

Understanding the RUNNING SLAP

In my opinion - The purpose of the Running Slap is to make the defense throw and catch faster than they can successfully throw and catch

- *These slides are intended to give you a better visual idea about the technique involved in correctly executing the Running Slap.*
- *Learning how to teach it follows in the last section.*

What is the Running Slap?

- The Running Slap happens from the lefthanded batter's box, and involves a batter running toward the pitcher while hitting the ball DOWN – trying to basically outrun the ball to 1st base.



This sequence shows Leah O'Brien-Amico a 3 time Gold Medalist on the US Olympic Softball Team, successfully executing a Running Slap

What is the Running Slap?

- The ball is hit DOWN instead of out so that the ball will bounce – the higher the bounce the longer it takes for the defense to field the ball and throw to 1st base.



- Slapping is a race between the batter trying to hit the ball on the ground and run to 1st and the defense trying to field the ball and throw it to 1st base.

Who Should Slap?

- Right handed batters who are fast on the bases but not good enough hitters to get on base very often – move them over to the leftside to slap and they will start off 3-4 steps closer to 1st which enables them to hit a groundball and beat out the throw to 1st.
- Good hitters who are VERY fast.

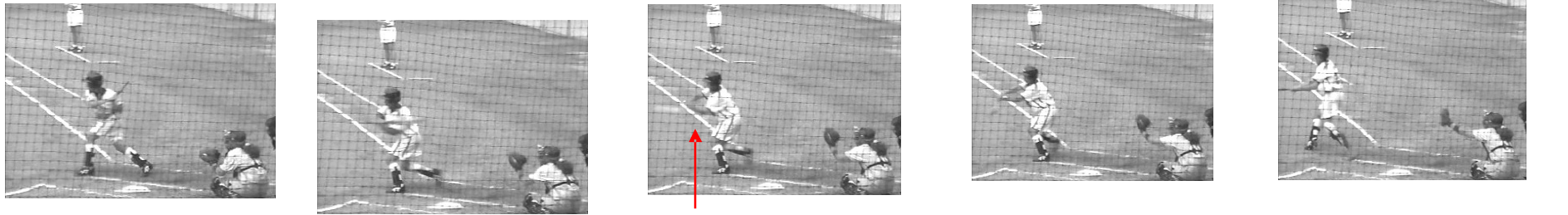
Who Should NOT Slap?

- Good power hitters (hitters that can often hit doubles or better) with average foot speed – don't give up a double to get a single. If a player has average foot speed they aren't going to be that effective as a slapper.
- Poorly coordinated right handed hitters – it's hard enough hitting while you're standing still never mind having to go to the other side of homeplate and hit with a completely different hand, **WHILE RUNNING.**

Overall step-by-step comparison – top player is correct and bottom player is not



The reason the top player is correct is because she keeps her hands close to her body as she runs. Notice that the player in the bottom pictures seems to run away from her hands thus causing her to try and hit the ball behind her and which makes it virtually impossible for this type of slapper to be successful



CONTACT



Player #1
correct



STANCE

Stance should be:

- relaxed
- not revealing intent
- back of the box

Player #2
incorrect



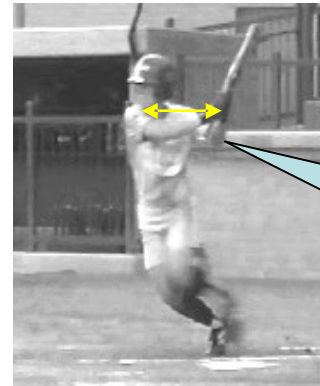
Player #1
correct



FIRST STEP

1st Step should be:

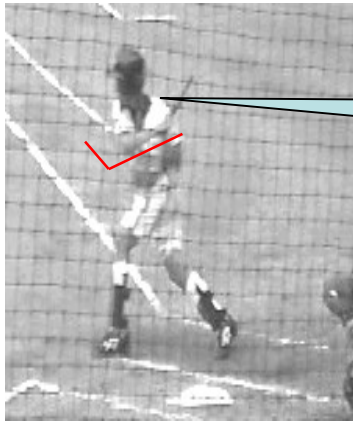
- Directly at the Pitcher
- Large Back foot crossover step or a smaller front foot step.
- Steps must continue directly toward the pitcher.
- Front shoulder must also stay pointing at the pitcher.
- Keep hands between back shoulder and ear to prevent running away from hands



