

2-Day Batting Clinic Instruction Guide



Baseball Positive 2023

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PREVIEW

Bat Safety (p.6)

When carrying the bat, it is held by the barrel. The only time the bat is held by the handle is when the batter is in their stance at a tee, batting drill station or in the batter's box.. When picking up balls, all players set their bats down.

Bat safety is our top concern at all times.

Teaching Phrases

The more we can limit our talk to Teaching Phrases when communicating with players, in the instruction environment, the better the learning. The kids learn to associate each teaching phrase to something specific in the swing. The key to optimum learning is clear, meaningful communication. Teaching phrases are the foundation of the instruction process.

Fundamental Points

1. The **LEGS** are the most important part of the swing and begin learning to use their **LEGS** in their swing. **LEGS** initiate the swing and power the swing.
2. Become aware of **HEAD** movement and make controlling **HEAD** movement a priority ('Face the Ball')
3. Keeping the **Feet** in place at the conclusion of the swing ensures balance, maximizing power of the legs for the swing, and plays a major role in keeping the head in place. We want our batters to keep their '**Feet In Place**' in every swing (balanced at the conclusion of each swing).

There are plenty of flaws in the swing when the kids first start out. It is a challenge to keep our instruction focused on one teaching point at a time. Developing the swing is a weeks-long process; we don't try to 'get it right' in one day.

Working on a consistent basis, using a Tee, for 10 minutes per day, it takes a player about two weeks for their muscles to adapt to our teaching. At that point, most develop a sense of what they are trying to achieve in their swing workouts. The process transitions from Learning to Training. Difficulties transition to understanding and progress.

There is still a long way to go, but the workouts become more enjoyable as both the coach and player begin to recognize that the process works, and that progress is being made. From this point forward, steady improvement is maintained through consistent workouts and executing quality reps in each swing workout.

Swing has Three Parts

1. Legs Turn
2. Bottom Hand Pulls Half-Way
3. Top Hand Snaps All the Way

Plus:

4) **Head** in Place & 5) **Feet** in Place = **Centered & Tall**

...Everything taught fits into the framework of these 5 points

Legs power the swing; Initiate the swing

Head in Place | 'Face the Ball'

Feet in Place | Balance

Instruction Points, Concepts and Communication - Part 1 of 2

Tee Work

Kids may not recognize the value of using a tee in the clinic, especially since they 'already played Tee-Ball'. Batting off a Tee is something players do throughout their careers, including time playing Olympic level softball and Major League Baseball. Tee work gets their muscles prepared for live batting practice.

[Video](#) of former American League MVP, Josh Hamilton, batting off a Tee. Only need to watch the first 20-30 seconds.

Note in the Video:

- **No stride** - watch the majority of successful college and pro players and you will notice **they don't stride** (striding is a 20th Century thing)
- **Feet remain in place** at the conclusion of his swing. Foot movement, following the swing is a very common flaw in youth batters. ("Keep You Feet in Place")
- **Torso and shoulders are relaxed** through the entire swing. The movement in his torso and shoulders is a result of his lower body turning and his hands/bat accelerating through contact. He is not using his torso and shoulders to swing the bat. A very common flaw in youth batters is initiating their swing with their shoulders (this problem persists up to the High School level and is found in struggling college players as well).

Stance at the Tee (p.11)

Relationship of feet to the ball when hitting off a Tee:

1. Front Foot even w/ball
2. One Bat length from ball
3. Feet wider than the hips (outside the knees)

Teaching Phrases

- Turn Fast
- Head in Place / Face the Ball
- Switch Heels
- Feet in Place
- Balance

Concepts

- Working on *Swing* development. We do **not** think, '*Hit* the Ball'
- Rubber Bands - analogy
- Legs have a significant impact on the accuracy of the swing

Important Points

- Legs Initiate and power the swing
- Switch Heels
- Centered & Tall

Instruction

Stay alert for when a player executes an *Action* correctly. Good instruction is not limited to correcting flaws. We want to acknowledge when we see something done right. The best way to acknowledge good actions is to point out what they did right and tell them to "Feel it". Becoming familiar with how correct actions *Feel* is a big part of the learning process.

Is The Stride Needed in the Swing?

Most successful batters Do Not stride. We will not tell any batter to stride. If a batter chooses to stride we leave them alone unless we see the stride causing them problems.

Striding is an individual thing, mostly in relation to an individual's instinctive timing mechanism. It is OK to stride if it feels natural to a batter, HOWEVER...

I encourage young batters to work **without using a stride**. Striding is additional movement for a batter to learn to execute with body control and balance. More movements in the swing; more chances for mistakes. A solution for eliminating or reducing a problematic stride is to widen the stance.

The videos below; WATCH: None of the batters stride. A few pick up their front foot and set it back down; an action called a 'Step' or 'Toe Tap' (timing mechanisms like a stride, but with less movement). Many (older and stronger) players today use this type of an action in place of a stride. These actions require quite a bit of leg strength, which players gain in their teen years. Younger kids are fine by simply 'Turning Back'.

[Canada v Italy](#) **1 min 57 sec** Aug 3, 2013

[Orioles v Blue Jays](#) **1 min 9 sec** Sept 26, 2022

[M's v Blue Jays](#) **4 mins** Sept 2022

(watch: 0:25 | 1:01 | 1:30 | 1:51 | 2:20 | 2:37 | 3:03)

Santana in the first clip, and the Jays batter in the last clip, Do lift their front foot. However, they set their foot back down, pretty much right where the foot started. Note that they do so slowly and with control of their bodies. These are grown men with tremendous body strength. Very few kids could execute this action.

Purpose of Drills

- Train muscles the movements made to swing the bat
- Maximize swing power and bat speed
- Develop Body Control and Balance

Skill Development Process

- Results are not instant - muscles need reps and time to learn
- Drills and actions may feel awkward or uncomfortable at first - this is normal

Sleep and Vegetables

Often parents and coaches ask if there is a drill or other activity that can help a player quickly fix a given flaw in their swing. In some cases we can give them something tangible they can work on to provide a fix. However, there are also instances where a given flaw is less about a player having poor technique and more about them simply being a young kid who has not yet developed the strength to execute the action correctly.

It is important to understand that the action of swinging a baseball bat takes a lot of strength and involves the entire body generating its maximum output of strength is a short burst. In many ways it's a 'grown up' or 'big kid' action.

The honest answer to this question often is, "Sleep and Vegetables". What we are saying is that the solution to the child's swing flaw is simply to grow more and get stronger.

In the meantime, we keep teaching, keep encouraging and keep loving them. Over time they will gain the strength required to perform the action correctly.

Bat Safety - Carry the Bat by the Barrel

The only time a batter holds a bat by the handle is at home plate in a game/scrimmage, or after getting their feet in position to swing during a drill, under the supervision of a coach.

Each year thousands of kids are seriously injured when a teammate is swinging a bat randomly on the field, unaware of other kids walking near by.

It is challenging to train kids to not hold the bat by the handle when they are walking around. For many, the handle is the only part of the bat where they have placed their hands.

