

Protecting Young Pitching Arms



***The Little League® Pitch Count Regulation Guide
for Parents, Coaches and League Officials***



LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL® INCORPORATED THANKS THE AMERICAN SPORTS MEDICINE INSTITUTE FOR ITS LEADERSHIP IN PROTECTING YOUNG ATHLETES AND ITS ENDORSEMENT OF OUR PITCH COUNT PROGRAM.



American Sports Medicine Institute

www.asmi.org

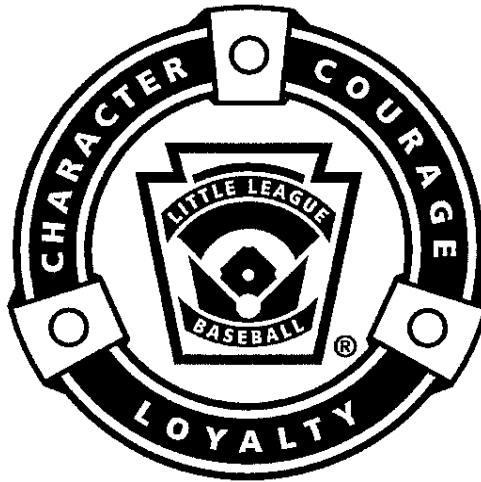
Baseball is a great sport, and Little League continues to be one of the premier youth organizations. However in the mid-1990's (when today's Little Leaguers were born), we started to notice an alarming increase in serious injuries in adolescent pitchers. For example during the last five years of the 1990's, 21 of the 190 "Tommy John" surgeries at our center were high school age pitchers or younger; however during the first five years of this decade, 124 of our 627 "Tommy John" surgeries were high school age pitchers or younger. This alarming trend was also happening for other types of pitching injuries.

Anecdotally it's believed that the rise in injuries is due to increased amounts of pitching at a younger age. To determine if this was true, our American Sports Medicine Institute conducted a series of scientific studies with support and cooperation from USA Baseball, Little League Baseball, and Major League Baseball. We followed hundreds of youth baseball pitchers, and monitored arm problems and potential contributing factors including pitch counts, types of pitches, quality of mechanics, and other factors. The scientific results confirmed that the number of pitches thrown was the most significant contributor to arm problems. Another study compared our young, surgery patients with healthy adolescent pitchers and found that young pitchers who often pitched past the point of fatigue were 36 times more likely to end up on the surgery table. Another risk factor was year-round baseball without sufficient rest (the data suggested at least four months a year away from throwing). Other risk factors included participating in showcases, and throwing with high ball velocity. Of course ball velocity is valuable for all pitchers, but we believe that there is too much emphasis on ball speed instead of on quality of mechanics, speed variation, and control, in today's "radar gun" generation. Details about these scientific studies can be found at asmi.org.

Little League Baseball has been the leader in recognizing the rise in injuries and has taken dramatic steps to make baseball safe for young players. Some issues – such as showcases and participation in independent traveling teams – may be beyond Little League's control, but Little League has embraced the pitch count research and boldly altered their rules. We applaud Little League for their continued effort to insure that their game is as safe and enjoyable as possible for you and your children.

James R. Andrews, M.D.
ASMI Medical Director

Glenn S. Fleisig, Ph.D.
ASMI Research Director



Contents

Introduction: Goal of New Little League Regulation: Protecting Pitchers' Arms	2
The New Pitch Count Regulation	3
Regular Season – Baseball Only	3
Regulation VI – Pitchers:	3
Tournament Rule – Baseball Only	4
Twenty Questions on the Pitch Count.....	5
Best Practices of the Pitch Count Pilot Program	7
Conclusions.....	8
Pitching Fundamentals By Nicholas Caringi	9
The Starting Position	9
The Delivery.....	10
Drills.....	12
Eight Essentials of Post-Pitching Recovery By Jim Ronai MS, PT, ATC, CSCS.....	13
Pitching Eligibility Form	15
Pitching Log.....	16
Little League Field Centers.....	Inside Back Cover

INTRODUCTION

GOAL OF NEW LITTLE LEAGUE REGULATION: PROTECTING PITCHERS' ARMS

Little League Baseball has changed its decades-old pitching rules, making the actual number of pitches delivered the deciding factor in determining eligibility in the baseball division.

Twenty copies of this publication, "Protecting Young Pitching Arms: The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide for Parents, Coaches and League Officials," are being provided at no charge to more than 7,000 local Little League programs worldwide. The goal of this publication is to reach as many parents and volunteers as possible, so that everyone will know the benefits and their responsibilities in making this regulation work.

Inside, you'll find helpful questions and answers about the new regulation, as well as the regular season regulation and the rule to be used in the International Tournament. It also includes great advice from respected medical professionals on the care and conditioning of the pitching arm, and the best ideas from the thousands of Little League volunteers who have successfully used "pitch counts" in their local Little Leagues during the past year or two.

Starting with the 2007 season, pitchers in all divisions of Little League, from age 7 to 18, will have specific limits for each game, based on their age. The number of pitches delivered in a game will determine the amount of rest the player must have before pitching again.

"Little League has a rich history of pioneering baseball safety innovations," said Stephen D. Keener, president and chief executive officer of Little League Baseball and Softball. "As the world's largest organized youth sports program, Little League is proud to take a leadership position in youth sports safety."

There are about 2.3 million players in the baseball divisions of Little League worldwide. There are nearly 400,000 female softball players, but the new regulations will not apply to softball.

For all of Little League Baseball's history, and for the history of amateur youth baseball in general, pitching regulations have used innings pitched to determine pitcher eligibility. Recently, researchers and medical professionals in the field of sports medicine have been working to determine if the actual number of pitches thrown (i.e., pitch count) is a better way to regulate pitching in youth baseball.

Most notable among those calling for pitch counts has been Dr. James R. Andrews, M.D., medical director at the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) in Birmingham, Ala. Dr. Andrews is the world's foremost authority on pitching injuries and ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction, or, as it is better known, "Tommy John surgery." The ASMI and the USA Baseball Medical and Safety Advisory Committee have worked closely with Little League to create the guidelines for the new regulation.

"This is one of the most important injury prevention steps ever initiated in youth baseball by the leader in youth baseball," Dr. Andrews said. "It is certain to serve as the youth sports injury prevention cornerstone and the inspiration for other youth organizations to take the initiative to get serious about injury prevention in youth sports. I am proud that our American Sports Medicine Institute and USA Baseball can play a small role in this important initiative."

Little League is the first national youth baseball organization to institute a pitch count. The Little League International Board of Directors approved the measure unanimously at a meeting on Aug. 25, two days before the conclusion of the Little League Baseball World Series.

"This is the right time to make this change," Mr. Keener said. "We call upon all youth baseball organizations, including travel leagues, to implement their own pitch count programs in the interest of protecting young pitching arms. Our goal continues to be to educate everyone, particularly parents and coaches, on the potential injuries that can occur from throwing too many pitches."

For the past two years, Little League has conducted a Pitch Count Pilot Program to determine the feasibility of implementing a regulation limiting the number of pitches a Little Leaguer can throw in a day, and the rest required before pitching again. Fifty leagues were studied in 2005, and nearly 500 signed up for the program in 2006.

