



Rotational Hitting

A faded, semi-transparent image of a baseball player in a red jersey and white pants, captured in the middle of a batting swing. The player is wearing a red helmet and is holding a wooden bat.

Breaking
it
Down

Sparky Parker

Breaking it Down

To all the coaches, parents and players that want to know what the best hitters in the game are really doing!



Edgar the Great

Taking a closer look

The purpose of this booklet is to simply help clarify and pass-on quality information when it comes to the elements of great rotational hitting mechanics, where the term came from, and what it means.

Rotational Hitting

Rotational hitting has been alive and well since the inception of the game, we just never really paid much attention to it nor did we bother worrying about labeling or defining the term. But, interestingly enough, it just happens to be what the very best hitters in the game did, and what the best are still doing. Great hitters use great mechanics, rotational mechanics.

In order to adequately talk about rotational hitting as a “hitting technique” we need to understand where the term came from, and how it materialized. One of the biggest and most confusing parts of this whole conflict surrounding rotational hitting is the term “rotational.” Rotational is a term that has been used forever in the baseball arena and is still being used on a regular basis today, but what does it really mean?

Rotational hitting is a hitting technique that was coined by Mike Epstein around 1999, give or take a few years. Mike wrote a book called Mike Epstein on Hitting that is based on his nine year professional career, endless hours of research and an endearing relationship that he had with the best hitter to ever step on the field, Ted Williams. The true beauty of Epstein’s book is the simple fact that he has given the everyday coach, like you and me, the tools and insight to

teach and understand what the very best hitters in the world are doing. And surprisingly enough, it is completely different than what I was ever taught. For the first time in my life someone said, “Would you like to know what Edgar, Bonds, Pujols, A-Rod and 95% of baseball’s Hall of Fame hitters do when they swing the bat?” Based on the principles from Ted Williams’s “Science of Hitting” Mike Epstein developed a teaching philosophy and technique that trained young players to duplicate those very movements. The elements and the movements of this technique were labeled “Rotational Hitting.”

When I hear coaches say, “We have been using rotational mechanics for years,” I often wonder what they mean when they use the term rotational. Are they truly teaching rotational mechanics or are they simply using the term rotational? For the most part it is the latter, but that is changing every day.

When you take the best hitter of all time, Ted Williams, nine year professional veteran from Berkeley, Mike Epstein, apply Newton’s second and third law of physics and add a teaching system and you will get “Rotational Hitting.”

The mechanics...

Defined by Williams and labeled by Epstein. Rotational mechanics are broken down into three simple parts; the movements of the hips (torque), getting the bat in the plane of the pitch and making contact with your hands inside the ball (Epstein, 2003). In essence, these are the primary

movements that the greatest hitters in the game all share and execute when they hit. You may have noticed that nothing was mentioned about the load, stride or hand position of the batter. Well, that is because it is all relative to the individual hitter and considered *style* rather than technique.

What the Epstein system fails to address however, is the most valuable aspect of teaching great hitting mechanics, **weight transfer**. **Weight transfer** is absolutely essential to the entire swing process and is the primary movement that sets the entire swing in motion. It is enormously important to fundamental hitting and without proper weight transfer hitters will never truly maximize their natural ability. Great hitters shift their weight!

The four key components that all great hitters share:

- Weight Transfer
- Hips Lead the Hands
- Leveling
- Ideal Impact



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As coaches, we have a huge advantage these days. Our ability to analyze the swing process of great hitters has never been so assessable and slowing down a video clip is more telling than anything you will ever experience. When you see player after player using the same techniques over and over again, it simply reinforces the notion that great hitters are all using the same mechanics. Hitting mechanics matter and understanding what the great hitters are doing will simply make you a better coach.

The challenge is that we are stuck in a rut when it comes to teaching quality hitting mechanics. For some reason, baseball and softball coaches feel that teaching a technique that is contrary to what the best players in the game are using is somehow beneficial to our players. Think about it, if you went to take golf lessons from a local golf professional he/she would be teaching you the exact same swing mechanics that they use and know to be true. They surely wouldn't teach you something that contradicts what they are doing, would they? What about basketball, tennis, soccer or even football?

