



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.

Efficient Movements

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Being efficient in any movement is not an accident. You always hear coaches say “nice and easy” when they are coaching an athlete in their sport.

When you see someone make the perfect pitch or hit the ball out of the park it always seems so effortless. Why? Everything is in sync. Everything is working together. Everything is working in order. One thing happens at a time and in the end you get positive results.

Most athletes feel they have to be “strong” when performing any athletic movement. Look at the top performers in sports today. What makes them special? Everything looks natural to them; they make it look easy. They are efficient in their movements and waste no energy. They have balance over their body and produce power consistently.

When everything works together we see positive results. You see many hitters at the plate “muscle up” when they are swinging the bat. This usually equals a negative result. We need to remember a tense muscle is a slow muscle. We want fast muscles that will produce explosive movements. When pitching the same concept applies. When we try to be “strong” and muscles become tense, our movements become inefficient. This will result in poor mechanics.

Where Should You Feel Strong When Pitching?

By Denny Tincher

I often ask that question and get blank stares from new students. Where should you feel strong? Then, after a pitch, I ask where they felt tight? Normally they name places in the body where they should not feel tight. These are often places where tightness can cause injury. The shoulder is an obvious example, but there are several more. Tightness also is an indicator that you are using the wrong muscles.

A good example of that last statement is one my physician friend once used. How well could you throw a softball overhand if your shoes were nailed to the ground? You would probably feel like you were giving it great effort, so you would feel incredibly tight, yet the results would be disappointing. If you try to throw harder, something has to give.

Yet, that is what we see very often with new students. They are using the wrong parts of the body to try to generate power, and when the results are dismal, they simply try harder or pick up a weighted ball or another other tool and try to force the issue.

Recently an experienced pitcher came to me for the first time. She was quite proud of her pitching and told me so. After watching her throw a few pitches, I sat down and gently told her that she should forget the lesson if she liked what she was already doing. I could see that the kid worked so hard, but she was getting no results. I told her that she would have to forget everything she believed about pitching and start as a ten-year-old. She refused to leave and finally admitted she was ready to give up on all of her dreams if I couldn't help her.

The next hour was intense as we re-trained the kid in how her body worked, how to generate power, how to transfer energy, and which parts of the body should feel powerful. She began to say she felt relaxed for the first time in her life. Yet, she said she felt strangely powerful in new places. The kid jumped from the mid-50's to low-60's in one hour and everyone watching, including myself, was stunned. I knew we could get a few miles per hour, but this was exciting. The greatest compliment from her came at the end, when she said she wasn't even tired and could tell she wasn't going to be sore for the first time in memory.

When I first started teaching, I wasn't excited about new students who were extremely tight and upper-body oriented. But, that soon changed as I realized these kids were some of the best students. They weren't afraid to work hard. In fact, they were some of the most goal-oriented and obsessive kids you could ever meet. They would work day and night if that is what it takes. Sometimes I tell them I want them to be a little lazy, and remind them of the saying in golf, “Swing easy to hit hard”.

It takes some time, but they soon learn that tightness is the enemy, but power IN THE RIGHT PLACES is their best friend. Helping them discover those places and how to use them in the transfer of energy sometimes takes some creativity, but the excitement on their faces when they finally experience it is worth the effort. Being tight is far different from feeling powerful. Power in the right places enhances the pitch, whereas, tightness normally impedes the pitch and puts the pitcher at risk.

LET IT SEEP!

By Suzy Willemsen
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So your daughter wishes to make some changes in her swing movement, pitching motion or fielding approach.....and no matter how much explaining you, her instructor or her coach has done or how much your daughter thinks she understands, the same inefficient movement continues to repeat itself. Frustration results and not just for the player! Why does this happen? Does the player understand the information? Am I teaching it correctly?

First, stop trying so hard! Remember and remind your daughter (and yourself) that it is a process. For instance, stop trying to get your player to 'make' changes to her swing. Instead, start trying to teach her a movement or a functional skill and let the movement find its own way into the swing. A movement training approach is something that I have found to be extremely useful with most of my students. I teach the movement, give the student a drill that focuses on the movement and then don't try too hard to make it part of the student's swing all at once. In other words, I let the new movement seep its way into the swing. Trying to force the change will likely show progress in the 'practice swing' but not likely in the 'game swing.' In the heat of game competition, the movements you can count on seeing are the ones that are deeply imbedded in the player. The movements you force in practice will tend to fade under pressure.