Step 1 in training our kids, is to alert them that the pros, when walking around, carry the bat by the barrel. Show them how to Look Cool Like The Pros. Second, and finally, look at a bat as a loaded gun when a kid is holding it by the handle. It can cause just as much damage. Respond and correct them with the same urgency as if it were a gun. That can save a child, on the receiving end of a misplaced swing, from having their life permanently changed, or worse.



Drills & Tee Work for Training The Swing (part 1 of 2)

Mindset/Approach

Early on there are plenty of flaws in the swing. We **do not** concern ourselves with every detail of the swing during a given aspect of our swing work. Stick to the focus point (action) of each round of swings.

Swing has Three Parts

1. Legs Turn
2. Bottom Hand Pulls Half-Way
3. Top Hand Snaps All the Way

Plus:

- 4) **Head** in Place & 5) **Feet** in Place = **Centered & Tall**

...Everything taught fits into the framework of these 5 points

Legs initiate and power the swing. LEGS generate energy, then transfer the energy to the WRISTS/hands
...swing is Legs and Wrists. (Head and Torso: Centered and Tall.)

DRILLS 1 & 2

#1 Twist

- Valuable Drill because the Leg Turn is the most important action in the swing.
- is not an action we do All Day Every Day, like: run, walk, sit/stand. Leg muscles get little or no Turning Reps in our daily activities. Weight off heels
- Keep Shoulders Still
- 5 seconds, rest; 5 seconds, rest...
- This is a new action; don't expect to get it perfect. Patience, Reps, Timemuscles will learn

#2 Switch Heels

- This action is body mechanics , not some baseball/softball secret - see videos [p.14](#)
- All successful batters switch heels - some are obvious; some it's more subtle. Some players, who step/stride, execute this action while setting their foot back down.

TEE WORK (focus points)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Leg Turn | Gain familiarity with the FEEL of the movement |
| 2. Switch Heels | " |
| 3. Head in Place/Face the Ball | |
| 4. Centered & Tall | Awareness at the completion of the swing |
| 5. Feet in Place | " |

DRILLS 3 & 4

#3 Lower Half Turn

- Obj. of drill: Train legs to move first
- Learning to separate the lower body from the lower body

#4 Sideways Karate Chop

- Legs start the action
- Elbow bent; Palm facing up
- Stop at Contact Point
- Face the Ball / Head in Place
- 'Snap' Rubber Bands

TEE WORK (focus points)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Switch Heels | Turn Fast Stretch Rubber Bands |
| 2. Sideways Karate Chop | Get used to the action |
| 3. <u>Feel</u> Karate Chop Action | Gain familiarity with the FEEL of the movement |
| 4. Head/Face | Awareness |
| 5. Feet in Place | Awareness - ' Check Balance ' at the end of each swing (Baseball/Softball Card) |

HELPING KIDS DURING DRILLS

HELP:

Hands on shoulders: **Touch** the shoulders to create Awareness of their movement; don't **grab** to force them to be still

Drills: #1) **Twist** #6) **Bottom Hand** (covered in part 2 - [p20-21](#))

HELP: Hand on top of head: If their head moves, the kids Feel a change in the relationship of their head to your hand

Drills: #2) **Switch Heels** #4) **Sideways Karate Chop** #5) **Skip-a-Rock** (covered in part 2 - [p20-21](#))

HELP: Verbal Reminder

Drill: #2) **Switch Heels:** Be sure kids have their **FRONT FOOT 'FLAT'** on the ground in their stance
...The front heel comes up when they 'Turn Back'
The back foot remains perpendicular to home plate when the batter 'Turns Back'
Note: This is less of an issue as kids get older and stronger

Below: points we taught Day 1, to watch for in the video (p.4):

- Powerful ('full speed') turn of the legs and hips (**Turn Fast**)
- At the end of the swing his front heel is pointing back somewhat; his back heel is turned up (**Switch Heels**)
- His head stays in place and is looking down at contact (**Head in Place, Face the Ball at Contact**)
- Executing the three points above, his torso and head remain centered between his feet throughout the swing. (**Centered and Tall**)
- He has very little body movement (no flailing around), is in control of his body and is balanced (**Feet in Place**) at the end of his swing.

Swing Development

- Brain is smart; muscles are dumb | Muscles forget; need Reminding | Muscles swing the bat, not the brain
- Massive reps and time | Reps = MUSCLE MEMORY
- Actions not Results: Talk | Self Evaluation
- One focus point when working
- Step-by-Step Process
- Day 1 focus: **Legs & Head**, the two keys of a good swing - Legs power the swing; Head controls power
- **LEGS** start the swing - You do not swing the bat with your arms! ...you swing the bat with your legs
- We are working on *Swing* development. We Do **not** think, '*Hit the Ball*'

Swing Review

- Legs Start the swing
- Turn Fast Stretch rubber bands
- Snap Karate Chop Snap Rubber Bands
- Contact Point Face the Ball | Head in Place
- Feet in Place - Balance Centered and Tall

Daily Drills at Home - 2 Minutes

Muscles learn differently than the brain. While the brain, in many instances, can consume information one time and retain it, that is not how muscles master physical movements. Muscles need to repeat a movement over and over and over, on a consistent basis, in order to adequately learn.

After gaining some level of mastery, the muscles then need to be constantly 'Reminded'. A young player who continues to incorporate the 'No Bat' drills into their pre-season and in-season routine, will further solidify their swing skills and develop more consistency from game to game.

Investing 2-3 minutes, 4-5 days a week, in addition to their team practice can make a significant positive impact on their success as a batter.

'No Bat' Drills - Baseball Positive

Twist

Feet wider than the hips. Arms held a bit out from the sides of the body (for balance). Feet and legs turn back and forth, while keeping upper body (shoulders) still. Fives seconds, then rest. Repeat 2x.

Switch Heels

Batting Stance with feet wider than hips. Hands on hips. Upper body remains relaxed, especially shoulders and neck. Turn Back (front heel up); Switch Heels (Turn Fast). Head remains in place (centered between feet). Action is powered 100% by leg muscles.

Lower Half Turn

Batting Stance with hands positioned where they would hold a bat. Turn back, then switch heels. This action done at half or three-quarters speed. Ideally there is no movement in the upper body.

Sideways Karate Chop

Batting Stance with top hand positioned where the bat would be held (hand is open). Bottom hand (which is not part of the drill) on front hip. Turn Back, Turn Fast. The top-hand elbow 'snaps' in a straight line to a point along side the torso. The hand, with palm facing up, stops at a point fairly even with the front foot (Contact Point).

Bottom Hand Pull

Batting Stance with bottom hand positioned where the bat would be held. Top hand (which is not part of the drill) on back hip. Elbow of bottom hand is slightly bent. Bottom hand 'pulls' approximately 6" towards Contact Point. Elbow remains bent. The action ends at a point prior to reaching the center of the chest (Sternum). Objective: train minimal movement of bottom hand.

