



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

#### **We Want to Hear From You**

How can we better help you? We often receive suggestions for articles and those are always welcome. It helps us to better serve you.

We are honored to feature outstanding professionals in the medical and training fields as well, and occasionally they ask me if there are any specific issues they should address. We would love your input in those fields too.

Feel free to e-mail us with any ideas. And, thank you for letting us be a part of your player's success!

### **Learning To Be a Better Player**

**By Kelsey Hoffman-Schmitt**

Catcher for VirginiaTech 2004-2008

Current member U.S. Professional All-StarsTeam

[kelseyhschmitt@gmail.com](mailto:kelseyhschmitt@gmail.com)

These days I have seen a lot of players who are all about themselves and their stats. However, softball is a team sport and it takes the team as a whole to be successful. Attitude plays a big role in female athletes, especially young ones. Help your daughter become a better athlete and a more coachable player. I'm sure you have heard this before but it all starts with you, the parent. Children emulate you because, whether they know it or not, you are their biggest role model. Being a coachable player is a skill, meaning it is something that has to be worked on to get better at it. Here are some key pointers to consider helping your daughter be a better player.

1. Allow her to play more than one position
  - By playing more than one position your player could be given more opportunities to play and it really helps to give her a better understanding of the game.
2. Absorb all the instruction possible and test it out and see what works best for her
  - It is my method as a player and instructor to be adaptable. Even now as a professional softball player I am still learning different aspects of the game to make me a better player and coach. I have never been a fan of the cookie cutter mentality that I see some coaches try to create in their team. Each player has their own attributes that will be beneficial to the team. So listen and learn to all your coaches, watch games and try out any drills, stances, etc that you pick up through people and see what works best for you.
3. "Can't" is not in her vocabulary
  - I believe this one is self explanatory, but if you need help understanding just ask me!
4. Take constructive criticism
  - A player who wants to learn and improve her skills will accept this challenge. It isn't easy to take criticism, but if she know that she want to get better, a player needs more than just herself to develop her skills.
5. Find out your role on the field
  - Knowing your role ahead of time keeps the confusion to a minimum. A good coach will explain the player's role. If they don't and the player is unsure just ask the coach. Trust me it will save the parents, player, and coach a lot of headaches if you are upfront with each other.

Remember that if your daughter wants to advance to college learning to deal with different coaches techniques is a big part of her success. Not every coach is the same and it may be difficult for players to adjust. But if they work on being a coachable player they will reap the rewards.

When it comes to making the transition from high school to college please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns you or your daughter may have. I will do my best to provide you with the right information and help answer any questions.

Kelsey Schmitt

## **Improving Posture Will Improve Performance**

**By Robbie Hebert, CSCS**

Director of Sports Performance  
Edge Sports Performance Center  
3710 Tom Andrews Road Northwest  
Roanoke, VA 24019  
[www.theedgesp.com](http://www.theedgesp.com)

Why is posture important to a healthy, athletic shoulder and how does this relate to overhand and underhand throwing athletes and performance? Many athletes that seek sports performance training need improvement in posture, which will affect their performance in a positive way. When looking at the posture in the resting position, the body is in perfect balance and allows the joints, muscles, and ligaments to function most efficiently.

Good posture, in relation to the shoulders and upper back, has the athlete's shoulder blades slightly pulled back (retracted). Bad posture would have the athlete's shoulders in a rounded/forward position. In turn, the amount of space for safe and effective movement at the shoulder joint is reduced resulting in potential impingement, inflammation and harm to the rotator cuff and stabilizing structures. This rounded/forward positioning of the shoulders also places postural muscles at a mechanical disadvantage. This can affect the pitching, hitting and running mechanics in a negative way. When addressing the rotator cuff muscles, the two methods of strengthening that are commonly used are unilateral (one arm at a time) and bilateral (both arms at the same time).

In conclusion, overhead and underhand throwing athletes at every level should be involved in a rotator cuff and equally important scapular and postural strengthening program. As athletes consistently perform rotator cuff exercises, shoulder strength, health, stability, and good posture are developed, ultimately improving performance and preventing injury. In the long run this will improve the mechanics needed to have success on the field and keep the athlete out of the training room.

## **The Core Secret to Throwing Harder and Hitting Farther**



**Delmas Bolin, MD PhD**

Director PCA Center for Sports Medicine  
Head Team Physician, Radford University  
Associate Professor, Via College of Osteopathic Medicine  
1935 West Main Street, Salem, VA  
(540) 387-0441 ext 2029)

I am often approached by parents (and even occasionally by young athletes) who want to know the "secret" tips on weight training in order to throw harder and longer and hit the ball farther. It's not really a secret; the stronger you are, the harder you throw, the farther you hit. Everyone is striving to become stronger. The natural questions that follow are: "When should my child start lifting weights?" and "How much weight is too much?" These are good questions that I'm asked frequently and, unfortunately, the answer is..."it depends..."

The first part of "it depends" is based on the age of the athlete. Young athletes (ages 5-14) don't need to focus on weight training. In fact, if performed incorrectly or with the wrong emphasis, it may be harmful. In this age range, the long bones all have open growth plates in their bones. These areas are not as strong as regular bones and are subject to injury with too heavy or too frequent lifting.

