

The 4 Most Critical Mistakes Made By Parents and Athletes Which Derail and, in fact, often Destroy a Young Pitcher's Career.

I have been doing 'this pitching thing' for over 25 years now. I've worked with Superstars such as Justin Verlander, Chien-Ming Wang, Barry Zito, Raul Ibanez, Tyson Ross, Trevor Bauer and CJ Wilson.

I've worked with 6 year olds who haven't thrown a baseball 500 times total in their lives. I work with several MLB organizations and their Directors of Player Development.

I work with high powered select organizations who run elite competitive teams from 7 years old to 18. I also have advised local Little League organizations, helping volunteer coaches (parents) regarding the basic health and durability of their young men.

I have been invited to speak multiple times at the ASMI (American Sports Medicine Institute) and the ABCA (American Baseball Coaching Association) on the topics of pitcher development.

I have traveled to Germany, Belgium, France and Italy and helped European Coaches develop throwing programs for their youth. I have spent hundreds of hours with physical therapists, athletic trainers, strength coaches and orthopedic doctors discussing common problems and issues they deal with on a regular basis.

So...what have I learned in these 25+ years of ALL that?

I see 4 mistakes being made...over and over and over again....derailing and in some cases...ruining careers. And the really tragic thing is most of it absolutely could be avoided with a few simple steps. It's heartbreaking frankly.

Below you will find Mistake #1. I will be forwarding you the other 3 Mistakes over the next few days.

Crucial Mistake #1. Ignoring the Pain

Understanding, identifying and assessing pain and then eliminating it is the single most important factor in becoming a competitive pitcher. Period!

Everywhere I speak and in almost every initial conversation I have while consulting with a pitcher, parent or a coach begins and ends with the concept of Starting with the Pain™. The reason for this is both simple and profound. **No pitcher, regardless of genetic gift or natural talent can achieve and/or maintain high level competitive capabilities if constantly sore, impaired or injured.** As my client CJ Wilson liked to say, "No one makes the All-star team from the training room."

Here is what I find as ironic. In all of my conversations and presentations, not one person has ever disagreed with my premise. Not one. Most shake their heads in agreement and offer knowing expressions of solidarity. Then almost always the strangest thing happens...

Nothing.

They simply continue on with what they were doing, apparently hoping that what I just said somehow doesn't apply to them personally.

At first I was perplexed. I thought, if they truly understood the critical importance of pain and the role it plays in long term exceptional performance, why then would they choose to cast the concept aside or give it mere lip service?

Over the past 10 years I have come to understand that this 'do nothing- whistle while you are walking through the graveyard' phenomena is widespread and has several contributing factors that occur almost naturally to the pitcher, his parents, coaches and trainers:

1. ***Few things are more difficult to sell than prevention.*** We may intellectually know that ulnar collateral ligament tears, labrum tears and trauma to the posterior cuff are more and more frequent in baseball players but until it happens to us, we don't think it could happen to us. We are bullet proof. Surgical interventions are what happen to 'other people' who abuse their arms. Not us! We are often in various degrees of denial regarding the status of our arm/ elbow and shoulder.

2. ***Most of us who pitch have been telling others 'a story' regarding our arm for as long as we can remember.*** We don't call it pain. Instead we play word games to minimize our anxiety. We refer to it as 'tightness', 'tenderness', or 'simple fatigue'. We call it 'muscle soreness', 'tendonitis' or 'normal after throwing soreness'. I've even had the term "sketchy" used to describe one pitcher's arm. We understate or down play what we are feeling or are experiencing. We 'slept' wrong on it. We tweaked it. We just need to 'stretch' it. (Yes and other than that, how did you enjoy the play Mrs. Lincoln?)

Case in point: I recently had a college pitcher attempt to minimize his pain by telling me, "The only time it hurts is after I throw!"

My response: "How very unfortunate for you son! If only you were a soccer player, you and I wouldn't be having this conversation. But you are not primarily a soccer player are you? You are a baseball pitcher and to attain the level you tell me you eventually want to attain, you will be asked to either throw every 5th day (starter) or back to back days (reliever) multiple times over a 6 month period".

"So your current status of 'It ONLY hurts after I throw!' really doesn't work very well for you does it? It's not a plan that is going to get you where you want to go. In fact I would tell you it's a non starter. Until you get the pain figured out and your comment to me becomes, 'I can throw ALL day long..and then I can throw the next day', your career path is in jeopardy. Your current path is simply unsustainable."

3. ***Expressing that you feel pain has some very real, potential negative side effects:***

- An expression of pain might indicate that you are soft physically, emotionally and/or mentally. It may mean you have a lower tolerance for pain and therefore are ill equipped to handle the challenge of high caliber competition. We don't want to be thought of as THAT guy. So we keep pain to ourselves.
- An expression of pain might indicate that you often play the victim and blame away poor performance by making excuses and therefore are ill equipped to handle the ups and downs of high caliber competition. We don't want to be thought of as THAT guy either. So we keep pain to ourselves.
- An expression of pain might motivate the coach to bench you, shelve you or to limit your playing time as a precaution and you may not be able to return to action as soon as you

would like to. We intuitively know that to achieve our goals we can't simply stay on the sidelines. So we keep the pain to ourselves.

