



# Coaching Youth Baseball

## CHAPTER 8 – PITCHING

### Fundamentals of Pitching

**ADAM CHRIST:** Alright coaches, we're going to take a look at three drills that will help prevent any injuries for your pitcher's arms and will also get them a little more consistent with throwing strikes.

Over here we have Coach Clay who is a Ripken certified instructor. He's going to help us with some of these drills today. The first drill we're going to take a look at is the one knee drill. We're going to take the lower half out of the equation when we're talking about pitching.

Have the kids take knee (right handed throwers should put the right knee down). The big thing in this drill is taking the hand back and get the elbow above the shoulder. You want to ask players to look back. Can he see the back of his hand? That's the big thing, you don't want to see the palm of the hand because that will put a lot of stress on the elbow. When a player looks back, if he can see the back of his hand then he's good. Elbow should always be above the shoulder. If you look at the front side you can see he is looking right at the catcher and that gives him the direction where he's going to throw. So he'll just do that. There are three check points:



1. See the back of his hand
2. Elbow is above the shoulder
3. Either elbow or glove is pointed toward the target

If you take a little bit and you add something to this drill, you can make sure their chest goes straight down to their knee and have a little follow through as you can see with Coach Clay over here: he throws the ball with his chest over his knee.

That is the first drill that can help your pitchers throw strikes. Eliminate the bottom half, you don't want to overwhelm the kids right away so we're just going to work on the upper half. Now we're going to have them stand and we're going to add a little bit of the bottom half with a power position drill. Coach Clay will show us the power position drill. You can see his feet are spread apart, he's got a good solid base. Again it goes back to the one knee drill, everything else is the same: he can see the back of his hand, his elbow is above his shoulder and either his front elbow or his glove is pointed at the target. Now he's going to just pivot with his lower half, throw the ball and you can see his chest is over his knee again. So now we're going to do it standing to work on the lower half.

Coach Clay is demonstrating the importance of making sure to finish, the importance of bending over and putting that chest over that knee, that's going to allow you to get through the ball and keep the ball lower in the strike zone.

That's the second drill when we talk about pitching. Remember the first drill was the one knee drill where we eliminated the bottom half. The second one was power position where we had them stand straight up and all we concentrated on is keeping the elbow above the shoulder, looking at the back of the hand and pointing either the elbow or the glove at the target.

Now we'll go into a drill call the balance drill. As you see with Coach Clay, he's pitched for quite a while, he has pretty good balance. Notice that he can stand there for a long time with one knee up. This is important. You want to keep your weight back, balance and gather yourself before you release the baseball. What position did he get into after that? The power position.

So he's going to do a drill called the toe tap where he taps his foot three times before throwing. This reminds him to get his weight back and stay balanced. Also, it helps him stay gathered.

Now it's important coaches to remember, when they're putting their foot down it's not hard. Tell the kids there is a hundred dollar bill down there and they don't want their cleat to go through it. So it's a soft landing so they stay back.

Coaches, for the younger players, if they're having trouble getting that balance just put your hands on their shoulders to hold them back until they get used to it.

Now coaches, remember the three drills:

1. The one knee drill – eliminate the bottom half and just work on the upper body
2. The power position – get them started with standing up, but don't put too much motion into it.
3. Balance drill – Remember that it's important to gather themselves before they throw.

Those are the three drills to remember and hopefully they will help you become successful coaches by helping you pitchers become better.