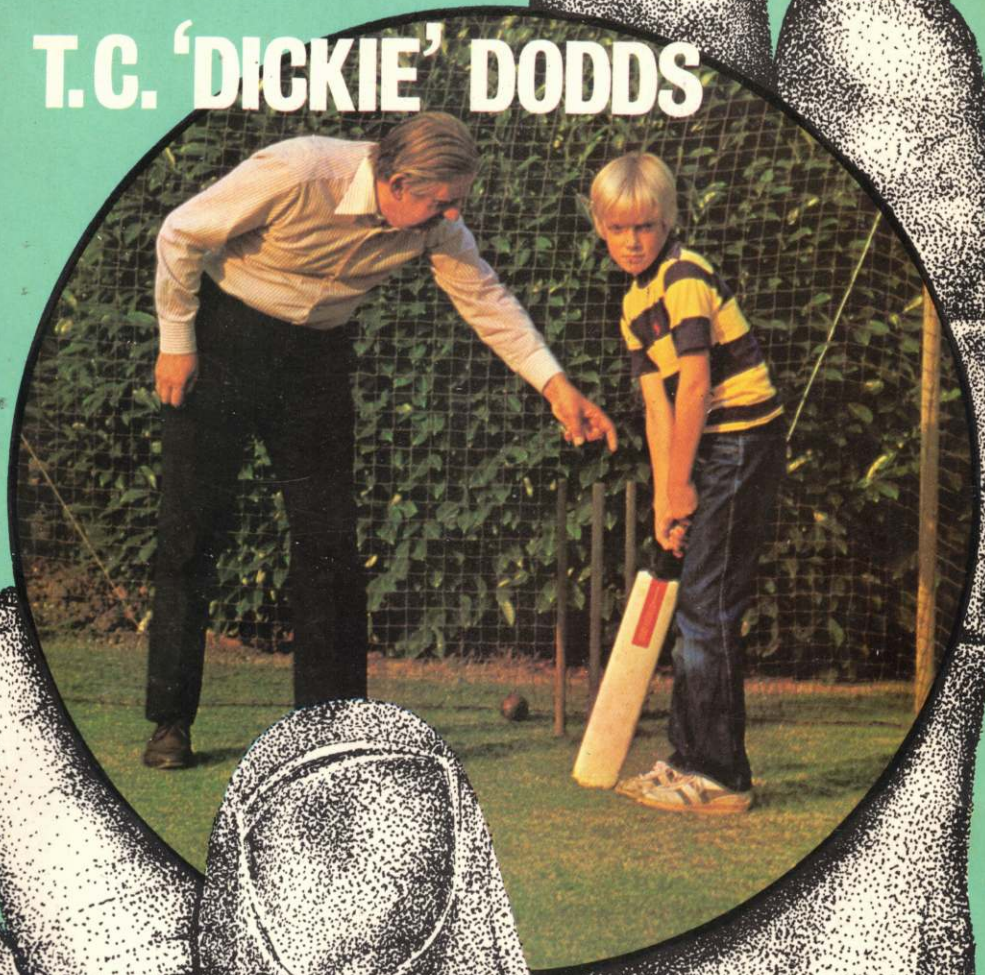


Cricket

FROM FATHER
TO SON

T.C. 'DICKIE' DODDS



CRICKET FROM FATHER TO SON

○

DODDS

k

CRICKET

FROM FATHER TO SON

T. C. 'Dickie' Dodds

Illustrations by Bob Bond

KAYE & WARD
LONDON

To the memory of Ann,
who was the inspiration behind this book.

First published in Great Britain by
Kaye & Ward Ltd
21 New Street, London EC2M 4NT
1979

Copyright © Kaye & Ward Ltd 1979

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 0 7182 1213 4 (*cased*)

ISBN 0 7182 1214 2 (*paperback*)

Photoset in VIP Palatino by S. G. Mason (Chester) Ltd
Printed in Great Britain by Fakenham Press Limited,
Fakenham, Norfolk

CONTENTS

Foreword by Conrad Hunte	6
Preliminaries	7

BATTING

1. Hitting the ball	8
2. Playing with a straight bat	9
3. Guard, grip, stance, backlift	12
4. Forward defensive shot	15
5. Back defensive shot	19
6. Practice – forward and back defensive shots	20
7. Off, straight, and on drive	22
8. Drive off back foot	25
9. Decision making	26
10. Timing	28
11. Lofted and pulled drive	30
12. Driving 'on the up'	31
13. Leg glance	33
14. The cut	35
15. Hit to leg	37
16. Pull	38
17. Hook	39
18. Sweep	41
19. Running between wickets	42
20. Some batting philosophy	47

BOWLING

General comments	52
1. Bowling action, stage one	52
2. Bowling action, stage two	55
3. Bowling action, stage three	57
4. Line, direction and length	60
5. Line and length. Hints on practice	62

6. Change of pace, flight, and line	64
7. Out swing	65
8. In swing	67
9. Off and leg cutter	68
10. Leg break, googly, and top spinner	68
11. Off spin	72
12. Left arm slow	74
13. Left arm fast	76
Summing up	77

FIELDING

General comments	78
1. Ground fielding	79
2. Catching	82
3. Throwing	83

WICKET KEEPING

General comments	85
1. Positioning and standing up	86
2. Standing back	88
Captaincy	90
Teamwork	91
Pitches – Preparation and care of	92
Finale	94

FOREWORD

BY

Conrad Hunte

West Indies former vice captain and opening bat

In an age of increasing leisure, cricket, other sports and all recreational activities will play a more prominent role in the use of man's time.

Dickie Dodds has written a remarkable book on how a father can learn with mother's help, to teach his son to play cricket, and to discover a love of the game.

He has laid out the techniques in such simple and clear terms that the book is readily understandable to the layman and the professional coach alike.

Cricket from Father to Son shows how the skills of cricket can be acquired and then tested in action on the field. It also re-states and updates that area of other 'skills' in cricket to be mastered by a cricketer at any level of the game, and in every country, today and tomorrow – teamwork and discipline, courage in failure, restraint in success, courtesy towards an opponent, and respect for a team-mate.

PRELIMINARIES

This is a book for fathers (mothers, too, can play their part) and their budding young cricketer sons.

Fathers, of course, can be almost any age. Budding young cricketers usually start from about five or six upwards. Perhaps the best age to begin is when the son shows the desire to play and to learn.

The first thing to be worked out with father is a little background philosophy. For instance, could we agree that the main beneficiary of this book is to be the son? If father is, or has been, or even fancies he is, or has been, or should have been, a good player himself, he needs to put all that to one side and henceforth live to make his son great.

For it must be admitted there are fathers who feel it necessary to demonstrate to their sons, when they are trying to learn to bat, how their own bowling is really unplayable. And for the son aged five or six or even ten, it usually is. The result on the boy in terms of giving him a love for the game, can be fatal. No; father's role now is to bowl the sort of ball his son can hit. It will require all the skill father thinks he possesses to do this. For instance, if he is teaching an off-drive, then he needs to bowl a half volley on the off – not a fast bouncer or a sizzling yorker. And so on.

And then there is the question of control. It seems part of parental nature that many fathers, and even some mothers, like to try to control every part of their children's lives as well as those parts that properly fall within parental jurisdiction.

Father may long have dreamt of his son opening for England, and, as soon as the son can hold a bat, he sets about trying to achieve his ambition. But father needs to be sure that this is really his son's destiny. If it isn't there is frustration and catastrophe ahead for both. Likewise there are other fathers who are determined their sons shall not enter the world of top flight sport, when, manifestly, this is their niche in life. And there are many grades in between.

Finally, it is put forward that cricket is a game, a recreation, even an art, that is meant to be enjoyed. This is where many fathers can learn a lot from their sons. Anyone who has watched a junior boys team in action will be aware of their obvious enjoyment of the game. It is clear from their smiles, their excitement, and their cheers, that it is terrific fun.

So, with these preliminary observations made, let play begin at the beginning.

BATTING

LESSON NUMBER ONE

PRIMARY

Hitting the ball

Preparation and Equipment

Father should provide his son with a bat that he can easily handle. Not too long and not too heavy.

It is possible to buy a small and relatively cheap bat in most children's shops which is quite adequate for the purpose of these initial lessons. It is also possible to make a simple bat from a piece of wood.

The next thing father needs is a ball. Better still — several balls. These should be soft — tennis balls or something similar and preferably not too bouncy.

Finally a pitch is required. This should be as flat as possible. A concrete or asphalt yard is ideal. Anything like this. Of course it can be done on grass. But in order to give both father and the boy a sporting chance this should have a surface that gives a true bounce. (see p. 92 on the preparation of pitches). The stumps can be of the usual variety if the pitch is on grass. If we are going to play on something harder then a box or an old oil drum or something chalked on a wall — anything will do.

For this first lesson be sure it is a nice day. First impressions are important. Plenty of time when the bug has really bitten to face those bitter, so called summer days, when the ball comes whistling into the slips and takes your hand off on its way to the boundary. No, for this beginning of a life long passion, choose a time when the sun is shining and the scent and song of spring, or summer, are in the air.

So in garden, yard, park or even quiet side street, we are ready for our first lesson. If mother is not otherwise occupied then have her along too. Mothers are very good for fielding and for handing out words of encouragement when they are needed. And they often are.

Father should give his son the bat and let him hold it how he will in order to find out if he is right-handed or left-handed by nature. If he has no idea how to hold the bat, and he is right-handed in his approach, get him to hold the bat with his left hand towards the top of the handle and the right hand underneath and next to it. For left-handed boys the hands should be the other way round.

Father should then stand 10 to 15 yards away and bowl the ball under-

arm to the boy so that it bounces well in front of him and at a nice height for him to hit. He should be told to hit the ball with the bat as hard and as far as he can. (In practice, and by some inbred instinct, this means the boy will swipe the ball to leg and mother should be stationed in that vicinity to do her stuff).

The object of lesson number one is:

1. To see if the boy has any eye for hitting the ball.
2. If he has, to evaluate to some extent his potential.
3. To enable him to enjoy the feel of whacking the ball.

If he makes no connection with the ball it may be he is too young to focus and co-ordinate his muscles properly, or, that he has no aptitude for the game. In this case it is suggested that father does not press things at this stage and after a few more tries gently puts cricket coaching at the bottom of the priority list for another year. Then the process can be repeated. If there is still no sign of any aptitude then father must reconcile himself to the fact that his son is not a budding young cricketer and has a different destiny – perhaps Prime Minister, or farmer, or even a Test Match statistician.

However, we will assume that after one or two abortive attempts, the boy begins to make contact with the ball with his lustily swung bat, and that mother is proudly retrieving the hits from underneath the bushes and out of the flower beds!

When it has been firmly established in his mind that hitting the ball is not only possible but a highly pleasurable exercise, and when he is getting his sights fixed – according to his ambition on:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The Under Ten XI. | 3. England. |
| 2. Middlesex. | 4. Packer Super Tests. |

or all four – the time has come to end the first lesson. Preferably end with a final, sweetly timed, swipe over mother's outstretched hands and into the neighbour's garden. This has the added advantage of giving parents the chance, whilst retrieving the ball, of explaining to the neighbour the nature of the talent that is obviously emerging and to begin to get used to what may be a lifetime of reflected glory.

LESSON NUMBER TWO

PRIMARY

Playing with a straight bat

Having established that the boy is keen and has some talent the time has come to get down to business.

Preparation and equipment. Same as for lesson one, plus a cricket ball in a long sock or stocking, and a line drawn in chalk from the middle stump three or four yards towards the bowler's wicket (on grass, string can be used for the line).

Father should take the stockinged ball in his left hand and hold the bat by the handle with his right.

He should then tell his pupil, in a voice suitable for the revelation of eternal truth, of the importance of playing with a 'straight' bat and that we are going to learn the reason for this.

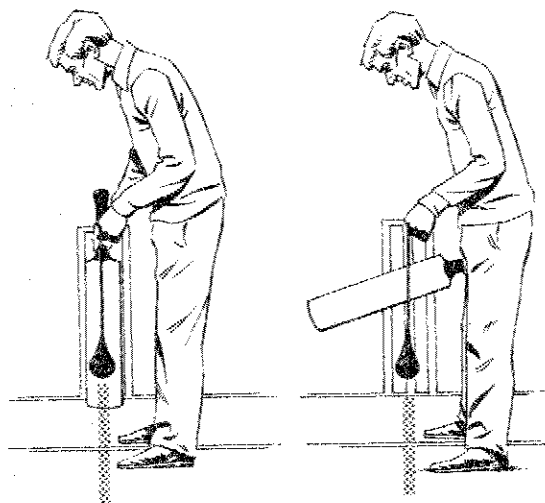
Explain that in the first lesson you had been bowling him balls that had been easy to hit with a 'cross bat', and that whilst he will always get a certain number of such balls which are easy to hit 'cross bat', most of the balls he will receive will be easier to hit with a 'straight bat'. In fact they will almost certainly be missed by anything except a 'straight bat'.

Father should now take up a batting position at the wicket and ask the boy to stand behind the stumps. Father should then swing the stockinged ball in his left hand as though it were coming from an imaginary bowler down the line marked on the ground.

The boy will probably have heard Test Match commentators talking about a bowler bowling a 'good line' and a 'bad line'.

This line is the one the ball travels from the bowler's hand down the pitch. A good line ball is one which will hit the stumps and a bad line ball is one wide of the stumps.

Father can let the ball bounce as he swings it down the good line marked on the ground.



Straight bat.

Cross bat.

Then switch the boy's attention to the bat. Point out to him that the blade is far longer than it is wide. Now swing the ball up and down the line and show him that it is far easier to hit if the whole length of the bat is swung vertically (straight) along the same line as the ball, than it is to try and hit the ball with the bat swung horizontally across its line.

Do each demonstration with a straight, vertical, bat and a cross, horizontal, bat several times. Be always sure to hit the ball with the former and miss it with the latter.

Boys generally quickly catch on

to the drift of the argument and appreciate the soundness of the logic.

The bat can also be swung in varying degrees of the horizontal cross bat arcs to demonstrate the comparative difficulty of making contact with the ball unless the bat is absolutely straight or vertical.

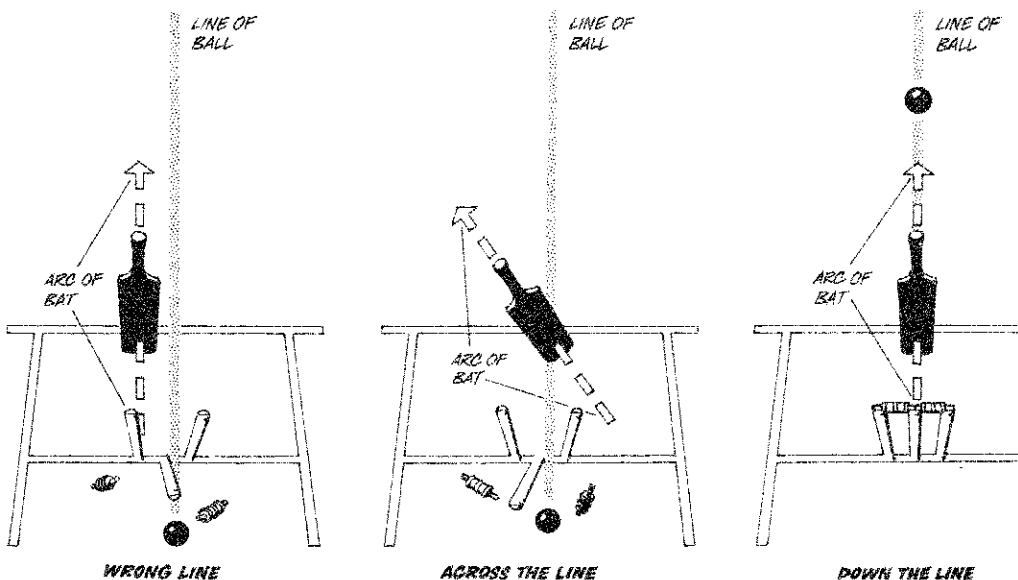
One hopes the point is thus made beyond all doubt, and for all time, that to play with a straight bat is the ultimate in batting virtue and to play with a cross bat is the depth of sin and folly for which, usually sooner than later, the price has to be paid by the offender with the loss of his wicket.

Since playing straight is the basic ingredient of all good batting it is the point to which all players will be brought back time and time again. That is why its importance at the beginning should be doubly and trebly underlined.

It can also be pointed out that if a batsman does play straight and moves his bat up and down the line of the ball, it is very difficult for a bowler to get the ball past the bat to hit the wicket.

It is of course possible to play with a straight bat and still miss the ball if the bat is swung down the wrong line or across the line of the ball.

This can be demonstrated with the aid of the stockinged ball.



The pupil, after all this theory, may welcome something more active. If so, it is suggested that he and his father throw balls to each other for some catching. If, on the other hand, things have gone exceptionally well, then move straight into lesson three.

Taking guard, grip, stance and backlift

Equipment and preparation

Bat. It would be best if from now on a properly shaped bat was used rather than a home-made one. Instructions regarding the right way to hold the bat will be given on that assumption. There will be no great harm, however, if a home-made one continues to be used. All lessons are given for a right-handed batsman. For a left hander the instructions should be reversed.

Pitch. The popping (batting) crease should be marked on the pitch. Locate a long mirror, french windows, or something giving a full-length reflection.

Taking guard

The first thing a batsman does when he goes to the wicket is to 'take guard'.

This means he makes a mark on the ground with his bat or boot and he puts the bottom of his bat on this mark when he stands and faces the bowler. The mark, or guard – it is sometimes called the 'block hole' – is to enable the batsman to know where he is standing in relation to the stumps behind him which the bowler is trying to hit when he bowls.

As part of the batsman's task is to prevent this happening he can do this best if he knows where he is, and where the wicket is. The best place to stand is with one's legs just outside the line of the stumps (this makes it harder to be 'leg before wicket') and with one's head directly over the centre of the stumps. This position of the head helps the batsman to judge the 'line' of the ball in relation to the stumps.

If the bottom of the bat is placed just behind the right toe then the mark should be either in line with the leg stump, or middle stump, or halfway in between.

To get this mark, or guard, you ask the umpire as soon as you arrive at the wicket for leg stump, or middle stump, or middle and leg for the half way position. To enable the umpire to give you guard hold your bat upright in front of the stumps. He will then tell you to move it one way or the other till you have got the guard you want.

A player will find by experience which guard suits him best. But the general principle is to know where you are standing in relation to the wicket and the approaching ball.

Having learnt the how and why of taking guard we will now learn the correct way to hold the bat.

Grip

Show the boy the 'V' formed by the fore-finger and thumb of his left hand. The point of this 'V' should be half way between the shoulder and the back hump of the bat when the handle is gripped with his left hand.

The handle must be gripped firmly with this hand with the fingers all the way round the handle. The position of the hand should be a short distance from the top of the handle so that when the right hand is put immediately below the left, they occupy the centre of the handle length.

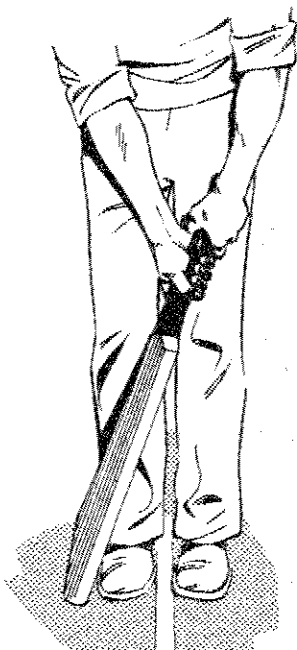
To obtain the correct position for the right hand, stand as though facing the bowler with the bat in the left hand. Then put the right hand round the handle in the position that comes naturally. Usually this means the 'V' formed by the fore-finger and thumb of the right hand is in line with or slightly behind that of the left.

The position of the right hand should be adjacent to the left but with this important difference. Whilst batting, it is the left hand that should do the brunt of the work. The right hand is a helper. Whilst the fingers of the left hand firmly grip the handle, those of the right should be more flexible and merely act in a supporting role and sometimes as a sort of pivot.

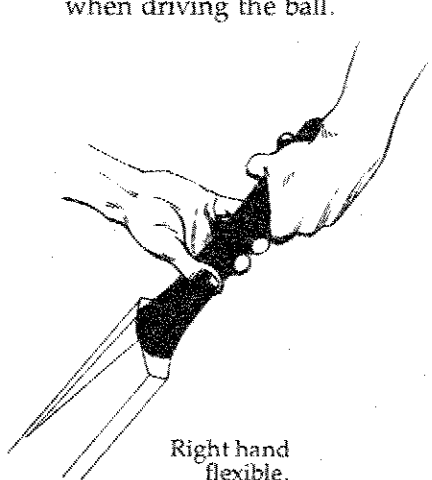
So it is the left hand that is important for a right-handed batsman and the reverse for a left-handed batsman.

The top hand in both cases should be in the half way position round the handle, as demonstrated above. This is the correct position.

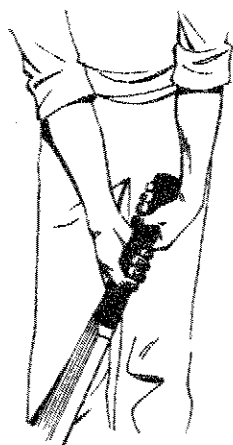
The reason is that this is the best position in order to 'cock' the wrist when driving the ball.



Correct grip.



Right hand flexible.



Left hand too far in front.



Left hand too far behind.

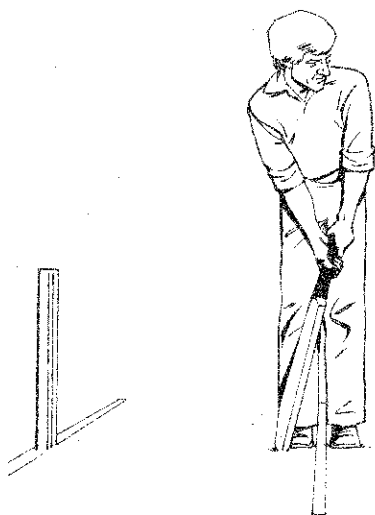
Stance

Stance means the position a batsman takes up as he waits for the bowler to deliver the ball.

The player can find the correct batting stance as follows:

His left foot should run along the front of the line of the batting crease. His back foot should run along the back of the line of the batting crease. He will then be standing sideways on to the pitch with his left shoulder pointing towards the bowler. Then taking the bat in the correct grip he should bend over, with his body quite relaxed, until the bat rests on the ground in the 'guard' he has made. The best place for the bat is just behind the right toe. The batsman then turns his head to the left and looks at the bowler. The weight of the body should be equally distributed on both legs.

The batsman should remain quite still as the bowler runs towards the wicket. Then as the bowler prepares to deliver the ball the batsman should lift his bat so he is ready to hit it.



Stance – side view.



Stance -- front view.

Backlift

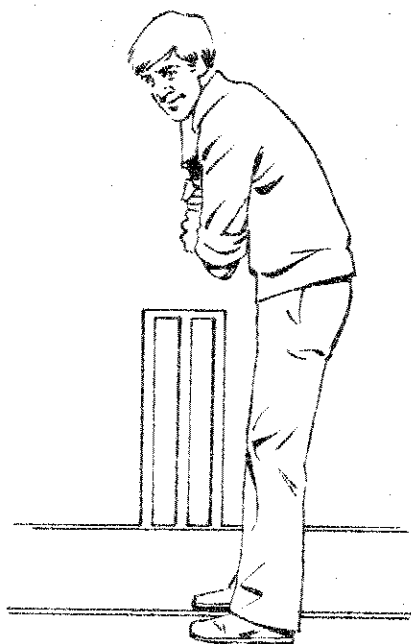
This is the name given to the movement the batsman makes with his bat as he prepares to play the ball the bowler is delivering. We have already learned that the batsman's golden rule is to play straight. To do this the bat should be brought down in a straight line. The batsman can best achieve this if he lifts his bat up in a straight line – that is straight towards the stumps.

So the boy should practise lifting his bat straight back and he should do this using his wrists and arms only. He should keep his shoulders and head still. The reason for this is as follows.

He is about to try and hit a moving ball. His main aid to this are his eyes. They have to focus the ball and tell his brain and muscles exactly where the ball is so he can hit it. His eyes have the best chance of doing this if they are still. Moving eyes trying to focus a moving ball makes the whole thing that much more difficult.

The height to which the bat is raised varies from one batsman to another. Many of the finest players have had high backlifts and it is suggested that the boy should be taught to lift his bat certainly to the height where the middle of the blade is level with his eyes. Another rough test is that at the top of the backlift the left forearm should be parallel to the ground.

Whilst the pupil is practising this backlift, father can see what he is doing and put him right, but by far the best thing is for the boy to see it for himself. To do this move to the French window, or long mirror, and let him practise in front of it. The boy will soon see where he is going wrong and in no time will be lifting up his bat and bringing it down in a dead straight line. The batsman is now ready to move to the next stage which is the playing of the ball.



Backlift.

