



The Tactics of Pitching: The Art, Science, and Strategy of Playing Baseball's Most Important Position

Branford McAllister

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There are two basic ways to win the pitcher versus hitter war: • Overpower the hitter (like Justin Verlander) • Fool the hitter (like Barry Zito). The first requires dominating stuff, generally velocity. (Verlander's average fastball in 2012 was 94.3 mph. He also showcased a superb curveball.) And, it requires a fair amount of control to go with the overpowering velocity. Not many pitchers have that kind of ability, even in the major leagues. At lower levels, very few pitchers have the kind of overpowering stuff to rely just on that to get hitters out throughout a game. Those who do have electric stuff can dominate hitters. They are the fortunate ones, but not everyone has this advantage. For them, and for the overpowering pitchers at higher levels, something more than great stuff is required. So, in general, we need a more strategic, mental approach to get hitters out consistently. Pitching is a complex endeavor—both physical and mental. While there are many views on how to succeed as a pitcher, there are several principles that lead to success on the mound. Among these are the following: There is a limited number of things you can do with a ball: give it speed, give it direction, impart spin, and select an orientation of the seams. You can also combine pitches in different sequences and combinations. Otherwise, there is nothing you can do to the ball. Every other factor that you can control is mental, and therefore absolutely essential to success. You cannot succeed consistently on the hill without having a plan in mind beforehand. So, if you prepare well, with solid mechanics, you can win each battle with hitters. The objective on the mound is getting outs. There is a strategy to doing this and it relies upon a thoughtful approach that considers your abilities and the situation. If you combine great physical preparation with a sound mental approach, you greatly increase your chances to get those outs, succeed on the hill, and give your team the best opportunity to win games. There are many books on baseball, a few of them about pitching. But, there are very few good books on the art and strategy: the tactics of pitching—specifically, books dealing with how to throw specific pitches, why they do what they do, when to throw them, to what locations, and how to set up hitters. There are few books that help pitchers “pitch” a good game—the subtleties of how to throw pitches and how to formulate game plans for pitching. The Tactics of Pitching is a practical manual for learning and teaching the science, mechanics, and strategy of pitching, suitable for amateur players and coaches through the college level. The book focuses on the following topics: • Pitching Philosophy • How Air Resistance Affects the Flight of a Ball • The Strikezone • Pitches • Situational Pitching • Mechanics Checklist • Correcting Problems • Mental Aspects of Pitching.

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