

OFFENSIVE CLINIC

HITTING

1. Bat Selection

- A. Weight
- B. Length

2. Hands

- A. Knuckle alignment
- B. Handle position

3. Arms

- A. Distance Away
- B. Distance Back

4. Feet

- A. Position to plate
- B. Stance
- C. Stride

5. Body Unison

- A. Flow of all steps into one
- B. Where are majority of balls going
- C. Adjust accordingly

BUNTING: TYPES & STANCE STYLES

- A. SACRIFICE
- B. BUNT FOR BASE HIT
- C. FAKE BUNT (FOR STEAL OR DEFENSE OBSERVATION)
- D. FAKE BUNT HIT
- E. SUICIDE

KEYS

BAT ALWAYS PARALLEL TO GROUND
OVER PLATE
SOFT HANDS (SOFT BAT-CATCH & GUIDE)
HAND PLACEMENT

PAUL MOLITOR
ON

HITTING

"I used to get started by moving my left leg, my hands were busy on the bat and I had a bigger swing that caused my head to move"

"I got tired of jumping out and waving at bad pitches. I did some experimenting and came up with this: no starting mechanism, no stride, no head movement, and a very compact swing."

"I thought it might cost me some power. I had a career high in home runs this season. I've found out that power comes from the bat speed you generate, not the length of your swing."

Taken from Minneapolis Tribune, 10/20/93

by Denny Doyle

Let's face it, hitting a baseball isn't an easy task. But that's no reason not to try and improve your hitting skills. Improving those skills takes hard work, discipline and as always, the right information.

In order to obtain the right information, you must learn to accept what scientific studies of hitting have shown and cast aside traditions which can actually hinder your development.

Eliminating Unnecessary Lower Half Movement

To make a tremendous improvement in your overall balance, head movement and hip rotation, you should eliminate the stride in your approach to hitting. If that is a difficult concept for you to accept, bear with me, I'll explain.

The stride is the major source of failure in the areas of balance, head movement and hip rotation. If this is new to you, remember that perfection requires us to eliminate tradition, theory and opinions and focus on FACTS. The facts tell us that striding is the one movement in hitting that can wreak havoc with all other movements of the swing.

Striding can cause excessive weight transfer to the front side, can limit back side rotation and result in a poorly timed weight shift. So why do hitters stride? According to Hall of Famer Red Williams, "It gets you started." For many, the standard answer to the "What will I lose if I don't stride?" question is "I will lose my center of gravity." Wrong. Again, this is a misconception stemming from opinion and tradition. If you ask hitting instructors who know hitting and spend time evaluating the swing, they will tell you, without hesitation, that power comes from "the rotation of the hips."

So there are several negatives resulting from the stride and the only positive is that it "gets you started." Because it's easy to agree that we need to get started, all we need to do is find a way to get started without the negatives the stride produces. That's exactly what we have done at Doyle Baseball.

The natural rhythm needed to be a successful hitter can indeed be accomplished without the stride. But before you can let that natural rhythm flow, you will have to establish good balance. To have this good balance, your center of gravity and the width of your feet must be under control. This center of gravity must be lowered to direct the major portion of your weight slightly to the balls of your feet. Test yourself. Have someone push you from the front and from the back, making sure you can maintain your balance.

Problems in keeping your balance are very obvious:

- Feet are too narrow to properly rotate and maintain balance

- Center of gravity is too high - legs are straight and the attempt to rotate makes you off balance

- Too much weight is prematurely transferred to front foot, causing much head movement

In SUMMARY, to establish proper balance you need to:

- Spread your feet twice shoulder width

- Have your legs flexed and ready to rotate the hips and shoulders

- Transfer your weight only on your swing and keep your head 4-6 inches behind the front foot at finish

Now that you understand the importance of good balance and how to achieve it, let's get back to the natural rhythm used to get your swing started. This rhythm begins as the pitcher gets near his release point. The hitter will then start his entire front side, by lifting his heel slightly, cocking his knee, turning the hips, and with the front shoulder starting at the pitcher, slowly turning in, moving the hands slightly back and tilting the clubhead slightly behind his head in one continuous, slow, controlled movement. All this is done in preparation to explode when you see the pitch you want to hit. By learning this movement you can attain the rhythm that gets you started and eliminates the premature shift of weight too often accompanying the stride.

Now that we've examined balance and gotten you started, let's take a look at the other two common denominators found in all good hitters, resulting from computerized bio-mechanic studies:

1. The ability to rotate the hips and shoulders with quickness

2. A limited amount of head movement when executing the swing.

Body control is the dominant factor in each of the three common denominators mentioned above. Any hitting instructor worth his weight in salt is sure to agree, so it makes sense that we should focus on these three areas. Since you already have the balance under control, it's time to take care of the other two.

