

DEVELOPING THE WINDMILL PITCHER

The Body is behind the Pitch

Before the actual pitching motion begins, the upper body can have a slight lean back and then a slight lean forward as the weight is being transferred from the back heel to the ball of the front foot. This indicates and gives the momentum of the stride to begin. This transfer of weight provides additional power in the pitch by aligning the upper body with the intended flight of the ball, - directly toward the plate.

A Perfect Circle in the Line of Force

The pitching arm travels in a 360 degree circle in line with the intended direction of the pitch, allowing the shoulder to rotate fully and the arm to move straight up in front and straight down in back.

The Proper Shoulder and Hip Rotation

Once the pitching arm has reached the maximum height and is on the downswing, the hip thrusts outward or open (pivot foot turns parallel with pitching rubber) and slightly toward third base which allows the pitching arm to follow a perfect circle in the line of force.

The Proper Release and Timing

The ball is released at the bottom of the circle, with an extended arm somewhere between the hip and thigh area. The arm brushes the hip/thigh at the bottom of the circle for an indicator of your release and prepares the forearm, wrist and fingers for the follow through.

The Proper Follow Through

At the release the arm does not stop. Reach the arm through, out and toward the batter, fingers toward the sky. Use the finger to shoulder follow through by bending the elbow.

THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS – WINDMILL PITCHING

Gripping the Ball

Grip "across" four seams.

Middle finger / thumb aligned.

Pad of middle finger on top seam.

Pad of thumb on bottom seam.

Two or three finger grip is utilized depending upon size of fingers. (The more fingers on the ball, the more control).

Fingers close together, not too spread apart.

Pressure on the pads of the fingers.

To ensure proper grip on ball place black tape around all four seams. Place middle finger and thumb on tape. This will properly align grip.

The Stance

Stride foot (back foot - glove side) is positioned with toes touching back edge of pitching rubber.

Front foot heel on pitching rubber with the toe turned slightly (45 degrees) toward 3rd base-RHP.

Feet are spread approximately shoulder width apart (comfortable and relaxed).

Body is erect and relaxed. Shoulders squared toward the catcher (very important).

Weight over back foot (Slight body lean backward).

Elbows folded at sides, ball in glove presented about waist high over front (pivot) foot.

The Stride Step

Stride with the whole foot or the ball of the foot. Never land on the heel. It jars the body and puts extreme pressure on the knee.

Placement of the stride foot should be at either a one or a two o'clock position. Landing at 12 o'clock never opens the hips. Landing at 3 o'clock opens to the hips too much and makes it harder to close them in order to get into a fielding position.

The key to the stride step is to maintain a constant line of force between the pivot foot and target. This is accomplished by stepping "in-line" between pivot foot and the target.

The stride at first should be a comfortable step for the pitcher. As the pitcher develops and her speed and timing increase, the distance of the stride will lengthen to provide additional power to the pitch.

The pivot foot must drag forward after the release of the ball. This dragging of the foot indicates that there has been some downward pressure applied during the arm swing. The drag will also allow permit the body to remain balanced and square to the batter after the release.

The Hip and Chest Thrust

The hip thrust is the most important phase of the windmill pitching motion. The hip thrust places the pitching arm in the correct position for releasing the ball. The hip thrust is nothing more than thrusting the front side of the left hip (RHP) forward, toward the catcher and slightly upward first base. If done correctly the left leg will be slightly angled, with a slight arc in the back. To achieve maximum speed and efficiency, the pitcher must utilize the proper hip thrust and release the back hip upon release. This hip action resembles the opening and closing of a door. At the beginning of the pitch, the hips open naturally toward third base (RHP). The key word is NATURALLY, do not force the hips to open. As the pitching arm reaches the release area, the back hip (closest to the pitching arm) is relaxed and released forward to close the hips and square the body to the plate.

The simplest way to open the hips is by pivoting the lead foot on the pitching rubber approximately 45 degrees toward the 3rd base line.

