



**Texas Bandmasters Association
Convention/Clinic July 21-23, 2022**

**Behind the Scenes with the
Vandegrift Drum Line**

**CLINICIANS:
Joe Hobbs, Mark Hunter**

**DEMO GROUP:
Vandegrift HS Drum Line**



Behind the Scenes with the Vandegrift Drum Line

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Percussion Camp Suggestions:

Take your time! This will be your best chance to really break down and discuss technique. I suggest focusing on a skill set a day. For instance: Up Stroke/8's on Monday, Down Strokes/Bucks or Accent Tap on Tuesday, High Accent to Low diddle (Paradiddle Rudiments) on Wednesday, Rolls on Thursday and Flam Vocabulary on Friday. We typically do technique deep dives in the morning sessions and focus on Show music in the afternoon.

Have a plan for the end of camp. We typically try and do a movement to a movement-and- a half of music per week. With the goal of being able to do a standstill run through at the end of band camp. Most times this run through is under tempo.

When learning music, take it at a tempo where the students can connect concepts from the warm up routine. Don't be afraid to teach the music well below the written tempo. Be patient, and be meticulous.

Make sure the learning environment is good for learning. Outside might be ideal for hearing clarity, but being inside in a comfortable environment will typically keep students more engaged.

Battery Warm Up Routine Suggestions:

The warm up book should reflect skill sets that you find throughout your show music. Make sure to cover the following stroke types: Up/Legato, Down/Marcato, Down stroke to low double and Controlled Rebound.

The warm up book should cover all dynamics. Make sure to play exercises at a variety of dynamics to solidify the students' understanding of heights/dynamics as well as the amount of wrist/arm in each dynamic.

Try to cover section specific skill sets throughout the exercises. Bass Drums should learn exercises in unison and also have a split part. Most exercises should have a Bass Drum part that focuses on 1s, 2s, 3s, 4s. Unisons during 8 on a hand should reflect common band/unison rhythms (dotted quarter notes, quarter note triplets, etc...).

Tenor arounds should follow the same rules as Bass Drum Splits. Try and sneak in arounds that will reflect moments in the show. Covering Scrapes and Crosses in the warm up book is crucial to help teaching advanced tenor concepts.

Roll "chops" are one the most important skills to develop. Your warm up routine should reflect this idea. Having a variety of exercises that work duple and triplet rolls is crucial. Make sure to also have exercises that incorporate accents into roll figures.

Front Ensemble Technique/Warm Ups:

We break the learning process into 4 parts. One 2 mallet exercise per day, one 4 mallet exercise per day, and one section of music at a slower tempo per day. The exercises work on similar skill sets that get more and more difficult. We will keep adding on to what we are playing with all exercises and show as we go along. We have the auxiliary students (commonly called rack players) play most of the 2 mallet exercises with us. When they don't play keyboard instruments, we have a coinciding exercise they can play on drum pad. The 4th part is chops. Intricate and/or fast mallet passages require chops to play well, consistently. Try to use one of your exercises that directly works the skill set you need to play in the show that's difficult. Take it up in tempo little by little until you reach that show tempo or very close. If you can alter the exercise to make it exactly what the show segment is, even better. Use the floor as well. When you take away the requirements of correct notes, you can really focus on what your wrists and/or fingers are doing. The floor can help you hear how accurate your rhythms are as well. A lot of simple balancing from individual mallet to mallet can also be done on the floor. The floor is a great teaching tool and something you can always use on a rainy day.

Mallets up, down, and simple choreography should be learned as soon as possible in show music. Although you may not know all of your precise mallet selections by the end of band camp, everyone will know when they play and when they don't, or when they need

to move to a cymbal, etc. Make it simple, but plan those choreographed moves immediately as they come along in the music learning process. It is the equivalent to sticks in/out, or sticks up/down for battery. For us, this will also include preps if at all possible. A quick down up with the mallets that everyone can see and strike the instruments together from.

Checks. Wrist check patterns are not just something for battery roll phrases. Work out ahead of time what a check pattern is for a part, but give the students a moment to figure it out on their own. Ask them, "What is the right hand check for this passage?" and give them a few minutes to figure it out. Speak about it quickly to make sure everyone came to the same conclusions, then work on the checked pattern so it can guide us later. Checks can be done several other ways. During difficult or fast passages, knowing a few different check patterns will give you anchor points to hit during the passage instead of just trying to hit all correct notes, rhythms and dynamics during an extended phrase.

With all of this listed above, one of the most difficult things to do during the band camp process is to be patient. Balance how much you need to get done on a timeline (getting through music for ensemble etc) and prepare to alter your plan based on that, or how that's going. Take notes on your progress every day. Especially exercises. What tempo did you play them at, in what keys, and how did it go. Then grow from there.

Other Suggestions:

Make sure you are on top of all of the 'adult' things. By this I mean things that are out of control of the students. Things such as getting music on time, having sticks and heads ordered ahead of time, putting time into the electronics before rehearsal, etc. The goal should be to have everything set up so the students can simply focus on playing well.

Focus on clarity and readability in the arrangements. Difficult 'licks' might be great for the drummers, but won't always read well from the box. Know the adjudicating system/process and design appropriately.

Take pride in the details. Things such as flat cymbals in the front, the way the students set

up their drums or how they tape their sticks go a long way. First impressions are crucial during the competitive season.

When working on alignment between the battery and the front ensemble, our basic formula is: Drum Major watches center snares feet, front ensemble listens back, winds play to the drum majors hands. This doesn't always work. Be creative in your approach to alignment. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. During holds, we typically have the center snare or pulse center bob his/her head. This allows the drum major to keep receiving time from the battery during holds.

Thank you to the following companies for their continued support:

Innovative Percussion, Pearl/Adams Percussion, Sabian Cymbals and Evans Drum Heads