



# DRIVING THE GAME

HOW TO THINK, TRAIN AND PLAY LIKE  
THE BEST T20 PLAYERS IN THE WORLD

Chris Lynn

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Driving The Game! This ebook is has been based on the core content of my online t20 coaching academy – Chris Lynn T20 Online Academy or CL T20 Academy.

The following 8 chapters dive deep into the 4 pillars of t20 success.

**Technical** – All things skills based, training drills, fundamentals of each skill, how to do them, when and how much to train.

**Physical** – Preparing your body for exercise and more specifically cricket, avoiding injury, maintaining your body during the season and recovery.

**Tactical** – Understanding different game situations and how to approach each situation, making plans and reading the opposition.

**Mental** – How to overcome nerves, bouncing back from failure and the mindset required for success.

The information in this book is a culmination of my experiences and what I've learnt from my 17 years playing cricket, the last 8 of them professionally for teams including the QLD, Brisbane Heat, Kolkata, Jamaica and Australian T20 team. Enjoy the read!



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### **WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE YOUR GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL?**

The ACI Online Academy is a membership website for aspiring cricket players to learn from Chris and other professional players. ACI Online Academy contains a huge range of how to coaching videos, guest professional player and coaching staff interviews, audios, written handout guides, monthly live Q&A webinars with Chris and is updated weekly with new training. Members also get access to a private “members only” Facebook for regular interaction with Chris and his team of coaches, creating a community in which players can’t help but succeed.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

# **BATTING**

**“How to build a solid foundation against both pace and spin and then expand your game with more advanced shots to become a dominant T20 batsman”**



# PACE BASICS INTRODUCTION

You've probably heard coaches say "master the basics first". And they're spot on. The best T20 batsmen in the world (De Villiers, Gayle, Warner) are all great players no matter what the format is. The reason? They've mastered the basics. The innovation follows.

## What Is Basic Batting Against Pace Bowling?

The idea of basic batting against pace bowling means giving yourself the chance to get set by playing low risk/high reward...proper cricket shots. This means showing the full face of the bat looking to get forward to hit the ball down the ground and if the balls short, transferring your weight back and getting your hands high, playing a high to low cut or pull shot along the ground. We're trying to play low risk cricket shots to good balls here, but by all means give the bad ball a whack! You still need to have the intent to score off every ball. If the bowler makes an error, you've still got to be looking to pounce on it. It's important to take every opportunity in T20 Cricket.

## How Long Do I Take To Get Set?

That changes depending on the situation. Obviously the time you take to get set in T20 is going to be a lot shorter than in longer forms of the game. This is where your game awareness comes in to play. If you're opening the innings and the wicket is good, you might only take 2-3 balls to get set and play basic cricket shots. If the balls swinging around or spinning you might take 5-10 balls to get set. If you come in at 2/150 with 3 overs to go....do you think you'd be taking any time to get set? No you'd be looking to score quickly straight away. So communicate with your captain, team mates, coach and use your game awareness to sum up the situation and work out how long to play low risk shots for.



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## Pace Basics – Front Foot “*Master the basics first*”

When you’re practicing basic front foot batting shots, you need to be looking to get your body in the correct position to hit the ball down the ground. This means getting a good stride in, showing the full face of the bat and hitting the ball late, under your eyes, with your head over the ball. You need to train your body to automatically get in this position. This is called muscle memory, and we build muscle memory by doing these basic drills over and over again.

### Drop Drill

The aim of the drop drill is to get your body used to getting in the right position at a very slow pace. The drop drill is a great way to kick off preseason as it gives you time to think about every step and get yourself in the right position many times in a short amount of time, under little or no pressure. This is the start of building that muscle memory. It’s also a great way to warm up for your net session, or a drill you can go back to when you’re struggling...to focus on the basics.



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*Look at my alignment in the photo below. Good stride, balanced, full face of the bat, high elbow and head over the ball. That's the position you want to finish in and you should be able to hold that position for 3 seconds after the shot*



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## Under Arm Drill

Now I want you to step it up a bit. Again a very basic drill but this time you're adding a bit more pressure where the balls moving towards you albeit still at a slow pace. So you're looking to step to the pitch of the ball and again get your body in that nice balanced position to hit the ball down the ground. A good challenge here is to see how many times you can hit the back net in a row.



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## Bowling Machine Drill

Now it's time to really challenge yourself and put yourself under pressure at near match conditions. The beauty of the bowling machine is you know where the ball is generally going to land (unless it's one of those dodgy ones that sprays it). So it's easier to get yourself in that good position, again good for building muscle memory. All of the basics remain the same and you're still trying to hit the ball down the ground. On the machine don't always set it on an easy half volley, take the length back a bit and practice getting forward and using soft hands and different bat angles to get the ball into a gap.



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### 1.3. Pace Basics – Back Foot *“Master the basics first”*

The most important thing to remember when playing basic back foot shots against fast bowling is to utilise the whole meter and a half crease you have. So getting right back in your crease as far as you can (obviously without stepping on them). This gives you more time to play the ball. The other thing to remember is to stay side on, one shoulder facing the bowler, not squaring up and showing both shoulders.

One thing you can do, especially in T20 if you're struggling to score is use your crease laterally. So try shuffling across to off stump and back to leg stump. This will change the line of the ball and allow you to hit the ball to different parts of the ground....putting the bowler under pressure. (which they don't like...they're a bit soft haha)

### **Bowling Machine Drill (make sure you wear a helmet)**

The aim here is to set the machine back of a length and get the ball coming through between waist and chest high, not too high. Work on using the crease and playing basic back foot shots.

When the bowler is bowling a tight line, stay side on and look to use different bat angles. Run the ball to third man with an open face, push it into the covers for a single, or tuck it off your hip to midwicket.

Important to remember: When you're practicing back foot shots, particularly on a bowling machine where you know it's going to be short, don't get into the habit of premeditating and going back early. Make sure you are still looking to get forward and practice transferring your weight back once the balls released. That's how it is in a game, so that's how you train.



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*Notice in the image below I'm back in my crease, I'm hitting the ball under my eyes but I'm not just looking to hit the ball back down the wicket to the bowler, my bat's angled to midwicket and the intent is to score 1. The key to playing off the back foot and getting off strike is loosening the bottom hand.*



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*This image I'm right back in the crease and looking to angle the ball down to third man with an open face. Make sure you get your hands high to get over the ball*



The moment the bowler gives you width climb into a high to low cut or pull shot. Get your hands up high and hit down on the ball and hit it hard!



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*When you're playing cuts and pulls, make sure to fully extend your arms, gives you a lot more power!*



## **Pace Advanced Introduction**

Ok so you've done the basics, you've got a platform and are feeling set. Now let's look at some more advanced shots. What I mean by advanced shots is higher risk and difficulty shots that you'd play when you're looking to take on the bowler. Now we can start to look to hit the ball in the air and clear the field...hopefully the rope!

These are also shots you'll use to combat some of the bowlers attacking balls such as a yorker, slower ball and bouncer.

Make sure you've practiced these types of shots plenty of times before you use them out in the middle, especially the more difficult ones like reverse sweep.

## **Pace Advanced – Front Foot**

Once I'm set, my mindset changes to a more attacking frame of mind and I'm looking to take on the bowler and put them under as much pressure as I can. Generally I like to widen my stance a bit to give me a nice stable base to hit from. I'm not so much worried about my stride, I'm more worried about my head and how much it's moving. I try to keep it as still as possible and my eyes level.

The basics still remain the same but you're just playing with a bit more freedom and extending your shot. I like to get into my back lift a little bit earlier and plod onto the front foot a bit earlier. Always expect the ball to be full. If they do happen to bowl a short ball, it's a lot easier to push back than it is to push forward if your weights back.

My mindset when I'm attacking is always to hit straight, no matter what the length is I'm still trying to go straight. It's really important to be looking to hit straight so you're utilising the full face of the bat. The moment they get a bit straighter or shorter, hold your shape for as long as you can and then you can open up and hit over the leg side.



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When you're looking to hit the ball in the air off the front foot, make sure you make contact with the ball earlier than usual so you're bat's angling up and you're getting underneath the ball to clear the fence.

Tip: Don't try to over hit the ball! You'll find you hit a lot more sixes if you focus more on being balanced, keeping your head still and hitting the ball cleanly rather than swinging yourself off your feet.

*See the picture below, my body is in almost exactly the same position as when I'm playing a basic straight drive. I've just given myself a little bit more room to free my arms and I'm making contact with the ball out in front of my body rather than underneath my eyes.*



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*The Important thing here is I'm balanced and my head is still. Here's an after shot and I'm still able to keep my balance without falling over.*



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## **Pace Advanced – Back Foot**

When you're looking to take on the short ball in the mid to late overs and the bowler is bowling fairly quick you don't always have a lot of time to get right back in your crease. This is the reason I widen my stance so that I don't have as far to go forward or back. It's more a transfer of weight, in this case to the back foot. Limiting your movement also allows you to keep your head a lot stiller.

When you're taking on the bowling off the back foot, make sure initially you're still looking to press forward and transferring your weight back when the balls short.

The three shots I play when attacking off the back foot are the cut shot, pull shot and what some people call the baseball shot (my favourite shot).

## **Cut and Pull Shots**

Two choices you can either load up high to low and whack the ball along the ground, extending your arms. Or hit low to high and get under the ball to hit it over the top. With the cut, you can even use the pace of the ball to ramp it over the top to third man (useful if third man is up).



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*Notice below I've hit the ball from low to high to get the ball over the top. I also like to make contact with the ball earlier and hit the ball in front of square when I'm taking the bowler on.*



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## The Baseball Shot

This is a shot that stems from my intent to get forward and to hit the ball straight. This is a shot I play to a shorter pitched ball where I'm still coming at the ball, giving myself room to free the arms and hitting the ball straight with a flat bat. The key is fast hands and really getting them through the ball.



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## **Pace Advanced – Short Ball**

It doesn't matter who you are as a batsman, everybody hates a good short ball. But...they're part of our game and something you will only feel comfortable playing if you practice it as much as you do your cover drive.

There's no secret to getting better at playing the short ball and feeling more confident other than challenging yourself at training.

I know some batsman don't like the bowlers bowling short in the nets, but I encourage it. You have to face them in the game so may as well get used to it in the nets....as long as they're behind the line! (no balls, that's when I get angry).

When you're facing someone quick who's throwing the odd short ball in, you need to still be looking to get forward. It's a lot easier to push back than it is to push forward if your weight is back – that's when you get yourself into trouble.

## **WATCH THE BALL**

The key to playing the short ball confidently and safely is to not take your eye off the ball. I know it can be an instinctive reaction to turn your head, but trust me, don't take your eye off the ball. Get used to doing it at a slower pace and against a soft ball.

## **Tennis Ball Drill**

The tennis ball drill, as the name suggests is a short ball drill using tennis balls. Why tennis balls? Because you need to get used to facing the short ball without fear. Knowing a tennis ball is not going to hurt you allows you to play the short ball confidently and correctly and get into good habits. The more you do this the more you will trust yourself to be able to deal with it against a hard ball.



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You can do this drill using tennis balls out of a bowling machine if you have access to one. Otherwise someone serving with a racquet or just throwing is fine.

## KEYS

- Watch the ball for as long as you can
- Look to get forward even though you know it's going to be short. Don't premeditate going back or you'll get into bad habits. Pretend you don't know where the ball is going.

*See below I've chosen to duck the ball but I'm still watching the ball for as long as I can before it passes over my head.*



If a bowler knows your weakness is the short ball, you're going to get a lot of balls up around the ribs. Especially in T20 cricket if they know it's going to get them a dot ball.

Once you're confident, you need to figure out a way to score off the short ball.



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If the ball is below shoulder height, whether you're cutting or pulling, get your hands nice and high and hit down on the ball. See the photo below.



If the ball is above shoulder height, I like to get under it and either whack it up and over fine/square leg or use the pace and ramp it over third man area. Like I said, there's no secret to becoming better against the short ball. It's intimidating but get in and do the hard work.

## **Pace Advanced – Yorkers**

Credit where credit's due, the yorker is one of the hardest balls to get away as a batsman. When you've got a bowler who's good at Yorkers, you've got to find a way to score against them. Whether it be scoring a single and getting down the other end, or trying to turn that yorker into a boundary ball.

The way I combat a yorker is to either get right back in my crease and turn the yorker into a half volley so I can get under it, or come down the wicket and turn it into a full toss. Either way, you've got to try and put the bowler off his rhythm and I think moving around in your crease is the best way to do that.

The other ways you can look to score off the yorker is to use soft hands and the angle of your bat to run the ball down to third man. Or some guys like to use the lap sweep, not one of my favourite shots but if you practice it and become skilled at it, it can be very effective.



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See below for some photo examples of how to combat and score off the yorker. I want you to really take notice of where I am in the crease.

**Example 1:** Staying still, using the angle of my bat, running to third man.



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**Example 2:** Getting out of my crease, turning the ball into a full toss and hitting it through the covers.



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**Example 3:** Right back in the crease, turning the yorker into a half volley and hitting the ball both sides of the wicket



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**Example 4:** Moving across my crease and playing a lap sweet down to fine leg.



Have a bit of fun and spend some time practicing these different techniques to score off the yorker because when it comes to those last 5 overs, you'll likely have to face a few!



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## Pace Advanced - Slower Ball

You'll come across bowlers that love to use the slower ball and they'll use the slower ball more and more as the innings goes on. The reason bowlers use a slower ball is to try to mix up your rhythm and bat speed to try and bring on a false shot. Whether that's swinging through the ball too early or hitting the ball in the air.

The key to facing a slower ball is exactly the same as a normal front foot shot, but you've got to have the discipline to hold your shot and your shape. Try to pick up the length and what type of slower ball it is as soon as possible, so you've got to watch the ball. You can't do that with a moving head so keep your head as still which can be hard sometimes if you're deceived by the slower ball.

One of the biggest things when facing a slower ball is making the decision whether to go through with your shot and hit the ball over the top or pull out and hit the ball along the ground. If you decide to go over the top, make sure you have a stable base, keep your weight forward and commit 100% to the shot. If you go half-hearted you'll find yourself getting caught a lot.

Hold your shape, keep your head still and don't try to over hit the ball. See example below.



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## **Spin Basic** *“Fast feet is the key to playing spin”*

When you're facing spin in T20 cricket, you've got to try and put them off their line and length as quickly as you can. The best way to do that is good footwork. So you're either getting right out of your crease to get to the ball on the full or half volley, or getting right back in your crease to give yourself more time to see the spin and play the ball.

This becomes even more important when the ball is turning. If you're facing a good spinner and you stay on the crease and let him dictate, it becomes more a game of survival let alone trying to score. So really practice fast footwork and using your crease.

### **The Footwork Drop Drill**

Similar to the stationary drop drill except this time you're dropping the ball 1m-1.5m out in front of where you're set up, depending how big of a stride you have. The thrower also pops the ball in the air, rather than just dropping it. What this does is firstly give you time to get down to the ball, but more importantly makes you track the ball up with your eyes and then down, similar to as if you were facing a spin bowler with good flight.

Once the thrower pops the ball, the batsmen skips down the wicket and gets into a nice balanced position to play the ball on the half volley. Big stride, foot next to the ball, head over the ball. Again you should be able to hold your balance after the shot.

If you're getting to the pitch of the ball easily, challenge yourself and drop the ball further away and really push yourself to get out to the pitch of the ball with fast feet.



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*In the image below that is the perfect position to be in once you've got to the pitch of the ball.*



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*Notice in the image below, I've challenged myself to get further down the wicket and still held my balance after the shot.*



## Throwing Spin Drill

Once you've got your feet moving, the progression from that is to get your partner to throw spin from half way down the wicket and mix the length, pace and flight up. This challenges you by giving you less time to make a decision and now you've got to decide whether to come down the wicket to nullify the spin or go right back in your crease to play the ball as late as possible.

