

### **Is Your Upper Back Flexible enough to Throw? – Take this test**

Pitchers place their shoulders in incredible positions. To unload the shoulder the joints below must maintain adequate flexibility. If these areas are tight then extra stress is placed on the shoulder and/or elbow. In order to achieve the position of the pitcher below your upper back (thoracic spine) has to bend backwards. Many athletes tend to have poor posture (rounded shoulders and a forward head). Since we are in this type of posture a great deal due to sitting a large majority of the day, our upper spine has a tendency to become stiff. When it becomes stiff, then it loses some of its ability to backward bend. Next time you pull up to a stop light look to your left or right and see how many people are actually using their head rests. I would bet that you won't find many. This means that their heads are forward. If their heads are forward, their shoulders and upper back will be rounded. This poor posture makes it difficult to achieve the positions needed to adequately throw the baseball without additional stress on the shoulder.



#### **How to Assess:**

To check your flexibility, lie on the floor (face up). Making sure that your lower back stays flat on the floor, slowly take both arms (keep them straight) over your head until they rest on the floor. If they cannot easily touch the floor or the backs of your upper arms do not touch the floor then you need the stretch below.

**How to Treat:**

The stretch is called the **“Prayer Stretch”**. In a kneeling position in front of a table or bed, place both elbows on the edge. Keeping both elbows together and your palms facing you, let your buttocks descend in the direction of your heels. Let your upper back **“sag”** to feel the stretch in your upper backs, lats, and possibly slightly on the top of the shoulders. You should never have any discomfort with this stretch. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds to one minute and repeat three times. Remember, if you don’t have time to do any exercises during the day, you can always work on your posture.

