

# **FASTPITCH SOFTBALL - BEGINNING PITCHING**

By Michele Smith

Becoming an Olympic Champion has been one of the highlights of my life. Getting to the medal stand in any event, requires not just talent, but the desire to learn one's craft. Pitching requires that we practice and study exactly what the body should be doing. The Fastpitch motion is one of the hardest athletic movements to learn; and therefore takes quite a bit of time, practice and dedication. I have outlined some of the most important steps in the Fastpitch motion. I hope it will be of help to you.

## BEGINNING PHASE

**STANCE:** Start with both feet on the pitching rubber, should width apart. The throwing arm foot should be on the front of the rubber with the glove arm foot on the back of the rubber. Arms should be relaxed and hanging down by your sides.

**SMALL ARM CIRCLE:** As movement is initiated, both arms should come together in front of the stomach area - about 10 inches from the body - and continue around in a small circle, up toward the chest, and then closer to the stomach - about 3 inches now - and down. You are now ready to enter into the large or big "Windmill Circle".

**STRIDE:** The glove arm leg should stride out on a straight perpendicular line of force off the pitching rubber (i.e. straight toward home plate). This will put the hips in the "open position". (Prior to pitching, when standing on the rubber, the hips are in the "closed position".)

**BIG ARM CIRCLE:** The glove arm will now be pointed at the catcher and the throwing arm will be at the top of the Windmill Circle. [The body position will now look like the letter "X".]

## POWER POSITION PHASE

From the "X" position, or "POWER POSITION" as I like to call it, all extended body parts will now start to drive back together to create a force that is transferred into the ball at release. The glove arm comes in and down to the body. The throwing arm also moves into the body-pulling down with the hand will create a slight bend in the arm, which is normal. The back leg, or throwing arm leg, drives into the front or glove side leg that is firmly planted in the ground as a result of the stride off the rubber. The hips are now at the release point and should be at approximately a 45-52 degree angle. The release, or snap, should whip the arm first in front of the hips with the hips remaining at the 45-52 degree angle and then rotate around after release. If the hips rotate too early, a great amount of stress will be put on the shoulder and could result in serious injury. It is very important to make sure the hips are at the correct angle at release. [If the belly button is facing the catcher and home plate, the hips are over rotated and in the wrong position.]

## FOLLOW THROUGH PHASE

The body should naturally rotate into a "closed" or good fielding position AFTER release. The throwing arm should be slightly bent and relaxed flowing up toward the center chest. The arm, however, should not rise above the shoulder. This will leave the athlete in a good fielding position to field batted balls.

Pitching is a difficult skill to master. My best advice to both athletes and coaches is to persevere. The more you understand the motion, the better pitcher you will become, and the less chance you will have of injuring yourself. I encourage you to work hard and never give up. I am living proof that great things can happen when you apply yourself and believe in your abilities. Best of luck... and remember, Rome was not built in a day!