



PLAY-BY-PLAY OF EVERY 2008 INDIANS GAME!
RADIO WITH FULL SEASON PACKAGE \$99⁹⁹
[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

[Register](#) | [Login](#)

[Español](#) | [Español](#)

[MLB.com](#)  [PROBATTER](#)

[News](#) [Audio & Video](#) [Scoreboard](#) [Schedule](#) [Roster](#) [Stats](#) [Community](#) [Fans](#) [Progressive Field](#) [Tickets](#) [Shop](#) [Auction](#) [Mobile](#) [Fan](#)

News

- [Indians News](#)
- [Probable Pitchers](#)
- [Depth Chart](#)
- [Press Pass](#)
- [RSS News Feeds](#)

Game Face

04/09/2008 10:00 AM ET

Behind the Scenes: ProBatter

Hitting application is the ultimate video game

By Anthony Castrovince / MLB.com



[e-mail this page](#) 

The pitcher depicted on the 8-by-10-foot screen seems harmless enough.

He is, after all, a one-dimensional video image.

Then he goes into his windup, rears back and tosses you a fastball.

This would all look like your basic baseball instructional video, if not for the fact that the fastball just popped out of a hole in the screen and is headed at you at 98 mph.

"It's kind of like watching a movie," said Indians designated hitter Travis Hafner, "and then, all of a



As an organization, the Indians are very routine-oriented, and several players use ProBatter as part of their regular

sudden, a baseball comes out at you. It catches you off guard."

The "it" in question is the ProBatter PX2 pitching simulator used by the Indians and four other big league clubs.

You could call it the ultimate video game. Unlike standard pitching machines used to get hitters some extra work in the indoor cages, this one provides the feel of standing in against an actual hurler who can toss fastballs, breaking balls and changeups anywhere from 40 to 100 mph.

Now *that's* a pitcher with a heck of a repertoire.

The Indians have been using ProBatter for several years. The machine is a staple of several players' pregame routines during Spring Training and the regular season.

"Organizationally, we stress [the value of] routines," hitting coach Derek Shelton said. "And it's become part of guys' routines. I think that's where it's really been helpful."

Nobody on the Indians calls upon that help more than first baseman Ryan Garko and right fielder Franklin Gutierrez. Those two players, in particular, swear by the benefits of ProBatter.

"I like to use it for curveballs," Garko said. "I do the same thing every day, hitting right-handed and left-handed curveballs. It's pretty realistic. You can get your regular timing, as opposed to somebody just standing there, feeding the machine."

If anything, Garko said he was probably guilty of using the machine too much during the '07 season -- his first full season in the big leagues.

"We've talked about cleaning it up a bit this year," Garko said. "We used to hit forever. This year, I'll probably do one round of 15 right-handed curveballs and one round of 15 left-handed curveballs, instead of, like, eight rounds. That's definitely something I learned my first full season. I never felt tired or anything, but just, physically, for your back and hips, you've got to try to save your bullets for the game."

hitting regimen. (ProBatter Sports)

MORE COVERAGE

igEhqv KhdgoLhv

- **Hafner's late homer bails out Indians**
- **Tribe's Breslow didn't give up on dream**
- **Sizemore, Sabathia to honor Robinson**
- **Borowski's mph down; Tribe not worried**
- **Borowski can't hold lead in ninth inning**
- **More Indians Headlines**

POE KhdgoLhv

- **What have we learned so far this season?**
- **Bauman: Sox home opener has it all**
- **Chase Field emotional for Davis**
- **All invited to don No. 42 on Jackie Day**
- **Jeter out until Friday at earliest**
- **More MLB Headlines**

DGYHUWVHPHQW

ON ((XM))

PLAY-BY-PLAY OF EVERY 2008 INDIANS GAME!

RADIO WITH FULL SEASON PACKAGE

\$99.99

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

ON ((XM))

PLAY-BY-PLAY OF EVERY 2008 INDIANS GAME!

RADIO WITH FULL SEASON PACKAGE

\$99.99

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

Though the thought of "saving the bullets" has some appeal, pregame gadgets such as the ProBatter have their value in augmenting the assistance of standard batting practice.

"No. 1, you have the image of the pitcher doing the windup, so you can work on timing issues," Shelton said. "That's the biggest thing. Secondly, it throws different curveballs -- left-handed curveball, right-handed curveball, left-handed slider, right-handed slider -- so we're very fortunate that our bench players are able to use it to stay sharp."

Shelton said the ProBatter is especially helpful for bench players this time of year, when the weather is cold and the value of outdoor pregame work is somewhat dulled. The Indians also use the machine to do bunt work.

"It's a higher velocity [than using a live coach], and you're getting the actual timing of it when you square around," Shelton said. "So I think it has a lot of advantages, and I think we're very fortunate that we have one."

Actually, the Indians have three of the machines, which currently run for about \$45,000. In addition to the one at Progressive Field, the Tribe also has a machine in Triple-A Buffalo and Double-A Akron.

"Our front office does a nice job," Shelton said. "They give us the different options of things to use. They're very generous in making sure those things are taken care of."

The ProBatter option, though, is not for everybody.

Hafner, for example, used the machine once or twice and decided against making it a part of his routine. He instead swears by the **iTrac vision training system**, which uses high-speed tennis balls with a series of colored numbers printed on them to train batters' eye muscles to read the spin on different types of pitches.

ProBatter, Pronk said, is limited by the fact that all the pitches come out of the same hole.

"It comes out of the same spot every time," he said, "so you're not getting the feel of a different left-handed or right-handed look."

Shelton has no problem with hitters making their own decisions about which devices to use.

"We don't force it on anybody, but we recommend it," Shelton said. "It's a personal preference."

After all, video games aren't for everybody.

Anthony Castrovince is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

[e-mail this page](#) 

 [Sphere Related Articles & Blogs](#)

[Official Info](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Statement](#)

[Help/Contact Us](#)

[Job Opportunities](#)

[Corporate Marketing](#)

© 2001-2008 MLB Advanced Media, L.P. All rights reserved.

The following are trademarks or service marks of Major League Baseball entities and may be used only with permission of Major League Baseball Properties, Inc. or the relevant Major League Baseball entity: Major League, Major League Baseball, MLB, the silhouetted batter logo, World Series, National League, American League, Division Series, League Championship Series, All-Star Game, and the names, nicknames, logos, uniform designs, color combinations, and slogans designating the Major League Baseball clubs and entities, and their respective mascots, events and exhibitions.

Use of the Website signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)(updated 03.22.05).