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Hi, I'm Coach Steve Cramblitt. Welcome to Total Hitting. We're going to focus on three main ideas today. Hitting mechanics. Hitting mechanics will involve the stance, the swing, and the follow-through. Hitting sequence. The hitting sequence will involve the proper use of the body parts.

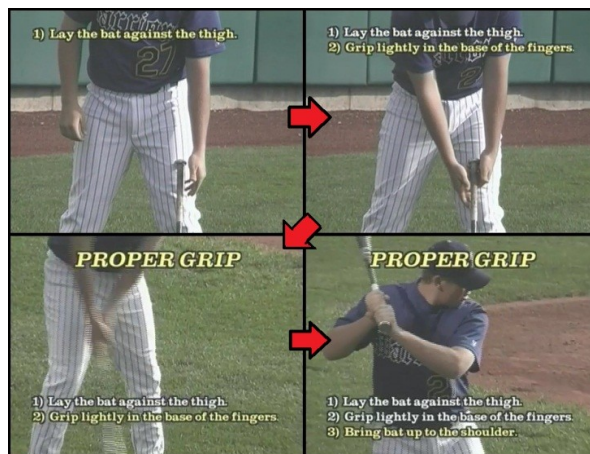
Meaning that the lower half of the body is going to go before the upper half of the body in the swing. Rhythm and timing in relationship to hitting. Rhythm and timing is extremely important because it allows the hitter to have the bat arrive on time to complete his swing.

What size bat should a player choose really depends upon the hitter. The key points are bat control, bat comfort, bat quickness, and bat speed.

In this case, Bryce has selected a bat that is 30" long and 23 ounces in weight. It's a bat that he can control through the hitting zone. The hitting zone is that area where the hitter is going to make contact with the ball.

And then he can establish some good quickness and bat speed as he swings. Each player, depending upon his size and strength, will select the bat that is comfortable to him. The thickness of the handle would also be a consideration in the selection of a bat, and the overall comfort and feel of the bat.

Chad has selected a bat for his body type. It is 33" long and 30 ounces in weight. Again, it is a bat that he can control through the hitting zone with good bat speed and good quickness.

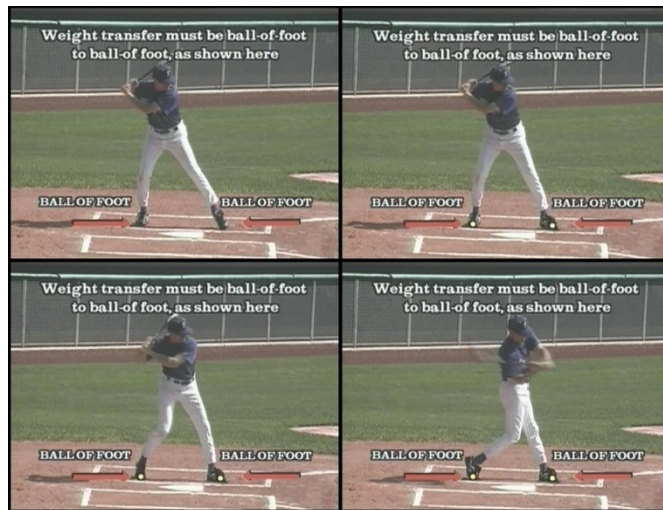


The bat grip should be loose and laid in the base of the fingers for the hitter. An easy way to do that is just as Chad is doing here, laying the bat on his thigh, laying the bat in the base of his fingers, closing his fingers, and bringing it up to his shoulders, thus establishing a comfortable grip. Laying the bat on his thigh, laying the bat in the base of fingers, closing his fingers, and bringing it up to his shoulders.



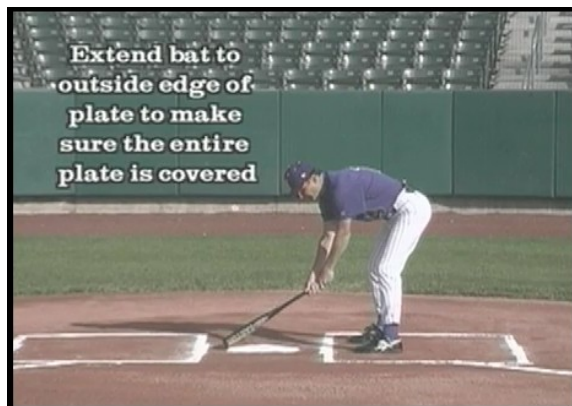
Players need to avoid an improper grip. And one of the most common problems is a player that puts the bat too deep into his hands and jams it back to his thumbs. And then when brings the bat up, it produces more of an elbows-up type of position

when he gets into his stance. This produces a more upper body shoulder-type swing which we want to avoid.

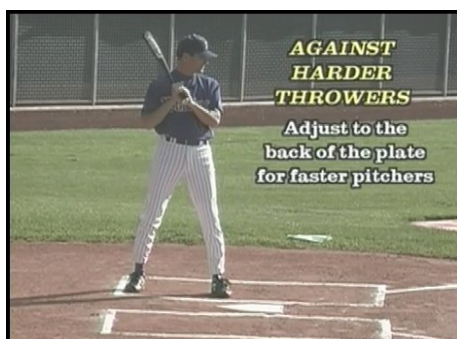


When considering the type of stance that a player would use, he needs to consider dynamic balance first of all. That is controlling the center of gravity and knowing that your belly button is your center of gravity. It is also important that the hitter understands that he wants a ball of foot to ball of foot movement with his feet.

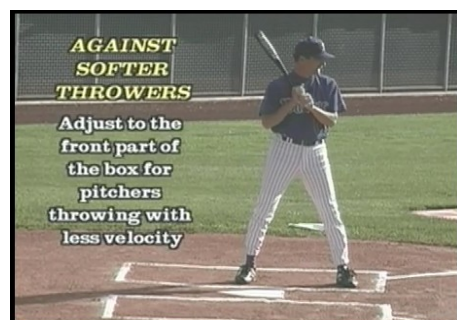
And that he wants to keep his head over top of his belly button throughout his swing.



When the hitter establishes his stance, one of the most important things for him is the distance that he is from the plate. Basic rule of thumb, I want to lean over, touch my bat to the outside corner to make sure that I have plate coverage. That is the first and most important thing when you consider a basic stance and distance from the plate.

