

# FASTSPORTS

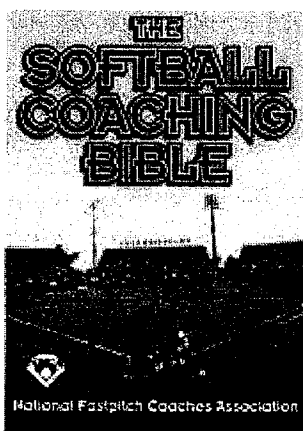
## Minnesota Girls Fastpitch

Home	Clinics	Tournaments	Discussion	Clearinghouse
Coaching Tips	Feature Articles	Comments	Links	About FastSports

## The Swing

by

Mike Candrea



After the hitter has achieved a good base from which to hit, it is time to execute the swing. The swing is initiated by a sequential unlocking of body parts. Powerful hitters unwind from the bottom up with a combination of linear and rotational movement. The back side rotates against a firm front side. The word firm is important: If the hitter locks the front side, her weight actually moves back as she executes the swing. This movement does not allow the hitter to create a positive weight shift that delivers her energy toward the contact point. When locking occurs, I like to use the term negative movement (hitter's weight is moving away from the contact point).

If we divide the body down the middle from the head through the belly button, the front side of the body supplies the direction while the back side provides power. This principle is the same when you are teaching proper throwing mechanics. Let the back side knock the front side out versus using the front side to pull the back side through.

A key element of generating the proper leg and hip action is the position of the back (pivot) foot. By watching the pivot foot on contact, you can tell what kind of weight shift occurred by the position of the heel of the pivot foot. Another key is the position of the back leg: L-shape versus straight leg. We like a hitter to have her heel up at contact. This tells me that she has achieved a positive weight shift. The closer the heel is to the ground, the more weight remains on the back side and is not transferred to the contact point. Some hitters actually finish on the toe of the pivot foot. This habit is common for hitters who hit off their front foot—for example, Laura Espinoza. Front foot hitters need to be strong in the upper body and gifted with great hand-eye coordination. Obviously, Laura has both, as she is the NCAA leader in home runs. As long as the hitter can achieve a positive movement to the contact point, the pivot foot takes care of itself. I have found more young hitters who have worked so hard pivoting that they actually overrotate, forcing their front sides to fly open and create a long swing.

Now that we understand that the legs lead the swing (unwind from the bottom up), it is time to discuss some key elements of the hand action to the contact point.

The bottom hand (the pull hand) sets the plane of the swing; the top hand (the throwing hand) finishes the swing. Both hands work together and have equal importance. Successful hitters keep their hands relatively close to their bodies and have a knack for controlling the barrel of the bat.

I use the phrase "Throw your hands inside the ball". If the hitter is going to deliver the barrel to the ball, her

hands must be inside the ball. Hitters who always try to hit the outside of the ball often have poor results. The only pitch hit on the back of the ball is the inside pitch. All other pitches are contacted on the inside half of the ball.

Some common attributes of the upper body in good hitters are:

Hands are held in a strong position to throw the bat head (barrel).

Hands are at the top of the strike zone. I like the bottom hand at the top of the strike zone.

Bat is held at 45-degree angle. Stay away from extremes, like the bat positioned perpendicular, flat, or wrapped behind the head.

Elbows are down.

Lead arm forms an L.

Both arms form an upside down V.

Front side is soft.

Front shoulder is slightly lower than back shoulder.

Wrists are in an active or cocked position to allow a throwing motion.

To read more excerpts from THE SOFTBALL COACHING BIBLE, or to order your own copy, click on the link below (or copy the link to the address bar on your web browser):

<http://www.humankinetics.com/products/showproduct.cfm?isbn=0736038272&associate=3410>

THE SOFTBALL COACHING BIBLE  
National Fastpitch Coaches Association  
Paperback • 360 pages  
ISBN 0-7360-3827-2  
\$22.95 (\$29.95 Cdn)

---

[Home](#) | [Clinics](#) | [Tournaments](#) | [Discussion](#)  
[Coaching Tips](#) | [Clearinghouse](#)  
[Feature Articles](#) | [Comments](#) | [Links](#) | [About](#)

