

The Skills





3. THE SKILLS - Batting

Law 18

Introduction

The whole idea of cricket is to score more runs than the opposition. But, you can't do that if you are back in the pavilion.

It is important that a batsman's game is built around a solid defence and technical proficiency.

No player has all the shots, but he should be able to handle deliveries that test his weaker areas safely. And, a good technique will give him a greater chance of survival on difficult or deteriorating pitches.

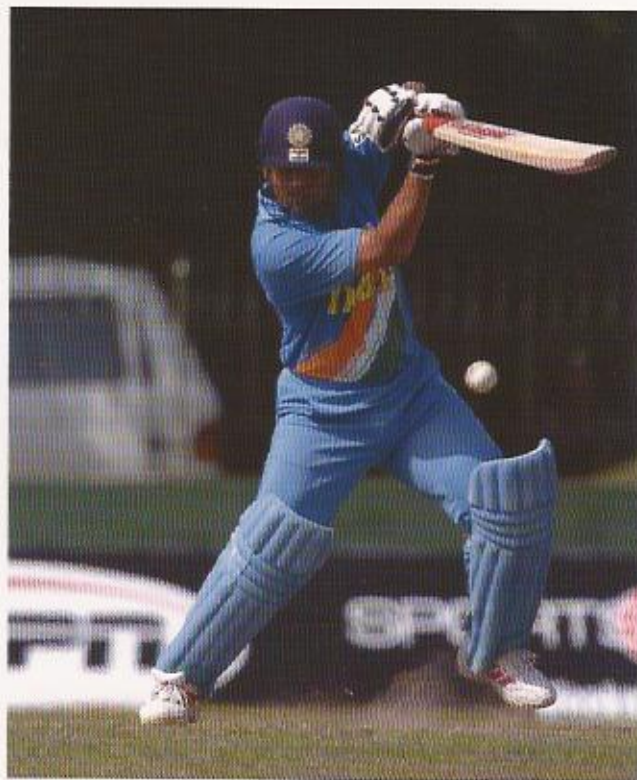
A batsman must also develop the ability to identify and remember the gaps in the field so that he can work the ball for a single. This rotates the strike, particularly for a more talented or in-form partner, and keeps the scoreboard ticking.

Good batting does not require immense power. Indeed, most of history's greatest batsmen have been small of stature. Balls are hit most effectively with exquisite timing based around good footwork.

The following pages address conventional shot-making, but a player is encouraged to improvise as this can upset bowlers' lines, and prove most effective in the shorter forms of the game.

However, even in T20, you have to keep the good balls out, and a sound technique provides the right foundation for success.

The aim is to hit the ball with the meat (sweet spots) located in the area 10 cm below the splice to 10 cm from the toe of the bat. So, this is an area approximately 20 to 23 cm by 5 cm, and it pays to practise often to sharpen the eye.



30,000 runs at International level: Sachin Tendulkar

Even tailenders should be encouraged to improve their batting. You may consider employing a "buddy" system in which they are paired with a specialist batsman for one-on-one attention at practice and other times.

... you can't make runs in the pavilion



Grip



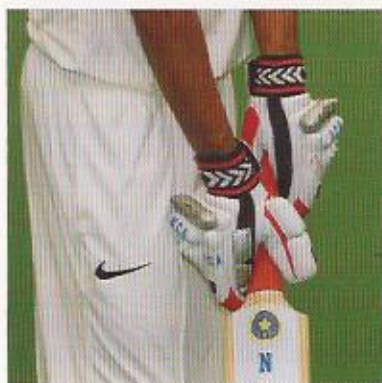
A proper grip is essential for power and control on both sides of the wicket, and is not unlike that used to wield an axe.

The simplest way to discover the correct grip is to lay the bat on the ground with the handle pointing towards the feet, then pick it up with both hands.

The Vs formed by the thumb and forefinger of each hand should be aligned towards the outside edge of the splice of the bat.

The knuckle of the index finger of the top hand will be aligned with the outside edge of the bat, and the back of the hand will face extra cover.

The hands should be close together in the middle of the handle so they act as a single pivot point.



... align the Vees

Law 36

Guard



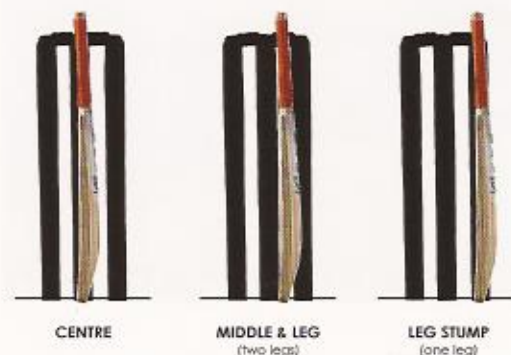
A batsman takes guard when he arrives at the crease so that he will know where the stumps are, and can protect them while batting. Most players take centre.

The batsman should place his bat vertically on the popping crease, side-on with the face pointing away from him. The umpire will direct him to shift the bat until it is aligned between the middle stumps at both ends.

The batsman will then mark the spot with his sprigs, or chalk in the case of an artificial pitch.

Two other popular guards are leg stump (the line between the umpire's middle stump and the batsman's leg stump) and two legs (the line from the umpire's middle stump to between the batsman's middle and leg stumps).

Some batsmen are more comfortable with these guards as they know that a ball hitting their pads in their normal stance will miss leg stump.

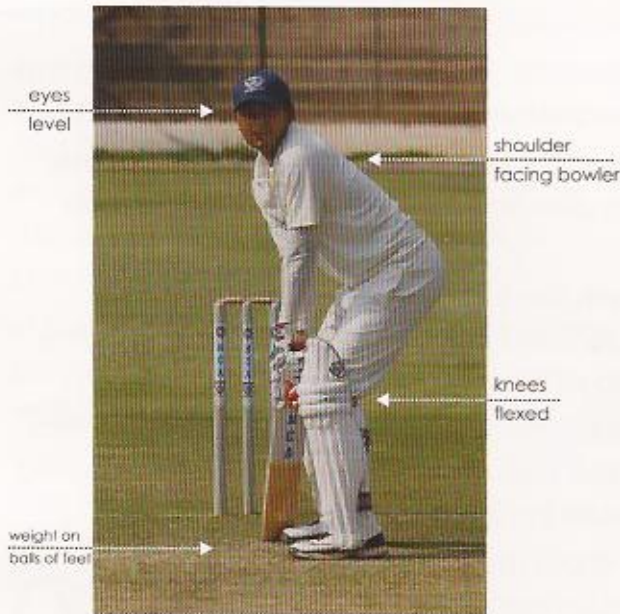




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Stance



The batsman must start in the best position to play his strokes efficiently with minimal movement.

He should stand side-on in a comfortable, upright position with his head and front shoulder facing the bowler for optimal vision.

His feet should be shoulder-width apart, parallel to, and either side of, the popping crease. (He should turn his body approximately five degrees to the left if the bowler goes around the wicket or for a left-arm bowler over the wicket.)

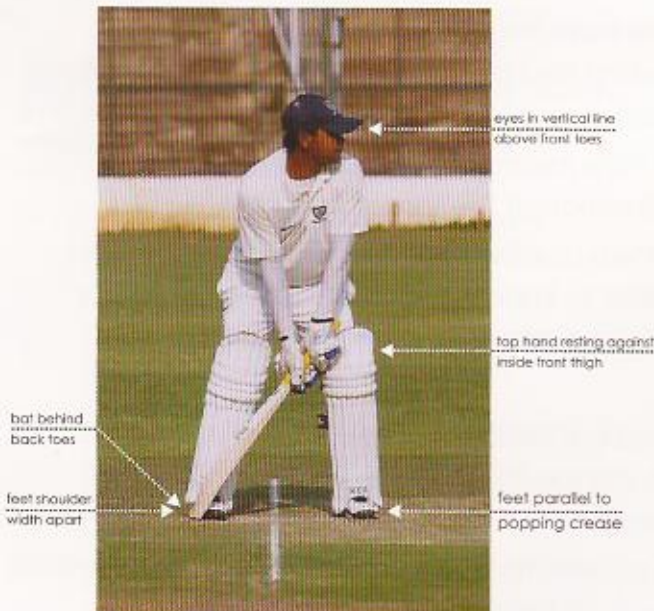
His knees should be slightly flexed, with the weight evenly balanced on the balls of his feet.

His head should be still and eyes level in a line vertically above the toes.

His top hand will rest comfortably against the inside of his front thigh, and the bottom of the bat behind the little toe of his back foot.

Some players prefer to be "pre-loaded", with the bat raised into the backlift as it helps them to keep their eyes level.

The rear knee should not impede the backlift, and his shirt should be tucked in so that it does not get caught in the handle.



... a side-on game



Phases



Backlift

As the bowler reaches the bowling crease, the bat is lifted in preparation for the backswing. The hands are kept in close to the body, with the grip of the bottom hand relaxed.

As the bowler delivers the ball, the bat is taken back above the height of the stumps in a direction between wicketkeeper and second slip.

The wrists are cocked, with the top hand gripping the handle firmly. The last three fingers and palm of the bottom hand come off the handle by the top of the backswing.

The front shoulder is dipped during the backlift in such a way that both shoulders and the bat handle are in line with the anticipated contact point for maximum control, force and stability.

Foot, shoulders, arms and bat move simultaneously as a unit, in the same plane, the body balanced, with the weight on the ball of the foot.



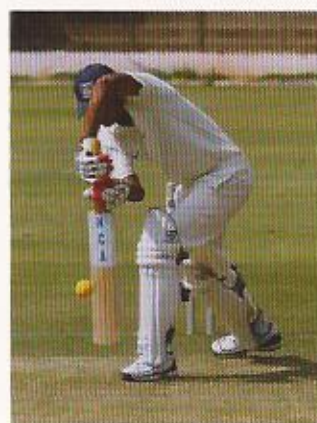
Downswing

Whether playing forward (to a full delivery) or back to a short ball, the step must be completed before the downswing starts.

This establishes a stable base for efficient transfer of weight, facilitating greater control and power. The batsman's centre of gravity is inside this base.

The body parts move from largest (hips, shoulders) to smallest (arms, hands) in the direction of the target (the ball).

The shoulders rotate, then stabilise, and the wrists un-cock. Bat speed increases just prior to impact for an attacking shot, and decreases for a defensive shot.



Impact

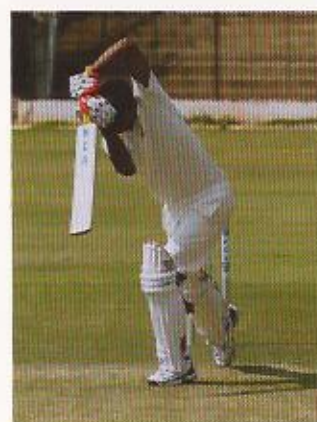
Feet remain stable, and bat makes contact at an angle of 90 degrees to the target, swinging in that direction for as long as possible (attacking shot).

The ball should be struck with the full face of the bat which, at 10.8 cm, is half as wide again as the ball, whose diameter is 7 cm.

Follow-through

After impact, the hands release and the bat continues along the line of the target, sometimes finishing over the shoulder for an attacking shot.

The feet should remain grounded to stabilise the body through the stroke.





3. THE SKILLS - Batting

FRONT-FOOT

Front-foot shots are played to deliveries that arrive on the full, the half-volley or on a good length.

By moving forward, the batsman is able to negate unpredictable bounce and lateral movement.

All shots bar the sweep are played with a vertical bat.

This ensures that the batsman gives himself every chance of being able to make contact with a ball that either keeps low, or bounces higher than expected. This is particularly important when the ball is on the stumps.

The blade of a standard, full-sized bat measures approximately 56 cm. So, in effect, it is eight times the height (diameter) of the ball (7 cm.).

Forward Defence



This shot is generally played to a good-length delivery on the stumps, particularly early in a batsman's innings, or on an unpredictable pitch.

The phases of batting described previously are observed, and the batsman moves his front foot forward to a position slightly inside the line of the ball.

The body weight is transferred into the front foot through a bent front knee which also brings the head down over the ball.

At the top of the backswing, the shoulders rotate vertically, and the bat accelerates before decelerating just prior to contact under the eyes. The head should be still, eyes on the ball.

The ball makes contact with the full face of an angled bat which is kept close to and in front of the pad.

While the hands are forward of the pad, it is important to let the ball come to you, not push at it.

The heel of the back foot will lift to allow the body weight to move forward. But, the back foot itself should not move as the back leg straightens.

A high top elbow, the bat, and a relaxed bottom hand will form a figure 9 as the top hand controls the shot.



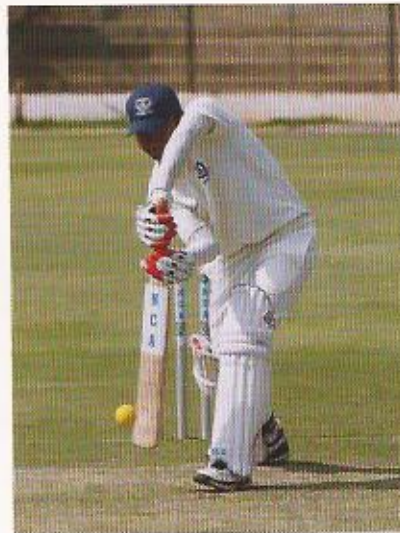
... close the gate



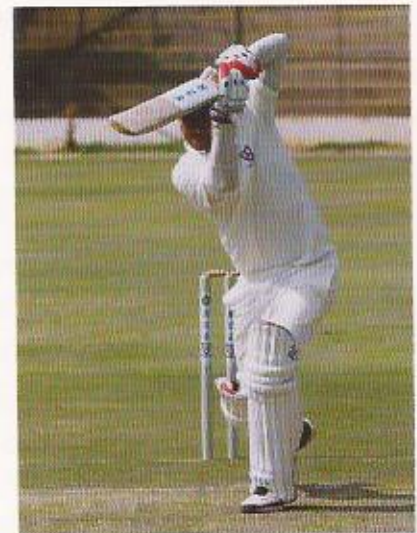
Drives



• Straight backlift



• Front foot inside line of ball



• Follow through with full face of bat

These shots are an extension of front-foot defence, and are played to full-length deliveries in an arc between mid-on and cover, depending on their line.

A batsman is advised to play in the Vee between mid-on and mid-off early in his innings.

For the drive, the bat accelerates through the point of contact, and the player follows through in the intended direction of the ball.

The arms are fully extended, and the front elbow, hands and bat usually finish high, although a "check" follow-through is often employed.

The step towards the line of the ball is crucial, and there is a subtle difference where the on-drive is concerned.

This is played to a full-length delivery on or around leg stump, and the stride is shorter. The toes point to mid-off, and the front foot remains in a line with leg stump.

As with all drives, it is important that the batsman "stands tall", and that the back leg does not collapse.

Drives may be lofted to clear the infield or the boundary, in which case the ball is struck slightly earlier, with the body weight remaining just behind the point of contact.



The drive to succeed: Rahul Dravid

... play in the Vee early

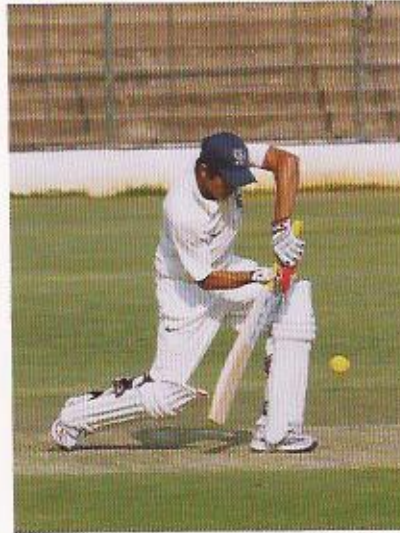


3. THE SKILLS - Batting

Moving Out to Drive



• Crossover step



• To the pitch of the ball



• Head steady throughout

When batting against slower bowling, a player may decide to leave his crease and advance towards the delivery to create a different length.

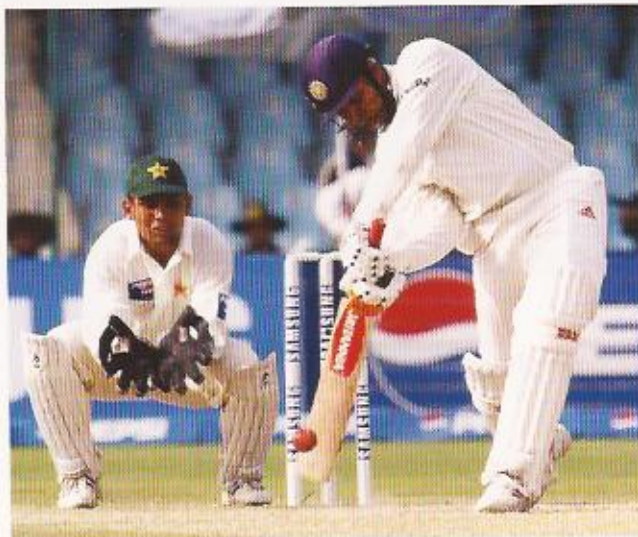
This will open up more scoring opportunities. But, it must be planned in advance and movement left until the last moment so that the bowler cannot adjust his delivery.

Using either a crossover step (back foot behind the front foot) or "click" (where the two feet meet in the same plane), the

batsman makes two quick, long strides towards the delivery.

It is vital that the head remain steady and the eyes level throughout, as the batsman advances towards the appropriate line.

He should also be prepared to defend (even get back in his crease) should the bowler see him coming and make effective adjustments to the delivery.

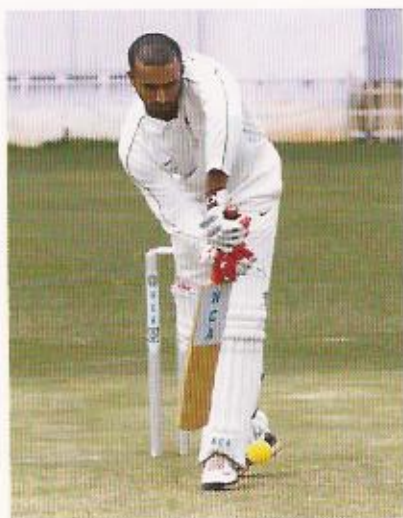


Down the track: Virender Sehwag

... take the initiative!



Leg Glance



- Contact in line with front leg



- Wrists turned on contact



- Body remains upright

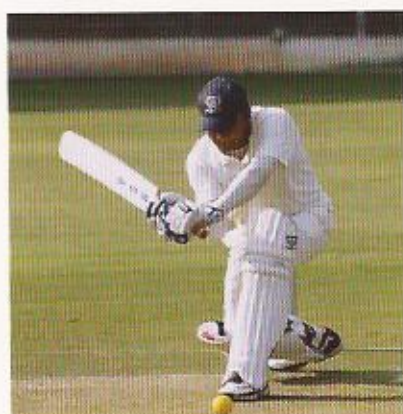
This shot is an extension of the on-drive, played in line with the front leg, to a similar delivery. By turning the face of the bat at point of impact, the batsman uses the pace of the ball to run it behind square leg.