Head Movement

All hitters must learn to limit their head movement forward toward the pitcher and the movement away from the contact area. Those two head movements are negative and prevent your hitting success.

The major cause of undesirable head movement is the premature shift of too much weight from the back foot to the front foot as a hitter strides into the pitch. By eliminating the stride, we've already eliminated the biggest problem. **LIMIT FORWARD HEAD MOVEMENT TO 6-10 INCHES, MAKING SURE YOUR HEAD MOVEMENT IS ON THE SWING.**

Rotation

To get the most out of your swing, it is crucial to learn to rotate the hips without losing balance. The necessary rotation comes from the back hip, and the back shoulder does the rotating around the front hip and the front side.

Rotation is actually a "firing of the back pocket" toward the ball when swinging. **MAJOR PROBLEMS WHEN ATTEMPTING ROTATION ARE MANY.** However, the most common are:

- Striding and transferring the weight to the front side before your swing; this also causes unnecessary head movement. This premature weight transfer prevents desired back side rotation, unless you have guessed and timed the pitch perfectly. This will allow you only limited success and will make

especially difficult to hit.

- Another problem is the front foot turning and not staying closed. This also causes you to lose maximum rotation. Pivoting on the front foot prevents full power and adequate plate coverage.

- If the hitter does not maintain that relatively low center of gravity he began with, he will not have the strength or power in the legs for adequate rotation.

Improving Balance, Limiting Head Movement and Increasing Rotation Ability

You can maintain outstanding balance, in season and during the offseason by taking 50 swings every evening and holding each swing at completion for three seconds in a frozen follow-through position.

Improve your head movement by standing in front of a mirror, taking your swings and making sure your head doesn't move more than 6-10 inches when you swing the bat.

Increase your ability to rotate your hips by practicing quick rotating hip and shoulder movements. Place both hands on your hips and practice these movements daily.

There's no reason not to get smarter and improve every area of your game, including hitting. In order to do this, you MUST accept the facts we have learned through careful study. Don't rely on tradition. By eliminating the stride, improving your balance, limiting your head movement and increasing your rotation ability, you'll make yourself a better hitter. The success stories of good hitters from Doyle Baseball are too numerous to ignore - become a success story yourself.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA BASEBALL

HITTING MECHANICS
AND
PHILOSOPHIES

CATEGORY: STANCE OR SET-UP

1. Balanced set-up
2. Feet spread - length of bat
3. Grip - knocking knuckles lined up
4. Elbows down, approximately 90° in front elbow
5. Toes pointed straight ahead
6. Hands at top of strike zone
7. Back arm biceps & forearm touching
8. Chin tucked on front shoulder
9. Eyes both look at pitcher
10. Farther elbows and knees are apart - slower the bat will be
11. Slight knee bent
12. Parallel stance
13. Bat held in fingers
14. Knob of bat points to opposite batter's box

CATEGORY: STRIDE

1. Short, controlled stride
2. Front foot goes forward, hands cock back
3. Keeping hands and weight back enables hitter to swing the same on pitches that have different speeds and location
4. Stride to hit rather than stride and hit
5. Front foot is down before ball is released
6. Head still
7. Front foot closed after stride
8. Do not wrap bat around head
- 9.

CATEGORY: PIVOT - TRIGGER

1. Back knee and back elbow trigger at same time
2. Rear foot cleats should face the catcher
3. Belt buckle turns to point of contact
4. Barrel of bat stays close to ear - no casting
5. On hip turn, front foot opens to 45°
6. Rotation of hips with limited head movement builds basted
7. Backside trigger and pivot creates a strong power base
8. Stay inside the ball with the barrel and hands
9. Be able to "hold the angle" on bastard pitch
10. Keep barrel above hands and hands above ball as long as possible

CATEGORY: RELEASE TO SWING

1. Maximize batspeed at point of contact
2. Swing with hands, not shoulders or feet
3. Palm up and palm down at point of contact
4. Let ball come to you - trust your batspeed to make a late decision
5. Sequential unlocking of body parts maximizes batspeed at point of contact
6. Form the "power triangle" at contact point
7. Stay on plane through the ball
8. Proper plane on the swing creates slight backspin and lift on the ball