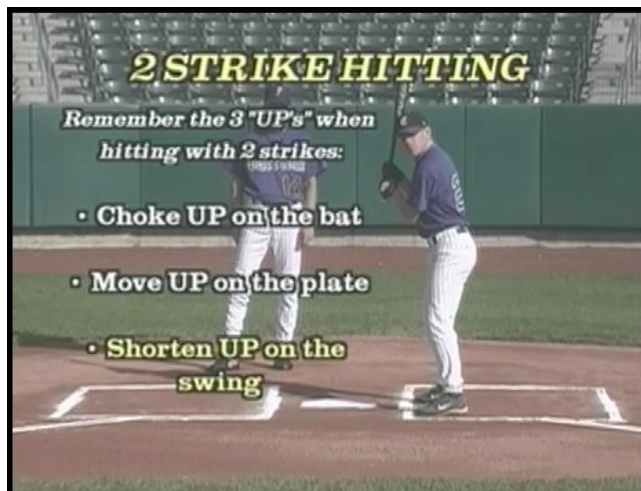
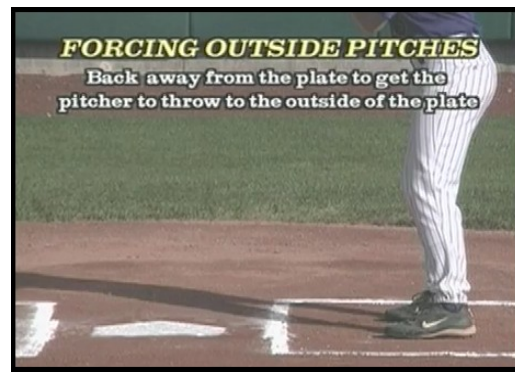
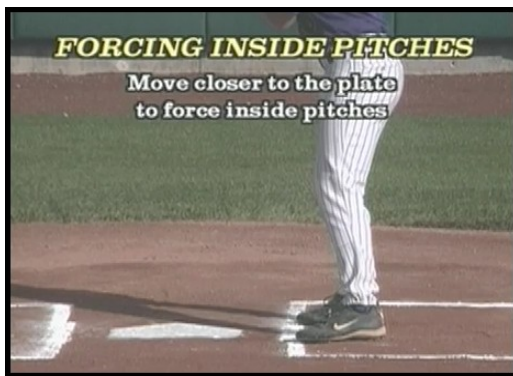


Of course, that can vary throughout the game, depending upon how hard the pitcher is throwing or, for that matter, how soft he is throwing. A harder thrower may take us to an adjustment towards more of the back of the box.



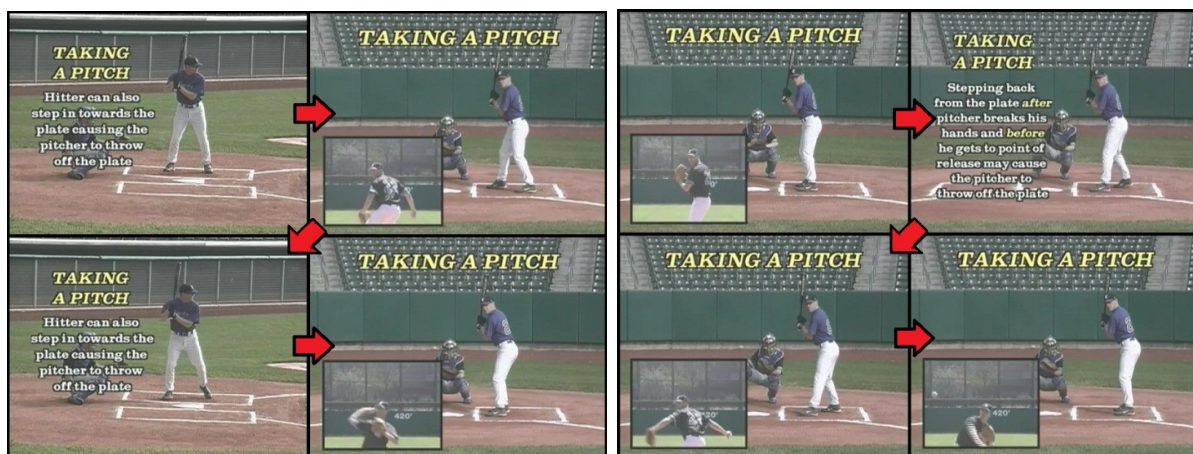
Where a softer thrower may make us adjust a little bit more to the upper part of the box.

There's also the theory that if a hitter wants the ball thrown inside to him that he might get on top of the plate a little bit more, challenging the pitcher to come to him on the inside part of the plate. Or the opposite idea of moving a little further away from the plate less the pitcher thinking that the hitter can't get to the outside pitch, and that's exactly what the hitter wants in this case.



The other stance that's important in hitting is the two strike stance or the two strike approach to hitting. In this, we consider the three ups. Weston is choking up on the bat, he's up on the plate, and he will shorten up on his swing to protect the plate.

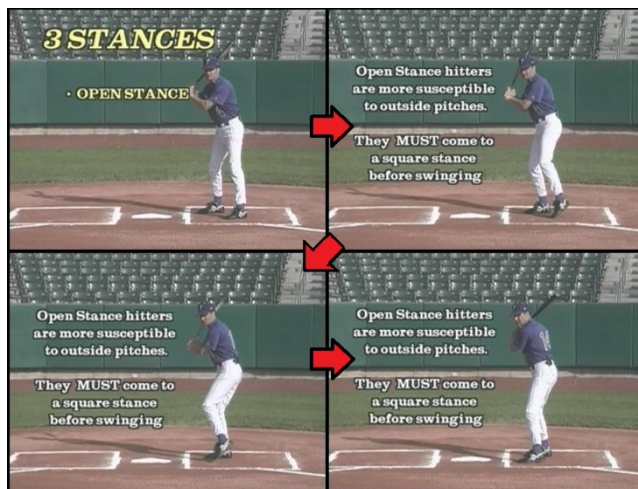
Most pitchers are going to try to come on the outside part of the plate when you have two strikes on. And that's the part of the plate that you want to make sure that you can protect and put the ball in play.



A hitter that may be ahead in the count – on a 2-0 count, 3-0 count, 3-1 count – his coach may want him to take a pitch. When taking a pitch, one of the things that can really distract a pitcher is that the hitter would step back off the plate as the pitcher begins to get to point of release. A lot of times, the pitcher's eyes will follow the hitter and he will then throw the ball off the plate on the inside part.