It's important to try and play straight as much as possible, especially if the ball's turning. If the ball isn't turning and you're in you can then start to play the ball to the square parts of the ground.



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*This image below I've used my feet to get out to the pitch of the ball. Again look at the position I'm in when playing the shot.*



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*This time I've moved right back in the crease and played the ball as late as possible, still with a straight bat. In the first image to the offside, second image down to long on. If the bowler gives you any width or gets short make sure you put it away with a cut or pull.*



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## **Spin Advanced – Straight** *“Commit to the shot 100%”*

Ok you’ve done the hard work against the spin. Or maybe not, sometimes in T20 it’s time to hit the “go” button as soon as the spinner comes on.

This section is about taking the spinner on down the ground. It almost becomes a game of cat and mouse. A good spinner is not going to keep throwing the ball up and letting you hit him back over his head. They’ll change their pace, length and flight. So you’ve got to try and be one step ahead of him and also make really quick decisions. If you decide to go, commit to the shot 100%.

When you’re indecisive and go through with the shot half-hearted you will get yourself in real trouble. That doesn’t mean swing yourself off your feet, it means doing everything with conviction. Strong skip down the wicket, balanced and weight going through the ball, keep your shape and hit the ball hard. Keeping your head still and eyes level.

It’s important to remember if you’re hitting the ball over the top, you need to get under the ball so that means making contact out in front rather than under your eyes if you were hitting the ball along the ground. You still need your weight forward and going through the ball though, not leaning back to get under the ball.

Tip: It’s a lot easier when you’re attacking a spin bowler to hit with the spin rather than against it. So let’s say in this case you’re a right hander facing a leg spin bowler – you’d try to hit the ball over the off side. Facing an off spinner you’d try to hit the ball over the leg side. This isn’t to say you’re limited to that, it’s just the less risky option. In saying that, the opposition captain is often aware of that and sets the field accordingly, so you might have to take a risk and attack to where the gaps are.



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*In the image below notice I've come down the wicket and I've made contact with the ball out in front of my body rather than under my eyes. I'm still in a nice balanced position with my weight forward. I'm also hitting with the spin as I'm facing an off spinner.*



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## Spin Advanced - Square of the Wicket

A good way to take on a spinner if the ball is really turning is to play square of the wicket. Whether that's playing a sweet shot if he's hitting a good length, or getting back in your crease and playing cuts and pulls if he's dropping short. Generally a spinner will bowl with a big leg side boundary.

## Sweep Drop Drill

This is a good way to get a lot of volume up and get a feel for the sweet shot, both reverse and conventional.

Get down on one knee and in position with your weight forward and make sure to try and fully extend your arms. Get your partner to drop the ball out in front and go one for one, conventional to reverse sweep. Hitting the ball on the half volley. Make sure you're getting in the habit of hitting the ball from high to low. Depending on the line of the ball you'll either sweet the ball fine, or more square of the wicket.

*Big stride, weight forward and arms extended. Hitting from high to low.*



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*Everything remains the same with the reverse sweep.*



## **Training Challenges Introduction**

Training challenges are drills, games and scenarios that you can use at training to give you a goal outcome or create some competition. These are my favourite drills and the one's I personally use at training.



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## Training Challenge: The Balance Beam

The purpose of this challenge is to, as the name suggests, work on your balance. In the basic set up and front foot drive I've spoken about the importance of keeping everything in nice and tight and your head still. This drill really highlights and inefficiency's you have in that area.

If your hands go out away from your body, you will fall off the beam.  
If your head falls over, you will fall off the beam.

If you try to swing too hard, you will fall off the beam.

So all you are doing is setting up on the beam in a position for a front foot drive and having your partner drop the ball next to your foot. Compete against each other and see how many drives you can play without falling off the beam.



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Ok you've mastered that? Great. Now step it up a bit, try these progressions.

**Intermediate:** See how many drives you can play that hit the back net while also staying on the beam. If you fall off or miss the back net, you're out and it's your partners go.

**Advanced:** Now get your partner to move back half way down the wicket and either underarm the ball or throw the ball at you on the beam. See how many deliveries you can face without falling off the beam. This also brings decision making into play as you'll have to let balls go that aren't in the right area. The thrower plays an important role here, if he's inconsistent the drill won't work.



*Balance beams are fairly easy to make. Just a plank of wood with a support at each end to hold it a few inches off the ground. (or anything you can put together to imitate this)*



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## Training Challenge: 12 Ball Challenge – Hitting 6’s

The 12 ball challenge is best done against a bowling machine so you’re effectively getting the same ball and it’s a test of your execution.

In this case my challenge is to hit as many balls for 6 as I can in 12 balls. (you can use the 12 ball challenge for anything...singles, certain shots etc.) Obviously in the nets you can’t actually see if it goes for six....but you know the feeling when you get it don’t you! Be honest with yourself and your partner here.

If you don’t practice hitting sixes how do you think you’re going to do it in a game? This is a good chance to have some fun and practice whacking the ball over the fence...and don’t we all love doing that!

## Keys to Improving Your Power Hitting

- Stable base – make sure you take a decent step. Doesn’t have to be huge, as long as your feet are stable and not moving when you hit the ball.
- Weight forward – don’t lean back when you try to hit the ball in the air, you want your weight going through the ball.
- Head still - this is the most important to remember, if nothing else, keep your head still. This allows you to track the ball a lot easier.
- Strong and activated core – activate your core to get more power.
- Keep your shape. Don’t try to over hit the ball – keeping your shape is a combination of all of the above. The moment you try to over hit the ball you lose your balance, weight goes back and your head moves.



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*Notice in the image below (during the 12 ball challenge) I swing right through and I'm still balanced after I hit the shot.*



***Good luck. Let me know how you go!***



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## Training Challenge: 12 Ball Challenge – Hitting 6's

You might be wondering, why on earth would I use half a bat to train? The reason is because using half a bat makes you get your head over the ball and make contact as late as possible, under your eyes. Get your partner to throw from 3/4 pitch. If you swing through too early with half a bat, you'll miss the ball. So it really emphasises hitting the ball late, which you want to do when you're hitting the ball along the ground.

You'll need a sawn off bat. Obviously don't go and saw off your brand new bat but if you have an old one you can saw it off or get someone else to do it for you.

*See how the half bat forces me to hit the ball under my eyes.*



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## Training Challenge: No Pads vs Spint

In this drill you are facing a bowler, thrower or machine bowling spin. The difference is you don't have any pads on.

Batsmen can sometimes get in the negative frame of mind of playing a spin bowler with their pads which is obviously dangerous and you'll struggle to score. What I mean by that is not simply kicking the ball, but leading with the pad and having the bat behind. Spinners love this and try to hit the batsmen's front pad.

The purpose of this drill is to get you playing the ball with the bat. It makes you watch the ball really hard and have that positive intent to score.

If you're worried about getting hit on the leg, use a tennis ball or softer ball to begin with and then progress onto a harder ball.



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## Training Challenge: Side Arm Scenario's

The side arm challenge is a great way to get some competition into your training. All you need is a partner and a side arm. (note: you can run these scenarios with a bowler instead of a side arm, it's just good to have a side arm so the level is about the same for both batsmen.)

These are a great drill to do outside of training and I've had hours of fun and quality training with mates and brothers. I like to break them up into 2-3 over scenarios and work on a different goal for each scenario. In this instance my challenge is to get a single off every ball, great for practicing rotating the strike. So get your partner to side arm 12 balls at you then swap over and see if you can get more singles than he did.

Make sure you set fields and make each other aware of the field you have set. You can even set cones out in the nets to imitate fielders. This is a great way to really start thinking about game situations. Where your partner is strong and where you think you can stop them scoring.

Have a bit of fun, compete against your mate and come up with your own scenarios. Really get into the mindset of being out in the middle.

*That's a side arm*



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## Training Challenge: Technique Bat

A technique bat is a modified cricket bat that is half the size of a normal bat. You can either take the edges off an old bat or buy a pre made technique bat. Whichever way you go, make sure your technique bat is similar weight to your normal bat. You'll notice the edges of my technique bat are really big, this is to make sure it weighs the same as the bat I use in a game so I don't get used to using a lighter bat. If you take the edges off an old bat, just make sure to add some weight to it, maybe by sticking something to the back of it.

The purpose of this drill is to limit the margin of error you have either side of the sweet spot. It makes you concentrate really hard and watch the ball. The theory behind it being if you practice with half a bat and get into the habit of watching the ball closely, it's going to be a lot easier when you go out into the middle with a full size bat.

This drill can be used in any other drill. Drop drills, throws, machine, bowler etc

*See how everything is inline, I'm hitting the ball in line with my eyes.*



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## **\*NOTE\***

### **WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE YOUR GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL?**

The ACI Online Academy is a membership website for aspiring cricket players to learn from Chris and other professional players. ACI Online Academy contains a huge range of how to coaching videos, guest professional player and coaching staff interviews, audios, written handout guides, monthly live Q&A webinars with Chris and is updated weekly with new training. Members also get access to a private “members only” Facebook for regular interaction with Chris and his team of coaches, creating a community in which players can’t help but succeed.

For more information visit: <https://australiancricketinstitute.com/aci-online-academy/>



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## **CHAPTER 2**

# **BOWLING**

**“Learn the most important balls for T20 cricket and how to bowl them. As well as tactics for different scenarios of the game”**

# INTRODUCTION TO PACE BOWLING IN T20 WITH JAMES PATTINSON

“Hi Guys, I’m James Pattinson from the Melbourne Renegades and Australia. I’ll be taking you through the fast bowling module of the CLT20 Online Academy. Let’s have some fun”



There’s a big difference between bowling in a T20 game and bowling in the longer forms of the game. Here’s a few;

- **The batsmen are always attacking you.**
- **The batsmen move around the crease and innovate a lot more.**
- **It’s a lot faster paced and you’ve got less opportunity to make an impact.**

Here’s a few things you need to be able to do as a fast bowler in T20 cricket

- **Adapt/Think on your feet**
- **Have a plan for every ball and set the field accordingly**
- **Remain calm under pressure.**



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In T20 cricket, we focus on 4 main balls to execute. These are;

- **The Hard Length Ball**
- **The Yorker**
- **The Slower Ball**
- **The Bouncer**

I'll go into more detail on how to bowl each ball in the following videos and guides.

## **How to Bowl the Hard Length Ball**

The hard length ball is one of the most important balls for a fast bowler and the 'go to' ball for me.

The hard length ball is pitched short of a good length and bowled into the wicket hard and fast. The aim is to get the ball to pass the batsmen between hip and chest high and cramp him up for room. If you execute the hard length ball the batsmen find it hard to drive or pull and find them self in no man's land so to speak, hence the name "hard length ball".

The hard length is easier to bowl for someone with a bit more pace. If you bowl too full in T20 cricket, the batsmen find it easy to hit you down the ground.

Use the hard length ball anytime during the innings to build dots and pressure which generally lead to wickets.

## **Hard Length Target Bowling Drill**

The best way to practice the hard length ball is to have a target where you want the ball going through at the batsmen's end (hip to chest high). The reason it's best to have a target as the end result is because the length each bowler needs to hit for the hard length is different. A taller bowler can bowl a bit fuller to get the ball waist high, whereas a shorter bowler will have to pitch the ball shorter. If you're on your own and know the area you need to hit you can also put markers on the pitch, generally the hard length will be 3-5m in front of the batsmen.



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*The image below shows the hard length drill set up with both left and right handed targets.*



Make sure you change the height of the end targets to practice bowling at different height batsmen. Also remember to practice to left and right hand batsmen.

## **How to Bowl the Yorker**

The yorker is the hardest ball to master but also the most effective ball in T20 cricket. It's almost a forgotten ball because there is such a small margin for error, if you miss the yorker it's an easy ball to hit. Don't let that scare you off from bowling it though, like I said it's the most effective ball for a fast bowler if you can master it, and guys that have such as Lasith Malinga have a lot of success.



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The yorker is a ball bowled up around the toes of the batsmen. But you can also play with the line. There are 3 types of Yorkers, at the feet, at the stumps or wide of off stump. A yorker bowled wide of off stump can be very effective and one of the hardest balls to hit, especially if the batsmen is backing away.

If you miss the yorker you're better off erring on the full side. A low full toss is a lot harder to hit than a juicy half volley. With this in mind I tend to aim my yorkers half way up the stumps. The other reason I do this is because as bowlers our muscle memory is to bowl good length, that's what we practice the majority of the time. So when we go to bowl a yorker our natural tendency is to drag it down a bit and serve up an easy ball to hit. Again, always try to err on the full side.

## How to Bowl the Yorker

When practicing a yorker I like to train in blocks in an empty net. Set up 3 markers. One wide off off stump to a right hander, one wide of off stump to a left hander and a set of shoes right in the middle. Bowl 6 overs and see how many times you can hit or get near the marker you're aiming for.

Make sure every ball you call which marker you are aiming for to give yourself some accountability. Whether you think it in your head if you're on your own, or call it out to a team mate.

## Challenge:

*See if you can hit the marker or shoes 6 times. That's one per over! Let me know when you've done it!*



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*The images below show me hitting a wide of off yorker and my mate Ethan hitting the pair of shoes!*



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## How to Bowl The Slower Ball

The slower ball is very effective in T20, especially when the batsmen are coming hard at you. In T20 cricket, the batsmen like to get into a rhythm hitting through the line of the ball. The purpose of the slower ball is to stop them from getting into, or at least put them off that rhythm.

There's a fine line between a good and bad slower ball. If the ball is too slow it gives the batsmen enough time to adjust and becomes easy to hit. The right paced slower ball will have the batsmen going through with his original shot and cause an error.

There are many different variations of a slower ball, which I'll go through in a moment but the 3 key attributes to any good slower ball are;

- The bowlers action remains the same or at least any subtle changes are hard to pick up. This means run up, grip, gather, arm speed all need to look as close to possible as your normal delivery.
- Pace changes are not drastic. A ball that's 10-20km slower than your standard pace is going to be more effective than a ball that is 30-40km slower.
- The ball includes another element to deceive the batsmen. E.g. If it's a slower ball with the seam up it might swing or if it's a cutter it moves off the wicket.

## Practicing the slower ball

Like I said, there are many different types of slower balls, and you'll have to decide which ones you're most comfortable bowling. The best way to do that is to practice them...a lot. When it comes to practicing the slower ball and getting volume up, you're better off doing this on your own in an empty net. Not many batsmen are going to want to face 30-40 slower balls in a row unless they're specifically working on facing the slower ball, which is great if you can get a batsman to bowl at.



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Otherwise set up some cones in a square on a good length and practice landing the ball in the square as many times as you can. The length of a slower ball is very important, if it's too full it's a lot easier to hit than a good length slower ball. If it's too short it will sit up for the batsmen (unless it's a slower ball bouncer you've bowled on purpose....i'll explain that shortly)

*Set your target up on a good length like in the picture below*



The three main slower balls I like to use are;

## **The Off Cutter**

The off cutter slower ball is one of the most common slower balls because it is one of the easiest to control. You bowl the off cutter by rolling your fingers down the side of the ball when you release it. If you're a right hand bowler you roll your fingers down the right side, if you're a left hand bowler you roll your hands down the left side.



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The grip for the off cutter is pretty similar to your normal grip, I like to tuck my thumb under the ball so I can flick it out with my thumb when I release the ball, giving me more top spin and dip. You can also grip the ball with both fingers on one side of the seam. If you're right handed, both fingers on the left side of the seam. The aim of the off cutter is to not only come out slower, but also move off the pitch.

The other variation of this ball is the leg cutter which is exactly the same but rolling your fingers down the other side of the ball.