CATEGORY: GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

1. Avoid "paralysis by analysis"
2. Strive to hit the ball hard - keep well hit average
3. Be aggressive early in the count
4. Evaluate hitting advice by "easier - tougher" rather than "good - bad"
5. Strive for a high OB% - more walks than K's
6. We want to try and score in at least 4 innings each game
7. 80% of line drives are hits; 37% of ground balls; and 18% of fly balls are hits
8. Make the pitcher work hard to get you out
9. 65-70% of pitches in a game are FB; hitters swing at offspeed pitches because they are set-up or fooled
10. Toughest pitchers to defeat are guys who throws three pitches for strikes; easiest - 1 pitch for strike

11. The ability to hit the ball on the ground the opposite way sustains big innings
12. Look to middle of plate and adjust
13. Hitting defined: talent, technique, time
14. Characteristics of good hitters:
 - a. hands go back before they go forward
 - b. weight stays between the knees
 - c. shoulders level and head still
 - d. back foot pivot
 - e. quick bat because of snapping joints

Teaching Techniques
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John Anderson

VII. The Swing

- A. Swing bat with hands, wrists and forearms
- B. Throw barrel of bat at ball with hands - wrist snap
- C. After inward turn, bring bat forward with good hip rotation - heel to toe in the rear foot
- D. Keep head down, eyes on ball and chin tucked in front shoulder as swing begins
- E. Chin moves from front shoulder to back shoulder during swing
- F. Front arm straightens and rear elbow remains bent and close to body - keep swing short, quick and powerful
- G. Front elbow down - "chicken winging"
- H. 3 H's rotated around a vertical axis; head, hands, hips
- I. Body balance - swing hand and quick but not out of control
- J. A still head equals quick bat
- K. Keep body down and swing at ball, don't reach for and lift ball - scoop swing
- L. Hit into firm front side
- M. On contact - palm up - palm down, no premature wrist roll
- N. Keep front elbow down and back elbow bent at elbow on contact

VIII. The Follow Through

- A. Concentrate on hitting through the ball
- B. Extend back elbow after contact and your wrists break and roll over so bat can complete swing and finish over front shoulder
- C. A complete follow through will allow a full weight transfer with majority of weight over the firm front leg
- D. Rear foot fully pivoted up on toes.
- E. Body should be in good balance when follow through is completed - overswinging lose balance, biggest fault in hitting
- F. Important to swing quickly, not hard!
- G. "Hit through the ball" - don't stop swing at contact

VIX. Hitting the Ball Where It is Pitched

- A. Inside pitch - pull the ball
 1. rotate hips fast in arc of about 110 degrees from start to finish of swing
 2. contact ball in front of plate
 3. hands pull the bat through inside and square at contact with back elbow still down
 4. bat moves from the outside - in
 5. drive knob of bat at 3rd base coaching box
 6. belt buckle should be pointed to pull field in follow through

TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR THE SKILL OF HITTING

JOHN ANDERSON, HEAD BASEBALL COACH
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

"Failure is the opportunity to begin more intelligently."

-Henry Ford

1. GOALS

- A. Hit the ball *HARD* every at bat.
- B. Hit the ball on the ground or line - think top half of ball.
- C. Hit the ball where it is pitched.
- D. Put the ball in play - K's should be 10% or less of at bats.
- E. Work hard to develop *BAT SPEED*.
- F. Be aggressive - strike=swing, not ball=take.

2. PREPARING TO HIT - CHECKLIST

- A. Select a bat. (Most kids use bats that are too big.)
- B. Grip - line up "knocking knuckles".
- C. Depth in box.
- D. Distance from plate.

3. SIX BASIC HITTING POSITIONS

- A. Comfortable stance.
- B. Stride down not out.
 1. Stride with lower body, swing with upper body.
- C. Preparatory movement - Hands back and up.
- D. Swing
 1. Mechanics - "Sink the AXE."
 2. Delay - separates stride from swing
 - a. Enables hitter to swing the same on pitches of various speeds and locations.
- E. Point of contact.
- F. Follow through.

