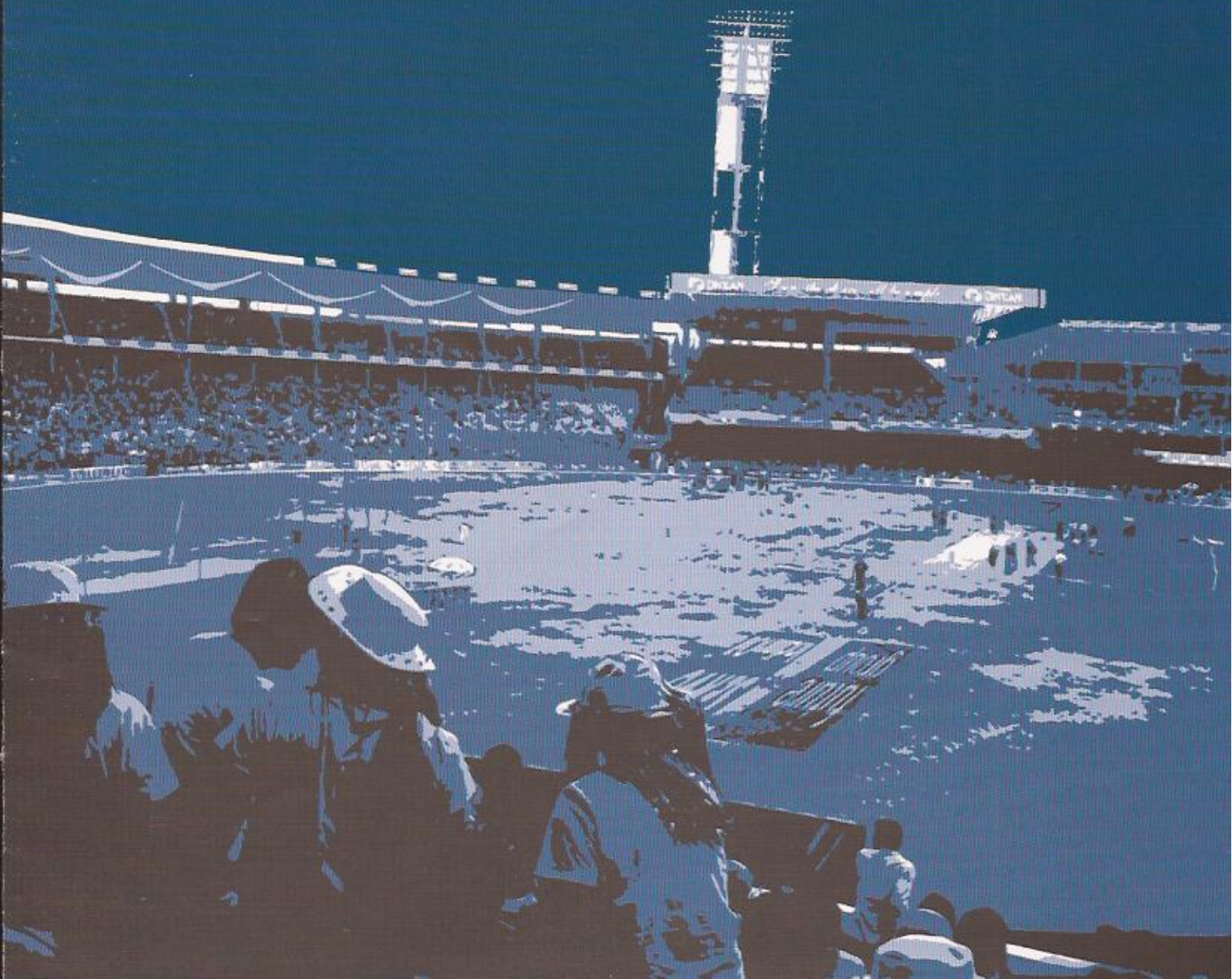


The Match





4. The Match

Introduction

Now that you know the player, and are equipped with an understanding of coaching methodology and the various skills, it is time to put it all into practice.

But, before your team takes the field, they and you should have a good knowledge of the Laws of Cricket and the various terms used in the game.

And, unless you have a dedicated scorer, your players need to know how to score, and how to interpret the umpires' signals.

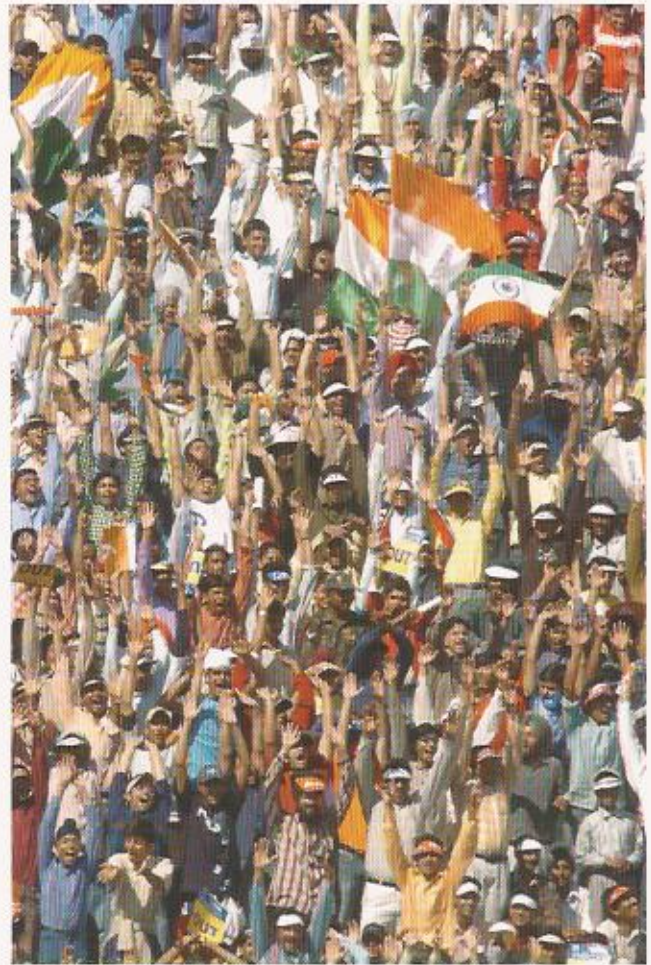
This information or references / links to it can be found at the end of the manual.