By memorising the gaps in the field, and turning the wrists appropriately, the batsman is able to open up more scoring opportunities from this mis-directed, full delivery.

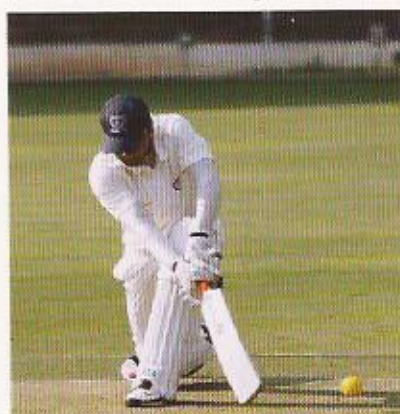
But, it is vital he remain upright, head steady and eyes level, and not fall inside the line of the ball.

It is also important to meet the delivery with the full face of the bat, and not turn the wrists prematurely.

Sweep



- Bat comes from high to low



- Bat horizontal at contact



- Wrists rolled

The sweep shot is played most safely and effectively to off-spin bowling, and opens up scoring opportunities from a good-length delivery.

The front foot will move in a line with middle and leg stumps, with the bat coming from high to low, and horizontal at impact.

The wrists are rolled, and the ball is played into a gap behind square leg.

The sweep is a risky shot when played against the spin and / or on a wearing pitch with variable bounce.



3. THE SKILLS - Batting

BACK-FOOT

Back-foot shots are played to deliveries that are short of a good length.

They are played with either a vertical or horizontal bat, depending on the line.

There is only one movement for all back-foot shots - back foot back and across towards off-stump - although the direction in which the toes point will vary according to the shot.

Law 35



- Level eyes fixed on ball



- Contact beneath the eyes

Defence

This stroke is played to a delivery short of a good length, bouncing usually above the knee and below the chest, and in line with the stumps.

The back foot is usually parallel with the crease to allow the body to remain side-on, although the important thing is that the shoulders do not open too much.

When the back foot is stable, the body weight is transferred onto the balls of the foot, and the front foot acts merely as a balancing agent.

The head remains steady, slightly in front of the back leg, eyes level and fixed on the ball.

As with forward defence, the bat decelerates in the downswing beside the rear hip just before the ball arrives.

The ball should contact the full face of an angled bat just in front of the body beneath the eyes.

Again, the grip is soft, with the top hand in control, and a side-on view of the stroke reveals a figure 9 formation similar to that made in forward defence.

Good use of the crease will allow the batsman to counter a sharply rising ball, but he should be careful not to disturb the stumps with either his bat or back foot.

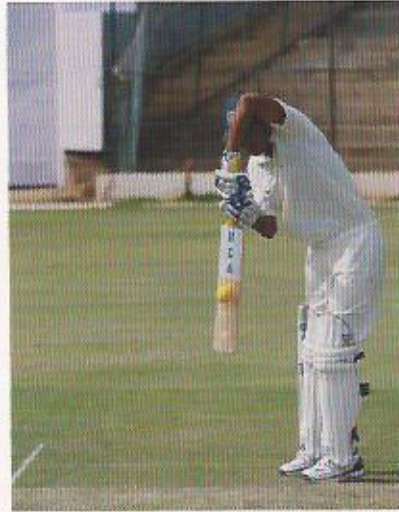
... use the crease



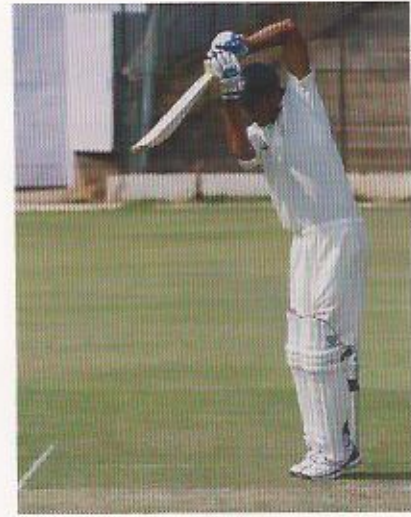
Drive



- Back foot towards off-stump



- Eyes behind line of ball



- Follow through with full face of bat

This is the attacking version of back-foot defence, played to a short delivery pitched on the stumps (or just outside off-stump) and bouncing between knee and waist-high.

This time, the bat accelerates through the point of contact, and stays on line with the shot, finishing high.

The shot can be played anywhere in an arc between mid-on and cover.

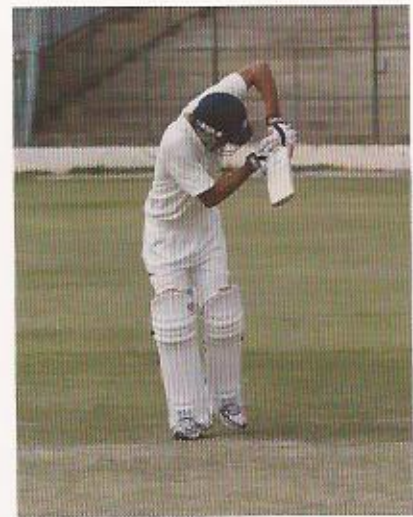
Leg Glance



- Back foot points down pitch



- Front foot withdraws



- Wrists turned on contact

This shot will be played to a delivery short of a good length pitched on middle and / or leg stump, with the body chest-on.

Instead of being parallel to the crease, the back foot points down the pitch, and the front foot, rather than sliding back, actually withdraws to "access" the shot.

The wrists are turned as the ball meets the full face of the bat, and the back foot pivots slightly as the ball is directed into a gap behind square leg.



3. THE SKILLS - Batting

Square cut



• Follow through above shoulder



• Arms fully extended



• Back foot to off-stump

This is an attacking horizontal stroke played to a short delivery bouncing between knee



Cut above the rest: Sourav Ganguly

and chest height outside the off-stump.

A large step is taken, and the back leg flexed. The back foot stabilises parallel to the crease, and the body weight transferred onto it.

The hands and front elbow are high and kept close to the body as the bat is taken back above the anticipated height of the bounce.

The wrists are cocked, and the front shoulder turned towards point.

As the ball draws level with the back leg, the shoulders are rotated powerfully away from the ball.

The bat accelerates down horizontally, and contact is made with the arms fully extended.

The wrists are rolled as balance is maintained over the back foot, and the ball is struck towards point.

The hands and bat follow through to finish above the front shoulder.

... high hands



Pull



• Back foot points down pitch



• Head in line with the ball



• Body pivots in follow through

This is an attacking horizontal stroke played to a full toss or short delivery pitched on or around leg stump and reaching the batsman between knee and chest height.

Again, a decisive step is taken back and across towards the off stump, but the back foot points straight down the pitch.

The front leg withdraws to the leg side as the back foot pivots, and the head remains slightly forward of the base and in line with the ball.

The bat has been taken back above the

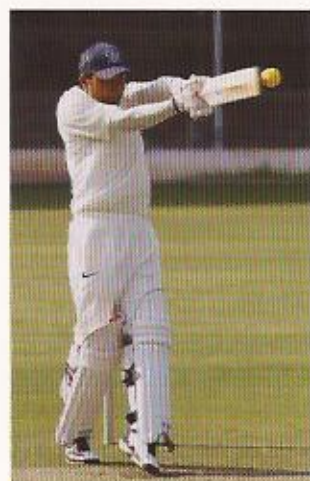
anticipated height of the bounce, the hands in close to the body and the wrists cocked.

The shoulders are now rotated, and the bat accelerated horizontally down and across.

As always, the eyes remain fixed on the ball throughout, and contact is made in front of the body with the arms fully extended.

The wrists are rolled as the ball is struck in the direction of mid-wicket, and the bat follows through naturally.

Hook



• Body inside line of ball

This shot is similar to the pull, but is played to a delivery bouncing between chest and head.

It involves striking the ball close to its apex and is, therefore, harder to control.

The hook is played with the body inside the line of the ball which is usually struck towards fine leg.

... help it on its way



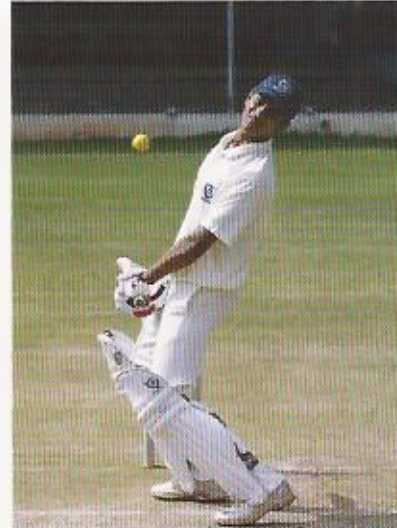
3. THE SKILLS - Batting

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Avoiding



• Eyes on the ball



• Knees flexed

There is usually no chance of playing an effective shot to a well-directed bouncer bowled at pace.

In this situation, the best a batsman can do is to avoid the delivery safely.

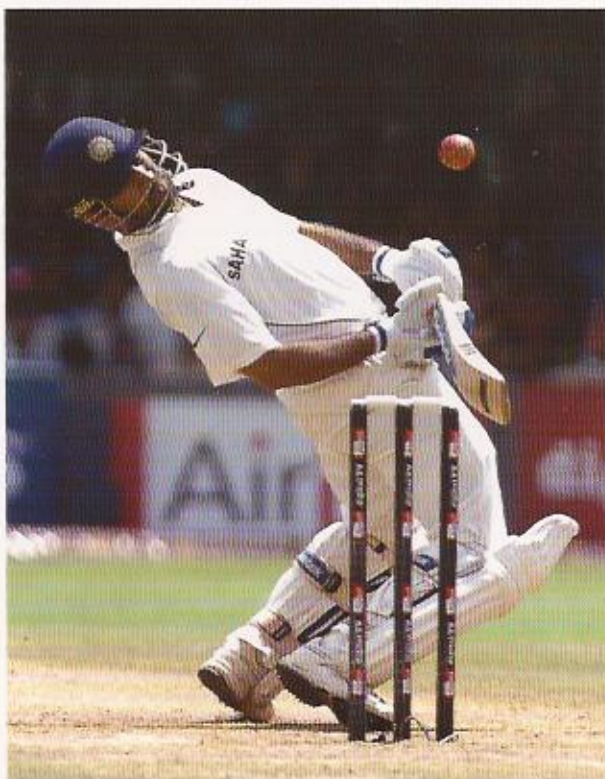
There are two methods, and each involves watching the ball closely until it passes the body.

Just because a ball is dug in short does not necessarily mean it will rise to head height. So, initially, the batsman will be looking to play a shot.

After he has determined that the delivery cannot be played safely (with control), he will bend his knees duck under it.

Alternatively, he may sway back, allowing the ball to pass his face on the way through.

In each case, the bat should be lowered away from the path of the ball, and away from the stumps.



Swaying to chin music: M.S. Dhoni

... the better part of valour



Footwork / Shot Selection

We have seen that batting is all about footwork, and the fundamental movements are incorporated in the batting mat below.



Children should be taught these basic movements until they are ingrained as second nature, somewhat like dance steps.

In conventional batting, you do not step to the leg-side.

The on-drive, leg glance and straight drive are played with a shorter step than the off- or cover drives.

The back foot always moves back and across towards off-stump, with the toes pointing as appropriate in a 90-degree arc for the square cut through to the pull or leg glance (dotted outline).

At practice in particular, junior cricketers should be taught to check the position of their feet after all strokes. In this way, they become their own coach.

If the shot felt good, and the result was satisfactory, it is more than likely down to good footwork.

Particularly if the youngster has lost balance when playing the stroke, it will almost certainly be the result of poor footwork.

But, even after a child has mastered the basic movements, successful batting depends on assessing the length and pace of deliveries, and correct shot selection.

	R		
FULL, HALF-VOLLEY	cover drive	straight / off-drive	on-drive / glance
GOOD LENGTH		forward defence	sweep
SHORT OF A LENGTH	late cut	BF defence / drive	BF glance
SHORT	square cut	pull	hook

The pitch map above is a guide to shots appropriate to the various deliveries. Length, of course, is dependent on speed (pace, spin).



3. THE SKILLS - Batting

DRILLS

Tee



- On ground: used for forward defence, drive and sweep



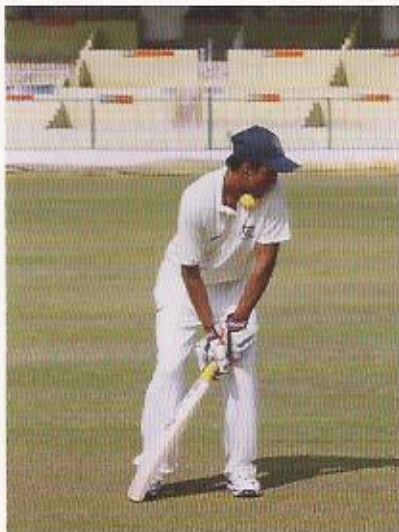
- On stump: used for back defence and drive



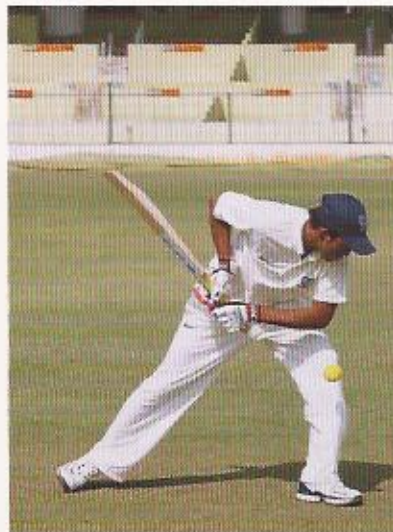
- On pole: used for square cut and pull

NB: The player should take the tee with him when executing shots to ensure he makes contact with the meat of the bat.

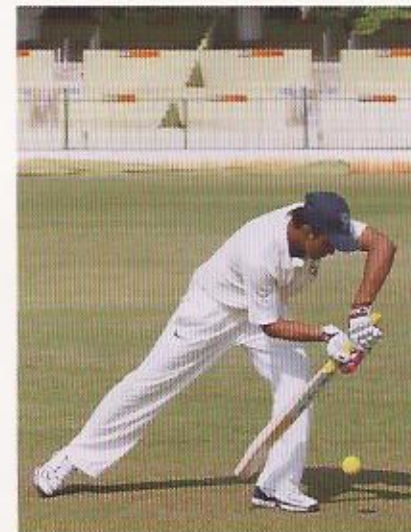
Chin-drop



- Tuck ball under chin and step first



- Release ball so it drops to outside of front foot



- Make contact on the bounce

NB: Like the tee drills, the chin-drop is a self-contained method of practising a skill. But, if the coach or a team-mate is available, they could be asked to drop the ball on an appropriate length and line to practise front-foot shots, even moving out to drive.



Selection and Care of Bat

When choosing a bat, a junior in particular should be careful not to buy one that is too heavy.

He should be able to lift it comfortably and in time to play the cross-bat shots.

A bat that is too heavy will compromise technique and could result in injury.

The face and edges of the blade (but not the splice) should be oiled lightly with raw linseed oil using an open-weave cloth.

The bat should be laid down horizontally and left overnight, before repeating the process the next day.

A day later, the face and edges of the bat should be knocked in to compress the willow fibres, prolonging the life of the bat.

This can be done with an old ball or a wooden mallet covered with an old sock to soften the blows, for two hours on each of successive days.

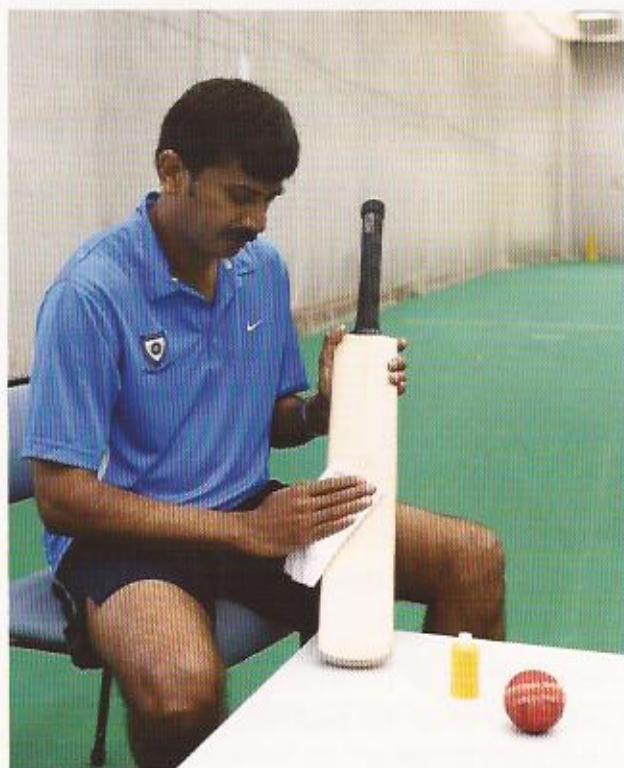
The bat can then be used in the nets, first with old balls, as the player gets a feel for his blade and its sweet spot.

During the off-season, the bat should be stored in a cotton football stocking which will absorb any moisture.

Selection and care of other cricket gear is generally commonsense.

Protective equipment should be aired after use, and wicketkeeping inners should never be stuffed inside the gloves when not in use.

Cricket shirts, trousers and boots should be clean at all times, especially for competition.



Good preparation: linseed oil and an old ball

... look like a cricketer



3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

Introduction

Bowling is the unique art of cricket. No two actions are the same, and no one has the perfect action.

And, some players have been quite successful at international level with highly unusual actions which have defied convention.

And, this is where the old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", comes in. As long as the action is safe and legal, don't tinker with what has proven successful unless and until the bowler has a lean spell.

The most important thing is to develop an action which is safe, efficient and legal. For this purpose, great attention is paid in the following pages to correct alignments.