The hands are getting too far away from the shoulders forcing the bat to stay behind the body at contact

Player #2
incorrect

Player #1
correct



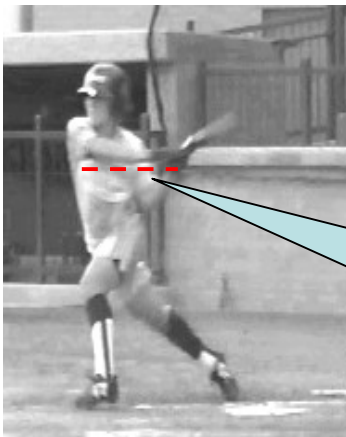
Front elbow is still bent

STRIDE LANDS JUST BEFORE CONTACT

Last Stride should be:

- Directly at Pitcher
- Front shoulder at pitcher
- Hands in front of back shoulder
- Front elbow still bent
- Eye's directly on the ball

Player #2
incorrect



Notice here how the Front elbow is almost straight, causing the hands to fall behind the body and the eyes.

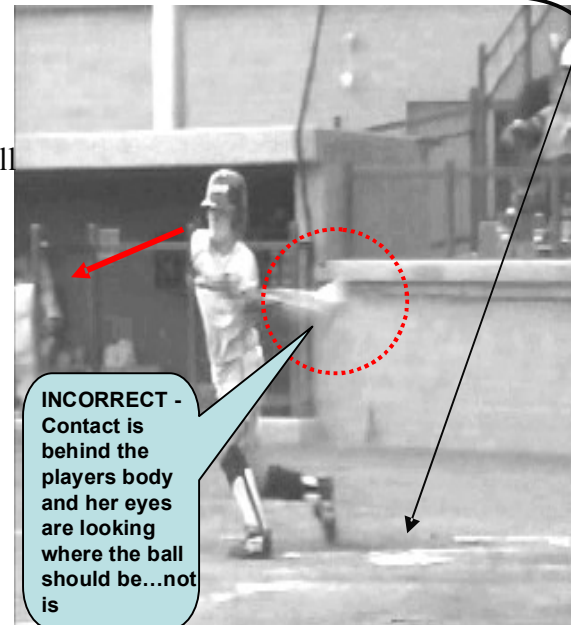
CORRECT
Contact in front of players body and eyes



CONTACT

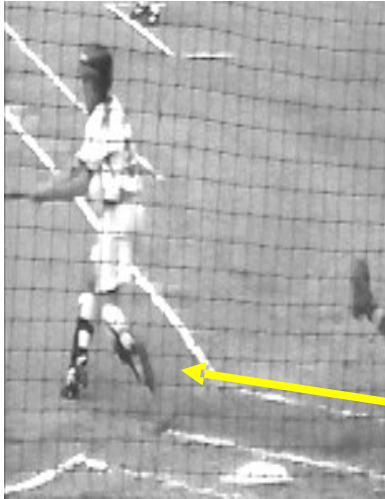
Contact should be:

- In front of the batter and homeplate
- with hands behind the ball
- Eyes directly on the ball



INCORRECT - Contact is behind the players body and her eyes are looking where the ball should be...not is

Player #1
correct

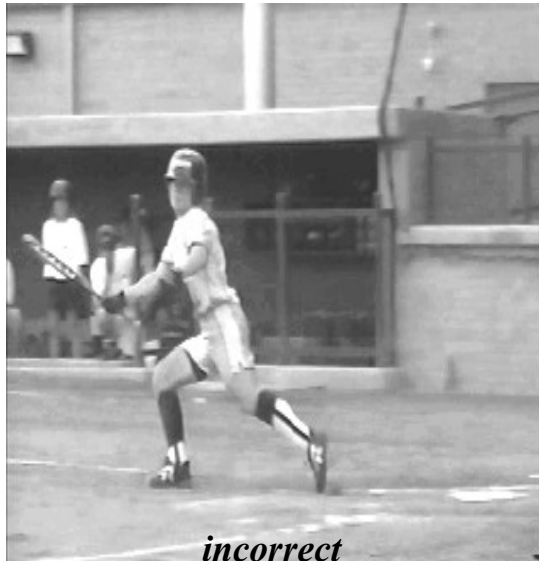


FOLLOW THROUGH

The Follow Through should be:

