

## PITCHING

Pitching is the most difficult and critical position in fastpitch softball. Without a good pitcher a team is in for some long games. Pitching requires dedication and practice outside of the normal team practices. It is difficult for a coach to work pitching instruction and practice into regular team practices. It is strongly recommended that a pitcher seek out a pitching coach.

### **SOFTBALL PITCHING DRILLS AND GAMES**

These are various pitching drills. The drills should be done with some purpose. The drills are for a right handed pitcher. Left handed pitcher will have to appropriately modify the position.

#### **DRILLS**

- "A-B-C-D"--pitcher is in "delivery position" for these drills.  
A--pitcher holds her pitching arm in front of her and using only her wrist throws the ball.  
B--pitcher holds her pitching hand at belt level and throws, emphasizing the follow through  
C--pitcher holds her pitching hand at shoulder height and throws.  
D--pitcher holds her pitching hand above her head and throws. (Teaches proper snap and follow through.)
- Stork--standing on the right foot, with the left leg raised, putting the left foot near the right knee. Raise the right hand above the head, pivot, stride and throw. (Teaches balance and opening).
- Half frame--standing facing third base, feet approximately shoulder width apart, transfer weight to the right foot, raise the hand above the head, push off, stride and throw without closing
- Kneelers--kneel down facing third base, both shoulders aligned with catcher, raise the left knee, placing the left foot on the ground. The right knee stays on the ground. Throw to the catcher, staying in the open position through the entire throw.
- Three-pump--standing in the start position, the pitcher does her normal delivery. When she reaches "delivery position", she does three circles before releasing the ball. She raises and lowers the left foot during each circle. (Note: There should be no movement of the head and shoulders during the circles. If the pitcher's head bounces, the pitcher is letting her weight transfer too early.)
- Slingshot--the pitcher pitches slingshot. She stands open on the mound, raises her arm backward, pushes off with her right foot, and then releases the ball as her hand goes forward. (Teaches leg drive.)
- "Eyes closed"--the pitcher throws with her eyes closed (Teaches Zen--"Use the force, Luke.")
- Reps (repetitions)--the pitcher throws, then returns to the mound quickly. The catcher returns the ball as soon as the ball hits the mitt. The pitcher starts her throwing motion AS SOON AS the ball hits her mitt and throws again. The drill is to be done AS FAST AS POSSIBLE--NO CHEATING! Most pitchers, if they do this drill correctly, will tire at 50 reps. At the end, the pitcher AND catcher should be huffing and puffing. (Good drill to integrate the various skills into a smooth motion. Also teaches aerobic breathing in pitching.)
- Strides--pitcher assume pitching position, turns and strides, without making any arm motion.
- "The wall 1"--pitcher stands faces a wall. The pitcher raises her arm and places the palm of her hand against the wall. She then makes arm circles, holding the palm of her hand against the wall as she makes the circles.
- "The wall 2"--the pitcher stands with her non-throwing shoulder (left shoulder) near the wall and pitches. This helps stop excessive shoulder motion and throwing of the glove hand.
- "Throwing a glove"--the pitcher takes a glove in the right hand and spins the arm as fast as possible. The coach yells "go", the pitcher releases the glove. The object is for the pitcher to throw the glove in a straight line. Teaches: Release point, perfect circle.
- Wrist snaps--the pitcher take a ball in her right hand. She grasps her right wrist with her left hand. She lowers the wrist to her side and throws the ball, using \*only\* her wrist to throw the ball. The left hand keeps the elbow of the right arm from bending.
- Turns--the pitcher stands without a ball facing home plate. She raises her arms to shoulder level. She turns, pivoting on her right foot so she is fully open, and then lowers the left foot. Teaches: basic foot movement.
- Distance throwing--the pitcher takes one step back from the mound and throws. If the ball gets to home plate with no arc, she takes one more step back. This continues until the ball bounces before it reaches

home plate. The pitcher takes one step forward and pitches from that distance for 10-30 pitches. Variations include doing the same drill with the "three pump", the "slingshot", "half frame", etc.

- "The stroll" or walk through--the pitcher stands behind the mound two to three feet, walks forward, and, using her pitching motions, throws the ball as she walks over the mound. Teaches weight transfer and relaxation.
- "Carolina walk through"--the same as the stroll, except that, after release, the pitcher is to keep her right foot (for a right handed pitcher) off the ground until the ball is caught by the catcher. Teaches "keeping the weight back". (Named after Coastal Carolina, where the drill originated.)
- "Medicine ball"--weight a softball, usually best accomplished by inserting finishing nails into the ball. Do any of the drills with the weighted ball.
- Quarterback--throw a nerf football underhand, obtaining a tight spiral on the ball. Teaches proper wrist snap.
- "Hit the corners"--catcher moves targets to the four corners of the strike zone. Pitcher must hit the target before catcher moves to a new corner. For young players, pitcher need only get the ball on the same side of the plate as the target.
- "Drop ball bowling"--to practice a drop, set up an obstacle (like a lawn chair) that is waist height about 20 feet from the pitcher and between the pitcher and home plate. Stand soda cans on the corners of the plate. Have the pitcher practice throwing drop balls over the obstacle and knock over a designated can. Make sure the pitcher doesn't "arc" the ball. (NOTE: This is \*fun\*.)

#### **GAMES**

- Beat Lisa Fernandez--starting with 5 points, the pitcher gets 1 point for each strike, and loses "X" points for each ball. If the pitcher gets to 10, she wins. If she gets to zero, she loses. "X" varies on the skill level of the pitcher. X would be 1 for a beginning pitcher and could be 3 or more for an advanced pitcher.
- "Two on, two out"--strike out the last batter of the game. (Variations include doing so with only drop balls, changeups, curves, or risers.)
- "One-on-one"--the catcher calls balls and strikes. Low scores in this game are better. Scoring is based on the number of walks in an inning. If a batter would have walked on four straight pitches, then a home run is charged to the pitcher. If a batter would have walked with one strike, then a double is charged. If a batter would have walked with two strikes, then a single is charged. Runs are scored as if there were "ghost runners". Three outs completes an inning.

#### **Miscellaneous thoughts on pitching**

- In facing a batter, have 3 or 4 pitch sequences in mind before you throw the first pitch
- Throwing low to bunters can generate foul balls.
- Be careful using the change with runners on base.
- Brush back hitters dug in or crowding the plate.
- Know what the batter did the last time at bat.
- Get the first out of the inning yourself
- Avoid pitches to the sweet spot area of the bat, watch hitters practice swings
- Pitch to opposites when in doubt; high/low, inside/outside, fast/slow
- Throw junk at good hitters and heat at bad hitters
- Let your catcher be your eyes at the plate
- Ball movement is more important than speed.
- To pitch faster, pitch slower.
- Know when to walk a batter