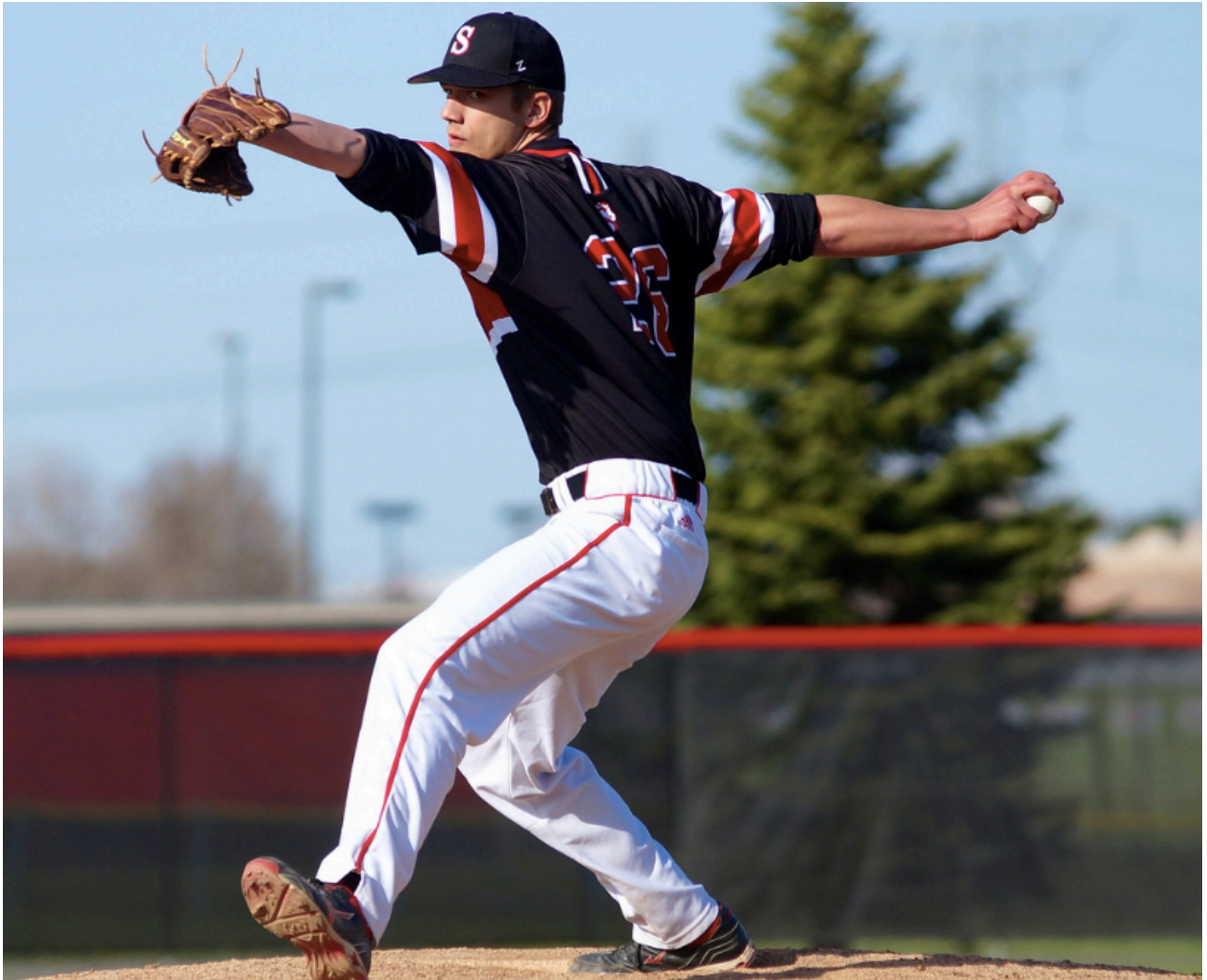


Pitching



Main Points

1. **Feet**-take a small step back with non-throwing side foot, keeping the weight over the stationary foot, which is turned parallel and touching the rubber
2. **Balance** Position-non-throwing side leg comes up, is at waist level, torso is slightly forward so that the weight is centered over the pivot foot.
3. **Power Position (Power T Position)**-hand above the ball, take the ball down out of the glove and up (circular motion) as the front foot strides toward home plate.
4. **Rotation**-hand goes from above the ball to behind it as the release point is approached; elbow is above the shoulder.
5. **Follow-through**-end up in a good fielding position; the follow-through takes care of itself if mechanics are correct; don't be too picky about a perfect follow- through if the results are consistent.