The other option would be if the player would step in towards the plate. And a lot of times the eyes would follow the hitter, causing the pitcher to throw the ball off the plate. Just a little tip for you when taking a pitch.

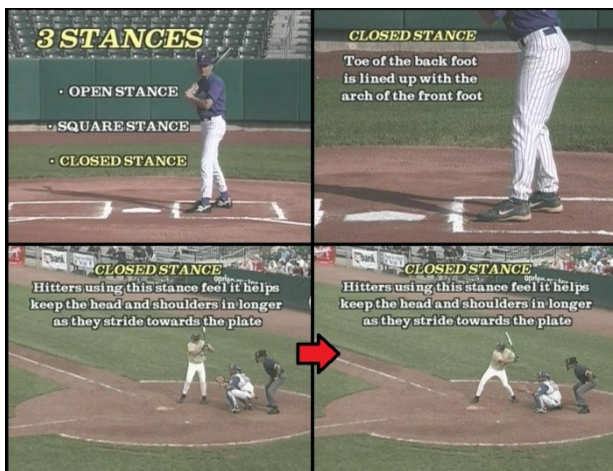
PART 2



There are three basic stances that players assume when they're considering their feet. One is an open stance where the lead foot is slightly open. Second would be more of a square stance where the toes are parallel. The third would be a closed stance where the front foot is closer to home than the back foot.

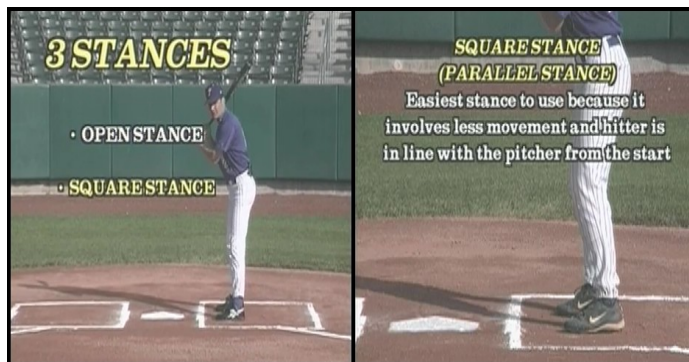
Hitters using the open stance feel that they see the ball better. They must make sure their back foot is close enough to the plate to achieve plate coverage. The

hitter will bring his front foot to a parallel stance upon front foot contact. Failure to do this will leave his susceptible to the outside pitch.



With the closed stance, the hitter wants his front foot to contact the ground close enough to the plate so that he can reach the outside corner. The toe of the back foot is in line with the arch of the front foot.

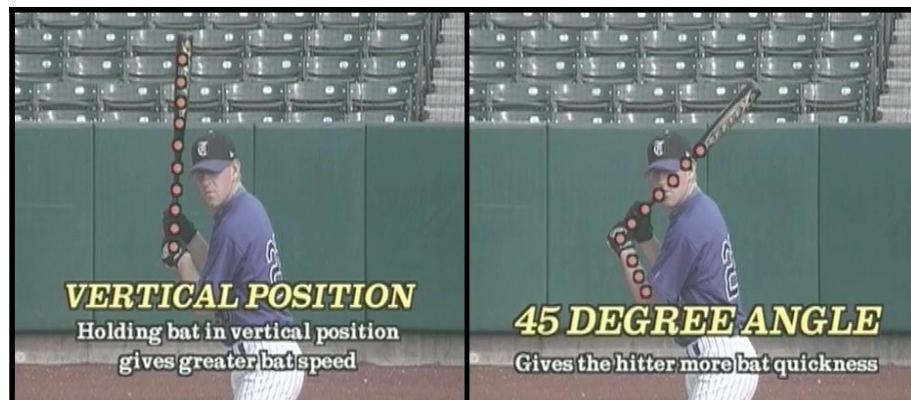
Hitters using this stance are striding or diving toward home plate. They also feel it helps them to keep the front shoulder and head in on a pitch longer. A hitter using this stance must have excellent sequential body rotation to hit the inside pitch.



The parallel stance is really the easier of the three. We recommend using the square stance because it provides less body movement for the hitter and the hitter is striding directly to the pitcher.

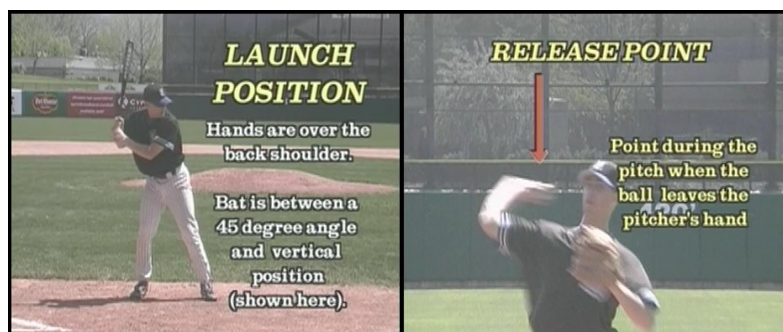


A hitter wants to be in a balanced setup where both eyes are facing the pitcher and they are level, along with the shoulders being level, the hips being level, and the knees being level.



A hitter can hold his bat at a vertical position, which gives him greater bat speed.

Or on a 45-degree angle, which allows for better bat quickness.



Rhythm and timing are a very important aspect of hitting. Professional hitting coach Tom Robson best describes rhythm and timing.

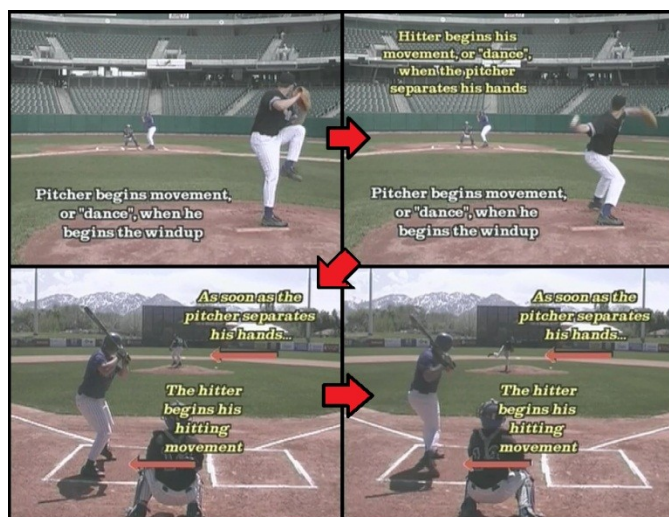
Rhythm is a controlled motion which allows the body and bat to get into the launching

position at the correct time against any pitcher or any velocity. A body in motion tends to stay in motion. A hitter must always get ready to hit early before the pitcher gets to his release point.

