

Hitting Manual

P.A.C.E.

Police Athletics for Community Engagement



“Great Hitters Are
Made Not Born”

“Great hitters are made, not born” is a quote from a great hitter named Roger Hornsby. Hornsby’s quote is the basis of our approach to hitting in the P.A.C.E Baseball program. We believe that any athlete can be taught to hit.

As our program grows it is our focus that we continue to emphasize and stress the fundamentals of hitting, as well as, playing as unit/team. **Our ultimate goal is teach you to know your limitations and continually to understand your role as a hitter, fielder and teammate.**

This year our hitting tradition will continue. Knowing the fundamentals is the key. That is the purpose of this manual. This manual will provide you with the fundamentals of hitting so that you can refer back to them throughout the season. This is not a reading that you should skim through once, you will want to refer back to this throughout the year.

Bat Speed

Let's keep this very basic and simple. Forget all other baseball tips on hitting. Very simply, the faster the head of the bat is going when it hits the ball - the harder a baseball hitter will hit the baseball.

There are hundreds of baseball tips on hitting, but when it's all said and done... don't the hitters with the quickest bat speed hit the baseball the hardest?

You can talk about many things that are required to be a successful hitter and right near the top of your list should be Bat Speed.

I thoroughly enjoy watching a very big, strong hitter clobber the baseball. It's equally enjoyable watching a smaller hitter, who is not exceptionally strong, clobber the baseball. The only way for the smaller player to be competitive with the bigger and stronger baseball hitters is with his very quick bat speed.

Below are several things you can do to Improve Your Bat Speed!

Practice your swing every day. Some professionals will take as many as 500 swings a day in the off season. That's very possibly one of the reasons why they are now professional hitters. I'm not saying it's feasible to take that many swings every day but practice your swing as often as possible. Remember to take your practice swings exactly like you are swinging the bat in a game. You're cheating yourself if you do otherwise. If you are willing to spend the time practicing your swing, you deserve to benefit from the time you are putting in. What can possibly be better to improve your strength and quickness as a baseball hitter than practicing the swing itself?

Avoid gripping the bat too tightly. This is a common baseball hitting problem, especially with younger players. They often have the mindset that "I'm going to grip this bat real tight and really clobber this ball." Nothing could be further from the truth. It actually will slow down the speed of your bat. It's identical to a pitcher who holds the ball tighter to slow down a pitch and a baseball hitter gripping the bat tightly will slow down his bat speed also.

Make sure you swing directly to the ball. The very beginning of the swing is NOT level at all. It is a DOWNWARD movement and only levels out at the point of contact! You absolutely must be "quick to the ball." Short and quick to the ball is far better than long and strong.

Weight Distribution

What makes it almost impossible to fool certain hitters is weight distribution during the stride. One of the most difficult aspects of teaching hitting is the importance of keeping the body weight under control while striding. One reason why young hitters have trouble staying back under control during the stride is that it is not a natural motion. By that I mean, when a person walks in everyday life he shifts his weight to the foot that is taking the step. In hitting, the lead foot should come forward, (6 to 8 inches) while the body weight stays back.

The reason the body weight must stay back is so that the hitter will be hitting with his entire body and the bat will be able to snap through the strike zone with arms extended. If the hitter allows his body weight to shift on to his front foot, he will be hitting with arms only and the bat will drag through strike zone. As Ted Williams has said, "A hitter shouldn't escort the bat, he should swing it." With the weight forward the hitter ends up dragging the bat, but with the weight under control he no longer is "escorting" the bat he is now able to "swing" it.

Some hitters and coaches may misunderstand the idea of keeping the body weight under control. The hitter still has to stride. You can't stride only when you think the pitch is going to be a strike. Nobody is that quick to wait that long. **YOU MUST STRIDE ON EVERY PITCH.** But keeping the weight under control during the stride is the key. The hitter begins his stride when he first sees the ball released from the pitcher's hand. At that point the hitter is unable to tell if the pitch will be a strike or a ball, but he has to get started in case it is a strike. As the hitter begins his stride (6-8 inches) he has not committed himself as yet. His body weight is under control. The hands are still back and the hips are closed. The hitter is getting a longer look at the ball with his weight under control.

