**General Pitching Philosophy – “Believe in the Power of One”**

These are some, but not all, of the ideas you will need to become an excellent Spartan pitcher. During the course of the season, the coaches will give you other information to develop your pitching skills and understanding – listen carefully and work hard – in order to advance as an individual player and contribute to the team’s success.

“Pitching is what the game is all about. Pitching IS the game.” (Bob Welch, 1990 Cy Young winner)

The pitcher is “the only offensive player on the defensive field. Action begins when the pitcher delivers the ball. He is pro-active; the hitter is reactive….All too often, however, the pitcher forfeits that edge.” (H.A. Dorfman, pitching instructor/counselor for Oakland A’s, Florida Marlins, Tampa Bay Devil Rays)

Pitching is 90 – 95 percent of the game, therefore, you need to be LEADERS of the team in practice as well as in games – set the tone with a confident attitude and exemplary work ethic. You need to give 100% on all drills, duties and routines. Live by these principles, “practice centers around getting better every day”, “perfect practice makes perfect” and “practice hard or go home”.

**SUCCESS in pitching requires**

1. Excellent physical conditioning / strength – you will need to run more than position players to get your legs in shape because when the legs get tired your mechanics breakdown; you will need to do med ball wall and throwing exercises to strengthen your core muscles to promote better hip rotation which will increase your velocity; and, you will need to do arm circles.

2. A sound mental approach / discipline – “Effective pitching in competition results from the application of a very basic core of mental principles. Pitching is not just the activity of physically throwing the ball.” (H.A. Dorfmann)

3 C’s – Confidence, Concentration, Composure

a. Confidence: Pitchers say they know they will do well when their prevailing feeling is to trust in their abilities rather than to doubt them. You must believe that you can and will make the pitches necessary when the game is on the line. Pitching is 80% mental and confidence is an awful lot of that mental part. Have a plan, an approach that is aggressive and clear. Trust in your preparation and focus on the tasks you need to do to follow the plan.

b. Concentration: Pitchers must be able to pay close attention to the tasks that they need to accomplish. Most commonly an unsuccessful pitcher pays more attention to himself, his desires, his doubts, his fears, his image, the consequences of his actions and whatever other needs he might have rather than to his tasks on the mound. In order to effectively compete, the pitcher must learn to redirect his thoughts and move his attention to his responsibility to throw the ball where he wants to and get the hitter to hit the ball. On the mound “zone in” on the catcher’s glove, your target, and ignore distractions like crowd noise. To be able to do this well, you need to practice this at home or before games using timed number grids and general to specific picture focus.

c. Composure: The nature of pitching requires that you recognize and accept that occasional failure is inevitable. A pitcher will dominate one game and be shelled in another, so he must develop an emotional resilience, the ability to accept the good with the bad. A good pitch might end up with a bad result or a bad pitch might have a good result. Realize that you have no control over the results that take place after the ball leaves your hand. The majority of things that can test your composure are things outside your control. An error by a teammate, an umpire making a ball call or a bad hop single should not cause you to become emotional. You must be able to turn negatives into positives. Use the situation to your advantage. Play
mental games with yourself, but do not, do not, give in to a bad break. The overriding mental factor to pitching success is composure. Never show your emotions on the mound because the batter “feeds” off of negative and positive emotions of the pitchers. Sooner or later you will get into a “jam” and, if you are composed, you will be able to get out of a tight spot with runners in scoring position. Focus on the task at hand – do not panic, have confidence in your abilities and just strive to do your best. Make sure to keep the ball down and away in the strike zone to get a ground ball and let your defense help. Once or twice come inside, high and tight, to make your pitches on the outside half of the plate more effective. Change speeds, hit your spots and throw every pitch with a purpose. “You can never let failure of your last pitch affect the success of your next pitch.” (Nolan Ryan, retired Texas Ranger pitcher) “Whether you just threw a great pitch or the worst pitch in history, the only thing that really matters is your next pitch.” (Greg Maddux, retired Atlanta Braves pitcher) “The name of the game is damage control – continue to pitch as if there is no one on base even if the bases are loaded. Your priority is always the hitter not the runners.” (Leo Mazzone, Baltimore Oriole pitching coach) The successful pitcher has to believe that he is one pitch from getting out of any jam. As a pitcher, you are a leader. Like it or not, it is your responsibility to keep a confident and controlled attitude and to keep your teammates in the game. Positive body language and strong self-confidence are two important ingredients of a pitcher who has poise.

3. Proper mechanics - Although all pitchers do not have to use the exact same mechanical style to throw the baseball, for most individuals there are several keys to focus on to develop a throwing style that reduces the chance of arm injury. We will focus on balance point (head over belly button over balls of feet with a slight knee flex), batting stance posture (feet armpit wide, big toe of drive foot aligned with instep/arch of stride foot with no head movement except towards the plate), flex T position (equal, opposite arms at stride foot strike with elbows shoulder high and slightly forward of torso), hip/torso rotation (hips deliver shoulders, lead with hip to catcher’s glove and the outside of the stride foot is pointing at the catcher as long as possible) and glove position at release as key parts of the delivery which should be similar. The ability to adapt and change your pitching mechanics might result in initial failure but will certainly result in long term success. Keep working hard to use sound pitching mechanics and let the “chips fall” where they may.

Working on these three areas will give you “the pitching edge.”

**Off Season Training Program**

How you train will affect your success and future. If you are in shape, you can give better effort, avoid injuries and accomplish more work. There are many factors you cannot control, but you can control how you prepare for the season. You should never get beat because the opposition is better prepared.

To make the team and compete for the championship, it is important that you get in shape, stay in shape and give 100% from start to finish. The choice is really up to you. You can work and be the best you can be or you can do just enough to get by. If you take the easier path, someday you might regret what you did not accomplish.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 6:30 a.m. until 7:45 a.m. in the fieldhouse starting on January 25th, you will be able to work on your off season training. Plan to throw for about 60 days prior to the first tryout practice. For your daily activities follow the “pitcher’s daily warm up routine” described in this handbook. Do steps 1 through 4, then do the step 5 described below and, finally do step 6, if you have time.