LESSON NUMBER FOUR

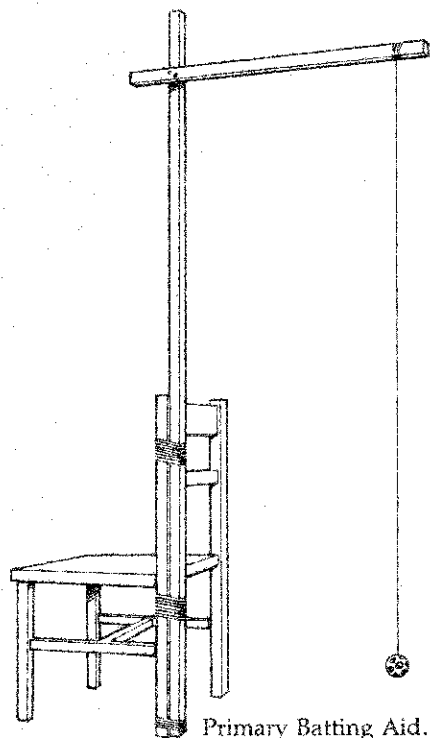
PRIMARY

Batsmanship. Forward defensive shot

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch with line drawn from the off stump four or five yards towards the bowler's wicket. Primary Batting Aid. The latter is made as follows.

Materials

- One 7ft 1 × 1 inch wooden pole.
- One 2ft 1 × 3/8 inch wooden slat.
- One thin piece of string.
- One Plastic 'gamester' ball.
- One chair to which the pole is tied.



Primary Batting Aid.

It should take the average 'do it yourself' father and his apprentice about 15 to 20 minutes to knock up.

If one is going to use this outdoors then the seven foot pole can be stuck in the ground. The advantage of having it tied to a chair is that it can be used inside or out and is easily moved. The ball should be suspended by light string so that it is some six inches or so off the ground – at just the nice height for hitting.

The pupil has already laid the right foundation for batsmanship with his correct and easy stance, with his classic straight backlift, and because in executing this backlift he has kept his shoulders steady and his head stockstill.

He is now ready for any eventuality and to launch whatever attack on the ball, or defence, he wishes and which the nature of the delivery he faces to some extent dictates.

The boy should be told there are two basic shots in cricket – the forward shot and the back shot. These are subdivided into the forward defensive and attacking shot, and the backward defensive and attacking shot.

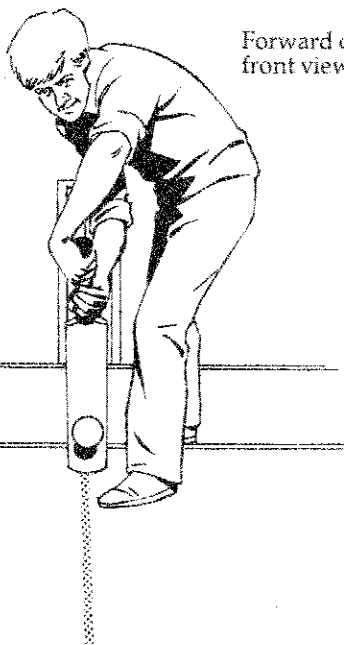
The forward defensive shot

This shot is usually played to a ball that is well pitched up. Father should take the bat and tell the boy to stand in front of him whilst he demonstrates the shot and tells him the rules for playing it. He should place a ball on the line on the pitch and say that the ball is pitching there and has travelled down that line from the bowler.

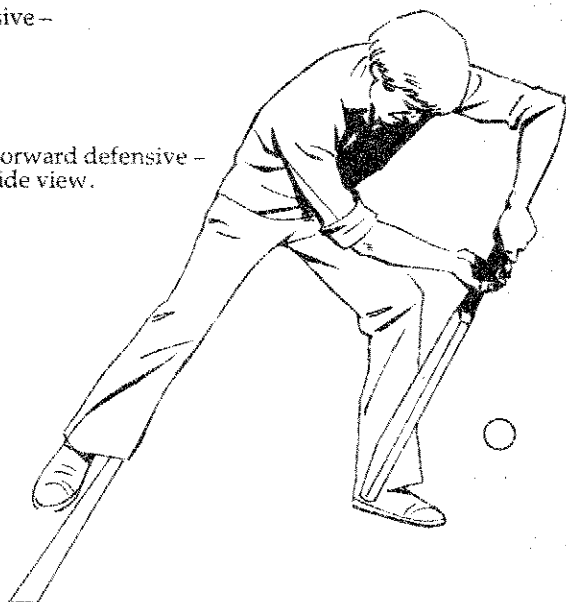
Then taking a correct stance at the wicket and doing the actions as he talks, father says that to play the forward defensive shot the batsman puts his front leg just to the left, and adjacent to, the line of the ball. At the same time he brings the bat straight down, with his left wrist, left elbow and left shoulder over the line of the ball.

There is no follow through with the bat in this defensive shot. The bat stops in the vertical position where it hits the ball. The batsman should be sure that his left toe is not pointing straight down the wicket or he will overbalance. His left foot should be at an angle of something like 45 degrees. The left knee should be bent.

Forward defensive –
front view.



Forward defensive –
side view.



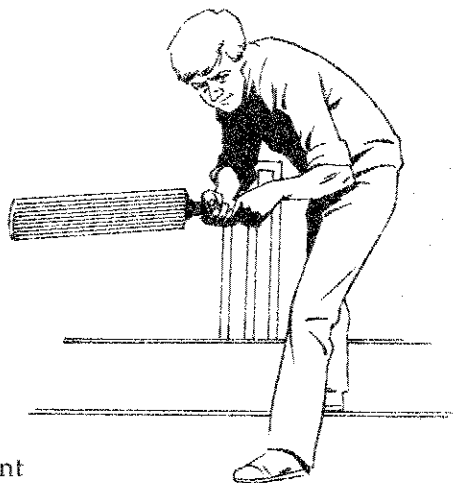
Father should go through the motions of playing this shot several times, emphasising the position of the left leg, wrist, shoulder, elbow and head and showing how these result in a 'straight' bat.

Then to underline the point, because the boy is going to have to come back to it again, and again, for some years, he should show what happens when any one of the above parts of the body is in the wrong position. Take away the left leg from the line of the ball and the bat is immediately slanted. Drop the left elbow to the side of the body and a horrible 'cross' bat results, and so on.

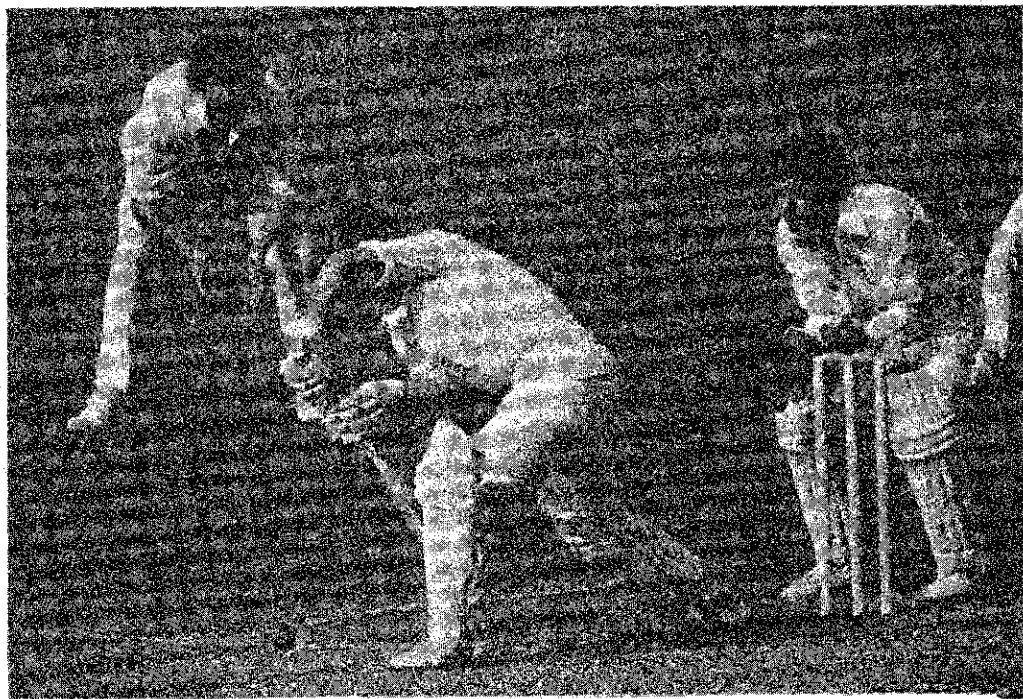
Then give the boy the bat, put a ball in front of him on the line, and ask him to go through the motions of playing the forward defensive shot. Correct whatever needs correcting to get the bat straight. The boy is now ready to play his first authentic cricket stroke.

He should take guard and a proper stance at the wicket and then father, from 10 or 15 yards, should bowl underarm to pitch about a yard in front of the boy so he can play forward and hit it almost on the half volley.

Father may find this taxes his skill. Not to worry. In fact one can play



Dropped left elbow results in cross bat.



Geoff Boycott, scorer of a century of centuries, plays a perfect forward defensive shot for England against Pakistan.

forward to almost anything – to a ball of any length – and the batsman should be encouraged to play his forward shot regardless of father's length and direction.

Another point for father. Don't harass the boy with too much advice or correction. All boys respond to different methods of instruction to some extent. But father may find that praise and encouragement bring better results than constant carping and fault finding.

After several minutes of practice at the forward defensive shot it might be good to have a change of scene and repair to the Primary Batting Aid.

Father can then, using this Aid, again demonstrate this shot. He should take his stance a foot or so from the hanging ball. Then he should play the correct forward defensive shot and just tap the ball ahead and return at once to the stance position and then forward again in time to hit the ball as it returns on its downward swing and keep repeating. It is a method of getting the movements of one's body right until they become automatic and second nature.

Most boys are eager to try their hand on this equipment and as they do it father can correct whatever needs to be corrected in order that a ramrod straight blade will be a part of the player's equipment for life. One can also practise on this Aid indoors when the days are wet.

In case of difficulty, and this is not uncommon, father and son should repair to the French windows or long mirror and play the forward defensive shot before it. The pupil will easily see for himself the sad slant of his bat and by self experiment with leg, wrist, shoulder, head but usually with elbow, he will be able to make the right correction himself.

And when a boy begins thus to know how to put his own faults to rights then a mighty leap forward has been achieved and the pearly gates of Lords are inching open.

LESSON NUMBER FIVE

PRIMARY

The back defensive shot

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch, Primary Batting Aid.

The second basic shot in cricket is the back shot. This is the stroke for the shorter pitched ball. The boy should be told that we are going to begin with the back defensive shot.

The rules of thumb for playing with a straight bat when playing back are the same as those for playing forward.

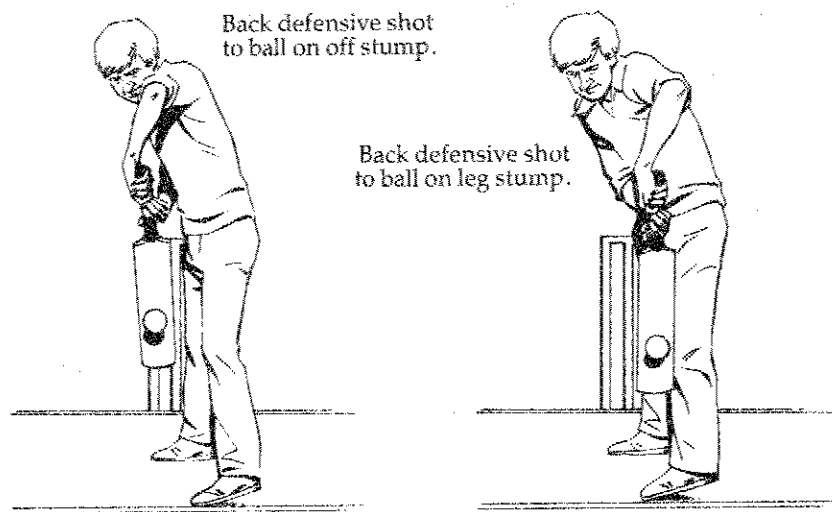
So for the *back defensive shot* he should take a good step back with his right leg adjacent to the line of all balls on the wicket and on the off side. The rules for the wrist, elbow, shoulder and head are the same as for the forward shot. Again there is no follow through when playing defensively – the bat remaining in the vertical position.

There is one difference between playing the back shot and the forward shot. This is for all balls pitching outside the leg stump; the laws of cricket say that a batsman can never be leg before wicket to a ball which pitches outside the leg stump. So in order to cover his wicket and not leave it exposed to balls pitching outside the leg stump, he should move his back leg towards the middle and leg stump and aim to play the ball in front of his body should it come into the wicket after pitching.

With all the above explained and demonstrated by father, the boy will be ready to try it for himself. He may like to begin on the Primary Batting Aid first. He can do this by standing on his right leg just to the rear of where the ball hangs on its string. He should then tap the ball forward just to get it going and then play the back shot as the ball keeps coming down.

When he has got this right, with particular attention being paid to the putting of all his weight on his right leg, then move to the playing pitch for further practice.

Father again would do well to put three balls on the ground three or



four yards in front of the wicket – one outside the leg stump, one straight, and one on the off side. Then get his son to go through the motions of playing back to each of these balls in turn.

When this has been correctly done, father can retreat his ten or fifteen yards and bowl short underarm balls for the boy to play. This should be continued until this shot is mastered for all three types of delivery – balls on the off, balls that are straight and balls that pitch outside the leg stump and break in towards the wicket.

LESSON NUMBER SIX

PRIMARY

Practice on defensive shots and how to decide when to play which one

Equipment and preparation. Bat, soft balls, pitch.

The pupil has now really progressed a very, very long way. He has learnt the great fundamental secret of batsmanship – how to play STRAIGHT – and with the two defensive shots he can prevent the ball knocking out his stumps.

What he needs at this stage is plenty of practice to get the whole thing into his system so that the actions are automatic.

Father and son would do well before going further to spend ten

minutes or so on the forward defensive shot and then a similar period on the back defensive shot.

He knows that the forward shot is for balls well pitched up and the back shot is for shorter balls. Before starting the practice father should explain why this is so as follows.

The batsman's great technical weapon against the bowler is his straight bat. A batsman who plays with a straight bat which is in line with the line of the ball, will always hit the ball provided the ball continues in a straight line in the air and after it bounces. The bowler tries to get round this difficulty from his point of view, by making the ball either swerve in a curved line through the air, or making it break at an angle when it bounces on the pitch, or both. How the bowler does this we will find out when we come to the bowling instruction.

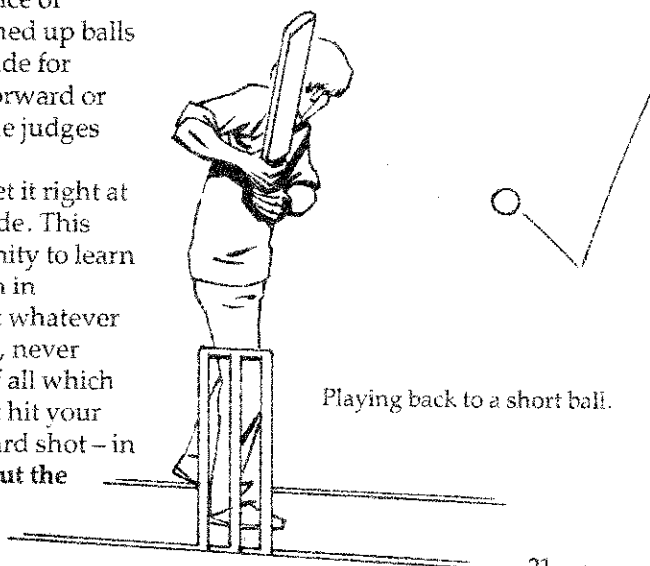
There are two ways the batsman attempts to counter these tricks of the bowler. The first is to play back to shorter balls. This gives him more time to see what the ball does after it hits the ground. The second is to play forward to the balls that are well pitched up because the nearer his bat is to the pitch of the ball the less room the ball has, when it deviates off its original line, in which to get by the bat or snick its edge.

In fact the three easiest balls for a batsman to hit are (a) a full toss (b) a half volley—a ball that bounces just in front of the bat (c) a long hop—a ball that bounces a long way from the batsman so that he has lots of time to see what it does off the ground before it reaches him.

Father could now give the boy the 10 minutes practice first at the forward defensive shot and then the back shot.

When this is over father should say that he is now going to give him another ten minutes practice of mixed short and well pitched up balls and that he has got to decide for himself whether to play forward or back according to where he judges the ball is pitching.

The boy is unlikely to get it right at once. Mistakes will be made. This will give him the opportunity to learn a further great basic lesson in batsmanship which is that whatever other mistakes one makes, never make the worst mistake of all which is to miss the ball and let it hit your wicket. Back shot or forward shot—in the final analysis always **put the bat to the ball!**



Off drive, straight drive, on drive

Preparation, equipment and additional personnel. Soft balls, bat, pitch, Primary Batting Aid. If mother has, in recent lessons, taken to the kitchen again, this is the time to get her out, and any spare and willing sisters as well.

The boy has now learnt, provided he does not make a mistake, how he can bat until he drops from exhaustion.

But defence is a dull business except when conducted against overwhelming odds. Most boys will want to keep it for emergencies, whilst their main attention is concentrated on run scoring, match winning, attack.

The reason we have started with the defensive shots is because it is the easiest way to learn the basic body positions.

Having mastered these body positions for the forward and back defensive shots, it is simple to go into the attacking shots, for the movements and positions are exactly the same, except that instead of, as it were, letting the ball hit the bat, the batsman now goes through with his shot and hits the ball with a full swing of his blade.

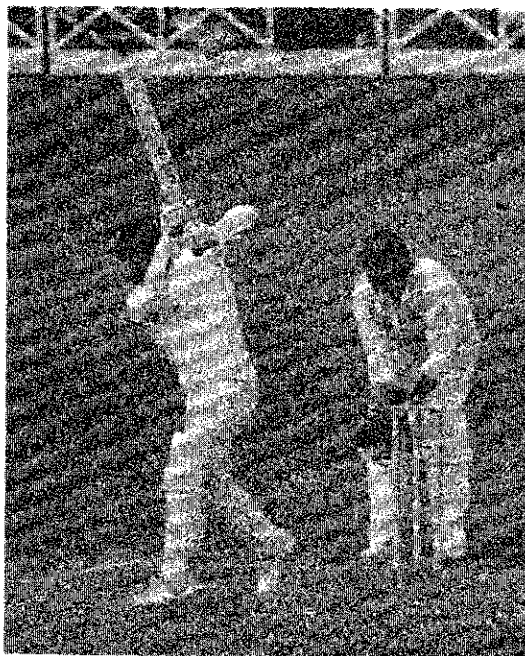
Father should now place three balls on the ground. One just outside the line of the off stump. One straight. And one just outside the line of the leg stump. All should be in the half volley position in relation to the batsman. Then father, going through the motions, should play at these three balls—the off drive, the straight drive, and the on drive. He should explain as he does so that the position of the leg, wrist, elbow, shoulder and head are the same as for the forward defensive shot, but now, instead of just playing the ball with a dead bat, the bat is allowed to go through the line of the ball and hit it.

After hitting the ball, the bat carries on naturally in the 'follow through'. It is important in this follow through that the left elbow is kept up, and not allowed to creep into the batsman's side.

At no time should the batsman's left elbow ever find itself tucked into his left side.

Father having completed this demonstration (hopefully without pulling a muscle in his side) the son can now try going through the motions at the three balls.

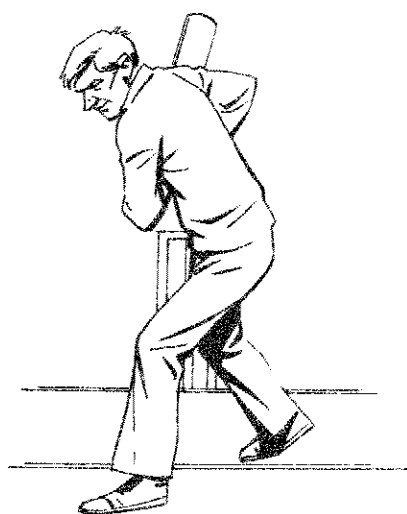
Father should then station mother on the off side, and any other fielders straight, and on the on side. Then, from his usual distance, he should bowl under arm half volleys for the boy to hit. Six on the off, six straight, and six on the leg or on side.



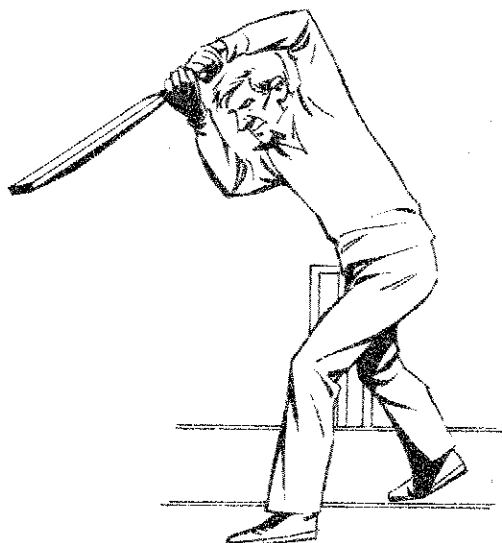
Few play straighter than Viv Richards of the West Indies, one of the best batsmen in the world. This is an example of a classic follow through after a straight drive. Note especially the position of his left elbow.



A specialist shot by Colin Cowdrey, who has played in more Test Matches than any other player. It shows a cover drive in which the batsman at the moment of impact has turned his wrist to angle the bat and send the ball wide of cover point.



The start of an off drive.



Follow through after an off drive.

If the on drive is the hardest of the three to master it is because the batsman has to move in an unnatural direction from the position of his stance. Secondly, if the ball is coming from a right hand bowler from over the wicket, and it pitches on or outside the leg stump, it will be on a line that is slanted across the pitch. The result is the batsman has to play slightly across the line of the ball. We have already learnt that this is a hazardous operation. However with extra care, and provided the shot is not attempted at balls wider than an inch or two outside the leg stump, all will be well and many boundaries will be struck (down the years) past the outstretched right and left hands of mid-on.

It is important that father really concentrates on his bowling for this lesson. He should be quick to apologise when, having instructed his son to hit a sizzling off drive past mother's left hand, he bowls a long hop down the leg side. In fact father should overpitch rather than under pitch. Full pitches should be the easiest balls of all for the batsman to drive.

There is another thing for father to be ready for in this session. It is likely that as soon as his pupil sees a slow half volley coming in his direction all the well learnt movements will go by the board and his natural instincts will take over, his left elbow will drop, and a primitive agricultural blow to leg will be attempted.

Father should show no surprise or disappointment. He might even say, 'Not bad – now try and get your left elbow higher,' or, 'Get your leg to the ball,' or whatever it is that needs attention.

Gently, hopefully, firmly, encouragingly, the raw talent must be guided into a sound technical mould.

If need be, and for a change, the forward drives can be practised on the Primary Batting Aid. However, he should not hit the ball too hard on this.

At the end of this session, mother may have a very key part to play. In between searching for balls and generally helping she will, with her finely-tuned maternal instinct, have divined the mood and need of her son. If she senses that things have not gone as well as he may have hoped, and that the path to England – or even the Under Ten XI – is beginning to look almost too long and rough, then there is no one better in the world than mother to absorb the tale of woe and revive the drooping spirit.

Even father may need a bit of this treatment from time to time – though he is by nature more likely to see a Rolls Royce in the making, when the evidence may only warrant a Mini.

INTERLUDE (between lesson number seven and eight)

As the simplicities of batsmanship begin to be understood by the son he may tax father with a difficult question. This is only likely if he is a watcher

of Test Matches and other first class cricket, on television. Fortunately, most boys, especially at the younger end, appear keener on playing cricket than watching it. But the question that may be asked is this.

'Why, Dad, do many of the batsmen we see on television not play forward, or backward, as you have been teaching me, but sort of both at the same time?'

Father, on closer inspection of the said players, will note the accuracy of this observation. Maybe to his surprise he will see that Geoff X, Derek Y and Alan Z, as the bowler comes to his delivery stride, put a foot forward, another back, and sometimes both sideways, in rapid succession, before playing the ball from a sort of straddle position that is neither back nor forward.

Kindly television commentators, and cricket writers, often describe this as the half cock shot.

The best reply Dad can make is to say that this is a demonstration of the lesson that if you don't know what to do and get in a muddle, be sure in the last resort to put bat to ball.

If the boy says, 'But why do good batsmen get into such a state? Father can give the positive reply that it is because the bowlers are bowling so outstandingly well. This may at least hold the line for a few years by which time other England batsmen of a newer generation may not be making the game so difficult for themselves.

LESSON NUMBER EIGHT

PRIMARY

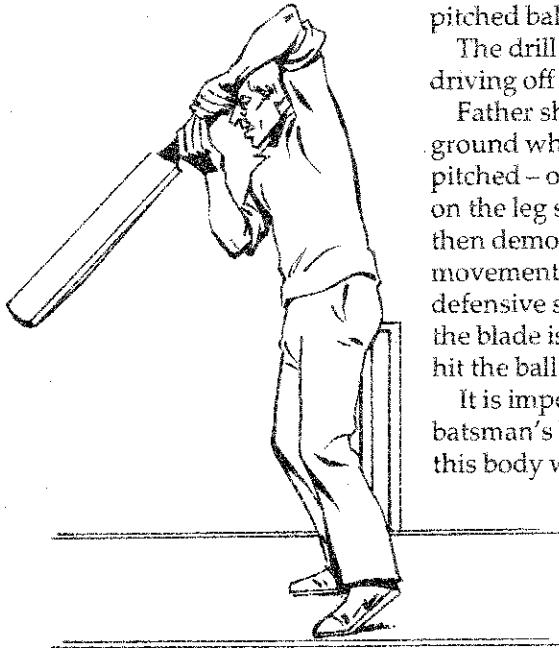
Off, straight, and on drive, off the back foot

Preparation and equipment. Same as for the last lesson. Once again fielders can be of much help and save a great deal of time.

