

“Wall Ball” is the single most effective training technique that was implemented in my game, and the one that I preach first and foremost to any aspiring player I come in contact with. **“WALL BALL”** is the one aspect of training that can help an individual develop and be the sure handed ball control player, regardless of position, that every team needs.

-Paul Carcaterra

Paul Carcaterra is widely regarded as one of the top youth lacrosse teachers in the USA. He is a former captain, National Champion, and All-American at Syracuse. He also played for the MLL New Jersey Pride in 2001 & 2002. Carcaterra also is an analyst for ESPN.

As this wonderful sport evolves, both from an equipment and training standpoint, we are all exposed to new ideas about how to become better coaches and players. I have been involved with the sport of lacrosse for 26 years, at the youth/high school (Yorktown), college (Syracuse), international (Team England), and professional levels (NJ Pride). There were many innovative ideas that helped me become a strong player, and coach in Westchester County, NY. However, **the single most effective training technique that was implemented in my game, and the one that I preach first and foremost to my players as a coach, is one of the oldest. “WALL BALL” is the one aspect of training that can help a player develop and be the sure handed ball control player, regardless of position, that every team needs.**

I look back to my childhood, and remember buying into this system that was preached to me from people with names such Gait, Maracheck, Zulberti, and Nelson. Committing yourself to 20 minutes a day, yes only 20 minutes will improve your stick handling, hand eye coordination, passing, catching, shooting, fakes, and trickery. The beauty of “wall ball” is that you do not have to rely on anyone else to get better. Just you and the wall. There are six phases of “wall ball” below that I feel can benefit everyone regardless of position. Find a wall in your area (it could be the side of a school, gym, handball court, etc) that is at least 15 yards long and ten feet high.

Phase 1-Quick Stick/Rapid Fire: Line up around 3-5 yards from the wall. First, 50 right hand throw and catches without cradling. After completing 50 right hand throw and catches, do the same with your left. Did you notice I didn't mention starting with your strong hand? With “wall ball” anything you do right, you follow-up left. This stage is great because it allows you to work on quick sticks, hand eye coordination, and one timing. You will become better about getting rid of the ball in a timely fashion without even noticing it by practicing this stage.

Phase 2-12 Yard Passing: Line up 12 yards from the wall. Start with 30 right hand throws, which will come back to you on one bounce. When you retrieve the ball from the one bounce, cradle once, then follow-up with the next throw. When you have completed 30 right handed throws, follow-up with 30 left.

Phase 3-Throwing & Catching On The Run: This may be my favorite and most helpful stage. First I start lined up 5-7 yards from the wall on the far left side of the wall. I begin this stage with the stick in my right hand and while I am running alongside the wall (towards the other end), I throw and catch the ball on the run. The important part is to throw the ball on the run and not always catching the ball stick side. I like to do this during every stage. Do you always get a pass stick side? No. Therefore, in your training you should throw the ball against the wall and catch it cross hand (or across your face). After I run one length of the wall, I run back to the other end throwing lefty (doing the same thing I did with my right). Keep repeating these steps. This stage should be done for about 5-7 minutes.

Phase 4-Shooting: Line-up around 12-15 yards from the wall. Get in proper shooting formation (hands loose, three quarter/overhand motion, snapping of the hips, and following throw) mark a few places on the wall with tape to aim at. Shoot at about 80% velocity, having the ball come back to you with one bounce. Depending on where you aim, the ball may take bounces that aren't the same, so you have to work a little bit. Start with 25 right, and follow up with about 25 left.

Phase 5-Pass and Switch: This stage really allows you to work on hand-eye coordination and stick transferring. I begin by setting up roughly 7 yards from the wall. I start with the stick in my right hand. With proper stick technique I pass with my right hand and instantly switch to my left hand and catch the ball with my left hand. I then pass with my left and catch with my right. I switch every time until I throw 25 times with both hands.

Phase 6-Trickery: This stage is fun. This is a great time to practice behind the backs (make sure you are not following through too much. Step in the direction you are aiming, and the behind the back motion is only about a foot, with the head of your stick ending up hitting the top part of your arm near your shoulder). Around the world, throw the legs, and any other creative stuff can be incorporated at this time. I would leave around 5 minutes for this stage. I am a firm believer that this stage is important. If you can pull this stage off (and only if you are mastering the other 5 stages should you try this stage), it is an indication that you have a strong comfort level with your stick and great hand eye coordination. It is also a stage that can help you in terms pulling something off in a game that is nice to watch and necessary. There are times in a game when a behind the back is the only option.

So there it is, six stages of "Wall Ball." Get a radio with your favorite beats, a snow cap and duck boots if there is snow on the ground, and do what you have to do to get out at least five days a week for 20 minutes/per day. Don't let the competition pass you by. No excuses!