**Up the Middle**

**Purpose:**  
Many hitters have a difficult time staying back and end up out on their front foot and off balance as they lunge for pitches. If they get a fastball they are fine but anything off-speed will give them trouble. The purpose of this drill is to help them get the feel for waiting and improving their ability to hit the ball where it is pitched.

**Equipment:**  
Bat and helmet; Soft Toss

**Setup:**  
This drill can be used as a batting practice station and is also a good cage drill.

**Execution:**  
In this drill you're going to use soft toss as a way to simulate off-speed pitches. Perform you're normal soft-toss for 3 or 4 pitches. Then slow it down, slightly to disrupt the timing of the hitter. If they struggle with the ability to notice the change and are out front and off balance then this is a great opportunity to work with them on staying back.  
  
Next tell them you are going to throw a number of those slow pitches and you want them to not adjust when they start their stride but rather try to get to that position and hold for a split second to adjust to the slower pitch.  
  
This is a great drill for you to see if they have the concept of how to wait on a pitch and work with them on staying back before they start their swing. The following page explains [starting the swing](http://www.qcbaseball.com/hitting/hitting-starting-the-swing.aspx), you can use this information to explain to the player that they want to pause and then initiate a quick powerful swing rather than letting their weight come forward prior to starting the swing.  
  
Finally by staying back the final goal of this drill is to hit the ball up the middle. Focus on putting the soft toss pitches on the middle to outside of the plate and when they are able to stay back and fire they should be able to drive the ball up the middle.  
  
When a player is able to accomplish this in the soft toss station, make sure you are seeing the same results in regular batting practice.