

## Pitching Strategy using Footwork

The purpose of this document is to link throwing the ball around the infield to pitching strategy. Since they are related, it also helps understand hitting strategy, and touches on catching the ball and finding hitters weaknesses by just looking at their feet before they swing.

Another name for this document could be “Four Fastballs and Four Curves”. Because we throw the bat when we hit properly, using the same footwork, it is related to a document that could be or will be called “Four Spikes and Four Big Flies”. Think footwork and elbow position, both strategies chosen before the pitch.

So, this document also uses what we learn throwing the ball around the infield to understand pitching and hitting. It also related to proper fielding. For example, how we catch a ball is related to what we are going to do with it. Like a cowboy turning a stampede, we do not want to stop a ball when we catch it, we just stop the spin while turning it towards its way. Like when we are throwing “around the horn”, where we turn it depends where we are going with it. Like catching, we are just trying to change its direction. If I am a catcher, “its way” is being ready to throw to a base or back to the pitcher. If to a base, there are many ways (see below) depending on which base and whether I want to throw to the chest or the base with different elbow positions. You will see this also works when hitting. We use footwork to hit against the spin. We use elbow work to either spike the ball into the baseline or fly it over the outfielder’s head. The ball is round and spinning, the bat is round and spinning, we are not trying to stop the ball when we hit it, we are trying to stop the spin and send it on its way. We learn this footwork and these spins throwing the ball around the infield. So, we also can learn how to spin the ball or bat for hitting and pitching, before we actually try hitting and pitching.

## Miss Patterns

Miss patterns are important in pitching. Sometimes we want to miss over the plate and sometimes not. Sometimes we want to miss high and sometimes not. Sometimes we want to miss low and sometimes not. So, we need to know the miss patterns for all the pitches. The miss pattern is in the direction of the spin.

Miss patterns pitching, just like miss patterns throwing around the horn. Now we could get into which finger or which side of the fingers the ball comes off to spin the ball left or right, up or down; But we do not have to know that, if we know how to throw the ball around the infield. There, we learn to throw to the chest starting with the elbow up, and throwing to a base starting with the elbow down. Besides the elbow starting place, everything else is just natural. We set the elbows up or down so the miss pattern will be down or up. In other words, we set the miss pattern so the ball will be catchable.

Back to throwing the ball around the horn and hitting someone in the chest with the miss pattern down and still in the catching zone. Starting the throw with the elbow up (or wrist out) will put top-spin on the ball causing the miss pattern to be down. When relaxed, the hand and wrist will be whipping down naturally. Just like holding your shoulder in to make sure 100 percent of the power is coming from the hips, allowing the wrist and hand to whip allows that power to flow all the way to the ball. We never want the shoulder to lead. It just rides the wave started from the hips. Also, we never want the power coming from the hand or wrists for the same reason. With an understanding of the elbow position throwing around the horn, we will see the spin also comes from the hips.

## Elbows

When we throw to a base, we start with the elbow down so the miss pattern will be up. We can aim right at the base with no problem hitting the ground a little because the ball will not spike, it will skip for an easy hop. Elbow down produces backspin. It also produces a little clockwise movement for a right-hander which you want to limit when throwing to a base.

When we throw to a chest, we start with the elbow up. We aim right at the chest with no problem the ball sailing over fielder's head because the miss pattern will be down. With the elbow up, the ball naturally comes out of the hand with top-spin and a little counter-clockwise movement for a right-hander, which we want to limit when throwing to a chest. We limit the left or right, clockwise or counter-clockwise movement by throwing overhand.

## Footwork Clockwise and Counter

Now we get into the different footwork when throwing around the horn clockwise or counter-clockwise. Here we will be talking about the four fastballs we use when throwing around the horn. Just learning how to throw to a base or a chest when we are throwing around the horn clockwise or counter, we learn all four without thinking about it. The footwork is natural. The spin is natural. The movement is natural.

Clockwise around the horn, first to a base, then to a chest. When we go clockwise, we will be balanced on the front foot, and our power will be coming from the back hip. So, we will be coming forward and down before the hip starts the whip.

Counterclockwise around the horn, first to a base and then to a chest. When we go counter-clockwise we will be balanced on the back foot, and our power will be coming from the front hip. So, we will be coming backward and up before the hip starts the whip.

First to a base, clockwise around the horn. We want backspin, so we will start with elbow in until we get forward and down before the hip starts the whip.

Then to a chest, clockwise around the horn. We want topspin, so we will start with elbow out until we get forward and down before the hip starts the whip.

First to a base, counter around the horn. We want backspin, so we will start with elbow in until we get up and back balanced on the back foot before the hip starts the whip.

Then to a chest, counter around the horn. We want topspin, so we will start with elbow out until we get up and back balanced on the back foot before the hip starts the whip.

## Twisting

So far, we have thrown balanced on one foot or the other, down and forward to front foot clockwise and up and back to the back foot counter. The next thing to work on throwing the ball around the horn are the exceptions, like practicing throws where we have to twist. We have to twist when our step has to be 90 degrees from the target. In the game this happens on double plays, fielding bunts, catcher throwing to third and first and from his knees to second. In hitting it happens on changeups, and with two strikes down the foul line or even foul. Everything is the same, shoulder in, elbows for right spin,

but avoid the “loop” or curve you unless you make it 90 degrees. Hitting you want the power of the short level stroke, and throwing you want the ball to go straight.

### Horn Throwing Teaches Footwork Naturally

Opening or closing the feet, stepping to the target, facing the target when open or facing away from the target when closed, all the things people say when teaching the throws all the positions need in baseball or softball, all the footwork is natural when we learn to throw the ball around the horn. Also, once we know that footwork, we can notice how the batter uses it to attack our pitches. Does he attack against the spin short stroke on all the pitches, both breaking to the centerline and away? If not, we have found a weakness.

We have described the four fastballs just by describing the throws around the infield. For example, with backspin comes clockwise movement naturally and vise-versa for topspin. Elbow in causes the ball to come off the outside of the fingers and elbow-out causes it to come off inside of the fingers, both naturally. Curves (sliders, cutters, splitters, etc.) come off the unnatural side. Change-ups come off the thumb, which is also un-natural. All this with the same footwork. Miss patterns go with the spin.

By thinking upside down, we have also described Spiking and Big Flies in hitting. Instead of spinning the ball with our hips we are stopping the spin. All this with the same footwork. Miss patterns go with the spin.

### Summary: Pitching Strategy Using Footwork

The purpose of this document is to link throwing the ball around the infield to pitching strategy. Since they are related, it also helps understand hitting strategy, and touches on catching the ball and finding hitters weaknesses by just looking at their feet before they swing. It all goes back to throwing, whipping the bat or ball from the hip with relaxed hands and shoulders, using the same footwork we learn naturally throwing a ball around the horn.