

24/5/11

What's your pitcher doing this winter?

If they are pitching...what are they working on?

There are 3 seasons to the game:

1. **Off-Season** (April – July) Velocity & Movement
2. **Pre-season** (August/September) Control, Movement, Mental Approach
3. **In-Season** (October-March) Control, Movement & Mental Approach

Off season is the time to really work on increasing pitching speed and improvement in movement. No need to work on control in the off season because you are not in games and not facing batters.

It's a real treat to pitch without the boundaries of the strike zone.

All young pitchers should be leaping. If they don't start they will be left behind as others improve on this part of their game. Use the off season to get familiar with leaping.

To improve pitching speed it helps greatly to have a better understanding of pitching technique. Have a look at [www.softball.org.nz](http://www.softball.org.nz) pitching resource page U15 Raw Sox Guidelines and U17 Emerging Sox Guidelines. The pitcher will also need to do drills which get their body and arm moving quickly. Sprint in pitching drills get the body moving fast. Pitching with a lighter ball gets the arm faster.

Doing weight training and core work help hugely to offer overall strength, but to really improve in pitching pitchers need to pitch.

Below is an example training schedule of an off season programme.

Pitch 4 days out of 7 days			
5-10 minutes	Warm up – must get to a sweat	Dynamic stretching	
5 minutes	Overhand throwing fielding	Ground balls & throw to bases	10 x turn & throw to 2B 10 x turn & throw to 3B
5 minutes	Start pitching your dominant pitch & building up speed	Focus on the correct spin	Dominant pitch is either a drop or rise. This is your best pitch
5 minutes	Start pitching your other pitch & building up speed	Focus on the correct spin	Other pitch is your 2 <sup>nd</sup> pitch and it is either a drop or rise
5 minutes	Change ups	Throw it hard	Must be deceptive
10 minutes	Leaping	Pitch all your pitches in which ever order you like	See how far down the mound you can get. See how high off the ground you can get. Make sure your arm is fast. Hide the ball longer
20 x repetitions (5 minutes)	Drop	Sprint in drill	Step back 5 big steps from the pitching mound and sprint in to pitching mark and pitch drop. Walk back

			to start.
20 x repetitions (5 minutes)	Rise	Distance drill	Stay back 5 steps from pitching mound & work on pitching rise balls from this distance. Leap & keep arm fast
20-30 x repetitions (5 minutes)	Mix 3 x pitches	Regular distance	Pitch all pitches and leap. Finish on something quick.
Want to do more?	Work on your weakest pitch	Work on other aspects of the game - hitting	Happy training

Each season should have particular goals and contribute to the improvement of the competitive pitcher.

### **Off-Season**

(April – July)

Emphasis: Velocity & Movement

Velocity - Off season is the ideal time to improve physical strength and flexibility. Weight training offers the pitcher the chance to improve their overall physical strength. By increasing the strength in the legs and core area the drive and stride in the pitching motion can be performed more explosively.

Pitching mechanics are also a consideration in the off season. This is when the pitcher has time to break the mechanics down and ensure he/she is performing the pitching motion in the correct sequence.

Movement - The off season is the best time to work on developing a new pitch and to improve the spin on your other pitches.

### **Preseason**

(August/September)

Emphasis:

Preseason is the time to begin working toward control; concentration automatically becomes a focus when working on accuracy.

The emphasis should firstly be put on the ability to throw called strikes.

If your pitcher cannot consistently throw the ball in the strike zone they will never be consistent at hitting the corners.

For the first 4 -5 weeks of the preseason have your pitcher throwing all their pitches as a called strike. Particular emphasis is given to the pitchers dominant pitch. Make sure the spin is correct on this 'go to pitch'.

For the remaining 3-4 weeks the pitcher can also work the corners and throw percentage pitches and balls.

### **In-Season**

(October-March)

Emphasis: Control, Movement & Mental Approach

Precision in pitching and attention to the spin is the biggest priority in season.

Control of all the pitches and having the accuracy to pitch to a specific location is a must.

The pitcher needs to become a perfectionist to ensure their pitches have the 'right spin and a tight spin'.

In-season provides the pitcher with feedback. Game results and statistics provide valuable information which the pitcher will need to use in order to continue improving.

Game time will help your pitcher to develop their mental approach, concentration, coping strategies and confidence in the position.