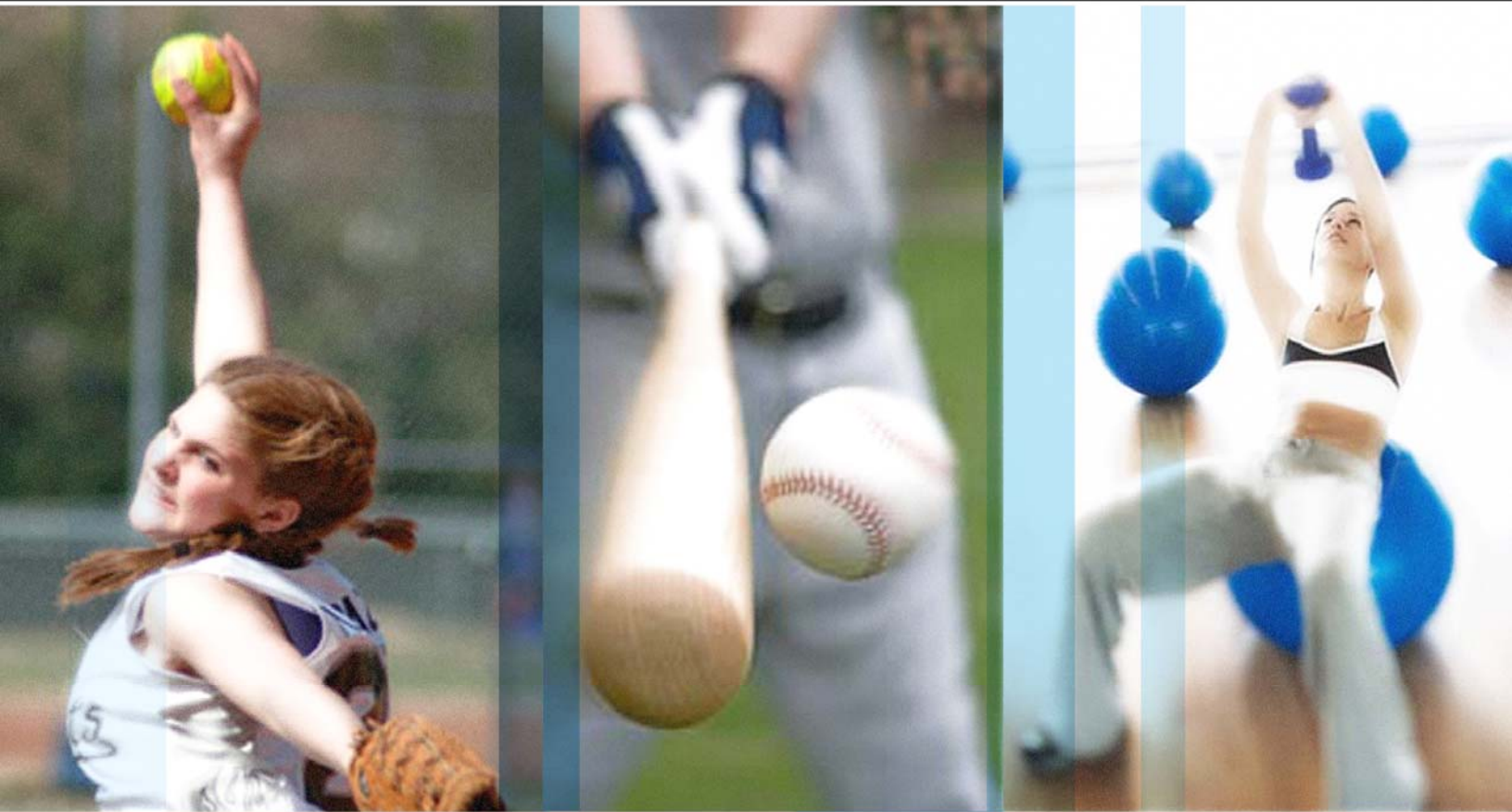


150 Fastpitch Softball Pitching Drills



softballperformance.com
Powerful Resources to Quickly
and Easily Boost Your Game!

By Marc O. Dagenais

Published by:

M.O. Dagenais & Associates, Inc.
Author : Marc O. Dagenais, Softball Peak Performance Coach
154 Charlotte st., Suite C508
Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2X 4A1
Email: info@softballperformance.com
www.softballperformance.com

Copyrighted 2007 © All rights reserved. These contents may not be shared, forwarded, or transmitted in any form, except for personal use. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

DISCLAIMER

Because exercise, nutrition, and food supplements are known to affect people differently depending upon the choices, combinations, intensity, timing, general health, genetics, and effort expended, among other factors over which M.O. Dagenais & Associates, Inc. and SoftballPerformance.com has no control, no guarantee is therefore made as to the outcome or favorable results of any program, product, or information provided herein.

User is advised to consult their physician before beginning any function or activity described herein and to obtain such physician's specific approval for the conducting of any activities described herein. In consideration of being provided the materials within, the user of such materials specifically certifies that s/he understands that participation in any function or activity set forth herein involves risks and dangers which could result in serious bodily injury including permanent disability, paralysis, and or death. User understands that such risks and dangers may be caused by their actions or inactions, the action or inaction of others participating in the activity, the condition in which the activity takes place, or the negligence of the releasers, specifically M.O. Dagenais & Associates, Inc. and SoftballPerformance.com and it's agents and employees.

With full knowledge, the user fully accepts and assumes all such risks and all responsibility for the losses, injuries, or damages as a result of participation in any activity set forth herein. User further understands and agrees that participation in any activity described herein is at user's own and sole risk. The user hereby releases M.O. Dagenais & Associates, Inc. and SoftballPerformance.com and its agents or employees from any liability, of any kind or nature, resulting from user's use of these materials, programs, or products or participation in any activities described herein.

About the Author

Marc O. Dagenais, MHK, CSCS, ChPC Softball Peak Performance Coach



Marc O. Dagenais is a sought-after peak performance coach and an expert at improving performance, developing talent and helping athletes and teams reach their full potential. He works with softball players to help them turn their athletic talent into extraordinary performances and he consults with coaches on how they can get more out of their players, turn their struggling team around or get an edge over their opponents.

Marc has an exceptional combination of softball coaching expertise and sports sciences knowledge – which is a very rare combo in the world of softball. He has intimate knowledge of what it takes to develop and maintain a high level of performance in athletes.

Marc has worked with numerous elite amateur, college and professional athletes including hundreds of softball players. He has also been coaching women's competitive fastpitch softball for almost 20 years and has coached at every level of the game from grassroots to the college and the international level. He has served three years as an Assistant Softball Coach at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C and he presently works and coaches with the Canadian Women's Softball National Team Program.

In addition to having an extensive background as a softball coach, trainer, and consultant, Marc has advanced studies in sport sciences (high performance coaching, sports psychology, and strength and conditioning) and numerous high level certifications.

Also, in addition to being an expert strength and conditioning specialist and a high-level softball coach, he is also extremely well-versed in the areas of sports psychology, sports nutrition, and injury management.

- Graduate Studies (doctoral-level) in Education (sports psychology, sports pedagogy), McGill University
- Masters of Human Kinetics (MHK), (Coaching Sciences), University of British Columbia
- Bachelor of Sciences, (Physical Education), University of Montreal
- Diploma in High Performance Coaching, National Coaching Institute - Vancouver, BC
- CPCA – Chartered Professional Coach (ChPC)
- NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
- CAN-FIT-PRO / Twist Conditioning Inc. – Master Coach (Sports Conditioning Specialist Certification)
- CWF - Level 1 Weightlifting Coach
- NCCP – Certified Level IV Softball Coach
- Red Cross – First Aid and CPR Instructor
- CPMDQ – Naturotherapist / Kinesiologist
- CAN-FIT-PRO – Personal Trainer Specialist (PTS) and PRO-Trainer

Please Accept My Personal Invitation to Subscribe to...



The "Softball Performance Secrets Journal" is a **FREE** E-zine that reveals the best performance secrets of superstar softball players and coaches.

To get you **FREE** lifetime subscription, simply visit www.softballperformance.com or send a blank email to marcdagenais2-187149@autocontactor.com.

Table of Contents

Table of contents	5
Conditioning Drills	6
Fielding Drills	8
Pitcher – Catcher Drills	11
Rise Ball Drills	13
Curve Ball Drills	15
Drop Ball Drills	16
Change-Up Drills	18
Screw Ball Drills	20
Accuracy Drills	21
Speed and Velocity Drills	24
Leg Drive Drills	27
Hip Rotation Drills	30
Arm Rotation Drills	31
Wrist Snap Drills	34
Global Motion Drills	36
Miscellaneous Drills	42

Conditioning Drills

1. **Arm Circle & Stretch.** Move pitching arm in a full circle stretching your hand away from your shoulder as far as possible. Keep your arm straight but loose throughout and perform at moderate speed (One per second).
2. **Speed Circles.** Move the pitching arm in a full circle at maximum speed. This exercise requires total exertion.
3. **Resistance Pitching.** Place palms on each end of the bat, broomstick or similar item. Move pitching arm to height of back swing and apply resistance with opposite hand. Move pitching arm through power phase of motion to point about shoulder height in front. Movement should take about 15 to 20 seconds.
4. **Wrist Snap.** Hold a book or other weight in the pitching hand (try official weighted arm training softball) and move wrist back and forth and circular until tired. Alternate the direction of the circles.
5. **Shoulder Shrug.** Lift shoulders to maximum height – hold for several seconds, then let your shoulders relax. Repeat.
6. **Isometric Pull.** Take position beside a door frame or other fixed object. Keep pitching arm straight, apply pressure against the object with your pitching hand. Pull with maximum effort and hold for 6 seconds. Repeat at four positions through pitching motion.
7. **Bent Arm, Shoulder Rotation.** Hold a weight (5lbs. or so) with pitching hand at waist height. Rotate shoulder in large circles, 5 circles forward, then 5 backward.
8. **Dynamic Tension.** Assume delivery position with pitching hand at side. Clench fist and squeeze as hard as possible tensing all hand, arm, and shoulder muscles. Concentrate on retaining maximum tension. Perform two slow pitching circles at the rate of one per 30 seconds.
9. **Arm Lift and Relax.** Lift arms sideways and up overhead while inhaling deeply. Let your arms drop loosely, head fall forward on to chest, relax knees and exhale completely. This can be used before a game and between innings to control tension. Perform as desired to promote relaxation.
10. **Distance Pitching.** In this drill you throw the ball at distances farther than required in a game. The exact distance you use depends on your own preference, but the farther you throw the harder you will have to work. This activity encourages maximum output, so it is useful in building up your level of conditioning. Start at regulation distance. As your arm loosens up, gradually move back until you reach the desired distance. Keep throwing at this distance for the specified number of pitches. As in “Speed Pitching”, don’t worry about control, just concentrate on throwing hard.
11. **Walk Drill.** The purpose of this drill is to strengthen the lower body and build endurance. One partner stands 60 feet away from the other partner with the ball in a grassy area, gym space, or ball diamond. She begins walking and takes approximately three steps before

she steps into her pitching motion. Once in the motion she attempts to throw the ball to her partner. She wants the ball to reach her partner in the air. To make this possible she must use her legs and lower body so she gets a good lift on the ball. After she releases, she takes three steps back to the 60-foot distance. Once the partner receives the ball, she will then do the same technique back to the first thrower. This drill works the legs and teaches the athlete to use the lower body as the generator for the pitch. Have each player pitch 20 to 30 balls.