Pitching 101 ~ Don Campbell

- I. Introduction
 - a. Why teach mechanics
 - b. Mechanics is #2 pitching factor
 - c. Improve mechanics / improve control
- II. Pitching Mechanics
 - a. Grips
 - b. 3 phases of wind up
 - 1. Start to balance
 - a. Small step back
 - b. Forearms parallel to ground
 - c. Lift knee up and back
 - d. Knee and back bent
 - 2. Balance to release
 - a. Separate hands first
 - b. Thumbs down, arms extended
 - c. Straight line with foot to ground
 - d. Toe slightly closed
 - 3. Release to follow-through
 - a. Thumbs up
 - b. Spine vertical
 - c. Stump over front knee
 - d. Show 3rd baseman spikes
 - e. Don not cross midline
 - f. Finish with hand low, back parallel
 - g. Same landing spot every time, both feet
 - c. Pitching from stretch / set
 - i. Forearms parallel, away from body
 - ii. Feet 12 inches apart
 - iii. Pull knee up and back to edge of rubber
 - iv. Straight line to landing spot
- III. Pitching thoughts
 - A Curve, slider, change
 - B. Long toss
 - C. Bull pens
 - D. Pitch counts

Things to remember about Pitching:

1. Good pitching will beat good hitting – A .400 hitter is considered very good and he still fails 60% of the time
2. Free passes – walks and hit batters- are like base hits. Keep your numbers (walks, hits, and hit batters) down to an average of one per inning and you will do just fine.
3. The hitter gets worse the deeper he gets behind the count – Stay ahead!
4. It may be the only team sport played where one person can control the whole game.
5. Develop as many pitchers as you can. You never know who will still be there when they get older.
6. A change-up can be the most devastating pitch in baseball, but there is nothing that beats a well located fastball.
7. Don't over use your pitchers! An arm has only so much mileage before it wears out.
8. Make sure that your pitchers get together and discuss how they can get out hitters. Two minds are better than one, and it keeps them thinking about the game.
9. Have your pitchers throw from the stretch. The most important pitches in the tightest situations come from the stretch.
10. Don't waste a good bullpen or pre-game by just throwing without thinking. Work on location and pitches. Is a great time to develop your game and raise the level of performance.
11. Reflect on your performance after you have thrown. Pick strengths and weaknesses.
12. If hitting is timing, then pitching is the disruption of timing. Make the hitters hit your pitch and allow your fielders to make plays for you.
13. Don't ever look at an umpire in a way that is negative. Don't question his ball strike calls. Let your catcher do this for you. You may need the man in blue later in the game.

14. Teach a lefty to wear his hat correctly and never give up on one as a pitcher.
They might surprise you.

Pitching – Training Between Starts

Day 1

Pitch

Bands: Shoulder routine

Sprints: 4 – 15 yard, 4 – 20 yard, 4 – 60 yard

Lift: Upper body, Lateral raises, Frontal raises, Triceps, Biceps, Reverse curls, Wrist curls

Day 2

Throw: Light 10-20 minutes

Sprints: 4 – 15 yard, 4 – 20 yard, 4 – 60 yard

Lift: Lower body, Squat, Straight leg dead lift, Hamstring curls, Medicine ball slams, Kettle bell, Calf raises

Abs: 125

Day 3

Throw: 10-15 minutes & 5-10 minute long toss

Sprints: 4-15 yards, 4-30 yards, 4-40 yards, 4-60 yards

Abs: 200

Day 4

Bull pen: 30-40 pitches – simulated innings, counts, stretch & situations

Bands: Shoulder routine

Sprints: 4 – 15 yard, 4 – 20 yard, 4 – 60 yard

Lift: Upper / Lower, Lunges, Step-ups, Hang clean, Push-ups, DIR, DER, Pull-ups

Abs: 125

Day 5

Throw 15-25 minutes

Day 6

Pitch

One-Knee Drill

Objective

To introduce players to proper throwing mechanics, particularly arm action (getting the ball down, out, and up)

Setup

Two players (or a player and a coach) and a baseball

Execution

This drill breaks down the player's arm action and works on keeping the elbow at the proper level. Players drop their throwing-side knee to the ground with the opposite knee up and play catch at a short distance using a four-seam grip to throw. Concentrate on taking the ball down, out, and up from the glove and keeping the elbow above the shoulder. The hand is on top of the ball as it's taken out of the glove, shifting to behind the ball as the arm comes forward. Players don't throw hard. Have them check their grip, hand, and elbow position after bringing the ball down, out, and up. Hand should be on top of the ball with fingers pointing away from the target just before the arm comes forward. From there, the player points the front shoulder toward the target, rotates the hips, brings the arm forward, and releases the ball, keeping the elbow above the shoulder. Younger players can use soft baseballs or do this drill with their coaches.

