

## Turning for Pitching and Hitting Copyright Robert D. Pace 4/1/2020

The purpose of this document is to define turning and twisting for pitching and hitting. Pitching Hitting and Throwing are very much related. I first learned this in 1966 from my baseball coach at the University of Idaho. From Lewiston, he had been a Triple A Baseball Player the year before. He told me to throw the bat at the ball and it really helped. That same year I started playing Fastpitch and learned the same thing from a Hall of Fame fastpitch player from Bonners Ferry, only he described it as keeping my shoulder in. This document will describe it a little differently, first by showing when to use turning and twisting while throwing, and hitting. Then, by showing how to turn or twist, which is the same for both pitching and hitting.

### My approach to hitting introduces twisting and turning

I will start with an approach to hitting I have been using since that time. The first and most important thing we see about a pitch is where it starts, because that determines how we set up to throw the bat with the big muscles in our lower body, keeping our shoulder in. That setup should work using the following approach.

### Don't ever think about balls and strikes

Besides knowing the count, I do not worry about balls or strikes. I set up to hit the ball hard and the only decision I make is to stop the swing, and that never happens over the plate. I'm hitting until I can't hit it hard from my setup. So, if I ever have a strike called on me, it will be a pitch just barely catching the corner moving away. I want to challenge the pitcher to throw that pitch. Either corner, great pitcher's pitches, and they get behind trying them. I do this almost all the time until I want to zone a pitch like hitting behind the runner or the third baseman gives me a hole for an easy double down the line. Unless the umpire makes a huge mistake, I never get a strike called with two strikes.

### Hitting with less than two strikes

Until I get two strikes, most of the time I look for balls breaking toward the middle of the plate. If it starts on the inside, I look for it to break toward the plate. If it starts on the outside, I look for it to break toward the plate. Inside, I set up to hit against the spin, I set up to hit on the inside of the ball. Outside, I set up to hit on the outside of the ball. The ball jumps off the bat when we hit against the spin.

### Inside pitches with less than two strikes

With less than two strikes we hit the inside of the ball with either an "up" or a "down" move off the front foot depending on whether a fly ball will help. Unless we want to hit a fly, we will be going down on that front foot, turning down from the heel to the little toe on that front foot. The quicker we go down the more powerful the turn and the more powerful the hit. We will be trying to hit it at either the third baseman's or the shortstop's left foot, but since we will be hitting on the inside of the ball it will go by them straight out to the fielder. If we miss it a little bit, we may hit either a blooper or a high hopper that may still may be a hit. With this approach, we can go all year without hitting a fly ball. Using gravity, it is extremely powerful. It is the same swing we use when hitting infield. Going down hands are below the ball and going up hands are above the ball. Both ways, the ball is hit close to the eyes and not over the plate. Hitting through the infield, we will never hit a ball to the baseman. Hitting easy grounders

to the infielders because we are trying to hit the gaps in the outfield is a hard habit to break, but well worth it. When someone hits one of those, we know what they were trying to do.

#### Outside pitches with less than two strikes

Outside pitches before two strikes are always made moving up, either off the back or front foot, and always on the outside of the ball, swinging toward first or second baseman's right feet. The more outside the shorter the swing. If a fly ball is in order, go up over their head.

#### Hitting with two strikes

Things are different with two strikes. We can't take a strike and it helps to hit a foul ball, so the field gets bigger. The object is to make the pitcher pitch. It doesn't take long before he has to bring it.

#### With two strikes, set up to hit everything on the outside of the ball

With two strikes I set up to hit on the outside of the ball. We hit on the outside of the ball always with an "up" move-turn. With two strikes we will be moving up off the back or front foot. That up move is also a hip turn, just like a down move is also a hip turn. When we twist, we hit or throw with the upper body with the hips locked and level. With two strikes we attack the outside of the ball moving up from heel to inside of the toe, just like we are jumping in basketball. That move turns the hips and that wave moves all through the body to the bat, throwing the bat unless we decide we can't hit it hard, which comes way later. Because the last thing that happens is the bat moving, change-ups are easy to hit with this throwing method. If we get fooled on a change, our bat is still back and the up move set us up to twist (extremely open or closed, see below). With two strikes, ready to move up, ready to hit on the outside of the ball, the only decision is which foot to hit from and that decision can be made very early.

