



*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.*

Robbie Hebert, CSCS  
Director of Sports Performance  
The Edge Sports Performance Center  
ABEAR Performance Training  
[www.abearperformancetraining.com](http://www.abearperformancetraining.com)

An athlete's core must be both stable and functional. Developing the "core", or the musculature surrounding the torso, hips and pelvis, anterior and posterior, is essential for all athletes when playing sports. But if we understand what exercises provide us with real core strength, then we can achieve the benefits that of a functional core.

When preparing an athlete for the demands of their sport, it becomes necessary to analyze the demands of that sport. Then, an assessment must be done of the athlete to determine what gaps can be identified.

These gaps would be the difference between what the sport demands and the athlete's state of preparation according to these demands. Not strong enough, not fast enough or not conditioned enough are just some of the most common issues when these assessments are made.

Not only is the "core" important for strength of movement but it is also important to stabilize and protect the spine by remaining rigid during the engagement of complex, loaded or unloaded movements.

For all athletics, the core is taxed in all movement patterns. Sports are not patterned, they are random and the athlete's reaction to these random movements cannot be predicted. That is why we must train in all of these movement patterns, in addition to, training in a random (or chaotic) environment. Athletes who can meet and overcome this demand, will not only be able to absorb impact forces, but also generate them, even late in the game.

For more information and to download your **FREE** Core Program go to [www.abearperformancetraining.com](http://www.abearperformancetraining.com)

## Thank you!!!

We received so many great emails this month from students and parents excited about the way things are going with their pitching. Some amazing stories. You can't imagine how much this means to us! Keep it up.

## What Do You Do When.....

**By Denny Tincher**

What do you do when your high school or travel ball coach starts meddling with your pitching? We hear that question several times every week. Nice coaches with good intentions tell a kid to do something that she knows will harm her pitching.

A lot depends on the severity of the problem. If it is likely to injure your player, you have to be the parent. An unqualified coach who wants to put your pitcher on a weight-lifting program, that you feel is harmful, needs to have a sit-down with you. Be respectful, listen carefully, but stand your ground.

A well-meaning coach who wants to pitch a kid till the arm falls off needs to have a sit-down with you. A coach who tells the kid to "suck it up" and pitch through an injury needs to have a sit-down with you. If the coaches are berating your daughter and killing her confidence and motivation, it's time to talk. These are non-negotiables. You need to start nicely, but can't compromise regardless of cost.

The next level is the coach who has enough knowledge to be dangerous. They saw this great drill at a clinic one time and want your daughter to do it, even though it goes against everything she has been taught. Or, they want her to change form because they once had a successful pitcher that did it a different way and that's all they really know about pitching. In these cases, schedule a meeting away from practice and be very gracious. Explain that you are spending a lot of money and time with your pitching instructor and ask if they might just let her have a little time to get comfortable with what this person is teaching. I even had one student fake a little injury. Coach wanted the shoulder to rotate through on a drop ball though she knew that was an extremely bad idea, so the kid just went "ouch" every time she performed it. Coach sort of got frightened and left her alone. Try to avoid direct challenges. They usually have a good heart, so try to help them discover the right answers.

The final level is the coach who plays politics, doesn't have a clue, or just doesn't care much. If it's school ball, you just gotta do the best you can to bring them along. Very seldom will it work out well because you are together every single day and will get on one another's nerves as it is, so trying to "push a chain" is likely to exacerbate the problem. Believe me, no story you can tell me will surprise me anymore. I have 500 pitchers and probably 300 stories that will make yours sound boring. If you are lucky to have a good coach, be so thankful. If not, look at it as rec ball and have fun with your friends. Serious softball comes during travel season.

If it is travel ball that is giving you trouble, make yourself valuable and you will be recruited to better situations. Learn from the experience and determine the type of coaching personality that suits you best. Then, search for that environment.