He must get his front foot down on the ground when the ball is halfway to him. This is timing.

You may see hitters in their stance holding their bats in varied positions. However, upon front foot contact, all hitters have their hands in the launch position. Over the back shoulder with the bat on a 45-degree angle up to a vertical position.

The elbows are angled down in a comfortable position. This allows for a short, quick path of the bat to the ball. Elbows that are up or parallel to the ground, because of an improper grip, create a longer swing. Elbows that are close together make it difficult for the hitter to get to the inside pitch.



Bob Kizer of Biokinetics describes dancing with the pitcher as the hitter's rhythmic movement of the swing in relationship to the wind-up of the pitcher. The hitter must time his movements and begin to dance with the pitcher at a specific point in the pitcher's wind-up.

This camera angle shows you a hitter-pitcher interface. The pitcher begins his dance when he begins his wind-up. The hitter begins his dance as the pitcher begins to separate his hands.

That is Chad's rhythm and timing.

Each hitter must start his rhythm and timing a little bit different. This next segment will show you the differences.

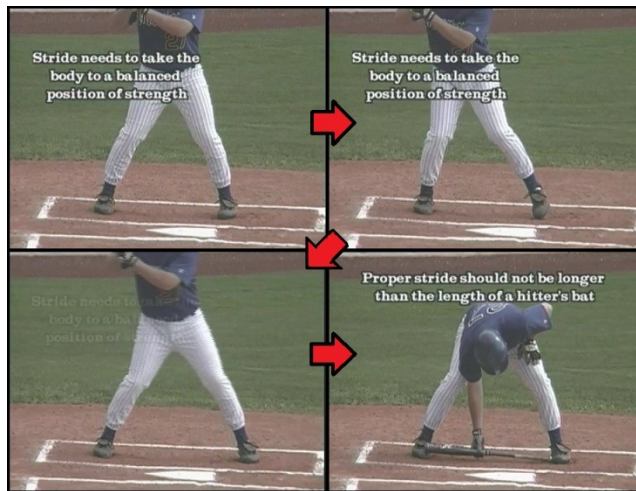
There are three basic ways to start the lower half of the body for the swing.

Chad is demonstrating a stride. Whether we are using the stride, the kick, or the tap, it should take us to a balanced position of strength. And the stride needs to be short enough to provide that balance and strength, but long enough to fit the hitter's body type. We generally say that the stride should be the length of a hitter's bat.

If a stride is too long, then the hitter's head dips and provides a real problem with rotation for the hitter.

Chad is using more of a straight stride approach, which allows him to start a little bit later than someone who may be using a kick approach or a tap approach.

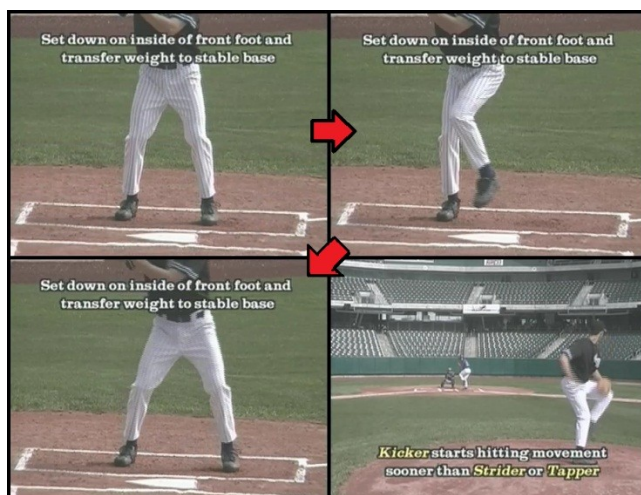
Chris is demonstrating a kicking movement to start his lower half. He will left his leg, turn with his hip slightly in, front knee slightly in, to about the center of his body, and then set it down lightly. He is setting it down so that he is setting to the inside part of his foot and then moving to a solid base.



Again, balance and strength is the position that we want to be in as our front foot makes contact. And we want to keep that stride about the length of our bat. He will actually begin his rhythm and timing earlier than Chad who was using the straight stride approach. A kicker must start earlier than a strider or a tapper. We'll show the tap movement with the next hitter.

PART 3

This hitter is demonstrating a tap movement to start his lower half. He brings his front foot back, taps a couple times in about the middle of his body, in the middle of that stride, and then steps out.

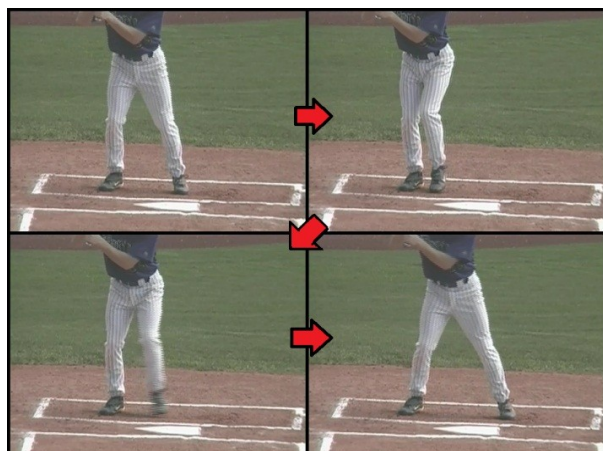


Again, he's landing lightly on the inside part of his foot, moving to a solid base to provide balance and strength. His stride is short enough to provide that balance and strength, and long enough to fit his body type. It is a ball of foot to ball of foot movement where we are controlling the center of gravity with our head over our belly button.

We must remember that a body in motion tends to stay in motion. And we want to build some energy into the swing.

