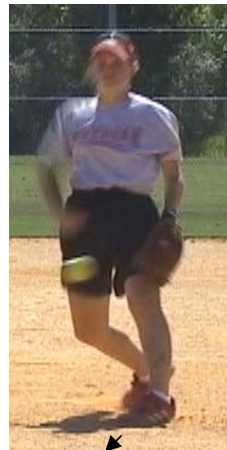


When Should You Make Your Pitcher Do Something Exact, and When Can You Let Her Do it Her Way?

As a coach this is a hard question, as a person that probably knows little to nothing about pitching – it becomes virtually impossible to know the difference. In softball, we never want our players to become robots because the game requires players to perform various skills based upon ever changing scenarios. Robots can perform something over and over and over, but they can't alter that something based on a change in their environment. Softball's a game of changing environments – this batter's left handed and slaps, the last batter was right handed and a power hitter. It's windy in right field but not in left, the umpire just changed his strike zone. There was 1 out with no runners on and now there's 1 out with the bases loaded...softball is always changing so our athletes can't just walk out onto the field and perform the skill, then leave – like they do in gymnastics, or diving, or figure skating.

Why does any of this matter? Because we need to teach our players to stick on the CONCEPTS and be flexible on the DETAILS. A player that understand CONCEPTS can apply that concept to any situation, while a player that only knows the DETAILS can only repeat the details over and over. In sports that never change like diving and gymnastics and figure skating, that's good, but in softball which changes on every pitch, it's too limiting.

An example in pitching of a Concept versus a Detail would be the pitcher's stride foot angle when it hits the ground. Most people teach that the pitcher must angle her foot when she plants – this is teaching on the DETAILS. But the CONCEPT that a pitcher is trying to accomplish when she plants her stride foot and lands is: **balance** (both side to side but more importantly front to back) and **strength** (she's got to have a strong leg position to prevent her body from continuing forward making a snap release almost impossible – as in hitting, this is called a strong front side). That's the concept. Now the detail that MOST pitchers will need in order to accomplish this upon landing is to angle their stride foot slightly sideways because when most people point their foot forward their knee also points forward which makes it almost impossible to prevent the upper body from continuing forward – thus making it almost impossible for a pitcher to have a crisp, strong snap zone when releasing the ball. Now, keep in mind I said “most pitchers” . As you will see in the following pictures, there are exceptions to this rule (and every rule) – exceptions to the details, but NOT to the concepts.



The pitchers on the top row all angle their stride foot when they land, some angle it more than others – and at the elite level (which all of these pitchers are), the type of pitch they are throwing will also determine their plant foot angle. For instance, if they throw a curveball (top left) they will bring their stride foot across the center of their body and pitch the ball back across their waist – so angling their stride foot helps with this pitch release action.



The pitchers on the bottom row are also very elite level pitchers (US & Australia), but all 3 of them point their stride foot more toward homeplate when they land. Again, it's personal comfort and preference as long as their plant foot gives their upper body balance and strength at the release point – which in the case of every pitcher shown here it does.