

easton sports coaches corner

Guests: Assistant Coach Nick Mingione and
Head Coach John Cohen (pictured), Mississippi State

The Most Underrated Hitting Drills of All Time

One of our themes for drill work at Mississippi State is that “Simple is Always Better.” The following hitting drills may seem elementary, but we use them almost every day and all of these drills have a specific purpose. The other characteristic that all of these drills share is that they are all designed to be done alone. In other words, it is not only possible to get better by doing drill work on your own, it should be expected. At MSU we feel that an athlete’s greatest improvement usually occurs when nobody is watching for many reasons:



- The player is motivated by a passion for the activity not instant gratification from another person (parent)
- A player’s focus is much greater when he is not worried about what others are thinking
- The athlete can work at his own pace and not the pace of a coach or other players
- Isolation can help creativity

Four Incredibly Simple Hitting Drills:

MEDIBALL THROWS

WHO: 1-3 players per mediball

WHAT: One mediball (we use anywhere from an 8-10 lb. ball)

HOW: Holding the mediball, have each player get in his batting stance facing the wall as if the wall was the pitcher. If doing the drill with a partner, have them face their partner as if their partner were the pitcher. The strength level of the player will determine how far apart from the wall or one another they are. Our players usually stand anywhere from 20 to 30 feet away. Have them go through their normal load/trigger and throw the ball in a straight line toward the wall or partner. The ball will usually bounce at least once before reaching the wall or partner. Have the partner now get in his batting stance and throw the ball to the partner. We are trying to stay away from the players throwing the mediball straight up in the air or straight down. We are looking for a “line drive” type of toss here.

WHY: The weight of the mediball instantly forces the body to organize itself in a manner which is productive. We do not have to tell our player how to hold the ball, the body will take care of that. We feel like the weight of the ball requires our players to focus on using the entire body to throw energy in a straight line toward their target which is their partner or the wall.

THROWN BATS

WHO: 1-3 players

WHAT: Fungo bat

HOW: Have the player get in their stance, go through their normal load/trigger and throw the fungo bat. Like all of the drills we have mentioned in this article, the player can work on this drill alone as well. The number of fungos available will determine how many throws he can get off before they need to be picked up. If there is a partner, the strength of the hitters will determine how far apart the partners should stand. Due to the nature of the drill we would suggest starting out at least 90 feet apart. We are looking for the hitter to throw the bat in a straight line. We are trying to stay away from the players throwing the bat straight up in the air, to the pull side, or away from their body. We are looking for a “line drive” type of toss in a STRAIGHT LINE. As a reference our players will throw the bat in a straight line anywhere from 50-80 feet in the air.

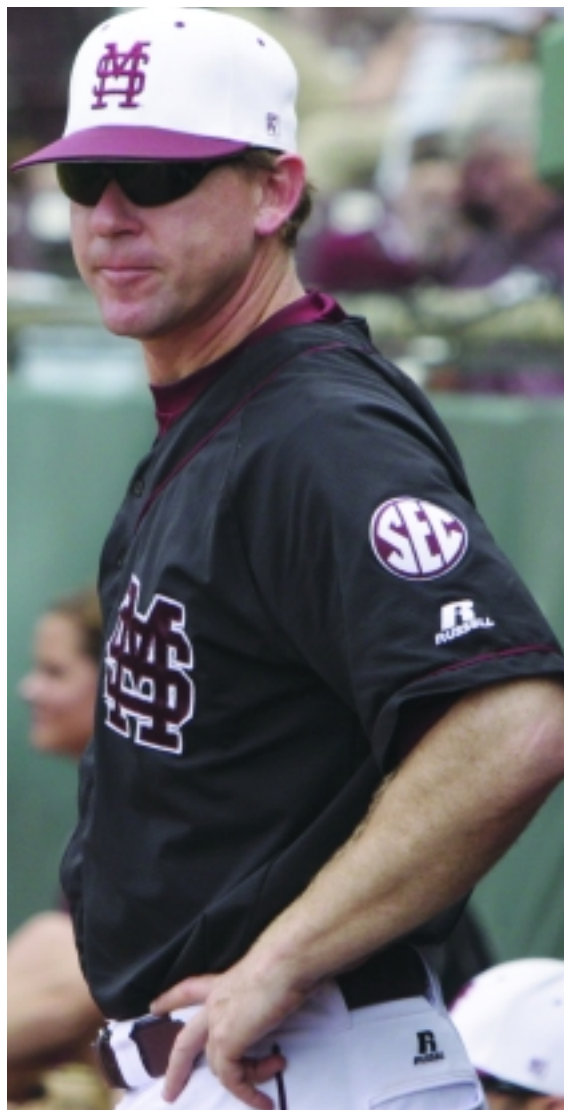
WHY: Forces hitters to have a feel for bat and what it’s like to store and release the bat and energy in a straight line. It has been our experience that most hitters will release bat to pull the side. If the hitter does the drill correctly a proper “shaft to shoulder” position is accomplished.

FUNGO DRILL

WHO: 1 - 2 players

WHAT: Baseball bat and baseballs

HOW: Have the player hold the bat with the bottom hand and shuffle his feet toward pitcher. While he is shuffling his feet toss a ball in the air and attempt to hit a line drive right back up the middle. The timing of the toss and shuffling of



feet might take a few attempts to get in sync. If player is ever “out of rhythm” and not comfortable he should TAKE the toss, reset and try again.

WHY: We have found that if the player tosses the ball with the bottom hand, it USUALLY eliminates the bat getting stuck behind the hitter’s head, commonly referred to as a “bat wrap”. Shuffling in a straight line can assist the players in having proper alignment with their feet. The toss is very important in this drill. We want our players to understand if it’s a toss which will not allow them to put a solid stroke on the ball it’s okay for them not to swing.

T-WORK

WHO: Any one player

WHAT: A batting tee and baseballs

WHY: Tee work is a major component of our drill work. Like the previous drills, it allows our players to isolate certain parts of the swing and work at a pace with which he is comfortable. The tee allows the players to work on everything from the stride foot to hand positioning. It can also permit players to work on different height levels and pitch locations. It can allow the player to use the creative part of his brain while working on his stroke.