

The Importance of Swing-and-Miss Stuff: Developing Your Secondary Pitches

Developing your secondary pitches is extremely important. As one of the three main areas of pitching performance (Velocity, Command, Secondary Stuff), it's critically important to have strong swing and miss stuff. Velocity is great. Everyone wants it because it can separate you, but by itself won't get you much further than just a "shot".

I have a friend and old teammate who plays High-A baseball in a top MLB organization (I will not name his name or organization's). He is 26 years old and is 3 years older than the average age in the league. He has incredible velocity, always has. His fastball sits between 98-100mph, and he struggles. His ERA has been around 7 for his whole minor league career. He's stuck in A-ball, and has been traded multiple times, released and resigned. His 100mph fastball consistently gets hit by Single-A hitters. Why? He has no off-speed.

As human's we gravitate to what we are already good at. Same with my friend. He simply hasn't spent the time he has needed to develop a secondary arsenal. He hasn't identified his constraints. Instead, he stuck with his guns and dabbled in the development of his CB/SL/CH.

Developing your secondary pitches can be done any time but just like anything else, takes a certain degree of dedication to get results. You cannot dabble.

Developing your Change-Up

The change-up is a "feel pitch". In order for it to be good, you must have confidence in it. To gain confidence in it, you must get comfortable throwing it. To get comfortable throwing it, you must throw it more often.

- Long toss with the Change-up to 120ft every day before switching to FB grip. If you're making 5 throws every fifteen feet beginning at 45 ft, that's 30 change-ups added every day. If you long toss 4 days/week, that's 120 added change-ups per week. In just 6 month's time, you will have thrown 3,120 EXTRA changeups. I'd be willing to bet you'll become pretty comfortable with your change-up.
- Mix the Change-up grip in when you're getting your drill work done. When you're working on your connection, arm action and lower-half throwing into a pad, mix in a change-up.

Developing your CB/SL

The breaking ball is a pitch that is often only thrown on the mound in bullpens or games. Very little true development occurs with these pitches. Most throwers are convinced that creating a good breaking ball is all in the grip, and the rest will take care of itself. They'll get in the pen, mess with a few grips, find one they think they like, and call it a day.

Just like the change-up, a good CB/SL must be taken more seriously if you wish to develop it.

- Develop better spin for your CB. There is tons of data out there that shows the better CBs are spun more according to their spin rates. More spin often means sharper break, thus harder to hit. Spend time spinning the ball to yourself against a wall. Get the fingers on top of the ball, and with just the hand, learn to spin the CB tighter and tighter.
- Add intent to your SL. The problem with many ammeter sliders is that they are not true sliders. Most guys will say they have a slider, but they don't understand what that means. True sliders are thrown hard and look like fastballs for a very long time. In a slider, the ball does not leave the fastball trajectory out of the hand. Many throwers believe that their breaking ball is a slider for the simple fact that there is 'tilt' on the break. Not true. Throw the slider from flat ground with added energy 3-5x per day. Do high-energy walking torques, or step behind with arm swings. Create hand speed.

A good mix of secondary pitches will help you keep hitters off-balance, make your fastball play as if it is 2-5mph faster and help you ascend in levels.



For more information on the Texas Baseball Ranch and the various training programs offered, visit www.TexasBaseballRanch.com, call (936) 588-6762 or email: info@TexasBaseballRanch.com