

Staying Focused in the Outfield

IMG
BASEBALL
ACADEMY

by Jason Elias



The outfield can be a very lonely and daunting place given the amount of game action an outfielder gets or, possibly more important, the lack of action. One of the toughest elements of successful outfield play is being able to maintain focus on the task at hand if you go a period of time without any balls hit your way.

Outfielders may not get a baseball hit to them at all throughout the course of a game and then...boom! The game is on the line and that outfielder becomes

the hero or the goat – all largely depending on focus.

The thing is, it is virtually impossible to stay completely focused for an entire two-or three-hour game while in the outfield. You must approach your job with the ability to focus “3 seconds at a time.”

Here is how to maintain your focus as an outfielder:

- OBTAIN AS MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT THAT YOU CAN.**

What type of turf or grass is the field? What is the weather like? Is it windy? Does the ballpark have a warning track? Are there elements in foul territory such as a bullpen or batting practice turtle to be aware of?

- FIND YOUR ALIGNMENT.**

Will you be playing a hitter “Straight Up” or with an “Opposite” field shift? Are you in a “No





Doubles” defense playing deep and guarding the line or are you in a “Two Strike” Defense moving in and guarding against the bloop-type hit.

•ESTABLISH AND UTILIZE A PRE-PITCH ROUTINE.

I recommend to my IMG outfielders that they take a step with their left foot, a step with their right foot, and “pinch their knees” together with their hands at their hips. This type of movement will allow the OF to start to gain some momentum and become reactive. By “pinching our knees,” we put ourselves into an “explosive” position ready to move in any and all directions!

•FOCUS ON PITCH LOCATION, TYPE AND THE HITTER’S BAT ANGLE.

These variables will give you a hint as to where the ball may be put into play. As an outfielder, you should know what type of pitches will be thrown in certain situations. In general, you need to know that if the pitcher is in a negative count (1-0, 2-0, 2-1, 3-1 or 3-0) then you can likely expect a fastball. If the

pitcher is ahead in the count (0-1, 1-2, 0-2) then you can potentially expect an off-speed pitch or a fastball outside of the strike zone.

•IF THE BALL IS PUT IN PLAY, REACT.

If it is not to you directly, you must put yourself in position to backup the play. Always be active and play the game with passion!

•IF THE BALL IS FOULED OFF, OFFERED AT AND MISSED, OR NOT OFFERED AT...RELAX.

Take a deep breath. You have a few moments to clear your mind. When the pitcher receives the baseball and steps back on the rubber, the process repeats itself. Do your pre-pitch routine and be prepared for our next 3 seconds of focus.

By implementing these tips into your game, you will increase your consistency and become better in the outfield!

Jason Elias is the head outfield instructor for the IMG Baseball Academy. He played four years at Baldwin-Wallace College, twice winning the Yellow Jacket Award for athletic, academic and off-field achievements. Check out IMG Baseball Academy at imgacademies.com or call 800-872-6425 for more information.