

Pitch Count Program

NEW for 2010 Season

“Coach, my arm hurts!”

Four little words that no baseball coach, let alone a parent, wants to hear. Unfortunately, with the rise of year-round baseball, hardcore travel teams, and an increased focus on building a deep “baseball resumé” in the hopes of making a high school team, youth pitching injuries are rapidly on the rise. And the risks are high: having to undergo shoulder or elbow ulnar collateral ligament (UCL, or “Tommy John”) surgery at the high school level could easily end a promising baseball career. One well-regarded study showed that youth pitching-related surgeries increased **six-fold** between 2000 and 2005! Table 1 also depicts the dramatic increase in the risk of surgery due to the overuse of young pitchers.

Table 1:
Increased Risk of Surgery Due to Overpitching

Risk Factor	Increased Risk of Surgery
Fastball > 85 mph	250%
Pitching > 80 pitches/game	400%
Pitching > 8 months/year	500%
Pitching despite arm fatigue	3,600%

In 2006, USA Baseball, the governing body for amateur baseball in the U.S., in cooperation with the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI), established safety guidelines for young baseball pitchers. Placing limits based on actual pitch counts, not just innings pitched, has emerged as the preferred method for protecting young pitchers

The Pitch Count Program: A Safe and Simple Approach

Starting in the 2010 season, LA-MV PONY Baseball has taken the initiative to adopt new pitch count limits based in part on the USA Baseball guidelines. These new limits will work in conjunction with existing PONY Baseball inning-based pitching rules as required by our league charter. Both per-day, and per-week pitch count limits have been established for each division from Pinto 2 through Pony. In addition, pitchers will earn a mandatory 40-hour rest cycle for crossing either an inning or pitch count rest threshold. Finally, the Mustang division catching limits have been improved and greatly sim-

plified. Table 2 summarizes these new limits combined with existing PONY Baseball inning limits.

Putting the Program Into Practice

Both home and visiting teams will maintain detailed scorebooks at all games, tracking pitches thrown and innings pitched per player. Coaches are strongly advised to also track pitch counts from the dugout. When a pitcher reaches a pitch count limit (per-day or per-week), the scorekeeper will notify the coach, and pitcher must be relieved after the current at-bat has been completed. After the game, both coaches will be entering their game reports using a new online application that will help track pitching and catching limits league-wide.

LA-MV strongly advises parents of players that also play on non-LA-MV travel teams to update their LA-MV coaches of their player’s pitching activity outside our league.

Benefits for All Players, Not Just the Top Pitchers

Although the new pitch count system is being put into place to better prevent injuries to our youths, we expect that the new rules will also encourage coaches to develop more pitchers and catchers on their rosters, especially in the younger divisions. While we can expect a few growing pains associated with the transition this season, the end results of keeping our players healthy, and providing more opportunities to pitch and catch will most certainly be worth the effort.

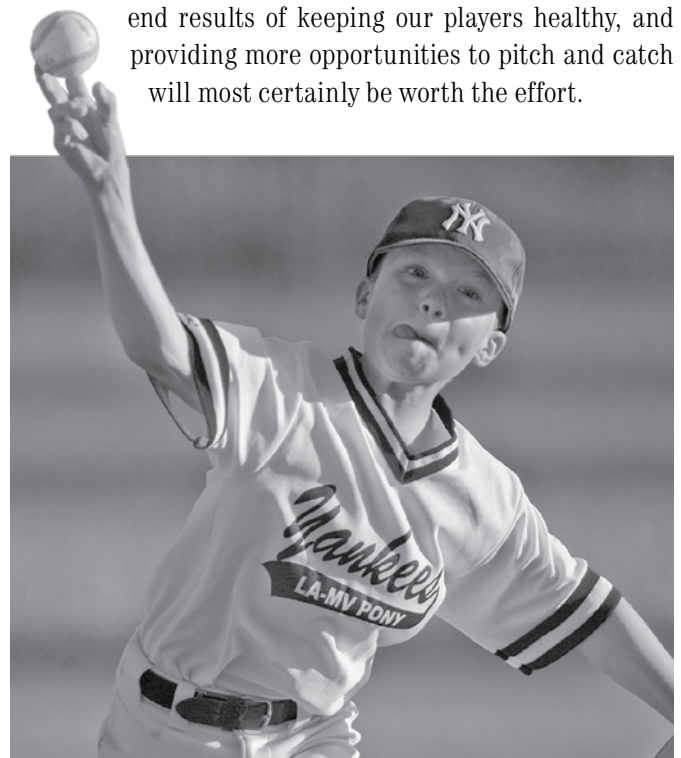


Table 2: Summary of LA-MV's Pitching/Catching Limits by Division

LA-MV PONY Pitch Count and Inning Limits	Pitching Limits		40-hr Rest Thresholds		Catching
	Max # innings ¹	Max. # pitches	# innings ¹	# pitches	Max # innings
PINTO 2					
PER DAY	2	40	2	20	
PER WEEK	4	60			
MUSTANG 1					
PER DAY	3	50	3	30	3
PER WEEK	8	75			
MUSTANG 2					
PER DAY	3	60	3	40	3
PER WEEK	8	90			
BRONCO					
PER DAY	7	70	4	50	
PER WEEK	10	105			
PONY					
PER DAY	7	80	4	50	
PER WEEK	10	120			
COLT					
PER DAY	7		4		
PER WEEK	10				
PALOMINO					
PER DAY	9		5		
PER WEEK					

Limits Applied					
Regular Season	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playoffs	Yes	Yes ²	Yes	Yes	Yes
Club Team	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Yes	Yes
In-House All Star Tournament	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-PONY All Star Tournaments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PONY All Star Tournaments	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

1. Per PONY National Baseball Rules

2. All pitch count limits apply EXCEPT if a team plays 3 or more games in a week, its players' per-week limits will increase to 2x the per-day limit.

3. All pitch count limits apply EXCEPT the Division Director will set the ratio of pitches per-week allocated to Club and Regular teams for Club players