

# PITCHERS & CATCHERS

## I. CATCHERS

### A. No one on base

1. Stance
  - a. feet
  - b. back and rear-end
  - c. head and chest
  - d. hands and fingers (thumb location)
2. Framing (no begging) Use baseball sense
  - a. glove action (low target)
  - b. body action

### B. Men on base

1. Stay low- yourself and advantage ump
2. arm action
  - a. throw from ear
  - b. elbow above shoulder
  - c. strength and quickness determines throw
3. footwork

### C. Key Situations (extra duty)

1. know who and where on base
2. bunting responsibilities (know all teammates jobs)
3. catcher is Field General (voice on bunts, slow roller, etc)
4. Third base coverage- runner on first (3rd base fields)
5. back up first (varies with different ball locations)

### D. Pop Ups

1. locate, take off mask, locate throw mask
2. back to infield, (overplay to fair territory)
3. go for everything until called off by infielder

## I. PITCHERS

### A. STANCE----stay there once spot is determined

#### 1. Rubber selection

- A. Righty-right side
  - B. Lefty-left side
- } or center

#### 2. Stand up

- A. Both feet on rubber
- B. Weight on opposite foot of throwing arm (to start)

#### 3. Hide ball with glove

- A. closed web glove is ideal
- B. Grip with the laces (different ways)  
(except 3-0 count)

#### 4. Throwing motion stays constant

A. Once determined as much overhand as possible which regulates plane of baseball.

- B. elbow above shoulder -come over top
- C. also throw with legs and back extension and follow through

#### 5. Push off

- a. stay low
- b. follow through-pick up dirt
- c. head up quick
- d. you are now an infielder ASAP

## **DRILLS FOR PITCHERS**

1. STRETCH, LOTS OF CATCH, LONG TOSS WHEN LOOSE AND WARM DARN
2. BALANCE & STRENGTHEN DRILL
  - A. START ON RUBBER, WIND UP, STOP WHEN LEG IS UP, BALANCE FOR 20 SECONDS
3. DRAW LINE ON MOUND-WATCH GOOD EXTENSION SPOT  
MAKE SURE LOOKS AND FEELS COMFORTABLE-THEN REPITITION WORKOUT
4. PFP PRACTICE (PITCHERS FIELDING PRACTICE)
  - a. COVER ALL SITUATIONS
    1. BUNTING
    2. SLOW ROLLERS
    3. BACKUP OF APPROPRIATE BASES
    4. COVERAGE OF FIRST BASE (ESPECIALLY LEFTIES)

## **DRILLS FOR CATCHERS**

1. FRAMING DRILL
2. BACK STOP DRILL (NO GLOVE)
3. BACK STOP DRILL (WITH GLOVE)
4. POP UPS
5. STRETCH, LONG TOSS, THROW TO ALL BASES AND WARM DOWN
6. BUNTING GAME
7. STEALING DRILL

## TECHNIQUES AND DRILLS TO IMPROVE PITCH VELOCITY

So you can better understand and study what actually happens within the pitching motion, I am going to show you high speed video of two real **POWER PITCHERS**, Mark Wohlers and Nolan Ryan. These two pitchers are great models to observe because they get the maximum energy out of their entire motion.

After describing their techniques, I'll then demonstrate drills I've developed to teach various segments of the pitching motion