The Arm Motion

Ball and glove positioned about waist high, over the pivot foot

Ball and glove reach out toward the catcher

Ball is removed from glove at eye level while glove stays extended toward the target

Shoulder opens toward 3rd base

Upper arm brushes the ear at the top of the perfect arm circle

Lower forearm brushes the hip/thigh area at the point of release

Make the arm as long and loose as possible throughout the entire arm motion

Follow the leader downward - Shoulder - Elbow - Wrist - Hand - Fingers

The arm must be loose and relaxed during this entire movement. Instruct the pitcher to keep the ball out in the fingers. Avoid getting it too far back in the palm as this will limit speed and rotation of the ball. Keep the fingers directly behind the ball at the release point. The more the wrist is cocked open at the point of release, the more snap the pitcher will get. Snap the wrist from directly on top of the ball. For maximum speed, vigorously snap the wrist forward upon release of the ball.

Emphasize total looseness, especially at the beginning of the arm circle. RELAX the arm and wrist as it leaves the glove; ACCELERATE the arm and wrist as it reaches the release area. Pitchers should get the feeling that the ball is being pulled throughout the circle versus forced throughout the circle. The ball trails the forearm and wrist up to the time of the wrist snap. Build centrifugal force. Follow the leader downward.

Releasing the Ball

Occurs split second after the stride foot placement

Weight shifts from the ball of the pivot foot to the ball of the stride foot

Body relationship as follows:

- a. Upper arm brushes the back rib cage area
- b. Lower Forearm brushes hip/thigh area
- c. Wrist snaps forward for speed (Wrist is opened toward 3rd base)
- d. Fingers snap forward for rotation (Fingers are directly behind ball)

The most important aspect of releasing the ball is brushing the side.

Brushing the side refers to the pitching arm brushing the hip/thigh area at the point of release. This brushing of the side area accomplishes the following:

- a. Cues the arm to release the ball
- b. Snaps the wrist and elbow into the pitch

The ball is released at the bottom of a perfect circle with an extended arm somewhere between the hip and thigh area. The arm will brush the hip/thigh area at the bottom of the perfect circle for a good indicator of the pitchers release area and prepares the forearm, wrist and fingers for the follow through.

The Non-Throwing Arm

Extend the glove hand as far forward as possible toward the target to open BOTH shoulders.

As the pitching arm reaches the downswing (2nd base) begin to pull the glove downward.

As the ball is released the glove hand may brush the thigh area to cue the closing of the hips.

The Follow Through

Completion of arm Motion: a) Extend the hand, arm, and then the elbow toward the target. b) Hand position depends upon type of pitch thrown.

Pivot foot drags hard: a) Create semi-circle drag with toe, maintain balance to get into a good fielding pos'n.

SOFTBALL PITCHING DRILLS AND GAMES

These are various pitching drills. The drills should be done with some purpose. It is strongly recommended that a pitcher have a pitching coach. The drills are for a right-handed pitcher. Left-handed pitchers will have to appropriately modify the position.

DRILLS

"A-B-C-D" --pitcher is in "delivery position" for these drills (pivot foot parallel with mound and stride taken with front foot)

A--pitcher holds pitching hand at side with palm down and throws using only a wrist snap.

B--pitcher holds pitching hand at side and throws, emphasizing the follow through.

C--pitcher holds pitching hand at shoulder height (palm toward second) and throws, emphasizing the release point.

D--pitcher holds pitching hand above head and throws, emphasizing close proximity to ear and leg.

Stork or one leg rocker --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, raise glove hand to target, pivot, stride and throw. (Teaches balance and opening).

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. Pitching arm does full windmill motion and glove arm extends to target and comes down to the knee as pitching arm is on the downswing. Throw to the catcher, staying in this 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 near the wall and pitches. This helps stop excessive shoulder motion and throwing of the glove hand.

"The wall 3" --the pitcher stands with her throwing shoulder near the wall and pitches. This helps stops excessvie shoulder motion and creates a perfect circle close to the upper and lower body.

