

## VBC Pitching Program

### Philosophy

Pitching involves a combination of skills and abilities- *effective mechanics, total strength* and it also includes adequate preparation- *dynamic stretching and explosive exercise*. A major contributor to the success of a pitcher is overall strength. Pitching is a refined, yet explosive activity that requires a significant amount of training to achieve. Without the strength to manage the eruption of forces, success will be limited. It is important to take a holistic approach and teach a young player how to achieve all of the components.

At VBC, we believe that pitchers:

- Are unique. All athletes are not built the same way and do not look the same when they throw and that's acceptable as long as they are meeting basic objectives. It is expected that as young pitchers grow and develop physically, they will need to be re-evaluated, make adjustments, and discover new approaches.
- Are athletes. They do not perform a set of specialized techniques without having the strength and power to complete them at full capacity. They have the ability to train and strengthen all of the muscle systems that support their movements.

### Preparation

#### *Dynamic Stretching:*

All 1:1 sessions, Group sessions and Camps for pitchers will start with stretch and warm-up activities.

Indoors: Have the player/s go the length of the tunnel and back for each listed below.

Outdoors: Have the player/s go 30 yards and back for each activity listed below.

- Light Jog
- Shuffle
- Karaoke
- Walking Lunges
- Walking Lunges with Twist
- Sprint
- Arm Circles for 1 minute each way-forward and backward
- Hugs

#### *Explosive Exercise:*

All 1:1 sessions, Group Sessions, and Camps will end with exercises. The goal is always quality over quantity. (Choose 3)

1. **Metabolic Sprinting (for outdoors only)**: a multitude of sprints at very short distances using a set recovery time. The recovery between sprints is calculated to match the time between pitches, which include the wind up, throw, the catcher receiving the pitch and the throwback to the pitcher.

**10-, 20-, 30-yard Sprints**

- Begin all sprints out of straddle stance position
- Run linear sprints of 10, 20, and 30 yards
- Reset 35-40 seconds between sprints
- Run 6-8 sprints for each distance
- Add 1-2 sprints each week
- Never run more than 14 sprints per distance

2. **Reverse Lunge Knee-Up**: Begin by standing on one foot (think Karate Kid), then step the opposite foot backwards into a reverse lunge. Powerfully push through the front foot and bring the opposite knee towards the chest. Quickly step back into a reverse lunge and repeat!

3. **Plyo Push-Up**: Begin in a standard push-up position with elbows bent at 90 degrees and tucked close to the body. Now push it with enough force to jump the hands off the ground and quickly clap together before landing. This one might be best to practice from the knees and with the goal of working towards doing them from the toes.

4. **Box Drill**: Fire up the calves by jumping around an imaginary box. Begin by balancing on the right foot with a slightly bent knee. Swing both arms forward and hop to the left. Staying on the same leg, hop forward, then hop to the right, and finally in reverse back to the starting point. Switch legs and reverse the direction.

5. **Standing Long Jump**: Stand with feet hip-width apart, and crouch into a squatting position with the arms back. Next, spring forward with both feet remaining together and land on the balls of the feet with the knees bent. Spring right back into action for the next jump (with no rest in between).

6. **Frog Squat Jump**: Begin in a wide stance, feet a bit wider than shoulder-width apart, with toes turned slightly out. Keeping the chest up, drop into a deep squat position, hands reaching to the ground. Now explode upwards and out into a jump. Land softly and quickly repeat with an emphasis on the height of each jump.

7. **Lateral Lunge**: Stand with feet together and then lunge to the right. Make sure the toes of both feet face forward and weight goes back into the heels. Reach the arms forward if you need extra help balancing.

8. **Lateral Triple Jump**: Stand on the right foot, bend the knee slightly and hop sideways as far as possible, landing on the right foot again. Immediately leap forward to land on the left foot. Finish the move by jumping forward one more time to land on both feet.

9. **Side Plank**: Start in a side plank position with the planted elbow directly beneath the shoulder and both legs stacked. Start out with a 30 second hold.

10. **Plyometric Push-Up to Squat:** Start in traditional push-up position, and then quickly push through the hands as hard as possible to generate some momentum. As the body rises, tuck the knees to the chest and simultaneously bring the feet to land under the body. The landing position is a deep squat. Hold it for a second and then jump back into a push-up position to repeat.

11. **Single-Leg Jump Squat:** Balance on one leg, grounding your weight in the heel, and lower into a single-leg squat. Extend the arms forward for balance. Hold momentarily at the bottom of the squat, and then throw the arms downwards to generate momentum and jump up off the standing leg. Softly land on the same leg and then head straight into the next rep.

