

# *Oshkosh West Baseball*

## **Pitching**

### I. Mental Approach

- A. The Future Is Perfect
  1. The most important pitch is the next one
  2. The most important game is the next one
  3. Stay positive
- B. You are in control
- C. Stay emotionally level. Don't show your emotions (poker face).
- D. Visualize

### II. Mechanics (right-handed perspective)

- A. Keep the front leg flexible
- B. Hide the ball
- C. Get it out, get it up -- "rip" quickly out of glove into throwing position (flex elbow)
- D. Keep head still, chin towards mitt; eyes pick up catcher's mitt
- E. Balance
  1. Hips/shoulders/head above pivot foot (don't lean back or sideways)
  2. Knee lift (not kick)...foot below knee (don't swing back), toes down
  3. Can balance on back leg at height of lift
  3. Pivot heel above toes
  4. Work pivot foot from right side of rubber
- F. Power
  1. Rotate hips (show batter your back pocket)
  2. "Drop & drive" (Tom Seaver, Paul Byrd)
    - a. push hard off the rubber, back laces straight down
    - b. front leg bent -- let lower body absorb strain
    - c. land slightly on inside ball of left foot, toes toward plate
  3. "Tall & fall (stride)" (Greg Maddux, Curt Schilling, John Smoltz, Kevin Brown)
    - a. front leg bent but firm
    - a. back foot kicks up (don't drag)
- G. Keep front side closed: shoulder, hip & knee
- H. Stride
  1. Keep consistent
  2. Left foot lands on line to target
  3. Foot plants slightly closed
  4. Do **not** land on heel
- I. Release
  1. Keep fingers on top of ball
  2. Keep elbow above shoulder
- J. Glove hand
  1. Drive down elbow at 45° angle past left hip;
  2. Don't move left arm horizontal to ground (glove against chest)
- K. Follow through
  1. Glove in front - fielding position
  2. Bend at the waist
  3. Come down balanced (square to plate) -- don't fall off the mound
- L. Have same delivery for all pitches
- M. Most common flaws
  1. Rushing – usually poor weight balance – front side flies open
  2. Overthrowing (relax, especially forearm)
  3. Throwing across body (left foot landing right of line to plate)
- N. Adjustments
  1. Too low: shorten stride, adjust target
  2. Too high: keep front side closed, elbow up, fingers on top, bend (follow through), adjust target
  3. Inside/outside: keep front slide closed, move over on rubber, adjust target (chin to mitt)

### III. Pitches

#### A. Fastball

1. Most important pitch
2. Palm faces catcher; backspin on ball
3. Grips
  - a. four seam (power fastball)
  - b. two seam
  - c. with seams
    - i. cut fastball – move thumb right of center under ball
    - ii. sinker – move thumb left of center under ball, up left side
  - d. finger pressure
    - i. more on index finger, ball moves toward throwing side
    - ii. more on middle finger, ball moves away from throwing side
  - e. must experiment & work on over time
4. Change speeds with fastball; don't cut loose on every pitch (less velocity = more movement)

#### B. Curve

1. Younger pitchers should master straight change first
2. Index finger & middle finger behind one long seam; thumb behind opposite seam
3. More pressure on middle finger & thumb
4. Palm faces ear; put topspin on ball
5. Snap down -- like pulling down a window shade or casting a fishing rod
6. Throw it top to bottom, not back to front
7. Don't try to throw it too hard
8. Follow through to opposite hip

#### C. Change up

1. Straight change/circle change/palm ball
  - a. stuff ball back in palm
  - b. same motion as fastball; pull down, let ball slide out
  - c. keep wrist stiff, relax fingers
2. Split-finger/forkball
3. Knuckleball (no rotation)
  - a. use fingertips on seams
  - b. push out with fingers & thumb

### IV. Strategy

- A. Get ahead in the count
- B. Work quickly (at your pace)
- C. Keep the ball down
- D. Change speeds
- E. Adjust to hitter & situation
  1. Hitter's stance, weaknesses, tendencies
    - a. open stance/pulling off = low & outside
    - b. closed stance/crowding plate = heat inside, off-speed away
    - c. uppercut/drop back shoulder = high heat
    - d. up in box = heat; back in box = off-speed
  2. 0-2 Count: at eye level or outside – the batter should not hit it with any authority
  3. Bunt situation: take the out; high heat
  4. What is our defensive alignment?
  5. Consider next batter(s) & likely offensive strategy
- F. Must establish fastball (inside)