Coaching Keys

Many young players turn their hand so that it's under the ball before they bring the arm forward. Some people call this "pie throwing". Think of how you have to hold a pie to throw it at someone; the palm is facing up so that you don't drop the pie. This is the opposite of how you should throw a baseball. For players who do this, have them stop their motion just before they bring the arm forward and check to see that the hand is on top of the ball and that the ball is pointing straight back. Other players will let their elbows drop below shoulder level at the release point. To fix this problem, try the Tee Drill.

Tee Drill

Objective

To help players learn to keep the elbow above the shoulder when throwing

Setup

Two players (or a player and a coach), batting tee, a baseball

Execution

This drill helps prevent players from dropping their elbow when throwing. Players assume a one-knee position, as described in the One-Knee Drill. A batting tee is placed on the throwing side, close enough so that if the elbow drops it hits the tee. Players take the ball down, out, and up – checking their grip as necessary before rotating forward and releasing the ball. The presence of the tee will force players to consciously think about not dropping the elbow below shoulder level. Over time this will develop muscle memory that leads to proper throwing mechanics.

Power Position

Objective

To develop a proper grip and arm action

Setup

Two players (or a player and a coach), baseballs, a pitching mound (optional)

Execution

Variations of this drill can be done at all levels. The drill can be simplified for the youngest age groups to stress which direction to face when throwing; the proper four-seam grip; getting the ball down, out and up; keeping the hand above the ball prior to rotation; keeping the elbow above the shoulder; pointing the front shoulder toward the target; stepping toward the target; and following through. For older and more advanced players, the drill can help troubleshoot mechanical problems often experienced by pitchers. Players create a wide base with their feet and hold the ball with a four-seam grip. Weight shifts to the backside before moving forward. Hands break, and the weight goes back. Power position is assumed (check as necessary): hand above the ball with fingers pointed away from the target. Weight is back; elbow is above the shoulder. Front shoulder points toward the target. Hand shifts from above the ball to behind the ball as the arm moves forward through rotation. Ball is released (does not have to be thrown hard). Follow-through takes place with the trail foot staying in contact with the rubber. Players rotate on the back foot so the hips turn. Front toe points forward.

Coaching Keys

The Power Position Drill can be used to troubleshoot the following mechanical flaws:

Short-arming. Start in the finish position with the throwing arm extended forward as if following through. Take weight all the way back through the power position before finishing to stretch out the throwing motion.

Getting pitches up. Have the catcher shorten up with the pitcher throwing from a mound. To throw downhill from the power position, the pitcher must get the elbow up and stay on top of the ball.

Long-striders. Again, have the catcher shorten up with the pitcher throwing from a mound. If the stride is too long the pitcher won't be able to compensate to get downhill in time to throw a strike.

Breaking balls or off-speed pitches. Between starts, pitchers struggling with their grips, mechanics, or control can practice their breaking balls and off-speed pitches from the power position on or off a mound from a shortened distance to get a better feel and make corrections.

