

# Hitting With Two Strikes

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Sam Piraro, the 2000 Western Athletic Conference "Coach of the Year" is in his 15th season as San Jose State's head coach. With a 454-342-3 record, he is 13 wins away from breaking the school record for wins. Piraro recorded career win 400 on April 10, 1999 in Las Vegas, Nev., when SJSU defeated UNLV, 6-0. The 48-year-old Piraro has coached his teams to four-straight 30-win seasons. In 14 seasons as head coach, seven teams have reached the 30-win plateau and three others (1989, 1990, 2000) have won 40 or more games. San Jose State was a participant at the 2000 College World Series.

Hitting consistently with a two strike count is one of the most difficult things to do in baseball. The following is an article on the topic by one of the most successful college coaches in the country. Coach Sam Piraro -- San Jose State University

One of the most important areas of offensive baseball is the ability to make good contact with two strikes. The most successful pitchers have the ability to "turn it up a notch" when they have the hitter in a two-strike situation.

Unfortunately, many hitters do not raise their level of competitiveness accordingly. Not only does a hitter need to make physical adjustments, but he must also turn up his mental focus to prepare for the upcoming confrontation. It should be "personal"!

Here are some ideas in dealing with the two-strike situation:

### **I. MENTAL OUTLOOK**

Imagine yourself backed into a corner of an alley. Someone confronts you and wants your last five dollars. You can either:

- Submit and give up.
- Try and negotiate a settlement.
- Fight your way out of it.

We would like players to have the "Fight your way out of it" mentality.

### **II. PHYSICAL ADJUSTMENTS**

- Choke up on the bat slightly. Bat control is important.
  - Move slightly closer to the plate. Take away the outside strike.
  - Spread out slightly to insure balance.
  - Slightly crouch to shorten the strike zone.
- This adjustment helps in identifying and laying off the high pitch.

### **III. MENTAL ADJUSTMENTS**

Make it clear to the team that taking a third-called strike is unacceptable. There is no doubt that sometimes a hitter is fooled by a great pitch, and he cannot pull the trigger. However, this situation requires a feisty, competitive mode.

- Look fastball and adjust.
- Look to go up the middle and opposite field. Protect outside to in.
- Foul off any borderline strikes.
- Fight off or block off inside strikes.

### **IV. ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE**

Putting the ball in play has so many possibilities. Keep the strikeouts down to find a correlation with run production. The difference between ten strikeouts and six strikeouts in a contest is huge! The difference with those four contacts can result in any of the following:

- Advanced runners.
- Forced errors.
- Bloop hits.
- Bad hops/lost in the sun.
- Frustrated pitcher.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

- Effective two-strike hitting can be enhanced in practice settings.
- Establish count settings in the cages or in front toss drills.
- Also include this package in a batting practice scenario live on the field.

As a coach, be very positive and complimentary when players compete in two-strike situations.