

PRE-GAME WARM-UP

A proper warm-up in any sport is necessary for two reasons. First, it prepares the athlete for the physical exertion of the game and second, it provides the opportunity to prepare psychologically for competition. Every warm-up should accomplish four basic goals, which are;

PRE-GAME WARM-UP GOALS

1. ELEVATE BODY TEMPERATURE.
2. STRETCH THE MAJOR MUSCLE GROUPS AND SPECIFIC SPORT MUSCLES.
3. LUBRICATE MAJOR BODY JOINTS, AND
4. REHEARSE SPECIFIC GAME ACTIVITIES.

The first three goals are standard for all sports, while the fourth one is unique to each. That is the goal we will focus on here. For softball this means performing all the skills that commonly occur in the game, such as pitcher & catcher skills.

The following chart shows a list of important basic catcher skills. All of these can and should be rehearsed, as part of the pre-game warm-up for catchers, to achieve this fourth goal. This can be done as part of the pre-game warm up for pitchers.

BATTERY SEQUENCE & WORKLOAD - PRE-GAME WARM-UP

PITCHER DOES	CATCHER DOES
<u>PHASE 1. OVERHAND THROWING</u> EASY THROWS 20 - 30	SAME - WORK ON WEIGHT SHIFT AND NO STEP THROWS
<u>PHASE 2. WINDMILL DRILLS</u> STATIC PITCHING - 10 PITCHES HIP PITCHING - 10 PITCHES HIP POPPERS - 10 PITCHES	RECEIVING TECHNIQUE ONE STEP THROWING ONE HAND/TWO HAND CATCHING
<u>PHASE 3. MECHANICS CHECKOUT</u> STRIDE, ARM, HIP, FOLLOW-THROUGH - START SHORT GRADUALLY INCREASE TO GAME DISTANCE 5 - 8 PITCHES EACH	STUDY PITCHING MECHANICS SIGNAL, CROUCH & SQUAT POSITIONS
<u>PHASE 4. QUALITY PITCHES</u> REGULATION DISTANCE - 3/4 SPEED WORK EACH PITCH SEPARATELY BEST PITCH ROTATION - 5 to 10 PITCHES LOCATION - 10 to 15 PITCHES EACH OTHER -ROTATION - 5 to 10 PITCHES PITCH -LOCATION - 10 to 15 PITCHES	BLOCKING LOW PITCHES, FRAMING TARGET AND PITCH - THROWING ACCURACY
<u>PHASE 5. SPEED PITCHES</u> EXTENDED DISTANCE - 10 PITCHES	QUICK RELEASE - PICK OF MOVES
<u>PHASE 6. GAME PITCHES</u> PITCHING PATTERNS - 20 PITCHES AT GAME DISTANCE & VELOCITY	SIGNALS - SIMULATE 1ST THREE BATTERS

WARM-UP DURATION

80 to 125 pitches are not too many, as illustrated on the next chart. Game conditions can also be a factor. At the end of a tournament, or in extreme heat, fewer pitches might be desirable to conserve energy.

Review the following explanation to clarify any points you might not understand about this warm-up process.

EXPLANATION - BATTERY WARM-UP

PHASE 1. The warm-up should start with some overhand throwing, to loosen the throwing shoulder and arm and practice some game-like throws. The pitcher works on accuracy and smoothness, while the catcher can work on stepping to the ball, shifting weight, no step throwing and quick release.

PHASE 2. In this phase the pitcher works through the three principles mechanic drills of Static pitching, Hip Pitching and Hip Poppers. At the same time the catcher works on receiving technique, feathering the ball and one and two hand receiving and one step throwing.

PHASE 3. The next step is easy pitching, from a short distance to check out mechanics and coordination. As the motion becomes smooth, the pitcher or catcher retreats gradually to game distance. During these 20 to 30 pitches, the pitcher works on pitching mechanics, while the catcher practices basic positions and setting the target with and without runners on base.

PHASE 4. Once game distance is reached, the pitcher focuses on pitch quality, working first on rotation, then hitting inside and outside targets for each pitch separately. This is the bulk of the warm up, requiring 15 to 25 repetitions of each pitch. At the same time the catcher would work on blocking low pitches (drop ball), setting up inside and outside on waste pitches, and framing the target and pitch.

PHASE 5. The next stage is speed. The goal here is to overload the muscles and concentrate totally on throwing hard for 10 pitches or so. Some pitchers prefer to extend the pitching distance several feet which forces them to stretch out the motion and follow-through more completely. The catcher's role is to keep pushing the pitcher to throw at maximum velocity, while working on pick-off moves, throwing to second and quick release.

PHASE 6. The final 20 pitches or so should replicate game conditions. Using the game signals, the catcher calls the total repertoire of the pitcher, and they practice the pitching patterns they plan to use against key opposition batters. The catcher can also practice the footwork for throws to the various bases.

The pitcher's warm-up should be timed to coincide with the pitcher entering the game. For a starting pitcher, this interval between warm-up and game should be no more than 4 or 5 minutes; just long enough for the pitcher to take a drink of water, then review, with the catcher, the first three batters coming up.

END WARM UP 4-5 MINUTES BEFORE GAME