THE ART OF CALLING PITCHES: All the Things You Need to Know to Call a Great Game

Cindy Bristow
www.softballexcellence.com
cindy@softballexcellence.com

Overview

- Things to Know:
  - Your Pitcher
  - The Batter
  - Your Needs

- Different Approach Options

- Choose Your Approach

- Who Should Call the Game

- Summary
Have a Plan

Use Pitcher’s Strengths to Attack Batter’s Weakness

Throw the Most Unhittable Pitches Possible

Copyright 2007 Softball Excellence LLC.
All Rights Reserved

Know Your Pitcher

What are Her Go-To Pitches = Weapons

What Pitches Do You Have?

Drop
Rise
Change
Screw
Curve
Curve Drop
Drop Curve
Rise Curve
Inside Rise
Outside Rise
Inside Drop
Outside Drop

Copyright 2007 Softball Excellence LLC.
All Rights Reserved
Know Your Pitcher

What are Her Go-To Pitches = Weapons

- What Pitches Do You Have?
  - On 2-0?

Curve
Drop
Fastball

Know Your Pitcher

What are Her Go-To Pitches = Weapons

- What Pitches Do You Have?
  - On 2-0?
  - On 3-0?

Fastball
**Pitcher – Zone Attack Pitches**

**Know Her Zone Attack Pitches**
- Low In, Low Out, High In, High Out

- Drop
- Rise
- Change
- Screw
- Curve
- Curve Drop
- Drop Curve
- Rise Curve
- Inside Rise
- Outside Rise
- Inside Drop
- Outside Drop

**Finding Her Zone Attack Pitches**

**Chart Her in Practice (5 or 10 each)**

- Strike Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitcher:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Softball Excellence All Rights Reserved
Calculating Her Zone Attack Pitches

Chart Her in Practice (5 or 10 each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitcher:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals for this location:</td>
<td>Totals for low pitches:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fastball</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changeup</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curveball</td>
<td>1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riseball</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changeup</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expanding Her Zone Attack Pitches

More Zones for Better Pitchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitcher:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals for this location:</td>
<td>Totals for low pitches:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fastball</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changeup</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curveball</td>
<td>1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riseball</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changeup</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Softball Excellence All Rights Reserved
Expanding Her Zone Attack Pitches

More Zones for Better Pitchers

Pitcher – Her Chase Pitches

Know Her Chase Pitches (vs Waste Pitches)

- UP & DOWN vs. Inside & Outside

Rise
Screw
Curve-Rise
Fastball

Change
Screw-down
Curve-down
Drop
Fastball

© Softball Excellence All Rights Reserved
Pitcher – Her Speeds

- Can She Change Speeds
  - Fast and Slow?
  - Fast, Slow and Slower?
  - Fast, Fast and Fast?

- WHEN Can She Change Speeds?
  - Only When Ahead?
  - Any Count?

- Can Catcher Block?
  - Change Ups Go Low
  - Runner at 3rd, Confident in Catcher?

Know Your Weapons

- What Are Your Zone Attack Pitches?
  - High Inside
  - High Outside
  - Low Inside
  - Low Outside

- Go-To Pitches?
  - What Are Her Best 2 Pitches
  - Where Are They
    - If Screwball & Rise, Tough to Attack Low/In

- Different Speeds?
  - Only When Ahead
  - Anytime
Know The Batter

- What’s Her Swing?
- What’s Her Speed?
- What’s Her Need?
- Scout Her Out

Batter – Know Her Swing

Find It
- Watch Her On Deck
- Watch Her in Box

Don’t Pitch It
- Swings High – Pitch Low
- Swings Low – Pitch High

Stay Away From Her Swing
- Warm up Swings are in Favorite Zone
- See It, Avoid It!
**Batter – Know Her Speed**

- **She’s FAST – Pitch Up**
  - Don’t Want Speed on Bases
  - Get Speed to Pop Up

- **She’s SLOW – Pitch Down**
  - Force Power to Outrun Groundball
  - Power Hurts You in Air

---

**Batter – Know Her Need**

- **She Needs to Bunt – wants down pitch**
  - Pitch it Up, or Down *(unpredictable)*
  - Make it Hard for Her to Bunt on Ground

- **Opposite Field – wants an outside pitch**
  - Pitch Inside
  - Make it Hard for Her to Get her Hands Away

- **RBI – wants high or her strength pitch**
  - Down into Defense
  - Hit on Ground into Strength of Your Defense

- **Sac Fly – wants up pitch**
  - Throw a Low Pitch to Get a Groundball
**Batter – Scout Her Out**

- Slapper
- In & Out
- Change up – Late in Count
- Inside – Not Out
- Over drop in curve down 4 out

**CONTROL MATTERS!!**

- From Lefty

**Know Your Needs**

- For This Pitch
- For This Batter
- Know GameDay
**Your Needs – This Pitch**

- **Is It an Out Pitch?**
  - You’re Trying to Get Her Out on THIS Pitch

- **Setup Pitch?**
  - You’re Using This Pitch to Set Up Another Pitch
  - Using Inside Change to Get Her on Screwball

- **Defensive Coverage Pitch?**
  - Runner at 1st – Trying to Get Ball Hit to Leftside for Force
    at 2nd

**Your Needs – This Batter**

- **First Time Through Lineup?**
  - Use Your Best Approach to Get Her Out
  - 2nd & 3rd Time Through – Same Pitches in Different Order,
    Chase Pitches