*FastSports!* and all content contained within are copyrighted and not to be reprinted in any form without the written consent of the developer/owner

**HITTING:**

**BASIC FUNDAMENTALS,  
COACHING POINTS & DRILLS**

**BY:**

**CINDY M. BRISTOW  
Amateur Softball Association**

## HITTING FUNDAMENTALS

1. COMFORTABLE STANCE. Page 1
2. RELAXED EXPLOSION. Page 1
3. KEEP YOUR WEIGHT BACK. Page 1
4. DRIVE THE HANDS IN A STRAIGHT LINE AT THE BALL. Page 1
5. ROTATE HIPS INTO SWING BY PIVOTING ON BACK TOE. Page 2
6. FRONT ELBOW EXTENSION. Page 3
7. FRONT SHOULDER STAYS IN. Page 3
8. CONTACT BALL OUT IN FRONT OF THE PLATE. Page 4
9. SNAP YOUR WRISTS AT THE BALL. Page 4
10. ROLL YOUR WRISTS AFTER CONTACT. Page 4
11. HIPS SNAP THROUGH AND WEIGHT SHIFTS. Page 4
12. FRONT SHOULDER ROLLS TOWARD THIRD BASE DUGOUT. Page 5
13. LONG FOLLOW-THROUGH. Page 5

1. COMFORTABLE STANCE:

Because everyone is built a little different, each person's stance may be slightly different. This is OK. Too much emphasis is placed on getting a person in a "perfect" stance. The problem with this is that what is "perfect" to one person may be uncomfortable to another. When a batter is uncomfortable he/she become tense. The tighter an athlete is, the slower he/she can react. Since hitting is a quickness skill and relaxed muscles react quicker than tensed ones, it makes sense that a batter stay as relaxed as possible.

2. RELAXED EXPLOSION:

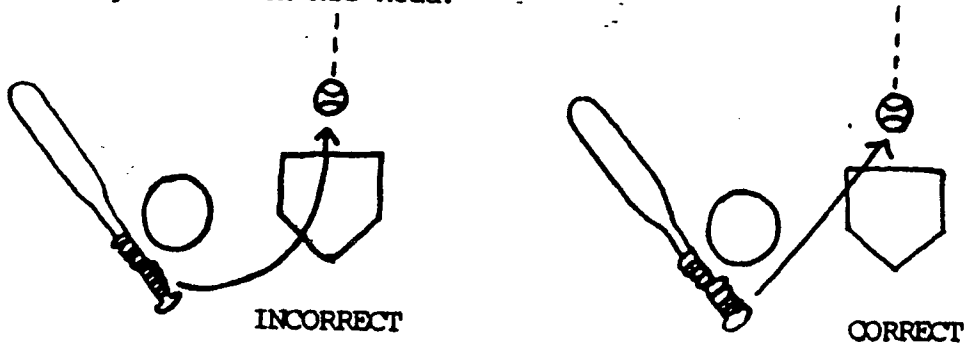
This refers to the combining of relaxation in the stance position, and turning that relaxation into explosion and power at the ball. It takes timing to turn from relaxation into explosion at the proper moment. But, all of hitting is timing.

3. KEEP YOUR WEIGHT BACK:

This refers to keeping most of your weight on the leg farthest from the pitcher (or closest to the catcher, however you want to look at it). The reason for this is when you shift this weight from the back foot to the front foot, it results in a key power source needed for proper hitting. This is one problem area for hitters having trouble hitting the ball hard. Chances are, they are starting their weight in the middle and then shifting it forward, if at all, resulting in half the power they would get if they started with it back and then shifted it forward.

4. DRIVE THE HANDS IN A STRAIGHT LINE AT THE BALL:

This is a very important point that can prevent a lot of timing problems. The easiest way to explain this principle is to draw an overhead view of the hitter. Pretend you are sitting directly above a batter, looking right down on his head:



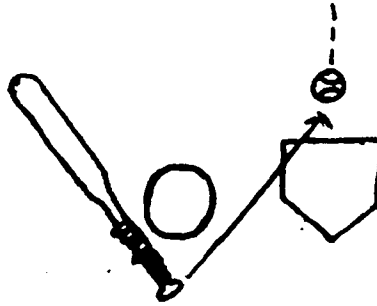
As you can see by the drawing, the correct method has the batter's hands going in a straight line to contact the ball, while the incorrect method has the batter looping his hands at the ball. It is this looping action that will cause:

- Your bat-head to drop and pop the ball up.
- Your swing to be late.
- You to hit the ball without any power.
- You to see the ball real good, but just not be able to hit it.
- You to always pull the ball.

