

# Preventing Injuries in the Throwing Athlete

By Dan Mueller, MS, LAT, ATC

When snow starts to melt, people's minds, start to count down the days until pitchers and catchers report. With that comes the countdown to the release of the disabled lists filled with big named players. Most of these are pitchers that are going to be sidelined due to an injury that occurred before the season even started. Injury and breakdown to the throwing athlete are common in all levels of sport, and in some cases can be prevented by doing some simple activities prior to, and during, the season to maintain strength and flexibility.

The most important factor for preventing overuse and breakdown injuries is proper form. This applies to all overhead activities. A vast amount of injuries during the season can be sidestepped by performing all pre-season training and throwing with ideal mechanics. Along with proper mechanics there are a few points to focus on during pre-season strengthening that can put athletes in a better place physically prior to getting into the grind of the season.

Flexibility is key for the overhead athlete. It is always a great day for a stretch. Shoulder and hamstring flexibility is essential to help maintain range of

motion which will help solidify the proper mechanics spoken about earlier. An essential to all overhead athletes, not just throwers, is known as a "sleeper stretch". It involves stretching out the posterior capsule of the shoulder and assists with proper shoulder range of motion.

Strengthening exercises should focus on core and posterior shoulder strengthening. Focusing too much on anterior musculature can actually be counter productive for overhead athletes. A good rule of thumb would be to perform two pulls for every push in the weight room. An excellent shoulder workout for the throwing athlete is known as the "Throwers 10" exercises. This program is specifically designed for the overhead athlete and uses Theraband tubing and light weight to build strength in the posterior shoulder. Completion of some of these simple exercises, as well as getting proper care for small injuries when they start from a certified athletic trainer, can help keep your team's injury list on the DL.



**Dan Mueller MS, LAT, ATC,** joins the Miami Valley Hospital Sports Medicine team after spending two years as the athletic trainer for men's basketball at East Carolina University. Dan also serves as an athletic trainer at Fairborn High School. Dan earned his bachelor's degree in athletic training from Xavier University in 2003. After earning his undergraduate degree Dan served as a graduate assistant athletic trainer at Indiana State and as an athletic trainer at Terre Haute North High School while obtaining his master's degree in 2004. Dan is a certified member of the National Athletic Trainer's Association (NATA) and certified clinical instructor.

## Common Causes of Recurrent Shoulder Instability, continued from page 1

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