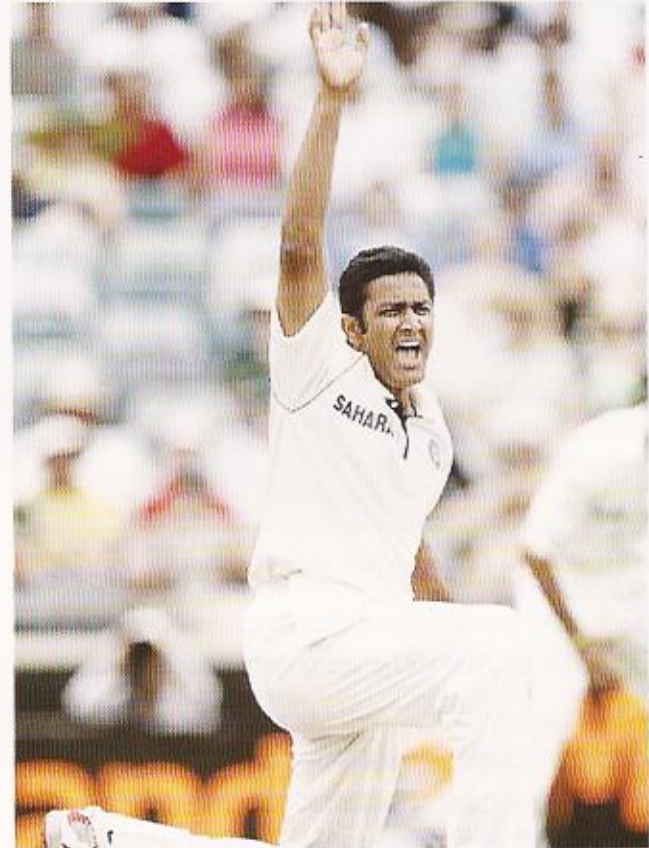
Juniors can build safe and efficient actions using the rock & bowl, gather & explode (both from a stationary position) and walk & bowl methods which are taught in the Level A course.

As the ball and wicket deteriorate, spin bowlers come into their own, with loop, drift, turn and bounce. These skills are outlined in detail.

Whatever style of bowling a player chooses, he should be encouraged to pursue it in an attacking manner. The idea is to make the batsman play at as many deliveries as possible.

Pace bowlers should try to bowl as quickly as they can, and swing it as much as possible. Slow bowlers should try to spin the ball with maximum rotations before refining line and length.

However, it is advisable that Under 13 children playing on a full-length pitch bowl seam-up to avoid the potential for illegal actions.



956 wickets at International level: Anil Kumble

Other than that, they should be encouraged to experiment with various deliveries on a pitch of suitable length until they find one that suits them.

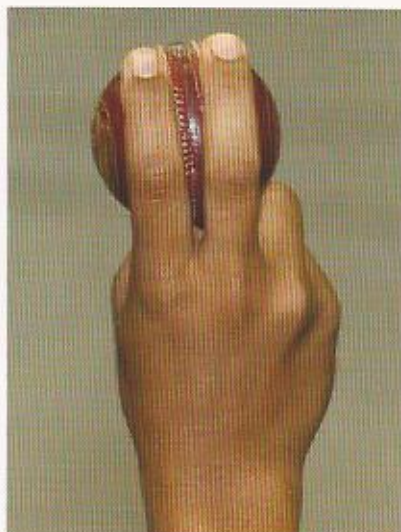
Indeed, experimentation in the nets should be encouraged at all times so that the bowler is able to perfect a variation before trying it under match conditions.

Constant practice is essential to hone the various styles, but workload should be monitored carefully, particularly among pace bowlers.

... get 'em out!



Grip



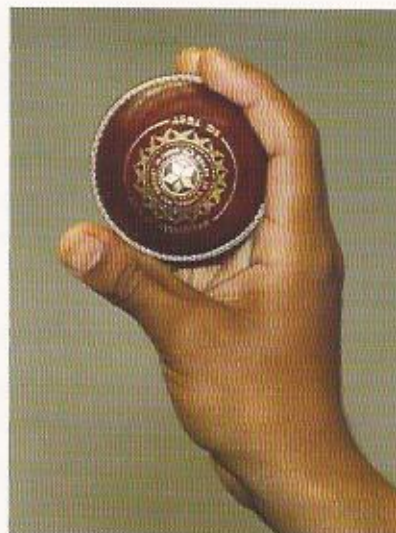
- Fingers either side of seam

Before a bowler can hope to deliver a ball effectively, he must know how to hold it.

At this early stage, we shall discuss the basic grip for bowling seam-up, and delve into swing, cut and spin later.

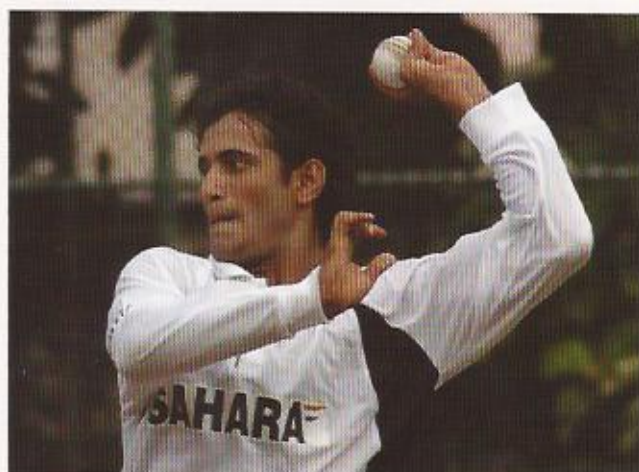
As depicted, the ball is held with the seam vertical, and the index and middle fingers gripping either side of the seam. Separation of the fingers provides stability and optimises use of the wrist.

The side of the thumb rests on the seam under the ball, and the remaining two fingers lend support.



- Seam rests on side of thumb

The ball should rest on the base of the fingers, and the grip should be firm but relaxed to allow smooth release from the top two joints of the fingers.



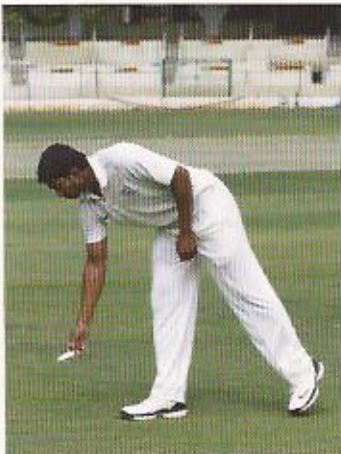
Exception to the rule: check out Irfan's thumb

... firm, but relaxed



3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

Run-up



- Measure your run-up



- Forward lean



- Hands above waist

The run-up is designed to achieve balance, rhythm and momentum, and its length should be determined accordingly.

The bowler's approach must be economical, to conserve energy, and consistent to avoid overstepping (no-balls). So, he needs to measure it.

The best method is to mark a spot on the outfield, and run with your eyes closed until it feels right to jump and bowl.

This should be repeated until a rhythm has been established, ensuring that the run commences with the same foot every time.

The actual run-up may commence after a few short preliminary steps.

A friend or team-mate should assist the bowler in marking where both back and front feet land (the delivery stride), and the overall distance should be measured with a tape.

International bowlers use a tape measure to ensure that they place their marker down correctly on match day.

A cruder and less accurate method at club level involves stepping out the run-up with regular walking paces.

A pace bowler's run-up should be in a straight line to the wicket, parallel to the return crease, and will commence with short steps, building into larger strides as he accelerates.

The body leans forward, and the elbows should remain close to the body. Indeed, all body movements should be directed at the target for maximum efficiency. Until he reaches the "gather", the bowler is an athlete.

The ball must, at all times, be held in the bowling hand, with the desired grip, elbows bent, and hands above the waist.

The head remains steady, with the eyes fixed on the target, and optimum body speed is achieved just prior to the "gather".

... an athlete first



Phases



At all stages, the head is steady, and eyes fixed on the target area.

It is impossible for a pace bowler to look at a spot on the pitch. Rather, he will use the top of off-stump as a reference point as he aims at a line roughly 15 cm outside off-stump, and "feels" his length.

Gather

The run-up will slow marginally in the last couple of strides to allow the bowler to "gather" safely and comfortably into the delivery position.

He will jump towards the target, turning in the air as appropriate for his action type (side-on, open, semi-open).

The body will lean backwards (rock-back), and the bowling hand ideally should be cocked under the chin (loading).

Back Foot Landing

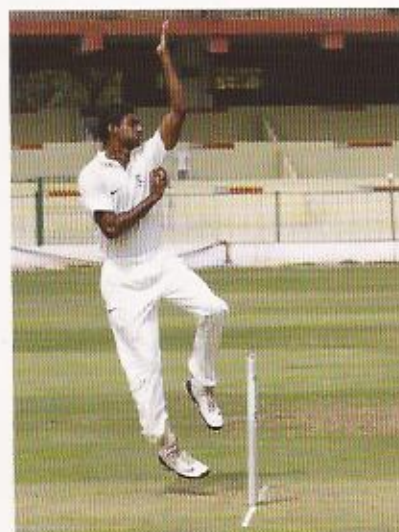
Law 24-5 (i)

Hips and shoulders must be aligned to the back foot when it lands. For a side-on action, the back foot will be parallel to the bowling crease.

The back leg remains stable (not collapsing), and supports the body which is upright.

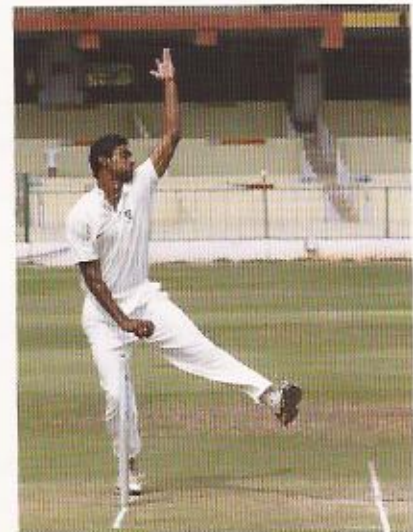
The front arm will be extended above the head, and the bowling hand cocked near the groin.

GATHER



- Ball loaded under chin

BACK-FOOT LANDING



- Back leg stable



3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

Delivery Stride

Law 24 – 5 (ii)

The front foot lands aligned with the back foot in the direction of the target, and the front leg stabilises and braces.

The front arm is pulled down the target line, with the elbow locked close to the body. It is often likened to pulling a chain. The bowling arm is horizontal at front-foot landing.

The arms and shoulders rotate as vertically as possible in line with the target.

Release

Law 24 - 2, 3, 4, 6, 7; 25; 42 – 6, 8

The ball is released at the highest point of the delivery arc, with the front arm still and close to the body (elbow tucked into front hip).

The wrist should be firm and under the ball, and fingers behind the ball in the appropriate position for the intended delivery, imparting backspin off the top joints.

Follow-through

Law 42 – 12

The back leg swings through as shoulder rotation continues, and the body moves forward, slowing gradually, initially towards the target, to absorb the forces generated during the bowling action.

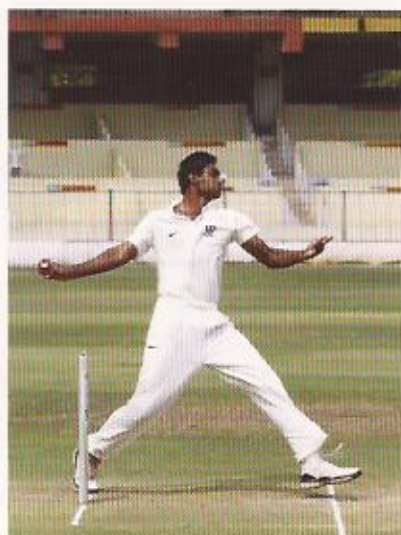
The bowling arm follows through across the body, finishing outside the front knee.

The front arm breaks away behind the body, with the hand finishing above (a lowered) head-height.

The bowler must be careful not to run onto the "danger area", and this requires substantial adjustment when bowling around the wicket.

... pull the chain

DELIVERY STRIDE



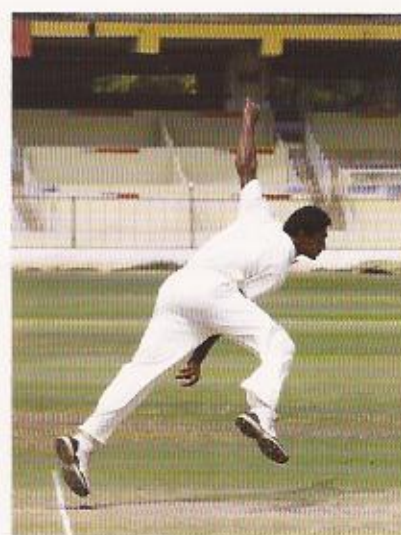
- Bowling arm horizontal

RELEASE



- Elbow tucked into front hip

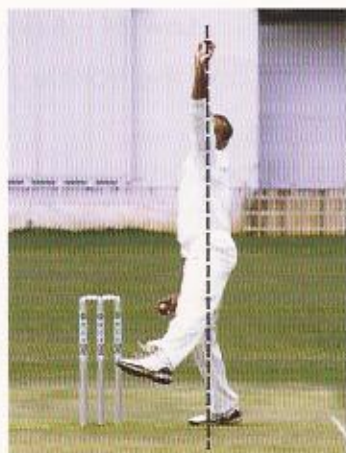
FOLLOW THROUGH



- Follow through outside front knee



Alignments



• Side-on



• Semi-open



• Open (front-on)

Without a proper wheel alignment, a motor car will not run efficiently. It will vibrate, steering will be compromised, tyres will wear unevenly, and fuel economy reduced.

It is the same for a bowler. For a safe and efficient action, the hips, shoulders and feet must be aligned at back-foot contact.

This will avoid a mixed action involving shoulder counter-rotation which can lead to lumbar spine stress fractures.

The traditional side-on action is now rare, but it is shown above, along with the front-on and semi-open actions.

Each is acceptable and safe if performed as demonstrated.

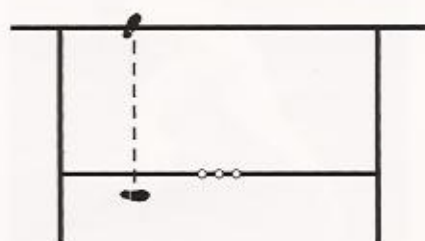
In the side-on action, the back foot lands parallel to the bowling crease, and the bowler looks to the outside of his front arm.

In the more open actions, the bowler looks to the inside of his front arm.

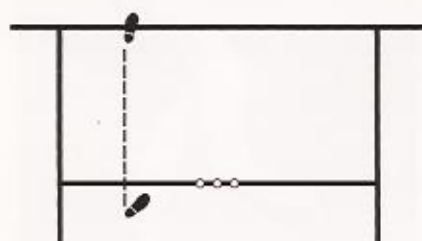
When bowling front-on, the back foot will point between the batsman and fine leg, and the hips and shoulders are aligned across the pitch.

In the semi-open action, the back foot points between fine leg and square leg.

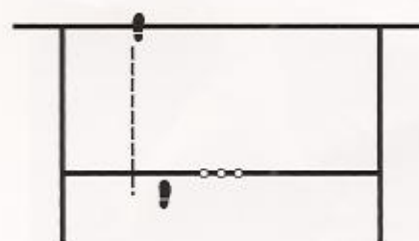
Feet Placements



• Side-on



• Semi-open



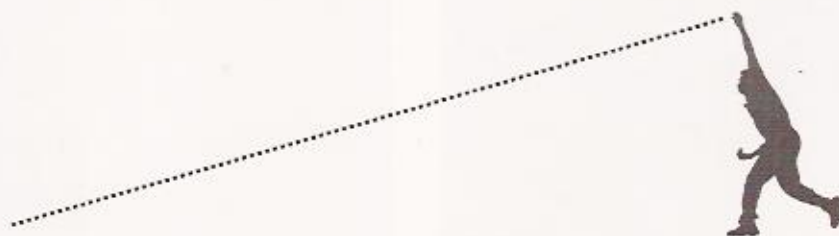
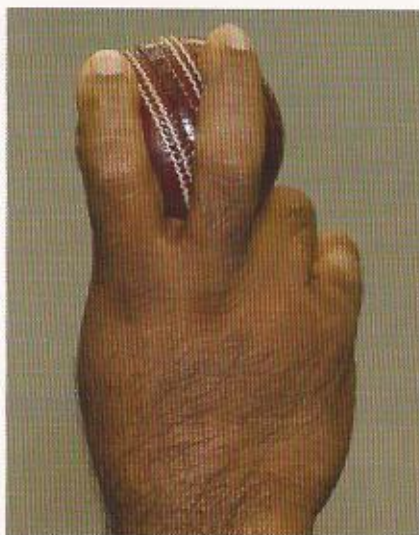
• Open (front-on)



3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

Law 42 – 3 (a) & (b)

Swing



Flight path

OUT-SWING

A delivery which leaves the right-handed batsman in the air, ending a possible edge to wicketkeeper or slips.

Grip

As previously described, but with the seam angled 20 degrees towards the slips. When the ball becomes a little worn, the shiny side should be facing square-leg.

Approach

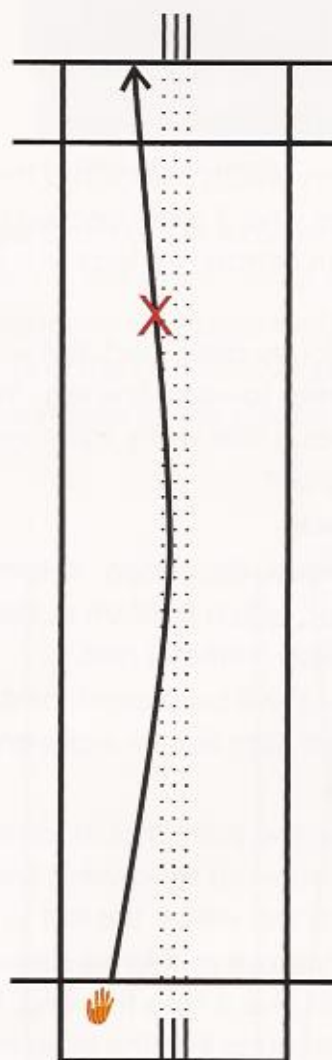
As previously described, and more likely to be achieved with a side-on or semi-open action, with the arm slightly away from the head.

The run-up may be slightly angled to allow the bowler to get into better position to deliver the ball from close to the stumps.

Release

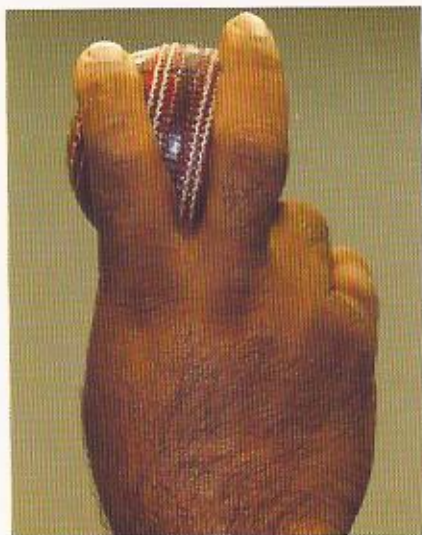
The palm should be angled towards first slip, and the wrist cocked so that the fingers push forward from under the ball in a "paintbrush" effect. This imparts backspin on the ball, necessary to maintain an upright seam.

The index finger will be the last to leave the ball which should be delivered on a good length, giving it a chance to swing. The bowling arm follows through across the body.