**Step 5 – off season throwing program to replace step 5 of daily warm up routine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Long toss, 90 – 120 feet, 5 minutes at @ distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Long toss, 90 feet, 10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Long toss, 90 – 120 feet, 5 minutes at @ distance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February 1  Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 5 minutes at @ distance
February 3  Long toss, 90 feet, 10 minutes
February 5  Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 5 minutes at @ distance
February 8  Long toss, 60 – 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes at @ distance except 3 minutes at 150 feet
February 10 Long toss, 90 feet, 10 minutes
February 12 Long toss, 60 – 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes at @ distance except 3 minutes at 150 feet
February 15  Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with FB only, 5 minutes
February 17  Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes @ each distance
February 19  Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with FB only, 5 minutes
February 22  Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with FB and CH only, 10 minutes
February 24  Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes at @ distance
February 26  Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with FB and CH only, 10 minutes
March 1 Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with all pitches
March 3  Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes at @ distance
March 5 Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with all pitches
March 8 Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with all pitches
March 10 Long toss, 90 – 120 – 150 feet, 4 minutes at @ distance
March 12 Light toss, 5 minutes, 32 pitch side with all pitches
March 15 Light toss, 5 minutes, 52 pitch side
March 17 Long toss, 90 – 120 feet, 5 minutes @ each distance
March 19 Light toss, 5 minutes, 52 pitch side

To interpret the throwing plan, you will need to understand the terms on the above chart. If a side calls for a curveball (CB) to be thrown, you can choose to throw a slider (SL) instead. The essential terms are defined as

a. Light toss – means that you should throw the baseball with light intensity and with a slight arc
b. Long toss – means that you should throw the baseball with full intensity and with no arc
c. Side – a specified number of pitches and pitch types with particular locations thrown from flat ground at the regular pitching distance of 60’6”
d. 32 pitch side
   1. Windup, 3 FB to outer 1/3 of strike zone
   2. Windup, 3 FB to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   3. Windup, 3 FB to inner 1/3 of strike zone
   4. Windup, 5 CH to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   5. Windup, FB out, CH out, FB middle, CH middle, FB in, CH in, FB middle
   6. Stretch, 5 CB to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   7. Stretch, FB out, CB out, FB middle, CB middle, FB in, CB in, FB middle

e. 52 pitch side
   1. Windup, 3 FB to outer 1/3 of strike zone
   2. Windup, 3 FB to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   3. Windup, 3 FB to inner 1/3 of strike zone
   4. Windup, 5 CH to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   5. Windup, FB out, CH out, FB middle, CH middle, FB in, CH in
   6. Windup, 5 CB to middle 1/3 of strike zone
   7. Windup, FB out, CH out, FB middle, CB middle, FB in, CB in
   8. Stretch, 2 FB to outer 1/3 of strike zone
   9. Stretch, 2 FB to middle 1/3 of strike zone
  10. Stretch, 2 FB to inner 1/3 of strike zone
  11. Stretch, FB out, CH out, FB middle, CH middle, FB in, CH in
  12. Stretch, FB out, CB out, FB middle, CB out, FB in, CB in, FB middle
  13. 2 Pickoffs, one to each side of the strike zone
Pitcher’s Daily Warm up Routine

A pitcher’s daily work should include the following elements:

1. Jogging to build the body’s core temperature as preparation for flexibility work
2. Flexibility work for the legs, torso and arms
3. Tissue and muscle endurance work for the upper body
4. A step throwing sequence which emphasizes proper pitching mechanics
5. A throwing bullpen which focuses upon control and development of different pitch types
6. Stamina work of an anaerobic intensity for cardio respiratory conditioning

Jogging – Each pitcher will jog laps in the field house or foul poles outdoors with the other position players at the beginning of practice. All pitchers should take pride in leading the jog, seeking to promote an intense team work ethic. Each field house lap or outdoor foul pole – from the RF line to the LF line and back - should be no more than 1:00 in duration. The number of laps or foul poles will vary according to the daily practice plan.

Flexibility work – As you stretch, it is important to work from feet to fingertips whenever possible. You will use this sequence because the first sensory signal for pitching balance in movement comes from the balls and arches of your feet. You should never hyper flex or hyper extend a joint in relation to the torso (head and center of gravity). With the team you will do the full dynamic warm up exercises (high knee walk with hands pull, butt kicks, forward lunge walk, backward lunge walk, backwards reach run, alternating one leg RDL walk, high knee carioca right and left, power skips, straight leg skips, monster walk and 4 – 90 foot leadoff sprints).

Tissue and muscle endurance work –

1. Arm circles: After flexibility work and prior to picking up a baseball you will do arm circles. Arm circles are designed to strengthen the four tiny rotator cuff muscles in the shoulder area which are vital to keeping the shoulder firm yet flexible. Begin by holding your arms outstretched at shoulder height with your palms up and standing only on your drive leg. Do 8 tiny clockwise arm circles. Continue with the following in the same direction: 8 one-quarter circles, 8 one-half circles, 8 three-quarters circles and 8 full circles. Still rotating in the same clockwise direction, climb down to 8 tiny arm circles. Drop your arms and relax for 1 minute – you may even shake your arms loosely at your sides. Do the same routine in the opposite direction (counter clockwise) but with your palms down and standing only on your stride leg. Over a period of about 2 to 3 weeks, you should gradually build up from 8 to 16 revolutions. When you can do 16 revolutions with ease, add a baseball to each hand and start at 8 revolutions again. Build up to 16 revolutions before adding a second baseball to each hand. Your goal should be to hold three baseballs in each hand while doing 16 arm revolutions.

2. Med-ball wall series: Using a 4 or 6 lb ball, you are to do these med-ball exercises. You are to do as many as you can in 15 seconds. If you are not within 2 of your baseline number, you must do the exercise again until you achieve or exceed this goal.

a. Side to side – You begin this exercise with your feet shoulder width apart and your heels about 6’ away from a wall. Make sure that your rear end does not touch, rest or lean against the wall for support at any time during the drill. You begin with the ball in the middle of your body. At the coach’s call you move/rotate side to side, hitting the ball against the wall as fast as you can, counting the wall hits, until the coach says stop. Report the number of touches you made to the coach.

b. Diagonals – You begin this exercise in the same position as the side to side. At the coaches call to begin, you move/rotate diagonally, hitting the ball high against the wall on one side and then low against the wall on the other as fast as you can, counting the wall hits, until the coach says stop. Report the number of touches you made to the coach.
c. Wood choppers – You begin this exercise in the same position as the other two. At the coach’s call to start, you move/rotate diagonally, twisting your torso and hitting the ball high, directly over your head and then coming straight down low, between your legs and then alternating the direction. As you did for the other exercises, count the number of wall touches and report the number to the coach at completion.

3. Med-ball throw series: After completing the wall series and using a 4 or 6 lb ball, you are to do these throw exercises. You should do 5 – 10 repetitions of each exercise. The coach may radar these throws to give you feedback and make you accountable for using maximum effort. If you are not within 2 of your baseline number, you must do the exercise again until you achieve or exceed this goal.

   a. Overhead – You will assume the exact position you would have, as when your chest squares up to the target when pitching in a game. In other words, the same distance you establish at foot plant when you pitch full speed down a mound – make sure that you do not narrow the distance between your drive and plant feet. You, then, arch torso back as far as you can, bringing the ball back directly over your head. Then, without pausing, you dynamically snap forward and throw the ball against the wall with maximum force.

   b. Full circle – Perform this exercise exactly like the overhead one, except instead of bringing the ball back directly over your head you make an arm circle around the torso. After you load your back and arms and without pausing, you dynamically snap forward and throw the ball against the wall with maximum force.

   c. Torques – You do this exercise exactly like throws 1 and 2 but this throw is purely rotational. You load up your trunk and spine by rotating first in the direction of the throw, then immediately rotating as far in the opposite direction as you can, creating as great a torque or feeling of tension/separation between the upper body and the lower body as possible. You will then immediately spring back and throw the ball into the wall as hard as you can.

