



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



**Power Up Your Hitting Clinic**

(more clinic details on last page)

**4 openings left....so get in TODAY !!!**

We're excited about our two-day hitting clinic July 6-7  
 With Gerry Glasco, UGA  
 at The Edge Sports Performance Center in Roanoke.  
 Email Susan and ask for the "link" to register.



**The Magic "Bottle"**

**Delmas Bolin, MD PhD**

Director PCA Center for Sports Medicine; Head Team Physician,  
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Imagine you were about to go out to practice and you saw a commercial for a new product that would improve your performance and all you had to do is swallow it about 30 minutes before you played? Everyone you know would be trying this out! As soon as they found it worked, it would be the newest "thing".

It's already here...It's the magic "bottle"; The "water bottle" or the "Gatorade" bottle. With nearly everything that an athlete does, the body expends energy and loses fluids. We lose fluids from sweat and even from breathing. Unfortunately, it takes a good bit of losing fluid before you start to feel thirsty. Most estimates suggest that you have lost 2% of your body's fluids before you start to get thirsty. In other words, when you feel that you need a drink, you have already lost a significant amount.

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**PITCH CALLING**

**by Kelsey Hoffman-Schmitt**

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**Pitch calling is one of the most overlooked and underestimated tool of our game.** It is a skill not often taught to the young catchers, and many coaches are not well versed in it. However, with some fundamental basics and a good understanding of the game any catcher or coach can learn to call their own game. Preparation for a game starts with these three things:

1. Study a number of scouting reports; I say a number because the more eyes to analyze a swing the better!
2. Watch the opponent in warm ups or game film; this gives you an idea of what the hitters are focused on for the game. Some teams will practice just the rise ball or screw ball before a game, if they know a pitcher has a strong pitch. (Crazy, I know but I have seen it happen)
3. Know what is working for your pitcher the day of the game; Warm ups will give you a good indication of which pitches are going to be go-tos and which ones to be careful with.

These fundamentals will get you prepared for the game. Yet, most of us know that when it comes to our sport it is not just about showing up to the field and practicing, especially for catchers. When I say you must have a good understanding of the game, I do not mean just the basics. You must learn the strengths and weaknesses of the hitters, studying your own swing is a great place to start learning. I learned a lot from my own hitting lessons. When I was able to identify sloppy habits in my hitting I knew what to look for in others.

Watch for where the stride takes the hitters foot, hands dropping, front hip opening to early, casting, I could go on and on!

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### ***THE MAGIC BOTTLE continued...***

What does this have to do with performance? Plenty. Even before your body tells you it needs fluid, your coordination and stamina deteriorate. In extremely humid and hot environments, this lack of fluid can really limit your body's ability to lose heat – putting you at risk for heat illness. Think about some of those really hot games you played last summer.

Some teams really seem to wilt and struggle during second or third games in the heat.

When you are dehydrated (literally, have “lost water”), your body does not perform athletic tasks as well compared to when your fluids are topped off.

To make use of the “magic bottle”, you have to practice good habits. Begin by drinking a little more about 15-minutes before practice. Over several days, gradually work up to drinking 8-12 ounces 1 hour before exercise and again 30 minutes before exercise. Your body will adjust to the increased fluids over a few days to weeks. After all, you don't want to go out to play with a lot of fluid “sloshing” around in there. You'll know you are “topped off” when you use the bathroom; if your urine is almost clear – with little or no yellow in it, you are ready to go.

What fluid is best? The right answer is the one that you'll drink. Most 10-16 year olds need to drink one glass of water for every 1 glass of Gatorade you drink. If you are concerned about your weight, use some low calorie additives such as Propel® or Crystal Light® in your water bottles. Fluids that taste good actually help you take in more; plain water doesn't do that. Keep a bottle with you on the bench and at practice. Hydrate early and often.

When you are done with practice, be sure to drink as well; this will help get you ready for the next game or practice. This really isn't “magic”, it's just your body working at its best when you give it enough of the fluids it needs.

Remember, if you are getting thirsty, the “magic” is already getting low.