The main object of this book is to outline the basics of cricket.

Some boys will learn faster than others. The great advantage a father has with his son in the yard, garden, or park, is that he can go at his son's pace. The curriculum can be varied to allow more time for this shot than for that. And all the while the aim is to enable the young player to understand the theory so that he can largely work out for himself what is wrong and how to correct it.

So whilst more practice will be needed on the forward attacking shots we will go ahead with the basic attacking shots off the back foot.



Follow through – off drive off back foot.

These back foot shots are used for shorter pitched balls.

The drill for learning them is the same as for driving off the front foot.

Father should again place three balls on the ground where they are supposed to have pitched – one on the off, one straight and one on the leg stump or just outside. He should then demonstrate the shot for each. The movements are exactly the same as for the back defensive shot except that for the attacking shot the blade is allowed to go through the shot, and hit the ball.

It is important that all the weight of the batsman's body should be on the back foot and this body weight should go into the stroke.

Having gone through the motions father should ask the boy to pick up the balls and bowl a few slow long hops to him so he can demonstrate the shot again and give the fielders some exercise to maintain their interest.

Then let the boy have a try – first going through the motions with the balls on the ground and then with father bowling the balls underhand.

If there is difficulty in getting the balls to bounce to the right length and height from underarm deliveries, father should try kneeling down and throwing them from this height.

As with all the batting that has gone before, it is the left elbow that should be especially watched. Be sure it is kept up.

If there are any problems, or for variation, and always if it starts to rain because it can be used indoors, try these strokes on the Primary Batting Aid.

LESSON NUMBER NINE

PRIMARY

First steps in judgment and decision making

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch and as many fielders as can be found.

The basic batting strokes have now been learnt. This lesson should be devoted to judging whether the ball bowled is short or well pitched up and deciding accordingly which shot to play.

It is suggested that this lesson is taken in stages.

For the first stage we will only do the forward and back defensive shots. The boy has to decide which defensive shot to play according to whether the ball is well pitched up or short.

For the second stage we will do the forward and back attacking shots. He has to make a similar judgment and decision.

In the last stage we will do them all and he will have to decide whether to play forward or back and whether to attack or defend.

Stage one. Father should again bowl underarm with his soft balls and he should say that he is going to mix up his deliveries on purpose (as opposed to his involuntary efforts in earlier lessons) and that the boy has only to decide whether to play forward or back defensively according to the ball's length. There will at first be many mistakes but he should be encouraged to play the ball regardless of the error made.

Stage two. Father should say that he now wants him to practise the drives off the front foot to balls that are well pitched up, and drives off the back foot to balls that are short.

Now is the time for the fielders to be well spread out. Father, concentrating with might and main – for much of the success of this stage will depend on his being able to bowl balls that are recognisable as short or well pitched up and that both can be hit – should bowl his balls from the usual distance.

In playing these attacking shots many balls will go in the air. Do not worry about this for the moment. Get the boy hitting the ball. And concentrate on his head, arms and legs being in the right position.

Third stage. The boy will now have to decide whether to play forward or back and whether to attack or defend. For the time being the basis of his decision can be this. He will play forward or back according to whether the ball is well pitched up or short. He should play an attacking shot unless in his judgment he is likely to get out doing so – either bowled, caught, or leg before wicket. If this is likely then he should play a defensive shot to stop the ball hitting his wicket.*

Having explained this then father should bowl his obviously short and

*It is recognised that this philosophy is entirely opposed to the current basic philosophy in cricket which is mostly to play safe. In the author's view this makes for dull cricket, frustrating watching and a grey life, and it is hoped that father agrees and that a different day will dawn as a new generation who have been encouraged by a different philosophy, reach maturity. Happily some new young players are now showing something of this attacking spirit.

obviously well pitched up deliveries and await the outcome with the same baited breath that he may experience some years later when the young man is waiting to receive his first ball in his first school match, first County Match or first Test Match.

Unless very bad mistakes are made it is suggested that he is left to sort himself out as much as possible aided with appropriate encouragement.

Wherever possible all lessons should end on a positive note – with a well struck drive, or even defensive stroke, provided it is done properly and achieves its objective.

LESSON NUMBER TEN

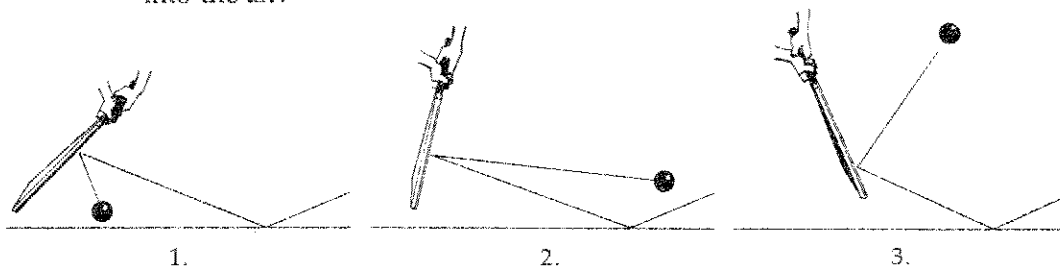
PRIMARY

Timing. The theory of hitting the ball on the ground and in the air

By the time a boy wants to learn to play cricket he will already know certain basic rules about the game. As a batsman he will know that if the bowler bowls a ball which hits his wicket, he is out. He will know that if his legs are in front of the wicket, and he misses the ball, and the ball hits his legs and would have gone to hit the wicket, then he is also out leg before wicket. He will know, too, that if he hits the ball in the air and a fielder catches it before it reaches the ground, he is out – caught.

So, as a batsman, his art and aim must be to hit the ball along the ground. The exception can be if he wants to hit the ball over the heads of the fielders for runs, or out of the ground for six.

The rules for keeping the ball on the ground are simple. The perfect position for the bat to strike the ball is when it is at the vertical position or just before this. The ball will always be kept down when this is so, and it will leave the bat with the greatest speed. If the ball is struck a good deal before the bat is vertical, then the ball is struck into the ground. If the ball is struck by the bat after it reaches its vertical position then the ball will go into the air.



In position 1 the ball has been hit too late and it goes hard into the ground. In position 2 the ball has been hit just right and it will speed to the boundary. In position 3 the ball is hit too soon and a catch is the likely result.

How does the batsman make sure he hits the ball with his bat in the right position? Assuming that his technique is right – that is that his body positions are correct – he does it through ‘timing’ his shot correctly.

There are no rules of thumb that can be applied to enable a batsman to get his timing right. But we can explore the elements that go into it. *Timing* depends on many factors. It depends on the batsman judging the speed of the ball correctly. His eyes convey the information about the speed and direction of the ball as it travels through the air, to the batsman’s brain. The batsman’s brain has already made a judgment about the nature of the pitch and how much it will slow down the ball when it bounces, and the probable height of this bounce. So the eyes convey the speed and direction of the ball through the air to the brain, and the brain works out the probable speed and bounce off the wicket. At this point there takes place what we will call ‘the decision’.

Let us assume that the batsman has now decided what sort of shot he is going to make. His brain then gives the orders to his muscles to wield the bat in the manner he has been taught so that the blade arrives at the exact place of impact with the ball and sends it along the ground in accordance with the decision that has been taken.

If the eyes have misjudged the speed of the ball, or a wrong calculation of the bounce off the wicket was made, or if the batsman’s muscles failed to carry out the orders they were given – even by a fraction of a second – then the ‘timing’ of the bat reaching the ball will be wrong, and the ball will be hit into the air, or into the ground, or, in a bad case, missed altogether.

Good timing is a gift some people are born with. They have an instinctive feel for hitting, throwing, or catching, a ball. Average gifts of timing are possessed by many people and this can be developed and improved by practice. Some cannot time a ball at all and they will find their pleasure in other directions. Even natural timers of a ball have periods when their gift seems to desert them.

It is rather like the engine of a car. When the car is properly ‘tuned’ the cylinders all fire at just the right time and the maximum power is obtained. When they fire at the wrong time, and other things just don’t quite work in harmony, then the engine labours and the maximum speed and power is not produced.

Harmony could be another name for timing. Our eyes, brain, judgment and muscles need to work in harmony. A fit body can help in this – being sure muscles are not stiff and so on.

It is this harmony, and the results which come from it, which give pleasure to the boy, and to his instructor, and to the spectators who later come to watch his art.

LESSON NUMBER ELEVEN

ADVANCED

The lofted drive and pulled drive

Preparation and equipment. Bat, hard or soft balls, fielder or two and a park or open space.

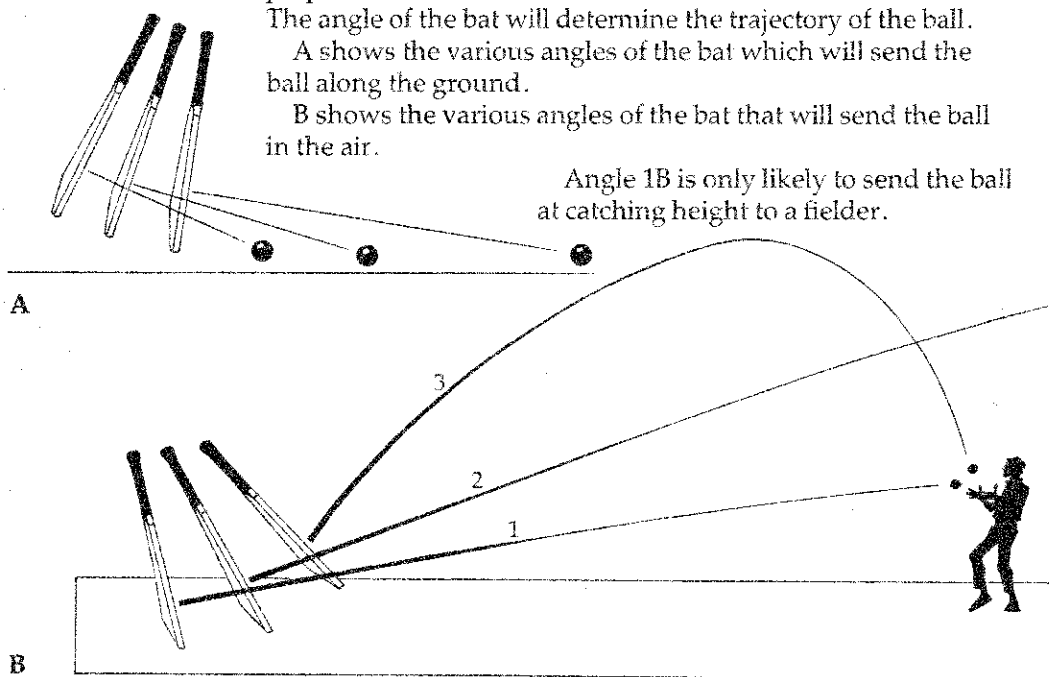
The purpose of the *lofted drive* is to hit the ball in the air over the heads of the inner ring of fieldsmen – mid off, mid on, cover, etc. – and to have the ball bounce before the boundary, or to hit it over the boundary for six.

The stroke is made in the same way as for driving along the ground except that the ball is hit a bit earlier. It is a question of timing. To hit the ball along the ground the angle of the bat has to be somewhere in the downward arc as far as the perpendicular. To hit the ball in the air the bat has to be somewhere in the upward arc from the perpendicular.

The angle of the bat will determine the trajectory of the ball.

A shows the various angles of the bat which will send the ball along the ground.

B shows the various angles of the bat that will send the ball in the air.



Angle 2B is the right one. Angle 3B is likely to send the ball too high thus enabling a fielder to get underneath it and make a catch.

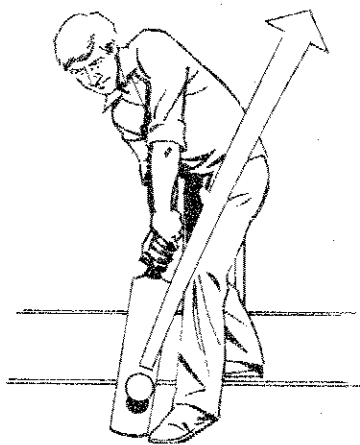
It will be seen that more skill is required to play lofted shots safely than those along the ground. Errors in the angle of the bat in the first illustration do not result in a catch as they do in angle 1B and 3B. But the complete batsman must be able to play them for they enable a stalemate situation, when a batsman is hemmed in by fielders, to be broken. They require courage to play because of the risks involved. A slight error in timing can turn an exciting six into a dismal dismissal.

For the practice of this shot father had best find a park or large open space. Mother and other fielders can be placed at mid off, and cover, and then father should bowl balls underarm from about ten yards for the batsman to try and hit over their heads. The balls should be just short of half volleys.

The pulled drive. This is a separate and distinctive shot. For some batsmen it is a deliberate shot. For others it is just their natural slog. It is used to despatch a half volley pitching on or just outside the off stump, in the air, to leg boundary, anywhere in an arc between mid on and mid wicket. The usual placing might be said to be half way between the two positions.

To play the shot the initial movements are the same as for the off drive. Just before contact is made with the bat, however, the left knee which is slightly bent, straightens. The left elbow drops slightly to the leg. The left shoulder pulls back. All this means the bat reaches the ball slightly across its line sending it to the leg side. The shoulder coming up means the bat is angled up sending the ball into the air.

To practise this shot father needs to bowl half volleys just outside the off stump.



The pulled drive.

LESSON NUMBER TWELVE

Driving 'on the up'

PRIMARY AND
ADVANCED

Preparation and Equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch. Fielders, or net, would be a great help.

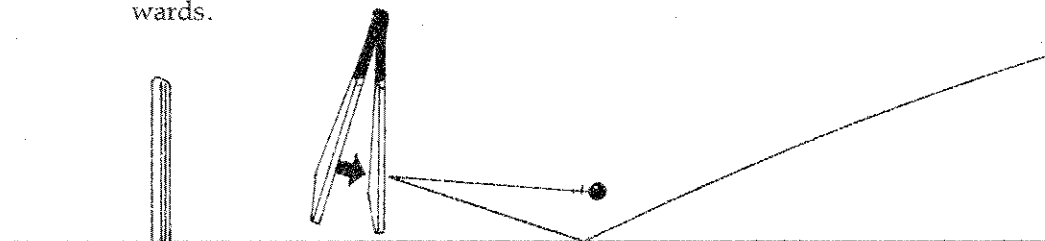
This a shot that is at present played by few batsmen but it is not

difficult to learn and the hope is that when it is mastered it will help create a generation of cricketers who are a class above most of their predecessors.

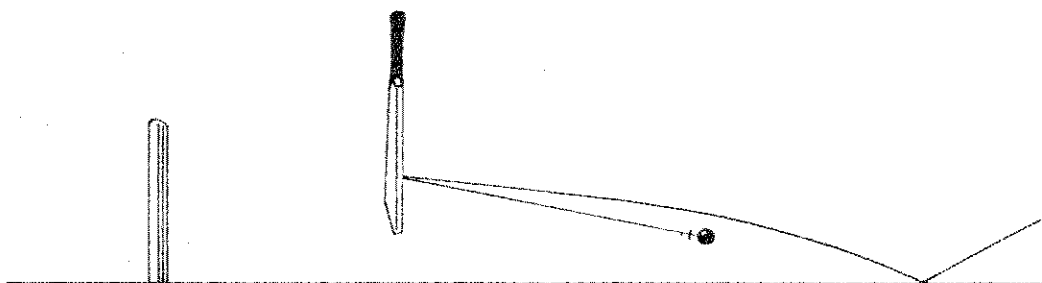
The shot is called *driving on the up*. This simply means that the ball having pitched some distance away is driven off the front foot as it is coming up towards the batsman.

In learning to drive off the front foot we have so far been restricted in so doing by the length of the ball. We know it is normally a shot to be played to a half volley or well pitched up delivery.

And from our timing lesson we remember that to keep the ball down, the bat had to hit the ball in any angle from the perpendicular backwards.



Now by a simple adjustment of our timing, by delaying slightly the bringing down of the bat, we can hit many shorter deliveries and still send them along the ground.



This shot depends also on the amount of bounce in the wicket. If there is a lot of bounce then the shorter the ball, the higher it will be when it reaches the batsman, and thus the harder it is to play with a straight vertical bat until finally it is impossible.

But on a great number of occasions the shot is perfectly feasible from the height aspect.

The other reason the shot is considered difficult is that the ball may move off the wicket. In playing a half volley no amount of movement makes much difference. The further away the ball bounces from the bat in its vertical position the greater the likelihood there is of it missing a bat held in line with the pitching ball.

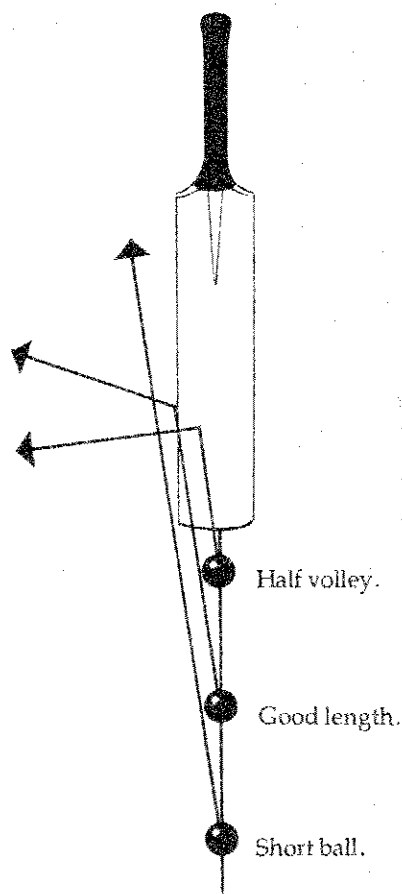
So, in general, it is a shot to be played on a wicket that does not encourage the ball to move off the pitch, or against bowlers who are unable to move the ball anyway for one reason or another. And this is very often the case.

A bowler on a plumb pitch often resorts to bowling just short of a length in order to keep the batsman quiet. When he is confronted by a batsman who can drive 'on the up' however, he finds that his balls are being despatched to all parts of the off, straight and on boundaries.

It is this ability which gives an added, and much needed, dimension to batsmanship.

To practice this shot father should first thoroughly explain the theory. The young, being revolutionary by nature, will probably surprise their fathers by the ready way they accept it. Father can then begin by bowling underarm slowly from six yards or so – pitching the balls short and getting him to watch them carefully after they bounce and then drive them along the ground when they reach him.

When he has got the idea father can retreat and throw balls from 10 to 15 yards. Although the balls are short he should go forward with his weight on the front foot and wait for the ball to come up to him. It is vital in this shot that the left elbow is kept well up.



LESSON NUMBER THIRTEEN

ADVANCED

The leg glance off the front and back foot

Preparation and equipment. Bat, hard balls and net or fielders on the leg side. The batsman should be fully padded up.

This shot is not to be confused with the snick to leg, politely described as getting an 'inside edge'. This happens when the batsman makes an orthodox forward or backward shot and misjudges the line of the ball, or the ball moves off the wicket and strikes the edge of the bat. A thin edge (slight touch with the edge of the bat) is likely to be caught by the wicket



Leg glance off front foot.

Keeper or go to the fine leg boundary. The 'thicker' the edge, the squarer to the wicket the ball will go.

Nor is it to be confused with what some call the 'Chinese cut' or 'Harrow drive'. This describes what happens when the batsman aims to drive a ball to the off and instead of the ball hitting the face of the bat, it hits the edge and goes through or past the batsman's legs to the fine leg boundary accompanied by an expression of pain and exasperated comment on the part of the bowler.

The true *leg glance off the front foot* is played to a well pitched up faster ball pitching just outside the leg stump. The front leg goes forward as though to drive the ball wide of mid on but at the point of impact the wrists turn to deflect the ball off the face of the bat to fine leg.

To practise this shot balls should be thrown at a brisk pace from 15 to 20 yards, pitching fairly well up and just outside the leg stump.

It is important to get the head over the ball and to keep the left foot at an angle of some 40 degrees so as to prevent overbalancing with the danger of being stumped if the ball is missed.

The *leg glance off the back foot* is a development of the backward defensive shot. The movements of the feet are the same. The ball should be missing the leg stump though not necessarily pitching outside the leg stump. As with the glance off the front foot the wrists turn the handle of the bat at the moment of impact so that the ball is deflected off the bat's face to fine leg.

It is important that the batsman keeps his head over the ball and the ball should be played late, i.e. as close to his body as possible. In this way the ball is kept down. All the weight is on the right leg and as the stroke is played the left leg moves round in almost a semi-circle.

This shot can be practised, preferably in a net, with the ball



Leg glance off back foot.

being thrown quite sharply from 15 to 20 yards to pitch short of a length and missing the leg stump.

LESSON NUMBER FOURTEEN

Cross bat shots. The cut

PRIMARY
ADVANCED

Preparation and equipment. Bat, hard and soft balls, pitch, netting or some barrier or fielders on the off.

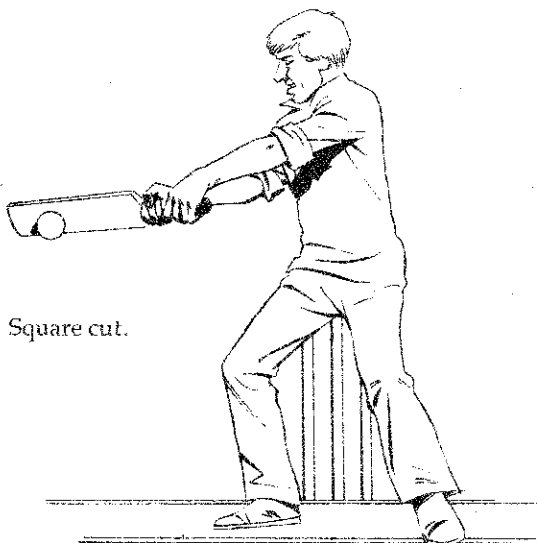
The square cut is played to a short ball pitching wide of the off stump. It is best played against bowling of medium pace or above.

The aim is to send the ball in front of, or behind, point.

As soon as the batsman sees a suitable ball for this shot, he should move his right leg back and across just far enough to allow him to hit the ball, when it reaches the line of his right leg, with his arms fully extended — see illustration. The right foot should point in the direction of the intended shot, and the bat should come down from the back lift on to the ball.



Follow through after a square cut by England's David Gower.



The late cut is played to a similar ball but one with a lower bounce. If a batsman tries to cut a high bouncing ball he is likely to be caught in the slips.

The aim is to send the ball just wide of the slips.

To do this the right foot goes back with the toe pointing in the direction it is planned to send the ball. The bat comes down on the ball as it almost reaches the batting crease.

Just at the point of impact the wrists turn the blade of the bat towards the ground to deflect the ball down. The blade of the bat should be at the same angle as the right foot thus sending the ball in the direction the toe is pointing. This is an extremely delicate and difficult

shot to play. Whilst being lovely to watch many players consider the risks involved not worth the reward – especially when there is a third man.

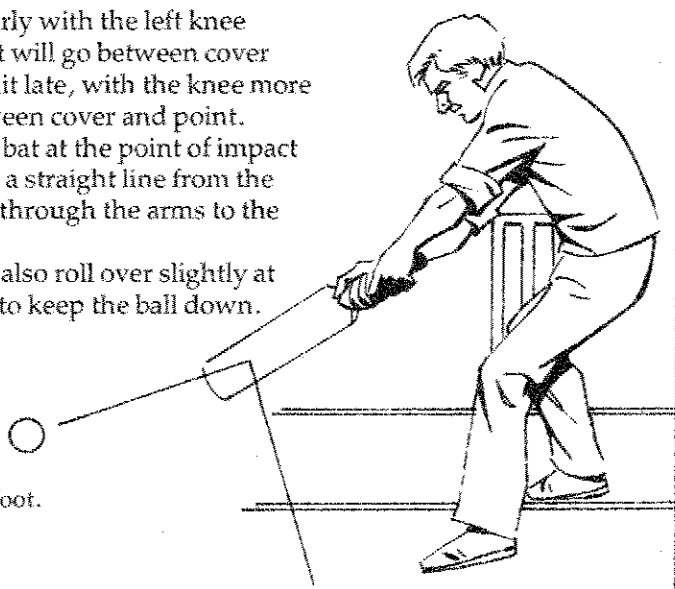
To practise these shots the balls should be thrown from about 18 yards. They should be short, of good pace, and about two feet or more outside the off stump. It is best to use a hard ball for the late cut.

The cut off the front foot is for the short ball of medium or slow pace on the off. The batsman should go forward with his left leg well away from the line of the ball. This is to give himself plenty of room for the shot.

If the ball is hit early with the left knee only slightly bent, it will go between cover and extra cover, if hit late, with the knee more bent, it will go between cover and point.

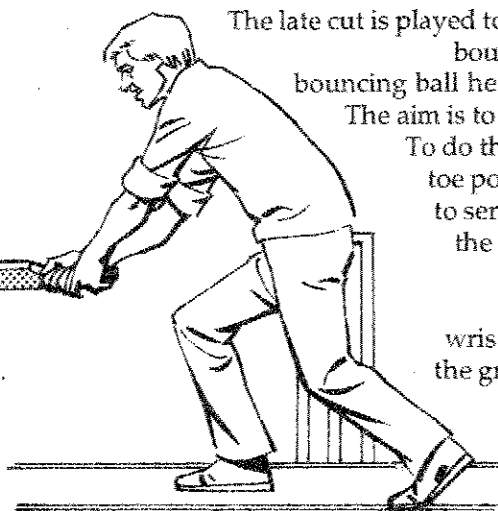
The length of the bat at the point of impact should be almost in a straight line from the left shoulder down through the arms to the ground.

