

HITTING PHILOSOPHY

The Washington State University hitting program is designed to provide the means for each hitter within the program to realize his potential and to develop into a productive, knowledgeable, division one level hitter as quickly as possible. Accelerated development is a central goal and can only be achieved with continuity in instruction. Uniformity in teaching principles throughout the staff is essential to the success of Cougar hitters. Staff and hitters alike must be well versed in all areas of the program.

HITTING PROGRAM

The following sections make up the program:

- I. Definition of a Cougar Hitter**
- II. Accelerated Development**
- III. Development of the Patiently Aggressive Hitting Approach**
- IV. The Mental Game**
- V. The Vision Plan**
- VI. Situational Hitting**
- VII. Count Knowledge**
- VIII. Two Strike Approach**
- IX. Batting Practice Routines**
- X. Mechanics**
- XI. Bunting**
- XII. The Maintenance Program**
- XIII. Hitters Checklist**
- XIV. Execution Game**
- XV. Terminology**
- XVI. Drills**
- XVII. Responsibilities of the Hitting Coach**

DEFINITION OF A COUGAR HITTER

Balanced and relaxed foundation, focused mind-set, ability to see the ball, sound preparation and be on time.

- Other Key Points:
 - Ability to slow the game down.
 - Head discipline.
 - Hands inside and above the ball.
 - Hands and hips work in conjunction.
 - Approach simple as possible.
 - Ability to duplicate swing.

ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

- Identify With the Player:
 - Knowing the player and amending his work ethic, behavior and characteristics takes an extended period of time.
 - The end of the season is not the end of his work year, rather the end of a segment of his hitting career.
 - He may be continuing his development through summer or fall baseball, as well as team and individual practice periods.
 - An unmatched hitting coach is one with passion for developing the entire hitter and one who can fill the players with enthusiasm.
- Goals:
 - Increase the amount of quality repetitions taken by hitters (on field, in the cage, in video room, weight room or any area related to hitting.)
 - Identify the strengths and weaknesses as soon as possible.
 - Establish maintenance programs to turn weaknesses into strengths.
 - Instruction needs to be consistent.
 - Coaches must know at what point the player has reached the saturation point both physically and mentally.
 - Leave ego at the door and realize success comes in developing the Cougar hitter.
 - Strive to help the underachieving hitter; broaden the scope and help him establish a strong work ethic.

DEVELOPING THE PATIENTLY AGGRESSIVE HITTING APPROACH

- Characteristics:
 - Ready to hit at all times.
 - Knows his pitch, the game situation and the location of each pitch.
 - Knows what his strengths are and what he will selectively offer at until there is a two-strike

count.

- Takes advantage of a pitcher who struggles to throw quality strikes by waiting for his pitch to hit.
- Exerts more effort both physically and mentally; intense focus is crucial.
- Patiently aggressive versus impatiently aggressive is a fine line, but it separates a successful hitter from a mediocre hitter.

- Method

- Keep daily hitting log.
- Use the bullpen warm-up periods of the pitching staff to work on strike zone knowledge and pitch recognition.
- Learn and understand your use of the strike zone as quickly as possible.
- Use every at bat to your advantage, regardless of game/practice/cage, etc.
- Hitters can improve strike zone knowledge by taking or swinging at pitches.
- Establish an aggressive attitude as the foundation and then begin to refine the approach to include patience.
- Elevate from the bottom of the strike zone: if it's high let it fly... if it's low let it go.
- Understand the hitter will chase more balls low out of the zone than he will up out of the zone.

- Dugout Routine

- Analyze pitching patterns. Watch opposing pitchers vs. teammates, watch other right handed or left handed hitters, identify situations, identify his out pitch.
- Examine infield movements, their early movements can tip off pitches.
- Categorize command. What pitches does he throw for strikes and more importantly what does he not throw for a strike?
- Recall his approach the last time you faced him. Keep a journal on all pitches for future reference.
- Watch catcher's throwing ability and his problem pitch at the plate. These can factor in on possible pitch selection. For example, poor arm and base stealing threat on first may equal more fastballs to hitter.
- Pitchers pace. Works quickly (slow him down). Works slowly (keep your rhythm and step out). The hitter is in control.

- On Deck Circle

- Visualize any and all possible hitting situations that might be challenging. Be prepared and relax!
- Be familiar with the game situation.
- Be a coach for base runner who is scoring (which way to slide or stand, etc.)
- Time the pitcher's delivery by practicing load and launch.

- The Whole Story
 - Create an understanding of situations within the hitter.
 - For example, batting averages with less than two strikes are all over .300 whereas averages with two strikes are .187.
 - Almost 60% of all run production occurs within three pitches and 1/3 of run production occurs with two strikes.
- Results
 - Quality Plan + Quality Mind Set + Quality Swing = Patiently Aggressive Hitter

THE MENTAL GAME

Mental preparation is the key to hitter development. Physical skill is difficult to develop to its fullest extent without the proper mental approach. All successful division one hitters spend time each day visualizing the pitcher they will be facing that night, what pitches he throws, when he will see those pitches and what he has done with them in the past. He is going into his mind's library and using recall to prepare for the next battle.

- Characteristics:
 - Successful hitters have strong mental skills and know they can succeed because they manufacture positive thoughts and have an optimistic outlook flowing through their minds when at bat.
 - Good hitters deal with failure by quickly learning from it and by keeping success in perspective through goal setting, visualization, relaxation, concentration skills, and cognitive restructuring.
 - A hitter must realize that he cannot control the outcome, only his preparation and how he reacts to it.
 - Control of the personal thought process is the key to hitting development.
 - Research shows hitters have personal control 10% of the time but the other 90% of the time is what determines success or failure.
 - Hitters must develop a mental plan and follow that plan on a daily basis.
 - Mentally tough players take responsibility for their thought processes.
 - They focus their energy on the areas they can control and their thoughts are positive whether dealing with past or present unsuccessful performance outcomes.
 - Learn to play the game one pitch at a time, once pitch is over, the hitter must begin preparation for the next pitch.
 - Remember there is a 12 second period needed to learn from the last pitch before concentration and focus can be brought to the next pitch.
 - Preparation for the next day should begin shortly after the end of the game.
 - Replay the events in the mind, make note of what happened and what can be learned from the experience and then get ready for the next game.
 - Visualize as many different scenarios as possible; see successful execution.