### ***PITCH CALLING continued...***

It is important to know the holes in swings to become a better pitch caller. And with more and more softball games being televised, it becomes easier for us to watch other catchers call the games. Study how they set a hitter up. See if you can pick up tendencies in the hitter. By watching others we learn how to get better. (Baseball games are a good tool too.) Observation is key.

Here is an exercise for you: (answers on following page)

1. If a hitter is standing in the front or back of the box what does your pitcher need to know?
2. A hitter who hits with a closed stance will have trouble with what location?
3. A hitter who pulls the ball will have trouble with what location?
4. What is the worst thing a pitcher can do at the start of an inning?

Ask the catcher or whoever calls the pitches these questions and find out their answers. (I have plenty more if you're interested)

Another part of the game to know is your own defense. Know their weaknesses and strengths. For example, if your left fielder has a good arm and is fast you can press the boundaries with the hitter. Testing a hitter's strengths is something most won't do. But just because that is their strength does not mean they are perfect. You must take risks when it comes to calling a game. This does two things, gives your pitcher confidence (because you are showing her that you believe she can throw her best) and keeps the hitter in check. If you take away a pitch from your pitcher, that is one less they will throw and their confidence will decline with it. Remember you must call a game without fear of something happening. Plays are going to occur, but trust your pitcher and defense to help each other out.

One last rule to remember, there aren't any rules when it comes to pitch calling. Pitch calling depends on the situation. You do not have a sequence you always call when a slapper is up or when bases are loaded. It does not work that way. The best thing is to keep it random to keep hitters off balance.

## Training Movements, Not Muscles

By: Robbie Hebert, CSCS

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Training Movements, not muscles, are very important in any sport especially softball. Most movements in softball are dynamic. Movements are ballistic, they're fast. Movements are highly reactive; you have to react to the ball, opponent and situation. They occur in sequence, one follows another. Movements are explosive; they require a high level of force (strength) applied quickly.

When training for softball, you must work the total body in movement patterns similar to those used in game situations. Don't train isolated muscles to move slowly. Strength that is not functional is wasted. Strength is the foundation, without strength your body can't withstand the high intensity training required to build speed and power. Two things must be focused on when training:

**1- Train for muscles balance.** Joint stability relies on the contraction of muscles on both sides of the joint.

**2- Train for performance, not capacity.** Emphasize quality of effort with each exercise, not quantity.

Focusing on these 2 training keys will increase strength and reduce the chance of injury.

## Kelsey's answers to above exercise:

1. A pitcher needs to know where a hitter is set up so that she can change when the breaks in her pitches occur.
2. Usually a hitter with a closed stance will have trouble with the inside, however be careful of those hitters who start closed then open with their stride! Their weakness is the outside
3. A batter who pulls will struggle with an outside change up because they are typically out ahead of the ball. A drop out could also prove to be a good pitch.
4. A walk. A catcher and a pitcher must both understand the important of the first hitter for EACH inning not just the beginning of the game.

## Something Has to Change

By Denny Tincher

As a fan of bat technology, I love to watch the ball explode off the barrel as much as anyone. However, is it worth the price?

This past week an area pitcher caught a line drive to the face and will never be the same. In a separate incident, I was coaching third base this past weekend when a 14-year-old turned on a pitch and it hit me so fast there was no time to react. It literally spun me to the ground. When you look at the photo of the bruise, imagine if that had been the head or the rib cage of a young player. Yes...it's ugly !



At first I thought little about it, but then I looked 6 feet from me at the runner on third base. It was my 14-year-old daughter....the same one who also pitches and lands just 33-feet from the batter. She was shaking after seeing the impact the ball hand on me. I have told the story several times, and every person who asks about it can tell me of a kid who was permanently injured by the impact of the ball off a hot bat. Yes, your team is forced to use them, because you are at a competitive disadvantage if you don't. Like you, I am really struggling with what should be done about it. But, we have to quit ignoring it.

