

Tip of the Month

Rob Hahne- VBC

Bullet Points to Pitching Success

I believe it is important to break down pitching success for baseball and softball into 3 categories.

1) MENTAL

Concentration / Focus - It is important to have tunnel vision both physically and mentally when pitching in a game environment. Throw to the catcher, not the hitter. Block out everything else around you.

Pitch-by-Pitch mentality- Remember to focus on the things you can control (where and how you are going to throw the next pitch), not the things you can't control (umpires, weather, mound condition, last pitch you threw, errors, walks...). Stay in the here and now. There is always an excuse if you look hard enough.

Composure- It is critical for pitchers to have composure. You have to be able to deal with adversity and control your nervous system. If you can't control your nervous system and remain relaxed in difficult situations then your heart rate will increase significantly and your muscles will tense up, which make it very difficult to pitch effectively.

Visualize- You must teach yourself how to visualize success. We all have a tendency to think of the worst. Please don't let me walk this hitter or I know this guy/girl is going to hit a homerun off me. Your nervous system can't tell the difference between imagined failure or real failure. If you think negative thoughts then you can't perform.

2) MECHANICAL / FUNDAMENTAL KEYS

Baseball

Balance- You must maintain balance throughout your pitching motion. If you rush through your mechanics or lead your head or body lean too much one way then you will struggle to throw consistent strikes.

Direction- A lot of young pitchers tend to fly open with their front side when they pitch. It is important to stay on-line as you leave the balance point and get to release. We like to talk about the imaginary line that runs from the middle of the pitchers back foot to the catchers glove. We want to try and stay on that line with our front foot.

Timing- It is important for your hands and balance point knee to work together. If your hands separate early (before lead knee drops) then your arm will be ahead of your body, which will cause your arm to stop at some point prior to release point, waiting for your front foot to land . If your hands separate late (after lead knee drops) then your arm will be behind your body and you will throw the ball up in the zone or to the arm side frequently.

3) PHYSICAL

I probably get asked this question 3x a week: "How can I get my son or daughter to throw harder?"

My first response always replies with my own question: "Is your son or daughter willing to work?" You must develop core strength, arm strength, leg strength and shoulder stability to throw harder. We do this through:

- Plyometrics (arm and/or core strength)
- Rotator Cuff Routines without weights (shoulder stability)
- Tubing Exercises (arm strength)
- Aerobic and anaerobic conditioning (leg strength)
- Long toss program (2 – 3x a week)

None of the above exercises consist of lifting weights. Throwing is the number one way to build arm strength. Kids do not throw enough these days

Other Pitching Fundamentals

- We must throw 65% first pitch strikes
- We should try and throw to soft contact (don't try to strikeout every hitter)
- Every pitch should have a purpose (no wasted pitches)
- You must be able to hit spots and change speeds at Majors level
- We must have a repeatable motion (doesn't have to be perfect)
- You must have a pre-game and pre-pitch routine