*See the picture below for my off cutter grip*



## The Knuckle Ball

The way I bowl the knuckle ball is by pushing the ball right back into my hand and widening my fingers on the ball. This makes the ball come out slightly slower and if bowled correctly with the seam upright it will also swing which makes it a good ball to bowl with a newer ball. The knuckle ball is not a massive change in pace but just enough to deceive the batsmen.



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## Back of The Hand

The back of the hand slower ball is without doubt one of the hardest to master but most effective balls in T20 cricket. When bowled correctly it looks like your normal ball but comes out quite a bit slower.

The grip for the back of the hand slower ball is exactly the same as your normal ball. The difference is instead of the ball coming out the front of your hand you turn your arm 180 degrees and release the ball out the back of your hand.



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A tip to help improve your accuracy is to get your arm as close as possible to your head. This also allows you to get top spin on the ball causing it to dip. If your release point is too wide, you will have more side spin on the ball. So they're my three favourite. There's plenty more you can try and even come up with your own but as with any other skill the key to mastering them is practice, practice and practice.

## How to Bowl The Bouncer

Now let's look at my favourite ball, the bouncer. The bouncer is a very effective ball in T20 cricket because a lot of the time batsmen are looking to get on the front foot and aren't expecting a bouncer.

It's very important that when you bowl a bouncer it's well directed and high enough, preferably above shoulder height which doesn't give you much room for error because anything above the head is a wide. If your bouncer is below the shoulders and around chest height good batsmen will put it away.



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In T20 cricket bowlers are only allowed 1 bouncer per over which means it's important to be aware of when to use it. I generally like to use mine in the

middle of an over or towards the end of an over so that it's in the batsman's mind. If you use it first ball the batsman knows he can be on the front foot for the rest of the over. That's not to say you can't use it first ball.

The other thing to take into account when bowling a bouncer is where the batsman likes to play it, this is where reading the batsman comes into play. Some batsmen will like to back away, free his arms and try to hit the ball over the off side. In this case I'd direct the bouncer straight at him and cramp him for room. Some players will like to get inside the ball and try to hit it to the leg side or down to fine leg and in this case I'd try to direct the bouncer more wide of off stump.

## **Practicing The Bouncer**

When practicing a bouncer, it's more important to worry about the end result rather than where you land the ball on the pitch. The end result we are looking for is the ball passing through between the batters shoulders and top of the head. Where you pitch the ball is going to be determined by your height and pace. A taller bowler will be able to achieve the end result by pitching the ball fuller, that's why we worry more about the end result.



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*Set some targets up as I have in the image below. On the back net at the height you want the ball to go through. Remember to set targets up for both a right and left hander.*



It's important to change the height of the targets to practice bowling at different height batsmen.

## **Keys to Bowling a Good Bouncer**

- Keep your action strong – use your front arm
- Stay up nice and tall
- Release from your highest point
- Don't try to bowl too fast (this will cause you to lose your shape and fall over – reducing pace and bounce)

Bowling a good bouncer is more about rhythm and the correct action. Stay up nice and tall, release the ball from as high as possible and finishing off with a strong front arm. If you try to bowl too fast you will lose your action, fall over and lose pace and bounce.



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## Swing Bowling in T20

There are three different types of swing.

New ball swing, old ball swing and reverse swing. The key factors effecting swing bowling are;

- Condition of the ball (new or roughed up)
- Wrist position (the position/direction of your wrist when you release the ball)
- Seam position (the position of the seam once you release the ball)
- Release point (where your arm is when you release the ball – higher or wider)
- Arm pathway (where you follow through with your arm once you have released the ball)

Let me explain each type of swing and how each of these factors play a part. Firstly.....

### New Ball Swing

As the name suggests, new ball swing is when the ball is brand new and both sides are shiny. The way that the ball swings is by using the seam as a 'rudder'. For my examples I'm going to be talking about a right arm bowler to right handed batsmen.

If you are trying to bowl an outswinger (swinging away from the right hander) with the new ball the seam will be positioned towards first or second slip and your wrist angled in that direction as well. See the photo below....



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The release point for an outswinger is slightly wider, so your arm slightly away from your head and your arm pathway is across your body, down to your left leg....see the photo below....



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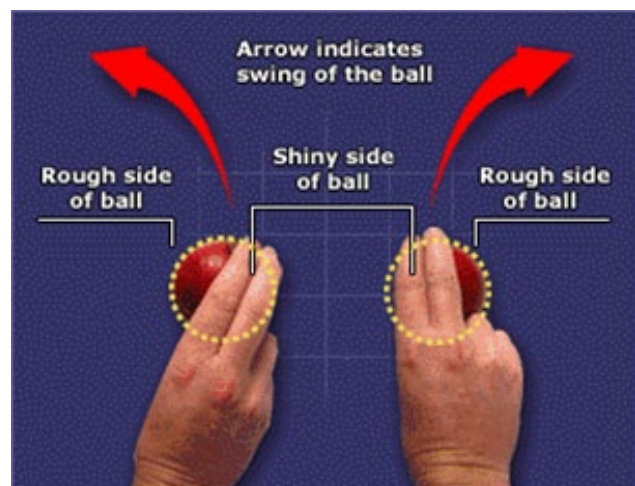
For the inswinger we do everything in reverse. The seam and your wrist point slightly to fine leg. The release point is higher, so trying to brush your ear with your arm. See the photo below....



Your arm pathway is through to your right leg for the inswinger.

## Old Ball Swing

Old ball swing occurs when one side of the ball gets rougher than the other. This happens by purposely taking better care of one side of the ball by shinning it. The reason the ball swings is because the rougher side has more friction and catches the air more, dragging the ball in that direction.



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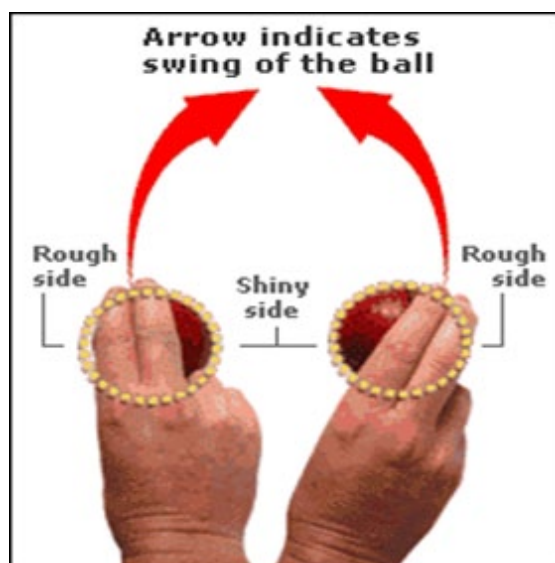
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Wrist position, release point and arm pathways all remain the same as new ball swing. With the old ball, instead of using the seam as a rudder you are using the rough side so you can keep the seam straight. The ball will swing towards the rough side so if you want to bowl an outswinger (right arm bowler to right arm batter) you have the rough side pointing to first slip. If you want to bowl an inswinger you have the rough side pointing to fine leg.

## Reverse Swing

Reverse swing is similar to old ball swing but this time, as the name suggests, it swings in the reverse direction. So the ball starts to swing towards the shiny side.

Without getting too scientific, the reason this happens is because one side of the ball gets so rough that instead of encasing that side of the ball, air skips straight past that side, causing more friction on the side it's encasing...the shiny side. This makes the ball swing to the shiny side.



Reverse swing is hard to achieve in T20 cricket because you are only bowling for 20 overs. It does happen sometimes on very rough surfaces and wickets but is more common in 50 over cricket and test matches. When you do get the ball reversing it's very effective because it's hard to pick up and generally swings very late and a long way.

You will notice teams trying to purposely rough up one side to achieve reverse swing by throwing the ball in to the keeper on the bounce. Remember this has to be done within the rules.



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## Basic Swing Drill: Wrist position

The first and most basic drill I like to use to practice swing bowling is the wrist position drill. This is a good warm up drill to work on getting your wrist and the seam in the right position.

Grab a partner and stand about 5 meters apart to start off. With ball in hand, rest your bowling arm elbow on your non bowling hand. See the photo below.



To do this drill throw the ball to your partner and try to use just your wrist as much as possible. Practice releasing the ball for an out swinger and an inswinger and see if you can keep the seam upright.



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## Challenge:

*Have a competition with your partner to see who can release the ball correctly with the seam upright the most times in a row or first to 10.*

## Advanced Swing Drill

An advanced drill I like to use to practice my swing bowling is swinging the ball around a stump. Set one stump up or something similar on about off stump line on a good length. See the picture below.



This drill is great for practicing both inswing and outswing bowling. The aim of the drill is to swing the ball around the stump. If you're bowling an outswinger the aim is to get the ball to pass the right hand side of the stump and miss off stump. If you are bowling an inswinger the aim is to get the ball to pass the left hand side of the stump and hit off stump or middle stump.

I know there's a lot to take in there on swing bowling. It's one of the most effective weapons a bowler has against batsmen. Every bowler will have a way their natural action allows them to swing the ball. Once you have figured out your action and how to consistently swing the ball your natural way, work on swinging the ball the other way. Bowlers who can swing the ball both ways are very dangerous and hard to play!



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## Bowling In the Power Play

The power play is without doubt the most important period of the game for both the batting team and the bowling team. Generally if you come out on top of the first power play it goes a long way to winning the game.

The fielding team is only allowed 2 fielders out of the inner circle and because of this the batsmen look to go very hard which makes it tough as a bowler to contain the runs.

Generally if you get the opportunity to bowl in the power play it's because your captain/coach sees you as a leader of the attack so take up the challenge and grab it with both hands.

Here's how we approach the power play....

### Plan A: Take Wickets

It sounds obvious but the best way to stop the runs is to take wickets. This means attacking the batsmen, sticking to your strengths. Whether that's pitching the ball up at getting it to swing, hitting the deck hard and making it tough for the batsmen to hit down the ground or bowling flat and tight as a spinner....whatever your strength is **STICK TO IT**. I like to use my pace and use the hard length delivery as my 'go to' ball to cramp the batsmen up and make it hard for them to hit down the ground.

### Plan B: Stop the Runs

It doesn't always go to plan, especially in T20. You need to be able to think on your feet and adapt. If the batsmen get away and you don't take early wickets, plan b is damage control! You need to sum up the conditions and the batsmen. What type of wicket it is, where they like hitting and come up with a way to slow the scoring.



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It might be using cutters and slower balls on a dry wicket, it might be bowling shorter on a fast wicket or bowling wide of off stump if the batsmen are strong through the leg side. Whatever you come up with, if you can slow the scoring, that generally always leads to wickets and puts you back on the attack.

## Dealing with Field Restrictions

The fact that you can only have two fielders outside the inner circle makes those two fielders extremely important and means you have to utilise them the best you can. Where you place the fielders must coincide with your plan. If you plan to bowl a bit shorter, use the fielders square of the wicket or fine. If you plan on bowling fuller and swinging the ball use your fielders straight and in front of the wicket. It's important you have a plan for each delivery you are going to bowl, be clear on that plan at the top of your mark and set the field accordingly, don't get stuck in the habit of leaving the field the same for every ball. If you are going to bowl a slower ball where is the ball likely to get hit? I'd say straight or midwicket so you need to put fielders there. That's the thought process you need to go through for every ball you bowl....where is the batsmen most likely to hit this ball. Here are a few quick references as to where you might place the field for different deliveries...

### DEALING WITH FIELD RESTRICTIONS

BALL	FIELDER'S OUT
Full And Straight	Deep Mid Off, Deep Mid On
Full Outside Off	Deep Cover, Deep Mid Off
Good Length Straight	Deep Square Leg/Mid Wicket, Third Man
Good Length Outside Off	Deep Cover, Third Man
Short And Straight	Deep Fine Leg, Deep Square Leg
Short Outside Off	Third Man, Deep Point
Slower Ball	Deep Mid Off, Mid On, Deep Mid Wicket

Just a guide to get you to start thinking about where the ball might go.



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**TIP:** *Getting in and out of your overs is really important in the power play. What I mean by that is the first and last ball of the over. If you get hit for a boundary first ball, you're immediately under pressure for the rest of the over.*

*If you've bowled 5 tight balls it's really important you close the over out and carry the pressure over into the next over. If you get hit for a boundary last ball, you release the pressure.*

*The power play is a good challenge. Think on your feet and enjoy it!*

## **Bowling In the Middle Overs – with James Pattinson**

The middle overs in T20 cricket are the most flexible stage of the innings. Plans for the power play and end of the innings are pretty cut and dry, meaning you know your plans and they don't change much. Plans in the middle overs are completely dependent on the situation of the game. Cricket match's ebb and flow and there are three phases your team can be in at any given time during a game. Attacking (on top), defensive (behind) or neutral (even). The phase you exit the power play in is going to determine your plans through the middle overs.

### **Attacking Phase**

Example of an attacking phase score: 4/25 off 6

If you've won the power play and taken wickets it's time to really put the foot on the throat and keep attacking. Use your strike bowlers, keep coming at the batting team hard. Keep attacking fields, maybe keep a slip in or have one more in the circle on the one and really try to build the pressure on the new batsmen. If you can back up a good power play and win the middle overs you basically shut the opposition out of the game.



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## Neutral Phase

Example of a neutral phase score: 1/40 off 6

The neutral phase is when there is no team clearly dominating and the game is really in the balance. In this situation stick with Plan A, keep trying to take wickets to turn the match in your favour. You might have to turn to new bowlers and look at new ways to take wickets. Be creative.

## Defensive Phase

Example of a defensive phase score: 0/60 off 6

Ok, plan A hasn't worked and the batsmen have got off to a flier. You've either bowled badly or they've batted well. It's time to take a step back and go into damage control. Set defensive fields, use your 5 players on the fence and use them wisely. You need to block off the batters scoring zones which you should have a fair idea of by now. Don't think the defensive phase means just running in and bowling, hoping for the best. It won't cut it. You still need to have plans and look to drive the game back in your favour, the plans are just more defensive. Things you can try in the defensive phase: stacking the off side and bowling wide of off stump, stacking the long boundary and forcing the batsmen to hit there with the line you bowl, take the pace off a lot of balls with slower balls and cutters, bowl full and straight and protect the straight boundaries. Whatever it is, make sure you have a plan. If there's one set batsman and one new batsman, try to give the set batsmen a single and then build the pressure on the new batsman.

**TRAINING TIP:** *Scenarios at training are a great way to emulate match conditions. If you can do it on a centre wicket great, otherwise run them in the nets. Come up with scenarios for phases, use two batters and run between the wickets. The closer you can train to match intensity the more beneficial it will be.*

*I hope that helps you attack the middle overs of a T20 with some clear and effective plans in the future!*



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## Bowling at The End of The Innings

There is no doubt that closing the innings is one of the hardest jobs as a bowler, especially when the batting team has wickets in hand. Either way they're going to come hard at you in the last 5 overs.

For me, I have a plan. Whether it is a bouncer, yorker, slower ball or hard length ball. I know what I'm going to bowl at the top of my mark and what I do with that is back myself 100%. I back myself to execute the ball I want to bowl. As soon as you start second guessing yourself in T20 the batsman is already in front. Then it comes down to execution, both yours and the batsman. There are going to be times when you execute your plan but still get hit for 4 or 6, that's the nature of T20 and especially closing the innings. Don't let that effect you. Go back to the top of your mark, have a clear plan for the next ball and back yourself to execute it.

You're still allowed your 5 fielders on the fence so again, use them wisely. You need to be smart about where you put them as I've spoken about previously. If you are clear about where you want to bowl the ball then you should be clear about where you expect the ball to go.....and surprise, surprise....that's where you have your fielders!

At the end of an innings there is going to be wickets falling and again, it's really important that if there's a set batsmen and a new batsman that you bowl the ball that you think is most likely going to get the set batsman off strike and then really put the pressure on the new batsmen, especially if they're a tail ender.

