

## easton sports coaches corner

Guest Coach Todd Raleigh - Head Baseball Coach, University of Tennessee  
Angle Batting Practice

This drill is a great for entry-level hitters. All great hitters have the ability to let the ball travel or get deep. Conversely, one of the biggest problems that hitters of all ages have is the inability to stay back and not "jump" at the ball. Hitters who let the ball travel and get deep have many advantages. One of the most obvious advantages is vision. Better vision can help create time; and anyone that has ever stood in the batter's box knows how valuable time is. How many times have you heard a coach tell a player to stay back? We all wish it was that easy. This angle batting practice drill will help a hitter learn how to do this.

When a hitter doesn't jump at the ball, the eyes and head stay on the ball longer. This allows the hitter to make a decision a little later than the one who doesn't stay back. Delaying the decision can be the difference between swinging at a ball in the dirt or letting it go by as a ball. Aside from the vision and time advantages, this drill will promote sound fundamental swing mechanics. If the drill is done properly it will create a positive chain reaction with the front side of your body. (Chain Reaction - front foot stays in longer, which keeps the front knee in longer, which keeps the front hip in longer, which keeps the front shoulder in longer, and finally, keeps the head in longer.) When the front shoulder stays in longer it helps to keep the hitter from flying off of the ball. It also keeps the hands inside the ball during a swing, thus creating a better swing path.

This drill can be done in the cages or on the field. I prefer on the field because it allows the hitter to see the flight of the ball, giving him instant feedback. We also use this opportunity to give our defense some work. We put our hitters in groups of four. Each hitter gets ten swings. Quality is more important than quantity. If this drill is done correctly the hitter will start to tire after eight to ten swings. The best way to know fatigue has begun to set in is to watch the front shoulder. If it is flying off the ball, the hitter is usually tiring. We like to group our left handed hitters in one group and our right handed hitters in another. We do this because it saves time, keeping the L-Screen in one place. This grouping is also beneficial for our defenders. It keeps the defenders from having to switch fields because the ball will always be hit into the opposite field. If the right handed group is hitting we move all our defenders to the right side of the infield and outfield. We make two defensive lines in both the infield and the outfield. You can make the infielders turn double plays, dive plays, prevent the ball from getting into the outfield or just field ground balls. The outfielders work on communication, line drives, ground balls, and fly balls. You can get very creative and switch these drills up.



The set up of the drill is very important. If you are a right handed hitter the pitcher will set up the L-Screen to your left side. You should be off-center, approximately in

line with the six-hole. We like the pitcher to sit in a chair but you can throw standing up. The pitcher is about twenty feet away from the hitter. The flight of the ball is important. The ball doesn't have to have great velocity but it must come to the hitter on a line; we are trying to avoid any loop in the pitch. When throwing the ball, the pitcher should aim somewhere between the center of the plate to the outer third of the plate. Make sure the hitter is facing the game mound or straight on. We don't want the hitter opening up and facing the angled pitcher. It will seem awkward to the hitter at first. His peripheral vision will allow him to face the mound and still pick up the ball. This is the key to the drill. The hitter won't be able to see the ball until it has had a chance to travel or get deep.

As before mentioned, the hitters have to hit the ball to the opposite field. We want line drives with backspin, not topspin. Hard ground balls are also very good. If the hitter is pulling balls or hitting weak fly balls to the opposite field then the drill isn't being done correctly. Putting a screen on the mound helps the hitters visualize where to hit the ball and can act as a guide for the swing path. We want our hitters to feel what it is like to keep your hands inside the ball and to let the ball travel. If our players hit two balls on the pull side of the screen on the mound, his round is over. This helps with their concentration.

This drill is good to use in early work. It also works well to do before taking a normal round of BP on the field. The hitters get a lot of swings in a short period of time. It is also a great defensive station that can have many variations. The hitters will see benefits from this drill after a few sessions. They will love to see the flight of the ball especially with backspin. The ball will get to gaps in a hurry and carry much further than they are used to. Once the hitter sees the benefits they will be sold on the drill.



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