

THE HITTING STREAK
SOFTBALL TRAINING PROGRAM

MOTIVATION

The following material is extracted from the work of Jim Lefebvre, a well know hitting coach with the L.A. Dodgers and San Francisco Giants during the 1980's and 90's. While it was originally designed to advertise the, "Hitting Streak" pitching machine, it contains a wealth of good information about hitting in general. Anyone interested in teaching hitting skills will benefit from it.

In my experience, most of the great players spend more time developing their softball skills off the diamond than on. Coaches generally do a good job of teaching skills at practice, but there isn't enough formal practice time to perfect them. So the basements, garages and sand lots of the nation have become the real training grounds for excellence. Enter the:

"HITTING STREAK"

The light weight, durable, state of the art **HITTING STREAK** is ideal for these off field practice session that make the difference between the ordinary players and the greats. Its versatility is unmatched. Not only will it throw a variety of pitches for hitters, it can also deliver the ground and fly ball repetitions necessary for defensive excellence. The Hitting Streak will turn the game around for players, coaches and teams and is an important acquisition for all around development of ball skills.

EXCELLENCE IS NOT A DESTINATION; IT'S A JOURNEY. Player character is the product of that journey, while practice is the vehicle. Performance improvements are the road signs we see along the way. We practice to improve, otherwise we don't need to practice. But excellence is accomplished in stages, which include motivation, technique, perfection, then automation. Once the point of automation is reached, it's the competition that adds the finishing touches and fine tunes the champion.

Here's how the "Hitting Streak" can help players along the journey.

***THE WILL TO WIN IS NOT AS IMPORTANT
AS THE WILL TO PREPARE***

One of the problems with developing skills is getting motivated to practice and do the repetition on which excellence is built. The hitting Streak makes it easy, convenient and fun to practice. Every player becomes a pitcher for quicker, more effective batting practice; and nobody has to bat fungos until their hands blister. This machine throws fastballs, curves, rise balls and drops with a twist of the wrist. For fielding it can throw side hoppers on the ground and curving fly balls to practice reading ball trajectory. It's so much fun that players will want to do more reps rather than less.

TECHNIQUE

Practice makes permanent, only perfect practice makes perfect. Technique is better learned in low stress conditions, such as those produced with the Hitting Streak using the patented super soft "Tuffy" SFT machine balls from ATEC. With this technology, even the youngest, most timid player can field or go to the plate with absolute confidence they won't be hurt if they get hit by a pitch. Now they can focus completely on their technique for better, faster learning. Coaches can keep stress levels low by reducing practice speeds, permitting players to learn from their own mistakes and by providing continual positive encouragement and reinforcement.

SKILL IS A MASTERPIECE OF REPETITION**PERFECTION**

The third stage is to repeat the proper technique to the point of perfection, so the movement becomes totally automatic. For hitting, this means swinging the bat and swinging the bat, then swinging the bat some more. Fielders have to take balls until they can field in their sleep. These repetitions are necessary to inject the muscle memory needed to achieve automation. But the essential ingredient is *perfect* repetition.

**PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT
ONLY PERFECT PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT**

===== **AUTOMATION** =====
This is the ultimate stage of development. The batter's in the box, everything is on automatic pilot. Total focus on seeing the ball. "See the ball, hit the ball". The swing is perfect, the muscles are toned, the timing is right on, **Hitting Streak** has done its job. Now let's hit.

Once this stage is achieved, it becomes a matter of maintenance and there is no device better than the Hitting Streak to maintain this level of performance, on or off the diamond.

SEE THE BALL, HIT THE BALL

QUALITY PRACTICE

As important as repetitions are to sport, the quality of each repetition is even more essential. Practising poor technique simply consolidates those bad habits. Every repetition of every skill has to be performed as close to perfect as possible. The mental set has to be;

DO IT RIGHT - EVERY TIME, ALL THE TIME

Quality practice involves three sequential phases, which are;

1. WARM-UP Preliminary activities to prepare the mind and body for total exertion and effort.
2. TECHNIQUE Focus on perfection of execution through quantity and quality of repetitions. This is normally performed under low stress conditions, to develop the muscle memory required for high stress work.
3. EXCELLENCE Work at game intensity to build power, stamina and competitive toughness. Practice is accelerated to top speed for maximum challenge.