Pick any other sport and look at what is being taught and you will see a clear and direct correlation between the mechanics that are being used at the highest level by the greatest players, and what is being taught to the young athletes that they are training; every sport that is except baseball. Somewhere along the way things have become distorted in the baseball world and mechanics that are being taught are significantly different than what the best players are really, truly using. Change is way over due!

Weight Transfer

Weight transfer is the forward motion that initiates the swing process. Great hitters have great weight transfer, no exception. The transfer of energy from the “back to the front” at the beginning of the swing process is so fundamentally important that it becomes paramount to the success of every player in the game.



When you look at hitters in the contact position, you will clearly see the evidence of weight transfer. The back foot becomes light and you can see the weight has been transferred to a strong front-side axis. This is what weight transfer looks like. If you are teaching your players to “sit,” “squish the bug,” or “kick” the can you may want to ask yourself why?



Weight is completely in the front axis, and the tip of the back toe is on the ground. It is also perfectly normal to see this back foot come completely off the ground.

Players that are taught to squish-the-bug are being taught improper mechanics and it will jeopardize the player's progress. Be a student of the game and make weight transfer your first priority.

The Hips

The hips are considered to be the single most definitive element when it comes to the power a batter generates in the swing, and is the primary source of bat speed and power. Epstein describes this movement that begins at heel drop as "torque" and the more "torque" you generate the greater power you will produce. It is the very same principle that pitchers, golfers and tennis players utilize when they are executing their swings. Ted Williams reiterates this notion when he wrote, as your hips come around, your hands just naturally will follow, just as in golf (Williams, 1970)



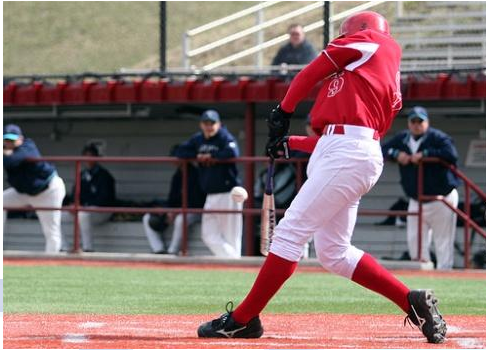
Bonds and Jr. generate incredible bat speed and power and it all stems from this principle, the hips lead the hands. Newton's second law states that **force = mass x acceleration**. The mass being the bat and the acceleration is the movement of the hips and the torque that is generated.

Leveling

What happens next seems to create another conflict between hitting coaches and instructors; matching the swing plane to the pitch plane. With rotational mechanics, the hips begin the process and pull the hands around the body. As this occurs the body tilts slightly back, the back shoulder drops and the front elbow works up and around a strong front side axis. All you need to do is look at pictures of hitters and you will clearly see, indeed, that is what great hitters are doing. The front elbow must come up and around your body and you must tilt or dip your back shoulder in order to get the barrel level to the flight of the ball. These concepts send the old-school coaches into frenzy and they fight it adamantly.

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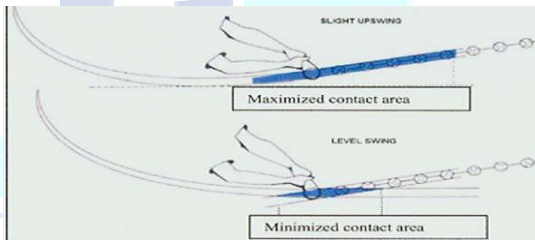
The reality of this notion is really quite simple, and if you take a really good look at what great hitters are actually doing you will see it before your very own eyes. Question is? Do you believe what you are seeing, or will you continue to be convinced of something that isn't really there.



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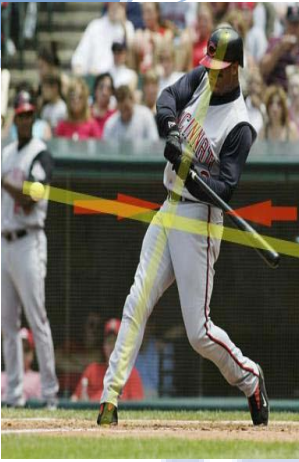


Ted Williams said the swing is not level and it's not down, but level to the ball working slightly up. When you look at the big leaguers you will see just what he was talking about.