- Formulate the plan and work it the next day while getting ready for the game.
- The good news is that all these mental skills can be learned and will be learned if the hitter puts in mental practice on a daily basis.
- Goals: Goals are the basis for success. They are not dreams and they are not wishes. Goals result from a plan and they are unique. Some are short term, while others are intermediate or long term.
 - A goal of every hitter should be to control his mental game. This means that he should control his thoughts and his emotions.
 - To be successful, hitters need to develop a goal system comprised of 90% process oriented goals and 10% outcome oriented goals. This goal system should be guided by short, intermediate and long range goals.
 - These goals should be specific, realistic and obtainable.
 - Be aware enough to reset goals when accomplished or met with resistance.

THE VISION PLAN

See ball, hit ball is a saying that has been around baseball for years. It is the act of hitting the ball in its purest sense. Successful professional hitters like to have more information available. Such as the types of pitches the pitcher throws, when he likes to throw them and if he can throw them for strikes. Pitcher knowledge is paramount in hitter's success. Still when the ball is thrown, early identification is perhaps the biggest single thing in hitting. Hitters do not perform the other skills of hitting equally so it stands to reason that visual skills are not equal. Vision is the guiding sense to human performance. Almost everything you do begins with what you see. The eyes provide you with the critical information your body requires to do almost anything.

- Vision is the most important sense, bringing in over 90% of what your body senses and observes.
- The average fastball takes .04 seconds to travel from release to contact. This can be an exciting time frame if the hitter has a plan in place to see the ball early.
- Half the time is spent recognizing the pitch, the other half is spent swinging the bat. In recognizing the pitch the hitter must decide whether it is a strike or a ball and whether to swing or take.
- By developing a plan to see the ball earlier the hitter will be able to slow down the action of the ball and make better decisions.
- Be aware of the pitcher's release point, what you are doing before release point and how you go to release point.

Vision by itself is not the entire answer to better hitting but certainly carries legitimacy in developing consistency in early pitch recognition.

SITUATIONAL HITTING

- Philosophy
 - Situational hitting is the essence of offensive, “winning” baseball. The whole reason to hit is to score runs.
 - To score runs consistently, hitters must be able to handle the bat and execute a variety of tasks, from sacrifice bunting to extra base hits.
 - The entire lineup must be able to hit in situations to be a consistent run producing team.
 - The foundation of situational hitting is to score runs intentionally by moving runners around the bases in a systematic fashion.
 - The team that scores the most runs wins. Individual averages mean nothing.
 - It doesn't matter who moves the runner or who gets the RBI.
 - Baseball is a team game played by a group of individuals performing as one with a single objective: "WIN".
 - The intent behind situational hitting is team offense.
 - "Me" and "I" hitters are not team players or winners. Check the ego at the door and play to win.

- Developmental Steps
 - Be aware.
 - Attempt to execute.
 - Execute.
 - Execute without making an out.
 - All hitters are to be aware of the situations and are ultimately accountable for execution.

- Ultimate Team Play
 - The ultimate in team play is the execution of a situation with two strikes after battling the pitcher all through the at bat.
 - All three strikes are for us, not the hitter himself.
 - Right handed hitter uses all three strikes to move the runner.
 - Left handed hitters uses the first two strikes to move the runner, and then goes to our two-strike approach at the plate.
 - Develop the proper mindset, play winning baseball.

- Situations
 - The situation may change pitch by pitch in one at bat.
 - Runners may change locations on the bases and infielders may change depths.
 - In a single at-bat the hitter may have two or three situations to try to execute, the most common are:
 - Leading of an inning.
 - Sacrifice bunt with runner at first base.

- Sacrifice bunt with runner at second base.
 - Hit and run, or run and hit.
 - Runner on second base with no outs.
 - Runner on third base with less than two outs and infield in.
 - Runner on third base with less than two outs and infield back.
 - Squeeze bunt.
- The winning team player derives personal satisfaction in the successful execution of any of these situations at any time. This hitter is always ready to find a way to help the team win.
- Leading Off an Inning
 - Get a good pitch to hit.
 - If it is not a strike, we are taking.
 - If it is a ball we take until we get a strike.
 - If the first hitter makes an out on the first pitch, the second hitter automatically takes the first pitch of his at-bat.
- Sacrifice Bunt
 - Bunt the pitch you are able to bunt; it does not have to be a strike.
 - Non-directional, deaden the bunt.
 - Early bounce (down angle), get the ball fair. Don't try to be too fine.
 - Possible situations to drag and push also, unless the manager has called for a sacrifice.
- Hit and Run
 - Hit the ball on the ground! It is a great skill to have the ability to hit the ball to the right side in this situation.
 - Swing at every pitch unless it bounces clearly in front of home plate.
 - This play can be used to create a big inning with a base hit by opening up some holes, staying out of a double play, or getting a runner into scoring position.
 - Hitters should think about staying on top of the ball and look for a pitch up and away then make an adjustment if it's inside.
 - If possible avoid hitting ground balls to the middle of the infield.
- Man on Second Base – No Outs
 - Hitter tries to drive the ball to the right side, moving the runner to third base or possible scoring him.
 - Pitchers will often throw left handed hitters hard stuff away, making it difficult to pull the ball. Left handed hitters move up on the plate and look to pull the ball.
 - Pitchers will work right handed hitters hard in and with lots of off-speed stuff trying to get them to pull the ball on the ground or pop the ball up. Right handed hitters must be patient and get a pitch out over the plate that he can handle.
 - Being able to push or drag bunt in this situation is a great asset.