12. **Spin Drill.** This drill is meant to teach the fingers the proper grip and ball spin. The pitcher stands three feet from her partner, either a catcher or another pitcher, grips the ball for the pitch she chooses, and then spins it to her partner. She does 15 of each of her pitches. If her partner is a pitcher, she can do the spin back; otherwise the catcher can catch it and give feedback. Make sure the pitchers are using the proper spin and help them to continue the proper manipulation.

Fielding Drills

1. **Bunt Fielding.** The purpose of this drill is to help the pitcher field bunts. Start with one or more pitchers in the mound area; place another pitcher or player acting as the receiver at first base, at second base, or both, to receive the thrown ball at the bases. The coach tosses the ball from home plate to in front of the mound, and the pitcher fields the bunt using the standard fielding procedure, and throws to first base. Remind the pitcher to surround the ball by setting her feet toward the base to which she is most likely to throw. The pitcher then returns to the mound and repeats the bunting procedure, either throwing to first or alternating between bases.
2. **Squeeze Bunt Fielding.** This drill teaches the pitcher to defend the squeeze bunt with a runner on third. Start with one or more pitchers at the mound area and a coach and a catcher (or other player) acting as the receiver at home. Upon recognizing a squeeze bunt, the pitcher surrounds the ball so the ball is on her throwing hand side. She then shovels the ball toward the catcher with her bare hand and the back of the glove. The ball should be tossed at knee height to the plate. To make it more game-like, use a real runner at third base.
3. **Throwing to Bases.** This exercise enables the pitcher to get used to throwing to all bases. Begin with a pitcher on the mound, a person receiving throws at each base (or one person rotating through the bases), and a person hitting balls. The pitcher should practice throwing to each of the four bases during this drill. The pitcher goes through the windup without a ball, and the fun-goer throws a ball in the air and then hits the ball toward the pitcher, who then moves to field the ball in the center of her body. You can change the base to which the ball is to be thrown right before the pitcher throws it. She should remember to reset the feet before throwing to the new target. Also you can set up a play by placing runners at home or any base, using real or ghost runners.
4. **Run the Ball to First.** This is used to recognize when to run the ball and toss it to first instead of throwing it to first base. This skill is normally used when there is nobody on base and the hitter is not a slapper. The pitcher lines up at the mound area, the coach at home plate, and another player receives the throws to first base. The pitcher begins with a windup without a ball, and the fun-goer hits balls directly at the pitcher or to the first base side of the mound. When the ball is hit hard right back to the pitcher and no one is on base, the pitcher has time to run toward first base and toss it to the first baseman. She fields the ball first, and then turns the ball out of her glove (hanging her throwing arm down to her side and out in front of her) with the palm of her hand behind the ball. When the pitcher gets a few feet from first base, she tosses the ball underhand to the first base receiver.
5. **Plate Coverage on a Wild Pitch.** This drill is meant to teach proper technique for plays at the plate on passed balls or wild pitches when a runner is on third. Line the pitcher up on the mound. If you're using a catcher, place her in a catching stance at home plate. The coach then throws a ball to the backstop for the catcher to throw back to the plate. The pitcher runs to the plate, positioning herself on the back side of the plate if possible and up the line 1-2 feet, where she waits in a semi-crouched position for the ball to be thrown. Once the pitcher receives the ball, she will tag the ghost-runner in front of the plate. You may use real runners so pitchers can practice their timing when arriving to the plate, but have the runners slide away from the plate so no contact is made.

6. **Backup Responsibilities.** The pitcher's main backup responsibility comes when a ball is hit beyond an outfielder and a potential play is being made at either third base or home plate. Start with base runners, an outfielder, a third baseman, and a catcher, with the coach standing at the plate. The coach places a base runner at first or second, and then hits a ball by the outfielder, either over the player's head or in a gap. The pitcher recognizes that a play will be made at either third base or the plate, and she immediately sprints toward and crosses the third base foul line, between third and home plate, and ends up in foul territory close to dead ball territory or the dugout. The pitcher turns to watch the play develop. She can cheat toward the base to which the throw is likely to go. Once she knows to which base the ball will be thrown she gets in position behind the fielder, leaving enough distance to be able to react to the overthrow (approximately 20-30 feet). On an enclosed field the pitcher is usually near the dugout or the fence line.
7. **Knockdowns.** This is meant to simulate a ball hit hard back to the pitcher off her shins or elsewhere on her body. The pitcher lines up at the mound area, beginning the drill 2 feet in front of the mound, facing home plate. A receiver is at first base ready for the throw from the pitcher. A coach stands close to the pitcher with a ball. The pitcher closes her eyes, and the coach gently tosses a ball off the pitcher's body. The pitcher must find the ball, scoop it up with two hands, and get into position to throw to first. The pitcher surrounds the ball so it is on the back foot as when fielding a bunt. To add stress to the pitcher to simulate a real game situation, the coach and other players can yell; create noise, while the pitcher is picking up the ball.
8. **Line Drive Drill.** The purpose of this drill is to improve the pitcher's ability to catch a hard hit line drive and throw to specific bases. The pitcher will pitch a ball, which is caught by the catcher. As the ball gets near the catcher, the coach will hit another ball as a line drive to the pitcher, who catches it and throws the ball to second base. The drill sequence is then repeated with the pitcher throwing the ball to third base. After around eight repetitions, the pitchers rotate, and the drill continues for as long as desired.
9. **Lateral Reaction Drill.** This drill is made to improve the pitcher's ability to react in a lateral direction a ball. With two pitchers, one at the defensive position and the other, 20 feet in front of the other pitcher and has a full ball bucket. The first pitcher simulates a pitch. Then pitcher 2 throws a ball randomly to the right or left of the pitcher making him reach to catch the ball. After eight repetitions, the pitchers rotate positions and the drill continues on for as long as desired.
10. **Pitcher's Lateral Movement Drill.** The purpose of this drill is to improve the pitcher's ability to react and move laterally in fielding a ground ball and to practice throwing to first base. The pitcher pitches a ball, which is caught by the catcher. As the ball is nearing the catcher, the coach hits another ball to the right or left of the pitcher who fields the ball and throws to first base.
11. **First Baseman Drill.** There will be situations where the pitcher needs to cover first base on ground balls. Any time the first baseman is playing back near the base and fields the ball to her right, the pitcher must quickly break for first base. Have a coach or teammate hit groundballs toward the hole between first and second base. The pitcher runs from the mound to first base. As she approaches the bag, the first baseman leads her with an inside

toss. The pitcher catches the ball and tags the inside of first base. Repeat this several times. It takes practice to get comfortable with the timing of the throw. Remember to touch the inside of first base and push off toward the infield. This will avoid any collisions with the runner.

Pitcher-Catcher Drills

1. **Game Drill.** The purpose of this drill is to experience game-like pressure during pitching practice. The pitcher pitches a specific number of innings with the catcher calling balls and strikes. If you have a batter standing at the plate, she should assume different positions in the box and stand in as both left-handed batters and right-handed batters.
2. **Three Points.** This drill creates competition and pressure for the pitcher when pitching to a catcher's targets. The catcher gives a target, and for advanced players she may call a pitch. If the pitcher hits the target, she gets one point. If she misses, she loses a point. When the pitcher reaches three points, the game is over. Add difficulty by requiring every fourth pitch to be a change-up.
3. **Centering the Signs.** This drill helps pitchers improve their ability to focus attention on each pitch (and reduce the tendency to go through the motions without fully registering the catcher's signs). Each pitcher throws two to three sequences of 10 pitches. During each sequence, the catcher should mix it up by changing pitches and pitch locations. The pitcher tries to completely register each sign by mentally talking herself through the process, answering two questions: What pitch am I throwing? and What location? From the time she receives the sign until the time the ball is released, the pitcher should be completely focused on the current pitch. For each sequence of 10 pitches, the pitcher should keep track of the number of times she successfully delivered the pitch without being distracted by other thoughts. If she recognizes that she has been distracted before the pitch is thrown, she should start over by requesting the catcher to repeat the signs.

Variations.

- a. To increase the difficulty, the coach can provide distractions by making comments or having another player make comments throughout the pitching motion.
4. **STRIKE Her Out.** This exercise is meant to increase the pitchers' ability to regulate attention style in the face of competition. Two pitchers throw side by side with two catchers. The first pitcher starts by calling the location of the pitch she would like to throw. For example, "high inside" or numbers can be used to identify zone locations. Then she throws that pitch. If she hits her spot, judged by the catcher, the second pitcher attempts to throw that same pitch. Instruct the challenger to focus her attention by going from broad external (thinking about the called pitch and how she will make her delivery) to narrow external (thinking only about the actual delivery). The goal is to eliminate the distraction of competition by focusing solely on that particular pitch. If the second pitcher hits the spot, the first pitcher goes again; if the second pitcher misses, she gets the letter S. If the first pitcher does not hit the correct spot, then the second pitcher gets to take a turn and call a pitch. The pitcher who spells STRIKE first loses the competition.

Variations.

- a. Increase the difficulty by requiring that the pitch be within a one-half-ball margin from the spot.
- b. Decrease the difficulty by allowing the pitch to have a two-ball-width margin for hitting the spot.

5. **Striped Ball Drill.** Place a stripe right down the middle of the ball and use them in close rotational work to insure the proper rotation is being imparted to the ball. The stripe gives instant feedback to the player and is easy for the catcher to see and determine what rotation has been imparted to the ball. When throwing a rise ball or a peel drop (straight drop ball) the pitcher and catcher should see a solid line as the ball flies toward the target. If the line looks solid, the rotation is probably correct. If the line wavers or is non-existent, the rotation is incorrect and more rotational work is needed. The straight drop (peel drop) is released off the "birdie" finger and the rotation is clockwise as viewed from 3rd base. If any other rotation is being imparted to the ball, the ball will not drop. The rise ball is just the opposite from the peel drop. The ball must have counter-clockwise rotation as viewed from 3rd base.
6. **Pitching into Glove.** Stand in stride position with glove open next to left thigh. Have the pitcher follow through to the bent arm position after releasing the ball. Use a sock ball or another softball to perform these drills indoors.
7. **3 Ball Drill.** This drill is a great way of teaching catchers and pitchers to work together. It can also be a good conditioner for pitchers. The pitcher does not use a full wind-up motion but rather uses a full windmill off a single step like she might if she were just beginning to warm up. If you have space to spare, your pitchers can do "walk-ins" where a right-handed pitcher would step first with her left, then her right, then pitch from there without the wind up. This kind of drilling teaches quick hands for pitchers and catchers but it is also a good way to drill your pitchers on dealing with line-drives back at them, especially if your catchers throw very hard. It also helps catchers to get to know the kind of ball movement they can expect from their pitchers. The one rule to follow, whether you are running this as an all-player drill or a pitcher-catcher drill, is never let this game become a simple game of catch and put a time limit on each iteration. Players will eventually get tired, even out of breath, and begin tossing the ball more and more slowly. This is a waste of time after about a minute. The 3 ball drill can be a very effective way to condition pitchers since a lot of pitches can be thrown in a short period of time. But don't stop with one iteration per player. Allow rest in between and as many repetitions as the time for this segment of practice allows.