- A definitive outwardly expression of pain would be an admittance that something serious might be wrong. Surgery is BOTH physical pain and mental/ emotional anguish. We desperately don't want to go there, so we keep the pain to ourselves.

Elbow and shoulder pain is the dirty little secret almost no one talks about. So often elbow/ shoulder pain is the elephant in the room that everyone tends to ignore, hoping it will go away. By everyone I mean everyone: pitchers, their parents, their coaches and their trainers have a tendency to down play or disregard pain unless or until the pain becomes debilitating.

I call it the 'Don't Ask- Don't Tell' Phenomena of baseball pitching.

Somehow if we just DON'T talk about it, maybe it won't happen to us.

My response: So how is that working for us? Injuries are occurring at an staggering epidemic rate. We must forge a new path. That's what the Texas Baseball Ranch® is all about: The rejection of the old standard conventional wisdoms and the creation of a new way of approaching training. We have designed a holistic, comprehensive, process dedicated to the hyper-personalization of training protocols. The old 'one size fits all program' needs to go the way of the dinosaur...namely...extinction.

People see our results and often ask me what is so unique about the Texas Baseball Ranch, Ron Wolforth and the Durathro™ System? It's hard for many of them to get their head around the fact that someone is so distinctly different in their approach to training.

The answer is really this simple. *We simply look at things differently than anybody else.*

For example: We are the only place in the world that STARTS our process of devising a customized/ personalized training program for each pitching athlete with a Pain Assessment. In other words we Start With The Pain™. In my opinion, the pain tells us where your current weakest link is.

I refer to it as 'triage for the pitcher'.

If you are not familiar with the 'triage' concept in medicine, let me explain:

Triage is a process in emergency medicine where individuals are assessed priority given their symptoms and status. For example: Three people walk into an emergency room at the same time. One can't breathe. One is bleeding profusely. One has a severe head ache. Which one sees the ER doctor first?

The medical staff will take the one that can't breathe first because if he or she can't breathe, they will only last a short time. Next they will take the patient that is bleeding. They will then take the patient with the severe headache. The patient with the severe headache may have the most severe problem, but they do not have the most urgent problem of the three. Triage is all about assessing priority.

Likewise, we believe pain tells us the most urgent problem within each individual pitcher. Pain doesn't tell us every one of his inefficiencies...it simply points us to the most urgent problem in front of him...today...right now. **After we solve the pain issue, then and only then do we at**

the Texas Baseball Ranch expand our processes to other areas. To go forward without first addressing the individual's weakest link is a gigantic waste of time and effort.

This in a nut shell is why we at the Texas Baseball Ranch are so different. We take the time to really assess so that we can then prioritize. It allows us to customize. It allows us to personalize. We keep pulling back layer after layer of the onion. No other place in the baseball world attempts to pull off what we do. It requires so much more attention to detail. It requires one to think not only broader but also much deeper. A vast majority of the baseball training world simply doesn't want to work that hard.

Everybody else has ONE system and you, the individual, must comply and fit inside that one system.

Treating You Like The Unique Individual that You Are

You see at the TBR we believe each individual pitcher is absolutely unique in the universe. He has his own specific constraints and limitations along with his strengths, his gifts and innate talents and therefore to maximize his training time he needs his own unique program. One that constantly grows and evolves with him. **We refer to it as his Pitching DNA™.**

We take our clients through 9 different assessments attempting to uncover each athlete's Pitching DNA™. Then we go to work. Our saying at the TBR is "Ask a better question...get a better answer."

Furthermore, we believe the common, conventional one size fits all program is actually an anathema to what we do at the Texas Baseball Ranch. We absolutely hate it! To us, any 'One-size-fits-all' program is the bane of high achievement. It is the enemy. It has robbed so many of their dreams and aspirations.

A one-size-fits-all program works well for only one person...and that's the person instituting and managing the one-size-fits-all program. It's far EASIER for him. It's VERY efficient for HIM. I've got this one way and you must follow that one way.

Traditionally what are the results for those athletes working under that type of system? You already know the answer to that. You've lived that scenario. The truth is that very, very few flourish under that type of system. Certainly a few may profit from structure of any kind, and for others the system happens to be a good fit for their specific needs but overall, a vast majority of athletes do not achieve high levels of success under a 'blanket' program. The one-size-fits-all program rarely matches the specific needs they have as an individual.

Where Does the Pain Come From? What Causes My Arm Pain?

Ok Coach Wolforth, I see what you mean about the pain. I truly get it's importance. So where, in your opinion, does the pain actually come from?

Great question. The answer is unfortunately multitudinous. It has been my experience in my 25+ years of training pitchers that a pitcher's weak links, constraints and/or limitations and the pain that typically accompanies them rarely have a single contributor. Almost always, the athlete's chink in his armor has multiple contributors.

