



Fast-Pitch Pitching

Rita Lynn Gilman
(804) 798-2772



Keys:

1. **Desire** – it takes lots of work! The athlete has to be self-driven want this for themselves.
2. **Practice**
 - ◆ Quality vs. quantity, intense & focused, good form is goal not the strike zone in the beginning
 - ◆ 3-5 days a week year-round, drills concentrating on particular aspects of motion
 - ◆ Goal-oriented – accomplish one thing (improvement in one aspect of motion) each practice
3. Success – pitchers must see some improvement even if small.
4. Understanding – pitchers must know what went wrong (or right) with each pitch and make adjustments, teach body awareness
5. Patience yet determination – don't get frustrated by wild pitches, analyze & do something about them.
6. Master the basic fundamentals
7. Relax but be aggressive!

Coaches:

1. This information is great, but do something with it: share it, perfect it, help a young pitcher improve.
2. Never tell a pitcher in training to "slow up and throw strikes"! She's learned a rhythm you'll destroy.
3. Be a student of the game and of the skill of pitching, try to do it yourself to appreciate how hard it is.
4. Hold separate, supervised practices for your pitchers. Get involved with young pitchers that will feed into your program in the future.
5. **Be positive** when possible, yet firm when a pitcher is sloppy.
6. Emphasize form, not strikes; encourage speed with good mechanics, strikes will result.
7. How often should a pitcher practice? How good does the **pitcher** (not Dad or Mom) want to be?
8. Do drills at a closer distance for better mechanics. **Air through the motion and pitch into a net until perfect.**
9. Keep it simple by focusing on one point at a time & stay with it until correct. Video to visualize mistakes.

ABSOLUTE NO-NO'S - do not allow a pitcher to do these!!!!

lean forward – head & shoulders are not to be ahead of hips (balance problems cause control problems)

push the ball – if there's no whip, there's no speed nor control (except for luck)

force fielding position - feet stay active and react to the ball without squaring up to plate

make her hand turn at the top of the circle - hand will naturally turn around

cock her wrist on downswing - do not force it! whip position will naturally occur if arm is relaxed

GAME SITUATIONS:

1. Always get ahead in the count. **First pitch strikes should be automatic.** Less than 8% of first pitch strikes are hit for hits!
2. Don't run the count on weak hitters.
3. Concentrate on getting the first out of the inning.
4. No walks because walks score. We have no defense against a walk!!!
5. Know where to throw strikes and balls to each hitter. Exploit weaknesses and avoid strengths.
6. Know what each batter did last time.
7. Beat a team not only with your best pitch, but with your **best pitch sequences.** Set 'em up to sit 'em down!
8. Throw low pitches for grounders, high for fly balls. Throw inside for balls to left side of field, outside for right.
9. Ball movement (determined by direction of spin & speed of spin) is more important than speed.
10. Disturb batter's timing & rhythm by varying your pitch speeds, wind up and arm speed. Be unpredictable!
11. Be careful throwing change-ups with runners on base.
12. Don't let batter have both sides of the plate: brush off if crowding or throw to weakness.
13. When in doubt, throw to sides/corners of plate. Less outside pitches are hit for hits than inside pitches.
14. Get help from catcher on calling pitches.
15. Don't be afraid to throw higher than high or tighter than tight; ump & batter have different perspective.
16. Normally throw high/inside to a bunter; contrast low & away; may try low to ensure an out from the bunt.
17. Practice pitch-outs and intentional walks so they are easy in a game.

18. 90% of pitching is down time so always be thinking positive affirmations and confidence.
19. If cold, wear jacket, run between innings or even throw. Use a bat to do long, extended arm circles.
20. Don't waste warm-up time on a pitch that isn't working; use it as a waste pitch early in game until working.
21. Pitcher becomes the closest infielder upon releasing the pitch; pitcher should be part of the "go around" before an inning or after an out so she gets an overhand throw in.

ISN'T IT INTERESTING...

- ◆ Batters have a .324 average on 3-1 counts yet only a .191 average on 0-2 counts. Get ahead!!!!
- ◆ 80% of all walks occur when the first pitch is a ball.
- ◆ A walk with no outs turns into a run 76% of the time. Yikes!!!!

Fundamental Tidbits

- Perfecting pitching mechanics is the best way to increase ball speed and control.
- Keeping the ball in the pitching plane during the entire arm circle is the key to good left/right ball control.
- A consistent grip and a consistent ball release are the keys to good up/down ball control.
- The arm whip may be the most mysterious part of the windmill pitching motion. It requires the arm to be flexible at the elbow and wrist, which in turn requires that the arm muscles be relaxed. Like snapping a towel or whip, the forearm and hand snap to produce high velocity at the fingers as the ball is released at the hip with the desired ball rotation.
- Consistent body orientation is a key first step to learning consistent release of the ball.
- Pitchers sense the proper release point by sensing the forces on the pitching arm and sensing the position of the pitching hand relative to the hip.
- Balance and stability on the stride foot provide the foundation on which good ball control is based.
- The errors caused by even small instabilities in footwork are magnified enormously.
- Pitching against a firm left side or blocking the left side of the body is an important speed mechanism. To exploit this mechanism it is important that the body be stopped abruptly when the stride foot plants.
- When working on ball speed, do not be concerned about control. It is time to "let it all hang out." A pitcher is not really experimenting and pushing the speed envelope if all the pitches are well controlled.
- The importance of ball spin cannot be emphasized enough. Proper ball spin is the essence of nearly all advanced pitches and ball spin is a good diagnostic tool for detecting an improper release of the ball.
- **Movement = direction of spin and speed of spin.** The faster the spin, the faster the ball movement and the more the movement.
- Some advanced pitches can lead to poor pitching mechanics. Be aware of the deviation from good mechanics and try to keep it from "contaminating" your other pitches.
- Learning how to throw an advanced pitch is step one; learning when to throw it in a game is step two.
- The pitcher must learn in practice what it feels like to throw her highest percentage pitch, not in a game when the bases are loaded and the count is full on the batter! It is this knowledge which provides the underlying self-confidence that enables the pitcher to weather rough times on the mound and to stick with the pitching mechanics and rhythm that will produce the best results.
- On game day, examine the mound area. Make sure the footing is sound. Get help if it isn't. Clear away any rocks that might cause a bad bounce on a ground ball. No excuses that the mound messed you up!
- A player cannot dwell on a failed pitch or a bad call by the umpire, but must instead always be looking forward with confidence to the next pitch.
- The necessary self-confidence to master the mental game comes from practice and knowledge that you CAN perform the pitching mechanics, that you CAN throw strikes and that you CAN get batters out.
- As you pitch to a batter, put yourself in her shoes. What would you expect to be thrown next? Do the opposite. Vary your holds, presentations, wind-ups and arm circle speeds.
- Learning how to peak physically for a game is an important part of becoming an experienced pitcher. All pitchers are different and each must learn what works best.
- Everyone needs reminding now and then that fast-pitch softball is a game and that the primary reason we play the game is to have fun!