Rise Ball Drills

1. **Rise Ball Drill #1.** This practice is designed to help you acquire a “feeling” for the proper arm position when releasing the rise pitch. Here’s what to do. Take your normal grip on the ball (Rise). Bring your pitching hand down to your side. Take a step forward with your normal stride foot, to simulate the usual delivery position. Keep your arm at your side, and rotate your pitching hand outward turning the entire forearm from elbow to hand. Hold this position for several seconds while forcing the rotation of the arm as much as possible. Repeat five or six times until the exaggerated rotation feels comfortable.
2. **Rise Ball Drill #2.** This is an extension of the previous drill, and will help you develop the arm rotation while your arm is moving slightly. Take your normal grip for a rise pitch, and bring your pitching arm down to your side. Take a step forward with your stride foot to stimulate the delivery position. Allow your pitching arm to swing easily back and forward about two feet in front and behind the body. Relax your arm completely, allowing it to swing freely like a pendulum. Add the arm rotation as the pitching hand swings forward past the body. The idea is to have the hand in release position when it passes the hip. Do this exercise gradually at first, with increased emphasis on the reverse hand/arm twist as you progress
3. **Rise Ball Drill #3.** This practice is similar to the Drop Ball Drill, as it will help develop the correct wrist and finger action to impart proper spin to the ball. Take a comfortable rise pitch grip on the ball. Twist your hand backward, out in front of your body. Allow the ball to leave your pitching hand as you try to make it spin. This may feel awkward at first, but keep doing it. As your technique improves you will be able to keep the ball under control. Repeat this exercise a few times daily until you can spin the ball rapidly every time.
4. **Rise Ball Drill #4.** If you experience difficulty achieving the appropriate ball rotation, this drill will help you develop the proper feeling for the rise pitch. Stand against a wall or a fence, pitching arm against the wall. Place the palm of the pitching hand flat against the wall, and perform the back half of the arm circle. Continue to press palm against the wall throughout the motion and follow through as high as possible. Repeat as often as required until motion starts to feel comfortable.
5. **Spinner Drill.** The first step in learning the rise ball is mastering the backward spin. Using a Sinner is one of the most effective ways to see and understand the rotation and the movements required to cause it. Pitchers and even coaches sometimes cannot see the spin of the ball. The flat Spinner reveals the rotation. The pitcher should start by spinning the Spinner backward to herself. She may find this feat awkward and difficult at first. After the pitcher can smoothly spin the ball backward, she can begin to rock back and toss to a catcher or wall four or five feet away. The pitcher will have to concentrate on straight follow-through and quick movements during release. Each time she accomplishes the spin, she can move back a couple of feet. It is recommended to go at least three-quarters of the distance without using the circle. When the pitcher feels confident enough to add the circle, she should come back up to the four- or five-foot range again and work backward. She should throw the Spinner at full distance and full speed before adding the ball. When adding the ball, she starts close again.
6. **Oversized and Undersized Ball Spins.** Using a baseball or an 11-inch ball may help the

pitcher make the correct movements to get underneath the ball. The smaller size of the ball allows the fingers to be more flexible and allows the correct movements to occur with less effort. A pitcher can use an undersized ball when initially trying to create muscle memory for the correct spin movements. An oversized ball is helpful in speeding up the wrist snap because the hand must pass under more area in the same amount of time. The oversized ball can also illustrate the spin to a pitcher who may be struggling with the backward concept. A 14-inch ball seems to be the perfect size because the pitcher can hold on to it comfortably throughout the circle before snapping the wrist at release. The routine used with these balls can mirror the routine used with the Spinner – starting close up without the circle and adding distance as well as the full circle.

7. **One-Knee Drill.** This drill places the pitcher on her drive-leg knee with the stride leg extended out in front. The pitcher should not put much weight, if any, on the stride leg because this would shift her weight forward. Remember, in throwing the rise ball, the weight stays behind the stride leg. Because the pitcher is positioned on her knees, the upper-body mechanics, such as shoulder positioning and posture, in an isolated environment. The pitcher should start with a catcher approximately 10 feet away and progress to full distance.
8. **Flat Spins.** Many pitchers can only spin the ball backward when they release it high. This is because, the higher they release the ball, the more time they have to pass underneath it before release. In doing flat spins, the goal is to release the ball at about knee height. For this drill only, the pitcher need not worry much about the upward angle. Releasing the ball at knee height will force the pitcher to start and finish the spin much more quickly than she does when releasing at shoulder or head height. If a pitcher can master a backward spin at knee height, the spin will be a piece of cake when she adds the angle of release to the formula and starts the ball slightly higher. Most pitchers make a mistake by practicing the rise spins to higher targets (usually with the catcher standing) and then trying to work their way down. The pitch just keeps becoming more challenging and difficult because she must finish the release quicker and quicker. But if the pitcher practices at the quickest release point most of the time, anything beyond that will seem easy.
9. **Rope Drill.** The rope drill for the rise ball is similar to the rope drill with the change-up. The rope should be approximately 7 to 10 feet in front of home plate, stomach high to the hitter, or three to four feet off the ground. The goal is for the pitch to pass underneath the rope and finish above it. The pitch that does this has the correct movement. For variation, the rope can be placed at the halfway point to show where the pitch is when the hitter is deciding whether to swing or not. For this drill, catchers should hold the ball for a second so that the pitcher can see if the ball rose above the rope or not. It is recommended that catchers remain in the down position when working with pitchers on rise balls. Many catchers automatically stand to catch the rise-ball spins, encouraging the pitcher to throw the ball high. Is it OK for the catcher to start by catching a few pitched in the standing position, but she should do most of the workout in a squat position or in a seated position.

Curve Ball Drills

1. **Curve Ball Drill #1.** This activity will help you learn the correct wrist action to release the curve ball. Take a comfortable grip for a curve pitch, advance your stride foot to simulate the delivery position, and drop your pitching hand to your side. Allow your pitching hand to swing easily back and forward, about two feet in front and behind the body. Relax your arm completely, allowing it to swing freely like a pendulum. Each time the pitching hand comes forward past the hip, snap your wrist sideways as for a slow release. Start gradually at first until you get the feel of the movement.
2. **Curve Ball Drill #2.** This exercise is designed to promote wrist and finger action when you release the curve pitch. The focus here is on ball rotation. Take a comfortable grip for a curve ball. Hold the ball out from your body with your elbow bent and palm up. Twist the ball using a strong side snap of the wrist and twisting action of the fingers. Repeat this activity trying to increase the side rotation on the ball with each successive attempt. Perform this practice a few times daily until you can spin the ball rapidly every time.
3. **Curve Drill #3.** As far as drills for a curve the most useful is having the pitcher throw from the slingshot position. Concentrating on the proper position of the hand at the hip. Instead of the ball facing the batter when it is at the hip, the hand should be palm up to the sky and the ball lying in the hand so if you were to stop the motion the ball would stay in the hand. Once the pitcher starts her push off the rubber she should concentrate on bringing the hand around with the hip and peeling the ball off the side of the hand. The forefinger (the middle one) will be along the seam and the index finger under the forefinger (basically the same grip as the rise). The forefinger will peel the ball off sideways by using the seam, in effect spinning the ball. Be careful not to get under the ball that will cause it to rise. As far as in and out all you can do is try different release points, the more a pitcher throws the more comfortable and accurate she will become.
4. **Two-Knees Drill.** In this drill the pitcher places both knees on the ground and angles them at 45 degrees to home plate. She starts with no circle and works spins with a catcher about 10 feet away. As the techniques become habit, she adds the circle and gradually backs up the catcher to three-quarters distance.
5. **Rope or Noodle Drill.** Some coaches like to hang a rope or string from the ceiling for this one, but a swimming noodle anchored by a large coupling will do also. The noodle or rope should be 5 to 7 feet in front of home plate and widthwise where the pitcher or coach would like the ball to be when it reaches that location. The pitcher breaks the ball around the noodle. A right-handed pitcher will pass the noodle on the right side and, if the ball breaks effectively, she will see the pitch caught on the other side of the noodle. This drill is also an effective way to practice stride-foot placement. The pitcher should be striding across the power line and to the throwing-arm side of the noodle, since this is where it is intended for the ball to start.

Drop Ball Drills

1. **Drop Ball Drill.** This activity will help you get the feel of the rotating ball using the different grips and releases. Experiment with the finger grip, using various locations and different numbers of fingers, until you find what feels best for you. Hold a ball in your pitching hand, using one of the drop ball grips. Snap the ball off the end of your fingers (Peeling) while trying to rotate it forward, using finger, wrist and arm action. As your ability improves, try to impart more wrist action, and increase the rotation speed. Repeat this practice daily for a few minutes until you can rotate the ball with complete control, i.e., Flip it the same height every time without dropping it.
2. **One-Leg Drill.** This drill places the pitcher in exactly the position she will land when she sets the stride foot. The pitcher places the stride foot under herself with all her weight over the leg. She bends the knee slightly so that the stride leg accepts the weight and is flexible. Her head should be slightly over the front foot. She can allow the back toe to touch the ground lightly for balance. The pitcher can bounce and move around some at first to become comfortable with the position. From this position, she makes the full circle, maintaining the position and releasing the ball at knee height. After release, the body will follow through forward in the direction of the ball. She should not try to balance. If the pitcher correctly sets the position and holds it throughout the pitch, she will see instant results when she releases the ball at the correct point. She should perform the drill at half speed, focusing only on body awareness. As the pitcher begins to experience steady success with this drill, she can add the step. At stride, the pitcher should try to get back into the position of the one-leg drill as soon as possible. She stays at half speed at first but gradually adds more speed as she has success. She must remember, however, to set the positions more quickly as she adds arm speed.
3. **Mound Drill.** Using a baseball pitcher's mound, the pitcher starts with the one-leg drill first, and then gradually adds the step and arm speed. By throwing off the incline, the pitcher can more easily set and feel the angles of the body, thus developing correct muscle memory. She must remember to land with the stride leg *underneath* the body.
4. **Rope Drill.** Using a rope or string positioned about five feet in front of the plate, the pitcher pitches drop balls over the top of the rope. If the pitches are thrown correctly, the ball will go over the rope and drop below it by the time it reaches the catcher. This drill provides the pitcher an excellent gauge of cut location and severity. Rope height can be changed with this drill for variations of count, either ahead or behind. If the pitcher is behind in the count, the rope should be held higher. If the pitcher is ahead in the count, the rope can be held lower. The rope can also be moved forward or backward to represent a move by the hitter up or back in the box. The cut should take place immediately after the ball crosses over the rope. The pitcher can experiment with getting onto the leg quicker and notice the effect that has on the cut. *The catcher must move forward and backward when the hitter does.*
5. **Low Net Throws.** This drill focuses on proper release and keeping drop balls low. From a distance of about 10 feet, the pitcher throws into the bottom of a catch net, exaggerating her release of the drop.
6. **Basket Throws.** This helps the pitcher focus on making the ball drop by using a visual target. The pitcher throws from regular distance and attempts to pitch the ball into a

laundry basket at home plate. This drill helps imprint the image the pitcher should see before every drop pitch. The pitch can be thrown to a bucket, but the ball will not ricochet as much off the softer basket.

