

## *Part II - Tactical & Training Use of Radar Guns*

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In Part I of this series, published (DATE) , I wrote about the value of radar guns in training. Radar guns provide us much more than traditional assessments of pitching talent by clocking the maximum ball speed.

In that article consideration was given on how to use a gun to teach pitchers to throw consistently as they increase velocity and how to learn to throw slow, as well. The teaching challenge is to develop throwers who master consistent but different release points for several pitches. A chart was provided to assist you in teaching pitchers to record, develop and control the velocity of four pitches. The goal was the command of four pitches with separate and distinct speeds.

Part II addresses the use of a radar gun during the game to (1) assess the success of that training, (2) acquire tactical information that can be used immediately, and (3) provide the information for post game training purposes.

The information that I am about to share with you works. It's proven valuable for me as a pitching coach/instructor and for my students. **WARNING:** Many of you are about to say: "Who has the time to do that?" There will come a time in your coaching career that you must face the fact that you can't continue to complain about not having any pitching and at the same time say you don't have time to fully develop pitchers.

The necessity for a radar gun is more dramatic during a game. If you have any doubts about the investment, this information will hopefully convince you.

I gun every pitch during a game and record the information on two different charts. The charts have been in use for many years. They are simple, effective, and easy to reproduce. The charts give you a clear graphic picture of what is actually happening during the game or what happened in the last game, depending on how you manage this process. They are also a valuable and verifiable tool for promoting high school pitchers to colleges.

The **Velocity Chart** shown \_\_\_\_\_ is the result of an actual high school game this season. The velocity was recorded with our Stalker Pro gun and entered into a PC the following day. The chart is the product of a simple pre-set Microsoft

EXCEL program. We create a master file (chart) and place 0 MPH for velocity over the range (approx. 120) of pitches. We then go back during or after each game and simply enter the speed into one column on a spreadsheet very quickly and produce the chart you see. Then “save as” the new file with pitcher’s name and date for a title.

We also take the same program in a laptop to the field on game day and immediately produce a new chart and update the it *pitch by pitch* as the game progresses. Why would we want to do that?

Well, in those games where catchers call the pitches, the graphic is an instant and extremely effective tool to identify what is actually happening in the game. The chart will easily communicate (with less conversation) the need to throw more or less off speed pitches, vary the pattern, exclude or include a particular pitch, etc. I know this may come as a shock to you, *but there are actually some catchers who really don't believe what coaches say. Yes, it's true!* Seriously, this chart is like holding up a mirror. No where to hide! No debate.

Using the laptop during the game also tells me when this pitcher hits a wall velocity wise. I’ve found the chart can alert me of a velocity trend in just three pitches. It’s been my experience that it beats most coaches’ instincts by about 10-12 pitches.

Keeping these on file provides a profile for each pitcher on “effective” pitch count and performance early in the season. For example, I can determine by a observing steady increase in velocity during the 1st inning that this pitcher needs more pre-game warm up structure or supervision.

Patrick’s chart - shown \_\_\_\_\_ indicates excellent command and consistent velocity of fast balls and curves. After reviewing this chart I think you would agree, he needs to tighten up his change up velocity. It’s unlikely that a big variance in speed of a specific type of pitch will produce consistent strikes. We are pleased that the chart shows the knuckleball is in use. It was part of the game plan to throw it early in the game and more often.

His chart clearly identifies four pitches with four different speed ranges used in a successful pattern. He also stuck out 14. 9 in a row and 10 of the last 11 batters.

Chart B is a **Location, Velocity, and Sequence Chart**. This flexible chart can be used with or without a gun. Just circle the off speed pitch. In youth leagues this is all you need. I have used this chart for over seven years with varied age groups and with a variety of assistants.

During a game it is difficult for one person to input data into a lap top computer and also locate and number sequential pitches on another chart. There is not enough time to do both in between pitches. Two players or parents can do it easily though.

This chart is a great teaching tool for pitchers and catchers to review after the game. Many coaches require a written review of this information within two days of an appearance. If you would like a master of this chart and a written review for pitchers to complete I'll send you one.

If you want to create this chart, duplicate nine boxes on one sheet of 8 1/2 x 14 inch legal size paper and use the same size clip board. Set it up horizontally and you'll have a line up of individual batters or nine innings of records on one piece of paper. In years of working with this chart with high school and college players, I'd rather use one box per batter. It is easier for advanced pitchers to study the pitch sequence if there are less graphic images per box.

If you only use the Location Chart you can easily enter the recorded velocities into the PC and generate the velocity graph the next day. You won't get the immediate tactical information during the game, but it will be of great use having and learning more about your staff.

Whether you review the location and sequence chart during the game or the following day you will quickly discover the following important tactical information:

- **In game success of pivotal 1-1, 0-2, 2-0, 2-2 pitches**
- **What is the location, speed and sequence of pitches are getting hit hard. All three are important**
- **Where, when and why are we successful?**
- **1st pitch strike success**
- **Are we in a zone to zone pitching pattern or no pattern at all?**
- **At what point did the pattern change?**

In younger pitchers we look for trends. If you use one box per inning you will often see graphic densities in certain areas. This information is helpful in diagnosing mechanical problems. For example, several pitches up and in and low and away may indicate premature external rotation or improper dynamic balance.

When we use the gun with this chart we often find a correlation between velocity, location, and strike percentage. It is not unusual to uncover that when pitcher throws a fastball at 85 MPH it is most always low and away with no movement. But at 82 MPH he is consistently low and in with good movement. He sees the evidence -- the facts on the chart convince him as well as his coach.

This type of chart really energizes committed pitchers. After the game as they have a strong desire to review the chart, they see tactical success or failure with specific pitch sequences to a particular batter. They see the benefits to their personal performance. Next game they'll repeat the successful sequences or be better informed.

Information, by the way, is only as good as deodorant. It only works if you use it, and if you don't,.....well, you could really stink! Xerox has a great saying: "Why is it you never have time to do it right, but you always have the time to do it over?" So the question is, will you take the time to record, review and reflect; regularly meet with your pitchers and catchers, use the information to develop fundamental and tactical skills? Or will you just wait for another wave of talent to float into your bullpen? It's your call -your record.

There are many new teaching technologies to help players become better pitchers. Hopefully this series on expanding your use of radar guns or motivating you to obtain one, has been helpful. Finally, the most challenging issue we as instructors face is not how much we know about the game, but how much our players learn from us as a result of our teaching ability, and subsequently how they develop and improve their on-field and off-field skills. Thanks for your time.

If you would like to receive a full size copy of these charts please send a self addressed stamped envelope to Pinkman Pitching, 2188 Golf Course Drive, Reston, VA 20191.