



Featured Columnist
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As the 2019 season draws near, make sure your body of prep work matches the anatomy of the best in the game:

- 1.) Eight-plus hours of sleep the night before games and training. Being alert and calm in the box allows for calm, smooth actions. No sleep, no chance. Mood swings, nervousness and stress management are all a function of sleep. Don't skimp on the foundation of your emotional and physical well-being.
- 2.) A balanced, healthy breakfast or lunch that will fuel you to attack all day—protein and whole grain carbohydrates! Add a fruit. Your body is like a Ferrari, it doesn't want or need subpar gasoline or cheap fast food to perform at its best.
- 3.) The human eyes are made up of 90% water. Your eyes are the ultimate weapon in your battle against the pitcher, so choose water over coffee with sugar or excessive amounts of sugar water, such as Gatorade, unless it's 90 degrees outside and you're playing a doubleheader. Water intake of half your weight in ounces gives you the best chance to leap tall buildings in a single bound and have X-ray vision during at-bats.
- 4.) Scan your JOG (journal of greatness). Relive some of your past highlights and review in your own words your mindset and feelings during your better performances. What did it look like in your mind's eye and how did it feel when you doubled in the gap against the lefthander in the green uniform at Indiana? The more details, the better the chance your brain and body will want to repeat the actions an hour later. Remember your JOG often with honesty and your own insight.
- 5.) MBP (mental batting practice) during pre-game and after regular batting practice. When your teammates are standing around chatting or playing hacky sack, visualize different pitches coming with real-game swings as you steer the pitch into your "Go Zones."
- 6.) Ditch your iPhone for at least an hour before you get to the field. Yes ... your iPhone. Who cares what Angelica is doing on vacation in Florida? Forget your friends momentarily and focus on what's really important at that point in time. If you don't take your performance prep seriously, you might as well keep spending your time on social media and wasting your 1440 minutes per day in cyber space. The eyes want to sweep and scan the world, not be stuck and crammed staring at a five-inch screen. Do you want to improve your chase rates? Cut down on your hard, fine focus of life and watch your game improve.



7.) Challenge your self during batting practice. Don't just hit everything thrown at you. Take pride in your takes. Put yourself in different counts. Step in and out of the box, practice your routines and commit to your visual plan! Take a few good rounds of hitting mistakes over the middle of the plate and then get back to reality hitting! Real game at-bats average about five pitches. Keep it real and practice your entrance and exits into the box.

8.) Taking your meds (mini meditation timeouts that soothe the soul and connect you with you) and watching your best flicks (visualization/imagery) should be a constant throughout your pre-game routine and in the on-deck circle. If you can close your eyes for a few seconds in public, you can see the best image you just created in your mind's eye. Be the master hitter and take these two skills into the batter's box and in between pitches. Are you on deck? A simple review of your eyes and visual strategy will get you ready for your upcoming at-bat. Connect with a deeply exaggerated breath, and then get your body and thoughts out of your at-bat.

9.) Cardio hitting isn't real. Great hitters need to practice doing nothing and control the time gaps that exist in real at-bats. The average time between pitches is around 20 seconds. Managing that time with a calmness and quietness takes practice. Hitters will see an average of five pitches per at-bat. Keep it real. Practice paying attention at actual game-time intervals and with the eyes of a quiet hawk for five consecutive pitches.

10.) Loose and smooth win the prize. Less is better. Effortless power. You have heard all the clichés. When you learn to get your body out of the way and let your eyes and barrel work as one unit, you are one step closer to hitting like the elite few! The big muscles (hips and shoulders) will find their way into the swing. Control your eyes and barrel first.

11.) Hit the pitch you want to see. Sounds like the universal basic advice of "see the ball, hit the ball," but it's quite the opposite. In offensive counts, good hitters stay with a visual plan and "funnel" the ball into a lane or ladder within their hit zones. With two strikes, great hitters love the challenge of seeing the ball longer—track the pitch to your back knee or front elbow—as their primary task. The better the pitching, the more visually discipline hitters have to become. On-deck preparation using visualization and self-talk to strategize what pitch location you are going to "see" is crucial as you move up the hitting good chain.

12.) Get to the library, be quiet and read. The library is the special place and mindset all good hitters pass through on their way toward deciding what, where and when the pitch is arriving. The library is the "take part of the swing" in the physical world, and it's the quiet, read/see part of the visual world of a hitter. The quality and consistency of visiting the library is the holy grail for hitters.

13.) Open eyes are calm eyes. Open-tracking is effective seeing. When hitters look at nothing, they see everything. Your pre-release look at the pitcher should feel like the gaze and focus level you have when looking at the sunset over the ocean or while walking in the mountains on a clear morning by yourself.

14.) Reflect and adjust. Your success in subsequent at-bats is directly related to how effective and quickly you autopsy the results of your previous bad at-bat. Great players have selective memory as they quickly prepare for the next pitch or at-bat with excitement and passion.

Great at-bats start months before Opening Day. Autopsy some of your results from last year as starting point for 2019.