

BULLDOG Baseball/Softball

“PITCHING”

PITCHING is just throwing at the center of attention and is the 2nd most basic skill set for all levels of baseball. The steps below are critical components. Pitching should be part of your daily routine.

Softball Pitching Steps

- Stance
- Negative Move/Loading
- Leg Stride Phase w/ Circle Peak
- Three Quarter Arm Position with Snap Release
- Follow-thru w/ Shoulder Touch

Stretch Pitching Steps

- Sign/Set
- balance
- Power/landing
- Love-Spin-Throw- follow through

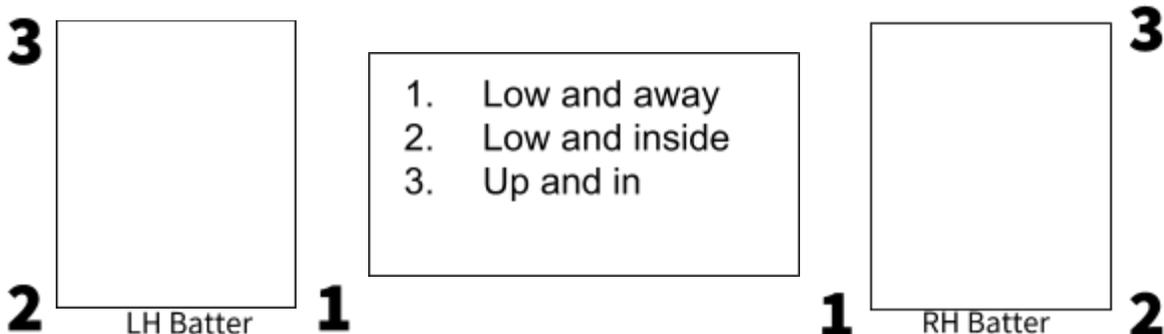
Windup Pitching Steps

- Ready
- Rocker
- Turn step/balance
- Power/landing
- Love-Spin-Throw- follow through

IF WE TRAIN ALL KIDS HOW TO CORRECTLY PITCH, those that have fun, are engaged, and know the routine will excel in pitching. The biggest issue for kids with pitching is the pressure. The only way to relieve the pressure is to make it routine for them. All kids should be trained how to pitch whether or not they pitch. This is a critical aspect of the game. This should be a primary focus of everyday practice and every game. Included below are developmental check points for each of the levels of play prior to starting High School. Our goal in working with you is that all athletes are properly prepared when they arrive for High School Competition. Build the best Bulldogs we can.

PITCHING OBJECTIVES:

1. For baseball throw at least three pitches to three locations (4 seam fastball, 2 seam fastball, and change-up).
2. For Softball throw at least four pitches to three locations (2/4 seam fastball, rise ball, drop ball, breaking ball)
3. Put the ball into play by your choice
4. Be AGGRESSIVE – MOVE THE HITTER'S FEET



We have to want to live down and away, but to live down and away we must be able to control the inside corner!

Emphasis Notes:

- ✓ Warm-up is foundational
- ✓ Routine is critical
- ✓ Bullpen should be for hitting the target not for being perfect

LEVEL STANDARDS:

Because pitching skills are universal all levels must be able to complete all steps of throwing. For 8U/10U, coaches should focus their training on “Stretch Pitching” but begin incorporation of the “Windup Pitching” as the season progresses. What coaches need to consider is how to break down each part to improve individual players skills sets and then increase arm strength and endurance each season.

8U player:

- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine all four steps of Stretch Pitching
- ✓ Begin to develop a degree of routine in all five steps of Windup Pitching
- ✓ Begin to develop a degree of routine in the five steps of Softball Pitching
- ✓ Rhythmic Throwing
- ✓ “W” grip on seams – able to throw a 4 seam fastball and a 2 seam fastball
- ✓ Throw two pitches consistently down the pipe – over the plate - ACCURACY over VELOCITY
- ✓ Field position and begin learning basic back-ups

10U player:

- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine all four steps of Stretch Pitching
- ✓ Begin to Achieve a degree of routine in all five steps of Windup Pitching
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine in all five steps of Softball Pitching
- ✓ Rhythmic Throwing
- ✓ “V”grip on seams, Two finger close grip, index pressure etc – able to throw a 4 seam fastball, a 2 seam fastball, begin learning claw change-up
- ✓ Begin to throw two-three pitches to three locations, able to throw two pitches down the pipe - ACCURACY over VELOCITY
- ✓ Field Position accurately, understand and achieve basic back-ups (base, home plate)

