

What a drag: Black-Hawks' Foreman is up to the job

BROOK POINT SLUGGER HAS PERFECTED THE ART OF DRAG BUNTING

BY JOEY LOMONACO
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Matt Cavalier taught Jackson Foreman in his Honors World History class last year, and in between lectures on Michelangelo and Da Vinci, the Brooke Point baseball coach realized his short-stop possessed an unusual aptitude for acquiring new skills.

“As his teacher, I learned very quickly that if it’s teachable, he can learn it,” Cavalier said. “He’s such a perfectionist that he’s not going to stop practicing or learning how to do something until he can do it perfectly.”

The art of drag bunting



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Black-Hawks junior Jackson Foreman demonstrates how to drag bunt at Brooke Point last week.

ABOUT THE SERIES

This is an installment of a new Free Lance-Star feature. Each month, Don't Sweat the Technique will shine a spotlight on the specialized skills that set high school athletes apart in their respective sports. Coaches: submit nominees at sports@freelancestar.com.

would make Foreman into a renaissance man at the plate. Midway through his junior season, Foreman is batting .375 with two home runs for the Black-Hawks (4–5). As opponents have taken note of his power, avenues for laying one down are opening up with regularity.

“Teams are starting to play him a little bit differently, playing him back a little bit,” Cavalier said. “For him to get this down, it just makes him more dangerous.”

Bunting for a base hit jells with Foreman’s game for a couple reasons. He bats left-handed, giving him a tangible head start down the first-base line. He’s also fleet-footed, clocking just under seven seconds in the 60-yard

SEE TECHNIQUE, B2

TECHNIQUE

► FROM B1

dash.

Starting when Foreman was 8 or 9, he took regular trips to the diamonds at Rowser and Duff parks. His father Alan would throw batting practice, followed by a bucket dedicated solely to bunts.

“I’ve always been pretty good at it,” Foreman said. “Something I have in the toolbox.”

Facing Stafford in last year’s Commonwealth District tournament, Foreman spurred a rally when he led off an inning with a perfectly placed drag bunt. The Black-Hawks scored four runs in the frame en route to an 8–4 upset victory.



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Jackson Foreman’s skill with a bat makes him a threat to bunt down either the first- or third-base lines.

When going for a hit, Foreman looks exclusively for fastballs. “If it’s a curve, I’m taking it,” he said. He and a few of his teammates have carte blanche where bunting is concerned.

“I always tell them: read the situation,” Cavalier said. “If the third baseman is back, first baseman is back and they’re feeling like they can time it up well, they’ve always got that green light.”

Cavalier continues to see Foreman evolve as a player. He hasn’t committed an error since moving to shortstop from second base, and is becoming more well-rounded with each plate appearance. Defenses aren’t exactly anticipating a bunt from Brooke Point’s three-hole hitter.

“Teams know about Jackson, and when they know he’s a good bunter they can’t play him back,” Cavalier said. “They can’t play him up. It just confuses you. It’s like a battle between offensive and defensive coordinators.

“When he doesn’t have a weakness, it’s easier to manage him.”

Joey LoMonaco: 540/368-5045
jmonaco@freelancestar.com
@joeylomono

MORE INFORMATION

TECH SPECS: As a lefty, Foreman is intrinsically a couple steps closer to first base. Couple that slight advantage with his brisk 60-yard dash time of 6.9 seconds, and it’s easy to see why drag bunting has become part of his offensive repertoire.

FORM AND SUBSTANCE: “I choke up [on the bat] with my right hand a little more since I’m a lefty,” Foreman says. “My left hand is near the barrel so I can easily twist and turn however.” He aims for the area vacated by the second baseman, who typically covers first

in a bunt situation. “No man’s land,” Cavalier notes.

DRAG RACE: Sports reporter Joey LoMonaco, a drag bunt devotee back in the day, challenged Foreman to a contest. With Black-Hawks coach Matt Cavalier throwing, Foreman and LoMonaco each

had 10 chances—home run derby-style—to deaden bunts inside targets on the first and third-base lines. It came down to the final pitch.

ONLINE: Watch the drag bunting contest and catch a video interview with Foreman on fredericksburg.com/sports.