

PITCHING

Presented by: Morgan Ray



INTRODUCTION:

Born and raised Montanan

Fiancé

Dog Mom

Retired Softball Player

Pitching Coach

Clinical Research Coordinator



SOFTBALL BACKGROUND

Started softball
(age 9)

Started Travel
Softball
(Age 12)

Moved to bigger
Seattle Travel
Team
(2011)

Committed to
The Ohio State
University
(February 2013)

Played travel
for fun after
junior year,
had my
official visit
(2014)

Played 4
years as a
Buckeye
(2015-2019)

Went
overseas to
play in Czech
Republic;
Slovakia for
Premier Cup
(2019)

Coaching
since 2016;
Private
Pitching
Coach Now

Started with a
pitching coach
(age 11.5)

Went to Fastpitch
Northwest Camp
(2010)

Camps,
recruiting
tournaments,
unofficial visits
(2011-2013)

Won state softball
sophomore/junior
year, GPOYx2
(2013-2014)

Won state,
GPOY again;
Played with
NW Bullets,
won TCS
Nationals
(2015)

Drafted to
NPF, pre-AU/
anything
feasible
(2019)

Went overseas
to play in Italy;
Slovakia for
Premier Cup
(2021)



ALL THINGS PITCHING: OVERVIEW

- General Tips/Tools
- MECHANICS***
- High School Practices
 - In-Season (Spring/Summer)
- Prepping for College Practices
- Pitching seasons
 - Post-Season (Summer/End of Summer)
 - Off-Season (Fall)
 - Pre-Season (Winter)
- Speed
 - Speed drills/tips
- Spins
 - Fastball
 - Screwball/Curveball
 - Riseball/Dropball
 - Change-up
- Mental Side of the Game

GENERAL TIPS/TOOLS FOR ALL AGES



Practice Length: Over-pitching

Live Pitching: MUST*

Spins

Tools:

- Big Ball/Little Ball
- Power Drive
- Spinner
- Weighted Balls: WHEN?*



MECHANICS***

- Pitching Coaches
 - As good as their knowledge-
 - A good pitching coach affects the pitcher just as much as a bad one
 - **Availability in the area = hard to find
- Evaluating a Young Pitcher (where do we go first?)
 - MECHANICS
 - Common things I DON'T see: standing tall, elbow tight, leg drive, drag
 - Coachability ***
 - This leads right into recruiting. No pitching coach, travel coach, HS coach, OR college coach will want you if you aren't coachable
- Philosophy on new pitch introductory
 - Early or late

HIGH SCHOOL PITCHING PRACTICES

In-Season

- At least 3 Days/Week without Games
- Strength/Speed incorporated (weightroom, sprints, pushups, leg drills, etc)
- Block Pitching: Time and Place
- Make realistic when possible (counts, batters)
- Game weeks
 - Light, full workout day before game
 - Day off after game, unless one day break or game; light
 - Two days+ until game: full/hard workout

Example Preseason Week:

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Off Off		Speed	Off/Hard	Hard/Off	Off/ Light	Hard

Example Game Week:

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Off Game		Pregame	Game	Light	Full/Hard	Pregame

PREPPING FOR COLLEGE/COLLEGE PRACTICES

****STRENGTH TRAINING**

****LIVE PITCHING**

****SCRIMMAGES**

****STAMINA (priority)**

****MENTAL STRENGTH**

****COMPETITIVE PLAY**

****ATTITUDE**

****EFFORT**

****FOLLOW THE PROGRAM (OR ASK)**

POST-SEASON

- Depends on route they are going
- If playing summer ball, give August off, maybe September
- If playing fall ball, just August
- If not playing summer ball, give June/July off, introduce back into pitching in August
- Rest/Heal from injuries: best time
 - Rehab, AT

OFF-SEASON & PRE-SEASON

OFF-SEASON

- Getting back into it, start slow
 - 1-2 days/week, mechanics, form, warmups
 - No need for injuries
- ~October/November, should be almost to full swing
 - 2-3 times a week
- THIS IS THE TIME TO BUILD STRENGTH/MUSCLE
 - Time to introduce new pitches, major form adjustments, things that take TIME

PRE-SEASON

- December/January: 3 days/week minimum, strength training, stretching, spins, maybe pitching to batters if possible
- In the weightroom 2-3 days/week if possible
 - If not, incorporate some of it for them

NOW FOR THE GOOD STUFF...