The complexity of hitting and fielding skills, demands that players receive as much quality practice as possible. For maximum benefit, both hitters and fielders must pay particular attention to each practice phase. Hitters are looking for a short, compact but powerful swing, while fielders need to develop a smooth, fluid, rhythmic style with total concentration on the ball. Here's a program to achieve batting and fielding excellence, built around the **Hitting Streak**.

**THE HITTING STREAK
TRAINING PROGRAM**

HIGH PERFORMANCE HITTERS

High performance hitters strive for excellence in every aspect of hitting. This means they study the mechanics of hitting, batting strategies and statistics. They know the strike zone, their own hitting zone and consistently try to hit line drives. This routine can be used in-season at practice or games, or as off-season practice.

WARM-UP

PURPOSE Stretch swing muscles. Prepare body for physical activity and mental

WORKLOAD 25 Swings - Moderate speed.

ROUTINE Use the batting tee and Catch Net. Focus on hitting through the ball

TECHNIQUE

PURPOSE Develop swing techniques, and mental application. Improve swing

WORKLOAD 50 Swings at top speed with attention to hitting form.

5 sets of 10 swings alternating inside and outside pitches.

3 sets with weighted ball, 2 sets with normal ball.

ROUTINE Hit off batting tee into Catch Net.
Hit through the ball on every swing.
Use proper set-up position and breathing sequence on every swing.

| | | |
|--------|----------|---|
| Set #1 | Focus on | - short quick step |
| Set #2 | | - full hip rotation |
| Set #3 | | - stiff front side |
| Set #4 | | - quick hands moving straight to the ball |
| Set #5 | | - keeping the head still throughout |

EXCELLENCE

- PURPOSE* Perfect swing timing for game application.
Improve focus and concentration skills.
Develop Tactical hitting skills.
- WORKLOAD* 50 Swings off Hitting Streak.
25 Drop pitches - 25 Rise pitches/curve.
- ROUTINE* Set up Hitting Streak at about 40'.
Adjust to throw drop pitches.
Use Catch Net for backstop.
Alternate sets of 5 pitches, inside and outside.
Change speed on each set for timing practice.
Repeat for rise/curve balls.

HIGH PERFORMANCE FIELDER

This routine will refine and perfect fielding skills while, at the same time, enhance physical conditioning. Fielding practice is hard work, but it can be more fun with the Hitting Streak. No other product provides such versatility in duplicating game-like conditions.

WARM-UP

- PURPOSE* Stretch major muscle groups. Prepare body for exertion and mental
- WORKLOAD* 10 minutes - slow deliberate stretch - all major muscle groups.
Rotate shoulders, wrists, hips, knees and ankles.
10 minutes - easy throwing at half speed. Start short, gradually
- ROUTINE* Perform static stretches, no bouncing.
Hold stretch 10 to 20 seconds until muscle relaxes.
During stretches, do imagery on fielding technique.
Visualize making all the plays within current skill level.

TECHNIQUE

PURPOSE Develop smooth, fluid fielding technique.
Improve lateral, backward and forward mobility.
Focus on coordination and body rhythm.
Develop concentration. See the ball into the glove.

WORKLOAD 10 ground balls - straight on with side spin.
10 ground balls - left and right side.
10 pop-ups in varying directions.

ROUTINE Set up Hitting Streak at home plate.
Use curve ball setting for side spin.
Catch net beside machine to retrieve balls.
Field from whatever position you prefer.
Have the feeder toss ground balls in sequence shown.
Use moderate speed only for technique.
Ensure proper set-up on each repetition.
Repeat for pop-ups.

EXCELLENCE

PURPOSE To simulate game conditions and perfect timing.

WORKLOAD 10 ground balls straight on.
10 ground balls to each side.
10 Pop-ups in varying directions.
10 ground balls in varying direction.

ROUTINE Set up Hitting Streak between home plate and pitcher mound.
Use curve ball setting for side spin.
Catch net beside machine to retrieve balls.
Field from whatever position you prefer.
Have the feeder toss ground balls in sequence shown.
Use maximum speed for current skill level.
Ensure proper set position for each repetition.
Visualize each repetition before executing.
Repeat for pop-ups.
