

6/2/08- MORE HITTING INFO (Contributed by Pat Colson-) Professional Baseball Instruction 704-681-0881

Preparing for battle....too much information is a killer! It's very easy to fall into the trap of providing too much information to a hitter while trying to hit in a game. We've all done it. You see something and either yell instruction or you call time out and have a mini-hitting conference with the player. This is important because the hitter can't see themselves but the challenge has always been what to correct and how to effectively while in battle.

It is very important that you and all of your hitters develop a language you can speak in the game. This language has been learned in spoon size bites and over the course of many practice sessions. The language blends sound mechanics and an effective mental plan with verbal cues that make sense are simple and provide an anchor back to the plan. The key to communication (instruction) is to be clear, concise and correct.

BREATHE , RELAX – BALANCED STANCE – SWING TEMPO – LET THE BALL GET TO YOU

We have a very specific program for practicing mechanical movements and strategy but our primary focus is on teaching the hitter to let the ball get to them before they try to swing. This is the most difficult task as it relates to timing. Start balanced, swing balanced, let the ball get deep and hit from behind the ball and balance on follow through.

We can't teach a hitter anything before they learn what balance feels like, swing tempo feels like and the feel of letting the ball get to them. It's amazing to me that we try to teach the hitter to swing with these goals in mind but don't train bunting let alone nurturing one this most important skill in learning to hit. Once they learn how not to freak out, we can teach them how to move to the launch position. Bunt before you hit....walk before you run.

Here's a brief example of what we learn and practice. The player's mind has to be alert (focused) and his/her body relaxed. Tension serves no useful purpose beyond the linked kinetic chain desired just before the swing (launch position).

All youth hitters freak out when learning to hit. Teach them to set up in a balanced stance keep their chin up and breathe. They have to take a deep breath before they swing at a thrown or stationary ball. Tell them they can swing as hard as they want as long as they can stay balanced. Lunging and hands being thrown out in front usually means the hitter has not been taught to perform these movements or they aren't letting the ball get to them.

Every batting practice session includes constant reinforcement. "let the ball get to you!" There ya go, did you feel that? Do it again. All of this feeling gets associated with the verbal "let it get to you" or WAIT. This is reinforced with the cues breathe, relax, dance with the pitcher and wait. It's the first step of the hitting plan and a security blanket so to speak.

A relaxed hitter will be balanced and have a higher chance of letting a good pitch get in the way of a good swing. If they look nervous they are...that's why we have to teach them how to relax. It doesn't matter what level you coach, confidence is king and has to be practiced with correct information, in an easy to understand way (clear and concise). Hit the ball hard and run like crazy! Now that's concise!