

A photograph of a baseball player in a dark green and yellow uniform, captured in the middle of a swing. The player is wearing a black helmet with a yellow brim. The background is a blurred stadium setting.

A Flipbook Analysis of the Swing of...

Josh Donaldson

Home Run to Left Field
2013.09.20

by Chris O'Leary

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January 2015

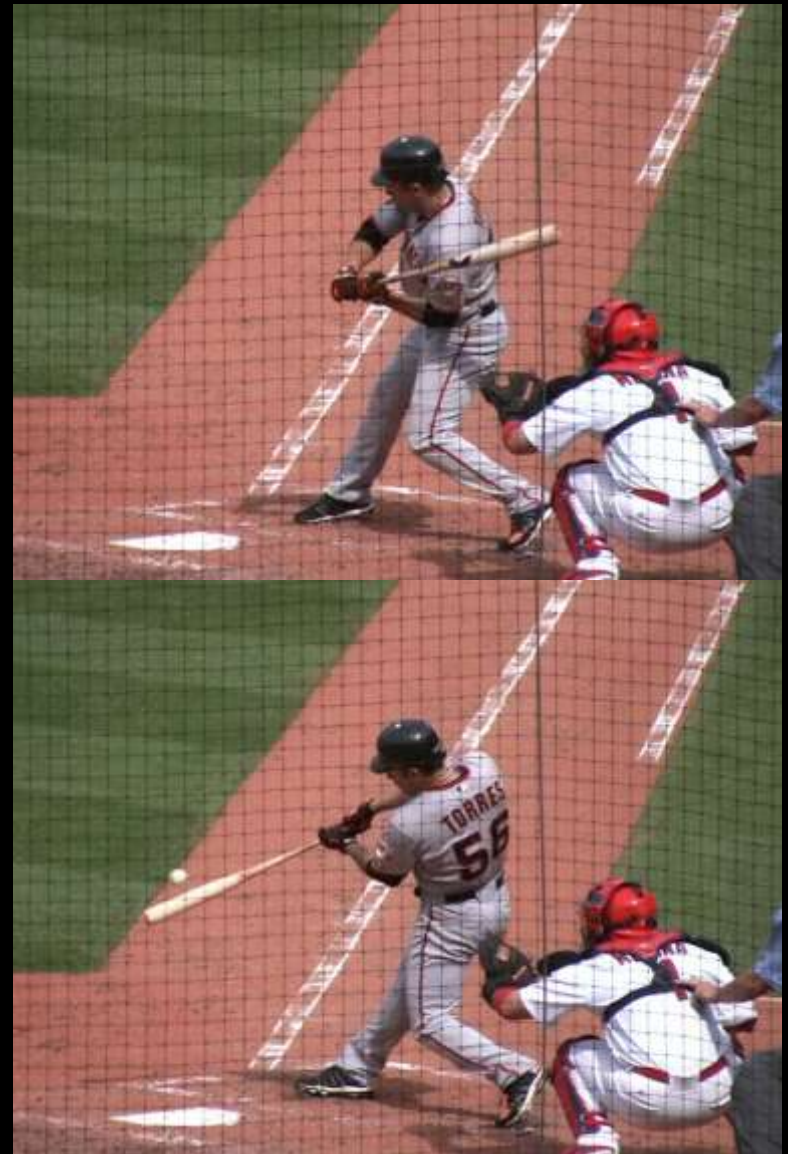
Version 1.0

How to Use This Flipbook

When I use this flipbook in front of an audience, you will notice that I am constantly rolling backwards and forwards through the slides, pointing out not just the positions and shapes but also the movements. If you want to get the maximum value out of this eBook, you should do the same; **you should set this eBook up so that only one page occupies the screen and then page back and forth from page to page, watching the movements.**

