

8K Front Corner and Back Corner Pitches

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The purpose of this document is to define and define the use of front corner, back corner and center cut pitches. I like to use these terms in both pitching and hitting strategies. Plus, these terms help define efficient and effective practice sessions. The catcher is on the back side and the pitcher is on the front side of home plate. The front corners are the two corners on the front of home plate. The back corners are the three corners on the back of home plate. A front corner pitch just catches a front corner without catching or crossing inside a back corner. A back corner pitch just catches a back corner without catching a front corner. For example: front corner pitches are moving away from the center of the plate and back corner pitches are moving toward the center of the plate. Center-cut pitches come close to the center of the plate. These definitions are used for framing the pitch and strike zone control.

Lateral Movement is the Cause

All pitches move laterally or side to side. Some move more than others. Some of that movement is apparent and some is real. Real movement is caused by the ball's spin, and apparent movement is caused by the pitcher's release point. An example of apparent movement: to the (right handed) batter a left hander's pitch appears to move from right to left, and a right hander's pitch appears to move from left to right. Real movement example: inside back corner strikes from a pitcher from the opposite side (lefty against righty or righty against lefty). A pitcher either pulls from the outside of the ball with a Figure 8 motion or pushes from the inside of the ball with a Windmill motion. So, from the batter's viewpoint (which is a triangle between the release point, the batter's eye, and the path of the pitch) a pitch that doesn't move or appear to move laterally is probably impossible. All pitches move laterally or side to side.

Catching Corners

Lateral movement catches corners. For example: A pitch type that has lateral movement will catch the back corner when thrown on one side of the plate and the front corner when thrown on the other side of the plate. Also, generally the error patterns will be to the inside of the arc of movement. That means if you aim to catch a front corner and miss your target, your miss will probably be outside the strike zone or at worst be outside the center of the plate. When you want to throw a strike, aiming for a back corner will give you a larger margin of error before the umpire will call a ball. I believe most umpires like to call strikes that look like strikes to everybody watching the game. This is what framing is all about.

Framing to Get inside the Arc

Because of the arc, framing and lateral movement go together. It is easier to see a pitch moving toward us; and because the pitch is moving toward the center of the plate, it is easy to frame back corner pitches. With framing the catcher is inside the arc and the pitch looks better to everyone but the batter. When pitches are moving away from center and catching a corner, more extreme framing by the catcher is required to make

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the pitch look like a strike to everybody watching the game (except the batter). Framing can be done boldly or subtly, and I like to use both methods. Framing is the catcher with his (his/her) feet wide apart just shifting his target including his body to cover the corner. Without framing the catcher is outside the arc of the pitch movement. On back corner pitches the catcher is already inside the arc. With framing the catcher is inside the arc and the pitch looks better to everyone but the batter. Putting your head inside the arc is also important in hitting.

Batter's Plate Coverage Strategies

Batter's also like to get their eyes inside the arc where the ball is easier to see. But, with two strikes that may not be an option. With two strikes and for several reasons like framing the batter must cover a much larger strike zone. With less than two strikes the batter can just look for pitches coming toward the center of the plate. In other words he can look for back corner pitches and center-cut pitches coming in from both sides. If the pitcher only moves the ball one way laterally (only leans back and pushes on the inside of the ball or only leans forward and pulls from the outside) then the batter can get his eyes inside a very narrow zone. He can look good on those pitches, knowing where they will go, framing his body well to those pitches, making the pitcher pitch, and setting the pitcher up to give him more front corner pitches with two strikes. With two strikes, the batter should set up or frame his body to put his head inside the arc on all the strikes. However, with two strikes batters are susceptible to back corner pitches. So, look good on back corner pitches before two strikes, and the pitchers will really have to pitch. You learn this in practice.

Practice vs. Game "Corner" Strategies

Practice getting your eyes inside the arc, where the ball is easier to see. I design the practices for a pitching and hitting competition that is efficient and effective in working on the things I have mentioned here. Now that we have defined back and front corner pitches, we can define practice rules that teach both hitting and pitching for the games. Practice pitching and hitting one-on-one with the pitcher or catcher calling balls and strikes, and the hitter or catcher calling hits or outs. Simply say front corner pitches are not strikes until the two strike count. This will encourage a lot of practice controlling (getting inside) the arc both hitting and pitching. With their head inside the arc, both batters and pitchers will control the strike zone.

Center-cut Pitches

A good example of getting inside the arc: hitting center-cut pitches. You want to hit against the spin with your eyes close to the ball. In other words we want our eyes inside the arc where they are close to the ball. Besides being easier to see, we want them close to the ball because we want a short (quicker and more powerful) stroke. With a quicker and more powerful stroke we can wait on the pitch longer to see it better. The way we should hit pitches depends on where they start (left or right handed pitcher, high or low release points) and which direction they are moving (pulling or pushing propulsion). In other words, soon after it leaves the pitchers hand we shape our body to hit the ball. At that time (even though you do not know its speed or where

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it will end up) we know the release point (where it starts) and which direction it is moving (the spin). Center-cut pitches get to the center by moving up or down and left or right. They are the only pitches you hit over the plate, but not necessarily over the center of the plate, and because of the spin almost never on the back of the ball. The only difference between center-cut pitches and front or back corner pitches is you contact the latter outside the plate.

No Sidearm

Whether hitting or pitching, nothing I have said in this article applies to sidearm or arm-swing and wrist flip techniques. Sidearm pitchers only have one release point and sidearm batters cannot get their head inside the arc or close to the ball. Sidearm does not take advantage of gravity. They go around the corner instead of getting the ball or bat moving down before releasing it out in the desired direction of hit or throw. When pitching for example: in both the Figure 8 and Windmill deliveries the energy is expended in a down motion then the smaller muscles in the arm and hand relax so the ball can whip out of the hand. The spin is caused by the hand in the down motion. Batting is very similar. As I said in other documents, we “throw” the bat at the ball. Like our arm in pitching, the twirling or pivoting of the bat allows us to begin the throw in one direction and have that motion result in a motion out away from the body towards a target. The bat pivots in a Tomahawk Swing and it twirls in a Golf Swing. The top hand is dominant in a Tomahawk Swing and the bottom hand is dominant in a Gold Swing. In the Hook Swing the dominant hand depends on the height or movement of the pitch. In all these swings though, we begin by throwing the “butt end” of the bat down and at the ball. In sidearm, there is no twirl or pivot, no way to take advantage of gravity, and no way to hit either front corner or back corner pitches.

Summary: Front and Back Corner Pitches

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