"Surveys of those leagues showed the overwhelming majority were able to implement a pitch count without any problems," Mr. Keener said. "They also found that they were able to develop other pitchers who might not have otherwise ever taken the mound. And they found that their pitchers were stronger at the end of the season."

Regulations for tournament play (all-stars) are similar, but with some modifications. Little League also continues to explore other pitching-related issues, such as the use of breaking pitches.

"While there is no medical evidence to support a ban on breaking pitches, it is widely speculated by medical professionals that it is ill-advised for players under 14 years old to throw breaking pitches," Mr. Keener said. "Breaking pitches for these ages continues to be strongly discouraged by Little League, and that is an issue we are looking at as well. As with our stance on pitch counts, we will act if and when there is enough medical evidence to support a change."

Little League International has begun a five-year study on breaking pitches by Little League pitchers. The study is being conducted by the University of North Carolina and is supported by the Yawkey Foundation.

THE NEW PITCH COUNT REGULATION

The following is the text of the new regular season Pitch Count Regulation for all levels of Little League Baseball. (The rule for use in the International Tournament is similar, and also is printed below.)

REGULAR SEASON – BASEBALL ONLY

REGULATION VI – PITCHERS:

- (a) Any player on a regular season team may pitch. (NOTE: There is no limit to the number of pitchers a team may use in a game.)
- (b) Junior, Senior, and Big League Divisions only: A pitcher remaining in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game.
- (c) The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group as noted below, but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position:

League Age	17-18	105 pitches per day
	13-16	95 pitches per day
	11-12	85 pitches per day
	10 and under	75 pitches per day

Exception: If a pitcher reaches the limit imposed in Regulation VI (c) for his/her league age while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until that batter reaches base or is put out. Note 1. Intentional Walk: Before a pitch is delivered to the batter, the catcher must inform the umpire-in-chief that the defensive team wishes to give the batter an intentional base-on-balls. The umpire-in-chief waves the batter to first base. The ball is dead.

- (d) Pitchers league age 16 and under must adhere to the following rest requirements:
- If a player pitches 61 or more pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 41 - 60 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 21 - 40 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar days of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest must be observed.

Pitchers league age 17-18 must adhere to the following rest requirements:

- If a player pitches 76 or more pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- If a player pitches 51 - 75 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- If a player pitches 26 - 50 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- If a player pitches 1-25 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest must be observed.

- (e) Each league must designate the scorekeeper or another game official as the official pitch count recorder.
- (f) The pitch count recorder must provide the current pitch count for any pitcher when requested by either manager or any umpire. However, the manager is responsible for knowing when his/her pitcher must be removed.
- (g) The official pitch count recorder should inform the umpire-in-chief when a pitcher has delivered his/her maximum limit of pitches for the game, as noted in Regulation VI (c). The umpire-in-chief will inform the pitcher's manager that the pitcher must be removed in accordance with Regulation VI (c). However, the failure by the pitch count recorder to notify the umpire-in-chief, and/or the failure of the umpire-in-chief to notify the manager, does not relieve the manager of his/her responsibility to remove a pitcher when that pitcher is no longer eligible.
- (h) Violation of any section of this regulation can result in protest of the game in which it occurs. Protest shall be made in accordance with Playing Rule 4.19.
- (i) A player who has attained the league age of twelve (12) is not eligible to pitch in the Minor League.
- (j) A player may not pitch in more than one game in a day. (Exception: In the Big League Division, a player may be used as a pitcher in up to two games in a day.)

NOTES:

1. The withdrawal of an ineligible pitcher after that pitcher is announced, or after a warm-up pitch is delivered, but before that player has pitched a ball to a batter, shall not be considered a violation. Little League officials are urged to take precautions to prevent protests. When a protest situation is imminent, the potential offender should be notified immediately.
2. Pitches delivered in games declared "Regulation Tie Games" or "Suspended Games" shall be charged against pitcher's eligibility.
3. In suspended games resumed on another day, the pitchers of record at the time the game was halted may continue to pitch to the extent of their eligibility for that day, provided said pitcher has observed the required days of rest.

Example 1: A league age 12 pitcher delivers 70 pitches in a game on Monday when the game is suspended. The game resumes on the following Thursday. The pitcher is not eligible to pitch in the

resumption of the game because he/she has not observed the required three days of rest.

Example 2: A league age 12 pitcher delivers 70 pitches in a game on Monday when the game is suspended. The game resumes on Saturday. The pitcher is eligible to pitch up to 85 more pitches in the resumption of the game because he/she has observed the required three days of rest.

Example 3: A league age 12 pitcher delivers 70 pitches in a game on Monday when the game is suspended. The game resumes two weeks later. The pitcher is eligible to pitch up to 85 more pitches in the resumption of the game, provided he/she is eligible based on his/her pitching record during the previous three days.

Note: The use of this regulation negates the concept of the "calendar week" with regard to pitching eligibility.

TOURNAMENT RULE – BASEBALL ONLY

4. PITCHING RULES – LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL, 9-10 YEAR OLD, 10-11 YEAR OLD DIVISION, JUNIOR LEAGUE AND SENIOR LEAGUE

These rules replace the regular season pitching regulations. Violation of these pitching rules is subject to protest and forfeiture by decree of the Tournament Committee in Williamsport if protested before the umpire(s) leave the playing field.

- a. Any player on a tournament team may pitch. (NOTE: There is no limit to the number of pitchers a tournament team may use in a game.)
- b. A tournament pitcher may not pitch in regular season or Special Games while the team is still participating in the tournament.
- c. Pitchers once removed from the mound may not return as pitchers. Junior/Senior League: A pitcher remaining in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game.
- d. The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group as noted below, but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position:

League Age:	13-16	95 pitches per day
	11-12	85 pitches per day
	10 and under	75 pitches per day

Exception: If a pitcher reaches the limit imposed above for his/her league age while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until that batter reaches base or is put out. Note 1: Intentional Walk – Before a pitch is delivered to the batter, the catcher must inform the umpire-in-chief that the defensive team wishes to give the batter an intentional base on balls. The umpire-in-chief waves the batter to first base. The ball is dead.

- e. Pitchers league age 16 and under must adhere to the following requirements:
 - If a player pitches 46 or more pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 21 to 45 pitches in a day, one calendar day of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 1 to 20 pitches in a day, no rest is required.
- f. A player may not pitch in consecutive games. Exceptions – A player may pitch in consecutive games if:
 1. less than 21 pitches were pitched in the previous game, or,
 2. the previous game was at another level, and the pitcher has received the required number of days of rest as noted in (e.) above. (Levels are District, Section, State, Division, Region, and World Series.)
- g. A player may not pitch in more than one game in a day.

4. PITCHING RULES – BIG LEAGUE BASEBALL

These rules replace the regular season pitching regulations. Violation of these pitching rules is subject to protest and forfeiture by decree of the Tournament Committee in Williamsport if protested before the umpire(s) leave the playing field.

- a. Any player on a tournament team may pitch. (NOTE: There is no limit to the number of pitchers a tournament team may use in a game.)
- b. A tournament pitcher may not pitch in regular season or Special Games while the team is still participating in the tournament.
- c. A pitcher remaining in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game.