Newton's Third Law states that forces always occur in equal and opposite pairs, and when you apply that theory to the hitter's swing you will see the following: The hips represent the acceleration, and as the front hip is pulled back the back hip moves forward around a fixed point (axis), which is established when the front heel drops to the ground. This is known as the hitter's axis and good pitchers do everything they can to keep hitters from swinging in their axis.

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The elbows are also working equal and opposite. In order to get the bat in the plane of the pitch the front elbow must work up and the back elbow stays tucked in close to the body at the rib cage. If the front elbow remains down it will keep the back elbow up, if the back elbow is up then the barrel will be up and off the plane of the ball. This is a huge point of contention with linear instructors across the country. A

linear coach wants players to throw their hands at the ball and move down to the path of the pitch. Basically, any coach that has ever told a player to throw their hands at the ball, keep the front shoulder and front elbow down, keep the back elbow up, and don't dip the back shoulder is teaching mechanics that are completely opposite of what great hitters are doing. Not to mention that it goes against the laws of physics.

If a coach is claiming to teach a combination of rotational and linear, I would really be interested in knowing what exactly they mean by it, and more importantly what the benefit is to the player? Rotational mechanics are interconnected and act as one complete motion that is sequenced together; you can't be linear and rotational at the same time. You either lead with the hips or you lead with your hands. Based on this movement your elbow will either go up and around your body or it will go down towards the ball. If players are taught to throw their hands at the ball they will have an extremely



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difficult time keeping their Hitters Box intact and struggle to make ideal impact. Players are either using rotational mechanics or linear, not both.

It is the hitter's ability to get the bat into the plane of the pitch that separates them from the rest of the pack. Rotational hitters not only hit with more power, but they can match the plane of any given pitch with far more consistency and with the same powerful force. Granted, if you don't get the bat in the path of the pitch you won't hit the ball, but that lies true for any hitter regardless of technique they are using.

One of my favorite comments I hear is when coaches, parents or players tell me that if they see a rotational hitter they will throw them certain pitches; like low and away or up and in for example. In reality, a rotational hitter is going to be able to adjust to any pitch in the strike zone in a fraction of a second and will handle any pitch in the strike zone far better than a linear hitter ever will. A linear hitter has one swing for every pitch, unlike a rotational hitter that has a swing for every pitch.

Why do you think professional players swing the way they do? Is it because they are superior athletes or is it because they are using superior mechanics? Too many coaches allow their ego and pride get in the way, and ironically, it comes at the expense of the players they are training, teaching and educating!

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"The very best coaches are great students; humble enough to recognize that there is always something to learn, and confident enough to learn it." – Sparky Parker



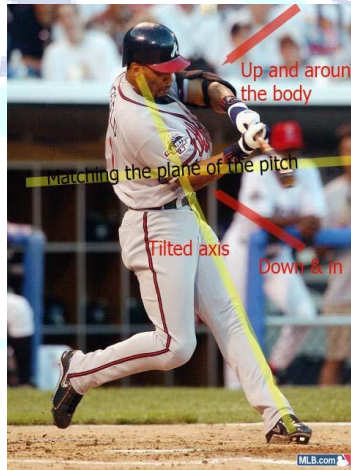
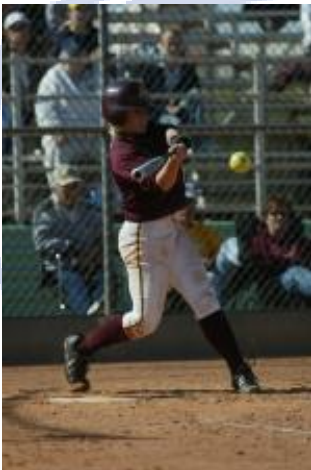
Every pitch has its own unique path to the plate and a hitter's ability to get the bat into that path of the ball is what makes them so great! The higher the pitch the flatter the bat will be, the lower the pitch the steeper the bat path, and everywhere in between.

In softball, I get a lot of questions about the rise ball or pitch up in the zone and, my response is always the same. If the player is flattened out and in the path of the pitch they will knock it to Georgia! If they drop the barrel below the path they won't touch it. Sounds simple enough? Well, It is!

