

THE GAME WITHIN A GAME

The strategies of winning cricket.

By Ashley Ross

THE WHOLE IDEA

The simple thinking that is the basis for all winning strategies is attack.

Hate losing but do not fear losing.

BATTING

SURVIVAL

The safest place for a batter whose primary objective is to not be dismissed is at the bowler's end.

The safest way to defend a ball not going to hit the stumps is to not play a shot.

Therefore, one of the most important skills a batter must develop is the awareness of the position of the stumps.

Reducing the width of the line to which the batter will play a shot, means an increase in the likelihood of the bowler straying onto leg stump.

Batting practice should include the development of 'stump awareness'.

MANIPULATION OF STRIKE

It is better for the new batter to spend the greater proportion of ball off strike.

The important thing is that the batter who has 'gone off' faces as few balls in this period as possible until their normal state returns.

BUILDING AN INNINGS

Originally, batters are trying to merely survive, and score in a fashion with minimum risk.

As the innings develops, the elevation in scoring is due to an increase percentage of the score in boundaries. In response to this, the fielding side sets a more defensive field in order to stem the flow of boundaries.

The next phase of scoring will see the batter respond to the more defensive fields set and take the opportunity to score safely off the bad balls by taking singles to deep fielders and 'working' good balls into gaps for more singles.

BUILDING A TEAM SCORE

If the batting partners can successfully keep the person least likely to go out, and most likely to score, on strike most of the time, it improves the chances of building a sizeable partnership.

When the loss of a wicket does occur, it is the responsibility of the established player to ensure that their wicket remains intact, at least until their new partner is 'set'.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TAILENDERS

In the situation where a tailender is batting with an established or a recognised batter, it is their responsibility to survive as per the discussion above.

Their performance is then rated by the size of the partnership they were involved in.

Their primary objectives are for the innings to close with them being not out.

They must have a well developed awareness of their stumps and be very disciplined to only play at deliverables that will hit the stumps.

They must be aware of which end they should be for the team's advantage at various positions during an over, and therefore run well between wickets to obtain this position.

Wild swings by tailenders, at practice or in games, are not tolerated.

HITTING THE BALL IN THE AIR

Increase the chances of scoring after the shot due to a field change in reaction to the hit.

Decrease the likelihood of their own dismissal by shifting a close catcher.

BATTING IN ONE DAY GAMES

Scoring singles is the safest, and yet the most important, factor of scoring quickly and therefore is the very basis that underpins all strategies in one day batting.

If the proportion of balls scored off increases, there will be a uniform lift in the run rate.

| OVERS | SCORE | RUNS | 4's | SINGLES | % OF SCORE IN 1's | 1's\BALL |
|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------------------|----------|
| 1 – 10 | 1\22 | 22 | - | 5 | 0.22 | 0.08 |
| 11 – 20 | 1\53 | 31 | 2 | 6 | 0.32 | 0.10 |
| 21 – 30 | 1\88 | 35 | 2 | 7 | 0.20 | 0.12 |
| 31 – 40 | 3\127 | 39 | 3 | 14 | 0.35 | 0.23 |
| 41 – 50 | 4\191 | 64 | 3 | 28 | 0.44 | 0.47 |
| TOTAL | | | 10 | 60 | 0.31 | 0.20 |

When chasing a target, it is more appropriate to decide on a consistently achievable rate of scoring, and then concentrate on the construction of 'big' overs where possible. Big overs are characterised not by the number of boundaries hit, but rather the number of balls scored off.

There are two basic strategies for effectively chasing or setting large targets in limited over situations. The first is the theory that one batter must bat through the innings. When this batter is set and the opposition are in defend mode, the batter must not take risks but rather endeavours to bat through, score safely off every ball (singles), and rotate the strike to their partners who will take the necessary risks. This is most effective against good attacks or with batting line-ups that are susceptible to collapse.

The second theory is most successful against mediocre attacks or with very strong batting line-ups. This strategy evolves from the confidence that the bowling side will not dismiss all the batters in the time available. All members of the batting team commit themselves to elevate their level of risk taking hoping to get maximum production from all batters. This theory can produce massive scores, particularly if the early batters get a good start, but involves the biggest risks.

Effective batting in the last 5 overs is characterised by good running between wickets, and ensuring that every ball delivered makes contact with either the bat or body of the striker to at least produce the opportunity to score.

Good batting in the last 5 overs is characterised by few 'dot' balls, not by the number of boundaries hit.

If you record more singles throughout the innings, and less dot balls in the last 5 overs then the opposition, you will win over 90% of one-day games.

BOWLING

LINE

The line of the ball most likely to elicit a catch in slips is THE WIDEST AT WHICH THE BATTER WILL PLAY.

AMOUNT OF MOVEMENT\USE OF CREASE

On days when the ball is swinging a great deal, the relative amount of swing can be manipulated by the position of the bowler at the crease and the angle of approach this creates.

Accurate short pitched bowling that intimidates the batter into an instinctive backward movement in anticipation of another hostile, short pitched delivery, gives the bowler the chance to pitch up without fear of being driven. The bowler can then swing the ball more than previously, due to being in the air longer, and hopefully deceive and dismiss the batter.

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

Bowlers must have sufficient control to ensure their variations are effective and do not allow the batter the opportunity to get off strike.

With one ball to go in the over, the established player is on strike; the bowler's objective is the delivery of a ball that keeps the established player at the striker's end, to enable the next bowler the chance to attack the new, yet to settle, batter.

All fielders should recognise the objectives of situations.

The pace of the game is an important factor to be manipulated to improve the environment for attack.

With the bowling side in a position where they are most likely to take a wicket, all players should be doing all with their power to bowl as many balls during this phase as possible.

When the batters are on top and scoring freely, the over rate should be decreased to increase their frustration, and thereby increase the likelihood of a wicket falling. Once the wicket has fallen, the pace of the game is accelerated once again as the bowling side has rested the momentum, and then must push for more wickets to fall.

If you are bowling, no matter what the situation, you are only ever 10 balls from finishing the innings.

REMEMBER... ATTACK!!!!

THE CULTURE OF SUCCESS

Without honesty there is no character.... without character, there is no culture. A successful culture is created by people with sufficient honesty and character to do what is right for no other reason than it is right.

The most valuable player is one who knows what has to be done, carries it out, and neither seeks, nor expects recognition for his efforts, whilst reinforcing every effort of his team mates.

Rewarding effort rather than results is the basis for creating a culture of success. The team that places the priority of applause upon the execution of the many thankless and unheralded tasks that set up a victory, rather than the victory itself, are reinforcing the culture that breeds success.

The better the character, the more complete the realisation of potential.

A flawed character in one club person can undermine the winning culture, and, like a degenerative cancer, spread through the club.

The flawed character might not show up in the results of the individual, but in the performance of others.

PERSERVERANCE

The good team, when faced with adversity, will reaffirm the quality of their strategy, have confidence in their ability to execute their plans, and resolve to persevere at the things they know are right.

CONFIDENCE

The suggestion that you can, gives you the chance to succeed; the suggestions you may not, or worse, cannot, will ensure certain defeat.

Confidence is the belief that you can produce your absolute personal best when the situation demands it.

Complete preparation gives you the confidence to stand up, look your opponent in the eye, and be totally confident you are about to produce your absolute maximum performance, win lose or draw.