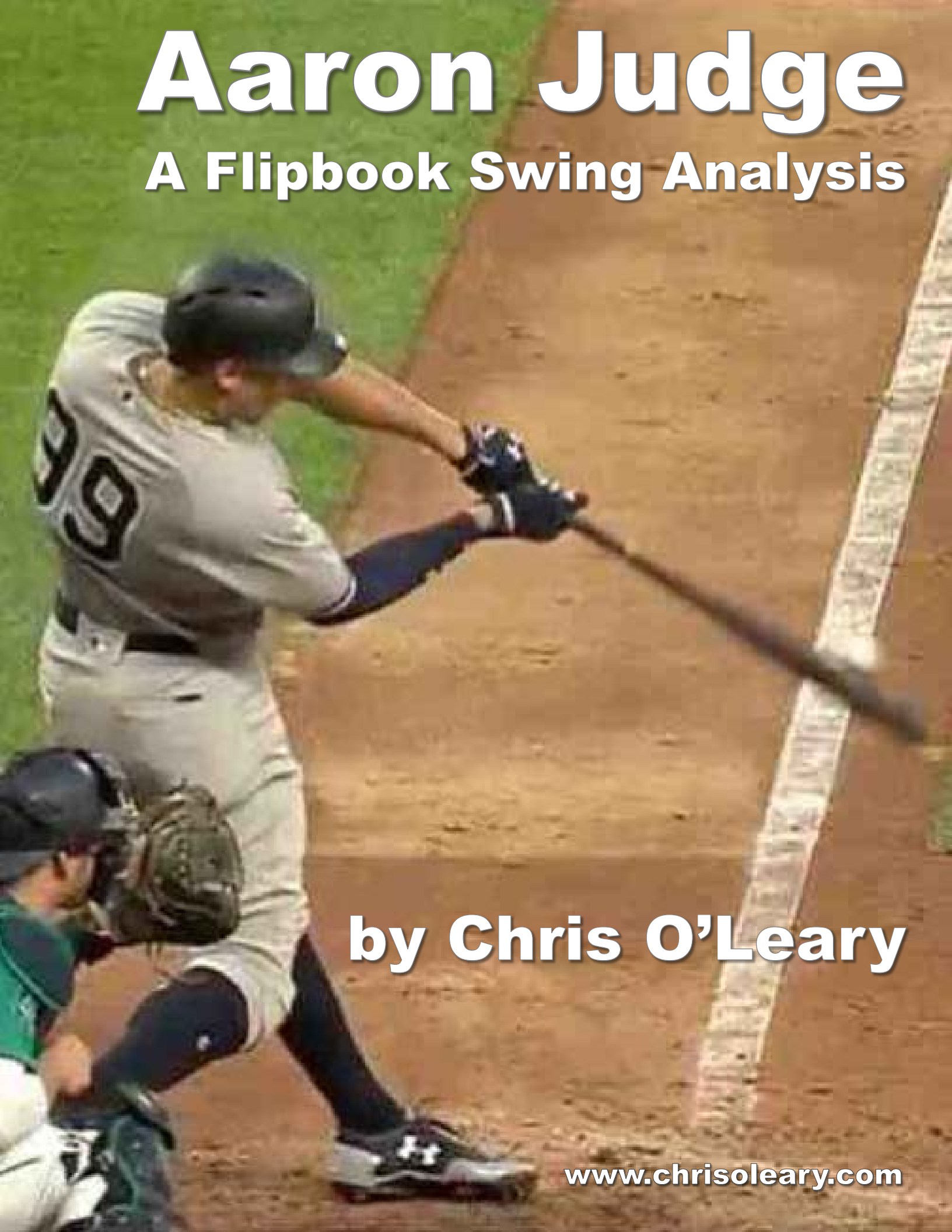


Aaron Judge

A Flipbook Swing Analysis



by Chris O'Leary

www.chrisoleary.com

About Chris O'Leary

I'm nobody.

My baseball career never made it out of grade school.

And that's my greatest asset.

When my kids started playing, and I started coaching them and their friends, I didn't know anything.

And I knew it.

So I started to study this guy who played for the Cardinals.

His name was Albert Pujols.

I started putting together flipbook analyses of Pujols' swing and posting them to the Internet. One day a minor leaguer named Andres Torres stumbled across them. He contacted me and I started helping him with his swing. He then went on to help the Giants win the 2010 World Series. I put together a web site and I've been helping hitters and pitchers ever since.

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July 22, 2017

Alpha 1



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 Reader 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.



Why This Flipbook?

I coach and am the hitting coordinator at Harris-Stowe State University in St. Louis. Last year, we had some problems with the consistency of the information our players received when it came to hitting, and it was one of the things that led to our offense dropping from one of the Top-2 offenses in all of NAIA to just a Top-20 offense.

While a Top-20 offense is nothing to spit it, when you're talking about 188 schools, that slide was unpleasant and frustrating and I don't want it to happen again.

The biggest area of difference came down to Rotation.

While our hitting coach and I were preaching Rotation, our players were hearing from others that they should throw their hands and not fly open. I just came across a clip of Aaron Judge absolutely destroying a ball and, since people are talking about him, I thought I'd use that clip to get some points across to our hitters.





WHY ROTATION?

If anybody could get away with swinging with just his hips and not his hands, it's Aaron Judge. The guy is massive.

But that's not what he does. Instead, and like all good hitters, Aaron Judge rotates his hips ahead of his shoulders, and thus his hands.



