

SLIGHT UPPERCUT AND BECOME A BETTER HITTER

As kids learning baseball from adult coaches, we heard many times to “swing level” and what every we do, “don’t upper cut the ball and drop our back shoulder”. “Doing this will result in fly outs, they preached”. What was being taught is called the A-C hitting technique that has been imparted for decades if not centuries to little leaguers on up. The A-C method (*Address to Contact*) is executed with the hitter moving their hands from a stationary batting position directly down to the ball. Wrists are cocked and fully loaded while taking the knob directly at the ball. During the A-C swing, bat lag is created by having the barrel trail behind the hands, contact is made at an extremely narrow intersection where the barrel meets the incoming pitch. This straight line down to the ball hitting technique was also a way to satisfy a baseball maxim “quick to the ball & smooth on the follow-through”, which is still valid today. Note that A-C looks good to the observer but does have shortcomings.

A few fundamental weaknesses with the A-C swing are:

- sends the knob to the ball first rather than the barrel reducing bat speed,
- does not create early bat acceleration during the swing,
- limits the area in which to make solid contact with the ball,
- does not allow the ball to travel deep in the zone to hit the other way,

A more efficient way to get the bat to the ball, in my opinion, is to use a hitting technique called “Turning the Barrel”. Turning the barrel abbreviated TB, allows for a larger area in which to contact the ball and accelerate the bat. The TB swing is similar to a coach lofting fly balls with a fungo bat to the outfield, which requires a slight uppercut, striking the belly of the ball at the center of mass. The barrel is swung directly at the ball, there is no leading with the knob in this action.

Turning the barrel has a loop configuration resembling the iconic Nike swoosh. This TB swing initially sends the bat back toward the catcher and around the rear shoulder deep into the path of the ball. The TB swing whips the barrel around and close to your back shoulder picking up bat speed as it enters the path of the incoming pitch (see, insert). When the bat and ball collision take place both arms will be slightly bent at contact, the rear shoulder is now lower than the front shoulder creating a slight uppercutting action. The arms don’t fully extend until after the ball leaves the bat. Using this TB method, more batted balls will be elevated keeping the ball off the ground, resulting in more line drives that reach the outfield fence for extra base hits.

The concept of turning the barrel technique makes the bat handle spin around your hands in a pendulum motion that moves the barrel quickly to the pitch. The A-C technique tends to depend on the use of the arms to move the bat-knob to the ball which is not ideal. The role of your arms with the TB swing creates a supporting scaffolding for the bat, allowing the hands to swivel the barrel faster.

Admittedly, there are many hitting techniques that work some of the time, but for consistency and proficiency as a hitter, I recommend the TB to an A-C swing. Give a try and see what you think.

Click on the links below for TB instructional videos.

Happy hitting,

Art Eversole (SSUSA Contributor)

Turning the barrel instructional video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEAwd8LCBXE>

video 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQwbe2V80EI>



A-C Knob to the ball Swing