Exception: If a pitcher reaches the limit imposed above for his/her league age while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until that batter reaches base or is put out. Note 1: Intentional Walk – Before a pitch is delivered to the batter, the catcher must inform the umpire-in-chief that the defensive team wishes to give the batter an intentional base on balls. The umpire-in-chief waves the batter to first base. The ball is dead.

- d. The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group as noted below, but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position:

League Age: 16 – 18 105 pitches per day

- e. Pitchers league age 16 and above must adhere to the following requirements:
- If a player pitches 51 or more pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 26 to 50 pitches in a day, one calendar day of rest must be observed.
 - If a player pitches 1 to 25 pitches in a day, no rest is required.
- f. A player may not pitch in consecutive games. Exceptions – A player may pitch in consecutive games if:
1. less than 26 pitches were pitched in the previous game, or,
 2. the previous game was at another level, and the pitcher has received the required number of days of rest as noted in (e.) above. (Levels are District, Section, State, Division, Region, and World Series.)
- g. A player may not pitch in more than two games in a day.

TWENTY QUESTIONS ON THE PITCH COUNT

Here are 20 commonly asked questions regarding the regular season baseball pitching regulation (pitch count) that takes effect in 2007.

1. Why has Little League changed the pitching regulation for all baseball divisions?

Recently, researchers and medical professionals in the field of sports medicine have determined that the actual number of pitches thrown (i.e., pitch count) is a safer way to regulate pitching in youth baseball. Little League has a rich history of pioneering baseball safety innovations. As the world's largest organized youth sports program, Little League is again taking a leadership position in youth sports safety.

2. How will a league determine who is responsible for counting the pitches?

Selecting the person responsible for counting pitches will be a decision of each local league. That person's pitch count will be the officially recognized pitch count for the game.

In most leagues, this responsibility will rest with the game's official scorekeeper. In that case, since a scorekeeper already keeps track of the balls and strikes on each batter, so he or she will additionally need to keep track of the number of foul batted balls that are hit with two strikes. Each pitcher's pitch count is computed by adding the number of balls and strikes, the number of foul balls hit with two strikes, and the number of fair batted balls.

Other leagues might assign a separate person who simply keeps track of every pitch on a piece of paper. Little League International will provide local leagues with a suggested form for this in the coming months. Leagues also can use any of the various digital or mechanical pitch counting tools that are available commercially. Still other leagues might assign the task to one or both of the managers, or to one of the base umpires.

3. What is the penalty for violating the pitch count regulation?

Violating the regular season pitch count regulation can be protested in accordance with Rule 4.19. And, as with all regular season games, the local league (by action of the local league Board of Directors through the Protest Committee) resolves all protests. The local league Protest Committee could decree a forfeit, or not, as it sees fit. The Board of Directors also could suspend or remove managers who willfully and persistently violate any rule or regulation.

4. What is the procedure for Interleague Play games?

As with any procedure of this nature, the Interleague Play Committee (formed from among personnel in the leagues involved before the start of the season) should decide this. The procedure for counting pitches should be agreed upon between all leagues involved in an interleague arrangement before the first game is played.

5. What is meant by "calendar days" in the regulation?

The principle of "calendar days" remains the same. A calendar day is one full day as it is seen on a calendar. A calendar day begins at midnight and ends at midnight the following evening.

Example: If a pitcher in the Little League Major Division throws 70 pitches in a game on Saturday morning, that pitcher cannot pitch again until Wednesday, when he/she has had three calendar days of rest (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday). It makes no difference what time of day the pitcher pitched on Saturday, as the rest period does not begin until midnight that night.

6. Can the same pitcher throw in consecutive games?

Yes, depending on the number of pitches thrown and the days of rest, the same pitcher could pitch in consecutive games (regular season).

7. Can the same pitcher pitch in both games of a doubleheader played on the same day? What about a partial game (such as a continuation of a suspended game) and a full game later in the day?

No, in both cases. The regulation specifically forbids a player from pitching in two games in one day. It does not matter if one of the two games is only part of a game. (Exception: In Big League Baseball, a player may pitch in up to two games in a day.)

8. Why do 7 and 8 year olds have the same pitch limits as 9-10 year olds?

The medical and expert advice Little League received shows that these age groups are essentially the same.

9. Could our local Little League place further restrictions on pitching in the Minor Divisions?

Yes, a local league could further limit the number of pitches that can be thrown by a player in the Minor League.

10. If a pitcher is pitching a perfect game or no hitter and reaches his or her maximum pitch count, does he or she have to be removed as a pitcher, or can he/she continue until the perfect game or no hitter is lost?

Any pitcher, without regard to his/her effectiveness, must be removed when he or she reaches the limit prescribed in the regulation. Remember, no game is more important than protecting pitchers' arms.

11. Is the pitch count regulation mandatory in all divisions of baseball? What about softball?

The regulation applies to all baseball divisions of Little League. It does not apply to and cannot be used in softball.

12. Is there a limit to the number of 12 year olds that can pitch in a week?

No. A manager may use as many 12-year-old pitchers in a week as he/she chooses.

13. Can 12 year olds pitch in the minors?

No. The regulation prohibits 12 year olds from pitching in the Minor Division. The Minor Division must be considered an instructional division for players who, because of age or ability, are not placed in the Major Division. It should be the goal of every league to place all 12 year olds in the Major Division who are capable of playing at that level.

Note: A local Little League is limited to only one Major Division, but may have multiple levels of Minor Division play (player pitch, coach pitch, machine pitch, etc.).

14. Are warm up pitches calculated in the pitch count for a pitcher?

No. As always, however, umpires should be mindful that the rules permit a returning pitcher to have eight preparatory pitches, or one minute, whichever comes first. (See Rule 8.04.)

15. If a Major Division pitcher has completed six innings in a game, and the game is tied, will that pitcher be permitted to pitch in the seventh inning if he/she has not reached the limit?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of innings a pitcher can pitch in a day. A limit is placed on the number of pitches only.

16. Is the Tournament Pitching Rule the same as the regular season regulation?

The Tournament Pitching Rule is similar to the regular season rule, but there are some modifications.

17. Last year, the Pitch Count Pilot Program was optional. Is it optional in 2007?

No. All leagues in Little League must use the new Pitch Count Regulation in all divisions of baseball.

18. Will local leagues have the ability to continue to provide feedback to Little League International regarding the new pitch count regulation?

Absolutely. As with any rule or regulation of Little League, local leagues and districts are encouraged to provide feedback through the regional office. This feedback is valuable in determining what, if any, changes need to be made.

19. Does this mean a pitcher could pitch in two games in a "calendar week."

Yes, but the concept of the calendar week is no longer in use. Here's why: A pitcher under the previous regulation could have pitched six innings (potentially 150 or more pitches) on a Saturday, and after three days of rest, could have pitched on Wednesday for six more innings (and potentially more than 150 pitches). That's a potential total of 300 or more pitches in a five-day period.