When the hitter decides to swing, the front foot is coming down from the stride. The hips explode open (as the back foot pivots) bringing the hands and bat into the plane of the ball. The reason the hips are still able to explode is because the body weight has remained back, under control. If the body weight was forward, the hips would not have a chance to open and the bat would drag through the strike zone.

Years ago people who discussed hitting referred to hitting with the weight on the front foot as **lunging** and this term still applies. Don't lunge into the ball; be patient, the ball will get there. Start your stride, but keep your body and swing back until you are ready to swing. You will get a longer look at the ball and that will help you to uncoil and drive the ball.

Here is a great example of coiling and uncoiling by Henry Aaron:

<http://www.beabetterhitter.com/text/batspeed/coiling/coiling.htm>

Obviously when the hitter strides some of the body weight must shift forward. The key is not letting the body get ahead of the swing. That is the tricky part about hitting, **STRIDING BUT STILL STAYING BACK UNDER CONTROL.** This is what is meant by keeping the weight back. It doesn't mean not striding until the last second, when you know it's a strike. It does mean starting your stride at the release of the ball but not committing your body weight too soon. Staying back under control allows the hitter to hit with his entire body not just his arms, it also gives the hitter a longer look at the ball which helps in making good solid contact.

The hitter should be able to work on his weight distribution during batting practice, providing the pitcher just lobs the ball in to the hitter there is no reason to stay back because the hitter will be able to get his bat around with no problem. Remember though that in a game the pitcher does not lob the ball. So in our batting practice we throw hard enough so that our hitters have a chance to work on their timing and body weight.

A few quotes from some other ballplayers:

Pete Rose, "I tell him (the hitter) to be comfortable. If possible, when they swing and stride toward the ball, they should try to keep their weight on their back foot. This is an important point in hitting. Take Henry Aaron, for example. He goes out a lot on his front foot but he keeps his weight back and his hands back and he still has everything to hit with. I take a short stride because it helps me keep my weight back on my back foot".

Ted Williams, "Do not lunge forward toward the pitcher because then you're committing your weight and the longer you keep from committing yourself, the better your chance of not getting fooled. You fight against going forward – you can't lunge into the ball."

Dick Sisler (former batting instructor for the St Louis Cardinals), "Most young hitters who come up to the big leagues are so over anxious to hit. They go out too quickly. They commit themselves too quickly. We try to teach these young hitter to stay back, to hold their weight back on their rear leg. My suggestion to most hitter who fall into a slump is to take some extra hitting and hit the ball to the opposite field. This will keep their heat in there and it will hold them back a little longer and they will be able to see the pitch a lot better than if they are over anxious and they go out too quickly."

Harry Walker (former coach and hitting instructor for the Pittsburg Pirates), "The secret of hitting is being able to wait and still get the bat on the ball. A coach should try to get his hitters to wait on the ball."

Walter Alston (former coach of the Los Angeles Dodgers), "If the hitter's body gets out in front ahead of the swing, his hands will have a difficult time in catching up. If his body (head and shoulders) lunge forward a foot or so, good timing will be difficult to achieve. The casual stride enables the hitter to stride forward with his front foot but not let his body go forward. The weight of the body is kept back, and the bat is quick. A good hitter is a waiter; he gets that last, extra look. Patience is one of the best qualities a hitter can have. In order to hit the ball well, a hitter must wait until it gets to the plated and then rip into it. Take a real good look at the pitch and then hit it."

As you can see from the above quotes there are others who are concerned about weight distribution during the stride and swing. To me it is the secret of hitting.

The Stride

The stride is one of the most important and probably one of the most misunderstood movements that a hitter makes. First of all, the length of the stride should be consistent, between 6-8 inches. This isn't really that long when you consider that this paper is 8 ½ inches in width. The striding foot should land in the same spot every time. Some young hitters believe that your striding foot lands in different locations depending on where the pitch is, that is wrong. The striding foot must be consistent as to where it land on every pitch.

