

8C Sidearm

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The purpose of this document is to describe “sidearm” for throwing, pitching (underhand and overhand), and hitting. Sidearm should be avoided. The problem: at first sidearm seems easier, but in the end it is both slower and harder to control. Since we throw the bat in hitting, there is also a similar problem with throwing the bat sidearm. Sidearm pitching (underhand or overhand) deceives the pitcher for the same reason: at first it is easier to do, but for someone who can hit on both sides of the ball it is easier to hit. The purpose of this document is to help players and coaches recognize “sidearm” in opposing pitchers and teammates who want to improve their throwing and hitting.

Visible Sidearm Characteristics

Whether hitting pitching or throwing, sidearm is visibly characterized by the palm position (pointing away from the body), by a foot stabbing motion upon release, and by an across-the-body follow-through. Since it is harder to get your thumb off the ball with sidearm, it can also be described as fast thumbing (with a wrist flip). When thumbing the ball, the arm gets flung in the direction of the pitch. So, the foot stabbing motion helps fling the arm in that direction and times the wrist flip. Sidearm throwers drag their arm from way back behind their back foot towards their stabbed front foot. In other words they sling the ball, having to keep their thumb on the ball (like a sling) until release or it will fall out of their hand. Besides less speed, sidearm produces less spin on the ball for less snappy movement and less twirl of the bat for bat speed. To the hitter, the ball seems to swoop in with a lot of horizontal (left and right) movement and comparatively little up and down movement. To the pitcher, the bat seems to take forever to swoop into the hitting zone. So, palm position, foot stabbing, cross-body follow-through, thumbing, wrist flip, long arm drag, slinging, and swooping are some visible sidearm characteristics.

Sidearm Footwork Characteristics

Sidearm footwork is push-push, push forward off the back foot and backward off the front foot. That backward push is the important timing mechanism that whips the arm forward causing the wrist flip. Because the footwork is push-push, the pushing means there is a forward lean which would be lean toward the third base side by a right-hander. So everything is done off the front of the feet. The result is a body position called the “K” with its “both hands and a leg forward thrust” that looks like a K. Because of the footwork with the forward lean, sidearmers create quite a mess in the dirt where the back foot drags and the front foot lands and pushes back. Many of the best women pitchers use the sidearm delivery, but it is not the best for many reasons like: speed, accuracy, movement, and the constant need to repair the pitching surface.

Poor Character Poor Results

Those visible and footwork characteristics produce predictably poor results. Because it may be easier to learn, sidearm is deceptive to the sidearmer. Later on you will need to throw harder (with more accuracy) or hit more difficult pitches (by easily checking a

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swing or by waiting on the pitch and hitting with a short stroke). It is easier to hit and more difficult to catch a sidearm throw or pitch. If it hits the ground the ball's hop is much more unpredictable. Even if it does not hit the ground, it can be so unpredictable the first baseman cannot afford to stretch for it, and the other fielders have to leave their base to catch it. Whether pitching or fielding, you never know how much it will break.

Summary: Sidearm

The purpose of this document was to describe "sidearm" for throwing, underhand and overhand pitching, and hitting. For speed, control, and movement or spin, sidearm should be avoided. I hope this document will help players and coaches recognize "sidearm" in opposing pitchers, hitters, and teammates who want to improve their throwing.