- Continued out toward the pitcher
- Two hands on contact
- Hard or soft depending on whether you are trying to bunt, slap or drive the ball hard.
- Finish the swing and THEN run!! (*when you try and run first you end up peeling away toward 1st base too soon and missing outside pitches*)

Player #2
incorrect



Let's look at a split view of a world class slapper in action and see if you can notice the important points along the way:

- *In the next 8 slides both slappers are the same person, Leah O'Brien Amico – a member of the 1996, 2000 and 2004 US Olympic Teams.*
- *Notice how well Leah keeps her eyes and head down on the ball and how her front stride and shoulder go directly toward the pitcher.*
- *She also keeps her hands close to her back shoulder.*

NOTE: In these slides Leah is performing a fake bunt, slap – which means that she starts as if she's going to slap, then she fakes like she's going to bunt, and then she slaps. Doing this brings the defense in for the bunt, and then makes them run back on the slap leaving the slapper at the advantage and the defense on their heels...

Front view



Side view





**a fake bunt, slap by O'Brien-Amico
from front and side view**



**a fake bunt, slap by O'Brien-Amico
from front and side view**



**a fake bunt, slap by O'Brien-Amico
from front and side view**



**a fake bunt, slap by O'Brien-Amico
from front and side view**



**a fake bunt, slap by O'Brien-Amico
from front and side view**



Now let's look at a split view of 2 different slappers:

- *The following 2 slappers are Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team and Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team.*
- *All of these next slides (with the exception of the first one) are at the point of CONTACT.*

Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team



Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team



Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team



Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team



Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team



Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team



Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team

Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team



Christa Dalakis from the 2004 Greek Olympic Team

Leah O'Brien Amico from the 2004 US Olympic Team



Points for Teaching the **RUNNING SLAP**

Steps for Teaching the Progression of Converting A Right-handed Hitter Into A Slapper are as follows:

(1ST) PRACTICE USING ONLY A BATTING T:

WITHOUT A BALL BEING PITCHED –

Learn the correct steps:

- Left, Right, Left (*all steps go directly toward the pitcher and not off toward 1st base*)

The Front Shoulder's the Key –

- Keep it pointing at the pitcher throughout the motion.

(2nd) HAVE SOMEONE SLOWLY TOSS BALLS FROM A CLOSE DISTANCE:

ADD A GLOVE ON THE LEFT HAND OF THE BATTER (NO BAT YET!) –

- First, practice the running steps and using the glove to catch the tossed ball.
- Then, after numerous tries – close the glove and use the back side to slap a ball off of a Batting T (use a tennis or sponge ball)
- Keep the glove closed and using the back side again, use the running steps and slap a tennis ball off of an easy tossed pitch.

(2nd) HAVE SOMEONE SLOWLY TOSS BALLS FROM A CLOSE DISTANCE (continued):

ADD A GLOVE ON THE LEFT HAND OF THE BATTER –

- Next, run faster and slap the tossed tennis ball harder.

THEN REMOVE THE GLOVE AND ADD A BAT -

- Then add a bat (a smaller one if possible and if not, then choke up) and use the running steps and slap a ball off of a Batting T.
- Then use a real bat and slap a ball off a tossed pitch.

(3rd) HAVE SOMEONE PITCHING FAIRLY HARD

THE BATTER HAS HER BATTING HELMET ON –

- First, practice the running steps and using the glove to catch the pitched ball.
- Then finally, practice slapping the pitched ball with the bat.
- It will help to place a small cone in the very front of the box just below where the contact point will be to help emphasize to the hitter to make contact in front of their body instead of behind.

SOLVING COMMON PROBLEMS:



- Add a table on it's side or a long ice chest behind the hitter to keep them from peeling toward firstbase.
- Place the batting T in front of the hitter to make them keep their hands in front of their body instead of hitting the ball behind them.
- Place a bucket or small cone on the ground slightly in front of the hitter to get them to hit the ball in front of them.