The stride should be soft, as if stepping on thin ice. To ensure a soft step the hitter's foot should land on the inside part of the big toe, not the heel or flat-footed. If the hitter lands on his heel the lead knee will lock. If that happens, the hitter will be off-balance away from the plate and pitch. The locked knee will also prevent the hitter from being able to bend on a low pitch.

Most surprising about the stride is the fact that the stride has nothing to do with the swing. The stride should be completed before the swing starts. **THE STRIDE IS A TIMING DEVICE.** It simply puts the hitter into a hitting position (what we call the "second position). Too many hitters combine their stride and swing together. Consequently, they end up lunging at the ball and do not get a good look at the ball, and therefore, they do not get a good swing at the pitch. The stride and swing are two separate and distinct movements. They take place one right after the other but they do not occur simultaneously. **THE STRIDE PUTS THE HITTER IN A HITTING POSITION.**

The Second Position:

All hitters should realize that to be successful they need to be in two different positions before they swing. The first position is the preparatory stance. This is individual choice. The position of the feet, hand, etc. is up to each hitter.

The second position, however, is uniform among all good hitters. The second position is as follows: **THE STRIDING FOOT HAS JUST LANDED ON THE INSIDE OF THE BIG TOE AND THE HANDS AND THE WEIGHT ARE STILL BACK.** Too many hitters never get into this second position. They stride but they take their hands and weight forward with the stride. Therefore, they are unable to whip the bat through the strike zone because their hands drag past the hitter's body. There is no bat speed. The good hitter gets into the second position with the striding foot down (on the toe) and the hands are back.

Getting to and understanding the second position will help the hitter against any pitcher so that the hitter should never feel overmatched.

Stride the Fastball

The verbal clue that seems to help hitters was to "stride the fastball". This is why we time each pitcher warming up to get our stride in tune with the speed of the pitcher. Most hitters stride the same no matter what the velocity of the fastball. That is, the length of time of the stride was the same. The length of stride is distance should always be the same but not in the length of time. Striding the fastball

means on a slow ball pitcher the length of time of the stride should be longer. That is you will not get into the second position as fast as you would against someone who is throwing quicker.

Let's assume that you are facing a pitcher who throws very hard. You have to get to the second position very quickly, so the length of time of the stride is quick. **That is why so many great hitters have called the stride the "timing device"**. Too many hitters never adjust to the quicker pitching. They never get to the second position because they are still in the middle of their stride and the ball is on top of them. It may help to think of it this way: When facing a pitcher that does not have good velocity the stride step is a glide step. When facing someone who throws very hard the stride step is more of a jab step, not shorter in distance but shorter in the time in take to complete it.

Transferring Weight:

As important as staying back during the stride is, transferring the weight forward during the swing is what gives the hitter power. The problem with transferring the weight forward is that too many hitters will transfer it too soon and end up lunging. **THE WEIGHT MUST BE KEPT BACK DURING THE STRIDE BUT ALLOWED TO TRANSFER FORWARD DURING THE SWING**. There is no reason to stay back once the swing has taken place. The back foot's only purpose is to pivot to open the hips. Once that takes place the back foot is no longer important in the swing. As stated once before, the furthest ball that Hank Aaron ever hit was photographed and his back foot was completely off the ground. I'm not advocating doing this but it helps prove that the back foot only pivots the hips. Just remember, the stride is a soft step – not a charge. The weight transfer takes place during the swing – not during the stride.

Rhythm:

Inertia: inactivity, sluggishness

A hitter must overcome his own body's inertia. As the dictionary states, inertia is a state of sluggishness. The last thing a hitter wants to be at the plate is sluggish. To overcome the body's inertia, the hitter must have some rhythm in his stance. He should not stand at the plate like a statue. This tenses up the muscles and fluid swing is impossible when the hitter's muscles are tense. A slight rocking motion back and forth will provide the rhythm needed to remain loose and to overcome the body's inertia.

Balance:

It is important to maintain good balance throughout the swing. If the hitter is off balance many things go wrong. The hitter will end up falling away from the plate and the pitch. The lead shoulder, head and eyes pull out which makes watching the pitch almost impossible.