Ball path

X = bounce



IN-SWING

A delivery which swings into the right-handed batsman and, if well-directed at speed, could bowl him or trap him leg before wicket.

Grip

As previously described, but with the seam angled 20 degrees towards fine leg. When the ball becomes a little worn, the shiny side should be facing point.

Approach

As previously described, and more likely to be achieved with a front-on or semi-open action, and a high (vertical) arm.

The run-up will be straight, and the ball should be delivered from slightly wider on the crease

Release

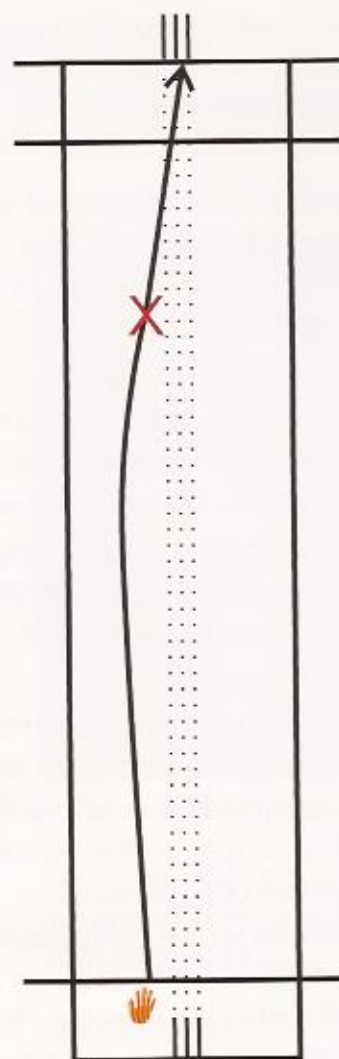
This time, the palm should face the batsman with a slight outward tilt towards fine leg, and the middle finger will be the last to leave the ball.

Again, the ball should be delivered on a good length to give it time to swing. The bowling arm follows through into the inner front thigh.

To prolong the possibility of effective swing bowling, the ball should be kept off the ground wherever possible, and properly maintained by fieldsmen and bowlers.



- Follow through to inner front thigh



Ball path

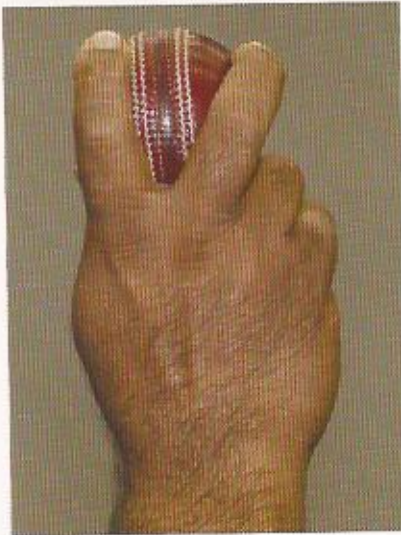


3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

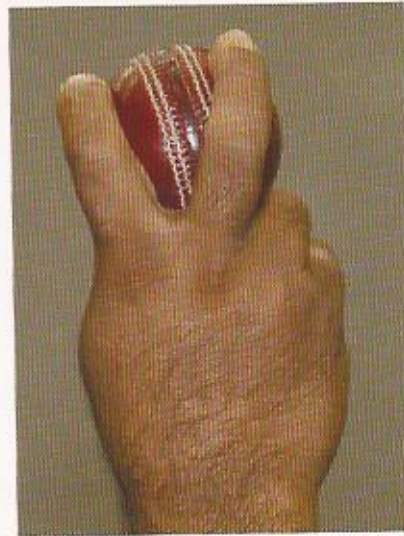
Law 36

Seam

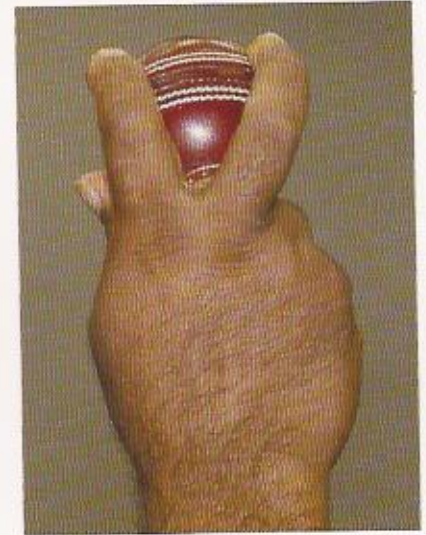
Seam bowling is particularly effective on grassy wickets or those presenting cracks.



• Off-cutter



• Leg-cutter



• Grip across seam

OFF-CUTTER

The ball is gripped with the index finger *down the seam.

At point of release, the wrist is turned towards the leg-side, imparting lateral rotation on the ball. The action is often likened to turning a doorknob.

Ideally directed 15 cm outside off-stump, the ball will seam into the right-hander towards the stumps.

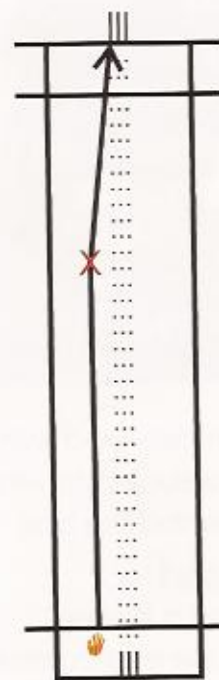
LEG-CUTTER

The ball is gripped wider than for the off-cutter, with the middle finger *down the seam.

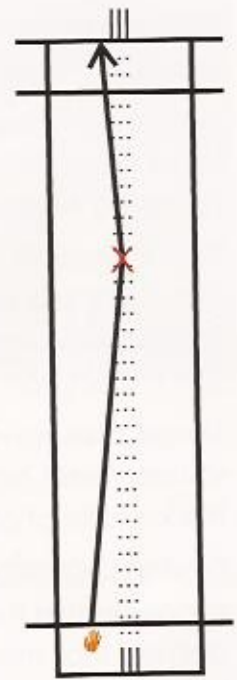
At point of release, the wrist is turned towards the off-side, imparting lateral rotation on the ball.

Ideally directed around middle and off-stump, the ball will leave the right-hander, possibly inducing an edge to slip.

*junior cricketers find it easier to bowl cutters with the grip across the seam. While this is fine in the developmental stage, such a grip is easy to pick, and the conventional grip should be encouraged as the bowler progresses.



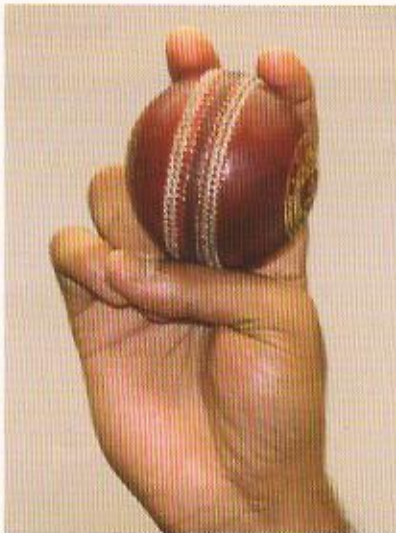
Off-cutter



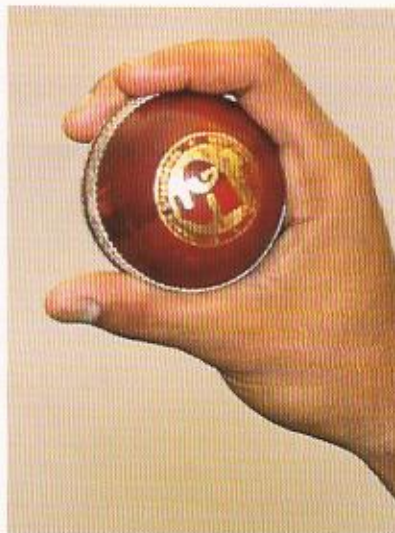
Leg-cutter



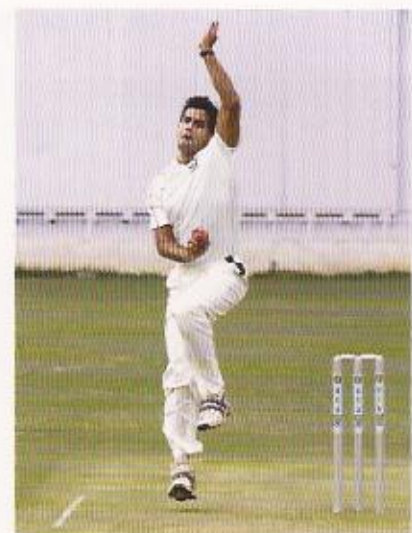
VARIATION



- **Thumb off the seam**



- **Ball held back in palm, index finger off seam**



- **Around the wicket**

Swing and seam are key elements in pace bowling.

But, sheer pace can be sufficient in itself if bowled accurately, with variations, to a plan.

A well-directed bouncer at the throat will discourage a batsman from automatically going onto the front foot to drive.

A searing yorker will make things difficult for the batsman with a high backlift.

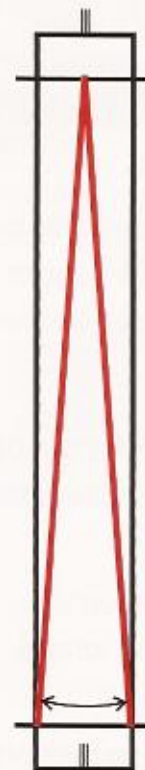
And, a well-disguised slower delivery can have the batsman playing too early and spooning a return catch.

The arm speed and action must be the same, but the ball will arrive later if held further back in the hand, or delivered with a split finger grip.

Slower balls have also been delivered with spinners' wrist actions, or baseball-style with the knuckle of one finger behind the ball.

Bowlers should be encouraged to experiment in the nets to find a slower delivery that they can disguise and control best.

Use of the crease (bowling closer to or wide of the stumps) and bowling around the wicket are other effective variations, as they change the angle of delivery.



maximum
8.5°

... mix it up



3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

SPIN

Slow bowling is a wonderful art that can truly test a batsman's patience, judgment and footwork.

In the following pages, we outline the basic grips and actions for finger-spin and over-the-wrist bowling.

Unorthodox grips have been used successfully over the years at international level, and experimentation is recommended.

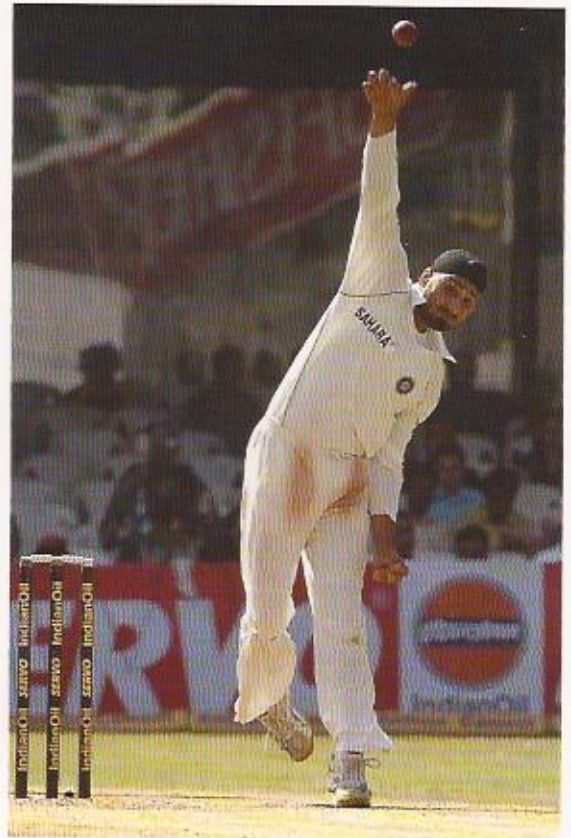
And, some players have bowled the doosra legally with effect.

But, this and the wrist spinner's flipper are very difficult to master, and we shall confine ourselves to the standard variations in the following pages.

Slow bowlers who spin the ball hard will also create drift, and a captain must take into account any prevailing breeze in determining the end from which his spinner should operate.

Junior bowlers should be encouraged to carry a cricket ball with them, and to practise spinning the ball hard from hand to hand, with a consistent seam position.

Budding spin bowlers should be taught the basic action using a one-step method with the feet in the recommended position of the delivery stride.



The Turbanator: Harbhajan Singh



... turn the doorknob

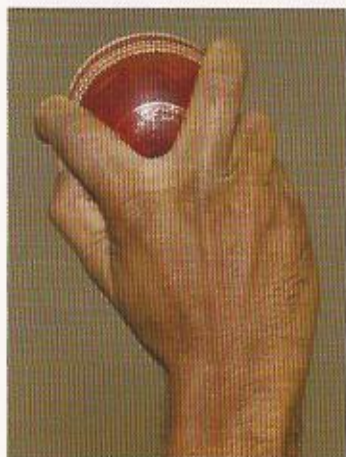


Orthodox Spin

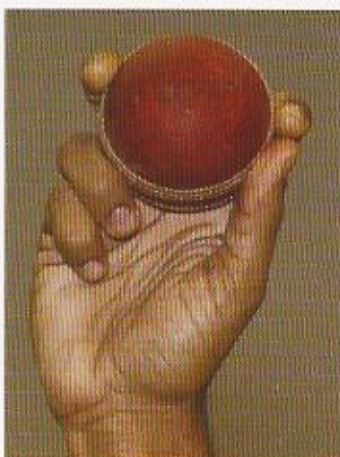
The right-arm finger-spinner bowls off-spin, which turns from off to leg, and we shall use him as the example.

Grip

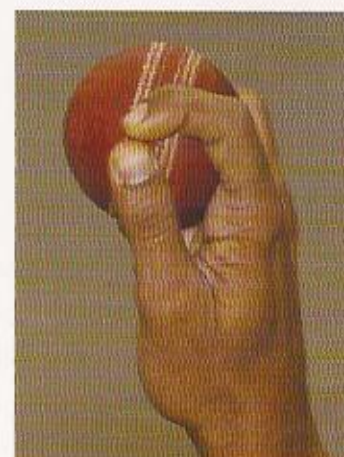
The grip is firm but relaxed. The ball rests on the base of the fingers, with the first joints of index and middle fingers spread as widely as is comfortable across the seam which rests on the thumb. The rough side should face the palm for a better purchase on the ball.



- Fingers spread widely



- Seam rests on ring finger



- Thumb on seam for control

Approach

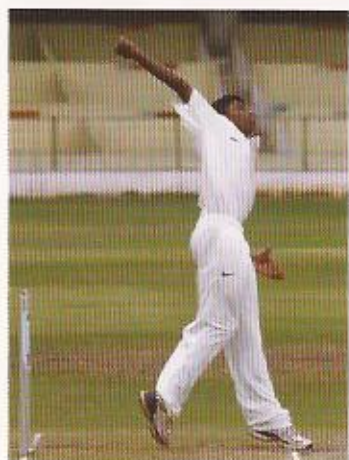
A short, direct approach, building momentum, is recommended for rhythm and balance at delivery.

The ball should be delivered preferably from a side-on position relatively close to the stumps.

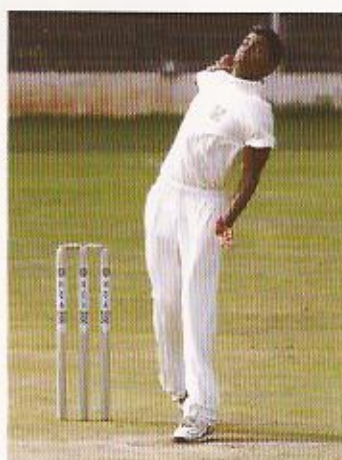
The back foot lands parallel to the bowling crease, and the bowler looks to the outside of the front arm. The front foot will be aligned with the back foot towards the target.

The idea is to draw the batsman forward with the stock delivery.

Bowling to a right-handed batsman, the ball should be aimed at a good length outside the off-stump, spinning in to hit off-stump.

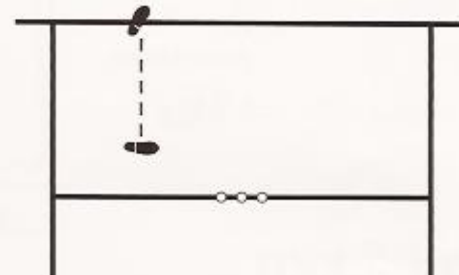


- short delivery stride



- feet aligned to target

Feet Placement

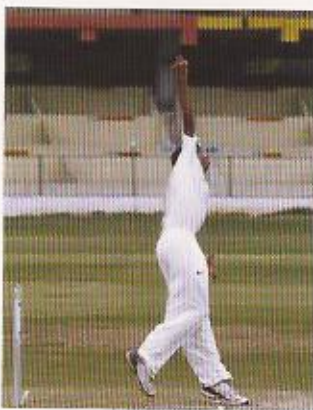




3. THE SKILLS - Bowling



• Arm vertical at release



• Front leg braced



• Front foot pivots



• Back leg drives through

The bowler will look at that area on the pitch, but be prepared to adjust his line and length should the batsman advance towards him.

The delivery stride is short, enabling the bowler to stand tall and drive hard with a high arm over a braced front leg. The bowling arm must not go past the vertical.

The wrist is cocked inwards in front of the face, with the seam position lateral. Head and shoulders are steady, and the eyes level.

Release

On release, the wrist is turned vigorously clockwise, and the index finger pulled down the seam to impart spin.

There must be plenty of over-spin to maximize drop as the ball loops from a trajectory above the batsman's eyes. This may cause the batsman to misjudge the length of the delivery.

To achieve this, the ball is delivered in an arc peaking at a maximum 30 cm higher than the release point.

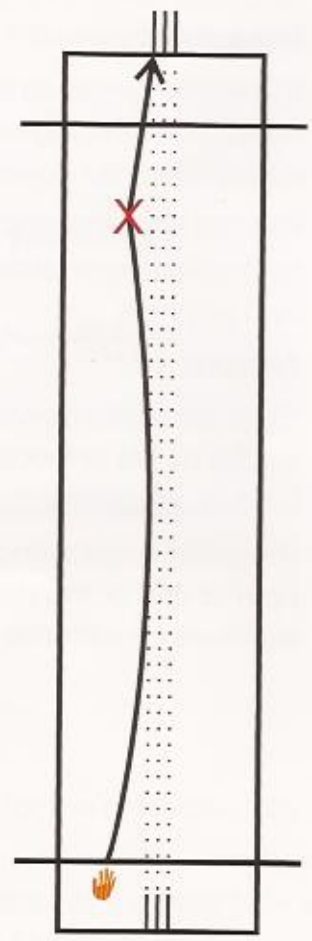
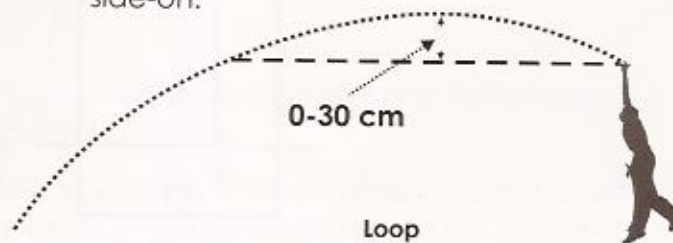
The ball should be spun hard to increase the number of times the ball rotates on its journey, creating maximum drift away from the batsman in the air before it pitches and turns the other way.

