



## **Kettlebells and Baseball: Is it all Hype?**

*by Dan Huff and Jason C. Brown*

We are always looking for new and different ways to work with our ballplayers. We use everything from medicine balls to weighted balls to barbells and dumbbells. Recently we have been playing around with the new fad in exercise (which is actually an ancient training method) – Kettlebells. If you are unfamiliar with a Kettlebell you can do a quick internet search and millions of pages will pop up for you, but let me explain them briefly here. A kettlebell is an iron ball with a handle on the top of it, picture your tea kettle made of iron and weighing anywhere from 16 to 80 pounds!

Over the past few months of experimenting with kettlebells we have found that they are a great tool that you should consider for your baseball conditioning program because they address many of the key issues facing baseball players.

Traditionally, many Baseball coaches have shied away from barbell Olympic lifts due to the fear that overhead lifts would quickly lead to injured athletes. The elimination of Olympic lifts however left the baseball player less explosive and powerful.

This article will outline how kettlebell drills can build outstanding amounts of power throughout the entire body, from fingertips to toes, while making the body more resilient to injury.

Kettlebell training develops power from a dead stop. The kettlebell Snatch, Clean and High-Pull performed from the floor will generate powerful triple extension of the knee, hip and ankle complex. It's this triple extension that will increase your speed down the baseline and have you stealing more bases than Rickey Henderson.

- Kettlebell training builds static and dynamic grip strength. Powerful grip and forearms are essential to your batting skills. The hand-to-hand drills using kettlebells will teach you how to apply just enough pressure at just the right time, a skill that is essential for managing fatigue and getting the most from your body.
- Kettlebell training creates strong and flexible shoulders. Kettlebell drills performed overhead take your shoulders through very long ranges of motion, building stability alongside mobility. These two qualities together are crucial for a long, injury free career.
- Kettlebell training demands focus. You just can't lie down on your back and zone out while kettlebell training. Many of the drills develop hand-eye coordination, timing, spatial awareness and rhythm. All qualities needed for athletic movement on the field.

- Kettlebell training hardens the body to deal with ballistic force. Baseball is ballistic. Throwing the ball and swinging the bat are both ballistic actions, so you best train your body to deal with those forces. Not to mention the occasional collision at home plate.
- Kettlebell training corrects muscle imbalances. Many Baseball injuries occur because only one action at a joint is trained. For example, since throwing involves internal rotation at the shoulder, many trainers prescribe more internal rotation to strengthen that movement. This quickly leads to over training and injury. The kettlebell Snatch and Clean take the shoulder through external rotation, leading to a more balanced strength ratio and less chance of injury and over-training.
- Kettlebell training eliminates the need for a large training facility. Kettlebells leave a very small footprint, meaning they take up very little floor space. They can be tucked away in the corner or underneath other equipment.
- Kettlebell training allows you to never miss a workout. Simply take your kettlebell wherever you go. Training outdoors with your team can add variety and motivation as well as increase the possibilities for conditioning drills. Kettlebell training develops power in several directions at once. Since baseball players need to move well laterally while looking straight ahead, only with the kettlebell Lateral Swing, Snatch and Clean can you focus your attention straight ahead while producing explosive movement laterally.

If you've never had the opportunity to use a kettlebell, search around and find someone in your area that has one and start experimenting with it. You'll quickly notice that you can be very imaginative and create movements that very closely resemble the sport specific movements that you perform on the diamond.