#### Hitting with a twist, with two strikes

Two strike count is where hitting with a twist becomes important. When we hit or pitch with a twist, we are extremely open or closed to the ball. For example, we can hit a ball right out of the catcher's mitt with our head right on the ball. That would be extremely open. Another example would be an inside pitch breaking toward the plate that we do not want the umpire to have a chance to call, and we can hit hard. We twist to hit it foul off the inside of the ball. That would be closed. It can then curve fair right down the line for a double. In that case we hit any pitch we can hit hard with a twist, not worrying about hitting it fair.

Again, we don't worry about strikes, just look for anything we can hit hard. Because we never hit a ball over the plate, we never stop a swing over the plate.

## The Eyes

We turn or twist so that the ball or bat stays close to the eyes for control, contact, short swing, and speed.

## My Approach to Pitching

My approach to pitching focuses on hitting the top or bottom of the strike zone for strikes, so the ball appears to break late. For balls, the focus is above or below the top or bottom of the strike zone, but seeming to pass the ball through the middle of the strike zone to get there. The strike zone is a 15-

sided volume sitting over the plate, not moving with the batter no matter where he stands or goes. Many umpires do not know this, so we have to figure out where they place their two-dimensional (4 sided) zones, and whether they move with the batter.

The main aspect of my approach is to make the ball appear to break late. To do this, we throw the high strikes off the top of the ball and the low strikes off the bottom of the ball. (We can also periodically twist to throw off the side of the ball from behind the batter or while stepping away from the batter.)

I emphasize turning when pitching because more spin and speed is generated from the turn than from the twist.

When we turn, there is so much spin that all we have to do to make the ball go up or down is whip the ball off one side of the index finger or the other. Moving the thumb may help make that happen, but is not required. (Change ups come off the bottom of the finger or thumb, while reversing things: throwing off the bottom of the ball while moving up or off the top of the ball while turning down.)

Like shooting, the miss pattern is very important. That pattern is a function of which side of the ball from which the pitch comes, down from the top, up from the bottom, and to the side from the opposite side. That means from the top of the ball we are aiming to the top middle of the strike zone, but if we miss we will miss down right or down left depending on which way we finished turning (see turning both ways, clockwise and counter).

Knowing our miss pattern, we can keep the ball out of the middle of the plate. Because of the miss pattern, and because a rise down the middle is a little more dangerous than a drop down the middle, we want to emphasize low rises down the middle to get strikes, and outside drops and changes before we need strikes, to set up those low rises at the bottom of the strike zone.

## Twisting when throwing

Whether hitting or throwing, twisting is used when we are on the move. Pitching fastpitch we see it a lot now days and no one believes the speeds the guns showed when pitchers had to keep both feet on the rubber. They had to turn to generate speed. We've had radar guns for a long time, and accurate.

### There is a place for Twisting when throwing

Every position on the field has to know how to throw the ball with a twist. Catchers do it all day long, throwing the ball back to the pitcher off the side of the ball with both feet open to the pitcher. Pitchers have to use it to throw someone out at first. Many pitchers have trouble with this because they had been stepping to their target and turning when pitching, and twisting forces them to step away from the target. Outfielders throwing on the run have to twist. Especially running to make a throw to home plate that bounces straight. To do that they have to close it up and throw over their front leg. Third basemen charging a bunt. Shortstops and second basemen turning a double play. Everyone in a rundown, staying open to show ball. Catchers preparing to throw either to second or first, step to the second baseman, or step to the shortstop when going to either third or second, avoiding the batter. Pitchers who normally step straight, can step behind a batter and twist it to the outside corner.

## Turning when throwing, like a good golf swing its faster

Like the extra power we get from a good golf swing, turning produces more power from the larger muscles of the lower body. When we throw with a turn, we throw with a release off either the top or bottom of the ball. Get to the top of the ball with an up-turn. Get to the bottom of the ball with a down-turn. Like hitting, keep the shoulder in and throw the arm with the lower body, as opposed to throwing the ball with the arm. When turning, the point of turning it to whip your arm with your lower body. That is done with a turn one way to get the arm moving and the opposite way to whip the arm. We can either start with a clockwise turn and finish with a counterclockwise turn or start with a counterclockwise turn and finish clockwise. Finishing with a clockwise turn makes the ball move clockwise and vice versa starting with a clockwise turn makes the ball move counter. By the way, as a hitter, picking up these first turns really helps is setting up for a pitch.

## Summary: Turning for Pitching and Hitting

The purpose of this document is to define turning and twisting for pitching and hitting. Pitching Hitting and Throwing are very much related. Throwing the bat at the ball or keeping the shoulder in are other ways to describe turning. This document described it a little differently by showing when to use turning or twisting while pitching or hitting. Then, by showing how to turn or twist, which is the same for both pitching and hitting.