SPEED POINTERS



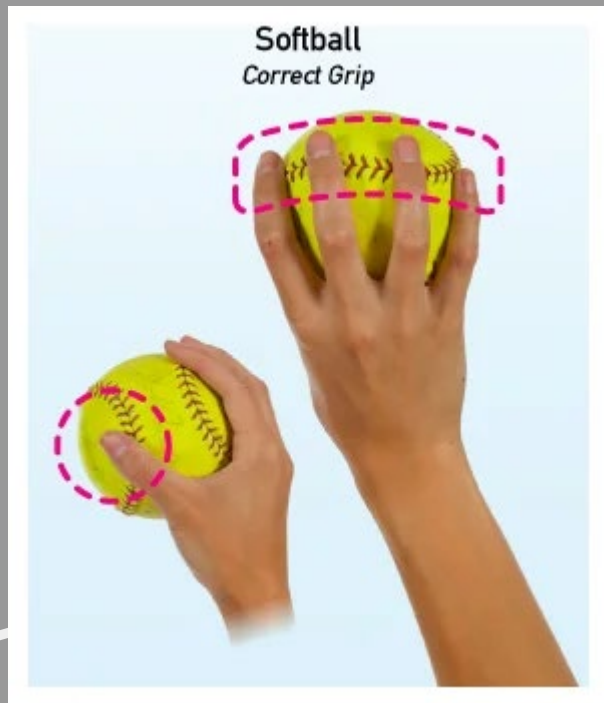
- Arm Speed
 - Bent elbow? Straight and tight?
- Bent Knee
 - Starts the leg drive; 80% of pitching = legs
- Momentum
 - Is there anything taking away from ALL energy going into the ball?
 - Landing foot
 - Drive out not up
 - Walking through
 - GLOVE HAND
 - Best friend/worst enemy
- Arm beating hip
 - Closing too soon? Arm too slow?
 - **Synonymous
 - Use different versions of the same thing so girls can get it
- Tight Arm/Elbow
- Wrist Snap
 - 80% of arm speed comes from which part of the pitch??

SPEED DRILLS



- Distance (High Arc)
 - Go until ball bounces, stop and do 25
- “Frozen Ropes”
 - Distance pitch without arc (~55-60 feet)
 - I did whenever my legs were slow/speed felt off
- 45-Second Drill
 - Bucket of balls, tosser, no catcher needed
 - Quick feet, quick arms, tiring, builds leg drive
- 10-Ball Drill
 - Catcher throw back and forth, 10 as fast as possible
 - Do 2-3 sets
- Up the River
 - Average Speed; staff/solo, +5 before -5
- Flamingos
 - BUT CORRECTLY
 - Leg “rock” back AND down, leg drive, glove, finish
 - Start over if bad balance
- Run-Throughs
 - Can get scary with knees, make sure flat surface
 - All pitches work with this
 - I did whenever my legs were slow/speed felt off
- THREE HOP DRILL
 - Personal fav, builds so much speed/warms up legs

Fastball Pointers



- Grip
 - Use laces to your advantage
- Snap
 - Watch spin
- Leg drive/push-off
- Landing foot
- Hips
 - Starfish
 - Arm beats hip
- Fast arm circle
- All come together at once
- Most girls with a “fastball” do not have a real fastball
 - Drop ball spin, curve/screw spin, etc. based on release and momentum
- Of the 9 girls total we had on staff in college, I was the only one who threw it

Screwball Pointers



- GRIP
- HAVE to stay open
- Thumb finishes to third base
- Spin
 - Door on the floor, turn the doorknob
 - Quarter turn vs. half turn
- Biggest Problems/How to Fix
 - Hitting hip
 - Ball stays straight
 - Ball screws wayyyyy off the plate
- Sister pitch: Rise

Curveball Pointers

- Opposite of screw
- GRIP
- Landing hard/Connected
- Work under your waist
- AROUND the ball
- Finish to left hip
- SPIN: Not natural for many
- Biggest Problems/How to Fix
 - Inside pitch (not necessarily wrong)
 - Elbow Out
 - Finishing OUT
 - Not a “curve”
- Sister pitch: Drop

