

Pitching

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Name of Drill: "Game Time" Drills.

Equipment Needed: Pitching area, catcher and stopwatch.

Objective: The objective of this drill is to improve understanding of the importance of being able to throw strikes, especially on the first pitch.

Explanation: This drill is a result of going to an NFCA clinic in Houston in the early 1980's. Mona Stevens told us, "If you can throw a strike on the first pitch, you have a 70-plus percent chance of getting that batter out." This is one of the drills I incorporated from this. I use it at the end of each pitching session to help improve a player's ability to throw strikes.

Execution: At the end of practice have pitchers pitch to their catchers for a timed period of 5 to 10 minutes. Catchers call balls and strikes and keep up with the number of outs the pitcher records along with the balls and strikes. An out can be obtained by throwing a strike on the first pitch or throwing three strikes to a batter if the first pitch is a ball. The pitchers throw their first pitch at the same time, but after that can move at their own game speed and rhythm. The catcher yells "out" when the first strike is thrown by any girl, and the stopwatch then starts.

As the timed period ends, the coach yells "Last Pitch," and indicates if it's a strike, it's an out, and a walk if it's a ball. The catchers then report the number of outs and walks the pitchers recorded.

The goal after five minutes is to get 10 or more outs with as few walks as possible and 21 outs with less than three walks over 10 minutes.

The drill also lets coaches look at how many batters pitchers faced. If pitchers have more than 10 outs in the five-minute period, then the coach can start looking to call different pitches or different locations to further challenge the pitcher.