In this section, we take a look at the coach's relationship with his captain, and basic strategies, tactics and field placements.

There is also detailed advice on how to run between wickets, and an introduction to preparing players mentally for the challenges of the contest.

And, finally, we remind you of the need to uphold the great traditions of fairness enshrined in the Spirit of Cricket.

Indeed, your players should also be encouraged to read up on the history of cricket, particularly in India, as this will enhance their respect for the greatest game on earth.



Match Day at Mohali

... putting it into practice



Law 17

Preparation

A proper, agreed pre-match routine and preparation is essential to optimise performance.

This includes attention to diet and fluid intake on match eve and in the morning.

Players should prepare their gear the night before, and the coach must be contactable in the event of changes to travel arrangements or cancellation due to weather.

The team should arrive an hour before play is scheduled for an unhurried preparation, starting with an assessment of the ground, pitch and weather, particularly wind strength and direction.

After changing quickly, the players will warm up, then practise their skills. Top-order batsmen will receive throw-downs, and bowlers will bowl to the wicketkeeper.

Slips fieldsmen will then be fed close catches while outfielders practise high

catches, intercepting and throwing to the wicketkeeper.

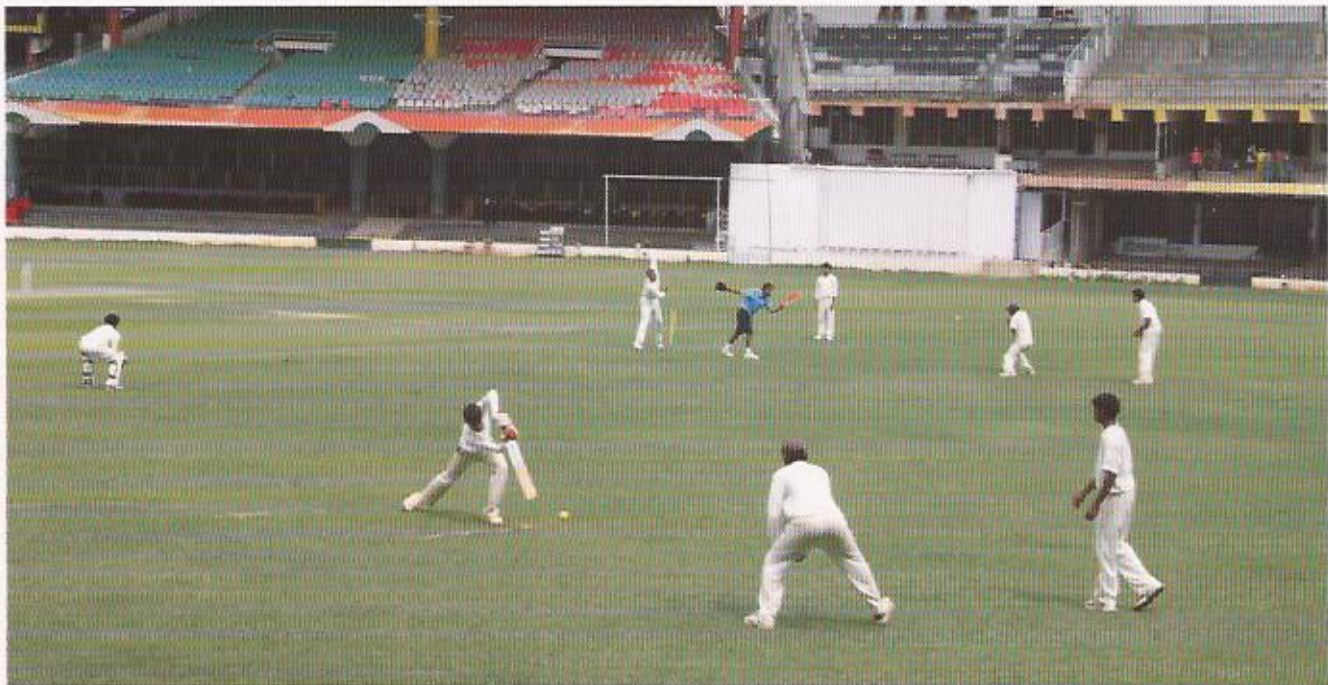
The toss should be effected as early as possible to give the teams a chance to focus on the relevant game plan.

Strategy formulated during the week will be reiterated and modified for the prevailing ground, pitch and weather conditions.

There should be a period of quiet before play commences to allow individual players, particularly an opening batting pair, to prepare mentally. Alternatively, the wicketkeeper may practise fine skills.

Carbohydrate intake and hydration will be maintained as appropriate throughout the day.

Other routines apply **during play**. If the team is batting, players should sit together, observing the fielding side and encouraging the pair at the wicket.



Everyone involved: skills warm-up



4. The Match



Bonding routine: team huddle

Players may need to score and / or operate the scoreboard, and such duties should be rotated.

When the team is in the field, it is essential that players change positions quickly between overs and for left / right-handed batting combinations.

They should watch the captain for instructions between deliveries, and move quickly to a new position.

The ball should be kept off the ground as much as possible and polished intelligently to maintain its condition.

Players should loudly encourage the bowlers and show appreciation for good fielding. There should never be criticism of either. A quick huddle after the fall of a wicket may help to bond the team.

At the conclusion of play, during a short recovery session, the coach will conduct a quick debrief and confirm practice arrangements for the following week.

Umpires, scorers, grounds staff, caterers and any other helpers should be thanked, and the venue left clean and tidy.

Mental Skills

Do you have a batsman who consistently gets a start, but fails to go on to a big score? Or, one who loses his wicket soon after a personal milestone?

You may have a bowler who "loses it" after being hit for successive boundaries. Do you have fielding lapses during a long partnership?

Concentration and the ability to handle pressure are two key mental skills that often separate teams of equal ability. And, these factors become more important the higher a player goes.

But, at any level, the right mental approach to competition will result in consistency of performance.



Cricket demands long periods of concentration of various degrees and is, perhaps, most intense for wicketkeepers and batsmen.

To a large extent, being in the right frame of mind to compete properly is a result of careful preparation. For example, high levels of physical fitness enable players to concentrate for longer.