To avoid being off balance during the swing the hitter should have rhythm in his stance and should avoid over striding. When the lead foot hits the ground on the stride it must be a soft step, landing on the ball of the foot, not on the heel. Stay off the heels both during the stance and during the stride. Once a hitter gets on his heels he loses his balance.

Timing:

There is an old saying, "Baseball is a game of inches." I think hitting is a matter of timing, split second timing to be more exact. Players who are having trouble hitting many times are just a second or less away from being a good hitter. Their stride and swing are not timed properly.

The stride helps to give the hitter timing. The lifting and gliding step begins when the hitter first sees the ball and it helps to keep the hitter back, uncommitted until he is ready to swing. This is why batting practice should be thrown with good velocity, so the hitter can work on his timing during his stride and swing.

A good hitter realizes that different pitchers throw at different speeds and they release the ball differently, therefore, the hitter's timing must change somewhat for each pitcher. Just because a hitter has a pitcher timed does not mean the timing will be the same for the next pitcher he will face. That is why it is so very important to **WATCH AND TIME A PITCHER BEFORE YOU FACE HIM**. When the pitcher is facing your teammates, imagine yourself at the plate facing him. **WATCH HIS VELOCITY AND HOW AND WHEN HE RELEASES THE BALL AND BEGIN TO GET YOUR TIMING DOWN**. It is important to watch relief pitchers warm-up and pitch to your teammates. Why? Because the relief pitchers will have a different delivery and will have different velocity than the previous pitcher. Work on your timing before you face any pitcher.

Getting Hands Started

The major objective of every hitter should be to hit the ball hard. To be able to do that the hitter must be able to get his arms extended and drive into the ball. In the lower levels of competition, the pitcher did not throw with much velocity and therefore it was relatively easy to get the arms extended. But now when the pitcher is throwing hard, it becomes more difficult to get proper arm extension. That is when the hitter must compensate for the increased velocity and begin his movement (not his swing) sooner. In other words, the hitter must get his hands started while **THE PITCHER STILL HAS THE BALL**. The hands should go straight back, **NOT DOWN**. It should be a smooth, rhythmic drawing back of the hands. It should not be mechanical but instead natural. The hitter is actually coiling up away from the pitcher so that he can be quick when he starts his movement towards the pitcher. This coiling back with the hands will be only a few inches but will provide greater bat speed and more power because the arms will now get extended during the swing. A good example of coiling is the link below, it involves Henry Aaron:

<http://www.beabetterhitter.com/text/batspeed/coiling/coiling.htm>

When I was younger and learning how to hit, early I was not starting my hands soon enough but when I began getting the pitcher better timed I had a different result. The result was I felt I was more aggressive when hitting. When you start your hands you should never feel overmatched by a pitcher's velocity.

The last point should be an obvious one; also **I have mentioned it 3 other times in this manual**. The quicker the pitcher, the sooner you start your hands back. This is **TIMING** and it should be worked on mentally while sitting in the dugout and while standing on the on-deck circle. Every pitcher is different; **KNOW WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO START YOUR HANDS** when you face each pitcher.

Hands

One characteristic of all good hitters is that they have strong hands. The hands help generate bat speed along with the hips. The height of the hands in the stance will vary from hitter to hitter but a good general rule is to start your hands slightly above the top of your strike zone. This helps in bringing the top hand over in the swing. If the hands are too low the hitter will have trouble with the high pitch because he won't be able to get on top of it to drive it.

Some hitters are told at an early age to get their arms far away from their body, which is true because you don't want to tie yourself up. The farther the arms are away from the body, the longer the arc of the swing, which makes it tough to get consistent contact. Therefore, I feel the hands should be closer to the body. (Ted Williams says just 3 to 8 inches away from the body.) This will keep the swing short and more compact.

Grip

Good hitters hit with the bat in their fingers and not in their palms. To ensure that the bat is being held in the fingers and not the palms, line-up the middle knuckles of the fingers. This allows the top hand to come over more during the swing and the top hand controls the barrel of the bat. If the bat is held in the palms, the hitter then has just one arc to his swing. So line the middle knuckles up to have better bat control and bat speed.

