

Pitching Made Simple

I. Today we will cover the following areas:

- i. Basic Mechanics
- ii. Debunking Myths
- iii. Grips/Pitches
- iv. Core Drills
- v. Feedback
- vi. Age appropriate content

II. Basic Mechanics

Balance Point

- **Lift* to get to the balance point
- *Should be at least to 90 degrees
- *Head and chin should stay over your pivot/posting leg

Separation and Landing

- *After you hit your “balance point,” *get the ball out of your glove* (“hand separation”)
- *Arm action should be long and loose (“thumb to thigh, ball to sky”)
- *Front-side direction (front foot, glove, and eyes simultaneously go to the target)
- *Angles of elbow/wrist in front arm should be the same as in the back arm at landing (“opposite and equal”)

Acceleration toward the plate

- *Squeeze and swivel glove
- *Separate hips (hips go first, delivering the shoulders)
- **Firm front side* (Glove stays fixed at the target as long as possible)
- *Take your chest to your glove

Extension and finish

- *Release the ball in front of your stride foot
- *Momentum directly at the catcher (DO NOT fall off to the side)
- *Back foot is pulled/ripped off the rubber
- **Flat back, heel to sky*
- *Eyes stay fixed on the target

III. Debunking some common myths

- a. In order to throw harder, kids must push off the rubber. FALSE. Actually, the back foot is pulled off the rubber.
- b. You must pull down with your front elbow. FALSE. Actually, your front side stays firm and at the target.
- c. Kids must get their elbow up and throw over the top. FALSE. The arm path belongs to the athlete, and most guys are somewhere between a high $\frac{3}{4}$ and low $\frac{3}{4}$ arm slot
- d. Kids shouldn't throw too much. FALSE. Pitching is different from throwing. The only way to develop a strong arm is to throw, throw, throw. There is a reason that the Latin American players all seem to have strong arms. They throw all the time.

- e. Youth players should never throw curveballs. FALSE. Throwing too many curve balls is likely a bad thing, but if thrown properly, the curveball can be taught to youth players.

IV. Grips/Pitches

- a. Demonstrate spectrum of hand angles (CB, Slider, Cutter, FB, Sinker, Change, Screwball)
- b. FB Grips
- c. Change-up grips
- d. CB grip
- e. Slider grip

V. Core drills

- a. Balance point
- b. Up and over toe taps
- c. In and outs
- d. Release point and drop ball
- e. Flat back, heel to sky
- f. Shuffles
- g. Recoils

VI. Feedback

- a. Count pitches: include balls/strikes, total per inning, and 1st pitch strikes

VII. Age appropriate content

- a. A few general guidelines
 - i. 1st through 4th grade
 - 1. All throwing done out of the stretch
 - 2. Always grip with 4 seams (probable with 3-4 fingers)
 - 3. Focusing on the most basic mechanical concepts
 - ii. 5th and 6th grade
 - 1. Introduce the wind-up
 - 2. Add to mechanical concepts
 - 3. Introduce pre-game routine
 - 4. Introduce both FB grips
 - 5. Changing speeds with FB grip
 - iii. 7th and 8th grade
 - 1. Introduce change-up and breaking pitches
 - 2. Introduce holding runner, pick-of move, fielding position
 - iv. High School
 - 1. Routines, holding runners, conditioning, out pitches, pitching backwards, moves, slide-step, pitching on count, sequences to put hitters away, mental toughness, mound presence, scouting reports, identifying hitters weaknesses.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Questions

- a. Who should pitch? Strong arm. Accurate arm. Tall. Left-handed. Athletic. Wants to. (That covers MOST kids). The kids who seem like they will be good pitchers when they are in 5th grade often are not...and some who don't seem like they will be often are. Give them all the opportunity to develop.

