

EARLY-SWING MOVEMENTS ADD TO BAT-SPEED

Many senior softball players know that there are two orders or levels of bat–speed before the ball is struck. However, a number of seniors are not cognizant of that fact and may be limiting their potential.

In this article I plan on explaining the much less known 1st order of bat–speed; what it is, and how it’s used to setup the 2nd order of bat–speed. You can review my SSUSA article on the “Double Pendulum Swing” to refresh your understanding of the two distinct and separate levels of bat–speed represented by two pendulums.

Click on the link below and scroll down the page to article #13:

<http://www.bashman01nwseniorsoftball.com/hitting-articles>

In my opinion, seniors unconsciously overlook the 1st order of bat–speed. Good hitters have both orders of bat–speed, whether they are aware of it or not. Seniors spend endless hours working primarily on increasing the 2nd order of bat–speed which does not manifest itself until the 1st order has been executed.

Definitions:

- 1st order of bat–speed is the early pre–swing bat movements that create swing momentum up to the point where the wrists begin to rollover,
- The 2nd order of bat–speed begins as the 1st order finishes where hands roll the wrists propelling the bat forward into contact with the softball, then finishing with a fluid follow-thru.

The 1st order of bat–speed is an action that spins or twists the bat barrel around the hands (e.g. a corkscrew action), by applying torque to the bat handle, creating early bat–speed. The back elbow should be held high behind your head (à la Nelson Cruz of the Mariners) and barrel pointing toward the pitcher; knob of the bat pointing back at the catcher.

A popular method to invoke the 1st order of bat–speed is by using a technique known as “bat–tipping”. You can either tip the bat barrel toward the pitcher, or straight out and perpendicular to your body.

[Please refer to the supporting photo figures 1 thru 6 for a visual of the technique.]

Bat–tipping is a favorite technique amongst many major leaguers (especially the Latin ball players) and has been used for many decades as a jump start for the swing by such greats as: Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Barry Bonds and many others too numerous to mention here. The bat is simply tipped forward either away from your body or toward the pitcher to

initiate your swing. Similar to a fly fisherman who will throw his rod forward and then pull it back before launching his line into the water.

The top hand controls the tip forward and brings the bat back to the ready launch position (Pro softball hall of famer, Bret Helmer, does bat-tipping exquisitely). The bat-tipping also makes the bat seem to feel lighter, as you've overcome the inertia of the bat with the tipping movement, promoting a faster swing to the ball.

After the bat is tipped and brought back to your center of body mass with the barrel now vertical, a stretching of the arms back bringing the right elbow to a height about head high is the bat's launch position. This stretching of the arms movement back to the bat launch position is important as it makes your muscles load like a spring. The bat can now catapult into your forward swing with much more force than if held in a static position behind your head.

Kinesiologists refer to this stretching and releasing action as "plyometrics".

Definition: Plyometrics is a muscular skeleton dynamic movement, or exercise, that involves a rapid muscle stretching followed immediately by contracting the muscles to increase power (i.e. a catapulting action). Muscles exert maximum force in a short interval of time, with the goal of increasing power.

Understand that utilizing the second order of bat-speed only, will not maximize your power. When orders of bat-speed's 1 & 2 are added together, they produce what is known as a synergistic effect, which means your total swing energy will be greater than the summation of the two individual parts.

***** **IMPORTANT** *****

Please take advantage of the link below to view a short but excellent internet instructional video that discusses and demonstrates the techniques I've presented in this article:

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeUHLUh3rdA>

Happy hitting,

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