



*We prepare this newsletter because we
enjoy talking softball
and seeing pitchers improve.
Please send it to friends who also enjoy
the sport.*

Coming Up.... a new clinic with everything you need to know to put the finishing touches on your pitcher. Things we never have time to discuss during regular lessons!

“100 Days to Greatness”

Contact us about bringing it to your area!

Preparing for the Big Game

By Angela Tincher

Pitching Coach

University of Maryland

Preparing for big games often means making an effort to stick to your normal routine. The excitement of an important upcoming game can often distract you from making sure to take care of the small things that usually help you to perform at 100% for any other game. Getting the proper amounts of rest, nutrition, and practice can seem like simple concepts, but they can lack quality or quantity during the days leading up to a big game

Rest is the most common area that suffers, due to sleepless nights because of stress or excitement. Being stressed about a game can also affect your body while you're awake, so its important to approach the days leading up to the event with the proper mental state as well. You want to be fresh on game day, so it may be necessary to cut out the lights or TV a little early for a few days in order to give your mind a chance to calm down and get to sleep. Keep it simple; you may need a little extra sleep, but even 20 minutes may do the trick. Sleeping in for an extra 2 hours may be going overboard, as good as it sounds.

Be mindful of what you eat, but don't go overboard. You don't want to give your body one more thing to deal with by suddenly adjusting your diet. Nutrition needs to be a constant, not something you try to tweak for a few days in order to get the results you want. Just make sure you're getting enough of the RIGHT foods to fuel your body properly, and a doctor/nutritionist can always answer questions on that subject if it becomes an issue. Of course, sometimes a brownie sundae IS just what we need after a few long practices!

Practice what you need, but put an emphasis on the quality. Don't place unrealistic goals on the last few practices before a big game, or you risk more stress on your mind and body. If you try to do too much, you might wear yourself out by practicing too long and start to get bad habits. Mentally, you need more focus and even preparation thinking about what you need out of practice that week. That way, you can start the right way and make the most out of every minute of practice.

Off-season training and normal practices lay your foundation, so preparing for a big game should build on that. Take care of the little things that help you function at 100%, and then get quality repetitions in at practice to fine-tune everything before the game. A big game or tournament is always exciting, so also give yourself a little time to enjoy the experience.

The Ideal Daily Workout

By Denny Tincher

This week a parent asked me to suggest a daily pitching routine. The biggest problem with that is the word **routine**. None of us likes the mundane. One of the most important things we can do for our pitcher is to keep it fun, challenging, and to work as partners to achieve specific goals. Each day should begin with specific goals, yet allow flexibility so we can make needed changes based on the circumstances. We will discuss those circumstances below.

Yes, there are certain things I want to do every day. There are specific warm-up drills which help develop particular skills and prevent bad habits. I don't like to do any drill just to get warm. Each drill should also be designed to build, within the pitcher, certain positive actions while she is getting warm. The warm-up might take 12-to-20 minutes. The pitcher should specifically know how each drill will contribute to the form and how to evaluate if it is being done well. The person who works with her daily should also be fully aware of these things and help her make sure she is getting the full benefit of the warm-up drill. That is one reason I spend as much time teaching the parent/coach as I spend teaching the pitcher. The person working with her every day must be her "eyes" as the pitcher often does not realize when she slips just a bit and the exercise is no longer contributing to the desired result.

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Counter Balance Forward Posture

By: Robbie Hebert, CSCS

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In our everyday lives, as well as in athletics, most motions are performed in the forward position (throwing a softball). If the back muscles are not strengthened sufficiently to counterbalance this forward posture, the shoulder joints are placed in a poor position. In this position, the shoulders will not perform efficiently and are at risk of impingement of the rotator cuff tendons.

