

UNDERSTANDING

SELECTION & PATIENCE

Did you know?

The longest home-run ever recorded was hit by Mickey Mantle. The ball travelled 550 ft.



PATIENCE DOESN'T EQUAL PASSIVENESS.....

Having an idea of what pitch you want to hit and attacking that pitch and only that pitch is selective aggressiveness.....

WHY BE SELECTIVE?

Arguably the greatest hitter in the world and the last person to hit over .400 was well known for his very selective approach. Almost more than 95% of the time Ted Williams took the first pitch whether it was a curve-ball in the dirt, a change-up away, or a fast-ball right down the middle of the plate.

His plan of attack was to see as many pitches as he was able to. His reasoning was that the more pitches that he saw the better of a chance he had for making solid contact with a pitch that he could handle.

His motto was **“get a good pitch to hit”**.

Pretty simple right?



THE ART OF SELECTION

In order to make sure that I have provided you with the best information that can be applied to the type of pitching that you will be seeing I have to leave a disclaimer.

Though I do agree that getting a good pitch to hit is an important aspect to having a good at-bat, deciding to take the first pitch regardless of the location should only be implemented in certain situations such as:

- being the lead off hitter in your first at-bat
- giving the runner on first a chance to steal second
- it's late in the game, you're down by a few runs and you need base runners
- the pitcher is having trouble throwing first pitch strikes

I believe that the decision to take the first pitch strike should be based on the game's situation and what it calls for.

The numbers don't lie.

During the 2012 MLB season, when a hitter has no strikes he is hitting an astounding .338.

Give him one strike and his average drops slightly to .337.

Give him 2 and it dives to .178.

There needs to be a balance in regards to adapting an aggressive approach and applying it to a selective one.

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS?

The first step to effectively applying aggressiveness is understanding the mindset.

In the beginning of an at-bat your approach is to get a good pitch to hit. For most hitters this is a fast-ball or breaking pitch that is left hanging in the middle part of the plate between the belt and just above the knees.

Effective aggressiveness is essentially looking for this pitch and this pitch only. When the pitch comes, your ability to recognize the pitch and react accordingly is effective aggressiveness in action.

A popular term used to express this kind of focus is “key-holing”. As you polarize your mental vision of what pitch you are attempting to hit while at the plate the better you’ll be at recognizing the pitch when it comes, and putting an aggressive swing on it on a consistent basis.

CONTROLLED VIOLENCE

An important note to remember is that swinging hard isn’t something to avoid. You hear some coaches say that you’re putting too much into your swing when really the only thing you’re guilty of doing is either:

- opening up to soon
- elongating and putting a loop in your swing or casting your arms
- or barring your arm

Swinging hard is fine so long as you’re able to stay within yourself.

This is another aspect of being selectively aggressive.

WHAT'S YOUR GRADE?



DO YOUR HOME WORK



WHEN TO TAKE SECONDARY PITCHES

When you analyze the approach of most successful hitters you'll notice that most of them take any pitch other than a fast-ball early in the count unless they are looking specifically for that secondary pitch.

It's very difficult and in many ways counter productive to attack any and every pitch in a pitcher's repertoire. Personally I NEVER swung at a pitch other than a fast-ball unless I had

- two strikes
- was looking for the secondary pitch
- or was thrown a hanging curve-ball, change-up, or slider.

QUALITY TAKING

When you're in the situation where you will need to take a pitch whether it's while:

- being the lead off hitter in your first at-bat
- giving the runner on first a chance to steal second
- it's late in the game, you're down by a few runs and you need base runners
- the pitcher is having trouble throwing first pitch strikes

There are certain things you can do to make sure that your "take" is a quality one that gives you enough feedback to enhance your timing and reaction of the next pitch.

If you have decided before hand to take the pitch, make an added effort to relax your muscles and focus SOLEY on the timing of the pitcher's delivery while picking up the seams and rotation of the ball.

Consider this an extra pitch that you can dedicate to "calibrating" the pitcher without having to worry about making solid contact.

A lot of hitters take the "take" for granted assuming that there is nothing to be done since there is no intention to swing.

Use this moment to increase your timing and reaction.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH UMPIRES.

Yes there are a few unwritten rules with how you communicate with umpires at the plate.

Some are more familiar than others.

In case you are not aware that there is **no arguing** “balls and strikes” with umpires but establishing an idea of what the umpires’ strike-zone is can and will pay dividends for both you and your team-mates’ at-bats. Now this is where being a team leader comes in.

So how do we establish a sense of the umpire’s style?

Does he have a wide strike-zone or slim one? Does he call balls high or low?

What’s the best way know?

Ask him!

I know I know crazy right? Well there is a specific way.

Have you ever seen a major leaguer dig his cleats into the box while looking like he’s talking to himself.

Well chances are he’s communicating with the umpire?

After a strike off the out-side corner, a seasoned hitter may want to ask the umpire if that’s as far as he’s going or calling pitches on that side of the plate.

The trick is to NEVER look at the umpire while you ask this. This is the unwritten rule.

Never “show up” an umpire. This means no eye-contact during an at-bat.



Yes, you can get the umpire on your side!

By showcasing your communication skills during your at-bat, the confidence to take control of the momentum at the plate while asking for feed back from the umpire with courtesy and humility, more often than not umpires will share with you their style of calling balls and strikes which will eventually give you the advantage you need to take control of the at-bat and force the pitcher to play your game!