

Using coach-pitch with younger hitters

Provided by Jeff Buxton, [NAVYU](#)

For Active.com

February 27, 2007

Coach-pitch is a technique where players under nine years old bat a baseball that is safely pitched to them by their own coach. I admit I have problems with it. If we called it coach-aim-the-ball-more-or-less-at-home-plate-sorry-ooops-darn-look out!-OK-this-one-is-going-over-pitch, we'd be more accurate in naming the technique if not in throwing it. This is because.

- Coach-pitch is HARD -- some coaches can pitch to little kids, and some can't.
- Some coaches can get the ball over the plate, but they throw too hard.
- Some coaches can get the ball over the plate slow enough, but it has too much arc.

From way up there

Most coach-pitch doesn't work because the ball is coming down to the batter as they try to take a swing. With the ball so high in the strike zone this causes kids to develop an uppercut to meet the ball coming down at them and develops other bad habits, like swinging at high pitches.

Ideally, the ball should come in like they do from pitching machines -- flat, waist-high and straight -- so that kids develop a more level swing. Getting a 6' adult to throw to a 3'8" child like that is easier said than done.

Fixing coach-pitch

I hit upon a possible solution in our summer coach-pitch program. We do a one-knee throwing drill with the kids I coach where we keep the glove knee up and make the regular throwing motion with the upper body. Its purpose is to train the kids in proper throwing mechanics, but why not try it for coach-pitch?

Getting down on one knee

I pitched to both teams this way: I moved in closer to halfway than 2/3 way to the mound, and I got down on one knee. From there I could use a dart-like throw, not unlike the one a second baseman makes on a double-play. I put myself VERY SLIGHTLY off the first base side; just enough for the pitcher behind me to see the batter, but not too much so that the straightness of the pitch was affected. As a right-hander I put myself in a position where my right arm pointed directly to the outside part of the plate on a right-handed batter.

Why it works

I had much better control of the speed, angle and accuracy of my pitches, and therefore my pitches came in flat and slow. Because I was fairly close to home plate I could throw quite slow and still not have to make a big arc to get it to the plate. I could place the pitches pretty much where I wanted to.

You can also adjust to the strengths and weaknesses of each batter easier this way. For the more advanced kids, I'd ask them where they wanted the ball, and I could usually put it there.

Advantages

- The "pitcher" can actually play on the pitcher's plate (no mound) safely, because they have a full view of the batter
- You are out of the way of ALMOST any throws to a base
- You are close enough to the batter to talk to the batter (and the nearby coach assisting kids with their hitting (we work with them even during the games)) without having to shout
- The games move MUCH faster since it takes fewer pitches for kids to hit the ball

With a little practice you can throw thigh- high flat-angle pitches that batters can actually hit, and help your kids develop proper swing mechanics without having to resort to expensive pitching machines and running electrical cords across a baseball diamond. Best of all they will feel a real sense of accomplishment as they get better and better