Stop Bat Casting ©
Winter 2014 – Art Eversole

This article was published December 2014 in Senior Softball magazine in an article entitled "Want Power? Slingshot Your Swing."

I would like to suggest not swinging the bat at the ball but instead to "slingshot" the bat to the ball. Sounds rather contrary to rotational mechanics as well as counter intuitive? I would have to agree.

However, "casting," or pushing the bat off the rear shoulder to accelerate the bat in striking the ball is ineffective for reliable hitting.

Casting is common amongst seniors but is a fixable problem. Casting results in early unhinging of the wrists producing a sweeping of the bat out-front of the body coming off the rear shoulder, resulting in bat deceleration and destroying all-important bat-lag which produces bat speed and power. Hitters who cast the bat frequently make contact with the ball at the end-cap area from sweeping the bat around the ball from outside-in.

Remember as kids that old Y-shaped stick with an elastic rubber band strip that stores energy between the prongs for projecting stones and other small missiles when released. The batter's arms represent the prongs and the bat-barrel is the projectile to fling. This approach of delivering the bat to the ball permits the bat to continue to accelerate to the ball maximizing bat-speed and the squaring of the barrel to the ball for ideal contact with the sweet spot. A flat-faced contact with the ball allows the bat to have a more resounding trampoline response for greater ball-exit-speed. The hitter's body mechanics supplies the energy to be transferred during the bat-slingshot. When the bat-barrel is launched from a lag position to contact with the ball it only takes a millisecond and can't be seen by the naked eye.

Stop Bat Casting ©
Winter 2014 – Art Eversole

A real world sports analogy to the bat-slingshot technique is a maneuver found in auto racing referred to as “drafting”. The race car accelerates or slingshots past the car in front by taking advantage of stored aerodynamic forces from staying back behind the lead car.

So, how does a batter invoke the bat-slingshot mechanic?

The following (8) steps outline the slingshot technique:

1) Begin by pushing the bat into the launch position behind your head; at the same time touching the front shoulder to your chin and coiling your body building up potential energy.
2) Begin the swing by unwinding and turning the hips and shoulders (i.e. rotational mechanics) toward the pitcher (not sideways) and transferring your weight to your front side; hands are moved out in front of your body with bat-barrel lagging behind in good position to strike the ball; rear elbow is tucked down in the “slot” next to your ribs.
3) With the hands out in front of your plant-leg the bat-barrel should be grazing your rear shoulder (or come very close to touching it) with the knob of the bat pushing toward the pitcher; the slingshot position should feel like you’re pulling on a rope that is trailing behind you.
4) Keep your hands inside the incoming pitch while rolling the bottom hand to a palm-up position through the ball producing a slingshot action; the hands only turn a few inches but the bat-barrel has to travel much further to catch-up to the hands and that creates the lighting fast bat-speed.

Stop Bat Casting ©
Winter 2014 – Art Eversole

5) At the same time top hand is pushing in behind the lead hand assisting the rolling of the wrists making the bat move from the lag position to contact point completing the slingshot action.
6) Releasing the top hand immediately after contact allows for full extension of arms providing maximum leverage and eliminating those power diminishing “alligator” arms.
7) End your swing with a fluid follow-through taking the bat full-circle around and behind your body.
8) Lastly, your back foot must move forward toward the front plant-leg to insure a complete body weight transfer to your front side getting off your back foot.

A drill to perform for the slingshot mechanic is to stand a little more than a bat's length, parallel, and away from the field fence and swing the bat. If you hit the fence you're casting.

See the photos supporting this article for a visual representation of the mechanics described above.

Happy hitting ...

Stop Bat Casting ©
Winter 2014 – Art Eversole