Under the new regulation, the same pitcher could pitch on Tuesday (but no more than 85 pitches), and, after three days of rest, could pitch on Saturday (again, no more than 85 pitches). That's a potential of no more than 170 pitches in a five-day period.

20. What about breaking pitches (curve balls, sliders, etc.)?

As of now, there is no solid medical evidence that these pitches are detrimental. However, Little League and many experts recommend they not be thrown until age 14. Little League International is currently conducting an epidemiological study on this issue to see if these pitches are harmful.

BEST PRACTICES OF THE PITCH COUNT PILOT PROGRAM: LITTLE LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS TELL US HOW IT WORKED

Here is a sampling of the comments we received from volunteers in those leagues that used the Pitch Count Pilot Program in the 2006 season. Little League International asked for the “best practices,” so the information could be shared with all Little Leagues worldwide for the 2007 season. In this book, we’ve also included some sample forms that local leagues can use, also based on the best ideas from Little League volunteers.

- **Greg, from a local Little League in New Jersey** – “We had each team’s scorekeeper keep track of pitches. We made up our own form, which was modeled after the pitching affidavit for tournament play. Before each game, the managers checked both forms to determine eligibility, and after each game, the opposing manager had to sign the sheet (in ink). We bought counters for all teams to use.”
- **Pat, from a local Little League in California** – “We created a sheet that was placed in the scorekeeper’s notebook that kept track of the number of pitches for each pitcher. The scorekeeper was the official pitch count recorder. We used two counters for each game and kept track of the pitches on one counter for each pitcher that was in the game.”
- **Rick, from a local Little League in Illinois** – “We required all managers to purchase a pitch count device with the home team keeping the ‘official book.’ After a few initial complaints from a few managers who, in the past, relied on only a few pitchers to carry the load, our program ran quite well.”
- **David, a president of a local Little League in New York** – “As we do not have enough volunteers to provide official scorers, each team was responsible for keeping track of its own pitch count. Most teams tried to keep track of both pitchers.”
- **Florian, from a local Little League in Alberta, Canada** – “It was fairly easy. The scorekeeper ticks off each ball and strike, and counts one for the pitch that puts the ball into play. If he/she also ticks off two-strike foul balls at the top or below the column, you simply total the column at the end of each inning. The teams were also required to have with them an updated pitching control roster. They simply stapled it to the back of their scorebook.”
- **Gary, from a local Little League in New Jersey** – “We used a volunteer parent to keep track of pitches for each team. They used a hand-held counter and compared numbers with each other after each half-inning to make sure they were both on the same page. This system worked out very well. Coaches e-mailed pitch counts to our Information Officer along with the scores of the game. The Information Officer kept track of the pitch count for each player.”
- **Rene, from a local Little League in California** – “Our league was very successful with the Pitch Count Pilot Program last season. Everyone was a little hesitant at first, but within a couple of weeks, it was running smoothly. We purchased small hand-held tally counters for each manager and they made one available to the official scorekeeper for each game. Between innings, each manager would come to the official scorekeeper and the three of them would compare pitch counts from the prior inning. Once it was determined how many pitches were thrown, the official scorekeeper would mark it in the official book by the particular pitcher’s name and/or number. We never had any problems with this system.”
- **Steve, from a local Little League in Wisconsin** – “We issued each manager a ‘lap counter’ so each bench could keep track of pitches during each half-inning. At the end of each half-inning, the pitch counters would meet at home plate and record the number of pitches on the umpire’s game sheet. Then we recorded the game totals on our website, for all other coaches and interested parties to view.”
- **Kevin, from a local Little League in California** – “We found that the teams that developed the younger pitching advanced further at the end of the season in the Tournament of Champions. With a year of experience, I don’t think we’ll get any objections from the coaches this year. After a little training of the scorekeepers, coaches and umpires, this seemed to work.”
- **Gary, from a local Little League in Rhode Island** – “We used hand-held counters, and confirmed pitch counts for pitchers after each half-inning. At the conclusion of each game, we had a pitch count sheet that was filled in by each manager and signed by the opposing manager. This sheet was available to all managers at every game, so they could quickly find out the eligibility on any player. It worked extremely well.”
- **Ray, from a local Little League in California** – “We don’t have official scorekeepers for the regular season, so each team had to count pitches for both pitchers. The coaches met between innings to validate the numbers. All coaches must fill in the game results in a book that is kept in our field house.”
- **Kevin, from a local Little League in Iowa** – “We bought a hand-held pitch counter for every field that had a baseball team on it. That allowed one person to track both pitchers in the game on the same device. We just used the home team as the official scorekeeper, since we don’t have a separate scorekeeper. We provided everyone with a form that they were required to fill out and keep with them for the pitches thrown by game. If a

manager fails to sign it, we allow the umpire to sign for that person.”

- **Joe, from a local Little League in Pennsylvania** – “We found the best and easiest way to track the number of pitches thrown, was to have the coach keep the scorebook in the dugout, and record each pitch in the scorebook. Since the scorebooks we use had a box for balls and strikes, it was simply a matter of checking off each pitch in the book. For fouls, we just made extra marks next to the strikes. We would then compare the numbers between innings with the opposing coaches, and I would estimate there were not issues 99 percent of the time.”
- **Curtis, from a local Little League in California** – “The Pitching Record form was kept with the ‘Official Game Scorebook’ and the information listed was recorded as the total summary of the pitcher’s usage for that game. To try to maintain a level of honesty, the Pitch Count Record was kept by the visiting team’s scorekeeper, and the Pitching Record was recorded into the book by the home team’s scorekeeper, who was responsible for the ‘Official Game Scorebook.’”
- **Bill, from a local Little League in Pennsylvania** – “The feedback I received from my managers was that the process was pretty easy and straightforward. Feedback from the parents was very positive, and we know they can be our worst critics.”
- **Jim, from a local Little League in New Hampshire** – “Each team typically has a coach keeping a book, and we provide a pitch counter to them before the start of each game. In between each half-inning (or when a pitching change occurs), the coaches sync up with the official scorer.”
- **Mike, from a local Little League in Rhode Island** – “Each team received a small hand-held counter. After each inning, the two scorekeepers checked the counts. Counts were e-mailed to me, and a spread sheet was updated each night and e-mailed back to all managers so they would know pitcher eligibility.”
- **Bob, from a local Little League in Michigan** – “We kept the pitch count a couple of different ways. One way was using a small, hand-held counter device (such as one purchased in an office supply store). The other way was to simply add a tally mark next to the area where we keep balls and strikes in the scorebook. The total pitches thrown by each pitcher were written next to each pitcher’s name on the scorebook, and then circled. In our league, the home team is responsible for keeping and tuning in our scorebooks in after each game. This gave the league the ability to periodically audit the program as well as settle any disputes about when pitchers were eligible to pitch again. In addition to protecting young pitchers’ arms, the pitch count program also places a priority on developing and teaching many more players how to pitch.”
- **Kent, from a local Little League in California** – “I am proud to report that we had absolutely NO arm injuries in 2006, as opposed to at least two a year in previous years. I believe the Pitch Count Pilot Program was a key factor. In our league, each team designated a “pitch count person” (not a coach, but a parent in the stands, as the coaches have too much else going on). The parent was given a hand-held counter and kept track of each pitch. After the end of each half-inning, the parents from each side compared their counts, which were exactly the same 99 percent of the time, then reported them to the official scorekeeper. The scorekeeper had a simple log for each game, which were kept with the official scorebooks in our board room.”
- **Chris, from a local Little League in Arizona** – “As an umpire, we always asked about the pitch count at the end of every half-inning to make sure everyone is communicating.”

