



PITCHING BASICS

by Mike Venafrò, Former MLB Pitcher

7 seasons in MLB as a pitcher for the Texas Rangers, Tampa Bay, Oakland, Dodgers and Colorado.

Baseball is one of the only sports in which a defensive player controls the pace of the game. The pitcher holds the ball and dictates when and if action occurs. How a pitcher delivers the ball to the catcher will have the greatest potential impact on the outcome of the contest. Enjoy the challenge.

PITCHING PHILOSOPHY

A simplified and aggressive approach often separates a pitcher's ability to navigate through challenging situations.

- 1- Get ahead and work ahead in the count. Strike 1, is the MOST important pitch in the game.
- 2- Working quickly, efficiently, and controlling the tempo of play keeps your defense alert and engaged in the game.
- 3- Throwing strikes. The name of the game is to get outs. It will only happen with strikes.

DELIVERY

When fine tuning a delivery it is most important to focus on the ability to repeat strikes. A delivery allows the pitcher to express some individuality but must prioritize balance, direction, and follow through. Working from the stretch is always the best starting point. Success can be had with a variety of pitching mechanics but pitching from the stretch early on will create a good foundation for developing "feel" and executing your pitches. The following are a few points to remember when fine tuning a delivery from the stretch.

- 1- The pitcher's arm side foot must be touching the rubber when receiving your signal and beginning your delivery to the plate.
- 2- Focus on BALANCE and collect the body and its weight over the throwing arms foot before striding towards the plate.
- 3- When delivering a pitch, stride towards the target. This DIRECTION will give the pitcher the best chance to repeat strikes.
- 4- After releasing the ball, the FOLLOW THROUGH should leave the pitcher in a good fielding position if he or she has maintained BALANCE and DIRECTION.

PITCHES

What to throw and when to throw it are dictated by the pitchers ability to manipulate the ball. A variety of grips and spins alter the balls speed and movement. Altering the flight and speed of the ball creates more challenges for the hitter. Keeping the hitter guessing and off balance helps define a good pitcher. Ultimately the pitchers ability to throw a fastball near a desired location will have the greatest impact on controlling the game.

A fastball generally has two different grips. A "4-seam fastball" is traditionally gripped across the large C on the seams. If the pitcher's hand is large enough, gripping the ball loosely using two fingers is optimal. Three fingers works for smaller hands. The "4-seam fastball" will be the hardest pitch and often have the least amount of movement. A "2-seam fastball" is gripped with two fingers close together in between the seams. The flight of the "2-seam fastball" often will have less velocity and more movement. Have fun experimenting with variations of the traditional grips to develop a comfortable feel for the pitches.