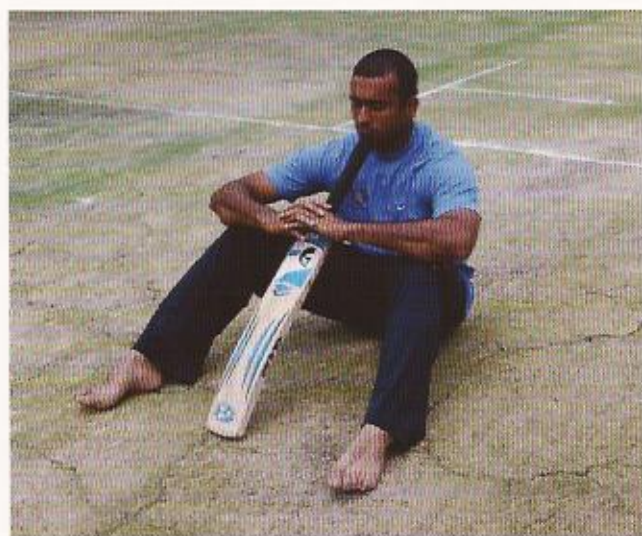
And, a consistent match-day routine will help settle nerves and allow the player to attune to the environment and focus on objectives to optimise performance.

Once play commences, preparation is still a factor with the implementation of short-term performance goals eg. building an innings ten runs at a time.

This involves focusing only on what can be controlled - the process, not the outcome; the present, not the future; the important, not the trivial.

Concentration is a relaxed state of alertness, which can vary in duration and can change its focus instantly to stay with the flow of competition.

An example of this is a batsman's switch from



Rehearsing success: visualisation

a broad observation of field placings, to a narrow focus on the seam of the ball.

It involves paying (selective) attention to the relevant factors at the right time – fine focus at the critical moments. This requires routine identification of cues to switch on to key elements of skills.

But, it is just as important to be able to switch off (or down) between deliveries: concentration cannot be sustained continuously for a long time. Fortunately, the structured nature of cricket does afford regular, predictable opportunities to relax the intensity.

Similarly, it is important to be able to handle distractions such as comments from the opposition, loss of a batting partner, the drinks break or an injury. Good preparation involves a checklist of triggers and coping mechanisms, including positive self-talk.

Another key area is anxiety. Players can feel this before going out to bat, or before bowling or facing their first delivery.

It can be exacerbated by a run of poor performances or after the sloppy execution of a skill. If a batsman misses a delivery, or a bowler delivers a long hop which is dispatched to the boundary, he may start worrying about the next ball.

The idea is to take a deep breath and concentrate only on that next delivery. What's done is done. A player should learn from an error, but nothing is gained by dwelling on it.

Other techniques can assist in achieving optimum arousal (intensity), and imagery (visualisation) can enhance confidence using the successful rehearsal of skills combined with relaxation techniques.



Law 1 - 3, 4

Captaincy

Cricket differs from most team sports in that tactical decisions are not made by the coach. As you are not on the field of play, your relationship with the captain is a key to successful performance, and will be developed at practice and other times.

Qualities

It starts with selection of the most appropriate person, the man or boy with the necessary leadership qualities. In junior cricket, the coach may even rotate the captaincy to give several boys the opportunity to prove their mettle.

The captain must be able to hold his place in the team on merit, and will have a further edge if he is one of the better players. The ability to lead by example is a definite plus. And, he must understand the game.

But, he should also command respect as an individual so that he can assist the coach in maintaining agreed club standards of behaviour on and off the field.

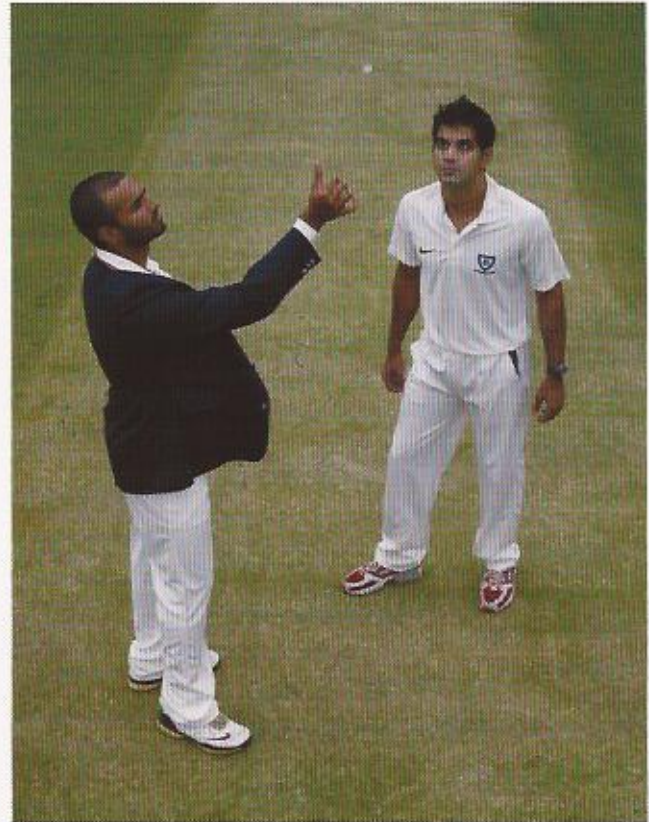
He should happily accept responsibility, and be confident, positive, decisive and honest. Most people need leadership; they are looking for direction, and are happy to follow.

But, at the same time, the captain must be unselfish and inclusive, with the ability to understand, manage, nurture and even learn from the different personalities in the team.

And, while charisma is a desirable quality, so is outward calm. The team needs to feel that the skipper has things under control, no matter what.

Relationship

The captain should feel that he can learn from the coach for whom he is the on-field



Know beforehand: the toss

representative.

You must ensure that he knows the Laws of Cricket and local rules and playing conditions, and understands and maintains match-day protocols.

You should educate and mentor the captain, monitoring his performance and providing regular feedback.

You should work as a team, developing season goals and a game plan, then planning strategies and solving potential scenarios during the week.

Such preparation provides the captain with a mental check-list of potential solutions, enabling him to be proactive in the heat of battle, rather than reacting to unforeseen circumstances.



Voice of experience: Sunil Gavaskar (47 Test matches) with Rahul Dravid (25)

Before selection, you will discuss opposition strengths and weaknesses, and consider likely pitch and outfield conditions and the weather forecast.

