

## 4. Grip on the Bat

The next stage involves the hands and the alignment of the grip—a critical point in the systematic approach to hitting. There are three different types of grip: the *standard*, the *modified*, and the *choke*.

With the **standard grip**, which we prefer for the young hitter, the player aligns the middle knuckles on both hands (see Figure 5a). A simple tip for setting up this grip is to lay the bat down in the fingers, not in the palms, across the calluses in the hands (see Figure 5b). The standard grip is somewhat similar to a golf grip, but without the thumbs on the bat. If the hitter lays the bat down in his fingers as though he were gripping a golf club and then picks it up, he will normally find that the middle knuckles on both hands are aligned.

The goal of the standard grip is to achieve with the hands and bat as much quickness and speed as possible. Think of “quickness” as how the bat starts. Think of “speed” as how fast it moves through the strike zone. An important equation from the field of physics can be applied to hitting a baseball. It says that “the distance a

ball travels depends on the amount of energy applied to the ball when hit,” and “the energy applied to the ball is one half times the mass times the velocity squared, that is,

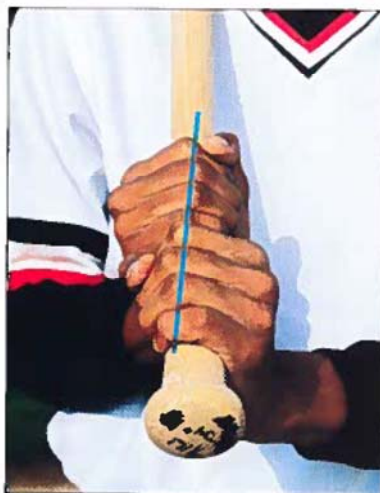
$$\frac{1}{2} \cdot (\text{Mass}) \cdot (\text{Velocity})^2."$$

Thus bat speed has a greater bearing on how far the ball travels than does the weight of the bat. A player who is not a power hitter and not primarily concerned with distance can still make the ball come off the bat a lot harder if he develops quickness and speed. Although they may not understand why, most young hitters will notice a big improvement in bat quickness and speed if they move to the standard grip.

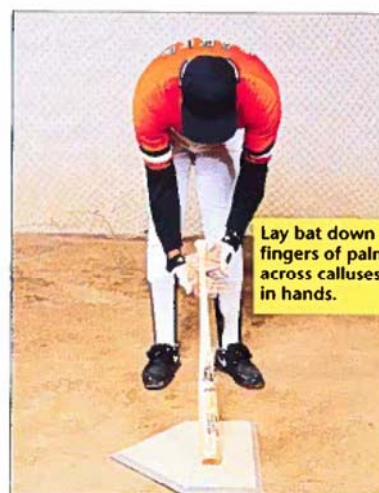
In the past, many major league players, such as Babe Ruth, Willie Stargell, and Dick Allen, used heavy bats. Now many power hitters in the major leagues are looking for lighter bats since most of them have been brought up using metal bats. Some even go so far as to hollow out the end of the bat. Weight of the bat should not be completely ignored—it is part of the equation for hitting the ball hard. With good technique, a hitter can be successful using a heavier bat, but learn-

## For The Advanced Hitter.....

Finding a standard grip on a bat is similar to gripping a golf club. Be careful, however, that this does not lead you to think that swinging a golf club will enhance your baseball hitting. The swing of a baseball bat is not necessarily compatible with the swing of a golf club, even though the grips may be compatible. In fact, some major league managers have not allowed their players to play golf for this reason. Consult your hitting coach.



A. The standard grip.



B. Positioning the standard grip.

FIGURE 5



A. The modified grip.



B. The choke grip.

FIGURE 6

ing the proper technique is far more important than moving to a heavier bat.

With the **modified grip**, the middle knuckles on the bottom hand align between the back knuckles and middle knuckles on the top hand (see Figure 6a). This grip tends to cause a loss in quickness and bat speed as well as a slight uppercut in the swing.

The third grip is the **choke grip**, which should not be confused with choking up on the bat. Grasping the bat in a choke grip is comparable to strangling the handle of the bat (see

Figure 6b). The choke grip aligns the middle knuckles on the bottom hand with the back knuckles of the top hand. Many strong major leaguers use this type of grip, and since it does require some strength, some players aged 16–18 might be able to use it. The choke grip forces even more of an uppercut than does the modified grip, whether the hitter wants it or not. It also tends to cause a greater loss in quickness and bat speed, particularly with younger hitters, because it tends to force greater use of the muscles in the shoulders and back rather than those in the hands, wrists, and forearms. These muscles allow for greater