4. Core stabilization exercises: Do these three exercises to strengthen your abdominal and lower back muscles.

   a. Planks – Get in a pushup position with your back straight but instead of being on the palms of your hands, you need to be resting on your forearms with your palms facing the ground. Hold this position from 1 to 3 minutes.

   b. Planks around the world – Get in the same position as the basic planks but then you lift your right arm and point it straight forward, then the left arm pointing it straight forward, then left the right leg and point it straight backwards and finally the left leg pointing straight backwards. See how many full repetitions you can do in 15 or 30 seconds. As a variation you can lift the right arm and left leg at the same time and then the left arm and right leg at the same time.

   c. Tuck jumps – Standing with your arms at your sides bend your knees so that your chest comes near your knees and at the same time swing your arms backwards. Then exploding up, tuck your knees to your chest. Do 5 to 10 repetitions. As a variation see how many you can do in 15 to 30 seconds.

5-step progression – After your arm circles, you will do this throwing routine - used at all practices as well as before games – which allows you to carefully warm up while slowly increasing the throwing distance and focusing on the aspects of pitching mechanics which makes your delivery more consistent and starts to build your endurance. You are to do 5 “quality” repetitions for each step which will allow you to finish this progression in 10 – 15 minutes while gradually working your way to a full pitching mound distance. Every throw should be done with your change up grip.

   1. STEP 1: You are to kneel on your drive knee with the stride leg bent perpendicular to the ground with the foot in the landing position – slightly closed, 45 degrees - about 3 body lengths from the catcher. With the ball in your throwing hand, rotate your upper body so that your non throwing shoulder and elbow points to the catcher while, at the same time, bringing
the throwing arm and ball to the cocked position. Throw the ball to the catcher by spinning it at half-speed to the low and inside target of the opposite hitter – right handed pitcher to left handed hitter and vice versa. You need to emphasize a proper follow-through of armpit over the opposite knee of throwing arm, elbow to that knee and a complete sweep of the fingers.

2. **STEP 2:** In the stretch position you are to stand about 5 body lengths from the catcher with your plant foot and knee of the front leg pointed toward the receiver. Your plant foot should be at the distance of the stride line that you normally use when pitching from the mound. Your hands should be at the break point – where a pitcher’s hands and glove separate as he brings the throwing hand down and out of the glove into a cocked position. While in your throwing motion and as you near the cocked position, transfer most of your weight over the drive leg. When your arm is cocked, you will simultaneously transfer your weight from the drive leg to the front leg and begin rotation of the hips toward the catcher. Your hip rotation should bring the arm and shoulder through the proper throwing pattern and end with a correct follow through. As you follow through, bring your drive foot forward so that the outside part of the drive ankle points toward the catcher and the drive heel points toward third base for the right-handed pitcher and toward first base for the left-handed pitcher.

3. **STEP 3:** In the stretch position stand about 7 body lengths away from your catcher and measure off your stride line [mark the point at which your stride foot should land]. Your hands should be at the break point – where a pitcher’s hands and glove separate as he brings the throwing hand down and out of the glove into the cocked position [at the middle point of the body slightly back towards the pitching arm shoulder]. With your weight over the drive leg, raise your stride leg until the thigh is parallel to the ground, the stride toes are loosely pointed down, the head is over the belly button and the glove and throwing hand are at the break point. While focusing on the catcher’s mitt, bring your pitching arm quickly to the cocked position before you shift weight and gain momentum toward home plate. As you step toward the target make sure that your stride toe and knee are closed – lead with your hip to the catcher’s target. You will simultaneously transfer your weight from the drive leg to the front leg and begin rotation of the hips toward the catcher when your stride foot lands on its ball [toe of stride foot should be either closed or 45 degrees toward the receiver]. Your hip rotation should bring arm and shoulder through the proper throwing pattern and end with a correct follow-through. In the follow-through the outside part of the drive ankle should point towards the catcher and your drive heel should be pointing toward third base if you are right handed or first base if you are left handed.

4. **STEP 4:** This is a three stage drill from the windup, about 10 body lengths from the receiver. Where you stop after each stage to insure that you are in the correct position. Stage 4 focuses on addressing the rubber and the rocker step. Begin with the drive foot on the right/left end of the rubber (depending on your throwing arm) and the stride foot touching the rubber as well. As you take a rocking step with your stride foot –about 6 – 10 inches straight back from the rubber-, it is important that you keep both your wrist and the ball completely hidden in your glove as well as your head steady over your belly button (the center of gravity). Stop at the end of the rocker step and check your position. Stage 2 focuses on the balance point and cocked position. See Step 3 for the proper balance point checks. Make sure that when you are stopped you also check that your wrist and the ball are concealed from the batter’s view. Stage 3 is the throwing and follow-through stage. At the end of this stage check your armpit, throwing elbow and ankle / heel positions.

5. **STEP 5:** At about 10 body lengths, get in the stretch position. From this stretch you come to A set position where your feet are a little more than shoulder-width apart and your weight is evenly distributed (generally your batting stance). In your delivery, which will emphasize the points from the previous steps, you will take a modified glide step toward home plate – lifting the stride knee toward the drive knee to gain momentum to the target.

Once step 5 is completed, you should be adequately warm and stretched to throw your bullpen routine or warm up for the game. At this point, you will add your fastball and breaking ball.

*“Long bullpen” – This is a 50 pitch throwing exercise – from 60’6” at 75% of maximum effort to a catcher in full gear - which should emphasize proper mechanics as well as the location of each pitch. You should*
always have another pitcher as a hitter, without a bat but wearing a helmet and glove, in the batter’s box so that game conditions are simulated as closely as possible. The hitter’s responsibility will be to call the pitch zones where the ball is thrown. This will give you feedback as well as increase the batter’s awareness of the strike zone. If you throw your practice bullpen for “live” hitting your focus should be on “pitching practice” not the hitter’s “batting practice.” The coach will tell you when to do this bullpen routine during a practice. You will need to report your ball and strike count to the coach for recording after completion of the bullpen.