Skip-a-Rock

This drill begins at Contact Point (the end of the Sideways Karate Chop) with top-hand palm facing up. Emphasis is the wrist. Snap the wrist/hand straight forward. Allow hand and arm to extend straight forward until top-hand arm is fully extended ('Straight out over the pitcher's head') and the back shoulder is pulled forward.

Hand Clap

The elbow of the bottom-hand arm is placed against the front of the torso, with the palm of the hand facing back. The forearm is angled a bit so the bottom hand is even with the center of the torso. The bottom hand represents Contact Point; it plays no other role in the drill action. The top hand positioned where the bat would be held (hand is open). Execute the swing actions: Turn Back, Turn Fast, Sideways Karate Chop action (instead of 'chopping' with the top hand, the top hand contacts the bottom hand with a 'clapping' action). The top hand accelerates through contact point (bottom hand) in a straight line out over the pitcher's head' (Skip-a-Rock action) until the top-hand arm is fully extend including the back shoulder pulled forward.



Switch Heels
Sideways Karate Chop
Bottom Hand Half-Way
Contact Point



Skip-a-Rock
Bottom Hand Half-Way

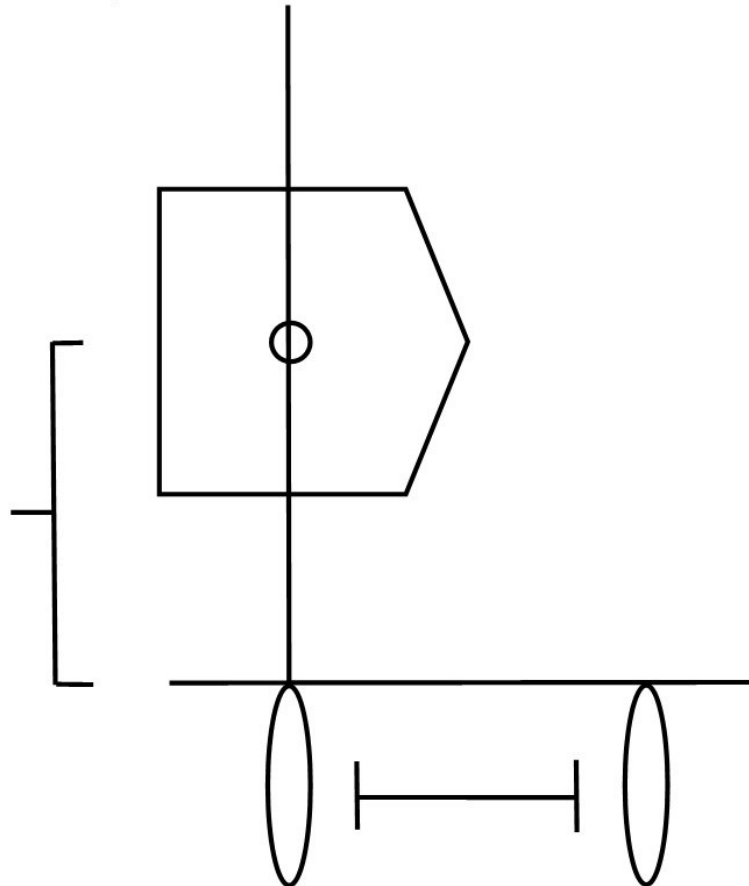


Straight-line Extension
Bottom Hand Remains Centered

Stance at a Tee

Have perpendicular line running across both batter's boxes and intersecting the Tee Stem and ball. The batter's front foot must be lined up with the ball. THIS POSITIONING IS CRITICAL and must be correct prior to EACH swing. The back foot, as noted below, is spread out so that the feet are slightly Wider Than The Batter's Shoulders. A good way to create a visual for the kids is telling them 'Your Feet Must Be Wider Than Your Knees'. It is easy for them to see the difference between their feet wider than their knees versus their feet directly under their knees (the spot where kids tend to want to position their feet. The problem is it is hard to generate power and be balanced when the feet are not wider than the knees/shoulders).

Batter stands one bat length from the ball. Measure from the ball to the batter's hip. NOTE: kids often measure distance with their arms extended - this is incorrect and we MUST prevent this mistake.



We want a straight line from the back toe to the front toe to the 'pitcher'

The figure drawn above represents the child's shoulders.

The ovals are their feet. The feet need to be wider than the shoulders.

Contact Point



Batting - Turn Back (Load)



Switch Heels

These video links show pro players doing the things introduced in the first day.

Switch Heels - Videos: Pujols, Zunino, About Face

A fundamental action in the swing is to 'Switch Heels'. All batters, when initiating their swing, drive their front heel back and down. While this takes place, their back heel turns up.

The result of these combined actions is energy from the legs pressing against the hip girdle, forcing rotation of the Lower Half of the body (legs). Many of us have heard the phrase 'turn the hips' in relation to the batting swing. The turning the hips begins with this action of the heels.

There are a few batters where it may be difficult to see this action in the front foot/heel. Some have a more- subtle movement. In those swings the rotation and driving back against the front hip takes place in ankle and knee joints (which have some laxity and capability to rotate).

Regarding the small percentage of batters who stride, there are two ways they execute the 'heel drop' in the front foot. Some rotate the heel back just before landing the stride; others finish their stride on their big toe, then drive the front heel back and down from there.

The first two videos below illustrate the 'Switch Heels' action used by Albert Pujols and Mike Zunino. The third video shows a soldier doing an 'About Face'. The soldier employs the same technique as the batters to turn his legs and body. The purpose of including the third video is point out that this action is not something unique to swinging a baseball or softball bat; this action is basic body mechanics.

[Albert Pujols](#) - Front Heel / Switching Heels - **Three examples: 0:00, 0:38, 1:35**

- Up to load ("Turn Back") Back and Down ("Turn Fast")
- Front heel (foot) initiates lower half turn

Note that Mr. Pujols has little or no stride; and minimal upper body movement until after the conclusion of the turn of his legs.

[Mike Zunino](#) - 2 HRs - **Three examples: 0:00-0:13, 0:14-0:20, 0:30-0:35**

(watch front heel; same as Pujols (and every batter to some degree ...and our US Army Soldier)

'About Face'

Example of a soldier using the same technique as Pujols and Zunino to turn his legs. This video is included to point out that what we are teaching isn't some 'secret' action exclusive to the baseball/softball swing. We want the coaches and players to gain an awareness of how the human body moves to initiate the action of the swing and most efficiently generates power in the swing. The soldier, Albert and Mike are each using the same technique to turn their lower body as effectively as possible ...they "Switch Heels".

...only need to watch the **first 10 seconds** of the video.

Legs Start the Swing - Stretch Rubber Bands ...Turn Fast!

