

Hitting at Game Time

Hitting is like a three-legged stool. There are three elements that must all be functional to succeed in its purpose.

They are:

- Mechanics
- Timing
- Mental State and Visual focus

Mechanics:

At game time, Mechanics must be limited to no more than one swing thought. This might be "Power-L", "Hands straight to the ball." Ideally, there will be no mechanical thoughts during the swing. All of this work is done in practice, with the goal of swinging from muscle memory @ game time.

Timing:

The ideal contact point is slightly in front of landing foot. Anywhere closer to the back foot robs the hitter of power and contact accuracy.

Very simply, the hitter's timing mechanism is governed by when his/her stride foot lands.

If the hitter is behind on the pitch, he/she started the stride too late.

The hitter, at game time and in practice, should focus on adjusting his/her stride to time the incoming pitch.

The mechanical carryover: Assuming solid mechanics are established, the swing can be quickened by:

- Starting Hand position □ Moving closer to point of impact.
- Relaxing grip and increasing fluidity of wrists and arms.
- Elimination of any non-directional hand path (ie, hitches, excessive loading)

Mental State and Focus:

Ideally, the hitter should have 100% of his/her concentration not only on the ball, but on a specific place on the ball. The goal should be to hit the middle of the ball with the middle of the bat □ vs. the lazy approach of "ball to bat" □ All focus is on the ball, with no thoughts of pressing to succeed or fear of failure.

The hitter, before going to the plate, should study the pitcher and his/her pitches and exercise positive imagery (of connecting middle of ball to middle of bat). The power of this positive imaging exercise cannot be overstated □ hitting happens quickly and the subconscious expectation of the hitter has a profound effect on his/her success at the plate.

Focus: The hitter should exercise broad focus while staring down the pitcher (for baseball, focus on the pitcher's head, for softball, the pitcher's hips), then, as the pitcher goes into the windup, the hitter must change to fine focus (for baseball, the pitcher's logo on his hat, for softball, the outside of the throwing arm's hip).

Note: Fine focus can be held for no more than five (5) seconds □ which is why we broad focus early in the pitch, then fine focus near point of delivery.

Note: To describe Broad and Fine focus to your players, use this analogy.

□ When I look at your face, I have broad focus. When I look at your left pupil (or Zit if applicable) , I have fine focus. □

IMPORTANT: The hitter must pick up the ball at the earliest possible moment and TRACK IT WITH 100% FINE FOCUS TO THE BAT OR INTO THE CATCHER'S MITT IF TAKING THE PITCH.

It is an excellent habit to hold the head on the contact area for a second AFTER making contact.