

The 7 Steps to Huge Pitching Velocity Gains

by Bill Mooney

Now we all know that pitchers can get hitters out without throwing the ball with Nolan Ryan type speed.

But why are most of us so obsessed with throwing the ball with obscene velocity?

In visiting with good friend and former Minor League Pitching Coordinator of the Washington Nationals, Brent Strom, I recently asked him “What are professional scouts looking for in baseball players?” His response, “The first thing we look for in a pitcher AND a position player is ‘speed...arm speed...bat speed...foot speed. For pitchers in particular, we are looking for a live, dynamic, loose, whip-like arm action. Bottom line, if the young man’s arm isn’t explosive...even if he is great at getting people out...he will never, ever get on our radar screen.”

Let’s take a look at the significance of what he just said. In all frankness and candor, if you’re a pitcher and you are not SERIOUSLY developing and enhancing your ability to throw harder...and harder...and harder on a daily, weekly and monthly basis...your already slim chances at professional baseball evolve to almost zero. That probably sounds harsh. Nevertheless, it is the truth. It is the reality of moving up at almost any level in baseball.

You know that on a team of 12 year olds or the high school varsity team...the one who throws the hardest will be treated differently...he will be given more time to get lined up...he will be given more chances to fail. Another 12 year old or varsity pitcher who is identical in every other performance measure (strike %, ERA, BB/K ratio, Hits/ Innings pitched etc.) but throws slower...will be pulled sooner... and will get far fewer chances to ‘right his ship’ if he struggles. THAT is simply reality. Fair or unfair, that is the way it has always been...and that is the way it will always remain. Doesn’t matter if it is a 12 year old, a high school varsity player or a college level pitcher, the harder throwers will always get more opportunities in baseball.

The 3 Little Secrets About Throwing Velocity

If you know velocity is critical...& I know it is critical...surely other baseball people also have to know it. Why then do most instructors never seem to talk about how to improve velocity?

The 3 little secrets about velocity that nobody talks about are...

1. Most instructors & lessons givers certainly do realize that velocity is critical...and although most would never admit it...they really aren’t sure exactly how to improve it. They say...it will come in time. The standard, boring and make-that-person-go-away answer.
2. To a vast majority of all instructors of pitching, velocity is a mystical, mysterious discipline. When talking about improving it, most will say something vague and smacking of profound conventional wisdom like... ‘use his legs and hips more...get longer on the back side...lift weights...drop and drive...more over the top...push off more...throw more long toss...use weighted balls, etc. The same old worn out excuses.
3. Another small group of instructors simply throw up the white flag and try to talk you into the fact that ‘velocity is genetic’...or ‘you can’t teach speed’...or...sound like a Real

Estate Agent and say the key to pitching is 'location, location, location'.

And the Truth IS ...

Velocity is indeed a very complex part of pitching. Location is important, but velocity is too. Most athletes never work on this discipline. We've been told all our careers, just throw strikes! Here are some facts about velocity:

- Velocity comes from many factors...namely baseball pitching specific strength, momentum, inertia, pitching mechanic sequencing and most importantly, body part synchronization. In the right pitching program, you can address all of these simultaneously.
- Velocity coming from a pitcher's arm is certainly genetic. But most athletes under achieve when it comes to velocity. Nobody can break through their genetic ceiling, but most grossly under achieve. Since we may never be able to quantify our true genetic potential, we must work on this discipline disregard any estimates or limitations we personally put upon ourselves...or worse, what others may put upon us.
- Many, many times our preconceived, self-imposed limitation of what is possible is **the problem**. We most often get in our own way. We underachieve. We convince ourselves we can't throw any harder.
- Velocity can be improved.
- Velocity is by far and away the number 1 discussed factor in whether a pitcher moves up to the next level or not. It doesn't matter if that level is club ball, HS, college or professional. Every conversation between coaches, scouts, pitching coordinators and GM's begins with velocity. Now is it the only factor? Heck no! We all know that velocity alone doesn't get hitters out. Location, movement, speed changes are the way to pitch. Velocity sure can cover up for shortfalls and mistakes, but anyone who would suggest velocity isn't the number 1 topic for discussion is simply not being truthful.

Here Are The 7 Steps to Huge Velocity Gains

Pretty simple really.

It's just not easy. It takes consistent and dedicated effort. No quick fix here.

1. First you need to examine your existing level of fitness.
2. You then need to set up a pitching specific fitness program. This program should include exercises for explosive power work, flexibility, balance and stability, and endurance.
3. You need to evaluate your current throwing mechanics to determine inefficiencies and energy leaks.
4. Begin a principle centered throwing mechanics program. Principle centered is a concept that is not based on old school or conventional wisdom, but a program that looks at all disciplines of pitching.
5. Test and quantify your progress. Both on the conditioning side and the throwing mechanics side of being a pitcher. We all need to keep score to see how we are doing.
6. Break your throwing and conditioning regiment into at least 4 segments. Segments such as: off season, pre-season, in-season, and post-season.
7. Set specific attainable goals. Not just for velocity, but all disciplines of pitching and

physical conditioning.

Throwing harder takes a dedicated effort, planning and discipline. For some it comes easier than others, but don't let that deter you. Make it a challenge to reach your genetic ceiling.

Train like a champion!

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