CONCLUSIONS

A common thread in many of the responses was the importance of clear communication. Leagues reported that the official scorekeeper, the pitch counter(s), the umpire-in-chief, and the managers should all be made aware of the pitch counts.

It is also very important for leagues involved in interleague play to ensure all officials concerned are “on the same page.”

Most leagues also kept the Pitch Count Log someplace accessible, so that both teams would know which pitchers were eligible for a particular game, and which ones were not. The location for the log varied, however. Some kept it in the concession stand or other common building, while others maintained the log on the league’s web site, or sent it to managers via e-mail.

The person who actually counts the pitches can vary from league to league. Here are a few of the ideas for the official pitch counters:

- The official scorekeeper. (Sometimes, this was a coach or parent from the home or visiting team).
- An assistant to the official scorekeeper whose duty it is to track only the pitch count for each pitcher.
- One coach or parent for each team in the game, with the two tallies being compared every half-inning.
- A base umpire.

The mechanics involved in counting the pitches also can vary:

- The official scorekeeper counts up the balls, strikes, foul balls with two strikes, and fair batted balls in a scorebook designed for this purpose, or on a separate sheet of paper.

- The official scorekeeper uses a commercially-available computerized scoring program, rather than the traditional paper scorebook, which allows the user to easily track the number of pitches throughout the game.
- The assistant to the scorekeeper counts up the balls, strikes, foul balls with two strikes, and fair batted balls using a form designed for this purpose.
- The person doing the counting uses a hand-held counter specifically designed for counting pitches or counting laps. These are generally available at sporting goods outlets.
- The person doing the counting uses a standard "inventory counter" that is available in most office supply stores.

The bottom line is, whichever system works best in your league for counting pitches, is the system you should use. It might take some leagues a week or two to become accustomed to the new regulation, and some refinements in putting it into effect in your league may be necessary – just as they were in the leagues that used "pitch counts" over the past two years.

PITCHING FUNDAMENTALS

By NICHOLAS CARING

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this part of "Protecting Young Pitching Arms: The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide for Parents, Coaches and League Officials," is to provide some insight to players and coaches learning about pitching in a mechanically correct way.

From Little League to the professional ranks, pitching styles have always varied. Regardless of the style, there are definite fundamentals all pitchers must follow. By doing this, the chances of injury are lessened.

Most effective pitchers have three things in common; working fast, throwing strikes and changing speeds. To be effective a pitcher must learn to keep hitters off balance. After all, hitting requires good timing on the part of the batter. The pitcher's main task should be to disrupt the hitter's timing. As a result, this portion of "Protecting Young Pitching Arms: The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide for Parents, Coaches and League Officials," will teach the change-up, which gives the pitcher an added edge on the hitter.

Learning a skill like pitching is not easy for most players. In order to assist teaching this skill several drills are included that are specifically designed to improve and maintain proper pitching mechanics. Pitchers need to work on these drills every day. The drills do not require expensive equipment; just a baseball, glove, and a hard-working player.

With a positive frame of mind, the willingness to succeed, and the latest knowledge provided in "Protecting Young Pitching Arms: The Little League Pitch Count Regulation Guide for Parents, Coaches and League Officials," pitchers can succeed – safely – at any level of ball.

THE STARTING POSITION

When a pitcher stands on the rubber to begin the delivery to the hitter, it is suggested that a right-handed pitcher stand on the right corner of the pitching rubber. Left-handed pitchers should stand on the left side of the rubber. Deception is an important part of pitching. By standing on the throwing-hand side of the rubber, the pitcher gains a deception advantage. The hitter is prevented from picking up the baseball during the delivery until it gets to the "window" – the spot over the pitcher's shoulder where the batter sees the release of the ball.

The pitcher should start in a relaxed stance with the shoulders square to the plate. Standing with both feet on the rubber, the pitcher's toes should be slightly in front of the pitching plate. Be sure that there is space between the pitcher's feet (a little closer than shoulder-width apart). The pitcher's weight should be on his/her pivot foot with the glove-side leg relaxed and slightly bent. This helps emphasize the weight transfer back when beginning the delivery.

The starting position of the hands can be held in any way that feels comfortable, such as:

1. In the throwing hand behind the back; 2. In the glove to the side, and; 3. In the glove resting against the waist or chest.

However, at the point of the delivery, the hands will be brought together in front of the chest and the hands will be together. If the pitcher holds the ball in the glove it is important that the pitcher holds the ball in the palm of



Ready Position

the glove for securing a grip. Be sure that the pitcher keeps the ball hidden from the batter and the opposing team's coaches' view to prevent them from picking up what pitch is going to be thrown.

THE DELIVERY

Weight Transfer: Regardless of the pitcher's position on the rubber, the next progression is to start the delivery. The pitcher will take a small step straight back with the left foot (right-handed pitcher), about five or six inches. The pitcher may want to step to the side instead of straight back. Either way is fine.

One important checkpoint is to make sure that the bill of the cap of the pitcher never leaves the plane of the rubber. This ensures that the pitcher will not pull the body back too far, causing a rushed delivery. The aim is to produce a smooth, tension-free delivery.

The best approach is to keep an unobstructed view of the target. Many pitchers like to take their hands back over their head when beginning the delivery, but some young pitchers may have trouble maintaining balance. By keeping the pitcher's hands near the chest during the delivery, balance is more easily maintained. It is important for the pitcher to move the hands at the same time the small step back is taken. Otherwise the pitcher gets out of rhythm and the delivery will not be as smooth.

The Pivot Foot: Establishing the pivot foot is one of the most important elements in getting the pitcher's body in a correct position to throw accurately. After transferring the weight back, the next step in the progression is for the pitcher to square off the pivot foot and place it in front of the rubber. The outside portion of the pivot foot must remain in contact with the rubber, and the instep should be directly at the target. Placing the foot on top of the rubber does not allow for an effective push or drive to the plate.

The Leg Lift: The leg lift enables the pitcher to obtain a maximum weight transfer towards the plate. As the pitcher's weight transfers to the pivot foot, his/her shoulders will automatically square toward third base (right-handed pitcher). Now the pitcher has established a pointer or a directional side with the glove side pointed towards the catcher.