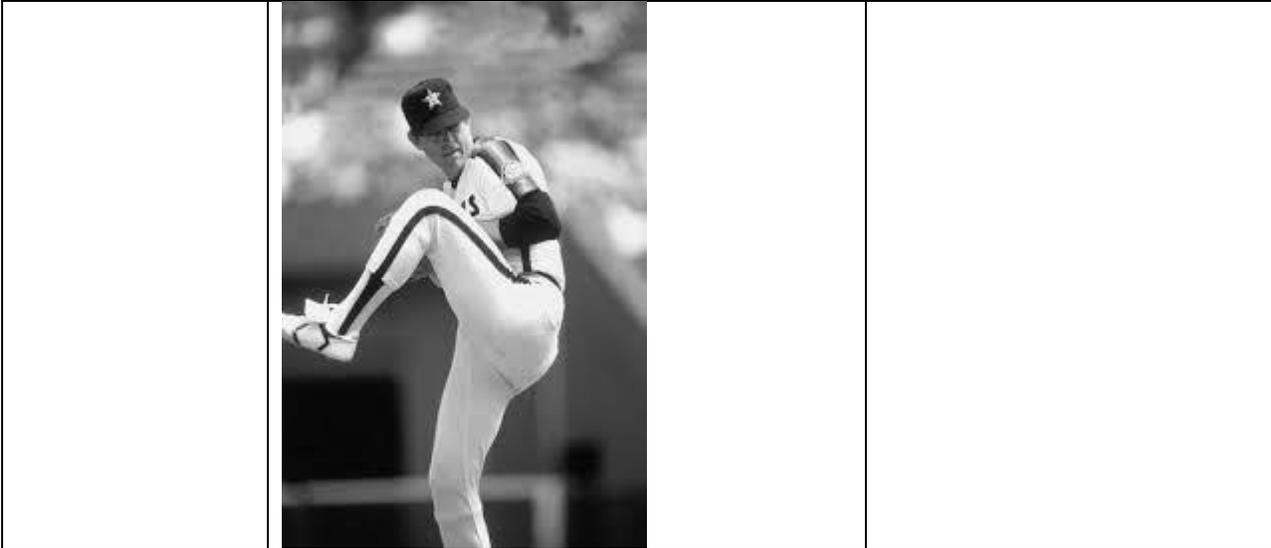
### Mechanics

The first session with any pitcher seeking instruction should involve an evaluation of mechanics. The *Lead Pitching Coach* will review the different focal points of their mechanics and identify areas of weakness. A personalized plan for improvement will be developed based on the individual needs of each pitcher and it will be available on a shared drive for all the instructors to review and follow.

For younger pitchers, it is vital to ensure that their basic form is accurate. Developing poor techniques is detrimental to future success and should be the primary focus of classes and 1:1 instruction.

### Pitching Evaluation Guide

Focal Points	Desired Actions/Movements	Drills/Instruction for Improvement
<b>Fast Ball Grip</b>	Thumb should be directly underneath the top two fingers. 	➤ Check periodically throughout the session and provide reminders.
<b>Stretch/Wind-up</b>	Keep it simple and basic. The least amount of movement is preferred. It is best to teach young pitchers to throw from the stretch, because this will allow them to focus more on balance and direction.	➤ Ensure that players work from the stretch during each session.
<b>Balance</b>	Make sure that all their weight is loaded over the back leg.	➤ Power Position Drill



**Drive and Direction to Home**

Drive should start with the back hip and **not** with their front shoulder. Their drive line should be from the back foot to the catcher.



- Power Position Drill
- Use tape to create a line on the floor/ground to ensure proper direction.

**Hand Separation**

Ensure the ball and glove start down with the leg before separating. Thumbs should break down at hand separation and this will encourage effective arm swing (below).



- Tap Drill

<p><b>Arm Swing</b></p>	<p>This is another area in which a pitcher can be unique. It is important to emphasize that the arm swing should be smooth with no hesitation in the movement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Be aware as players throw each pitch, and provide reminders to stay smooth and experience no hesitation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stride</b></p>	<p>Teach a nice long stride towards the plate and open the toe towards the target at landing.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Power Position Drill using the tape. Each session, encourage the player to increase stride length.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Power Position and Head Position</b></p>	<p>It is important to note that there are several postures that a pitcher can incorporate and still be effective. In teaching basic mechanics to young pitchers (ages 8-12), there are key points to follow for posture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-head over the belly button throughout delivery.</li> <li>-no backwards tilt to the torso/spine.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Power Position Drill</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hip and Torso Rotation</b></p>	<p>Hip rotation should start from the back hip driving towards the target. The torso rotation should follow. Shoulders should be as level as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Demonstrate proper form</li> <li>➤ Encourage reps on the mound until progress is evident.</li> </ul>

		
<p><b>Release Points and Body/Head Position</b></p>	<p>Ensure that players are taking their head right into the target.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ One Knee Drill</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finish</b></p>	<p>The player should have their chest over their front leg with their head on the target.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monitor for head on target and throwing arm finishing on outside of front leg.</li> </ul>