4. HITTING DRILLS - Get barrel on plane of ball & stay on plane as long as you can.

- A. T-Drills
 1. Pull, middle, opposite field
 2. 2-3 tees in a row
 3. Extension drill

- B. Soft Toss
 - 1. Front side
 - 2. Back side (front side closed)
 - 3. Opposite side
 - 4. Quick toss (10 locations)
- C. Small Bat Drills
 - 1. One knee
 - a. Full swing
 - b. Top hand
 - c. Bottom hand (fist to pitcher)
 - 2. Toss
 - a. Same drills
 - 3. Loop or hammer drill
 - a. Manipulates wrist
- D. Bounce Drill
- E. Short toss
 - 1. 35-40', at 40 MPH, same reaction time as 85 MPH Fast ball,
1/2 second to react
 - 2. Hit line drives into screen
- F. Underloading - Light Bats
 - 1. Bat swing drills
 - 2. Delay in swing different locations
- G. Voice Commands
 - 1. Back - hit
 - 2. Ready - hit
 - 3. "Hit the glow of the ball"

5. OFFENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

- A. Offensive is scoring runs, NOT hitting.
- B. Score runs with a good line-up, not just 1 or 2 hitters; spend time with ALL your hitters.
- C. What a hitter should be able to do with the baseball
 - 1. Line drive
 - 2. Ground ball
 - 3. Move runner to 3b from 2b, less than 2 outs
 - 4. Fly ball
 - 5. Bunt

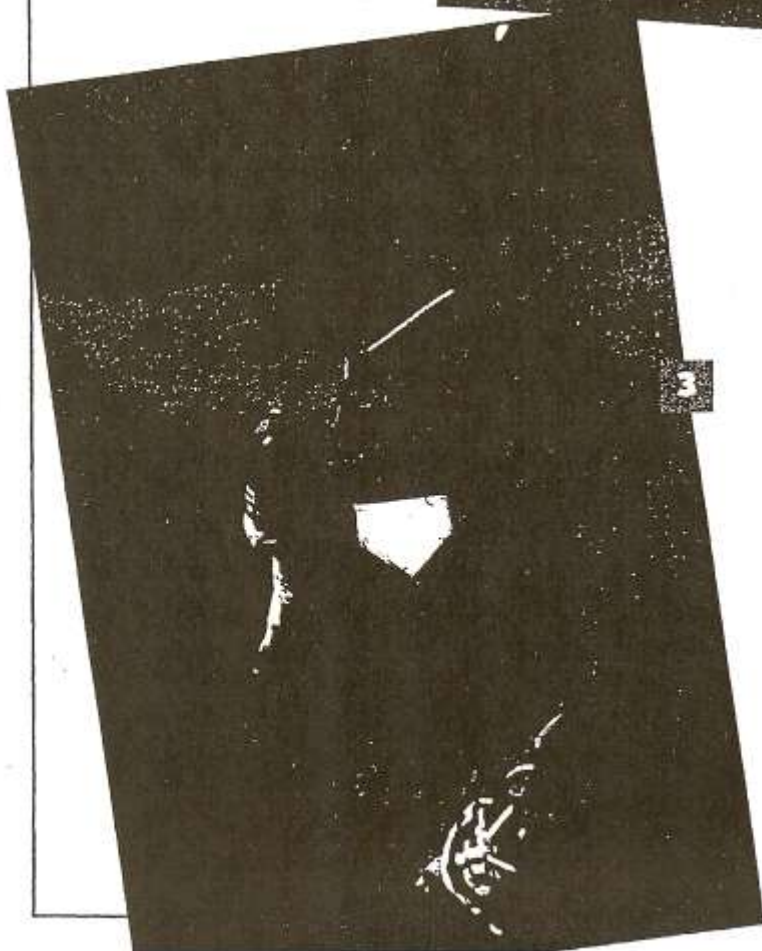
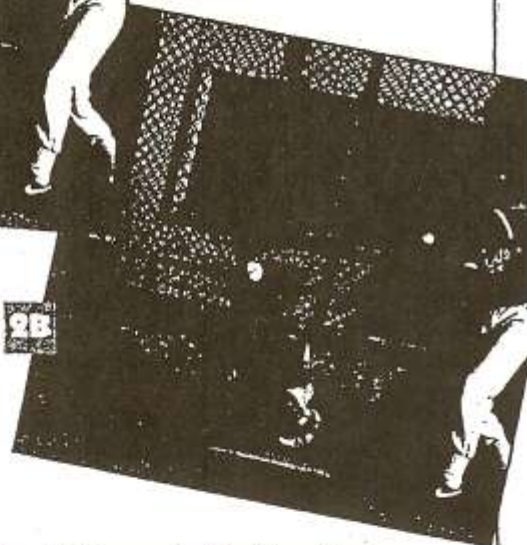
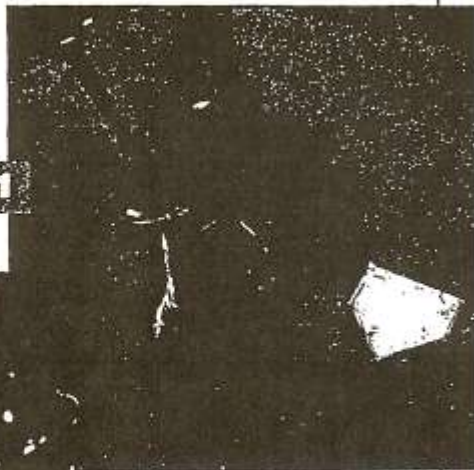
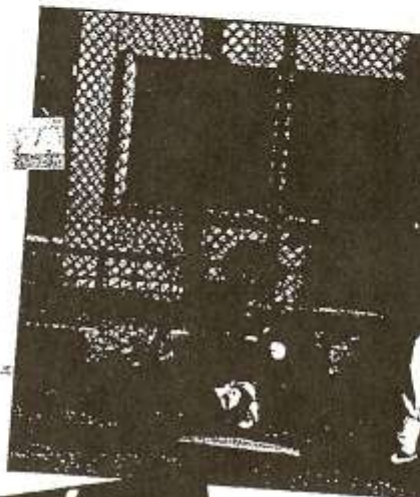
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- D. Offensive goals for each game
 - 1. Only 2 routine fly balls in infield and 2 in the outfield per game.
 - 2. Only 2 called third strikes per game.