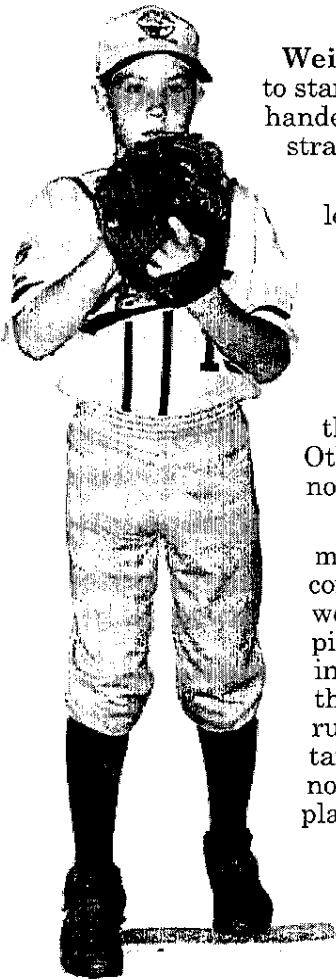
The pitcher then begins the knee lift, with three important checkpoints. First, make sure the pitcher's thigh is at least parallel to the ground at the height of the lift, at a comfortable level. A good way to find a comfortable knee lift position is to have the pitcher freeze at the top of the lift. If the pitcher loses balance, the knee lift is too high. The pitcher must keep good posture. Arching the back may cause the pitcher to lose balance during the delivery.

Another checkpoint on the leg lift is to keep the lift foot somewhat underneath the knee. Kicking the foot out will cause the pitcher to lose balance. If the foot is relaxed, it will allow the pitcher to have a higher, more comfortable leg lift. Remember, the pitcher needs to achieve a tension-free delivery.

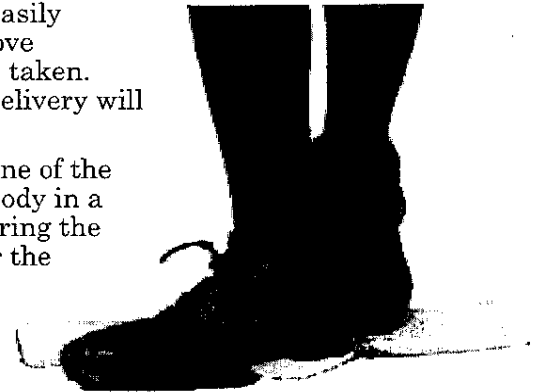
Finally, at the height of the leg lift, the knee should be turned back slightly towards the plane of the rubber. By bringing the knee back, this ensures that the hips stay closed and the pitcher's weight is completely on the back leg. By not keeping the hips closed, the pitcher cannot get maximum hip thrust when throwing the ball. It is important that the pitcher's head is over the back knee. If the pitcher tips his head toward the plate, it will cause a rushed delivery.

The hands, regardless of where the pitcher has them during the beginning of the delivery, must be at the chest or waist area at the height of the leg lift.

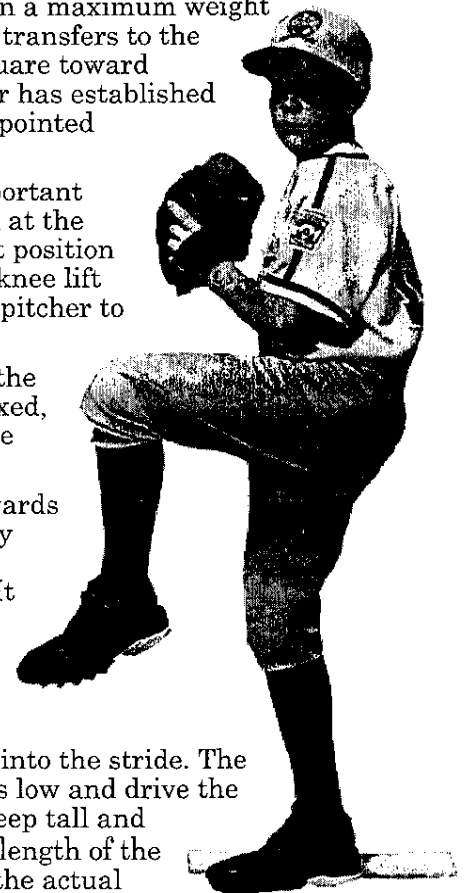
The Stride: From the leg lift position, the pitcher should drive off the back leg into the stride. The extent of the drive is the pitcher's preference. Some pitchers like to drop their hips low and drive the ball to the plate using their legs as a part of the throwing action. Others like to keep tall and in a sense "fall" towards the plate. This is a decision for the pitcher to make. The length of the stride may range anywhere from approximately 85 percent of the body height to the actual length of the entire body.



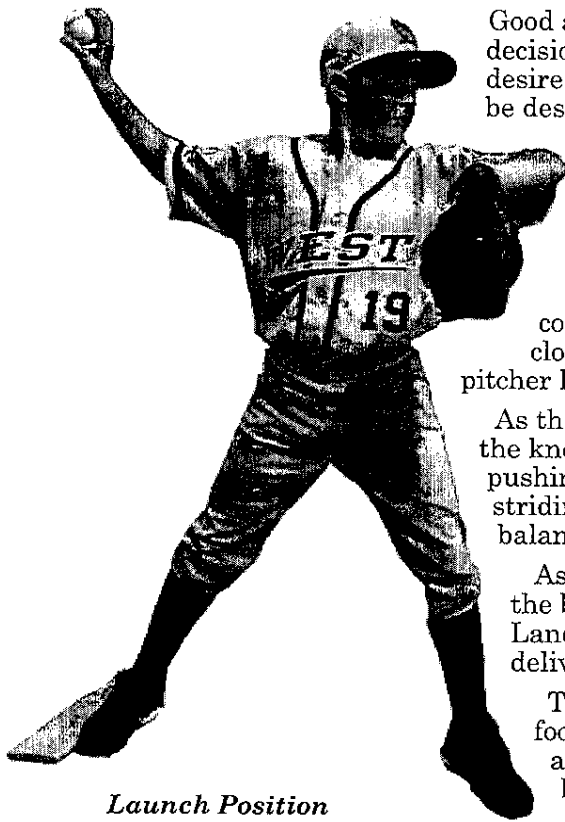
Weight Transfer



Pivot Foot



Leg Lift



Launch Position

Good advice is to use the pitcher's physical attributes when making this decision. If the pitcher is tall, then the "tall and fall" method might be desired. If the pitcher is not tall then the "drop and drive" method might be desired. The only problem with the drop and drive method is that some pitchers have a tendency to drop and drag the elbow during the throwing motion. A low elbow at delivery of the pitch can lead to arm and shoulder injuries. The "tall and fall" method will not necessarily keep the elbow from dragging, but it makes it easier for the pitcher to stay on top of the ball.

What is important is that the pitcher gets a maximum stride that is comfortable. A maximum stride will allow the pitcher to release the ball closer to the plate, increasing velocity. Over-striding may result in the pitcher having trouble keeping pitches down in the strike zone.

As the lift knee moves forward into the stride, the pitcher should keep the knee flexible. This prevents the pitcher from kicking out the foot when pushing toward the plate. If the pitcher does kick the lift foot out when striding, the pitcher will normally arch the back in order to attempt to gain balance. Arching the back cuts down on the stride.

