

# Rare 'Switch-Pitcher' Spotted on Baseball Diamond



This month, shouts of "Play ball!" will echo across the country as baseball teams take to the diamond. Even though spring training is over, some people are still talking about a rare sight spotted on the field last month. They saw a pitcher who can pitch with *both* arms.

You've probably seen a switch-hitter stand at home plate. A switch-hitter is a player who can bat both right- and left-handed. But, chances are, you've never seen a switch-pitcher. That's because you've never seen Pat Venditte [say Ven-dit-tee].

When Venditte was just three years old, his mother and father noticed that he threw balls with both hands. So father and son kept practicing. Pat threw baseballs and footballs with both hands. He kicked footballs with both feet. His mother even had him write and eat with both hands.

All that hard work seems to be paying off. Last year, Venditte pitched for two farm teams of the New York Yankees. He pitched in 49 games and had 4 wins and 2 losses. He walked 11 batters and struck out 87. In spring training this year, he took the mound for his major league team for the first time. He gave up just two hits in 1-1/3 innings.

Since Pat Venditte showed up on the field, baseball umpires have had to make a new rule. The "Venditte rule" limits the number of times a switch-pitcher and switch-hitter can change sides during one time up at bat. The pitcher must choose which arm he will use to pitch. Then the batter can choose the side from which he will hit. After one pitch is thrown, the pitcher and batter can each change sides just one more time for each at-bat. Without the special rule, a batter and pitcher might switch sides for every pitch.

Switch-pitcher Pat Venditte will likely spend this year with Yankee farm teams. But many experts agree that he could have a bright future. So if you see Venditte at a ballpark, be sure to ask for his autograph. Then watch to see if he signs lefty or righty.

## THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

This winter, Venditte played ball in South America. Some teammates there called him *Pulpo*, which is Spanish for "octopus."

Do you think that's a good nickname for Venditte? Why or why not?

Can you think up another good nickname that you might give him?

## MORE FACTS ABOUT PAT VENDITTE

- Venditte wears a specially made six-fingered glove that has two thumbs.
- When he warms up, he throws four pitches from each side.
- In the past 100 years, only one other pitcher has thrown with both arms.