



# TEAM ONTARIO BASEBALL

## What are Professional Scouts Looking for in a Position Player?

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### ARM STRENGTH

This is a tool that is often overlooked by ball players today and one of the most lacking tools at the major league level. With 10 teams playing on artificial surfaces, making fielders play their position deeper, a strong arm is even more necessary today than in the past. The player with a strong arm will have less teams take a chance by running against him thus preventing runs from scoring. Thus a team with a weak throwing outfield or catcher will have more opportunities taken against them leading to more throwing errors and more runs given up.

When scouts are evaluating a players' arm strength it is usually during pre-game infield-outfield practice. A scout will get to see several throws by the outfielders to second, third, and home plate. If a player has a good arm, chances are he will show it here, particularly on throws to home plate. Scouts are looking for four things from outfielders: a strong overhand throw, a straight-line trajectory, good carry, and good life on the turf when the ball finally hits the ground.

A strong arm is also necessary for infielders particularly the shortstop and third baseman. Scouts will pay the most attention to throws made from the outfield grass from deep short. If a player has a strong arm, it will show here. Look for a straight-line trajectory, strong hissing noise, and a sharp smack in the first baseman glove.

### RUNNING SPEED

Foot speed is the only common denominator of offense and defense. This is one tool that does not go into slumps. A fast runner is of greater priority for clubs that play on artificial turf because they are playing in a bigger park and the ball travels faster than on grass. A fast outfielder may be able to catch up to two more balls a game thus saving his ball club an average of one run a game. The same player can steal bases thus putting ore pressure on the defense and making the pitchers throw more fastballs.

A players running speed is usually timed in two ways; 60 yard dash and from home to first. The average major league time is 6.9 for the 60 yard dash, from home to first 4.3 seconds for right handed hitters and 4.2 seconds for left handed hitters

### FIELDING ABILITY

This is the one tool that has the greatest chance of improvement. While you cannot develop great foot speed or a great arm, fielding has the greatest chances of improvement with consistent practice. When judging fielding scouts are looking for a number of traits:

- \* Quick Feet -- the ability to move quickly laterally and forward and back.
- \* Range -- how much ground does he cover?
- \* Soft Hands -- the ability to catch the ball smoothly in the center the glove.
- \* Quick Hands -- the ability to field bad hops.

### HITTING ABILITY

This is the most difficult tool to scout because you are judging a hitter on how they will hit do at the major league level, by watching them hit against amateur pitching. There are a lot of amateur hitters that will look great against amateur pitching and then fall flat on their face once they enter professional baseball. A hitter should have these lists of skills:

- \* Bat Speed -- the ability to swing the bat quickly
- \* The ability to consistently hit the ball hard.
- \* Knowledge of the strike zone
- \* The ability to turn on a major league fastball.
- \* The ability to hit breaking pitches.
- \* The ability to hit to all fields.
- \* The ability to make adjustments at the plate when fooled.

### HITTING FOR POWER

Hitting the ball for power is one of the more desirable traits for any hitter, unfortunately it is often the most poorly projected tool at the major league level. In order to hit for power, a hitter needs outstanding batspeed. Batspeed is what makes the ball travel and all outstanding hitters have it. A hitter with major league power will regularly hit the ball over the fence in batting practice and should be able to drive the ball over 400 feet.

A lot of care should be taken when judging amateur hitters swinging aluminum bats. The aluminum bat has a greater hitting surface, and because they are lighter they can be swung with much greater bat speed, driving the ball 18% farther than with wooden bats. A 400-foot drive with a wood bat will travel 470 feet with aluminum. So many hitters are home run hitters swinging aluminum become warning track hitters with a wood bat. It is very important for hitters to get used to a wooden bat before signing into professional baseball. Most hitters find they have a tough time getting used to not driving the ball they way they used to in college or high school baseball.