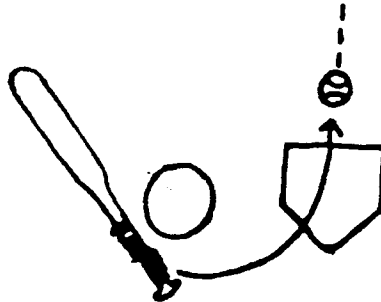
If any of these symptoms sound like you, then chances are you are looping your hands (and as a result, the bat) at the ball. The easiest way to correct this is to point the bottom (butt) of the bat at the contact point and keep it pointing there as you swing. This will keep your hands in a straight line to the contact point.

REMEMBER:

A STRAIGHT LINE,

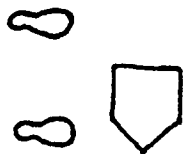


NOT A LOOP,

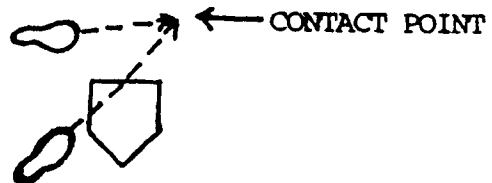


5. ROTATE HIP INTO SWING BY PIVOTING ON BACK TOE:

Pivoting the back toe so it points at the point of contact is an easy way to get hip snap into your swing. The pivot action resembles the action of squashing a bug with your foot. Here is an over head view of this pivoting action:



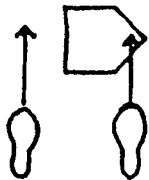
BEFORE PIVOT



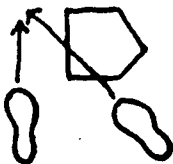
AFTER PIVOT

A very simple method of determining whether or not your hitters are "getting their hips into the swing" is to look at the angle of their back foot:

a. Before the swing



b. And after the swing



After the swing, the back foot should be pointing towards the point of contact if the hips are being used in the swing. If the back foot is pointing at home plate, just like it should be before the swing, then you are swinging with all arms and not using your hips and legs.

6. FRONT ELBOW EXTENSION:

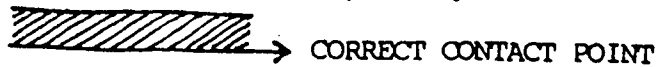
Extension is another word for straightening. Not stiffening of the elbow, but straightening the front elbow out at the contact area. This enables the proper wrist snap and explosion at the ball. If the elbows stay bent throughout the swing, the result is less power, due to a lack of ability to snap the wrists. Remember that the swing fundamentals are very similar to those of the overhand throwing motion. When you throw overhand, you straighten your elbow in order to allow your wrist to snap and thus "throw" the ball. Try throwing without straightening your elbow. Keep it bent throughout the entire throwing motion....it's tough, isn't it? You cannot get any power. Well, the same is true for the swing. If you follow step 5 and DRIVE YOUR HANDS IN A STRAIGHT LINE TO THE BALL, then without knowing it, you are also straightening your elbow...or...getting extension.

7. FRONT SHOULDER STAYS IN:

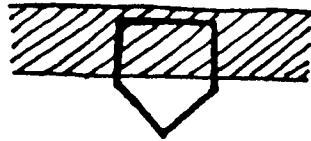
This means that the front shoulder must avoid turning out towards the third base dugout until after contact is made. If this shoulder turns prior to that, then the hands can no longer snap and explode the bat at the ball. The bat will have to be "pulled" into the contact area, which results in an extreme loss of power and bat control.

8. CONTACT BALL OUT IN FRONT OF THE THE PLATE:

The following drawing explains this point quite well:



INCORRECT CONTACT POINT



This is especially important in fast pitch. Draw a line in the dirt in front of the plate during batting practice to get used to this idea.

