

How to make 95-mph pitching look like it's 85-mph

(Aaron Miles Interview 2020-08-24)

Joey Myers 00:00

Hello and welcome to Swing Smarter Monthly Newsletter. This is your host Joey Myers of HittingPerformanceLab.com. And today I have the honor of being on a call with one of my good buddies over the years, we've been talking hitting, we've talked all kinds of different things. We once had a three-hour phone call that I had, hopefully was trying to record and it didn't record. It was a very good conversation that only I got to hear and benefit from the information from Mr. Aaron Miles. So welcome to the show, my friend.

Aaron Miles 00:31

Thank you for having me. It's been a while. And this is the perfect setting, the things that are going on in the world right now. There's nothing, nobody's missing out on anything else. Let's talk hitting.

Joey Myers 00:45

And that's a great transition into my first question. What do you think coming from a player's perspective, even a coach because you were coaching an Indie team for a little bit there? What do you think the best approach for current players and maybe even you can touch on for coaches as well, but definitely players in dealing with this COVID layoff like to return at the top of their game? What would be your advice in that?

“...players in dealing with this COVID layoff like to return at the top of their game? What would be your advice in that?”

Aaron Miles 01:09

Well, there's a multitude of things that can get in the way of what you can best do to be best prepared. Obviously, the best thing you can do is, as a hitter, find a batting cage you can hit in. The great thing about baseball is a lot of these things are done alone anyways, on yourself, if you're a good player, most likely, you've spent plenty of time alone on a baseball field or with maybe your dad or somebody else hitting you grounders or pitching to you.

Aaron Miles 01:42

We can still do that. I think one of the main things which is something that I like to implement all the time anyways in regular training is getting into some sort of a batting cage where you're seeing significant speed. It doesn't have to be the number one thing, the main thing, but you have to see that ball speed, you can't just get flips. You can't just take, you know, 40 mile an hour 50 mile an hour BP

from the guy short, get into a batting cage where there's even 50 feet someone's throwing 65 miles an hour or better.

Aaron Miles 02:22

If it's a little further, then you got to hit something with some speed. When you get back to a game situation, it's not a big deal to you.

Joey Myers 02:31

That is a great point Aaron, and that's one in our three-hour conversation, one of the gems that came out of that conversation that was me listening from you. Go back to that time, where I think you were struggling and I can't remember who you said you were playing for at the time of St. Louis. And you're playing with Pujols, I think you were struggling a little bit and you went out crank the pitching machine up out on the field could throw like 100 plus miles an hour and you were bunting.

Joey Myers 03:00

I think maybe you didn't put down a bunt or two or something happened where the next day it drove you to go out and see about 200 pitches at 100 miles an hour and trying to bunt them down and just discuss that the circumstances of that. And then what that ended up leading to after that.

How Bunting can help players learn how to hit better

Aaron Miles 03:17

Well, let's talk about the story first. You're mentioning the younger the training things that I learned from it, and then implemented but for the first part. Yeah, I was not hitting the ball well, and I absolutely I didn't get a bunt down. The reason I wasn't because I said, Hey, I want to show up and bunt. I didn't get a bump down in the game. And as a rookie, you know, you can get that scolding and like, hey, you're going to bunt for the next two days before everybody shows up. And you're going to burn 100 balls every day for the next three days.

Joey Myers 03:49

And that was with St. Louis, right?

Aaron Miles 03:51

No, absolutely. That was earlier in my career with Colorado when I was a rookie. You know, luckily it didn't happen in St. Louis...I've worked those kinks out of my game. Anyway, they didn't get bogged down I got to show up do that. So after three days of literally 300 pitches and they had the hack attack machine the very good one pumped up all the way it's probably throwing 85 it's a little bit closer they're using good baseball so it's safe the balls aren't running and you know it's safe I'm bunting...

Aaron Miles 04:23

After three days of seeing 100 pitches in a row of that and bunting them, my eye was locked in and what I really figured out what happened is my eyeballs, and really just got locked into what was a pitch right down the middle. You know, you sometimes, I mean you know what it is, you know what it is but

sometimes your brain just gets a little bit a skew of seeing it recognizing it and going yeah, baby that's it.

Aaron Miles 04:51

You know, and then I just got a dose of it. You know, big time dose of it at that top-notch speed that 85 mile an hour speed, boom. I went on for the next three weeks to hit like .400 and got my batting average back into 300. And, you know, I was sticking around and, in the lineup, ever since.