The captain should have a say in team selection, and in determining batting and bowling orders and standard field placements.

On match day, he will help you review actual conditions, including the strength and direction of any wind, and determine the decision to be made should the captain win the toss.

The captain will assist you in ensuring an effective warm-up, hit-up and fielding drills.

Once play commences, he is in charge, but you should review tactics at scheduled breaks in play, and debrief without recrimination after the match while memories are fresh.

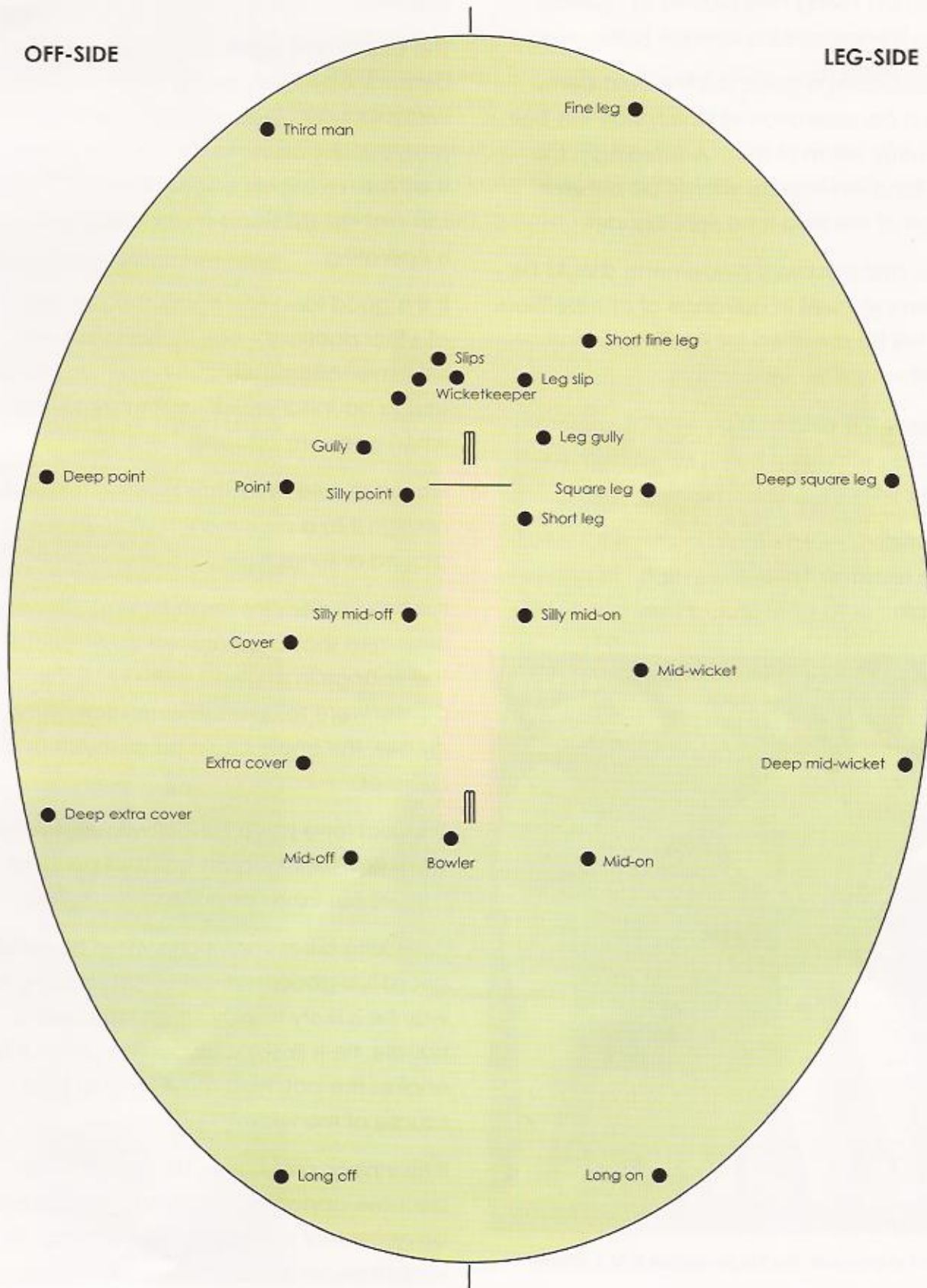
The captain may head a leadership group which assists you in managing difficult players.

... be calm and decisive



4. The Match

Fielding Positions FOR A RIGHT-HANDED BATSMAN





Law 41 - 5, 6, 7, 8

Field Placements

Setting the appropriate field for a bowler is not simply telling nine players to "spread out". There is quite a science to it.

But, basically, a good starting field stems from a consideration of which way the ball will swing, seam or spin. Accordingly, the field for a left-hander will not be a mirror image of the field for a right-hander.

These standard field placements should be determined well in advance of competition, and will be modified for significant wind, weather and outfield factors.

The way the pitch is likely to play will also be a factor, with fields being set squarer for slower wickets.

Essentially, fieldsmen are in place for only three reasons: to take a catch; to prevent a single; or to save four. If they cannot do

any of those things, they are in the wrong position.

The depth and positioning of slips will be determined largely by the position of the wicketkeeper. Slips and gullies stand progressively closer to the bat the wider they are, as thicker edges do not carry as far. First slip will stand wider when a spinner is operating.

It is a good idea to stagger the placement of other positions – one in, one out - with fieldsmen alternately cutting off singles and saving boundaries, with the latter sweeping when gaps are pierced.

Players should mark their position on the turf or align it to a prominent feature of the ground or surroundings.

If a bowler decides to go around the wicket, fieldsmen should be moved appropriately to the change in angle of delivery. If the bowler were to operate from wide of the crease, this angle could be as much as 8.5 degrees.

The field for a pace bowler will change with wear and tear on both ball and pitch, as the ball will not travel as quickly, nor as fine.

Checking a batsman's grip when he takes guard is a good method of determining the way he is likely to play. If it is high on the handle, he is likely to favour the drive; if he chokes the bat, he is more likely to play square of the wicket.

If his innings progresses, his strengths will become apparent, and field changes may be necessary to stem the flow of runs. The wicketkeeper is in a good position to advise



A word in your ear: Sachin Tendulkar & M.S. Dhoni



4. The Match

the captain in this regard.