Therefore, counterbalancing forward posture is a basic requirement for a high performing, healthy shoulder. One necessary component to counterbalance forward posture is developing strong scapular muscles to stabilize the scapula (shoulder blades) placing them in a neutral position. Neutral position of the scapula is retracted back (good posture) without visually seeing the medial (inner) border or the inferior angle (bottom) of the scapula. Another component of counterbalance is a thoracic spine (back bone between the neck and the low back) that can extend (straighten), and rotate (turn). If the athlete has a rounded spine in between the shoulder blades, this causes the scapula to protract (round forward), which puts the shoulder joints in a poor mechanical position. Having proper alignment and posture will help generate maximum power when throwing a softball.

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Once the warm-up is complete, the parent/coach should quickly assess the day's plan and see if it needs to be varied somewhat due to circumstances. For instance, you may get to the field and realize the heat is oppressive. There are several things you can do, but it largely depends on the way your daughter performed during warm-ups. You must read her carefully and even discuss options with her. You can push through the heat and help her learn to perform at peak on hot days. We may slow the pace and take a lot of breaks. We may choose only to work on two of her pitches and stop earlier than planned. We might choose simply to work on spins and drills for each specific pitch. Or, we might decide to do a very aggressive practice with focus on speed drills so we can finish quickly. Different choices are right for different days.

Generally I like to see about 100-pitches a day, (perhaps a lot less with younger pitchers) but that varies greatly. Throwing 100 pitches is counter-productive if 50 of them were poorly thrown. With my older daughter there were days when we determined, in advance, we were going to throw 50 good pitches, but we were only going to count good pitches. Others were just wasted effort. That gave her incentive to focus on throwing each pitch well, as the practice would be shorter and she would still accomplish much. With my younger daughter, we have a basic format for practices, but I sometimes tell her she will only need to throw five riseballs today if all of them are good, and we can move to something else. We may not even choose to do the drills for that pitch if she can hit each perfectly on that day. But, she knows that we will have to stop and go through the drills that day if she can't get that pitch working quickly. You can bet she is focused on getting them correct the first time. Tomorrow we might focus more on the drills and the riseball, but may let her try the shortcut on the drop or screwball.

Obviously the age of the pitcher is an important factor. Mature pitchers tend to be more tolerant of, and even more comfortable with, a specific routine. Younger pitchers may need more variety. In addition, they may be working on more little things within the form and need to focus on different things on different days to prevent overload. We can't improve everything at once. Enjoy small victories and keep a long-term vision.

You also have to take personalities into account such as the way a pitcher feels physically on a given day, whether she has been swimming with friends all afternoon, and even if she has just had a bad day at school. The way you deal with each issue can even vary from day-to-day so you have to read your pitcher carefully and discover how you can best help her.

Overall, it is good to have a general routine, but it is quite important that it never become routine. If you find that you are not looking forward to practice on a given day, chances are that she won't enjoy it either. Keeping it fresh helps make it fun for both of you as you work together to help her achieve her goals. Yes, it takes a lot of your time thinking and planning. However, she will notice that extra effort on your part, and if you show you believe in her enough to make that effort, it is not long until she begins to believe it as well.

Practical Tips for Pitchers
(and the mechanical issues related to them)
By Denny Tincher

4- Applying ice after games: Frankly, I prefer ice more than the different products they sell that you keep in the freezer and cooler and then sort of velcro to your shoulder. Why? College trainers know their stuff and I see them use ICE bags ten to one at college games. Ice is colder and lasts longer. And, yes, **always** ice your shoulder, and perhaps elbow, after the last game of the day.

-Related Mechanics: If you experience pain, definitely use the ice and an anti-inflammatory that your physician approves, such as Ibuprofen. If that pain is in the elbow, shoulder, or around the shoulder blade, you need to have it checked. Also, have a good pitching instructor see what you are doing wrong to cause it. Pain is NOT part of the normal process for a fastpitch pitcher.

LESSON SCHEDULE:

August-

The Edge, Roanoke – Monday & Tuesday evenings, 4 to 9pm

August 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & 31

Bristol, VA - Friday & Saturday, August 27-28

....now booking; still a couple Saturday times open

September-

The Edge, Roanoke –now booking Monday & Thursday evenings, 4 – 9pm

“100 Days to Greatness” Clinic - TBA

Tappahannock, Richmond, South Carolina – dates pending

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