"Thigh slaps" --after the ball leaves the hand, the pitcher slaps the top of her left thigh with the glove. This helps keep the left arm on line. (NOTE: thigh slaps should not become part of her motion--this is only a drill.)

"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 1 --the pitcher takes 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.

Wrist snaps 2 --kneel down facing third base, both shoulders aligned with catcher, raise the right knee, placing the right foot on the ground. The left knee stays on the ground. Glove arm is extended to the target while the pitching arm circles around and is stopped at release point by bent right leg. Ball is released under leg.

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.

3-ball drill --two pitchers are involved. One pitcher holds two balls one in the glove and the other in the hand; the other pitcher holds one ball in the hand. The pitcher with two balls pitches the first ball. The receiving pitcher then pitches their ball back to the original pitcher. In a short time each pitcher has pitched 50 pitches concentrating on a certain mechanic. (ie. release point, follow through)

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 3 step walkthrough --the pitcher stands in a pitcher position behind the distance of the mound two to three feet. The pitcher walks forward with stride foot first, and on the third step, the pitcher uses the pitching motion and throws the ball. 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.)

Weight back drill --In the open hip position and the front foot facing the target/catcher, the pitcher snaps the ball driving the back knee to the front knee. Immediately after the motion, the pitcher takes a step back to the original position with the back leg to perform the motion all over again. The feeling is like falling back into the original position. When the pitcher strides back off to either side of the line of force, the coach makes the corrections to bring the stride back onto the line of force.

"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 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*.)

"Pitch Tracking" Great Drill For Hitters, Catchers, and Pitchers

The pitcher is throwing to a catcher as she normally would in pitching practice or bull-pen work. The pitcher is throwing at her normal pitching distance. The coach has one or two batters, with helmets on, stand in the batter's box without bats. Each batter will assume her regular stance and imagine that she is holding a bat. The batters will "track" or watch the first three pitches out of the pitcher's hand until they hit the catcher's mitt, making sure to keep their head and eyes are on the ball all of the way. Next the batters will swing away with their "imaginary" bats. The batters will read the location of each pitch the pitcher throws and hit the ball where it is pitched. One batter or two batters can track pitches. Having two batters makes the pitcher have to concentrate even more. When two batters are tracking, they will do opposites. One will pull a pitch in a location that her tracking partner will hit to the opposite field. The coach can call out a count such as 2-0, 3-1, 1-2, and 0-2 to allow the batters, pitchers, and catchers certain mind-sets in different situations. Note: If your hitters are too young to perform this drill, have a coach stand in. The coach may wish to wear a helmet and wear a glove for protection. This is a tough drill, but it is great for developing concentration of all parties involved. Make sure all participants wear helmets and other proper protective equipment.

PITCHER INFIELD DRILLS

Pitchers Field and Cover First

Purpose: To practice fielding all types of balls after delivering a pitch. This is an excellent conditioning drill as well.
Procedure: The drill works best with at least three pitchers, a catcher, and a hitter. If you don't have three pitchers, another player may play first and pitchers rotate only on the mound. Pitchers form a single-file line at the mound, and one pitcher is at first to catch the throw. The pitcher pitches the ball to the catcher, and the hitter hits a ground ball back to the pitcher for fielding practice. The pitcher fields, throws to first, and then rotates to first to receive the throw from the next pitcher. After catching at first, the receiver rotates to the end of the fielding line. Vary the type of balls hit, hitting to each side of the pitcher and bunting and slapping as well. Include a sequence of having pitchers look imaginary runners back before making the throw.

Pitchers Cover Home

Purpose: To practice footwork for covering home on wild pitches.
Procedure: Pitchers rotate on the mound, and catchers rotate at home. The pitcher throws a wild pitch to the catcher in receiving position and runs home to cover the plate for the return throw. The pitcher's feet must be well out of the way of the sliding runner. The pitcher should call the catcher's name and wave her arms until the throw is on its way.

PITCHING 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 complete an inning.

