Getting off to a Good Start:
The balance position

In any sport motion, each individual movement affects the efficiency of the next movement. Because of this, getting off to a good start with a solid balance position is the first thing we look at when evaluating a pitcher's mechanics. It is also essential for a sound delivery.

The balance position is the preparation position for the pitcher's stride, his first movement toward the plate. Because the stride sets-up the delivery of the pitch, anything that contributes to and affects the stride must be precise. For the balance position to be efficient it does not need bells and whistles and a straight-forward approach can be more productive for the pitcher.

Check out the photo above….Max Diaz of the Pleasant Hill Hawks is demonstrating an efficient balance position. His body is straight up and down and there is no rotation. Because his next move is a straight line towards the plate, the straighter his body is in this position, the straighter his stride will be. This knee-lift balance position shifts his bodyweight on to his rear hip and leg. Loading the rear hip and leg will assist Max in having a powerful drive during his stride towards the plate.

The ball is in the glove during the balance position. The position of the shoulders is really important at this time because it directs the path the arms will follow during the hand break. The hand break has the important role of

positioning the ball for the subsequent phases of the pitching motion. Notice how Max is keeping his shoulders on a straight line above his hips.

Concepts to remember about the balance position:

- The next movement of the pitcher is a straight-line toward the plate; anything that is twisted or rotated has to untwist or de-rotate to get back on line prior to the landing of the front foot. It's easier to eliminate all unnecessary motion by being aligned from the beginning.
- The lifted knee is the stride leg. If it is twisted or angled towards the right shoulder, it will have to "untwist" to find the desired straight line to the plate. There is no mechanical reason why the lifted leg should be rotated toward the opposite shoulder. It is not on the ground, it turns toward the plate from the hip joint while it is in the air during the stride, and counter-rotating this hip can cause stride and stride-landing errors.
- The shoulders need to be level during the stride therefore leveling them during the balance position only makes sense. The pitcher's rib cage should be lifted with activation of the muscles between the shoulder blades to support the upper back and shoulder girdle. This ensures an efficient positioning of the arms and the shoulder joints which in turn can contribute to a hand-break motion that stays level.
- During the stride, the body must be strong in preparation for acceleration. Create the strength position from the beginning of the pitching motion with a strong balance position.

General checkpoints for the balance:

- Look at the pitcher in this position from all four angles. Everything should look straight up and down and stacked in terms of alignment.
- No slumping, twisting, or leaning.
- The glove should be positioned in the area of the sternum.
- The weight should be centered in the rear foot allowing for a solid contact with the ground in preparation for the stride toward the plate.