

- No manager has ever developed a pitcher (other than his own daughter).
 - It takes a huge commitment from the girl and her family. Team practices are generally not time for pitching practice as you get older... need to put in the extra time on their own.
 - But managers can aid in their development, especially the young ones
 - As you move up in divisions, pitching goes from being a right (Primary) to a privilege (Intermediate and higher). Girls need to show they've done the work it takes to stand in the circle, because everybody's experience suffers if they haven't
 - There are many different ways to teach pitching. Encourage girls/parents to attend clinics and seek instructional videos. Many will find private instruction helpful.
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GRIP

- 3 fingertips on seam across top of "C" (pinky on side, unless hand is real small)
- Thumb opposite if hand is big enough, but don't strain to get it there
- Ball not in palm to free up wrist
- feel pressure on fingertips... don't grip too tight. If hand is tight, that will travel up arm through shoulders.

Wrist snap drills:

- Hold throwing arm at side with glove hand, snap ball with just wrist, being sure to cock wrist back and feel ball come off fingertips. 12 to 6 rotation
- One knee: Left knee on ground, right forearm against side of right thigh, flip ball under leg.
- One knee, 1/4 arm circle: Same as above, but start with arm back, parallel to ground

Important they don't try to make ball go far or fast... concentrate on spin and feeling ball come off fingertips. Trying for a fast tight 12-to-6 spin.

ARM CIRCLE

- Vertical, straight arm circle most important element of control. Also allows for a free, loose arm whip for maximum speed
- The ball should never be in front of or behind body... catcher should be able to see the ball all the way through the arm circle.
- At top of circle, bicep should be by ear, ball facing 3B (for a right-hander)
- "Long and loose" Arm and shoulder muscles must be loose so arm develops a "whip" feel. A whip is much faster than a board.

Arm Circle drills:

- Wall drill: helps muscle memory and reinforces correct body position (open, facing 3B)
 - Mirror work: See and feel to aid muscle memory
 - One knee drills or standing: 2X rotation... the 2nd time around the ball/hand tends to fall into a vertical circle if arm is loose and relaxed.
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STRIDE

- Start with correct feet position
- Stride with toe on Power Line, foot at 45 degree angle
- Get to fully open position, facing 3B
- Right foot drags to left as hip closes after release
- Get to "Big X" position, incorporates arms and legs, tall and extended.

Stride Drills:

- "Dry strides" no ball, no arm circle, feel push with right leg, concentrate on land position
 - "Flamingo": Start with left leg up to feel drive.
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THE MOTION: PRE-MOTION

- One of the most personal and unique aspects of each pitcher.
- The goal of the pre-motion is to gather momentum for an explosive stride, and to get ball started on a good arm circle
- Find something that accomplishes those goals and is comfortable. Watch other pitchers & try it out.

Pre-motion drills:

- Feel rocking weight shift: from starting position, shift weight to left heel and then to ball of right foot, body should sway, but stay in balance.

THE MOTION: RELEASE & FOLLOW-THROUGH

- Isolate the last quarter of the arm circle, along with the hip close to find the release point and concentrate on follow-through
- Follow-through to right shoulder, elbow up. There are other schools of thought on this.
- It's important that the follow-through stay "on plane" with arm circle, so hand stays behind ball and pitcher has control.

Release drills:

- NO BALL: In "semi" stride position (feet not as wide as full stride.. a little more than shoulder-width apart), "ball" at 9:00 position. Relaxed, swing arm through release point, snap as hand passes right high and have hand continue up and back to right shoulder, elbow pointed at target. Immediately after release, as hand clears, right hip should close as right foot drags to left foot.
- Repeat with ball & catcher: Emphasize we're not looking for speed here. Just a smooth and relaxed motion.
- For younger pitchers, put a sticker on their right elbow and emphasize showing the sticker to the catcher after each pitch.
- 3/4 Motion: Pitcher stands on right leg, left foot up and out. Ball at 12:00, palm facing 3B. Same as above, but now we're adding a stride. Still don't want to try to throw hard.. concentrate on good balance, strong leg drive, land on power line in open position, good arm circle, release point, hip close foot drag and follow-through.
- Walk-through: 2 or 3 steps and then stride and deliver pitch and walk through after release/follow-through. Emphasizes keeping momentum moving toward plate along power line.

THE MOTION: PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

- Go over rules of stance, pre-motion and stride.

These notes were put together for the 4/11/12 Tomboys coaches clinic on pitching. They were meant to be shorthand to keep me on point, so they are a little lacking in detail and description of the drills. If you have any questions, please email or call me and I'd be happy to try to clarify.

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WARM-UP

- Many of these drills are actually part of Sarah's warm-up routine.... get a habit formed and emphasize that warm-up time is not social time. Pitchers need to focus and work on developing the feel for their pitches, as well as loosening up their muscles.
- It's important pitchers have adequate warm-up time. Start with running and dynamic warm-up/stretching/arm circles. Move to overhand throwing.... progress in distance and speed.

Now ready to begin pitching warm up sequence:

- Wrist snaps (focus on spins)
- half-motion (focus on loose arm, relaxed motion. No stride, a slight back foot drag as hip closes)
- 3/4 motion (same as above, but now building a little speed. Can start with left foot up, weight all on right, a little longer stride, feeling that weight shift and drive)
- full motion walk-throughs (focus on keeping momentum all on power line, keeping arm loose and relaxed)
- full motion, working through all pitches. (maybe 5-8 of each, depending on how she's feeling)

GENERAL TIPS

- Never, ever tell a pitcher who's struggling "to just throw strikes". They are trying to... and saying that will make them try harder, which is completely counter-productive. Tell them to relax, take a deep breath, don't worry and just throw.
- Tough call when to pull a pitcher who's struggling, or let her fight through it. There's no single answer, but have a number in mind... like "5 walks in a row, I have to put someone else in". Don't tell pitchers that, because they'll start pressing after 3 or 4 walks.
- Habits get harder to break the older they get. Watch they don't get their drag foot off the ground
- Try to keep the ball concealed as long as possible through pre-motion
- Make every pitch the same, up to release. Will help disguise pitches against better hitters.
- Learn change-up first after fastball
- Weighted balls are okay but they need to be thrown at quarter speed.