Joey Myers 05:12

Yeah, that's a big question that I get with my hitters that I work with is what happens when I have some that are Junior seniors in high school they're playing a lot of showcase and travel ball outside of California because governor nuisance is not allowing baseball to be played in the state so they're going outside the state to play...they're seeing a lot of good competition. They're seeing a lot of pitchers that are for some guys 85 is super-fast.

Joey Myers 05:38

And others... I got one who's actually a cousin on my wife's side, he's a good prospect is that next season this next draft season, he's going to be drafted in the 20th round or whatever that they're going to be doing this next time around - in the five to 15 round range. And he's seeing pitchers that are throwing 90 plus. I think he saw one that was 90, he saw actually one I've actually I don't know if he hit off the one out with 100. But he saw one that was 96, 95, 96.

Joey Myers 06:04

The question is always asked, well, how am I able to hit that, and I just always come back to your story of just crank it up faster than what you would normally see. And do that about 300 times and you're going to be a lot better for it when you see the really high plus the average velocity.

Aaron Miles 06:23

Absolutely. And, and, you know, in today's day and age where, you know, if you were to be if, you know, 25 years ago, you would have look at the way a lot of guys are swinging there, you'd be like, these guys are swinging like softball players, you know, softball players learn how to hit a ball pretty far.

How to make 95-mph pitching look like it's 85-mph

Aaron Miles 06:48

We're all seeing these guys, swing with the most authority, most the time, power is of most importance and to do that, and just especially when you haven't been playing all the sudden make that happen against 95. And especially when you're young, when you don't have a five-year 10 year built up of face in it, to go do it, you better get on to something.

Aaron Miles 07:16

I used to in my batting cage, I would even go up and beyond it, I would be hitting something that was coming out of a machine probably at around a 70 to 75 mile an hour range close to 80, probably and I would get as close as I possibly could and hit it. There's a YouTube video of a guy doing it. And he's

like, Oh, I'm hitting the ball that's equivalent to 200 miles an hour. The easy thing is when you're that close, you know it's pretty much going to be in the same area.

Aaron Miles 07:52

You're not spitting on a slider in the dirt at that. It doesn't really give you... but it does train your brain to see it and boom and make that little tiny adjustment and really challenge your brain and your hands to get to the extent of what is possible on recognizing it and hitting a speed. And the more you can do that, manipulate it and do that you'll be easier you'll make 95 like it used to be 85.

Joey Myers 08:28

And I actually heard a story about Bonds that he used to do something similar. He would crank the machine up and he'd hit from 50 feet or 60 feet and then he would after every swing, he would take a step forward.

Aaron Miles 08:39

And not only that, his bp pitcher would be throwing harder than everybody else, and would be closer. And he would do that and he wouldn't always do it but he did it a lot. It wasn't he would do it pretty much. And especially when he would do an early BP but you know guys always have their guys that they like the best and that guy was always somebody who's throwing harder and...

Joey Myers 09:09

And probably facing somebody throwing plus velocity, I'm sure he that's what he's doing that day

Aaron Miles 09:15

Yeah and just swing maintenance throughout the season they all are throwing hard now so yeah back in the day that would have been more of a thing I want to do it more now because I'm facing JR Richards, yeah, I went way back on that one.

Joey Myers 09:32

Hey, what do you think two mission critical hitting skills are in today's game? You did mention that was you're doing another transition that got a little off track...but you did mention about the launch it you know, you didn't call it launch angle but these guys that are swinging for the dingers and doubles and things like that. What do you feel like is being lost on the game? Maybe that's it. You can go into that. Or what are the two-mission critical one or two mission critical hitting skills that you think are, that need to be really reinforced in today's game?

What are the two-mission critical one or two mission critical hitting skills that you think are, that need to be really reinforced in today's game?

Aaron Miles 10:04

Well, first off, I want to say that the hitters today are, they are better than the hitters before. Because they have more training, they have more people that have dedicated their lives to understanding the

swing and making the knowledge of hitting is growing and growing as it should. No one's winning the gold medal in the 100 meters with a 10 flat anymore.

Aaron Miles 10:38

So for people that say that they can't do this, they're not as good. They're completely capable. That's just not what they're trying to do some of the things that were good back then. Now, okay, the fact that you can shorten up and if you pride yourself on trying to hit .400, then you're not going to probably be able to drive the ball as deep or whatever, because you're trying to not strike out as much and you're trying to go for hitting the ball hard 85% of the time as opposed to 60% of the time with more homers, and you understand what I'm getting at?

Aaron Miles 11:20

It might be hard. It's just a give and take. It's like a spectrum, you know what I mean? So, the player that has the possibility to like a Wade Boggs or Tony Gwynn style guy, that guy has gone therefore some of those drills that they would do are disappearing. And the thing is, is their skill set is still so amazingly important in winning a baseball game and being a complete hitter. But at the same time, we need to try to be the most productive hitter and in today's day and age it says hit for power and try to hit for power.