### COMMON TRAITS OF POWER PITCHERS

- A. **GOOD BALANCE** - during the rocker step, foot pivot, and leg lift, and during stride foot plant, the pitchers create a very solid and stable base. They stand tall, stay back, and have a solid foundation to begin their transfer of weight directly to the plate.
- B. **CONSISTENT AND EFFICIENT ARM ACTION**. There is a consistent arm path with a continuous controlled arm motion with the fingers staying on top of the ball. The elbow stays somewhat flexed, or flexes early on the way up into the cocked position allowing for a quick and compact circle.
- C. **COCKING POSITION**. Elbow is approximately shoulder height with the hand even with the top of the head. The palm of the hand faces the SS (RHP) with the wrist in a loaded position (extended back). This allows a pitcher to throw in a downward plane and get a forward wrist snap.
- D. **EXTERNAL ROTATION OF THE SHOULDER**. High velocity pitchers are able to externally rotate the shoulder close to 180 degrees before exploding (internally rotating) into the acceleration phase.
- E. **GREAT TRUNK AND SHOULDER FLEXIBILITY**. The trunk goes from extension (arched back) when the trunk is squared to the plate, to trunk flexion forward during the release phase. This gives the pitcher a great range of motion for power during the acceleration and release phases.
- F. **LEAD ARM ACTION**. High velocity pitcher's exaggerate lead arm action so to keep the front side closed as long as possible, and then to whip the elbow down and back to create maximum torque (angular velocity) of the upper body.
- G. **HIP, TRUNK, AND HORIZONTAL SHOULDER ROTATION**. Upon stride foot plant, the front hip opens slightly, but the front elbow and shoulder stays closed for milli-seconds longer. The upper body is released like a spring-mechanism. This is the greatest source of energy within the throwing motion.
- H. **THE STRIDE**. Most high velocity pitchers take a long stride (lead with the front hip) and stride slightly closed (across the mid-line) to help them keep the body closed longer. The stride foot lands flat footed with the toes pointed inward slightly (10-20 degrees).



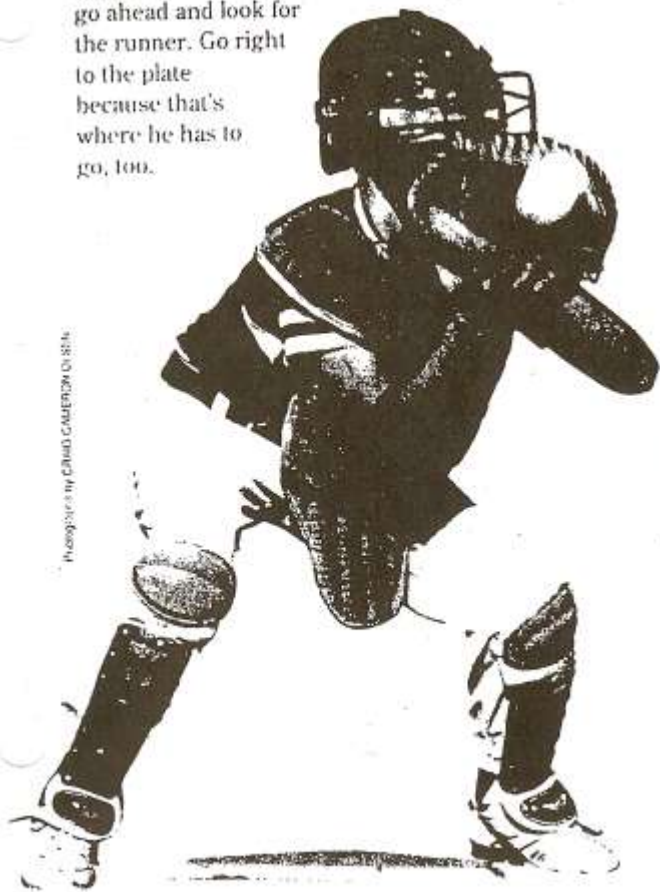
# Pro Playing TIPS

**P**laying catcher is one of the toughest things in

baseball. You have to be quick and strong, good with the glove, and fast on your feet. Cardinals catcher Tom Pagnozzi has all these skills and more. One of the best defensive catchers in the Majors, he has won two Gold Gloves for fielding excellence. In 1992, he tied all-time records for best fielding percentage (.999) and fewest errors (1) by a catcher. The former Little Leaguer told us ways you can become a better catcher, too.