The wrist should also roll over slightly at the point of impact to keep the ball down.



Cut or slash off front foot.

Late cut.



To practise this shot, which comes easily to many batsmen, father should bowl and throw his balls from 15 yards. The balls should be wide of the off stump. The slower ones can be further up than those of faster pace.

LESSON NUMBER FIFTEEN

PRIMARY

Cross bat shots. Hit to leg

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch and fielders if possible.

Hit to leg. The young batsman is likely to receive a number of long hops, and other balls of varying length, on the leg side. These will come from young bowlers who are also learning their trade. The batsman will be doing a service to these bowlers by severely punishing such balls. He will thereby rub in the lesson that long hops on the leg are bad. But the batter should beware. Such balls are not as easy to hit as one might imagine.

The trick is to move into the ball. For a short ball down the leg side the left leg should move towards the line of the ball, which is hit with a cross bat, i.e. with a bat that is roughly horizontal to the ground. The ball should be hit before it reaches the batsman. It is much harder to hit the ball after it has passed the batsman because then the bat is trying to catch up with the speed of the ball. To do this the bat has to move very fast indeed and this is why so many leg hits are missed. So, aim to hit the ball in front of, or square with, the wicket rather than behind the wicket. The arms should be fully extended when the bat hits the ball.

If the batsman sizes up the nature of the ball early enough he can move straight into the shot by putting his left leg to the ball. He may, however, if the ball is short, have gone back with his right leg in the approved manner for playing a short ball with a straight bat. If he has, and he finds the ball is in fact outside the leg stump and too wide for a straight forcing shot, then he should quickly move his left leg towards the ball and complete the shot as described above.

The shot can be easily practised with father bowling short balls on the leg side. These can be either thrown or bowled underarm from 15 yards or so. The batsman should be sure to hit the ball down except when going for a six. Give this shot plenty of practice till proficiency is obtained. If the boy misses with frequency father should watch his head and make sure he is



keeping his eye on the ball rather than looking at the place he hopes to hit it.

One often sees a batsman get out trying to hit a really bad ball. The reason is that he is often so relieved and excited at the sight of a ball that can, and should, be despatched for four that technique is thrown to the winds, and the batsman's head goes up, and his eye is taken off the ball, and a fatal mistake is made.

Bad balls need as much attention as good ones.

Hit to leg.

LESSON NUMBER SIXTEEN

PRIMARY AND ADVANCED

Cross bat shots. The pull

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls, pitch, fielders. If fielders are difficult then the cross bat shots can be practised with a wall, or net, on the leg side. Often public parks have a public cricket net that can be used.

The pull is a natural batting stroke. It is a sort of correct edition of the shot the boy may have used in the first lesson when he was told to hit the ball.

It is played to a very short ball pitching on the wicket or on the off side. By very short is meant a ball which, after it bounces, gives the batsman plenty of time to safely gauge its height, speed and direction, so he can play a cross bat shot with the reasonable certainty of making contact.

It is a stroke that can be played off both the front and back foot though it is usually a back foot shot. Since it is played to a short ball, the first movement will be to



The pull.

move the foot back as in the back shots. Then, as the ball is seen for what it is, and the shot is decided on, the bat, from the top of the backlift comes down in a semi-horizontal position and wrists roll over slightly as contact with the ball is made. This is to make sure the ball is kept down. With this shot the batsman will find he can place the ball with comparative ease out of the way of any fieldsmen who may be patrolling the leg side area.

Because it resembles the primaevial slog, this stroke comes naturally to all batsmen. It is a favourite of tailenders who use it for balls of good length with fatal results.

To practise this shot a father simply needs to bowl underarm – or throw – short pitched balls that bounce no more than stump high. As with the hit to leg it is important to give this shot just as much concentration as any other.

LESSON NUMBER SEVENTEEN

ADVANCED

Cross bat shots. The hook

Preparation and equipment. The same as for lesson 16.

Whilst every boy will want to have the hook in his repertoire, it is a shot that can be left until he is about eleven or twelve. This is because in his earlier years he is unlikely to face short fast bowling and it is a difficult shot to learn to play well.

The hook is the batsman's positive answer to the fast bowler's bouncer.

It is really the same shot as the pull except that the ball to which it is played is high as well as being short. It can be any height from the batsman's hip to his head. Balls that go higher than that are hard to make effective contact with and are almost impossible to keep down.

To play the shot the batsman goes back with all his weight on his right leg. Ideally the right leg should be outside the line of the ball, as should the batsman's head. By this it is meant that both are to the off side of the ball. In this way if the ball is missed, it also misses the batsman's head – if the ball is that high.

The bat is then brought down in an arc from the top of the backlift and it should be horizontal with the ground when the ball is struck.

The aim should be to hit the ball between square leg and mid wicket – or wherever the fielders are not. The wrists should be rolled over as the ball is struck in order to keep it down.

Of course if the batsman is aiming for a six he will hit it up and hopefully well clear of the boundary.



The finish of a hook shot played by the author.

The hook is a dangerous shot because the margin of error is small. There are two alternatives to the hook when dealing with a bouncer. The first is for the batsman to take avoiding action – either by ducking under the ball or swaying out of its line of flight. When this is done the important thing for the batsman is to keep his eye on the ball. If he takes his eye off the ball, he is in great danger of making a mistake and getting hit.

The second alternative is to play the ball with the bat held high with loose wrists – a sort of high backward defensive shot which aims to drop the ball down at the batsman's feet. However this is a difficult shot against really fast bowling.

It is very important for every batsman to feel secure in his technique against fast bouncers. It is something everyone has to work out for himself.

Some batsmen always hook. Some always take avoiding action. A few are able to do both, according to the speed of the ball and pace of the wicket.

The batsman should have decided in his mind what he is going to do before the bouncer comes along, as, when this

occurs, he will only have a split second between the time the ball leaves the bowler's hand and the time it reaches him.

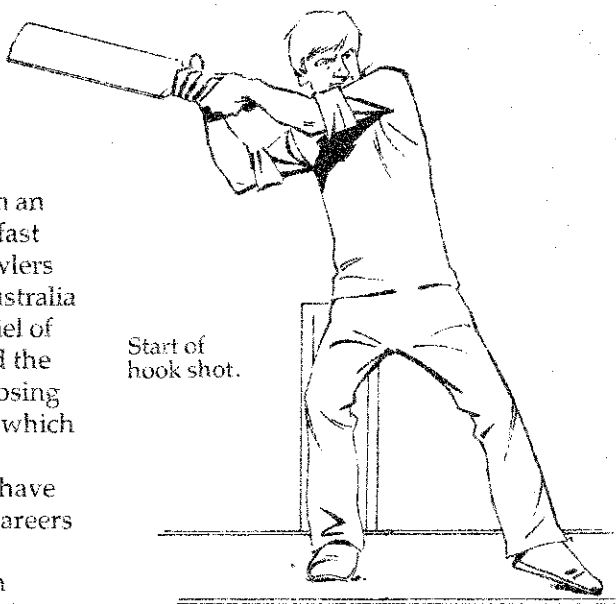
If a fast bowler finds he is faced with a good avoider he is unlikely to waste his energy bowling too many bouncers.

The advantage of hooking is that it is a positive response to the bouncer. If the hook is done well it can produce many runs. The spectators also love it. The batsman maintains the initiative, adds to his score, and perhaps even to his character. The bowler is also not too displeased for he is always hopeful that the batsman may make an error as he goes all out for maximum runs.

This shot is definitely one to be practised with a soft ball! The boy should play one or two hooks at imaginary balls and then father from some fifteen yards or so can despatch bouncers with a tennis ball. They are best thrown.

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of the short fast bouncer. The emergence of bowlers like Thompson and Lillee of Australia and Holding, Roberts and Daniel of the West Indies has highlighted the need among Test batsmen opposing them, for some technique with which to handle these cannonball deliveries. Some Test batsmen have failed to do this and their Test careers have faltered or ended.

The hook is a shot a son can practise with his father using plastic balls on a hard surface – outdoors or indoors. Father should throw the balls from a kneeling position. He should mix up his deliveries making sure there are plenty of bouncers. The practice should be continued until all the actions come automatically to the batsman.



LESSON NUMBER EIGHTEEN

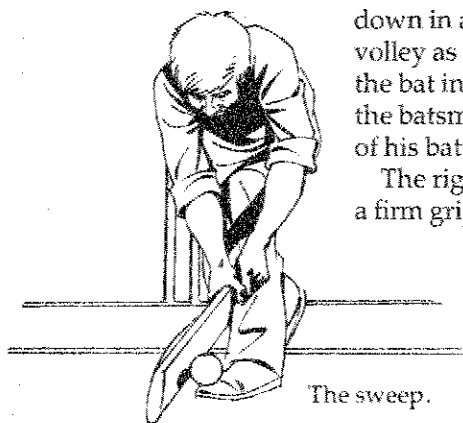
ADVANCED

Cross bat shots. The sweep

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft balls. Net, barrier or fielders on the leg side.

This is a shot to play against slow bowling and is much favoured by some against off spin. It should not be played to leg breaks, because as a general rule one should never hit against the spin.

For this shot the ball should pitch about a bat's length in front of the batsman's left leg when he plays forward. This is because he should hit the ball on the half volley with his bat in the horizontal position. The ball can be pitching on the wickets or even outside the off stump but it should be on a line that would take it past the leg stump. To play the shot the batsman goes forward with his left leg which is put in front of the line of the ball. At the same time he goes down on his right knee. The bat comes



The sweep.

down in an arc and he plays the ball as near on the half volley as possible and in the middle of the bat and with the bat in the horizontal to the ground. It is as though the batsman were trying to sweep the turf with the edge of his bat – hence the name.

The right hand plays a great part in this shot. It keeps a firm grip of the handle and does much of the work.

The sweep is a specialist shot. If a boy has a feel for it, and can play it, fine. If not he should not worry, as unless it is played well, it will get him out a great deal, especially LBW. For unless the ball pitches outside the leg stump, if the batsman misses the ball, it will hit his left leg which will be in

direct line with the stumps. And although his leg will be well forward and the line of the ball would have carried it past the wickets he will be very much at the mercy of the whim of the umpire and the fashion of the time.

To practise this shot start by putting the ball on the ground in front of the wickets where it would pitch and go through the motions of playing the shot at this ball.

Then father should bowl slow underarm deliveries pitching so they can be hit on the half volley when at full stretch on one knee. Practising this shot with soft balls is likely to effect a saving in dentist's bills!

LESSON NUMBER NINETEEN

PRIMARY

Running between the wickets

Preparation and equipment. Two bats, pads and pitch with batting creases marked out. The pitch can be from a few yards in length to full size depending on the space available.

Our pupil is on the way to becoming an accomplished batsman. He must now be told that although he may think there are few bowlers who can find a ball to dismiss him, there is yet another way he may lose his wicket without the aid of the bowler at all. He may be run out.

Running between the wickets is a most important part of batsmanship. A pair of batsmen who are good at it can gain for themselves and their side a great number of extra runs. Three ingredients are needed for this. Correct judgment and calling, backing up by the non striker, and fast running.

The striker (the player who is at the batting crease), always calls for all balls that are hit in front of the batting crease. The non striker (the player at the bowler's end) always calls for all balls that go behind the batting crease. The reason for this is that it is easier for the striker to see where the ball has gone when it is hit in front of him and for the non striker to see where the ball has gone when it is behind the batsman.

There are three basic calls. 'Yes', 'No', 'Wait'.

There are endless varieties and none are recommended! Some say, 'yes, no', quickly followed by, 'wait', and soon reduce their batting partners to nervous wrecks. There are those batsmen who say nothing but who set off two or three paces up the pitch as though they are going to run before they make a call. Some don't call at all but look into the eyes of their partner and operate on a basis of mental telepathy. Batsmen should eschew all varieties. Let his yes be a plain yes. And his no a plain no. He will not go wrong if he always thinks first about whether his partner can make the run.

Like every other instruction in this coaching book the aim of calling is to get it automatic so that the striker or non striker never think whether they should call - only what they should call.

This means that every time the ball is struck in front of him the striker says something and every time the ball goes behind the wicket the non striker says something. Such calling costs nothing and settles all arguments. Even when the ball goes through to the wicket keeper - especially when he is standing back, the non striker can say, 'no'. This is because the striker doesn't know what has happened and the ball may have gone through the wicket keeper's legs.

Perhaps some players will always be better judges than others of what is, and what isn't, a run. Here are some of the ingredients that go into making this judgment.

1. How fast can you run and how fast can your partner run? Boys should always remember that the cricket pitch is quite a long way for them to run especially when pads may slow them down. A ball hit slowly to cover by father, anyway in his younger days, might always be a single. But seldom is the equivalent a safe single for young boys. It takes their shorter legs that much longer to cover the ground, whereas the time the ball takes between leaving the bat and being fielded may be very much the same.

2. The observed running, fielding and throwing capacities of the fieldsman to whom the ball is hit must be considered.

3. The call should be immediate. If either batsman is certain there is no run he should call, 'no' at once. If there is doubt he should call, 'wait' at once. If there is a run the sooner you get on with it the better.

A 'wait' situation can be when a ball is struck, perhaps hard, wide of a

fieldsman but with the possibility of his stopping it. If he stops it and returns it, and a run had been attempted, then a run out would have resulted. If he misses it there would have been one or more runs. So the call is, 'wait'. Then, depending on the outcome, this is followed by 'no' or 'yes'. And the 'yes' can be qualified by, 'look for two', or 'look for three'.

Both batsmen should always run the first run as fast as they can and look for a second. This is because even if there may only seem to be one run, the fielder may miss or misfield the ball and further runs may be taken if the batsman has run the first run fast, and is ready for this.

It is always said that you should only run for a misfield if there are two more runs to be had. Whilst this is a good general rule, there will be times when it can be safely taken with a pinch of salt. The reason behind this rule is:

1. The batsmen will be waiting to see the result of the fielder's efforts – in other words if and when they start on their second run they will be doing so from a standing position rather than on the move.

2. It is very easy to misjudge exactly how long it will take the fielder to recover from his mistake which is often less time than the batter thinks. The fielder may only have to cover three or four yards and then throw to the wicket whilst the batsman has to cover eighteen yards or so.

The non striker's job, in addition to calling for all balls that go behind the wicket, is to 'back up'.

This means that he watches the bowler and, as he is in his delivery stride (but not before or he can legally be run out by the bowler if the latter doesn't release the ball and catches the non striker out of his crease) he begins to get ready to run by moving a pace or two down the wicket as the ball is in the air. Backing up, like every other routine thing in cricket, should be automatic.

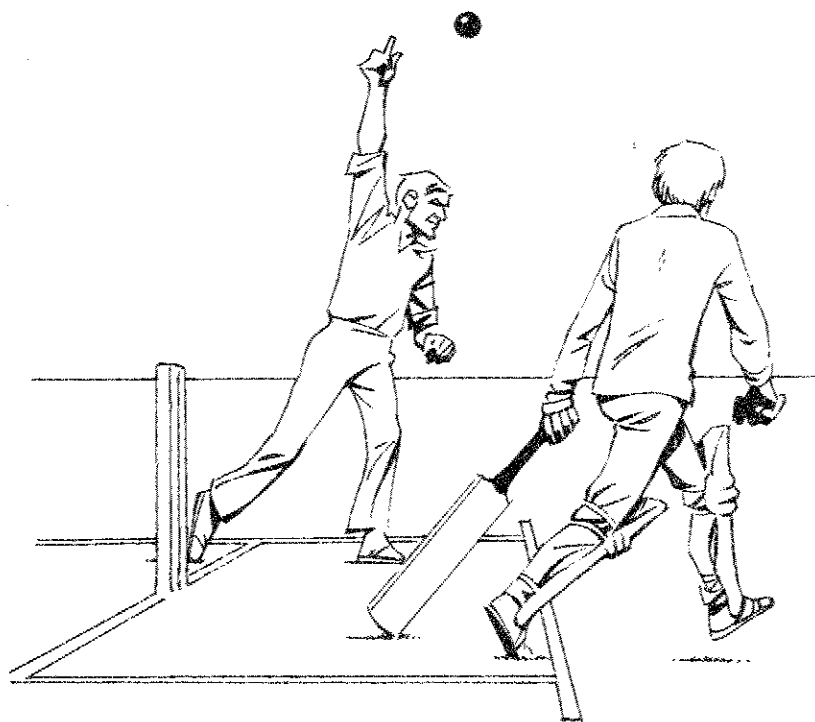
He should stand with the bat in his left hand and with it, and his left foot, just behind the batting crease as the bowler approaches. He can watch the bowler's arm come over and as the ball is delivered he can move out of the crease and should be three or four paces up the wicket by the time the batter has made his stroke and called.

If the ball has been hit to the on side it is best for the non striker to run with the bat in his left hand. When he reaches the other crease he should turn to his right and his turn should be so timed that he turns needing only with outstretched arm and bat to run the end of the bat over the batting crease. By having the bat in his left hand and turning to his right he can keep the ball and fielder in view thus aiding his judgment about further runs.

If another run is decided on then at his original crease the non striker should have returned the bat to his right hand. This will again bring him into full view of ball and fielder on the on side.

The opposite is true if the ball was originally struck on the off. Ideally each batsman should turn so that he is facing that side of the field to which the ball has been struck.

If a boy can master this so that it becomes automatic he will have achieved a priceless lifelong gift and will be well on the way to being a great runner between the wickets.



Non striker backing up.

Second and subsequent calls. We have dealt with the rules for the initial call. If there are two or more runs to be had the general rule is that these subsequent calls are made by the player who has to run to the end to which the fielder is likely to return the ball.

For instance suppose the striker hits the ball past mid off and calls for a run. The non striker runs to the striker's end and turns and it will now be his responsibility to call since the fielder is likely to throw the ball to the bowler's end which is the one the non striker will be trying to reach to complete the second run.

Similarly if the striker had cut the ball to the third man area, the first run would bring the striker to the bowler's wicket and he would then have to

decide and call for the second run since third man would return the ball to the wicket keeper at the end which the striker would then be trying to reach.

If the ball is struck into the outfield with no fielder near, the two batsmen may be able to give each other, as they cross, some idea of the number of runs possible e.g., 'Look for two', 'Look for three'. Nevertheless the correct procedure at the completion of each run is for the batsman who has to run to the wicket to which the ball is likely to be returned, to decide whether another run is to be taken or not, since he is the one most in danger of being run out.

Response to a call. It is perfectly in order for the non caller to decline his partner's call for a run. The procedure is this. If the caller says, 'yes', and the non caller accepts the call he just sets off at top speed. If for any reason he disagrees with the call he must immediately decline it with a loud, 'no' or 'wait'. It is important that this call is immediate since the caller will be already on his way and, if there is hesitation, a run out is very likely.

Running between the wickets brings a new element into cricket. Batsmen should try and develop an understanding with their batting partners. It is an activity that calls for the quality of unselfishness. For instance the caller should always have his partner in mind, 'will he get in?'

There may also be a very fierce, or good, bowler at one end and a 'help yourself' bowler at the other. A batsman may be tempted to judge his calls for runs in such a way as to keep himself facing the easy bowler.

There can also be the situation where the bowling is easy at both ends. There is a standing joke in county cricket about players in such situations who are good 'counters'. These players always seem to get one run at the end of the over so that they keep the bowling to themselves.

Of course it is quite in order for a batsman to try and shield his partner from a particular type of bowler if he is good at playing that type and his partner is weak. One sees this often, too, at the end of an innings when an established player is in with a tailender whom the former tries to keep from the bowling.

Running mistakes, which are almost bound to occur in every match, are also occasions for the unselfish act – especially on the part of the faulty caller. He can often deliberately sacrifice his wicket rather than his partner getting out through no fault of his own.

When a run out does occur, each player should ask himself if he was at fault. The normal reaction of both players is to think it was the fault of the other. Applying the test of absolute honesty, however, will often illumine the true state of affairs to one or the other. Then the guilty one, even if he so regards himself by only a millimetre, should make amends by an immediate apology.

Some may find this easier to do than others, but it must be done if good teamwork, not to mention good personal relations, are to be maintained. It is also better and helps the person apologised to, to accept it, if the person who says sorry, is sorry, and has perhaps in addition decided to do better next time!

Whilst the real business of running between the wickets has to be practised in match conditions, father and son can at least go through all the theory. The areas they can practise are as follows.

The boy should put on pads. Father should go through the motions of bowling whilst the boy practises backing up in the way described. This backing up must become absolutely automatic.

Then the boy can go to the batting crease and father can bowl to him from the other end of whatever length pitch is available and get him to hit the ball and call for a run. Father abandons his bowler's role and becomes the non striker and the two cross. Father may then call for a second run, even a third. The point is to get the boy into the habit of hitting the ball, calling and running. Be sure he does every turn correctly and that he always runs the first run flat out.

If several players are available and father has the use of an open space then more realistic running practise can be had. Two boys can pad up with each pair having, say ten minutes, of practise in calling and running whilst the rest act as bowlers and fielders. Father should never let a ball be bowled without some call being made.

SOME BATTING PHILOSOPHY

Every batsman from number one to number eleven is motivated, or guided, by something.

A man who came from outer space and read the rules of cricket could not be blamed for thinking that the motive of every batsman should simply be to get as many runs as possible in such a manner as to enable his side to beat their opponents.

But each human heart and personality is a unique, different blend of forces, so that many other factors play a part, and batsmen's motives can vary considerably. Perhaps we might look at some of them.

Ambition. A tricky monster to handle. Father may be ambitious for his son to play for England, as we said at the beginning. This is fine if this is the right destiny for the son and fits his talents. Ambition needs to be checked and controlled by other motives and aims otherwise it can damage not only the ambitious but those over whom the ambitious try to climb to reach their goal.

I once asked a well known international cricketer, who in his career

accumulated more runs than most, what had motivated him. He said that, after a season or two in first class cricket he had decided he was going to be a success in his profession. His profession was batting. Success meant runs. What mattered at the end of the season was how many runs you had scored and what your average was. He decided he was going to score as many runs as he could regardless of how he got them. He sure got a lot of runs. But he was a very dull player to watch.

Ambition and jealousy often go hand in hand. There is the story told by the West Indian opening bat Conrad Hunte in his book 'Playing to Win'. The West Indies were playing England. In their last innings they needed to get 253 runs to win. Only two teams previously had scored more than 250 runs in a fourth innings to win a Test Match in England. On the morning of this last day Hunte considered the situation and what his role for his side might be. He writes, 'West Indies were in the habit of collapsing under pressure. I thought, "Keep one end up," and let the runs come from the other end. To do so I would need to be "vigilant" and "careful" all day. Play every ball on merit.' Hunte describes how he and Rodriguez put on 78 for the first wicket before Rodriguez was out. 'In strode Kanhai. In an innings of majestic driving, cutting and hooking, he raced to 77 out of a partnership of 113 in seventy minutes. I was on 75 when he passed me with a glorious hook for four runs off Lock. Instantly I became jealous of all the applause he was getting from the crowd and was tempted to compete with him. "I have been out here longer than Kanhai. I can score as fast as Kanhai. I'll show him!" I reasoned with myself. Then I remembered my clear instruction in the early hours of the morning; "Be vigilant and careful all day". So I reflected, "My job is not to compete with Kanhai but with the England bowlers." Kanhai tried another special hook to the next delivery of Lock, mistimed his shot and was caught on the square leg boundary.' Hunt goes on to describe how he carried his bat for 108 and the West Indies won the match by eight wickets.

This story clearly shows the sort of battles that go on in the hearts of most players.

Determination and resolution. These can be a batsman's greatest allies and can overcome great gaps in technique. There was one county cricketer who later became a great batting theoretician and coach. In his playing days he did not always play with the technique which he afterwards advocated. But of his resolution and determination there was never any doubt. He would sometimes say to his opening partner as they went out to bat, 'They're going to have to dig me out today.' And he would set his jaw and put his bat to every ball that came down as though his life depended on it.

The writer was never reckoned a great player of spin bowling. One year the West Indies toured England with a new slow bowling 'find' called

Ramadhin. He had great success and bamboozled many very accomplished players.

I was determined to master him. 'After all,' I thought, 'he can only bowl one ball at a time.' It was this determination together with that thought that helped obtain the subsequent century.

Another powerful motivating force is *fear*. It can be fear of failure. An England player told me how he once decided that there were many runs to be obtained by hitting the ball over the heads of mid off and mid on. He spent a winter practising this shot in an indoor cricket school. By the time the summer came he was an expert at the stroke. But when it came to the point of trying it in a match the fear that a slight mistake might result in a catch always prevented him from doing so.

Then there is physical fear. A cricket ball is hard. Blows on the body can be painful. Those on the head can be dangerous. Getting a number of the latter, from an early age, up to and including one from the great fast bowler Fred Trueman, resulted in my having a lifelong battle with that sort of fear. It was a long time before I recognised that fear, like jealousy, was a temptation that did not have to be given in to, or endured like some natural disability that was part of one's makeup.

Fear, or that condition known as butterflies in the stomach, can be an ally. Many great players say they always have them before a match. It is part of nature's way of equipping us for battle. It is the thing that makes our adrenalin glands function. A sporting doctor described to me what happens as follows.

