

Most Common Hitting Flaws - #2

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In the previous article, I talked about the first of the five most common hitting flaws that Baseball Factory sees in youth hitters. The first flaw was the "failure to reach a good launch position." In this article, I will discuss the flaw that we find to be most prevalent in young hitters. Remember that in hitting, mechanics are not everything. Without sound hitting mechanics, however, it is very difficult to be a productive, consistent hitter at any level.



Wrapping the Bat - Wrapping the bat is a term that you hear a lot in baseball circles. Many young hitters "wrap" the bat and this can doom a swing from the start, just as failing to reach a good launch position does. In fact, the "wrap" almost always occurs when players are trying to get into their "launch" position. The "wrap" occurs when the player is loading his hands back. Many players will take the tip of the bat and stick it way behind their head or "wrap" it as in photo #1.

Why is this a problem? The key to a good swing is keeping your swing path to the ball short and quick. When a player wraps the bat way behind his head it makes it nearly impossible to maintain a short, quick swing. Yes, you will see some major league hitters "wrap" the bat, however many of them possess strength and bat speed that is far superior to the amateur player. Gary Sheffield of the Atlanta Braves is a perfect example of a big leaguer who "wraps" the bat. Sheffield does this in order to slow his bat down some. He is so fast and quick with the bat that he needs to slow himself down or he would be out in front of everything the pitcher throws. Again if you look at Photo #1 and #2, notice the distance that the head of the bat will have to travel in order to get to the hitting zone.

Photos #3 and #4 are of players who do not wrap the bat. Notice that the distance the bat head must travel to the hitting zone is much shorter than that in the first two photos. The players' hands have also gotten into a perfect slot in close to their bodies. You can therefore see how much a bat "wrap" lengthens the swing.

Another problem created by the bat "wrap" is that it promotes a loop in the swing. In order to get the barrel to the hitting zone the player must loop the barrel out and away from his body. When this happens the barrel also tends to dip down. This produces a long, looping swing wherein the bat head drops (see photo #2). That type of swing produces lazy fly balls and jam shots. Players who "wrap" very often

bar their front arm which causes a long swing and makes it impossible for the player to keep his hands inside the ball and hit the ball where it is pitched (see photos 1 and 2).

HOW DO YOU CORRECT THIS PROBLEM?

· **Load Drill-** Players who "wrap" often do so because they "load" their hands too strongly with the bottom hand. When you push too hard with your bottom hand, the tip of the bat goes towards the pitcher thus causing a "wrap." Concentrate on loading your hands back with your top hand. Keep your bottom hand a little looser on the bat and focus on taking your hands back to "load" with your top hand. Do this in a mirror, or have a parent or coach watch you to make sure you are not "wrapping."

· **Stride and load soft toss-** Once you can "load" your hands without "wrapping" the bat in the mirror, do soft toss or front toss after you have reached your "launch" position. When you reach the "launch" position check your bat to make sure it is not "wrapped," then have the person feed the ball. This puts a little more pressure on you to react, and the natural reaction will not be a "wrap." You must complete many repetitions of this drill correctly before it will filter into live game action.

· **Adjust your bat position in your stance-** Many players will hold their bat slightly "wrapped" in their stance. Therefore, when they do start to "load" it is only natural that they will "wrap" the bat even more. In your stance try to rest the bat against your collarbone, not on top of your shoulder. If you do this correctly your bat should be very upright and your hands will be low. Then lift your hands up so that your top hand is even with your ear. This should put you in a position that will keep your bat more upright and weightless in your hands. If you do "wrap" when you "load" out of this position you should feel it right away. Lastly, take notice of your back elbow. If it is sticking up like a chicken wing, you are probably going to "wrap" the bat. So relax that back elbow some, let it drop down a bit and this should help to avoid "wrapping" the bat.

Remember, this adjustment will take a lot of reps to correct, so don't get discouraged if you struggle to make the correction.

For more information on hitting or other related topics, please send emails to newsletter@baseballfactory.com or to speak with a Baseball Factory Representative call 800.641.4487.