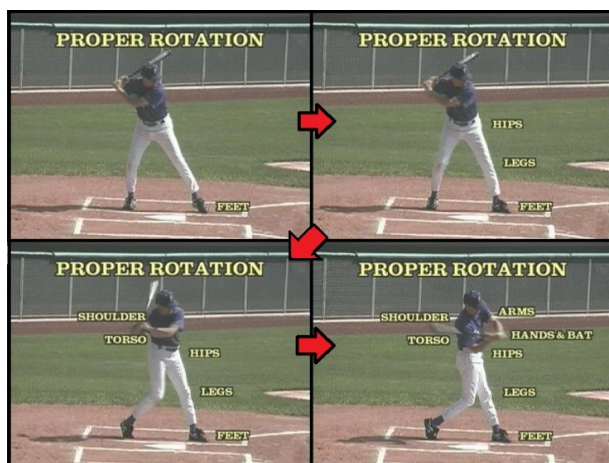
Again, the hitter must start early, work ball of foot to ball of foot, control his center of gravity, and keep his head over top of his belly button throughout the movement.

Both the tapper, the kicker, and the strider have to determine when to begin their movement in relationship to where the pitcher is in his wind-up. The important thing to remember is the kicker must start earlier than a tapper and a tapper starts earlier than a strider.



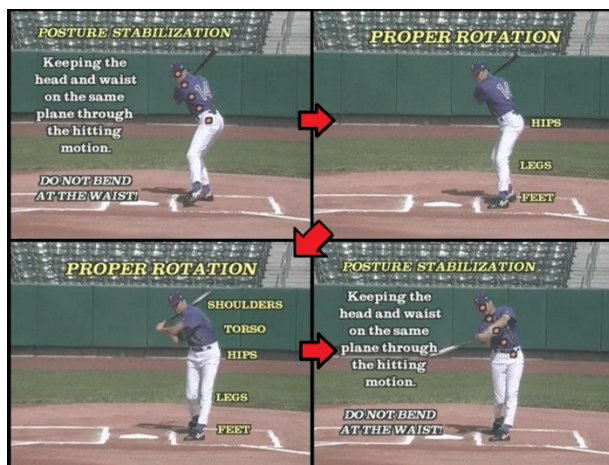
Upon front foot contact, next thing to remember with the swing is that the back heel comes off the ground aggressively and rotation will now begin in the swing. You'll notice that as the back heel comes off, it begins to rotate and the power source begins to develop from the feet through the legs to the hips, then supplied to the torso and the upper body.

We are now using the biggest muscles in our bodies to become involved in the swing.



The biggest muscles in our bodies – through the legs, the torso, and the back area – will be the muscles that deliver the bat. This will give us the power source that we need to have a good, quick speedy swing.

The power of the swing is generated from the back heel coming off the ground and rotating, starting with the lower half, from the feet, to the legs, to the hips, to the torso, to the shoulders, to the arms, into the hands that deliver the bat.

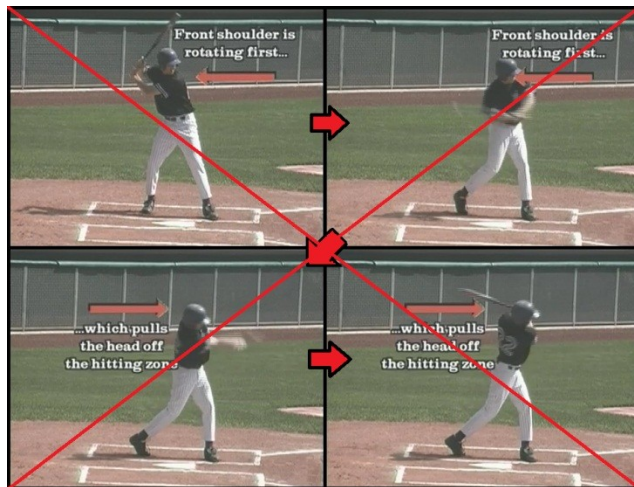


Posture stabilization involves keeping the upper body, from the waist to the head, on the same plane from the hitting stance through the point of contact. This will aid in reducing head movement and helping to maximize power. To maximize power, stabilize your posture from the hitting stance through the point of contact.

Hitting the low pitch requires the hitter to drop or take the barrel of the bat to the ball as opposed to bending over at the waist.

Bending over causes the player to lose balance, as his head moves away from his center of gravity. This action also causes a loss of power because the energy built up from the proper sequential movements of the lower body stops at the waist.

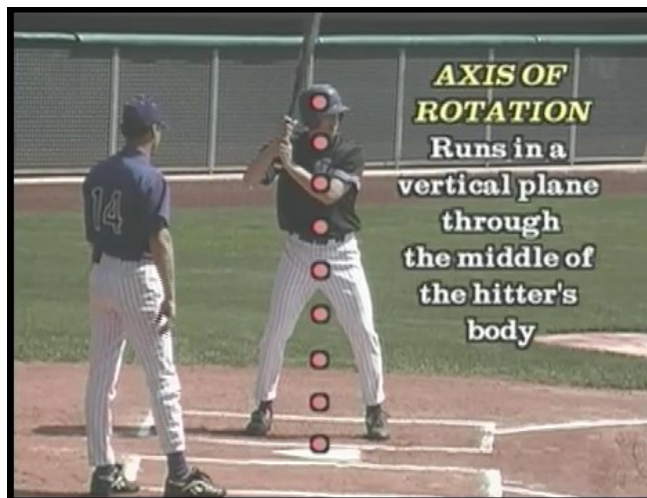
A hitter who has a good sequential swing will deliver the bat with power. Here Chad is in the proper hitting position and he will be in a position of strength. Chad's going to hold the bat so that I cannot push it back. You can see the position of strength that he has.



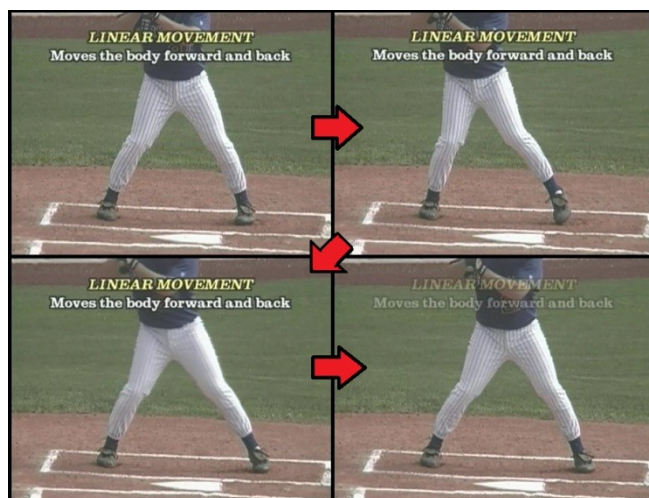
A hitter who is out of sequence, who leads with his arms first, will now reach that hitting position but he has no strength at all and the bat is easily pushed back. To reach a position of strength and power, you need to have a sequential swing beginning with the lower half rotating before the upper half.