[JD Martinez Super Slo-Mo Video](#) ...same swing repeated. Swings get slower each view. Slowest: starts at 0:35



Sideways Karate Chop



Head in Place - Face the Ball at Contact



Feet in Place - BALANCE

"No Careful Swings"



Instruction Points, Concepts and Communication - Part 2 of 2

Teaching Phrases

- Half Way - bottom hand
- All the way - top hand
- Fast-Faster - coordinating both hands in the swing
- Feet In Place
- Check Balance (hold position at the end of the swing; 'to get baseball/softball card picture taken')

Important Points

- Funny Bone (the small knob on the inside of the elbow. The Funny Bone leads the Sideways Karate Chop action.)
- Position of Strength (end of the Karate Chop action; at Contact Point - [p.12, 16](#))
- The Swing: Legs generate energy, which is then transferred to the Hands

Concepts

- Learning = Awareness + Feel - [p.22](#) ...*physical actions are not learned through memorization.*
- Hands work in a straight line - [p.21](#)
- A player doesn't *Swing* the bat; they *Snap* the bat - [p.21](#)
- Baseball Card Picture (feet in place / BALANCE) - [p.18](#)
- No Careful Swings* - Full speed (100%) every time

*NO CAREFUL SWINGS

'Slower' swings are less accurate. The faster you swing, the more accurate the swing. Rubber Bands analogy ...Turn Fast to stretch Rubber Bands; Snap the rubber bands - Sideways Karate Chop.

Muscles learn faster when they move at the same speed on each swing. The only speed that is surely the same, from swing to swing, is full speed (100% effort).

Kids, when they are learning to swing the bat, are overly conscious of RESULTS. Instinctively, they slow down their swing thinking it will help them be more accurate. In fact, the opposite is true; the slower the swing, the LESS accurate it will be. We go back to our 'Rubber Bands' analogy: The more you stretch a rubber band, the more accurate it shoots - the muscles work just like rubber bands.

Turning the Legs faster (and swinging faster) will result in a more accurate the swing - the actions of the Legs have a major impact on swing accuracy. ...that is when the batter keeps their "Head In Place" as well as Turning Fast.

We use the statement, '**No Careful Swings**' as a reminder to "Turn Fast" and swing fast.

MOVEMENT IN THE SWING

Everything we are teaching, regarding swing actions, is to *reduce* body movement. We are working toward the point where any movement in producing the swing is purposeful and efficient.

Drills & Tee Work for Training The Swing

DRILLS 5 and 6

#5 Skip-a-Rock

- Snap Top-Hand wrist forward; keeping palm facing up
- Allow arm and back shoulder to follow the forward momentum of the hand ...in a straight line
- Top Hand - All the Way

TEE WORK (focus points)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Switch Heels | Turn Fast! - stretch rubber bands |
| 2. Sideways Karate Chop | Snap rubber bands |
| 3. Karate w/Funny Bone focus | Snap straight to Position of Strength |
| 4. Skip-a-Rock | FEEL wrist snap |
| 5. Skip-a-Rock | FEEL Straight line action of hand/arm after wrist snap - All the Way |

#6 Bottom Hand Half-Way

- Bottom hand held near back shoulder, as in the batting stance
- Shoulders remain still and relaxed during the drill action
- Elbow remains bent throughout the movement (note: it is bent when holding the bat in the stance)

Drill:

Pull bottom hand 6" - 8" towards contact point. Repeat the pulling action 10x
(bottom-hand arm moves as a single unit; elbow remains bent)

- Bottom hand should not reach the center point of the chest (sternum) - only goes 'Half-Way'
...this drill can be difficult to execute at first; kids are learning to use *less* movement with their bottom hand

TEE WORK (focus points)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Switch Heels | Turn Fast! - stretch rubber bands |
| 2. Karate w/Funny Bone focus | Snap straight to Position of Strength |
| 3. Bottom Hand - Half Way | FEEL hand Stop (pulling/contributing to the swing) |
| 4. Skip-a-Rock - All the Way | FEEL Straight line action of hand/arm after wrist snap |
| 5. Bottom Hand - Half-Way | FEEL hand Stop (pulling/contributing to the swing) |
| 6. Fast-Faster | Bottom Hand pulls, Half-Way - Fast
Top Hand (and bat) accelerates, All the Way - Faster |

Skip-a-Rock (Drill #5)

The sequence of body movements used to swing a bat are the similar to those used for many other physical actions.

Swinging a bat is nearly identical to skipping a rock: 1) Legs turn, followed by 2) the Elbow leading the Sideways Karate Chop; and concluding with the 3) Wrist snapping forward in a straight line (while keeping the palm facing up)

On Day 2 we add a new drill called Skip-a-Rock. It trains the straight line action of the top hand, from just prior to contact to full extension of the arm.

Bottom Hand (Drill #6)

The theme for Day 2 was the Straight-line path the hands follow during the 'swing'. The Bottom Hand pulls the bat '**Half-Way**' towards contact point; the Top Hand 'Snaps' the barrel of the bat '**All the Way**' through contact point. The path the hands is a straight-line, resulting in the wrists snapping the bat.

On Day 1, two aspects of the swing were identified as critical for **swing accuracy**:

1. **Legs** Turn Fast to stretch the rubber bands
2. **Head** in Place; Face the Ball at contact point

The **Bottom Hand** is the third of three Points to maximize **swing accuracy**. A batter wants to *limit the movement* of the bottom hand (6"- 8", in relationship to the back shoulder) and *maintain its direction* towards contact point.

Hands Work in a Straight Line

The effort, and direction, of both hands in the swing is a straight line.

The bottom hand pulls the bat straight towards contact point. This straight line pulling action is completed when the bottom hand has travelled 'Half-Way' (Drill #5). The distance the bottom hand travels in relationship to the back shoulder is only about 8"-10".

The top hand, using the Skip-a-Rock action, snaps (the barrel of the bat) in a straight line 'All the Way' through contact point. ...the action of the hands in the Swing is actually a Snap.

The 'Swing' is Actually a Snap

Training the bottom hand to '**stop**' Half-Way (Drill #6) is the first part of developing the Snap in the 'swing'. [Page 23](#) shows a series of four pictures. These illustrate the '**stop**' of the bottom hand (note the relationship between the batter's bottom hand and the first base line).

The second part of the Snap is the Skip-a-Rock action (Drill #5) of the Top Hand; All-the-Way. Coordinating the Half-Way, All-the-Way action of hands/wrists ('**Fast-Faster**') produces **acceleration** of the barrel through the ball (contact point).

Final points of note in the series of pictures:

1. The distance the barrel of the bat travels in relationship to the bottom hand
2. The limited amount of hand movement, through space, used to Snap the barrel this distance

COACHES:

It takes some time for the muscles get the 'straight line path of hands'. The **feel** of snapping the bat (correct action) is different than the **feel** of the circular 'swing' (incorrect action) that is familiar to most young batters.

Learning = Awareness + Feel ...physical movements are not learned through memorization.

Awareness

The players are learning fundamental body actions used to swing a bat.

Physical actions are learned by doing. Repeating the action (properly) Over and over, leads to the creation of 'Muscle Memory'. Not to be confused with brain (cognitive/academic) memory.