- Cougar hitters should all have the ability to move a runner from second base with a ground ball when the job must get done. Coaches have the option of letting the hitter try to drive the ball to the right side or making him hit a ground ball to the right side.
- Man on Third Base – Less Than Two Outs – Infield Back
 - The other team is giving up the run as long as the ball is not hit to the pitcher (unavoidable) or the comers (avoidable). The hitter should try to drive the ball to the big part of the field.
 - Look for the ball down and out over the plate. Ground ball in the middle will score the run. A pop-up won't.
 - With two strikes, the hitter should think about hitting a ground ball up the middle.
 - A base hit bunt in this situation is also a good idea.
- Man on Third Base – Less Than Two Outs – Infield In
 - The hitter should look for a ball out over the plate that he can drive to the big part of the field.
 - The pitcher is trying to get a ground ball by working down in the strike zone.
 - Trying to drive the ball to the opposite gap will result in more sacrifice flies than ground balls and produce more runs in this situation.
 - Do not try to manufacture a fly ball by altering your swing. This causes more pop-ups than fly balls.
- Squeeze
 - Hitter attempts to bunt any pitched ball towards the shortstop or second baseman.
 - Hitter squares around when front foot of pitcher hits the ground.
 - Technique can be a shortened version of the sacrifice bunt.
 - Safety squeeze.

COUNT KNOWLEDGE

The patiently aggressive hitter has count knowledge ready beginning with the first pitch. The pitcher is trying to get ahead with his best pitch, not trying to be too fine and fall behind. Generally the pitcher's goal is to get the hitter out within three pitches. If the hitter gets deep in the count because the pitcher locates it is good hitting, but if the hitter gets deep in the count because he took hittable pitches then he is not being patiently aggressive. Pitchers will struggle with control because they do not practice pitching enough; if they go to their second or third pitches it should be to the hitter's advantage. Based on a recent study of MLB hitters (over 165,000 at-bats), when the hitter puts the ball in play within three pitches the batting average is .298 and 60% of the runs are driven in. With two strikes the average is .187 and 30% of the runs are driven in. All averages with less than two strikes are above .300.

COUNTS	AVERAGE	% AB'S	TOTAL AB	RBI	% OF RBI
0-0	.335	14%	22,530	3893	18%
0-1	.309	10%	15,815	2223	10%
0-2	.159	8%	13,994	935	4%
1-0	.324	8%	13,867	2394	11%
1-1	.320	9%	15,693	2336	11%
1-2	.172	15%	24,826	1940	9%
2-0	.339	3%	5081	1004	5%
2-1	.338	6%	10,145	1619	8%
2-2	.189	14%	23,417	2046	10%
3-0	.359		312	166	
3-1	.357	3%	4190	960	4%
3-2	.226	9%	15,712	1942	9%

TWO STRIKE APPROACH

Two-strike hitting has been grossly over-rated as being a do-or-die hitting situation. Due to this fact, unnecessary fear and pressure to perform has been put in the minds of hitters, which substantially empowers the pitcher. By focusing on what we want to accomplish, we are utilizing the premise, "what we think about, we bring about." When we focus on the "do's," the "don'ts" don't show up.

Hitters must realize that if only takes one strike to hit a single, double, triple or homerun. Successful hitting can come via the very first strike, second strike or the third strike. Therefore, if it takes only one strike to help your team win the game, the fact is every strike is significant and of equal importance. The third strike has no more importance than the first two unless you give it more importance. If a hitter is in fear of striking out, then you best change careers because striking out is not only inevitable in baseball but every All-American hitter has done so many times. Also, hitters should know that when they fear striking out, they are increasing the skill level of the pitcher and in doing so, giving him the competitive edge. We must use the same mental approach no matter what the count is.

- Do's with Two Strikes
 - You must never allow yourself to totally "sell-out" by looking for a specific pitch in a specific location. Never guess what a pitcher's out pitch might be. If you have done your homework and are "very sure" what the pitcher's go-to or out pitch is on the third strike, you can anticipate that pitch but always be ready to adjust to something different. Remember, being "very sure" does not mean "guessing". Informed anticipation is developed by past history with a particular pitcher and by watching the pitcher during the game to see what he will throw on the third strike.
 - Be ready to hit the fastball. Never ever take the fastball for a third strike.

- Understand and believe that it takes just one strike to get the winning hit in order to help your team win a ball game. Therefore, it doesn't matter if it's the first, second, or third strike.
- Remember the real pressure to perform in a two-strike count is on the pitcher. Why? Because he can't get an out unless he throws a strike and when he does, you'll be waiting for his mistake.
- Hit the ball up the middle or opposite field with two strikes.
- You must watch the warm-ups of a closer or reliever. 99% of the time they will throw their fastball to start their warm-ups and 99% of the time the pitch they throw after their fastball will be their go-to or out pitch.
- Allow yourself to be empowered by not fearing striking out. Remember, your fear is the pitcher's greatest strength or competitive edge and it is your greatest enemy. How do you not fear striking out? By understanding that failure is as powerful and important, and needed, in your quest to the best as is success. Both failure and success are teachers in disguise helping you to be empowered by knowledge. When you succeed, you learn what you should do the next time to create success. When you fail, you learn what not to do in order to create your next success. This way of looking at failure will diminish or even eliminate the fear of strike out because you'll know that no matter what happens, empowerment will be the result when you learn from the outcome. Remember, failure is potential success. If you fear failure, you will not see its potential. Learn from failure, and your potential is limitless.
- You must put the ball in play with two strikes.
- Mandatory Physical Adjustment with Two Strikes
 - Choke up or spread out, hitter's choice or do both (recommend doing both).
 - Look away and think away – let the ball travel.
 - Keep both hands on the bat throughout the swing.
 - Keep head and eyes on contact point past the actual act of contact.
 - Short, compact swing with solid contact being our goal.

BATTING PRACTICE ROUTINES

Batting practice must have a specific plan to help young hitters build habits that will ultimately lead to success. Structured sessions allow increased quality repetitions that enhance development. The batting practice routine is designed with both team and the individual in mind. Winning team baseball revolves around the successful execution of situational hitting.

