Strength and Conditioning for Pitchers

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A majority of pitching injuries are a product of fatigue, lack of strength/conditioning, and bad technique. Anyone of these three variables greatly increases the chance of injury. We commonly think that the underhand motion-- even under the ideal conditions of an un-fatigued state as well as pinpoint mechanics-- will never result in injuries. But that is where we as coaches need to be careful in our thought process.

Just remember that both male and female athletes are composed of muscle, tendon, ligaments, cartilage and bones. Both genders will "break down" if chronic abuse is present for too many games in one day, too many pitches in one game (which is an arguable factor), as well as continuous use throughout a calendar year. So with this understanding here are some key strength and conditioning tips that will prolong the life of a pitchers career.

1. **Flexibility** - Rotator cuff and core/midsection movements should be performed at least 3-4 days per week. A google search will get you all the exercises you need.

2. **Weight or Body Weight Exercises** - No need to train like a football player, you need to train like a "Softball" player. We lift for two reasons:
   a. **Injury Prevention** - Your ability to sustain contact injuries (collisions) as well as non-contact injuries (slips or poor mechanical occurrences).
   b. **Strength/Power/Stability Increases** - Just remember that good balance will aid in potential power in movements. Weight-lifting can provide improved strength and better balance, which will ultimately lead to better acceleration (power) and deceleration (stability and integrity of the body).

3. **Tracking pitches** - Monitor your athletes usage. Know when enough is enough in regards to pitches thrown in a day, a week and the entire year. Don’t become the major factor in an injury so track the athletes usage.

4. **ICE** - It's important to get at least 10-15 minutes of ice on key areas once the competition/practice day is over. Injury prone areas are the back, elbow and shoulder.

5. **Nutrition** - Eat healthy foods and drink fluids that will keep hydration. See a sports nutritionist.

6. **Agility and Quickness** - Cones configurations, mini hurdles and 5-15 yard sprints for fielding plays/back-ups.

*Note*: Remember that in no way have I covered what a comprehensive training program should look like. The tips that I have provided are just simple guidelines. The internet is a great resource to view studies of injury rates of pitchers amongst Division I teams, find certified strength professionals that understand the demands of softball and a good way to find solid articles of strength and conditioning principles. *One last note...* Recent rule changes have altered the demands of this sport for a lot of pitchers so lets apply these principles to keep these athletes prepared and healthy.