



The Top 10 Things Every Pitcher Must Do

1.) **Be an athlete** – Ask yourself this simple question, “When does a player throw harder, pitching or with a crow hop from the outfield?” The obvious answer is with a crow hop from the outfield because you are more athletic and are able to create more momentum. The key to maximizing your velocity on the mound is creating a similar momentum while keeping your direction to the target. Do everything athletically. Play catch athletically, throw med balls athletically, train athletically. Never let a pitching coach take your athleticism away just because you are on a mound.

2.) **Have a proper grip** – This seems like such an elementary point, however a lot of youth players take away velocity and accuracy by having an incorrect grip. Many youth players are guilty of gripping the ball too tight. Make sure the grip is loose, with the thumb directly under the fingers (imagine they are gripping a hockey puck instead of a baseball). The closer the player can get their fingers together, the more velocity and movement they will be able to create.

3.) **Learn to throw a change-up** – Other than a well located fastball, the ability to throw a change-up in the zone is the best pitch a pitcher can throw. Throwing a change-up will actually increase the relative velocity of the fastball, because it gives the hitter a different speed with the same arm action and spin on the ball to account for.

4.) **Dominant decision counts** – The two counts that dramatically change the hitter’s batting average are 0-0 and 1-1. The difference between 0-1 and 1-0, and 1-2 and 2-1 is about .200 points. Emphasize that not being too fine in decision counts will lead to more success. Attack hitters in decision counts!

5.) **Never get beat on an 0-2 count** – An 0-2 count is not the time to challenge a hitter. Also, don't use 0-2 as a "waste" pitch. Why on earth would anyone waste a pitch? Make sure the 0-2 pitch is extremely difficult to hit, and make two people make a decision. The hitter has to make a decision whether or not to swing, and the umpire has to make a decision whether or not to call it a strike. If the hitter doesn't have to make a decision, then it was a waste pitch. There should be no such thing as a wasted pitch!

6.) **Listen to your arm and know safe pitch counts and rest time** – Pitching injuries are a reality of the position, however some of them can be prevented or minimized if a pitcher listens to their arm and is honest with themselves and their coach. Don't pitch with a sore arm, and follow pitch count and rest guidelines closely.

7.) **Learn to field the position** – Once the pitcher delivers the ball, they become the fifth infielder, but there is little attention paid to pitchers fielding. Mistakes by pitchers in the field often show up in high leverage positions in the game such as not backing up third base and allowing a run to score, or not fielding a bunt correctly and creating a big inning.

8.) **Condition the correct way** – Pitchers are not football players and they are not long distance runners. They should not train like them. Pitchers need to train their core to be explosive, their legs to be powerful, and their pitching muscles (throwing arm) to be durable. Pitchers should not lift heavy in their chest and shoulders, and they should not run long slow distances. The vast majority of training should take place in the same energy system in which the athlete will be performing. Pitchers perform repeated explosive movements with rest between each. Conditioning should look similar.

9.) **Have good posture** – The buzz word used to be "balance." Pitchers needed to be balanced, but this leads to stolen athleticism. Balance is a very static idea, and there is nothing static about pitching. The word "posture" better describes this while allowing a pitcher to be athletic and move freely. "Balance" indicates that they will be stopping at some point. This steals athleticism. "Posture" gives pitchers a mental cue they can use to stay on line with their target, and keep their body in a strong position throughout the delivery.

10.) **Repeatable delivery** – The ability to throw strikes and locate really comes from having the ability to repeat an efficient, mechanically sound delivery. The only way to repeat a delivery is to practice it over and over again. This can be difficult for pitchers because “practicing” of a mound can be damaging to the arm. Pitchers must do flat ground work and drills to learn to repeat their delivery.

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