

FERRIS WHEEL SWING

A “Ferris Wheel” swing is currently the favorite of most major league ball players in the game today. This swing motion has supplanted the long time “Merry-Go-Round” shoulder motion (i.e., level swing) that we were taught as kids that produces too many ground balls. The FWS is not the dreaded uppercut swing, where the barrel is dragged to the ball in an upward motion which can lead to weak fly outs. Just as the name indicates, the Ferris Wheel swing or “FWS” is like the motion of a theme park Ferris wheel. The swing starts downward gaining bat speed and then travels up as it makes contact with the softball right after the low point in the arc.

The body mechanics for executing the FWS requires your trailing side oblique muscles to experience a pinching sensation at completion. As the batter releases the bat barrel to the ball in an upward direction, the front shoulder will be pointing up and the back shoulder pointing down. This swing approach to hitting, when performed correctly, will carry the ball to the outfield clearing the infielders with line drives instead of ground ball outs.

The horizontal swing or a downward swing arc can produce a cutting action on the ball. However, this cutting action can have the effect of cleaving the ball if not executed precisely, producing weak pop outs and just an occasional long ball. The FWS is not only a home run swing, it also produces harder hit balls to the gaps for those bases clearing shots. The FWS bat plane is not totally vertical but is about 25-30 degrees below the level swing, providing a better path to the incoming pitch (*see insert*).

A Ferris-Wheel swing allows the ball to be struck at its center of mass using a slight uppercut at the belly of the ball producing a greater exit speed. The FWS can also produce back-spin for that additional carry on your big flies. The shoulder movement should be more of a rocking motion back to the catcher and then forward to the pitcher rather than horizontal.

In addition, allowing the pitched ball to travel lower before contact permits the FWS to be executed effectively. You may want to adjust your position in the batter’s box by standing a bit deeper to catch the ball at your waist to fit the FWS. Doing this also permits a longer look at the pitch for improved pitch selection which can help prevent leaking out early on pitches.

When executing the FWS, make sure to use the “turning-the-barrel” technique discussed in a previous article. Turning the barrel begins with a bat tilt toward the pitcher, then looping the barrel backwards toward the catcher, and then sending it forward directly into the path of the incoming pitch in one continuous motion, which creates a Ferris Wheel swing.

You don’t have to be a home run hitter to take advantage of the FWS motion. It will produce more solid contact with the ball that clears the infielders (*i.e., fewer ground balls*) on to the outfield once you calibrate your ideal launch angle through practice.

Advantages of the Ferris-Wheel verses the Merry-Go-Round swing:

- Utilizes gravity for early bat acceleration,
- Launches the ball into the air,
- Hits fewer ground balls,
- Allows a greater margin for error when making contact,
- Drives the ball through the gaps for extra base hits,
- Matches the pitch slope better than a level swing,
- Higher exit speed.

Below are two internet links; the first providing drills to implement the FWS and a second link, featuring Mike Trout of the Angels demonstrating his FWS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbwjjWvOoBE&list=PLQIEjLA5txkK2oLNrobmecVkdwY6pGf5z>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irjxSNvI6kA>

Happy hitting,

Art Eversole