- **What’s her Swing?**
  - Find it, Pitch Away From it

- **What Do They Need Her to Do?**
  - Make That REALLY Difficult

- **Is She a Keep-Off in Front of a Key Hitter?**
  - The Hitter/s in Front of Their BEST Hitter
  - Attack Them, Keep Them Off Base
  - ATTACK THEM vs trying pitches & wasting pitches
Your GameDay Needs – Know Today

- Pitches Vary Day-to-Day
  - Watch Them During Warmups
  - Ask Catcher Following Warmups
- Determine TODAY’S Go-To Order
- Mix in a Non-Working Pitch Later

Choose Your Approach

- BATTER Dictates
- COUNT Dictates
- Dominance Dictates
The Batter Dictates

- Swings UP – Pitch DOWN
- Swings DOWN – Pitch UP
- Swings LATE – JAM Her
- CROWDS Plate – JAM Her
- FRONT of Box – MIX Speeds
- BACK of Box – Mix Movement

The Batter Dictates

- OFF Plate – Pitch OUTSIDE
- DIVES In – JAM Her
- PULLS OUT – Pitch DOWN/IN & OFF-SPEED (OS)
- Swings INSIDE-OUT – Pitch DOWN/IN & OS
The Count Dictates

0-0 (A) STRIKE
0-1 strike
0-2*! (A) strike
2nd – Mix Order
3rd – CP
1-0 (A) STRIKE
2-0 (A) STRIKE
3-0 (A) STRIKE
3-1 (A) STRIKE
1-1 strike
2-1 (A) STRIKE
2-2* (A) STRIKE
3-2 * (A) STRIKE

STRIKE = Pitcher’s BEST Pitch
strike = strike at batter’s weakness
(A) = ATTACK pitch
* = counts where batter trying avoid her Red Flag (Striking Out Looking)
! = 0-2 an ATTACK count
-1st time thru lineup,
-3rd time becomes Chase Pitch

Biggest Pitch Calling Mistakes

Spin the Wheel
- Random Reason for Calling the Pitch
- Haven’t Thrown it In-A-While

Caller’s Favorite Pitch
- Simply Liking a Pitch
- Calling a Pitch this Pitcher Doesn’t Have
- Calling Screwball she Don’t Have One

Calling a Pitch in Location She Doesn’t Have
- Calling Curveball Inside she Kind-of Throws Outside

Throwing Change Ups to Weak Hitters
Reality Makes You Choose

**PITCHER: (R)**
- Best = Curve
- Weak = Inside

**BATTER Dictates**
- Closed = In

**COUNT Dictates**
- 0-0 = STRIKE (OUTSIDE)

**Pitch to Count:**
- EVEN or BEHIND

**Pitch to Batter:**
- AHEAD

Mixing Both Methods

**Confident Combos:**
- 3-4 Pitch Combinations
- Scripted Pitch Combinations
- Already Practiced & Confident

**Combo’s for All Hitter Types:**
- **Lefty Power** – F(lo), R(ui), X(lo)
- **Lefty Slapper** – D(li), R(ui), X(li)
- **Righty Power** – S(ui), X(lo), X (li)
- **Righty Ave** – D(li), C(lo), R(ui)

**Stay with Combo if K in 1st 2 pitches**
**Abandon Combo if 0 K in 1st 2 pitches**
Critical Count

**Size Up Pitcher & Batter**
- **PITCHER(r):** Strong Curve
- **BATTER:** Weak Inside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Balls</th>
<th>Strikes</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batman</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superman</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *Critical Count* (1-1):
  - 1 - 1: .311
  - 1-2: .179

Who Should Call the Game

**Coaches**

*Pros:*
- More Time to Study Hitters
- More Ability to Process Information
- Have Information in Front of Them

*Cons:*
- Too Many Other Things to Do
- Not Enough Coaches to Help
- Can’t See What Catcher Can See
- Slower Due to Relaying Info to C

**Catcher**

*Pros:*
- Great View of Umpires Strike Zone
- Great View of Pitcher’s Movement
- Great View of Hitter
- Faster

*Cons:*
- Lack of Time to Study Hitters
- Less Ability to Process Info
- No Info Right In Front of Them
Coaches Call

Determine Coach – Catcher Signal System
- Location-Pitch
- Pitch-Location
- Numbers for Both
- Touch – Location, # for Pitch

Catcher to Coach Signals
- Umpire’s Zone Changed
- Pitcher’s Pitch Changed

Practice the Signal System

Catchers Call

Go! Zone
No! Zone (No Go)

Even Innings Call

Call the Whole Game
- Review Last Inning
- Preview Next 3 Hitters for Next Inning
Keeping Track

**Know the Pitchers**
- Each Pitcher’s Pitches In Order

**Know this Game**
- What Pitches to What Hitters
- Results

**Find It**
- EASY
- FAST

### Bree vs. Nikki

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bree</th>
<th>Nikki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curve</td>
<td>1. FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Drop</td>
<td>2. Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Change</td>
<td>3. Curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Screw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Resources

- **eClinic**, [Critical Counts – How to Stop the Walks](#)
- **Book**, [Softball Strategies, Coverages, Signals & Charts](#)
- **eClinic**, [Pitching Charts – How to Use Them to Win More Games](#)
Calling Pitches Summary

- **Don’t Get Fancy**
  - Get Strikes
  - Get Outs

- **Have Control**
  - More Control - Fancier You Can Get
  - Further Behind – Get a STRIKE

- **Keep Your Pitcher In a Position of Dominance**
  - Know Her Pitches & Control of Each
  - Get Ahead in Count

- **Win with Runs & Outs, Not Most Types of Pitches Thrown!**

GREAT Softball Educational Material

[www.softballexcellence.com](http://www.softballexcellence.com)

[cindy@softballexcellence.com](mailto:cindy@softballexcellence.com)