You can also take pressure off the player by having them do drills that feature movements that are exaggerated; then the player doesn't feel like they are working on their swing. For instance don't be afraid to take the bat out of the player's hand or make movement drills that are so foreign to their current feeling. This can help to take away some of the anxiety of "messing up".

These days many want immediate gratification and instant results. Therefore if your daughter doesn't feel the desired movement change right away--frustration! Yes, wouldn't it be nice if learning could be like a light switch....you don't have it, flip a switch and then you do! However, we know that is usually not going to be the case. So continue to reassure your daughter that **anything worth having requires a process**, in this case a seeping, oozing of new movements into existing ones. By embracing the struggle, any changes have a better chance of being permanent ones. And she'll learn something much more valuable than increasing her batting average. She'll learn how to push on, push through and never give up.

Suzy

Nutrition for Peak Performance

Fueling Strength and Power Sports
KEEP IT SIMPLE AND PRACTICE THE BASICS!

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Nutrition and Hydration Goals

1. Eat 5 times per day, particularly within 30 minutes of completing workout sessions.
2. Consume enough protein from foods, drinks & use protein containing bars and shakes if needed.
3. Get plenty of creatine from muscle building foods like, beef, pork, salmon, lamb and cod.
4. Include antioxidant rich foods (brightly colored fruits & vegetables, fish, nuts, oils) for optimal health and recovery.

IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW!

A good nutrition plan is the foundation to enhancing strength and power, reducing muscle soreness, boosting energy stores during workouts and maximizing overall performance.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO FUEL MY BODY?

The timing of food and fluids you eat and drink should be a major focus of your nutrition plan. Too many athletes skip meals and miss critical fueling opportunities.

Follow this basic eating schedule:

Breakfast > Lunch > Dinner > plus 2 snacks

1 refueling snack within 30 minutes of exercise

At least 1 snack between meals during the day

If your goal is weight gain, have 3 snacks

FRUIT SMOOTHIE

A great post workout recovery drink or snack!

1 cup vanilla yogurt

1/3 cup orange juice

1 ½ cups frozen strawberries

1 ripe, frozen banana

2/3 cup skim milk powder or protein powder for an extra protein boost

1 tsp. vanilla

1 cup ice

Combine all ingredients in a blender.

Blend until smooth and creamy.

Makes 2-16 ounce servings

Calories – 260; fiber – 2 grams; fat –2; protein – 16 g

Lost in Translation

By Natalie Titcume

Co-Founder of **TLC Mentoring**, Australia

Olympic Medalist, 2000, 2004, 2008

During my time as a teacher and elite sports person, there was one thing that I had to be sure of at all times. Communication. This was always key in directing students and trying to lead a team during intense competition.

The first time I thought that this was going to be a problem when I was given the opportunity to play as a professional Softballer in Japan at the age of 31. I know this seems late to start a professional career, but it was the opportunity of a lifetime. This was the icing on the cake, so to speak, after two Olympic Games and 2 World Championships.

I was now in the position where I could not speak the language but was still expected, as part of my role, to lead the team and to share my experience and knowledge of softball. I was so scared. I would no longer be able to use humor or distraction to help my teammates through stressful times. This was going to be one of my hardest challenges. I realized that the communication that I had taken for granted for 30 years had to change. I had to start finding other forms of communication that would be successful in a stressful environment, not only for me, but also for my younger teammates who would be looking to me to set the tone. The first area I decided to look at was my body language. This would be the key to everyone's first impression. I needed to show my teammates that I was confident and in control.

The next thing I chose to change was my physical attitude. I showed more enthusiasm outwardly. By changing this I was going to give the impression that I too was working just as hard as anyone else. Before I left, I decided to get a new strength trainer and began training 5 days a week so that I would be able to handle any new workload in Japan. I knew they trained harder than any other country in the world, and I wanted to ensure that my body didn't break down.

I knew that changing these two communication tools in Body Language and Attitude would hold me in good stead for the start of the season.

Then came "Lost in Translation". When the team explained to me that I would have an interpreter I quickly sighed with relief. But there was still more to learn. Even through an interpreter, some of the things that I wanted to communicate were just not delivered the same way. In Japan, there was the right way, and then there was the way in which the coach wanted to hear it. My interpreter was fantastic in teaching me this from the very beginning. Never say anything you don't want to be used against you later, and be true to the team at all times. I was able to learn by observing.

