

# If You Can't Lick 'Em, Join 'Em Computers in the Bull Pen

John Pinkman

Have you ever said: ***“The players today have their heads stuck in a computer”***? This generation is indeed both blessed and cursed with technology. We gave them computer toys when they were young to keep them quiet in the back seat. Nowadays when our personal PCs at home malfunction, who's the first person we call? Our kids!

Nevertheless I still hear the consistent chorus of ***“these kids don't play catch – they play video games on the computer.”*** Let me ask you, --- ***do you think that will change?*** I don't.

Five years ago we started developing a computerized bull pen pitching workout program. Instead of making the computer the enemy - we made it our partner.

Many years ago I created a velocity and accuracy paper chart that, when completed, yielded a graphic picture. It served its purpose and became a valuable teaching tool. I wrote about it in CB. All of my past articles are posted on our website [www.pinkmanpitching.com](http://www.pinkmanpitching.com). It amazes me that we still get requests for copies of that form. We are not going to send that out any more. We have replaced it with an excellent program that incorporates the same learning strategy while embracing many simple computer program advantages.

But first, before discussing the benefits of computer technology, let's talk about the teaching value and concept of a radar gun workout. As I wrote many years ago, the best use of a radar gun is to teach pitchers to throw slow. Consistent speed and accuracy go hand in hand when learning to throw strikes with off speed pitches.

After completing these charts in bull pen workouts it becomes crystal clear to both player and coach that when a narrow range of speed is maintained on a specific pitch, it will most always produce a very high strike percentage. For example, 10 change ups thrown between 64-67 MPH will very well produce 70% strikes, whereas a change thrown between 60-70 MPH most always produces less than 30% strikes.

We have had great results in the use of the bio feedback concept of radar followed by a review of the statistical and graphic data. We have invested heavily in Stalker Radar Guns and display units to instantly inform a pitcher of his velocity. We want him to experience what it feels like to throw a change up at 70 mph vs. 65 or 75 mph.

Over the years and thousands of charts later, our instructors, pitchers and parents are convinced that this is a meaningful benefit to pitchers. It produces results in a captivating way.



We have found that our pitchers study the graphic display of the program. Our goal is to develop 4 pitches at 4 different velocities separated by 3-5 mph. I trust you see the tactical advantage. If a pitcher has an 80 mph fast ball and a 60 mph breaking pitch, there is a huge difference in the speed of the ball and the pitcher's motion, and it becomes much easier for the batter to adjust.

However, over the years of teaching the development of additional and new off speed pitches we have found that there is a significant predisposition to throw the new pitch at the same speed as the initial off speed pitch. The computer program and the instant bio feedback work successfully together to reinforce speed separation.

Please refer to the chart examples and I will describe the benefits of the program:

1. Each column represents a specific group of pitches. The speed is entered and a determination is made and entered as to B (ball) or S (strike). **THAT IS ALL YOU HAVE TO DO!** The program does the rest.
2. Total pitches are counted
3. Average speed of that specific type of pitch (e.g., fastball) is tabulated
4. Average speed and total of strikes are tabulated
5. Average speed and total of balls are tabulated

This is extraordinarily helpful – you are able to say things like, “***Son, your chart indicates that you throw more strikes at a slightly slower speed. Look at the chart, there is the proof.***” To me that is a better teaching phrase than yelling “**Hey – stay within yourself!**”

6. Simultaneously an XY axis graph is generated providing clarity of speed separation of each type of pitch. Speed consistency is easily seen as well. What you don't see on this black and white chart is the color. Strikes are in red, balls show up in blue. The actual program uses several other bright colors.
7. Changing the bullpen routine to throw 4 different pitches, one after another, and inputting the data down the fast ball column (instead of across the columns) will yield a game-type chart. It is valuable to see speed and accuracy consistent results in varied game situations.
8. The entire program file contains 10 sessions or workouts. Each workout is saved and stored in the player's individual file.
9. The program then produces separate, pitch specific, workout session charts automatically. Each week these XY axis charts compare current progress against all the previous workout sessions for that pitch. It maintains a 10 week comparison of each pitch type.
10. This program was developed in Microsoft Excel. You can create this yourself. We have revised it over the last 3 years, adjusting it to our teaching needs. It is not as simple to create as it looks, though. If you would like to buy it from us you can do so for only \$35 and use it tomorrow. Email me at [throw@pinkmanpitching.com](mailto:throw@pinkmanpitching.com) or call 703-661-8586 to place an order.

Our winter workout program involves about 130 high school pitchers weekly over a 10 week period. We begin with a 3 week return to throwing section. Each of the 7 remaining weeks all pitchers are charted. We took some great advice from Bobby Miranda at Georgia Tech. In order to maintain a high level of seriousness to the program, each week we tabulate the fastball strike percentage and post it. Someone is always #1 and someone is #130. **GULP!** Each player has his own file so we can email the entire winter's bullpen record to the high school or summer team pitching coach or college recruiter.

