

Hitting – How can we get kids to make (hard) contact in games? Kids hit the ball hard in practice, but struggle in games.

Issues:

- 1) Part of the problem is that kids have not seen this level of competition (pitching speed) or peer to peer pitching, and it will take natural time to adjust.
- 2) Kids have no clue on how to approach an at-bat.
- 3) Kids don't have the correct mental mindset, and furthermore don't know where to make contact with the ball (in relation to their body).
- 4) Some kids don't have the proper mechanics (Start hand in the proper area, quiet with front foot, hips through the zone first).
- 5) Afraid of getting hit by a pitch – some kids are scared of getting hit by the ball. We need to show kids how to get hit by a ball so that they can defend themselves and thus feel more secure.

Points to re-enforce (without these two points kids will never make contact):

- 1) Kids need a YES YES YES mindset – This means that they need to make up their mind before each pitch that they will swing the bat. Kids will be able to adjust and lay off bad pitches eventually. **If kids swing at a bad pitch, coaches cannot get on the kids about swinging at a bad pitch.** Kids know that they swung at a bad pitch, a coach telling them will only discourage from swinging at future pitches.
- 2) Make contact with the ball in front of their body – Inside pitches need to make contact about a foot in front of their body (ahead of their front foot). Pitches down the middle need to make contact even with front foot. Outside pitches need to make contact even with middle of the body.

At bat Approach:

- 1) On Deck – Determine the pitchers release point. This is the spot to focus on as the pitcher starts to bring his arm forward.
  - 2) Stepping into the box – Right before stepping into the box take a deep breath in, and then release the breath out. Take a few half swings and then get in your hitters stance as the pitcher is about ready.
  - 3) For the at-bat – As the pitcher loads, you load, start the quiet first step
  - 4) As the pitcher releases the ball, hips start
  - 5) In between pitches, stay loose (half swings, etc.)
- We care about making (hard) contact, not base hits
    - A good hitter only gets a hit 30% of the time
  - Can't think and hit at the same time – trust all of the drills we do in practice to translate to the game

How can we practice and institute the above philosophies?:

- 1) Drills Drills Drills: Kids cannot think about hitting during a game, they need to trust that the drills will translate to the games. As coaches do drills with the boys, continue to reinforce the 3 key fundamentals (proper starting hand placement, quiet with front foot, hips start the swing).
- 2) Tee work to show them where to hit the ball in relation to their body
- 3) Soft toss drills - instead of the traditional soft toss from the side, soft toss from out front of the player. Toss inside, middle, outside having kids make contact in the proper area (with relation to their body)
- 4) Teach kids how to take a pitch – while doing soft toss drills, fake a throw every now and again and see if kids start their hips. Incorporate this into live Batting Practice (i.e. throw a non-strike every now and again to make sure their hips are started)
- 5) Throw wiffle balls at the kids to show them its ok to be hit by a ball. In this drill, the proper way to get hit by a ball is to turn the body away and duck a bit so that the ball ‘rolls’ off the body.
- 6) Live batting practice – Most kids already hit the ball. Will start throwing the ball harder and mixing up speeds a bit for the more advanced kids. With that said, main emphasis in live BP will be how to approach an at-bat (pick up release point, deep breath before stepping into box, load as the pitcher loads, start bottom half of body as pitcher releases ball, make contact in the proper spot, etc.)
- 7) During Drills and/or Batting Practice, tell the kids to pull the ball. This should get their swings started earlier if they are trying to pull every pitch. Once a kid is making contact in a game consistently, then we can work on hitting the ball where it is pitched.

*Additional Drills to re-enforce some concepts above:*

Softtoss/Tee – Bat on Shoulder to start (teaches proper hand placement to start swing)

Softtoss /Tee – No front step while swinging (teaches quiet with front foot)

Softtoss – Fake throw (teaches to start hips before swing)

Softtoss a ball from behind the hitter (teaches getting hips through the swing)

Teach them the strike Zone