

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.

8-11U: Travel

- **Athletic Throws**
 - **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.
- **90 Degree Throws (This is a Step & Throw Drill, Not Pitching)**
 - Player comes set
 - Glove starts in front of chest (elbow up and aimed at target)
 - Throwing hand is back, ball facing same way as the Closed Chest and the arm is at a 90 Degree Angle
 - Player steps towards target and as their foot hits the ground, THEN they throw the ball.
 - The throwing arm should stay still and in control until the front foot strikes the ground.
- **Split Stance Throws**
 - Start facing the target / partner
 - Take a big step with stride foot to target / partner

- Rotate chest so front shoulder is facing target
- Throwing arm at 90 degrees
- Knees bent
- Rotate / Throw using torso and upper half, not just arm
- Feet stay on the ground
- A good queue for players is to replace their throwing shoulder with their front shoulder as they rotate.