**Softball Instruction- Slap Hitting**

So you've decided that you're going to make a slap hitter out of one of your fast pitch players. You arrived at this decision because your fast pitch softball player possesses the following traits.

- 1) The **Softball** player is a natural left-handed hitter and has very good speed, but not much pop in her swing.
- 2) The **Softball player** is a natural right-handed hitter, not much pop in her swing, but has very good hand-eye coordination and has better than average running speed.

I find these 2 items to be the most common threads in making a Slap Softball hitter. Now, by no stretch of the imagination is this gospel, or the only two reasons! I'm sure someone reading this will say they have a very coordinated right-handed hitter that can hit with power, for average and is fast as lightning and they should be turned around also... ladies and gentlemen I give you United States Olympian Natasha Watley...

My point here is that there are the few exceptions to every rule but the two basic reasons for turning a kid into solely a Softball Slap hitter are outlined above. Clearly as you can see they both have the common denominator of speed and hand-eye coordination as the primary ingredient.

Fastpitch Softball Teams with effective **Slap Hitters** put a tremendous amount of pressure on the opposing defense. So let's take a look at how we go about teaching this style of **Softball hitting**.

**Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitting - The Feet Matter**

Understanding the use of the feet and how to start the crossover step along with the timing of the swing will be your starting point. Some will teach (step back or drop step) towards your left foot with your right foot, as a timing mechanism, then cross over with the left foot, some will teach step away from the plate with the right foot (clear step) and then cross over with the left foot. The main and most important ingredient here is the left foot cross over. This step **MUST** be towards the pitcher! I personally prefer and teach the first example (step back or drop step) rather than the clear step, primarily because I find it easier to teach the drag bunt from this approach (see Drag Bunt below.) Be sure they are not trying to run before making contact. The hands move forward with the crossover step. The batter is stepping toward the pitcher, not first base. The slap hitter wants to make contact before she reaches the front of the batters box. The ideal position is her left foot is down at contact and her right foot is in the air, this will maximize her head start and prevent her from being called out for being out of the batters box.
Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitting - Keep the shoulders Square

The slap hitter must turn her hips (belly button) to the pitcher while keeping her shoulders closed (as in stationary stance) to the ball. The hands start out high and fairly close to the body. The slap swing is not a violent hack, but rather a controlled, smooth, inside out -- and slightly downward attack on the ball. It's important to let the ball get a little deeper into the strike zone, not out in front as you would on a stationary swing.

The classic slap swing produces a chopping ground ball to the left side of the infield, allowing the batter to race the fielding infielder and the throw to first base all in under 3 seconds. The slapper MUST keep their shoulders closed on the stride towards the pitcher opening up too soon trying to run to first will make it impossible to reach pitches on the outside half of the plate.

Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitting - Drag Bunt

Using the same technique as outlined above its also very important to teach your Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitter how to drag bunt. This is an effective strategy that will keep the 1st and 3rd basemen honest and bring greater value to your softball slap hitter as an offensive threat.

In teaching the drag bunt be sure your Softball player has her hips (belly button) to the pitcher while keeping her shoulders closed (as in stationary stance) to the ball while maintaining a cross over step towards the pitcher! The hands start out high and fairly close to the body just like in the Slap positon (we start with the hands high in all of thee approaches so that they learn to drop the softball bat on top of the pitched ball sending it downward to hopefully prevent the pop-up.) From here rather than slap swing, teach them to catch the top of the ball in front of them with the barrel of the bat. As they advance teach them to guide the ball towards the 3rd base line by leading with the knob of the bat at contact, or the 1st base line, while leading with the barrel of the bat at contact.

The most important points here are that they are catching or absorbing the top of the pitched ball rather than trying to swing. Their feet and body mechanics will be the same as outlined above.

Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitting - Power Slap

The "Fastpitch Softball Power Slap" like the "Drag Bunt" is used to keep the defenses honest. The Fastpitch Softball Power Slap like the drag bunt starts with the very same foot work and body position as outline above for the Slap. The batter uses the crossover step towards the pitcher, hips open, shoulders closed only here rather than take a softer chopping swing, the fastpitch softball player takes a full swing to drive the ball through
the pulled-in infield. As with the slap and the drag bunt the softball hitters focus is the top half of the ball, which will produce a hard grounder or line drive off of the softball bat.

**Fastpitch Softball Slap Hitting - Be Patient**

Fastpitch Softball coaches be patient with this instruction, build a solid foundation and understanding of the process with your players.

