

Why Can't They Throw Better Than That??

Now that school is going to start soon, practices and tryouts will begin also. Coaches want their team to have every advantage possible to be successful throughout the season. However, one of the most overlooked skills is throwing and the use of OPPOSITION. Many coaches chalk up poor throwing to lack of strength or just lack of skill. However, if you watch the female players, their fundamental technique of throwing is not correct. It can be corrected with just a couple of adjustments.

Most female players throw with just their arm. This leads to arm injuries like those to the rotator cuff of the shoulder and elbow tendonitis. It is extremely important to work on the little things in throwing a ball to get more power on the throw, better accuracy and less injury.

1. Opposition

Most players do not use OPPOSITION. This is simply leading with the glove side of the body, "pointing" your glove hand and foot toward the target and replacing it with the throwing hand when releasing the ball. It's like swimming; you do not swim with one arm. When swimming, one arm goes out first and it is followed/replaced by the other arm. Both arms are involved, but they stay opposite of each other. It is the same with throwing. Lead with the glove hand and glove foot pointing toward the target, step and throw replacing the glove hand with the throwing hand. As the player throws, the glove hand pulls back allowing the throwing arm to come through.

2. Pivoting the Hips

This is extremely important in order to do OPPOSITION correctly. Too many players throw the ball with the front of their body always facing forward. When the glove hand is pointing to the target so should the same side of the hip. The side of the body is facing the target. When throwing, the hips PIVOT back to the front of the body-to the forward position. Just as a hitter has to PIVOT the hips to make the ball shoot off the bat for a possible home run or deep hit without suddenly dying in the outfield, the hips have to do the same thing when throwing. This PIVOT also puts a lot of zip on the ball instead of it floating, just like PIVOTING does in hitting.

3. Following Through is Extremely Important

Many females like to keep the foot of the throwing hand on the ground for some reason. They may drag it a little but it definitely stays on the ground for most players. When it does stay on the ground, the momentum of the throw stops and the ball quickly dies and tails off from the target. This also can cause shoulder injuries. Make sure the player brings that foot off the ground when PIVOTING the hips. Some will try to force it and move the foot almost in unison with the arm. Make sure that the foot is trailing the arm and work on making it a smooth/fluid throw with a NATURAL FOLLOW THROUGH.

Drill: Keeping the arms against the chest or on the hips, work on PIVOTING the hips to the side and then forward to the front. Make sure that the FOLLOW THROUGH leg is coming off the ground and following the hips. Then add the arm motions without an actual throw. You may have to count for them to keep them together. Example: Nothing with a ball yet. Field, PIVOT to the side, PIVOT back to the front, FOLLOW THROUGH.

That's a lot to say but say it at the beginning then just count 1-2-3-4 and they simulate a throw to the count. When they achieve the four steps, they are then using OPPOSITION.

4. Grip

Most players use the thumb and three fingers. The little finger just hangs out on the side. Just make sure that the palm is off the ball.

5. Flip the Wrist

Some players will not really FLIP THEIR WRIST when throwing and/or they won't release the ball FLIPPING THEIR WRIST toward the person catching the ball.

Drill: Have them stand about 10 feet apart and with just using the wrist, FLIP the ball to their partner. Some will need to hold their elbow with the glove hand to make sure they are just using the wrist. Make sure the FOLLOW THROUGH is directly at their partner not down to the side.

Once they accomplish this fundamental, they can then learn all of the different types of throws needed to play softball. Softball is a very quick game and a player needs to know every type of throw and the position of their body when making those throws. They need to learn to put the power needed on each throw and the correct direction of that throw to be successful. It all starts with OPPOSITION.

Look for Celeste's article next month.