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Why Rotation?

My name is Chris O'Leary and I talk about Rotation.

And I teach it.

There, I said it.

Given how much video I've looked at, I literally can't understand how people can have a problem with talking about Rotation.

But they do.

They talk about the problem of hitters flying open and spinning or pulling off the ball.

My questions to them are simple.

Have you EVER looked at video of a good hitter?

What word would you use to describe what Aaron Judge does in the swing I break down in this flipbook?

Aaron Judge is big enough that, if anyone didn't have to rotate, it would be him.

But he does.



The Pitch and The Swing





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01

THE PITCH AND THE SWING: You can prove ANY theory of hitting, no matter how crazy, by basing it on a single, out of context clip. I'm going to base this analysis of Aaron Judge's swing on a single clip, but one I know the context of. The pitch was a 77mph Andrew Moore breaking ball up and slightly in. The count was 2-1 and there was one out. The pitch was crushed into the second deck in the left field corner. Because this pitch was a breaking ball, you would expect to see some signs of an adjustment, including more Extension at the Point of Contact, and that is exactly what you see.



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Why Rotation?





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WHY ROTATION? Aaron Judge is a big guy. 6'7" 280 pounds. If anyone could get away with swinging with just their hands, it's him. So, does he keep his front shoulder closed in into Contact or does he rotate into Contact? His front shoulder stays closed into Frame 12, but then it rotates open. Don't get me wrong. Keeping the front shoulder in as long as possible can work. AS A CUE. It can keep the shoulders from rotating TOO SOON. That can help increase the Separation of the hips and the shoulders and increase the efficiency of the swing. But video shows that Aaron Judge's shoulders rotate. INTO Contact. And that's fine.



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Substance





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TOE TOUCH: Let's take a look at Aaron Judge's swing starting at Toe Touch. I like to start my analyses at Toe Touch because that is when what hitters do stops being Style and starts being Substance. Notice that Aaron Judge is Leading With His Toe rather than landing flat footed or heel-first. That is critical when it comes to Adjustability. Also notice that, rather than starting to sweep the barrel around, Aaron Judge still has the barrel wrapped and the knob pointing at the catcher.



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HANDS BACK: Like all good hitters, Aaron Judge starts his swing assuming it's a fastball. That's the only way to catch up to premier velocity. However, in Frame 12 you can tell Judge has a sense that the pitch isn't a fastball (it's actually a 77mph off-speed pitch). As a result, while the knob moves forward in space, it doesn't move much, if at all, relative to Aaron Judge's back shoulder. That is because Judge is fighting to keep his hands back as his hips just start to open up.



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HEEL PLANT: In Frame 13, Aaron Judge's front heel has planted and his hips have continued opening. He has released his hands and has let them start rotating around toward the pitch. Notice that at Heel Plant his front foot is more OPEN than closed. It's pointing between the pitching mound and first base. That is important because it lets Aaron Judge's hips open fully without putting unnecessary stress on his front ankle and leg.



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ROTATION: While “Keep your front shoulder in” works for many hitters as a cue, it’s just that. A cue. Not reality. The reality of Aaron Judge’s swing is that, by Frame 14, his front shoulder has rotated open and out of sight behind his chin as his shoulders and hands rotate behind his hips. Rather than keeping his front elbow down, as is often taught. you can see that some space has opened up between Aaron Judge’s front arm and his chest as he starts to get on plane.



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CHICKEN WING: I grew up watching Tony Gwynn play. He was one of my favorite hitters. And one of the greatest hitters ever. But I don't understand why he said many of the things he did, starting with the problem of a Chicken Wing. Maybe, like keeping the front shoulder closed, it worked for him as a cue. But it's not reality. Tony Gwynn's front elbow chicken winged and so does Aaron Judge's. Notice how the space between Aaron Judge's front arm and chest is even wider.



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LOOP: The “problem” with the Chicken Wing is that it creates a Loop in the swing. That that I say this. So what? How else is a hitter supposed to get the barrel on plane with the pitch? The pitch is dropping down through the strike zone so, to match it’s plane, you want to uppercut. Not a lot. But enough. Enough to get the ball over the heads of the infielders, into the gaps, and to the wall. Every time. If you get lucky, like Aaron Judge did, then it will go over the wall.



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CONTACT: At Contact, Aaron Judge is at an absolutely textbook position. His back elbow is in the classic Power L position. He did make contact with the pitch a bit out front, but he was able to do that because he didn't try to. Similarly, instead of being at the Slot position at the back hip, his back elbow is a bit forward of the Slot. Aaron Judge also stayed back. While his hips thrust forward, his head stayed back. That let him match the plane of the pitch and elevate it.

Hands or Hips?





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HANDS OR HIPS? The big, and lingering, debate when it comes to hitting is whether hitters power their swing with their hips or their hands (and arms). That's a question because some people think the hips are just too slow. So, does Aaron Judge power this swing with his hands or with his hips? To judge that, I like to look at a hitter's hands and arms. What I see is that, while Aaron Judge's hips clearly rotate – just watch his belt buckle – the shape formed by his arms and his hands doesn't change. That tells me that Aaron Judge's hips are doing most of the work from Heel Plant into Contact.



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ABOUT CHRIS O'LEARY

I am the hitting coordinator for Harris Stowe State University in St. Louis. I work with our hitting coach head coach, and our other coaches to make sure our hitters are getting the best information. I also work privately with hitters and pitchers of all ages. For more information go to...

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