



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

Speed Training

By Robbie Hebert, CSCS

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Speed Wins

The players making the biggest impact in the game combine explosive speed, agility and quickness to complete their game. Speed is the one quality that can keep a good player from becoming great. To become a complete softball player, you need to incorporate speed in your game. To get faster, you must improve running mechanics, get stronger, and become more flexible and train for speed.

Game Speed

Speed and quickness are both important in the game of softball. Game speed includes both technical speed and tactical or decision making speed. **Technical speed** is the ability to execute a given skill (running the bases, charge a slow roller, run down a ball in the gap, etc.) with speed. **Tactical speed** is the ability to react and respond quickly to a given situation (backing up a base, react to a pickoff move, score on a pass ball). Pure speed is an asset, but it's not the sole ingredient for success. You can compensate for a lack of speed if you can react, start, stop, change directions and move side-to-side quickly. Sport specific speed in softball includes the ability to start quickly from different positions, accelerate, change direction and stop quickly under control. Incorporating speed training in your training program will make you a better all around player.

Editors note—In many communities there are excellent facilities like The Edge that offer Speed training. Just a little research in your town can give you a jump on your game!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October-November

Roanoke- Weekly Lessons continue;
Monday & Thursday evening s; 4-9pm; at The Edge
October 15th-16th Friday/Saturday times

We're coming to Northern Virginia...

October 23-24

Exciting Events at VBC-Occoquan, Woodbridge, VA

October 23

9:30-1:30pm Unleash Your Power Potential
Hitting Clinic Baseball and Softball Ages:12yrs and older Kevin Morse \$95

2:00-3:00pm 100 Days to Greatest Denny Tincher Free

3:30-6:30pm Softball Pitching Clinic-Advanced
Denny Tincher \$80 Limited to 12 players

October 24

10am-2pm Unleash Your Power Potential Hitting
Clinic Baseball and Softball Ages: 12yrs and older
Kevin Morse \$95

2:30pm-5:30pm Softball Pitching Clinic -
Beginners Denny Tincher \$80 Limited to 12
players

To register or to receive more information, please contact Suzy Willemsen at willemsensportstraining@gmail.com or go to www.suzywillemsen.org

Private pitching lessons also available on those dates in morning hours, contact TincherPitching@aol.com for scheduling.

Virginia Beach – clinics November 27th

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THREE KEY MOVEMENTS FOR AN ELITE SWING!

By Suzy Willemsen
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Fairfax Station, VA

I'm thrilled to be a contributor to Denny's newsletter and I hope to offer some insights to improve a player's performance at the plate. Let's get bashin!

One of the main goals of a pitcher is to keep the hitter off balance...and since hitting is all about timing, the pitcher is doing their best to mess up that timing. Therefore, why would a hitter want to have a swing pattern that makes it easier for them to accomplish their goal?

I like to use the analogy of going to Disneyworld to explain why simple, efficient and repeatable movement patterns are desired when developing a powerful and consistent swing. What if I told you that if you wanted to enter Disneyworld you needed to be at the gate precisely at 7pm....would you rather leave from someplace in Orlando or your home in Northern VA? Most would choose to leave from Orlando. By leaving from Orlando you would have more time to get there, plus less chance of a mishap...be it a flat tire, the unpredictable traffic on 95, a brother needing to stop at South of the Border....you get the idea. We can certainly leave from Northern VA and be at Disneyworld at 7pm but it would be much more difficult, risky and the trip would certainly be longer. Likewise, we want a swing pattern that creates movements that will allow us the best chance to be consistently on time and with power---leaving from Orlando to be at Disneyworld at 7pm!

So what are those movements? There are three key movements that are found in elite, high level swings. The first is being able to load the body with leverage---getting the body ready to hit in a powerful and consistent manner. The second key movement is pushing off the backside, creating some forward momentum that is going laterally. This is crucial to creating power and most often the biggest eye-opener to my new students. After I show them video of Jessica Mendoza, Crystal Bustos, Jenny Finch, etc. having a weight shift in their swings, they realize how keeping their weight on their backside was a huge reason their swing was less than optimal. The third key movement is locking out at impact. The less energy our body absorbs at impact (like making contact with the front knee bent) or pushes back into the ground, the more energy is able to go into the ball---and that's what we want! The ball jumping off the bat...wicked!!

Bottom line we want a swing that allows us to be powerful and consistent. One that is simple, efficient and repeatable. By making sure our swing incorporates the three key movement patterns, a player will be in a better position to combat those pesky pitchers and their desire to keep us from being at the gate to enter Disneyworld at 7pm.

Next month we'll look more in depth into the three key movement patterns. If you have any questions or wish to talk hitting, please contact me at suzyfastpitch@gmail.com.

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When Sleep Isn't Enough – Fatigue in High Level Softball Players



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Several times a year, I am visited in my office by young athletes who tell me they are “tired all the time”. They complain that they used to be able to run in a certain amount of time, but now they find it harder to do these workouts. They have difficulty concentrating and sometimes they are even irritable (more than normal...). While these can be symptoms that are related to many causes such as sleep deprivation, low thyroid hormone, or even clinical depression, there is another diagnosis that parents of young female athletes should consider – iron deficiency.

Iron deficiency is common in athletic populations. Some studies find that in older high school and collegiate athletes, as many as 45% had abnormal blood tests for iron or outright anemia. Low iron can be a source of poor performance and should be looked for whenever there is fatigue or just a drop off in your effectiveness of training.

