



The Significance of Pitching on a Downward angle

A hitter relies on rhythm and timing to make consistent solid contact with the baseball. As a pitcher it is very important to disrupt the timing of a hitter by changing his vision at the point of contact. This can be achieved by changing speeds and elevating or de-elevating pitches. In order to achieve success, a pitcher must have the ability to deliver a baseball on a downward angle with consistency. There are 6 important factors that will help achieve this mechanical pitching goal.

Lead Leg to Throwing Shoulder (Load)

A controlled and rhythmic movement of the lead leg rotating towards the throwing shoulder will create a proper winding movement of the hips and trunk while allowing the body to stay positioned over the rubber. In turn, this will create a sequential unlocking of the lower body at foot-strike.

Balance Position

The correct position is achieved when the lead leg rotates to the throwing shoulder. Weight should be distributed 60/40 on the backside. There should be slight flexion in the back leg with the lead foot and leg positioned over the rubber. The catcher or hitter should see the back pocket of the pitcher or the heel of the lead foot, as the pitcher's lead shoulder is square towards the target. Hands are positioned comfortably in the middle of the body with the shoulders square towards the target. The head needs to be positioned in the middle of the body with the back ear over the back foot. When observed from the backside, the heel to the ear resembles a "V" position, which equates to power and balance. Proper balance will allow the hips to unlock sequentially and the arm and hand to be in a proper release position at foot-strike. A common problem with pitchers at all levels is a hurried load that disrupts the balance and timing of the pitcher. This will lead to pitches being elevated (flat-plane)- a favorable visual for hitters.

Foot-Strike (Opposite and Equal)

As the lower half descends towards home plate, the back leg remains on the ground and the lead foot is positioned slightly closed towards the target. Weight should be felt on the inner-part of the back foot towards the instep, and distributed towards the middle of the front foot at foot-strike. Posture and positioning of the elbows need to be equally balanced at foot-strike. Ideally the head should be over the center of the body and the elbows should be in an opposite and equal position, basically mirroring each other. The throwing arm should be in a 90-degree angle; this will be different depending on how the individual takes the ball out of the glove.

Lead Arm

The lead arm and shoulder are very instrumental in keeping the front and backside square to the target. The action of the lead arm is pivotal in creating the proper angle for the throwing arm. To maintain the 90-degree angle, the lead arm must be silent and remain directional throughout the delivery. Any violent movements away from the target will shorten the hand-path and create an inconsistent release point. Ideally, the non-throwing arm and glove should remain in-line with the chest and rib area of the upper body following the release of the baseball.

Elbow/Hand/Finger Exchange

The elbow will lead the throwing hand to release point and assist in the acceleration phase. The hand and wrist should remain strong or firm until release of the baseball. When delivered properly the ball should be released off the fingertips.

Follow Through and Back Leg Release

When the chest goes to knee after release, this action will force the back leg off the ground. The main emphasis here is keeping the back leg on the ground as long as possible throughout the delivery. This inturn will allow proper lower body rotation and a complete finish of the backside and the arm-stroke.