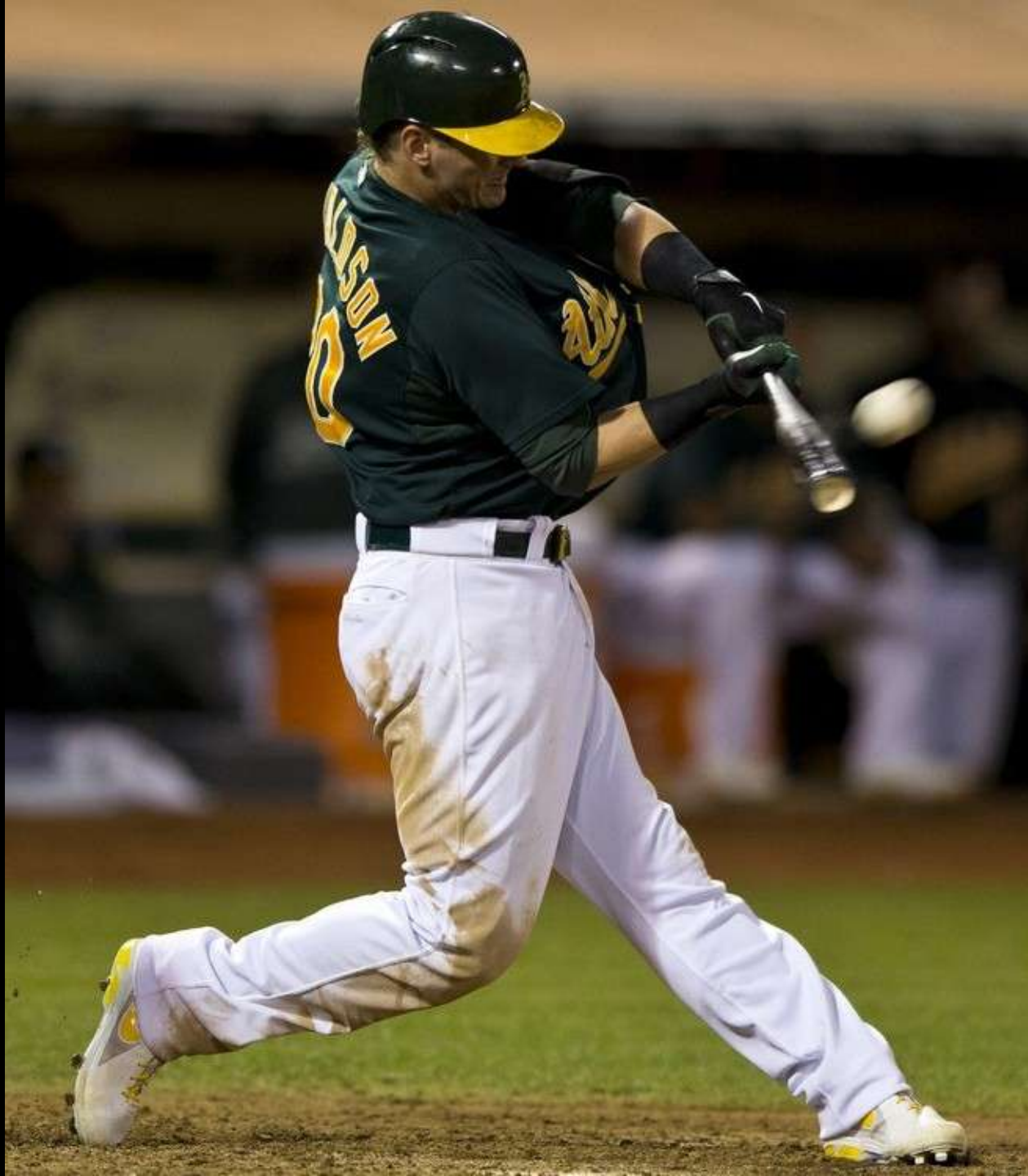
The easiest way is to download this PDF to your computer and open it using [Adobe Reader](#) or some other application that can display PDFs one page at a time. **In Acrobat select View > Read Mode or View > Page Display > Single Page View.**

You can then use the right and left – or up and down – arrows on the keyboard to go through the frames of each clip and get a sense of how each movement looks and works.



Josh Donaldson's swing first caught my eye in late 2013 when I was Googling around, looking for pictures of hitters whose swings I could teach from.

I stumbled across this absolutely gorgeous picture of Josh Donaldson hitting a home run to left field on September 20, 2013.



The really interesting,
and valuable, thing about
this picture is that you
can also find high-speed
footage of this swing.

Combine that with
the fact that we know
what Josh Donaldson is
thinking when he swings,
that makes this an ideal
swing to analyze.

For context's sake,
let's first look at a center
field view of the pitch
and the swing.

Among other things,
look at the tremendous
Rotation of his hips
that Josh Donaldson
achieves on this 93MPH
fastball up and in.



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Now let's take a look
at what's happening
at certain key points
of that swing.

Josh Donaldson
Home Run to Left Field
2013.09.20

Complete Swing
75 Frames Per Second

01

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Frame 01: Instead of opening his hips too soon, Josh Donaldson's instead Coils slightly as he lifts his front leg.



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13

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Frame 13: Josh Donaldson's knee and front foot have reached their highest point.



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20

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Frame 20: As his front foot drops and he strides into the ball, Josh Donaldson's hands go up and back. Some would call this a hitch. In truth, it's an essential part of Josh Donaldson's Loading process. If he were to eliminate this movement, his swing would be less efficient and less powerful.