9. SNAP YOUR WRISTS AT THE BALL:

The old saying is to "roll your wrists" when you hit the ball. This idea resulted from watching the position of the wrists during the follow-through. The wrists roll-over in the follow-through. Rolling the wrists during contact results in a weak, powerless swing. The correct action for the wrists during contact is to "SNAP". Keep the finger nails of the top hand pointing up to snap your wrist. To roll your wrist your finger nails start pointing by up to the sky, and the back of your hand ends up pointing to the sky at contact.

10. ROLL YOUR WRISTS AFTER CONTACT:

After the ball has contacted the bat, the wrists can roll. This is a comfortable and natural motion, but for maximum power it needs to be done after contact is made.

11. HIPS SNAP THROUGH AND WEIGHT SHIFTS:

As contact is made, the weight shift that was started by the back toe pivot (#5) continues on to the front foot and the hips open up (go from pointing towards home plate to pointing towards the pitcher). This continues the power generated at the beginning of the swing and helps transfer that power to the ball.

12. FRONT SHOULDER ROLLS TOWARD THIRD BASE DUGOUT:

As the weight is shifting during the follow-through, the front shoulder can turn toward the third base dugout without hurting the swing. If this turn occurs anytime before the follow-through, power and vision are adversely affected.

13. LONG FOLLOW-THROUGH:

This means that the path of the swing, during the follow-through should be long and away from the body. This is opposed to a follow through with bent elbows where the hands stay within a foot or so of the body through-out. This type of follow-through is incorrect because it restricts the power imparted on the ball. Again, we can use the overhand throwing motion for comparison. When throwing overhand, the follow through is out away from the body and eventually ends up close to the body -- the same is true for the swing follow-through.

### HITTING CHECKPOINTS

1. Soft step -- if at all. (Fast Pitch only, slow pitch will lengthen stride.)
2. Bat-head stays higher than hands, throughout the swing.
3. Front toe, back toe and bat ALL point at contact area on impact.
4. Bat-head contacts ball in front of home plate.
5. Front side stays closed until follow-through. (Open on follow-through.)
6. Chin contacts front shoulder at beginning of swing, and contacts back shoulder at end of swing. (This ensures the head and eyes are staying on the ball and not turning out.)

### HITTING COACHING POINTS

1. RELAX the front side, DRIVE the back side.
2. WAIT on the pitch, EXPLODE at the ball.
3. KEEP YOUR WEIGHT BACK!!!
4. WAIT LONGER, BE QUICKER!!!  
(Know your hands are quick enough to wait an extra second before swinging at the ball, without losing any of your power.)

### PITCH SELECTION

1. A great swing will not help you if you don't use it on a good pitch.
2. Know your strike zone and practice hitting strikes.
3. Stay ahead of the pitcher and your success as a hitter will go up.
4. When a pitcher throws you a "very hitable" pitch, you better be hitting it. A good pitcher won't throw more than one hitable pitch per batter.