As kids are exposed to new aspects of the swing, we want to make them Aware of proper actions. Examples of important characteristics of a movement:

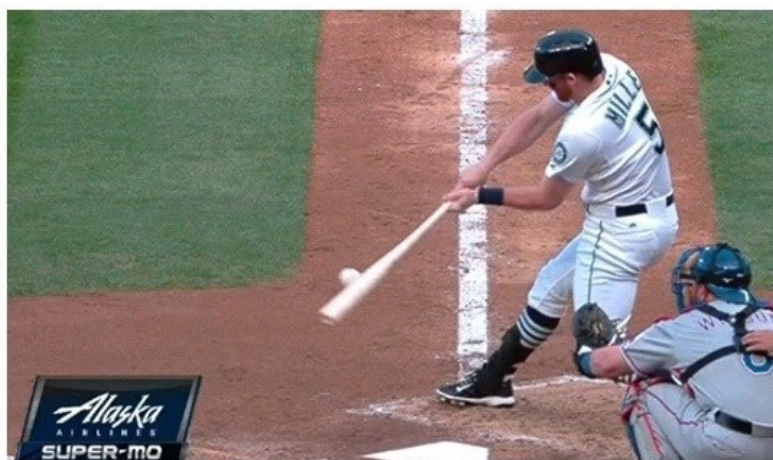
1. Length of movement
2. Movement in relation to other parts of the body
3. No-movement (ie, 'Head in Place', 'Centered & Tall')

Feel

During swing work, when we see a player execute an action properly, one of the best forms of feedback we can give is the statement, "Feel That!" Athletes (and muscles) 'memorize' through familiarity with the Feel of the proper movement. As players gain more experience, they begin to differentiate between the Feel of a movement executed correctly and the Feel of a flawed movement.

Bottom Hand “Half Way”

The bottom hand is done contributing to the swing when it has traveled “Half Way” to contact point. The top hand continues “All the Way” to, and through contact point. In this series of photos, note the position of Brad Miller’s bottom hand in relationship to the first base foul line. Note how far the barrel of the bat travels as a result of the top hand snapping past the bottom hand.



Batting - Skip-a-Rock

Top hand palm remains 'facing up' through contact with the ball, as the top hand wrist is snapping the barrel of the bat through the ball. This is the same action and positioning of the hand just after release when skipping a rock.



In each of the above pictures the ball has already been contacted and is leaving the bat.

Extension (straight line)



The **five fundamental** aspects of the swing are discussed on [pages 26-27](#). These are verbal **Reminders** we can give a player anytime during future swing work.

The kids now have had enough exposure to these points. They can digest and implement them into their work without thinking through their meaning.

It is important to recognize, when working with a batter, the difference between **Reminding** and **Teaching** (new content).

Five 'Anytime' Reminders

Leading into the classes we were very firm in our direction for teaching, to **not** give instruction outside of a given point of focus during a series of swings. Moving forward that remains true for communication with the kids. However, there are five points below that can be used, at any time, above and beyond a primary point of focus. These are all related to the Legs and the Head, which have been points of emphasis in the first two workouts. We can feel confident the players are now familiar with these teaching phrases and have a good understanding of their meaning.

Note: Be careful not to throw three or four of these out to a batter at one time (often there is an issue with more than one of these aspects in a swing). Stick with one reminder until that point is smoothed out a bit. Most important is to remember, we aren't going to Fix It, and they aren't going to Get It, in one day).

1. Turn Fast (Legs)
2. Face the Ball | Head in Place
3. Feet in Place | Check Balance
4. Centered & Tall
5. Full Speed | No Careful Swings

Turn Fast

Most kids, understandably, associate swinging the bat with their arms. The bat is held in the hands and the hands are connected to their arms. The legs, in fact, generate most of the power for the swing, they initiate the swing action and they impact the accuracy of the swing a great deal. It is critical that we not only keep teaching the kids to turn their legs fast, but to keep talking to them about how the legs are so important, per the points mentioned above. While teaching it is important that we keep in mind that, prior to puberty, that most kids do not have a lot of strength in their legs and it is challenging for them to constantly, swing after swing, maximize the use of their legs. Keep talking 'legs'; keep pushing for more, but also recognize that mastering the use of the legs will take time.

Face the Ball

Same concept as 'keep your eye on the ball'. This phrase is preferred b/c it ties in with the concept of 'Head in Place'. **Head in Place:** awareness of the head during and after the swing, and minimal to no movement, is an absolute for a technically sound swing.

Feet in Place | Balance

Ultimately, a batter wants to complete every swing with their Feet in Place and **Balanced**; and having just executed their swing at full speed with sound body control throughout.

Keep in mind, it requires a good amount of strength to execute a swing at full speed and maintain the Feet in Place. Early in the learning process, and when returning from a layoff, this is challenging and can be a bit uncomfortable.

However, through awareness and repetition, the muscles of the legs adjust and adapt. We need to balance patience with a firm conveyance of the importance of Feet In Place at the conclusion of the swing. A young player *will* get it ...through awareness and repetition..

Centered & Tall

Head and torso centered between the feet; no bend at the waist - during , and at completion of, the swing.

Full Speed | No Careful Swings

Fundamental to a sound and consistent swing. Working at the same speed every swing the muscles learn quicker. The only speed we can be sure is the same each time, his full speed. This approach also produces the most accurate swing.

Applying the Swing to Live Pitches

This 2-Day Clinic only gave us time to address the Swing. The following information addresses applying the swing to a live pitch. Our objective in swinging at live pitches is to maintain the same good swing being developed in Tee Work, while developing timing.

Live 'Batting Practice' is actually 'Timing Practice'. Except at elite levels of play, live batting practice is not where mechanics are addressed or worked on. Even at elite levels of play, when mechanics are a focus, in a given workout only one aspect of the swing is the focus of a given workout.

Issues:

- Kids want to hit the ball. We must emphasize to them that their mindset is to **make good swings**
...**NOT think: 'Hit the Ball'**.
- There will be plenty of bad pitches. The batters **do not change their good swing** in an effort to hit a bad pitch.
- When we make a poor pitch, remind them: *"I made a bad pitch; don't let my bad pitch mess up your swing"*.
- When the kids swing at bad pitches, in most cases, they **should miss** the ball. Because a good swing will not be able to contact a bad pitch.

Swinging at, and missing, a bad pitch (while using a good swing) is GOOD. Over time the batter begins to recognize which (bad) pitches they can't hit. Come game time, they better recognize poor pitches and learn to let them go.

Focus Points

1. Timing: 'See Ball, Turn Back' | 'Let the ball get to your feet' (Contact Point; Position of Strength)
2. Head in Place (Face the ball)
3. Feet in Place (at the conclusion of every swing) - Balance
4. Straight Line Path of Hands.... Sideways Karate Chop | Funny Bone | Skip-a-Rock... top hand, straight line action

Pitching a Wiffle Ball

Watch the video below from **0:30-1:20 for baseball** (note the elbow position and 'dart throwing' action of the arm; **1:23-2:13 for softball**, which demonstrates the wiffle ball pitching technique.)

