

Turn the Barrel for More Power and Consistency ©

March 2020 – Art Eversole

This article was published on page 30 in [Senior Softball magazine](#) in Spring 2020.

There are many ways to deliver the softball bat to the ball, as there are with a tennis racquet or golf club, all of which will have some degree of success. How is success defined? Success is the highest level of proficiency you as a hitter can attain. Good swing mechanics will create a consistent and repeatable action that will make you a better hitter. Unfortunately, bad swing mechanics work some of the time which can lead to inconsistency, great one day and terrible the next. Our goal is to produce good results game after game, which means executing good mechanics and having a great swing all the time.

An efficient technique in attaining a productive and consistent swing with high end results, is by “turning the barrel” into the swing plane. The batter’s turning of the barrel is what begins the acceleration of the bat head and is done with the hands, not by using the arms. If the barrel is not turned around your backside and aligning to the incoming path of the ball, the bat head will not accelerate effectively. Your hands are primary in leveraging the bat head, not your arms.

Turning the barrel creates early bat speed before the wrists roll over, adding to total swing speed. It also gets the bat into the hitting plane early by whipping the bat around your hands. When executing the turning of the barrel, make certain to maintain the lag in your swing until the hands release to the ball. Turning the barrel technique is taught by most top of the line hitting coaches today.

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How do we execute the turning of the barrel swing mechanic? It is done by applying a torqueing action with the hands to the bat handle. When hand torque is applied to the bat, the hands will be pushing in opposite directions. Therefore, torque applied to the bat handle from opposing directions will begin the acceleration of the bat. This torqueing of the bat handle does not mean you grip the bat tighter to execute the opposing hand action. Take your normal grip.

Using hand torque, the bat will rotate around your hands from the rear shoulder and then deep into the swing plane, permitting the hitter to use the whole field. By getting the bat on plane early, and deep into the swing zone, allows the hitter to either go out and get the ball in front for a pull hit; or letting the ball travel deeper into the hitting zone, for those middle and off-field hits.

Torque is what causes an object to acquire angular acceleration, like in a bat swing (see diagram in photo).

Great hitters take the arms out of the swing to maximize hand torque. The role of the arms is to provide support to the bat, like a scaffolding platform. Your body rotation will move your hands to the ball and not by extending the arms. The distance between your front and back elbows should remain constant when striking the ball. The arms fully extend only after the ball has left the bat (see [video link](#) here/bottom).

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Moving your hands directly down from your back shoulder without torquing the hands, creates a small window of intersection to hit the ball; limiting how much of the field you can hit to. This straight down path to the ball, will not create early bat speed, does not get the bat head on plane deep in your swing, and is too steep of an angle to the ball to produce consistent contact (reference diagram below).

To be a great hitter your swing must have both rhythm and tempo that manifests itself as good timing. Rhythm is the perfect connecting of the dots that make up your swing. Tempo is how quickly you connect those dots and that's bat speed. If you jump over a connecting dot in your swing, you may lose your rhythm.

Don't start your bat from a dead stop off your rear shoulder area. Have some pre-movement (e.g. a waggle) in your swing to get the bat moving early that will create maximum bat speed. Also remember that relaxed muscle is fast muscle, and tense muscle is slow muscle.

Here is a link to an internet instructional video discussing turning the barrel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEAwd8LCBXE>

Happy hitting,

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