



From [www.probaseballinsider.com](http://www.probaseballinsider.com)

## Bat Path – The most important hitting trait no one is talking about

By [Doug Bernier](#) on January 18, 2015 [hitting](#), [Low Liners Blog](#)

Baseball is a game that constantly teaches if you are willing to learn. I feel I have learned a lot about the baseball swing over the past year and a half and I am excited to share some insight.

It started with my friend and teammate [Chris Colabello](#). Chris went from 7 years in the independent leagues to the big leagues. Watching him hit a baseball was a pure joy and talking to him about his swing changed the way I look at a baseball swing.

I was also challenged by some of you through comments on this website, which made me look into things a little more. What I found may not be new or groundbreaking for some people out there, but to me it's been an eye-opening year.

### The importance of Bat Path

I was taught like many others out there to take my hands to the baseball, use my top hand, and chop down at the ball. This process would keep me “short to the ball” (a very common thing coaches talk about) and help me to be consistent more often.

There was only one problem, *the best hitters in the game were not hitting that way*. To make it more confusing, they often use the same terminology – but the way their swing came together it looked very different from mine. The first glaring difference was bat path.

Personally I know how difficult it is to be consistent in this game. I have had good seasons and very bad seasons statistically. I find it amazing how the same hitters year after year are tops in the league in slugging percentage, batting average, home runs, doubles, etc.

That led me to ask, “Why are the same great hitters consistently great, year after year?”

### Bat Path, Part 1 – Getting your bat into the hitting zone

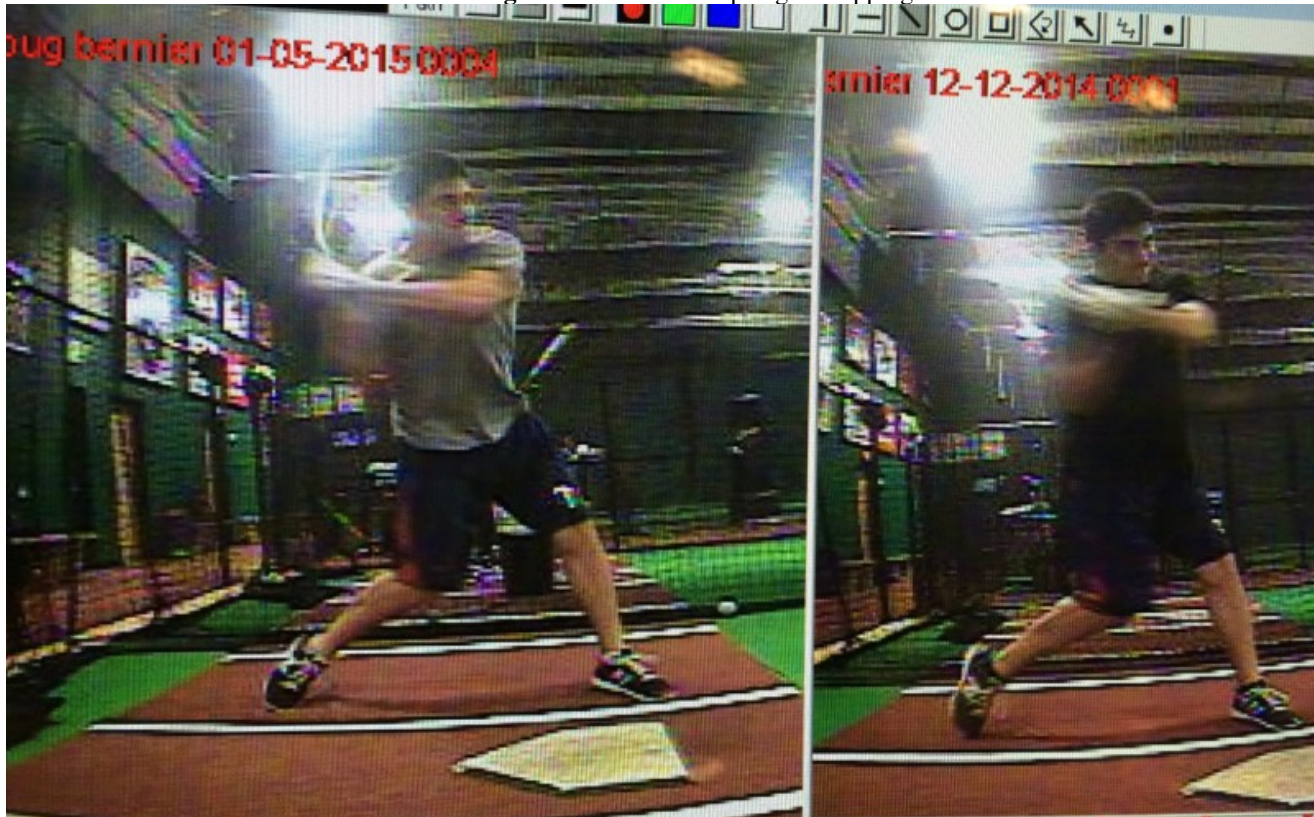
I had a very steep entry point into the hitting zone. I was taught if you “chop down” the baseball will go up. It was a similar thought to hitting a golf ball. But the more I talked to some great hitters and found a few coaches that devoted themselves to watching video and learning the baseball swing (Big thanks to Bobby Tewksbary and Mike Bard, who have been teaching “The Truth” for some time now), I was able to see how early the best hitters get their barrel of the bat into the hitting zone.