Screwball/Curveball Drills



- Trash Can Drill
 - Especially good if afraid to throw a batter inside
- Ball on tee
 - Volleyball/Soccer Ball
- Moving mounds
 - 3 mounds in a row, pitch to far mound and back
- Pitch with sister pitch to differentiate
 - Screw/Rise
 - Curve/Drop

Riseball Pointers



- Stay Low in back leg
- Dump "Glass of Water"
- Regular Doorknob
- Middle finger to the sky
- Have to finish HARD in last part of snap to get it to spin up
- Biggest Problems/How to fix
 - Not in back leg (knee drill)
 - Spin not tight/right (big ball)
 - Not finishing hard (combo ^)
- Sister Pitch: Screw

Riseball Drills



- Up the shoot
 - Pitching net @ plate
- Knee drill
 - Big Ball**
- Get a Kevin
 - Under the armpit
- Combo with Sister Pitch (Screw)

Dropball Pointers

- Many types/grips
 - Peel
 - Over the hand (peel/catch)
- Get landing foot down FASTER
 - Not** shorter step
- Weight on front foot, play with gravity
- SPIN tight
- Do all the work TIGHT to your body and below the waist
- Biggest problems/How to fix
 - Weight back/Chest Up
 - Spin not tight enough
 - Wrong grip
 - Arm/Elbow Out
 - Finishing high
- Sister Pitch: Curve

Dropball Drills



- Lay down something to go “over”
 - Half-circle dummies
- 9 square nets: corners/bottom two
- Pitch with Curve or Fast
 - Curve is sister pitch
 - Fast is same grip and good to differentiate between

Change-Up Pointers



- ENDLESS amounts of change-ups
 - No right/wrong
 - If it's not working after a good quality effort, try a new one
- For all change-ups
 - FULL body speed, don't slow down
 - What is the point of change-ups?
 - Release with step
 - Great timing
 - Stop Hard
 - No walking through*
 - Drop off
 - Most effective
- Flip change
 - Hold deep in hand
 - Grip like fastball
 - Hand turned before waist
 - Big open hand
- Horseshoe Change
 - Grip tight around lace
 - "Lego Arm"
 - Common problem: twisting one way or the other, not stopping and snapping through
- ** THROW ALL THE TIME
 - Not the best pitch? Throw when you're ahead, but throw anyway!!!

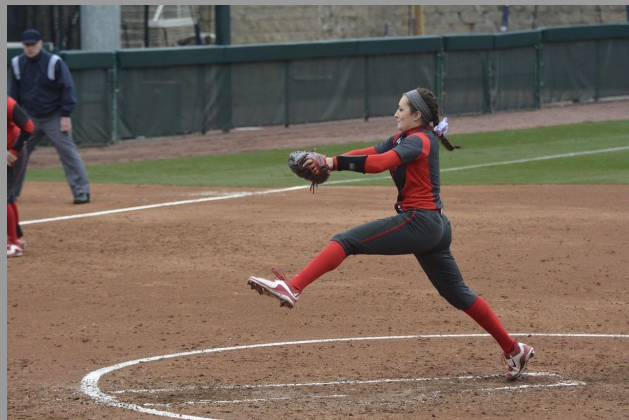
Change-Up Drills

- Locate
 - In/Out
 - Ball/Strike
- Over the half-dummy
- Combo pitching
 - Fast/Change
 - Drop/Change
 - Rise/Change
 - Curve/Change
 - Strike pitch/Change
- Counts**
 - Always work these in

Mental Side of the Game

- Pitching is extremely mental
 - Most if not ALL
- Mental drills should ALWAYS be incorporated
- Figure out what “drives” your pitcher
 - Words?
 - Pump up?
 - Being stern?
 - Staying quiet but having clear trust? (Eli)
- Let them call timeouts
 - Remind them to call time if they need a break, quick reset with their catcher
- Work on growing that strength
 - Talk about strengths/weaknesses
 - Discuss what might help
- Books, videos, team dinners/bonding,
*communication!!

Final Tips



- Teaching new pitches
 - Master mechanics before you move on
 - Most girls are learning pitches without knowing what they are trying to do OR having good form/success with the others
- Grip Strength/Strength training
 - Spins and speed
- Don't overlook the mental side of the game
 - Incorporate what you can
- They don't ALL have to be pitchers!
- ASK if you don't know- do research, call a pitching coach, go to camps, etc.

Questions?
Comments?

THANK YOU!!!

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