Softball can be frustrating, especially to those who have big goals. **Knowing when to push and when to stay quiet is an art that will serve you in the dugout, but also in life, so this is a good chance to practice.**

## **June Lessons** - Make a trip to Roanoke, Va

NOW SCHEDULING THESE DATES/TIMES:

June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4-9pm;

June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2-8pm

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 4-9pm;

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 12-5pm

June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1-6pm

June 16<sup>th</sup>, available

\*Other dates may be available, so talk with Susan about your needs.

**TincherPitching@AOL.COM**

**540-960-1750**

### **MENTALLY TOUGH OR TIMID?**

By Suzy Willemssen  
Willemssen Sports Training  
Fairfax Station, VA  
[www.suzywillemssen.org](http://www.suzywillemssen.org)

*Fastpitch softball is such an awesome sport. I love it because it is a team sport but also an individual sport within the team sport setting. You get to showcase your individual skills but also get to share the joy/thrill of competing with others--it doesn't get any better than that! Also, can you think of another other game where the defense has possession of the ball? There is constantly a new game and you get to stand alone, fully exposed and put it on the line for all to see. Softball is not like soccer or hockey where the game is so fast paced that if you were to blink, you might not know who just had possession of the ball or puck. In softball if you strike out or make an error, everyone sees that you failed, and usually the spectators are only a few yards away--not way up in the stands or on the other side of the field. There's no hiding and you are close enough to hear everything.*

*Softball is a game that counts every mistake you make even though you can gain elite status if you fail seven out of ten times at the plate....wow, talk about dealing with a lot of frustration! As a hitter, how many times have you hit the ball hard on a line every at bat, yet still gone 0-4? As a pitcher how many times have you painted that corner with that 3-2 pitch and it has been blooped over an infielders head for a run scoring single, or how many times have you frozen a hitter with a change-up that was called a ball by the umpire, even though everyone in the park, even the hitter, knew you should have been out of the inning?*

*As a hitter, you may only get to hit once every 20-25 minutes. There's a lot of time for those pesky gremlins to get into your head, there's the time between pitches after you've booted the ball as you stand there in the field, all alone...so much time for negative self-talk to start. How to minimize the dance of the gremlins? Also with the players playing and practicing almost year around, how do you keep the energy level up? How do you keep your focus up over that duration?*

*It becomes critical that you base your standard of success on more than outcome and end results, i.e., batting average or number of wins for a pitcher. Many times players have much less control over the outcome than they initially perceive, or believe. The outcome of your performance is in a large part dependent on factors outside of your control. In softball you can do everything right (successful process) and still fail (non-desired outcome).*

*The key becomes being in control of yourself. You have to be in control of yourself before you can have control of your performance. Being in control of yourself gives you the best chance to be successful and when you are giving yourself the best chance to be successful, you are giving yourself a best chance for obtaining the desired outcome.*

*So how is this accomplished? By becoming a master of the mental game. This is what separates champions from the rest of the pack. I encourage you to look for tools and resources to help you become a mental champion! Please feel free to contact me if you don't know where to start...I'd be happy assist you in your journey to becoming a master of the mental game! Bring it on!*

Suzy

**Join Denny in  
Northern Virginia**

for the

### **POWERHOUSE SOFTBALL CAMP**

**July 5th-8<sup>th</sup>, 2011**  
(Tuesday-Friday)

**Time: 9am-2pm, daily**

**Ages: 7-14yrs**

**Cost: \$165**

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Lorton, VA

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[www.suzywillemssen.org](http://www.suzywillemssen.org)

**or contact Suzy at**  
[suzy@suzywillemssen.org](mailto:suzy@suzywillemssen.org)

Friday, April 22, 2011  
Updated: April 21, 3:47 PM ET

## Angela Tincher pitching in with Terps

By Graham Hays  
ESPN.com

COLLEGE PARK, Md. -- Three years after Angela Tincher made fact out of a pitching performance more appropriately the province of folklore, a steady stream of University of Maryland hitters march toward the batter's box and spray her offerings around Robert E. Taylor Stadium like so many batting practice pitches.

