

BRHLL Player Development: Baseball Pitching/Throwing Program

The pitching progression is ideally done with a catcher (player or coach). When adjusted to the throwing progression, a catcher isn't necessary. The ball is held with the fingers across the laces in a Four-Seam Grip. Solid and consistent mechanics result in accuracy. Emphasize this throughout.

1. Wrist Flips: The pitcher and catcher both standing about five feet apart. Elbow is raised to a height where the upper arm is parallel with the ground. Glove-hand is placed under the raised elbow. The ball is "flipped" using the wrist only. Look for backspin on the ball. (10 reps)
2. One-Knee: Catcher is in squatted position. Pitcher is on one knee about 15 feet from the catcher. For RHP's the right knee is on the ground. The motion begins with the ball in the glove in the "ready position". The hands separate and the motion is completed with a follow-through of the chest to the raised knee. Stress a firm core and broad shoulders. Ensure the proper angle/height of the elbow and wrist/hand position. (10 reps)
3. Trunk Twist: Catcher is in squatted position. Pitcher is standing facing the catcher about 20 feet away. Feet are at shoulder's width and knees are slightly bent – an athletic position. While the feet remain on the ground, the hands begin in the ready position and separate as the trunk twists and the follow-through ends with the trunk in a tilted position. Pitcher can rise up on the toes while in motion. Stress proper separation of hands. Stress an athletic position where the power in the pitch is produced by "pushing" feet into the ground with bent knees and rising up to the toes as the ball is released. (10 reps)
4. Power Position: Catcher is in squatted position. Pitcher is standing with body perpendicular to the catcher about 30 feet away. The hands are in the ready position and the knees are bent, the body weight is focused on the front leg. As the hands separate, the weight shifts to the back leg. When the motion moves forward and the ball is released, the rear foot remains on the ground but twists to release the hip and torso to throw the ball. Stress the athletic position and that power is produced from the lower body through the torso to the arm and then to the hand. Stress the torso tilt on follow-through. (10 reps)
5. From the Stretch: The pitcher should be about 40 feet away from the squatted catcher. This is simply the full pitching motion from the stretch (or perpendicular to the catcher) position. The front leg is engaged now with a lift to a point where the thigh is parallel with the ground. The same type of weight shift as seen in the Power Position is used and the same type of push is used to generate power. Stress proper head position (eyes on target) and a full stride with the plant foot landing on a direct line to the catcher. (10 reps)

Throwing Progression: Use the first four steps of the Pitching Progression. Replace the fifth step of the progression with a crow-hop throw at 40 feet. With the crow-hop, stress bent knees in an athletic position with one or two hops into the throw, releasing the rear foot on follow-through.

Variations:

- Go to 15 repetitions for each step in the pitching progression but break the 15 into sets of five where each set is performed at increasing levels of effort – 80 percent, 90 percent and 100 percent. This will help the pitcher develop body control while also working to increase top-end velocity.
- Using the throwing progression (crow-hop instead of the stretch position for the fifth step) extend the fifth step into a long-toss session. Have the pitcher step back two or three steps after each crow-hop. As the distance increases the pitcher will have to arc the throws in order to reach the target. This is how arm strength is increased. The maximum distance will depend on the pitcher. The maximum distance is the point at which the pitcher can throw the ball on an arc in the air to the target. Once the maximum distance is reached, have the pitcher take two or three steps forward after each throw. Move in till you've reached the 40 foot distance. The arc under the ball should dissipate as the distance between the pitcher and target decreases. Long-toss should be a highly structured method of increasing arm strength, not just "having a long catch". Emphasize solid/consistent mechanics.
- Extend the throwing progression/long-toss combination into a bullpen session. Start with the pitcher on the flat ground at 46 feet from the stretch. After 10 pitches, move the pitcher to the mound for another 10 to 20 pitches.
- Alternate the Four-Seam Grip with the Change-Up Grip in the pitching and/or throwing progression. You can alternate on each pitch/throw or do the entire throwing progression/long-toss combination with the Change-Up Grip. This will increase the effectiveness of the Change-Up because the pitcher must compensate for the grip with increased arm speed to allow the ball to travel any significant distance. For a Change-Up to be effective, the arm speed should be indistinguishable from the arm speed for the fastball.

Additional Information:

<http://www.drivelinebaseball.com>

<http://baseball.physics.illinois.edu>

<http://www.thecompletepitcher.com>

<http://www.fullwindup.com>