The dry mouth, sweating under the armpits, the restlessness, the bowel movement, and even retching, that sometimes precedes the first ball, or the starting gun, or the stage entrance, are signs that the body is being prepared to meet the challenge that the game or situation has set for you.

The will to win, do your best, to avoid mistakes, widens the pupils to let in more light, sharpens your attention, steps up the heart rate, raises the blood pressure, and expands the blood vessels which supply the muscles so that the latter can get a greater quantity of oxygen and fuel.

Pre-match 'butterflies' in the stomach are not a sign of weakness, they are nature's way of getting you in top physical form for fight or flight.

This condition causes the adrenal glands to produce a chemical which in turn causes all these changes to take place.

When you understand the meaning of what is happening you welcome these sensations. You do not try to fight them or wish that you didn't have them. The feelings usually disappear immediately you get into action. They are evidence that nature is at work preparing your body and brain to do their best.

Concentration is a vital element in all aspects of cricket. A player's technique may be perfect but if his mind wanders away to something other than the matter in hand then technique will not help. Anyone

watching Test or county cricket will be aware that many of the players appear to be like cows eternally chewing the cud. They are, in fact, chewing gum and this exercise is done in the belief that it aids concentration.

It is increasingly common to see a dismissed batsman on his way back to the pavilion not only taking off his gloves but also spitting out his gum.

Whether gum helps or not may be argued about but each player must recognise the importance of concentration and work out his own method of achieving it.

One way in which I used to try and achieve this as a batsman was to concentrate to the exclusion of all else on the ball in the hand of the bowler from the moment he started his run up to the wicket. I would watch it as his arm came over; as it left his hand, and all the way down the wicket and hopefully on to my bat.

My main memory of bowling to England batsman Bill Edrich was the almost hypnotic stare he seemed to fix on the ball in my hand. It was as though the world had shrunk to those two staring eyes and I felt that no matter what I did with the ball those eyes were locked on to it and that it would be, as it frequently was, despatched to, or over, the boundary.

It is important that a batsman recognises he has a right to draw back before a bowler delivers a ball, should any movement, such as a spectator walking behind the bowler's arm, or a piece of paper blowing across the pitch, distract him and break his concentration.

We must not leave the subject of batsmanship without a word on *pressure*. It is often said that this or that cricketer plays well under pressure or that he is not so good when the pressure is on. What is this pressure?

An opening bat can be said to be under pressure as he faces the first ball from a fast bowler surrounded by five slips, two short legs, and a silly mid off, having been out for naught in his first innings! Any batsman at the moment of going in can be said to be under some sort of pressure however slight. Some batsmen feel under pressure when they get into the nineties, and the opposing captain may try and heighten it by placing an attacking field. A whole team may come under pressure. For instance if a side has made 240 in their innings and their opponents 140 without loss, their increasing need to take a wicket will build up the pressure. It is then that the fielding side either maintains, or tries to step up their attack, or they give in to the pressure and go to pieces.

One characteristic for many people who are under pressure is that they are tempted to be upset by small things. I remember a great athlete who broke many world records telling me that often when he was under pressure on the track he would find himself being tempted to get angry and upset by some object – like a matchstick or pebble on the running track which his eye kept catching as he went round. A batsman similarly

can find himself looking round for someone or something – like the pitch – to blame and get upset about, or for some form of escape. I remember walking out to open an innings in a county match against a hostile attack. My opening partner made me laugh when he said, 'I don't know why I do this rather than some easy job like being a barber.' I knew exactly how he felt! The first step in dealing with pressure is to recognise it and call it by its right name. Whatever it is, it will be a temptation we can either give in to or reject. Each giving in will make it harder to deal with the next time. Each rejection will make it that bit easier to do the same. I suppose this is how character is built or not built.

Every player will have to work out his own method. The character he reaps will be the fruit of his efforts.

Some players I have known relieved pressure by talking. One most creative player who represented England always talked at the batting crease. He would talk to whoever was in earshot. And his talk was as entertaining as his batting.

Some pundits say deep breathing helps bring relief. Others advise ceasing to think about oneself and to think of those around who may also be in need of help.

Finally batsmen and all cricketers are often very *superstitious*. Even the best of them are chary of walking under a ladder on their way to a match. Many make no bones about their idols. We have all watched England wicket keeper Alan Knott touch the bails when he goes to the wicket. I have known batsmen who got a hundred in a certain sweater, wear the same garment thereafter whatever the weather. Watch a county team go into a familiar dressing room on an away ground and many will make for the places and the pegs they used when playing there some other time when dame fortune smiled on them. Some batsmen always put one pad on before another. Does it help? Alan Knott probably says it helps a lot! Maybe it helps with pressure.

BOWLING – Some general comments

The art of bowling has evolved. The earliest bowling action was underarm. Then came roundarm, and finally overarm.

The last action is performed with a stiff elbow. Any jerk at the elbow, as in throwing, is illegal.

The overarm action is an acquired one, rather than one which is natural, like throwing, so father should not worry overmuch if his son does not appear to be a born bowler.

If he is a born bowler, and many distinguished judges in the past have said that good bowlers are born and not made, then he is lucky.

But whether a boy's basic bowling action is instinctive or acquired, father can help build the arts of the bowling craft on to either.

Each person's bowling action is like a person's handwriting – it is individual and different. The letter 'E' has certain characteristics and yet ask a hundred people to write it in their own hand and it is unlikely that any two of the 'E's' will be exactly the same. So it is with bowling. A bowling action has certain characteristics. It is these that will be learnt. After that each bowler will develop his own style.

LESSON NUMBER ONE

PRIMARY

Bowling action, stage one

Preparation and Equipment. Soft ball. A windowless wall or garage door is helpful. Also a plastic (gamester) ball attached to five or six yards of light string (not nylon).

We will assume that the boy does not know how to bowl and is right-handed.

Father should stand sideways to the wall and a few yards away. If no suitable wall can be found then the lesson can take place on a lawn or an empty space.

Father should stand with his legs apart. He should turn his head and look over his left shoulder as though at an imaginary wicket 22 yards away. He should raise his left arm high and slightly to his front so it does not impede his view. Then his right arm should be stretched out in line with the left and pointing to the ground, figure 1.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

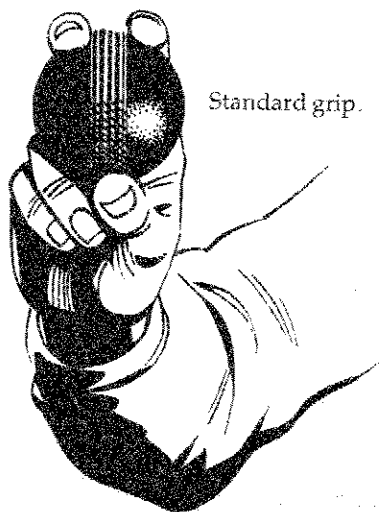
He should move his left arm down and his right arm up, keeping the line between them roughly straight, figure 2.

As his arms are thus moving, so his weight should be transferred from his back right leg to his front leg. When his right arm reaches the vertical position, figure 3, he should move both back to their original positions. He should then demonstrate this action several times to his pupil and then get him to do it. The arms in this action move a bit like the opposite spokes of a wheel.

Father should now take the ball in his right hand using a standard grip. For this the ball is held with the first two fingers and thumb with the third finger running down the side.

He should then go through the motions again and when his arm reaches the vertical position he should release the ball so it goes slowly forward on to the wall. The advantage of doing this against a wall is that it is simple to catch the ball as it bounces back and repeat the process. Such practice can be done anytime on one's own.

Father should now get the boy to do this. He should not be surprised if it goes wildly wrong to begin with, remembering that the art is an acquired one.



Standard grip.

When the action can be satisfactorily accomplished father can take this lesson one step further.

He should get into his original position with his feet apart, with his left arm up and right arm down. Then he should slightly raise his left leg as well. This will move the upper part of his body backwards and the trunk, flexible from the waist, should move further in the same direction.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

Now, as he moves his arms he lowers his left leg, figure 5, and all his weight is transferred to it by the time the right arm has reached the vertical position. The trunk, too, has moved from a backward to a forward position and this has brought the back leg off the ground. The ball is released when all the bowler's weight is on the front leg and straight at the knee and his back leg is raised.

It is important that the head is not allowed to drop forward as the ball is released. The eyes must be kept on the imaginary target.

Father should demonstrate all this several times and then get his pupil to do it. The practise should continue until the boy is fairly fluent in his movements.

It should be noted that this leg movement is known as the 'delivery stride' and will be called this in future.

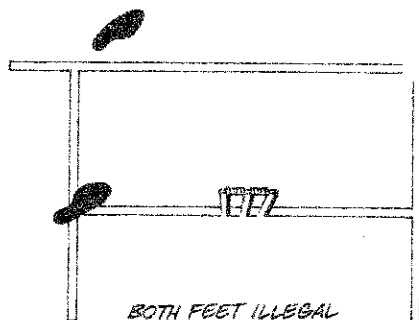
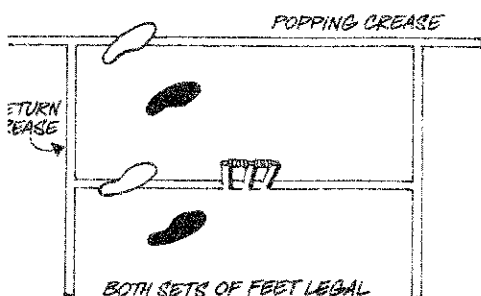
The bowling action can also be practised using the plastic ball and string. This can be done indoors or out. The loose end of the string is tied to the left wrist and the string is allowed to hang loose whilst the ball is held in the right hand. The idea is to help a boy practise the action time and time again without having to chase and pick up the ball.

Bowling action, stage two

Preparation and equipment. Pitch, creases marked out at bowlers end. Stumps at both ends. Soft balls if the pitch is on concrete or similar surface. Hard balls on grass. Some method of stopping the balls bowled.

Having learnt the first stage of the basic bowling action from a standing position we can now begin to add a run up.

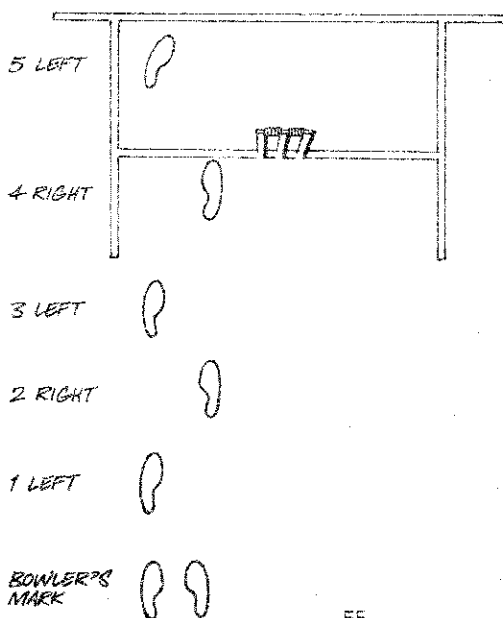
The boy should be told that for a bowling action to be legal his back foot in the delivery stride should not cross the return crease, and some part of his front foot must be grounded behind the popping crease.



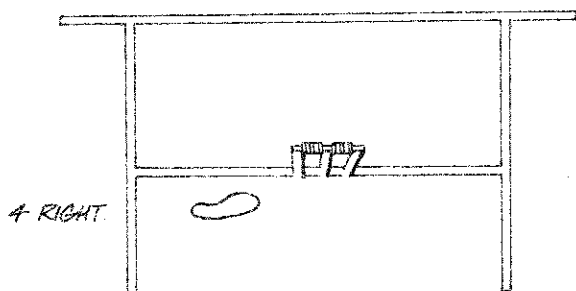
It is important therefore, that the bowler's run up to the wicket is measured exactly so that his feet land within the prescribed area. The length of a bowler's run will depend, in part, on the type of bowler he is, e.g. a fast bowler will have a longer run than a slow bowler.

But our concern in this lesson is how to approach the wicket and arrive in our delivery stride in the position learnt in lesson One.

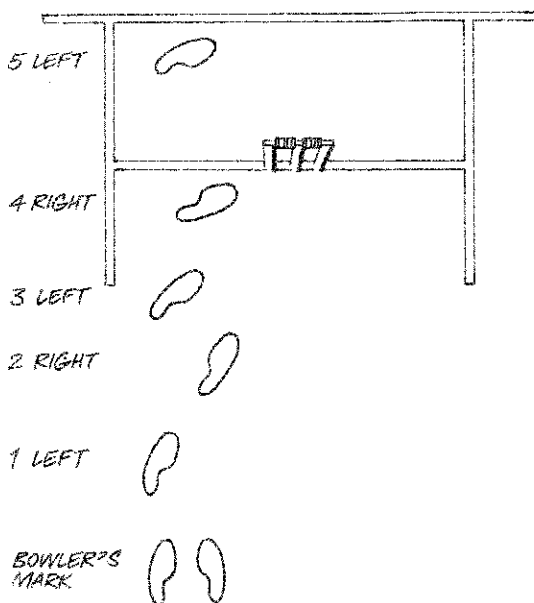
Let us suppose that our approach up to, and including, the delivery stride is five paces starting with the left foot. Father should first walk this as in the following illustration, and then get his pupil to do it.



Of course when we walk to the wicket like this we arrive with our body square to the pitch instead of sideways on. To arrive in the right sideways bowling position in our delivery stride, the foot at 4R needs to be sideways to the pitch thus:



This turn of the foot and so of the body can be prepared for in paces 2R and 3L by a slight turn of the feet. The foot pattern may thus be somewhat as follows.



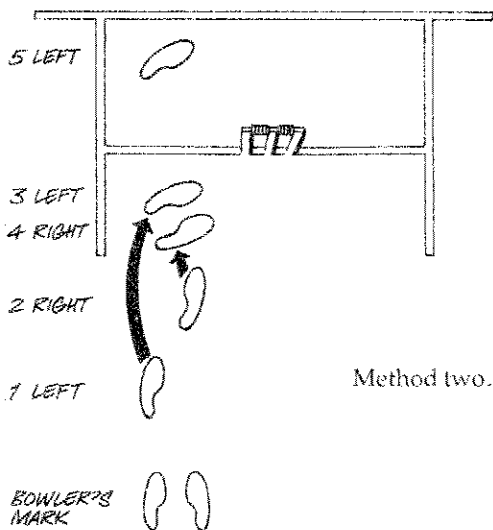
Father should now walk through these movements and get his pupil to do this. Then he should add the bowling, leg, and arm actions to paces 4 and 5 and the boy should do the same.

The pupil may find it helps to count the paces. One - two - three - four - five. There should be an even time between the paces to get rhythm. In bowling rhythm is very important.

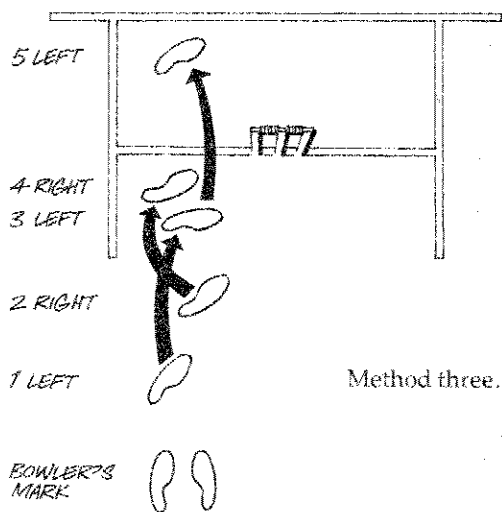
The boy should walk through the approach and bowling action first

without a ball and then, when he has got it right, he can try it with a ball. He can just release the ball for father to collect as he stands a few yards in front of him.

Before moving on we can look at two other methods used by some bowlers to arrive at a sideways position in the delivery stride. The following illustrations show the foot patterns for each. Neither is recommended though method three makes it impossible to arrive in the delivery stride other than in a sideways position.



Method two.



Method three.

LESSON NUMBER THREE

PRIMARY

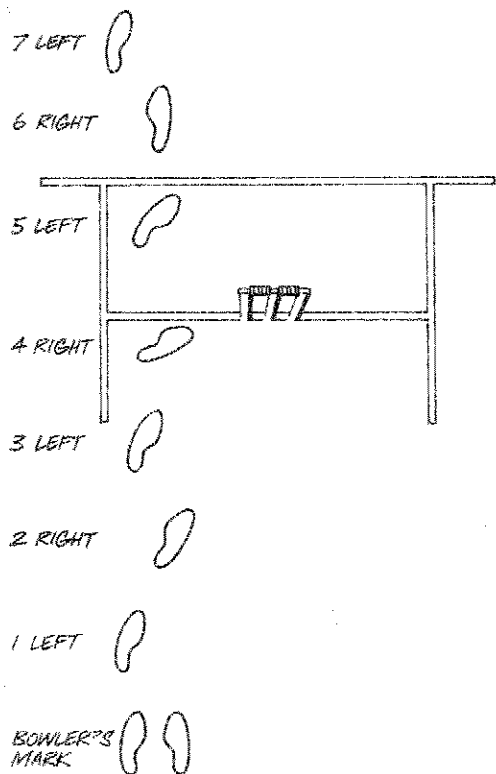
Bowling action, stage three

Preparation and equipment. Same as for lesson two.

So far we have walked the paces to get to our delivery stride. Now we need to learn to run this approach.

For convenience we will use the same number of paces but as our running strides will be longer than those we use when walking, we will move our starting mark further back.

Father should now run to the wicket starting with his left foot and placing his feet in the positions he has learnt and going through the bowling motions with his arms. As he does this he is likely to be conscious of two things.



1. He may find a tendency to jump, or spring, on step 3, which is the one before the delivery stride.
2. He will find he cannot stop on step 5 but will 'follow through' with his right leg – step 6 – and even on to step 7. So his foot pattern will look like this.

This spring into the delivery stride is quite correct. It is during the spring between the take off on the left foot, and landing on the right, that the body turns, bringing the right foot parallel to the bowling crease, the hips at right angles to the wicket, and the left shoulder pointing down the pitch in the direction of fine leg. The trunk is also slightly leaning back. The arms also position themselves. The right arm is down by the right leg, and the left is in line with it and follows the left shoulder in pointing to fine leg. The head looks over this shoulder with the eyes on the target. This target, it is suggested,



should be the spot on the pitch where it is hoped to land the ball.

Father having gone through the motions, and with the help of the illustrations explained the various stages to his pupil, the latter should now try it. Particular attention should be paid to a rhythmic approach to the wicket and to the spring. Get the boy to do it over and over again until there is some semblance of it becoming automatic. When this is the case the boy can try it with the ball.

Father should not worry too much at this stage where the ball goes but concentrate on getting the run up to the wicket and action automatic.

The reason for dealing so thoroughly with the structure of the bowling action is because it is on this that everything else is built. It is the equivalent of learning the basic body movements of batting to enable a batsman to play straight. The action has to be automatic so it does not have to be thought about.

We hope by the end of this lesson the pupil will not have to look or worry where his feet are. By starting at the same mark each time with his left foot first, and taking the same length of pace he will arrive at the legal position at the crease. He will thus be free to direct all his attention in the next lesson as to where he plans to send the ball.



Line (direction) and length

Preparation and equipment. Same as previous lesson plus a sheet of newspaper and four stones.

Father should explain to his son that to bowl well the most important thing is to bowl a good *line and length*. The line or direction of the ball is the line the ball takes as it travels down the pitch from the bowler's hand. A good line is normally one which will result in the ball hitting the wicket. The exception can be when a bowler is bowling wide of the stumps to induce a batsman to give a catch.

A ball's length is the place on the pitch where the ball bounces. A good length ball is one to which the batsman is uncertain whether to play forward or back. This good length spot will vary with the type of bowler. For instance for a fast bowler the ball will bounce further from the batsman than for a slow bowler.

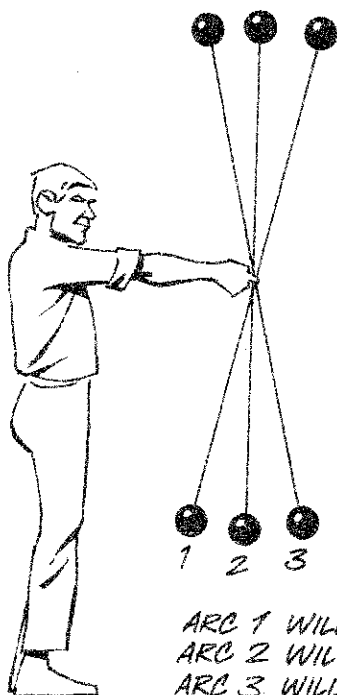
A fast bowler's good length might be a ball which bounced 12 feet in front of the batsman. If a slow bowler's ball bounced on that length the batsman would have so long to see it after it pitched that he would be able to hit it anywhere.

A good length spot for a slow bowler might be seven feet in front of the batsman. If a fast bowler pitched that length it would be almost a half volley to the batsman.

The good length spot will also vary with the size of the batsman. A tall batsman with a long reach will make a half volley out of a ball that would be a good length one for a very short batsman.

The general theory about bowling straight (a good line) can be explained by father as follows.

Take the plastic ball on the end of a piece of string as long as one's arm.



ARC 1 WILL SEND THE BALL TO THE RIGHT
 ARC 2 WILL SEND IT STRAIGHT
 ARC 3 WILL SEND IT TO THE LEFT

Imagine this as your arm with the ball in our hand. If we then whirl the ball on its string in an anti-clockwise vertical arc and let go of the string as the ball goes forward it will fly in the direction of its arc.

It is like this with the arc of our bowling arm. If the arc is straight the ball will go straight. This is why our action is so important. There are differences of course, between the string and our arm since the latter is jointed at the shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers. All these joints can make last split second adjustments. But the general principle holds.

Father should then tell his pupil that to bowl straight he also needs to keep his eyes all the time on the target he aims to hit. This is the place on the pitch where he wants the ball to bounce. His secondary target – the stump he wants to hit – he will also have in his vision. He should keep his eye on his target right through his delivery stride and follow through.

To help the boy sight this target a sheet of newspaper should be spread on the wicket and weighted. It should be on an imaginary good length and in line with the wickets.

Now the boy should try and put all the actions together – run up, spring into delivery stride, turn of the body, eye on target, release of ball and follow through.

Much encouragement is likely to be needed at this point. The boy should be told that whilst his eventual aim must be to land all his balls on that paper, even many first class bowlers would find it difficult.

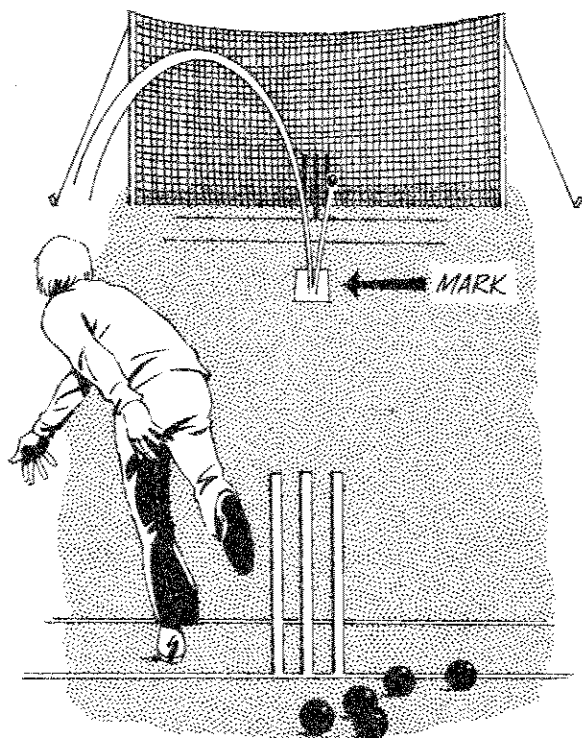
Each boy will be different in his capacity to learn the bowling action. Some will be born to it. Many more will learn it. A few won't get the hang of it no matter how they try and their strengths will lie elsewhere. But all who can bowl should be encouraged to work at it. The best will get their 100 Test wickets but a player who can turn his arm over and bowl straight on a length is welcome in most sides.

INTERLUDE

We pause here. The young bowler has now been taught how to bowl. His skill and future progress will depend on his natural aptitude and his capacity for practice. He will also have to decide what sort of bowler he aims to become. Fast (always popular with the young), medium, or slow. Seam and swing, cutters, leg or off spin. From now on, after a lesson on general methods of practice, we will examine the various types of bowling and the techniques involved. But for the very young cricketer of six to ten, or so, just to bowl overarm and reasonably straight will be as much as many can manage. For those who want to know more, and there is no reason why a boy should not progress as fast as his ability and desire dictates, then what follows can be used.

Line and length. Hints on practice

Preparation and Equipment. Pitch. Stumps. Creases marked at bowler's end. White bowling mark to aim for on a good length – suggest white tape enclosing a 3ft by 9 inch oblong. Back net. Six hard balls.



Father should explain that for a bowler to pitch the ball where he wants and to bowl straight, requires a skill that can be obtained by practice. It will be up to each boy to decide how skilful he wants to become and therefore how much practice he will need to be prepared to do.

A good action is half the battle. The other standard requirement is a fit body. The bowler's muscles must be in such a condition that they do what the bowler's brain tells them to do. Bowling fitness, of course, is bound to come the more bowling a player does.

