Maybe It Is All in His Head

Alex Rodriguez is having a powerful April that few batters have even approached. Theories about what has caused the hot streak abound. Here is a mechanical one: Rodriguez has always had the tendency to move his head and torso forward as he takes his stride, which can create swing problems. This season, his head is still and his bat is mighty.

2006

Lateral Head Movement

By moving the head forward during the stride, many elements of the swing become compromised.

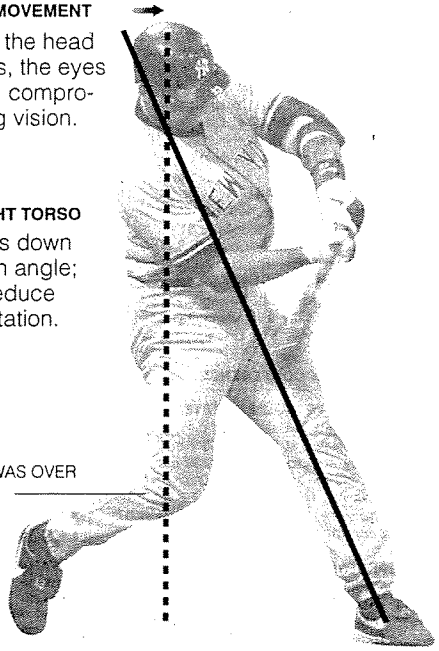
HEAD MOVEMENT

When the head moves, the eyes move, compromising vision.

UPRIGHT TORSO

Breaks down launch angle; can reduce hip rotation.

HEAD WAS OVER KNEE



Rodriguez singling against the Twins last season.

2007

Stationary Head Position

Swing elements fall more naturally into place and create a more efficient and powerful swing.

NO HEAD MOVEMENT

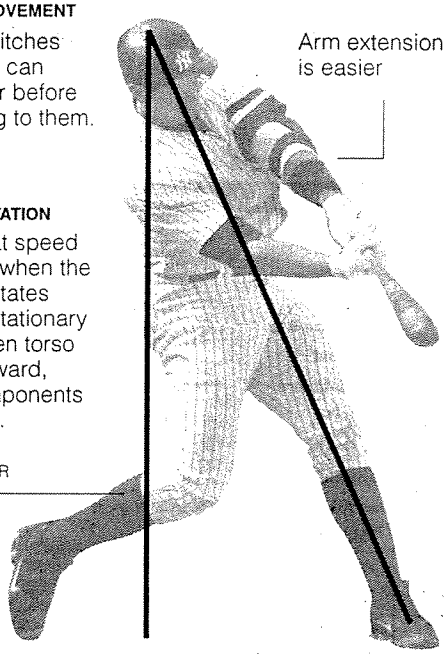
Can see pitches better and can wait longer before committing to them.

Arm extension is easier

AXIS OF ROTATION

Greater bat speed is created when the swing is rotates around a stationary spine. When torso moves forward, swing components slow down.

HEAD IS OVER CALF



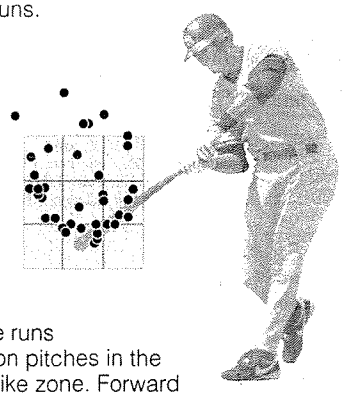
Rodriguez's winning home run against the Indians last week.

The Effects of His Swing

Pitch locations for Rodriguez's home runs.

2006

36 Home runs

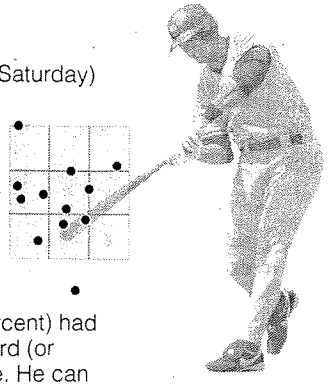


With his vision diminished by head movement, he liked pitches up in the zone, which were easier to see.

Only six of his home runs (17 percent) came on pitches in the lower third of the strike zone. Forward movement by the head and the torso made it tough to drive low pitches.

2007

12 Home runs (through Saturday)



Seeing pitches better and waiting longer to swing allows for better pitch selection. He is laying off the high ones so far.

Four home runs (33 percent) had come from the lower third (or lower) of the strike zone. He can now see, and drive, the ball in a larger variety of pitch locations.

Source: Pitch-location charts by Inside Edge Scouting Services

Maybe It Is All in His Head

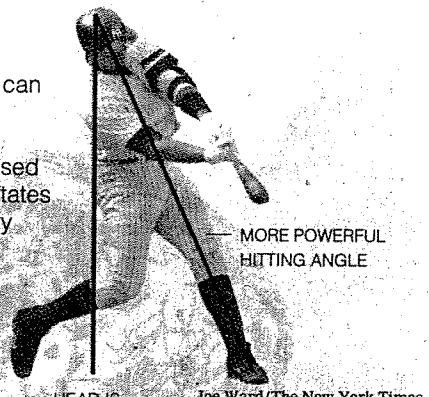
Alex Rodriguez is on a torrid offensive streak in the early season. There could be many reasons for it, not the least of which could be his effort to keep his head back and still during his swing.

2006

By moving the head and torso forward during the stride, elements of the swing become compromised. Vision is reduced, making pitch selection difficult. Other swing components slow down.

2007

With the head stationary, a hitter can better recognize pitches. Also, bat speeds are increased when the swing rotates around a stationary spine.



Joe Ward/The New York Times