

Find out if your pitcher is warming up properly, or just wearing herself out

By Cindy Bristow

Making sure your pitcher is warming up properly without wearing herself out is crucial for a successful season. Too many pitchers take forever to warm up and still aren't ready for the game to start as they very often have a horrible first inning! Sound familiar? If so then your pitcher could benefit from a proper warm up routine designed to get her warm physically and mentally and her pitches ready for the game!

A proper warm up is vital to preparing a pitcher both physically and mentally to pitch well. Whether a pitcher is warming up for practice or for a game that warm up should be the same. The reason is - routine. Routine is something that happens the same way over and over and as a result, we can depend on it, we can trust it, and it can help calm us down. These are all qualities that come in handy - particularly when you're warming up to pitch an important game.

Too often, pitchers have a totally different warm up for games than the one they use for practice. And, even more common is the pitcher who warms up with out a clue why they're doing any of the things they're doing, what the goal of warm-ups should even be, and how they know when they're actually warm. That's why too often, pitchers take forever to "warm up", they don't actually get "warm" in their warm-ups and they end of pitching horribly the first inning or two. That pitcher has warmed up too long and has left her best game in the bullpen.

So, to help pitchers keep from throwing too many pitches in warm ups, or wasting time in warm-ups, or even getting worse by their warm up routines, let's look at the goals for a proper warm up and then a suggested warm up routine.

Goals for Warm Up:

- Get your body physically warm (jog & throw overhand to get warm)
- Warm up your arm (both overhand and underhand)
- Warm up your fastball and solve the day's main issue (find the problem you're having that day and fix it - or else it will be with you throughout the game)
- Warm up your pitches
- Let your catcher (if warming up for a game) see what pitches are working, which ones aren't so she can call a better game early.
- Get your mind under control

Suggested Warm Up (Pitcher with only a Fastball):

- Jog & Stretch
- Warm up throwing overhand - 10 x throws
- 10 x backflips from 5-8 feet (this is the old behind-the back basketball pass. It's done from about 5-8 feet from the catcher, the pitcher has the ball behind her back and -with only her wrist - flips the ball to the catcher. When she first tries it the ball will most likely go all over. It's going where her hand is pointing when she releases, the problem is her hand isn't pointing at the glove. So fix it!)
- 10 x 1 knee pitches from 15-20 feet
- 10 x $\frac{3}{4}$ distance pitches at $\frac{3}{4}$ speed
- 10 x regular distance fastballs at regular speed (working locations)
- Done

NOTE: 10 is 10! Make the adjustment so the problem is fixed in 10 pitches instead of pitching "until it feels right" - which can end up being forever!

I know this really seems like a radical warm-up routine because it's so short, but that's the whole idea. It's long enough for a pitcher to get herself and her pitches warm without being so long that she ends up fatiguing her arm for the entire season. Having more time usually isn't our problem, it's using the time we have more effectively. This applies to how our pitchers warm up as well.