The best spinners achieve between 20 and 25 revolutions per second.

Follow through

Once shoulder rotation is complete, the back leg drives through, allowing the hips to rotate over the front foot which pivots automatically.

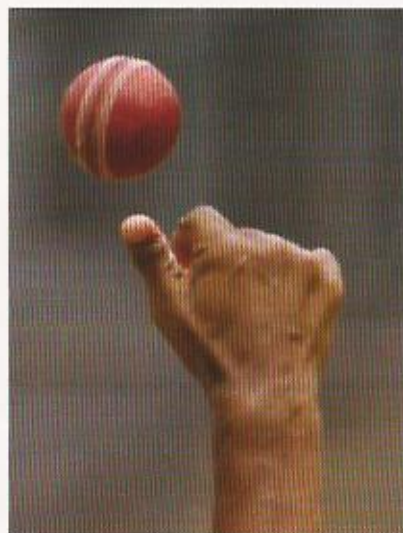
The bowling arm follows through across the body, and the back leg helps to create a figure 4 when viewed from side-on.



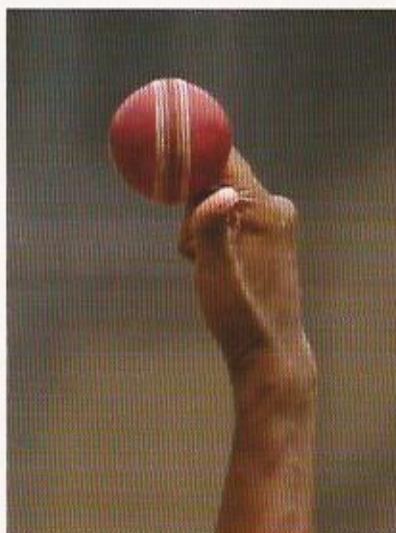


VARIATIONS

An off-spinner may go (wider) around the wicket to a left-handed batsman to change the angle of delivery. The stock delivery will be aimed at the stumps, spinning away.



• Off-spin



• Top-spin



• Arm-ball

Top-spinner

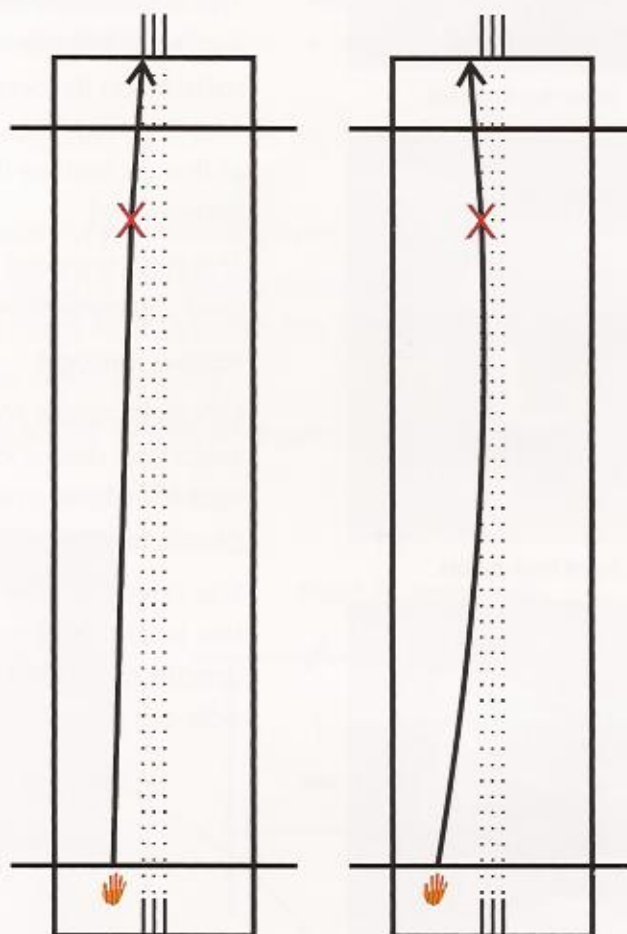
The wrist is turned so that the back of the hand faces the leg-side, and the seam points vertically down the pitch.

The ball is intended to deceive the batsman by continuing on straight with extra pace and bounce.

Arm ball

This is generally bowled with the same arm action as the orthodox spinner, but the grip is down the seam.

The delivery will swing away, emulating the normal drift of the stock ball, but will continue on with the arm towards slip



Top-spin

Arm-ball

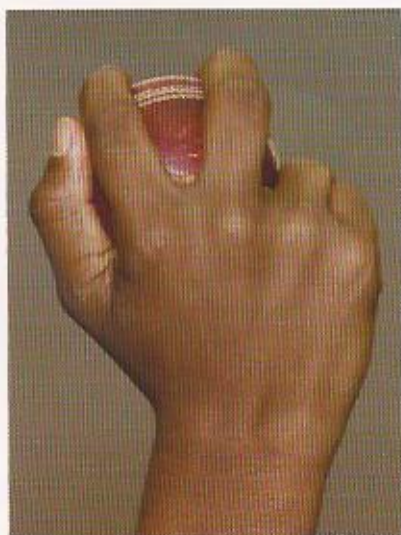


3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

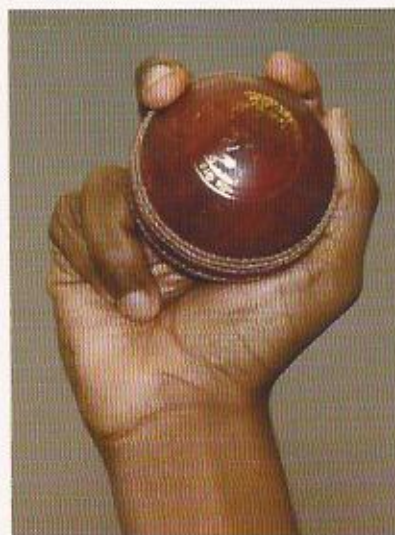
Law 36

Wrist Spin

The right-arm wrist-spinner bowls leg-spin, which turns from leg to off, and we shall use him as the example.



• Fingers closer together



• Ring finger bent along seam

Grip

Similar to that for the orthodox spinner, but the index and middle fingers are closer together, allowing the ring finger (which is bent and along the seam) to exert its influence.

Rather than giving passive support, the ring finger actually imparts the spin as the wrist rotates anti-clockwise.

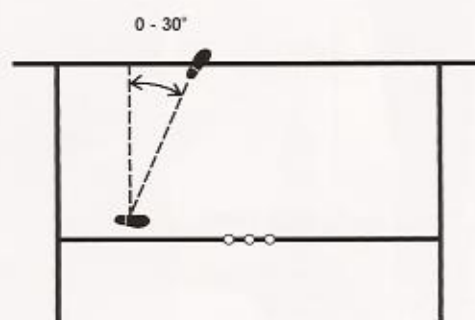


• longer delivery stride



• front foot aligned to on-side of back foot

Feet Placement



Approach

The approach will be more angled, and the delivery stride longer than for the orthodox spin bowler for proper weight transference.

Again, the back foot will be parallel to the bowling crease, but the position of the front foot is different. It will land up to an angle of 30 degrees to the leg-side of the target, allowing oblique rotation of the shoulders.

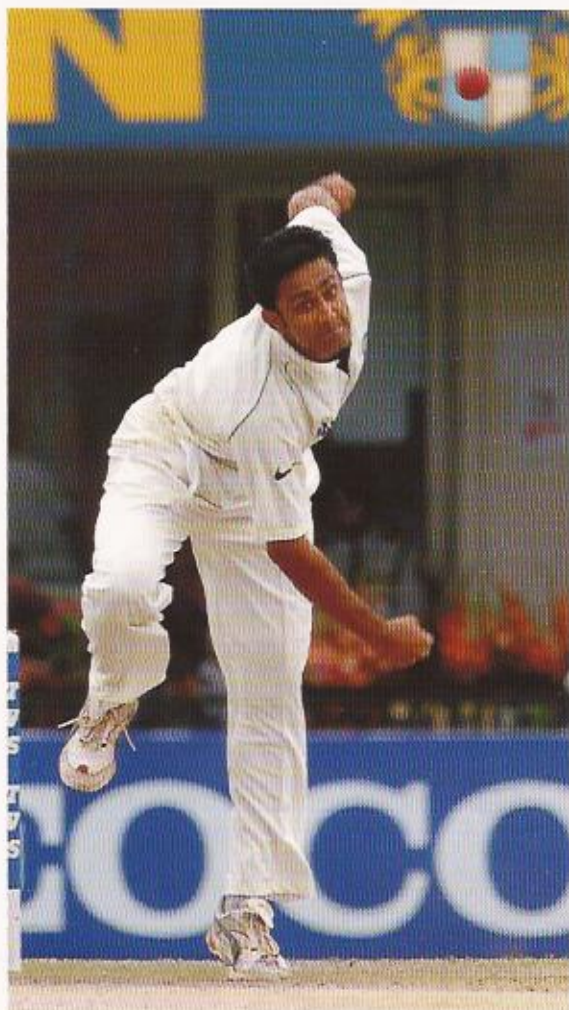


Release

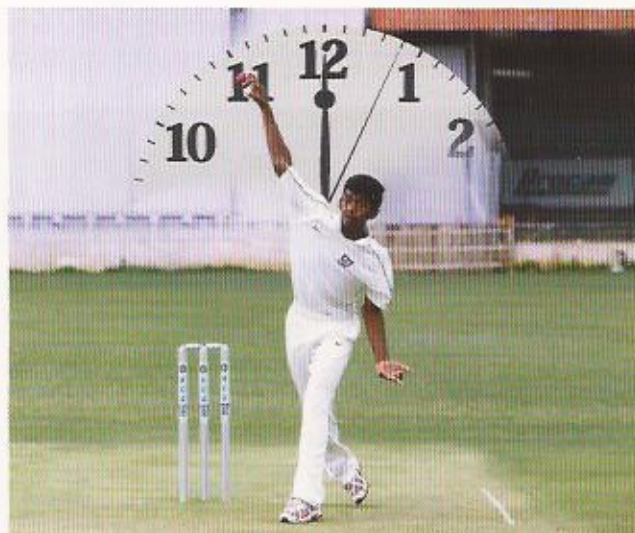
Although many leg-spinners have bowled successfully with a high action, ideally the bowling arm will be lower than for the orthodox spinner, and the back of the hand faces mid-off.

A release point around 11 o'clock will enhance spin, power, velocity and swerve, and result in more margin for error in length.

The aim is to land the stock ball on a good length on the stumps so it spins away from the right-handed batsman.



High noon: success for Anil Kumble



If sufficient rotations are applied, the ball will also drift into the batsman before it lands, encouraging him to play down the wrong line.

The stock delivery should entice the batsman forward, creating an edge to wicketkeeper or slip, or a stumping chance.

The arm "breaks" during delivery, assisting the wrist action at release. The ball must be spun hard.

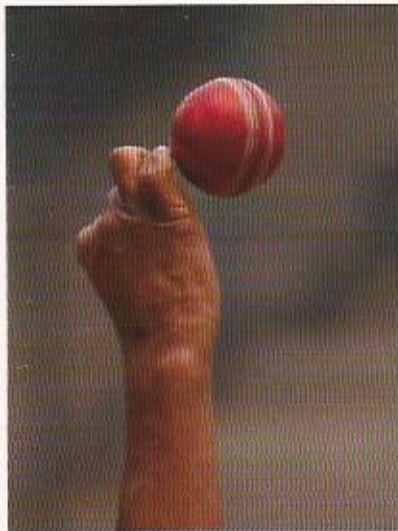
After release, the back of the bowling hand will face the off-side, and the seam rotates towards gully, with a combination of side-spin and top-spin.

... spin it hard!

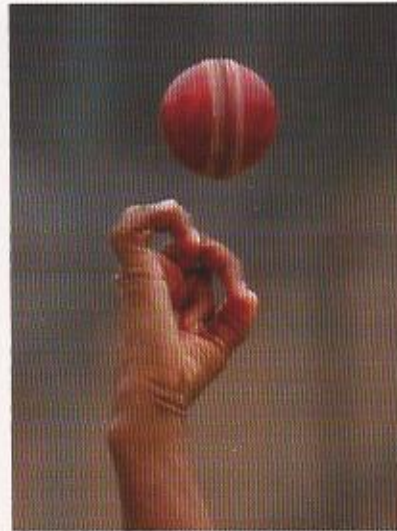


3. THE SKILLS - Bowling

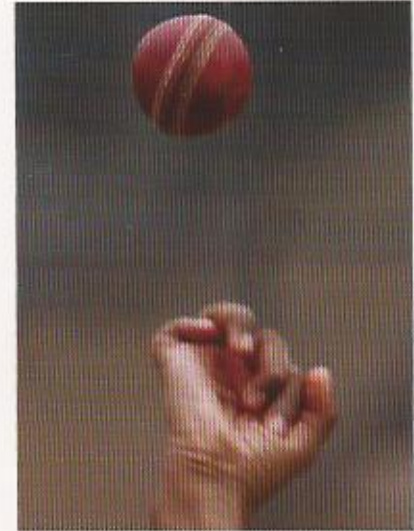
VARIATIONS



• Leg-spin



• Top-spin



• Googly

A leg-spinner may go around the wicket to exploit the rough created by the footmarks of a right-arm pace bowler operating from the other end.

He should also vary his delivery position on the crease to create subtle changes of angle, and may even deliver the ball from behind the popping crease to change the batsman's perception of length.

Top-spinner

The wrist is rotated further, and the back of the hand faces the off-side on release.

The seam rotates towards the batsman, and the ball continues straight on and bounces higher with the over-spin.

Googly

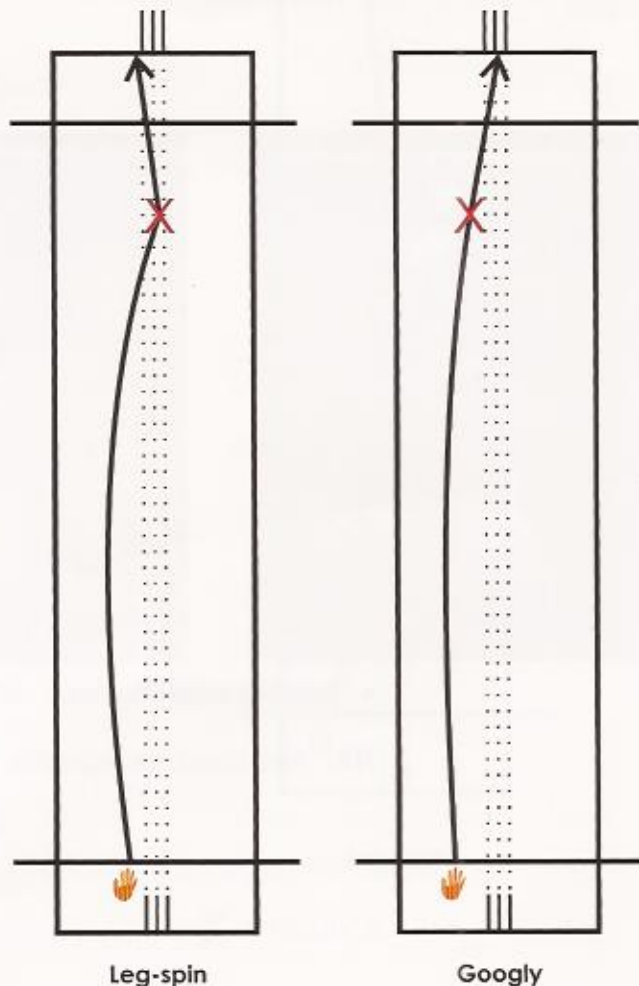
The wrist rotates as far as it can go, and the back of the hand faces the ground on release.

The seam rotates towards fine leg, and the ball spins into the right-handed batsman.

These variations may require a slightly higher bowling arm, but should be able to be disguised with sufficient practice.

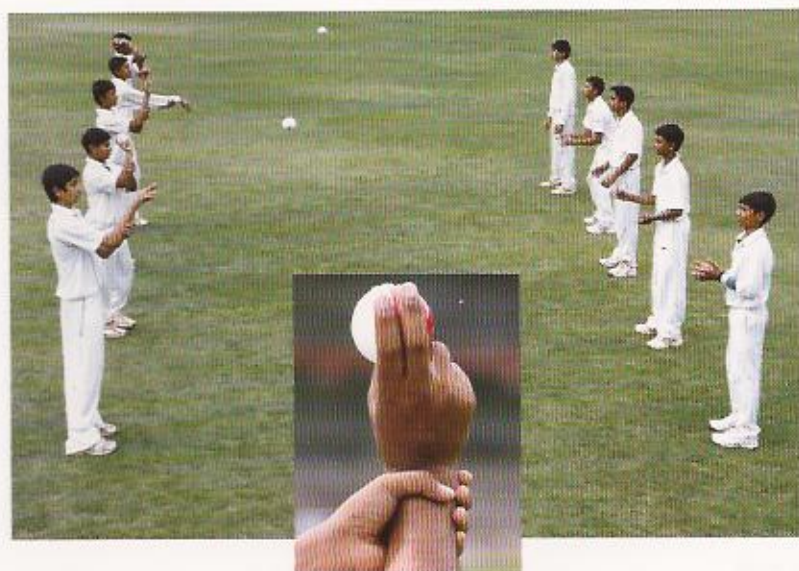
But, a junior cricketer whose wrists are still

developing should not over-bowl them lest he lose his stock delivery.



