

Patience Vital When You Step To Plate In Contests

Continued From Page 6

20th century.

Practical Instruction To Help Teach Discipline

1. Learn your pitch. Every drill requires the players to swing at strikes. Every toss in a soft toss drill must be thigh high over the plate. Players must learn to make a good move at pitches right in the middle of the strike zone. Use soft toss drills to find where you hit the ball the best in the vertical strike zone (up or down).

2. Get a good pitch. In batting practice, hitters must have strike zone responsibility. If they are hitting fast balls, they must be getting pitches to pull and taking the outside pitch. If they are working on going to the opposite field, they need to take the inside fastball. Hit the pitch you are looking for and take pitches off location.

3. Hammer the hanger. To learn to hit the breaking ball, hitters must recognize a hittable curveball and take the tough pitch. Hammer the hanger, take the breaker.

The hanger starts off the plate and finishes in the middle. The breaker starts in the middle of the plate and breaks off the plate.

The hittable breaking ball must start above the release point of the hand of the pitchers.

If the pitch starts above his hand and off the plate, move through the pitch and hammer it when it finishes in the middle.

4. Batting practice with counts. In batting practice, use simulated counts to force hitters to learn strike zone discipline. For example, have a hitter take rounds of five pitches with a 2-0 count. He should swing at pitches in the zone he wants and take borderline pitches.

It may take 8 to 10 pitches to get the five he wants, but that is the goal of a disciplined hitter. Handle a good pitch in your hole when it shows up.

5. Hit the right pitch. In batting practice, mix fastballs and curveballs and demand the hitter swing at only at the pitch he tells you he is looking for.

As an example, the hitter must

take a fastball when he is sitting on the curveball.

6. Tough outs. In batting practice, stage a two-strike drill. The goal is to win three pitches by taking balls out of the zone, fouling pitches off, and letting the ball get as deep as possible toward the hitter before he swings. The hitter should get jammed often. In a round of five 0-2 pitches, see how many the hitter can "win."

7. Use the sweet spot. In tee work, the hitter should explore the geometry of the game. It should be evident to the hitter that the four to six-inch sweet spot on the metal bat cannot cover the inside and outside corner simultaneously. It is even more critical when using a wood-bat with a two-inch sweet spot. The hitter should work at both corners so he begins to understand that when he is looking inside, he cannot handle the outside pitch. When he is working away, he has to take the inside pitch.

8. Demand execution. In the execution rounds (bunting, slashes, hit-and-runs), demand strike zone discipline and practice performance. Shrink the zone and bunt strikes. Bunt the ball to the correct side of the diamond. Avoid swinging and missing during a hit-and-run.

9. Five means intensity. Do all your drills in batting practice with rounds of five swings.

The hitter should be able to focus and monitor his own performance. Beyond five swings in the round, the hitter loses intensity. Coaches and the on-deck hitters waiting also have a chance to become distracted.

10. Cage work without coaches. Stage game situations and ball strike counts in your cage drills. For example, have a 3-1 drill and demand your throwers mix in 50% curve balls.

The hitter should sit on the fastball and take the spinner.

Even if the breaker is a hanger, the hitter should not swing at the pitch.

Remember that the drill is about strike zone discipline and not how many swings a hitter can get in a short period.