1. 30 feet from the catcher throw 5 FB for strikes @ 50% velocity
2. 45 feet from the catcher throw 5 FB for strikes @ 50% velocity
Now move to the regular pitching distance of 60 feet, 6 inches
3. Windup – 2 FB @ outside, middle and inside (outside/inside on yellow, middle on black)
4. Stretch – repeat 1
5. Windup – 4 CH down and away to opposite-handed hitter
6. Stretch – 3 FB inside and 3 CH down and away to opposite-handed hitter
7. Windup – 4 CB down and away to like-handed hitter
8. Stretch – 3 FB inside and 3 CB down and away to like-handed hitter
9. Windup – “1-2-3” (1 fast ball away, 1 change up down and away and 1 curve ball down and away)
10. Stretch – repeat 7
11. Windup – “Win or Lose” (Throw your best pitch for a strike on 3-2 count, bases loaded)
12. Stretch – repeat 9

“Short or spots” bullpen – This is a 60 pitch throwing exercise – from 40’ at 75% maximum effort with the pitch-to-win machine – which will emphasize hitting your locations and increasing your “feel” for each pitch type. You will throw 15 four seam fast balls, 15 two seam fast balls, 15 change ups and 15 curve balls at one of the three targets on the lowest rung of the pitch-to-win machine. For each set of pitches you will throw 6 from the windup and 9 from the stretch. The coach will tell you when to do this bullpen routine during a practice. At its completion you will need to report to the coach your hit count for recording.

Stamina work – Our stamina work is composed of intervals or PFP sprint exercises. Before you leave practice, as a group the pitchers should do these sprints to increase their conditioning. The coach will vary the sprint work from practice to practice. Pitchers will be expected to run more in practice than other players to adequately condition their legs. Anaerobic activity is the best way to burn unnecessary body fat and gets oxygen to muscle tissue more efficiently making you work better and longer in competition. If you are anaerobically fit you will have a quicker healing and recovery time between outings because critical nutrients are brought to stressed muscles. To reduce stress on your arm, we will also throw off of flat ground frequently in practice rather than from the mound.

1. **Interval training:**
   a. Run full speed from the LF foul line at the outfield fence to CF then walk briskly to the RF foul line at the outfield fence.
   b. Run full speed from the RF foul line at the fence to home plate and to the LF foul line at the fence then walk briskly to CF.
   c. Run full speed from CF to LF foul line at the fence (along same pattern as b) then walk briskly to CF.
   d. Run full speed from CF to CF (along same pattern as b) then walk briskly to RF foul line at the fence.
   e. Run full speed from RF foul line at the fence to CF (along same pattern as b) then walk briskly to RF foul line at fence.
   f. Run full speed from RF foul line at the fence (along same pattern as b) to LF foul line at the fence then walk briskly to CF.
   g. Run full speed from CF to RF foul line at the fence then walk briskly along the foul lines to LF foul line at the fence for a cool-down.
2. **PFP sprints**: All pitchers will gather at the mound to simulate fielding bunts (3rd base line, 1st base line and home plate), backing up 3rd base and home plate and/or covering 1st base on a ground ball. Each pitcher will simulate a pitch from the windup or stretch, sprint to the proper position – make sure to chop steps towards the end – and simulate a throw, catching a ball or blocking an overthrow as appropriate.

### Pitch Types and Grips

If you ask five pitchers to show you how they grip their pitches, you are liable to see five different grips. The one thing about grips is that if the grip is not comfortable then it will not be successful. Each pitcher needs to find out what is most comfortable for him and what works to make that grip successful for him.

1. **Fastball**: A four seam fastball is gripped across the seams and gives you the most control while the two seam fastball is gripped along with the seams to give you the most movement. When releasing the fastball your palm should be facing the target and your wrist snaps with the palm facing downward immediately after release of the ball. Generally the fastball is used to get ahead in the ball – strike count, to dispose of weak hitters quickly, to set up your off speed pitches and to establish you as in control of the game.

2. **Change up**: More than any other pitch, the change up is a matter of individual experimentation and personal preference. This pitch is frequently thrown as a circle change (tips of the index finger and thumb touch with the ball fitting snugly in the palm of the hand), palm ball (ball rests in hand with four fingers resting on it but the finger tips do not touch the ball nor does the thumb tip), split finger (index and middle finger on sides of the ball with the thumb underneath), a two seam grip (throw the front of the ball, as you would a screwball, with a stiff wrist) and a modified circle change (ring and middle finger each lying on a seam with the pinky resting on the side of the ball and the thumb and index finger are not touching – put the ball a little deeper in the palm of the hand and put pressure on the ball with the thumb). You need to make sure that your arm speed is the same as that of your fastball to give the impression that you are throwing a fastball. “A change up is not a flashy pitch like a curve ball that will buckle a hitter or strike them out, but it will generate many ground balls or pop ups.” (Barry Zito) Use this pitch to disturb a batter’s rhythm / timing, to effectively set up the fastball and make sure to keep it down in the strike zone.

3. **Curve ball**: The fingers grip the ball along the wide or the narrow seam. When you throw the ball make sure that you throw the ball over your glove and see the release out of the corner of your eye. Your fingers must stay on top of the ball throughout the entire delivery, your wrist is turned to the side with the pinky finger closest to the hitter and the wrist snap is done with the same motion as a “karate” chop ending with the thumb pointing to your target. Use the curve ball to disturb the hitter’s rhythm / timing, effectively set up the fastball and throw it outside the strike zone to make it a good out pitch. When throwing your curve ball think of 4 different visual anchor points to change its look to the batter. Anchor points are simply spots or visual reference points that you concentrate on and throw to in order to get the curve ball to break to the desired plane. If you use the batters hip as your cue, the ball should break to the middle of the strike zone and be called a strike. This ball should have a good downward bite and is a good first pitch. If you use the catcher’s mask or glove hand shoulder – depending on where he sets up – this pitch should finish on or off the plate. Try to throw a curve ball that breaks off the outside part of the plate and be difficult to hit even if the batter expects it. If you use the umpire’s mask, the curve ball should break to the outside corner of the plate. This pitch should be thrown for a strike and have a good downward bite. Finally, if you use the catcher’s shoulder away from the hitter, it should be impossible to hit but it must break way off the plate. If these anchor points do not work for you, work in practice to find those that work for you.
**Pitcher’s Pre game Warm up Routine – Bring You’re a Game to the Big Game**

You should follow this routine prior to starting in a game. Other pitchers should do everything except for the pre game bullpen which you would do if called upon to be the relief pitcher.

1. You will jog and do the dynamic warm ups with the rest of your teammates when we arrive at the game site. Before picking up a baseball, you will do the arm circles. With another pitcher as your partner, complete a quality 5 step warm up progression.

2. Start your pre game bullpen warm up about 15 minutes prior to home games and about 10 minutes prior to away games (or earlier if you take longer than 10 minutes to do this routine). You should be finished with your bullpen throwing so that you allow yourself 5 minutes of rest as well as time for you to drink some water/liquid before you must begin the first inning. If you have warmed up properly, you should physically feel like you have already pitched one inning in the game. The pre game bullpen is a 46 pitch regimen that should start at 75% effort and finish at 100% effort. Work on your “pitch with attitude” and “composed” behaviors in preparation as well.