This hitter is demonstrating a swing that is out of sequence. If you'll notice, the front shoulder is the first thing that is rotating. As the front shoulder rotates, it also pulls the head off of the hitting zone.

A swing that is out of sequence causes problems with rhythm and timing. It is also a less powerful swing and a longer swing. It disrupts the potential energy of the lower half of the body.



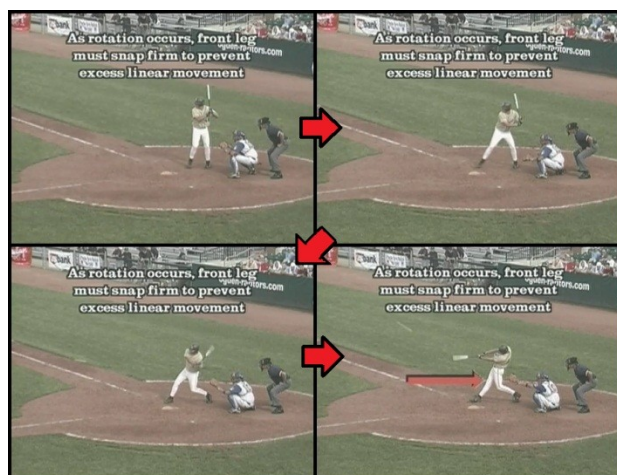
The axis of rotation runs on a vertical plane right through the middle of the hitter's body, and he will actually rotate around that axis in his swing. If you will notice, as that rotation takes places, that the last thing to come in the swing is the bat. This is known as bat lag. We will have the lower half of the body rotating first, the upper half of the body rotating last, and the very last thing to occur is bat lag in that swing.



There are two types of movement when the lower half of the body begins its rotation. There is linear movement, which is the slight moving forward of weight, and then there is the rotational movement which we have already shown.

In order to stop a linear movement and keep our head still throughout the hitting sequence, it is very important as rotation begins to occur that the hitter's front leg snaps firm, thus providing a firm front side for the hitter to hit off of.

Our hitter will now demonstrate that firm front side.



You can see that his firm leg that he is hitting against, that leg snaps straight as rotation begins. This stops linear movement and allows for the rotational movement to continue.

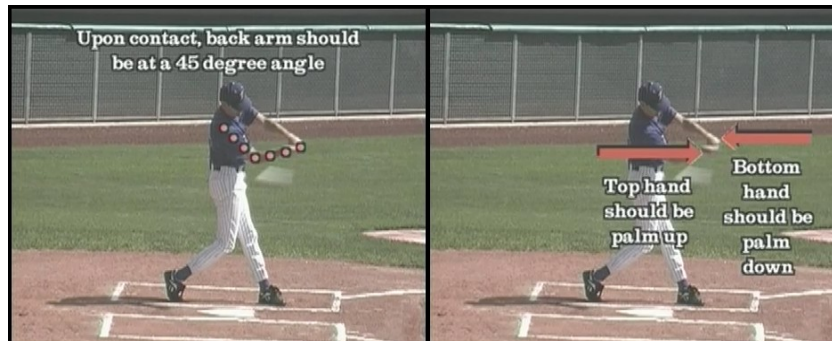
PART 4

A hitter's perceptive skills will have great impact on his success. The hitter should keep his eyes on the pitcher from the moment he gets into his stance. A hitter should use a soft focus initially without one direct focal point.

Then, two to three seconds before the pitcher gets to his release point, he should hard focus on the release point, seeing the ball come out of the pitcher's hand.

A hitter should have determined the pitcher's release point long before he gets into the batter's box. He should watch the pitcher during pregame warm-up, as the pitcher is working in the bullpen, watch from the dugout, and later from the on-deck circle.

The bat path should be short and quick to the ball. The back hip rotates and clears a path for the elbows to travel close to the body, with the hands staying above and inside the ball.



Ideally, the back elbow will be at a 45-degree angle with the front arm straight at contact. The top hand palm up, the bottom hand palm down.

The arms are levers. When they stay close to

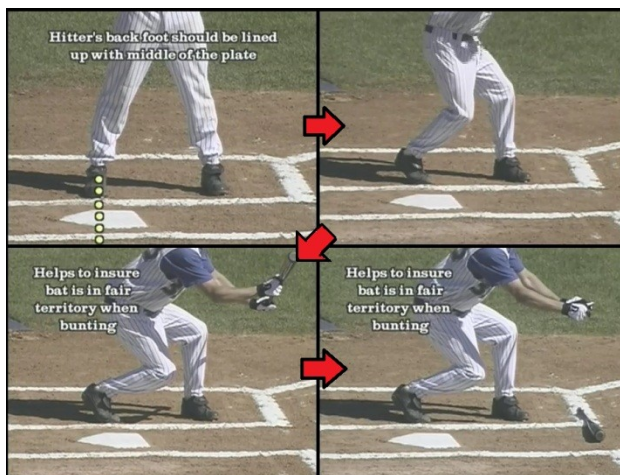
the power source of the legs and torso, then maximum power is obtained.



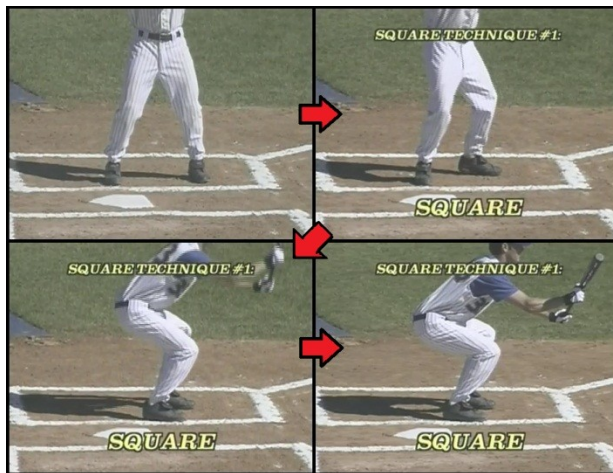
The further the hands and arms are extended from the power source, the weaker the swing.

Upon contact, the bat then continues through the zone and follows through with a high follow-through and a high finish.

