

Prepare to win



Coaches Matter

ECB Coaches Association Technical Bulletin in partnership with the ECB Coach Education Office
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Match day preparation



Alastair Cook and Jonathan Trott warm up with Bruce French

A team's match day preparation has come a long way from a half-hearted lap of the boundary and the coach smashing a few close-range catches at reluctant fielders.

It is now universally recognised that a productive pre-match routine is key to successful performance on the pitch at all levels of cricket.

While every team's preparation is subtly different there are a number of common factors that will help give your players the best possible chance to perform once the bell has tolled and the umpires have marched to the middle.

A good preparation should get your players physically and mentally ready for the match ahead. It should reinforce the key skills that will be used in a game, move at a fast pace and gradually increase in intensity. For the coach pre-match practices should be quick and easy to set up and provide a last opportunity to discuss tactics. Below are a few ideas to try when next putting your players through their pre-game paces.

PHYSICAL WARM-UP

A physical warm-up is vital to ensure players are prepared to perform at their best and to prevent injuries. Ensure that a warm up includes a range of dynamic stretches. Here is a simple drill that combines dynamic stretches, fast feet and simple ball skills.

DRILL 1 : Circle of dynamic stretches and fast feet



Equipment: Cones, stumps, 1 ball between 2.

Description:
 ■ Set up a ring of 6 cones to form a circle 10 metres diameter with 2 players and a ball on each.
 ■ In the centre of the circle scatter cones, stumps or SAQ ladders.
 ■ The first player picks up the ball, jogs into the circle and uses explosive fast feet movements to travel through the cones.
 ■ They then throw the ball to any player on the edge of the circle.
 ■ The player who receives the ball repeats the drill while the original player replaces them on their cone.
 ■ As the warm-up progresses, change the players movements to include dynamic stretches, such as heel flicks, high knees, side-steps, lunges, hamstring stretches and squats.

Coaching points: It is important for the coach to monitor the quality of the movements to make sure they are being performed effectively. Start off with slow paced movements and gradually build up the speed and intensity of the training.
Variation: When one player throws to a team mate change the fielding skill to include one-handed pick-ups, bounce passes, low and high catches.

FIELDING

Fielding practices are a major part of any pre-match preparation. Ideally they should cover all of the main technical skills that will be used in a game e.g. overarm and underarm throws, close, cover and high

catches and ground fielding. Team fielding practices can also help build team spirit and communication. Below are two drills that combine a number of different skills.

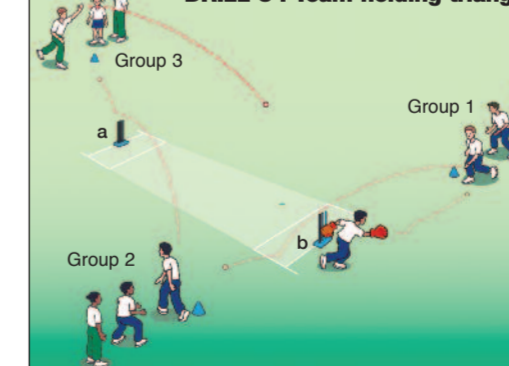
DRILL 2 : Hand hockey



Equipment: 1 ball, cones.

Description:
 ■ Set up a pitch about 10m by 20m with a 2 metre by 2 metre box of cones at each end.
 ■ Divide the players into two teams, each with a designated box to catch the ball in.
 ■ Each time a player catches the ball inside their team's scoring line a point is scored.
 ■ To get the ball there, team-mates throw the ball underarm to each other but cannot run with it.
 ■ The team without the ball must try to intercept passes. If the ball is dropped possession changes.
 ■ No player can stay in a scoring zone for longer than 3 seconds at one time.

DRILL 3 : Team fielding triangle



Equipment: 1 ball, two sets of stumps, 2 cones.

Description:
 ■ Mark out a triangle with 2 cones 15 m apart as the base and one set of stumps (a) at the top point 15 m from the bottom corners.
 ■ Place a second set of stumps (b) between the cones, and place one more cone about 5 m back from the top set of stumps (a).
 ■ Start with equal numbers of players at each cone and a wicketkeeper behind stumps (b).
 ■ The wicketkeeper rolls the ball to group 1, who pick the ball up using one-handed pick-up and under-arm throw to aim at stumps (b).
 ■ Group 2 collect the ball and, using the two-handed intercept and over-arm throw aim for stumps (a).

■ Group 3 collect the ball and throw back to the wicketkeeper; the practice continues. After fielding the ball, each player follows the ball and joins the next group.

Coaching points:

■ Reinforce key tactical points eg backing up and develop any technical points necessary.
Variation: Instead of the wicketkeeper rolling the ball out along the floor and players shying at the stumps throw the ball in the air between groups to develop catching skills.

BOWLING

It is important for bowlers to have the opportunity to bowl before each game. They should bowl from both ends to allow them to get used to different conditions e.g. the pitch, slope of the wicket, breeze etc.

DRILL 4 : Target bowling



Equipment: 1 set of stumps, 4 cones.

Description:
 ■ Mark out a target area about 50cm wide and 1 m long on a good length about 2 m in front of the stumps. The target should cover an area stretching from middle and off to just outside off stump, to a right-handed batter. The line and length of the target may vary depending on the pitch conditions or the type of bowler; e.g. a leg spinner will bowl a different line and length to a seam bowler.

Coaching points:

■ Observe players and reinforce any relevant technical points.

