

SEND BARREL INSTEAD OF KNOB TO THE BALL

In my previous article, I covered the technique of turning-the-barrel around your rear shoulder back towards the catcher, then forward deep into the swing plane while illustrating its advantages. In this piece, I will explore bringing the barrel directly to the ball in contrast to the long-established method of knob-to-the-ball. Bringing the barrel-to-the-ball directly is the end-result from turning-the-barrel method. Most senior hitters have been taught knob-to-the-ball their entire lives. In executing this old school technique, the hitter either pulls the bat with the front arm, or pushes it with the back arm, aiming to move the hands out in front before making contact.

I realize that sending the knob first to the ball has a deep history and is well ensconced in our baseball culture and teachings. As I have stated before, there is a veritable plethora of ways to deliver the bat to the ball, some work, others fail. Barrel-to-the-ball method employs your hands as the pivot point producing a quick spinning of the bat in a horizontal pendulum plane, without pressing arms forward. When pressing the knob-to-the-ball, there is a disconnect between the arms and core muscles which produces the power in your swing. The barrel-to-the-ball action is a fundamental part of rotational mechanics.

Barrel-to-the-ball utilizes your hands as the pivot point in a horizontal plane, like a spinning rotor blade on a helicopter. During this motion, the knob of the bat is not going straight to the ball but is rotating around your body in a circle creating centrifugal force. The knob-to-the-ball method looks okay to those who have been taught the technique. When executed it does not create early bat speed. The barrel remains static when hands are pressed forward. Contrastingly, barrel-to-the-ball starts the bat-barrel immediately while maintaining the connection between arms and body as the hips fire (see insert).

One major drawback with the knob-to-the-ball technique, is that the barrel stays back and does nothing as you begin your swing to the ball. Furthermore, moving the knob to the ball creates a separation of arms from the body losing the advantage of kinetic energy that is stored in legs and torso. Swinging the barrel-to-the-ball also creates a quicker move to the ball, allowing the batter to wait longer before swinging, helping eliminate going out early on a pitch. When Invoking barrel-to-the-ball, the hands do not move forward of the body independently, but maintain a solid connection allowing the hip turn to bring the barrel square to the ball.

Execution: Start by tipping the barrel of the bat directly toward the pitcher at about a 45-degree angle. Now begin drawing the bat back toward the catcher, at the same time cocking wrists and setting bat-lag, this is your launch position. The launch position is near your rear shoulder where the back elbow has now dropped down to the waist area (in the slot) and hands are in the palm-up and palm-down pattern. The rotation of the hips will bring the barrel to the hitting position. In the process of drawing the bat to the launch position, try adding a clockwise (opposite for lefty) twisting motion of the bat around your hands that initiates early bat-speed.

Summary: The Knob-to-the-ball delays the starting of swing speed as the barrel is not moving, just your arms. Furthermore, Knob-to-the-ball can produce a chopping down swing action at the ball, making good contact more difficult. In contrast, the barrel-to-the-ball provides instant bat-speed in a circular motion, creating centrifugal force needed for power. Power comes from maintaining a solid connection of arms to body as the hips will turn the barrel to meet the ball flush.

On the other hand, knob-to-the-ball separates the connection of arms to the body and you then become just an "arm swinger". Barrel-to-the-ball also helps eliminate going out early on the pitch that weakens power. Bottom line, barrel-to-the-ball will generate additional mph to your bat-speed. Just a side note, Jose Bautista of the Toronto Raptors turned his career around when he adopted the turning-the-barrel.

The insert photos were captured from the internet instructional video discussing knob versus barrel to the ball.

- Link to barrel-to-the-ball instructional video a 2+min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Henv2cKA9Es>
- Jose Bautista turning the barrel-to-ball 2+min video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0Tv9JTP2qs>

Happy hitting,

Art Eversole