Change-up Drills

1. **Change-Up Drill #1.** This activity will help you learn the correct wrist action to release the change-up. Take a comfortable grip for a change-up, advance your stride foot to simulate the delivery position, and drop your pitching hand to your side. Allow your pitching hand to swing easily back and forward, about two feet in front and behind the body. Relax your arm completely, allowing it to swing freely like a pendulum. Each time the pitching hand comes forward past the hip, snap your wrist sideways as for a slow release. Start gradually at first until you get the feel of the movement.
2. **Change-Up Drill #2.** This drill is a little more complex, and requires a partner. Take the grip you want to work on, using a regulation ball and have your partner stand about 3 or 4 meters away, facing you. Allow your arm to swing easily forward and backward. As the pitching hand passes the hip, release the ball softly, very softly, to your partner. Remember, the idea is to get a feel of the grip and release, not to learn how to throw the pitch at this stage.
3. **Turnaround Change Drill.** The pitcher starts one stride away from a bucket. (The pitcher should match her arm speed to her distance but keep steady arm speed throughout the circle. For example, if she is pitching from half of full distance, her arm speed should be half of full effort and start and stay at that speed throughout the circle. The pitcher must not start fast and then slow down the arm.) At a slow but steady speed the pitcher goes around to eight o'clock and turns the wrist, continues past the hip, and reached to the catcher, or in this case, over the bucket. As the pitcher extends her pitching hand and the ball over the bucket, she drops the ball into the bucket. At release, the arm and hand should be no higher than the pitcher's waist, and the palm should always be facing downward. The pitcher continues this turn, reach, and drop sequence until it starts to look natural. She can easily practice this alone. Gradually, as the pitcher starts up, she can add a bit of speed each step. At about halfway, the catcher becomes part of the drill, catching the balls, throwing them back, and reminding the pitcher to visualize dropping the pitch into the bucket. *The only difference in pitching from 5 feet away and 40 feet away is arm speed.*
4. **Shove Change Drill.** The pitcher starts close and very slowly with steady arm speed. Instead of using a full circle, she draws the elbow back and pushes the ball outward. This is not exactly a rock back because the ball is in front of the elbow, being pushed instead of extended in a rocking manner. (The pitcher can imagine drawing back an arrow underhand or punching someone in the stomach.) At close distances (until about halfway back) if the draw back and pop-out release are done correctly, the ball will have little or no spin. As the pitcher begins to back up, the ball will gain spin, but she should remember the goal of shoving the ball throughout. The pitcher should continue to back up with no circle until just past halfway. At this point, if her technique is correct and the ball has little or no spin, she can return to short-distance pitching and add the circle. She repeats the gradual backing-up process until reaching full distance and full speed. The pitcher may need to master this drill, but she should not rush the advancement backward. If the pitcher rushes to throw the full distance before she is ready, the wrist snap will take over. This will be a difficult habit to break if she does not conquer it at the beginning.
5. **Knuckleball Drill.** Because of the size of the female hand and the size of the ball, for most pitchers the grip will tend to be uncomfortable. For this reason, the pitcher should simply

begin to sit around with a ball in her hand and become accustomed to the tightness and discomfort that she will initially experience. From here, the pitcher can take the ball and toss it upward to herself. Doing this will allow her to feel the opening of the fingers and thumb and at a basic level start to master throwing the ball without spin. After learning to self-toss the ball with no spin, the pitcher starts close to the catcher without using a circle. She moves back over time as she masters throwing from the current distance. At just past halfway, she returns to close distance and adds the circle. The pitcher may want to add the circle with a self-toss first before tossing to the catcher.

6. **One-Knee Drill.** A great drill for practicing alone is to kneel down on one knee about five feet away from a target. The target could be a box, a stool tipped over, or just some tape on the wall or in the net. From one knee in a stabilized position, the pitcher performs the correct mechanics with the pitching arm. The drill allows the pitcher to think her way through the correct movements and create muscle memory with those movements. When the correct mechanics start to become more of a habit, the pitcher can challenge herself by reducing the target in width (8 to 12 inches) and height (waist high and lower). She can also begin to back up and add arm speed. But she should not go past three-quarters distance without adding the help of the lower body. The player can continue the drill from a standing position, again starting close and working all the way back.
7. **Rope Drill.** In this drill the pitcher starts at half distance with a rope about 5 feet in front of the catcher. The rope should be 3½ to 4 feet high. The goal of the pitcher is to keep the ball *under* the rope. With the rope at the halfway point, any humps will cause the ball to be above the rope. As the pitcher adds speed and backs up, the rope should always stay at the halfway point between the pitcher and the catcher. The rope will be a good visual reminder to the pitcher, even during a game. She must put the ball under the rope.

Screw Ball Drills

1. **Rope or Noodle Drill.** Place the rope or noodle vertically in front of the catcher (as with the curve ball) to provide a target that the pitcher can move the ball around, using movement opposite the curveball movement. If the pitcher can throw the curve, an enjoyable addition to this drill is to place the noodle about 10 to 15 feet in front of home plate and in the middle of the plate widthwise. Alternating between the curve and the screw ball, the pitcher tries to throw each pitch around the noodle. The curve (for a right-handed pitcher) will travel around the right side of the noodle, and the screw will travel around the left side of the noodle. The catcher should freeze the ball for a few seconds to show the severity of the movement.
2. **One-Leg Drill.** This drill is helpful in mastering positions, balance, and release path of the arm. As with the one-leg drill for the drop ball, the pitcher takes her position with the stride leg already in place. The location of the stride should be to the glove side of the middle power line. The back leg should be dangling with the toe touching for balance. The head should be set slightly toward the throwing-arm side, causing the posture to be slightly tilted. This position is known as a controlled off-balance position. From this position, the pitcher should make the circle (50 to 70 percent of full speed) and release the ball. After release, she will fall toward the throwing-arm side. This drill places the body in the correct landing position. The pitcher can feel that position and perform the movements required to complete the pitch. The noodle can be added to the one-leg drill after the pitcher is comfortable with the standard drill.

Accuracy Drills

1. **One-Skip Drill.** Most pitchers seem to find the high targets naturally. Usually, the low pitch causes most of the problems in accuracy, posture adjustment, follow-through, and so on. This is a great drill to learn lower release points. The pitcher should choose a focus point about five feet in front of the plate. The object is to one skip the ball to the catcher without adjusting or compromising form. If the ball is higher than the target, the pitcher should change the focus point to a lower spot. After the pitcher masters the one skip, she can try throwing to a glove placed as a target at the ground behind the plate. Focusing on one small spot, the pitcher throws into the glove or short hops the ball in front of the glove, changing focus if necessary. For fun, she can throw into a five-gallon bucket with the open end toward her. Sometimes, if she hits the bucket just right, it will stand up! Notice how many of these pitches end up knee high, making the point that from down low it is usually helpful to focus slightly lower than the target. To end the drill, the pitcher can finish with some knee-high pitches. She must be careful, though, not to raise her focus point too high.

Variations.

- a. By performing the one-skip drill against a concrete wall, the pitcher can hit the ground directly in front of the wall, skip the ball into the wall, and have the ball return to her in the air. This is an excellent way for the pitcher to work alone, but she must remember to stay true to her form.
2. **Side-to-Side.** In working side to side, the pitcher can work alone and become accustomed to various step locations by standing in the middle of a room. Someone can call out different objects in the room – the corner of the coffee table, the lamp, the coat rack, the glass of water, the plant, the left side of the television – and the pitcher can stride toward the object and finish through the pitch. This drill, of course, is done without a ball.
 3. **Four-Corner Drill.** This helps the pitcher develop control and accuracy. The pitcher throws to the extreme four corners of the strike zone. When she achieves accuracy at one spot, she moves the target to the next corner. A catcher or a target on the wall can be used. To adjust for the in and out targets, the pitcher must adjust her body angle from her normal stance. She turns the toe on the rubber about a half-inch in or out from the position she used to throw to the middle of the plate.
 4. **Maxed Out.** This drill improves pitchers' accuracy when pitching under conditions in which stamina is being challenged. Each pitcher works with a catcher. For 30 to 45 seconds, pitchers continuously deliver pitches without any breaks (speed drill). At the end of each session, catchers call a sequence of five specific pitches varied by type and location. Between the speed drill and sequence of five pitches, pitchers should take two shallow breaths followed by one deep breath, releasing tension in the shoulders during each exhalation. If pitchers accurately throw the sequence of five pitches to each designated location (judged by the catcher), they have successfully completed the drill. Pitchers who do not hit each specified location will repeat the speed drill and a new sequence of five different pitches until successful completion. Repeat until the pitcher hits each spot or has performed the speed drill a total of three to five times.

Variations.

- a. Another way to practice side to side is to work on the balance beam. With the beam turned slightly to indicate inside or outside, the pitcher can feel what it is like to step directly to the target. This drill is also beneficial for pitchers who are learning the proper power-line step when using a movement pitch. The balance beam forces the foot to go in the right direction, and the pitcher can focus on completing the correct mechanics.
- b. Side-to-side practice added to the towel drill will help gain muscle memory and increase repetitions to the locations. The catcher or helper in the towel drill, instead of holding the hand directly in front of the pitcher, can hold both hands out slightly to the left and right of center. The pitcher alternately steps back and forth to each hand while slapping the towel.

5. **Positive Pitching for Perfection.** This will help pitchers develop pitching accuracy and control using mental imagery. Near the end of pitching practice, the coach selects a sequence of three pitches, such as the following:

- Rise ball, high and inside
- Change-up, low and outside
- Curveball or screwball, low and inside

Each pitcher must accurately perform the sequence of pitches three times in a row (total of nine pitches). Before the delivery of each pitch, the pitcher should visualize the particular pitch to the desired location and repeat a positive self-statement (such as the following examples).

- I will hit my spot.
- This is my best pitch.
- I'm in control.
- Attack the zone.

If the pitcher misses the intended target, she must repeat the drill beginning with the first pitch in the sequence. The catcher judges the accuracy of each pitch.

6. **Joe's Long Toss.** The following speed drill also works for accuracy, while building arm strength. I have my pitchers pitch from approximately 20 feet, 10 balls. Then I have them move in ten-foot increments back until they are throwing from as far back as 60 feet. Once we have maxed out the comfortable accurate distance for the drill, I have them move to the rubber, and throw 20-50 hard pitches. I find that combining the short and long distances works on two things at the same time; arm strength (speed) and accuracy.
7. **Hit the Box.** This drill is a great way to improve accuracy and ball control for pitchers. Throw uphill or a slight incline, this forces players to keep the ball down. Use a computer paper box that holds 8.5 X 11 in paper (although, any small box will work as a target). Place it on a small stool or short chair about 12 to 14 inches off the ground. Have the pitcher at the regulation distance or just slightly more and throw the ball and try to hit the box consistently. The box provides a visual "strike zone" to aim at and since this box is both narrower and smaller than the normal players' strike zone. In addition the player can move to the right or the left a step and simulate pitching from the sides of the rubber. Have the

player see if she can "strike out the batter" by hitting the box 3 out of 6 times (a full count and a 3rd strike). Any contact with the box is a strike.

8. **Ten-Strike Game.** Working on pitching accuracy can sometimes be boring, so why not turn it into a game? This game can be played with two or more pitchers and a catcher. The object of the game is to throw ten strikes. The first pitcher throws as many balls as it takes to throw ten called strikes. The next pitcher tries to beat that number by throwing fewer pitches to get to ten strikes. The catcher is the judge. A more advanced game is to count only pitches where the catcher does not have to move her glove to catch the ball. If she moves her glove, it does not count.

