"Hamilton High School Baseball Hitting Philosophy"

Note: There are a variety of techniques that can be used to promote a successful baseball swing. In the Hamilton High School Program, a greater percentage of our baseball players will benefit most with a swing that promotes line drives back up the middle.

That being said, in general, ALL successful baseball swings share a commonality – That commonality being the hitter's hands, hip, & back foot rotate. As they do, the hitter needs to ensure their hands stay inside the ball. To achieve that "line drive" we promote the barrel stay slightly above hands (at the high school we refer to this as the proper "slot position") – If hitter is in the mindset that the "barrel hits the ball" likely he will end up "casting" his hands which ends up being a very long and inefficient swing. (See image diagram for more clarity)

"Casting Hands" – Hitter extends hands toward the plate instead of towards the inside of the ball

"Knob Drill" Drill to promote proper rotation

1. This is a two-person drill. Person one hide ball behind their back – Person two (the hitter) sets up in their hitting stance – Person one flashes ball in various locations – Hitter rotates on ball ensuring "Knob(hands)" stays inside the baseball – DO NOT SWING – Just get hands to the ball. When doing this drill make sure hitter maintains "hitter's triangle, "stays back of center," and rotates hand, hip, and back foot.

   Players can do this with players OR a coach can do this with player – Nice time to incorporate this drill is when player is waiting to go into the cage (the guy "on deck")

2. This Knob drill can also be done on a tee – Set up as many tee's as possible – Have players practice this action in as many pitch locations as possible

"Distance Tee Game" Drill to promote line drives

This is a game we play at the high school level to promote our hitters hit line drives back up the middle. The ultimate goal of the game is to cleanly hit the ball off a tee and have the ball travel through the cage and hit the opposite back wall (in doing so the ball SHOULD NOT hit the cage roof)

Game set up – Split kids into two teams – Put a tee on each end of the cage – Set up two "L-Screens" in the middle of the cage – Set them up in such a way that they form a perfect square

The game is played in "innings" – One inning constitutes each team having a chance to hit – Every player gets one swing off the tee – Play as many innings as time (or attention span) permits

When playing the game, the coach(s) score the points – Refer to "Point Cheat Sheet" on the next page

Points Cheat Sheet

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Ways to Earn Points

3 points -   Ball goes through the square & hits back wall (without hitting the roof)

2 points -   Ball hits square & falls on other side (Tennis Rule)

1 point -   Ball hits the net (on a fly)

0, 1 or 2 pts -   Goes through square THEN hits roof (coach's judgment – Determine if it's a hit or not)

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Points will be subtracted if …

Subtract 5 points - Swing & Miss (You pulled your head)

Subtract 3 points - Knocked over tee (Lost your "slot position" "barrel got below hands")

Subtract 2 points - Ball hits the roof before it makes it through the square
                (Lost your "slot position" "barrel got below hands" – Maybe dropped back shoulder)

Subtract 2 points - Ball hits the ground within a few feet from home plate
                (Rolled your wrists - Hands did not "go to the ball & through the ball" - You did not
                get to "Power V")

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To end the game the coach will declare "last inning" – Each team will get it's last at bat – Then do the "bonus round" – Each team establishes a batting order – If a player successfully earns points for his at bat – In addition to getting the "normal" awarded points he get additional points for what batter he is – Example: The 3rd batter successfully hits the ball through the square and hits the back wall – He gets 3 points for doing that AND an extra 3 points (because he is batter #3) – Giving him a grand total of 6 points for his AB – The winning team is the team with the most amount of points (add up inning totals and bonus round to get a grand total)

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"Parallel Tee" Drill to promote line drives (and to prevent hitters from "casting" their hands

Set up a tee a foot or so from the cage net – Players are to hit ball off the tee – The ball should fly "parallel" to the net – If their swing is proper the bat should not make contact with the net when they swing (because they drove their hands to & through the ball in the swing path and did not "cast" their hands

Often we tell our kids to "play catch" with one another when doing this drill – Have groups of hitters on opposite ends of the cage (each group with a tee at their end) – Have enough baseballs so each player can get 5 swings – Group One hits the ball down to the opposite end of the cage (5 or so hits per player) The team in waiting is OUTSIDE the cage – Once all balls have been hit to the opposite end - Group one steps out of the cage and Group Two steps in and hits the ball back

"Timing Drill" – Promotes front foot getting down in time

Set this drill up where you have a pitcher outside one side of the cage and a hitter ready to hit off a tee on the outside of other side of the cage – The pitcher will simulate a pitch – The hitter is to load and get their front foot down in time based on the type of pitch that is being focused – We do a minimum of 9 reps for this drill:

Set 1 – 3 reps that are "at bat speed" – In this set you are deeming the pitcher to be at bat speed – Therefore, the hitter should start his load as the pitcher is releasing the ball (or slightly before)

Set 2 – 3 reps that are "above bat speed" – In this set you are deeming the pitcher to be above bat speed – Therefore the hitter should start his load just after the pitcher breaks his hands

Set 3 – 3 reps that are "below bat speed" – In this set you are deeming the pitcher to be below bat speed – Therefore the hitter should start his load just after the pitcher releases the ball

The overall idea here is – If you load the swing at the proper time you will get your front foot down in time – If you get your front foot down in time you will be able to successfully rotate your hands, hip, and back foot – A greater percent of the time the reason a hitter was unable to rotate successfully (and/or they drop their shoulder/hands, lack extension, ect) is because their timing was off – Often I find the identified flaw is not necessarily the issue – Often their "flaw" is a by-product of "bad timing"

"Stay Back Drill" – Promotes hitter stays back of center and does not get weight on front foot -

Drill set up – In the cage the coach sets up protective screen about 5 yards in front of hitter – For the hitter, set up a tee on the outside corner – Place a ball on the tee – The coach will underhand front toss to the hitter (trying to toss the ball middle in) – On occasion "fake" the toss – The fake toss is supposed to simulate an off speed pitch – When this happens the hitter is to IMEDIATELY hit the ball off the tee

Things to watch for on the fake toss – Player transfers all their weight to their front foot (they lung at the pitch), player tries to pull the ball, player double clutches – None of these things are good.

When you fake the toss players need to make sure the "stay strong" – They cannot allow their body weight to get past the front side of their front knee – The idea is they keep their hands back for a split second which will allow them to "stay back on the ball" so they can successfully hit the off speed pitch

For kids who have a difficult time I often tell them to "quiet" their hips – This can help a struggling hitter

Mentally I want them to deemphasize their hip rotation – It tell them to get to 50/50 (body weight distribution), keep their front shoulder & nose on the ball, and simply try to drive the ball to the opposite field primarily using their upper half – If they rotate a bit that's fine – If they do not rotate at all that's fine too – This is for the kid pulls out every time – By doing this they will never get the barrel on the ball – Good pitchers/catchers/coaches will see this and set up outside on them all day because they will either swing and miss OR hit the ball with the end of the bat