## V. Holding Runners

- A. Most bases are stolen off the pitcher -- keep the runners close
- B. Throw over! -- you don't always have to pick runner off to be effective (listen to coach)
- C. Step off if uncomfortable
- D. Vary your looks & your timing from the stretch (can throw to base before coming set)
- E. Can check runner looking over right shoulder (peripheral vision)
- F. Pitchouts
  - 1. Fastball that catcher can handle & batter can't hit
  - 2. Squeeze: pitch out to 3rd base side
- G. 2 outs, 3-2 count = automatic pickoff
- H. Timing plays with SS/2nd/3rd
- I. 1st & 3rd walk-off = step back, throw to 2nd base cover man
- J. Slide step?: Don't be distracted from your primary task (batter) -- know the importance of each runner
- K. Balk Rule
  - 1. Not coming set when going home
  - 2. Dropping ball on rubber
  - 3. "Feinting" or "intentional" deception of runner (can fake to 2nd/3rd if occupied)
  - 4. Not stepping towards base when throwing from rubber
  - 5. In pitching position without ball
  - 6. Starting delivery to home & stopping
  - 7. Quick pitch
  - 8. Illegal pitch
  - 9. Non-pivot foot breaks plane of rubber & not throwing home (except to 2nd)
  - 10. Separating hands & not throwing home

## VI. Fielding

- A. Get in position to be a fielder from follow-through
- B. Know ahead of time where your plays are & who you are working with on DP
- C. Know bunt coverages & get there (make sure of one out)
- D. Cover 1st base on anything hit on ground to right side
  - 1. Banana route -- hit inside of bag & turn back in towards infield
  - 2. Catch ball before you get to base if possible, otherwise stop & act as 1st baseman
- E. Comebackers
  - 1. Knock the ball down -- keep it in front of you
  - 2. Don't throw off mound if possible
  - 3. "Step & throw" -- Step off mound & towards base; don't lob
  - 4. Make sure fielders are covering; lead them
- F. Backing up bases
  - 1. Get far enough behind the base to stop the ball
  - 2. If not sure on a deep ball, go halfway between home & 3rd and react to throw
- G. Let infielders call you off on popups when possible
- H. Cover the plate on wild pitches with runners on
- I. If you catch a runner off base, run at him so he commits (back is better), then execute rundown

## VII. Signs

- A. Throw what is called by coach
- B. If uncomfortable or not sure, step off or have catcher run sequence again
- C. Get together with catcher before to discuss signs (SS, 2B should know)
- D. Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> -- P & C get together!
- E. Location
- F. Pitchout = throw FB shoulder high in opposite batter's box
- G. Coach's signs (team meeting)

## VIII. Getting Ready

### A. Between starts

1. Day before & day after: light catch, 50-70 ft., 10 minutes
2. Other days: 8-10 min. outfield catch; 8-10 min. bullpen
3. Pick targets: inside, outside, middle; keep track of strikes

### B. Game day

1. Get 8-10 hours sleep previous two nights
2. Don't sleep late -- get up & move around
3. Eating
  - a. day game: eat a good breakfast, then don't eat until game (liquids & fruits OK)
  - b. 4:30 game: eat a good breakfast & lunch, then don't eat until game
  - c. night game: mid-afternoon meal (before 3:00; some carbs good), don't eat until game
  - d. make a routine to fit you
4. Go over opponents' lineup
5. Warming up
  - a. jog - stretch - jog
  - b. throw 3-5 minutes (50 feet backing up to 75 feet) before getting on mound
  - c. start with fastballs only (5 min.)
  - d. mix pitches (e.g. 3 fast, 3 change, 3 fast, 3 curve)
  - e. run through all your pitches
  - f. work some from the stretch
  - g. throw same direction as in game if possible (learn wind effects)
6. Keep yourself (arm) warm!
  - a. always have extra t-shirts for changing during & after game
  - b. wear your jacket/sweatshirt
  - c. have towels available
7. Ice your arm when done for the day
8. Your routine can vary a little, but **get yourself prepared to pitch!**

## IX. Conditioning

### A. Legs are most important to a pitcher

1. Distance running is a must to stay in shape
2. Run sprints/shorter distances; keep times; push yourself

### B. Never try to cut loose & throw too hard when starting each season

### C. Seaver/Jobe arm exercises with 5-10 pound weights

## X. Thoughts

### A. Have good communication with catcher & coach (getting tired? -- be honest)

### B. Control is most important quality, then ability to change speeds, then velocity

### C. Play catch with the catcher

### D. Avoid throwing new/white balls (rub the ball up best as possible)

### E. Never question, talk back to, or show up the umpire, verbally or with body language

1. Remain emotionless when the umpire misses a call (think about next pitch)
2. Catcher & coach deal with umpires

### F. Make sure your fielders are all in position & ready before pitching

### G. An average 10 mph tail wind will add 25-30 feet to a 370 foot fly ball

### H. An average 10 mph head wind will take away 25-30 feet from a 370 foot fly ball

### I. Hold a ball a lot and get used to feels and grips - experiment.

### J. Pick a very specific small target (like a lace or grommet).

### K. Stay within yourself. Play the percentages. Let the hitters get themselves out.

### L. "Hitting is timing. Pitching is upsetting timing." - Warren Spahn

### M. "I became a good pitcher when I stopped trying to make them miss the ball and started trying to make them hit it" - Sandy Koufax

### N. "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." - Earl Weaver

### O. "It's never over 'til it's over" - Yogi Berra