Speed and Velocity Drills

1. **Dry Pitching.** This simple exercise is one of the easiest and most effective activities for improving speed. It can be used as a warm-up exercise or even during a game to keep loose. Stand in a pitching position with your stride foot well in front. Complete a number of arm rotations concentrating on making large circles (Windmill). If you add gradually increasing weight to your pitching hand you will be doing an exercise that builds arm strength. Use weights with caution however; limit them to what you can handle easily.
2. **Wall Pitching.** This is a good drill for beginning pitchers early in the spring. It consists of pitching against a wall of some type and catching the rebound. This enables you to perform a high number of repetitions in a short amount of time. Stand about 3 to 5 meters from the wall. Throw the ball hard enough to have it bounce back to you. Catch the ball with your glove and continue pitching as long as you wish. As your technique improves move back slightly and throw a little harder. You can also improve your concentration during this drill by placing a mark of some type on the wall, and trying to hit it with each pitch.
3. **Speed Pitching.** This exercise is based on the “overload” principle and requires you to work at or near maximum capacity. In this drill you throw a regulation softball to a catcher, increasing your workload as your strength increases. Pitch from regulation distance. Don’t try to throw “stuff” and don’t worry about control. Concentrate on “EXPLODING” off the mound and throwing as hard as you can. The goal is to try and throw each successive pitch a little harder than the previous one. Before you start decide how many pitches you want to throw this way, then increase that number by five or ten each week.
4. **Three-Step Drill.** (For leap-and-drag pitchers only.) This drill is designed to increase ball speed by developing more aggressive footwork. The pitcher should take three long steps back from the pitcher’s plate. Starting with the pivot foot, take three running steps to the pitcher’s plate and perform the normal pitching motion on the run. The idea is to get a running start so that an especially long leap off the pitcher’s plate can be achieved. The ball can be thrown much faster with the running start and it builds confidence in players that they can throw faster. It also helps develop the strength and athleticism to perform the leap-and-drag motion at a higher level.
5. **Speed Drill.** The pitcher should take her place on the mound. After someone says, “Go,” the pitcher begins to pitch a predetermined number of pitches, pitching the ball as fast and as quickly as she can. She drives her back leg through normally and stays in tune with other correct mechanics. As soon as she finishes a pitch, she hurries back to the rubber and sets her feet for the next pitch. Meanwhile, the catcher catches the ball and throws it back as fast as she can. The pitcher should be on the rubber to catch the throw and immediately pitch again. She omits the windup and makes just the circle before release. The scale that follows is a good guide for timing a series of pitches. It is helpful to use two balls. The pitcher starts with one, and the catcher with another. The catcher, who should be standing, should not throw her ball until she has caught the pitch.

Number of Pitches	Minimum Time in Seconds
10	30
12	36
15	45
20	60

During the year the pitcher should build up to a speed-drill workout of 60 pitches, which could be six sets of 10, five sets of 12, four sets of 15, or three sets of 20. She should do the sets at the end of a normal workout.

6. **Fast and Slow.** The purpose of this drill is for the pitcher to practice changing speeds. Working with her catcher, the pitcher alternates fast and off-speed pitches. The goal is to keep the delivery time the same.
7. **Bag Drill.** This drill involves pitching a bag with a ball in it. Take any kind of plastic shopping bag, and drop a ball in the middle of it. Now, put your fingers through the holes of the bag, and then pitch the bag, just like you would if it were a ball. Now, it will probably go straight up the first time, a common occurrence with almost everyone who tries it. All you need to do is let go sooner. Remember that the faster your hand moves, the sooner you have to let go of the ball. Try it again this time and let go sooner. Practice getting the right release point, and on feeling your hand go faster as you let go of the bag. What makes this drill helpful is the weight of the ball and the length of the bag, which create a momentum that forces your hand to go faster than it normally does.
8. **Over-Weighted / Under-Weighted Ball Drill.** This drill helps to increase strength and speed of the pitch. We often recommend that a pitcher throw 15-20 pitches with an over-weighted ball each practice session. It is important to warm-up properly, and use caution when using the weighted ball to prevent injuries. You can buy regulation-size 12" (circumference) softballs that weigh up to 12 ounces (twice the weight of a regulation 6¼+ ounce softball). Typically our pitchers use a 9-, 10-, or 11-ounce ball for strength development. Otherwise, you can create your own 8-ounce weighted ball by adding 1½ to 2 ounces of 1½"-long finishing nails into the seams between the stitches. Pound them into the ball along the seams every 2 to 3 stitches and counter-sink each nail. (You might want to also dip each nail in a small dab of glue first to help stop them from partially coming back out). As for the under-weighted ball, balls that are below the official weight of a softball can be used. Practice good pitching mechanics and fundamentals using a 4- or 5-ounce ball, then move to an over-weighted 8 or 9-ounce ball before moving back to the regulation softball.
9. **4 Control #1.** Stand facing toward the wall in your stride position (standing sideways). Take a ball and flick your ball straight to the wall and it should come right back to you. Only use your wrist no windmill. This drill can be done indoors with a rubber or incredi-ball, or outside with a regular ball against a pitch-back.
10. **4 Control #2.** This drill is also to be done in or outdoors. Stand 8 feet away from the wall in your stride position, do your windmill and close your hips and the ball should come right back to you.
11. **4 Control #3.** This one is also to be done in or outdoors. Stand 6 feet away from a wall in your stride position and just do your windmill do not close your hips, the ball should come right back to you, time yourself for 15 seconds and see how many you can do. Every time you do it see if you can get more than the time before.
12. **4 Control #4.** The last drill should be done outside with a catcher. Get a weight ball and

kneel down on one knee with your other knee facing the catcher. And only using your wrist snap flick the ball to your target or catcher. As you do 15 move back a couple of feet. When you're about 10 feet from the plate use a regular ball. Then when you're about 20 feet away from the plate do the windmill, until you can do this all the way from the rubber.

13. **Carpet Drill.** This drill is used to improve pitching speed. Find a heavy tarp or carpet remnant at least 6 feet wide and 10 feet long, hang it from a joist in the basement or a rafter in the garage, and then just wail the ball at it with all of your might. Don't worry about control, just throw hard. Use your full wind-up and good pitching mechanics, but throw each pitch as hard as you can, without worrying about accuracy. There's no one to call balls and strikes, just think that each pitch needs to be a little harder than the last.
14. **Mixing Speeds and Locations.** One of the best drills a pitcher can do is to work in practice on mixing speeds and locations. This is how a typical game will be, so it is advantageous to work like a game in practice. This type of precision and pitch control is going to take a lot of practice. The pitcher should stay on the pitch until she hits it. For example, she may throw 10 inside fastballs and only one outside fastball. Hopefully as she practices more and more, it will take less and less time for her to hit the pitches. Mix the sequences up as she becomes more skilled at hitting the target. Only use the pitches that your pitcher throws. You will see quickly what targets or combinations need more work.

Leg Drive Drills

1. **Push-Off.** It is important to push-off the mound forcefully (speed), to maintain good balance of your body at all times (control) and maintain proper weight distribution on each leg (advanced pitches). Start with the normal pitching position with weight back on the stride foot, but without a ball. Transfer your weight forward to the pivot foot and start taking a step with the stride foot to move your body forward. Bend the knee of your pivot leg as your stride foot reaches to take a forward step. Stepping style pitchers should turn the pivot foot toward third base. Push off the mound by straightening the pivot leg and thrusting the hips/stomach forward. This is where throwing speed can be achieved. Be sure to thrust toward the target and not upward. The stride foot should land pointing substantially in the direction of the throw. It is important that you stride in the direction of the throw; if your stride foot lands to one side, your body will be out of balance and control will be more difficult. The knee should be bent on the stride leg when it lands. Follow through by dragging the pivot foot forward off the mound and planting it in a position which will enable you to field a ball hit back to you. Don't lift your pivot foot during the drag – it is illegal for women!

Variations.

- a. Bend forward at the waist as you transfer weight to the pivot foot, and then straighten up tall as you stride forward and push off the pitcher's plate. The push-off should thrust the hips forward and complete the straightening.
 - b. Perform the windmill arm motion, but without a ball. This may be necessary when trying to correct improper placement or direction of stride foot plant.
 - c. If the pitcher has difficulty bending the pivot leg knee, consciously "squash a bug" with the heel of the pivot foot during the motion.
 - d. To encourage a more energetic push-off, place a target on the floor that promotes a longer reach with the stride foot.
2. **Back-Leg Drive Drill.** Try placing a ball at the inside of the drive foot. If the pitcher uses correct action, the heel of the drive foot will not disturb the ball. If the pivot occurs, the ball will roll away.
 3. **Back-Leg Drive Drill #2.** Another drill to correct the back-leg drive is for the pitcher to start about a stride away from the catcher. The catcher places the mitt at the height of the pitcher's knee. Without a ball, the pitcher goes through the motion, striding right under the catcher's glove. As soon as the stride foot is set, the drive-leg knee should come forward and into the glove. The toe of the drive leg should still go toward the heel of the stride foot. This drill will create a nice visual aid even when the pitcher is 40 feet away.
 4. **Long Toss.** Long tossing a ball is an effective way of uncovering lower-body problems. *Distance will magnify mistakes.* Pitchers can start at regulation distance and gradually back up to 75 to 150 feet, depending on the size and the strength of the pitcher. As the pitcher backs up, she can put a slight arc on the pitch to carry the distance. This activity should appear more like tossing or playing underhand catch than pitching. The focus should not

be on throwing a strike height wise but on stepping on the power line or pulling the ball through a straight line. In backing up, if the pitcher does not correctly use the back-leg drive, she will compromise her posture and the ball will fall short of its destination. This drill can greatly improve the pitcher's understanding of proper mechanics.

5. **Chalk Drill.** Stride aggression can be improved in several ways. The coach can observe the pitcher's stride on several pitches without her realizing that the coach is trying to get an honest idea of her natural stride. The coach then places a chalk mark where her toe is landing and another three or four inches in front of the first. The pitcher should try to reach the new mark. If that is easy, the distance can be increased by another three or four inches. The pitcher should not attempt to do too much at one time.
6. **Rope Drill.** Knowing the natural stride of the pitcher, the coach can place a rope in front of her at about three-quarters the full distance of her stride. The rope can be four to five inches off the ground. This placement will encourage the pitcher to stride farther as well as drive the stride leg (by forcing it to stay higher longer). The distance and height of the rope can be changed reasonably and gradually. But the pitcher must keep in mind the timing that must occur with the stride-foot landing and the arm between ten o'clock and twelve o'clock.
7. **Harness Training.** Ankle harnesses can be used to increase strength in the legs (when resisted) or create quicker leg drive (when assisted). A piece of theratubing attached to an ankle harness balances the forces. The pitcher should perform an assisted leg drive for 10 pitches and then a resisted leg drive for 10 pitches. For the resisted leg drive, the ankle harness goes around the ankle of the leg drive. A coach or partner should take a position behind the pitcher. The theratubing should be extended but not pulled, and there should be no slack in the tubing. The pitcher should stride forward and drive the back leg as normally as possible. The resistance can be adjusted but not to the extent that it changes the pitcher's mechanics or inhibits the drive pattern. The pitcher can actually pitch into a net or fence on the resisted drill. For the assisted leg-drive, the coach or partner takes a position in front of the pitcher, again permitting no slack in the tubing. As the pitcher strides forward, the coach will have to draw his or her hand backward to keep the slack out of the tubing. Again, the coach or partner can adjust the pressure he or she imparts on to assist the leg drive forward but still must permit the pitcher to drive toe to heel and maintain mechanics. The pitcher should shadow pitch this drill, that is, not use a ball.
8. **One-to-One Drill.** In this drill the pitcher stands balanced on the drive leg. Bending slightly as if preparing to jump, she powers outward with the stride, beginning with the thigh or quad of the drive leg rather than the foot or leg of the stride leg. Some pitchers will feel awkward when first trying this drill because they are not accustomed to using their legs to incorporate power. They start the motion simply by stepping forward comfortably. By starting the drill with the drive leg, the body will start to count on the contribution of power, thus generating more speed overall. Once the pitcher has pitched the ball, she should balance on her stride leg. The pitch goes from one leg (the drive leg) to the other leg (the stride leg). Isolation for strengthening is a factor, and balance is incorporated.
9. **Brace Drill.** Like the one-to-one drill, the brace drill isolates the drive leg to enhance power and strength. The pitcher positions the drive leg against something solid. In pitching lessons and clinics we sometimes use a base, but many objects will work, including a stair.