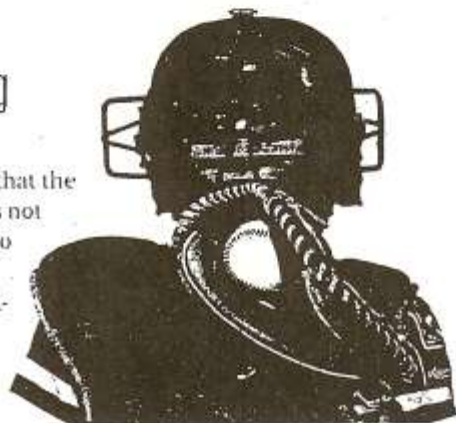
## On making the tag play at the plate:

When the throw comes in, I look at the ball all the time. I know the runner is going to slide. Sometimes he'll even tag himself out by sliding into you. But my concentration always has to be on the ball. Yours should, too. Once you catch it, go ahead and look for the runner. Go right to the plate because that's where he has to go, too.



## On catching the ball:

It's important that the mitt you use is not too small or too big. You have to feel comfortable with it. But the main thing is to concentrate on the baseball. When the pitch is coming in, watch the ball, not the batter or the pitcher. If you're scared of the ball, that's when you're going to be in trouble. You'll miss the ball if you're not watching it. Just focus on it and catch it.



## On making throws to the bases:

Whether you are fielding a bunt or trying to throw out a base stealer, you have to react like an infielder. The first thing is to set yourself on your feet. The quicker you get your feet in position, the quicker you can get the ball to the base. Your arm motion won't be there until your feet are in a good position to throw. Fast feet mean a quick throw.



## RELAXED POSITION

- The body is balanced and is square ~~behind~~ the plate. The weight is on the toes.
- This is the catcher's position before the pitcher steps on the mound.
- The ready position is then assumed.



## CATCHING A BALL ABOVE THE WAIST

- Catch the ball with the "thumbs together" position.
  - The hands and arms start out in front.
  - Cushion the ball as it is received.
  - Catch the ball in the palm of the glove.
- Glove elbow clearly in front and pointing out from the knee.



## CATCHING A BALL BELOW THE WAIST

- Turn your hands over into the "palms up" position.
- The hands and arms start out and in front.
- Cushion the ball as it is received.
- Catch the ball in the palm of the glove.



## CATCHERS EQUIPMENT

- It is mandatory to have the neck protector and helmet attached to the mask.
- Your chest protector should fit and be adjusted to cover the neck and groin area.
- Your leg pads should cover the area just above the knee cap and should be done up on the outside of your legs.





### 1. CATCHER'S STANCE:

HOW FAR FROM THE BATTER IS SAFE?

- Allow the batter to assume his position in the box.
- Stay at least arm's length away from the batter's back leg and hip.



### 2. BAT CLEARANCE

- This will give you room to catch the ball safely even as the batter swings.
- NOTE: A ball in the dirt or a low pitch are very difficult plays. The further back a catcher takes his stance, the more often these difficult plays will occur.



### 3. CATCH THE BALL

- Once the pitcher has used up the target (on release) relax the glove hand.
- Keep the seat up and the shoulders down.
- The hands and arms are held out front.
- Cushion the ball on contact.
- Catch the ball in the palm.
- When anticipating a throw to a base, begin to shift your weight forward as you catch the ball.



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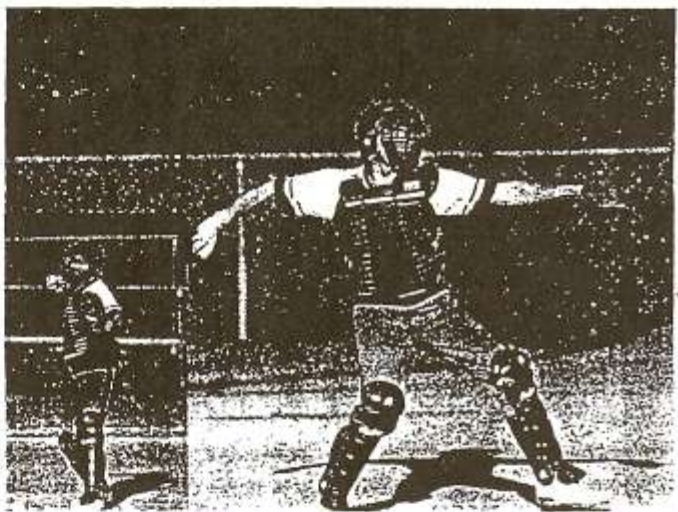
#### 4. GRIP AND STEP

