

Pitching Baseball

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Hopefully, a useful by-product of this purpose will be to help overhand throwers understand fastpitch (underhand throwing). Since I have caught professionals in both sports, I believe I have a unique perspective. In previous documents I have discussed extending inside-out throwing as opposed to sidearm outside-in (arm swing and wrist-flip) throwing. I have also discussed windmill motions (without twisting) and figure-eight motions (that emphasize twisting). Plus, I have also discussed throwing with various release points off both feet as something that we do naturally when playing each of the positions in the field, including varying the speed of the throw by the way we combine windmill and figure-eight motions with release points. In other words, changing speeds by the way we use the thumb. This document will use those definitions to define common baseball pitches and relate them to fastpitch. Using my language, it will define fastballs, curves, sinkers, sliders, cutters and split-finger pitches, and show how they relate to the full array of rise-balls, drops and curves in softball.

Overhand Fastball Pitchers with Cutters and Split-finger Pitches

In order to come over the top in an overhand motion, the arm must be bent. So, to propel the ball (because they have to bend the arm and then extend it) overhand fastball pitchers use an inside-out movement. With this inside-out motion, the fingers are bent when the arm is bent and extended when the arm is extended. So, the spin is created as the arm is being extended. Therefore, the kind of spin can be hidden from the batter. There are three kinds of spin, plus for each kind of spin the speed can be adjusted by the release point or thumb position upon release. So, a cutter and an overhand curve have the same kind of spin, but the overhand curve has an earlier release point (more thumb on the ball).

Catchers know Cutters and Fastballs

Being a catcher I sometimes have to throw with topspin and sometimes with backspin. If I am throwing at the base I use backspin, and if I throw to the fielder's chest (for example: to second in the first and third situation) I want to use topspin like a cutter so it will not sail. This is especially important when the ball is wet. So, many catchers know all about cutters and fastballs. We should use both. to keep the ball going straight, some throw all cutters and some throw all fastballs, but no catcher wants to throw sidearm (sinkers or sliders).

Backspin, Topspin and a Double Side Backspin

Here are the three kinds of spin: backspin, topspin and (double) side spin. The fastball has backspin, the overhand curve and cutter have topspin and the split-finger has a backspin from both sides of the ball or double side backspin mainly off the right side if the index finger. To the pitcher because he (he/she) is spinning the ball before the

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release they all feel light in the fingers upon release. For a right-hander, the cutter comes off the right side of the index finger creating topspin, the fastball the middle of the index finger creating backspin, and double side backspin is backspin from the sides of the ball and fingers especially the right side of the index finger. The split finger works because all the spin is created before the ball leaves the hand and the fingers have little impact on the spin or speed of the ball.

Sidearm Sinker-Slider Pitchers

Sidearm pitchers use arm-swing and an outside-in wrist-flip to propel the ball. The longer and stronger the arms, wrists and fingers, the more power and spin can be put on the ball. But the fact they have to keep their thumb on the ball until release limits their spin and speed. The sinker comes off one side of a finger and the slider comes off the other. Both sinkers and sliders move more horizontally than vertically. The more they put their thumb on the ball the more those sinkers and sliders turn into curves and screwballs. If they really put the ball back in their hand they become change-ups. I believe the greatest advantage to side-arm pitching is the power and late breaking action they can get down low in the zone. As soon as they get the ball up it slows down because they have more thumb on the ball. So, they have good high change-ups and low sinking or sliding fastballs. Turn it upside-down (fastpitch or underhand) and the opposite is true. A disadvantage for the sidearm sinker slider pitcher is because all the action is in the wrist and fingers the batter can see the way the thumb is being used. The major disadvantage with sidearm is that each release point and pitch feels different, so it is hard to move the ball around the strike zone and change speeds.

Off-speed Pitches: Curves, Screwballs and Changeups

In general, pitchers who extend the pitching arm have better off-speed pitches. For several reasons: they hide the spin and grip, they get more spin, they follow through more realistically and naturally, they can more easily change release points, and they are easier on the arm because the work is done before the arm is extended. In general, off-speed pitches are a release point adjustment to get more of your thumb on the ball, the same way you adjust the speed of throws when fielding. Because each release point feels completely different, sidearm (arm swing and wrist flip) techniques have trouble changing release points in both pitching and fielding. So, in this off-speed section we will think about all the release points we use when fielding or pitching. See [“80 Complex but not Complicated”](#) for a description of all the release points and just reverse everything from underhand Fastpitch to overhand Baseball pitching. For example: a fastpitch raise ball with backspin translates to a baseball cutter with topspin, and a fastpitch drop ball with top spin translates to a baseball fastball with backspin. I think the main idea is to understand which speeds go with which release points and which motion (windmill or figure 8), so you can control your pitching pattern like the catcher does when he uses a cutter to throw high and a fastball to throw low, or he uses a figure 8 off the front foot to throw hard and a figure 8 off the back foot to come off the thumb and throw soft. Likewise an overhand pitcher may want to use a figure 8 off the front foot to get the lowest profile fastball, then windmill off the back foot to get the best profile high fastball that seems to pop late. He may

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also want to windmill off the front foot to throw the easiest changeup for a strike, or windmill off the back foot for the best changeup in the dirt.

Summary: Pitching Baseball

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