## HITTING FACTS

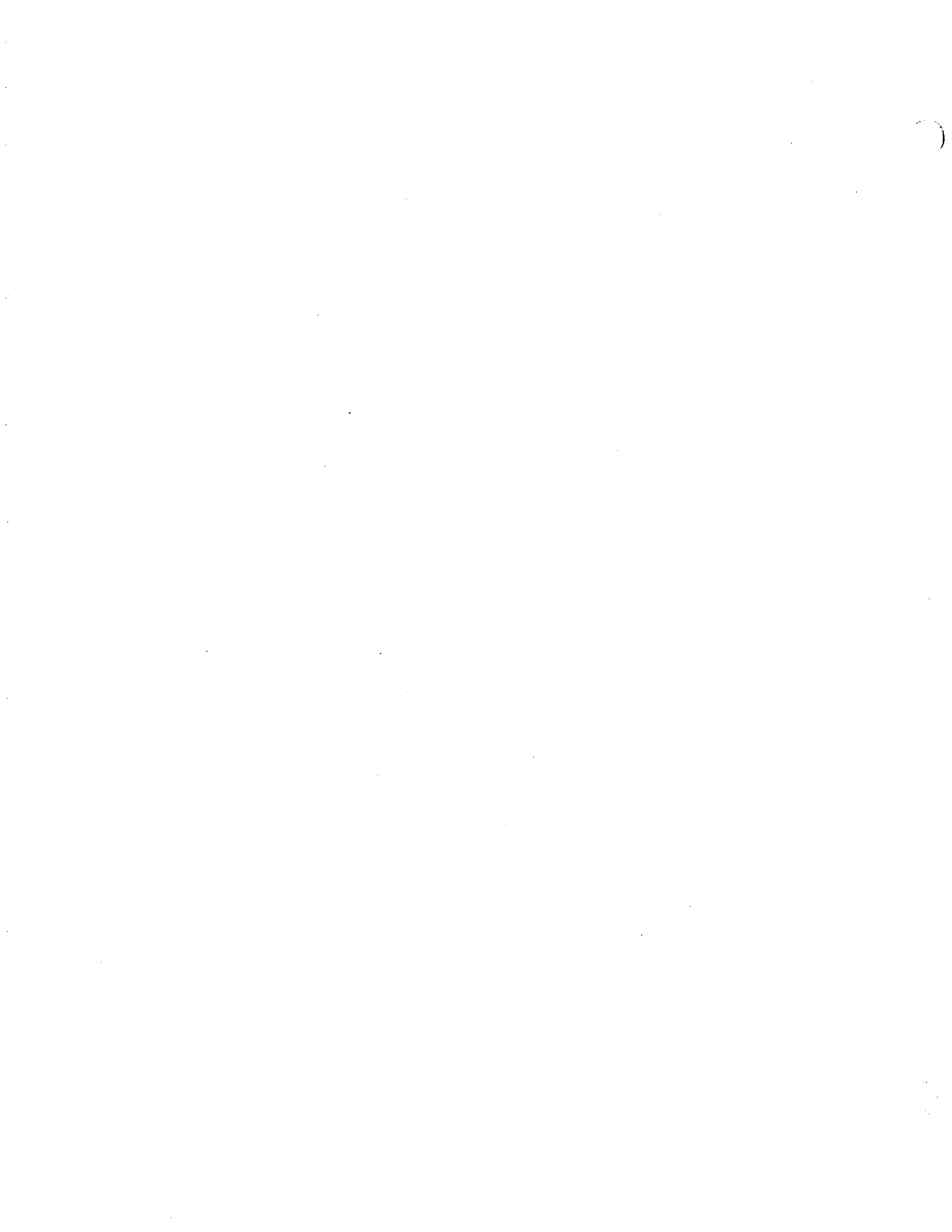
1. FLY BALLS: 2 out of 10 will fall; On-base percentage of 23%.
2. GROUND BALLS: 3 out of 10 will fall; On-base percentage of 32%.
3. LINE DRIVES: 8 out of 10 will fall in: On-base percentage of 84%.

### USING THESE FACTS:

- Emphasize to your hitters to stay ON TOP of the ball.
- Hit the top half of the ball. This way you'll be hitting high percentage line drives and ground balls, and you'll still get your share of home runs.

### HITTING DRILLS: (See "Hitting Drills")

1. BREAKDOWN SERIES:
  - A. Hip turn.
  - B. Left-hand swing from toss. (One knee)
  - C. Right-hand swing from toss. (One knee)
  - D. Both hand swing from toss. (One knee)
  - E. Tee swing standing.
  - F. Soft toss standing.
2. TEE GAMES
3. TEE DRILLS:
  - A. Two tee drills to emphasize full swing.
  - B. Two tee drills for "inside" and "outside" work.
  - C. "Slap" bunt work.
  - D. "Hit and Run" work.



# The Short Game: Making it Work for You

By Rhonda Revelle

A. Fundamentals and Mechanics of the various bunts: footwork, handwork, bat location and angles, timing, ideal placement, velocity desired on the bunted ball

1. Sacrifice
2. Drag
3. Push
4. Slap
- ★ 5. Running Slap (left side) (~~fast~~ runners)

B. Working with your personnel

1. Physical characteristics you look for in your drag, push, slap, and running slappers
2. Mental characteristics you look for in your bunters

C. Offensive situations

1. Most important goal for particular situation will help determine which bunt to execute
2. Coach vs. player in the decision making role
3. Biggest Risks of each type of bunt
4. Biggest Rewards of each type of bunt

D. Reading the defense

1. What type of infield set-up is susceptible to the drag bunt
2. What type of infield set-up is susceptible to the push bunt
3. What type of infield set-up is susceptible to the slap bunt
4. What type of infield set-up is susceptible to the running slap

E. How a good bunting attack can help the other aspects of your offensive game

1. Enhances hit and run percentages
2. Increases effectiveness of base stealing
3. Aids your versatile bunters in their hitting attack
4. Helps overall offensive game by constantly putting mental and physical pressure on the defense.