The next thing I'm going to share with you regarding injury prevention is critically important for you to understand. Please, please don't miss this:

The world at large looks for simple, concrete reasons for everything. It makes the world seem more manageable. 'This causes that.' Pitching injuries are no different.

Most commonly, the baseball universe will say that Player X got injured because: (I'm using the 3 most common that I hear on a regular basis)

1. He overused his arm- threw too much, too hard for too long

or

2. He had bad mechanics (whatever that means)

or

3. He threw too many curveballs/ sliders

Not only is this type of typical diagnosis dangerously shallow and narrow, many times even the very premise they are forwarding is flawed, inaccurate and in some cases, just plain wrong.

Why is this so dangerous? Let me use a very recognizable, problem solving math equation as an analogy to emphasize my point.

Let's say I'm using the Pythagorean theorem, $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$, to determine one of the sides of a triangle, what would happen to my answer if only 90% of the equation I was utilizing was correct? What about 50%? What about 10%? My answer would obviously run from slightly incorrect to significantly incorrect.

What if the equation I was given was $A^2 + B^2 = C^3$?

While MOST of this equation is correct, if I utilized the second equation, my answer would be incorrect. While I'm not suggesting that we at the Ranch have the 'pitching injury equation' completely figured out, we are far more complete than anyone else that I have seen or read.

As one of my all time favorite pitching coaches, Albert Einstein, once suggested, **"Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."**

So much of today's baseball arm health advice comes from a dangerously narrow, shallow and even naively simplistic diagnosis. In essence, far too often people make things 'simpler'. As a result, thousands upon thousands of young men every year are left attempting to put together a puzzle with many of the puzzle pieces missing and/or they're unable to utilize the picture on the box to use as a visual model.

The following is The Texas Baseball Ranch's listing of the items we currently understand that can possibly contribute to reductions in performance. It affords you an idea of how complex arm issues truly are.

I. Mindset Related

- Mental, emotional or intellectual interference
- Ineffective, inappropriate or inaccurate paradigms/goals
- The de-habilitating influence of others.

II. Physical Structure Related

- Asymmetries, misalignments, strength imbalances and/or constraints in mobility/flexibility.
- Asymmetries, misalignments, strength imbalances and/or constraints in strength/stability.

III. Movement Pattern Related

- Mistimed, Out of sequence, Out of Synch movements

IV. Preparation Related

- Ineffective or inappropriate wake-up / warm-up protocols
- Too steep of a ramp up from being at rest to full effort
- Ineffective post-game / post-training recovery regimen

V. Training Related

- Ineffective or inappropriate strength training, conditioning, mobility/flexibility and/or throwing programs

VI. Internal Systemic Related

- Insufficient Sleep, Nutrition and/or Hydration

VII . Work Load Related/ Recovery Related

- Unprepared for the intensity and/or volume of the work currently required.

In my experience, most pain is a literal witch's brew of 3, 4, even 5 of these common contributors mixed together. Almost never can we isolate the problem to one single causal factor.

So, if you have some pain, tenderness, discomfort... what is the answer:

At the Texas Baseball Ranch® and our Elite Pitchers Boot Camp we do something revolutionary: We deal with pain head on...BEFORE it becomes a problem which derails and could possibly end your career.

We do not yet have a 100% completely fail safe answer for everything...but at least we are working at solving advanced Calculus problems with advanced Calculus skills. Without question I believe the **Durathro™ System** to be the most progressive and effective pitcher development training in the world today bar none.

These are the essential elements to our new and improved Elite Pitcher Boot Camps (EPBC) and the revolutionary **Durathro® System**.

1. *"Start with the Pain"™*- Pain Assessment
2. Mobility, Stability and Physical Assessment
3. Movement Pattern Assessment
4. Strength and mobility corrective exercises designed to fit the needs of each individual
5. Begin with training and mastering efficient patterns of deceleration (Issues with deceleration are the number one cause of professional injuries)
6. Neuromuscular Blending & Differential Learning with Efficient Posture and Connection
7. Wake-Up / Warm up

8. Utilize the Bernstein Principle and Awareness Training
9. Personalized Recovery Process & After Throwing Protocols
10. Personalized, daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal workouts

For the past 15 years, the EPBC has been the Gold Standard for pitching camps in the world. We have held over 250 of them since 2003. We have never been satisfied with good. We've kept improving them and then improving them again. The EPBC that are currently scheduled will represent something on an entirely new level. We'll have coaches from all over the world visiting just to get a glimpse of the new processes.

As you know...if we want to throw harder...step one is health and durability.

I sincerely fear for the average pitcher out there who gets this crappy conventional wisdom spiel. I really do. **Injuries are rampant yet a vast majority of them are completely avoidable.** It is hard to calculate how many injuries we've been able to avoid simply with our older stuff...but with the new **Durathro™ System** I am so excited about the future.

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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