

Keep Your Eye On The Ball

Hitting a baseball at an elite level is considered to be the single most difficult skill in sports. Many reasons are given for this ominous designation including:

- the hitter is attempting to hit a round ball with a round bat and the margin of error is miniscule.
- pitching velocities at elite levels range from 85-100 mph and you have a split second to recognize the pitch and start your swing.
- the movement that pitchers place on the ball with two-seam, split-finger and cut fastballs, curveballs, sliders, sinkers and knuckle balls.
- pitchers use change of speed via the change-up to disrupt the hitter's timing.
- pitchers vary location and elevation of pitches to change the hitter's visual context.

All combined these variables make hitting an elite pitch a tremendous challenge.

Are your eyes up to it?

So to be a good hitter you have to be able to pick up the ball as it leaves the pitcher's hand (acuity), see the spin on the ball (dynamic acuity), follow the ball (tracking) until contact and do all of that in a split second.

Every baseball coach will repeat the encouragements to a struggling hitter, "keep your eye on the ball" "keep your head in there" and "follow the ball right to contact." They don't say these things just to be talking, they know if you don't follow the ball with your eyes from the release of the ball out of the pitcher's hand until contact that you will never be a good hitter.

Sports vision is far more than just acuity although a good hitter has to have 20/20 vision or better. A baseball player has to **read and react**. Visual skills required for reading the ball include depth perception (ability to judge distance and the speed of a moving object), tracking (ability to focus on and determine movement of the ball) and peripheral awareness (ability to focus on the pitch while maintaining awareness of other players on the field). Visual skills for reaction include hand-eye coordination (ability to optimally link visual input to motor skills) and visual reaction time (ability to process visual information and respond to that information rapidly).

Athletes, coaches and associated professionals are always looking for ways to **improve performance**.

In Honsberger Physiotherapy and Biomechanics Clinic's continual efforts to maximize athletic performance we have realized that critical visual skills are rarely tested and even more rarely trained.

You can't hit what you can't see. Can you process incoming visual information efficiently and react instantaneously. **Ask about our sports vision training programs.**

What a shame if we spend countless hours training the body to perform a skill but don't have adequate visual skills to maximize performance on the field.

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