**A Couple of Excellent Slap Hitting Drills to get started:**

- A good drill for the right-handed hitter that you're turning around is to put their fielding glove on before you give them a bat. With their glove on have them get in the box against a pitching machine. Concentrate on their foot work, with the left foot crossing over and stepping towards the pitcher, keep their shoulders closed, hips open and have them catch the ball with their glove. This will train the closed shoulders and feet before they try to swing, it also gives them a feel of the left hand in the approach.
- Nothing can replace tee work! Off of the tee have your young slap hitter work on her body mechanics. Do Not Start them out full speed! Have them walk through 1/4 speed and build from there. Allow them to feel this process and ingrain the proper muscle memory, and please don't measure them on making contact. Once they get the feel of the cross over step towards the pitcher, hips and belly button pointed towards the pitcher and shoulders closed you'll see their contact and Slap Hitting coordination improve rapidly.

**Softball Instruction - How to slap hit part 2 The Feet**

**Slap Hitting.. The First Step**

The most common asked question in How to Slap Hit is what's the best first step technique? As I pointed out in a previous article Softball Instruction - How to Slap Hit the two most common ways of teaching in no particular order are:

1. **The Clear or Step Away.** Here you teach the softball hitter to step away from home plate with her right foot (clear) and then the crossover step with the left foot moving towards the softball pitcher and

2. **The Step Back or Drop Step.** Here the softball slap hitter takes a short jab step with her right foot back towards her left foot to get the process started, as a timing mechanism this can also be just a quick lift and replace step with the right foot.

As I mentioned before I personally prefer the Step Back or Drop Step approach to Slap Hitting. The short jab step or lift and replace gets the body in motion and keeps it on the desired line towards the softball pitcher. This is the most commonly taught approach.
How to Slap Hit - The Step Back or Drop Step

In the short Slap Hitting slide-show to the right you'll see the comfortable starting stance, which is deeper in the batters box, the step back or jab step which is the slap hitters timing mechanism, the slappers crossover step (which begins to move the hitters body forward toward the pitch not up the first baseline) and finally the contact step of the slap hitter.

Notice the position of the left foot in the cross over step it is facing directly towards the Fastpitch Softball Pitcher. The importance of this concept is that the hitter is getting her energy moving towards the pitch first, it is actually ok if the foot is pointed on a 45 degree angle between the Pitcher and Shortstop position, what you don't want is for your slap hitter to be pulling off the pitch and thinking run before hit. The goal is to get your slap hitters body in the best position to:

1. make contact with the softball
2. establish the optimum running position for the race to first.

The contact position is the position of the left foot after the cross over step has been made. The correct timing of the contact swing or slap will have the ball of the left foot planted (contact position) during contact with the pitch and the right foot just coming off the ground moving forward. Our softball hitters hips and belly button will be opening towards the the pitcher, putting the slapper in the best position for the sprint down the line.

Remember, the successful slap hit is a race after contact with the softball has been made and being efficient in the process will increases your odds of success!

How to Slap Hit - The Clear Step

Again in the slide-show to the right you'll see the comfortable starting stance, which is deeper in the batters box, the slappers crossover step and finally the contact step of the slap hitter. What you'll notice different in this slide show on slap hitting is the timing mechanism step, here the softball hitter will take a clear step (or short jab step backwards) to start the cross over process. This is a short jab step! Please DO NOT allow your slap hitter to over exaggerate this step.

As I mentioned above the most commonly taught Slap Hitting approach is the Step Back or Drop Step, but you may find that a modified approach will help your younger slappers understand the starting process.

Which ever method you use it is critical that the cross over step be performed correctly by either stepping towards the pitcher with the left foot or at a 45 degree angle with the left foot pointed just in between the pitcher and shortstop position to put your hitter in the best possible position for slap contact.
How to Slap Hit - The Timing

The timing of getting your slap hitters feet in motion is dependent on the velocity of the pitcher. As an example if we're teaching this approach to a Under 10 Fastpitch Softball player we'll have the slap hitter begin the step process when the pitchers arm is at the top or just on the down swing of her arm circle. If we're teaching a High School Softball Player it could be just before the softball pitcher gets her arm to the top of the arm circle, If you're hitter is facing Monica Abbott, as her pitching arm comes forward to start the pitching process may be the correct time to get the feet moving.

Please remember softball is a game, so keep it fun and your softball players will get the most out of each lesson.

Softball is for everyone.... Fastpitch Softball is for athletes!