

Overuse Injuries in Adolescent Baseball Players

Editorial

Baseball is the most popular professional sports in US, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Lots of countries have amateur baseball league and is one of the most popular sports in their country. Among lots of sports, overuse injuries are most common in baseball. Of course other sports (for example, European football) have overuse injuries, but it is not as common as baseball. Serious problem about overuse injuries in baseball player is that it can finish the player's baseball career.

Especially the overuse injury is a major concern in adolescent players. Because they are still skeletally immature, we need special care to protect them from injuries. Pitchers are most vulnerable to the overuse injuries. According to articles, only 26% of little league pitchers answered that their arm never hurt when they throw. But more serious problem was that 46% of the players with painful arm answered to be encouraged to keep throwing despite having arm pain. Fortunately, little league in US adopted new rules from 2007 and reflecting latest researches to limit the number of pitches (Table 1). Not only the limiting the number of pitches per day, but also they are giving detailed manual how many days of

Table 1: This table shows how many days of rest are required for the pitches.

Age	Daily Max (Pitches)	Required Rest (Pitches)				
		0 Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days
7-8	50*	1-20	21-35	36-50	N/A	N/A
9-10	75*	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+
11-12	85*	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+
13-14	95*	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+
15-16	95*	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+
17-18	105	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+

Although these regulations are not as same in Korea, Japan and Taiwan, it is valuable manual for coaches and trainers to adopt to their little league players. Real problem comes from high-school players. Unfortunately, there are no uniform regulations in high school baseball even in US, but there are state-by-state pitching restrictions. It is still better than nothing to have pitching restrictions. But it is so distressful to tell that there are no restrictions nor regulations on pitchers in Korea, Japan and Taiwan. As there are only one or two outstanding pitchers per one high-school, it is understandable that the coach of the team has no option but to overuse the pitcher to win the game. Of course these overworked players are outstanding players and they are the one who is recruited to the professional teams. It is no wonder to know that 70% of rookies of professional baseball in Korea have labrum tear or SLAP lesion in their shoulder. It is not easy to make mandatory rules to restrict pitching numbers in high school players. As there

rest is required according to the number of previous pitch. Thanks to these regulations, unofficial research has published that little league shoulder and elbow injuries were decreased to 50%.

are not lots of good players in one high school, but tournaments are so competitive, and the players who want to be professional player has to prove his ability to pitch as much as they can do.

But instead of just doing nothing and watch the players overwork their arm, and finally hurt their arm, main organizations of Korea, Japan, Taiwan has to change the tournament periods and change lots of other environments to protect adolescent baseball players. Even if it will be nearly impossible to give strict restrictions as strong as in US, it is recommendable to make minimal restrictions to protect adolescent players. Because they are the one who will be the super-stars when they grow up and protecting them will make baseball more popular in their country. I hope coaches of the high school team and administrators of the organizations come together and make the best effort they can do to protect the talented players of their country.

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