

## 4 Periods of the Year for a Pitcher

Below are the 4 different time periods that a pitcher will go through during the 12 month cycle of a year. Each period will be different based on the age of the player, length of season, player's location, off season demands, etc. But it is important to understand that there are different needs/segments to what a pitcher is doing/working on during the year. This is important so that the pitcher is staying healthy, developing, and consistently has a plan. I will try to go into depth on typically when each of these periods takes place and what some of the most important things a pitcher should try to accomplish during each period.

### Pre-Season

The pitchers pre-season generally starts for most players 2-3 months prior to the first game of the year. Depending upon where you live, this could occur outside on a field or inside in a cage due to colder weather. Either way, there are a few staples that every pitcher should follow when preparing for the upcoming season.

- Pre-Care
  - Setting up your routine making sure that your arm is getting ready to throw.
    - Bands
    - Proper Stretching Routine
      - Arm Circles
      - Arm Isometric Movements
      - Shoulder Tubes
- Arm Build Up
  - Understanding that your arm needs to be properly re-introduced into the throwing process.
    - Gradually building the distances and the amount of times a player throws during the week.
      - Key to this process is to listen to your arm. Don't push the process. Don't jump right back into where you left off last year.
    - This build up generally takes 3-4 weeks to re-introduce your arm into fairly decent shape. Not game ready yet or even ready for bullpens.

- Flat Ground Bullpens
  - This is the next step for pitchers to work into. Pitchers should use flat ground bullpens to re-establish a feel for your mechanics and your pitches. 4-6 flat ground bullpens would be ideal before a pitcher gets back on the mound.
  - Flat ground bullpens refer to a shortened bullpen distance in front of the mound. For example, high school pitchers throw from 60 feet 6 inches. A flat ground bullpen would be 45-50 feet. This allows players to slow down their motion and focus on mechanics without the element of the mound.
- Bullpens w/ Pitch Count Build Up
  - Once your arm build up and flat grounds are accomplished and you feel as though your arm is in a state to where it can handle the mound, pitchers should start to work on a pitch count build up on the mound.
  - Pitchers should be entering the season with confidence that they can throw 40-60 pitches in a game depending on if they are relief pitchers or starters.
  - This should take place over a 4-6 week period. Starting around 20 pitches and building up incrementally. Make sure to work on gaining a feel for your mechanics while building up the effort levels of your throws through your bullpens. First bullpens should not be thrown over 60-80% effort. Last bullpens of the build-up should be closest to game effort as you can make them.

## **In Season**

- Maintenance Work
  - Continuing your long toss, weight room workouts, bullpen work, pick off catch, defense work, and conditioning.
  - This is not the time to stop doing all of the things that helped you get to the season. You should work to maintain and even make small gains during this time.
- Scheduling Out Throwing Routine
  - Mid-Week Bullpen: Set this up several days after your last start/outing and at least two days prior to your next outing. This can be a flat ground bullpen or an off the mound bullpen. Should focus on something that you need to work on after last outing or something that you have been working on for some period of time.

- 1-2 Long Toss Sessions to maintain arm strength and preparing for next outing.
- 1-2 days of normal catch at a shorter distance than long toss.
- 3-4 days of conditioning or workouts.
- 1 round of pick off catch.
- 1 round of Pitchers Fielding Practice.
- Conditioning
  - Mix in long distance and sprint work during the week to maintain a high level of conditioning.
  - 1-2 long distance runs per week. 1 long distance run should be the day of a pitching outing and the other should be during the middle of the week.
  - 1-2 sprint sessions per week. Sprint sessions should be during the middle of the week and the day after a pitching outing.

## **Development Period**

- When
  - The developmental period for a pitcher can come for players at so many different times. Let's preface with saying that a pitcher should always be developing and working at his craft. There are however times throughout the year where games might not be happening that a pitcher can focus more on his development and not necessarily on the results of a game.
  - For some, they don't play fall baseball and this is a 2 month period to work and make gains. For some it is during the winter after a no throw period. Whenever it is, make sure you have a plan for it and a structure that is going to help you make gains from last year.
- Needs and Weaknesses
  - Take a step back at take a look at what you struggled with last season. It might be a mechanical issue. It might be a pitch or a location you struggled with. Possibly it is holding runners, pick offs, or fielding your position. Whatever it might be, use your developmental period of the year to work on that. Come up with short, middle, and long-term goals to achieve progress in these areas.

- Long Toss Build Up
  - During every developmental period there should be an arm strengthening focus. One of the best ways to build up arm strength in a healthy safe way is through long toss. We have done this with our players every fall and players have made distance gains of 10+ yards every fall. This directly translates into a stronger more durable arm. We suggest 2 long toss sessions every week for a minimum of a 6 week period. This can also be done for a longer period of time but we don't suggest many more than 2 long toss days a week because the players arm needs time to recover properly.
- Strength Build Up
  - During your developmental period we suggest this be your heavy strength training time. You don't have the stress on your body that 5 games a week would cause so you can put more time into gaining strength. Have a goal of what you want to accomplish and how that is then going to translate to performing better on the field

### **Off Season/No Throw**

- Minimum 6 Weeks Off
  - It is important to take time away from throwing. It is never a good idea for a pitcher or even a position player to throw consistently for a 12 month time cycle. There is too much stress in the throwing motion for those ligaments, joints, and muscle groups to not get overly stressed out and then get to the point where they could get seriously injured. A no throw period gives the arm the time needed to heal after a long season. This should come after the season is over or after the developmental period is over. It should also occur right before your upcoming season and your pre-season throwing. This is a good opportunity to get away from the game for a short time period and recharge yourself for the upcoming year.