- 6. SITUATION HITTING - BATTING PRACTICE EACH DAY
 - A. Have a plan for each at bat before you step into the batter's box.
 - B. Then focus just on the ball and hitting it - EXECUTION.

SKILLS CLINIC

**Part Two:
Hitting the Opposite Way**
Your teammate is on first or second and you need to get her or him in a better position. But you don't want to give up an easy out with a bunt. That's the spot Ivan Atencio of Panama was in the first inning of the International Championship game. He solved the problem by hitting the ball to right field and moving teammate Onesimo Morales over to third. Here's how he did it. With a little practice, you can do it, too. (If you are left-handed, reverse all the left/right directions.)



Step 1: Set up a slightly "closed" stance. Move your right foot away from the plate and your left foot a bit closer to it.

Step 2: Not every pitch is right for hitting the opposite way. Let an inside pitch like 2A go by; wait for an outside pitch like 2B.

Step 3: When you see the right pitch, start the swing with your hands first and bring the bat head around after, reaching out to the far side of the plate. Instead of turning your hands over, snap the bat forward, aiming at the second baseman. The ball should go to the right. And even if it's not a hit, your teammate can advance, and you've done your part. Way to go!

Games to end practice with:

Goof ball is a good game as it requires a lot of fielding and throwing, base running, hitting, and is fun for the players. You can play this game with any number of players but you might want to get some parents to help field.

Equally divide your team into two teams. You should try and make the two teams balanced by ability so that it's competitive and fun for the players. One team takes the field. The coach or a parent will pitch. Infield positions need to be filled first. Have parents play the outfield if necessary. To speed the game up you may also want a parent as a catcher (putting on and taking off of the catchers equipment can slow the game down). A player bats until they hit a fair ball. Once the batter hits a fair ball they have to run the bases (first, second, third, home). They must touch all the bases. If they miss a base they are to be immediately told and must go back and touch it before proceeding to the next base. The fielding team has to field the ball and then throw it to first base. After the first baseman catches the ball AND touches first base they throw it to second base. After the ball has been caught and second base touched, the ball is thrown to third. The third baseman catches the ball, touches the base, and throws home. The catcher then catches the ball and touches home plate. If a fielder fails to make contact with the base when they have control of the ball, they are to be told immediately and the ball must be returned to that base for this to happen before the ball can advance to the next base. If the base runner has properly touched all the bases AND has touched home plate before the catcher has caught the ball and touched home plate, the batting team gets a run. If the fielding team has fielded the ball and properly touched all the bases and the catcher has touched home plate before the runner, no run is given. After all players have batted they take the field and the fielding team bats. One last rule, a player can not play the same position in the field twice.

One strike is another game kids seem to enjoy. This game moves fast so if you only have 10 minutes you can still get in a couple innings. This game is played just like true baseball except the batter gets only one strike before they are out. If the batter swings and misses or hits a foul ball they are out. If you have batters that are being too selective you may want to call a wide strike zone.

If you are really short on time (5 minutes or less) any type of team competition is good to end the practice with. You could do a relay race. Put half the team at home plate and half at second base. When you yell go one base runner leaves from home plate at the same time one leaves from second base. After the home plate runner has run and touched first, second, third and home the second runner leaves from home plate to run the bases. Same thing is happening at second base. After the second base runner has run and touched third, home, first and second base the next runner leaves from second base. The first team to have all their base runners complete their relay wins.