Timing

Objectives

- Timing in the live swing
- Acceleration in the swing ('Fast-Faster')
- Extension Resistance Drill

We've worked a lot to establish use of the legs with a focus on balance and body control throughout the swing. The focus of Day 5 is the use of the hands and bat acceleration.

Again today, *for every swing*, we want our batters keeping their Feet in Place and to Check Balance following the swing. We'll continue our work in the timing of live pitches with an increased focus on contacting the ball at a Position of Strength, which requires that we Let The Ball Get to Our Feet (specifically the front foot). Our hands/wrists focus is on the bottom hand working Only 'Half Way', while the top hand accelerates past the bottom hand, 'All the Way'.

We want the batters mindset and focus of the action of their hands to be: 'Fast-Faster'. The bottom hand moves Fast to get the bat going Half Way, then the top hand takes over and accelerates Faster, in a straight line, using the Skip-a-Rock action to SNAP the barrel of the bat through Contact Point.

During live batting we will add a timing drill, '**Ball, Pitch, Hit**'. The batter verbalizes, "Ball" when they 'see the ball', then verbalizes "Pitch" when they see the ball out of the pitcher's hand traveling toward home plate. Then verbalizes "Hit" at the moment of contact. To help the players coordinate their timing, we pitchers will slow down our arm action a bit until just before release, at which time we speed up in order to generate the power and velocity to get the ball to the batter.

We can give a few coaching/technical reminders.... '**Live 5**' from the last session.

Timing

1. See Ball, Turn Back
2. Let the ball get to your feet

Swing

3. Turn Fast
4. Head in Place
5. Feet in Place - BALANCE (centered and tall)

Live batting practice is not for teaching the swing*

It is tempting to 'Coach' when players are batting live. Its pretty much guaranteed there will be flaws in a young batter's swing when working with live pitches. The last thing a batter needs during live is attempting to translate new or detailed information to their swing in the middle of a live session.

When a player needs additional instruction, we work them *AWAY* from the live batting environment. Get the player at a Tee, or use soft toss or front toss to help them work through their issues.

* The exception is when working with an experienced batter who understands their swing and has an established working relationship with the coach. Prior to a live session, the coach identifies a single aspect in the swing to work on during the live session.

Timing (cont.)

Developing timing is the primary objective during live batting work. The mechanics of the swing are worked on and developed in Tee work, Soft Toss and Front Toss.

The two key components for timing are

1. Load (Turn Back)
2. Contact Point (Let the ball get to your feet)

See Ball, Turn Back

Today we put most of our emphasis on 'See Ball, Turn Back'. If a batter doesn't load (Turn Back) and do so at the right time during the pitcher's delivery, most everything else taught in the class has little value.

In order for a person to jump as high as possible, they first need to squat down a bit (get a bend in the knees and set up the legs to maximize the use of their muscle strength. Turning Back prior to the swing prepares the legs to power the swing.

[Drill Video](#) (watch: 1:20 - 2:25)

Let the ball get to your feet

A major factor in young players swinging and missing, or hitting the ball weakly, is they swing too soon. This is also common with older players, including Major League players when they are struggling and are not confident in their swing.

The teaching phrase, "Let the ball get to your feet" is one a coach will need to use constantly with young players. Generally speaking, the ball is contacted when it is even with the front foot. This may vary a few inches, but it's a good rule of thumb for where we are in the teaching process.

On the next page are four pictures of batters making contact with the ball pretty much even with their front foot.

Have your young batter look at these so to become clear regarding where the ball is contacted in relationship to where they are standing. Creating Awareness is the first step in learning. ...yes, you let the pitcher bring the ball all the way to your front foot before you contact the ball.

These pictures also illustrate all the points we've been working on. Look at these pictures with your child and, together, identify 4 or 5 of the focus points in the swing we have been emphasizing throughout the class sessions.

Let the Ball Get to Your Feet

A pitch in the middle of the plate is contacted even with the front foot (give or take a few inches). We let the pitcher bring the ball to us. We don't 'go get the ball' or 'hit the ball in front of home plate' (two very common, but incorrect coaching clichés). The height of the pitch changes the depth of contact point in relation to the front foot. A high pitch is contacted a bit sooner; a low pitch is contacted a bit later.

Inside and outside pitches are contacted at different points in relation to the front foot. Inside pitches are contacted before the ball reaches the front foot. Outside pitches are contacted after the ball passes the front foot.

When batting against live pitching, the ball is moving, but **we swing to a 'Stationary Contact Point'**.



The Pitcher is Your Servant

OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT

The Pitcher is Your Servant. A well trained batter does not think of the pitcher as their adversary. The fact is the rules say that the pitcher is required to 'serve' the ball to the batter

Once the batter establishes a mindset of 'The Pitcher is Your Servant' and takes note of the small space that makes up the strike zone they pretty much know where they are going to swing the bat **before** the ball is pitched.

LET THE PITCHER SERVE YOU

Many young, unsure and/or misguided batters 'jump' at the ball or try to 'go get it' before it arrives to a point relative to their feet/stance where they have the best chance of making solid contact. A successful batter will **'Let the Ball Get to Your Feet'**.

On pitches in the middle of the plate a batter contacts the ball pretty much even with their front foot. A pitch on the inside part of the plate is contacted a few inches prior to the ball reaching the front foot; a pitch on the outside part of the plate* is contacted after the ball passes the front foot. When a batter allows the ball to 'get to their feet' they are more apt to be in a **'Position of Strength'** at contact.

When a batter contacts the ball where they are strongest, 'when the ball is at their feet', they can hit the ball harder and further.

Finally, we always want our batters to maintain an approach where their **focus is always on swinging the bat**. We do not want a batter thinking, 'Hit the Ball'. A good pitch and a good swing will result in good contact being made much of the time. When a batter is thinking 'Hit the ball' they are more likely to swing at poor pitches using a bad swing.

* Contacting pitches on the inside and outside parts of the plate is the focus of Batting, Part 2 (Days 6-10).

EXPECT TO SWING AT EVERY PITCH

When standing in the box we want our batters to have the mindset that *every pitch* is going to be right down the middle, belt high; and that they are going to swing. **A successful batter's approach is, "Yes, yes, yes...No!"** There is no doubt in the batter's mind that they are swinging at every pitch. Only at the last moment, if the ball is not going to be a good pitch to hit, does the batter decide not to swing.

CONCLUSION

The pitcher is your servant:

- Let the ball get to your feet, where you are strong
- You always expect to swing the bat - Yes, yes, yes...

Final Points

My hope is that, based on the content presented in the clinic, you can picture the points described below in 'The Swing' ...think of this exercise as the Final Test :)

...I had a professor in college who viewed tests as learning activities, not make or break moments. This test can be taken again ;)

The Swing

A batter uses their Legs to start the swing and generates energy by Turning Fast. The initial turn of the legs creates a Stretch of the muscles in the torso. These muscles Transfer the Energy produced by the legs through the torso and begin the snap the hands.

The Sideways Karate Chop of the top hand and the 'Half Way' action of the bottom hand work together to move the Hands, in a Straight Line, towards Contact Point. As the bat nears contact with the ball, approximately even with the front foot*, the top hand makes a Skip-a-Rock action, SNAPing the bat, which Accelerates the barrel of the bat through contact point.