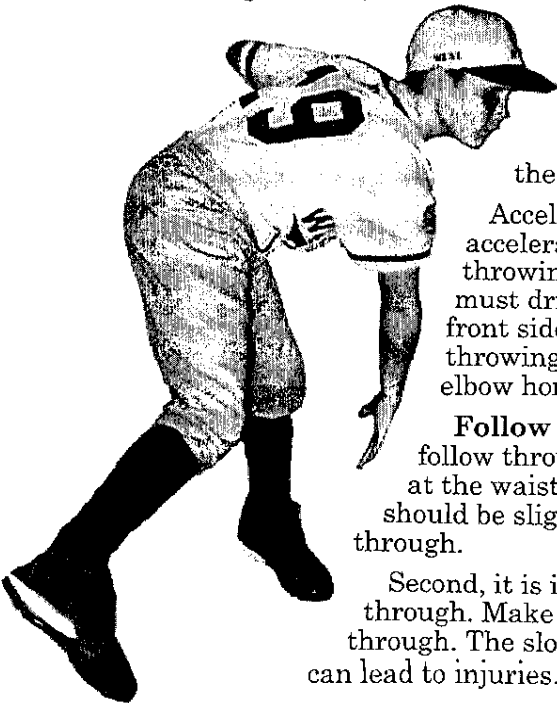
As the pitcher lands on the stride foot, make sure that the landing is on the ball of the foot with the toes pointing just slightly closed to the plate. Landing on the heel of the foot will cause a "jerk" or momentary stop in the delivery. This can create arm problems.

The foot must be in a direct line with the target when landing. If the foot lands away from this line, then the pitcher is forced to either throw across the body, or the follow-through will be affected by the loss of balance.

Getting to the Launch Position: As the pitcher lifts the leg and takes a comfortable stride, the hands must separate and reach what is called the launch position. The pitcher must concentrate on turning the thumbs in toward the body (down) and turning the palms away from the body when separating the ball from the glove. This action helps to get both the glove-side elbow and the throwing-arm elbow to shoulder height. When the hands break, be sure the pitcher separates the ball and glove inside of the lift knee. If the pitcher throws the hands outside the lift knee, the back may arch.

There are three checkpoints in the launch position. One is to be sure the glove-side elbow is at shoulder height when the pitcher is ready to deliver the ball. This will give the pitcher a better balance and will aid in keeping the throwing elbow from dragging.

The second checkpoint involves the throwing elbow at or slightly above shoulder height. If the elbow drops or drags when throwing the ball, elbow and shoulder problems are soon to follow.



Follow Through

Finally and most important, make sure the ball is facing away from the catcher toward second base. Keep the elbow slightly bent in an "L" shape. If the ball is not facing away, the elbow will have a tendency to drag below shoulder height as the ball is thrown. With the ball facing away in the correct position, as the hips are rotated to the plate the ball also will automatically be rotated toward the plate.

Acceleration of the Arm: From the launch position, the pitcher begins to accelerate the arm. At this point, the glove side is just as important as the throwing side. With the elbows at shoulder height in the launch, the pitcher must drive the glove side elbow down vertically past the hip. By "driving the front side down" the pitcher ensures that the throwing shoulder is up and the throwing elbow is at shoulder height. If the pitcher drives the glove hand or elbow horizontally, the throwing elbow may drag.

Follow Through: Pitchers must adhere to two absolutes for an effective follow through after delivering the pitch. First, be sure that the pitcher bends at the waist and is getting the head out over the stride knee. Also, the front knee should be slightly bent to cushion the weight transfer, and to aid in a smooth follow through.

Second, it is important that the pitcher is in a good fielding position after following through. Make sure that the pitcher does not stop the throwing arm during the follow through. The slowing action causes control problems and completely stopping the arm can lead to injuries.

PITCH VARIETY

A Little League pitcher should concentrate on mastering two pitches, the fast ball and the change up. As players get older, they may elect to learn the breaking ball.

Fast Ball – Four-Seam Grip: The most commonly used grip for accuracy is the four-seam fast ball. The four-seam fast ball is held with the index and middle fingers positioned across the large seams. A finger's width should be the distance between the index and middle fingers with the thumb positioned underneath the ball on a seam. The pitcher should be sure there is a small space between the web of the hand and the ball. The third and fourth fingers are curled back.

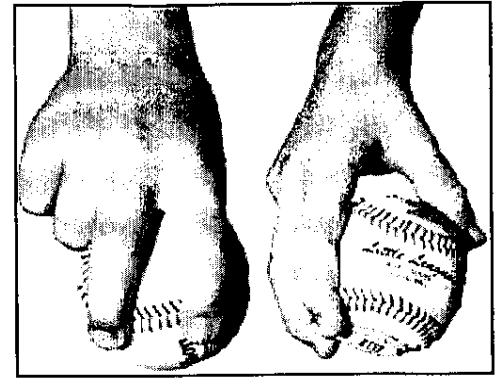
Fast Ball – Two-Seam Grip: The two-seam fast ball is held with the index and middle fingers across the seams where the horseshoe-like seams almost meet. The thumb is placed on a seam at the bottom of the ball, while the third and fourth fingers are curled back. Using this grip provides a little extra movement on the fast ball. Again, the pitcher should be sure there is a small space between the web of the hand and the ball.

Fast Ball – With-the-Seam Grip: On this grip, the index and middle fingers should be placed on the seams where both horseshoe seams almost meet. The thumb is placed on a seam underneath the ball. The pitcher should be sure there is a small space between the web of the hand and the ball. The third and fourth fingers are curled back. When thrown, this pitch has a tendency to move a little which will make it more difficult to hit.

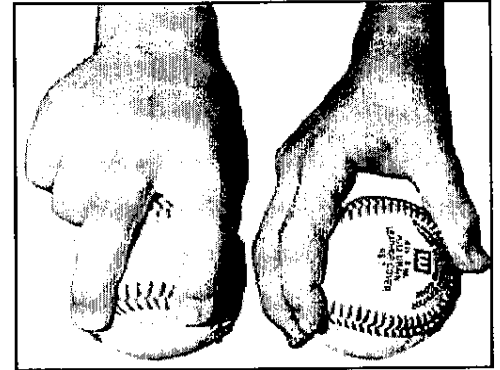
Three-Finger Change Up: The purpose of a change up is to give the appearance of a fastball, but because the speed of the ball is much slower, the hitter's timing is disrupted.

The three-finger change up can be gripped in any way the pitcher feels comfortable. Most pitchers grip the first and third fingers running the length of the seams with the middle finger in between the seams. The thumb is positioned underneath on a seam. Some pitchers grip the three-finger change up similar to a four seam fastball with slight modifications.

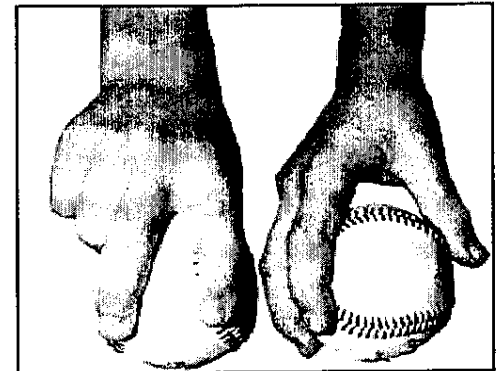
The most important aspect of the change up is that the ball, unlike all the fast ball grips, is tucked back against the pad of the hand. When throwing any change up, the key is to keep the same pitching mechanics and arm speed. The grip of the ball will slow the speed of the pitch.