"Japanese" Pitching Drill Great for Developing Control

Pitchers are to throw strikes at varying distances. The drill has a catcher set at a stationary plate. The plate never moves. The pitcher should begin throwing at a distance 1/2 of her normal pitching distance. You should have 6-8 distance markers with the first being at her starting point and the longest being twice his normal pitching distance. The markers should be at 10 foot intervals and in a straight line with the plate. The object of the drill is to develop control by gradually moving toward and away from the targeted strike zone. The pitcher is required to throw 1-3 strikes from each marker before moving to the next. The catcher serves as the umpire. Variations of this drill may be to have 1-3 pitchers working and competing against each other. The drill teaches them to work fast, concentrate, and execute a perfect pitch. Make sure your pitchers are in condition for this drill. They will find that throwing strikes from longer distance requires great mechanics and builds arm strength. Make sure your players stretch and warm-up first. You may have reduce the distance to match this drill to the strength of your pitching staff.

"20 X 4" Pitching Drill Great for control & concentration and to pitch under pressure

This drill is a pitching drill in which the young pitcher works at a smooth, rather fast pace, but only throw 50-60%. She should not be allowed to throw full speed. The objective of the drill is to teach concentration and develop great control. The pitcher has to throw 20 strikes before she throws 4 balls. She should be allowed to perform the drill at a shorter distance at first but she should be able to move to her regular pitching distance within a couple of weeks. If she throws 4 balls, she must start over. Be careful to not overwork her. However, keeping the distance short, emphasizing accuracy not speed, and making sure she properly stretches and warms up should prevent any chance of arm injury. With very young players you may want to make the drill a 10-3 drill. She must throw 10 strikes before she throw 3 balls or she must start over.

Three Points

This game creates competition and pressure for the pitcher when pitching to a catcher's targets just like in a game. The catcher gives a target, and for advanced players she may call a pitch. If the pitcher hits the target, she gets one point. If she misses, she loses a point. When the pitcher reaches three points, the game is over. Add difficulty by requiring every fourth pitch to be a change-up.

COACH HAL'S 'SHOOTOUT'

This is a game and drill is used for all pitchers regardless of age or experience level.

One of the things this game does is improve a pitcher defense and increases a pitcher's reaction time to a self-defense situation (ie. a hard hit line drive coming straight at them).

Here is how it works. It requires 2 pitchers of similar age and ability. Each pitcher stand facing each other at whatever their regulation pitching distance is, minus 5 feet. Each pitcher is wearing their glove and has a softball size wiffle ball in their throwing hand. Both pitchers have the ball and glove at their side and are in the pitching position as if they were standing on the rubber. Both pitchers are staring at their opposing pitcher across from them.

A third person, (coach, parent or player) is standing off to the side out of their view while they are staring at the other pitcher. The third person loudly claps their hands together. The instant the pitchers hear that clap, they fire off the fastest pitch they can throw at their opponent, both pitchers firing at the same time.

Whichever pitcher's ball gets to or hits the other pitcher first, wins that round.

First priority; THROW A FAST HARD STRIKE.

Second priority; DEFEND YOURSELF AND STOP THAT BALL COMING AT YOU FROM HITTING YOU! Get the glove on the ball!

For a very young beginner, this can be a little scary for the first few pitches. However, once they realize they are not going to get hurt when the wiffle ball hits them, they will get a huge grin on their face. They will have a blast and you will be pleasantly surprised when you see how fast they can speed up their overall motions to try and win at this game.

Make sure their mechanics do not go down the drain when playing this game as they try and speed everything up. Many will take a shorter stride length to try and be a little quicker, make sure they keep what they have learned correct, just do them faster.

Use this drill to speed up new beginners motions and that of more experienced pitchers too.

After playing this game a few times, even the very young ones get really quick at defending themselves and blocking that incoming ball. In a very short while they will get REALLY good and REALLY fast at defending themselves at a ball coming at them TWICE AS FAST AS ANY HIT BALL EVER WILL.