A batsman's weaknesses will often be the opposite of his strengths, and bowling tactics will alter, along with the field settings they require.

And, except at the developmental stage, fields should not be set for bad bowling. Bad bowlers are taken off.

Similarly, plugging a gap in the field after each boundary smacks of catch-up. Bowlers must bowl to the agreed field which should be maintained for the duration of a set plan.

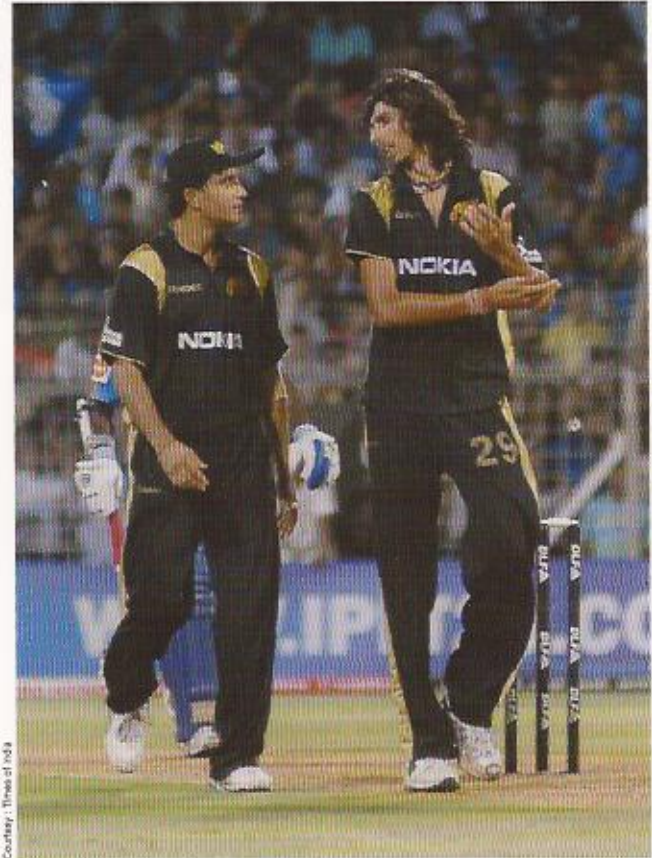
Fieldsmen should be trained to glance in the captain's direction between deliveries so that subtle alterations can be made without alerting the batsmen.

They should call loudly "mine" or "yours" (or player's name) in the event of a skied ball which could be caught by more than one fielder.

And, they should alert team-mates loudly and quickly as to which end they should throw the ball to effect a run-out.

While it is logical to develop specialists in key fielding positions, varying personnel can help freshen their concentration during a long day.

The distance travelled by outfielders between overs should be minimised to conserve energy and maintain a satisfactory over rate. Thus, for example, third man becomes mid-on.