The pitcher braces the drive leg against the object and shifts most of her weight over the drive leg. This will leave the stride leg barely touching the ground. (If she is bracing against a stair, lightly touches the next stair with her stride leg.) She again begins the stride, using the thigh or quad of the drive leg (against the brace) to power outward. She finishes the pitch normally. In both of these drills, the emphasis is not on the length of the stride but on the force in getting to the stride leg powerfully.

10. **Weight Back Drill.** The goal of this drill is to teach players to keep their weight back during the pitching motion. In the open hip position and the front foot facing the target/catcher, the pitcher snaps the ball driving the back knee to the front knee. Immediately after the motion, the pitcher takes a step back to the original position with the back leg to perform the motion all over again. The feeling is like falling back into the original position. When the pitcher strides back off to either side of the line of force, the coach makes the corrections to bring the stride back onto the line of force
11. **Run-up / Walk-through.** This drill helps increase your leg speed in your stride leg, which can determine the speed of your pitching. We usually recommend that our pitchers use a 2-step approach by starting 5 or 6 feet behind the rubber. Step first with your left foot. The 2nd step lands on the front edge of the rubber where you start your rotation and delivery. After releasing the ball, continue "walking through the pitch" 1 or 2 steps toward the catcher. Eventually you can increase the speed of your approach by running to the pitching rubber. The faster you drive your stride foot forward, the faster you will pitch. This is especially beneficial when throwing your warm-up pitches at the start of a new half-inning.
12. **Walking Drill.** Begin one step behind the mound with the feet together. The pitcher should have the ball separated from the glove in the throwing hand. At the same time, the pitcher will take a step and present the ball and then throw hard to the wall or net. The focus is to take an aggressive step and drive off the mound. The step gets the momentum going for the pitcher. Try the drill for 10 times and then alternate a regular pitch from the mound and then a walking drill.
13. **Step Drill.** Sometimes a pitcher has a problem with her stride, it may not be long enough or forceful enough. To see if that's the problem, have a partner hold a stick in front of you before you begin your motion. As you stride, make sure your foot goes over the stick.
14. **Open Circle w/Step.** This drill focuses on the stride foot angle, the power line as well as the backside drive. During the motion, let your hand lead through and not your hips. With your power foot at a 45-degree angle, continue with a backside drive keeping your balance the whole way.

Hip Rotation Drills

1. **Drum Major Drill.** This drill is designed to drive the hips closed and increase ball speed by improving the closing body rotation. The pitcher performs the normal pitching motion and after the ball is released, the pitching arm is lifted high overhead and the pivot leg knee is brought up so forcefully that the pitcher hops on the planted stride foot. The pitcher looks like a high stepping drum major. This drill also checks balance on the stride foot, since an out-of-balance pitcher will not be able to hop on the stride foot.
2. **No Stride.** This exercise promotes proper ball release and speed when pitching. The pitcher delivers a ball to a partner without using a forward stride. The partner can be another pitcher, so this is a good warm-up drill. The stride foot is even with the pivot foot. The pitcher pitches the ball using good hip rotation, a strong snap of the wrist, and a good follow-through, focusing on proper hip and arm mechanics. Pitchers should be aware of the danger of not rotating the hips and then throwing only with the arm.
3. **Side Drill.** Have the pitcher stand sideways to the catcher with both feet on the power line, shoulder width apart. With the catcher 20-30 feet away, have the pitcher take a side step down the power line, using full arm motion to throw the ball. The body should finish by rotating the position facing the catcher. Concentrate on an aggressive and balanced stride, and completing the hip rotation.
4. **9 O'clock One-Step Drill.** This drill is designed to assist in "closing" and using the lower body or hip rotation. Face 3rd base (for a right-hander) start by holding the ball straight up in the air, and glove hand pointing toward the catcher. Throw hard, and follow through, ending up in the ready position.
5. **Standing 1-2-3 Drill.** Emphasis here should be on the rotation of the hips as well as the push with the back leg, keeping the knee slightly bent. Start with both your hands forward, pointing at the target and your feet in the power line position. Bring your throwing hand with the ball overhead, slightly bending your elbow, with your glove still pointing at the target. Follow through and finish with increased speed when reaching the bottom of the pitching motion.

Arm Rotation Drills

1. **Arm Whip.** This drill is designed to improve the whipping action in the arm that occurs just prior to ball release. This action works in combination with the wrist snap, and it is necessary to achieve high ball speeds. Stand in the “power” position in which you face the target with the stride foot placed forward of the pivot foot. The feet should be spread wider than the shoulders. Extend the glove arm toward the target and swing the pitching arm rearward to a horizontal position while rotating hips and shoulders to the “open position.” The wrist should be “cocked” and the arm slightly bent at the elbow. From this position, bring the pitching arm down forcefully to the side while closing the hips and shoulders. Stop the elbow at the hip and allow the pitching hand to pass while releasing the ball with a snap of the wrist. After the ball is released, the elbow may follow the pitching hand past the hip. Throw the ball as fast as possible without letting the elbow pass the hip before ball release.

Variations.

- a. **Arm Whip from 9:00 Position.** Standing along the power line with the glove hand pointed at the target and the ball hand in line with the glove hand (the body should be a T), snap the ball toward the target and the glove hand down at the same time. Bend your legs so your weight is over the back leg. As the ball and glove are pulled down rotate the hips and shoulders so the belly button faces target at release. The elbow should also point at the target during the follow-through.
 - b. **Arm Whip from 12:00 Position.** Standing along the power line with the ball hand directly overhead, snap the ball toward the target and the glove hand down at the same time. Bend your legs so your weight is over the back leg. As the ball and glove are pulled down rotate the hips and shoulders so the belly button faces target at release. The elbow should also point at the target during the follow-through.
2. **Simple Toss.** The pitcher takes a ball and just lets the arm rock back a foot or so behind the hip. She rocks forward smoothly and tosses the ball to the catcher, who is standing. The pitcher should not be trying to throw a strike. She should simply toss the ball to the catcher. The catcher should gradually back up to full distance or perhaps a little farther. If the pitcher performs the toss correctly, she will be able to throw the distance with no problem. If the follow-through stiffens, the tosses will fall short or go sharply upward.
 3. **Glass of Water.** A visual aid, such as a glass of water, may help with going through the pitching motion – slowly of course. Correct motion will allow the glass of water to stay upright until the bottom of the circle, approximately 12 to 18 inches behind the body when the arm begins to move forwards for the wrist snap. At that point the water will spill out of the glass. Early loaders will spill water as soon as they reach the back side of the circle top.
 4. **Football Toss.** A drill that allows for faster arm movement while working on the correction of the early load is the football toss. The pitcher grips the football as if to throw a normal overhand pass. Using the pitching motion, she makes the circle and releases the ball in front of her body. The point of the ball located closest to the pinky finger must be heading straight upward. The pitcher must not be afraid to throw the ball high with an arch. This would indicate that the elbow leads the circle. An early loader will release the football on a flat angle with the tip aiming outward left and right and the ball spinning forward. Another

good aspect of this drill is the fact that it shows arm whip rather than straight-arm release. A pitcher who can get the point up in the air is leading correctly with the elbow. If the point goes directly outward to the catcher, the arm is straight. The pitcher should start this drill with a simple rock back and no circle but she should eventually add the circle and distance to help strengthen the arm and reinforce proper mechanics.

5. **Triple and Double Circles.** The pitcher kneels on one knee close to a net or a fence (right knee down for a right-handed pitcher). She makes her arm circle three times in a row as fast as she can before releasing the ball and tries to become faster with each circle. She should use muscles throughout the arm to make the circles, not just spin at the shoulder. (A slight curve to the arm rather than a straight arm indicates involvement of the whole arm.) The pitcher performs 10 pitches, and then drops to double circles for 10 pitches. She finishes with single circles but puts all the energy of the multiple circles into the single circle.
6. **Arm-Speed Development.** The purpose of this exercise is to learn the feeling of arm speed and to develop acceleration through the arm circle. The pitcher works alone on her arm circle. She stands in a sideways pitching position with the stride leg forward and the pitching arm above the head at the top of the circle. She moves the arm around in a perfect circle as fast as she can to get the feel of high arm speed. She keeps her arm totally relaxed, as loose as a noodle. The pitcher then focuses on building acceleration through the circle. Still sideways, she begins with the pitching arm at waist level. The pitcher focuses on lifting the arm in a relaxed manner and increasing the speed of the arm by accelerating on the downswing with a whip-like action. The arm is extended (elbow relaxed) to create the biggest arc and lever possible. The longer the lever, the more force it can produce.
7. **Wall Drill.** This drill helps the pitcher develop proper rotation of the arm. The pitcher throws imaginary pitches using a wall to keep the arm straight in a perfect circle. She stands perpendicular to a wall with the pitching arm close to the wall and about four inches away. The pitcher uses the full pitching motion (including the stride and the opening of the hips), keeping the arm straight and in tight so that it does not contact the wall. The pitcher walks and moves down the wall throwing imaginary pitches.
8. **The Wall.** Have the players line up about a foot or so from a wall with their body perpendicular and their throwing arm closest to the wall. Make them deliver the ball to a catcher 40 or so feet away. The intent of the drill is to make sure that the pitcher isn't getting long in the back. If the player is, then he/she will hit the wall with the throwing arm. Some coaches think that the use of this drill makes the kid short arm the ball, but most kids have full extension towards the ground, not straight back.
9. **Pitcher's Wall.** This drill will make sure pitchers do not drop their shoulders and make that swooping motion. Stand next to a wall, approximately 4 to 6 inches away, feet angled at a 45 degree, then go through the motion of either slingshot or windmill.
10. **Upper Body Drill #1.** Stand with your feet together in the open position (45-60 degree angle) and throw as hard as you can to a full distance (your pitching distance) target. This drill works on the upper body and arm speed, so don't get into a habit of slowing the arm down to match the feet.

11. **Upper Body Drill #2.** Stand, while balancing on your back foot (push foot) in the open position (45-60 degree angle) and throw as hard as you can to a full distance (your pitching distance) target. This drill works on the upper body and arm speed and also works on keeping weight back using your middle body.
12. **Upper Body Drill #3.** (Triples): This drill works on arm speed making your pitches noticeably faster. Get into your “power position” (feet spread wide, but comfortably apart in open position with weight back) about three-quarters of your full distance. Swing arm around very quickly 3 times releasing ball on third revolution. Glove arm comes up on first circle and down with pitching arm on third circle at release. Arm should be very loose like a wet noodle on each circle.

Wrist Snap Drills

1. **Wrist Snap.** This drill improves the wrist snap to achieve more ball speed, and it improves control of the ball during release. One of its main advantages is that it can be done almost anywhere. In a seated position, rest your forearm on your thigh. Extend the wrist and throwing hand out over your knee. With a fastball grip, cock and snap your wrist to throw the ball straight upward. You may initially hold your forearm down with the other hand to insure that only the wrist muscles are used, but eventually you must learn to do this drill by relaxing your forearm during the wrist snap. You may use any ball, but a weighted softball is best. Work on increasing the heights of the ball as it is thrown (ball speed) and work on controlling where it lands (ball control).

