

New Vision Training Program Helps Little Leaguers Improve Batting Performance



In August of 2004 twelve little league players (age 12) in Davis, California participated in a study to see if a new vision training system could improve batting performance. Each child was thrown 40 curve balls from a pitching machine in a batting cage. The number of hits and misses were tallied. Then the players used a new vision training system call Exercise Your Eyes (E.Y.E.) for 10-minutes a day for three weeks. The participants did not play baseball during this time. At the end of 3 weeks, the players were re-tested with the same pitches and demonstrated an average improvement of 34% without ever having touched a bat or a ball.

The E.Y.E. vision workout system, (www.exerciseyoureyes.com) created by optometrist Dr. Jacob Liberman is different than all prior approaches to exercising the

eyes because of its unique use of alternating red and blue lights. The E.Y.E. device is about 3 feet long and looks like a little like a spaceship. The user sits in front of it wearing red and blue glasses and allows their eyes to follow from one light to the next. Since viewing red and blue light creates opposing effects in the eyes, alternately looking at these colors creates a rocking action that stimulates and relaxes the eye's aiming and focusing mechanism. Only the eye behind the red lens can see the red light and only the eye behind the blue lens can see the blue light. This innovative system allows each eye to be trained individually to aim, track and focus, while simultaneously reinforcing the ability of both eyes to work together as equal partners. It is like training a batter to become a "switch hitter."

And high level visual tracking skills are just what are required to hit a curve ball. Where a fastball moves in a relatively straight trajectory, a curve ball is a pitch that changes direction suddenly as it crosses the plate, making it difficult to see. In order to hit a curve ball, the batter needs to track the ball all the way to the bat as well as see the rotation of the seams on the ball. Often little league batters who become quite proficient at hitting a fastball still have difficulty hitting a curve ball.

Why? A little known fact outside the world of optometry is that many people are not really "looking" where they think they are looking. Often the child *is* watching the ball, and *is* swinging where he "sees" the ball, but that is not really where the ball is. When both eyes aim at the same object in space, they must turn in, or converge in order to create a single picture. Sometimes because of muscle irregularities, the eyes may not converge directly on the object, but in front of or behind it. When an object is moving,

the eyes must not only aim accurately, but also focus, track and work together as a team. The E.Y.E. works to re-train, balance and strengthen the visual skills necessary for the batter to accurately watch the ball all the way to the bat.

After 3 weeks of using the E.Y.E system, some of the players noted that they felt more relaxed and confident at the plate. A month later, this team went on to win their first league tournament. More information about the E.Y.E. can be found at www.exerciseyoureyes.com.

Teresa Bowen is a vision educator and avid baseball fan. She has coached her son's Little League team in Davis, California for 5 years. During this time, Teresa has watched many coaches yell at batters to watch the ball as they strike out time after time. She has also seen many talented players with great mechanics drop out of baseball because they are poor hitters. In April of 2004, as Dr. Jacob Liberman was demonstrating the E.Y.E. Training System at a conference in San Francisco, she had an insight that the E.Y.E. might help these children become better batters by improving their visual skills. She conducted this study as a result of that inspiration. Teresa offers vision training using the E.Y.E. to sports teams and individuals. For a complete copy of the study you may contact her at 530-757-6463 or tbowen@sbcglobal.net.