Variation: Make the target area smaller.

DRILL 5 : Bowling at the death



With the ever-evolving development of one-day cricket it is increasingly important for bowlers of all ages to work on their ability to bowl yorkers, slower balls bouncers and other variation balls. Before a game is just as good a time as any.

Equipment: 1 ball, kwik cricket stump bases

Description:
 ■ Set up a pitch but replace stumps with 2-3 kwik cricket bases stacked one on top of the other. Players bowl to hit the bases when practising yorkers and use conventional stumps for the other variations.

WICKETKEEPING

Pre-match preparation is particularly important for wicketkeepers. Many 'keepers preferred pre-game routine involves taking a few deliveries from the team's bowlers but here are a couple of simple drills that can be incorporated into a warm-up.

DRILL 6 : Fast footwork



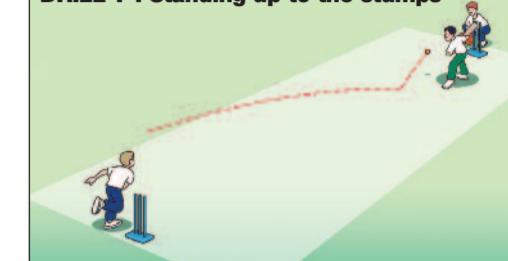
Aim: To get the wicketkeeper's footwork going in preparation for standing back to seam bowlers.

Equipment: 1 ball, cones.

Description:
 ■ Create a 3m wide 'goal' with the wicketkeeper standing in the middle. A feeder stands 2 m away and throws the ball waist high in line with one of the cones. Moving sideways on the balls of their feet, the wicketkeeper moves to catch the ball, returns it to the feeder and side-steps back to the middle.
Coaching points: As the player side-steps encourage them to keep their weight on the balls of the feet and their head up, eyes level, looking at the ball.
Variation: This drill is just as effective with the feeder standing back a full pitch length and feeding overarm.

The feeder can also vary the feed, throwing to either side at random

DRILL 7 : Standing up to the stumps



Aim: This practice is designed to prepare wicketkeepers for standing up to spinners.

Equipment: One ball, bat and set of stumps between each group, cones.

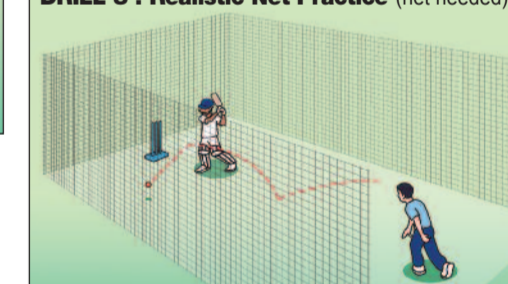
Description:
 ■ Place a feeder about a pitch length back from the wicketkeeper, who should be behind a set of stumps with a batter in front. Throwing over-arm, the feeder throws to the wicketkeeper aiming about 3-5 m from the stumps aiming to get the ball to bounce around stump height. The batter plays just inside or outside the line of the ball to try and distract the wicketkeeper. The wicketkeeper takes the ball and the practice is repeated.

Variation: The batter comes down the wicket and misses the ball to replicate a stumping chance. You can also give the batter a small marker cone instead of a bat. They then try to deflect the ball on the way through to the wicketkeeper to replicate an edge.

BATTING

It is important that batsmen have an opportunity to practice purposefully in order to prepare them for the individual challenges they will face out in the middle. A batter's preparation should warm up the body and the mind. For example if you're an opening bat try and replicate the types of balls you are likely to face - length balls, balls around the off stump, balls that make you move quickly back or forward etc. Whilst gentle throw downs can give you confidence they don't necessarily help you prepare for what you're likely to receive in a match. Try the 2 exercises below:

DRILL 8 : Realistic Net Practice (net needed)

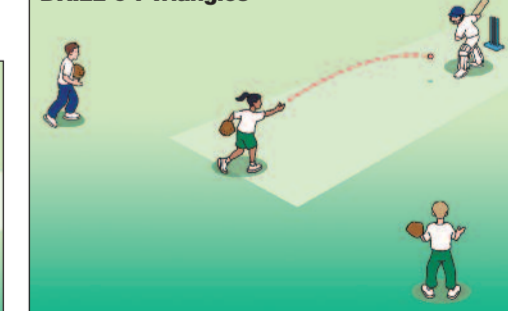


Aim: To prepare a batter for a match.

Equipment: Balls, stumps and a net.

Description:
 ■ 1 batter (padded up) faces 30 balls of a good length thrown at match pace. If the feeder can't deliver the ball accurately get them to move closer. The feeder then throws 30 short balls for pulls, cuts and back foot defence followed by 30 full length balls for drives or forward defence; then 30 mixed up.

DRILL 9 : Triangles



Equipment: 1 ball, stumps, mitts.

Description:
 ■ Set up 4 players, 1 batter, 1 feeder (ideally with a baseball mitt) and a fielder at mid-on and mid-off (both with baseball mitts if possible).
 ■ The feeder throws 10 full pitched balls to the batter who hits them to mid off and mid on. The fielders field and throw at full pace back to feeder. After 10 goes the fielders and feeder rotate through each position.
Coaching points: Triangles should be practiced with purpose and energy and allows 4 players to bat, throw, and ground field within a small space.

The Match Day Preparation Technical Bulletin has been produced by Luke Sellers.