All situations, from sacrifice bunting to hitting with the infield in, should be practiced as often as possible

if we are to expect execution during the games. Games are won on the total number of runs scored, not hits. Execution each day in batting practice will accelerate our hitters' development in preparation to become unselfish, winning team hitters. In the first two rounds we concentrate on going the other way and hard up the middle.

- Batting Practice Routine
 - Round One
 - Two sacrifice bunts.
 - Five swings to opposite field.
 - One squeeze or safety squeeze.
 - Round Two
 - Two hit and runs
 - Two move the runner over from second base.
 - Two score the runner from third base with less than two outs.
 - Three swings.
 - Round Three – Coaches Choice – Five Swings
 - No Pop No Pull
 - Hit and run
 - Shoot the four hole
 - Two-Strike approach
 - Round Four
 - Three swings if time permits
 - Round Five
 - Well hit round – stay in if hitter hits the ball hard.

Each situation has to be successfully executed before moving on to the next. The routine, as always, is subject to time restraints, road, weather, promotions, etc. Base runners are mandatory.

MECHANICS

- Bat Selection
 - The weight, length and the thickness of the handle are all personal preferences in choosing a bat.
 - Bat control is the overriding factor in the final decision in selecting the apparatus of war.
 - Thriving hitters have bat speed and can control the bat head in the strike zone.
 - Young and senseless hitters have a tendency to swing a bat that is too unmanageable.

- Bat control cannot exist with an incorrect grip or a bat that's too heavy.
- The greater the bat speed...the more power. This can and will also work in reverse.
- Bigger is not always better unless you can maintain bat speed.
- Bat selection becomes extraordinarily important when compared and contrasted to bat speed or lack thereof.

- Stance / Setup
 - Hitting is a cause and effect activity, beginning with the stance.
 - Attain a simple, sound, relaxed and balanced stance that has control of the center of gravity and allows for the creation of rhythm and timing.
 - Substance is more important than style, refrain from adding extras.
 - Try to avoid the "set up to mess up" mentality.
 - The feet are the foundation; place them slightly wider than shoulder width apart, with the weight towards the balls of the foot and in a straight line towards the opposite batters box.
 - Flex the knees and keep them between the feet.
 - Align the head, both eyes and the body squarely and level towards the pitcher.
 - Keep the head between the feet and let the arms hang relaxed, close to the body.
 - Place the bat close to the launch position angled at 45 degrees with a natural grip have the bat run through the base of the fingers.

- Loading Phase
 - As the pitcher gets ready to pitch the ball the hitters begins to get into position to hit the ball.
 - Hitter loads slow, easy and early approximately when the pitcher lifts the stride leg – hitters hands go back towards launch position.
 - Keep upper-body rotation to a minimum while maintaining posture.
 - This initial phase of rhythm and timing helps the hitter to be on time for the swing no matter what type of pitch is thrown or the velocity of the pitch.

- Stride to Balance
 - When hitter strides to balance the hands will move back towards the launch position as the stride foot simultaneously moves towards the pitcher prior to the release of the ball.
 - Hands will settle near the back shoulder moving the bat over the shoulder close to a 45 degree angle, with the knob of the bat pointing down to the ground in front of the catcher.
 - The stride foot moves directly towards the pitcher, landing on the inside ball of the foot on a 45 degree angle. Heel remains slightly elevated in preparation for the swing.
 - Stride must be short enough to keep strong balance and long enough to fit the hitter's body type.

- The stride-to-balance linear movements are completed by the time the ball is halfway to the hitter.
- Swing
 - The swing begins the rotational action starting as the stride foot heel hits the ground elevating the back heel and opening the front hip.
 - Front shoulder remains closed with the hands back.
 - The lower half action begins the sequential swing and creates torque in the body.
 - The swing is feet first, hands last, from the ground up, with the back foot rotating to toe down or completely off the ground at contact.
 - The body delivers the bat to the ball.
 - During the swing the body rotates around an axis maintaining dynamic balance; if the hands remain close to the body the rotation will be quicker.
 - Less head movement during the swing is better, the head and eyes are angled towards the ball, while the hitter maintains eye contact with the ball as long as possible.
- Contact and Finish
 - The bat is fired through the hitting zone as the front or lead leg snaps straight.
 - The front or lead leg will snap straight just before contact is made.
 - A firm front side will not allow the hitter's weight to drift forward out over a collapsed front leg.
 - Hitting through the ball is a must. The hands stay above the ball and the bat will always be below the hands.
 - One hand is up and one hand is down at contact. Arms are never extended at contact.
 - A hitter is strongest when the top arm is at 90 degrees at contact.
 - The finish should be high to keep bat in the strike zone longer and decrease the chance of error.
- Head and Eyes
 - The head will move twice during the approach and swing. It moves first during the stride and it moves second during the swing.
 - Keeping these movements under control is important for success.
 - The eyes must be given a chance to track and recognize each and every pitch. Good decisions will be made when the ball is recognized correctly.
- Understand-Feel-Execute
 - We learn three ways – listening, seeing and feeling.
 - The most efficient of the three is feeling. A good hitter tells his coach what he feels and a good coach tells his hitter what he sees.

- Together, difficult problems can be worked out and corrected.
- Have an aggressive, positive attitude and work hard.
- Never be afraid to fail or swing and miss. Go for it!

BUNTING

The short game has tremendous value to an offense and ultimately to the entire team. Moving runners into scoring position puts pressure on the defense. The bunting game draws the corners close and creates more openings in the infield. Everyone uses the short game differently. Our job as coaches is to make sure every player is capable of executing a sacrifice, push or drag bunt in order to move a runner into better scoring position, and the squeeze bunt in order to score a runner. The objective in our program is to teach the players winning baseball. The bunt game is clearly used in today's winning baseball at the division one level. It is important we produce well rounded division one players, not one-dimensional players. Teaching our players that the team comes first is a priceless statement in the future of the player and the program.