   1. 30 feet from the catcher throw 5 FB for strikes @ 50% velocity
   2. 45 feet from the catcher throw 5 FB for strikes @ 50% velocity
   Now move to a pitching distance of 60 feet 6 inches
   3. Windup – 2 FB @ outside and inside (on edge of plate or just off)
   4. Stretch – repeat 1
   5. Windup – 4 CH down and away
   6. Stretch – 3 sets of FB and CH to opposite-side hitter, FB in and CH down and away
   7. Windup – 4 CB down and away
   8. Stretch – 3 sets of FB and CB to like-handed hitter, FB in and CB down and away
   9. Windup – “1,2,3” (1 FB inside, 1 CH and 1 CB down and away to opposite side hitter
   10. Stretch – repeat 7 to like-handed hitter
   11. Windup – “Win or Lose” (throw your best pitch for a strike on a 3 – 2 count, with the bases loaded
   12. Stretch – repeat 9
   13. Throw some of the pitches you need to fine tune your repertoire

If you are a relief pitcher who enters the game in the middle of an inning, it usually means trouble is brewing. When you enter the game in the middle of an inning, tell the catcher ahead of time what pitch sequence you are going to throw for your eight warm-up pitches, instead of signaling with your glove what the warm-up pitches are going to be. That way, the hitters on deck and in the opposing team’s dugout will not know which pitches to look for at the plate. Hitters can only gauge speed when watching from outside the batter’s box – not the movement, spin or amount of break on a pitch. Why tell them your off speed is a split-finger? Make them figure it out for themselves.

When you warm up between innings you do not need to throw many pitches, but throw as if you are facing a batter. Concentrate on keeping the ball low and do not shy away from throwing some balls in the dirt if you have to in order to focus on keeping the ball low. The last pitch type of your warm ups should be the first pitch type to that inning’s lead off hitter.

**Pitch Delivery Routine**

To help you focus during the game on every pitch that you throw – to be in the moment and not the past – you need to use this pitch delivery routine to keep a reasonable tempo on the mound. “Tempo is huge. Just act like you are throwing a bullpen and don’t try to muscle the ball to the plate. Your best velocity occurs when you are relaxed.” (Barry Zito) Working at a steady, quick pace will keep you in a good rhythm and keeps your fielders ready behind you. A pitcher who throws a pitch, gets the ball back from the catcher and is already back on the rubber ready to throw again accomplishes several things. First and foremost, he keeps charge of the game. He is ready and waiting for the hitter to get into the box, forcing the hitter to either speed up his between-pitch routine or to have to ask the umpire for more time as he steps into the box. Either way, because the hitter is thinking about the pitcher “quick pitching” him, the pitcher has won.
A brain that is thinking about the pitcher’s quick pitching is not thinking about hitting. Also, a fast tempo makes it easier to repeat pitches (the rhythm of a repeated delivery stays fresher) and keeps your defense on its toes. Make sure, however, that the speed of the game suits your pitching personality/style, but do not work so slowly that your teammates lose their focus. Spend about 3 or 4 seconds on every step in this model but no more than 15 seconds on the full routine.

1. Evaluate your previous pitch. You should consider the velocity of the pitch, its movement, its location and the type of swing, if any, that the hitter took. This information can be helpful in determining what the next pitch should be. You should seek objective, positive information and not make negative judgments about your performance because the latter leads to “thinking backwards.”

2. Now clear your mind. Do not think about the previous pitch but rather you should realize that the most important pitch of the game is going to be the next one you throw. In order to completely focus on the next pitch, you must forget about the last pitch.

3. Plan your next pitch. Determine what/how/where of your next pitch after analyzing the game situation, the score, count, outs, position of the base runner(s) and the tendencies of the hitter. Decide what you feel is the best pitch you can make to this hitter at this time as well as consider what your capabilities/strengths are at the moment. If you have any indecision about what pitch to throw, step off and start the routine over.

4. Receive the signal from your catcher – his or the coach’s recommendation – indicating the type of pitch and location. Acknowledge or change the pitch call and visualize where you want the pitch to go (see its trajectory for the last 15 to 20 feet) and how you want it to act (see the seams spin). After being complimented for throwing a 90 pitch game, Hall of Fame pitcher, Tom Seaver, said, “I threw 180 – 90 with the mind and 90 with the arm.” This kind of visualization gives you a complete and positive mental image of the next pitch.

5. Lastly, fine focus your attention on the web of the catcher’s glove because if you widely center your vision, your mind drifts and you will “space out.” You should then inhale, start to let out your breath and begin your wind up or stretch.

**Philosophy of Pitch Selection**

“To be successful as a pitcher, you have to be able to locate your pitches, change speeds, create movement on the ball and throw with velocity, in that order.” (Barry Zito) In addition, your job is to make pitches that will enable your defense to make the putouts. You will not be able to strike out every hitter so use the defensive abilities of your eight teammates. It is important that you are mentally prepared to attack hitters from the first pitch you throw every inning. The leadoff hitter is a big key to the inning from both an offensive and defensive standpoint. For you, getting the first hitter out is crucial to having a scoreless inning. By getting this hitter out, no matter how much trouble you get into, you are always one pitch away from getting out of the inning with a double play. When you get the leadoff hitter out, 85% of the time you will go on to have a scoreless inning; however, if this hitter reaches base, 52% of the time the opposition ends up scoring a run. In addition your goal should be to have each hitter put the ball in play on one of the first three pitches of each at bat. This keeps the counts short, keeps the pitch counts low and keeps the defense active and alert.

1. Location. To consistently win you must be able to locate your pitches well, in and outside of the strike zone. Successful pitchers learn that what matters is not just throwing strikes, but being able to locate those strikes as well as being able to throw the ball out of the strike zone. When you are ahead in the count do not be afraid to throw a pitch outside the strike zone, either in the dirt or off the plate inside or outside. Batters can be put out by pitches outside the strike zone. Two-strike hits are the leading cause of premature baldness among pitching coaches. Nothing is more frustrating than watching a pitcher tilt the at-bat impressively in his favor, and then give up a hit because the two-strike pitch was too good. This concept is summed up by the maxim, “Get ahead with strikes, get outs with balls.” A two-strike pitch should be close enough to the strike zone that the hitter has to consider swinging at it, but not so close that he can get his bat on the ball.
One of the best and easiest ways to start towards this goal is simply to always play catch with a target in mind. Pitchers should pick a spot on the body or clothing of their partner and use it as a target. If you do this, you will add focus to playing catch and the mind will help train the body in the skill of accuracy. For a drill compete with your pitcher, throwing partner to see who first hits the nine pitching zones. When deciding pitch location consider throwing to the L, the count on the hitter, the type/weakness of the hitter and “remember the pitch sequences for each hitter’s previous at bats and don’t repeat it the next at bat.” (Barry Zito)

a. Pitching inside has become a lost art in baseball today. In high school/college ball, the aluminum bat has pitchers staying away from the inner portion of the plate. Throwing inside against the aluminum bat does not necessarily correlate with outs; however, to make the 67% of all pitches thrown to the outside part of the plate more effective, you will have to throw the fastball aggressively to the inner half of the plate as well as off the plate. “You cannot be afraid to throw inside. When you throw inside, that sets up many other options. You are going to hit some guys but that happens in pitching.” (Barry Zito) Using the fastball inside early in the count will help you be successful and might get easy outs. Pitching to the L as well as just under his hands prevents a hitter from reaching the outside corner and opens that location to you. If the hitter is able to handle this pitch, it will be with the small part of the bat which will reduce his power and increase your chances of a putout. Usually the hitter fouls the pitch off and creates a setup for an off speed next pitch—the batter will not be able to time the pitch as well. An exception to the inside pitch strategy is a hitter who can hit to the pull side of the field. You should pitch this batter away.

