

8J Bend then Extend the Pitching Arm

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The purpose of this document is to point out how important it is to bend the pitching arm during the delivery. I teach the overhand or underhand inside-out release. Since the 1960's I have been watching the great pitchers and most if not all extend the pitching arm and hand upon release. Since you cannot extend a straight arm, the purpose of this document is to point out how important it is to bend the throwing arm during the delivery.

In other Words, Throw Overhand

What I am teaching is nothing new. I was taught how important it was to throw overhand when I was first learning how to play. They taught us to throw overhand so our follow through would be toward the target. They said when your follow through is across your body, it is much harder to be accurate. They also said the ball would go faster, but they did not say why. The reason is the inside-out motion of the arm and hand required to produce that straight down (overhand) or straight up (underhand) follow through. Both the arm and hand must bend and then extend to produce this follow through. Sometimes this happens twice in a windup, or sometimes an extension, then a bend, then a second extension upon release; but, when throwing either overhand or underhand there is always that final bend and extend.

Arm Swing and Wrist Flip

When I watch other fastpitch coaches on YouTube I hear terms like “arm swing” and “wrist flip”. The technique they are teaching is outside-in (in from the small bones and muscles to the large bones and muscles). To do this technique and keep the ball down in the strike zone they have to keep their thumb on the ball and bend their arm on release. In other words, they look great throwing up around the shoulders where they do not have to short-arm the ball on release. In baseball “sinker-slider” pitchers use this motion, but they can keep the ball down. Those baseball “sinker-slider” pitchers have the short-arm and thumb problem trying to throw up in the zone.

Inside-out Release: Extending

When we throw with an inside-out release, the arm and hand are fully extended upon release. But, before the release the arm and hand are extending (inside-out). Like a chest pass, the effort explodes inside-out when the arms are bent. Also like a chest pass, the effort explodes down and then out, using gravity.

Extending Equals Spin Equals Movement

Besides speed and accuracy, it is much easier to spin the ball inside out. Spin causes movement. With the inside-out release, that movement or spin starts inside when the arm and hand are bent and finishes off straight fingers outside when the arm and hand are extended. For another basketball example: it is much easier to spin a basketball (on your finger or as a chest pass) inside-out (counter-clockwise for right hand) than outside-in. With the great pitchers, their spin is so powerful you not only have to hit

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the ball you have to hit it against the spin. The more you bend the arm and hand before extension, the more spin. To see this bending in action check out this video of Tim Lincecum: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGDIwhITEp8> .

Extending equals Power

Besides great spin or movement, extending increases power. Power is a little different from speed. Here we are talking about things like “heavy ball”. In other words, power combines (multiplies) speed, spin and rotation for leverage. You see power in action when an ice skater multiplies their rotation by bending their arms. With that outside-in move they are exchanging speed for their spinning rotation. In the Tim Lincecum video above there was the example of the inside-out multiplier in helicopter leverage. In pitching overhand or underhand, the extending of the arm causes both great changeups and that “heavy ball” effect. In other words, there is such a thing as powerful changeups. We throw a change-up by releasing the ball about 90 degrees different than the fastball when the thumb is on the ball and the arm will have to fly towards the target. Depending on the type of pitch, the 90 degrees will be before or after the fastball. If we are extending the arm on the changeup, the spin will look just like the fastball. In other words you will get a “heavy changeup”. You also want the rise to look just like the drop. Because everything is visible when short arming the ball, when pitching outside in there is a visible difference between the rise and the drop. When extending, the subtle difference between the rise and drop are hidden when they happen. Also, an important power difference is in the size of the muscles being used. When extending, we use the muscles on the back and the back of the arm which are larger than the muscles on the front of the arm and the wrist. Finally, the most important part of power is spin. In learning to pitch I have experimented with all the different techniques. With arm extension; my changeups have the same spin as my fast-balls, extension increases my speed and accuracy, and for power my spin is at least 200% better than it was when I used wrist flip and arm swing.

Summary: Bend then Extend the Arm

The purpose of this document has been to point out how important it is to bend the pitching arm during the delivery. I teach the overhand or underhand inside-out release. Since the 1960's I have been watching the great pitchers and most if not all extend the pitching arm and hand upon release. Since you cannot extend a straight arm, the purpose of this document is to point out how important it is to bend the throwing arm during the delivery.