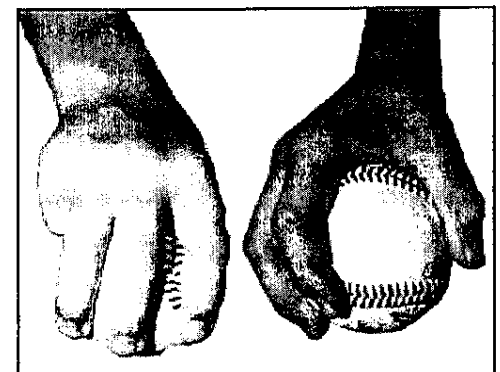
Four-seam Fastball



Two-seam Fastball



With-the-Seam Fastball



Three-finger Change Up

DRILLS

The following drills are designed to break down the pitching motion into progressions that can be isolated. They can be done from shorter throwing distances.

Slow Motion Drill: Standing on the rubber, or a simulated rubber, or simply line in the dirt or grass and without a ball, the pitcher begins the pitching progression as slow as he or she possibly can. This concentration drill allows the coach and the pitcher to look very closely at each progression of the motion and make corrections. The pitcher fakes a pitch and completes the progression with the follow through.

Pivot Foot Drill: The pivot foot drill begins with the pitcher's pivot foot or power foot placed against the rubber with the instep facing the target or the plate. The weight is on the stride foot. At this point the body should be in control and above the plane of the rubber. The pitcher transfers the weight to the pivot foot which then creates the directional side (meaning glove side pointing to the plate) and goes right through to the knee lift and finishes the progression. This drill reinforces the control over the rubber as well as the creation of the directional side.

Knee Lift Drill: Starting in the knee lift position, the pitcher simply holds a proper, comfortable knee lift for three to five seconds, and then completes the progression moving to the stride and launch positions. This drill reinforces the balance needed and controlled direction towards the plate.

Launch Drill: With the feet separated more than shoulder-width apart, and in a good launch position (both elbows at shoulder height, ball facing away and throwing arm in an "L shape), the pitcher should simply lift the

stride foot slightly, transfer weight from the pivot foot back to the stride foot, continue with the progression by driving the glove side elbow down and back past the hip, and throw the ball with a good follow through.

If needed, the coach can reinforce any position of the launch by simply holding or reinforcing the position. For instance, a pitcher may drag his elbow through the delivery, and the coach may correct it by holding the elbow at the correct height at the start of the launch.

Nick Caringi of Williamsport, Pa., is the Little League International Director of Operations. He attended St. Bonaventure University (Olean, N.Y.) where he was a pitcher on the baseball team. He graduated in 1990 with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. He also served as the St. Bonaventure pitching instructor during graduate school.

EIGHT ESSENTIALS OF POST-PITCHING RECOVERY

BY JIM RONAI MS, PT, ATC, CSCS

The institution of the pitch count in Little League Baseball represents a positive step towards ensuring that the game of baseball is safer both in the present and future careers of young pitchers.

As an adjunct to this new pitch count regulation and in an attempt to protect the health and safety of youth baseball pitchers, the following post-performance suggestions are offered. Since most youth baseball pitchers are typically removed from the mound, but not necessarily from the game, these suggestions are intended for post-game or for a time when the pitcher is considered done for the day.

1. Children learn most effectively with a consistent routine. All athletes need to have a routine that they perform both pre- and post-game. The routine needs to be monitored and consistent. Athletes need to know that the routine needs to be completed correctly before they will be permitted to participate in subsequent game or practice play.
2. Perform a "cool down activity." Have pitchers jog for four to six minutes, to the point when they start to sweat. This increases general blood flow throughout the body and prepares the body for a post-performance flexibility routine. Increasing blood flow allows the body to circulate oxygenated blood to fatigued muscles. Oxygenated blood helps soft tissues recover and heal following activity.
3. Spend five minutes on a post-game, movement-based, "dynamic flexibility program." Incorporate movements for the forearms, shoulders as well as the torso and lower body. As an example, have athletes perform progressive arm circles forward and backward for their arm and shoulder muscles, and walking heel grabs for their thigh and hip flexor muscles. These drills represent only a portion of a post-outing routine that help the athlete stretch their entire body. Along with increasing the flow of oxygenated blood to muscles and tendons, stretching dynamically following an athletic performance helps to mediate the by-products of exercise that make the body stiff and sore.
4. Designate one staff member to review the pitcher's performance. Keep things simple and to the point. Review the negative aspects of the pitcher's performance, but be sure to finish the conversation by emphasizing the positive. Leave the athlete feeling good about his/her outing.
5. Since most young athletes answer questions about how they feel with a shrug or a one-word answer, develop a visual analog scale for the pitchers to use to quantify how they feel before, during, and after the game. The scale can be something as simple as a one-to-10 scale with a picture of a frown at No. 1, a neutral face at No. 5, and a happy face at No. 10. Ask the pitcher how he/she feels before the game, at the end of each inning, and at the end of the performance. The visual scale allows younger players to easily point to the number or picture that most describes how the arm is feeling. Coaches can use the scale to inquire about the condition of a pitcher's arm before the game as well as any symptoms that he/she develops during or at the conclusion of the game. Monitoring a young pitcher's perception of his/her physical wellness helps coaches make note of trends related to performance or potential injury related to volume, lack of endurance, or other variables.
6. Having a cooler of ice available in the dugout is an important part of optimizing a pitcher's recovery. Keep a few bags of ice available for pitchers to apply to their shoulders and elbows following a pitching outing. Never apply ice directly to the skin or for more than 12-15 minutes. Also be aware of the ulnar nerve found in the area of the "funny bone," and be sure not to apply ice directly over it.
7. Do not allow pitchers to go home and re-create their game by throwing with "coach mom or dad." Once they are done on the field, they are done for the day. Encourage families to follow this approach for the sake of the child's health.
8. In an attempt to establish consistent pitching performance, athletes need to gain and maintain strength as well as control of their bodies. An age-appropriate strength, balance and coordination routine for your pitchers should be taught at the beginning of the season and should be

performed by pitchers the day after each outing. These activities help to ensure that the athlete is taking care of his/her "pitching muscles" on a consistent basis in preparation for the next outing. Simple programs should address balance, as well as strengthening for the rotator cuff, back, core and leg muscles. Remember that the season is long, and that without training, muscles fatigue and lose strength over time. Keep them strong for the long haul.

Jim Ronai MS, PT, ATC, CSCS is a Physical Therapist, Certified Athletic Trainer through the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) and a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). He is the Director of Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine at Rehabilitation Associates, Inc. in Connecticut and Director of Jim Ronai's Competitive Edge, an athletic performance-training program. Jim has served on the medical staff for two U.S. Olympic teams and is a member of the USA Baseball Medical and Safety Advisory Committee.

Little League -- Baseball Game Pitch Log

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																					36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	
			71	72	73																74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105				
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									71	72	73										74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105				

Pitching eligibility varies by the league age of the pitcher, which is the pitcher's age as of May 1 of the current year. The pitching eligibility regulation is Regulation VI (see current rule book for details). A blank electronic version of this form is available for free download at www.littleleague.org.