Aaron Miles 12:08

That being said, I do think that some of the little things that don't try to be somebody that doesn't strike out, try to be somebody that says, I want to learn how to maybe make that decision later. Not just later because I'm seeing it better, later because I'm going to make my swing shorter sometimes, or have the ability to make it shorter sometimes. I don't strike out. I do put the ball in play. I do give the other guy a chance, so I do make hit that run in against that pitcher that strikes most everybody out anyway.

Aaron Miles 12:49

So some of these things that show up in a swing that maybe aren't showing up and it started 10 years ago, but maybe more and now it's showing up at the big league level because and it's showing up and I'm not saying it's bad, not saying it's good. But today's hitter has less of a chance of getting a two-strike hit with a guy on second, than a hitter a couple, maybe a decade ago or two decades ago. And again, some of that has to do with what the umpires gave the pitcher back then, what they don't know if they do I really, pitching is different now to at the big league level than it was couple years ago because of what they call, what the hitters are trying to do, what guys throw the ball immensely.

Aaron Miles 13:50

My biggest thing is, even though some of those old things are still taught to young hitters to be short and to be able to not strike out They both need to be taught and the hitter and the instructor need to understand that you're getting towards something that is going to be the best. And you have to build it with these parts, you can't just always go for power, just you can't just shorten up way too much because some kid can't figure it out. You know what I mean?

How the lost art of “hitting” is disappearing

Aaron Miles 14:23

Because you try to do that as a hitting coach say this kid can only handle this this kid going to handle this. I want to teach the kid to be a complete hitter. Joey Votto had this thing said it best. You see these guys that are having these amazing swings, hitting all these homers, you don't realize that they learn the progression to learn how to hit and they can do all the crazy little things as well. That's starting to disappear a little bit at the high level.

Joey Myers 14:34

I agree. Yeah, that was a great talk that he had. It was probably diamond demos or something and he was saying how he's being modest, Joey Votto but he's talking about Miguel Cabrera or Mike Trout if you told either one of those guys to hit a one hopper to the second baseman, they could do it. If you told him to the one hop the fence in right centerfield they could do it. If you told him to hit a pop fly to the third baseman, they could do it, you know, maybe a batting practice type of scenario.

Joey Myers 15:22

But they're but they're barrel control is so good. We talk about controlling the verticals, which instead of calling it launch angles, we call them verticals because some coaches don't like launch angle, the terms which really doesn't make sense because it's just talked about what the angle the ball is coming off the bat, but the other is controlling vertical and horizontal so line to line approach. And after that, Joey Votto talk, he really got me to think about what hitting really is and it isn't just launch angles, but also to be able to control the line the line game as well.

Aaron Miles 15:59

Yeah, well, and here's the thing... your focus, which is, I believe the right focus, is to teach the hitter, the proper mechanics that he can get the most out of his swing completely. Now, given that he needs to apply that to a game, because we've all had the kid where he's come to you three times that he hasn't gotten a hit yet. I don't think we're coming back. Well, sorry. I don't mean to sound like a woman that I get kind of like a guy too.

Aaron Miles 16:46

There's all that that's involved in, you know, teaching some of these younger hitters, but that the hitters they can do many, many, many, many things with the baseball. And they've done it throughout their progression and in life. And that's the thing that I think, you want to get to is, is you want to get to a point as a hitter where you know yourself and you can shoot for more, or come back a little bit. And because we're always maturing, getting stronger, lifting... We're becoming adult, as young hitters and even professional guys become stronger. You're always changing a little bit, because you should until you get to a certain age, right?

How to use “tinkering” to get the dial on the right learning channel when teaching hitters

Aaron Miles 17:42

And there's always this, maybe I can do that now. I had a kid. The other day, I felt like his back elbow was just too pointed down. Right, and he's missing a little bit of this torque. And he's so talented. I know

he can get it, right? But I have to tell him, look, you have to do this at your progression. Because you still want to go and get hits in the game, but I didn't become the best hitter I did without fooling around and tinkering and saying, Oh, this is better, that's better.

Aaron Miles 18:15

And every hitter is his own guy to say, I'm ready to do this now in a game. I'm tinkering with it, I'm getting it. But I'm going to look at a hitter and say, you're not getting the most out of it. Here's this is you could probably do it. And you know what? It may be better for him. It may not. But eventually, he may figure it out and he will be because that's what the best power hitters are looking like. I could look at Matt Carpenter and I think his back elbow looks kind of down a little bit. He got it up a little more, he'd have more pop. But the way he feels it, he's probably got it in a comfortable position and he's going for what he's going for, and it looks like it's down more, but I guarantee you it's still in a really good position.