Bat Speed

The way to hit a baseball hard is to have good bat speed. **Bat speed is accomplished two ways: (1) Emphasize your hands using a short, quick swing and (2) Pivoting on the back foot which opens the hips and pulls the hands through.**

The point to emphasize is the first one – hitting with the hands. The second point is important too but it is a relatively easy skill to master. All the hitter has to do is pivot his back foot because it is physically impossible to pivot and not open your hips.

The point about the hands is not so easy because hitters have a tendency to “**muscle up**” on the ball. That is, they swing with their entire body, thus they over-swing. When a hitter does not emphasize his hands and swings with his body he becomes off balance during his swing. He won't be so off balance that he will fall down but he will lose the fluidness or smoothness of his swing. When a batter over swings the lead shoulder pulls out which then brings his head and eyes out. **A hitter should strive for “PERFECT CONTACT”**. The ball will go further by making perfect contact than by muscling up on the ball.

A hitter might think that by emphasizing his hands and not his body during his swing would take away his power. Don't forget that the most prolific homerun hitter of all time, Hank Aaron, was the perfect example of a hands hitter. Power comes from bat speed, which bat speed comes from the hands and a pivoting back foot.

Back Foot Must Pivot

Last year one of our ballplayers started off the season hitting the ball with authority. After awhile he began to stop driving the ball like he was. The reason why he tailed off was that he stopped pivoting his back foot. Consequently, the hips didn't open and the bat just dragged through the strike zone. The back foot must pivot to provide bat speed.

To help the back foot pivot the hitter should make sure the body weight is on the ball of the foot – not on the heel. It is hard to pivot the foot when the weight is back on the heel.

The Head Goes Down

When the pitcher releases the ball it is good practice to sway body to get a rhythm but as practice it is good to “keep your head still”. When an object is coming at you and begins traveling towards you it is important to focus on the release of the ball but the most important part of the pitch is the last 10 feet. The reason being, I think most hitters lose sight of the ball in that area. That is not to say the hitter should be able to see the ball hit the bat but by putting the head down the hitter will see the ball longer in the last critical 10 feet.

The lowering of the head will be slight, just a few inches but it will help in following the ball. The head going down becomes obvious when watching slow motion. The movement is down, a lowering of the chin. It is not a tipping of the head to the side. **Most hitters have trouble hitting because they do not follow the ball “all the way.”** I didn't discover the importance of lowering the head to watch the ball “all the way” until later years. Some hitters make the mistake of watching the ball with just their lead eye. You should have your head positioned so you can see the ball with both eyes. You may notice a difference when an opposite armed pitcher pitches from the other side, the reason why is you have more time to see it and your head is not so far turned.

Lead Shoulder

Some hitters cheat themselves at the last split second by pulling their lead shoulder out too early. This takes the head, eyes and body away from the ball. Obviously the lead shoulder will come out eventually when the hips explode open during the swing and the bat comes through but the hitter must keep the lead shoulder in as long as he can. Keeping the body weight under control during the stride and swing gives the hitter an extra look at the ball – he should take advantage of it by keeping the lead shoulder and head in.

Top Hand

Different coaches stress different hands on the bat. For me, the top hand is the most important because it controls the barrel of the bat and therefore it generates the power. The bottom hand is important in guiding the bat to make contact.

The more the top hand can come over, especially on the high pitch, the more power the hitter will be able to generate. The wrists don't roll over until after contact has been made with the ball but the top hand should begin to come over during the swing at the point of contact. This top hand movement helps to ensure a somewhat downward swing but not a chopping swing. The downward swing is advocated by many hitters because it helps them to hit line drives and sharp ground balls. Hitters who take an uppercut swing need to have a great deal of power to lift flyballs out of the ballpark consistently. I don't believe there are many young players who can do this consistently. An uppercut swing is longer (arc) and because the barrel of the bat is not in the plane of the ball very long with an uppercut swing, the contact has to be almost perfect to be successful. With a slightly downward swing the barrel of the bat is in the plane of the ball longer and therefore the hitter has a better chance of making good contact.