Courtesy: Times of India

Where do you want them? Sourav Ganguly & Ishant Sharma

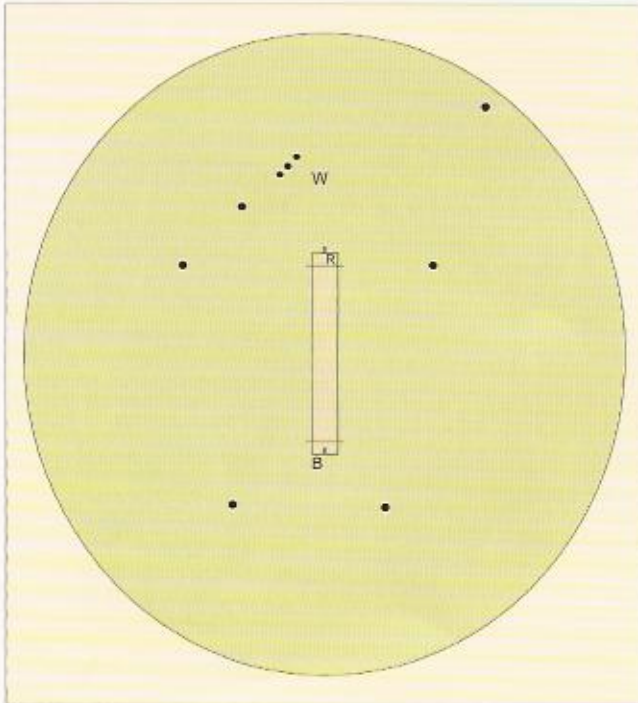
... it's all about angles



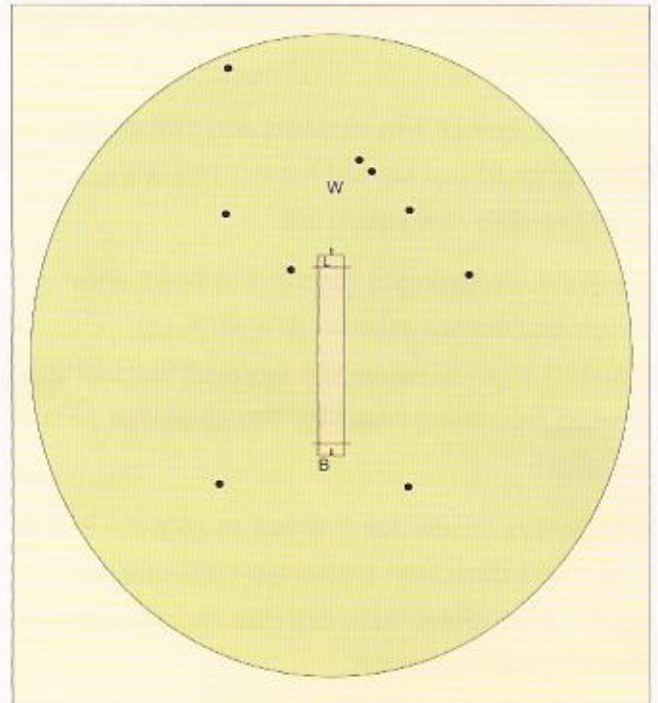
FIELD PLACEMENTS

OUT-SWING

RIGHT-HANDED BATSMAN

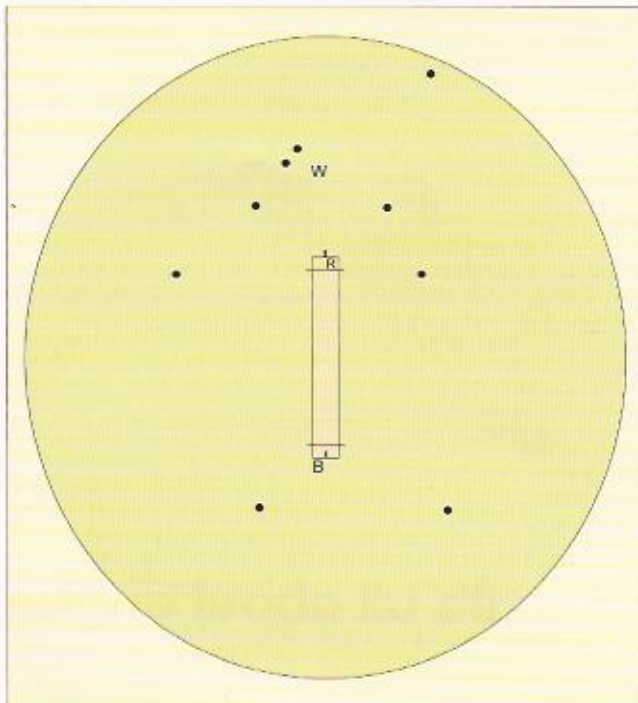


LEFT-HANDED BATSMAN

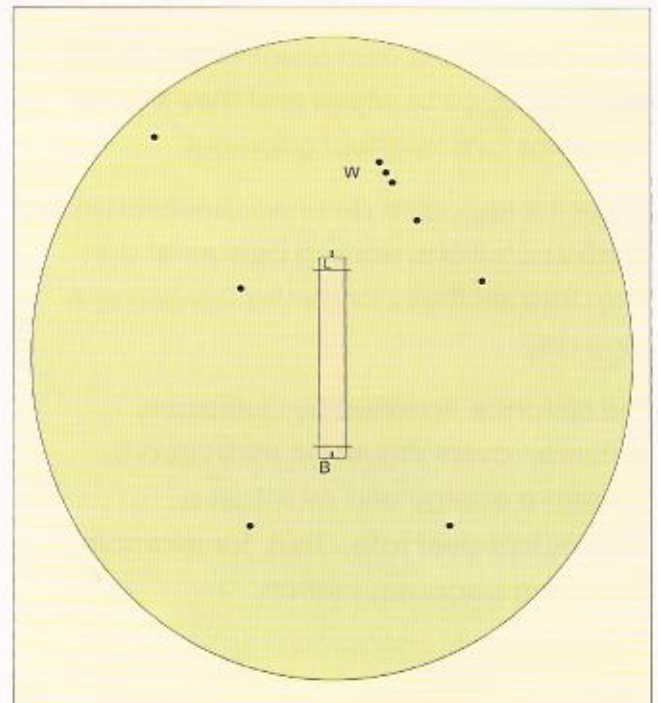


IN-SWING

RIGHT-HANDED BATSMAN



LEFT-HANDED BATSMAN



B = bowler W = wicketkeeper

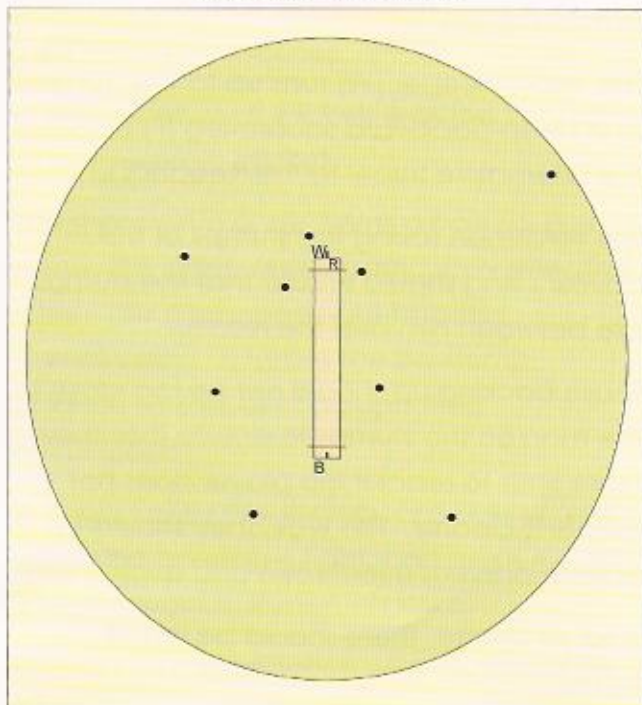


4. The Match

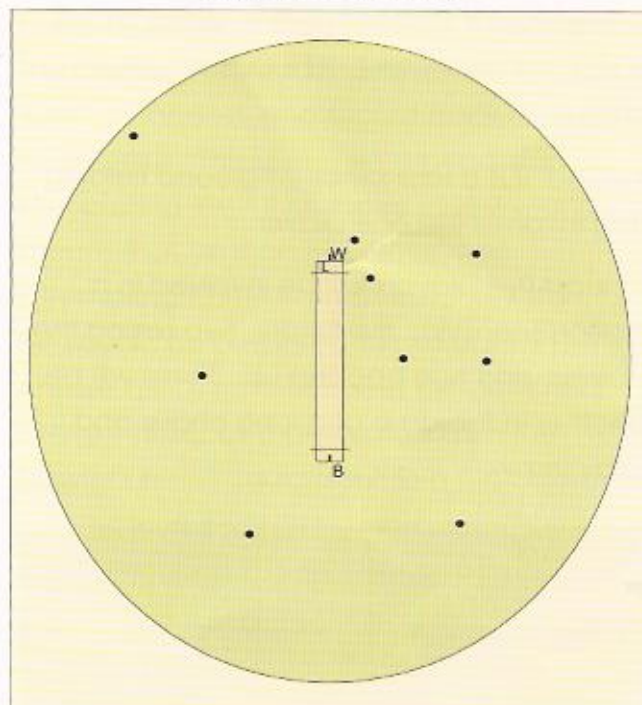
FIELD PLACEMENTS

OFF-SPIN

RIGHT-HANDED BATSMAN

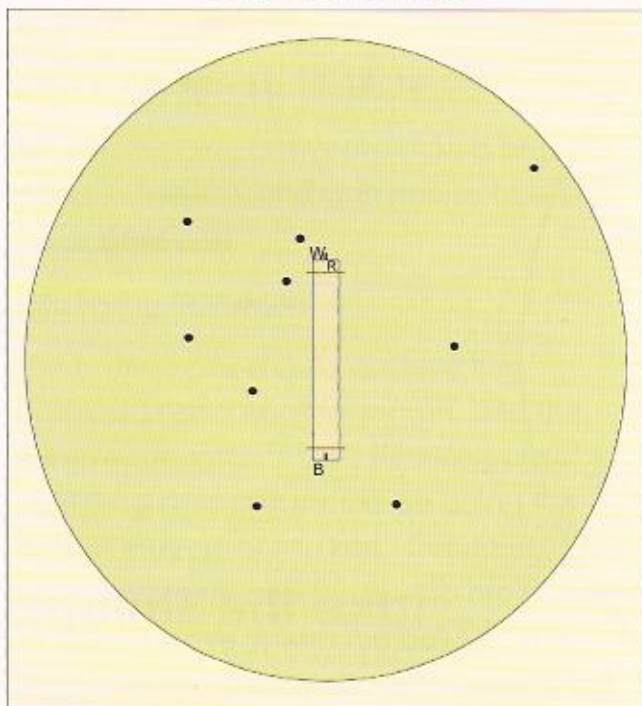


LEFT-HANDED BATSMAN

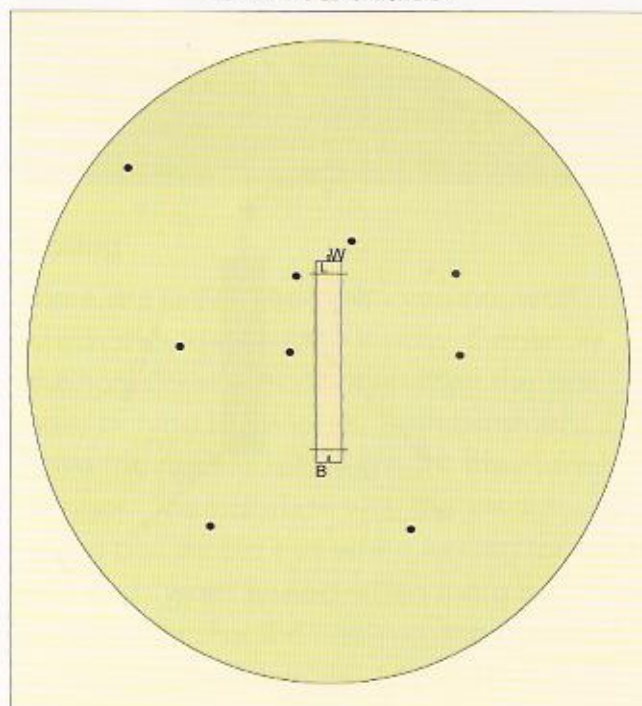


LEG-SPIN

RIGHT-HANDED BATSMAN



LEFT-HANDED BATSMAN



B = bowler W = wicketkeeper



Backing Up

As mentioned earlier, fielding is about teamwork and supporting your mates. Sometimes, it is about putting in the "hard yards" for no reward. About being there just in case.

Indeed, it is a rare piece of ground fielding that involves just one player.