- Sacrifice Bunt
 - Move up in the box to assure the bat head is in fair territory and create a more appropriate bunting angle.
 - When the pitcher comes set, the hitter pivots or relocates the back foot 4 to 6 inches closer to the plate for better balance. Arrive early to the bunting position to avoid being late with the bat head versus a quick pitch or slide step.
 - Body weight is 60% on the front leg. The back foot is turned towards pitcher with the heel slightly off the ground.
 - The lower half of the body is flexed and balanced –in an athletic position.
 - Hands separate: top hand slides up to the trademark and the fingertips, not exposing the finger to the bunting area. The bottom hand comes up the bat slightly for better bat control. The farther the hands are apart, the softer the bunt.
 - The bat head is extended out in front of home plate. The bat head must be eye level, positioned at the top of the strike zone. The arms are never locked out, keep the elbows flexed.
 - The bat is held at the top of the strike zone. Use ONLY the knees to bunt a low pitch. NEVER lower bat head to bunt a low pitch. Only lower the body by utilizing the knees- back knee to the ground if necessary!
 - Head and eyes attached to the tip of the bat head. Absolute eye tracking is imperative throughout the bunting process.
 - BUNT PITCHES YOU CAN BUNT – NOT NECESSARILY STRIKES!
 - Early bounces –attack the top half of the ball and propel the ball on the ground.
 - Do not stab at the ball. Catch the ball with the bat –slightly give with your body or step back, with contact of the ball on the bat with both hands at the same time.
 - Bunt first- run second: SACRIFICE YOUR AT BAT FOR THE TEAM!
 - Be aggressive – not timid. DO NOT TRY TO BE PERFECT.

- Drag Bunt – Left Handed Hitter
 - Designed to take firm at second baseman. Placement is everything.
 - First move is false-stride/jab step with right foot to disguise bunt.
 - Slide top hand (left hand) to just below balance point, holding the bat firm in hand.
 - Back leg should be stepping toward second baseman; your leg must be in that position before bunting the ball.
 - KEY TEACHING POINT: the back foot must be down before bunting.
 - Your top hand should be pointing towards the second baseman, using your chin as a sight to line your top hand.
 - Remember: you are walking into the bunt, NOT running.

- Drag Bunt – Right Handed Hitter
 - Designed to go to the third baseman.
 - Placement is more important than surprise (bunt, then run).
 - Get off the plate so you can step with lead foot towards first base.
 - Bring bat over back shoulder pointing end of bat between first base coach and first baseman to create proper angle.
 - Keep left elbow close to side.
 - Looking ideally for pitch away or breaking ball.

- Push Bunt – Right Handed Hitter
 - Stride leg is disguised to freeze infielders.
 - Take back leg (right leg) walking toward second baseman.
 - Right foot must be down and pointing toward second baseman before bunting.
 - Glide top hand to below balance point, holding bat firm in hand.
 - Top hand pointing toward second baseman, using chin and nose as sight to line up your head and foot.
 - The key is to walk into the bunt, making sure your back foot is down when ready to bunt. Ball contacts bat at same time the back foot touches down.
 - Looking ideally for a fastball up in the zone.

THE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

This is the main cog in the accelerated development wheel. Its design is to increase quality repetitions by providing a daily structure. Each day of the season, if possible, whether at home or on the road the hitting coach will meet with individual hitters one-on-one for a specified time frame (5-10 minutes) based on need.

- The maintenance program is how a hitter will make major adjustments in the swing outside of game situations over the long haul.
- Proper mindset and time frame will allow for current production and gradual change to take place at the same time.
- The goal of the maintenance program is to give each hitter in the organization an opportunity to acquire the mechanics used by successful hitters.
- The hitting coach plays a pivotal role in this program. He offers positive instruction and support to endorse this behavior modification. This is where the hitting coaches earn their money.
- Adjustments made based on the maintenance program are kept by the coach, who is in constant communication with the coordinator. The coordinator will then keep the master record in the computer.

HITTERS CHECKLIST

- Five Absolutes
 - Rhythm
 - Timing
 - Recognition
 - Stride/Separation – Stride to balance
 - Stride square
- Important Concepts
 - Dynamic balance
 - Axis of rotation
 - Sequence
 - Bat lag
 - *There are only two movements in hitting: linear and rotational. One movement must finish before the next begins to have an effective swing.*
 - *Timing = being in the right place at the right time no matter the pitch type or speed of pitch.*
- Setup
 - Square, level, straight
 - Balance
 - Feet approximately shoulder width apart
 - Weight, placed toward the balls of the feet
 - Knees flexed, inside the feet
 - Grip the bat at the base of the fingers
 - Front elbow down-back elbow up or level with hand

- Hands set close to the body and back shoulder
- Bat angled close to 45 degrees or more with the barrel behind the body
- Level, 2-eyed look at the pitcher
- Establish rhythm

- Load
 - Rhythm, timing
 - Keep it simple, repeatable
 - Back knee remains inside foot
 - Avoid shoulder roll – linear only
 - Hands behind back shoulder (separation) and even or below back elbow
 - Lower half
 - Extremes-tap, kick
 - Maintain head over center of gravity
 - Maintain posture - eye level
 - Action is early, slow, easy
 - Initial action to allow the body to be in the right place at the right time
 - No load

- Stride / Separation
 - Dynamic balance
 - Stride foot lands close to a 45 degree angle on the inside ball of the foot with the heel slightly elevated.
 - Hands are close to the body and back shoulder with the lead elbow angle at no more than 120 degrees.
 - The bat is over the back shoulder close to a 45 degree angle or more with the barrel behind the body.
 - Proper timing puts the hitter in stride to balance position when the ball is approximately halfway to the plate (26 Ft).
 - Achieve the stride to balance position early rather than late; the hitter will be unable to swing with proper sequence when late.
 - Pitch recognition and identification phase of hitting, very important in mastering the most difficult skill of all.
 - Two eyes on the ball (in stereo).
 - Stride begins prior to release, when is determined by type and size.
 - Signifies the end of linear movement and puts the hitter in a strong position.
 - Maintain eye position with 3" of elevation from setup.
 - Stride square.