Look, it is very hard to contain a side in T20 in the last 5 overs, especially if they have wickets in hand but if you do everything I've spoken about above then you give yourself the best opportunity to succeed in the closing overs.



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## **Introduction to Spin Bowling In T20 - *with Cameron Boyce***

### **Spin Pre-Game/Training Warm Up Drill**

I like to keep it pretty simple when I'm warming up for training or a game. Before a game I go to the nets and bowl 20-30 balls. I take a coach with me to throw balls back and also give me a bit of feedback on my action and how I'm letting the ball go.

What I do is go through each of my deliveries so I can get a good feel for them and get them coming out right leading into a game. So I bowl 6 leg spinners, 6 top spinners, 6 wrongun's, 6 top spinners etc. For me it's all about feeling good going into a game or training session.

I like to do a two-step drill where all I'm working on is getting up and over the ball to get drift and dip. I'm also working on getting up and over with my back leg and rotating on the front leg.

### **Training Drill - Turning the Ball - *with Cameron Boyce***

First things first, you're not a spinner if you don't turn the ball....you're a slow bowler. And that doesn't change in T20 cricket. You will vary your pace, flight and turn a lot more in T20 cricket and use different tactics to deceive the batsman and unsettle their rhythm but spinning the ball remains your biggest weapon.

Here's a simple drill I use all the time at training and on my own to practice really ripping the ball.

Set up 4 markers in a rectangle up the batters end. Two just in front of the stumps and two in front of the popping crease. Check the image below for setup. So you want the same or similar colour markers on the opposite corners of the rectangle.



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The aim of this drill is to spin the ball from marker to marker. If you want to bowl a leg spinner, you're trying to land the ball near the first white cone and spin it to the other white cone and if you're trying to bowl a wrong-un you want to land the ball near the red cone and spin it to the purple cone.

I've also got a red cone out of picture which you will see in the video. Make sure you practice different lines. For example, when I'm bowling to a batsmen who is always trying to hit the ball through the leg side I like to bowl wide of off stump which makes it harder for them to access the leg side. So in this drill I'd practice red cone to red cone.

Very simple drill but it gives you a visual on where you're trying to land the ball and where you're trying to spin the ball....and if you achieve the desired result. Play around with the position of the cones and how far you are trying to turn the ball. It's a little bit more difficult for off spinners to turn the ball as far in the opposite direction (doosra).

This drill gives you a good opportunity to practice spinning the ball without bowling to a batsman and having to worry about bowling a bad ball and getting whacked. So give it a rip and figure out what works for you. The more you do it the more it'll become part of your muscle memory.



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Make sure you practice both your attacking and defensive bowling in the nets. Get a mate and set some scenarios, they're a great way to practice as close to game situation as possible.

## **Spin Scenarios Introduction**

Scenarios are great for putting yourself in a match like situation, putting yourself under pressure and practicing different styles of bowling.

You can literally come up with any scenario you like.

In this instance, I'm just going to stick with fairly broad scenarios, attacking bowling and defensive bowling.

## **Scenarios – Attacking Phase**

Scenarios are a great way to practice your plans for different situations of the game and different types of batsmen.

In this scenario Lynny will be batting as he would in a game as if he has just come in to bat, just looking to rotate the strike early. I'm going to share with you my mindset and plans when bowling to a batsman in this frame of mind. Generally when you come on as a spinner it will be after the power play so you can have up to five fielders out. So I start with an in-out field to a new batsman. Meaning I've got some men in tight stopping the single and some on the fence protecting the error ball or big shot.

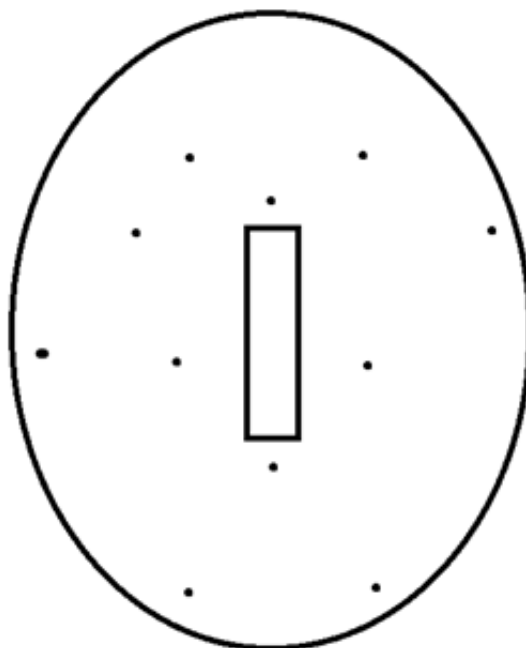
The hypothetical field I'll start with to Lynny is 4 fielders on the fence. Deep square leg, deep long on, deep long off and deep cover. The fielders in on the single will be short third man, point, extra cover and catching mid wicket. Being good friends with Lynny I know how he likes to play and that he doesn't generally sweep. You'll have to figure out the batsmen you are up against as quick as you can.



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Here's a basic diagram of my attacking field.



My plan early on is going to be to land the ball on or outside leg stump and get him pushing the ball through the leg side and hopefully hitting it to my catching mid-wicket. I want to build as much pressure as I can early on by bowling dot balls.

When you're bowling to a new batsman you generally get away with more error balls. So don't get too down if you bowl a bad ball...as long as you're working to your plan.

I like to bowl my first couple of balls a bit quicker to get off to a good start to the over. My next couple of balls I then like to bowl with a bit of flight to see if the batsman wants to take a risk, being a new batter I'm happy for him to have a go at the chance of getting his wicket.

I like to bowl a variation towards the end of the over so I'm not too predictable. If it's been a good over I'll bowl what I think is the safest ball, to close out the over with a dot or single.



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## Scenarios – Defensive Phase

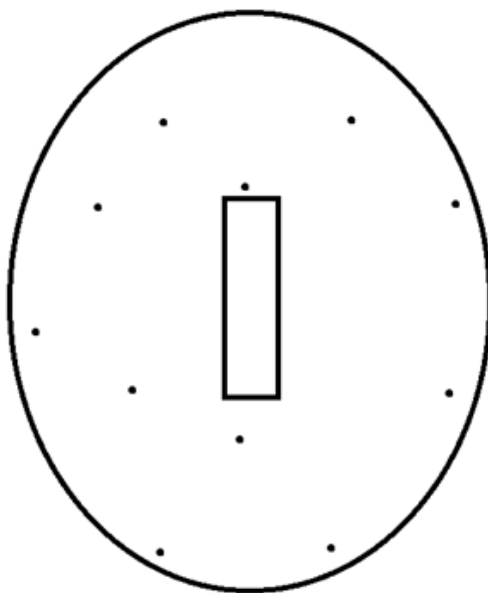
In this scenario Lynny will be batting as he would in a game as if he is set in his innings and towards the back of his teams innings, looking to come hard at me. I'm going to share my mindset and plans when bowling to a batsmen in this frame of mind.

It can be pretty daunting as a spinner when the batsmen are trying to whack you over the fence every ball, but it's also a lot of fun and can be a good opportunity to get some wickets.

The first thing you need to think about is what parts of the field are going to see a lot of the ball. You need your best fielders to be in the “hot spots”.

When I'm bowling, because I'm turning the ball away I try to pitch the ball on or outside leg stump so a lot of batsmen try to hit me to the leg side. That means I need my best fielders on the leg side boundary and I also like to have a good fielder in the ring at point to save runs and create run outs.

Here's a basic diagram of my defensive field...



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You'll notice my catching midwicket is back on the fence. The other difference is that rather than having the fielders inside the ring in tight and stopping the single, I have them back on the ring as far as they can go to help prevent boundaries.

As a spinner, sometimes you'll bowl good balls and get hit for six and bowl bad balls and get wickets and visa versa. It's important to get it out of your head as quick as you can if you do get hit for a boundary.

Bowling to attacking batsmen is a bit like a game of cat and mouse. Play with you pace and line and do the best you can to not let him settle.

If you get a batsmen to play a shot outside of his comfort zone (i.e. reverse sweet) you know you're bowling well and that's a little win.

I like to really work on finishing my overs well. So I have a couple of balls that I know if I execute properly will only go for 0-1 runs, unless the batsman plays a really good shot. My go-to ball to close the over is a flatter and faster ball outside off stump that I want the batsman to hit out to the deep cover.

As I said, bowling to attacking batsmen can be a lot of fun but you need to be prepared and have a plan.

Make sure you practice both your attacking and defensive bowling in the nets. Get a mate and set some scenarios, they're a great way to practice as close to game situation as possible.



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## **\*NOTE\***

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## **CHAPTER 3**

# **FIELDING**

**“Discover the fundamentals of ground fielding, catching and throwing for T20 cricket and learn the drills I use to become a jet in the field”**

# FIELDING INTRODUCTION

In the fielding module, I'll go through basic and advanced fielding techniques and drills.

Fielding has almost turned into a discipline on its own that can be the difference between winning and losing and also between getting selected for a team and missing out.

One big play in the field can turn the game, an awesome run out, a spectacular catch. Especially in T20 cricket where there is limited time and limited opportunities.

I can't stress highly enough, how important it is to spend as much time on your fielding at training as you do on your batting and bowling.

And make sure when you're practicing your fielding, really rip in. Make it competitive and make it fun.

Let's go.

## Ground Fielding Fundamentals

When it comes to ground fielding, I like to break it down to 4 key points. Anticipation, attacking the ball, body height and watching the ball for the last 6 inches into your hands.

When I'm talking about ground fielding, it doesn't matter where you are on the field – these principles apply for any ball coming to you along the ground. Here's what I mean by each key point.

## Anticipation

Anticipation is basically trying to stay one step ahead of the game. If there's a new batsman at the crease he's going to be looking to get the set batsman on strike so you're moving a bit closer and looking to stop the single.



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If there's a set batsmen smashing boundaries you're hanging back a bit expecting the ball to come hard and flat. So reading the situation of the game and trying to predict what the batsman is going to do.

An even more advanced level of anticipation is to read the play mid delivery. What I mean by this is taking notice of where the ball is pitched and reading the batsman to see what he's shaping to do.

An example of this would be if I'm fielding at point and I see the ball land short I can probably pick up the batsman shaping for a cut shot, so I'd hang back a bit expecting the ball to come to me harder. When I say hang back I don't mean moving backwards or your weight back. I just mean you wouldn't be racing in as much as if you saw the ball land on a good length and picked up the batsman shaping for a defensive shot.

This can all happen in a split second so it takes a lot of practice to get to that level.

Next time you're watching cricket on TV – see if you can pick out this happening.

## **Attacking The Ball**

Attacking the ball is moving to the ball rather than waiting for the ball to come to you. The more you practice this the more you'll pick it up cleanly. Attacking the ball creates doubt in the batsman's mind and forces them to make quicker decisions, helping you create run outs.

If you sit back on your heels and let the ball come to you, you're not going to give yourself the chance of a run out.

## **Low Body Height**

Body height is bending at the knees, getting nice and low to the ground, which massively reduces the risk of a fumble. Make sure you're getting low early and not at the last minute. If you're not low enough, you risk the ball going through your legs and looking silly – which we've all had happen before and it doesn't feel great.



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## Watching The Ball Into Your Hands

Probably the most important fundamental, not just of ground fielding but fielding overall.

This is something most of us don't do well enough. We watch the ball until it gets close to our hands but don't track it right into our hands...and that's when the mistakes are made.

Take note of the best fielders in the world and watch how closely they track the ball into their hands.

Something so simple but make sure you are consciously thinking about it at training.

## GROUND FIELDING DRILLS

### Drill 1: Basic Technique Drill – Stationary Ball

The first ground fielding drill is a basic technique drill. Very similar to the drop ball batting drill. All you are doing is working on the 4 fundamentals and fielding a stationary ball.

I like to set up 3-4 stationary balls and field them in quick succession. Field the ball, throw it to the keeper, jog back and repeat. It's a great drill for younger cricketer to practice the basics and a great warm up drill for older players to make sure the basics aren't forgotten.



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## Drill 2: Moving Ball – Goal Keeper Drill

Ok, a bit more challenging now. We're going to move onto a moving ball. This drill brings in a lot more anticipation and makes it harder to attack the ball. Set the drill out like the picture below.



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You can have the markers close together to make it easier or further apart to make it harder.

The challenge is for your coach or teammate to hit or roll the ball through the markers and you've got to anticipate, attack, get low and watch it into your hands.

This is a great drill that incorporates every aspect of ground fielding. You can adapt it for in fielding or out fielding and make it as easy or as challenging as you like.

## Game:

*Get in pairs or small groups and make it a competition. See which team can cleanly field the most balls in a row.*

Have fun with this drill!

## Throwing Technique and Drills

Throwing is a game changer in T20 cricket. A fielder with a powerful arm is an asset to any team.

### Technique

A good throwing technique is not only important to help you throw more accurately and powerfully but it also helps prevent shoulder and elbow injury.

Keys to a good throwing technique are;



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## **Line your feet up**

Throwing is a game of straight lines. Keep everything in line and you will be a lot more accurate. Quick feet as soon as you pick up the ball to get both feet in line with the target.

## **Elbow and/or hand of front arm in line with the target**

Again, straight lines. You want your front arm pointing at your target, not across your body or away from your target. It acts as your lead.

## **Both arms line up towards target**

You should be able to draw a straight line through your chest between your throwing arm and your front arm. And they should line up with the target.

## **Elbow above your shoulder (throwing arm)**

This is a good power position and also helps prevent elbow and shoulder stress.



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## Throw in front of your eyes and follow through to your target

Once again, all in the name of straight lines. If you release the ball in front of your eyes you'll be somewhere around your target. If not you're either releasing it too early or too late. So focus on releasing in front of your eyes.

Follow through to the target to keep the momentum going in the direction you want it.

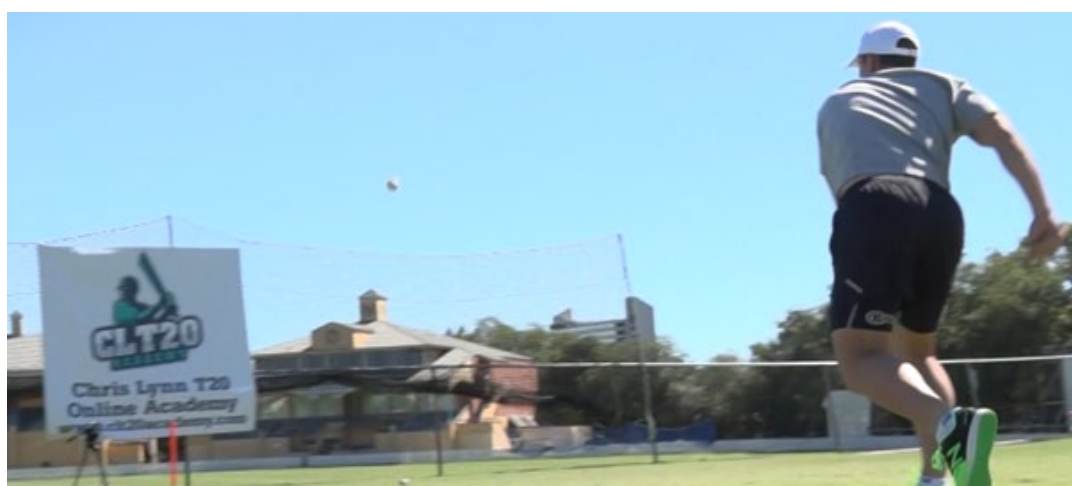
## Single Stump Drill

An easy repetition drill you can do on your own. Grab a single stump and practice narrowing down your accuracy.

Start from a standing position and slowly go through all the fundamentals before moving onto a run and gather or moving ball.

A great game to play is not to miss the stump on the same side twice in a row. Really work on throwing in front of your eyes. If you miss to the right you released the ball too early and know to hold it longer next time. If you missed to the left you know you held the ball too long.