Four Pitcher Pick Off Drill

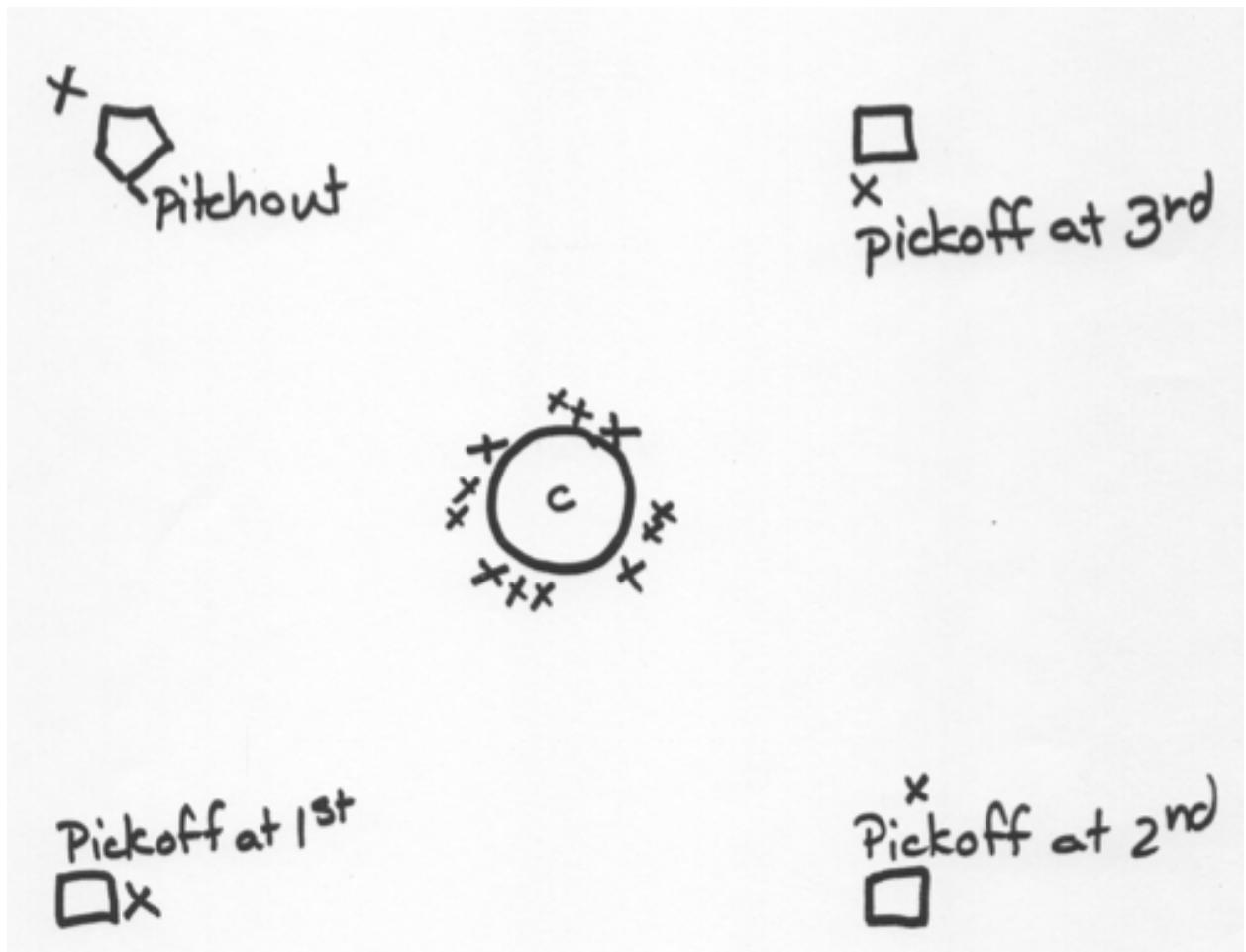
Objective

Teach Pitchers pick off moves at all bases

Setup

Regular infield (smaller infield can be used)

Execution



Pitching Mechanics

Two Theories:

“Tall and Fall” vs. “Drop and Dive” – We tend to use the Tall and Fall method because the mechanics tend to be more consistent.

3 Phases of Pitching:

Phase I **Start to balance**

- A. glove position-taking signs
- B. rocker step
- C. back foot into rubber
- D. balance position
- E. hands are together at or near chest slightly away from the body

Points of emphasis:

- RHs on the right side of the rubber
- Rocker step is short and back-It is the timing device that gets motion going
- Lift leg is parallel (or close to) ground
- Back foot turns into rubber before Pitcher gets to balance
- Front foot should be in a relaxed position
- Front foot stays under the knee
- Shoulders and body is hunched slightly forward
- Back leg is flexed, yet firm

Phase II **Balance to Landing**

- A. hands break
- B. goal post position
- C. lift leg knee goes to landing point
- D. front foot hits in a straight line to target; toes are slightly closed
- E. arm path goes in a down, back, and up path

Points of emphasis:

- Head is level and eyes are on target
- “Thumbs down”
- Arm path must get to release position by the time the front foot hits
- Lift leg does not get too high to cause improper balance
- Front foot hits on the balls of the feet rather than the heel
- Arm path is long and fluid – rather than short arm
- Land on flexed front leg

Phase III **Landing to Follow Through**

- A. hip and torso rotation
- B. arm gets to release position-arm slot
- C. upper body extends towards the plate

- D. chest gets out over the front leg
- E. glove has turned over to palm up position
- F. back leg lifts up and comes through to 2nd quadrant

Points of emphasis:

- front elbow leads to get more extension
- Arm slot-elbow is parallel or slightly above the shoulder
- Glove comes slightly back while chest extends into the glove
- "Lazy glove" vs. ready to field position
- Back is parallel to ground after the follow through
- Arm path extends across the front knee
- Keep the head as "quiet" as possible
- Back foot lifts off the ground

Pitching Drills

Remember that when Pitchers work on mechanics they should not work on location at the same time. Mechanics are not focusing on results, they are fine tuning the process of delivering a baseball.

