



New Pitch-Count Rules Will Change Tournament Play Strategy

Under the old rules of innings limitations, a pitcher could work two full innings on the mound without needing to take a day or a game off. Not anymore. Responding to an alarming uptick in reported cases of young pitchers experiencing arm and shoulder problems, In 2017, Dixie Youth will institute pitch limits rather than innings limits -- and under those new rules, anyone who throws more than 40 pitches in a game needs meet the rest requirement before he can pitch again.

For more than 60 years, DYB coaches have developed their pitching strategies for tournament play based on an innings limitation and 36-hour rest rule requirements. Times are changing. Beginning in 2017, coaches will be evaluating pitchers based on how many pitches per inning (PPI) they average. Transitioning to pitch-counts will cause coaches to more closely assess the effectiveness of their 12 and under pitchers.

The previous innings limitations led coaches to either pitch a pitcher a complete games (6 innings) or pitch multiple pitchers 2-2-2 to maintain each pitchers eligibility to pitch daily without a 36-hour rest period. Coaches will be looking for pitchers who can throw 40 or less pitches over two innings to maintain their daily eligibility in tournament play in 2017. Coaches will need to carefully evaluate their pitchers eligibility status at all time during a game.

Coaches will still attempt to get complete games out of some pitchers but they may not be able to complete six innings with the daily pitch-count limits and coaches will need to resort to using one or two pitchers to get through the last one or two innings while maintaining those pitchers eligibility. Coaches will be able to use their ace pitchers as closers in games where they are the home team and have a comfortable lead or in in potential run-rule games.

The more efficient pitchers may be able to pitch complete games or pitch more than two innings under the rest period thresholds. In any event, coaches will need to develop more pitchers in local league and bring more than 2 or 3 pitchers who are ready to pitch in tournament play. Coaches will be looking for the 40-pitch guys who can maintain their eligibility. Managing the pitching game will be a major part of the game going forward. DYB passed a rule to allow for intentional walks without having to throw a pitch to batters to eliminate those pitches adding to a pitcher's pitch-count.

Bottom line....the new rules dictate new strategy.