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The more important exercise for athletes in this age range is to emphasize proper mechanics in swinging the bat and throwing the ball. Work out extensively to eliminate technical flaws that contribute to injury. In addition to that, exercises that teach body positioning (such as dance) and coordination/hand-eye drills are more important for skill development. If parents are persistent or the athlete is particularly driven, I usually recommend Yoga-type exercises. These are great for developing good core strength. Along with core, it is important to train the postural muscles. Re-educating" the body to hold "chest out, shoulder blades in" and keep your head centered over the shoulders can be difficult but can become a habit if you work at it. Exercises such as "plank" and "side-plank" are great ways to train with gravity and enhance core strength. Exercises are typically performed a couple times each day up to 4-5 times per week.

A strong core and well-developed postural and position sense will make you prepared for the teenage years when you can start developing bulk muscle strength. If you are going to lift weights, it is essential that you use proper technique; you should perform up to 3 sets of 8-12 repetitions. If you are going for endurance, use lighter weights and repeat more frequently; if you are going for bulk, then use weights that are sufficiently heavy to cause you to almost not be able to complete the last exercise. Usually weights are performed every other day with good results. When you lift, be sure to slowly lift the weight through the entire range of motion and slowly lower the weight. Tempo is important; usually count to three slowly during the lifting phase and the lowering phase. During the lifting phase you strengthen the muscle belly; but as you lower the weight, you actually strengthen the tendon, which allows for greater muscle growth. Variety is key in weight lifting; but...You will never get stronger arms or legs or bat speed without first training the core to allow for the peripheral muscles to build and use the bulk they develop. No matter what, in this age group always give your muscles at least a day to recover and heal before lifting a second time. If your muscles are sore afterwards, it probably means you over-did it a little. Any pain that persists or joint that won't go through its full range of motion are usually indicators of injury – put the weight training on hold and get those checked out.

### **LESSON SCHEDULE:**

**September – October – November**

Now scheduling..... Monday & Thursday evenings, 4-9pm at The Edge, Roanoke

Watch for details coming soon about visits to...Richmond, Bristol, & Charlotte.

**TincherPitching@AOL.COM**

**540-960-1750**

**Look for us on Facebook !!**

## That Seems Like a Good Drill, But.....

By Denny Tincher

...why are you doing it? We have the privilege of dealing with kids all over the country and find that most do about the same drills to get started. I always ask them why they choose to do a certain drill.

It is surprising that kids, and their parents, often do not know why they are doing a drill, nor what it contributes to the final pitching motion. The most common response is that she is doing it to "get warm". Getting warm is important, but a drill should also be designed to "bring out" certain desirable actions needed within a pitch. Sometimes kids actually come to us with warm-up drills that literally go in the opposite direction or reinforce a bad habit they are trying to overcome.

A pitcher must know the specific improvement she is trying to get from a drill, how to judge if she is doing it well, how she can improve the benefit it delivers, and whether she is ready to move to a more advanced drill that incorporates the previous motion into a more complete desired outcome. A good example is the "T" drill. I have asked a hundred different pitchers the reason for doing it and very few seem to have any idea. The same thing applies to "walk-thru's". If done well, there might be a benefit. If they come to us doing these incorrectly, they can lead to problems in the form, and we often have to help them come up with other drills to overcome those problems.

Sometimes kids will see another pitcher do a certain drill and it looks beneficial or perhaps just seems cool. Be very careful about emulating another pitcher's routine. Many times we design a specific drill to overcome a certain problem for one pitcher, but would never allow another pitcher to do the same drill as it could actually contribute to a different bad habit she is trying to overcome. For example, we have about 18 different ways to help a kid develop stronger leg drive. For a kid who gets too much weight on the front foot, I'll develop a certain drill that helps overcome the leg-drive problem while pushing the weight back. Another kid may "launch" the front foot, but never get the weight off the back leg properly. Obviously they need two very different approaches, and the drill for one might actually hamper the other.

The "T" drill is a good example. When we find a pitcher who tends to tighten-up and do too much work at the finish of the circle, we like to eliminate that drill and develop an exercise that helps distribute the work more evenly through the motion. The "T" wasn't a bad drill, but was holding this specific pitcher back from the outcome she needed.

Great drills are wonderful for helping pitchers achieve certain actions that don't easily come to them. However, drills can be like medications. Each can cure the problem at hand, but can complicate other conditions. Before allowing your pitcher to add an exercise to her regimen, know the specific purpose and how it enhances the final motion. And, understand your pitcher's form and goals well enough to identify whether it will take her in the direction she wants to go or if, perhaps, it will exacerbate certain problems.

### Practical Tips for Pitchers

(And the mechanical issues related to them)

By Denny Tincher

**Weight-lifting:** Don't do it unless you work with a pro that is among the state-of-the-art in sports training. More damage can be done than good. Far more! Don't pick up a weighted ball and start throwing. Same reason. If you are not studying with a certified professional, you are taking chances.

**Related Mechanics:** Lack of performance almost always indicates a need for tiny adjustments in mechanics. Find someone who can make those adjustments. Adding weight to improper form, or improving the wrong muscles for the task desired, rarely achieve more speed but greatly increases the risks for injury.

TincherPitching@AOL.COM

540-960-1750

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