- Get the correct grip for the throw.  
The power leg steps toward the target.
- Keep the body low and balanced to set up the quick release.



#### 5. THE THROW

- Use the down-back throwing motion and keep the eyes fixed on the target.
- Step toward the target with the non-power foot.
- Use an overhand throw.



#### 6. FOLLOW THROUGH

- Completely extend the arm forward.
- Snap the wrist on the release.
- Finish so that the right shoulder ends up pointing at the target.
- The throwing arm should follow through to the opposite hip.





## BLOCKING A BALL

- Drop to your knees.
- Stay behind the ball.
- The glove and hand should cover the hole formed between the legs.
- "Look" the ball into the body.
- Keep the head down.
- Do not try to catch the ball. Rather, try to block it and keep it in front of the body.



## MAKING A PLAY AT THE PLATE

### 1. RECEIVING THE THROW

- The body faces the throw.
- The heels of the feet are at the front of the plate.
- Ready Position: Knees are bent, arms are out front, and eyes are on the ball.
- Do not stand on the baseline waiting for the ball.
- You cannot block the runner when you do not have the ball.



### 2. MAKING THE TAG

- Catch the ball, grip it and keep it in the glove.
- Jab step into the baseline with the leg pad facing the runner.
- Allow the runner to slide into the tag. Do not reach.
- Clear out of the way.



- It is mandatory in Little League Baseball to have the neck protector and helmet attached to the mask.
- Remember, wear all your gear whenever you are receiving throws from the pitcher



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## THE CATCHER

**T**HE CATCHER IS THE LEADER OF THE DEFENSIVE TEAM. HE MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY, BE STRONG AND QUICK, AND MOST OF ALL HE MUST WANT TO CATCH. A STRONG THROWING ARM, GOOD HANDS AND A COACHABLE ATTITUDE ARE ALSO IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES.

IN ORDER TO BE A COMPLETE CATCHER, THE FOLLOWING SKILLS MUST BE MASTERED: BLOCKING LOW PITCHES, MAKING A TAG PLAY AT THE PLATE, THROWING TO ALL BASES, CATCHING POP-UPS, RECEIVING THE PITCHER.

A GOOD CATCHER MAKES SURE THE EQUIPMENT FITS AND IS PROPERLY ADJUSTED.



### READY POSITION "A"

- Provide a good target throughout the pitcher's windup and delivery.
- The body should be square to the pitcher and behind the plate.
- Hands and arms are held out in front of the body.
- The fist is held behind the webbing of the glove for protection.
- The feet are shoulder width apart and shoulders are low.
- The seat is off the heels, the glove foot is forward and the power foot is back and pointing out.



### READY POSITION "B"

- All of the above information applies except the position of the throwing hand.
- The thumb and index finger of the throwing hand are held lightly on the heel of the foot for protection.
- Weight should be on the balls of the feet.
- Fingers could be placed under heels.

### LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL

- Make sure your equipment fits and is properly adjusted.
- You must wear your equipment whenever you are receiving throws from a pitcher.
- It is mandatory to wear a protective cup for practices and games.



## PITCHING

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**T**HE PITCHER, MORE THAN ANY OTHER PLAYER, HAS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THE OUTCOME OF THE GAME. WHEN COACHES SELECT A PITCHER THEY SHOULD LOOK FOR A PLAYER WHO HAS CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY, HAS A COACHABLE ATTITUDE, IS COMPETITIVE AND WANTS TO PITCH. THIS PLAYER WILL OFTEN BE YOUR BEST ATHLETE AND WILL HAVE A STRONG, ACCURATE THROWING ARM.