Variations.

- a. While standing with the pitching arm extended forward, grip a softball and flick it straight up with the wrist. Keep the elbow relaxed and don't throw with the arm.
 - b. While standing with the pitching arm extended forward and palm up, place a softball on the fingers of your pitching hand and flick it upward using a wrist snap. Note, don't grip the ball with your thumb.
 - c. While standing with your arm at your side, grip a ball and flick it to the catcher using only a wrist snap. Keep your elbow relaxed.
2. **Wrist Snap Behind Back.** This drill develops the wrist snap by isolating the wrist, preventing the pitcher from using the elbow to snap the ball. The pitcher stands sideways 5 to 10 feet from the catcher or a wall. The glove side faces the target, and the ball is behind the back. The pitcher flips the ball by snapping the wrist.
 3. **Wrist Snap Under Knee.** Like the behind the back wrist snap, this drill also isolates the wrist. Partners stand about 10 feet apart. Pitchers can throw to pitchers. If right-handed the pitcher kneels on the left knee with the right leg bent and the right foot flat on the ground. The pitching arm is placed against the leg with the ball and hand under the knee. The pitcher flips the ball in the air to her partner by snapping the wrist.
 4. **Broom.** Here is a drill for pitchers players trying to learn the wrist snap. Have a friend or parent hold a broom where the long part is horizontal and touching the arch in your back right where your wrist would hit on your release point. If you take your arm behind you and slowly pitch, your wrist will hit the broom making your wrist flick the ball. You don't want to throw the ball hard, it should not go far and will go slow.
 5. **Forearm Strength.** This drill can increase your strength in the hand, wrist, and especially the forearm. Put a pile of single sheet newspapers in an area you would normally walk by the most times during the day. Every time you walk by, grab a sheet and wad it up, using only one hand. This is the kind of exercise that you hardly notice doing after awhile
 6. **L Drill.** This purpose of this drill is to help pitchers with the wrist snap. Have the pitcher stand the distance of the rubber or closer in. If she is right-handed, put her standing, facing 3rd base. Put the left foot towards the catcher (toe pointing the catcher). Hold your glove up

towards the catcher (arm out like a wing). Take the throwing hand and hold it up so that with your glove and ball arms you are making an "L" shape. Then just let your hand drop and snap your wrist.

7. **Pull Down.** Stand in stride position. Extend the throwing arm to rear, parallel to the ground, and the glove arm forward, parallel to the ground. Pull down the throwing arm and glove arm and release the ball with a full wrist snap. Do not stride, but shift weight slightly to the stride leg and close hips towards the catcher after release. Allow the throwing arm to follow through to the bent release position.
8. **Snap Drill.** When you make advances pitches, most of your motion remains the same. The things that change the most are your grip and your snap, so it helps to isolate these when you are learning. Stand sideways, as if you have already taken your stride, about ten feet from a partner. Throw your pitch without the windup and with just a slight backswing, working on getting the most of your power from your wrist snap. Work on all the pitches this way until you feel comfortable with the different releases.

Global Motion Drills (general technical drills)

1. **Pendulum Swing.** This drill improves ball speed by working on hip and shoulder closing rotation and on improving the arm whip and wrist snap. It also improves control by teaching how to keep the arm in the pitching plane during the downswing and by practicing the proper release of the ball. Stand in the “power” position in which you face the target with stride foot placed forward of the pivot foot. The feet should be spread wider than the shoulders. Extend both arms forward toward the target and without moving your feet, swing the pitching arm back while rotating the hips and shoulders to the “open position”. The ball should be straight overhead, the wrist should be “cocked” and the arm slightly bent at the elbow. For beginners, the arm may be started from a position behind the hip, and as the drill is mastered, the arm is gradually swung back farther until it can be started from the overhead position. From the overhead position, swing the arm downward in the normal pitching motion while rotating your hips and shoulders back to the “closed position” (i.e., facing batter) and without moving your feet. The glove arm should be pulled down to the side at the same time to assist the closing rotation and maintain balance. The trick is to keep the pendulum (i.e., the pitching arm with the ball) in the pitching plane that includes the target while your body is rotating to the closed position. This is not easy. Release the ball with a wrist flick. The arm should not be a stiff shaft, but a flexible “whip”. Make sure the ball is released from the hand in the proper manner for the pitch being thrown. This drill should be done without moving the feet and with weight evenly distributed.

Variations.

- a. Advanced pitchers can practice with feet closer together and with more weight forward (drop ball) or with a wider stance and more weight on the back foot (rise ball). To keep weight back you will have to push back with the stride leg as the arm is pulled down to the release point.
 - b. Perform the drill on one knee (the pivot leg knee) to further focus on the upper body motion and to force the upper body back. Obviously the knee should be well padded for comfort.
 - c. Perform the drill with the stride foot propped up to shift most of the body weight back on the pivot foot. This gives the pitcher the feel of throwing with weight back.
 - d. Take a step with the pivot foot after the ball is released to finish in a defensive position. Take a step with the pivot foot and lift your knee up to your chest before planting the pivot foot. This helps develop a forceful hip closing rotation.
 - e. Leap-and-drag pitchers should practice pushing rearward with the stride leg as the arm is brought downward to assist the closing rotation of the hips.
2. **Towel Drill.** This drill is an excellent way to practice without having to have a real catcher or a place to throw. The pitcher should grip the towel with three or four fingers on one side and the thumb opposite the fingers on the other side. A partner or catcher should stand in front of the pitcher about two feet ahead of where the stride foot lands. The partner should face the pitcher and hold a hand or glove out in front, directly over the power line. The

pitcher should go through her regular motion and slap the towel through the partner's hand. The partner can tell the pitcher whether the towel hit squarely or hit off the edge of the thumb or pinky. A hit off the edge would indicate a pitch that would not have been located down the power line and over the plate.

3. **Windmill.** This drill improves speed and control by practicing the timing of the entire body rotation and arm revolution. Stand in the "power" position facing the target and with the stride foot placed forward of pivot foot. The feet should be spread wider than the shoulders. Extend the arms forward toward the target with the glove hand covering the ball in the pitching hand. Revolve the pitching arm in the complete windmill motion without moving your feet. Rotate the hips and shoulders to the "open" position as the pitching arm swings overhead, and then close as forcefully as possible when the pitching arm reaches straight back from the shoulder. The glove arm should be swung down to the side to assist this closing rotation. Make sure your arm remains in a plane that intersects the target during all phases of the arm revolution and keep the arm extended and relaxed. As the elbow is pulled downward to the hip, initiate the arm whip and release the ball with a wrist flick so that it rolls off the ends of the fingers (unless practicing an advanced pitch).

Variations.

- a. Perform the drill on one knee to focus more on upper body motion and to shift body weight back. The pivot leg knee should be well padded.
 - b. Perform the drill with the stride foot propped up to shift weight back on the pivot foot and give the pitcher the feel of throwing with the body very upright or leaning back.
 - c. Perform the drill with the pitching shoulder near a wall or fence and throw along the wall or fence. This helps keep the arm in a single "pitching" plane during the entire revolution.
 - d. Perform the drill in front of a mirror using rolled up socks. This enables the pitcher to see and feel proper arm rotation in the pitching plane. It also enables the pitcher to see and feel the pitching hand position relative to the hip at ball release.
 - e. Leap-and-drag style pitchers should practice pushing rearward with the stride leg during the downswing of the pitching arm to assist hip closure.
 - f. Advanced pitchers may bend at the waist at beginning to help "sling" the pitching arm upward by straightening the body as the arm lifts overhead. Weight can be distributed evenly or shifted to the front or the back foot when practicing advanced pitches.
 - g. Take a step with the pivot foot after the ball is released to finish in a defensive position.
 - h. Take a step with the pivot foot after the ball is released and lift the knee up to your chest before planting the pivot foot. This helps develop a forceful hip closing rotation.
4. **Full-Body Harness Training.** This training should only be done with pitchers who have the physical integrity to withstand the forces imparted on the body. It is not recommended for young or inexperienced pitchers. The harness fits around the waist or midsection of the

pitcher. The holder should stand in front of the pitcher and slightly off to the glove side. (Note: the holder should try to stay close to the middle without getting into the path of the ball, and the pitcher should use a flexible practice ball rather than a regulation hard softball, in case the holder gets hit). The purpose of the harness is to create momentum. Essentially, the harness makes the stride more aggressive, in turn making the arm more aggressive and quicker. The full harness can also be used behind to strengthen the body overall within the pitching motion itself.

5. **Mirror Drill.** This drill is supposed to teach the body muscle memory of the proper techniques. The pitcher stands in front of a full-length mirror with her glove in hand, about four to five feet from the mirror. The pitcher is to go through the proper pitching motion at a slow speed, while watching herself perform in the mirror. Each pitch should be performed 20-30 times to help the body learn the motion.

Variations.

- a. If you cannot get a mirror, have your pitcher face someone with proper mechanics, and after the pitcher goes through her motion she is to watch the coach or other pitcher go through the pitching motion. In this case the coach or other pitcher is taking place of the mirror. Make sure the pitchers go slowly and make each movement have a purpose.
6. **Wall Drill.** This drill is made to teach the pitcher to keep her arm straight and to open up into the star position. The wall acts as a deterrent to improper mechanics. If the pitcher does not keep her arm straight, get her hips open, and close strong, she might hit the wall with her arm or body. You will need either a wall or a fence that the pitcher can walk down. The wall should be around 30 feet long. If you use the fence of your softball field, make sure it is higher than the pitcher's reach. You do not want the pitcher to come down on the top of the fence wire. The pitcher stands sideways about four inches from the wall with her pitching arm closest to the wall. She begins her motion keeping her arm straight so that it does not hit the wall. The pitcher will need to open her hips up when she approached the star position. If she is in the position correctly, she should be facing the wall with both arms at shoulder height and legs opened shoulder-width apart. After the pitcher is in the star position, she should finish up her motion keeping her arm straight so that when she closes it again it does not rub or bump the wall. The pitching motion should be continuous while she walks down the 30-foot wall. Have each pitcher do 10 sets (one time down the wall counts as a set).
 7. **Baseball Mound Pitching.** This drill helps develop proper body lean and weight transfer. The pitcher pitches to a catcher off a baseball mound using the baseball rubber and a catcher at the regular softball distance. The angle of the mound forces a longer stride and helps the pitcher feel the importance of body lean and weight transfer.
 8. **Relax and Release.** This drill will help pitchers develop kinesthetic awareness of muscle tension while performing proper pitching mechanics. This awareness will help improve pitching speed and accuracy. Pitchers throw each type of pitch a total of 20 times in two sets of 10 each. Pitchers begin throwing pitches at a very high level of intensity by using all of their strength and effort to deliver the pitch. This will include an extensive amount of muscle tension in all major muscle groups, including the arms, legs, and torso. For the first set of 10 pitches, the pitchers should decrease the level of tension with each subsequent

pitch. By the 10th pitch of the first set, the delivery should become almost effortless. The pitchers then perform the second setoff pitches at the lowest, most efficient, level of muscle tension (the level experienced on the 10th pitch of the first set).