- Maintain posture.
- Lead elbow angled down at 45 degrees with back off lead hand facing pitcher.
- Swing
 - Sequence = feet first, hands last.
 - From the ground up, with the large muscles leading the small muscles to the ball.
 - Turn all potential energy into kinetic energy with proper sequence.
 - The swing starts when the front heel hits the ground.
 - Drop it, pop it, torque it or snap it.
 - Hitters have only two different movements in the swing: (1) linear and (2) rotational.
 - Complete the linear phase prior to beginning the rotational.
 - Back heel pops off the ground aggressively as the front heel drops and the front hip opens.
 - The lower body begins the swing while the upper body remains closed.
 - Rotation is around an axis and under a stable head.
 - Objective is to minimize head movement to three inches or less.
 - Maintain posture.
 - Create Torque
 - Allow the lower half of the body to bring the bat to the ball.
 - Keep hand placement close to the body to help increase bat speed.
 - Top hand elbow will fall close to the side on the body turn causing the barrel to drop creating the bat lag.
 - Feet first, hands last. Let the body turn before the hands go to work, take the back of the knuckles to and through the ball.
 - Aggressive quickness with the feet along with sustained dynamic balance will increase bat speed.
 - Level hips create rotation around the axis.
- Contact
 - Maintain dynamic balance.
 - Stride foot angle remains at 45 degrees.
 - Front knee snaps straight, or close to it.
 - Back toe is either pointed straight down or off the ground.
 - Head and eyes are angled down towards the ball.
 - Maintain posture.
 - Shoulders have tilt depending on the height of the pitch.
 - Top elbow is bent at 90 degrees - strong position.
 - Hands are palm up and palm down.
 - Hands are above the ball and the barrel is below the hands.

- Contact is made in front of the stride foot.
- Pitch location requires creating hand angles to get the barrel on the ball.
- Back knee is bent, forming an L.
- Hips are very close to level.
- Top elbow is down and close to the body.
- Finish
 - Extend through the ball before rolling the top hand, think about hitting through 6 balls.
 - Roll the top hand around the corner rather than over the top.
 - Can be with one or two hands, whatever is best; top hand release must be late.
 - Finish high and around the body.
 - Allow head and eye angle to remain down as long as possible after contact.
 - Maintain a stable head position and let the body rotate around underneath.
 - Dynamic balance from start to finish.

VIDEO PROGRAM

- Video is the best available teaching tool in baseball today.
- The use of video is essential if we are going to give our hitters the best opportunity to develop their talents.
- Players need to make this a priority, it will be time well spent.
- The day-to-day operation should consist of taping as many hitters as possible, as often as possible and from as many angles as possible.
- Time slots will be set up for the coach and hitter to review the video.
- This is a valuable tool, both for the hitter as well as the coach, a tool that can help us create that edge.

EXECUTION GAME

The Execution Game is designed to perfect the skills necessary to accomplish our Team Plate Appearance goals. Acceptable point totals for Position Players are 30 points out of a possible 38 through execution round and 25 points for Pitchers.

- Team Plate Appearances:
 - Any hit
 - Any walk
 - Any hit by pitch
 - Any out advancing the lead runner
 - Any sacrifice fly
 - Any sacrifice bunt

- Any error that would have counted
 - Ie, groundball error committed by second baseman with runner on second base and 0-1 out; fly ball error committed by outfielder with runner on third base and 0-1 out.

TERMINOLOGY

Communication between the coaching staff and hitters is more effective when the same terminology is used. Continuity is maintained, time is saved and development is enhanced. The following words and phrases should be understood and communicated by all staff:

Dynamic balance – Staying balanced from start to finish. Maintaining the head over the center of gravity throughout the entire swing. This is a primary goal of every hitter.

Center of gravity – The spot located just below the belly button. Keep it between the feet at all times.

Sequence -Refers to what body parts start the swing and continuing on through the completion of the swing. Feet first, hands last. Swing from the ground up. The swing starts in the feet and ends with the hands.

Axis of rotation- An imaginary pole that runs down through the hitter's body from the top of the head through the belly button and into the ground directly between the feet.

Kinetic link - The distance measured in degrees where the lower half of the body is leading the upper half to the ball.

Torque- Created when the lower half of the body and the upper half are moving in opposite directions.

Linear movement – One of only two movements made by the hitter. It begins when the center of gravity starts forward and ends when the front heel touches the ground.

Rotational movement- The other movement made by the hitter. It begins when the front heel hits the ground.

Bat lag -During the swing, the bat actually is the last thing to move to the ball. The body delivers the bat to the ball and the bat lags last.

Bat quickness – The time it takes the hitter to move the bat from launch to contact.

Bat velocity – How fast the bat is traveling at contact.

Pop it -Refers to the aggressive action of the back foot as it gets into rotation.

Snap it- Refers to the front knee locking' out close to contact, allowing rotation to be completed.

Timing –Being in the right place at the right time no matter what type of pitch is thrown.

Be On Time – Make front foot contact when the ball is half way from the pitcher.

E.P.R.- Early pitch recognition is accomplished while the body is in motion, a must for good hitting.

The body delivers the bat- The swing begins in the feet and ends with the hands and bat. Feet first, hands last, turn the body prior to swinging the bat.

Stay tall- Refers to upper body posture. There will be a slight tilt to the upper body on the swing. Try to avoid excessive bending at the waist.

Posture -Maintain an upright body position throughout the swing for quicker rotation, especially on the lower pitch. Do not go down to get the ball causing excessive bending at the waist and unnecessary head movement.

Head movement –The head will move two times during the swing process. It will move in relationship to the stride length and it will move a minimum amount on the swing.

Stride to balance –The action that puts the hitter in position to swing the bat. The hands are positioned close to the back shoulder, the bat is over the back shoulder, the body is dynamically balanced and the front foot is on the ground on the inside ball of the foot, on a 45 degree angle with the heel slightly elevated.

Launch position –Same as stride to balance.

Hand path –The route the hands take from launch to contact. It is determined by the body rotation with the hands becoming active late in the turn moving above the ball at contact.

Load –The initial phase of timing where the hitter coordinates his movements with the pitcher. Generally this involves the weight moving back in a controlled fashion to then move it forward under control.

