

My 2003 Top Product Picks

#1 The BOSU Trainer.

We saw this in its R&D stage with Fernando Montes, strength and conditioning coach of Cleveland, in spring training. We knew instantly that this was a great tool because of the good time the Indian players were having with it. We have used several of these in our facility for about 10 months now. It is affordable, entertaining and fun. But most of all it represents an amazing conditioning tool with an extraordinary flexibility of use.

BOSU is short for both sides up. The ½ ball design provides stability in an unstable environment. This device can provide balance and strength conditioning in a chaotic workout. Lay it flat it works similar but with more stability than large training balls. Turn it over grip it with 2 hands and place your feet on it and it's a whole new world. This is another key product to make condition fun, challenging and provide a serious and significant functional fitness workout. It comes with a video to explain the dozens of drills. There's extra fun after you use it for a while. You will create some new ones on your own. Don't fool yourself; these subtle drills are very hard to perform. Available through M-F Athletic Company 800- 556-7464

The Graduated Mitt System

Brady Custom Gloves directs their marketing toward high school and younger players with this innovated catching system series. There are 3 separate gloves costing only a total of \$165. Brady Executive Allen Shimizu said the company wanted to design more than just an adjunct infield training glove model to their complete glove line. Their system design has 3 variations of flat or open pocket depth. The player progresses through the various stages of difficulty to mastery. These are quality gloves made by dedicated baseball people. 650-321-8448, Menlo Park, CA.

BP Barrel

This product is clever, not complicated and easy on a BP pitcher's back. The BP Barrel is designed so that it always provides a coach with several baseballs at his waist. The barrel holds up to 200 balls. As balls are removed the lift mechanism raises the level of balls to the top of the barrel. The sturdy barrel serves as a storage bin with a waterproof hinged lid. Mounted on to wheels it is easy transported. 866-6barrel, Carleton, MI.

Baseball Renewer

I have no idea how this works.... but it does and remarkably so. A new exhibitor to ABCA but an established baseball family business, many teams (like the LA Dodgers) and leagues are using this product. An electrical motor rotates a strong solid drum. Inside the drum are dozens of chunks of what look to be rubber erasers. As the balls tumble and contact the rubber compound the dirty balls "renew" back to a white color. We are told that leagues actually set up recycling boxes at fields. The previous weeks game balls are picked up renewed and subsequently returned to the fields. Sad news for balls sales!

Good news for twilight batters trying to see the ball better. Safety first!
626-336-9586, Hacienda Heights, CA.

Pro Mounds Inc.

There are a number of quality indoor mounds on the market. What make these different? Simply the company's willingness to custom design a wider unit. If a training mound is too narrow it will alter pitching mechanics, particularly with 6'3"+ high school students learning how to use there new growing bodies. Some of these baby giraffe like creatures have a hard time walking into through a standard door without injury. A 5 foot wide (or less) training mound is too narrow. The company offers several mounds at with and without turf for indoor baseball & softball, BP platforms and batting mats. 877-22-pitch. www.promounds.com Winthrop, MA.

Compression Clothing

Compression clothing has recently become very popular with players, particularly the shirts. Two companies Stromgren and Spettro offer well made loose fit or skin tight compression shirts at very competitive pricing. They are available in long or short sleeves high or low necks. But what is attractive and unique to these brands is the absence of their company logo on the chest. That will give your team the flexibility to customize the shirt into your teams uniform concept and logo. Stromgren Hays, KS 800-5271988 & Spettro USA, Laguna Hills, CA 949-448-7570.

The Category of Motion Capture

This year's show had a remarkable number of new technology motion capture exhibitors. You cannot call them videotape cameras because there is no tape in the process. Digital technology has revolutionized this market. Images are now stored on hard drive with rapid access file systems. The ease of use, quickness in retrieving archived images and the graphic telestrations are simply outstanding. Many of the manufactures have originally targeted and designed products for the demands of golf and tennis teaching professionals.

There were so many quality, innovative new products we cannot in this article due them justice other than to recognize them. But we will do an in-dept product review and comparison in the near future. The following exhibitors represent many levels of options and costs. Some of them only sell software, others offer turnkey systems, still others will mix and match hardware and software.

VCoach 913-905-1774 KS

Amaya Systems 858-558-4235 CA

Skill Technologies 602-277-7678 AZ

Sports Motion 888-265-6226 CA

Pinnacle Systems 978-275-0201 MA

Dartfish USA 888-655-3850 GA