Yet if the contrast suggests a pitcher whose time has come and gone, it does so only because Tincher controls the hands of the clock.

As music blares over the speakers and bounces off the bleachers in an otherwise empty stadium, the Terrapins treat Tincher's pitches like batting practice because that's precisely what it is. The same pitcher who wore the maroon and orange of Virginia Tech when she no-hit Team USA in 2008, ending a 185-game winning streak in pre-Olympic exhibitions in which the national team outscored opponents 1,475-24, now stands in the circle as an assistant coach wearing a gray-and-red Maryland sweatshirt and

servicing up hittable pitches from behind a protective screen.

She arrived at the park on this day with her glove, tucked away in a



As an assistant coach at Maryland, Angela Tincher has earned the respect of her players.

backpack loaded with other odds and ends, but also toting a double-decker Tupperware platter of cupcakes, the treats testimony to freshman Ashley Czechner's winning a share of ACC pitcher-of-the-week honors. Almost certainly still the best pitcher in practices this season as one of Maryland coach Laura Watten's assistants, Tincher has nonetheless acquired a new nickname in her first months of retirement.

"I call her 'Mom' most of the time," Czechner said of the pitching coach, who at 25 is shifting gears at the same age Dwight Howard, Felix Hernandez and Alex Ovechkin hit their primes.

Tincher burst on the scene during an unforgettable senior spring in 2008, first shutting down and shutting out Team USA at Hall of Fame Stadium in Oklahoma City and later returning to the sport's signature venue as the driving force behind Virginia Tech's first trip to the Women's College World Series. She was a phenomenon, beating Michigan in Ann Arbor twice in the same day to win a super regional and striking out 28 batters in 15.2 innings while allowing just two earned runs in two losses against Texas A&M and Florida in the World Series.

But as meteoric as it seemed, an ascent whose trajectory matched that of her rise ball didn't emerge out of the ether. The 2,149 career strikeouts that rank her third all time in NCAA history behind Monica Abbott and Cat Osterman (she's second only to Osterman in strikeouts per seven innings) were a product not just of four stellar college seasons, but at least a decade before in which pitching was her priority.

After trying the professional routes available after college, including a season with the Akron Racers of National Pro Fastpitch, another with a team in Japan, and time with USA Softball -- endeavors that demand all the time and geographic commitments of pro sports with little in the way of financial security -- the math no longer added up for her. At the end of last summer, she felt like it might be time to walk away from playing. As spring moves again toward summer, the high season of pro and international competition, she still feels doing so was the right decision.

"I think I am at a point where I sacrificed a lot of things for softball. And I don't regret one minute at all; I'm glad I did," Tincher said. "But I'm kind of ready to maybe make some time for other things in my life as well -- try to do both."

After returning from Japan in the fall of 2009, she found herself in Syracuse, where her boyfriend, now fiancé, was enrolled in graduate school. She reached out to Syracuse coach Leigh Ross to see if there were camps or clinics in the area to which she might be able to contribute. As it turned out, Ross needed a pitching coach, and not only was Tincher an uncommon talent, but also the uncommon soul willing to spend January and February in the snow in Syracuse.

"I didn't really know what I wanted to do," Tincher said. "My major was in finance, but I couldn't see myself sitting behind a desk immediately, either. So I wanted to stay involved with softball as long as possible."

Led by ace Jenna Caira, the Orange won the Big East tournament and advanced to the NCAA tournament for the first time in program history. When a full-time coaching position opened last summer at Maryland, several hours from her Virginia hometown and part of her ACC softball roots, Tincher stuck with coaching, even as she decided to stop playing competitively.

"She's so humble and so down to earth -- so real," Watten said. "I just knew that she'd be able to connect with the kids really well because of that. ... I knew her work ethic, I knew her mentality and I knew she's a competitor -- but also she communicates really well. She's just good people to be around."

The present beneficiaries are three Maryland pitchers who collectively rank in the top 20 nationally in team ERA.