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It is also fair to say that a good rise ball is not thrown for a strike and climbs up out of the zone. Chasing a pitch out of the zone is not a mechanical breakdown, it's a mental one. Don't get sucked in to an irrational conversation when it comes to the rise ball.

Notice the gal on lower left hand side; this is a great example of a flattened out swing on the pitch that is up in the zone. She gets her bat in the path of the ball the same way Sheffield does on a similar pitch that is up in the zone; same exact principles, same exact game, same mechanics.



When we talk about hitting, we are talking hitting; not baseball v softball, but hitting.



Ideal Impact

Another misused and misunderstood term used in the coaching realm is “hands inside the ball.” The problem is that it has no conceptual meaning to players, and it is extremely difficult for coaches to adequately explain. A much better teaching technique and one that can be internalized by the players is the term “Ideal Impact” and the “Hitters Box.”

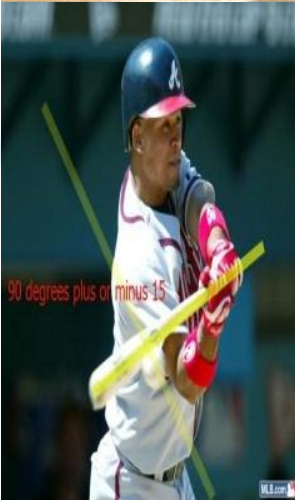
A hitter’s power is contingent upon two things, providing they are in the plane of the pitch of course; the torque that is generated from the hips, and the batter’s ability to make Ideal Impact. In order to understand this concept we need to look back to Ted Williams. Williams refers to deal impact zone and he describes it as being 90 degrees to the ball (Williams, 1970). He also states that about 15 degrees either side of your true ideal contact spot is tolerable. Outside of that and you lose a significant amount of energy that that was generated prior. Let’s take a look! Since every pitch has its own path to the plate, then it is fair to say that every pitch will have a different ideal impact zone.



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Depending upon the location of the pitch will determine where the hands need to be at impact. A pitch that is inside will be out in front of your front thigh. An outside pitch needs to get much deeper into the body and your ideal impact zone will be off your back hip and clearly the greatest adjustment for young hitters. Wait, wait, wait and let the ball get deeper into the body!



Hitters that throw their hands at the ball will struggle to get them inside the ball and the bat 90 degrees at impact, Ideal Impact. The only way you can accomplish this is by rotating the hands around the body with the Hitters Box intact. In order to do that, you must work your front elbow up. If your front elbow needs to go up and around the body you have to tilt and dip that back shoulder. Tilting and rotation is all triggered by the torque that the hips

are generating that starts at heel drop....Whew! That's a mouth full. But, you can see how the mechanics are all interconnected with one another. Leave one of the elements out of the swing and you end up with an extremely frustrated and a sub-par hitter.

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The picture of Manny is a perfect example of what Ted Williams describes as the ideal impact zone. Notice the axis, the tilt, the elbows and the contact. See how he is rotating to the ball, no wrist-roll whatsoever. The wrists should **never roll** until after the hitter has reached their power V which occurs shortly after contact. If you throw your hands your wrists will roll.



From Ideal Impact you will see extension, or the long part of the swing to the Power V. Ken Griffey has a famous Power V, notice the wrists don't roll.

At the beginning of the booklet, I mentioned a player's style versus technique. Style is defined by how a player holds their bat, how they load and how they stride. Every player has an internal timing mechanism that helps generate initial momentum, regardless of the technique being taught, these remain true and constant. The difference is when they go to heel drop. At heel drop, a rotational hitter will lock out, torque the hips, tilt, and rotate around the body with the Hitters Box intact. As they are rotating around the body the front elbow moves up and around the body while the bottom elbow stays tucked into the body guiding the bat to Ideal impact. At Ideal Impact, snap to the V and watch with amazement. It truly is a great gift to give your players.

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The rotational swing is natural motion and if we can educate players to understand what they are doing at the plate they will be far more successful hitters.

If biker-guy can somehow figure out great hitting mechanics in a waffle-ball game, with little to no instruction, than the odds are definitely in your favor when it comes to teaching your own players to use them.



