

## Stop Making It So Complicated Getting Batters Out – Part Two



*"Greg Maddux is probably the best pitcher in all of baseball along with Roger Clemens. He's much more intelligent than I am because he doesn't have a 95 or 98 mph fastball. I would tell any pitcher who wants to be successful to watch him, because he's the true definition of a pitcher." - Randy Johnson*

After Game 1 of the 1999 World Series, the *Washington Post* interviewed Atlanta Braves starter Greg Maddox. Maddox is a 2014 HOF inductee, won 18 Gold Glove Awards and is a four time Cy Young Award winner.

*"I could probably throw harder if I wanted, but why? When they're in a jam, a lot of pitchers try to throw harder. Me, I try to locate better. I try to do two things: locate my fastball and change speeds. That's it. I try to keep as simple as possible. I just throw my fastball to both sides of the plate and change speed every now and then. There is no special food or anything like that, I just try to make quality pitches and try to be prepared each time I go out there."*

We are just covering the physical side of pitching here, not the mental game side.

### Don't Make It Complicated

Pitchers get too caught up in trying to throwing hard, learning countless different pitches, imitating the "current" hottest pitcher at the time, etc. Successful pitching comes down to two things:

- Reading the batter
- The ability to command and locate your fastball

While getting a called third strike is great, statistically the most successful pitchers are the ones who strike out enough batters in a game but also get enough hitters out on contact. This keeps their pitch counts low. The best, long-term successful pitchers have a balance of both. Now granted, there are times and situations where a strike out is key.

### How Do You Get Batters Out?

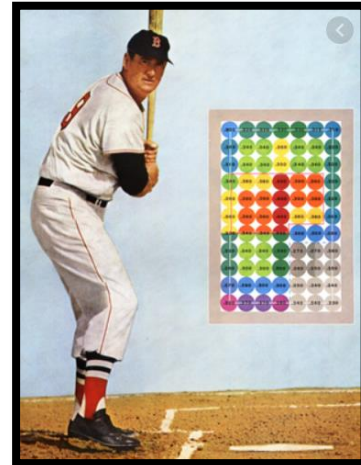
Do you go into a game trying to get batters out with your "stuff"? The truth is, you will be more successful if you DON'T come into a game with that strategy. You don't get them out, you have them to get themselves out.



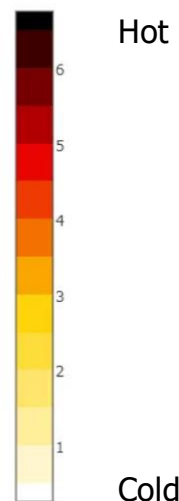
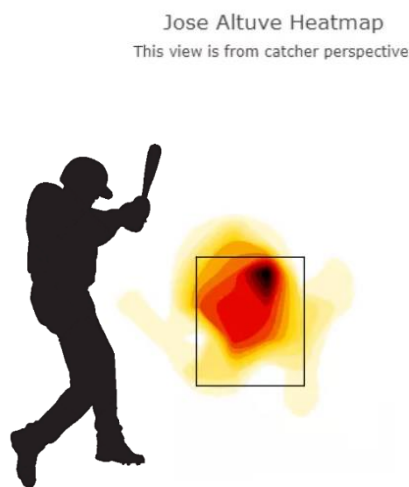
As we covered in the report *"Reading Batters at the Plate"*, more times than not, pitchers should attack a batter's weakness, not necessarily to the pitcher's strength. **You don't get them out, you have them to get themselves out.** Every batter is different. While some will have similarities, there are still differences. No batter is "hot" the entire strike zone. What if a batter is hot where you throw your best pitch? It's better to initially go after that batter with your second or third pitch vs. your best pitch.

Every batter has at least two areas in the strike zone they are weak. Where would you pitch Ted Williams for example?

Color	Batting Ave Range
Red	.400+
Orange	.390 - .400
Yellow	.350 - .380
Light Green	.320 - .340
Dark Green	.300 - .320
Blue	.270 - .300
Purple	.250 - .270
Grey	.250 & under



Even the great Ted Williams wasn't hot the entire strike zone. How about Jose' Altuve a .300 hitter? Where would you want to pitch him?



Heat Map for Altuve 2019  
Source: Baseball Savant

As mentioned in *"Reading Batters at the Plate"*, let the batter tell you how to get them out. Lose the ego. It's so much easier if you do. Good hitters are going to hit no matter how good the pitcher. Since they are going to hit any way, pitch to where they are telling you they are weak. Let them hit a grounder or pop up. Let them hit **Your** pitch – not **THEIR** pitch. That's why there are fielders. Those eight teammates on the field are part of your pitching arsenal also.

### You Must Have Command of Your Fastball

Are you trying to learn fancy pitches or learn how to get batters out?

*"Many pitching gurus through the years have tried to overcomplicate the art of pitching. I like to keep it simple. In working with the Braves, I tell my pitchers to focus on being in command of their fast ball. If a pitcher doesn't have command of their fastball, he has nothing"* (from: *Pitch Like a Pro* by Leo Mazzone\*, pitching coach Atlanta Braves & Jim Rosenthal 1999)

\*ESPN ranked the Atlanta Braves as having the best pitching rotation (1998) and the fourth best pitching rotation (1993) of all time. Leo Mazzone is considered one of the best, if not the best pitching coach in the modern era.

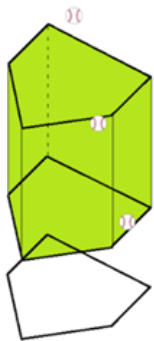
It's been said a million times "*The best pitch is a well located fastball*". If you want to have only one skill as a pitcher, it would be the ability to command and control your fastball. To be able without hesitation to spot it where you want it. Changing speeds is important, but nothing beats a well located fastball. One study looked at MLB stats and it showed that pitches with good movement, if not located well, were just as likely to be hit for a HR as an average fastball. If a pitcher doesn't have command of his fastball, the rest of his pitches usually won't be good either.