Maryland senior Kerry Hickey once squared off against Tincher on the field, coming on in relief for the Terrapins as a freshman in a loss against the Hokies in 2008. She recalled admiring the

All-American's rise ball at the time, also the bread-and-butter pitch of Hickey's repertoire. But even among rise-ball pitchers, emulating Tincher's version is a fool's errand. More helpful is the young coach communicating what went into that pitch and anything else she threw.

"She works a lot on specifics and details, and really mechanical things and form," Hickey said. "It really helped me a lot because that's how I grew up pitching, how I learned. I really looked at the finer things and used video and everything to really break down the motion and get the most out of your body -- that's what she had to do. I was never really tall and she's not very [tall], so you really have to use all your body and she was really helpful in that aspect."

That master practitioners do not always make master instructors is an old sports adage. What comes easy for great players, the line of thinking goes, is precisely what makes it difficult for them to explain to others how to do it. Like a lot of old adages, it's probably true only often enough to keep getting repeated. Osterman has already enjoyed a successful stint as a pitching coach at DePaul. Lisa Fernandez is an unmistakable presence in the dugout for defending champion UCLA. Former Arizona ace Nancy Evans remains one of the most familiar names in pitching instruction. And the list goes on. The move Tincher made is not unprecedented in softball.

Nevertheless, there is something rare about a pitcher as gifted as she is who also proves to be such a natural communicator.

Tincher never really fit comfortably in the mold of superstar pitcher. She wasn't hyped as the next great thing from before she was old enough to drive. She wasn't the subject of a recruiting battle between traditional powers. She isn't an imposing, long-limbed 6-footer like so many strikeout pitchers. She didn't wear sunglasses, eye black, a glittery headband or shiny jewelry in the circle. She just pitched. And struck a lot of people out while she was at it.

She had a star's talent, to be sure, but her mannerisms were always those more suited to a director than a, well, diva.

"I think you do have to be flexible because something that works for me isn't going to work for everybody else, and vice versa," Tincher said. "My dad gives lessons now and I was around that a lot -- when I was in high school, I would help him out with lessons, or through college I would do clinics and things like that. So I've always been teaching. I think getting that background and working a lot of camps and clinics and just getting used to instructing and how to verbalize things, I think that helped. It's one thing to feel it and to do it; it's another to be able to say it."

She had a lot to work with at Maryland, inheriting two pitchers in Hickey (21-12, 1.67 ERA last season) and Kendra Knight (13-12, 1.70 ERA last season) who were among the best in the ACC last season. But whether it's Hickey talking about mechanics or Knight talking about pitching mentality, both readily point to specific ways that Tincher's presence has helped them. The numbers back up such sentiments, with Hickey's strikeout rate on the rise and the opponent's batting average against Knight on the decline.

But perhaps the best indication of the effect is Czechner, the freshman who has an 11-2 record with a 1.55 ERA and 108 strikeouts against 17 walks in 81.1 innings; she often comes in as an invaluable bullpen option.

"She's definitely helped me with my movement of pitches, also my location and just my consistency," Czechner said. "I came in here as more like a rise-ball pitcher and now I throw pretty much all my pitches now pretty consistently, which I've always wanted to do."

Coaching at the college level at Maryland or anywhere else may or may not end up part of the long-term plan for Tincher. Her fiancé works for the Golf Channel in Florida, making for a long-distance relationship. Not to mention that softball may eventually have company in pursuing her services -- if she wasn't so unfailingly pleasant, it would be easy to hold against her the annoyingly accomplished fact that in addition to a 0.78 career ERA, she also earned a 3.84 GPA in finance at Virginia Tech. Perhaps the postgraduate work she's doing at Maryland may lead to that desk job for which she wasn't quite ready, albeit one that might eventually come with a corner office and a nice view.

As she readily admits, there is no five-year or 10-year plan to work off of at the moment. But there is a pitching staff with the talent to take the Terrapins back to the NCAA tournament for the second season in a row. And it doesn't take long watching Tincher go about her business to see that's her focus at this particular moment.