Their bat was in the hitting zone BEHIND their back leg... compared to myself, who wasn't getting in the zone until my front leg at the earliest. That is a good 2-3 feet that I am missing out on!

This really hit home when I compared video of my swing against Albert Pujols. My bat was in the hitting zone for **about a foot** vs Albert Pujols who was in the hitting zone for **almost 4 feet**. Common sense tells you that if your bat is in the hitting zone longer your timing doesn't have to be as perfect to hit the ball well.

**On the left** – Me getting my bat in a position to get in the hitting zone earlier.

**On the Right** – Me with a steep angle chopping down at the ball.



Left – Better bat path; Right – Bat path is too steep

## Bat Path, Part 2 – Swing trajectory

Another part to bat path is the angle in which you are swinging the bat. Most people talk about having a level swing. I also hear swing down or swing up depending on what we have been taught or a deficiency in our swing we are trying to put a band aid on.

A point that was made to me that made so much sense was to swing level with the trajectory of the pitch. Again, common sense tells me that if the barrel of my bat gets into the hitting zone early, and my barrel is traveling on the same path as the ball is coming, that is a pretty good 1-2 punch.

Instead of thinking about swing level, up, or down, we want to swing angle at the trajectory of the pitch.

**On the left:** Me getting on plane with the ball earlier. Swing is level with pitch trajectory.

**On the right:** Me pushing my hands down to the ball hoping to meet the ball in the hitting zone.



Left – Earlier to the hitting zone = longer in the zone (good) Right – Later to the hitting zone = less time in the zone (bad)

In both photos I believe the image on the left is a much stronger and more consistent position to attack the baseball when starting your swing. A bat path with early entry to the hitting zone and getting level with the pitch trajectory is a trait that all great hitters possess. These two areas of bat path is exactly what the best hitters in the game do. I don't want to put up pictures that infringe on any copyright laws but take a look around and see if you can see what I am describing. If you can do nothing else but have a proper bat path in your swing, you will increase your chance of being a better, more consistent hitter.

### About the Author-

[Doug Bernier](#), founder of Pro Baseball Insider.com, debuted in the Major Leagues in 2008 with the Colorado Rockies, and has played professional baseball for 13 years. Most recently, Doug signed with the Minnesota Twins in 2013, where he logged time at every infield position except 1st base in 33 Major League games. Currently Doug is with the Twins' AAA team in Rochester, NY