Contact –The point where the bat meets the ball. It is in front of the body on all locations. The hands will be above the ball and the bat will be below. The top elbow will be bent close to 90 degrees and the palms will be up and down.

Turn it -Refers to what the hitter does with his body to get into the position to swing.

Extension- The position the arms get into after contact, prior to the hands rolling over.

Let the ball travel- Maintain dynamic balance throughout the swing. The ball will most always come to the hitter, just wait for it to arrive.

Head/Eyes down at contact – try to follow the ball as far as possible into the contact area. Keep the head on the ball because the body will follow it wherever it goes. Let that be a positive direction along with maintaining posture.

Elevate – Make the pitcher bring the pitch up higher. Avoid swinging at the pitch below the knees where the pitcher would like the hitter to work.

How to improve bat speed – rotate quicker.

Stay back -Maintain dynamic balance.

Go down and get it –Maintain posture when hitting the pitch down, the only thing that goes down to get the ball is the bat.

Take the back of the knuckles to the ball - Refers to the body turn starting with the feet first to get the bat to the ball rather than using the hands too soon.

Hub –Picture the head as the hub of a wheel and the body parts as the spokes and rim. The head remains as still as possible while body parts rotate around underneath.

Effortless power or powerless effort -Refers to the feeling in the body when the lower body starts the swing or the lower body does all the work.

Touchdown -Refers to the position of body when the front foot touches the ground.

DRILLS

Long tee: Soft toss on the field to work on the sequence of feet first, hands last. Puts emphasis on the aggressiveness of the lower half while leading the upper half to the ball. Gives immediate feedback by the flight of the ball. Can substitute a tee for soft toss.

Low tee: Ball is set on a low tee (below hitters front knee). This drill helps hitter to get into sequence, as well as create proper bat path on a low pitch. If this drill is done right, hitter will hit line drives off the back of the tunnel.

High tee: Ball is set on a tee higher than a high strike. Hitter has to get hands above the ball to create a proper bat path and to hit line drives. The difficulty in the first part of the drill makes it easier as we continue to move the ball lower and way in the strike zone. This drill helps create proper stroke, and keeping hands above the ball.

Front hip flip: Flip directly at the front hip to promote the mechanics of the lower half leading the upper half to the ball, putting the body in position to allow the hands to be pulled across in front of the body and ball. Maintain the head over the center of gravity. Can substitute a tee.

Front low flip: The ball is flipped low so that the hitter maintains posture and does not go down to get it by bending excessively at waist. The body does not go down to get the ball, the bat does. The drill is also intended to make the hitter elevate the pitch by making the ball be thigh high before swinging. Take the ball at the knees.

Front high flip: The ball is flipped high, in and out of the strike zone with the hitter swinging at all pitches within reason. The objective is to get the hands above the ball at contact. The hitter delivers the hands above the ball on the way to contact and the barrel remains below the hands. Can substitute a tee.

Backside front flip: The ball is flipped from in front but five feet off to the backside of the hitter. The objective is to simulate an outside pitch. The hitter waits on the ball, swings from the ground up and hits the ball to the opposite back corner of the net.

All inclusive drill: Working on all aspects of the swing one thing at a time using tee, flip or short pitch. Hit 4-8 balls in an area and then move to the next. Going through the complete swing:

1. Create dynamic balance from the stance to the load to stride separation and finish.
2. Load, stride to balance landing on the inside ball of the stride foot at a 45 degree angle with the heel slightly elevated; body is dynamically balanced and the bat is positioned over the back shoulder angled close to a 45 degree angle with the hands close to the shoulder.
3. Begin the swing by dropping the front heel, opening the front hip and lifting the back heel while keeping the head as still as possible_ to rotate around the axis.
4. Keep the front shoulder closed and the hands back while the lower half is opening to create torque.
5. Rotate with level hips.
6. Finish high and around the corner.
7. Keep the eyes as close to the point of contact as possible through the completion of the swing.
8. Snap the front knee close to contact.
9. Increase the aggressiveness of the lower half by popping the back heel off the ground, create as much torque as possible and snap the front knee at contact.

10. Concentrate on the separation of linear and rotational movement.
11. Try to keep the head completely still on the swing.
12. Create the bat lag by dropping the top elbow down towards the side of the body on rotation.

Separation Drills: Walk Thru and Throw Back.

Hitter stands two steps behind tee and walks into the hitting stance. At the same time the hitter is walking into the stance, his hands are moving away from set up position to create good separation and putting hands into a good launch position behind rear shoulder. During the walk thru, start hands closer to the center of gravity which will force the hands to move back into a proper launch position outside the rear shoulder when hitter gets to touchdown. There are two ways to walk into hitting position:

1. back foot stepping inside of front foot and then coming back to square at touchdown.
2. stepping behind front foot and keeping shoulder square as you get to touchdown.

Beat it / Bash it: The objective of this drill is for the hitter to have the stride foot on the ground and be balanced when the ball is halfway to the plate. This drill can be done in many situations including the bullpen, on deck circle, home plate, 3-man drill. The objective of the drill is to increase the aggressiveness of the swing, especially the lower half, thereby increasing bat speed.

Mirror: Hitters work in front of the mirror for everything from dry swings to full speed. Work on all aspects of the swing from the stance to the follow through and as many angles as possible. Be able to associate the look and feel of the swing. Use lines for posture rotation.

Keep two eyes down towards the point of contact: Seeing the ball early and late has to be a primary goal for hitters. This drill has the hitter trying to track the ball to as close to contact as possible and after contact leaving the eyes where they were without negatively effecting posture. A secondary objective is that the body follows the head in the ideal swing to make it a positive action, maintaining dynamic balance. This drill can be done from the tee to the game.

Bullpen tracking: Hitters stand in the bullpen as pitchers do their side work. Early pitch recognition (E.P.R.) and tracking using the correct mechanics of the load should be stressed. Stride to balance and the start of the swing are practiced. Hitters should umpire the pitches while working on pitch recognition and strike zone knowledge. Concentration must be high and a time frame established for maximum effectiveness.