Aaron Miles 19:07

Not everybody gets Javi Baez torque or Gary Sheffield, or you know what I mean? We can't all get it we don't all, but it's fun to get as close to those guys as you can because they're doing something that is like Sheffield and Bonds.

Joey Myers 19:27

Yeah, well what's interesting about that back elbow is and I was always 100% most of my hitters at the time, I was telling them to get it up and it's not get it up like Matt's dad out in the 10u Little League park that doesn't know anything about baseball, Johnny dad that saying get the back elbow up, back elbow up, we use the back elbow to steer the shoulders down downhill all the way to your landing position, right?

Joey Myers 19:52

I diverged away from making all my hitters do that because I find that some just don't have a sense of the down shoulder so they'll raise the elbow, but it causes some other things to break. So yeah, I'm talking about Carpenter with that elbow more down. As long as he's getting his shoulders down. I'm good with that. Think about Stan Musial. I think Stan Musial had a down elbow, back elbow. But his shoulders were down like he made sure at landing his shoulders were down. Showing his numbers, all that good stuff.

Aaron Miles 20:25

Yeah, that's the key. Absolutely. Right. 100%

Joey Myers 20:30

Yeah, so I agree. I agree with you trying to get all that which I would love listening to you guys that played at a high level on the adjustments that you make. I don't know if it's a conscious thing that you guys are doing or an unconscious thing, but think about guys like you guys like Trout, different guys that play and we try and stress it to my local hitters, or an online is you have to make adjustments. Depending on what the ball does. You have to make adjustments on the fly all the time, so if you hit a ball in the air you pop out to the second baseman, there should be a swing adjustment.

Joey Myers 21:05

And I'm not talking about mechanics, but just external cue, right? So maybe the next one, you try and get on top of you try and hit a ground ball. Talk about I mean, I don't know, do you guys do that consciously or unconsciously? Or is it just...

Do the best in the game make adjustments consciously or unconsciously?

Aaron Miles 21:19

I'm going to say what is and I'll probably go too long, but stop me. As far as like knowing your swing, and making adjustments, when you just start at a young age, when your dad throws you a ball, you hit a grounder or you hit a pop up, hit line drives, son, right? And then you figure out how to hit a line drive pretty good, but then up, that ball is out and you rolled over to the shortstop. That ball was in, you hit foul. And then all of a sudden you figure out, Oh, I got the contact points. And now you can hit a line drive on any pitch that's kind of everywhere.

Aaron Miles 22:10

You're becoming a better hitter, because you're figuring out contact points and where to put the sweet spot of the bat on the ball to where it leaves the trajectory from it. So, that is the essence of hitting completely. You do not need more than that, really. You have analyzed the swing completely to figure out what the greatest hitters have done, which they're doing the exact same thing in their brain is what I'm talking about. And they're doing exactly everything that you're saying with, putting their body in the situation to get the most torque and the most bat speed.

Aaron Miles 22:53

But the main still thing is getting ready to hit to apply a blow and see it and apply the proper blow. The bottom line is Hey man, we love it when Canseco used to swing and miss. Oh man, it was like, oh god, but how about when, that was when he had no strikes and he swung at a slider in the dirt. He looked like he's swinging at a fastball. What about when he shortens up and he just says, I'm going to just make contact and then boom, hands to the ball. Now, if Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, those guys didn't have video, they didn't have things to tell. You need to look like this. You need to look like they just went and said, I'm going to hit. You're going to throw me 50 pitches. I'm going to hit 47-line drives.

Aaron Miles 23:53

And if you just do that, you can't do that without doing a lot of things right. Now, you may not have a whole lot of power, you have figured out how to do it and not have a lot of power. Guess what? Joey Myers, you've already proven you have a brain to figure out something to repeat it. Let me teach you how to hit the ball further and harder. So yes, I go to you, boom, boom, boom, I do that, but yet it always comes back down to, do I have that feeling where any pitch I can when I get the timing down, boom, the line drives are coming.

Aaron Miles 24:31

And those adjustments, everything comes back to that. Everything comes back to that and that's how, if you wouldn't know what a good hitter was without that thing. Without, we could look at Ted Williams

now oh look, he does this. He does this. Nobody had video to show him. We know from doing that because if you have the right approach in your head, hit through the baseball, make contact so I'm not sticking my butt out or whatever you will stick your butt out in a game or when you're off and that's just hitting because the thing that should be in your head when you're hitting BP, how you get to where you can hit nine line drive you think sweet spot of the bat on the baseball through the baseball. That's it.

