006 US Lacrosse National Convention, calls wall ball "a topic that I am very, very passionate about, although it's a topic that isn't the most glamorous."

Speaking to convention-goers in front of a collapsible practice wall, Worstell contended: "There's a tendency for [players] to take their game from 'A' and 'B,' and go right to 'Z.' We have a habit of saying to a guy, 'Michael, you really have to go out and hit a wall.' But how many times have we showed Michael what that looks like?"

With Worstell's help and input from some other popular wall drill engineers, the Lacrosse Classroom took recess outdoors and hit the bricks. Next time you go out to a wall, follow these guidelines, and you'll be housing line drills by the time next season surfaces.

Right Hand, Left Hand

(50 reps each)

Start off standing 10-15 feet from the wall, with your feet spread in throwing position, perpendicular to the wall. Having the step already in place allows you to concentrate on the upper body mechanics of throwing — keeping your biceps by your ear, your hips and shoulders creating a torque motion, snapping the wrist of your top hand and fashioning a full follow-through.

Do 25 reps on each hand. They should be rapid (an optimal wall ball workout lasts about 30 minutes). Then move to within 5 feet of the wall, choke up on your stick handle, and repeat reps of 25 on your right and left hands.

"It's about wall *work*. I want reps. Forget how many times you drop the ball. You want to dial in on the fundamentals," Worstell says. "Push yourself a little bit.

