

AT BAT

with Jack Perconte



Attention Players: Baseball Tips You Need to Know

Of all the things that I have told my students and parents of students over the years, the most often repeated would have to be, "If I only knew then what I know now." I am sure I am not alone with this sentiment, as many professionals in all occupations would probably say the same. Of course, I did make the major leagues and most people who knew me would say that I got the most out of my talent, but I have come to disbelieve that. When I look back on my quest to the major leagues, I would have done differently so many things.

I have come to realize that I did not reach my potential, mainly because of my lack of confidence caused by insufficient knowledge of how to perform the fundamentals of the game. There is simply no substitute for good fundamentals to reach the top in any sport, and the knowledge of those fundamentals allows players to remain confident that they can fix problems when bad habits creep in. In my situation, I believe the lack of knowledge to fix problems relatively quickly led to a loss of control over the situation, which led to confidence loss. I often look back and wonder if I was not paying attention to what my coaches were teaching, or was I not taught the basics because coaches assumed I knew what I was doing because I generally performed well. I will never know that answer.

The years of study and teaching youth after my playing career have taught me the game of baseball and how to teach the game. I believe my experiences have driven me to becoming a better baseball instructor. Helping players avoid the mistakes I made, has been my goal. Additionally, from my lack-of-confidence experience, maybe the most important teaching lesson for coaches is to never assume players know what they are doing, no matter how good those players are.

Following are some baseball tips covering most aspects of the game. Some of them are obvious and others are not. Many of these helped me reach the major leagues, whereas some I learned after my playing days. The sooner players learn these, the better chance they have of a long baseball career.

Mental Game

1. Baseball, like all sports, is a game of repetition but the quality of the repetition is what is most important.
2. You learn more from your failures than your successes so do not "beat yourself up" over bad games, but learn from them.
3. Usually, bad games are not because of a bad mental effort, but from bad fundamentals.
4. The game is not always fair, but you owe it to yourself to keep persevering and not give up. You cannot do anything about the last play but do not let that affect your next one.
5. Be willing to try everything your coaches suggest, use the suggestions that work and dismiss those that do not.

Hitting

1. Many hitters limit their chances of being consistent hitters before they get in the batter's box because of an incorrect bat grip. Make sure your grip is in the upper palms and fingers, not deep in the palms. An incorrect grip sets hitters up for many swing fundamental mistakes including an early wrist roll, lack of bat speed and an over-anxious hitter because of the increased pressure of the wrong grip.
2. It is almost always better to hit the ball on the sweet spot then off the handle or off the end of bat. Bat control is so important. Do not be afraid to choke up, cut down on the swing with two strikes and hit the ball to the opposite field.
3. They did not design the game so that pitchers could throw the ball by you, so remain confident without fear of two strikes or striking out, even though they are not desirable tendencies.
4. Without 100% concentration on the ball, timing and good hitting results will not last. Focusing the eyes and focusing the mind leads to consistent, quality at-bats.
5. A tired feeling and/or tired hands lead to hitters' inability to stay back on the pitched ball, so do not allow yourself to tire physically or mentally, when possible,

Fielding Tips

1. Learn to read the angle of the bat at contact to get a good jump on batted balls.
2. Focus on throwing warm-up balls in between innings as if they were game throws. Remember, perfect practice makes perfect.
3. When in doubt, charge the ball. Lying back on balls usually leads to "letting the ball play you" or hurried and inaccurate throws.
4. Never take the bat to the field with you. Taking the bat to the field means thinking about your last or next at-bat when on defense.
5. Always know where your other fielders are positioned on defense so communication on batted balls is easier.

Pitching Tips

- It should be noted that I did not pitch after I was 14 years old but I like to think I had some impact on my

son making it to professional baseball as a pitcher.

1. The glove is the target, whether a batter is in the box or not. Throwing in a game should be no different than throwing in the bullpen as far as focus goes. Do not allow a batter to minimize your focus on the target.
2. Do not let bad fielding plays affect your game.
3. Pitch with “no fear,” challenging hitters and realizing there will be days that do not go your way.
4. Speed is good, but never more important than location, movement, and change of speeds.
5. Throw each pitch with conviction, believing in yourself, your ability and your defense.

Base running Tips:

1. If the pitcher and catcher are not attempting to pick you off at least occasionally, you are not being aggressive enough.
2. Always anticipate balls pitched in the dirt and be ready to take extra bases.
3. Practice hitting the bases with the same foot every time and practice your secondary lead so the timing is perfect each time.
4. Never forget to pay close attention to other base runners so you do not overrun them on confusing plays.
5. Never assume the defensive player will catch the ball.

Being a Team Leader (& a good teammate)

1. Never put your own interests and statistics ahead of the team's.
2. Being vocal is OK, but leading by example is better.
3. Remain humble because the game will humble you, quickly, when-

ever you are not.

4. Be there with an encouraging word for struggling teammates and they will be there for you when you are in same situation.
5. Show respect to all – teammates, opposition, umpires, coaches and most of all, to the game of baseball.

In conclusion, I hope players noted two things from the points made above. It is often the littlest details that make the difference between success and failure. Good ballplayers do not neglect the slightest details like hitting the base with the same foot, gripping the bat in the fingers and focusing on the glove when pitching. Secondly, the lessons learned concerning the mental game and leadership, are things that will also help ball players in every phase of their life and long after their playing days end.

Jack is the author of “The Making of a Hitter” A Proven and Practical Step-by-Step Baseball Guide. To read more about it visit

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Read more about it at his blog – positiveparentinginsports.com and also be sure to check out baseballhittinglessons.com/baseball.