It is not known what sort of a bowling son father has got – fast, medium or slow – and the son may not have yet decided and, of course,

his first decision may not be his last. But the following hints can be adopted to any variety.

We will assume he is of medium pace and has decided to take a seven pace run up, starting with his left foot, and including his delivery stride.

The first thing to do is to find by experiment the right starting mark for this. It can then be measured in walking paces from the bowling crease. It is likely to be about ten. The boy can then always quickly mark out his run by measuring the same number of paces. Whenever he practises, or bowls, he should always use the same run. This will help to make it automatic and get the all important rhythm to launch him into his spring and delivery stride.

For the purpose of this practice he should use the standard grip that he learned in lesson one. (If a boy decides to be a spin bowler he should practise his length and direction bowling doing the spin at the same time. This will need a wider bowling target.)

Father should invest in six balls for this practice. They should be of leather, or composition and the right size. (Boys should use a $4\frac{3}{4}$ oz ball until they are 14.) Having six balls makes it possible to bowl an over at a time. The bowler can then have a breather as he collects the balls and puts up the stumps he has knocked down.

The practice should be done as often and for as long as the enthusiasm and drive to succeed remains. But a commitment to a set period each day – say 20 minutes – can be a help. A bowler can note how many length and wicket hits he gets each day and so have a competition with himself.

He should remember that great pianists are born. But without practice their genius would never flower. There is no doubt that bowling skill will be the reward of patient practice. And the necessary foundation of all skilled bowling is length and direction.



Speed! Jeff Thomson of Australia, one of the fastest bowlers of all time.

N.B. It is suggested that the length of pitch for boys should be as follows:

Under 10 years	16 yards	13 years	21 yards
11 years	18 yards	14 years	22 yards
12 years	19 yards		

Change of pace, flight and angle of the ball's line down the wicket

Preparation and Equipment. Pitch with stumps. Balls and back netting.

Father should explain to his son that whatever type of bowler he is, three of his basic weapons are change of pace, a different flight pattern, and a different angle from which the ball is bowled.

His son will remember from his batting lessons how important good timing is for a batsman. Make him play too soon and a catch is likely. Make him play too late and he may miss the ball and be bowled. Bad timing in any case will hamper his scoring strokes.

The standard way of achieving a slower ball is for the bowler to grip the ball very lightly though otherwise in the same way as his normal ball. The boy will find when he tries this that though his arm comes over at the same speed the ball is just that much slower.

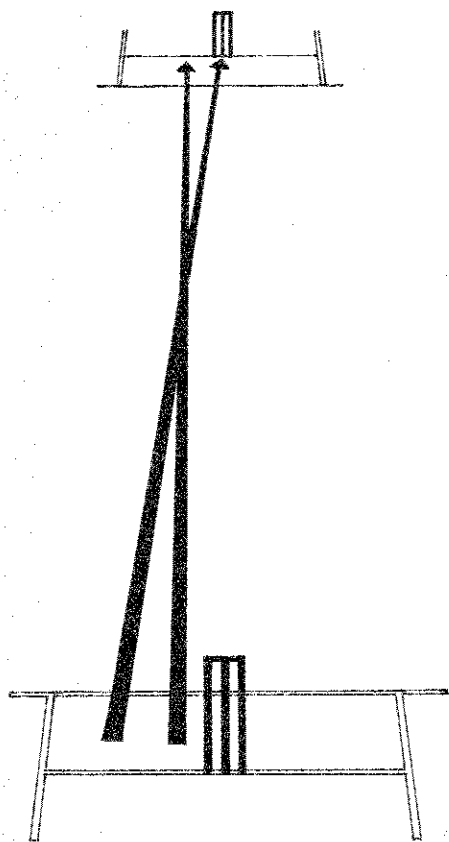
He can practise this by bowling alternate balls using his normal grip and then a light grip. He must concentrate on pitching both of them the same length.

A faster ball can be delivered by speeding up the arm action. This is not so easy to disguise but it can be an effective weapon against a batsman who is seen to be playing across the line as he is likely to miss the ball and be bowled.

Flighting the ball means bowling a ball with a higher trajectory than normal. This is achieved by releasing the ball just before the normal point of delivery.

The angle the ball takes down the pitch can be varied by bowling one ball near the wicket and one from the edge of the return crease.

As will be seen by the illustration (left) if three balls are bowled from the edge of the crease and then one from near the wickets, the latter might find the edge of the bat of an unwary player.



Out, or away, swing

Preparation and equipment. Pitch and back netting. Balls as new as possible. If they are old, try and shine them up and raise the seam. (Note. It is strictly illegal to raise the seam in a match.)

The reason a ball swings or swerves in the air can be explained as follows. Suppose a ship was moving through water and had its rudder in front instead of at the back. If the rudder pointed left the ship would move left; if right it would move right.

The rudder on a cricket ball is the seam and the seam steers the ball through the air. If the ball is new the seam sticks up more and makes a better rudder. The leather is also, shiny and offers less resistance to the air making the rudder more effective. This is why swing bowlers try and keep the shine on the ball by polishing it up.

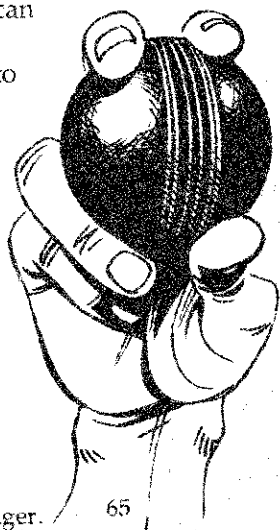
The outswinger is a ball that moves away from the batsman to the off.

To make this happen the seam, or rudder, of the ball needs to point towards slip as the ball goes down the pitch.

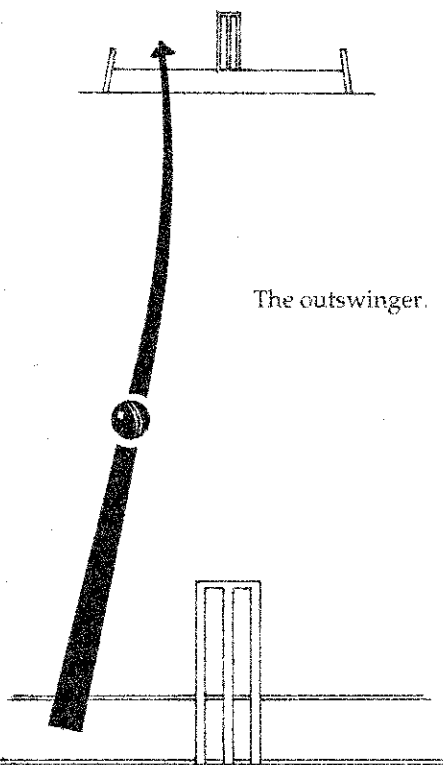
The bowler, therefore, must launch the ball with the seam upwards and pointing towards slip.

As an additional aid he can also, in his delivery stride, slightly move his left foot to the right.

This will bring his body further round to the right as well, and in a compensatory move this will help get the seam at the right angle. The bowler's right arm on the follow through should come downwards towards his left thigh.



Grip for outswinger.



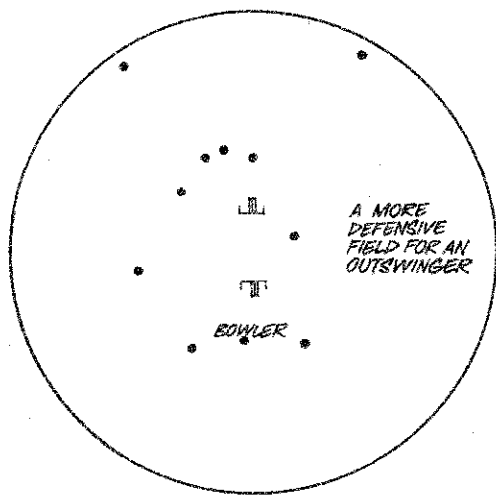
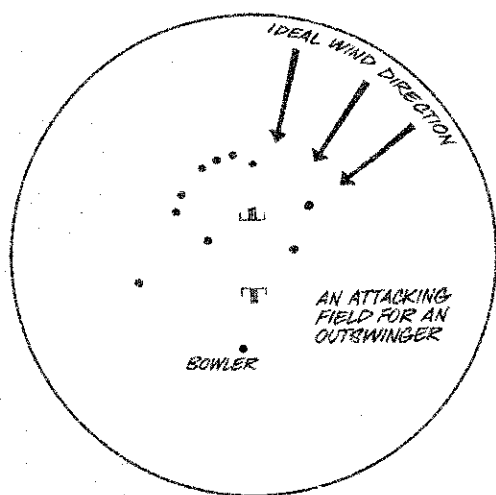
The outswinger.



England all-rounder Ian Botham bowls an away swinger to Pakistan's Wasim Bari. Note angle of seam.

In addition to the ball swerving in the air, if it lands on the side of the seam it may also move off the ground in the same direction. This can also happen if the wicket consists of thick juicy grass and the seam, like the tread of a car tyre, lands full on it. The seam will grip the grass and move slightly off the wicket in the direction of the lines of the seam.

Since it is the air acting on the seam of the ball which makes it swerve this means that the wind direction is also very important. For out swing bowling the wind should ideally be ahead or from the bowler's right as he approaches the wicket. The arrows in the illustration below show the best wind direction and also two field settings for this type of bowling.



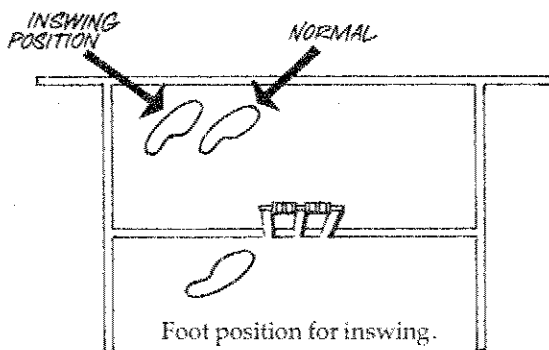
In swing

Preparation and equipment. Same as lesson seven.

A ball that swings 'in' is one that swerves from the off to the leg to a right-handed batsman.

The same principles governing the outswinger apply for the inswinger, only in reverse. Now the seam has to leave the bowlers hand pointing towards fine leg. The grip to help achieve this is as illustrated.

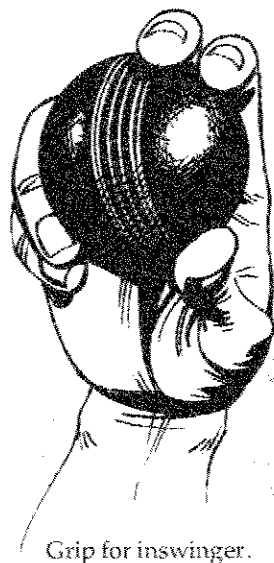
The body action that will also help is for the left foot in the delivery stride to land to the left of the normal position the right arm should come over as near to the right ear as possible – even brushing it. Then the right arm should come down on the follow through by the right thigh.



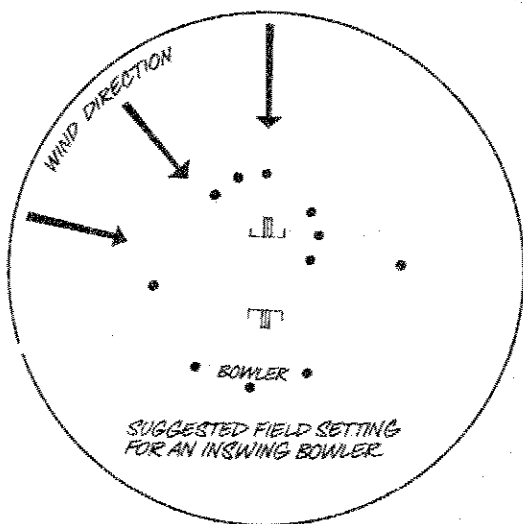
Foot position for inswing.

The best direction for the wind is in an arc from cover to straight ahead.

Above is a suggested field setting for an in swing bowler. The slip and gully are there since this type of bowler should also have a ball that does not swing or better still a leg cutter moving to the off. If the batsman is deceived and plays for the in swing he is likely to get an edge and be caught.



Grip for inswinger.



Off and leg cutter

Preparation and equipment. Same as last lesson. Balls can be old.

For the *off cutter* the first two fingers cut over the ball from left to right at the moment of delivery. The fore-finger does most of the work. The wrist can also play its part by being cocked to the left and snapping to the right.

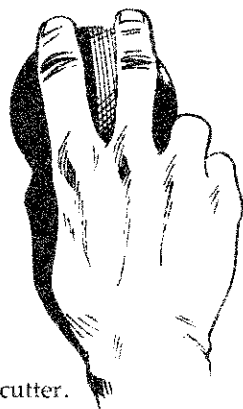
For the *leg cutter* the reverse of the above takes place. This time it is the second finger that is most used.

The grip for both deliveries can be the same. Most bowlers hold the ball with the fingers across the seam, figure A. The other method is to have the seam between the fingers, figure B.

The first method gives the best guarantee of the ball landing on the seam and thus 'biting' more.



Grip for off cutter.



Grip for leg cutter.

Cutters can be deadly on a rain affected pitch since they are normally bowled at medium pace and above and in these conditions they are like quick off and leg breaks.

Leg break, googly, and top spinner

Preparation and equipment. Same as for lesson nine plus tennis balls.

Although this type of bowling is now somewhat out of fashion in Eng-

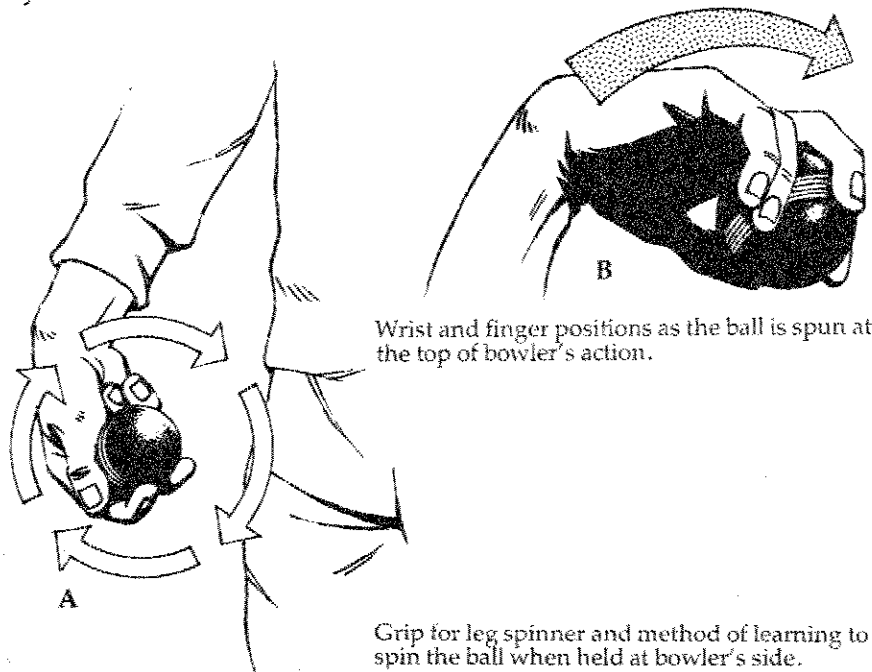
land it is still used a great deal in India and Pakistan and to some extent in Australia and the West Indies. This type of bowler is a breed apart. It is an art that can be begun early.

Father may have a young man who will restore the leg break to its former place in English cricket. It is interesting to look at the list of those bowlers of all types who have taken more than 200 first class wickets in a season. Heading that list is Kent's leg spinner A. P. Freeman who did it eight times and one season got 300 wickets. Few others have got anywhere near that record.

Although requiring greater muscle co-ordination than any other type of delivery, plus a quixotic temperament, it is fairly easy for a boy to learn how to bowl leg spinners and googlies. This is because the finger and wrist movements can be practised bowling underarm, or just using the fingers and wrist and spinning the ball and catching it again.

The grips for leg break, googly and top spinner can be the same. The ball is gripped with the first three fingers and base of the thumb. The seam can run along the side of the third finger, under the tips of the first two fingers, and be tucked under the base of the thumb. Another grip is to have the base of the thumb gripping the seam with the side of the third finger across the seam. Both give good spinning purchase.

The wrist should be cocked inwards when the bowler's arm is down by his side.

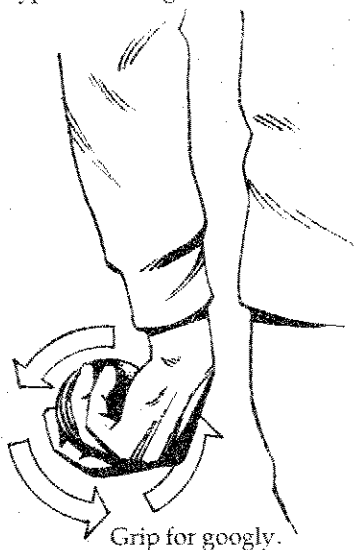


Wrist and finger positions as the ball is spun at the top of bowler's action.

Grip for leg spinner and method of learning to spin the ball when held at bowler's side.



This remarkable picture shows the moment of release of a leg break from B. S. Chandrasekhar of India, one of the greatest exponents of this type of bowling.



The *leg break* is spun with the same motion that is used to turn a door knob anti-clockwise. Whilst the first two fingers do some work, the bulk of it is done by the third finger and thumb.

Father and son should try this with a tennis ball. The boy may soon get the hang of it. When he can do it just throwing it up as he stands he should try and spin it whilst bowling underarm. He should try and get proficient and confident at this before attempting the overarm variety.

He should not be disappointed if, when he tries it overarm, there are considerable difficulties of co-ordination. There will be. Even first class exponents of the art have trouble from time to time and land the ball half way down the pitch. This is where the right temperament helps and can be developed.

The technical description of a *googly* is that it is an off break bowled with a leg break action. The idea is

that the bowler's action is so cleverly disguised that the batter thinks he is playing a leg break and instead the ball comes in from the off and bowls him.

The *googly* can be practised from a standing position as follows.

With the arm down at one's side, grip the ball as for the leg break and then turn the wrist to the left as far as it will go. The back of the wrist should now be facing the side of the leg.

Now spin the ball with the fingers as for the leg break. The thumb will this time play almost no part and the third finger is prominent and even the little finger can give the ball a flick. The ball now spins in the opposite way to the leg break.

The complete wrist and finger action is accomplished when the ball is held in the normal leg break position and the wrist is turned round as

described above and the ball is released in a consecutive movement. This again is something that can be practised at any time with a soft ball – and also bowling it underarm – before going on to the full overarm action.

The *top spinner* is a ball that is spun with an action half way between that of the leg break and the googly. A top spinner, as well as going straight on after pitching will also, because of its forward spin, leave the pitch faster than a ball that has no spin.

Another weapon in the leg spinner's armoury is the 'drift' that can sometimes be obtained with these balls. The theoretical explanation can be seen in the following diagrams.

The leg break in figure 1 turns the air from right to left and depending on the speed of the spin this will cause the ball to drift to the leg before pitching and turning to off.

The reverse process can occur with the googly.

Similarly the top spinner will tend to dip as compared to a ball without spin.

If it were possible to spin a ball backwards it would tend to float.

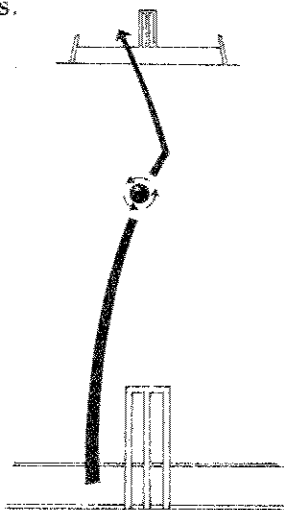


Figure 1.

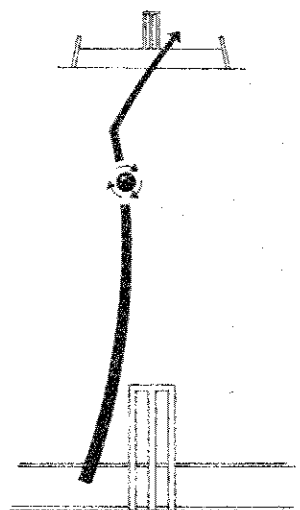
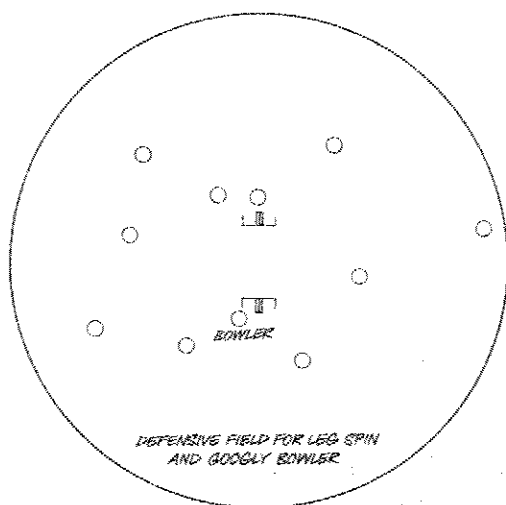
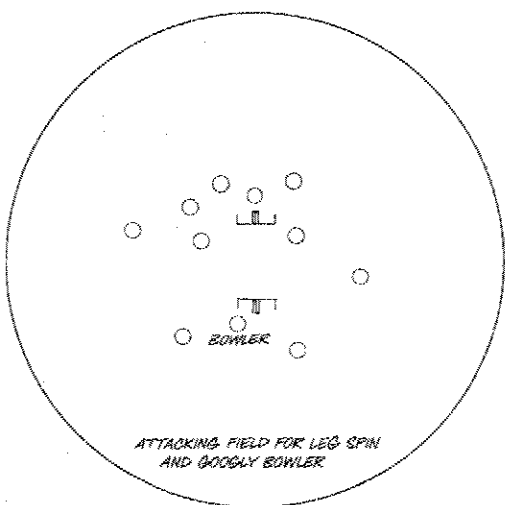


Figure 2.



Off spin

Preparation and equipment. Pitch, back netting, balls.

Off spin is the most popular of spin attack. Great past exponents of it include Jim Laker of England, who once took 19 wickets in a Test Match against Australia, Lance Gibbs the West Indian spinner, Prassanna of India, and Ashley Mallet of Australia.

An off spinner is a ball that spins in a clockwise direction and moves off the pitch from off to leg.

The ball is mainly spun with the inside of the fore-finger which is wrapped as far round, or along, the seam, as it will go. This causes considerable wear and tear on the side of this finger and those who bowl it a lot have to take steps to harden their skin which otherwise can often split. Sometimes such bowlers develop a callous of hard skin.

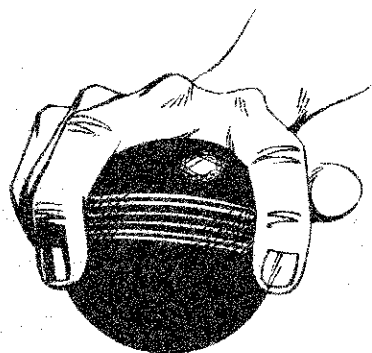
The wrist too, plays its part by being cocked back and to the left and the wrist is sprung from this position at the moment of the ball's release.

The delivery stride for an off spinner should not be too long. This will help him get his body into the action of spinning the ball and at the moment of the ball's release all his weight should be on his left leg which should be braced and straight.

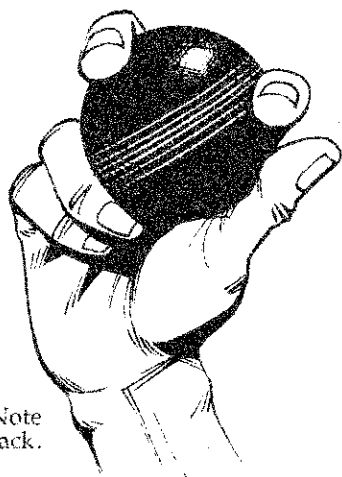
Father can start his young bowler on his off spin career by getting him to bowl slow off cutters. Instead of the boy's fore-finger trying to curl itself round the seam it just cuts down on the side of the seam of the ball at the moment of delivery.

On any but hard wickets this will give enough turn to whet the appetite and provide the motivation to aim for higher things.

The off spin bowler will build on to his basic off break a variety of deliveries. There will be the ball that does not turn but which 'goes on with the arm'. This means that the ball continues its line



First grip for off spin.



Second grip for off spin. Note the wrist is cocked back.

of flight down the pitch after it bounces. It does this because although the off spin grip was used the ball was not spun on delivery, and thus followed the line of flight that the arm had given it after it pitched. The idea of this ball is to lure the batsman into playing for the turn and perhaps thus edging a catch into the slips.

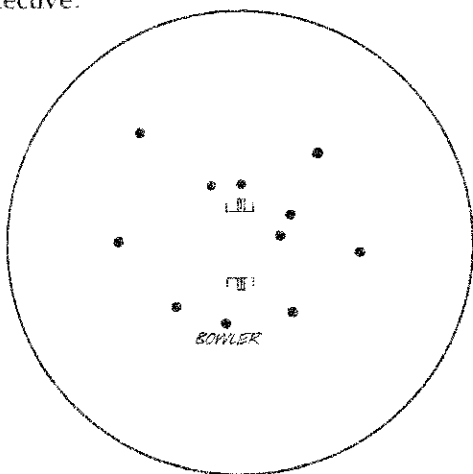
Then there is the ball which 'floats' to the off before it bounces and turns into the wicket. This is caused by the spinning ball's action in the air as in the googly.

