

Hitting: A Mental Game within the Game

Good hitters possess a natural ability to swing the bat; great hitters use their natural abilities to the utmost by thinking positive before, during, and after their time at bat.

Here are some “mental” batting tips to consider in aiding the good hitter.

IN THE HOLE MENTALITY: This occurs when the hitter is the third one up in the inning. Start preparing on your way in from the field. Your main objective is to relax completely. Deliberately tighten and relax certain muscles in your body- fist, wrists, forearms, biceps, thighs, calves, and back and chest muscles. Take two or three deep breaths and exhales slowly helps a person relax.

ON DECK MENTALITY: This is the start of the hitters concentration period, where talking with others is avoided unless talking about the pitcher. The player takes mental batting practice against each pitch thrown by the pitcher concentrating on watching the ball and meeting it out in front of the plate. Be mentally viewing a hit on each swing, the batter builds up confidence before stepping into the batters’ box.

GREEN LIGHT MENTALITY: Be thinking “hit every pitch”. As the pitcher reaches the delivery point, the batter begins forward movement of hips and hands. For a fraction of a second after the delivery, the batters’ mind thinks- complete the swing (Green Light), or hold up (Red Lights). While this may seem difficult, it simply tells the batter to approach each pitch with the idea of hitting it. Don’t think green light in practice and save red light for games. Use your mind to help your confidence by thinking green light all of the time.

PERFECT PITCH MENTALITY: When the count is 2-0, or 3-1, the advantage is highly in favor of the batter. The pitcher wants and needs to throw a strike; the batter should expect a strike and think green light all the way. Occasionally the batter looks for the first pitch to be perfect- thinking the pitcher always wants to get ahead of the count; thus, the batter can be thinking green light again.

TWO STRIKE MENTALITY: The batter uses extra concentration when she is one strike away from being retired. Thus the green light mentality really takes over even to the point of swinging at pitches just outside the strike zone. On a close corner pitch, the umpires generally give the advantage to the pitcher. Therefore, by guarding the plate and getting the bat on the ball the batter stays alive hoping the pitcher will make a mistake on the next pitch. With two strikes the big swing is forgotten; rather the batter chokes up on the bat and takes a shorter stride when swing the bat. A great hitter never thinks, “Don’t strike out”; instead she thinks, “Make contact somehow”. This positive attitude will cut down on strikeouts and raise batting averages!