

HITTING IS TIMING

The Craft of Hitting a Baseball

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DRAFT E-BOOK

INTRODUCTION

Warren Spahn once said, “Hitting is about timing and pitching is about upsetting timing.” Why was I never taught how to set my timing when I played high school or college baseball? The only answer that seems logical to me is that my coaches were not familiar with the concept of timing, nor did they have a teaching model to follow when instructing their players about timing.

This manual is designed to provide a model for parents, coaches, and players to use when working on the timing of hitting a baseball.

I will provide an overview of the rotation hitting mechanics. I will also discuss the mechanics needed for an effective two-strike hitting approach. For optimal hitting results, excellent hitting mechanics, an excellent two-striking hitting approach, and excellent timing are essential.

I will discuss my observations, ideas, and conclusions about the visual process, the mental process, and the physical process that are involved when working to time certain pitches in different locations, in different counts, in different situations, against different types of pitchers.

I will use several examples of different pitchers that throw from the left and right sides, have a various arm motions, various arm angles, various speeds on the fastball, various breaking balls, various off-speed pitches, various holds, and various leg kicks.

I will provide a model of basic timing for players in little league to high school, which involves one set timing and basic timing mechanisms. I will provide a model of advanced timing for players at the college and professional levels, which involve early and late timing and advanced timing mechanisms. I will discuss what to look for in a pitchers arm motion when setting your timing during practice, pre-game, and on-deck to set your timing.

Hitter’s should seek maximum knowledge of their craft. Hitter’s should not only study the strengths and weaknesses of pitchers, but they should study their own strengths and weaknesses. I will use several examples of different hitters that have various tendencies according to their various strengths and weaknesses.

Always keep in mind, that “to understand hitting is to understand pitching.”

You will find in this free offer, sections on timing, trigger mechanisms, the pitcher’s arm motion and timing. The best part is that the teaching of timing to young hitters is open to new ideas and theories. Please feel free to let me know your ideas. Contact me at info@baseballchartsonline.com. ENJOY!!!

TIMING

Before studying timing, the effect bad timing has on hitting mechanics should be examined. If a hitter begins his swing too late, he will rush his hitting mechanics by speeding up his body to make up for lost time. Rushing hitting mechanics will not allow the hitter to get into a proper launch position, because the front foot will not be completely down in-stride before the bat needs to begin the swing phase.

If a hitter begins his swing too early he will slow the bat with his body to allow time for the pitch to travel closer towards home plate. A hitter that begins too early will have had time to get into a proper launch position, but the lower body which has begun its swing phase will be out in front of the pitch, leaving only the upper body to adjust to the unexpected velocity and/or location.

As you study this manual, keep in mind that a hitter can have perfect mechanics, but with poor timing, he may not touch the ball. A hitter could also have poor mechanics, but with good timing he could make a lot of good contact.

Hitters need to think, "When he shows me his back pocket, I'll show him mine."

TRIGGER MECHANISMS

What is a timing mechanism? A timing mechanism is a pre-stride movement. How does a timing mechanism help? A timing mechanism helps hitters designate certain trigger points in a pitcher's arm motion to begin the pre-stride movement. The difference between hitters with a timing mechanism and hitters without a timing mechanism is that a hitter with one begins the pre-stride movement a split second earlier. The batter must create and feel rhythm from the feet up.

1. FRONT HEEL LIFT (Jim Edmonds, Joe DiMaggio, Paul Molitor)

This mechanism is used to create rhythm and check balance in the stance. The front heel lifts and sets back down in a comfortable slow rhythm. When the pitcher separates his hands the batter starts closing the front side and takes the hands back into the launch position.

2. FRONT HIP INWARD ROTATION (Ted Williams, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth)

The simplest of the timing mechanisms. Inwardly rotate the front hip to get into the launch position. For better results, incorporate with the front heel lift.

3. FRONT TOE TAP (Sammy Sosa, Rafael Palmiero)

This mechanism is used to being the closing of the front side and backward movement of the hands into the launch position. From the batters stance, when the pitcher breaks his hands, the batter then shifts his weight to the back side, at which time the batter lightly taps his front big toe on the ground near his landing position. These will hopefully, get the batter to take his weight and hands back into a good hitting position and create good timing.

4. KNEE DOWNWARD PUMP (Lenny Dykstra, Derek Jeter)

Done with the knees bent and pumping the body downward before the pitcher releases the ball. This is extremely difficult to do due to the shift in balance and changing planes with the eyes.

5. KNEE LIFT (Daryl Strawberry, Shane Spencer)

The knee lift is the most difficult timing mechanisms to master because the higher the front foot comes off the ground, the more your timing is likely to be off. The knee lift is done by bringing the knee up to hip level.

6. ROCKING MOTION (Tino Martinez)

This mechanism is used to relax the batter and create a sense of balance and rhythm in the stance. This mechanism is done by shifting the weight back and forward, back and forward, by alternating lifting the front and the back heels. Again, when the pitcher separates his hands the batter closes the front side and moves the hands back into the launch position.