It's a great guide to work on and something I learnt from Australian fielding coach Mike Young.



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## Throwing Off Balance

There are plenty of times in T20 games where you don't have the time to line your feet up and you're going to have to throw off balance.



Technique basically goes out the window here.

I don't mind which foot you throw off.

The main thing to work on is keeping your head still and as level as possible.

## Long Throwing (Power and Distance)

When it comes to throwing in from the boundary, the aim is to get the ball in hard and flat and hit the perfect circle on the keepers chest.

Technique remains exactly the same as short throws.

The only difference is you need to use your legs a lot more. That is where you get your drive and power.



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Add in what we call a “crow hop” to get the momentum going towards your target and really drive through your legs when you release the ball.



## Long Throw Challenge:

*In a group of 4 (two pairs), have two throwers and two catchers the same distance apart.*

*See who can throw the ball the flattest and hardest to the keeper or gloveman and hit the “perfect circle” which is a circle about a meter diameter around the centre of the keepers chest.*

That should give you plenty to work on with your throwing.  
Have fun!



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## High Catching Technique and Drills

High catching is really important if you're a boundary rider. You'll see a lot of action in T20 cricket. It's even harder when you start to play under lights.

Again, I like to keep it very simple when I'm practicing high catches at training and work on 3 key points.

### 1. EARLY SPEED TO THE BALL

Early speed to the ball gives you the opportunity to get yourself in position under the high ball and keep your head still. Think about how much your head moves when you're running.

A moving head makes it a lot harder to track the ball into your hands. Sometimes you don't have a choice if the ball's a long way from you. But you need to make every effort possible to get yourself set under the ball. As soon as you see the ball go up, make your judgment and then get to where you think it's going to land.

### 2. HIGH HANDS

Get your hands above your eye line and it allows you to track the ball all the way into your hands easily. If your hands are below your eyes, you will lose sight of the ball momentarily as the ball crosses your eye line, making the catch a lot more difficult.



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### 3. TRACKING THE BALL ALL THE WAY INTO YOUR HANDS

This is a key fundamental for every part of fielding but so many players take their eye off the ball for the last 6 inches. Very simple and so effective. I promise it will be the difference between winning and losing a match one day. WATCH THE BALL ALL THE WAY INTO YOUR HANDS!!



As for training drills.

You don't need to do anything fancy. It's just about catching as many high balls as you can. Practice them standing still, running in from the boundary, balls going over your head so you have to turn and run. Just practice as much as you can and as many different situations as you can.

### Reflex Catching Technique and Drills

Reflex catching means when the ball is coming hard and flat and you don't have a lot of time to react.

Fielding positions you can expect to get reflex catches are in the slips and in close to the bat, so positions like catching cover, catching midwicket, point etc.



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A few fundamentals for reflex catching technique are;

- **Strong base – knees bent and in a power position**
- **Good balance – feet about shoulder width apart**
- **Weight forward and on the balls of your feet**

The above three points equate to what we call “basing up” – the power position you get into just as the batter makes contact with the ball.

This puts you in a great position to react and move up, down or sideways. When the ball comes you to.

- **Making contact with the ball out in front and watching the ball all the way into your hands.**
- **Soft hands**

See the picture below for a great example of a good catching position and watching the ball all the way into the hands.



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## Basic Reflex Catching Drill

The above picture is a great drill to practice your reflex catching basics. Grab a partner and set out 3 different distances/levels. Take it in turns to catch 10 balls on each marker. Even turn it into a competition and see who drops the least amount of balls.

If you don't have a knicker board don't stress, you can do this drill simply using a bat.

A key point when doing this drill is to keep your head nice and still so your eyes are level and you can easily track the ball.

You'll notice on the side view I get my hands out in front of my head so that I can meet the ball nice and early and use soft hands.



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## Decision Making Drill

A drill I like to use to increase my reaction speed is the decision making drill. Use the knicker board or a bat and base up facing either sideways or with your back turned to your partner.

When they say yep (as they're throwing or hitting the ball) you jump to face them and have to quickly pick up the ball and catch it.



## The Square Challenge

This is a simple but great reflex catching challenge that works on so many different components, reaction, agility, decision making, awareness and even fitness depending how long you do it.

Set out a square, about 2m x 2m. The bigger the square the harder it is. You need a group of three at least and can have up to five.

One person on opposite corners of the square and someone in the middle catching.

The aim is to catch a ball from one person and then the other and keep going back and forwards. The throwers job is to try and challenge the catcher and make them dive around.



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See the photo below.



Have a competition amongst your group and see who can catch ten in a row. You might have noticed I like competition! I think it's the best way to challenge yourself and improve.

## Goal Keeper Drill

The same as the drill we covered in ground fielding except this time the thrower or hitter is trying to get the ball through the cones in the air. So as you would in a game, walk up to the cones and “base up” just as your partner hits the ball.

See how many you can catch in a row without letting one through the cones

## Challenge yourself:

*If your good at this drill. Move the cones further apart to make it harder and give yourself more ground to cover...really gets you diving around!*



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## Short 3's Drill

As the name suggests, you need a group of three for this drill and it's all about volume (getting as many catches as you can)

There is three variations of this drill. You need a thrower (underarm), a batter and a catcher.

They are all done in close range and working on short, sharp catches.

## Short 3's Slips



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## Short 3's Cover



## Short 3's Midwicket



All of the drill's I've shown you in this section are about getting as many catches as you can in a short time frame while still focusing on the important fundamentals.

They'll keep you busy for a while!  
So grab some mates and have fun!



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## **CHAPTER 4**

# **CAPTAINCY**

**“How to manage your players, communicate effectively and have the tactical genius of a great leader”**

# PLAYER MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

One of the most important but hardest things to do as a captain is understand each and every player in your team.

Generally you've been picked as captain for a reason and that's because you've got good player management skills.

The biggest thing is understanding how different players react. Some players need a kick up the backside to get them going where as some players need a softer approach and maybe have their tyres pumped up a little bit.

You've got to take the time to really understand your players' character so that you can help get the best out of them.

You also need to know each players role in the team and communicate that clearly with them so that everyone in the team is on the same page. As soon as you get divide amongst the team with players not understanding their role clearly it won't be enjoyable which means you probably won't be successful either.

Good teams will have a set of standards that they want every player to abide by. Both at training and on match day.

Things like punctuality, dress standard, training intensity etc.

It's your job as a captain to not only communicate that with the team and make sure everyone is aware of the standards, but also lead the way and set an example and make sure you're leading the playing group to the standard that you want it to be at. Players will look up to and follow you.

Being a good captain is not just about talking and leading though.

A good captain is also a good listener and shows empathy to other peoples opinions. You need to be able to listen and take on board constructive feedback but also filter out what's not needed.



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Being a captain is not easy.

One of the biggest qualities of a good captain is mental toughness and being able to make tough decisions.

As a captain, you're going to be involved in things like, disciplining players, selection and letting players (your mates) know they've been dropped from the team.

The best way to deal with that goes back to communication. As long as you're upfront and honest, they'll take it a lot better. There's usually a pretty clear reason why people are dropped from a team as stats play a pretty big part in cricket.

While it's a tough job, being captain brings a lot of fun and enjoyment and a sense of fulfilment so if you get the chance. Grab it with both hands.

## **TACTICS**

The first decision you have to make as a captain on match day is whether your team wants to bat or bowl first.

My personal opinion in general is I like to bat first and put the pressure on the other team. I'm a big fan of scoreboard pressure and I think it's the positive approach.

But....

Here are the things I consider, with the coach and a couple of senior players, before I go out to toss the coin.

## **Makeup of the team**

As captain you will have a good understanding of your team and what circumstances they perform best under. Some teams like to chase, some teams like to set a total. If it's a line ball decision, you'd go with what your team prefers.



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Another reason to look at the makeup of your team is that the attacking thing to do might be to do whatever your team is strongest at first. E.g. if your team has a strong batting line up but a weak bowling line up, start the game on a positive note and hope you can set a big total.

The advantage we have at professional level is that we know the opposition team and what they like to do as well.

## **Time of day**

Sometimes you will play a game that the first innings is during daylight and second innings is under lights. You need to take into account that it's difficult to bowl and field under lights because there is more dew on the grass.

If you play a game in the early morning, say 9am, the ball tends to move around more so I like to bowl.

## **Overhead conditions**

More so in a day time game.

If there is some cloud cover overhead and the weather is humid generally the ball will swing more and it's better to bowl first in those conditions.

If it's a hot, dry, sunny day then you would be more likely to bat.

## **Pitch conditions**

This usually ties in with overhead conditions.

If the pitch is flat, hard and dry then it's a perfect chance to bat and set a big total.

If the pitch is green or slow, then you might look to bowl first and make the most of the movement out of the pitch.

If the pitch looks dry and crumbly then it might turn more and reverse swing in the second innings so you would look to bat first (this doesn't occur as much in T20)



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So you've got to weight up all of those factors and discuss with the leadership group before deciding what to do.

But as I said, if the conditions are ok and the wicket is good, I think it's a positive move to bat first and put the pressure on.

Now....

Let's have a look at some tactics on the field.

## **Power play**

The power play, as you know, lasts for 6 overs and there is fielding restrictions (only allowed 2 fielders out of the circle).

The power play is such an important part of the game. Both teams are going to be aggressive and look to get their team off to a flyer, and usually whoever wins the first power play is a long way towards winning the game.

## **Bowling...**

As captain you look to your most experienced bowlers to bowl in the power play. Usually fast bowlers but occasionally you see spinners open the bowling in T20.

Personally I'm a fan of giving the ball to the quicks and letting them try to swing the ball around.

The goal in the power play is to create singles and get early wickets. We like to aim for 2-3 wickets in the power play.

If you're not getting wickets, the ring fielders need to be in a little bit closer and trying to cut off runs, which builds pressure generally leads to wickets. You know as a batsman that if you string a few dots balls together, you really start to feel the pressure and look for that big shot.



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## **Batting....**

Obviously limit loss of wickets. That's going to help you at the end of the innings.

The field is up and it's a time you need to take on the bowlers. You would look to go with 1 if not 2 really aggressive batsmen.

The goal is to get somewhere between 45-55 runs in the first 6 overs for maximum 1 wicket.

If you can achieve somewhere around that, then you're right on top.

## **Middle of Innings**

### **Bowling....**

Through the middle of the innings it really becomes about minimising boundaries and maximising dot balls.

90% of teams that finish with 50 dots balls or more win the game. It's going to depend a lot on the power play.

If you're on top, keep attacking and try to shut the opposition out of the game. If the batting team gets off to a flyer, you need to start defending a bit more and try to stem the flow of runs which hopefully brings a wicket or two.

## **Batting....**

These are the "blue collar" overs.

Not as fun as the start or finish and where all the hard work is done. You need to be really working hard between the wickets, turning ones into twos and twos into threes.

Taking the fielders on and still putting away the bad balls.



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## End of Innings

### Bowling....

It's all about minimising boundaries. 1's and 2's are now a win for the bowling team.

If there's a set batsman, try to keep him off strike and bowl to the new batsman. Think about where the batsmen are strong and limit their access to that area. Make them hit to bigger boundaries.

Your best fielders need to be on the boundary for the last 5 overs

### Batting...

You've done the hard work and hopefully have wickets in hand so now it's time to really put the foot down.

We try to aim for at least 10 an over in the last 5 overs.

You still have to play smart cricket shots and what options you take to minimise the risk while still looking to drive the game.

You need to take into account which way the ball's spinning, where the short boundaries are, who's the best bowler to attack, which batter is hitting the ball the best to get them on strike.

All of those help you make smart decisions when attacking at the end. As we all know, even the best laid plans don't always work out.

As a captain you need the ability to think on your feet and adapt if plan A doesn't work.

You need to stay cool and think of ways you can swing the game back in your favour.



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## **CHAPTER 5**

# **FITNESS**

**“How to prepare and maintain your body for cricket to keep you injury free and playing at your peak all season”**

# INTRODUCTION TO CRICKET FITNESS

## - With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano

Hi, My name's Miguel Rojano. I'm a strength and conditioning coach with a masters degree in sports science from Edith Cowan University. I work with a lot of athletes and in particular cricketers.

Strength and conditioning for cricket is broken into three parts; Off season, preseason and in season.

The first stage of training is off season.

In this phase we generally work on preparing the body for exercise, building base strength, working on some speed technique and of course aerobic endurance.

Cricketers of old used to think "go for a run" and that's all there was to it. Cricket has changed and become a three dimensional sport and there's a lot more to it.

Cricketers of old also had to work a lot harder around playing cricket. These days we're indoors a lot more, studying a lot more, sitting a lot more and generally just less active. So we need to be working these areas to help alleviate any danger of injury etc.

The second phase is pre-season. We get a little more specific in this phase, so we look at range of motion, flexibility and preparing the body for cricket. We also address the three core areas. Strength, speed and endurance. This is where we start working on maximum strength and power.

With speed we look to do cricket related activities such as running between wickets and work on agility and lateral movement.



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In pre-season we maintain the endurance work and look to do more cricket specific endurance by doing a lot of anaerobic capacity work, which put simply is getting the heart rate up, recovery, get the heart rate up, recover...similar to

what we do in cricket, whether it's bowling 6 overs or batting for an hour. It's start/stop exercise.

By the time we get to the in-season phase, we move into maintenance. So all of the hard work that we've done in the first two phases, we need to capitalise now and maintain.

If you've neglected the first two phases and trying to play catch up in-season, it's too late and there's a very good chance you're going to get injured! Or perform below your best.

Not only are we maintaining the general fitness, but also strength and power. It's really important that we don't overload the athlete and keep the work levels within a safe range. Particularly if it's with a 14-16 year old athlete, or a high level athlete playing 2-3 times per week.

## **PRE-SEASON OVERVIEW**

**- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano**

### **1. What is the purpose of pre-season training?**

The purpose of pre-season training is to build on your strengths and work on your weaknesses to ultimately make you a better cricketer. Each year you want to be getting stronger, faster and better at your craft.

So get in the gym, get yourself stronger, work on those base excersises, get your range of motion right, work on your mobility.



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Practice outside the gym, listen and understand what you're doing and why you're doing it.

If you want to be a faster bowler, it doesn't just mean bench pressing more. You've got to get each area right. You've got to get the connective tissue right, the range of motion right...and in the pre-season is the best time to do that.

## **2. How important is a good strength and conditioning pre-season to a players success?**

Extremely important. Talent will only get you so far.

You will notice players have a poor season and then all of a sudden next season come out and dominate.

Generally that's by no mistake. That's the result of hours and hours of work, not just in the gym but on every aspect that I spoke about in pre-season.

To the person watching from the outside it looks like an overnight change. But the commitment, dedication and work behind the scenes during pre-season results in those dramatic improvements.

## **3. How long is a professional preseason and how long would you recommend a youth players pre-season to go for?**

As I said, training for cricket is a bit of a continuum, and by that I mean you're working on something all year round.

Pre-season is usually around 12 weeks. Adaptations take about 4-5 weeks. Meaning you will feel the difference but not see much of a difference and growth takes about 12 weeks. So 5 weeks in you'll be feeling good. 12 weeks in you'll be looking and feeling the part. That's why pre-season generally goes for around 12 weeks.



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#### **4. Do you do the same thing throughout preseason or do you break it into different outcome goals?**

You make sure you break it up year to year, depending on what you need to work on. Just because you did something last year, doesn't mean you have to do it again this year.

So you need to think, what didn't quite work for me this year? My coach wants me to bowl faster, what do I need to do to achieve that? Really focus on what it is you need to improve and plan your pre-season accordingly.

During pre-season mix it up to trick your mind out of routine. For example if it's normally leg day, do an upper body session occasionally.

#### **5. What age would you recommend players start doing strength and conditioning?**

Very common question.