Also never try to make a pitch do more that you are physically able to make it do. Once you start trying to do that, pitchers overextend and bad things happen.

Contrary to the baseball industries mindset, here is what's actually most important in order: *Location, Movement, Velocity*. While velocity is important, if you can't locate, velocity means nothing.

### **Batters Can't Cover the Entire Strike Zone Effectively**

While this subject has been covered in "*The Batting Tee Report*", it is worth mentioning again. Home plate has pentagonal volume. That means there are countless locations the ball could cross the plate in time and space.



*"A pitcher could throw the ball to roughly 80 different points and it be called a strike. If that pitcher threw 4 different types of pitches, that means 320 different lanes to cover."* (Source: baseballthinktank.com).

Why so many lanes? Let's say two pitched balls arrive at the same location BUT at different angles. Because of the differing incoming angles (trajectory), the ball would have different lanes and speeds. Which means even through it's the same ball location, to hit the ball solid, the batter CANNOT have the same swing for each pitch. There is no batter in the world that can cover 80 random lanes on every pitch. Let alone a possible 360 or more lanes and be successful. Period. Even the great Ted Williams couldn't cover the entire strike zone. Even though he was a .350+ hitter in about 30% of the strike zone, he was a sub .250 hitter in about 25% of the strike zone.

### **How One Pitch Type Can be Multiple Pitches**

What many pitchers and coaches don't understand is that where the ball crosses the plate (high, low, inside or outside), actually determines the speed of the pitch and the balls exit velocity if hit. Perry Husband (patented science of Effective Velocity) has done extensive research on this fact. [Click here to read one of his articles](#). To keep it simple, just think of it this way. No matter what type of pitch is thrown and its speed:

- Pitch thrown outside – low, middle or high  
A pitch thrown outside will be slower to the batter vs. that same pitch and speed thrown middle or inside.
- Pitch thrown inside – low, middle or high  
A pitch thrown inside will be faster to the batter vs. that same pitch and speed thrown middle or outside.

We will use an 80mph fastball to illustrate this point. But any pitch type with the same speed will have the same effect. As you can see in the example on the next page per Perry Husband's research, even though the same pitch type is thrown at the same speed, its location dictates its true speed and the batters timing.

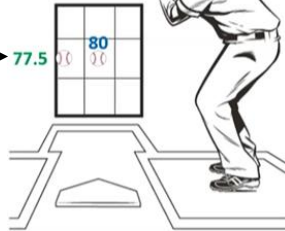
Based on extensive research by Perry Husband

80mph fastball  
Middle/Middle



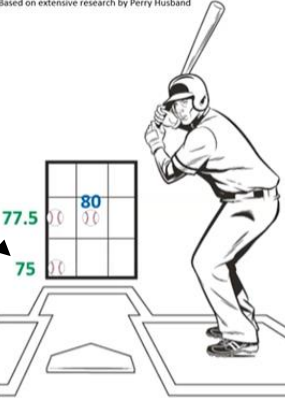
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Same pitch & speed thrown  
Outside/ Middle



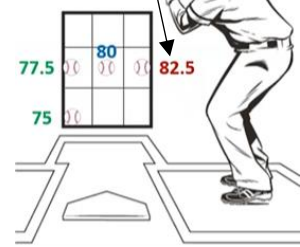
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Same pitch & speed thrown  
Outside/ Low



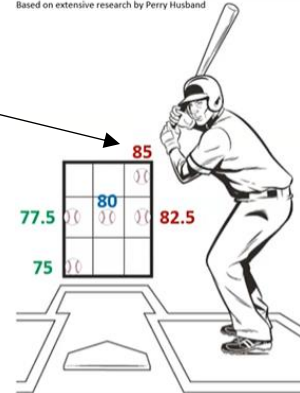
Based on extensive research by Perry Husband

Same pitch & speed thrown  
Inside/ Middle



Based on extensive research by Perry Husband

Same pitch & speed thrown  
Inside/ High



As Hall of Famer Warren Spahn once said:

*"Hitting is timing and pitching is upsetting timing."*

So, using our example, the timing of the swing at the 80mph fastball up and in would be different than the timing for that same 80mph fastball thrown low and away. It's the timing difference between swinging at an 85mph fastball and a 75mph fastball. One pitch that can upset a batters timing.

Pitchers have to lose the mentality *"I have a fastball and that's only one pitch type to get the batter out."* From our example, that one fastball, thrown at the same speed, can have different speeds depending upon the location it's thrown. Now add the fact that one pitch can have 80 different points and it be called a strike. Combine that with the fact batters can't effectively cover the entire strike zone. What if a pitcher has three pitches? That's HUGE. Pitchers have heard it a thousand times *"Move the batter's eyes"*. These are the main reasons, proven factual reasons, why pitchers want to do this.

### Bottom Line

It all starts with the ability to command the fastball. All pitches are set up by the fastball. If a pitcher can't throw a fastball with good command, do you really think they can throw another pitch with movement accurately? Most can't. I have trained many pitchers that tell me they can throw four different pitches. Yet when they throw their curveball is all over. Change-up "dirt's" or tails way out of the strike zone. Slider rarely "slides". When throwing their fastball, even though they can throw it for a strike 65% of the time, its location is all over. Until a pitcher can *confidently* throw any of their "pitches" with a full count, bases loaded and winning run on third, they don't have that pitch in their arsenal. It all starts with the ability to consistently locate their fastball first before trying to learn to throw all the fancy stuff.