# Hitting: It Can't be That Hard

By Pam Newton -

1. BALANCE
  - a. Feet
  - b. Weight Distributions
  - c. Head
  - d. Weight of Bat
2. STANCE
  - a. Feet
  - b. Knees
  - c. Head
  - d. Hands
  - e. Bat Positioning
3. ARM EXTENSION WITH PIVOT
  - a. Stride
  - b. Arm Extend
  - c. Wrist Snap
  - d. Pivot & Rotate Hips
    1. Power - in lower body
    2. Pivot and extension (best friends)
    3. Hips "never sag"
    4. Pivot knee bent
4. FOLLOW THROUGH
  - a. Long Arms
  - b. Whip the Bat
  - c. Around Arms - Give Yourself a Hug
  - d. Head Still on Contact
5. HOMEWORK
  - a. Drills --
    1. Mirror Swing
    2. Tee Hitting
    3. Wrist and Forearm Drills
    4. Back Yard Hitting Equipment

## HITTING DRILLS

1. Hitting off Tee:
  - a. Stand behind tee
  - b. Extend arms
  - c. Pivot back foot
  - d. Eyes looking down hole in the tee after swing
2. Fence Hitting:
  - a. Group off
  - b. Tossers kneels down slightly, behind and away from hitter
  - c. Tossers throw ball out in front of hitter
  - d. Hitter should use same technique as on tee hitting
  - e. Hitter should hit the ball into fence, waist high and down
3. Toss Hitting:
  - a. Group of 3 or more
  - b. Same technique as fence hitting
  - c. Use an open field with players shagging the hit balls
4. Dry Swing:
  - a. Stand in open area
  - b. Mentally picture a ball being pitched to you
  - c. Swing using same technique as mentioned above
  - d. This is good to do in front of a mirror

## HITTING DRILLS:

### 1) BREAKDOWN SERIES:

#### A) "BEHIND THE BACK":

PURPOSE: Develop proper hip rotation.

EQUIPMENT: 1 bat, bunch of balls.

PEOPLE: 2

SET-UP: 1 person with the bat behind their back locked through their arms, the other person on her knees tossing up the balls. Both people about 5 feet in front of the fence or net.

————— FENCE

X<sub>1</sub>   X<sub>2</sub>

X<sub>1</sub> = batter  
X<sub>2</sub> = tosser } Facing each other

EXECUTION: Tosses tosses up the ball about waist-high to the hitter. When the ball reaches its peak the hitter rotates on her back toe and drives the bathead into the ball and the ball into the fence.

#### COACHING POINTS:

- Keep the weight back.
- Chin goes shoulder to shoulder.
- SPIN the backside into the ball.
- Emphasize rotation on the back toe.

#### B) "WRIST SNAPS": (Each hand separately)

PURPOSE: Develop arm extension and proper wrist snap.

EQUIPMENT: Same as above.

PEOPLE: Same

SET-UP: Person with bat on front knee, bat in left hand, other hand behind the back. Tosses does same as above.

EXECUTION: Hitter works on getting bat arm extended first and then snapping the wrist and bat into the ball.

#### COACHING POINT:

- Hit out front of body.
- Work on relaxing the front shoulder.
- Hit with the hands and elbow extension.
- CHOK UP in order to properly control the bat.

NOTE: When both players are finished with one hand have them change and do the other one.

#### C) "BOTH HANDS, ON KNEES":

PURPOSE: Develop correct arm action in two-handed swing.

EQUIPMENT: Same

PEOPLE: Same

SET-UP: Same

EXECUTION: Hitter on one knee with bat in both hands. The tosser's role is the same as above. The hitter will hit the ball into the fence or net.

#### COACHING POINT:

- Emphasize keeping the front shoulder in.