At least five players will be involved in a routine scenario: the fielder, two taking the stumps, and two backing up. There will be another in the case of a long chase and relay throw.

In this example, the ball is struck through extra cover. Fielder A makes an unsuccessful attempt to stop the ball, and pace bowler (B) has followed through.

Fielder C is hoping to restrict scoring to one

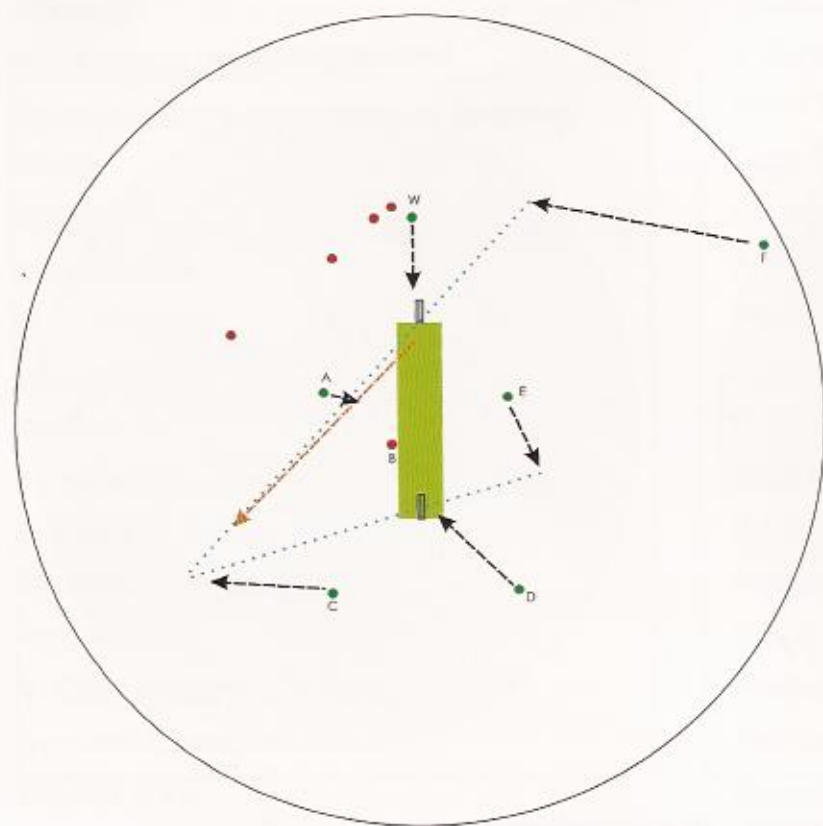
run, as fielder D takes the stumps at the bowler's end. Fielder E moves to back that possible return.

The wicketkeeper (W) runs up to the stumps, and deep backward square-leg (F) backs the alternative throw to the 'keeper's end.

The fieldsman taking the stumps at the bowler's end should ensure that the stumps are between him and the return.

Those backing up should not be too close to the man on the stumps to ensure that they have time to react if the player does not gather it cleanly. This way, they should be able to prevent overthrows and avoid injury.

And, of course, there should be lots of talking.



... take the stumps!



