



## THROWING

To help you get a feel for what your players are experiencing, get a softball and go outside. With your non-throwing hand throw the ball as far and as accurately as you can. Unless you are extremely skilled you probably throw the ball very far or anywhere close to your target, and you probably felt really clumsy and frustrated doing this. Now, before you go back to what you know and are comfortable with, imagine yourself throwing like this in a game situation. That is what your players go through. That is why it is important that you are patient with them and understand the difficulties they are having.

Coach, keep things simple for your players. Avoid teaching them everything you know about throwing. Hit the highlights. They probably aren't making a complete circle with their arm, or turning their hips, or pivoting their feet correctly, but be patient with them. Remember, they have only been playing for a short time. Don't worry so much about perfect form *in the beginning*, focus instead on **practical results**.

### GRIP

- Draw a **stripe** on the ball with a black marker (or tape), so it crosses all 4 seams while dividing the ball in half.
  - The player should grip the ball with three fingers, so the ball is not in the palm of their hand.
  - Grip across the seams (large horseshoe) of the ball if possible. The fingers will form a **"C"** around the ball with the middle finger on the *stripe*.
  - The little finger will "ride" loosely on the ball.
  - Place the thumb under the ball; the thumb should be underneath the pointer finger.
  - The fingers should cross the seams where the knuckle closest to the fingertips are. This is so the fingers can pull down on the "raised" seams during release.
  - The pressure on the ball from the fingers that cross the seams should be evenly distributed.
    - A tight grip on the ball will inhibit your ability to spin the ball. The grip should be firm, but not tight allowing your wrist to stay flexible and create backspin.

### Arm Circle and Release

- When explaining things to your players, talk in terms of **"ball-side"** (throwing-hand side) and **"glove-side."**
- Use the phrase **"thumb by the thigh", elbow high, fingers to the sky, wave bye-bye, and release the back side.**
  - The throwing hand travels in a downward and back motion so that the thumb passes by the thigh, keeping your hand on top of the ball, reaching a position where the palm is facing away from the target above the shoulder ("fingers to the sky"). The back foot begins to pivot and turn the body sideways.
  - The throwing arm is long and loose (elbow not locked); the elbow should be at the same height or slightly higher than the shoulder and the hand is above the head. At this point the front foot has landed and established a *firm* front side.

- As the weight transfer (from the back to the front) begins, the elbow *leads* the arm into the release position above the head in line with the shoulder. The palm has begun to turn forward and the elbow is slightly higher than the shoulder in a vertical line from the elbow to the wrist. There should be a separation that remains even from the head to the elbow all the way to the wrist.
- The path of the arm circle, from the starting point to the release point, is on the “power line” (straight line to the target). For example, the throwing arm should not fall behind the head or body.
- As the ball is released, the fingers should pull down with force across the seams of the ball (intensity of grip across the seams increases during the pull down). The transfer and throw should be against the firm leg (“glove-side”).
- The thumb leads the hand down toward the ground on release.
- Follow-through: The hand follows through down and toward the glove-side (opposite knee). The back leg should continue following through (releasing the back side).
- The goal at release is to create complete vertical backspin on the ball.
- The glove-side (non-throwing) arm extends toward the target. The glove-side shoulder stays on the power line to the target as weight transfer and release occur.
- Keep the glove-hand close to the body through the release and follow-through

### Lower Body Drive

- Establish a strong throwing-hand side base by opening instep of the throwing-side foot slightly toward the target ( $45^{\circ}$ ). This is the **pivot foot**. The **pivot foot** turns out toward the target to begin the throwing sequence.
- The glove-hand side foot should land at a  $45^{\circ}$  angle when transfer is beginning to occur.
- Weight should be balanced “athletically” on the balls of the feet.
- Lower body transfer begins as the glove-side arm “pulls” down and into the chest as the throwing arm comes forward into release position.
- Lower body weight transfer completes as the ball is released and follow through occurs. The ball-side leg (back leg) continues forward at a natural pace (a drag of the foot is recommended).

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