

THE LOAD

PART ONE OF THE TIMING MECHANISM

The Load is a timing mechanism to start the swing. At lower levels of baseball it is not used or needed much. When pitchers start to throw faster you will see that pitches from 46 feet can get on a hitter very fast. This fact makes it difficult for a player to start his swing after the ball has left the pitcher's hand and have any hope of making an on time swing.

A well timed Load followed closely by the Stride enable the player to be in position to achieve the most important part of hitting:

ARRIVE ON TIME

The length of the Load will depend on where a player starts with his hand position in his stance. Ideally, a player will start with his hands around his back shoulder and Load (slightly back and up) to the "attack" position. This would limit the amount of movement and thus be the easiest way to time the pitcher.

The best visual (for me) regarding the Load comes from a story told by Bucky Jacobsen regarding something said by Albert Pujols. Pujols imagined that there was a hook on the top part of his bat and a shelf above the catcher on a wall. Each time Pujols would Load he would think about reaching that hook up to the shelf and then pulling it down off the wall when he swung.

The key points to a good Load:

- The weight moves primarily in to the inner portion of the back leg and foot.
- Think Load "in to" the back leg, NOT "onto" the back leg. Key: Do not let the back knee get over the back foot, this will cause you to load "onto" the back leg. Try to keep the back knee inside your back foot, this will allow you to Load "in to" the back leg properly.
- Another way to help with the lower body load is to think "Load down in to the back knee" - starting with bent legs (athletic position) will help avoid too much Load "onto" the back knee.
- The front shoulder closes slightly, automatically loading the hands.
- The hands move slightly up and back towards the umpire. Hands should be relaxed.
- The Load should be smooth and synchronized with small relaxed movement, avoid stiff robotic movement.



From this position, the player is in a well-balanced loaded position and has taken his Stride to toe (more on that in next section) that allows him to attack the incoming pitch and "ARRIVE ON TIME".

Watch the Major Leaguers, you will see most players reach this Load position at some point, no matter what their stance looked like when they started.