

Developing & Coaching Pitchers Without a Pitching Coach

Eli Field • Frenchtown High School, Montana • 8 state championships & 6 runners-up.

We don't have a dedicated pitching coach on staff. This handout covers how we still develop pitchers: the traits we look for, the four concepts we coach, how we set and communicate goals, and how we teach in-game strategy.

FINDING & DEVELOPING THE RIGHT PITCHER

Treat these traits as things that can be developed, not just found: dedicated students who work as hard as the staff; athletes who love to pitch and want to be the center of the game; players with leadership potential; and pitchers who keep their composure. We coach to bring these traits to the next level.

FOUR CONCEPTS TO COACH

Condense the whole motion into four concepts to keep the athlete's mind clear:

1. Stand Tall / Stride on Line	2. Leg Drive / Stride Length
3. Consistent Release Near Hip	4. Stay Loose / Don't Aim

Our pitchers' own words for their most important mechanics — leg drive, straight arm circle, wrist snap, explode off the mound, strong front leg, stay loose, stand tall — map back to these four concepts.

SIMPLE WORKS

Simplify anything that seems unneeded, build consistency before complexity, and don't force a change if something is already working.

COMMUNICATE GOALS CLEARLY — OFF-SEASON

Off-season starts late October. By the second meeting ask each pitcher **what she wants to accomplish** — this eliminates mindless workouts and gets her to own what she's working on. We suggest things we think are important: a change-up (a must-have if she doesn't have one), location with her best pitch, consistent mechanics, strength and stamina, and developing or experimenting with a new pitch.

COMMUNICATE GOALS CLEARLY — IN GAME

75% strikes with the best pitch (fast or curve) — get ahead or fall behind on purpose, but always be able to recover.

50–60% strikes with the change-up — force hitters to honor it; it should be throwable on 1-0, 2-0, 3-1, and 3-2 counts.

One walk per seven innings — it's difficult to score when things are given for free. Minimize big innings and keep the defense active and engaged.

We chart every pitch, share the data, and set the strategy — that's how we cover for not having a specialist on staff.

THE TRAINING CALENDAR

- **Off-season (indoors, 1–2× / week, mornings):** run a consistent warm-up around the core mechanics. **Oct–Dec** focus on a single mechanic or a new pitch; **Jan–Mar** shift to strategy, mixing pitches, and location. The coach catches to gain perspective on the pitcher's spin and location — equal investment from coach and pitcher.
- **Pyramid workouts:** the pitcher picks one, but every workout keeps a first-pitch strike, 0-2 choice & location, and 3-2 pitches. Start with mechanics drills and about 15 fastballs, warm each pitch with roughly 10 reps, then gradually hand the location choice to the pitcher.
- **In-season (maintenance):** the off-season work should let her self-coach. No new pitches; trust her read on feel — a light or heavy day, spin-only, or warm-up only. Pitchers are the most neglected players in-season, so protect the routine.

TEACHING IN-GAME STRATEGY — “THE BEST THING WE DO”

- **Short, personal cues:** give each pitcher her own phrases — “be online,” “keep your hand tight,” “stay loose,” “don’t be too fine.” Don’t flood her with mechanics; when she’s locked in, she hears only the catcher and the coach.
- **Getting hitters out:** get ahead and control the zone, then expand it and let hitters chase. 0-2 pitches aren’t hittable unless you want them to be; when behind, throw off-speed to aggressive hitters; and pitch backwards once you’ve seen a hitter multiple times.
- **Confidence:** they did the work — they deserve success. Build a reset mechanism (a keyword, a 3-2-1 count) for the bad moments, rehearse pressure, and want the ball. Failure will happen — move on to the next pitch.
- **Trust (pitcher / coach / catcher):** respect how hard pitching is, communicate constantly and actually listen, explain the why behind every ask, and make sure she knows you’re as invested as she is.
- **Self-assessment:** every pitch is information. Teach her to question herself — why am I missing location, why is the ball high, why am I losing velocity or movement — and to adjust within two pitches. Growth mindset, not dwelling on the last pitch.