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## **JULY LESSON SCHEDULE:**

The Edge in **Roanoke** schedule will be Monday evening/Tuesday all day times on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>

Power Up Your Hitting Clinic with Gerry Glasco, UGA- July 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

**Bristol** - Thursday evening/Friday day times July 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>

**Richmond and Charlotte, NC area**-- dates pending

For questions or to schedule lessons email Susan at [TincherPitching@aol.com](mailto:TincherPitching@aol.com)

## **Why Can't I Control the Fastball?**

By Denny Tincher

A young pitcher asked me last week why she had more trouble with the fastball than her other three pitches. It's a pretty simple answer. Pitchers use the fastball for a warm-up pitch. Once they get it warm, they move on to other pitches. In other words, they throw, perhaps, 20 fastballs, most of which weren't done correctly because the body was still getting acclimated to pitching. Then they get a couple right and then move on to the "glamour" pitches.

So, we threw the fastball incorrectly for about 20 pitches, got a couple right, and stopped. In other words, our "muscle memory" was basically trained to do it wrong for 90-percent of the pitches. The problem is that the fastball never gets the respect it deserves, and never gets the serious attention it once received now that they have exciting breaking and off-speed pitches. Let me put it this way. Would you ever use the riseball, for instance, as a warm-up pitch? Of course not. It would probably ruin a good pitch and wouldn't build a good base for the other pitches.

For young pitchers the fastball should be looked at as another serious pitch. Once you get it warm, pitch to spots, work on speed, get it consistent for at least a dozen pitches, and then move to the other pitches. After you get a couple of those working, come back to the fastball as if it were a pitch. Really focus on form, maximum leg drive, nailing spots, and all of the little "rules" as I call them that you have for any pitch.

Does this apply to advanced pitchers? Well, even if you don't throw a fastball in college, it is the foundation upon which you built other pitches. If you are "falling off" to the side on the fastball, what will happen on the drop or rise? If you can't get the back foot under you on the fastball, you'll fall back on the dropball and "hang" the pitch continually. If you collapse the scaps on this one, you'll never have them right on the pitches where they are most critical.

Think of the fastball as a serious pitch and your entire game will improve.

**Look for us on facebook !!**

## 14-U Catcher Needed !!!!!

Denny needs a little help due to injuries on his travel team. Call him for information.

### Practical Tips for Pitchers

(and the mechanical issues related to them)

By Denny Tincher

**Most frequent cause of injuries.** I get a lot of pitchers from a lot of different parts of the country who want to know if I can help them identify the cause of nagging shoulder and elbow injuries when they come for a visit. In most cases we discover the injuries are caused by overhand throwing. Kids either throw with their elbow lower than their shoulder, or they drop the glove-hand to the side, causing the shoulders to close to the target too soon. Both of these issues stress the shoulder and elbow and keep you from using leg power to drive the ball. Find a college or pro player to assess your overhand throw if you're not sure what we mean.

**-Related Mechanics:** Sometimes it is the actual pitching motion which is causing shoulder and elbow pain. The most frequent causes are squaring the shoulders toward the catcher at release, raising the shoulder during the circle, or making the shoulder do all of the work because the legs are in the wrong position to contribute. You can get away with that when you are young, but as the muscles grow, stress will occur. There are other causes, such as certain muscles being out of balance, so it is always a good idea to have a good trainer like Robbie, who writes for our newsletter, perform an assessment.



### Power Up Your Hitting Clinic

Many observers believe University of Georgia is the nation's best hitting team. Having spent time with them in Athens, we totally agree! That's why, we are bringing Bulldogs Assistant Coach, Gerry Glasco, in for two very special days of hitting instruction.

His resume' is extremely impressive and he is a patient, thorough instructor. Hitters will learn proper techniques, how to put them into action, how to develop power and consistency at the plate, and numerous drills and exercises to retain the right form.

In addition, participants will also spend time with Robbie Hebert, Head Trainer at The Edge Sports Performance Center as he teaches you how to use your body strength properly to execute the techniques Gerry teaches, as well as special exercises you can do at home to build a more powerful swing.

Also featured during this clinic will be Dr. Delmas Bolin, MD PhD,

Director PCA Center for Sports Medicine; head Team Physician, Radford University; Associate Professor, Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Dr. Bolin will talk about the unique physical stresses of softball players, injury prevention, and ways to maximize your results in safe and healthy ways.

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