Off spin, of course, lends itself to being bowled round the wicket since the natural line of the ball is then across the pitch and a ball landing in line with the off stump and turning will straighten and hit the off or middle stumps.

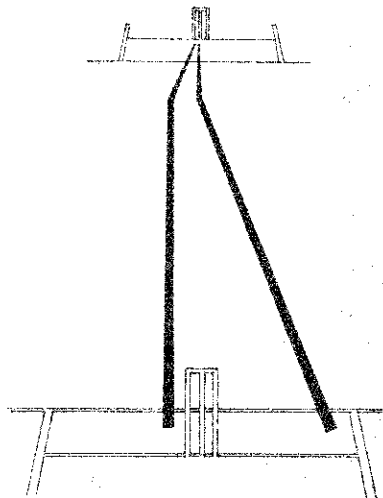
The special priority of the off spinner must be line and length. This is because being slow, any balls that are not a good length will be heavily punished. This also lessens the chances of survival of the close fielders he must have if he is to be effective.



Record wicket taker, with 309 Test victims, is West Indian spinner Lance Gibbs. Here he prepares to bowl an off break against Australia at Melbourne. Note the position of his fingers, the cocked wrist, and his eyes concentrated on the target.



FIELD FOR AN OFF SPINNER? AND THE SORT OF LINE BALLS BOWLED OVER AND ROUND THE WICKET MIGHT TAKE



Left arm, slow

Preparation and equipment. For learning the action, have soft balls and the plastic ball on string.

This type of bowler is of great value in any side. Two notable examples are Derek Underwood of England and Bishen Bedi of India. Underwood, with over 200 wickets in his Test career, combines the role of stock bowler (i.e. a bowler who can bowl on good batting wickets for long periods without having many runs scored off him) with that of a match winner on pitches which give the bowler some assistance.

If father's son looks like being a left arm slow bowler he should insure his bowling arm for a large sum and set him to work on the basics.

These are to get his action right and then to practise his length and line. The rest will follow.

Action. Father can get his pupil to learn the basic action in the same way as for a right-handed bowler, only in reverse. It should be noted, however, that many slow left arm bowlers do not 'spring' so much into their delivery stride but adopt a much smoother approach.



The slow left arm bowler's natural ball and most effective weapon is the one which spins in an anti-clockwise direction. This is a leg break to a right-handed batsman. He bowls it using basically the same technique as a right-hander spins the off break.

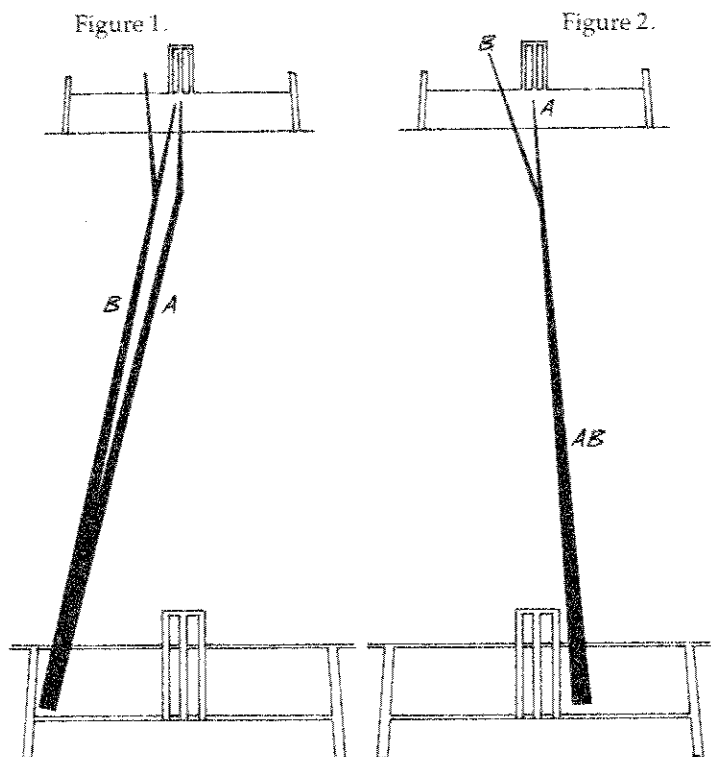
He has two lines of attack to a right-handed batsman. He can bowl round the wicket. This enables him to pitch the ball on the line of the stumps and straighten the ball enough to hit the stumps – see figure 1., ball A. He can also pitch it outside the off stump. If he spins this ball he may get the batsman to edge a catch. If he does not spin the ball

The action of the most successful left arm slow bowler in Test Match history – Derek Underwood of Kent and England.

it will go on in the line his arm has given it (called 'on with the arm') towards the stumps. See figure 1B.

His other line of attack is to bowl over the wicket. To left-handed batsmen he can bowl his spinners into the rough of the bowler's footmarks which will be outside the left-handers off stump.

To right-handers he can spin the ball across the batsman, varied with the ball which pitches in the same place and does not spin and goes straight towards the stumps. See figure 2, ball A, and B.



Another useful trick when bowling round the wicket is for the bowler to approach the bowling crease from behind the umpire standing up close to the stumps. In this way he prevents the batsman getting a sight of his bowling arm until the last moment.

The left arm bowler must add variation of pace and flight to length, line and spin. Those two will be his chief weapons when the wicket is hard and true.

This type of bowling is economical in energy and left arm bowlers often have long careers. One of the most famous, Wilfred Rhodes, played for England when he was 50.

Left arm medium and fast

Preparation and equipment. Same as last lesson.

As with the previous lesson, the run up and action for left arm bowling is the same, in reverse, as for right arm.

If a boy can bowl left arm from medium to fast he has a very useful talent to develop.

He will bowl for most of the time against right hand batsmen and again he can pose them special problems because his line of attack is different. The following diagrams will make this clear.

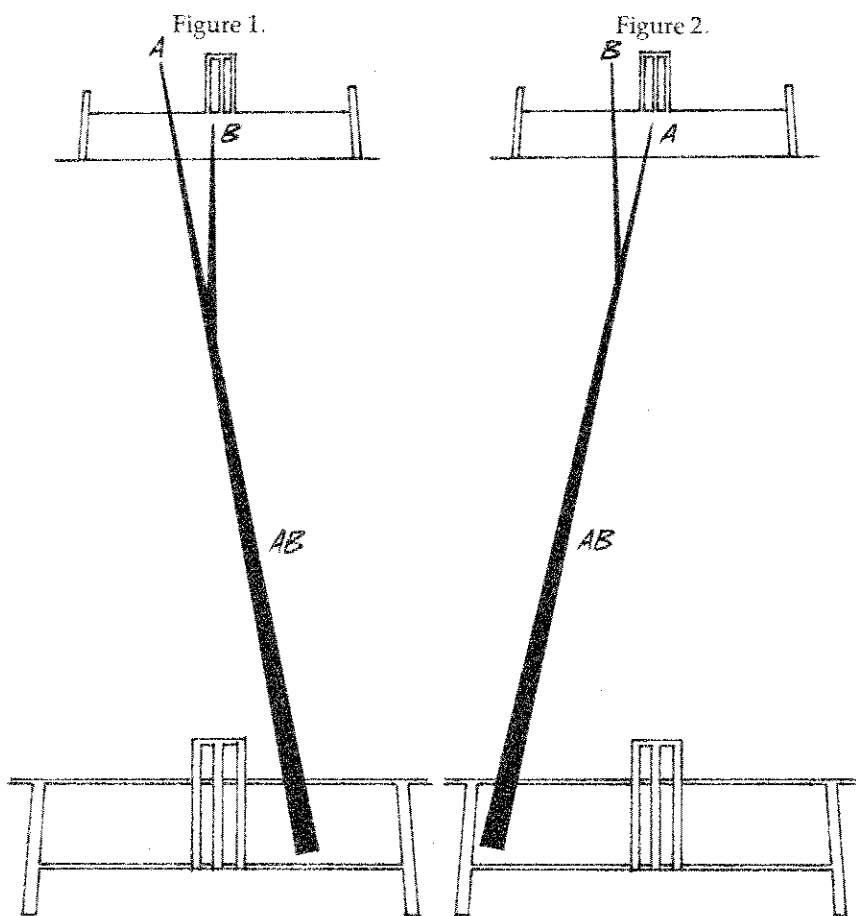


Figure 1 shows the line of consecutive balls bowled over the wicket. Ball A, after pitching moves off the seam and goes straight towards the stumps. Because both balls pitch on the line of the stumps the batsman has to play at them. Unless he can tell which is which he is likely to be in trouble.

Figure 2 shows the line of consecutive balls bowled round the wicket. This time ball A carries on its line to the stumps and ball B moves away to the slips. Again both balls pitch on the stumps giving the batsman the same sort of problem as above.

This method of moving the ball can either be off the seam or by cutting the ball.

BOWLING – Summing up

Get the young bowler's action right. Then let him develop his own characteristics (but not faults) within that broad framework.

The two essentials are length and line. These, as a matter of fact, can be obtained by practice, using a mark on the ground and a bag of balls. A boy aiming to be an off spinner or leg spinner should be encouraged to practise spin at the same time as his basic length and line practice. It is better to do this than to practise length and line using one action and then try to add spin using an action that will be slightly different.

The best known bowling variations have been described, but any boy may come up with a new one. A new grip; a new way of spinning the ball. Bosanquet did it when he pioneered the googly. Sonny Ramadhin of the West Indies did it with his uniquely spun off and leg breaks, which bamboozled for a summer some of the best batsmen of England.

No matter what the type of bowling, it is also important to develop qualities of heart. When hit for four, or when a catch is dropped, am I tempted to give up, and perhaps blame the pitch, wind, footholds, fielder, or captain, or do I hold fast and try, try, try again – and again? And try to bowl even better?

Finally, bowling, like batting, is meant to be enjoyed.

FIELDING – General comments

Whatever else cricketers do – one thing is certain. They will spend most of their time fielding. So they should decide to make something of it and enjoy it. They may perhaps specialise in one position like the slips, or gully, or cover point. The speciality that suits each young cricketer will become clear as his particular skills and likings emerge.

Those who can run fast and have a strong throwing arm may take to the boundary. Quick reflexes can indicate the slips or short leg area.

Three things help to make a good fielder. *Fitness, concentration and practise.*

There was a time when County cricketers were not as fit as they are today. They tended to let the job get them fit. That meant that May could be a painful month as muscles which had had a winter's rest got back into shape. During this period a fielder on the boundary would inwardly groan when he saw a ball hit into the area over which he had jurisdiction and he would will his protesting body into action.

Concentration. It is curious how when the mind wanders for a moment that that is the time when the ball whistles towards one at bootlace height. The only answer is to eagerly expect every ball to come to you.

Practise. In some sides, apart from a few catches hit around in April, almost the only ones you get are in matches and for real. These are attempted with a mixture of hope and faith and a sort of wondering expectancy about the outcome that accompanies the toss of a coin at the beginning of a match to decide who will bat.

This state of affairs can change dramatically when 10 or 15 minutes are spent before a match with players hitting catches to each other. It is surprising how soon one faces even the most steeppling hit with confidence which comes from repeatedly doing it.

But a caution must be given. Harden the hands at the start of the season slowly. Work up to the steepplers. Have nothing to do with a hitter of the ball who thinks it funny to hit hard and high in early April.

Be comfortable in the field. Wear the right amount of clothes. Cool on hot days. Above all, warm on cold days.

Look after the feet. There have been great advances in cricket footwear. If a cricketer has trouble with his feet he should find footwear that will look after them in comfort as well as aiding his nimbleness. Many players find wearing two pairs of thick socks a help.

Finally fielders should keep an eye on their captain. He may want you to move a little this way or that before, or during, an over and it helps him a lot if he does not have to stop the game to catch your attention.

Ground fielding. Positions in the field

Preparation and equipment. Bat, balls. Level turf. If the practice is on concrete then use soft balls.

Father should encourage his son to learn the names of all the positions on the field and where they are situated. These are given on the chart at the end of this lesson.

Each fielder should make a small mark on the ground when the captain has placed him in position. It is very easy to stray if this is not done.

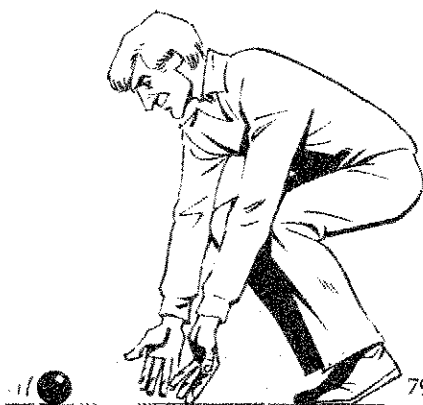
Those in the close catching positions will remain on that spot.

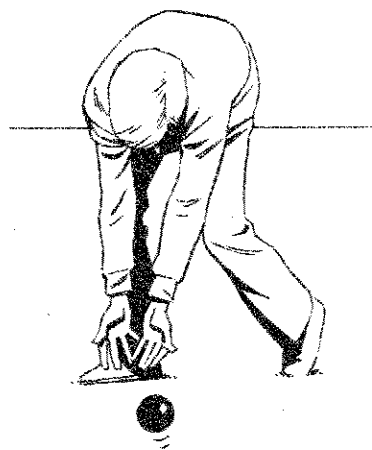
Every other fielder should 'walk in' as the ball is bowled and so be on the move and on his toes as the batsman hits the ball. This means that, having made his fielding mark, he should retreat a few paces to allow for this 'walk in'.

Father should explain to his pupil that the object of ground fielding is to stop any ball that comes in his direction, or chase any ball in his vicinity, and pick it up and return it to the wicket keeper with the greatest possible speed. (If there is the chance of a run out at the bowler's end, then the ball should be returned there.)

There are five basic methods of picking up the ball. The first two are for balls that are hit hard and straight at the fielder.

1. Go down with the left knee on the ground and in line with the ball and with the shin at right angles to it. The fingers should be pointing at the ground and the hands in front of the knee. The head should be over the ball.
2. Bend down with the heels together and with the hands with fingers down in the 'V' formed by the feet.





The idea is to have two lines of defence. First the hands and then the feet and legs.

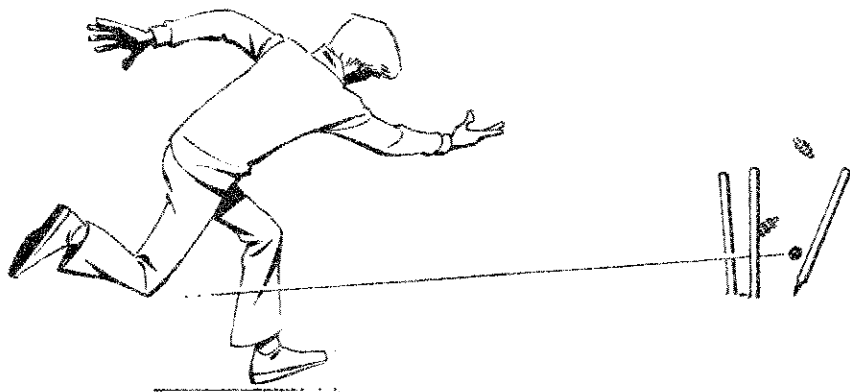
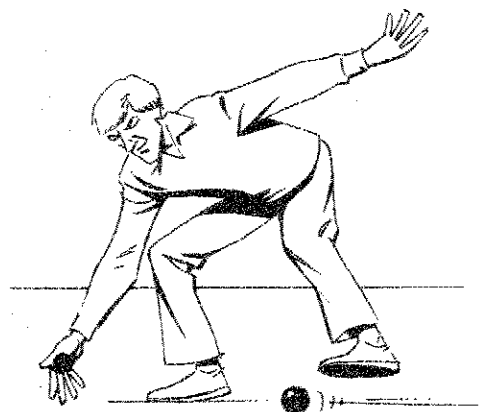
Father should get his pupil to practise these two methods without the ball and then hit him six balls to stop in one way, and six in the other. The pupil is likely to have more trouble with the first than the second. When he is at ease with both, move on.

There are three methods of picking up the ball on the run.

1. Pick it up, using two hands if possible, in front of the right foot. The fielder may have to adjust his steps as he runs to get his feet right by the time he reaches the ball.
2. If a run is being attempted the quickest way to return the ball is to bend sideways as you run in, risking picking up the ball one-handed and throwing it in, all in one movement.
3. Another method for attempting a run out is to pick the ball up and bowl it in underarm to hit the wickets.

Father should give his pupil practice with all these pickups but tell him not to throw at this stage.

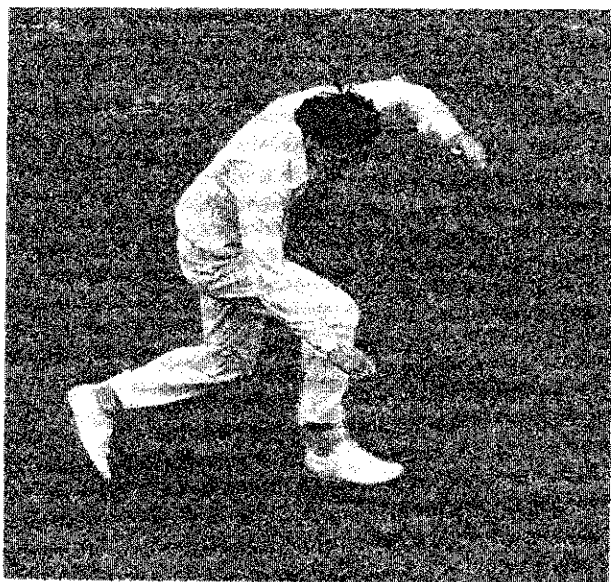
If the fielder has to run after the ball



he should judge his run and approach so that he picks the ball up as he turns, and the throw should be done as fast as his balance permits. In other words he should not reach the ball at full speed and then have to run on several paces before he can slow down enough to turn.

Father should give plenty of practice for all these methods of stopping and picking up the ball until they begin to come naturally.

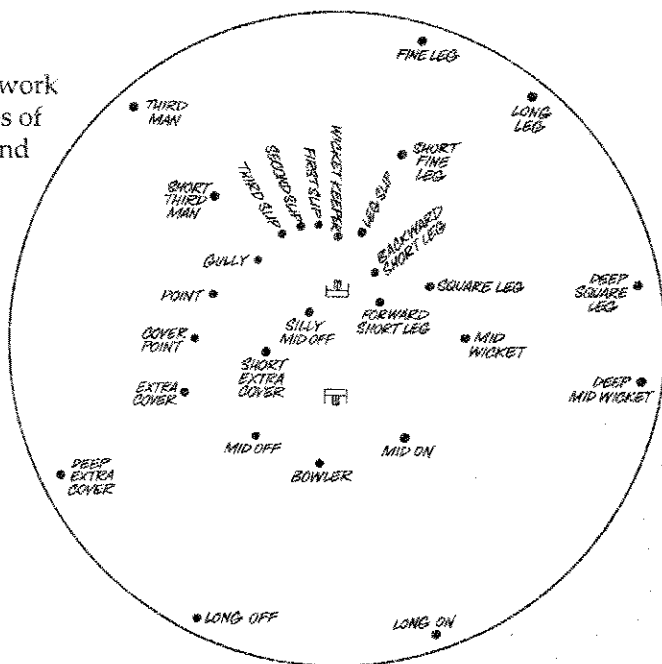
The man who makes fielding a pleasure to watch – Derek Randall of Nottingham and England.



POSITIONS IN THE FIELD

Every young player should work at getting to know the names of every position on the field and where they are situated.

The exact position of each named place can vary to suit different conditions, batsmen, and bowlers. For instance mid on may be straight or wide, deep or close in, etc.



Catching

Preparation and equipment. Bat, soft and hard balls.

Catching is an instinctive exercise. However there are basic rules which father should emphasise.

1. Keep your eye on the ball.
2. Use two hands if possible.
3. The fingers should never point at the ball. (See illustrations).
4. The hands should give in the direction in which the ball is travelling.
5. The body should be balanced when taking the catch.

Father should demonstrate points 3 and 4 and then give his son some practice. He should throw balls (soft or hard according to his discretion) from about 15 yards.

There are three basic catches

1. Those near the wicket. Slips, gulley, short leg and silly mid off.
2. Medium distance, low trajectory catches. Cover, mid on, etc.
3. High catches. Mostly in the outfield.

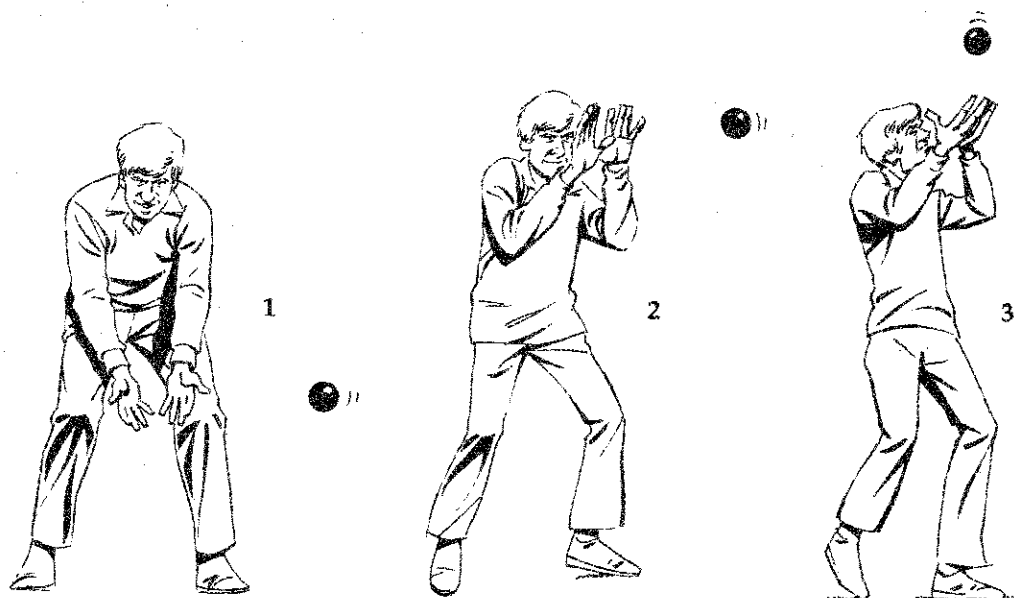
Close catches are usually reflex ones. The ball is nicked and reaches the slips in a split second and the fielder moves instinctively. One important rule is to get down before the batsman plays his shot and stay down until the outcome is clear.

Another important thing for those in the silly mid off and on positions is not to flinch by blinking if the batsman makes to hit the ball in your direction. In the fraction of a second the blink takes the ball is lost to view and has gone by.

For medium distance catches the fingers should point up, down, or sideways depending on the direction of the ball.

For high catches it is important never to take your eye off the ball even though the fielder may have to run to get underneath it, which he should do as soon as possible. The catch should be taken with the hands at eye level or just below.

To practise short catching father can get his son, and any others who like to join, to stand 10 to 15 yards away from him. Then, using the bat, he can hit catches to each. When they have caught the ball they throw it back to father on the full toss so he can hit it straight back. As with all fielding practice the hits should be gentle at first till the hands get warmed up and then the pace can be increased.



1. Close fielder's catch. Fingers down. 2. Medium distance, shoulder high catch. Fingers up. 3. High catch taken at eye level. Fingers forward.

Middle distance catching needs more space. Again boys can stand 20 to 30 yards away and father can hit catches. Unless he is an expert bat he will find it easier to stop the returned balls and throw them up himself to hit.

For high catches it is again important not to hit them too high. Remember, it will be a boy fielding to a boy batting and they are not likely to hit them that high anyway. It is also necessary when hitting high catches to designate the boy who is to make the catch. In matches, the captain will call out the name of the fielder he feels best able to make the catch if there are two fielders within reach of the ball. Otherwise the fielders, with their eyes on the ball, are likely to collide.

Nothing makes for better catching than practice, and it is suggested that some catching forms part of every cricket practice session. And remember, start with gentle hits and work up speed as the hands get warmer. Bruised and damaged joints on cold April days take the pleasure out of fielding and a long time to heal.

LESSON NUMBER THREE

PRIMARY

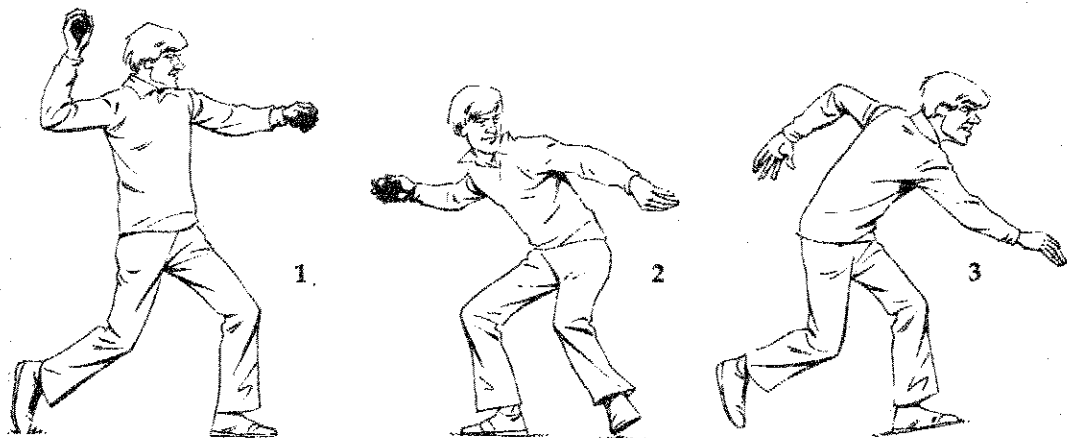
Throwing

Preparation and equipment. Plastic 'gamester' ball on string. Hard and soft balls. Netting if possible, or father in lieu.