Aaron Miles 25:26

And when you don't hit it on the sweet spot you go, I didn't make the adjustments to do it and then magic happens. And then you learn how to get more into it and whatever. That's my thing about making adjustments it all comes back to that.

Joey Myers 25:44

Okay, experimenting all that. Well hey dude, I want to be respectful of your time. As you can listen to those listening. You could tell that we just got Aaron all warmed up. This is how we go three hour conversations is because he just warmed up right now and you could tell by the energy and his voice and everything, so I wish we could do that today but we'll do a part two part three part four or whatever and we'll play off of this but Aaron where can we find you? Are you pretty active on the social medias right now?

Where to find Aaron Miles...

Aaron Miles 26:14

Not, not too much and maybe if somebody really wants to pick my brain and everything about something, I got an email aaronmiles7@gmail.com

Joey Myers 26:38

I gotcha.

Aaron Miles 26:38

And yeah, I do lessons if you're in the bay if you're in the Bay Area. But with what's going on right now there's a lot of issues...

Joey Myers 26:51

You guys are on lock down up there. I know.

Aaron Miles 26:53

Yeah. We've got the fires going on too. They're going on in LA and everything too. So yeah.

Joey Myers 26:59

You guys stay safe out there. And I think what I'll do is I'm going to email you; I have a link to one of the pages on my site that for people that will search in Google hitting instructor near me or something like that. So this page shows up on the top 10 search results on that, I think it's actually the four or whatever, so people can go on that page, I have a link they can click and it'll bring up a spreadsheet of all the hitting instructors that teach based on the system that we talk about.

Joey Myers 27:02

I'll email that over to you, and you can put your name in there because I know I do get quite a few inquiries. And for people that don't find that page on their own, they ask me, I just send them that page. We'll get you on there so that people can, if they're in the Bay Area, they're looking for somebody that teaches this stuff, and they can find you and reach out.

Aaron Miles 27:48

Oh, that's cool. There's a lot of people out here and you know, one of the things that's good is, the individual lesson hitting is one of the only things that's going on right now as far as baseball training is concerned as far as... I know there's a couple travel ball teams playing and some high school teams and they got to do everything they got to do and be safe.

Joey Myers 28:11

Prohibition baseball in California.

Aaron Miles 28:13

Exactly right. Yeah.

Joey Myers 28:16

I don't envy, and I don't know you do but I don't envy the poor athletes, young athletes right now. Could you imagine being in the big leagues right now with the 60-game college season? And all the propaganda political propaganda that is going on?

Aaron Miles 28:31

Well, yeah, I mean, that is, it's a tough go around everything. The ones I feel for the most, the guys that, the end of their career, they're trying to get one more paycheck. You know, maybe didn't, and that guy, the guy that was a fringe double A, triple A player who's they think is an organizational player who was about to have the best year of his career. And all of a sudden shake that organizational player tag and become a prospect. That guy that figured it out maybe at the end of last year, who worked hard and was ready, or every guy in junior college, even college high school that worked.

Aaron Miles 29:16

That wanted it because I was one of those guys that, went from meh to Oh, look at this. Oh, kids doing it. Oh, wow. He keeps like I had to keep proving it. If you're a big-time prospect from the eyes, the eye test. You're okay. If you're somebody who has to go out and put on a show where, that's where it's tough. And, good luck to those guys because they need a season to prove it, and that's the beauty of this game is you don't have to be one of those guys that is just passes the eye test. The guy that doesn't pass the eye test, can still do it in this game.

Joey Myers 29:58

Yeah, thanks to metrics and all that good stuff.

Aaron Miles 30:00

Yeah, I mean just doing it, you hit you hit .450 in every league you ever playing? Guess what? You'll find a league good enough to keep going.

Joey Myers 30:15

Alright brother, I'll let you go you guys stay safe up there up north. I know it's crazy, we're getting the smoke from you guys and LA, we're sandwiched in the middle of you two. Be safe out there man. If they tell you guys you have to evacuate make sure you guys evacuate.

Aaron Miles 30:30

You too. You too. Keep looking at those hitters man.

Joey Myers 30:35

I know you too. Well, hey, I will get all this stuff over to you. And then we'll stay a little bit closer connected and maybe do a part two part three.

Aaron Miles 30:44

Absolutely. Thank you, Joey, I appreciate it.

Joey Myers 30:46

Okay brother.

Aaron Miles 30:47

Okay.

Joey Myers 30:48

Bye.