There are many reasons that a young female athlete could be at risk for developing low iron levels. As kids get older, iron requirements are increased. With longer running for fitness, there is some destruction of red blood cells – the so called “foot strike” hemolysis (red blood cell destruction). Iron is also lost in sweat and from the gastro-intestinal tract. Finally, monthly menstrual cycle flows contribute to iron loss.

If you are concerned about iron levels, ask your doctor to test for this during your school or yearly physicals. We will typically test a “complete blood count” which will identify anemia, but iron levels and “ferritin” levels (a body storage form of iron) will give a better indication of how much iron you have in your body.

If your iron stores are low or you are anemic, there are some dietary changes and supplements that you can use to help raise those levels. Red meats, poultry and certain fish are good sources of iron that can be readily absorbed. Even cooking foods in Grandma’s iron skillet can increase iron that is available to be digested. If diet isn’t enough, consider using a multi-vitamin with iron or iron supplements. Most of these provide about 25-27 mg of elemental iron. Other supplements, such as Ferrous Sulfate (FEOSOL, for one) are available at pharmacies which contain about 65 mg of elemental iron. Usually, you should take one tablet 1 or 2 times per day. Taking the tablet on an empty stomach with a chewable vitamin C tablet or orange juice will help your body absorb the iron. Antacids and fiber products actually make it harder for your body to absorb the iron.

If you are anemic, it is probably best to see a doctor to make a confirmed diagnosis rather than guessing. Once treatment is started, your body begins showing improvements metabolically in 4-7 days. We usually recheck your lab work in 2-3 months. Anemia is a common cause of fatigue and if you have it, it is slowing you down...and your team.

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

Insoles Can Make a Big Difference

If pitching a lot leaves you with aching ankles or knees, or causes shin-splints, you might find relief in good insoles. The feet and legs take a heavy pounding on long tournament weekends, and many cleats are not designed with that in mind. Cleats are generally designed for fielding and running, and manufacturers just have not realized that many pitchers will drive forward 6-8 feet, causing a tremendous amount of stress on the feet with repeated landings. If your problem is minor, off-the-shelf sport insoles might be the answer. If you have repeated problems, find a good doctor to recommend a more suitable product.

Related Mechanics

Often pain in the knees and ankles, or shin-splints, can be caused by improper mechanics. Because of the tremendous forces at work, being a little "off" on your landing, failing to use the drive leg properly, or poor timing can cause stresses that not only cause pain, but render you much less effective as a pitcher. Usually pain in any part of the body indicates mechanical problems that could lead to injury, but also seriously affects your pitching ability. Pain means it is time to change something. A great Sports Medicine Physician is the first step, consider a good physical trainer, and make sure your pitching coach has input into form changes needed.

How Important is "Talent" in Pitching?

By Denny Tincher

Very often parents will approach me after their daughter's first lesson and want to know if she has potential. I always tell them about a little 10-year-old girl who approached me and wanted to pitch more than anything. She was one of the worst athletes on the field so I tried to discourage her. She persisted and I asked her to write down some goals so I would know if she was serious. She put some big goals on paper and before long I was sitting on the bucket and working with my daughter. I always promised her that we would find a way to make her dreams come true.

Little did I know that this little girl would one day have the lowest ERA in college softball for two consecutive years, appear in the College World Series, and be second in the history of college softball in strikeouts per 7-innings. She has played professionally in both the U.S. and Japan, and enjoyed playing on a couple of our National Teams. I would never call Angela "talented". She is persistent, meticulous, stubborn, dedicated, and very smart. Most of all, she works hard, and always helped me discover new ideas that would make her better.

A few years ago another young pitcher approached me for lessons. Her former pitching coach indicated that she just didn't "have it" and she was dropped from pitching for her travel team. Just a few years later she owned all of her college records and most of the conference pitching records.

I am currently working with another pitcher who was told she didn't "have it", and in a couple of years we will enjoy watching her in a college uniform. She had it, but someone was not sure how to help her get there. I received an email today from a parent on the west coast whose daughter had been so frustrated she was going to give up softball. We had the chance to work together this summer and change some things for her and within a few days the kid had blossomed and is now taking recruiting trips to colleges.

Yes, there are kids who are blessed with certain gifts. I work with a high school pitcher who is one of the fastest pitchers in the world at any age. That requires some talent, but we don't work on that much anymore. We know that her success will totally depend on her ability to move the ball, change speeds, and be deceptive. These are things that don't come naturally to her. She has an advantage because of talent, but will succeed, as all pitchers do, with hard work and discipline.

When parents ask me if their daughter has a chance to be successful at pitching, I always tell them it takes about four elements: 1-Desire, dedication, and self-discipline; 2-Intelligence; 3-Parental support; 4-No extreme physical problems that prevent her from doing the motion.

Basically I tell parents that, if their kid is obsessed with pitching, she has a chance if she has the right kind of support around her. My feelings about talent are these:

--The most talented pitching student I ever had didn't have the heart so she tried to rely on talent, instead of pushing herself to grow. She dropped by the wayside.

--My very favorite pitching students are those who have hit a plateau and people think they have maximized their potential, but the kid refuses to believe it and is hungry to learn and willing to work.

--Never, ever decide if your kid "has it" when she is under 14. You can't believe how much can change as she grows and learns. If she reaches 14 and hasn't found it yet, find another instructor and another till you find one who can help her discover her best. It is usually in there, but nobody has found a way to connect to it.

--Make sure you are the right influence. And make sure she is having fun. If so, she will love it and want to get better.

One of the best ways to discourage a young pitcher is to convince her that talent is one of the top five factors in her future success.

Finally, if you see a pitcher doing well, she has probably spent hundreds of hours and sacrificed almost everything else in life to get where she is today. One of the best ways to offend her is to say she is talented.