

GLENCOE YOUTH BASEBALL  
PLAYER COACH DEVELOPMENTAL SERIES



## **Dynamic Warm-ups:** (Tony Bastinelli) 10-15 minutes

-Start with a light jog, maybe two / three gym laps, w/ gloves on. Single file, no passing and no walking.

-Split into groups (no gloves) of four to five (will depend on attendance numbers) spaced out along one baseline, facing center court.

\*Once grouped, emphasize this is NOT a race, this is not a competition, this is meant to get your bodies and fast twitch muscles properly warm.\* Also, as we do this we go in a straight line with our heads/eyes up, not worrying about the player(s) next to us.

### **Exercises:**

-High knees to the far line. Good form, good posture, light on your toes, not a race!

-Butt kicks back to starting line. Again, good form and not a race!

- Lunges to opposite baseline, twisting your torso towards your forward leg. Torso should be straight and not bent over.

- Karaoke down to other baseline then return karaoke to starting baseline facing the same direction. The players' toes should be very quiet and they should be light on their feet, no stopping.

- Frankenstein's to other baseline. Straight right leg kicks upward to the opposite side hand extended in front. Repeat with left leg kick to right hand extended. Repeat to far line.

-Sprint to opposite line. When there the player will do five air squats. The player will then sprint back to starting line and proceed to complete five Burpee's. This is repeated one time for a total of two repetitions

- Skip-Stomps, really bring the lead foot down aggressively.

- Skip-Jumps, again, not a race and the player should extend their jump and reach as high as they can vertically.

-Sprint to opposite line then backpedal to the middle, then dynamically change back to forward sprint to opposite line then backpedal the full length of the court to starting line.

-Leap Frog jumps, the player should start flat footed swing their arms and bend their knees then jump as far forward as they can. The player will come to a resting position, flat-footed then press their squat up and repeat.

-High Knees to the middle then dynamically change to a sprint and finish at opposite line.

-Butt Kicks to the middle then dynamically change to a sprint and finish at opposite line

# PITCHING

"I try to do two things: locate my fastball and change speeds. That's it. I try to keep as simple as possible. I just throw my fastball (to) both sides of the plate and change speed every now and then. There is no special food or anything like that, I just try to make quality pitches and try to be prepared each time I go out there."

Greg Maddux

The above quote is what the essence of youth pitching should be. As coaches we need to teach two important things to our kids. Show them the **proper fundamentals** to pitch a baseball and instill the **mental confidence** to do this. The easy part is teaching the fundamentals of a sound wind up. The challenge we face as coaches is making our kids understand it is ok to make the hitters hit. They get caught up with the excitement of striking hitters out. Which as coaches we love to see, but youth players can just as easily lose focus and begin to walk batters. Over the past years I have given my pitchers homework each week to work on various aspects of the wind up to install the needed muscle memory to become successful. Below you will see that most of the drills are done on flat ground without a baseball. Our goal is to increase velocity and accuracy, reduce the likelihood of arm injury, and guarantee a long and prosperous pitching career.

**Key Elements:** Starting Position, First Step, Leg lift, Balance point, Stride, Foot Strike, The release point and Follow through, Throwing out of the Stretch

**Starting Position:** The starting is to decide where you are most comfortable standing on the pitchers rubber. Typically right-handed pitchers will stand on the far left side of the rubber and Lefty's will stand on the far right side.



**First Step:** The first step towards building momentum to the plate is to either take a small step to the side or behind the rubber. I recommend stepping to the side (**small step**) because this it allows youth pitchers an easier transition into the leg lift.



**Leg Lift:** At this point of a pitcher's delivery, it doesn't matter whether you are throwing from the stretch or from the windup because each technique requires a leg lift. A pitcher's leg lift is one of the most important stages of the pitching delivery.

### Leg Lift Mechanics:

- Lift your leg up at an angle
- Do not lift your leg straight up because it will not allow you to achieve proper hip rotation at foot strike
- Keep your foot relaxed and aimed towards the ground
- Avoid pointing your foot in the air
- Lift your leg to at least waist height
- Keep your hips close with your glove side back pocket aimed at the target
- Try not to rotate your shoulders
- Your stride leg should be slightly bent, making it easier to stride into foot strike
- The majority of your weight should be on the ball of your foot
- At the top of the leg lift, your head and eyes should be locked in on the target



A proper leg lift is essential to the rest of your delivery, and you must develop consistency with it. Develop a leg lift that is comfortable for you and avoid trying to mimic other pitchers.

**Balance Point:** At the peak of your leg lift your body will be at what is traditionally referred to as a “balance point.” Do not make your pitcher pause here it can be detrimental to his pitching mechanics and velocity potential. During flat ground drills you might make your youth pitcher stop here if you are working on specific mechanics of the windup, but during mound time practice you should never have your pitcher pausing here on purpose. By pausing at your balance point it becomes difficult to generate stride speed.



**The Stride:** Pitchers with excellent strides have a greater potential for pitching velocity. The most important aspect of the stride is generating speed and length towards home. The typical stride length for most pitchers is 75 to 85 percent. However pitchers able to reach or exceed 100 percent of their height will have higher velocity. With youth baseball players if we can create a good stride length then that will stay consistent as they continue to grow. **Four important things must occur during the stride.**

**1. Your weight and momentum should already be shifting towards home.**

The momentum shift should already be occurring at the peak of the left lift as previously discussed.