It is worthwhile father encouraging his son to develop a good throwing arm. He may throw naturally and if so he can leave well alone.

Good throwing comes from good co-ordination, and timing, in the joints involved.

There are two types of throw – the above the shoulder throw and the side throw.

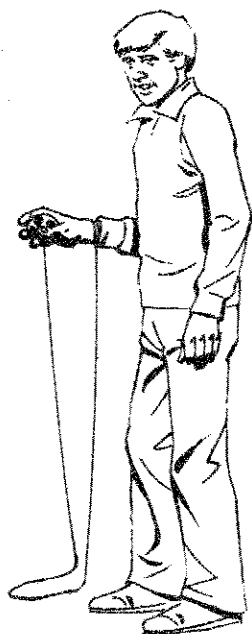


1. Above shoulder throw. 2. Side throw. 3. Follow through of side throw. Ball is thrown with weight on front foot.

The important thing with throwing, like bowling, is to get the action right. The left arm should be pointed at the target at which the eyes look over the left shoulder. The eyes, with head steady, should be kept on the target throughout the action of throwing.

The right arm is cocked at the elbow with the weight on the back foot. As the throw begins all the weight is transferred to the front foot and it is on that foot that the ball is propelled.

Father can get his son to try this using the plastic ball with string attached. The loose end of the string can be tied to the right wrist. The thrower should pick a target to throw at. If this practice is indoors it can be the top of a chair. Outdoors, and in a match, the ball should always be thrown either to hit the stumps in the case of a close run out situation, or it should be aimed just over the top of



Plastic ball attached to right or left wrist for indoor throwing practice.

the stumps and into the waiting hands of the wicket keeper or fielder.

Practice outside can be done with hard or soft balls with a back net, or father behind the stumps to collect the throws.

It is important not to do too much throwing, or try to throw too hard, to start with, or muscle and joint trouble can easily take place.

The boy should be told to work hard to improve his throwing. A little and often can be the rule. He will throw all his cricket life and if he does it well he will get, and give, a lot of pleasure through this alone. He'll also save many runs and run out a lot of batsmen.

'Backing up.' Whenever the ball is returned to the wicket keeper or to someone at the bowlers end, another fielder—whichever is nearest—should get into position to stop the ball in case it is missed. This should be an automatic reaction on the part of the fielders.

WICKET KEEPING – Some general comments

Every side has to have a wicket keeper. It is a good role for those who like hard work and being at the centre of the action all the time. In one sense the fielding side revolves round its keeper. Every ball is his concern.

If the batsman misses the ball and it does not hit the wicket the keeper has to catch it—especially if it is nicked—and he has to be alert for any possible stumping chance.

When the batsman plays the ball the keeper has to be ready for the fielder to return it to him with perhaps the possibility of a run out.

The keeper can do a lot to lift the morale of the fielding side by the eagerness with which he waits for their returns—almost demanding the ball—and by the way he tidies up any lack of accuracy on the part of their throwing.

The wicket keeper is also in the best position to see what the bowler and batsman are doing and he can help the captain with this information whenever the latter requires it.

If a boy feels called to be a wicket keeper he should be given every encouragement and father can teach him the basic techniques which follow.

Positioning

Preparation and equipment. Soft ball, stump. If hard ball is used then gloves and pads.

There are two basic places for the wicket keeper to stand.

1. Close to the wicket for the slower bowlers. One reason for this is to enable him to stump the batsman.
2. Some yards back for the faster bowlers. This enables the keeper to be more certain of stopping these faster balls and of holding the catches that come.

When close to the wicket, or 'standing up' as it is called the keeper should get into his basic position as the bowler starts his run up. His feet should



Basic standing up position.

be slightly apart with the weight evenly distributed on the balls of his feet. His knees should be bent and his arms should hang down relaxed with his hands in front of and between his feet with the fingers pointing down, and the palms to the front. His left leg should be in line with the middle and off stumps and his head just outside the line of the off stump and about six inches back from it. This position will give him a good sight of the ball.

Father should get the boy to take up this basic position. As with the batting stance each player will have minor variations. The player should be comfortable, his eyes

should be level, and his hands should be in the position that suits him best to take the ball cleanly and quickly.

The boy should be told that the wicket keeper, like the batsman, must concentrate hard on the bowler and watch the ball as it leaves the bowler's hand. This will enable him to tell what the ball is likely to do. He must pick up its line and length quickly and then move his feet so as to get his head and body behind the line of the ball.

This is done with very simple foot movements that must be practised until they become automatic.

For straight balls and those just outside the off stump he will already be

in the right position.

For balls further to the off he should move the right foot sufficiently to get the head and body over the line of the ball. At the same time turn the body slightly toward the wicket so as to make it easier to move the hands with ball to the stumps for a possible stumping.

In moving his feet the keeper should keep his hands down and bring them up with the ball as it bounces. He should always let the ball come into his hands which should give in the direction the ball is travelling.

Never go forward with the hands to meet the ball and never snatch. The fingers should always point down if the ball is low, up if the ball is high, and sideways if the ball is wide. They should never point at the ball.



Taking a ball on the off.

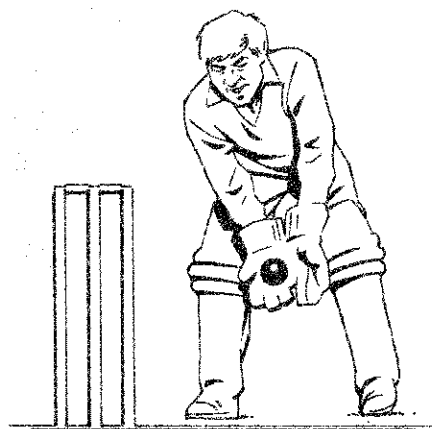
Some keepers cross their little fingers to give strength to the catching cup which the gloves form.

The keeper should expect every ball to come to him and even those balls which the batsman plays he should imagine taking, and every time, whether he takes the ball or the batsman plays it, he should move his hands to the wicket. This needs to be automatic for when the chance of a stumping comes it will be a split second affair.

Father should go through the motions of taking imaginary balls on the off and then moving his hands to the stumps ready to remove the bails. Then he should get his pupil to do the same and give him plenty of practice at this until he can do the movements automatically.

Father should then throw balls from fifteen yards with a good long bounce and outside the off stump. When the boy begins to get the hang of this he should go through the same drill for balls outside the leg stump.

This time it is the left foot that moves over. However, because the initial stance is outside the off stump there will be further to go for balls on the leg side, and in order to cover this distance it may be necessary after taking the first step left, to bring the right foot up to it and then move the left foot a further step over.



Taking a ball on the leg.

As with every department of cricket, balance is very important. The above basic movements can be practised any time. They can be done on one's own with an imaginary ball.

They can be done indoors with father throwing a plastic ball.

Another way is to practise against a wall or garage door with a tennis ball as follows. Put a stump in some sort of container filled with earth. Place this on the ground five yards from the wall. The boy then throws the ball against the wall so that it bounces on its return some distance in front of the stump and the boy practises taking the ball.

LESSON NUMBER TWO

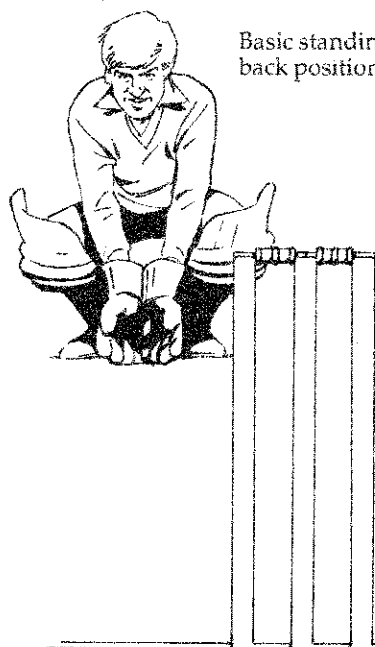
PRIMARY AND ADVANCED

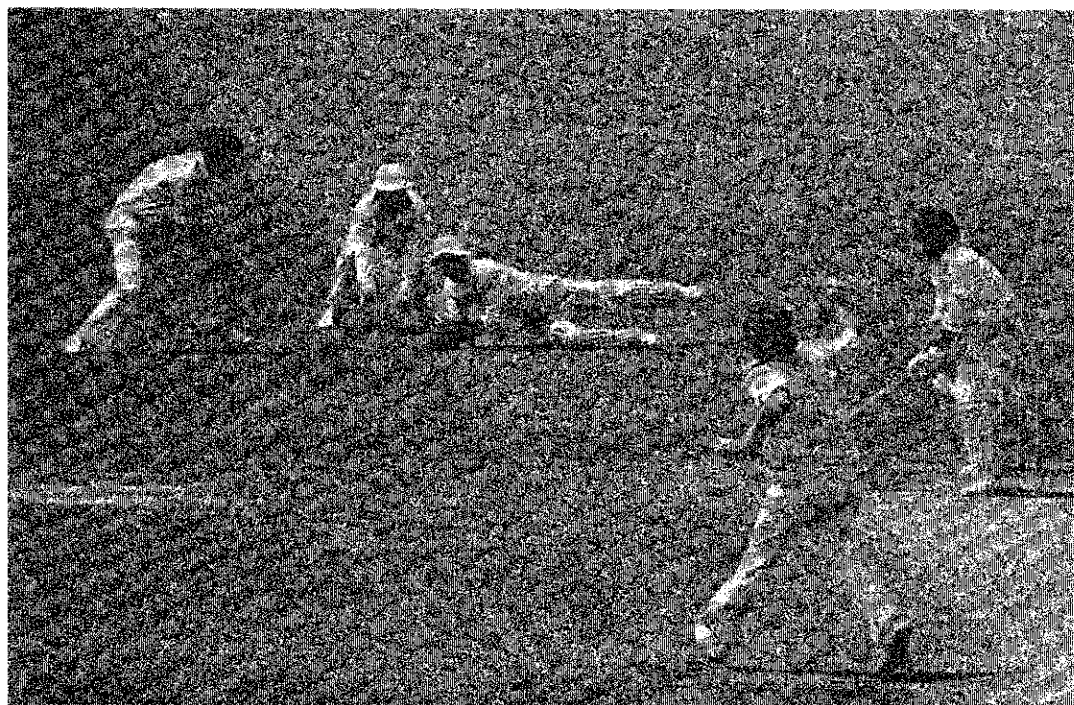
Standing back

Preparation and equipment. Soft balls and stumps. Again, if hard balls are used then pads and gloves. Mother with a bat.

The second basic position for the keeper is 'standing back' for the faster bowlers. His distance from the wicket will vary with the speed of the bowler and the condition of the wicket. As a general rule he should stand so that a good length ball reaches him between knee and waist height. His initial crouching position should be a little wider to the off. This is so he can see what happens to a ball which pitches on the middle or leg stump. Some balls may move off the seam to the off and some may go down the leg side.

Father should get the boy into the right position and then throw him a few balls – first to the off and then to





Keeper catches keeper. Bob Taylor, England, one of the best wicket keepers in the world, dives to catch his Pakistan counterpart, Wasim Bari, during a Test Match.

the leg. For balls on the leg he will often have to take two paces to reach them and for wide balls may have to dive.

When the keeper is standing back his first duty, when the batsman plays the ball, is to race in to the wicket and be ready for the fielder's return.

The next part of this lesson should take place with mother wielding the bat. The pupil should take his standing up position. Mother should take guard and be told to play at, and miss, all balls. Father should then throw tennis balls on the off for his pupil to take. Unless he has a genius on his hands, father may find the presence of a batsman, even of mother's calibre, completely puts off his son. This is par for the course. He should give encouragement and persevere. When some confidence is gained father should then throw balls on the leg. These may present even more initial problems since there will be a time when the keeper loses the ball behind the batter.

The thing is practice and more practice. At an early stage in subsequent practice father should mix up his deliveries and not tell his son which side of the wicket they are coming. Then do the same with mother batting. It is

as well to have a private signal for mother when doing this or she may object – especially if and when a hard ball is being used.

Appealing. A wicket keeper is entitled, because his position enables him to see what is going on, to appeal for lbw, and he should do so clearly and forthrightly.

CAPTAINCY

Just as every team has to have a wicket keeper so every team must have a captain – the most important job of all.

He is the leader, the decision maker, the morale lifter, encourager, instiller of discipline, strategist, tactician and much else. He gets some credit when his side wins. He gets a lot of blame when they lose.

Each boy will have his own style of leadership depending on his individual qualities and personality. But there is a basic framework to captaincy that we can outline. Taken a step at a time the job is not too alarming.

1. He should have a working knowledge of the laws of the game.
2. He should know the names of the various fielding positions.
3. It is helpful to think ahead of time about the known length of the match and when a reasonable time to declare might be.
4. It helps to lead by example. This does not mean he should get 100 or five wickets etc., though this can help, but in matters of punctuality, thought for others, and being panic proof under pressure.
5. He needs to think about the qualities of each man in his team and how they can best be utilised in the interests of the team as a whole.
6. All 10 men are his concern. Having favourites or the reverse will not help.
7. At the start of a match he needs to greet the opposing captain. They have to toss for innings. The home captain tosses the coin and the visitor calls. The winner has choice of batting or fielding.
8. At the end of the match it is customary for the two captains to shake hands, with congratulations, commiserations and thanks for the game.
9. It is good too, to thank the umpires for officiating, even if you think half your men were given out when they were in.

10. On the field the captain will organise his attack – who bowls when and from which end. He will be wise to do this in consultation with his bowlers. But the final decision will be his.
11. He must judge when to change his attack, either because it is ineffective, or because the bowlers need a rest. He needs to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of the batsmen and perhaps change the field, or attack, accordingly.
12. He needs to make sure his field is arranged in the most energy saving manner consistent with effectiveness. For example, all other things being equal, it is best not to have the same fielder at third man both ends, because he would have so far to run between overs. Third man and mid on can be interchangeable and so on.
13. He should be precise and decisive when giving orders and instructions.

Although it is currently out of fashion, the history of cricket has many examples of teams enjoying great success under good captains – men not necessarily great players but who had the gift of making the players more effective and the team greater. This can be the honourable aspiration of every captain.

TEAMWORK

Cricket is a blend of individual and team effort.

It is like a pot of tea. The tea leaves must be good. The water must be fresh and boiling. The pot must be heated. And the mixture must be allowed to brew for just the right time.

If any one of the above are perfect and the rest are not, the resulting cup of tea is less than maximum.

So it is with a cricket team. Perfect individual efforts are seldom much good without everyone playing the part they should.

One of the best ingredients for creating teamwork is honest apology for one's mistakes, like:

1. Dropping catches.
2. Running out one's batting partner.
3. A bad shot resulting in dismissal.
4. Jealousy.
5. The sulks.

Nothing builds teamwork better than admitting where you are wrong

and putting it right as far as you are able. Nothing causes division quicker than spotlighting where you think someone else is wrong and blaming him, either to his face, or especially behind his back.

The problem is that most people find the latter easier to do than the former. But the problem is not insoluble and the rewards are great.

Father is likely to be an old hand at recognising all this but it may be newish territory for his son. It is worth exploration and experimentation.

PITCHES – Preparation and care of

Every practice, or match, takes place on a pitch. The quality of the cricket and the enjoyment the players experience, will depend on the excellence, or otherwise, of the pitch.

Father will go a long way towards giving his son a love for cricket if from the start he provides a flat pitch for practice.

Nothing is more likely to put off a boy than a ball in the teeth from a bumpy pitch.

Making a good pitch is a very satisfying occupation, for turf responds in almost direct proportion to the amount of simple treatment and care it receives.

The first task is to make sure the ground is flat. Ideally it should also be level, but if there is a slight slope it can be accommodated – even the pitch at Lords has a perceptible slope. But it should be flat – that is it should have no depressions or mounds. Deep depressions can be dealt with by taking off the turf, filling in the depression with as much earth as is necessary and then replacing the turf. Mounds can be dealt with in the same way except that as much earth as is necessary is removed. These operations are best done in the autumn.

Slight depressions can often be made good by lifting the turf with a fork, working it up and down a few times, and then rolling it.

Having got the ground flat all that is necessary to provide an excellent pitch is to roll and cut it. The rolling should be done when the ground is damp. It is not really possible to give a pitch too much rolling but it will certainly suffer from too little.

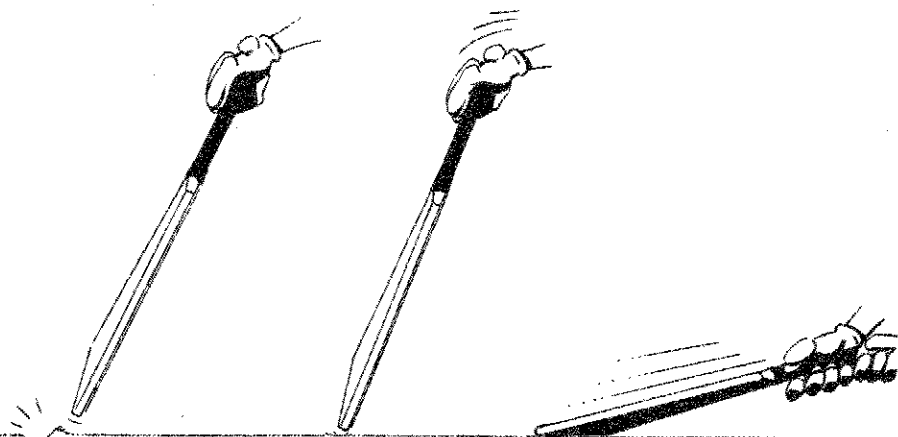
Cut the grass short.

Weeds can be removed by digging them out with a knife or by watering with a proprietary weed killer. But provided the pitch is rolled and well cut weeds are not a major problem.

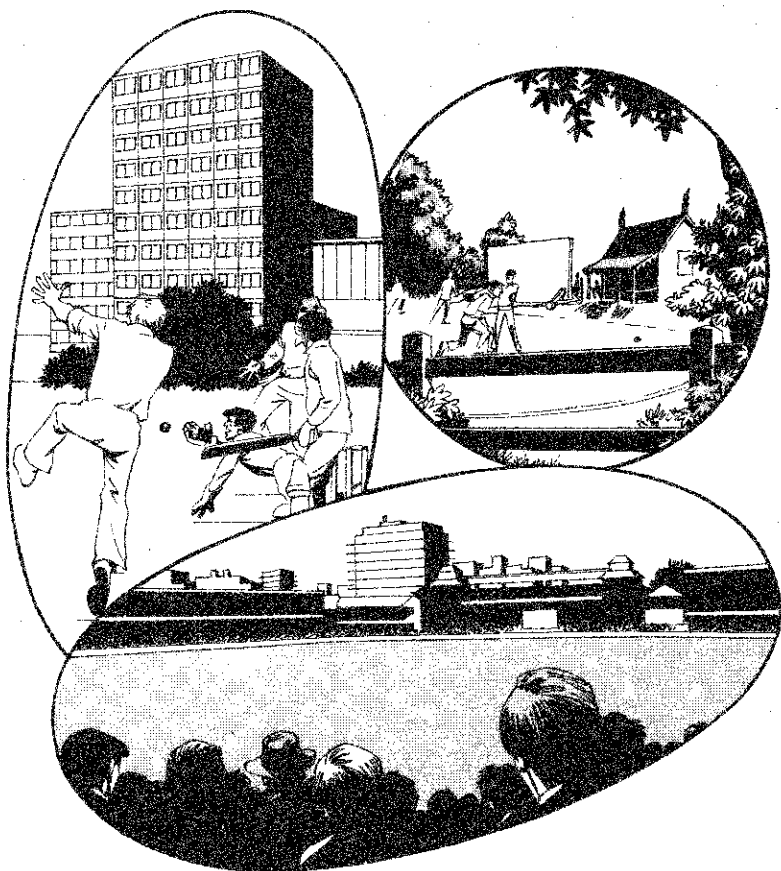
Roll and cut, roll and cut, is the secret.

Father should also teach the young batsman from the start to look after the pitch when he is batting. This is usually called 'gardening'.

The practice pitch at home, and the one he bats on in matches, can be kept in good order if, when the ground is soft and the ball is taking out divots, or scarring the ground, he repairs these by using the back or bottom of his bat. The ground should be flattened by knocking it back in the opposite direction to which it has been taken by the ball.



Repairing the pitch.



FINALE

Father, or the coach, has now done his best.

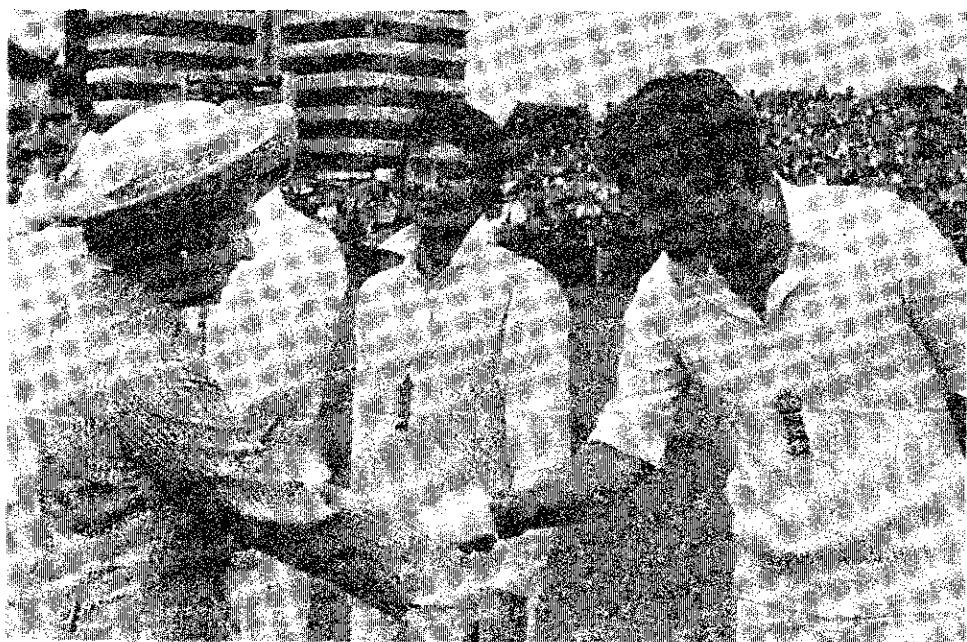
Success? This must not be measured in terms of playing Test, State or County cricket, club cricket, village cricket, or school first, second or third eleven – but rather whether his pupil loves the game.

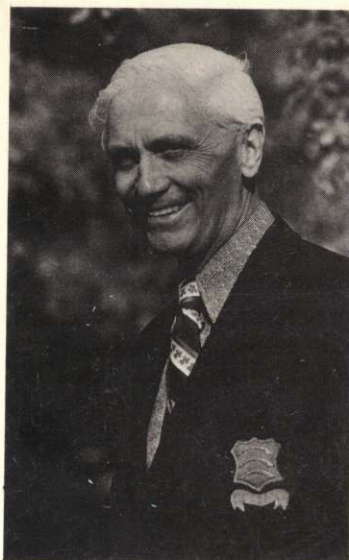
If he does then father has passed on something that will be enjoyed and grow down many a sun filled summer's day, with the smell of mown grass in England, the rustle of the wind in the palm trees in the Caribbean, or the blue gums of Australia, with the sound of crisp click of bat on ball and the gasp from the crowd as a fast bowler has his sizzling bouncer hooked for six out of the ground.

All that remains for me is to thank father and his son for their patience and wish them the very best of luck.



How it can start and sometimes finish! (*Above*) The author as a boy in the garden. (*Below*) Dream Test debut for England's Ian Botham. He took 5 wickets for 74 and is shown here shaking hands with the Queen.





T. C. 'Dickie' Dodds played cricket for Essex from 1946–1959 during which time he was their opening bat and scored almost 20,000 runs. He passed the 1,000 mark in a season 13 times with 2,147 in 1947 as his most productive summer. He was known for his attacking and attractive batsmanship. *The World of Cricket* said his career 'had delighted cricket followers all over the country'.

This is the book all cricketing fathers have been waiting for – a coaching book to enable them to teach their sons cricket.

A love of the game is assumed, ownership of a bat and ball – but very little else. With these ingredients fathers everywhere will be able to set their sons on the right road to a good technique and much enjoyment. *Cricket from Father to Son* shows in three sections, batting, bowling and fielding, how to cultivate stance, the strokes for all occasions, how to recognise and play spin and speed; how to bowl, field and keep wicket. And how to do all this in your back garden or a field or park.

The book is comprehensively illustrated with photographs of well-known players, and line drawings and almost always shows the father (reader) how the son (subject) should appear, but the text is carefully constructed so that the son *can* use it on his own.

Progress is gradual and care is taken that the child will learn a little every lesson and not become bored. Not only cricket skills are taught but also ideas of good sportsmanship.

This is something entirely new in the field of coaching books and will be of enormous help to many fathers and sons.

Foreword by Conrad Hunte.

Cover photograph by David Channer; design by Mark Pickard.

Also available in a hardback edition.

£1.95 net
(in UK only)

ISBN 0 7182 1214 2

Printed in Great Britain