

## **Developing Aggressive Hitters: The Green Light Hitting Method**

**By: ACV**

I have been very fortunate to work with many high-level coaches, trainers and physicians who have dedicated their lives for the betterment of athletes. Here is a brief list of those professionals whose opinions and training techniques I highly value: Kyle Wagner (Green Light Hitting/GoWags Baseball), Eric Cressey (Cressey Sports Performance), Matt Blake (MB Elite Pitching/Cleveland Indians), Randy Sullivan (Florida Baseball Ranch), Kyle Boddy and Jason Ochart (Driveline Baseball). My goal is to implement some element of their teachings into every aspect of the NY Bulldogs baseball programs. This article spotlights Kyle Wagner.

I first heard about Kyle and Green Light Hitting (“GLH”) from my assistant coach Rob Benjamin (RIOT Hitting) in the winter of 2015. Kyle ran a training facility and travel program in Camp Hill, PA where the Red Land Little League team had just won the 2015 Little League World Series. The team was coached by Kyle’s brother Bret Wagner and nearly all of the players from the LLWS team trained under Kyle and his GLH philosophy. The team had an impressive season batting average nearing .500 and swatted in excess of 85 homeruns in just 19 games. This display of hitting consistency and power was very intriguing, so I ventured to Central Pennsylvania in December to find out what was happening at this facility.

Kyle grew up in Central Pennsylvania playing multiple sports while excelling in baseball as a catcher. He went on to play college baseball at Wake Forest before signing a professional contract with the LA Angels. Kyle was a self-proclaimed “bad” hitter so when his son was born he had to learn a method to teach hitting that was fun while still having a progressive path with test and retest checkpoints along the way. What resulted was a book titled, Green Light Hitting: From the Backyards to the Big Leagues. Not only did I come away from that training with a new focus on how to train hitters of all ages but a renewed motivation in how to approach training young players in this new age of technology and need for immediate results. Without further ado, here is a snapshot of GLH, the method and process which helped turn Red Land Little League and the surrounding area into a hotbed of baseball development.

When you're close to something, you take things for granted. And if you find yourself teaching a subject that you are intimately familiar with, it is easy to assume that your audience knows what you know- even the basics. Just like mathematics, Green Light Hitting is a system that builds on itself. Just like you would not teach Calculus to a student who has not yet had Algebra, you don't teach a Level 5 hitter Level 7 skills- they simply just aren't ready. Here are the Green Light Hitting levels defined as provided by Bret Wagner.

Simply put, training hitters is more complex than telling a player to stay back, squish the bug, take your hands to the ball or swing down or up, which are phrases that we prohibit our coaches from saying- sometimes to no avail. I can assure you that we don't use this kind of terminology when working with developing hitters- we don't want paralysis by analysis. The goal is to implicitly teach them by using repetition in the form of fun drills to produce the desired results without them thinking too much.

Here is an explanation of Levels 1-8, which are the primary levels that most players between 6-12 years of ages will achieve. GLH goes up to level 21, which is geared to professional hitters.

**Levels 1-2:** Hitters must anticipate swinging at a ball thrown by a pitcher- they need to unlock their mind, so to speak. In order to do this, they must show an authentic willingness to hit and an understanding of "tracking" the ball and anticipating its end location. It is critical to understand that new hitters are often filled with tremendous doubt about standing in a batter's box as a baseball is thrown at or near them. We have a variety of techniques that we use to help remove this doubt or fear. Simply put, "Anticipation" is a mindset that most players do not have to learn while others need to work hard at to acquire this skill. To be brutally honest, a player who does not show proper anticipation to hit cannot be a successful hitter which is why this skill comes first.

**Levels 3-4:** These next levels focus on hitters who rotate the bat from ready position to contact primarily about their wrists. This produces a weak, off plane swing. These levels are designed to "freeze" the wrist action and to "free" the hip joints. We want the bat on

plane through the use of bigger muscles by engaging the hips. However, since the wrists are functioning, it is very beneficial to train the wrists how to move correctly. The wrists should move from radial deviation to ulnar deviation rather than from flexion to extension. Without the hips turning the hitter will not produce enough bat quickness to get to fast pitching nor enough bat speed to drive balls hard to the outfield.

**Levels 5-6:** Not only do we want the hips engaged, we now want them engaged on two planes. We want them rotating through the transverse plane while “tilting” through the sagittal plane. This is where we say “STAY OVER THE PLATE!” We are really focusing on the hips allowing us to be on plane. Special attention is still paid to the wrists moving efficiently from radial deviation to ulnar deviation. I have found this to be one of the most challenging levels to achieve since it takes a certain amount of core strength, body awareness and trust to stay over home plate.

**Levels 7-8:** This is where we “free” the front shoulder joint for rotation. We work on pre-stretching the scapula so it can pull the lead arm into the ball. Hip action along two planes is still very prevalent with our training. Level 7 and 8 hitters can begin using the wrist joint to add an extra whip to the end of the bat. These hitters should have the bat cocked in the direction of the pitcher. This is a pre-stretch of sorts for the hands to launch correctly into the ball. It is useless to recognize this aspect of hitter training until the hips are unlocked.

This is certainly a lot of information to digest but hopefully you have a better appreciation about the GLH training process.

For more information on Green Light Hitting check out the following website: [Learn More Here.](#)