Some coaches will never get it, but that doesn't have to be you.

If you can see it, you need to teach it!



What is Next?

The next step is easy; start teaching it! The ParkerTraining System Training Manual will put you on an ideal path to teaching great hitting mechanics. College teams, high school teams, select programs down to little league teams and yes, boys and girls. You have a unique opportunity to learn what took me a life-time to put together and you are literally minutes away. See what players and coaches are saying.

Chamberlain Sets Home Run Mark In Split with Lutes



PARKLAND, Wash. Chelsey Chamberlain (Fr., Grants Pass, Ore., pictured) hit a pair of home runs, breaking the Pacific single season record to lead the Boxers to a doubleheader split with Pacific Lutheran Sunday in Northwest Conference softball action at the PLU Field.

Chamberlain hit both of her blasts in the opening game, pacing Pacific to a 7-5 victory. With the shots, she surpassed the former record of six set last year by teammate Brooke Toy (So., Drain, Ore.).

Chelsey Chamberlain threw a two-hitter and hit a first inning home run, leading Pacific to a 5-0 victory over Concordia (Ore.) at the Southern Oregon Tournament

Chamberlain, making in her first start in the circle for the No. 20 ranked Boxers (4-2), allowed single hits in the second and fifth while striking out eight and walking just two, leading Pacific to their first shutout of the season.

If the pitching performance wasn't enough, it was Chamberlain who got the Boxers' five-run first inning going, hitting a two-run shot just three batters into the contest. Chamberlain, making in her first start in the circle for the No. 20 ranked Boxers (4-2), allowed single hits in the second and fifth while striking out eight and walking just two, leading Pacific to their first shutout of the season.

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Sparky,

Thank you for this wonderful hitting style! I have hit two bombs already with in the 3 games that I have played and I have been hitting the ball very hard. I just wanted to tell you that this hitting style is great and going to the plate with a plan really helps.

Hope to see you soon

Chels



Sparky,

Just a quick note to let you know that we hit our 30th home run of the year (in 26 games) last weekend. We hit 23 for the entire year last year. So, production is definitely up!!

Thank you, Tim



SALEM, Ore. – Junior Rachel Steigleman (Eugene, Ore.) was voted as the third Warrior "FAN"-atic Player of the Month thanks to her performance during the month of February, as announced earlier today by

Corban's Sports Information Office.

The 5-foot-6 Steigleman received 50% of the votes in last month's poll and becomes the second straight member of her family, joining younger sister Katie, to be honor by the Warrior faithful.

In 14 games during the month of February, Steigleman registered a batting average of .366 that included 15 hits in 41 at-bats. The third-year shortstop also scored nine runs and drove in nine RBI. Steigleman's slugging percentage (.610) and on-base percentage (.480) were the highest among everyday position players, while she led the team with two home runs.

Steigleman also led the team in total bases with 25, while registering two doubles and one triple to go along with her two round-trippers. Along with her hitting totals, Steigleman also drew a team-high nine walks to go along with an 80% success rate in stolen bases (4-out-of-5).

So far this season, Steigleman is one of seven Warriors that are hitting higher than .300 thanks to 25 hits in 80 at-bats. The junior has scored 20 runs and drive in 15 RBI, while drawing 13 walks and being one of only three Warriors to start all 26 games.



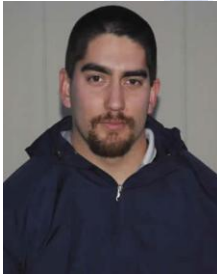
Franke Foils 'Yotes' Victory With Game-Winning Home Run to Help Warriors Earn Split

SALEM, Ore. – Junior

Rebecca Franke hit a game-winning three-run home run in Game #1, as Corban's softball

team earned a split with the nationally-ranked 'Yotes of The College of Idaho, 3-2 & 3-5, Saturday afternoon at Warrior Field.