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25

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Frame 25: One concept that Josh Donaldson talks about is loading his right scap. You can see him set this up in this and the surrounding frames, as his back elbow moves up and back and then locks in place through the start of his Rotation. I would argue this helps keep his hands from getting trapped behind his back shoulder as he rotates.



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Frame 30: As he strides forward toward the pitcher, Josh Donaldson does so while still keeping his hips closed.

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33

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Frame 33: While his front knee extends a bit as he comes out of the top of his leg lift, Josh Donaldson's front knee stops extending in Frame 33. This is important because it enables him to land with his front knee flexed, not straight. That in turn enables him to finish the Rotation of his hips.



34

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Frame 34: Josh Donaldson's hips are finally starting to rotate open. At the same time, his back knee is start to come around and the heel of his back foot is just starting to lift off the ground. This is important because there are people who teach that the hips need to stay closed into contact. That is clearly not true in the case of Josh Donaldson.



35

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Frame 35: Although it's hard to say exactly how open or closed Josh Donaldson's front foot lands, notice that it starts relatively open and then opens up even more as he goes into foot plant.



36

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Frame 36: While Josh Donaldson's hips are opening up, if you watch the letters on the back of his jersey, you can see that his shoulders still have not start rotating yet.



37

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Frame 37: Up until this frame, Josh Donaldson has kept his front shoulder closed. In this frame, you see the first hint of movement as his front shoulder starts to react to the Rotation of his hips underneath them. However, this first movement of his front shoulder is more up than back, suggesting that he employs a Resisting Movement to keep his shoulders closed.



38

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Frame 38: If you watch Josh Donaldson's back foot closely, you can see evidence of what is referred to as [The Move](#). However, because he does a good job of planting and stabilizing his back foot, there is just a hint of this.



39

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Frame 39: Six frames after his hips started rotating, Josh Donaldson's shoulders have finally started rotating. By loading his hands and his right scap, and holding his shoulders back while his hips start rotating, Josh Donaldson dramatically increases the efficiency of his swing.



40

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Frame 40: As his front foot plants, Josh Donaldson is still pointing the knob of the bat at the catcher. While some would worry that this puts him in a problematic position of Bat Wrap, in truth this is part of how he loads.



41

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Frame 41: Josh Donaldson's front knee is bent when his front foot lands. This enables him to finish the Rotation of his swing. I would argue that one of Brett Wallace's problems is that he lands with his front knee almost straight, which keeps him from being able to finish his Rotation.



42

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Frame 42: Josh Donaldson's front foot is fully planted. Notice how he does what Matt Holliday does until his front foot is planted.



43

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Frame 43: While he tips the barrel forward as part of his [Loading](#) process, Josh Donaldson still gets the barrel into the [Swing Plane](#) by Heel Plant, avoiding an increasingly common problem with how many hitters [launch their swings](#).



44

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Frame 44: Josh Donaldson's front knee is extending, helping to finish the rotation of his hips. Also, while his head does move some due to the Rotation of his shoulders, it is relatively steady, not moving forward or backward but just a bit up, letting him watch the ball as long as possible.



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Frame 48: Rather than keeping his front elbow and his front arm down, Josh Donaldson's front elbow has instead risen up into a position of [Alignment](#). The knob has also moved up in this frame, causing the barrel to fall below the ball and his hands, creating a [Slight Uppercut](#).



49

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Frame 49: Josh Donaldson is in the process of Stopping the Knob, which is causing the barrel to rapidly Whip around his hands.



50

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Frame 50: Rather than [Squishing The Bug](#), you can tell from how it moves in this and the next frame that Josh Donaldson's back foot is completely un-weighted and up in the air in this frame.



51

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Frame 51: At the Point Of Contact, Josh Donaldson's hands are still rotating in sync with his back shoulder. Rather than being at full extension at contact, his back elbow is still bent 90 degrees and making the Power L. His front knee is fully extended, having helped to finish his hip rotation.

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Frame 58: Only now, seven frames after the Point Of Contact, has Josh Donaldson reached full extension.

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60

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Josh Donaldson
Home Run to Left Field
2013.09.20

Rotation Through Extension
150 Frames Per Second

40

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Frame 40: As his front foot plants, Josh Donaldson is still pointing the knob of the bat at the catcher. While some would worry that this puts him in a problematic position of Bat Wrap, in truth this is part of how he loads.



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43

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Frame 49: Josh Donaldson is in the process of Stopping the Knob, which is causing the barrel to rapidly Whip around his hands.



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Frame 58: Only now, well after the Point Of Contact, has Josh Donaldson reached full extension.

Where to go From Here

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Phone: 314.494.1324

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