It's more a question of what type of exercise should you start doing at what age?

What happens in the gym, if you're with the right trainer will never compare to the impact on the body that happens on the cricket field.

I could have a 6 year old in the gym with me and they'd be safe. But you know they're not going to be lifting weights, they're going to be doing body weight work, learning balance and range of motion etc.

I say to everybody, get your kids in the gym as young as you can because they'll have that skill for the rest of their lives. The same as swimming, kids that start young can swim for the rest of their lives, kids that start late never fully pick it up.

Get in the gym early. But GET THE RIGHT COACH and make sure they're safe.



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If you've got a coach telling your 8 year old to do deadlifts, then you need to find another coach.

13,14,15 year old athletes is when we really want to see them in the gym. That's when we see a lot of injuries. Poor posture, lower back issues, growing fast, soft tendons.

You really need to make sure they're been supervised and guided in the right way because the impact on the cricket field is going to cause an untrained body injuries.

## **6. Do you train harder in preseason than in season?**

The intensity in season needs to stay. You need to make sure they're consistently working at a high intensity but less sessions and for a shorter duration.

The beauty of pre-season is that players are generally not playing cricket so you can work them really hard more often for longer both in the gym and on the running track.

In season it becomes more about customized training sessions for each athlete based on their output on match day.

If you're a bowler and have bowled 30 overs over a weekend, the following week is going to be about recovery and a lot less physical work.

If you're a batsmen who gets out first ball or bowler that gets hit all over the park and taken off after two overs, you're the ones who need to get the joggers on and go for a run!

Pre-season...everybody needs to work hard!



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## **7. Do bowlers and batters have different strength and conditioning programs?**

Bowlers and batters will be similar but have some differences. In general bowlers need to be working on leg strength, core strength and shoulder stability.

Batters need to be working on upper body and cross core strength. Again it's going to depend on each athlete. The smartest way to train someone is not to look at them as a batter or bowler but as an individual.

## **IN-SEASON OVERVIEW**

**- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano**

### **1. What is the purpose of strength and conditioning training during the season?**

Strength and conditioning training in season, is really maintenance. Maintenance is prehabilitative and it's rehabilitative.

We're trying to stop you getting injured, we're trying to manage your injuries and niggles and we're trying to keep you strong.

### **2. Do you train as hard as preseason? Why?**

Obviously in season you can't train as hard or as much as you do in the preseason.

You need to let your body recover from games and training sessions. Recovery sessions like pool work are very important.



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### **3. How important is it to maintain strength and conditioning during the season?**

If you drop the ball and stop gym all together, and I see it all the time, you're going to start breaking down. You really need to keep going and maintain all the hard work you've put in during the preseason.

Club players play cricket on Saturday and sometimes Sunday. They're busted and sore, they've got cricket training on Tuesday and they do nothing on Monday. Get in the pool, get in the gym and do your rehab work. You'll be a lot better for it than sitting at home on the couch or whatever else you do.

### **4. How often and when during the week do you recommend to train during the season?**

During the season I recommend doing maintenance and rehab work on Monday and Wednesday, in between training and have Friday as a rest day or a nice easy stretch day.

## **PHASE ONE CARDIO - ENDURANCE**

**- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano**

### **1. What is the purpose of the power/endurance cardio phase?**

Look, early days, you have to set up a base.

And whether you like it or not, there's no easy way of doing it other than getting miles in the legs. Cricket is a demanding sport. You can do 10-15km in a day, sometimes more. It's very much a stop start type of sport but underlining that is the aerobic energy system.



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Go for a run, go for a ride, go for a swim.

Swimming is one of the best cardio work outs you can do, it's low impact (meaning it doesn't put stress on your joints) and it gives you a whole body work out.

Definitely focus on building that aerobic base early on in pre season.

## **2. What types of drills do you do in the power/endurance cardio phase and what are some targets that the players look to achieve?**

You can definitely build your aerobic fitness by doing high impact interval work, but early on we want to set the body up, we don't want to thrash it.

AFL does a really good simple test where they do a 3km run and the guys try to get under 11 minutes or so.

It's great to do drills that you can time or score so that it gives you a target to drive towards and beat and also creates a bit of competition amongst the team.

You don't have to try to run 10km, that's too far. Find a distance that suits you, taller runners will be able to comfortably run further than shorter runners. Somewhere between 2-5km on a consistent basis is a good start.

Make sure you try to stay off the hard surfaces like roads and foot paths. Try to run on ovals/grass to limit the impact.



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# PHASE ONE GYM - STRENGTH

- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano

## 1. What is the purpose of the strength phase in the gym and how does it help to improve your cricket?

I like to talk about strength around the joints first. So your smaller muscles and local stabilisers.

Then, in line with that , strengthen the bigger muscles.

If you can't engage the stabiliser muscles and the bigger muscles take over, you can imagine what's going to happen.

You're going to be ripping joints out of their position and having all sorts of issues.

So strength is very important, but you've got to be smart about the way you go about it. There's definitely a correlation between stronger athletes and better performance.

There's also a strong relationship between strength and increased endurance. So strength is as important as any other aspect in cricket. Particularly in T20 cricket. You have to be strong, you have to be fit and you have to be powerful.

## 2. What types of exercises and how many repetitions do players do in the strength phase?

In the strength phase you're looking to work the bigger muscle groups. So exercises like;

- Bench Press
- Dead Lifts
- Chin Ups
- Squats
- Seated Rows



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The list goes on, but they are the main ones.

When we look at repetitions, to get strong you want to keep the repetitions down (8s, 5s, 4s, 2s) and lift heavier weight. More sets, less reps, more weight.

### **3. What areas of the body do batsmen focus on and what types of exercises do you think are most beneficial?**

Every cricketer needs to work on whole body strength but there are some key areas of focus depending on your discipline.

Batsmen look to do a lot of work on their forearm strength, particularly for T20 cricket and a lot of glute and quad work for power through their base.

### **4. What areas of the body do bowlers work on and what types of exercises do you think are most beneficial?**

Bowlers perform a lot of their exercises in a lengthened position.

You need to open up a lot more as a bowler, so do a lot more overhead work. Again, a lot of core work.

And probably the most important area for a bowler is the legs and glutes. Show me a good bowler that doesn't have big legs and glutes!

So bowlers need to strengthen through the glutes and core and stabilise the shoulders and upper body.

### **5. How many times a week would you recommend senior players and youth players to train in the gym?**

Ok let's start with youth.

It really depends on the time of year. In the off season they should be working out around 4 times a week to get a good solid base before the season.



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Make sure one is cardio based; one is rehab/stabiliser based and two strength sessions.

Senior players can work out around the same amount, maybe one or two more sessions to achieve a specific goal.

## **PHASE TWO CARDIO – ANAEROBIC**

### **- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano**

As we get closer to the season we start to add anaerobic work into the cardio workouts.

Anaerobic fitness is short duration and high intensity.

Anaerobic exercises can last anywhere from seconds up to two minutes. After two minutes of continuous exercise the aerobic system kicks in.

Anaerobic exercises include things like;

- 10m sprints
- 20m sprints
- Shuttle runs
- Beep test
- Yoyo test

All of those exercises are fantastic because they give you quantitative measures and something to strive to beat.

If you want to be an elite cricketer, it's very likely you will be tested for certain things, not just cardio, but every area of fitness.

It makes it very simple, practice what you are being tested on and you will improve to the level you need to be at.



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# **PHASE TWO GYM – ENDURANCE/FUNCTIONAL**

**- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano**

## **1. What is the purpose of the endurance phase in the gym and how does it help to improve your cricket?**

The endurance phase in the gym is combined with functional. The functional aspect is combined with every phase of gym work.

What we do in the endurance phase of gym work is increase the repetitions. So 15-20 repetitions of lighter weight and less rest.

In between sets we might do spin work on the bike, calisthenics type work on the mats or boxing work to keep the heart rate up.

In the endurance phase you can often pick up bad habits from lack of form when you get fatigued so be careful about that.

## **Power**

The second stage of the endurance phase is adding power, which is different to strength.

Strength is a slow movement gauged on how heavy you can lift.  
Power is an explosion of strength in a short, sharp movement which is so important for athletes.

Developing power, you should never do any more than 5-6 repetitions. Some even say 3 repetitions is enough.



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# RECOVERY

- With Chris Lynn's S&C Coach Miguel Rojano

## 1. What is recovery?

Recovery is simply the process of helping your inflamed and damaged muscles heal and return to normal as quickly as you can.

## 2. What is the purpose of recovery?

The purpose of recovery is to help your body return to normal and allow you to perform at your best as quickly as you can, whether that be in a game or at training.

Recovery is particularly important when you're playing multiple days in a row.

## 3. When do you do recovery?

Recovery is a combination of things you can do, with the process starting straight after play and extending into the day after play.

## 4. Should all players do recovery?

All players will benefit from recovery but it depends on the level of involvement you have during the days play as to how important and how much recovery you should do.

A bowler who bowls 30 overs in a day and has to back up and bowl again the next day is going to need a lot more recovery than someone who has fielded in the slips all day and has to do the same again the next day.

So it really depends on the individual and their workload during the day.



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## 5. How does recovery benefit a player?

Recovery speeds up muscle repair and reduces pain, allowing the player to perform at a much higher level the following day than if they were in pain, cramping etc.

## 6. What types of things to players do to recover?

The main ways we can help the body to recover are;

- Firstly you need to move your body. Go for walks or light runs after the days play and the next day.
- Make sure you stretch after the days play.
- Ice packs on inflamed areas.
- Ice baths after the days play (2min in, 1 min out x 3 sets).
- Hot/Cold showers (1 minute hot water, 1 minute cold water for 3 rotations).
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after play.
- Go for a swim the next day.



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## **CHAPTER 6**

# **NUTRITION**

**“The secrets of Brisbane Heat nutritionist Kerry Leech on how professional players fuel their body for peak performance and how you can do the same”**

# INTRODUCTION TO NUTRITION

**with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech**

Nutrition plays a very important role in cricket.

It gives you the energy supply you need to get through games and perform at a high level.

The right nutrition helps your body repair and recover from games, training and gym sessions.

Eating the right food also helps get your body composition right. Meaning lose fat, increase muscle etc.

## 1. What role does nutrition play in Cricket performance?

Nutrition plays a very important role in cricket.

It gives you the energy supply you need to get through games and perform at a high level.

The right nutrition helps your body repair and recover from games, training and gym sessions.

Eating the right food also helps get your body composition right. Meaning lose fat, increase muscle etc.

## 2. How much of a competitive advantage can good nutrition have?

In terms of a competitive advantage. It's pretty simple.

A person with the right nutrition will be able to play harder and longer than someone with poor nutrition.

They'll also recover quicker and be able to perform better in short turn over matches as well, which is often the case with t20 competitions.



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### **3. Do the nutrition recommendations you provide for someone vary for positions in the game?**

The nutrition recommendations for t20 games are pretty standard for everyone because most of the players are involved with the game at all times.

Players with a slightly larger work load, bowlers and in particular all-rounders, need to make sure they're topping up their energy supply's while they are on the field.

For the batsman, it will depend on when and how involved they are. We want to make sure they are fuelled and ready to go at the start and have supplements at the ready to give them a spark when they need it.

### **4. How important is an individualized nutrition plan for athletes and should all athletes be seeing a sports dietitian?**

An individualised nutrition program is important for all athletes because everyone has different circumstances. You may live in different conditions, you may have a different climate that you're working in and you may have different body composition goals that you're trying to achieve.

Following the guidelines that I'm going to give you is a great start, but seeing a sports dietitian will help you narrow your focus and achieve your individual goals.



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# NUTRITION TO BUILD STRENGTH

with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech

## 1. How important is good nutrition in building muscle strength and size?

T20 cricket is predominantly about power and strength.

Good nutrition is imperative to be able to build the required muscle mass and size and also to support the training program you need to stimulate that growth.

## 2. What are the best sorts of foods to eat when trying to increase muscle strength and size?

If you want to increase your muscle mass and size. You need to make sure your body is getting enough energy to build the muscle mass and also make sure you have enough protein in your diet to support the recovery and muscle growth.

Without enough energy though, you can have as much protein as you like and you still won't be able to achieve your muscle mass potential.

Our best sources of protein in the diet are foods that provide all the essential amino acids, so if we look at our animal based products, things like;

- Meat
- Chicken
- Fish
- Cheese
- Milk
- Eggs
- Yoghurt



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And looking at some vegetarian options things like legumes and some of the cereals will provide the amino acids that you need.

### **3. Is there such thing as too much protein when trying to increase muscle strength and size?**

A lot of people think that building muscle is all about how much protein you have.

Research has proven that if you have any more than about 2g of protein per kg of body weight, you're not going to get any further gains than having 1.5-2g of protein per kg of body weight.

So it's actually best to make sure that you're maximising your energy intake, with the 1.5-2g of protein timed after training sessions to reach your full muscle growth potential.

### **5. What are the advantages / disadvantages of supplements?**

The major advantage of using supplements is the ease and convenience. Which makes it a lot easier to stick to a regime and get the required amounts of protein and energy at the correct time.

While they're great and convenient, protein supplements can be quite expensive and you need to make sure they're coming from a reputable source.

With the explosion of online shopping, there's definitely some lower quality products on the market and in some cases make the product unsafe by using additional ingredients as 'fillers'.



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# NUTRITION TO GET LEAN

with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech

## 1. What foods or nutrients do you generally reduce in the diet when assisting an athlete to reduce body fat?

Generally you will want body fat losses to happen in the pre-season phase. And the reason why we want you to lose body fat is so that you're not carrying excess weight around the field that's not performance based (muscle mass). It helps to make you more agile, typically helps you stay cooler and will also give you better endurance as well.

When we're looking to decrease body fat, we generally look to cut out or reduce intake of foods that are very high in energy but generally have very little other nutritional value. Usually those foods are high in fat.

Some examples of those types of foods include;

- Deep fried foods
- Snack foods – chips, bars
- Butter

Other foods to avoid are foods with empty sources of carbohydrates (sugar)

- Soft drinks
- Lollies
- Chocolates
- Alcohol (if you are old enough to be drinking)



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## **2. What is considered realistic in terms of fat loss goals?**

If we are looking at body fat loss, we typically look at kilograms of weight that an athlete loses.

I never get athletes to aim for more than 1kg per month of fat loss per month.

If you decrease more than this then you run the risk of missing out on all the other nutrients you need to perform at your peak. So about 1kg per month is about the most anyone can practically aim to lose.

## **3. How to you recommend athletes maintain muscle mass and performance while reducing intake for fat loss?**

When you're trying to lose body fat, you want to maintain as much muscle mass as possible.

In order to do that, you need to make sure you have the right strength training program (see Miguel's workouts), but you also need to make sure you plan your food intake around those times.

Make sure you have a regular intake of protein throughout the day, so making sure there is some form of protein in every meal or snack will go a long way to helping you preserve your muscle mass while still losing fat.

## **4. What role do fat burning supplements play in fat loss and are they effective?**

Fat burning supplements are often just things that help you to decrease your appetite more than anything else. They've often got high amounts of caffeine in them and other herbs that have been reported to aid fat loss.

The effectiveness of them is often very low and you're better off at working towards a diet that is lower in the high energy sources of food mentioned above.



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# PRE-GAME NUTRITION

with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech

## 1. How important is nutrition in the pre-game period and what are the important nutrients?

Pre-game nutrition we often divide into two sections.

Firstly, the last meal you have the day before the game, which tends to be a much larger meal. We are looking at that to load up the energy sources so it's often high in carbohydrates.

Secondly, what you eat the day of the game, which is generally not as large and the aim is to top up your energy stores and make you comfortable to play (not too full or bloated).

So the most important pre-game nutrient is carbohydrates and also making sure you have plenty of fluids to make sure you're well hydrated going into the game.