If you have a pitcher that is "Gunshy", from being hit by a batted ball, this is a great way to re-instill their confidence. Make sure they realize they are defending themselves from a ball coming back twice as fast as any hit ball ever will.

WARNING; NEVER PLAY THIS GAME WITH ANYTHING OTHER THAN A PLASTIC WIFFLE BALL (the kind with all the holes in it) OR A PAIR OF ROLLED UP SOCKS! Do not use a softball, tennis ball or ANYTHING else.

A pitcher can use tactic during a game. If the pitcher's normal motions or pre-motions are somewhat slow, every so often the pitcher simply thinks to herself "Time to play Shootout". For that pitch, she takes the call, brings the hands together and EXPLODES into the fastest motions she can, with NO HESITATIONS AT ALL, just like when she plays 'Shootout'.

The batters get used to a pitcher's motions and pre-motions and they use it to time the pitch. All of a sudden, for this pitch, the ball is being delivered faster than they expect it to happen and the batter reacts badly.

FASTPITCH PROBLEM SOLVING

All pitchers will have problems. By identifying these problems early in their development it will greatly increase their chances of becoming a good pitcher.

Do not attempt to correct all problems at once. Correct one at a time beginning with the stride step and working your way up to the follow through. Attempting to correct all problems at once will only confuse the pitcher and her confidence will be shattered.

Loss of Speed

Improper or inadequate warm-up.

Pitcher not achieving proper timing and tempo.
Rushing the initial move - throws off the pitcher's rhythm.
Stiff arm in pitching circle, reduces centrifugal force.
Moving the arm instead of swinging the arm
Poor hip and shoulder rotation
Over or under-striding
Uncocking the wrist too early during the backswing
Gripping the ball too tightly which creates tension in the arm and wrist
Improper wrist snap at release

Loss of Control

Improper or inadequate warm-up.
Pitcher not achieving proper timing and tempo
Practice down the middle first THEN work on the corners
Improper or poor pitching mechanics
Excessive body movements
Over or under-striding
Not picking up the target soon enough - Taking eyes off the target
Aiming the ball; slowing the arm down at the release area
Inconsistent release point
Poor physical condition
Lack of confidence

Wild Inside

Slow or lazy hand - *Emphasize forceful wrist snap*
Falling to the right (during/after) releasing the ball - *Emphasize proper weight transfer at beginning of pitching motion. Emphasize proper foot drag*
Improper Arm Motion / Over-rotating shoulder on backswing - *Emphasize "perfect circle" in-line with the intended target (Brush Ear)*
Stride Step off-line towards 3rd base (RHP) - *Emphasize stride step in-line with intended target*

Wild Outside

Follow through across body - *Emphasize proper follow through - Finger to shoulder / Elbow to catcher*
Arm too far from the Body at release point (causes arm to swing across body) - *Emphasize "perfect circle" in-line with intended target (Brush Ear/Hip)*
Stride step off-line towards 1st Base (RHP) - *Emphasize stride step in-line with intended target*

Wild High

Inconsistent release - *Emphasize brushing the hip/thigh area at release*
Grip too tight (choking the ball) - *Move ball out of the palm and into the fingers*
Improper stride step - *Shorten stride step to compensate for problem*
Getting under the ball - *Emphasize remaining upright with no back arc. Emphasize keeping shoulders level. Emphasize getting the fingers behind the ball at release vs under the ball at release*

Wild Low

Inconsistent release - Elbow too stiff - *Emphasize Brushing the hip/thigh at the release*
Grip too Loose - *Tighten (slightly) grip on Ball*
Improper Stride Step - *Lengthen stride step to compensate for problem*
Getting over the Ball - *Emphasize remaining upright with no body lean forward*

PITCHING GRIPS

There are 4 basic pitch "clusters".