You must be able to elevate the fastball when ahead in the count. Anyone who has ever tried to hit a baseball knows that a pitch just above the hands is irresistibly enticing—but it is nearly impossible to hit. A good pitcher must be able to tempt the hitter into swinging at a high fastball without giving the hitter a pitch he can drive. When you are ahead in the count, the hitter is anxious (he feels like he is running out of time) and is far more likely to swing at a high pitch than a low pitch. You will get a number of strikeouts with the hitter swinging at a fastball at or just above the letters on his jersey.

b. The ball–strike count on the hitter can also suggest where to throw the pitch as well the type of pitch to use.

0 – 0 / 1 – 1: A coaching maxim is that strike one is the “most important pitch” in baseball. Get ahead early in the count. Did you 90% of first pitch strikes are taken for a strike or result in an out? Putting the ball in play on the first pitch is not a ticket to success for most hitters. Of the 10% of first pitch strikes that are successfully turned into hits, 75% are singles. Does that need repeating? Nearly every other batter who comes up to hit would get on base if the pitcher threw a ball on the first pitch every time. While that number is high, it becomes even higher if a ball is thrown on the one ball and one strike count. Most hitters look at the first pitch so get the ball over the plate for a strike and then you will be in charge of that at bat. Throw your best percentage pitch for a low strike and let your defense do their job. Do not be afraid to throw a change or curve ball on the first pitch if you can throw it for a strike. You have a psychological edge on the hitter when you throw a first pitch strike. Even if you throw a ball on the second pitch, the batter still thinks he has to hit the pitcher’s pitch, which still gives you a mental advantage. However, if you throw a ball on the one and one count, the pressure shifts to you. When you consistently throw first pitch strikes or two strikes out of the first three pitches (as well as get the first hitter out in an inning or allow no runs in the half inning after your team scores) you will win two-thirds of your games.
0 – 1: A hitter must expand the strike zone in this count to guarantee a quality at bat. You should pitch to the corners of the plate and not develop a habit of always throwing an off-speed pitch here.

1 – 2: This is the put-away count. Throw your out pitch here to the corners or just off the plate – four to six inches. A high fastball out of the strike zone can be very effective if you have a good finish to it.

0 – 2: This count puts the hitter at his greatest disadvantage. You should throw pitches off the plate and out of the strike zone. Throwing a fastball in or up in the strike zone can change the hitter’s eye level setting him up for your out pitch on the 1 – 2 count. Do not think of this as a waste pitch but rather as a pitch which sets up the hitter for your next pitch. “Put away” pitches are a pitchers bait for the hitter. They are the pitches located just off of the corners of the plate so that even if an umpire does call the pitch for a ball, a hitter may fish for it. When you get ahead with two strikes, it is often effective to put away hitters with curveballs in the bottom of the strike zone, fastballs a few inches off the inside or off the outside parts of the plate or change-ups that drop off the plate. Get ahead early in the count and put the hitter away with quality put away pitches.

2 – 2: Remember, you still have the advantage in this count. Do not get nervous or defensive, as hitters are not comfortable with two strikes on themselves. Attack the hitter with your best pitch.

3 – 2: Stay positive even though you do not have the advantage in this situation. Although there are times when you might want to pitch around a particular hitter, generally you should attack this hitter with your best pitch in this count and let your defense rise to the occasion by making the putout.

1 – 0, 2 – 0, 3 – 0, 3 – 1 and 2 – 1: These are the aggressive hitter’s counts. In these counts you have lost the advantage and you must throw a pitch which is your best strike percentage pitch. If you have more than one pitch that you can consistently throw for a strike, you can be more successful because you can make the hitter less confident about what pitch to expect. A change up would be effective on these counts.

c. When deciding pitch selection and location, you should also consider the bat speed and plate coverage of the hitter, because batters set up to protect their weaknesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance / tendencies</th>
<th>What the batter likes</th>
<th>How to beat the hitter</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open stance</td>
<td>Pitches middle to in</td>
<td>Fastballs or curve balls away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed stance</td>
<td>Ball out over the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stands away from plate</td>
<td>Ball out over the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside / off speed down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowds the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside</td>
<td>Fastballs and off speed away; Use fastballs up for effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long stride / lunges at the ball</td>
<td>Constant speed and pitches below the belt</td>
<td>Off speed pitches down and away; fastballs above the hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow bat / long swing</td>
<td>Fastballs below the belt and over the plate; change ups to speed up his bat</td>
<td>Stay aggressive with fastball inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitch in swing / hand dropper</td>
<td>Pitches belt or below out over the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside and above the batter’s hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strides into the pitch</td>
<td>Pitches away</td>
<td>Fastballs inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps in the bucket</td>
<td>Pitches on inner half of the plate</td>
<td>Curve balls or fastballs away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free swinger</td>
<td>Constant speed in strike zone</td>
<td>Change speeds and use fastball off the plate, outside strike zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulls off the ball</td>
<td>Constant speed on inner half</td>
<td>Curve balls or fastballs away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact hitter / uses all fields</td>
<td>Pitches around the plate</td>
<td>Change speeds within the strike zone; change eye levels and sides of the plate; use change ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull hitter</td>
<td>Pitches middle to inside</td>
<td>Fastballs or off speed pitches on outer third of the plate; use fastball in and off plate to set up off speed away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds hands high</td>
<td>Balls below belt and out over the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside and above hands; curve balls down and out of zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stance / tendencies</td>
<td>What the batter likes</td>
<td>How to beat the hitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hits out of a crouch</td>
<td>Pitches down in the zone</td>
<td>Fastballs inside /curve balls away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very eager hitter</td>
<td>Constant pace</td>
<td>Change pace of mound work; hold ball longer before delivery to get him out of rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets out on front foot</td>
<td>Fastballs below belt and out over the plate</td>
<td>Fastballs inside or off speed away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left handed</td>
<td>Down and in his wheel house</td>
<td>Fastballs inside and above belt or up and away</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Change speeds:** The fastball is the cornerstone for the art of pitching. You will not possess an effective core of off speed pitches if you have not established your fastball, especially early in the game. Throw all your pitches with the fastball’s arm speed. This will make it more difficult for hitters to see, read and commit to swinging at what is being thrown. This creates the illusion that a fastball is coming when it is not. All off speed pitch velocities should be correlated to your best fastball velocity. A change up should be 17 – 20 mph slower than the fastball while the curve ball should be 13 – 16 mph slower than the fastball. Do not be afraid to throw a change up anytime throwing a fastball is strategically dictated. Generally in 100 pitches a good pitcher throws about 60 – 65 fastballs, 15 – 20 change ups and 20 – 25 curves balls. Speed the bat up, slow the bat down. No two pitches in a given at-bat should be the same speed. A pitcher should always be looking for ways to make the hitter lunge out in front of a pitch (by slowing the ball down) or swing late through the zone (by increasing the relative speed between pitches). This does not mean a pitcher should be less aggressive with his fastball; he should not throw every fastball at 100% velocity. There is a sweet spot in any mature pitcher’s delivery where he can throw easy strikes with good velocity. This is the base from which all other pitches (both off-speed and the “reaching back for something extra” fastball) are built.
Philosophy and strategies to deal with runners on base