12U/14U player:

- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine all four steps of Stretch Pitching
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine in all five steps of Windup Pitching
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine and success the five steps of Softball Pitching
- ✓ Rhythmic Throwing
- ✓ “V” grip on seam, Two finger close grip, index pressure etc. – able to throw a 4 seam fastball, a 2 seam fastball, a claw or circle change-up.
- ✓ Throw three pitches to three locations, able to throw two pitches down the pipe - ACCURACY over VELOCITY
- ✓ Field Position accurately, proficient on all back-ups (deflection, scoring position “T”, and covering home)

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Ready Position: Feet should be shoulder width apart, knees slight flex, weight evenly distributed between feet on rubber.

Rocker: From the Ready position, the player will step slightly with his glove side foot at a 45 degree step off the rubber removing the weight from his pitching side foot. This is a critical step to get the momentum going toward the batter. If taken too large it will throw off the balance of the pitcher.

Turn Step: From the Rocker position, the player will step with his throwing side foot at a 90 degree step at the center of their catcher's body. This is a critical step to set up for getting into the proper perpendicular throwing position.

Sign/Set – Balance/Power (K.A.S.H. UP): Following the turn step, the player's entire body now moves to a 90 degree perpendicular to the center of their target's body. Their Knee, Ankle, Shoulder, and Hip get lined up with their target as in throwing. The slight difference here is the included 90 degree balance position of the front leg. THIS IS ACTUALLY A HYBRID position of the KASH UP

LOVE, SPIN, THROW, FOLLOW THRU: Player "LOVES" glove, bringing front side glove and shoulder towards body to "SPIN" and generate core rotation. "THROW"ing rotation through "FOLLOW THRU" to finish motion and provide increased velocity. MUST SNAP WRIST ON FOLLOW THRU!

Accuracy over Velocity: the simple concept that where the ball goes is more important than how fast it gets there!

"W" Grip (four seam grip/ two seam): for use with smaller hands or Softball players. Players would use a "W" with their first three fingers across the four seams of the ball to throw it with proper rotation. Four seam grip allows the ball to rotate in a 12 – 6 rotation which allows the ball to travel farther, faster, and straighter. While a "normal" two seam fastball would general cut slightly down and toward the throwers arm side, with the smaller handed players this is more of a practice for the future movement. The "W" Grip is actually counterproductive to the movement of the two seam fastball.

"V" Grip (four seam grip): for use with more advanced players with larger hands. Players would use a "V" with their first two fingers across the four seams of the ball to throw it with proper rotation. Four seam grip allows the ball to rotate in a 12 – 6 rotation which allows the ball to travel farther, faster, and straighter.

Two seam grip: for use with more advanced players with larger hands. Players would use a "V" with their first two fingers across the two seams at the sweet spot of the ball to throw it with pressure from the fingers to the thumb directly below the two fingers. Two seam fastballs generally have a cut movement slightly down and toward the throwers arm side.

Wrist Snap: the act of rotating the throwing hand in line with the love, spin, throw, follow-thru and snapping the wrist to finish.

Rhythmic Throwing: the uniform movement of the pitching steps. Critical to allow players to develop routine delivery of their pitches.

Stance: pitcher has both feet shoulder width apart with heel of drive foot on the pitching rubber and stride leg foot upright behind the rubber.

Negative Move/Loading: pitcher shifts weight backwards onto stride foot bending at the waist in an athletic position. May often be referred to as "Attack Posture".

Leg Stride: From load position, pitcher drives off rubber along power line towards target.

Circle Peak: Counter-clockwise arm swing of pitcher during the leg stride phase. Ball is at 12 o'clock position and glove is at 3 o'clock position.

TERMS & VOCABULARY continued:

Three Quarter Arm Position: From circle peak, pitchers is now at the 9 o'clock position and begins to decelerate.

Snap Release: ball is released a mid-thigh level with a violent snap of the wrist to the target. This momentum carries wrist up towards throwing arm shoulder during the follow-thru.