The top hand extends, in a straight line, through contact. The straight line action of the top hand pulls the top-hand arm and back shoulder to full extension, in a straight line.

The Momentum of the bat barrel continues in a circular path after the batter reaches full, straight line extension, the end of their swing. The momentum of the barrel pulls the hands off their line, resulting in the *circular look* of the final part of the 'swing'.

* Inside pitches are contacted 4-6" before the ball reaches the front foot; outside pitches are contacted 6-12" after the ball has passed the front foot.

The Hands

We focused on properly using the hands/wrists. It is critical for batters to understand that the bottom hand's contribution to the swing is a Very short, straight line, action towards contact point. The bottom hand pulls the bat for approximately 8"-10" and that is the end of it's work. Any further use of the bottom hand results in a 'long', slow, less powerful and less accurate swing.

The 'Feel' the batter experiences in the use of the bottom hand is 'just getting the bat started'. It likely feels, to the batter, that they are using/moving the bottom hand a distance much shorter than 8"-10". When first training the bottom hand, and using it properly, the feeling to the batter will be very strange. If the batter communicates that their swing does feel strange, different, and awkward, that is a good indication that they are utilizing the bottom hand Correctly :)

The 'Feel' when coordinating the hands correctly is 'Fast-Faster'

A Few Mental Points

Successful batters have good swings and swing at good pitches

1. The rules say the Pitcher Must Bring the Ball to You (strike zone)
2. Let the ball get to your feet
3. The batter knows, before a pitch is thrown, pretty much where they will swing (5-gallon bucket)

The Swing Zone

1. Don't think of where the ball might go before it gets to contact point; that is beyond your control.
2. You know where the ball has to be in order for you to be required to swing - strike zone.
3. Always expect the ball right down the middle. Always expect to swing; "Yes, yes, yes, No" mindset on each pitch.

A perfect pitch every time + a perfect swing every time (hard line as a result) = *You still get out a lot*

1. Batting is the most unfair thing in sports: 9 defenders v 1 batter
2. The result is out of the batter's control ...all the batter can control is the swing
3. Limit thoughts to the swing zone ...and the swing itself

Every Swing is the Same

There is one most efficient way for the human body to move a bat through the swing path. This is difficult to see with the naked eye because the swing itself takes place so quickly.

The 'swing' begins when the legs start their Turn; and ends as the top hand is has executed a *good portion* of the "Skip a Rock" and "All the Way" action through contact point.

What most of us see, and get confused by, is the batter's 'style'. The way they **begin**: stance, load and stride (many don't stride); and the way they **end**: follow through and finish. The style aspects are much easier to identify because they are slower than the swing itself (the **middle** part).

Often observations of style lead well intentioned coaches and parents to make assumptions about the swing. Instruction often focuses on style rather than points that are fundamental to the swing itself.

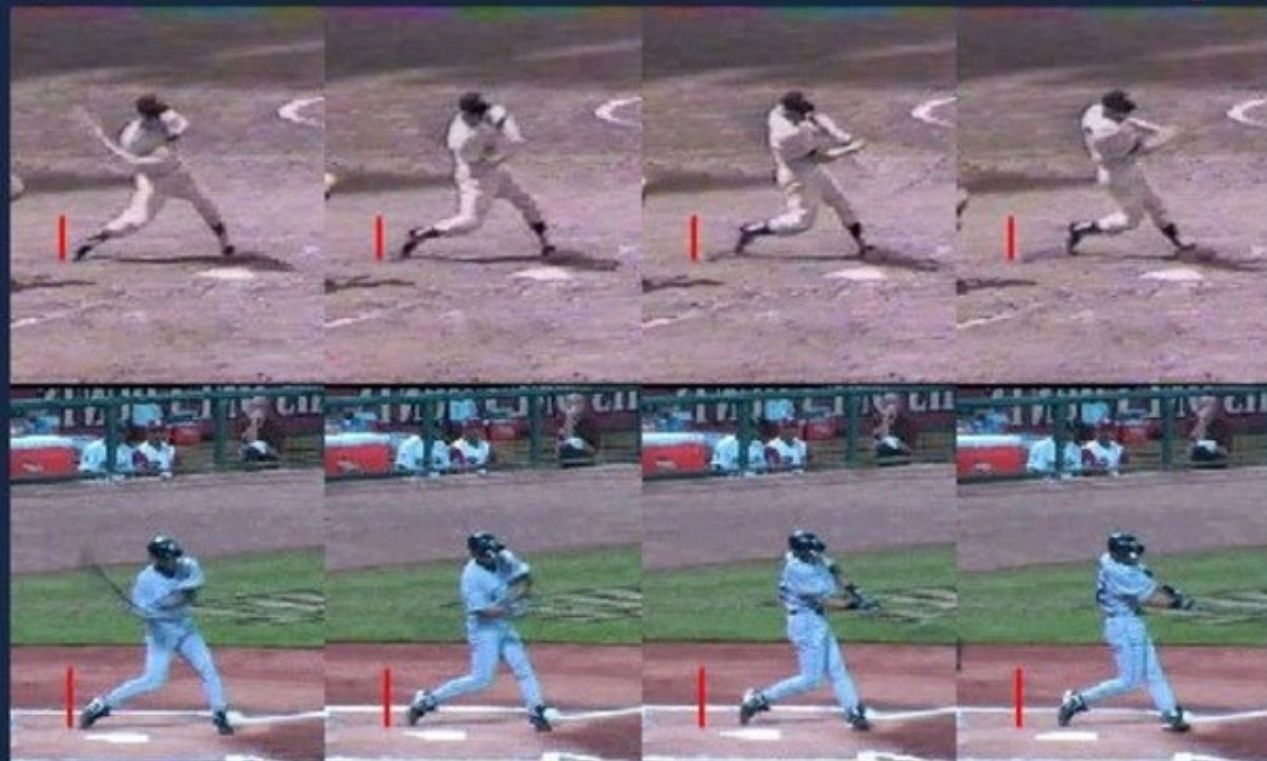
Below are a series of photographs of two batters with very different styles but who have the same swing. We could plug in any two players who have had success at the highest level of the game over the past 150 years and would get the same result; we would see two swings that are pretty much identical.

