

## Both Feet on the Rubber

The purpose of this document is to define the purpose of starting with both feet on the rubber. The rule of starting with both feet on the pitching rubber was implemented to help people learn how to pitch properly. It almost forced pitchers to push or pull “back” with the feet to generate power against the ground. Using the big muscles of the body to push or pull back turned the arm into a whip that both propelled and spun the ball much faster than could be obtained by the pushing or pulling forward. After the rule changed the pitchers all began to push or pull forward. We had speed guns back then and the speed was faster with the whip by about ten miles an hour, but probably more important was the spin and where the ball appeared to break. The purpose of forcing pitchers to start with both feet touching the rubber was to help people learn to pitch properly.

## It Forces Pushing or Pulling Back

When you must start with both feet on the rubber, it is not comfortable to throw by pushing or pulling forward, but it is very comfortable to throw by pushing or pulling backward. Besides being comfortable, backward makes the ball to appear to break late with more spin and speed. Simply stated, it is easier to whip the ball than to muscle it.

## It's all about the Footwork

We push back to throw high strikes and we pull back to throw low strikes, strikes that appear to break late. The only way to get those high or low release points is to use the backward footwork. When pitching this way, the pitcher's focus is on the toe and how to balance on the toe while pushing back, or the heel and how to balance on the heel while pulling back. This backward footwork can be done with either foot, and (because it is a whip not using the little muscles in the arm or hand) it feels the same with either foot. The main difference in the feet is the miss pattern. You want your miss pattern to stay out of the middle of the strike zone. By throwing off either one foot or the other you can control your miss pattern to stay in the strike zone but out of the middle. If you throw low off the back foot, pulling back, your miss pattern will be “U” shaped; and you place that “U” so the misses don't hurt you. For me that means aiming for the right side of the plate, the same side as the back foot. The opposite holds true when throwing off the front foot. I aim for the same side as the front foot. The misses go away from the foot unless you twist and they go in the opposite direction. Turning is good but twisting is a “No-No”. Forward footwork and twisting go together. When twisting the ball moves in the direction of the foot closest to the release, instead of away. By the way, pushing back creates an upside down “U” pattern.

## What that Footwork Looks Like

To guarantee those misses stay out of the middle of the strike zone, I put the front heel back up against and in front of the rubber. The backfoot toe goes up against the back of the rubber. I start from the same place for all pitches, the front foot in front a little left of the center of the rubber. I also throw from the same place for all pitches when releasing off the other foot. I step out there to that same place and either push back with the toe or pull back with the heel. So, no matter what I am throwing I only have two holes to fill. In other words, I can hit all around the outside of the strike zone (all four sides, especially the top and bottom), the ball breaking both ways all around, but without changing the way the pitches feel, just heel or toe off either foot.

## I should say something about grip

Long grips go with high release pushing back off the toes, and short grips go with the low release pulling back off the heel. With the long grip the palm is closed and with the short grip the palm is open. This is true for all pitches, rise drop or change. Whenever your palm is open you are pulling off a heel. That pulling motion is a backhand inside-out motion. We push with a closed palm, because pushing is a forehand outside-in motion, in which the elbow moves in to out.

## Rise Drop or Change Grips?

When whipping the grips are very loose. You do not want them to get in the way of the spin or the speed. What makes the ball move up or down is the placement of the thumb. Placing the thumb closer to the forefinger will make it go up and away from the forefinger will make it go down. With a long grip the thumb is already away from the forefinger, so just to replace the thumb you bend the index finger which seems to move the thumb. Because you are whipping the ball, just moving the thumb does not seem to change where the ball ends up or how the pitch feels. Rise or drop they feel exactly the same. With a change the grip and feel is the same but there is an extra move with the elbow. With a low pitch the elbow moves from out to in, natural because you are backhanding the ball. With a change drop the elbow moves out to in and then back out. Moving the thumb to the rise grip will make it curve and drop. The change rise comes from the long rise grip with that extra elbow move, in-out-in.

## Summary: Both Feet on the Rubber

To feel good, both feet on the rubber forces the backward move in the footwork. It also forces you to whip the ball, and the backward high and low releases accelerate speed and spin. The grip reminds you what you are going to do, pull or push. It feels the same to break it both ways. Nobody's perfect but you can place your misses around the outside of the strike zone. The place of the thumb makes the ball go up or down, and the extra elbow move creates the changeup. The purpose of forcing pitchers to start with both feet touching the rubber was to help people learn to pitch properly.