

Coaches,

I am very much looking forward to helping out each and every one of you and your teams this upcoming season. My speciality is pitching and throwing, and if I were to condense my philosophy down, as it pertains to pitching, I firmly believe that it is our goal as coaches to help build the proper Foundation for youth athletes.

Strikes are important, but let's not turn these boys into robots. Let them be athletic.

When it comes down to building a proper foundation for young players, there are a lot of areas to look at, and that can be overwhelming. My goal with all of this is to simplify and condense complicated information that is translatable to both you and your players. I will be a resource for you each step of the way, and will be available to communicate throughout the course of the season.

The following information will start with general throwing guidelines and become pitching specific.

THROWING

- As baseball players, we ONLY get 15-25 minutes Per Day to play catch. That's it. We don't get the privilege to shoot hoops or play a little stick & puck all day like other sports.

I went throughout all of high school without understanding the importance of having structure around playing catch. It was in college that I was able to properly develop and grow as a pitcher. And that started with the simple act of having focus and a guideline on catch play.

- Proper Catch Play
 - Setup cones at 30, 45, 60, 75, 90ft (dependent on age of players)
 - This gives players consistent feedback on where they are and how far they are throwing.
 - The point of playing catch is to warm up.
 - DO NOT let them start throwing hard right away. START slow. It is about warming up while they are on the way back.
 - On the way back in, players can then start to throw hard and throw the ball on a line drive.
 - Once the players have come back in, they can work on pitch grips, mechanics, etc.. (if needed) for the last 5 minutes.
 - Ensure they are throwing a 4-Seam grip while playing catch.

***** When Players Mechanics Start to Break Down, They Are Throwing From Too Far Away *****

PITCHING

If you do not know what to look for to help fix a player on the mound, it can be very hard to provide the proper direction. I have found that the best way to look at the throwing motion, holistically, is to understand that there is ALWAYS a root cause to a player struggling on the mound.

General Mechanical Flaws (In Order) To Look For:

General Rule: The Pitching motion is first a Linear Move, then Rotational. The player should be moving towards the target with their body. Once the front foot lands, the upper half then becomes rotational (think throwing a punch at the catcher).

1. Upper Body / Front Shoulder Positioning @ set position
 - a. Front shoulder needs to be slightly closed when coming set
2. Back Foot Connection to the Mound / Rubber - Helps with creating consistent stride direction with body
 - a. Is the player getting on their toes too much as they stride or as they lift their leg up?
 - b. Are they swinging their front leg open too much?
 - c. Is their head and shoulders moving up and down before they stride?
 - d. **Fix:** Players back foot should stay connected to the mound. They should have their weight drive through the mid foot as they begin their stride.
 - i. Tell Player to keep big toe, pink toe and heel on the ground as they begin their stride
3. Glove / Ball Separation - All about Timing & Direction
 - a. Timing: While everyone is different, a general rule of thumb is they should take the ball out of the glove AS they are beginning to start their stride towards the target.
 - i. Think "Glove & Front Foot are attached on a string"
 - b. Direction: Do Not Point Glove At Target, Please.
 - i. Again, everyone is different, but the glove should trail right behind the lead stride leg and a general rule is to get the elbow on the glove arm up to the target
4. Upper Body Stay Closed
 - a. The front shoulder should Not begin rotating before the front foot has hit the ground. There is room for error, but if they player is swinging his glove side shoulder way left or right, then there is an issue.
 - b. Think: Foot down, Then throw
5. Landing
 - a. The front foot should land pretty firmly. Make sure that the players landing foot is hitting the ground all at once, OR heel, then toe. Anything else, is generally an issue.
 - b. A good queue for players is to draw a line in the middle of the mound.

- i. The pitcher's stride foot should land, generally, slightly closed and on the arm side of the mound.

The following pitching drills are based off of age and whether the players are in House or Travel.

I will provide either videos and / or review ALL of these drills with the coaches at the first meeting I am able to attend.

12U+: House

- **Athletic Throws** (These drills are best for helping players clean up their arm path and be more fluid / smooth)
 - **Kneeling, Both Knees on Ground**
 - Facing target, have both knees on the ground.
 - Ball starts in the glove
 - Rotate chest into throwing position & separate the ball from glove as player begins rotation.
 - Throw
 - **Single Leg Kneeling**
 - Chest is closed / Front shoulder facing Target
 - Back Knee on the ground
 - Front leg extended towards target. NOT bent.
 - Ball starts in the glove, glove separates in front of chest, throwing arm separates back, flips up into throwing position, then player rotates torso towards target.
 - **Bent Over / Throwing On The Run**
 - Put the players in athletic situations - Think Jeter Throws OR throwing on the run. Let them figure things out on their own and be athletic throughout the movement.
 - This is also great because it takes their legs out of the motion and it is more of a reactive movement.
- **Proper Grips**
 - 4S Fastball vs 2S Fastball
 - Change up
 - Do Not palm the ball. Should feel like your fastball
 - Fingers should be spread out wider than FB
 - General rule of thumb: Player should think releasing the ball with their ring finger on top of the ball
 - Curveball
 - Easier to talk about in person.

- I will talk over these grips in more detail during the first in person or Zoom meeting.
- **Stride & Separate:** This is a great drill during catch play to help with timing for their throw. (1x Practice / 1x Throw)
 - Start with the ball in the glove and front shoulder facing target.
 - Stride to target and separate the ball from the glove at the same time.
 - As players front foot lands, the ball should be in a throwing position (Ball should be facing same direction as chest and arm in a 90 degree angle)
 - Bring everything back together
 - Repeat motion, BUT throw the ball on the second time
- **Hover Drill**
 - Start in the set position.
 - Front knee starts up near waist (think balancing on one leg)
 - Think Knee Down & Separate.
 - As the body begins its descent down the mound towards the target, the player should then be separating the ball from the glove.
 - Back foot stays connected to the ground until release
 - Front shoulder / Upper body should be closed until front foot strikes, then upper half rotation begin
 - This drill eliminates the initial move of bringing their front knee / leg up and helps create an understanding of rhythm and timing
- **Rhythm Drill**
 - Think Puppeteer
 - When player comes set. Their glove and front knee should work together
 - Come set
 - Knee up, Glove up —> Tap the front foot down on the ground once
 - Knee up, Glove up one more time —> Deliver the baseball.
- **Single Leg, Double Hop Throws:** This drill is great for getting a player to move faster to the target, use their legs more efficiently, and move better, directionally, towards the target
 - Begin in the set position
 - Start with front foot up in the air
 - Take 2 small hops towards the target (could be on flat ground or mound)
 - On the second hop, as the player hits the ground with their back foot, the player should deliver the baseball
 - Hop through the middle of the back foot, NOT the toes. This will ensure they are hopping towards their target.