**Philosophy:** Batters do get on as base runners. A pitcher having an average day will have base runners on about 75% of the time. Therefore, you need to understand that runners on base are part of the game because there are not that many perfect games. Runners are part of the game! Runners on base are not a disaster, but they come under the heading of things that the pitcher must cope with. In general, 40% of all base runners will score and, if the leadoff hitter gets on, he will score 67% of the time unless you can do something to cut down on that percentage. Even though you may not like it, you will pitch with runners on base and the team’s success depends upon your proficiency from the stretch. Will a stolen base beat you? Not very often. But bases on balls will beat you. Therefore, your goal is to hold the base runners close and concentrate on the hitter. Your overriding principle is not holding the runner but your effectiveness against the batter. Remember that you control the tempo of the game and nothing happens until you decide that it will happen.

**Runner on 1st base:** If you can hold a runner close to first base and have him advance only by a hit or a sacrifice, you will have a great advantage and it can be the difference between winning and losing. But, never let holding runners on take away from your effectiveness in working the hitter. Learn to compartmentalize in your mind what you do to hold the runner and what you do to make a pitch to the batter. In your setup and delivery, devote your full attention either to the hitter or to the runner, not partial attention to both. Your general strategy should be

- Focus on the next hitter with your first thought being to “get strike one”
- Know the situation and the type of runner because this will dictate what you do on the mound. If the runner is not a base stealing threat or, if the situation does not dictate running, then give quick attention to the runner to see that he is not doing anything out of the ordinary and devote your full attention back to the pitch.
- If the base runner is a steal threat then you will need to work to keep the runner close to the base giving your catcher an opportunity to throw him out on the steal attempt or giving your fielders a chance for a force play or double play. Base runners either tend to run early in the count because they are confident of their speed or they will wait until they think you will throw a change or curve because they need that little extra time. Know the runners speed and tendencies because they will dictate what you do on the mound.
- There are three basic steps to be applied when holding runners on.
  1. Make the runner stop their movement. When you come to the set position, hold and look at the runner. Only make a pitch delivery when the runner is fully stopped and not leaning toward 2nd base. Use a “long hold” if you think the runner is about to steal or adept at getting a good jump on your delivery to the plate. The runner will usually get anxious and prematurely start or lean to second which will allow you to either attempt a pickoff or step back off the rubber and start again.
  2. Base runners are always looking for patterns in a pitcher to give themselves an advantage on a steal attempt, so you need to vary your pause times, looks and what you do with your head. Make sure that you do the same thing with your head when you throw to the plate or make a pickoff attempt. Vary the time from the set position to when you start your delivery to the plate for 1, 3 or 5 seconds. This makes it difficult for runners to get a good jump by anticipating when you will throw to the plate. Work on this in your practice bullpens by coming set and then counting “one M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i” for each second of hold before you pitch. The toughest one will be the 5-second hold because it seems so long. Resist the urge to speed up and give it the full 5 seconds because it really will improve your game and deter runners from stealing on you. The long hold is an excellent way to throw off a runners timing, gets him back on his heels and makes it tough to get a good jump toward the next base. It is also effective to sometimes hit and go (come set and with “no look” move immediately to the plate or throw to first) which will surprise the runner so he will not get his full lead or will catch him in mid-stride as he takes his lead.
  3. Be quick to the plate with your pitch. From when you begin your movement to the plate until the ball reaches the catcher the time should preferably be 1.3 seconds or less to give
your catcher a chance to throw out the runner on a steal attempt or get a force / double play on an infield ground ball. Keep your same basic delivery but make sure your first movement is quick to the plate once you decide to make the pitch. If you feel uncomfortable at all about the situation, disengage the rubber and begin again. Practice a knee-to-knee delivery in which you have your feet shoulder width apart or slightly wider during the set position. Push with the big toe on your stride foot, take your front knee into the back knee and get the ball out of your glove. This movement will allow you to get your upper and lower body in rhythm faster and still make quality pitches consistently. The key to a quick delivery is a faster first movement.

- Although a pitcher will only pick off a runner a small percentage of the time with a move to first base, you must throw there to make the runner aware that you may pick him off at any time. Your prime objective is to keep the runner off balance and actually picking off the runner will only be a bonus. An effective pitcher, however, does not use his best move every time. You should develop several moves with one being the “best” – a quick motion which is capable of getting the runner out – as well as a “calling card” – a more deliberate type of move which is used to let the runner know that you are aware of him. By varying routine throws with good throws, you keep the runner guessing about what you are going to do. Right-handed pitchers need to make their best pick off move to first base in one second or less – measurement is from the pitcher’s first movement of any kind to the moment the ball strikes the first baseman’s glove – for it to be effective. Although quickness is vital here, accuracy is more important than raw quickness, else the potential pick off may become a thrown-ball triple.