Arm Action Drills

- A. Towel drills
 - 1. Balance to follow through
 - 2. Front foot
 - 3. Full mechanics
- B. Arm Path/Wrist
 - 1. Wrist snaps
 - 2. Short lever
 - 3. Long lever

Dry Mechanic Drills

- A. Mass Pitchers
 - 1. Phase I, Phase II, Phase III
 - 2. Eyes closed-balance to follow through
 - 3. Eyes closed-full wind up and stretch
 - 4. Wall drill

Partner Drills

- A. One knee-shoulder to shoulder
 - 1. Fastball
 - 2. Change-up
- B. Shoulder to shoulder rotation-standing
- C. Stride out
 - 1. Throwing
 - 2. Reaching
- D. Partner handling
 - 1. Balance-catch-throw
 - 2. Reaching back
 - 3. Knee-stride
- E. Chair drills
 - 1. Front leg
 - 2. Back leg
- F. Other drills
 - 1. Pick up the handkerchief (dollar bill)
 - 2. Backside mound work

Pitchers-Back Up Bases

Teach your pitchers to back up a base on all plays. There is no play in baseball where players should be standing around after a base hit. You have to reinforce this because sometimes a pitcher will hang his head when he gives up a hit and he won't hustle to the spot where he should be.

The proper position for a play at home plate is behind the plate, as deep as possible and directly in line with the throw. Use the third and first basemen for cutoffs on throws to the plate. Their position is on the infield grass in line with the throw and the catcher. If a ball is hit to the left field, the third baseman is the cutoff man. The first baseman is the cutoff on all other throws to the plate.

The exception is when there is a runner on first base and a ball is hit deep in the left/right-centerfield gap. The middle infielders go out to form a double relay and the third baseman must stay at home to cover his base. The first baseman becomes the cutoff.

Here are a pitcher's responsibilities for backing up bases:

- Single to left or center field with no one on base- backs up second base in direct line with outfield throw.
- Single to right field with no one on base- a pitcher's first reaction should be to hustle to first base in case of a play there.
- Single to the outfield with a runner on first base- backs up third base in line with the throw from the outfield, as deeply as possible. The SS is the cutoff man in this situation. He will be stationed approximately 60 feet from third base in line with the throw.
- Single to the outfield with a runner on second base and trying to score- backs up home in direct line with the throw.
- All extra base hits with no one on base backs up the base where ball will be thrown.
- Extra base hit with a runner on first base- becomes a floater. The pitcher should hustle to a spot halfway between third and home and then hustles to back up the base where the ball will be thrown. This play should be drilled in practice. It takes some timing and skill.

Pitchers should always hustle with controlled speed to their backup positions (Being under control helps you to react at the proper time.) They should get as deep behind the base as they can and still be in line with the throw. If they are too close to the base, the overthrow will get by them too. Remember on the big fields the dugouts are open (no fence) and when a ball goes into it, the runner(s) get an extra base. The pitcher must do everything in his power to prevent this.

Pitchers should get out of the infield on all possible plays at the plate. Otherwise they are clogging things up. Teach them to go where they are supposed to go. Proper back ups by the pitching staff will save you a run or two in the course of a season. These are some more of the 'little things' that win close games.

Several years ago, the Little League World Series ended when the pitcher cut a throw to the plate from the left fielder while standing 10 feet IN FRONT OF THE CATCHER. Under pressure, a pitcher (and all players) will instinctively do what they have practiced.

Little League coaches, have your pitchers go the correct position after a base hit with a runner on second. I know many coaches use their pitchers as the cut-off, but that's not the correct way to teach the game. Forget the fact that most Little League pitchers are the best athletes on the field. Teach them the game the way it is supposed to be played and get your other players involved. These skills are just as important as proper throwing mechanics and pick off moves. They define a total pitcher.