

Get the feet right to leap and hide the ball longer

Leaping is a rule which has now been in effect for two seasons in NZ. The rule allows the pitcher to be airborne in their motion. The old rule insisted that one foot had to be in touch with the ground at all times while pitching. Leaping allows the pitcher to use their legs more and to get more behind the pitch by jumping with the pivot foot. Make sure you encourage your young pitchers to give leaping a go. Winter is a great time to get your pitchers practicing leaping.

To demonstrate leaping:

A right handed pitcher (RHP) would start with the right foot at the front of the pitching plate.

To leap, push off the pitchers plate and jump or hop forward with the right foot (pivot foot).

When the right foot lands make sure it is side on with the laces facing the foul line. By doing this the pitchers body has rotated away from the batter.

The left foot is the stride leg and this then lands with the foot at a 45 degree angle (between 1-2 o'clock). The foot at this angle ensures the hips are also on this angle which means the pitcher has room for the arm to get to the release point without the hip obstructing. Once the right foot (pivot foot) has landed you cannot push again from this point; a second push is considered a crow hop and is illegal. Once the right foot has landed, the hands must be separated. It is a

deceptive advantage to try to keep the ball hidden in the glove for as long as possible before you land with the right foot. Keeping the hands together can also help to propel the pitcher forward allowing for a leap further down the mound. The pitching arm must be in continuous motion and must not stop during the pitching motion. Remind your pitcher to keep their pitching arm fast.

Sometimes young inexperienced players will try leaping and will land with the stride foot first before the pivot foot. This is not leaping. The pitcher must land with the pivot foot first and the stride foot will land second. Have a look at the illustration below.

For a demonstration of the rules and film on leaping consult the International Softballs youtube article: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09FLfw1rlrw&feature=colike>