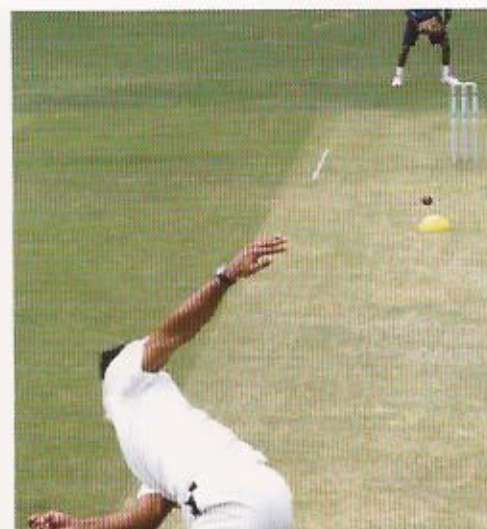


Drills



- Maintaining a vertical seam rotation

NB: This can also be practised solo by the player lying on his back and tossing the ball in the air



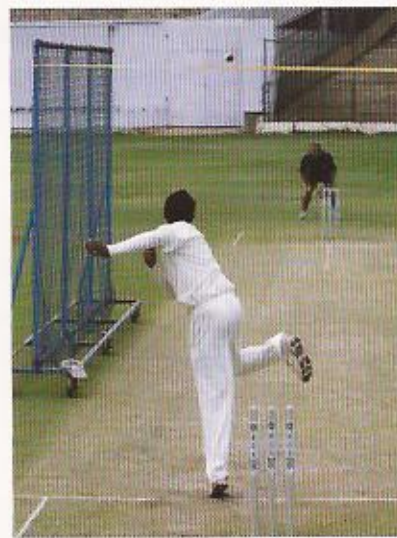
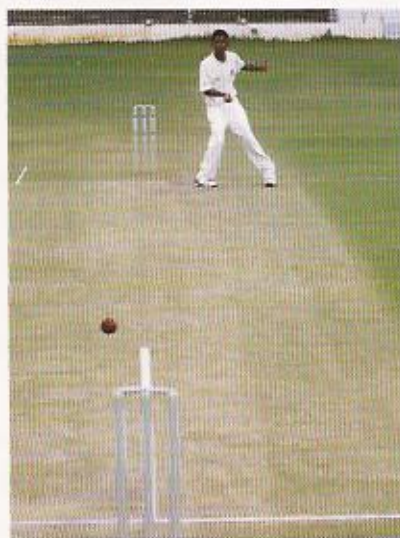
- Target bowling

NB: discs are placed 15 cm outside off-stump and 5 metres from the stumps for pace bowlers.



- Spinning across the line

NB: Also used for leg-spin.



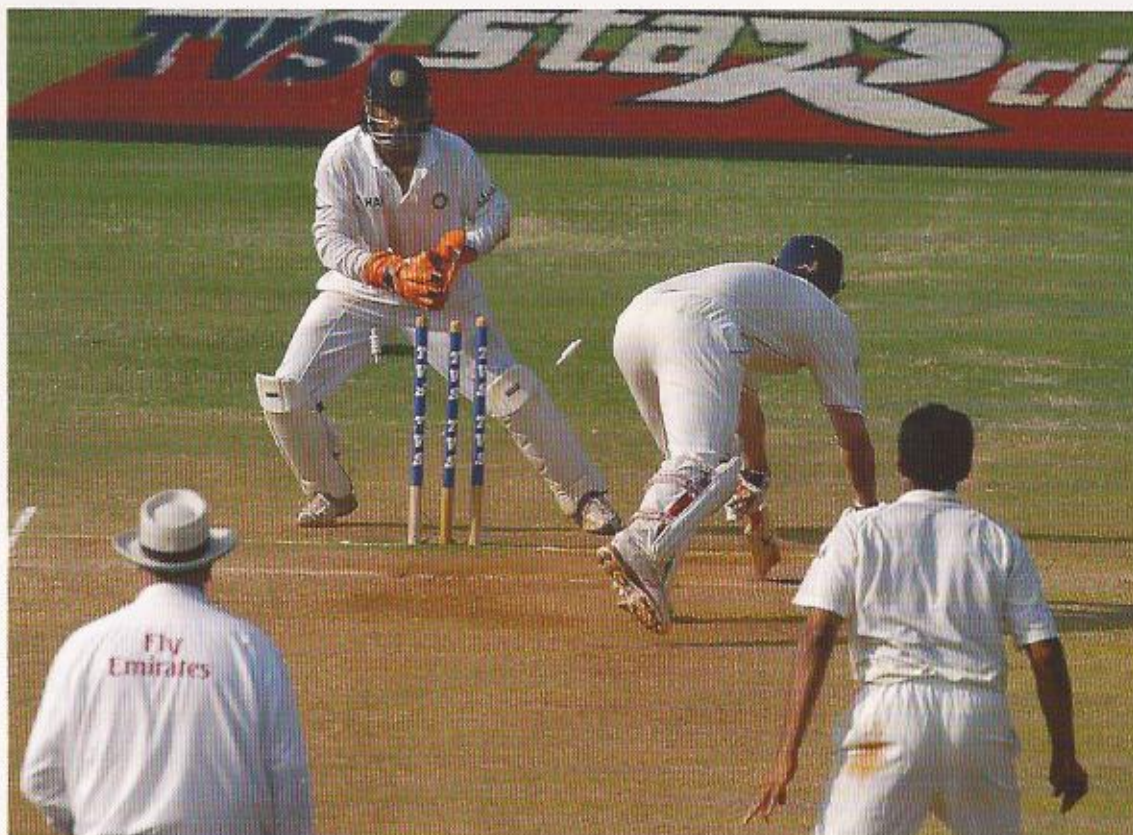
- Loop over the tape

NB: tape is 230 cm above the ground and 6 metres from release point.



3. THE SKILLS - Wicketkeeping

Introduction



Greased lightning: M.S. Dhoni

Wicketkeeping is one of the most underrated, yet difficult, arts in cricket. It requires excellent eye-hand co-ordination, combined with testing degrees of fitness and concentration.

The 'keeper is the engine room of the team, making poor deliveries and wayward returns look good, and offering tactical advice to the captain based on his unique view of proceedings.

When spirits flag during long partnerships, he must give the side hope with an encouraging word as he is usually the only man on either team involved in every delivery of the innings.

The following advice will prepare the wicketkeeper technically to handle the most difficult of pitches, and the ever-present threat of being unsighted by the batsman's body when standing up.

Efficient wicketkeeping is one of the greatest challenges in cricket. If you have someone prepared to endure this often thankless task, treasure and nurture him.

... the engine room



Law 40

Set-up

Stance

The wicketkeeper should adopt a comfortable, balanced, low crouch so that he can rise with the bounce of the ball.

His feet should be shoulder-width apart, with the weight on the balls of the feet.

His hands should rest comfortably together on the ground, palms forward, with the gloves open, presenting the largest possible catching surface.

The head should be still, and the eyes level, focused on the impending delivery.

Positioning

The wicketkeeper should have a clear view of the bowler, directly facing his delivery path.

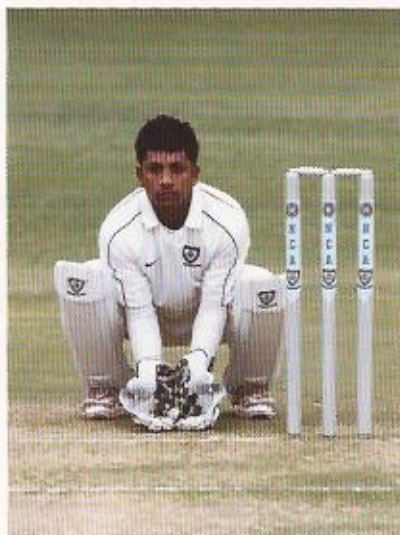
This means that he will stand wider for someone bowling left-arm over the wicket to a right-handed batsman.

To pace bowling, he should stand in a position outside the off-stump where he can take a good length delivery comfortably at waist-height as it begins to drop after bouncing.

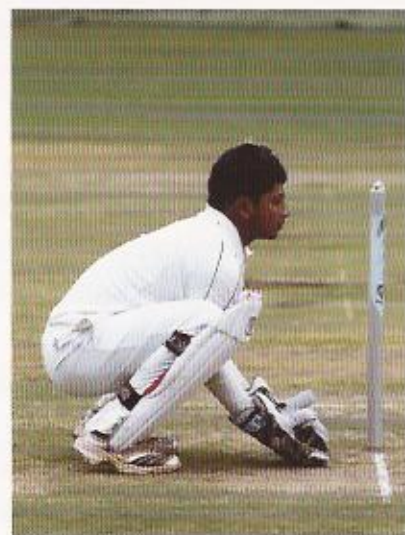
Standing up, he should crouch with his left leg just outside the off-stump (for a right-handed batsman), with his gloves resting just behind the bowling crease.

The 'keeper may come up to the stumps for medium-pace bowling to put pressure on the batsman or to discourage him from batting out of his crease to change the length of the bowling.

There is the possibility of a stumping, particularly on the leg-side, if the batsman has a tendency to overbalance or fall inside the line of the ball when playing forward.



- Feet shoulder-width apart



- Weight on balls of feet

... balanced, low crouch



3. THE SKILLS - Wicketkeeping

Footwork



• Palms forward, gloves open



• Lead with left leg



• Shuffle footwork

The wicketkeeper always moves in a straight line, head steady (in the one plane), parallel to the bowling crease, with knees flexed.

Standing back, he will rise with the bounce of the ball, employing a cross-over step (eg. right foot behind left when moving to leg) or shuffle footwork.

He should make sufficient ground to be able

to take the ball on the inside hip. This means that if the batsman gets a thick edge, the wicketkeeper is in a better position to take the catch.

He will lead with the right leg when taking deliveries outside the off-stump to a right-handed batsman.

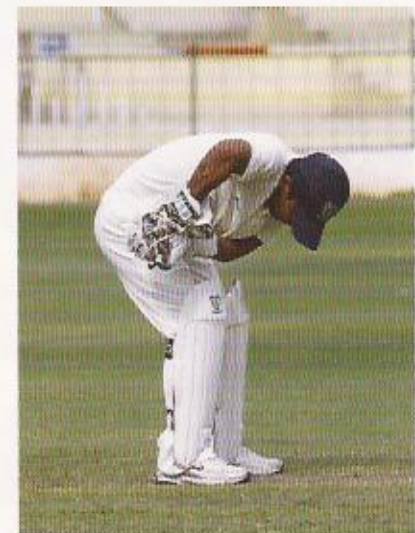
Diving is a last resort.



• Eyes behind the ball



• Ball taken on inside hip



• Elbows retract

... rise with the ball

3. THE SKILLS - Wicketkeeping



On the stumps, it is even more crucial that he rise with the bounce of the ball.

In this regard, it is important that he gets an idea of the height of the bounce and extent of the turn for a leg-side take.

He will be unsighted temporarily by the batsman's body, and should move to the leg-side at the last possible moment, having quickly assessed where the ball will arrive.

The weight is on his right leg as he takes the first of two quick steps in a shuffle movement to finish outside leg stump.

Gloves are the last to move, and they will sweep low in the case of a half-volley, rising with the ball.



• Late step to leg

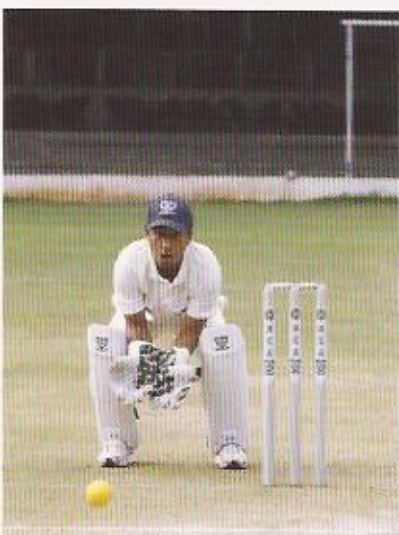


• Fingers point away from ball



• Weight transferred to right leg

When taking deliveries on the off-side, the inside foot should remain anchored unless the ball is very wide. This will facilitate stumping attempts.



• Rise with the ball



• Left leg anchored



• Stumping with both hands



3. THE SKILLS - Wicketkeeping

Law 39

Glovework



• Arms extended, elbows flexed



• Elbows retract, eyes over ball

The hands should move together, gloves cupped with palms outwards and fingers pointed down, upwards or to the side - 90 degrees to (and never at) the ball.

The "long" catching technique should be employed, with arms extended (but elbows flexed) in front of the body, and eyes behind the ball.

Retracting the elbows on contact takes the speed off the ball and cushions the impact with "soft" hands.

The hands are brought back past the inside hip for a regular take, and the eyes never leave the ball.



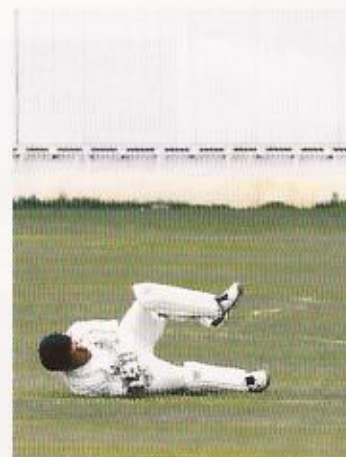
• Knees flexed



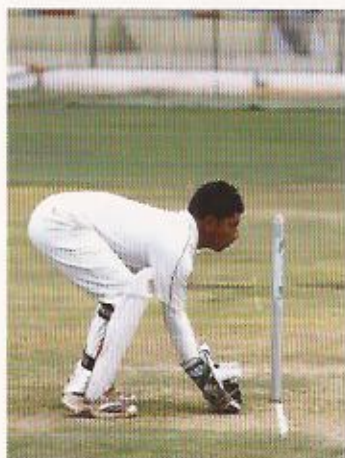
• Ball taken back over shoulder

For the awkward delivery arriving chest-high, the 'keeper should flex his knees and use the reverse cup method of catching, taking the ball back over the shoulder.

He should never step backwards.



When diving for a wide deflection, the 'keeper should be adept at rolling onto the shoulder of his catching arm to ensure that the ball does not dislodge when an elbow hits the ground.



- **Backside before gloves**



- **Allow ball to come**



- **Transfer weight to stumps**

Up on the stumps, it is vital that the 'keeper expects to take every delivery. He should not assume that the batsman will hit the ball, nor be distracted by the swing of the bat.

And, he should not assume that the ball will bounce at a comfortable height. As always, he should rise with the ball, backside before gloves.

He should watch the bowler's hand intently for variations, and the seam rather than the ball in flight. This will enable him to predict the path of the ball.

It is important that the 'keeper allow the ball to come to him for a soft take rather than

snatching at it in his haste to complete a stumping.

After the take, the body weight transfers towards the stumps, and the wicket is broken with both hands if possible.

Once the batsman goes onto the back foot, a stumping is not on, and the 'keeper should focus peripherally on the outside edge of the bat.

This will enable him to adjust his gloves for the possibility of a thick outside edge. His weight should transfer slightly onto the right foot, and gloves may move laterally depending on the bounce and turn.



3. THE SKILLS - Wicketkeeping

Law 28, 29, 38

General Play

The wicketkeeper must set the standard for the fielding side.

It starts with preparation, in which it is recommended he tape every joint of each finger for support.

He should wear a long-sleeved shirt tucked in at all times, and be first in position for the start of every over.

Where possible, he should take returns on the full, and always return the ball to bowler or fielder on the full to help maintain its condition.

When standing back, he should move to the stumps habitually when a stroke is played so as to be in a position to help effect a run-out or discourage a run.



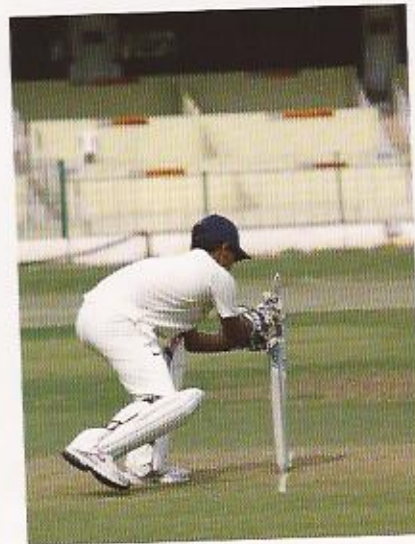
• Rise with the ball

He should call fieldsmen (by name), indicating which end to return the ball.

When taking returns, he will be behind the stumps, or occasionally to the side (but never with his back to the stumps) so that he can effect a run-out or allow for a direct hit.

He should stay low and rise with the ball for bounced returns and those on the half-volley.

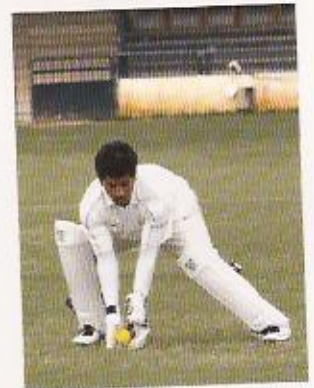
The 'keeper is sometimes in a position to effect a run-out on his own, and should practise whipping off a glove while chasing the ball, and throwing down the stumps at either end.



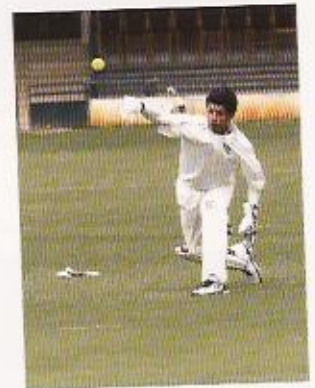
• Break wicket from side



• Glove taken off



• Ball gathered inside right foot



• Throw quickly





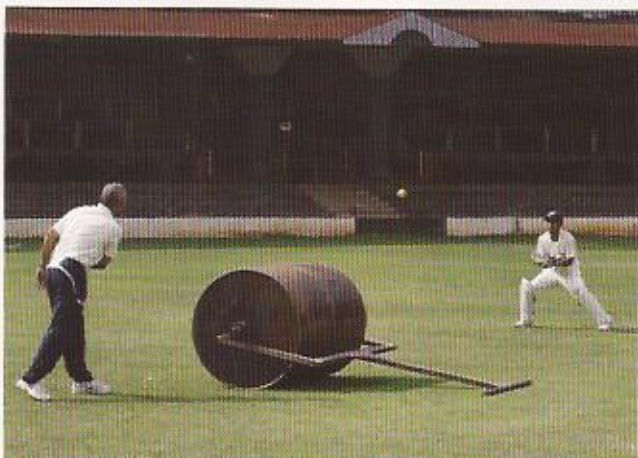
Drills



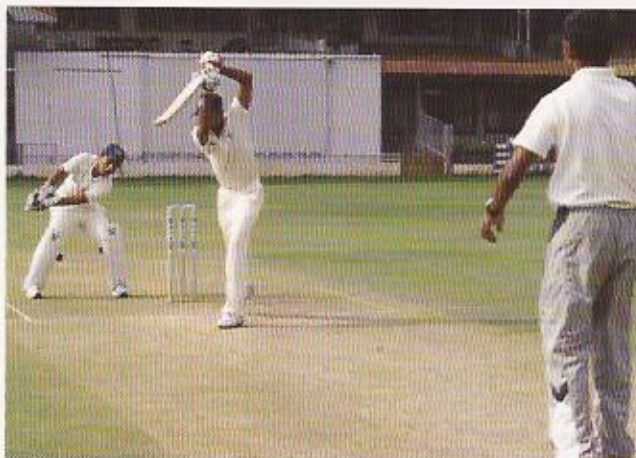
Taking tennis ball
For soft hands



One-handed catching
To improve weaker hand



Catching off roller
Realistic deflections



Shadow batting
Fake shots played to help overcome distraction of bat



Stump edges
Unpredictable edge



The chair
Replicates ball being obscured temporarily by batsman's body during leg-side take



3. THE SKILLS - Fielding

Law 41

Introduction



World record: Rahul Dravid

Many cricketers regard fielding as a necessary chore in between batting or bowling. It is not a glamorous aspect of the game, yet it is often the difference between two evenly-matched teams.