The bottom line here is learning. We are using computers *after school* the same way students use computers all day *during school*. This is one way to integrate low cost technology that produces high end results in your program. Another way is to listen to and implement ideas of young assistants. You can't stop change...but you surely can make it work for you!

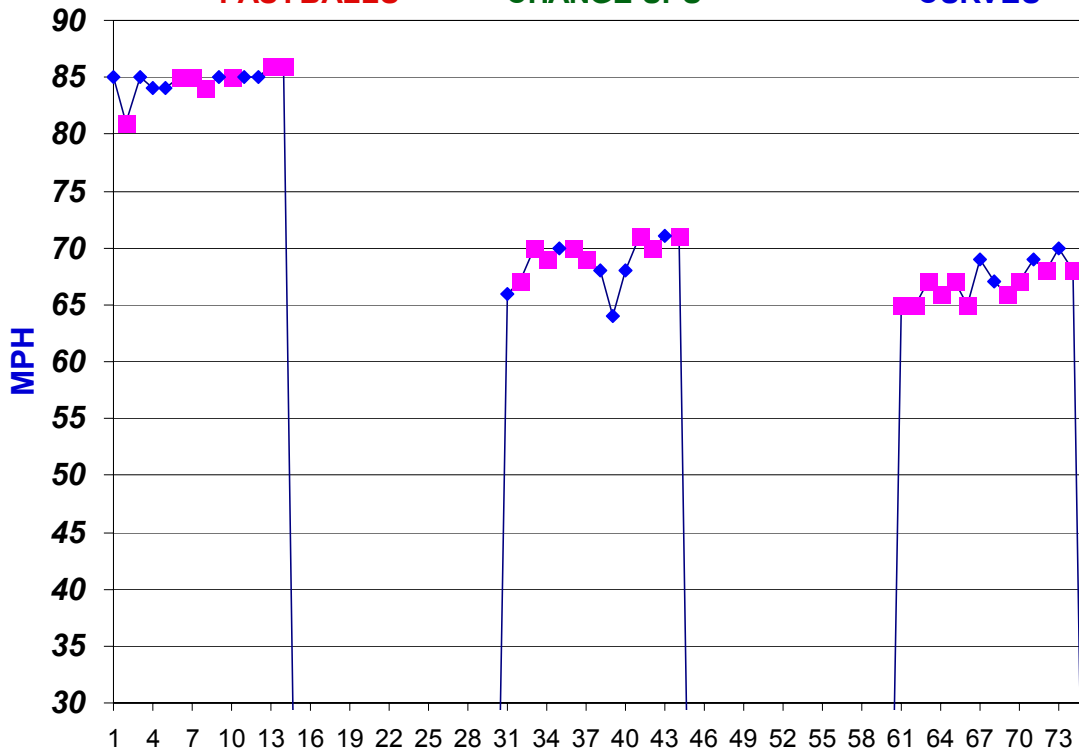
# PINKMAN PITCHING VELOCITY & LOCATION CHART

FASTBALLS

CHANGE UPS

CUTTERS

CURVES



■ Strikes    ♦ Balls

PITCH NUMBER

FASTBALLS						CHANGE UP			CUTTERS			CURVES		
Pitch Count	Speed	Balls Strikes	Pitch Count	Speed	Balls Strikes	Pitch Count	Speed	Balls Strikes	Pitch Count	Speed	Balls Strikes	Pitch Count	Speed	Balls Strikes
1	85	b	15			15	66	b				1	65	s
2	81	s	16			16	67	s				2	65	s
3	85	b	17			17	70	s				3	67	s
4	84	b	18			18	69	s				4	66	s
5	84	b	19			19	70	b				5	67	s
6	85	s	20			20	70	s				6	65	s
7	85	s	21			21	69	s				7	69	b
8	84	s	22			22	68	b				8	67	b
9	85	b	23			23	64	b				9	66	s
10	85	s	24			24	68	b				10	67	s
11	85	b	25			25	71	s				11	69	b
12	85	b	26			26	70	s				12	68	s
13	86	s	27			27	71	b				13	70	b
14	86	s	28			28	71	s				14	68	s
<b>Average Speed</b>						<b>68.9</b>			<b>67.1</b>					
<b># of Balls</b>						<b>6</b>			<b>4</b>					
<b>Average Speed Balls</b>						<b>67.8</b>			<b>68.8</b>					
<b># of Strikes</b>						<b>8</b>			<b>10</b>					
<b>Average Speed Strikes</b>						<b>69.6</b>			<b>66.4</b>					
<b>% Strikes</b>						<b>57.1%</b>			<b>71.4%</b>					

**PINKMAN PITCHING – VELOCITY & LOCATION WORKOUT**

This is an actual computer printout from of one of our high school pitcher’s bull pen on Feb 20, 2004. A LHP JR --- with a future.