"I just know she's a competitor," Watten said. "And I knew that she'd be able to take this pitching staff, if I gave her those responsibilities and just doing that, and that would be her baby. And that's what it has been."

Mom, indeed.

It's a long way to come in three years, from the kid who stunned mighty Team USA and earned a legion of young fans in the process, like one from South Carolina who watched the replay of that game.

"I just thought she was the best pitcher I've ever seen up to that point," Czechner said. "After she shut down the USA team, I thought she'd be, like, my idol."

Instead, she's the one bringing cupcakes, driving the team van on road trips and admonishing the freshman when she's tardy warming up during a game. There's little doubt which iteration will have a more lasting impact on Czechner.

Selfishly, there is a certain sadness that Tincher's time in the spotlight came and went in what felt like the blink of an eye. But as she watches with mock maternal concern as her players try to sneak an extra cupcake after practice, it's easy to appreciate the sight of someone with all the time in the world for the rest of her life.

Graham Hays covers women's college softball for ESPN.com. E-mail him at [Graham.Hays@espn.com](mailto:Graham.Hays@espn.com). Follow him on Twitter: [@grahamhays](https://twitter.com/grahamhays).

## How Often Should a Pitcher Have Lessons?

By Denny Tincher

That is probably not a good question to ask a father whose daughter had only two formal pitching lessons in her life. That's right, for all that Angela accomplished, we only had two hours of pitching lessons, and both of these were late in her high school career when we wanted a second opinion on some things. People are shocked that we did it on our own.

These days I just won't agree to accept students for weekly lessons. True, we are so overwhelmed that we couldn't accommodate that request, but we made this decision long before that occurred. Our main goal is to help the parent and the pitcher totally take ownership of her career. We are very serious about teaching parents to be the primary pitching instructor for the daughter. As you gain a thorough understanding of the form and the process, you will gain the courage to begin creating your own drills and finding ways of fixing things that have never occurred to anyone else. Why? Because you are custom-designing them for your daughter's needs.

A second reason we don't agree to see the same 40-50 students every week is that we wouldn't learn nearly so much. Kids in different regions bring us unique problems. Different ages bring different challenges. By working with over 500 kids, we see it all...ways to overcome form problems we wouldn't have seen otherwise, putting kids with chronic injuries back on the mound in healthy fashion, new ways to develop speed in 15-20 different body types, and by developing drills for the riseball that 200 completely unique kids can grasp, we have developed over 30 drills instead of the one or two with which we started.

But, those are still not the reasons we won't do weekly lessons. When pitchers have a weekly lesson, it is too easy for them to put off fixing something since a lesson is approaching and they think it will be easier to just wait and let the pitching instructor fix it. In doing that, they blow a good chance to figure it out for their self and learn something that would have made her a better pitcher in many ways. Instead, the kid avoids the pitch that's causing trouble, or builds a bad habit by pitching it wrong until the next lesson. **They get in the habit of being spoon-fed, which inhibits the maturity we want a pitcher to develop.**

Sometimes parents choose a weekly lesson because they just don't want to have to get that involved in the kid's dreams. "It's just too much work to learn all of that stuff". "Pitching is just too confusing". "I'm too busy".

As a coach of a travel team with lots of years behind me, I don't want the type of pitcher who cannot adapt easily and cannot creatively overcome problems on her own. Nor am I excited about the kid and parent who feel no urgency to fix something. "That's good enough" is an attitude that leads to mediocrity.

Yes, we do occasionally do consecutive lessons with a kid who is working on a special pitch, and for kids from the deep south or west coast, we do two or three consecutive days to help ingrain any new habits. Those are different situations.

So, are there parents out there who are willing to get as involved as we hope? Absolutely. Ninety-nine percent of them get as excited about learning and being a part of the process as I did with my daughter. I absolutely love them. And, when they bring their daughters back after 2-6 weeks, the kid is always greatly improved and they are full of new questions and ideas for me to consider. Those are the kids who soar. And, when parents get that involved, they tend to pass on their knowledge to neighborhood kids who want to learn to pitch, and, they do it with a passion that helps the kids fall in love with the great game of softball.