IF PLAYERS HAVE NEVER PITCHED BEFORE, THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS ARE OFFERED:

1. CONCENTRATE ON THROWING STRIKES. THIS REQUIRES CONSTANT PRACTISE AT THROWING TO A TARGET. YOUNG PLAYERS MAY HAVE TO SACRIFICE SPEED FOR CONTROL.
2. MAKE SURE ALL PLAYERS USE THE CORRECT THROWING PROGRESSION (HAND DOWN - BACK - THROUGH MOTION) PAGES 6 & 7.
3. BEGINNING PITCHERS MIGHT BEGIN PITCHING IN THE PIVOT POSITION WITH THE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE RUBBER.
4. ONCE A PLAYER CAN THROW STRIKES FROM THE PIVOT POSITION, HE CAN BE TAUGHT THE STARTING POSITION AND SHIFT OF WEIGHT MOVEMENT.

THE FOLLOWING TEACHING PROGRESSION WILL EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE, CONTROL AND USING THE WHOLE BODY IN THE THROW.



### 1. STARTING POSITION

- Grip the ball and hold it in the glove.
- Place the power foot slightly over the edge of the rubber and pointing to home plate.
- Place the non-power foot slightly back.
- Lock eyes on the target before any body movement.
- Assume a relaxed, comfortable body position.



THE PITCHER CAN CHOOSE WHICH OF THE TWO POSITIONS (A OR B) HE FINDS MOST COMFORTABLE.

### 2A. SHIFT OF WEIGHT

- Lock eyes on the target.
- Transfer your weight from your power foot by taking a small step back and to the side with your non-power foot.
- At the same time, bring your hands up to the chest area.



### 2B. SHIFT OF WEIGHT

- Keep your eyes on the target.
- Transfer your weight from your power foot to your non-power foot by taking a small step back.
- At the same time, bring your hands up behind the head.
- Quiet body.



### 3. THE PIVOT

- Slightly flexed back.
- Head slightly in front of the shoulder.
- Keep the eyes on the catcher's glove.
- The power foot is placed in front and parallel with the rubber.
- The power foot must touch the rubber.
- Lift knee of non-power foot to L shape.
- The hands remain together.
- Glove shoulder faces the catcher.
- A right-hander's chest would face third base to allow a full pivot of the body and cock of the hips.
- Right hander - extreme right side - opposite for left hander.



### 4. ARM DOWN

- Throwing hand comes out smooth.
- The throwing hand is extended down.
- Eyes remain on the catcher's glove.
- Flex the power leg.
- Aim with lead shoulder.



### 5. ARM BACK

- Throwing arm extended straight back for maximum power.
- Glove hand extended out for balance.
- Begin to drive power hip toward catcher.



## 6A. DELIVERY STEP AND THROW

- Non-power foot whips around and plants pointing to the catcher.
- Front knee bends.
- The arm is brought through in overhand throwing position, with the fingers on top of the ball.
- Drop the glove and lead shoulder down.
- Inside toe to inside toe.
- Throwing arm is fully extended out front.
- Ball is released with a snap of the wrist



## 6B. FOLLOW THROUGH

- The power leg drives off the rubber for maximum body power.
- Arm follows through to the outside of the glove side knee.
- Tuck in glove arm on release.
- Throwing shoulder ends up over the glove knee.
- Top of the head points to the catcher on release; then comes up.
- This may give the pitcher a more compact and controlled delivery.



## 7. FIELDING POSITION

- After the pitch, the pitcher becomes another infielder.
- The power leg ends up parallel or slightly in front of the bent leg. The feet are approximately shoulder width apart.
- The pitcher assumes the infielder's ready position to field ground balls or bunts.

