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**Do Pitching Machines Help Your Hitting?**

**By John Marcus**

One of the most widely asked questions of baseball and softball coaches is: do pitching machines

help your hitting. Although having a pitching machine one hand does certainly give your hitting game an extra boost, it is certainly not essential to have a machine in order to be successful on the baseball diamond. In most instances, coaches suggest that all baseball or softball players should spend some time working with a pitching machine, but not devote their entire hitting practice to a machine.

The biggest complain that both coaches and players have of pitching machines is their consistency. Although consistency in hitting and pitching is generally a good thing, pitching machines can provide you with the same pitch each and every time, often allowing the pitcher to relax since they essentially know what is coming. In this case, pitching machines can make a player become overconfident or cocky, which can be detrimental when game time rolls around and a pitching machine is replaced by a real, live pitcher. If you are interested in using a pitching machine, consider a model that will vary the speeds and pitches served to you so that you do not fall into the pitching machine routine.

However, the problem of consistency is often overpowered by the positive attribute of using a pitching machine. For example, a pitching machine can help a baseball or softball player by providing them with a way to practice their technique. Even though they may not hit the ball, the technique of the swing and follow through is crucial and easier to teach in using a pitching machine than an actual pitcher. Choose a pitching machine with several speeds so that a beginning player can better practice his or her swing technique in addition to keeping his or her eye on the ball without threat of being injured from high speed pitches.

In the end, the choice of whether or not to use a pitching machine in practice is left up to you. If you do elect to include a pitching machine into your practice routine, be sure to interchange it with time with an actual pitcher who performs a variety of pitches, including balls so that you know what to expect in game play. Typically, players who perform well in the batting cages with pitching machines find their game is less effective on the baseball diamond when they are pitted against an actual pitcher. The reason tends to be because the consistency of a batting machine tends to lure you into the false security that each and every pitch will be perfect. For this reason, you may not be skilled at deciphering with pitch is good and should be swung at verses those pitches that should be left to slide past without

swinging.

John Marcus specializes in Pitching Machines

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## **Divisional Outlook For June – NL East**

**By Jay Nault**

It's been quite a month in the NL East. What looked like a competitive race during our last review has become a runaway at the top and a surprising look from the bottom. The Mets have been on fire lately, and it appears that the Braves' incredible streak of postseason appearances could be coming to an end.

New York Mets

Currently:

The Mets are surging, and are pushing their division lead towards double digits. They went 19–9 over the past month, and that includes an eight–game winning streak and a sweep of their biggest challenger for the title, the Phillies. David Wright and Paul Lo Duca continue to be pests on the base pads, and Carlos Delgado and Carlos Beltran are continuing in their roles of bringing them home. Not to mention, the pitching staff is leading the NL in team ERA.

Outlook:

There's no reason, barring injury or an unforeseen slump, to foresee the Mets stumbling at this point. If they simply hold their lead, they'll win the division.

Philadelphia Phillies

Currently:

The Phillies have stumbled lately, going only 11–17 over the past month, and that includes a six–game losing streak, with three of those losses coming in a damaging sweep at the hands of the Mets. Their offense has been pretty good, with Ryan Howard sitting in the top five in the NL in home runs, RBI's and SLG. The problem in Philadelphia has been the pitching, as the staff is near the bottom of the NL in team ERA.

Outlook:

## Do Pitching Machines Help Your Hitting?

The Phillies need to fix their pitching problems now, or they'll continue to fall further behind the Mets and never catch up.

### Washington Nationals

Currently:

The Nationals quietly had a decent month, going 18–12 in their last 30 games. They have been a bit streaky though, as they had both a five–game winning streak and a five–game losing streak. The problem is that the Mets are playing so well that the Nationals haven't made up any ground. Alfonso Soriano and Jose Vidro are continuing their strong seasons, but their offense still sits near the bottom of the NL in BA. The pitching staff continues to have issues, sitting near the bottom of the NL in team

ERA.

Outlook:

Despite their statistical problems, the Nationals are winning games. All they can do is continue their hard play and hope for the Mets to stumble.

### Florida Marlins

Currently:

The Marlins have also quietly been playing well, going 18–9 over the past month, and they're currently on an eight–game winning streak. They've been doing it with timely hitting and strong pitching. The Marlins have lowered their team ERA to 4.29, which ranks fifth in the NL.

Outlook:

If Miguel Cabrera can continue his big offensive season and Dontrelle Willis can keep his stuff after a strong turnaround, the Marlins could wind up having a successful season for a young team.

### Atlanta Braves

Currently:

Oh, how the mighty have fallen. When was the last time we saw the Braves sitting in last place this late in the season? The Braves have gone 9–20 in the past month, and are currently mired in an eight–game losing streak. How has this happened? Because both their hitting and pitching has been spotty. Edgar Renteria is the only position player who could still be considered as having a strong season, and the pitching staff has given up the second–most runs in the NL.

Outlook:

## Do Pitching Machines Help Your Hitting?

The Braves unbelievable streak of winning is not talked about as much as it should be. Baseball is perhaps the most difficult sport to reach the postseason, and the Braves have been doing so every year for over a decade. Perhaps it's time to reload with young prospects and work towards next year.

Written by Jay Nault sponsored by

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