It was always difficult in the heat of battle to find a happy medium with my interpreter, Miyako, often yelling out things like; "Isn't the weather sunny today?" or "I think it looks like rain" These times often made me laugh, as I knew that was definitely NOT what the coach was saying, but in her communication I knew exactly what he meant. Sometime things needed to be lost in translation, or as we say in Australia, "let go through to the keeper". This is a skill that I now use in everyday life, not to get caught up in some of the dealings with others. Sometimes there is no answer, and this is a part of communication that I think serves us well.

Don't get caught up with things that really don't require an answer, but might just require that the next time we step into work or onto the field for us to change our actions and not use words. Communication is everything that we do, not just what we say.

And remember, we are born with two ears and one mouth. The most effective communicators listen twice as much as they talk. So Look, Listen, Learn.

Nat



A pat on the back is only a few vertebrae removed

from a kick in the pants,

but miles ahead in results.

Tis the Season !

With High School and Travel Ball season upon us,
EVERYONE is ready to work !

We are experiencing “growing pains” and, are not getting to everyone; and that is important to us !

We are restructuring our visits and expanding our offerings to accommodate YOU. If you have not been able to get a lesson scheduled, be patient. New information on group classes and clinics is coming! Meanwhile, consider “Chalktalk”, below:

“CHALKTALK”

WORK WITH DENNY VIA VIDEO...

If you are having trouble with a specific pitch, dealing with a problem with mechanics, or simply looking to improve a specific part of your pitching, we may be able to help through video analysis. This program is designed to work on very specific areas within the pitch, identify problems, help you maintain and improve your form between lessons, or allow new students to get feedback to see how we could help if we get together for instruction.

You can take a look at the **Chalk Talk** videos by Denny on this **PowerChalk** website:

<http://www.powerchalk.com/?affcode=tincherpitching>

Fill in the free registration, then do a keyword search for TincherPitching.

ChalkTalk video services **are not intended to replace one-on-one lessons**, but certainly can enhance your practice time between visits, keeping you more focused on areas you need to work, eliminate problems when you know they are happening, but don't know what to do, and certainly to save on trips when you live across the country!

100 DAYS TO GREATNESS

How do you help your daughter, your players, or your coaches develop individual plans?

Most of us just don't know where to start.

Our program, **100-Days to Greatness**, is a very simple concept that allows parents, coaches, and players to chart a course for each individual based on her specific needs. It requires some research, working closely with the player to identify her specific needs, and a good bit of energy and creativity from everyone. However, it allows you to become a partner in her goals, helping you work together in a more fun way, and giving you a method

to judge when a change in course is needed.

Learn more about bringing this new training concept to your organization, contact us at

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Practical Tips for Pitchers

(and the mechanical issues related to them)

By Denny Tincher

A Cool-Down for Pitching

Never end a pitching practice by simply stopping when you have completed your goals for that day. You want your muscles to finish in a more relaxed mode. One way to finish is to slowly “cool down” by pitching fastballs easier and easier as you step closer and closer to your catcher. Then go back to the mound and do the same overhand. A bit of stretching wouldn't hurt as well. Both allow the muscles to relax and heal in a more desirable mode. It can also reduce soreness a bit.

Related Mechanics

Soreness should not be a part of your daily pitching. Recently we worked with a new pitcher who said she was always sore after an hour of pitching. This pitcher travelled a long distance because she needed a lot of changes in form and mechanics, so it took well over three hours to get everything right. At the end she was excited we had gone that long, saying she felt like she had only pitched about 45 minutes. Was she sore the next day? Absolutely not. If you pitch three games in a day, yes, we expect some soreness. If you experience soreness after every workout, something in the form is probably very wrong. It is a health issue, certainly, but is very likely negatively affecting your pitching as well.

Study the Form, Get Involved

Once you understand how things should function, don't be afraid to experiment on your own. Some of our best ideas come from students and parents who discover little variations that make a big difference. You don't have to be an expert. Here are a few examples:

-A 15-year-old, Mikayla, came up with an innovative way to keep the glove in perfect position through the pitch. We borrow it often.

-A dad re-phrased something we had taught his daughter and made the riseball easier to understand. We now use it.

-A grandmother noticed that her granddaughter had more power when she held the calf muscle in a particular way at takeoff. We love it.

-We have three specialty drills named for the kids who took our drills and added an element that made them even better.

-Our 14-year-old daughter combined two drills for the drop in a very special way that makes the pitch so much easier to grasp. It is part of each lesson on the drop.

We love to hear your innovative ideas! Keep talking to us.

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