Hitters who keep their hands low in the strike zone usually have trouble with a high pitch because they are unable to get on top of the ball and drive it. On a low pitch, a hitter must uppercut some but he shouldn't try to "golf" the ball out of the park. Instead he should lift the ball onto a line – not a flyball.

Use the good top hand in your swing. Work on it during batting practice and dry swings. It will help generate line drive power.

Strike Zone

Know your strike zone, make the pitcher throw to you and don't help him. Also, know what pitches give you trouble, (make sure they are in the strike zone) and lay off those pitches if you have less than two strikes. You should also know what pitch you can hit well and then look for that pitch and that pitch only when you are ahead of the count.

You should learn early in the game what the umpire's strike zone is. Don't let him take the bat out of your hands. Learn what pitches he calls strikes. You can learn this by watching all the hitters in the game.

Distance from the Plate

Too many hitters give the pitcher too much credit. They (the hitters) believe that every pitcher will put every pitch on the outside corner at the knees. Therefore, they move closer to the plate in order to reach that pitch, a pitch that most pitchers cannot throw with regularity. Remember, **THE CLOSER YOU ARE TO THE PLATE THE QUICKER YOU HAVE TO BE**. Why? Because when you're standing close to the plate your arm extension will be a couple of feet in front of the plate. Being further back from the plate will give you arm extension over the front part of the plate and about a foot and a half in front of the

plate. **THIS IS ASSUMING YOU ARE STRIDING TOWARDS THE PITCHER OR TO THE PLATE, IF YOU STRIDE AWAY FROM THE PITCHER YOU ARE LOOSING POWER.** In other words, you will be able to wait just that much longer on the pitch. The longer you can wait on a pitch the less likely you are to be fooled.

What about reaching the outside pitch? That can still be accomplished if the hitter strides more towards the PLATE ON EVERY PITCH and not so much towards the pitcher or away. In other words, move off the plate and then stride toward it.

Being Selective

Good hitters know what pitches they hit well and which pitches give them trouble. They also know when the advantage lies with them and when it lies with the pitcher. When a hitter is ahead in the count, (2-0, 3-1) he should look for his pitch and hit just that pitch. For example, if a hitter is a good fastball hitter and he likes the pitch to be on the inside part of the plate, he should look for that pitch. If he gets any other kind of pitch (for example, a curveball or changeup) he should let the pitch go. If the pitch is a fastball but on the outside part of the plate, he should let the pitch go because he was looking for the fastball on the inside part of the plate. The hitter should hit his pitch when he is ahead, not the pitcher's pitch, even if the pitcher's pitch is a strike.

Of course from time to time the pitcher gets ahead of the hitter (0-2, 1-2). When this happens the hitter must now hit the pitcher's pitch but he should not feel that he has to give up. A good hitter should be able to hit every pitch even if it is just fouling a certain pitch off. The hitter must make contact to avoid striking out because when a hitter strikes out he is putting no pressure on the defense. When being behind in the count the hitter should choke-up on the bat thus cutting down on his swing and make good contact. **GIVE IN BUT DON'T GIVE UP.** Battle the pitcher all the way.

Some hitters feel they have three strike zones. One, when he has no strikes on him, the strike zone is small. The hitter is looking for a pitch in a zone and that is the only pitch he is going to go after. Second, the strike zone is when the hitter has a strike on him. This strike zone is wider than that first and actually takes up all of his strike zone with the possible exception of a very difficult pitch for the particular hitter. Third, the strike zone is made-up of the entire strike zone and slightly outside of the zone. It is used when the hitter has two strikes on him. The thinking here is that the hitter does not want to take any pitch that is close when he has two strikes on him. You should not let the umpire take the bat out of your hand by calling you out on a marginal pitch.