**2. The drive leg should be slightly collapsed**

This is a very important step and must be refined in order to generate velocity. The drive leg should already be slightly bent at the peak of the left lift because it makes it much easier to drive with the lead hip. The collapse of the back left should continue during the entire stride phase. However the knee should only collapse to the point that it continues to stay above the drive foot.

**3. The left leg is descending down and out towards home.**

This is important because some pitchers have a tendency to bring their left leg out and around in an attempt to increase stride length. Pitchers must focus on driving the stride leg directly down and out. This will generate stride speed, good direction and better transition into breaking of the hands.

**4. The hands should begin to break**

Take the ball out of the glove with fingers on top and thumb underneath. The pitcher will show the ball to first or third base because it will eliminate additional strain on the elbow. The reason for this is the old school way of bring your arm straight back to second base put unneeded strain on the arm. During the stride the pitcher absolutely must stay closed with the upper body and this must remain until the foot strike.



**Foot Strike:** The foot strike is what transfers the kinetic energy through the legs, into the hip and core, through the upper body and into the arm whip. This is what enables pitchers to have arm speed.

**1. What is the position of the landing foot? Closed, straight, or open?**

It is best to have the landing foot slightly closed off at foot strike. Keeping the foot slightly closed off will force the hips to stay closed longer. When I say slightly, I am referring to a very minuscule closure of the foot!

**2. Should the hips and shoulders move simultaneously at foot strike?**

This is one of the most important aspects of developing pitching velocity. The key is to have your hips separated and open before your upper body begins to rotate. This millisecond of movement between your lower and upper half is responsible for roughly 80 percent of pitching velocity. This separation coils the upper body resulting in a violent (good) torquing motion that the arm into external rotation. Developing excellent hip to shoulder separation is by far the most important aspect of the pitching mechanics.



**The Release Point & Follow Through:** From the external rotation, the throwing arm will rapidly transition into internal rotation and the ball will be released. At this stage, the head and chest should be out over the plant foot in a direct line towards home. Make sure that you are not pulling to the glove side. The front leg should no longer be bent, and the upper body should be completely bent over the plant leg. Your momentum should start towards home, and it should end with the same direction to home. Avoid falling left or right of home plate.



**Throwing out of the Stretch:** It is important for every pitcher to understand how to properly pitch out of the stretch. The purpose of the stretch is to prevent runners from stealing. It is essential you spend an equal amount of time practicing throwing out of the stretch as you do the windup. After coming set the pitching mechanics start at the **leg lift** above and proceed through the rest of the pitching mechanic steps. I do not have the youth throw with a slide step because it puts additional stress on the arm. I know this might be counter intuitive for holding base runners, but the child's arm is more important than a stolen base.

I want the coaches to remember we are dealing with young kids learning to pitch. I have given you a lot of information above. I don't want you to think that you can change every issue a young pitcher might have, but pick one or two flaws and work on those through out the year. The goal is to teach the same fundamentals and have any future pitchers improve every year on

one or two aspects of the windup. So they can have success through out their baseball career as a pitcher.

## **Drills:**

**Balancing Act:** The balancing act pitching drill is a very simple drill that forces pitchers to develop a sense of balance during the leg lift. Pitchers should move through their routine and stop when they get to the leg lift, holding that position for five seconds.

**Leg Lift:** The leg lift pitching drill is designed to teach pitchers to stay tall during their pitching motion. During the drill, the coach should stand to the side of the pitcher but near enough that they can touch with the coach's arms extended. The coach measures where he wants the knee to end up at its highest point (Waist or higher) and holds his hand there to measure. Then, without a ball, the pitcher goes through his pitching motion, making sure to hit the coach's hand with the top of his knee at his highest point in the kick.

**Bullseye:** The throwing player gets points for where his throw is caught. Here is the point system: A throw at the other player's body between the knees and the waist line (pretty much the strike zone) is worth 3 points. A throw at the other player's body between the waist line and the shoulders is worth 1 points. Any throw that is below the knees or above the shoulders is a 1 point deduct. Any throw that hits the ground or goes over the head of the other player is a 3 point deduct. First to 21 wins.

**BullPen Drill:** The bullpen pitching drill was developed because some pitchers have a hard time throwing in games but are great in the bullpen. Many times, this is because they are afraid of hitting the batter. If so, there is an easy way to fix this. In the bullpen, have an adult stand in both batter's boxes, so there are essentially two "batters." The pitcher is forced to pitch straight down the middle so as to not hit either batter.

**Stride in a straight line:** First you want to draw a straight line from the spot your foot touches the pitching rubber then towards home plate. What we are looking for here is to see if you are striding in a straight line towards home plate. Any variance to the left or right will slow down the speed of the pitch, and could also lead to arm injuries. It is very important to stride directly towards home plate. Practice this until you can do it without even thinking. The second thing to do is measure from the pitching rubber out to the distance you want to stride. Remember, it should be at least 75% of your height. And you want to really be working towards a stride of 100% of your height. Now you have the markings where your front foot should land. Again, you can do this without a catcher, but actually pitching is best. Also, if possible, have someone stand near the mound and observe where your front foot is landing. This will give you a more accurate spot.

**Long toss:** I can't emphasize this enough. After the first couple of weeks and players have their arms in shape, all youth players should be doing long toss to strengthen their arms. This is particularly important for kids that want to be pitchers. This is very easy to do towards the end of every warm up.