9. **Stair Step Workout.** This drill challenges pitchers to be able to hit the intended location with a specific count three times in a row. Direct the pitcher to focus her attention on a designated pitch location. Then have pitchers throw three pitches per location for each pitch in their repertoire (for example, the first pitch they select will be thrown three times with a different count on each of the three pitches (fastball 0-0, fastball 1-2, fastball 0-2). The first pitch is thrown with an 0-0 count; the focus is on hitting a spot for a called strike. The second pitch is thrown with a 1-2 count; focus is on “missing” slightly. The third pitch is thrown with an 0-2 count; focus is to miss farther off the plate. The pitcher is successful if she is able to locate all three pitches to the proper location on the specified count.
10. **Process Versus Product.** This helps pitchers improve pitching mechanics and establish body awareness by paying attention to specified body segments throughout the throwing motion. The pitcher stands 10 to 15 feet in front of a fence or a screen with a bucket of approximately 20 balls. She selects two specific fundamentals to practice throughout the drill, such as a wrist snap and foot placement. The pitcher will throw a total of three buckets of balls, directing her attention to one particular fundamental (body part) at a time. While throwing the balls from the first bucket, the pitcher devoted her attention to the first fundamental (e.g., wrist snap); during the second bucket of balls, she directs her attention to the second fundamental (e.g., foot placement). To help develop an awareness of each particular body part, the pitcher alternates throwing pitches with her eyes open and closed. For the final bucket of balls, the pitcher alternates her focus back and forth between the two body parts. Success is determined by proper execution of the isolated portion of the skill, not the outcome of the pitch.
11. **See a Strike.** This helps pitchers learn how to use mental imagery to perfect pitching mechanics. The pitcher performs her pitching motion in front of a mirror. After completing each pitch, the pitcher closes her eyes and imagines herself performing the pitch as if she is watching herself on video. Repeat 20 to 30 times.
12. **Japanese Pitching Drill.** The drill is used to develop great pitch control by having the pitcher throw strikes at varying distances. The drill has a catcher set at a stationary plate. The plate never moves. The pitcher should begin throwing at a distance 1/2 of her normal pitching distance. You should have 6-8 distance markers with the first being at her starting point and the longest being twice her normal pitching distance. The markers should be at 10-foot intervals and in a straight line with the plate. The object of the drill is to develop control by gradually moving toward and away from the targeted strike zone. The pitcher is required to throw 1-3 strikes from each marker before moving to the next. The catcher serves as the umpire. Variations of this drill may be to have 1-3 pitchers working and competing against each other. The drill teaches them to work fast, concentrate, and execute a perfect pitch. Make sure your pitchers are in condition for this drill. They will find that throwing strikes from longer distance requires great mechanics and builds arm strength. Make sure your players stretch and warm-up first. You may have to reduce the distance to match this drill to the present strength of your pitching staff.
13. **Pitch Tracking.** The pitcher is throwing to a catcher as she normally would in pitching

practice or bullpen work. The pitcher is throwing at her normal pitching distance. The coach has one or two batters, with helmets on, stand in the batter's box without bats. Each batter will assume her regular stance and imagine that she is holding a bat. The batters will "track" or watch the first three pitches out of the pitcher's hand until they hit the catcher's mitt, making sure to keep their head and eyes are on the ball all of the way. Next the batters will swing away with their "imaginary" bats. The batters will read the location of each pitch the pitcher throws and hit the ball where it is pitched. One batter or two batters can track pitches. Having two batters makes the pitcher have to concentrate even more. When two batters are tracking, they will do opposites. One will pull a pitch in a location that her tracking partner will hit to the opposite field. The coach can call out a count such as 2-0, 3-1, 1-2, and 0-2 to allow the batters, pitchers, and catchers certain mind-sets in different situations. Note: If your hitters are too young to perform this drill, have a coach stand in. The coach may wish to wear a helmet and wear a glove for protection. This is a tough drill, but it is great for developing concentration of all parties involved. Make sure all participants wear helmets and other proper protective equipment.

14. **20 x 4 Drill.** This is a dual-purpose drill. It teaches proper mechanics, increase pitch control, and helps the pitcher learn to perform under pressure. This drill is a pitching drill in which the young pitcher works at a smooth, rather fast pace, but only throw 50-60%. She should not be allowed to throw full speed. The objective of the drill is to teach concentration and develop great control. The pitcher has to throw 20 strikes before she throws 4 balls. She should be allowed to perform the drill at a shorter distance at first but she should be able to move to her regular pitching distance within a couple of weeks. If she throws 4 balls, she must start over. Be careful to not overwork her. However, keeping the distance short, emphasizing accuracy not speed, and making sure she properly stretches and warms up should prevent any chance of arm injury. With very young players you may want to make the drill a 10-3 drill. She must throw 10 strikes before she throw 3 balls or she must start over.
15. **K Drill.** This drill teaches the pitcher how to add some power to your release and secondly, it squares your body to the target making it easier to be more consistent. Start out in the "K" position. This is the position your body is in when you have taken your stride toward the plate, your glove hand is pointing toward the target and your ball hand is at its highest point. If you look at the body from the third base side, it resembles the letter "K". As you bring your ball hand around toward the release point, push off the pitching rubber with your trail foot violently so it squares your body to the target. This does a couple of different things.
16. **T Drill / Power Line Drill.** Draw a line from the pitcher's pivot foot (right foot for a right handed pitcher) on the rubber to the plate. This is your "T" Line or Power Line. Make the line about 7 feet long for beginners. Have the pitcher go through her complete motion, concentrating on stepping in line and close to the marker. Start without throwing the ball so she can concentrate on the marker. When she is comfortable, let her throw to a target 20-30 feet away. Do not worry about pitching accuracy. Continue until the stride becomes natural.
17. **Calling Your Pitches.** The ability to create movement on your pitches is helpful, but you must be able to throw these pitches to each part of the strike zone. In this drill, you will tell the hitter you're facing what pitch you're throwing. You need your catcher and a few hitters.

Throw to the hitters as if it were a real game having the catcher call balls and strikes. The difference, though, is that you are only allowed to throw one type of pitch during the at-bat and you must tell the batter what pitch it is you're throwing. For example, for the first round of hitters, you will only throw your drop pitch. The batters will be aware that every incoming pitch will be a drop pitch. This forces you to concentrate on throwing to different locations of the strike zone. Because you cannot fool the hitter, you will have to throw her inside, outside, high, and low. For the second round, pick a different pitch.

18. **1-2-3 Drill.** The objective of this drill is to teach the pitcher to extend the glove hand forward and to develop good rhythm. On one knee, with your hips open, place both your hands forward, pointing at the target. Bring your throwing hand with a ball overhead and bend the elbow slightly, with your glove hand still pointing at the target. Follow through and finish with increased speed when reaching the bottom of the pitching motion.
19. **Reach for the Sky.** This drill touches up on the wrist snap, leg drive and, arm speed & full extension. While focusing on reaching for the sky at the very top of windmill, throw 8 balls into a net concentrating on wrist snap, where the pitcher snaps her wrist as quickly and as violently as possible. Next the focus is on arm speed, throwing another 8 balls into a net. And finally the leg stride, where players will make a mark in the dirt for her stride on the first pitch and then try to beat it.

Miscellaneous Drills

1. **Posture Drill.** A good drill to reinforce correct posture is for the pitcher to position herself on both knees at a 45-degree angle to the target. From the two-knees position, she pitches normally. If her head does not stabilize itself over her body, or if her spine bends in any direction, she will fall in that direction. As she continues to catch herself with her hands, the correction will sink in.
2. **Posture Drill #2.** Another drill to straighten up posture is to get positioned so that the stride foot will land about three feet in front of a wall or net. She starts with about 50 percent effort and throws the ball into the net or wall about head high or slightly above. (Use a Flexi-ball or rubber ball instead of a hard ball for this drill.) If posture is straight up and the pitcher does not miss the desired target low, the ball will ricochet off the wall or net and fly backward over her head. A catcher can be positioned behind the pitcher to retrieve balls. If the pitcher bends forward, she will be unable to perform this drill consistently with any success.
3. **Cool Pose.** This drill helps pitchers develop the three C's (confidence, composure, competitiveness) by modeling confident behavior during pitching practice. Conduct regular pitching drills. Instruct the pitchers to exude confidence through body language and by modeling the three C's during the drills. Presence in the pitcher's circle should include good posture, shoulders back, head high, and eyes focused on the catcher. Don't allow players to drag their feet or hang their head. Players should use affirmations to reinforce the physical elements of body language throughout each drill. Positive affirmations for pitchers may include "This is a strike," "I've got your number," or "I'm in control."
4. **The Great Escape.** This drill enables pitches to practice using a pre-performance routine that will mentally and physically prepare the pitcher to be more consistent and successful. Set up a scrimmage by dividing the team in half. Throughout the scrimmage, the pitchers should perform a pre-performance routine before each pitch. The sample routine denoted by the acronym ESCAPE includes the following elements:
 - **Evaluate** – evaluate the situation (outs, runners, batter tendencies).
 - **Signs** – read the signs from the catcher.
 - **Cue** – direct attention to a specific cue (the pitch to be thrown).
 - **Assess** – assess your energy level.
 - **Pitch** – throw the pitch.
 - **Evaluate** – evaluate the effectiveness of the previous pitch and repeat the initial evaluation procedure.
6. **Flamingo Drill.** This drill is used to improve the pitcher's balance. Throw a normal pitch and try to balance on your plant foot only at the end. If there is an imbalance in the pitch, then the pitcher will fall forward or to the side. After several pitches during this drill the pitcher will learn to keep her balance. Added benefit is the improvement of using the front leg. Try not to pivot your pitching side through at the end of this drill.
7. **Triangle Drill.** This drill will help with balance problems. The pitcher stands at full distance with push foot on the pitching rubber facing straight ahead at the target. Lift the stride foot and both arms directly at the target. The stride foot should be at least 1 foot off the

ground and arms should be horizontal and no more than 6 inches apart (care should be taken to make sure arms are facing the target and not off to one side or the other). Balance in this position for 3 seconds and then throw a full pitch. Don't drop hands or feet back down, but lift directly from start position.

8. **Ball-Knee Drill.** Stand in the release position. Raise the stride knee off the ground (thigh parallel to the ground and calf perpendicular to the ground). Balance your weight on the pivot leg. Extend the throwing arm over the left thigh and knee, and glove arm over throwing arm. Push the glove arm and throwing arm towards catcher while pushing out with the stride leg. Perform a full arm circle while striding forward. Release the ball, and complete a full follow-through.
9. **Step Back - Arm Circle.** This drill helps the pitcher keep her weight back while she pitches. Have her stand in the stride position and perform a full arm circle drill. With the glove and hand pointed towards catcher, have her perform a one-arm circle, driving the back knee in to the front knee at ball release. She should immediately take a step back with the back leg giving her a sense of falling back. She should fall back along the power line if she is not off balance at ball release.
10. **Weight Back - Full Motion.** This drill will help the pitcher keep her weight back while delivering the pitch. Have her pitch at 75% speed, driving her back knee into her front knee and holding that balanced position until the catcher returns the ball.
11. **Bucket Drill.** The point of the drill is to help with keeping the weight back. Use a 5 or 6 gallon bucket to put your plant foot (left foot for right-handed pitchers) up on to help keep your weight back. Your feet and body should be in the "open position"(45-60 degree angle). Keeping your right side down and relaxed, release the ball in the open position.



Are You Struggling to Achieve Your Full Potential?

Is Your Team Underperforming?

Does Your Game Need a Boost?

If so, visit us at www.softballperformance.com and discover how we can help you boost your game quickly and easily!