And, if you were to chance upon a match at random, the quickest way to assess the standard is to observe the fielding.

One of the oldest sayings in cricket is "catches win matches". But, it is true – and not just because it rhymes. How often has a player been dropped early in his innings while he is still getting his eye in, and goes on to score a century?

But, ground-fielding is equally as important. Sloppy fielding not only concedes easy runs to the opposition, but an unnecessary single can release the pressure on a batsman created by a series of "dot" balls.

It can upset a bowler's careful plan to "set up" a batsman for dismissal. And, it is particularly annoying if the batting pair is a

left- and right-handed combination, and the bowler has to readjust his line.

A player must try to enjoy his fielding so that he stays alert, and a coach should help him find his niche in the field.

And, remember, fielding is about teamwork. Throwing down the stumps is spectacular, and can result in run-outs if practised regularly. But, backing up and taking the stumps at the bowler's end are the "one percenters" that give a fielding team consistency.

Good teams spend more than half the match in the field because they normally field twice, so attention to fielding is vital

The following pages provide the basis for fielding, throwing and catching to a high level.

... soft hands



Moving to the Ball



• **Semi-crouch**

A fieldsman's job is to support the bowler by restricting runs, taking catches and helping to effect run-outs.

The latter is often achieved by putting pressure on the batsmen so that they misjudge a run.

A fieldsman must want and expect every ball to be hit in his direction.

When fielding at a distance of 15 metres or more from the bat, he should walk in towards the striker as the bowler runs in to deliver the ball.



• **Hands low**

With his weight on the balls of the feet (which are shoulder-width apart) and knees flexed in a semi-crouch, he should take short, choppy steps, with his hands relaxed, out low in front of the body.

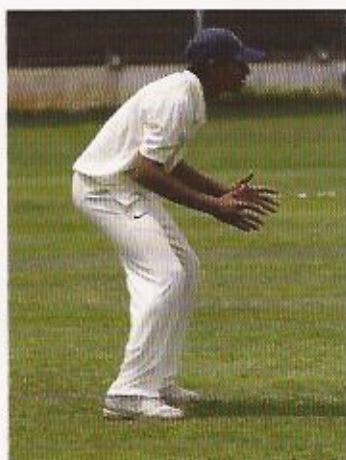
His head should be still, eyes level and focused on the bat.

Studying the batsman's stance, grip, backswing and footwork will help him anticipate the direction of the stroke.

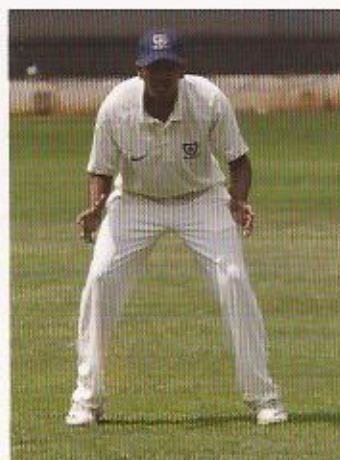
As the batsman is about to play the ball, the fieldsman stops momentarily and adopts a "ready" position, which is known as "basing up".

This allows him to react quickly to a ball hit either side of him without being committed in any one direction.

Once the shot has been played, he should move directly with short, quick steps to the line of the ball, maintaining a low body position.



• **Weight on balls of feet**



• **Feet shoulder-width apart**



3. THE SKILLS - Fielding

Interception

Attacking

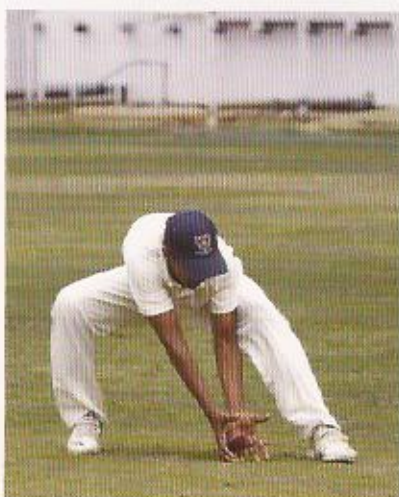
With body low, and eyes fixed on the ball, the fieldsman props with his back foot at right angles to the path of the ball, opening the front hip and shoulder slightly.

He watches the ball into cupped hands out in front of his eyes, and his elbows retract to take the speed off the ball ("soft" hands).

The ball is then taken back in the throwing hand, past the hip and behind the body, for the throwing sequence to begin.



- Back foot at right angle to path of ball



- Cupped hands in front of eyes



- The long barrier

Defensive

A technique known as the "long barrier" is used when the ball is travelling at great speed along the ground, or on a rough surface where its movement is unpredictable.

The player kneels down on the (front) knee opposite the throwing arm, and the leg forms a "second line of defence" with the body, at right angles to the path of the ball.

The attempt should still be to field the ball with both hands, under the eyes in front of the knee, and to rise quickly into a throwing position.

... the long barrier

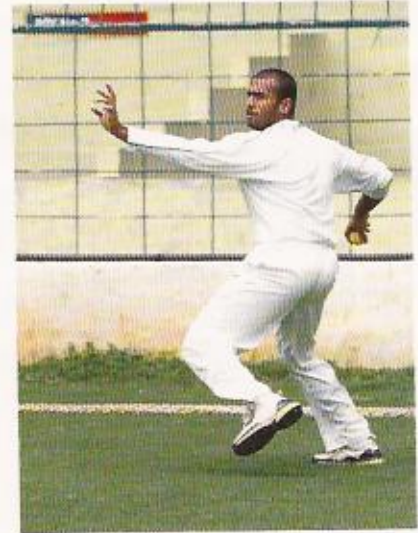
3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



• Pick-up



• Turn



• Throw



Front foot towards target: Sachin Tendulkar

Retrieving

When a ball is struck past the fieldsman, he must turn and chase it as quickly as possible, running in a line so that the ball is on the throwing side of his body.

He will slow down, taking shorter steps, as he nears the ball, lowering his body and slightly over-running the ball.

He reaches down and picks up the ball on the outside of the foot below the throwing arm, taking as few steps as possible to decelerate.

He plants that "back" foot to turn the body side-on and point the front foot towards the target, a set of stumps at either end.

... cut to the chase



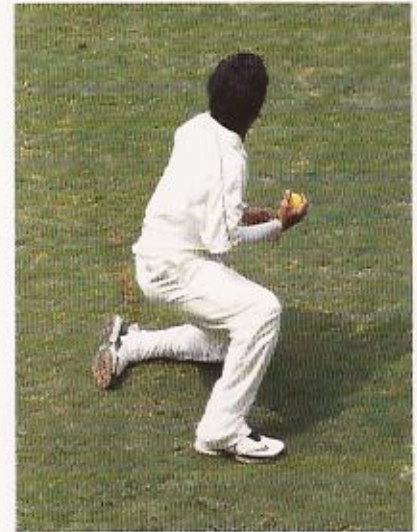
3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



- Ball on left side of body



- Slide on outside of left boot



- Throw after planting right foot

Slide (Law 19 - 3)

When a ball is struck hard towards the boundary, sometimes the only way to prevent four is to slide to retrieve it just before it hits the rope (reaches the line).

This time, the fieldsman must give chase with the ball on the opposite side of his body to his throwing arm.

For a right-hand throw, he will slide on the outside of his left boot to the right-hand side of the ball.

The left leg is bent under the knee of an outstretched right leg in a (reverse) figure 4.

The slide carries the fielder to the ball which is retrieved in front of the shin of the bent leg.

He must be careful not to be in contact with the rope (or over the line) when doing so.

As the ball is intercepted, the fielder pushes the extended foot into the ground to regain

his feet and return the ball using the crow hop throwing technique (see page 94).

Where possible, a team-mate should pursue the fieldsman in a long chase so that he can retrieve a ball that has been flicked back rather than fielded cleanly.

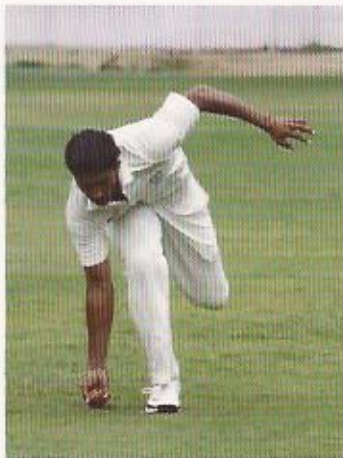
That team-mate could also be employed in a relay throw (see page 94).

The slide can also be performed after a shorter pursuit after which the ball is often thrown from a kneeling position.

... 4 saves four



Throwing



- interception beside front foot



- wrist firm, elbow straight



- follow through towards target

Underarm

Generally performed in run-out situations, the underarm throw is a quick release over a short distance when the ball is travelling slowly at pick-up.

The ball is intercepted beside the front foot on the same side as the throwing arm.

The fielder raises his eyes to sight the target, steps onto the opposite foot, and releases the ball.

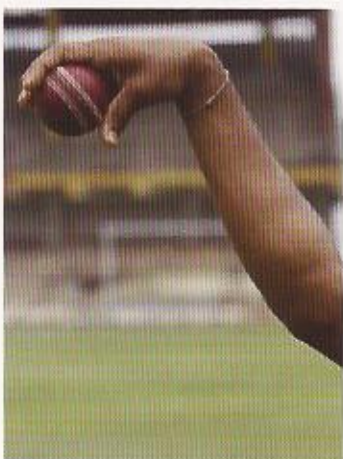
The wrist should be firm, the throwing elbow straight, and the arm close to the body

which should remain low throughout.

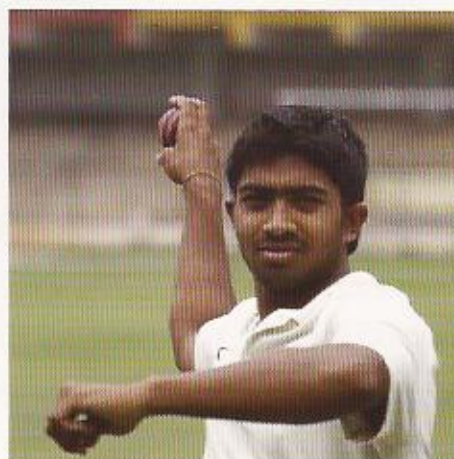
The fielder should aim at the base of the stumps and follow through towards the target. A dive is a possible extension of the follow-through.

Another variation of the underarm throw is the lunge where the player continues with his momentum in a dive towards the target.

The ball is released while the left leg is fully extended and off the ground, and the left hand is placed on the ground to cushion the body.



- Grip ball across seam



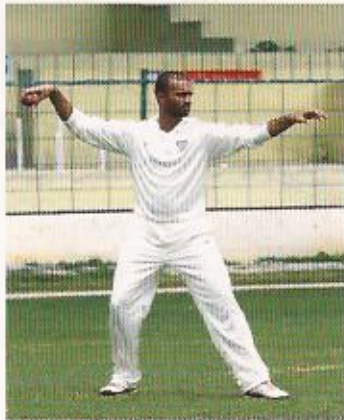
- Back of hand faces target



- Elbow higher than shoulder



3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



- Front arm points at target



- Throwing arm led by elbow



- Back leg drives forward

Overarm

These throws are used after fielding balls in the midfield and the outfield.

The ball should be gripped across the seam with the index and middle fingers on top, and the thumb underneath. This grip is used for accuracy, as the ball may swing in flight if gripped along the seam.

The eyes are fixed on the target, and the body side-on with the front leg in line with the target, and the back foot at 90 degrees to the target.

Both arms are extended horizontally, the front arm pointing at the target, and the throwing hand on top of the ball (the T-junction).

The throwing wrist is cocked, with the back of the hand facing the target, and the elbow higher than the shoulder.

The front arm is withdrawn into the side, and the throwing arm, led by the elbow, with the hand wider, whips across the body, finishing outside the front knee.

A powerful flick of the wrist imparts backspin. The back leg drives forward to rotate the hips and shoulders, pushing the head forward over a braced front leg. The player steps through to transfer body weight into the throw.

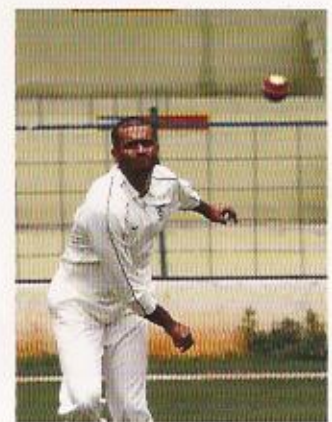
Movement occurs from large to small body parts – legs (which provide a wide, stable base) through hips, shoulders, arm, elbow and wrist.



- Hand wider than elbow



- Wrist imparts backspin



- Finish outside front knee

3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



Crow Hop

This technique is used to enable the fielder to get into a side-on throwing position from a front-on fielding position. It also allows him to generate more momentum and greater distance in his throw.

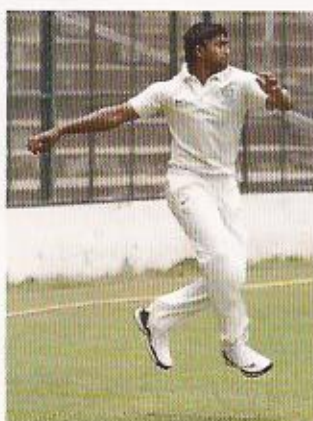
After receipt of the ball, the rear foot crosses in front of the body, landing at 90 degrees to the direction of the throw.

The front foot then comes through in a slightly open position, allowing for rotation of the hips, and the throwing sequence begins.

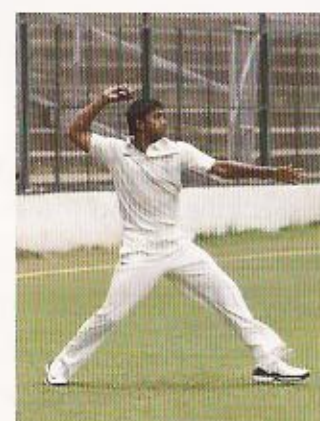
For shorter distances, and a speedy, flat throw, the rear foot may merely be brought up to the front foot in a "click".



• Received front-on



• Rear foot crosses in front of body



• Front foot slightly open

Relay

To return the ball over a long distance, a cut-off player will position himself midway between the fieldsman and the stumps.

This enables two flat throws instead of one (potentially slower) looping throw, and is also used when the fielder has a weak arm

The cut-off man must communicate loudly and with hand motions to the fielder whose relay throw should be on the full.

The cut-off man can direct the throw to either end in case of a misunderstanding between the batsmen.



• Retrieve



• Turn

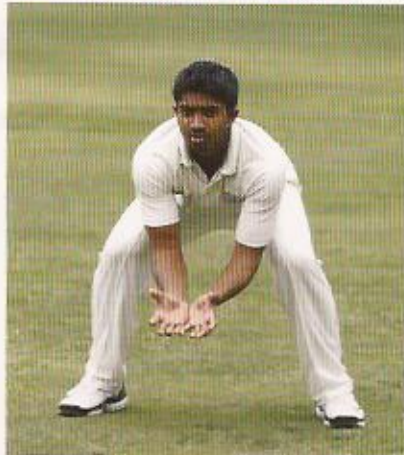


• Throw to cut-off man

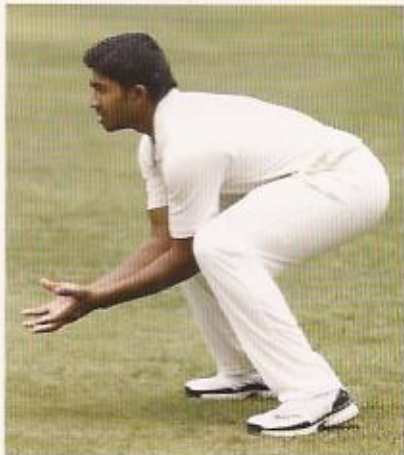


3. THE SKILLS - Fielding

Catching



• Feet shoulder-width apart



• Hands low, forward of body

Close

Fielders are chosen for close-catching positions because of their eye-hand co-ordination, soft hands, quick reflexes and anticipation.

They should be positioned close enough to take a regulation chance, but deep enough to have time to react.

The depth of slips fielders will be determined by the wicketkeeper who is in the best position to judge the pace and carry of stock deliveries.

They will be staggered arms length apart, progressively closer to the bat for thicker edges wider of first slip.

First slip will stand wider for slow bowling.

Close fielders in front of the wicket need to be fearless, and short-leg must be able to react to a possible dual deflection off both bat and pad.

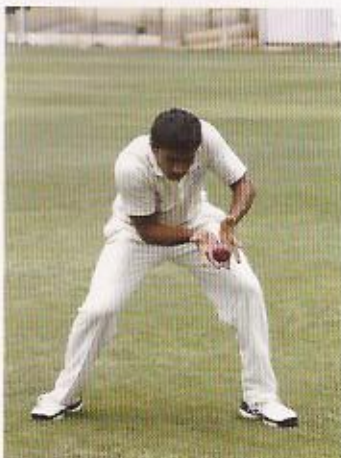
All should crouch with their feet shoulder-width apart and weight on the inside balls of their feet, balanced and ready to move quickly in any direction.

Hands should be low and forward of the body, cupped together, palms forward, fingers down.

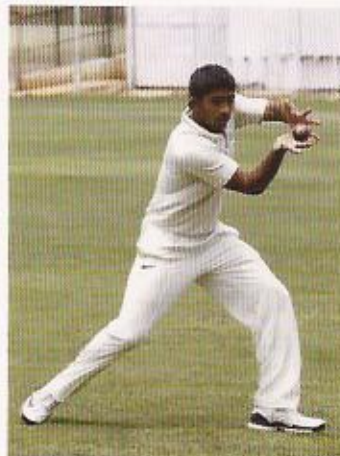
All close fielders should have their head steady and eyes level, watching the area around the bat. Some first slip

fieldsmen prefer to watch the path of the ball from the bowler's hand.

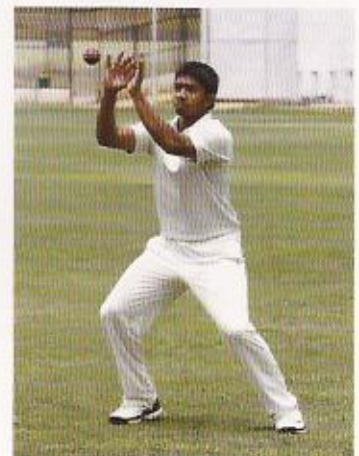
The fielder should stay low and come up with the ball as required, watching it into his hands, allowing it to come to him.