The high finish is very important because it allows the bat to stay in the strike zone a little longer, as opposed to somebody who would have a low follow-through.



If you'll notice the stance of this hitter in relationship to home plate, his back foot is lined up with the middle of home plate.



That way, when he squares around and begins to go to the bunt position, his bat will be in fair territory. As you can see, the bat would be in fair territory; that way he can bunt the ball in the fair territory much easier.

The first technique is to square around, moving both feet at the same time. Thus getting square to the pitcher.

The next movement could be a pivot move, which is the second technique, where the batter just pivots on his feet.

Coach needs to decide which technique he prefers. Some coaches will use both techniques.

They will use a pivot technique in less crucial situations, and the square technique, especially in the late innings when it is absolutely crucial to get that run across.

They feel that this technique is much easier and more successful because the batter has totally squared his body to the pitcher.

The batter's grip on the bat will determine how hard the bunter will move the ball away from home plate. If he wants a very firm bunt, then he will grip the bat very firmly. If he wants a soft bunt, then he will have more of a loose grip on the bat. His hands do stay separated; bottom hand down by the knob, top hand up by the label on the bat.



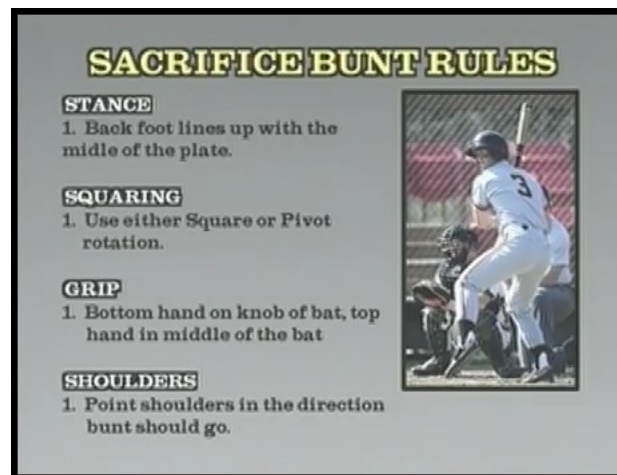
You'll notice as he grips it that his top hand and fingers are underneath the bat, thumb behind it. This way he protects his hand. As he bunts it on the barrel, it will not make contact with his hand.

In order to place the ball, all the bunter has to do is to turn his shoulders in midline in the direction that he wants to go. If he wants the bunt to the first base side, he merely turns

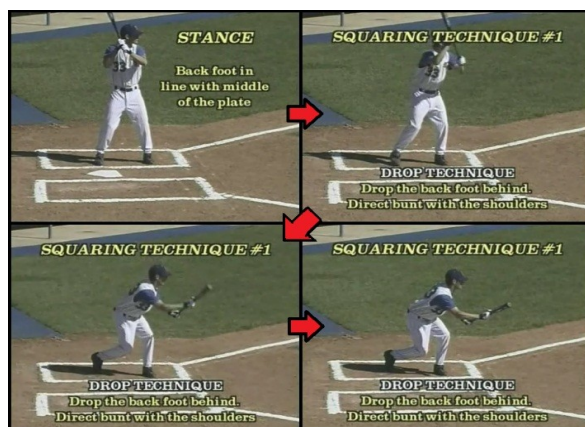
his shoulders in that direction with his midline. If he wants to go to the third base line, then he would turn his shoulders in midline to the third base line.

The least bit of movement that we can have, the better that we're going to place the ball. When moving on pitches that are up and down in the strike zone, the bunter wants to move all in one piece. In other words, his body is going to stay on the same plane as he moves up and down.

Everything moves in one piece. The bat moves as he flexes down with his knees, and as he stands up further the bat comes up and moves the same. This way we can keep our levels and we can keep our bat in the right position.



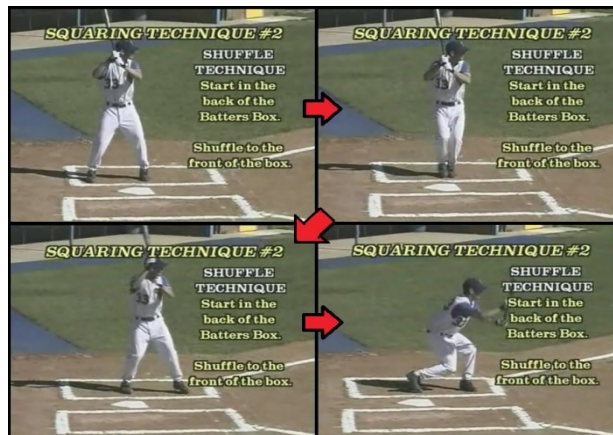
PART 5



Drag bunt techniques also begins with movement of the feet. Back foot in line with the middle of the base once again so that when he squares, his bat will be in fair territory.

The first technique, the hitter will drop his back foot slightly behind him and get the bat out in front, shoulders in line with the direction that he's going, eyes over the top of the bat. The bat, again, the barrel at the top of the strike zone.

The grip on the bat will determine how hard he wants to bunt it. Whether he wants to bunt it firmly or softly. He may want a firmer bunt to get the ball past the pitcher with the third baseman back; or if the third baseman is playing up, he may want a softer bunt, therefore he has a loser grip on the bat.

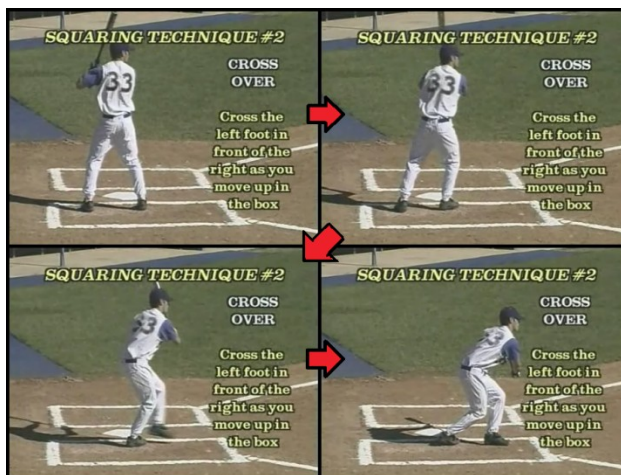


The second technique is a shuffle technique. The hitter in this case starts more towards the back of the box because he's going to come up and heel-click and shuffle his feet towards the pitcher's.

Some coaches like this technique because it gets the hitter's feet moving.

