

The Towel

Building Speed, Strength and Endurance

To improve the body, as with all physical goals, one common thread runs throughout...

RESISTANCE.

The following is a process I have carefully tested and have yielded positive results at every experience level. The process is quite simple, however yielding positive results and gaining the maximum benefit from this process is dependent upon consistent, regimented and proper use of it.

All you need is a full size bath towel, preferably one you don't mind parting with, and your favorite snare drum practicing surface... practice pads of all types and, of course, drums are perfectly fine to use.

- 1) Begin with your towel completely unfolded and draped over the drum (that is one layer of towel).

- 2) Choose a sticking pattern: RLL RLL RLL RLL RLL

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RLRRLRL RLRRLRL RLRRLRL RLRRLRL

Or any pattern you wish. You may elect to use a pattern from George Stone's, *Stick Control* or Mitchell Peters, *Developing Dexterity* or the like.

- 3) **Play the pattern as fast as possible maintaining a smooth and even dynamic, or the desired dynamic gesture, and a steady tempo for two minutes.** (Do not compensate your pattern or the dynamic integrity by playing too fast or too loud.)
- 4) Relax for about thirty seconds, during which, fold your towel in half to get two layers and drape the towel back over the drum.
- 5) Repeat step 3).
- 6) Relax for another thirty seconds, during which, fold your towel into thirds to get three layers and drape the towel back over the drum.
- 7) Repeat step 3).

At this point you should begin to understand that with the more layers of towel you're playing on the more your wrists have to work to make up for the loss of 'natural' bounce the drum provides.

¹ The first accent pattern is a softer more subtle accent where the second accent pattern is louder and more dramatic.

- 8) Continue repeating step 3) and relaxing for thirty seconds and increasing the amount of layers of towel by folding it twice, three times, etc. until there is virtually no 'natural' bounce from the drum, or until you can't fold your towel any more.
- 9) Relax for thirty seconds, during which, unfold your towel once and repeat step 3).
- 10) Repeat step 9) until your towel is completely unfolded.

You should feel and hear an improvement when you return to the natural drum or drum pad surface whether your goal was to improve strength, speed and endurance or to achieve an even tempo and dynamic of a more intricate pattern.

A very important concept to understand when using this process is relaxation, as so many great players and authors have preached.

I highly recommend finding a tempo when first trying this process that does not cause you to tire quickly or, worse, sharp pains. 'Fighting' muscles that have to relax in order to simply raise or lower the wrists is exactly what will cause fatigue, pains and perhaps irreversible damage and is accomplishing the opposite of what this process should. Of course moving incorrectly altogether does one no good either.²

There is the saying, *no pain no gain*, so a certain amount of 'burning' may be associated with this process, but again start at a relaxed tempo and condition your wrists, fingers and arms and gradually find what tempo is most beneficial.

Some alternate uses are practicing with just one or two layers of towel for a series of repetitions for your entire 'towel session'.

As you become comfortable with this process and have regularly used it for several weeks, increase your playing time from two minutes to two and a half minutes and keep increasing accordingly. Likewise, cut the time from two minutes to one and a half minutes if you feel two minutes is causing you to tire too quickly or play with less quality.

Keep in mind...

- 1) Pay attention to correct motion. Don't compensate your pattern, consistency of dynamic, tempo or anything else just to play fast.
- 2) Carefully select your tempo. Use a metronome. Log your tempo from day to day.
- 3) Make sure that the pattern you choose will accomplish your goal(s).
- 4) Relax. Do not overplay.

Happy Practicing!

² Learn to use gravity to your advantage when the stick is moving downward. Pursue the advice of a respected player/instructor in regard to moving properly.