

PRACTICE OFF A TEE AND IMPROVE YOUR HITTING

Becoming a better senior softball hitter requires finding the time during your busy day. The utilization of a batting tee can be an efficient use of your time, bringing immediate benefits and requires only you to be present.

Batting practice can come in a variety of forms such as: live-arm batting practice, a batting cage with a pitching machine, soft toss or other ways like hitting off a stationary tee apparatus. The lesson to be learned here is the more a hitter practices the perfection of hitting, the better hitter they will become.

Hitting off a stationary tee only needs a stop-net or fence to hit into, a bucket of softballs, a senior bat and your dedication. If practiced correctly, a tee can develop good swing mechanics that will be transferable to the game.

The goal is to build muscle memory from practicing on the tee so that in the game you don't have to think, just hit. Correctly executed repetitions during your practice time with a tee can make you a better senior softball hitter. So, become the master of your own swing.

Benefits from hitting off a batting tee:

- Hitting off a stationary tee allows for improvement of your softball hitting skills while working alone,
- Hitting off a stationary tee allows the hitter to effectively prepare the large muscles of the body for the new season after an extended layoff,
- Hitting off a stationary tee can help eliminate your swing flaws and weaknesses,
- Hitting off a stationary tee and knowing your weaknesses allows you to address and fix them before live game action,
- Hitting off a stationary tee allows the hitter to identify weaknesses through self-assessment and the helpful eyes of a hitting partner or a video,
- Hitting off a stationary tee teaches a batter to hit-the-other-way to save team home runs and or eliminating the dreaded DBO,
- Hitting off a stationary tee can teach a hitter to get to the inside pitch with the barrel of the bat, instead of those handle hits, driving the ball into fair territory,
- Hitting off a stationary tee can cure a common weakness of many seniors which is the inability to hit to the off-field (or backside) thereby, moving runners and throwing off the defense,
- Hitting off a stationary tee reinforces the hitter squaring the barrel to the ball resulting in the maximization of the bat's trampoline effect.

My batting tee demonstrator is Rod Gibson of the Arizona Elites 50's major plus (see figures 2 – 6). I met Rod while vacationing in Scottsdale, AZ, back in early March of this year. Rod and I joined two other 50's major plus players, Don Long and Steve Long (no relation) from the Pacific Northwest Legends for some bp at the beautiful Community park softball complex in Anthem, AZ.

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A technique that Ron adopted is to draw in the dirt a half-circle around the strike mat area that dictates him staying behind the ball at all times while practicing. Ron's tee hitting approach is to try and obtain full extension with his arms regardless of which field he's hitting to and then driving the ball hard to all fields (see figure 2).

The proper set-up of the batting tee is paramount in being able to work effectively on the type of pitch you will be hitting such as: inside, outside or middle pitches; each pitch type will have a different batter's foot positioning when striking the ball off the tee.

Next is the adjusting of the tee for pitch height from the top of the "letters" to about your belt buckle area. The basic tee setup along with your physical and psychological approach to the batting drills should create good swing habits that are put to muscle memory and then transferred to game conditions.

What not to do when hitting off a stationary tee:

- Keeping your feet in one location and not moving around the half-circle,
- Just striking the softball without purpose (work on game situations),
- Toppling the tee over and over again without making the necessary adjustments,
- Hitting only a few balls and then quitting not making your tee time worthwhile,
- Hitting every ball just to one field defeating the purpose of hitting off a tee.

If you don't have a tee and you'd like to start using one, you'll need to get a tee that works for slow-pitch adult ball heights; some baseball tees are for the youth and waist high pitches. Get one that will telescope up for the highest pitches. You still may need to prop the tee up to satisfy for maximum ball striking height by setting it on something; a ball bucket or the like.

Below is a link to some batting tees available on the market. I would recommend the 'G Tee' type in the ad, or some similar brand of tee that works for the game of slow-pitch softball.

<http://probabaseballinsider.com/best-batting-tee/>

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