Ichiro (one of the greatest contact hitters of all time) and Mickey Mantle (one of the greatest power hitters of all time):





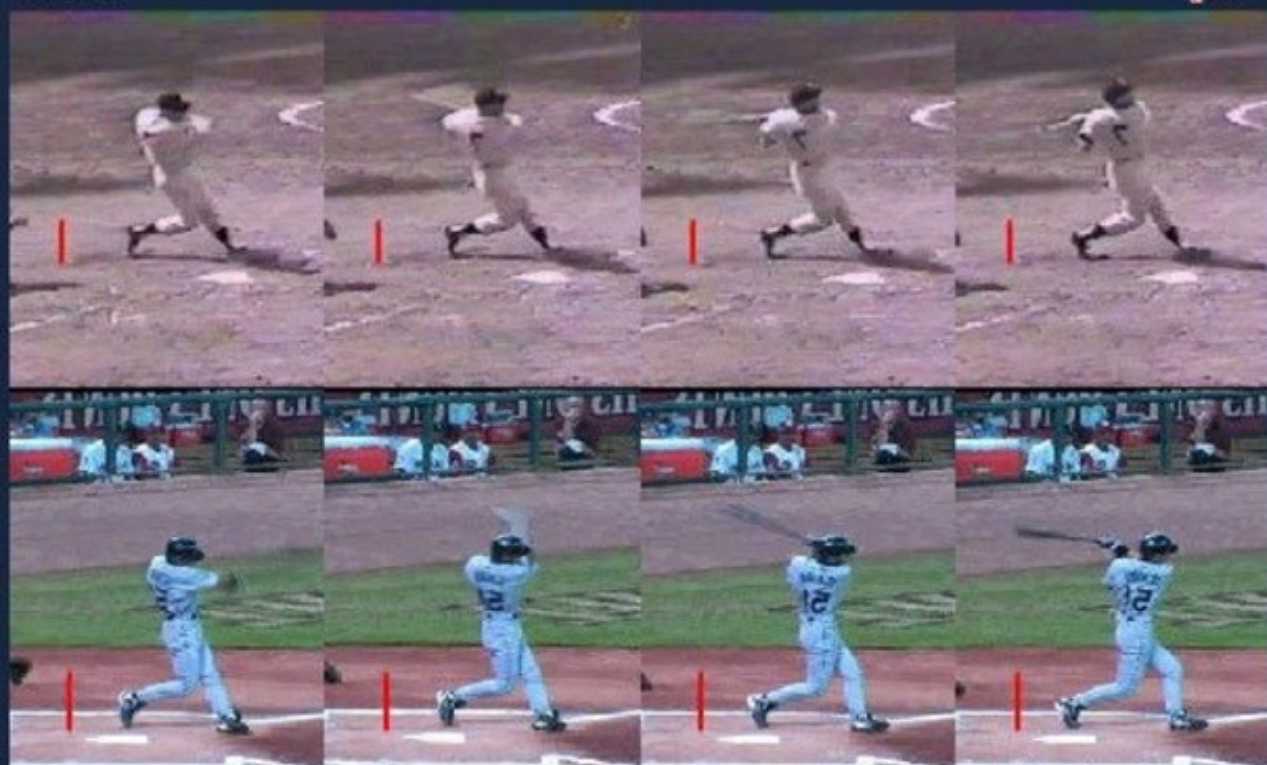
RightView Pro



Mantle vs Ichiro 2



RightView Pro



Mantle vs Ichiro

Objective of the Swing

We are working towards the objective of generating the maximum amount of energy in the swing while minimizing the amount of body movement. This is not something that is accomplished in a few weeks; or even in a season when working with young players.

Though it is an on-going process we want our batters to have an awareness of these characteristics of a fundamentally sound swing during their practice.

Maximizing energy starts with the mindset of 'No Careful Swings'. We want our players executing each swing with 100% effort; 'Full Speed' every time. The more a player practices their swing at full speed the more comfortable they will become and will develop a sense of being 'in control' during their swing. The other key element of swinging with 100% effort every time is the muscles learn the actions quicker. When working at the same speed (100%) the muscles better 'recognize' the actions they are wanted to master.

Developing body control starts with the 'No-bat Drills' we go through at the start of each workout. These drills have a specific start and end points. By executing the drills properly each time the habit of executing the proper movements of the swing are established. These habits are taken to swing work where the batter works to gain awareness of the Feel of a given action of the swing when it's executed properly. Over time, this familiarity of parts of the swing evolves into awareness of a good fluid swing, as a whole.

The concept of 'Snapping' the Sideways Karate Chop action was introduced. We have started the process of changing our batter's mindset of what is happening in the swing. A successful batter doesn't want to think of 'Swinging' the bat; we want their objective in their tee (and live) work to 'Snap' the bat.

A final important concept that was introduced on day two is that the action of the hands is not a circular 'swing', but more of a straight line 'snap'. We talked about The Hands Working in a Straight Line. The Skip-a-Rock drill helps the muscles develop the action and Feel of a straight-line path of the hands, the top hand in particular, in the swing.

FUN VIDEOS

Below is a 5-minute video. If nothing else, it will be fun to watch. The point of watching is to see these batters Swinging Full Speed, which is a major key for their success. Notice these batters also have great BALANCE and body control during their swings. You will not see any 'Careful Swings' in this video :))

Baseball's Best Pure Hitters

While watching, look for some of the other points we've been working on:

- Turn Back
- Turn Fast
- Head in Place / Face the Ball
- Feet in Place

Considering the core aspects of the swing, there are not many details; the swing itself is quite elementary.

The objective in our instruction is simplification. The goal in developing the swing is generating maximum energy from the legs and fluidly transferring that energy to the wrists/hands resulting in the bat accelerating through the contact point with the ball.

Feet In Place - Balance

Josh Hamilton 2008 HR Derby Watch his balance, efficient movements and Feet in Place.

Swing Workouts

These are examples of a Tee Work out. From these examples, variations can be made. Some workouts can focus more on one specific part of the swing; others can be a bit of each part. Workouts can be short (25 swings) or longer (60 swings). Mix up the plan from workout to workout depending on time available, the other activities planned during the time of the workout and the perceived focus and desire of the player on that particular day.

Do each of the No-Bat Drills 5x each before each swing workout

TEE WORKOUT #1

No-Bat Drills

Swings (focus points):

Focus on Turning the Legs

... get used to the Feel of the Legs working 8 swings

Switch Heels focus 8 swings

Switch Heels - Face Contact Point (Head in Place) 8 swings

Sideways Karate Chop focus 8 swings

Sideways Karate Chop - Feet in Place 8 swings (Check Balance after each swing)

TEE WORKOUT #3

No-Bat Drills

(Drills #5 & #6: First do a Sideways Karate Chop to get to Contact Point where the Skip-a Rock action begins. Pause, then Skip-a-Rock)

Swings (focus points):

Switch Heels (Stretch Rubber Bands) x10

Switch Heels (Face the Ball/Head in Place) x 5

Sideways Karate Chop x8

Bottom Hand Half-Way x8

Skip-a-Rock x8

Fast-Faster X10

TEE WORKOUT #3

No-Bat Drills

Swings (focus points):

Switch Heels 10 swings

Sideways Karate Chop 5 swings

Sideways Karate Chop – ‘Funny Bone’ focus 5 swings

Face Contact Point (Head in Place) 5 swings

Bottom Hand – Half-Way 5 swings

Top Hand Wrist Snap 5 swings (feel the wrist snap)

Bottom Hand – Half-Way 5 swings

Top Hand Wrist Snap 5 swings (feel the wrist snap)

Feet in Place 5 swings (Check Balance after each swing)

Fast-Faster (Check Balance after each swing) 10 swings