Swing Mechanics 101 ©
April 29, 2011 – Art Eversole

This article was published in a May 2011 article in Senior Softball magazine entitled "Five Key Secrets to Better Hitting."

What makes the game of slo-pitch softball so much fun for all ages and skill level is that nearly anyone can swing a softball bat at a slow pitch and get a base hit regardless of how poor the batting technique. However, if you really want to excel at hitting in slo-pitch softball, the proper mechanics of swinging a softball bat are essential and need to be learned.

Here are five fundamental hitting tips to consider when building your slo-pitch softball swing:

1. Make certain that you lead with your hands getting the bat out in front of your body into the hitting zone with the knob pointing at the pitched ball. You should then let go with the top hand after contact is made with the ball. Finish your swing with a follow-through using only the lead arm and bottom hand on the bat.
2. Good softball hitters have mastered the physical skill of flexing the leading forearm from a slight bend to almost completely straight as they lag the bat into hitting position and then executing a quick wrist-snap precisely when bat meets ball thereby creating power.
3. Power is generated from the synergy that comes from the combination of your lower body rotation and then fast hands through the hitting area. When snapping your wrists at the ball always initiate the snap with your bottom hand on the bat (not the top hand) with a turning under action that will "flip" the bat over--- the bat-knob should now be facing your body after the flip.
4. The quicker the bat gets across the plate into the hitting zone the harder and further the ball will travel with the appropriate spin. Under

spin makes the ball carry further than a direct hit into the ball or a top-spin strike. Strike the ball just below the imaginary equator of the softball to produce the proper under-spinning action.

5. Power needed to drive a ball over the 300' fence is not just a function of body size or arm strength as some would still like to believe. Power is not strength! Power is accomplished by generating enough bat speed that creates a large Force = Mass times Acceleration and then Power = [work/time] = ((the force × distance traveled)/over time). These formulas translate into the quicker or faster the bat is accelerating from the start of your swing to contact, the greater the Power.

Let me discuss just exactly what I mean when using the term "bat-lag". Bat-lag is the situation the batter creates where the bat is actually lagging behind where the hands are as you bring your swing into the hitting zone in front of your body. The bat-lag technique is used by all
great hitters because it allows a rapid movement of the bat head to the ball creating a "snap" or "bat-flip" motion at the very last moment. As the wrists release, the barrel of the bat has to physically catch up to where your hands are positioned creating more bat speed for longer fly's and harder hits through the infield. Without bat-lag your swing will not be able to create a snap with the wrists resulting in a slow sweeping action with much reduced bat speed.

Try to think of the bat-lag mechanic as analogous to shaking out a dusty entry-way rug off the front porch on some sunny Sunday morning. You will naturally swing the rug with both hands up over and behind your head with your hands only getting about face high and then you'll make a quick downward motion with both hands while holding on to the end of the rug

that moves to about waist high. Note that the rug has to travel much further than your hands have to move and this physical law means the rug has to travel faster! Forcing the rug to catch up to your hands will create that all too familiar “snapping” sound. Bat-lag will do a similar thing as the bat has to catch-up to your hand position while creating more bat speed at impact with the softball.

A good softball swing should be a concentrated effort to move the bat quickly to the ball, followed by a long and smooth deceleration around your body for your follow-through. See the slide presentation attached to this column to see a great swing demonstrated by legendary power hitter, Brett Kreuger of Puyallup, WA, known as “Kreugs” to his teammates.