



"Patience is a hitters greatest virtue!"

As a high school coach, I face the challenge of correcting and breaking many bad habits that players pick up in youth baseball! My #1 motto as a coach is "You must hit the ball to get in the lineup!" There are two basic skills that a player must learn to to become a great high school hitter.

• LET THE BALL IN - Great batters allow the ball to get inside the front foot before attacking the ball. They know that this point allows linedrive contact. Allowing the ball to "come in" allows the hitter to see the ball longer, and to use front foot leverage to generate power. Taking this patience approach also allows the hitter to keep the hands back and hit off speed and outside pitches to the opposite field.

HIT THE BALL WHERE IT IS PITCHED - Great hitters pull the inside pitch, hit the middle pitch through the box to centerfield, and hit the outside pitch to their opposite field. They do not try to "man- handle" or pull every pitch without regard for location. They adjust to pitch location and speed properly.

READ THE CONTACT and ID THE MISTAKE:

Many times coaches and players see the results of a swing and do not fully understand what is causing poor contact with the ball. Here I take several examples of poor contact and give the most frequent cause of this type swing:

HARD POP FOUL AWAY - Most frequent cause is late loading, late trigger, late launch or a lazy top hand. The batter must learn to load or "trigger" the hands to the proper launch position earlier. The batter must learn to allow the top hand to "rule the swing". The top hand must be strong through the swing.

WEAK POP FLY - Batter may be overstriding, long striding, or dipping the back side. A collapsed front leg can also contribute to this problem. The batter must hit with a stiff front leg. The batter must "maintain stack" to eliminate head travel and lunging.

SWING AND MISS - Timing may be the problem if the hitter is normally a good hitter. The hands may have a "hitch". A quick fix to this is to lay the bat on the shoulder or on the side of the shoulder and have the batter launch the hands from there. Have the batter track three pitches to the mitt or screen before any swings are taken. The batter must learn to see the ball "go flat" on one side when the bat hits it.

DRIBBLER IN FRONT OF THE PLATE - The batter is not allowing the ball to come in. The bat is "arched" upon contact. Meaning the bat is hitting the top half of the ball with an upper cut swing. The batter is "almost missing the ball". The batter must allow the ball to come in a 10th of a second longer to get in the "flat bat" zone. Contact in this area insures that the bat will travel through the ball and not over it. Those dribbling grounders to the pitcher can quickly be eliminated by teaching the hitter to be a little more patient before attacking the ball.