4. The Match

Running Between Wickets

It is no use having every shot in the manual if you cannot run efficiently between wickets. Even the greatest players don't score all their runs in boundaries.

Running between wickets is at the very core of teamwork in cricket.

The sharply-run single helps a batting pair to rotate the strike, and is particularly effective if they are a left- and right-handed combination. It forces the bowler to change his line, and disrupts field placements.

A single keeps the scoreboard ticking over when the bowling is tight, and helps to get the dominant batsman on strike.

But, all running between wickets should be done with aggression so as to squeeze as many runs out of a well-placed shot as possible. This places pressure on the opposition, often leading to a mis-field or an errant throw (return).

Laws 2; 38; 42 - 11, 14, 15, 16

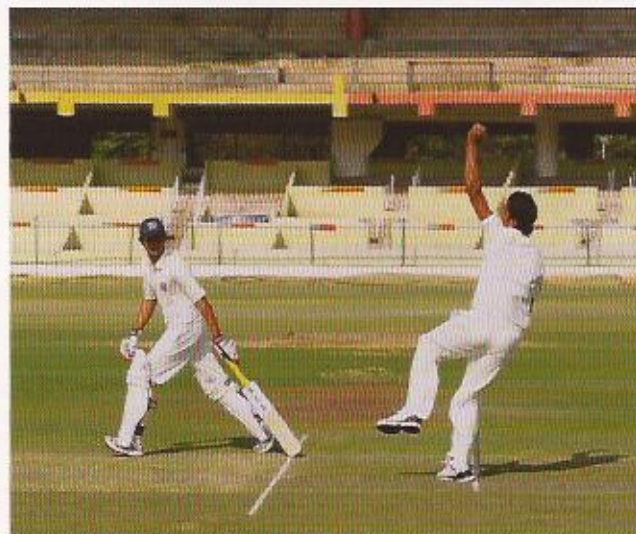
Efficient running between wickets requires good judgment, and adherence to seven basic principles.

Observing fieldsmen

The batting pair should observe the preferred hand of all fieldsmen, and the relative strengths of their throwing arms. Incoming batsmen should be doing this before they go out to bat. They should note poor fieldsmen, and those who are not alert or do not move in with the bowler. This facilitates the pre-meditated "stealing" of (extra) runs, even from a defensive shot.

Backing up

The non-striker should hold his bat in the hand closest to the bowler. He may leave the popping crease once the bowler's back foot has landed, and should back up two or three steps. This gives him a head-start in completing the 17.68 metre journey, and means that he is on the move, not attempting to run from a stationary start. He should be prepared to get back in his crease quickly, however, in the case of a straight drive, as a deflection from the bowler's hand could result in a run-out.



Calling

There are only three calls - yes, no, wait - which should be made loudly. Generally, the non-striker will call only when the ball goes behind the wicket. Both batsmen have the right to refuse a run if they sense danger. The batsman with the clearer view of the ball should call when turning for each run, and "wait" is used when there is uncertainty. For the final run, the batsman running to the "danger" end will call or, in the case of a long throw from the outfield,



the batsman with the better view of the fieldsmen should alert his partner as to which end the ball is being returned. Each should be alert to the possibility of overthrows.



Which side of the wicket?

Normally, the striker should run on the opposite side of the wicket from his partner whose side is determined by the bowler (**Law 29 – 3**). The striker should be careful to avoid colliding with the bowler who has right of way in his follow through, and must avoid running on the pitch (**Law 42 – 11**).

Carrying the bat

The bat should be carried in both hands for balance and maximum speed between wickets. The hand holding the handle should be switched, as appropriate before turning, to facilitate the best view of the ball.

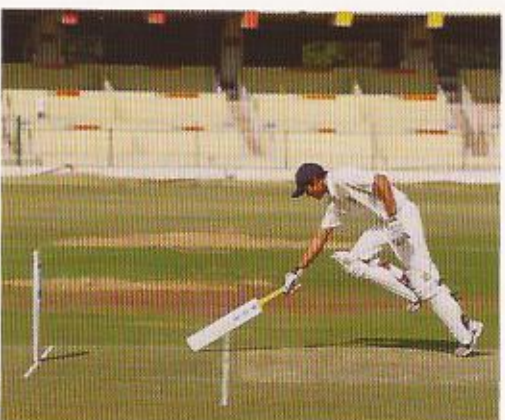
Turning

The batsman should employ a low, three-point turn ensuring the bat is grounded just over the popping crease. This improves braking, and power away from the turn. He should have the ball in sight at this time so as to judge the viability of a further run.



Sliding the bat

In the event of a close run, the bat should be grounded a metre or so before the popping crease and slid on its edge to minimise the possibility of it being caught in the turf or matting.



... yes, no, wait!



4. The Match

Spirit of Cricket

There is a well-known saying which has passed into the lexicon.

Such is the game's long-standing tradition of fair play, that people will use the expression, "It's just not cricket", to refer to a situation where such protocols have been breached.

In 2000, the MCC enshrined the Spirit of Cricket as a Preamble to the Laws when they were revised and rewritten for the new millennium.

Essentially, it is a reiteration of **Law 42** (Fair and unfair play). In addition, it notes that the Spirit of the Game involves respect for your opponents, your own captain, the roles of the umpires and the Game's traditional values.

It stresses that there is no place for any act of violence on the field of play, and that captains and umpires together set the tone for the conduct of a cricket match.

Every player is expected to make an important contribution towards this.



There are certain time-honoured protocols that are observed on match day. Umpires are first onto the field of play, followed by the fielding side, then the batsmen. Fielders make way for the batsmen to exit the arena first at any break or at the completion of an innings.

And, while there are no Laws requiring such courtesies, it is considered good sportsmanship to applaud an opponent's century. Just as it is poor behavior to deride opponents' errors, or to appeal when you know someone is not out

It is simply common courtesy to thank an umpire for holding your cap or sweater while you bowl an over, or for giving you guard. And, you can help him by honestly signalling a close boundary, or by apologising for bowling an accidental "beamer".

Players should be gracious in victory or defeat, shaking hands with the opposition after the match.

And, they should show appreciation to all officials and volunteers without whose efforts play could not proceed.

A coach is there to build character as much as he is to teach skills. If you insist on your players maintaining the ethics of cricket, there is a good chance that this will carry on into life itself.

... play up, play the game