• Fingers down



• Fingers to side



• Reverse cup

3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



He should withdraw his elbows (shock absorbers) and "give" with the ball on impact, either into the body (which can provide a second chance at a fumbled catch) or to the side.

When the player has had to dive for the ball, he should roll under or over it to avoid spilling the catch if his elbows were to jar on the turf.

The fielder should flex his legs and employ a reverse cup to catch a ball hit to an awkward chest height, a method also employed for flat catches taken in "the ring".

Fingers should be pointed down, up or to the side, but never at the ball.



- Catch at eye level



- Elbows are shock absorbers



- Ball taken in front of eyes

High

When catching in the deep, it is important to get under the ball as early as possible to establish a stable base.

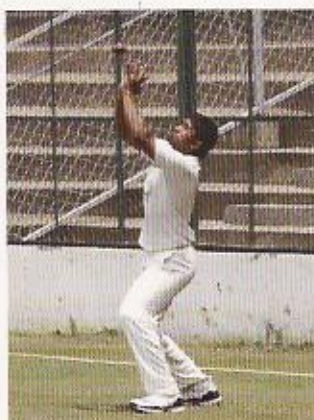
Once there, the fielder cups his hand in a high, comfortable position under the ball, with elbows tucked into his sides.

With his head still, he will catch the ball at or above eye level and, using elbows and knees as shock absorbers, receive the ball with "soft" hands towards his chest.

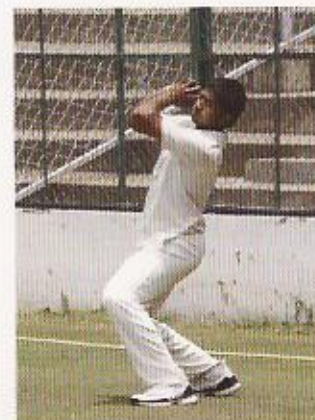
An alternative to this orthodox method of catching is the reverse cup in which the fingers point upwards, and the thumbs and index fingers overlap.

Again, the ball is taken in front of the eyes and elbows act as shock absorbers, but the head is then moved to one side and the hands are retracted over a shoulder to "give" with the ball.

This method allows the fielder a better opportunity to block out the sun and to keep the ball in the same plane throughout the catch.



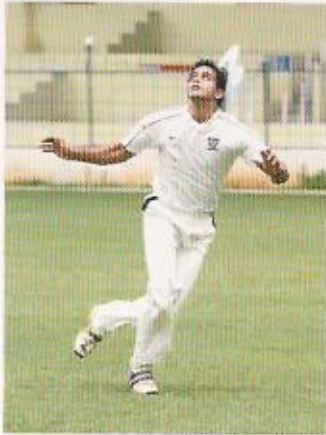
- Knees also shock absorbers



- Hands retract over shoulder



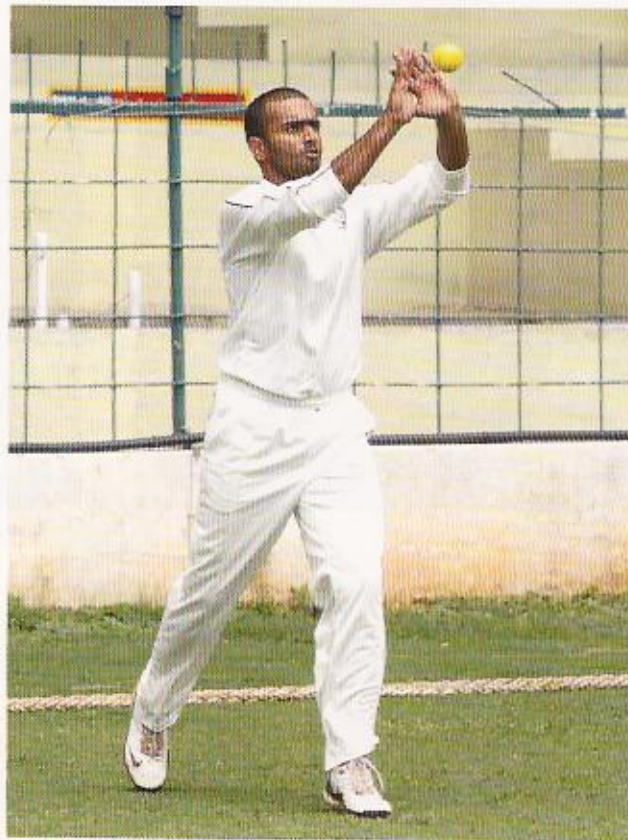
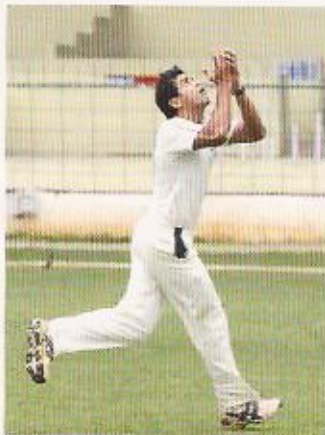
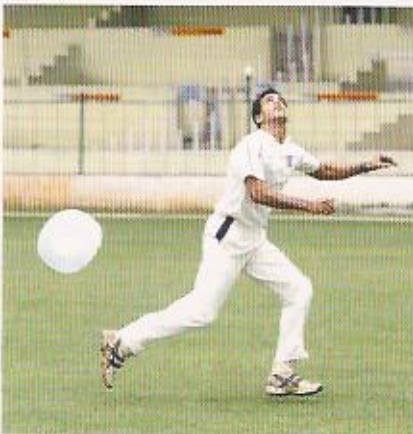
3. THE SKILLS - Fielding



If the ball has been hit flat and hard, he may employ a scissors position with the legs. With one foot forward of the other, the rear leg is flexed to absorb the force and cushion the catch (reverse cup).

If the ball is hit over the fielder's head, he will use a "drop" step, taking the foot nearest the flight of the ball back to achieve a position from which he can begin running.

He either runs backwards or with the flight of the ball, looking back over his shoulder to keep his eyes on the ball, and the orthodox method is employed to catch it.



• Scissors, reverse cup

... catches win matches



Drills - Close Catching



• Slips catching



• Single-handed catching



• Nicks & glides



• Fast catching in pairs



• Katchet cradle



• Pattern catching

NB: Katchet cradles can be placed back-to-back, with players taking the place of the feeder at one end.



3. THE SKILLS - Fielding

Drills - Outfield

Drills promote talking, teamwork, throwing, catching and fitness. Throwing at full capacity confined to Inner Ring drill to avoid shoulder injuries.

GROUND FIELDING

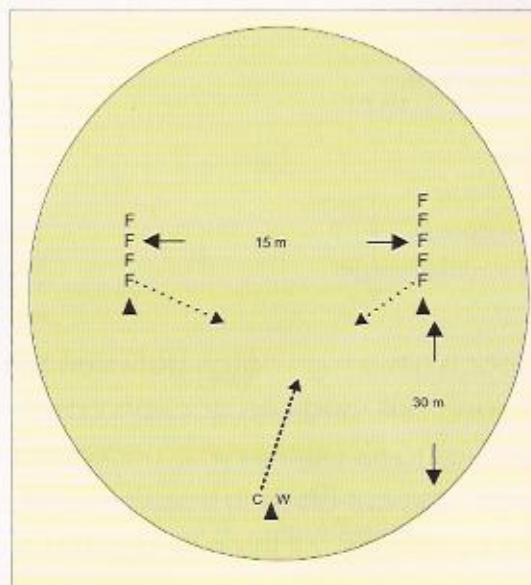
Requirements

- Markers - 3
- Cricket ball
- Bat
- Wicketkeeping gloves, protector
- Players - unlimited

Key

- F = fielder
- W = wicketkeeper
- C = coach
- ▲ = marker

Coach hits a ground ball between the markers. Fielders work in pairs. The first to the ball fields the ball and underarms it to the other who throws it to the wicketkeeper. Fielders run around feeding station and return to back of their respective lines.



INNER RING

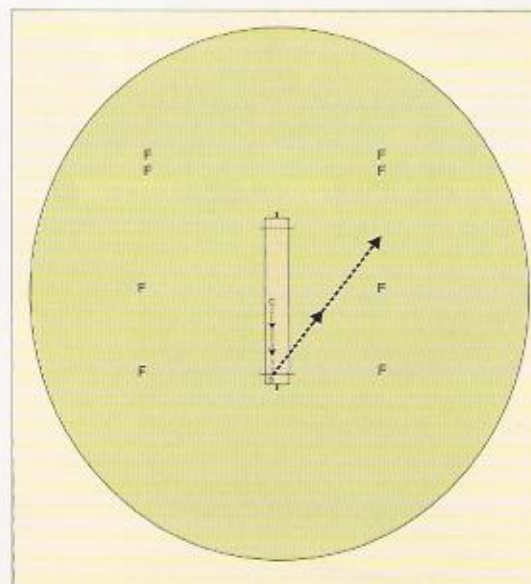
Requirements

- Pitch
- Bat
- Cricket ball
- Set plastic stumps - 2

Key

- F = fielder
- W = wicketkeeper
- B = hitter
- C = coach

The coach feeds the hitter who plays the ball along the ground to any of the inner-ring fielders who gather the ball and attempt to throw down the stumps at either end. Backing up to be done by the appropriate fielder on the other side of the wicket who returns the ball to the wicketkeeper. Fielders rotate positions after each two-minute block. (Ten in group necessitates two fielders each at mid-on and mid-off who take it in turns to field.)





OUTFIELD CATCHING

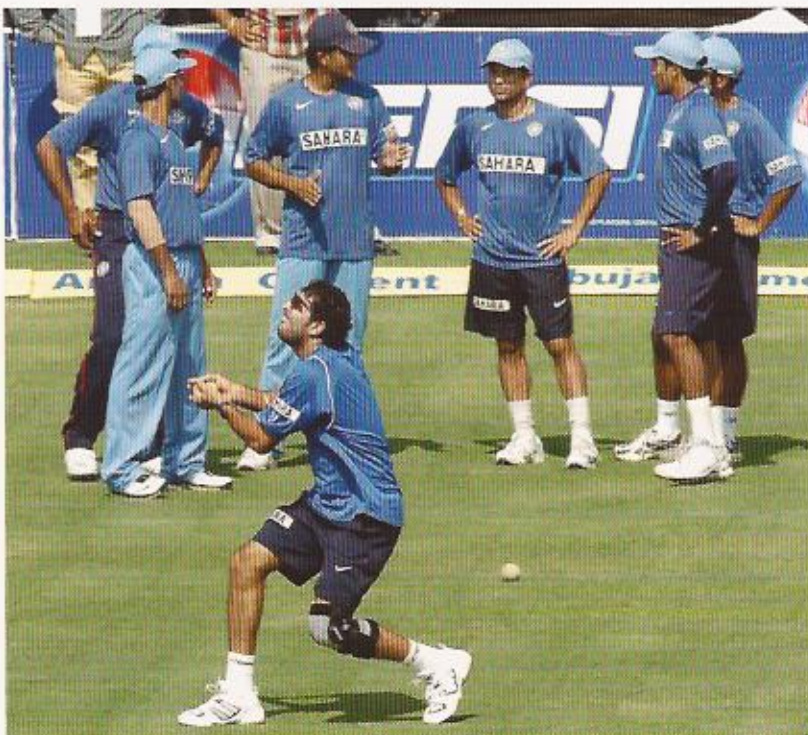
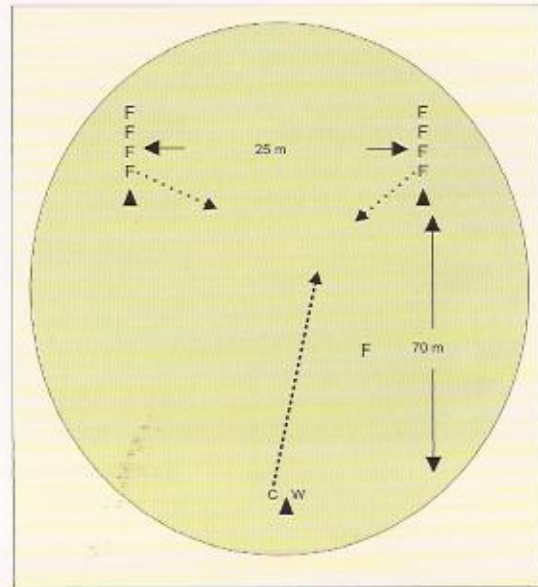
Requirements

- Markers - 3
- Bat
- Cricket ball

Key

- F = fielder
- C = coach
- W = wicketkeeper

Coach hits a high catch between the markers. Fielders call, and one accepts catch. He underarms the ball to his partner who underarms it to the cut-off man. The cut-off man throws it gently overarm to the wicketkeeper. All three fielders run around the hitting station and return to the back of their respective lines. The cut-off man joins the back of the line vacated by a new cut-off man.



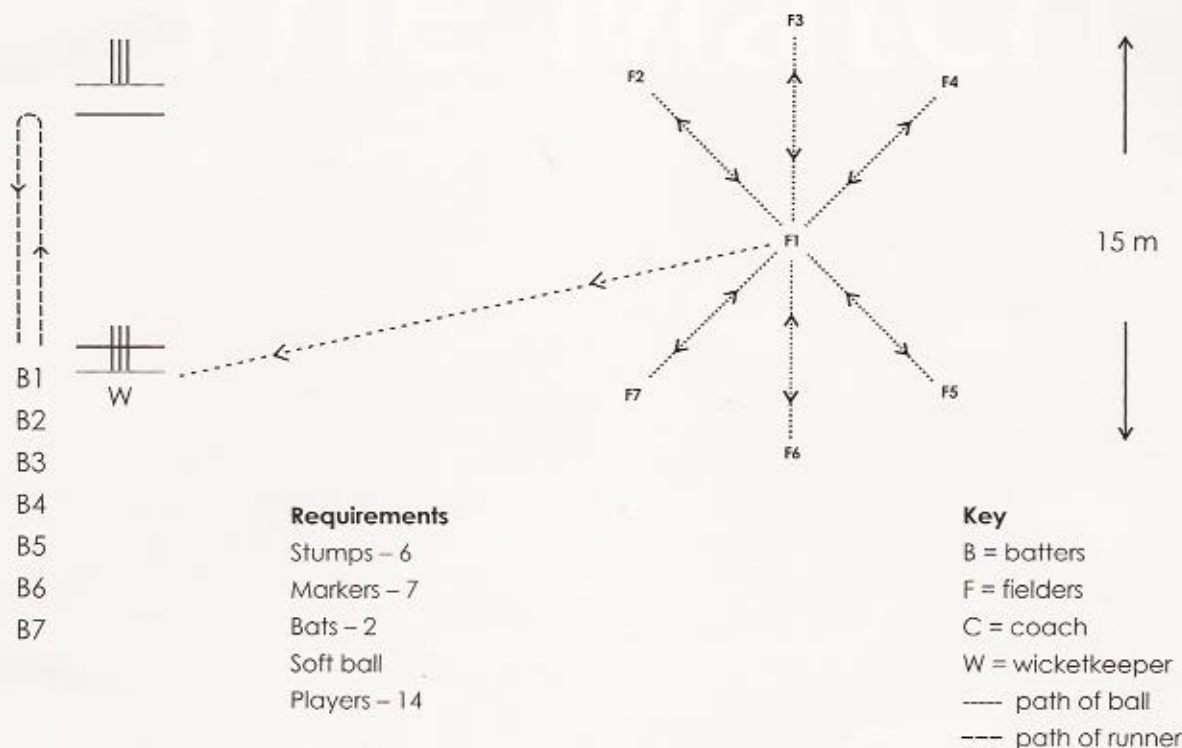
Safe hands: Yuvraj Singh

... well drilled



3. THE SKILLS - Games

Piggie in the Middle



How the game works

There are two teams of 7 players each.

F1 (Piggie in the Middle) has the ball, and B1 has taken up a batting position in front of the wicketkeeper.

At the coach's whistle, F1 throws to F2. F2 throws back to F1, who then throws to F3. F3 returns it to F1 and so on until F1 receives the ball from F7 and throws it to the wicketkeeper.

Meanwhile, B1 tries to complete as many runs as possible. The idea is to restrict the runs to a minimum by throwing accurately and catching cleanly.

When B2 comes to the crease, F1 moves to F2 position, F2 to F3 and so on, and F7 becomes Piggie in the Middle.

Everyone gets a chance to be Piggie in the Middle, and the team which scores the most runs wins the Game.

Coaching points

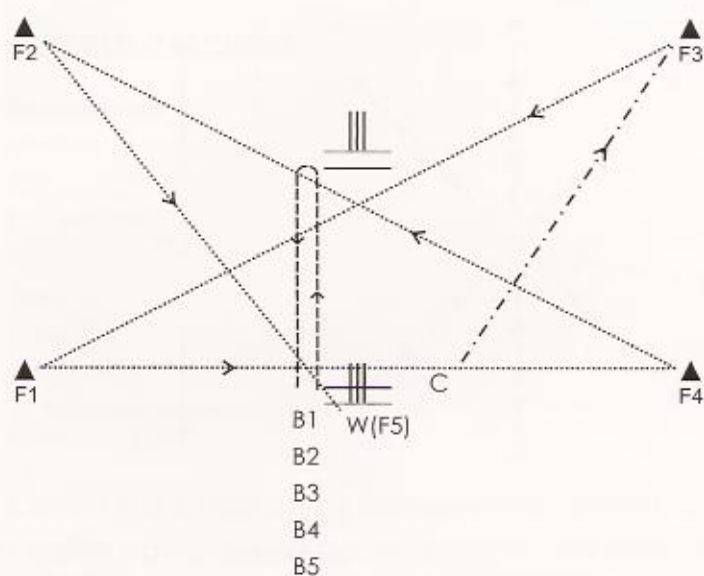
Catching and throwing under pressure; running between wickets; communication.

Encourages participation, fun and enjoyment.





Star Run-out



Requirements

Stumps – 6
 Markers – 4
 Balls – 2 (soft)
 Players – 10

Key

▲ = marker
 B = batter
 F = fielder
 W = wicketkeeper
 ---- path of ball
 ---- path of runner
 - - - coach feed

How the Game works

The coach feeds a ground ball to F3.

As F3 picks up the ball, B1 starts running.

F3 throws overarm to F1, who throws to F4, who throws to F2, who throws to the wicketkeeper.

The batter must beat the throw to the wicketkeeper to score two runs.

B1 then joins the line behind B5.

The fielders rotate clockwise for the next batter, B2.

The Game continues until all batters have had a turn, whereafter the fielding team bats. Most runs wins.

Coaching points

Overarm throwing; catching; RBW; communication.

Encourages participation, fun, enjoyment and competition.