Curve Ball drill: Coach throws in a turfed cage for proper and consistent bounce. Coach throws a one hop ball off turf into strike zone for hitter to react to and hit. Hitter is reacting to Coach's arm as if it is a fastball but has to slow body up as he realizes it's a bounced ball (just like recognizing a CB and slowing up the body so weight transfer and dynamic balance is under control). The change in speed is

similar to the change in speed of a CB in a game.

One hand drills: Lead arm is loose and relaxed, think "snapping a towel". Top arm, elbow against side, palm up, on release think "sledgehammer". Body delivers the bat and backside drives through and rotates to contact.

Three man drill: Can be used during pre-game to lock in concentration. The drill consists of a hitter, pitcher and catcher. The pitcher is 35 feet away from hitter with the catcher set up behind the hitter. Catcher signals the pitch which is thrown and the hitter strides to balance identifying the pitch and umpiring strike or ball while tracking the ball as far as possible. Generally players switch positions after an at bat or specified time frame.

Pitch identification: Hitter stands in the bullpen and vocalizes out loud the type of pitch being thrown as quickly as possible.

Say "Ball": Hitter says "ball" as soon as he sees the ball leave the pitchers hand. Drill can be done in 3- man drill, bullpen, on deck circle or anywhere else where it may be effectively practiced.

Say "Ball-Hit": Progressive drill where the hitter will also say "hit" when contact is made. Good drill for concentration, tracking and the entire vision element.

Say "Ready-Hit": Hitter says ready at the start of the load and hit at contact. The objective is to be able to draw the "ready" out very slowly because the load is easy and early. There should be no rushing or sense of urgency.

Number and letter balls: Hitter calls out number or letter on the ball as quickly as possible. The ball is flipped to the hitter with little or no spin to make identification possible. Balls can be marked with different colors.

Fingers at release: Two man drill using a pitcher and hitter, pitcher goes through the delivery without a ball and holds up different fingers each time, the hitter in tum says the number of fingers as quickly as possible. The drill works best when the pitcher slows down the arm action.

Opposite field pepper: There are four players in the game: hitter, pitcher and two fielders on opposite field side. The hitter hits the ball to the fielders on the opposite side who then give the ball back to the fielder directly in front of the hitter who is acting as the pitcher.

High velocity short pitch: Velocity is increased by shortening the distance between the machine, coach or teammate. Can be done standing or on one knee, breaking balls can be included. Will help eliminate extras from swings and also help hitters understand when they have to be ready.

Forced hand movement: Hitter sets up with the hands closer to the center line of the body and then makes the hands move back and possible up to get into the proper position at stride to balance where the bat is thrown over the shoulder close to a 45 degree angle. Hitter may start with the bat vertical.

No stride, 3/4 release throw to simulate rotational swing: Stride to balance as if taking a swing. Work the lower half of the body from the ground up, rotate and make a sidearm throw 10 feet.

Slider flip: Coach is off to the slider side of the hitter 15 feet away and flips ball to outside of part of plate. Hitter lets ball travel deeper than normal into the contact zone and hits the ball up the middle and the other way by rotating the lower half first and keeping hands inside the ball.

Backside flip: Coach gets directly behind hitter who is 10 to 12 feet in front of him facing the other way. Coach flips ball from behind and hitter has to wait until ball is in contact zone to hit it straight ahead. Hitter has to get foot down early to insure contact in the right spot. Hands have to stay inside and hitter has to get foot down early enough to make proper contact.

In the line of fire: Hitter stands behind plate and is looking at ball in coach's hand who is standing behind flip screen. Hitter starts drill by taking 3 steps into hitting position starting with outside foot. As hitter approaches touchdown, the coach tosses ball. This drill stresses the eyes to focus on the ball with more than usual head movement, to improve the ability of the eyes to scan and sweep.

No look: Hitter stands at home plate looking over rear shoulder. The coach doing the soft toss says, "ball" at the moment of release, and hitter then turns head to pick up the ball and hits a line drive off the back of the tunnel. Hitter should get into a loaded position before release of ball to make it a smoother transition. This drill emphasizes eye scanning and sweeping.

Jump Back/Explode: Player gets in stance, jumps backwards on back leg, front leg is raised up. When front foot strike occurs coach flips ball to hitter. Drill is designed to activate back hip.

Ball Chunker: Ball chunker is held with the tennis ball over players head. Load with hands below elbow and then throw the ball to center of batting tunnel. Drill is designed to create proper load with hands and to help create more extension through the hitting zone.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HITTING COACH

- Be responsible for the hitters understanding and learning the Cougars hitting plan.
- Work from the hitter's maintenance plan daily.
- Know the swing mechanics we are teaching: be able to break the swing down.
- Be able to identify problems and solve them using the Cougars plan.

- Be well versed in the Cougars hitter terminology.
- Know how and when to make adjustments.
- Hold hitters accountable for their actions.
- Communicate with each hitter daily.
- Establish a daily maintenance schedule/plan.
- Communicate with the manager concerning the hitters.
- Prepare the hitters for each game: both mentally and physically.
- Help each hitter formulate a mental plan as early in his career as possible.
- Prepare hitters to succeed at the next level.
- Video all hitters at least one time per home stand from side, back angle and front.
- You are responsible for maintenance of video library.
- Teach hitters how to use the video.
- Be able to throw BP.
- Supervise BP.
- In charge of all baseballs and bats for team use: BP, drills, etc.
- Keep all situational hitting, ratios and pitch tendency charts up to date.
- Have daily pre-game meetings to discuss opposing pitcher tendencies.
- Assist Head Coach with all enforcement of organizational policies.
- Keep a daily log for each of the players detailing individual daily activities.
- Keep mechanical talk to a minimum during the game.
- Provide statistical information to the hitter every two weeks.
- Demonstrate the following qualities:
 - Patience
 - Commitment
 - Work ethic
 - Confidence
 - Optimism
 - Passion
 - Motivator
 - Flexibility
 - Focus
 - Good listener