Sparky,



The girls are continuing to improve offensively. We aren't hitting like Tim's team (they pretty much put on a free clinic for us when we played them last month), but we are swinging the bats better and better. We are 18 games into our season, and we've got 8 kids hitting over .300 (compared to 3 last season). The new players are hitting better than they ever have, and our

returners are posting better numbers than they ever have. The hard part for me is figuring out how to get them all in the lineup. As a team, we are on pace to nearly double our homerun total from last year, and our batting average, slugging percentage, and on base percentage are on pace to be the best in school history. By no means are we there yet, but the improvement on both the physical and the mental side is noticeable. Knowledge is power. I'm reminded of that with every extra base hit, and every ball that sails over our scoreboard.

Thanks,

[Nathan](#)

Sparky,

Just wanted to say thank you and give you a quick update. We have played two games and had one called by darkness in the bottom of the fifth.

We have pounded out 6 homeruns and have scored 40 runs in only those 2.5 games. We are a top enrollment school in Michigan and play Class A ball which is the top level for schools in Michigan, the competition is not weak but rather pretty good.

I want to say thank you, our players are getting it and you have made me a better hitting instructor. I am shocked by our success, I knew we had talent, but this kind of run production was not really expected.

Thanks again Sparky,

Rob Bucher
[Portage Northern Hitting Instructor](#)

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Brittany

Sparky! I just wanted to give you an update on how I'm doing. Last week was our first week of league games for college, we played eight games. I had 2 homeruns, one triple, 3 doubles, 7 singles, 9 RBI's, 3 BB's, and 1 HBP. My batting average was .614 for the week and my slugging percentage is crazy. I started out kind of slow, but my batting average is up to .372 for the whole season, and still rising!

Thanks so much for all of your help! I'll keep you posted on the rest of the season!



Hey Sparky,

Matt had a good day at Safeco last Friday. He carried the offense, going 2 for 3 with 2 doubles and 3 rbi's. Both of them looked like they would go out.

His first one bounced on the warning track in right field - the pictures are right after contact, you can see him tracking the ball to right field. His second one hit high on the wall down the left field line - it was just short of going over. It was a great season and Matt's swing is really coming for him now...

You're a great instructor and I can't thank you enough.

All the best,
Phil

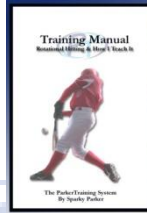
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IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU!

"The ParkerTraining System"

TRAINING MANUAL

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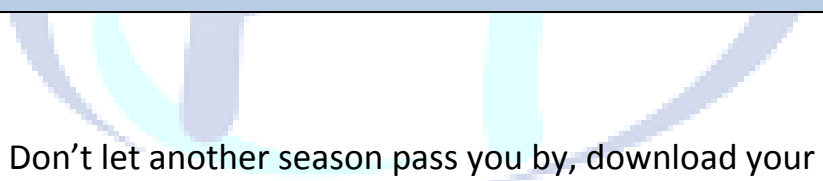
Personal Instructional Video Segment from Coach Parker Included!

Fifty Pages Packed with a Lifetime of Knowledge!

The ParkerTraining System Manual is a step-by-step instructional break down of how to teach great rotational hitting mechanics. A complete training process jammed pack with illustrations and specific training instructions every step of the way. Easy to understand, easy to implement and proven over and over again; ideal for every player at every level.

The ParkerTraining System uses a simplistic scaffolding approach that is specifically designed to mimic the exact movements of the best hitters to ever play the game. Targeted drills are designed to teach players through a process of conceptualized training where players learn by *simulation* and learn by *feel*. Put players in the exact same positions and teach them the mechanics that are being utilized by the best players in the game.

Coach, I very much like the new training manual. It's a big jump over the original one and loaded with absolutely great info and a real simple teaching method. I like the systematic approach (scaffolding) that really, really works very hard to groove the swing and teach the body what a good swing feels like before you ever introduce a baseball into the equation. I think that your approach will work wonders for the 9-10 year old teams in our organization (we have 9-14 year old teams. I coach the 13's but am also vp of our organization). It can really set a nice foundation that those little guys can use for their entire baseball lives. There's so much joy for a coach when a young player realizes a flaw in their own swing before you even have a chance to say anything! Once they learn to self correct they take a huge step. Your teaching method will enable them to get to that point quickly. Brian



Don't let another season pass you by, download your training manual today!

When Hitting Mechanics Matter

Sparky Parker