

## Become a Better Hitter by “Passively Unhinging Wrists”

The role of the wrists is probably the most misunderstood and important action in the softball swing. Many swing mechanics instructors believe the proper role of the wrists is similar to hinges on a swinging door. Good hitters don't force their wrists over at contact. You may think this sounds counter-intuitive to what we have been taught in our early years playing ball.

The wrists acting as hinges are a fundamental concept of “Rotational Swing Mechanics”. Rotational swing mechanics is where the large muscles of the legs, torso and shoulders coupled with a fast driving rear hip turn generates the majority of a hitter's bat speed. The powerful forces generated by the rotation of the body are transferred to the bat through the arms and unhinging wrists. (See illustrations). Linear swing mechanics teaches the conscious forcing of wrist action to generate bat speed.

Hitters should be most interested in generating the maximum amount of bat speed their physiques can possibly provide and only through rotational mechanics can this be achieved. I firmly believe that the rotational mechanics with wrists naturally unhinging from the forces built up is a superior method for striking the ball. If the hitter uses a wrist snap in an intentional manner the result is the loss of the correct hand-wrist mechanical action. Any purposeful forcing of the wrist action when striking the ball usually results in a premature rolling over of the wrists resulting in weaker hits like slow rollers and popups.

In addition, it's more difficult for hitters to achieve good timing if they try to flick the bat-head at the ball with their hands using a conscious wrist/ hand action. Proper timing only comes when the unhinging of the wrists is brought about automatically by the momentum of a twisting lower/upper body with a circular hand path to the ball. The key to unhinging wrists is that the hitter must have attained their first order of bat-speed from the large muscles of the legs, hips and torso. Hitters who don't generate enough bat speed from their body (usually a result of poor hip action and a slow lead arm pull) will find it necessary to generate more bat speed by forcing the wrists over at the incoming ball.

Understand that a forced action of the wrists can deliver a fairly good punch to the ball at times. However, a conscious effort to flip the bat over with the hands and wrists is not nearly as efficient as that of a full-body swing that will naturally unhinge the wrists at the right time. To paraphrase the great Byron Nelson, who was said to have told a group of his students when asked about the role of the wrists in the golf swing...*“the club-head should be moving so fast from body generated forces that it's virtually impossible to consciously snap the wrists; as they'll naturally turn over from the momentum of a fast moving club-head”*.

To put this concept into perspective, the conscious movements of your swing should only be with your lower body (e.g. legs, hips) and upper body (e.g. chest, shoulders, lats). The wrists are the unconscious or passive action of your swing. Grip pressure should be just enough to hold onto the bat allowing wrists to move freely. Hitters who do not generate effective bat speed from body forces will feel that the bat is moving too slowly, and will then resort to the use of hands and arms to generate bat speed; this technique will result in slower bat speed.

A useful exercise that demonstrates the effect of a fast moving bat that automatically unhinges the wrists is to simply take your normal swing using a plastic whiffle bat. Swing the whiffle bat as fast as you can using body mechanics and you'll see the bat is moving so fast your wrists unhinge naturally. The unhinging of the wrists belongs to a passive type action where the hands are driven by the body. Your arms and hands are just passengers along for the ride but steering the bat-head to direct contact with the ball.

In summation, if a hitter uses the proper body mechanics the wrists will unhinge naturally and will maximize bat speed. To better understand the subject matter of this article I recommend you review some of my previous hitting articles in this publication.

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