- 1) hand/fingers BEHIND the ball, fingers snap upward into the wrist/shoulder. Examples are fastball and peel-drop.
- 2) hand/fingers UNDER or INSIDE the ball, fingers snap away from the thumb (hold your hand palm up, twist and snap toward your body. See how the fingers are moving toward the pinky side of your hand?). Examples are rise, screwball, "frisbee" curve.
- 3) hand/fingers OVER or OUTSIDE the ball, fingers snap toward the thumb (hold your hand palm down, twist and snap toward your body. See how the fingers are moving toward the thumb side of your hand?). Examples are rollover-drop and drop curve.

4) the changeups. These are a huge variety of pitches meant to defeat the snapping so necessary to all the other pitches. Examples of these: handshake, push, knuckle, knuckle-curve, flip, backhand, palm, and probably 3 grip variations for each of those.

DRILLS FOR SPECIFIC PITCHES

Low Net Throws

Purpose: To focus on proper release and keeping drops low.

Procedure: From a distance of about 10 feet, the pitcher throws into the bottom of a catch net, exaggerating her release of the drop.

Basket Throws

Purpose: To focus on making the ball drop by using a visual target.

Procedure: The pitcher throws from regular distance and attempts to pitch the ball into a laundry basket at home plate. This drill helps imprint the image the pitcher should see before every drop pitch. The pitch can be thrown to a bucket, but the ball will not ricochet as much off the softer basket.

Football Toss

Purpose: To develop correct rise-ball release.

Procedure: The pitcher throws a junior-sized football underhand to a partner. Grip it along the seam with all the fingers and with the thumb on the opposite side. The ball should spiral. If it wobbles in flight, the palm has turned toward the catcher at release.

Long Toss

Purpose: To practice getting under the ball for rise-ball release. The drill also develops body and arm strength.

Procedure: The pitcher pitches to a catcher from second base or farther, lobbing the ball up as if she is throwing it over a telephone pole. This action forces the pitcher to get under the ball. To develop strength, the pitcher keeps backing up (from second base, to center field, to the fence) to see how far she can throw it.

Bucket Toss

Purpose: To practice keeping the change-up pitch low.

Procedure: The pitcher pitches the ball into a bucket two to three feet in front of home plate. She avoids having a big loop in the pitch.

Fast and Slow

Purpose: To practice changing speeds.

Procedure: Working with her catcher, the pitcher alternates fast and off-speed pitches. The goal is to keep the delivery the same.

A "Coach Nick" COACHING TIP FOR PITCHERS:

Smart pitchers always pitch to the batter's weakness allowing the batter to "get herself out". Most batters have a weakness. The key to getting them out is to identify that weakness. One must observe and chart each batter. We

call the batter's weakness a "Hole" in their swing.

How to Classify Opposing Hitters.

1] DEAD PULL - Most of the time it is caused by "stepping out or stepping strongly to the pull side". This batter will try to "swing around everything"! Even pitches on the outer half are "pulled" if hit.

2] SLOW BAT - HAND SEPERATION - The batter lets the hands drift or separate from the body to cause a slow bat.

3] SLOW BAT - ROTARY SWING - Batter has little control or coverage of the outside half of the plate.

4] UPPER CUT - Looping swing, dropping bat head, and front shoulder lift are signs of this flaw.

5] BREAKING BALL OUT - The batter allows her hands to drift forward with her stride. She swings with her body. She always starts early and has trouble keeping her hands back!

6] SOLID - This is a good hitter with good mechanics. They tend to have no obvious "holes" and make proper adjustments. These are a team's best overall hitters.

7] MHH - MAKE HER HIT - This is a defensive hitter. She has little ability to "hurt us" with her bat. She is in the line up because of her speed and defensive skills. Do not "mess around" with her! Go straight at her! Make her swing the bat!

We also need to know a batter's demeanour at the plate. We want to know if the batter is:

1] FIRST PITCH HITTER - If so, we do not want to "groove" the ball. Move the first pitch around.

2] PATIENT HITTER, WORKS THE COUNT - Go straight at the batter and challenge her early in the count.

3] GUESS HITTER - Mix your pitches. Do not get caught in a "tendency trap" of your own. If the batter is a guesser, keep her guessing. "The batter must never know!"