## 2. What sort of foods/fluids do you suggest in the pre-game period?

In a pre-game period you need to make sure you're having plenty of fluid, so 2-3 litres of water the day before the game.

On the day of the game you want to be topping up your carbohydrate sources with things that are very easily digestible and will make you feel light and easy in the stomach. So it's not a time for high fibre food.



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Things like;

- Light cereals
- Light breads
- White rice and pasta

Will be a lot easier to digest than more complex foods.

### **3. In terms of nutrition is there a difference in what an athlete should be doing the night before a game versus the morning of a game?**

In a pre-game period you need to make sure you're having plenty of fluid, so 2-3 litres of water the day before the game.

On the day of the game you want to be topping up your carbohydrate sources with things that are very easily digestible and will make you feel light and easy in the stomach. So it's not a time for high fibre food.

### **4. How soon before a game should an athlete have their last meal/snack?**

I generally recommend that the last time you have something substantial before a match is around 4 hours before the match starts.

A lot of athletes like to top up with something light and small 1.5-2 hours before the match starts.

Then during the game athletes often like to top up with small snacks to keep them going during the game. And they may be just straight carbohydrates. Things like energy gels, sports drinks or a small energy bar.



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## **5. What do you suggest for athletes who feel they can't stomach anything pre-game?**

If you feel that you have a very sensitive stomach before a game and that's generally when you get very nervous and can't digest and absorb food then generally a liquid based food is a good idea.

Typically we would suggest something like a smoothie that's based on some milk, yoghurt and fruit. Or a liquid meal supplement that has some carbohydrates in them as well, not just a protein based supplement.

Things like Sustagen and Up'n'Go are readily available and you can have them a couple of hours before the game. They'll give you plenty of energy but they aren't going to make you feel like you're going to be sick.

## **NUTRITION DURING THE GAME**

**with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech**

### **1. How important is nutrition during a game and what influence does it have on game performance?**

Nutrition during a game needs to have a focus on topping up the fluids and also the nutrients that you may need to keep the energy flowing during the game.

Typically, when you've been out there exercising, you will have been eating into your carbohydrate sources.

For cricket, one of the most important things we need to feed is your brain. The nutrient source for your brain is carbohydrates.



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Light, small sips of high energy fluids work best. Things like;

- Sports drinks
- Juice
- Cordial
- Sports Gels

If you've got a break between innings, that's when you might like to eat a very plain and small sandwich or something like some crackers to help refuel and make sure your brain is firing and you are mentally focused at all times.

## **2. How does the game day nutrition plan for an athlete vary depending upon sport/position played?**

In t20 cricket, it's going to be dependent on your role in the team as to what type of food you take into the game.

With a bowler, you know you have a set amount of overs, and it will depend how much effort goes into those over as to how much extra fuel you're going to need to top up your energy.

Someone who's out on the field all the time and exerting more energy (like a fast bowling all-rounder) will need to top up in terms of fluids and also carbohydrates and energy, more so than someone with less of a role in the game (batter who fields in the slips).

If you're a wicket keeper, you're exerting a lot of energy and also need to concentrate for long periods so fueling with carbohydrates is important.

For a batsman, it's just making sure that you're feeling comfortable, ready to go when you need to be and able to concentrate really well. So if you're out in the middle for a longer amount of time, getting someone to run some fluid out with some carbohydrates in it.



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### **3. What are the important foods/fluids to consume during a game?**

During a game, the most important fluid to consume is water to make sure you maintain your hydration.

If you feel you need to top up your carbohydrate levels for either your brain or the amount of muscle work you're doing, something like a sports drink is advisable.

If you are playing back to back games, you will need to consume something with higher salt content in it to replace what has been lost and prevent you from getting cramps. That's where you can use something like hydrolyte or instinct which are products that have been made specifically with higher salt content.

### **4. Is it possible to over hydrate during a game?**

Absolutely it's possible to over hydrate at some times.

Making sure you know how much fluid you normally use during a game is very important. A very easy way to determine this is during a practice session.

So if you weigh yourself before the session and after the session, the weight you lose during that session will be the equivalent of the amount of fluid you've lost.

So if you lose 1kg of weight, you've lost 1L of fluid and you know that's how much you need to replace during that same amount of activity.

So it's very much being aware of what your individual requirements are, matching that and not going overboard.



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## 5. What sort of foods / fluids should be consumed immediately after the game

Immediately after a game is where you need to do everything you can to help your body recover, especially if you have another game straight after or the following day.

The first thing you need to do is replace any fluids you've lost. The most accurate way to do that is to weight yourself, or at least have a good understanding of your body and requirements.

You then need to replace any energy you've used. So getting in some carbohydrates, but also getting a good source of protein is very important. So things like meat, fish or chicken, because they'll help your muscles recover from the damage that's been done during a game.

## SUPPLEMENTS FOR CRICKET

with Brisbane Heat Nutritionist Kerry Leech

### 1. What is the role that supplements play in sports performance?

Supplements is a very varied area in sports performance. We normally divide them up into 3 different categories.

**Medical Supplements** – Things that we use to correct any medical deficiencies an athlete may have. Things like iron, zinc, vitamins.

The next one we look at is what we call dietary aids or sports foods. So things like protein bars, liquid meal replacements. And those types of foods are there to replace a meal or give you a more convenient option in your training diet.



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## **2. What supplements do you routinely recommend athletes to take?**

The supplements I would routinely recommend an athlete take include things like multi-vitamins that may act as an insurance policy for athletes that miss out on certain vitamins in their diet. Fish oils help to decrease inflammation and anything an athlete is deficient in (e.g. iron).

In terms of ergogenic aids, the most proven supplement is caffeine. But it's very individualized as to people's reaction.

## **3. Do the supplements change while in training versus pre-season versus games?**

In terms of when you use supplements, there are different roles for them at different times. When you're looking at increasing lean muscle mass, you may use something like a meal replacement drink or a protein shake when you're looking for something that's convenient to have available around those training times. You may also use the same type of supplement pre match when you're looking for a light and readily available meal that's not going to upset your stomach.

Things like caffeine may be used to help you get the most out of a training session...especially something like a weights session to increase your energy level so you work harder during that session. During the game, caffeine can be used to help increase your concentration levels throughout the game.



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#### **4. What, if any, are the risks of taking supplements and what do athletes need to look out for when purchasing supplements?**

The biggest risk in taking supplements that contain added ingredients that aren't on the label and may put athletes at risk of returning a positive drug test for those playing a high enough level.

Athletes need to be very careful and know exactly what they are putting into their body. The best way to make sure is to follow a company called Informed Choice, they actually test products for any traces of ingredients that may return a positive test.

The best supplements to go for are the most pure supplements with the least amount of ingredients. The stacked products are where most athletes get into trouble.



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## **CHAPTER 7**

# **GAME AWARENESS**

**“Dive into the mind of professional players and learn exactly what they are thinking in certain situations of the game”**



# GAME AWARENESS INTRODUCTION

Game awareness is a players ability to read the situation of the game and develop a plan for that situation. Good players are always one step ahead of the game.

The aim of the game awareness chapter is to provide you with an insight into the thought process and plans of professional players and share key takeaways and learnings from some common situations of the game that I've been in during my career.

## Game Awareness – Batsman vs Aggressive Fast Bowler – Key Takeaways

### Bowlers

1. Aggression is a crucial weapon for fast bowlers.
2. You don't have to always outwardly display aggression but be able to identify stages in the game when aggression is required.
3. Good fast bowlers will sense when their team needs a leader – an aggressive spell from a fast bowler lifts the intensity of the whole team. (think back to a time when you or a team mate has lifted the team with an aggressive spell, or how intimidating it is when an opposition bowler steams in with a hot head).
4. To defend a small total usually requires an inspired spell from a fast bowler.



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## Batsmen

1. Sometimes as a batsman you will be required to curtail your natural game and get through an aggressive spell for the benefit of your team.
2. You need to be able to recognise when a bowler is trying to lift his team and also stages in the match that require you to dig deep.
3. If you get through that one big effort from the bowler, usually the fielding team drops off considerably and batting becomes a lot easier.
4. Notice how Watson was in all sorts of trouble but he stood tall, took blows for his team and played a game that was unnatural for him for the benefit of his team. The one lapse he had resulted in a mistake and he was very lucky to get away with it.

## Game Awareness – Close Finish – Key Takeaways

1. Our target for the power play is between 40-60 runs and 0-1 wickets, depending on the wicket.
2. Never EVER think that the game is over. I've personally been involved in and seen some amazing come from behind wins when I never thought possible.
3. Nerves really affect your ability to execute under pressure, you need to be as relaxed as possible in the field, when bowling or when batting.
4. The best way to make sure you are relaxed in pressure situations is practice quality at training – this means train as close to match intensity as you can and put yourself under pressure. Set up scenarios in the nets and have centre wicket sessions as well.
5. Fill your skill set with as many options as possible – this means practice them at training. The more options you have at the top of your mark or facing up to bat and the more confident you are of executing them (confidence comes with repeated practice) the more relaxed you are going to be at the crease.



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## Game Awareness – Taking Step To The Next Level – Key Takeaways

1. Whenever you step up to the next level, whether that be a higher team at school, a higher grade at club or a representative side, you're going to experience nerves. It's natural and I'd be worried if you didn't.
2. A lot of the time, the nerves you feel before game day or on game day while you're waiting to get involved in the game, will be a lot worse than when you get to bat or bow, you'll relax.
3. The way I like to look at it is, the other 21 players in the game are all just the 21 best state players, just like me. No matter what level you're jumping to, break it down like that. The other 21 players are just the 21 best players from the level you came from...just like you.
4. Always remember you got selected in the team for a reason, and that reason is for the way you play and have been playing...**STICK TO WHAT GOT YOU SELECTED IN THE FIRST PLACE!** You don't need to change the way you play, or feel you have to play any better. If you play to the best of your ability, know that will be good enough.
5. Relax, enjoy it and HAVE FUN!

## Game Awareness – Batting at The Death – Key Takeaways

1. If you're a set batsman batting with the tail, look to score boundaries early in the over and get a single off the 5th or 6th ball to get as much of the strike as you can.
2. Never give up on winning the match. As soon as you give up, there's no chance of winning the game for your team.



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3. Don't slog and hope for a miracle, have a plan and stick to it.
4. Stick to your strengths. James Faulkner looks to only hit over long on and mid-wicket where he's very strong.
5. Stick to the basics of power hitting – head still.
6. Don't look at overs and think "I've only got 3 overs left". Break it down to balls and you'll realise you've got a lot longer than you think.
7. If you back yourself, generally half chances will go your way.
8. If you're a tail ender, don't be selfish, bat in a partnership and support the set batsman.

## **Game Awareness – Batting On a Tough Wicket – Key Takeaways**

1. When you're batting on a soft wicket you want to play the ball as late as you can, under your eyes.
2. A big mistake when playing on a tough wicket is playing out in front of yourself.
3. Generally on a soft wicket when it's seaming it will spin as well.
4. There's two ways you can go on a tough wicket. Either look to go hard and take on the bowlers or identify what a defendable target is and try to grind your way to that target.
5. Soft hands are key on a tough wicket.
6. Ben Cutting was a great example of how playing your natural game on a soft wicket can work in your favour – he got us to a defendable total, which unfortunately wasn't enough.



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7. It doesn't matter if you fail on occasions, it's going to happen. As long as you learn from your mistakes and work hard to rectify them at training.

## **Game Awareness – Batting With Freedom – Key Takeaways**

1. I didn't have the greatest tournament so went into the last game with the simple game plan of getting off the mark and then trying to hit the ball as far as I can.
2. When you go in with a positive mindset, luck generally goes your way.
3. Stick to your strengths when you're attacking the bowling.
4. Keep to your routine, stick to the basics and start fresh every ball.
5. Massive key to attacking batting is KEEPING YOUR HEAD STILL!
6. When I got out, I started thinking about 100 and lost my shape and concentration. I didn't stick to my simple process of watching the ball and keeping my head still.
7. Always have fun when you're batting.



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## **CHAPTER 8**

# **MINDSET**

**“Learn the simple mindset techniques I use to overcome nerves and failure, enjoy my cricket and create a successful state of mind”**

# MINDSET INTRODUCTION

The aim of this final chapter – mindset – is to give you a deeper understanding of the mindset of a professional player around certain topics that I believe are critical to a players success.

This chapter is set out in Q&A format.

## Mindset – Dealing With Success And Failure

*Q. Failure is part of our game. The average player has more personal failures than success in cricket. How do you deal with failure?*

A. I've been through highs and lows in my career, and I certainly know it's not all "bells and whistles". I struggled with it at first...I thought about it too much and got myself down. Sometimes you get a good ball or there are situations in a game that you can't control. The quicker I realised it's just a game and I will get another opportunity next week and get to practice and improve, that's what motivates me.

If you do drop a catch, get a duck or whatever it is, acknowledge it, be disappointed (it's natural) but move on and forget it as quick as you can...it's done...can't be changed! The longer you dwell on it the more upset you'll get and it will drag on and affect the rest of your game and sometimes into the week and affect your training...what's the point of that?

At the end of the day, there's a lot worse things that can happen than dropping a catch. We play the game because we love it so don't let failure or a mistake ruin that enjoyment.



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*Q. What do you do specifically to drag yourself out of a rough patch of form?*

A. There's no secret, you've got to get in and work your butt off at training. You're going to have bad days and sometimes a few in a row, but as long as you're learning, working on those areas at training and not letting those mistakes happen again and again, you're going to be improving. If the same mistakes keep happening, you're not learning and you're showing you're not willing to fix the problem.

I like to visualise, so I replay the situation in my head and get a clear picture of what went wrong. Even though it's a negative thought, I'm using it to learn. Whether I'm squaring up or my hands are away from my body or whatever it is, I'm learning and figuring out how to improve it for next time.

Especially if you're playing a team again, they'll always be looking at how they got you out last time, so you need to have improved on that and not allow the same thing to happen again – it really surprises teams when you've turned a weakness into a strength a few months down the track! And visa-versa if you're a bowler.

*Q. How important is it to support team mates who are going through a rough patch.*

A. Cricket is a team game and you've got to be able to enjoy your team mates success and also help them out if they're struggling. If you're going well, ride the wave but support your mate who's struggling, that might be offering to have extra sessions with him. There's going to be plenty of times throughout the season where he's going well and you need the support.

At the end of the day, you don't lose your class overnight. A rough patch of form often always comes down to mental struggles. That's why I like to break it down and make it as simple as I can. I clear my mind of every other thought and just keep it to "I'm playing against another person...just like me...and it's a ball coming down at me...hit it". It's as simple as that.



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As soon as you worry about who's bowling, who you're bowling to, how fast or strong they are, what happened last week etc...all that rubbish takes your focus off what it should be on.

*Q. Can team success help you overcome the disappointment from your own failure?*

A. Definitely, cricket's a team game and as much as it's an individual game, the team's success is the end goal. You've got to remove any ounce of selfishness and do what's best for the team and enjoy the team's success.

*Q. I know some players can experience jealousy towards other players' success which can be really bad for team culture. How do you deal with that?*

A. If you come across a player showing signs of jealousy, you or the captain or coach need to pull them aside and nip it in the bud early. Make sure they're buying into the team's plans and what works for the team. If you're experiencing jealousy, know that all it achieves is hurting your own game even more. As soon as you learn to forget about everyone else's game and worry about your own game and enjoy others' success, you'll play a lot better cricket and also enjoy the game a lot more...as well as you won't look like an idiot!

*Q. How do you deal with success and behave after success.*

A. It's a tricky one because if you've just scored a 100, you're on a high and you want to celebrate. But all I try to do is be the same bloke when I walk off the field as when I walked on, and same goes for making rep teams. Be the same bloke when you've played for your country as when you were playing for your club.