Learning Experience

Every trip to the plate should be a learning experience. You should ask yourself afterwards: What did I do right? What did I do wrong? What did the pitcher throw the first pitch? What did he throw when you were ahead in the count? What did he throw when you were behind the count? Did he pitch differently with runners on base? Did he jam you? Did he pitch you away? Was he up or down in the strike zone? You should ask yourself these questions after each trip to the plate and analyze your answers.

This doesn't mean that you then go up the next time guessing. The more you know about a pitcher before you face him the more confident you should be and the better you will do. You can also learn a lot about a pitcher by watching him work against your teammates and then talk to them after they have faced him. This goes for relief pitchers as well as the starter.

Thinking At The Plate

After reading through these batting tips you might ask yourself, how can I remember all of this at the plate and still concentrate on the ball. The answer is, you shouldn't have to think about all of these tips and suggestions. You should work on them during batting practice and dry swings so that when you are hitting in a game it all comes natural to you.

This is not to say that you shouldn't be thinking at the plate but keep it simple. Concentrate on the ball and what you have to do to hit the ball with authority. Some hitters concentrate on taking a short stride because they have a tendency to over stride. When I used to go to the plate I would concentrate on keeping my body weight back, stride mechanism and take a short stride. That's all I would think about. The rest just came naturally because I had worked on it before I got to the plate during batting practice and during my dry swings. I didn't have to think about my grip, my lead shoulder staying in, the height of my hands, etc. It just all fell into place because of the work I had done earlier. So I would suggest that you keep it simple at the plate and just concentrate on your particular mistake that you might make at the plate. Don't let yourself make that mistake (example – lunging at the ball) and let everything else come naturally.

I think it is a mistake to go up to the plate thinking about “getting a hit”. Does that mean if the hitter hits a ball 10 feet in front of the plate and beats it out for a hit that he should be satisfied? He shouldn't. What if a hitter hits a shot and the shortstop catches it? Should he be dissatisfied? He shouldn't. I feel the hitter should think about hitting the ball with authority and then concentrate on what he has to do in order to hit the ball with authority. Keep it simple at the plate but concentrate on doing what you have to do to make good contact.

Confidence

Here is the situation: Last inning, 2 outs, tying run on third and winning run on second. You are on the on-deck circle. What is going through your mind? Are you hoping to get up to hit or are you saying to yourself, “I hope the hitter either gets a hit and drives in the 2 runs or makes an out. Just don't walk, I don't want to hit in this situation.”

Good hitters want to hit in tough situations. They want their teammates to do well so they are rooting for them but they also have confidence in their ability. They realize they can hit in tough situations because of the work they have done before they are in a tough situation. This is when the winter batting practices, the hard work on drills, the discussions on hitting, the extra batting practice at the hitting cages and the reading of this manual pays off. The harder you in preparing yourself the better you will do when called on to produce, no matter what the situation. **The old saying is true: HARD WORK BRINGS CONFIDENCE, CONFIDENCE BRINGS SUCCESS.**

The Perfect Swing

This is how I envision a perfect swing: The hitter goes to the plate confident; he has been studying the opposing pitching throughout the game. He knows what to expect from him. The hitter while at the plate thinks about watching the ball and one other thing – keeping the body weight back under control during the stride and swing. The rest, such as grip, top hand, back shoulder etc., will all come naturally to him because of the work he has done in batting practice and dry swings, he also is relaxed, not tight. He knows that as long as his weight is under control the pitcher cannot throw the ball by him. The hitter cannot be fooled at the plate; his hands are loose on the bat as he waits.

When the pitcher releases the ball the “casual” gliding stride begins. The body weight is still back under control, he is not lunging. He (the hitter) is getting a longer look at the ball by keeping his weight under control while striding. His eyes recognize rotation, he knows fastball. His lead shoulder is still in as his hands are staying back. The front foot is beginning to come down to plant; the back foot pivots and the hips explode. The top hand is coming over as the hitter makes solid contact with the ball and the head is still down. He rips a line drive right past the pitcher’s head, into centerfield for a base hit. As he gets to firstbase he remembers, **“GREAT HITTERS ARE MADE, NOT BORN” AND IT HAS BEEN WORTH THE EFFORT.**