7. FRONT SHOULDER CLOSING

Slightly rotate the front shoulder inward, getting launch position.

8. ELBOW FLAP(S)

- A. Back Elbow Flap:** The back elbow flaps towards the ribs before beginning the stride.
(Joe Morgan)
- B. Both Elbows Flap:** Both elbows flap towards the ribs before beginning the stride.
(Mark McGwire)

9. HAND CIRCLES (Carney Lansford, 1990's Oakland A's 3B)

This mechanism is used to relax the batter's arms and hands. This movement can be done by moving the hands up and down in a slow circular motion. The arms will move with the hand and bat, with is okay as long as the batter does not create the bad habit of hitching. Even if the batter creates a hitch, he can still hit well, as long as he uses the hitch as a timing mechanism. Keep an eye on this because if he is using a hitch and is late on pitches, find another trigger mechanism for the batter, because the batter will be susceptible to a inside fastball. Once again, when the pitcher separates his hands, the batter closes the front side and moves the hands back into the launch position.

10. BAT WIGGLE (Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds)

This mechanism is used to create a relaxed movement in the hands of the batter. The batters hands are at or near the launch position. The bat his held still until the pitcher separates his hands, which at that time, the batter will make a downward movement (wiggle) with the bat to start the closing of the front side.

11. FINGER WIGGLES (Lenny Dykstra)

This mechanism is used to relax the hands and forearms in order to create hand quickness. The batter starts his hands near or at the launch position because when the pitcher separates his hands, the batters hands will move backwards ever so slightly. What really happens is when the pitcher separates his hands, the batter only has to close his front side.

The process of teaching a timing mechanism begins by observing hitters for a natural movement prior to the stride that is compatible to one of the aforementioned timing mechanisms or for a timing mechanism that is all his own.

The order to observe hitters natural movements prior to the stride and the timing mechanism(s) to try for each is as follows:

First Movement

Feet
Knees
Hips
Front Shoulder
Elbows
Wrists
Hands
Bat

Timing Mechanism(s)

Front Heel Lift or Front Toe Tap
Knee Lift
Wiggle or Inward Rotation
Closing of the Front Shoulder
Back or Both Elbows Flap
Slight Twist of Wrists
Hand Circles
Bat Wiggle or Bat Wave

THE PITCHERS ARM MOTION AND TIMING

Hitters should understand that there is ample time to hit any pitch if their timing is on. Hitters describe seeing the baseball “as big as a beach ball” when they are hitting well. The opposite is true when hitters are struggling; they say the ball “is as small as a bebe.”

To begin understanding the pitcher’s roll in the timing of hitting a baseball, hitters must understand the four typical phases in a pitchers arm motion. The pitchers arm motion is the most basic concept for hitters to concentrate on while trying to set and adjust their timing.

To set timing, the batter can also count the number of beats it takes the pitcher to release the ball from the set position, wind up, stretch, with runners on, no one on, with a kick, and a long or short slide step.

The typical four phases of a pitchers arm motion, of pitchers that throw over-the-top, high three-quarter, or low three-quarter, to be considered when studying to set timing to begin the timing mechanism are as follows:

- Phase 1: Breaks hands**
The pitcher takes the ball out of the glove, thus breaking his hands apart.
- Phase 2: Downward motion**
The pitcher begins to take the ball in a downward motion towards the thigh.
- Phase 3: Backward motion**
The pitcher begins to take the ball in an upward behind the body.
- Phase 4: Upward motion**
The pitcher begins to take the ball into their arms slot, into the rear of the release window.

The pitchers strengths and weaknesses should be compared to the strengths and weaknesses of the hitter when trying to set timings. For example, when facing a hard throwing pitcher, hitters should set timing to phase one or two. Hitters should set timings to phase three or four when facing a breaking ball pitcher.

The process for hitters with a timing mechanism set their timing is:

1. Focus on the pitcher’s glove.
2. When the pitcher gets to the phase the hitter has set his timing to, begin timing mechanism.

High School Hitters: Set to Phase 1
 College Hitters: Set to Phase 1
 Advanced Hitters: Adjust according to the pitcher and hitters strengths and weaknesses.
 Advanced Hitters Two-Strikes: Phase 3 or 4

The following chart is suggested for setting a hitter’s timing when comparing the hitter’s tendency to the strength of the pitcher’s fastball during fastball counts:

Pitcher’s Fastball	Below 78	Fair 78-81	Average 82-85	Hard Fastball 86-90	Exceptional Fastball 90+
Hitter’s Tendency					
Opposite Field Hitter	2	2	1	1	1
Spray Hitter	3	3	2	1	1
Pull Hitter	4	4	3	2	1

The following chart is suggested for setting a hitter's timing when comparing the hitter's tendency to the strength of the pitcher's breaking balls or off-speed pitches during non-fastball counts:

	Pitcher's Breaking Ball Or Off-Speed				
	Change-Up	Hanging Curve	Slurve	Sharp Curve	Slider
Opposite Field Hitter	2	2	1	1	2
Spray Hitter	3	3	2	2	2
Pull Hitter	4	4	3	3	3