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As you know, it takes a lot of work to score hundreds and make rep teams, but you can quite easily be shut down very quickly. So enjoy your success definitely. But don't go overboard and change who you are. That's not just in cricket either, it's about becoming a professional in life and being the best person you can be.

*Q. Would you prefer to score 10 and the team win or score 100 and the team lose?*

A. Haha. In a perfect world both! But without a doubt if I had to choose, I'd choose the team winning, because there's no better feeling than winning and at the end of the day, that's what it's all about...driving towards succeeding as a team. The moment you become selfish, it takes the fun out of the game.

If you've got players in the team that put their game before the team, it breaks down the whole team, creates fractures and small groups. I've never seen a team succeed that doesn't have 100% buy in with everyone driving in the same direction...that creates a winning culture!

## **Mindset – Game Awareness**

*Q. I know game awareness is a broad term, but I think it's something that is often overlooked. Can you give us your opinion on game awareness, what it is and how important it is to reaching the next level?*

A. Obviously the most successful players around the world don't walk out to bat or bowl without a plan. They're always well thought out, they know the situation of the game and they know their role and what they're trying to get out of that game. In my opinion, you can always be one step ahead of the game if you do have good game awareness. You can sense what ball is coming or what the batsman is going to do next.

Communication is a huge part of game awareness, communicating with the captain and other players, understanding the plan and being aware in the field.



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*Q. Game awareness is something that is going to improve with experience. How has your game awareness improved over time and do you think it's something that needs to be actively coached?*

A. As I said, you only learn from experience. And the best way to learn is from the older more experienced guys. You've got to be a good listener, but also filter what does and doesn't work for you.

Be open minded and always willing to learn. When I started out in professional cricket I was very raw to the system and that was the only way to learn. I had to listen and I had to soak in as much information as possible from the older players. You've got to ask plenty of questions. There's no right or wrong questions. If you want to learn and challenge yourself, you've got to be open to learning from other players and not be selfish about it. You've got to talk with other batsmen, talk to the bowlers. At the end of the day it's a team game and you all want to drive towards the same goals.

*Q. Game awareness is important in all forms of cricket but how crucial is it in T20 cricket?*

A. With the game being so fast, one right or wrong decision can be the difference between winning and losing the game. I've made decisions that have cost us the game and I've also made decisions that have won us the game. As I get older I feel I'm getting better at this and starting to make more winning decisions.

*Q. Let's look at it from different disciplines. Firstly, when you're padded up waiting to bat, how does game awareness come in to play?*

A. My routine when I'm next in to bat is, firstly I like to stay calm but I'm watching exactly what's going on in the game.



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Making sure I know who's bowling and if the ball is swinging or spinning. I even make sure I know who is fielding in what position. Generally there's one or two fielders in each team that you can take on. They've either got a weak arm or move slowly...(the fast bowlers haha! ;-). Not only that, I know exactly what my role is, I've communicated with the captain and or coach and I know the scenario of the game. If you tick off all those boxes then it just comes down to execution and as I've spoken about a lot, that goes back to your training and lead up. You're going to have good days and you're going to have bad days, but if you know you've done the hard work leading up to that game, you'll be a lot more confident in your ability to execute.

*Q. When you're out in the field, what does game awareness mean to you then, what do you think about in the field?*

A. First of all you've got to make yourself aware of your environment. Is it day or night? Is there dew on the surface? Are there lights to contend with? What is the condition of the surface?

Then...

If it's a new batter, anticipation is the biggest key. You're looking to put the squeeze on him, put him under pressure and keep him on strike. He's trying to get into the game himself and we (the team) just try to challenge him as much as we can and not allow him an easy start to his innings.

Then you're weighing up the situation of the game, if they're going well or it's the end of the innings...obviously they're going to come a bit harder.

You need to be aware of the position you're in and how often the ball is likely to come to you. For example if you're at long on or deep midwicket towards the end of the game, you're in a "hotspot" and likely to see a lot of action. If you're fielding at point, you know the ball usually comes flat and hard to that area... if you're fielding at fine leg, you know you won't see as much action, but your challenge is to switch on every ball and not go to sleep so that when your opportunity does come, you're ready for it!



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Being aware of your captain is so important, especially in T20 cricket. You've got 120 balls to bowl in a pretty tight time slot. The game goes at such a fast pace and sometimes the captain will want to change the field every ball in one over. He can't afford to be having to yell and wave to grab your attention... sometimes it's hard to hear from the other side of the field...so it's your job to always be watching and checking the captain and not off with the fairy's.

The captain and also the bowler don't need the frustration of misfields or boundaries caused by an unaware fieldsman.

*Q. Finally, I know you're not a regular bowler but you've played with some great bowlers...what do the bowlers need to think about and be aware of?*

A. The first thing you need to do is work out the batsmen as quick as possible. You'll have your plan A but you need to also figure out what the batsmen's plans are and adapt accordingly if you need to.

Secondly, you need to have clarity at the top of your mark and have a plan for every ball you bowl...and set the field accordingly. If that means moving the field every couple of balls, then do so. But make sure you have good communication with your captain and team mates. Make sure the captain is aware of your plans and what you're trying to achieve, and let the fielders who will be moving around a bit know prior to the over that's going to be the case.

## **Mindset – Mindset For Success**

*Q. Obviously mindset plays a big part in cricket, it's such a mental game. How important do you see mindset for success?*

A. It's really important. For me I just try to make sure I am having fun, enjoying my success, the teams success and other players success and that puts me in the right frame of mind.



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As I've said before, I like to visualise. So the week leading up to a game and the night before a game I actually visualise myself batting in the middle and scoring runs. That gets me into a positive frame of mind and feeling like it's a done deal...like it's already happened which gives you a lot of confidence.

*Q. Some people love to really think about the game 24/7 and some people like to play it more on the run, switch off outside of cricket and focus come game time...what's your preference?*

A. I believe I'm a bit of both. I like to switch off and have my time away from cricket, but as I said, I like to visualise and everything I do on the field, I've thought about before and planned. I won't just do it out of the blue, I've always got my methods and my reasoning. If someone asks me about something I've done, I've always got a reasoned response. In saying that, sometimes you have to just go with your gut. The best players in the world have great instinct and once they've made a decision, they back themselves.

*Q. Do you like to set goals?*

A. Your goals are going to change with your success. I like to break it down. So I have a lot of short term goals that all add up to your long term goal. Your long term goal will always be there...for me that's to play for Australia in all forms...but I break it down to goals for the season, weekly goals and even what I want to achieve out of one training session. Having those short term goals keeps you from getting overwhelmed by looking too far in the future and feeling disconnected from your long term goal. If you keep turning over those weekly goals, you'll keep edging closer to your long term goal. I like to have a little 2 minute reflection on a Sunday and ask myself was it a good week? What did I do well? What could I have done better? And then go about setting my goals for the coming week.



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*Q. Do you experience nerves? And how do you deal with it?*

A. I used to get really nervous and it was frustrating because you think “I know how to bat, I’ve done the work, why do I deserve to be nervous”?

Obviously some guys can’t help being nervous. There’s always going to be nerves to some extent, they’re healthy, but it’s how you deal with them. Over time, the more you play the better you’ll become at dealing with nerves. For me, I don’t want to put too much pressure on myself. The moment you put too much pressure on yourself, you take the fun out of the game and it will affect your performance...after all, we play the game because it’s fun.

*Q. How do you go about keeping the drive and fire in the belly to keep turning up to training, working hard and putting in 100%?*

A. Mate, great question. As we spoke about, I’ve got that long term goal to play for my country and that really drives me every day. I want to train, I want to be better, I want to learn and improve.

There’s going to be times when you’re down or flat, but having that long term vision is what picks you up. Take a moment and question why am I doing this, what’s my long term goal and that should be enough to turn things around. You’re around your mates, you’re having fun...it’s the best feeling in the world! I can’t stress how important it is to **play with a smile on your face.**

## **Mindset – Short Pitched Bowling**

*Q. Is there a fear of short pitched bowling among professional players?*

A. Yes there definitely is. No matter who the batsman is, no one likes a good bouncer. In saying that, some guys can play it really well. The guys that do play the bouncer well, practice the hook and pull shot as much as they do the cover drive. The best players in the world go that extra step at training and are willing to take a couple of blows on the body.



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*Q. If you've got a fast bowler coming in and bowling short, do you consciously think about it and acknowledge that fear or do you try to put it out of your mind?*

A. Yeah, I do. You've got to sum up the situation of the game. If they're coming hard in T20, they're limited to how many they can bowl in an over. You can generally feel when it's coming as well. The field setting is usually a good indication. It's always in the back of my mind, but I'm a big believer that the bouncer is a great opportunity to score. If it's quick, all you need to do is get a little bit of bat on it.

*Q. If you know you're coming up to a game with a quick attack, how do you deal with that leading up to a game?*

A. As you said, you know you're coming up against a fast attack. The only way to prepare for that is to get in the nets and practice against fast bowling. There's no easy way out. What I do is get the thrower to come closer or set the bowling machine up closer to me just to sharpen up my reaction time. You'll find if you challenge yourself and train harder than what you're going to face on game day, batting will get a lot easier in the middle. As I said, it's not comfortable, it's challenging. But if you want to become the best cricketer you can be, you've got to do those sorts of things at training. What I do get annoyed with is when the bowlers over step the mark in the nets!

*Q. Again, if you're coming up against a team with an aggressive attack and know that short bowling might be there plan, do you discuss it in team meetings?*

A. Yeah we do discuss it, you've got to try to sum up the situation. If it's a real attacking option for them, we've got to try to minimise the damage the bouncer does (i.e. wickets). As I said earlier, it can be a great opportunity to score so if you take it on early and have success, that forces them to change their plan. If they get on top of you early, you need to find a way to counter attack that.



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*Q. There's always one or two blokes running around each team that love to have a crack in the nets, who's that in your group?*

A. From the Brisbane Heat, it's definitely Ben Cutting. He loves to run in hard, but also loves to over step the mark, he bowls no balls every ball haha! But he comes hard and that's a great thing, you're challenging each other and there's honest feedback there as well, you're not beating around the bush, there's honest feedback in the nets. He comes as hard as anybody but I reckon that's great. You tend to respect those guys more at training. Like I said earlier, if you train harder than match conditions, life becomes so much easier in games.

*Q. Sometimes, yes it's about survival. But in the T20 game, you've got to look to score. How do you take on the bouncer?*

A. First and foremost, they're limited to how many they can bowl an over. But you've only got 120 opportunities to score in T20 so you've got to look to maximise every ball. Personally, I know when I go out to bat there's going to be a bouncer or two early and it's up to me to either duck under it if it's a good bouncer or decide it's a scoring opportunity. Once I'm in I know it's only going to get easier so if I do get a good bouncer early, I tend to let it go. As soon as I feel comfortable at the crease I look to score off the bouncer. I tend to open up and I like to hit down the ground. You can score 360 degrees with the bouncer so a lot depends on the field settings and the line of the ball. If it's at my body I'll look to go square, if I can free my arms, I like to hit the short ball down the ground with the 'baseball' shot, which you'll see in my videos.



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## Mindset – Training Habits For Success

*Q. One thing I've noticed about guys that make it to the next level (state or national) is their training habits. What are your thoughts on that?*

A. It's definitely the extras that get you there. If you're at club training and you're only batting twice a week for 10 minutes, you're only batting for 20 minutes a week so how do you expect to have the concentration to then go and bat for 30, 40 or even 60 minutes in a match? So is 20 minutes a week cutting it for you? I guarantee you, the guys that score runs on the weekend consistently don't settle for 20 minutes a week...they're doing hours of work outside of scheduled training hours.

*Q. I guess when you make it to the professional level it gets a lot easier to do the extra's because that becomes your sole focus, but the journey to getting there is where the hard work is put in?*

A. Yes it's definitely a lot tougher because you have other things to do and don't have as much time. If you want it enough then you'll find the time to do the extras. Try to find someone with the same level of ambition as you and pair up with them. Push each other, challenge each other and hold each other accountable. Do everything you can to make that next level.

*Q. What do you say to the people listening or reading that say "It's easy for you, you're a professional player and have the time and support"?*

A. Yes it's challenging, you only generally have two scheduled sessions a week. But the other 5 afternoons of the week I was doing work. I was in the back yard or at the nets. Sometimes without pads, making up games and scenarios etc. Just hitting as many balls as I could and learning my own game.



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For me, that was fun. I was with my mates, competing and learning. I guess that's where my competitiveness came from...games in the back yard or at the nets. If you love the game and have fun, it's not 'training'...you're doing it because you enjoy doing it.

*Q. How early did you realise that those two 10 minute bats per week weren't going to cut it?*

A. As you get older, the days and games get longer. It's sink or swim...you have to learn to bat for longer periods of time and as I said, training yourself to bat 10 minutes twice a week simply won't do the job. If you want to bat for longer, you have to practice doing so at training. Same goes for bowlers. If you want to bowl faster for longer, you have to practice it, and not just at night during training, do some extra sessions during the day when it's hot and more challenging.

The way I looked at it, I love batting, so why wouldn't I bat for as long as I can (or for as long as someone will bowl to me).

The easiest way to get your extras in is to arrive at training an hour early with a mate and work on YOUR game and what you want to work on that week before the team session starts.

*Q. At the top level, what's the intensity and work ethic like?*

A. Having trained at club level and international level, you can tell so easily why those players are playing for their country. They go into sessions with a purpose. They're not just hitting balls for the sake of hitting them.

They walk into training knowing exactly what they want to work on and what they want out of the session, then rip in 100% to tick every box in that 2 hour session.

The other difference is, there's a real competitive vibe at professional training. Guys are really pushing and challenging each other and that's great for the team. It's your job to be a leader at club level to drive that at training and get everyone up and moving in the same direction.



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## AS A JUNIOR PLAYER

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Morning	Swimming	Gym workout	Swimming	Rest	Rest	Game Day	Potential rep cricket game
Day	School	School	School	School	School	Game Day	As above
Afternoon	Non training- back yard cricket	Club Training	Non training -back yard cricket	Club Training	Swimming	Game day	As above
Night	Gym workout	Study and school home-work	Gym workout	Study school and homework	Swimming	Something fun	As above

## AS A SENIOR CLUB PLAYER

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Morning	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Game Day	Day off unless there is a game
Day	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Game Day	Day off unless there is a game
Afternoon	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Recovery - ice relax, hydrate, debrief	Day off unless there is a game
Night	Gym and Cardio Workout	Club training - get there 30 min early for extra core workout or hit balls	1 on 1 hitting balls or bowling with private coach or team mate. Short catching and boundary catching  Run,swim, ride	Massive skills session at club training. Extra hit before, extra fielding after - chat about game and opposition if you know them, otherwise set in place team plans	Top up preparing for Saturdays game - light field, hit, bowl	Recovery - ice relax, hydrate, debrief	Day off unless there is a game



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## AS A PROFESSIONAL PLAYER

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Morning	Gym, Speed and agility session	Skills session in the nets	Gym workout	Depends on schedule - Run Team meeting before training - set plans for training	Option of top up - 1 on 1 with coaches what ever you want to work on	Sleep in - very light breakfast, morning walk	Sleep in - recovery if stiff and sore - or visit physio
Day	School	Skills - nets, bat, bowl, field	Break	Huge team session - nets, fielding	Option of top up - 1 on 1 with coaches - whatever you want to work on	Relax - movie, something enjoyable	Rest/Hobbies/Family
Afternoon	Recovery	Recovery	Skills - 1 on 1 sessions	Huge team session - nets, fielding	Rest	Massive lunch, travel to game venue	Rest
Night	Family time/ rest/hobbies	Family time/ rest/hobbies	Family time/ rest/hobbies	Family time/ rest/hobbies	Team dinner	Big Bash Game - Debrief after game - ice bath, hydrate before team beer or dinner	Rest/Family



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## **\*NOTE\***

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