DRILLS:

Coach sets distance and pace. COACH CONTROLS ALL DRILLS.

- **BULLPEN ROUTINE:**

Below is the exact same Bullpen routine that is done by HS/College players (minus breaking pitches). Time and again this routine has proved to be the most effective preparation for pitching in a game. Teaching kids as early as 8U this routine (with appropriate modifications) will provide them with routine that will eliminate much of the butterflies associated with Pitching. When going through the throwing segment, follow the steps exactly. When the steps call for a RH/LH, either have the coach stand in or have a player stand there. PITCHERS NEED BODIES TO SIMULATE GAME SITUATIONS.

- **3-5 minute jog until you break a sweat**

- **Active body stretching routine: (10 count)**

Trunk rotation – clock-wise & counter clock-wise (no count)

Fence line standup quads

Walking deep lunges

Push-ups hips on the ground – x2

Cat & Cow

Butterflies

Partner Legs

Fence line – calves and Achilles

- **Active tube (can be done without tubes as well) stretching routine: (10 count)**

Arm circles – facing the fence

Internal rotation – back to fence rotating from the elbow into the waist

External rotation – facing fence rotating from the elbow away from the waist

Bicep curls – facing the fence

Tricep curls – back to fence, over head extension

Front raise – back to fence, arms straight pull up to shoulders

Side raise – perpendicular to fence, arm straight pull from waist to shoulder

Bent over raise – facing fence, leaning over, pull from front to back

- Long toss, flat ground, 8-12 tosses at appropriate distance for your level
- 4-seam fastball out of balance position – 3 tosses
- 2-seam fastball (across seams), in and out, windup, stretch – 4 tosses
- 2-seam fastball (with seams), in and out, windup, stretch – 4 tosses
- 4-seam fastball, in and out, windup, stretch – 2 tosses
- 4-seam fastball, up and in on LH, windup, stretch – 2 tosses
- 2-seam fastball, up and in on RH, windup, stretch – 2 tosses
- Change-up out of the balance position – 3 tosses
- Change-up, 3 spots, windup, stretch, windup – 3 spots
- Three spots set to RH, all pitches – 3 tosses
- Three spots set to LH, all pitches – 3 tosses
- Strikeout pitches to RH and LH, windup, stretch – 4 tosses
- Pitchout to RH – 1 toss
- Pitchout to LH – 1 toss
- 3-5 minutes – relax, towel off, drink some water

Bullpen Routine should be used when pitchers begin to be identified and individually developed. The other pitching drills should be used early in the season to provide training to all players in pitching as is LYAA's philosophy.

DRILLS (continued):

- **Line Ball:**

Divide the team into two equal lines the same distance apart. Take older baseballs and using a permanent marker draw a line through the four seams. Have athletes with partners practice throwing their respective "W" or "V" grip four seam fastballs. This drill can also be incorporated with "other" grips so athletes can recognize spin or rotation of ball dependent on their grip.

- **Ghosting:**

Divide the team into as small of groups as number of coaches available. For example if you have three coaches and twelve players. Divide into three groups of four players each. One player is the catcher, one is the batter, one is the pitcher, and one is the ghost pitcher. The groups will line up at the distance of the mound at your level. The ghost pitcher will simulate throwing approximately 5 steps behind pitcher, while the pitcher will throw, to the catcher, past the batter (who will with a ghost bat in hand practice swinging). Coaches will compliment, correct, and modify form. Coach will determine pitch type thrown and how many pitches in a row each pitcher will throw (generally 3-5), before rotating to next job. Ghost pitcher to pitcher, pitcher to hitter, hitter to catcher, catcher to ghost pitcher. Be sure to use bases or cones to establish the distance and lines of throwing.

- **Simulated game:**

Using batting tunnels have your pitcher's complete a simulated game against your batters. Divide team into two sub teams and have the pitchers go head to head against the opposing half of the team. While in cage establish what is considered a hit and out. General rules for cages, any ball the hits the top of the cage is an out, any ball the hits the ground in front of the L-screen is also an out. Line drives off the side of the cage L-Screen are considered singles. Line drives off the back wall of the cage are considered doubles. Have your catcher's catch inside the cage in full gear as well. Teams on defense should cheer and encourage as if a game was happening, while teams on offense should do the same. When runners do get on pitcher should deal accordingly, such as going from the windup to the stretch (at the older levels). Pitch 1-2 innings per pitcher.

