

“GET A PROPER GRIP AND BECOME A CONSISTENT HITTER”

Everyone playing the game of senior softball should realize the importance of taking a proper grip on the bat. The grip is the key to being a successful hitter as everything you do during your swing will go back to the grip. We all know that a good grip is essential for good hitting, but either we think we have a good grip, or we don't want to take the time to learn a more effective one. A proper grip sets the stage for good hitting. An inferior grip can compound swing flaws; and by the same token a good grip can correct flaws.

The basic grip is both hands on the bat (i.e. all fingers are on the bat) and is sometimes referred to as the “Ten Finger” grip. This is most common grip by baseball players. In softball we are restricted to a maximum of 34” bat length unlike baseball which allows up to 42” in length. A longer bat provides greater leverage but they're not legal in softball; so what can we do? First, we can drop the pinky of the bottom hand dangling it off the end of the bat knob thus giving the batter more leverage. Second, we can then manipulate the top hand by moving it down further on the bat towards the knob by draping fingers from the top hand on to the bottom hand. This grip is called an “overlap” grip. Some players “overlap” just one finger from the top hand over the bottom hand. Others will do two, three, or even all of the fingers depending on what feels good. When the top hand is moved down over the bottom hand the pivot point will be further from the barrel of the bat. (See attachment photos)

Much has been written about lining-up the middle knuckles (aka “door knocking knuckles”) of the hands which is taught by baseball hitting coaches everywhere. The proper alignment of the knuckles allows wrist action to be more effective resulting in greater torque. If the batter wishes to generate “under-spin” on the softball so that it will carry further with the same bat speed, I would recommend aligning the first set of knuckles on both hands. This may feel awkward at first but you'll adjust quickly. This first knuckle alignment will put your hands at contact in the correct position for under-spinning the ball. The back of your bottom hand at contact should be facing upward and the top hand should be underneath with the palm up making a sandwich of the bat handle. Aligning the first knuckles will impart the most effective under-spin to the softball. The grip position we're trying to attain with this technique is known as “palm-up/palm-down”.

The “overlap” grip style is popular with most of the famed “Long-haul bombers” of MLB stadium HR derby. Many seniors today are using some variation of the “overlap” grip. The traditional grip will suffice for most hitters, but if you're looking for that extra 20-30 feet on your

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“big flies”...I would suggest considering some form of the “overlap” grip. Using a “correct” grip has many benefits: 1) allows good control of the bat during the swing; 2) allows the batter to create their maximum bat speed without over-swinging; 3) wrists will have a more effective snapping action; 4) hands will be in the correct position on the bat when contact is made with the ball; 5) a proper grip promotes good swing mechanics.

Another benefit from taking a proper grip is that your wrists will not roll over prematurely. Some players use a “strong” grip that aligns the large knuckles of the hands. The “strong” grip feels good but is ineffective for consistent hitting. The bat handle must be gripped in the fingers of both hands running diagonally across the hands. Do not grip the bat like you’re holding a hammer (i.e. when the handle is perpendicular to the grip) as this restricts the wrist action leading to rolling up on the ball and hitting weak infield grounder. If you’re a base hitter I would recommend staying with the “Ten finger” grip for more bat control. If you desire greater distance then try one of the variations of the “overlap” grip to improve your distance.

It’s time for some bp.

Written by,

Art Eversole (SSUSA Contributor)

Attachments: Grip.6pics.jpg, Grip.2pics.jpg