1. **RHP moves to 1st base:**
   - **Decoy or setup move** (I know you are there) – step back with drive and disengage rubber, turn shoulder toward 1st base when drive foot hits ground behind the rubber and throw hard to the 1st baseman but not with your highest velocity
   - **Fake move** – the same actions as the previous move but you do not throw to 1st base but rather are interested in seeing the intentions of the base runner towards stealing 2nd base. You just take a quick step backwards off the rubber.
   - **Got you move** – your best move which might pick off an inattentive base runner
     a. **Spin** – lift drive foot heel and spin on the ball of that foot, turning shoulder to 1st base and stepping with stride foot toward the base while throwing the ball
     b. **Jump** – both feet simultaneously leave the ground, your body turns in the air with the front shoulder pointing towards 1st base, at the same time your hands are separating, keeping your elbows up and throwing as your feet hit the ground. Try to hit the 1st baseman’s target at the knees and on the 2nd base side of 1st base

2. **LHP moves to 1st base:**
   - **Normal** – step with stride foot to 1st base and throw to 1st baseman at the knees and up the line toward 2nd base
   - **Balk** – at the top of the balance point briefly pause and then step in a 45 degree angle toward 1st base making a strong throw to the 1st baseman at his knees. Practice this move by using your same pitching motion to the plate first in a 20 degree angle to 1st base, then in a 45 degree angle to 1st base and finally stepping directly toward 1st base. Make sure your motion is the same for all these different angled moves.
   - **Flip** – disengage rubber quickly with your drive foot, keep your elbow in to the side and as your drive foot hits the ground throw sidearm to 1st base. Practice this move in short distances from 1st base and build up to the distance from the rubber to 1st base making sure your arm is strong enough to make this move effective as well as so you do not unduly stress your arm. Only use this move if you can strongly and accurately make the throw to 1st base
3. After all moves to 1st base you should walk several steps toward the base to remove any doubt in the umpires mind that you might have balked. A deliberate move toward the bag will negate any tendency that the umpire might have to call any illegal action that you might have made.

Runner on 2nd base: Basically the approach and techniques are the same as when a runner is on 1st base, except you can fake a throw to that base and not have a balk called by the umpire. If you see the runner leaning toward 3rd base, you can use the back door move of lift, pivot and turn toward the runner to either throw to the 3rd baseman or shortstop / 2nd baseman. Do not throw the ball unless you are sure that your spikes will not catch on the rubber and that you can make a good throw with a very good possibility that you might pickoff the runner. Use a front door spin move if you see the shortstop / 2nd baseman in the daylight between the runner and 2nd base and there is a very good possibility that you might pickoff the runner. If you do not throw, the basic result is that the runner is still at 2nd base and not on 3rd base because of a bad throw by you.

Runner at 3rd base: Rule number 1 is focus on the hitter. Rule number 2 is to see rule number 1. Never ever throw over to 3rd base because things always go bad when you do.

Recovery after pitching in a game

After you are done pitching you will need to cool down and recover. Right after you leave the mound you should do some resistance flexing with the help of a teammate to stretch out leg and arm joints and muscles so that they do not tighten up. If, as it frequently happens in high school baseball, you are moved to another defensive position, do this at the end of the inning. In addition, as soon as feasible you should put ice on your arm to address the micro tears and bleeding in the muscle tissue because you have strained them while pitching. A bag of small frozen peas is effective for this and less expensive than a shoulder wrap. Put a thin dish towel on your arm and tape the bag of peas around it. Peas are great because they are small, will shape to your arm and will stay cold long enough – about twenty minutes. After you have iced down, a short jog will restore the core temperature in your body to normal. Finally you need to replenish your energy which has been exhausted by your strenuous exercise. A good protein / carbohydrate plentiful meal about 1 – 2 hours after the game would be wise as well as eating a banana for its high potassium content. In order to reduce the swelling and pain in the muscles and ligaments after pitching, some individuals may want to take the anti-inflammatory, ibuprofen, as a supplement to their ice treatment. Do not take aspirin or acetaminophen to reduce your discomfort.

Additional pitching drills to develop sound mechanics and strength

These drills can help prepare you both physically and mechanically for a successful season on the mound. You can do these at home during the off season, in addition to the suggested off season program, to promote your continued development as a pitcher. Except for the alphabet drill and long toss drill, you should do each drill for 10 repetitions.

1. Strength and endurance drills
   a. Alphabet drill: You should take a plastic gallon jug, which is half-filled with water, in your pitching hand with the elbow slightly bent and slowly spell out the 26 letter alphabet.
   b. Long toss drill: Get on your knees while squared to a partner about 6 body lengths from you. Emphasizing proper pitching mechanics, you should play catch with that individual gradually expanding the distance between the two of you. While throwing the ball as much on a line as much as possible – do not lob the ball --, reach the maximum distance that you can throw and reach your partner on 1 hop. Make 10 throws at the maximum distance and, then, gradually return to the initial throwing distance. This drill will probably involve 75 throws but your level of tolerance should determine the exact number of throws.
c. Stationary towel drill: You should get in your completed delivery position with a small towel wrapped around your middle finger. Swing your arm and towel in an easy, medium and hard manner at each difficulty level.

2. Lower body mechanics. Remember that the “pitching posture is the same as the hitting posture” which generally means that your feet are comfortably apart – usually shoulder width – with a slight flex to the knees and your head is over and in front of the belly button.

   a. Ball to ball – rotate late – eyes level drill: You should fold your arms across the body without thinking about actually making a throwing motion. Spread your feet until the inside of the legs are turning in and rock twice back and forth on the balls of your feet. On the second time you should go as far forward as possible before you rotate your hips open. You need to make sure that you keep your eyes on a level plane to the ground.

   b. Tap drill: In the stretch position you should raise your knee to your belly button and, then, drop the stride foot to tap a wood block. Raise your knee again to the belly button before dropping your stride foot into your delivery.

3. Footwork and throwing mechanics

   a. Step behind drill: This is a short catch exercise that involves your taking the stretch position. You should step behind your stride foot with your drive / pivot foot while going to the flex T position and, then, throw the baseball to a partner.

   b. Delivery towel drill: Have a partner watch your full delivery to see where your stride foot lands. This person will take a stance square to you about 4 feet in front of your maximum stride plus 5 steps and on a line to a simulated home plate with his hand in a relaxed “give me five” position. You should wrap a small towel around your middle finger and go through a normal delivery -- with your eyes locked horizontally on his hand – trying to slap his hand. The partner adjusts his distance in 6 inch increments until you can barely reach hitting his hand with the towel. If you work at this drill, you should be able to extend your stride length by about 1 foot more than usual which will get the ball to the plate quicker without requiring an increase in pitch velocity and, therefore, give you more of an advantage over hitters.

   c. Blind lead foot to the plate drill: In either the warm-up or stretch positions close your eyes at the start of your pitching motion. Your throwing partner will set the target after your delivery begins. As you begin your stride to the plate, open your eyes, find and throw to the target. While your eyes are closed you should visualize proper pitching mechanics. A variation of this drill has your partner setting the target before you begin your delivery and you, then, close your eyes and complete your delivery and throw while they remain closed.

   d. Balance beam drill: You should stand on a 2 x 4 in either the windup or stretch position. Go through a full delivery emphasizing keeping good balance throughout your pitching motion. You can either do this without a ball or using a ball throw to a partner.

   e. Change up / curve ball mound drill: You should stand at the back of a mound with a Partner about 6 body lengths from the rubber in line with home plate. Throw your change up and/or curve ball while striding up the mound. Your delivery should finish so that your stride foot ends up just in front of the back of the rubber. While doing this drill you need to emphasize proper follow though mechanics.