Softball Specific

- **L Drill:**

The L drill is performed from the knee. Pitchers will have their glove-side foot up and will start in an L position with their throwing hand directly above their head and their glove straight ahead of them. We're now working from the shoulder all the way down. One thing to point out is that through the pitching motion, we're trying to achieve a whipping motion. The farther we move from our body, the more accelerated movement should exist in your body parts. Beginning with the shoulder down through the elbow, to the wrist, and ending with the fingertips. At release, your fingertips should be the fastest-moving part of your body.

- **Flamingo Drill**

This drill works on push off and driving into your target. Your pitcher should start on the non-glove-side foot. She'll need a little bit of rock to generate the forward motion. As your pitcher does this drill, remember the open door, closed door. She should start to close shortly after the front foot plants. She should be open as she gets to the release point, plant, and shortly after the plant and as she moves into the follow-through, she will be closed. Remind your pitcher to keep in mind as she drives forward that she needs to get her feet in line. If your pitcher draws a line from herself to the catcher, to the target, she wants to perform her skills and mechanics on that line. We get our shoulders, hips, feet in line, and our glove and throwing hand in line on that power line.

DRILLS (continued):

- Circle Speed Drill

This drill improves a pitcher's arm rotation speed, leading to more powerful throws and controlled speed. To do this drill, the pitcher's feet should be wider than shoulder width and in a stride position, as if she has taken a small stride. She will make three fast circles with her pitching arm, releasing the ball on the third rotation. The shoulder should stay relaxed but controlled. The purpose of this drill is to increase arm rotation speed and help pitchers release the ball with more momentum. To help aim the ball, the pitcher should have her glove hand at shoulder height and facing the catcher, where she wants to throw the ball. After working on three rotations before a pitch, reduce it to two rotations before the pitch and finally, one rotation and the pitch.

- Wrist Snap Drill

Pitchers should be at their open position towards the batter (or one another when working with a partner about 10 feet apart from each other). Use the wrists only to focus on strengthening the pitching motion. Use the glove to help restrict the movement of the elbow by placing the glove against the forearm. Tape can be placed on the ball to ensure that player is achieving the 12-6 spin on the ball. A weighted ball can also be used for this drill to increase wrist strength.

GAMES:

For "FUN" but should increase skill level, NOT decrease skill to win at all costs!

Point Game:

Modification of the standard game used for throwing. Instead athlete's throw to each other as pitcher to catcher back and forth. Points are awarded for hitting locations. 1 for up and in on batter, 2 for down and away, 3 for down and in, minus 1 for up and away or any balls. Players should rotate throwing to LH and RH after have three chances to hit each of the "spots". If they hit the three spots they could score up to 6 points per batter.

Back Me Up Game:

Modification of the standard game but using pitching motion rather than standard throwing steps. Athletes partner up to play coach controlled catch. Using commands, on coach's cue, athlete throws to partner. If catch is completed pair is still in game and moves back however many paces coach determines. If athlete drops the ball the pair stays in the game but must turn their hats to the right (signaling that they have had one drop). If athlete drops the ball a second time the pair stays in the game but must turn their hats to the back (signaling that they have had two drops).). If athlete drops the ball a third time the pair is out and sits down until the last pair of athletes remain. FOCUSED ON "PLAYING CATCH" as well as "PITCHING" – Coaches should also call "drops" when players do-not use correct form. The expectations for this game should increase at each level of baseball.

T-Targets:

Divide the team into as small of groups as number of coaches available. For example if you have three coaches and twelve players. Divide into three groups of four players each. Set a distance for the pitch at the same distance as your mound for your respective league. Place one ball on the "T" at a mid waist level of a average player in your league. Give a second ball to the first player in each line. Players on coach command will "pitch" using the correct steps at the ball on the "T". If they hit the ball directly off their team earns 10 points. If hit the stem of the "T" on the fly and the ball falls off they get 5 points. As soon as everyone has pitched, coach gives command for retrieving their individual balls and replacing the knocked off ball. Players then run to get the ball and then run back to hand the ball to the next pitcher in line. If they leave early, fail to run, or throw the ball to the next player, minus 5 points from that team's total. Set either a number of throws total per team or a point total to determine winning team.