A drag bunt wants to be placed close to the line. Some coaches like the idea of either it's right on the line or it's out of play.

The drag bunt for the left-hand hitter involves three different techniques. The first is merely a drop step, where the hitter opens his front toe and gets in a position to be able to drag the ball down the third base line.



The second technique is a crossover technique. You'll notice the hitter starts further back in the box for this because he's actually going to cross over with his left foot in front of his right and drop the ball down. Many coaches like this technique because the hitter is actually starting to move, and getting his feet moving he can get a running start. It is a much more difficult technique than the first shown.

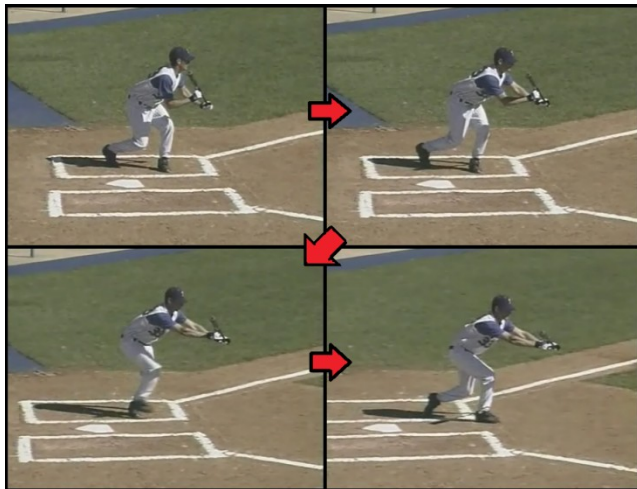
The third technique is the shuffle technique which we showed with a right-handed hitter, and also a left-hander could use that as well. Where he starts in the back of the box with his feet, shuffles, clicks his heels together, and lays it down.

Both the crossover and the shuffle, the hitter actually has his feet moving before he's going to bunt the ball.

The push bunt is often used against a team where their second baseman is playing close to the second base bag, or against a left-hand pitcher, or maybe even a first baseman who's slow moving.

The right-hand hitter will drop his right foot behind him, much like a drag technique but he will have the bat in closer to his body. His elbows will be bent. He will have the bat up at the top of the strike zone with the barrel once again. And as the pitch arrives, he will actually push his bat forward, getting his arms straight and then stepping through after contact is made.

It is a technique that is being used with a firm grip because we want to bunt the ball hard past the pitcher so that the pitcher, first baseman, have to make a decision as to who is going to field the ball and who's going to cover first base. If there is any hesitation on the part of the pitcher and the first baseman, then our runner has a very good chance of reaching first base.



The push bunt for the left-hander involves a hitter getting towards the back of the box actually crossing over, his left foot over his right getting into that position with his bent elbows and then pushing the ball out, as he steps forward with his right foot. Again, you're trying to push the ball past the pitcher so that the first baseman and pitcher have to make a decision as to who's going to field the ball, who's going to cover first.

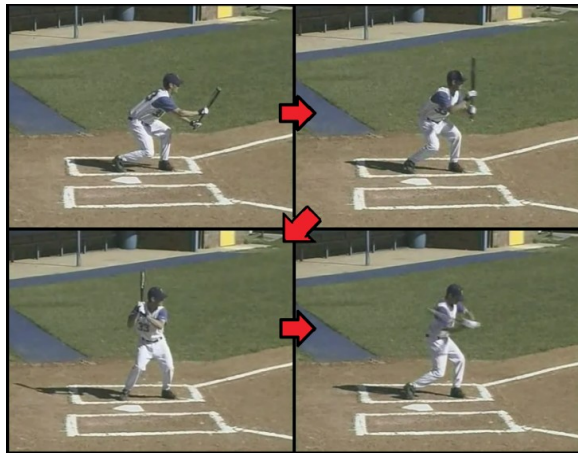
The left-hander can also push bunt to the shortstop pull. Which is push the ball past the pitcher towards the shortstop so the pitcher cannot move on a straight line to the ball, and the shortstop will have to charge, or the third baseman, to make that play. It's a long run for a third baseman, it's a long run for a shortstop, to get to that ball.

The slash is used in a sacrifice bunt situation. When a team is using a very aggressive defense and their first baseman and third baseman are charging towards the plate.

The bunter is using the pivot technique here. Once the bat is out in front and he shows good bunt, he's going to pull the bat back by moving his bottom hand up the bat to his top hand and bringing the bat to his shoulder.

The bunter will square around early in this case. He will actually square around when the pitcher first comes to the set position, with his hands together. And he has to have enough time to square and then to pull the bat back to get into a good slashing position.

The slasher is trying to hit the ball on the ground, either in the 4 hole or the 6 hole, as infielders are vacating. It is surprising how hard someone can hit a ball in a slashing position. You may even consider using this with weak hitters in your line-up because it shortens up their swing, it gets the defense moving, and it opens up a lot of holes.



Teaching and learning hitting is a tremendous challenge. There are many different aspects of the swing and there are many different challenges that we face in the game. There are three types of learners. There are the audio learners, the ones that can hear information and then process it very well. There are the visual learners that actually watch it taking place, and they can learn from that experience very well. And then there are the tactile learners that we have to place our hands on and actually move their bodies through the actions for them to be successful.

The challenge of hitting involves not only hours and hours of practice, of trying to get the swing in the right sequence, but also the understanding that baseball is a game of failure. And that good hitters are going to fail two out of three times that they're at the plate. Dealing with that failure is just as important as learning how to handle the mechanics and the sequence of the swing. They must have a mental game that will allow them to stay in the present and to deal with all the situations and circumstances that the game may bring.

It is very important that they have a plan before they come to the plate and that they're able to stick with that plan. Their plan would be determined by the situation and the hitter must be aware of those situations and must practice them. Practice is very important in getting ourselves ready for hitting situations. We must not only practice our mechanics, but we must also practice the mental preparation that is involved in performing well in a game.

One of the most important things is for a hitter to stay in the present. To deal with the game one pitch at a time and to let those things that are negatives leave them.

Hitters must be willing to practice those things that are going to make them better hitters. They must be interested in doing drill work and not get ahead of themselves. It's very important when you're trying to learn to do a swing in sequence that you practice the order of the swing. It is very difficult for hitters to learn against live pitching. Tee work, different drill work, will allow the hitters to be able to relax and be able to develop a sequential swing.