There are many ways to be successful, and weekly lessons can be one of them. We just choose to take a different approach. Parents ask me when they should return, and I tell them, "When you accomplish the goals we set today, or when she gets frustrated and needs a little help". **I feel my job is to empower parents and kids to dream together and work to help it become reality.** The more time and energy both have invested in it, the more likely they will fight through it when facing difficult challenges. That is the real goal.

## Practical Tips for Pitchers

(and the mechanical issues related to them)

By Denny Tincher

### SPINS

If the spin on the basic fastball spins to the side or clockwise, the pitcher is losing efficiency. Check the pads of the fingers and also the sides of the fingertips on the thumb side. If the side is tough or calloused, it means the pitcher is trying to snap the wrist, causing the ball to roll off the side of the fingers. Wrist-snaps, though well-intentioned, often do more harm than good. Kids who focus on those often tighten the wrist before release, tightening the entire arm and stopping all momentum. They also tend to creep the hand forward on breaking pitches, lessening the desired spins.

### **Practical Application**

Wrist snaps often cause a tightening at exactly the point where we want a "whip" effect. Obviously we don't ask infielders to suddenly stop the arm and snap the wrist when throwing to first base. Pitching has more in common with overhand throwing than most imagine. There are some better ways to take advantage of the natural biomechanical advantages inherent in the female body to create speed, increase endurance, and enhance accuracy. Catch up with us when we are in your area and we will explain the process and help you feel a different way of gaining explosive power off the fingertips.

## **"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 [TincherPitching@aol.com](mailto:TincherPitching@aol.com)**

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## Virginia Wesleyan College

July 20-21, 2011

### **Advanced Pitcher/Catcher Camp**

with Denny Tincher & Jennifer Herzig

This Pitcher/Catcher Camp is designed for athletes who want to improve their pitching and catching skills. **Denny Tincher, father of Va. Tech star and National Player of the Year Angela Tincher, will direct the pitching session of the clinic and UNC Greensboro head coach Jennifer Herzig will direct the catching session of the clinic.**

**PITCHERS** will learn and improve on the bio-mechanics of pitching, how each body part contributes to the pitch and incorporate these lessons through drill work that increases speed and accuracy. Pitchers will also be given a thorough understanding of the major breaking pitches with specific ways to make each more effective. Pitchers will also be introduced to Denny's "100 Days to Greatness" Pitching Program. Pitchers should provide their **OWN** catcher, who is **NOT** attending the catching portion of the camp.

**CATCHERS** will learn and improve on all aspects of being the leader of the defense. Instruction will be geared towards proper receiving & blocking techniques as well as proper footwork and mechanics when throwing. Catchers will also be given valuable instruction on calling a good game, recognizing hitters weaknesses and working with pitchers.

### **Fundamental Pitcher/Catcher Camp**

with Denny Tincher & Jennifer Herzig

This Pitcher/Catcher Camp is designed for athletes who want to improve their pitching and catching skills. **Denny Tincher, father of Va. Tech star and National Player of the Year Angela Tincher, will direct the pitching session of the clinic and UNC Greensboro head coach Jennifer Herzig will direct the catching session of the clinic.**

**PITCHERS** will learn and improve on the bio-mechanics of pitching, how each body part contributes to the pitch and incorporate these lessons through drill work that increases speed and accuracy. Pitchers will also be given instruction on finding a good change-up and begin to understand their movement pitches. Pitchers should provide their **OWN** catcher, who is **NOT** attending the catching portion of the camp.

**CATCHERS** will learn and improve on all aspects of being the leader of the defense. Instruction will be geared towards proper receiving & blocking techniques as well as proper footwork and mechanics when throwing.

Registration will be up soon at the Va Wesleyan College website;

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Denny's new toy...



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