

Twenty20 vision



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Twenty20 vision



Toby Radford



Tim Boon

As the shorter formats of the game become more prevalent within the first class and international arena we thought it apt to look at the implications for coaches when working with players in preparation for twenty over cricket.

We were fortunate to catch some time with **Toby Radford, Middlesex Head Coach** and **Tim Boon, Leicestershire Head Coach** to look at how Twenty20 cricket impacts on the technical and tactical aspects of the game.

How important are the first six overs of the innings?

TR: With the fielding restrictions in place it is important to try and take advantage of the opportunities to hit boundaries wherever possible. As a batting unit we have established a settled line up based on players who are able to play 'proper' cricket strokes but have the ability to play a wide range of strokes. When Twenty20 was introduced it was seen as a game for 'sloggers' but as the competition has intensified over the last few seasons you see the batters adapting and becoming more effective.

As Twenty20 is a condensed version of the longer forms of the game the loss of wickets is exaggerated and it is important to balance the quest for quick and explosive runs with the need to keep wickets in the tent. You don't want to be using too many of the remaining overs consolidating the loss of early wickets. The par score in the first six overs is dependant on the conditions, bowlers, size of boundaries, previous match scores along with a wide range of other variables but the key is to research as much as possible to help formulate an effective game plan.

As a bowling unit it is important to try and take early wickets to ensure the opposition are unable to attack throughout the innings. Taking wickets early allows the fielding team to take the initiative and restricts the opportunities for the batting team to play freely when the fielding restrictions are in place. The two slip catchers enable

hand combination you can disrupt the line and length of the bowler which can make it easier to keep the scoreboard ticking over. With the fielding restrictions relaxed it becomes increasingly difficult to hit boundaries and it becomes increasingly important to score off every ball faced. The analysis of strike rates has never been so prevalent in the game and they are now used to assess the batters effectiveness at certain times of the game. For a batter looking to bat through the innings a strike rate of around 150 is now becoming the norm as they compliment the more attacking batsman who takes greater risks in an attempt to up the tempo of the innings.

At any stage of the batting innings it is important batters maintain self belief and have confidence in the knowledge they have prepared effectively for the situation they face, they must remain resilient and have belief in their ability to execute the required skills at the right time through clear thinking under match pressure.

TR: In an ideal scenario you are looking for a total of around 120 after thirteen or fourteen overs with five or six wickets remaining. This gives a fantastic platform to try and increase the scoring rate towards the end of the innings allowing batters to play with freedom rather than having to consolidate after a poor start.

Bowling during these middle overs has to be dynamic and varied to ensure batters are unable to take advantage of consistency in length. Seam and swing bowlers are required to use a mixture of lengths and changes in pace to try and outwit the batter and maintain

a competitive advantage. The slower ball, yorker and back of a length delivery into the hip of the batter are three types of delivery that when executed effectively can restrict the scoring options available to the batter. Batters are generally looking to hit a boundary early in the over to relieve pressure but as a bowling unit if you are able to restrict boundaries early in the over you start to reverse the pressure onto the batting side as the necessity to score a boundary increases.

What kind of game plans do you try and execute at the business end of the innings?

TB: Graham Napier's recent innings for Essex was the epitome of batting in the final six overs of a Twenty20 game. The Essex top order built a solid foundation during the first twelve overs after a slow start going at around six an over for the first six but managed to keep wickets in hand with James Foster playing the supporting role. Graham Napier, after taking a couple of deliveries to play himself in, was able to exhibit some very destructive clean and hard hitting to all areas of the ground. If the initial foundation had not been laid then we may never have seen the record breaking innings.

TR: As a bowler you can earn your stripes at the back end of the innings and the most successful teams have been able to execute a variety of deliveries that restrict the batters scoring opportunities. Surprisingly spinners have become a vital cog in any successful bowling unit throughout the competition and the majority of teams operate with two spinners to offer a change of pace and approach from the fielding team. The spinners seem to be successful due to their variety. You see some spinners that bowl a lot of arm balls and quicker deliveries short of a length to stop the batter getting any elevation on the stroke and try and 'cramp' the batter where as other spinners consistently change the pace and trajectory in order to deceive the batsman. At this stage of the innings it is about containing the batters and restricting the number of boundaries scored.

Fielding!

TR: Twenty20 has had a positive effect in the way teams now prepare for the competition. You will find the quicker more able and agile fielders patrolling the outfield to restrict boundaries and the number of twos taken by the batting team. The less agile fielders tend to remain within the inner circle as the batting team are likely to take the single regardless of the quality of the fielder in the circle.

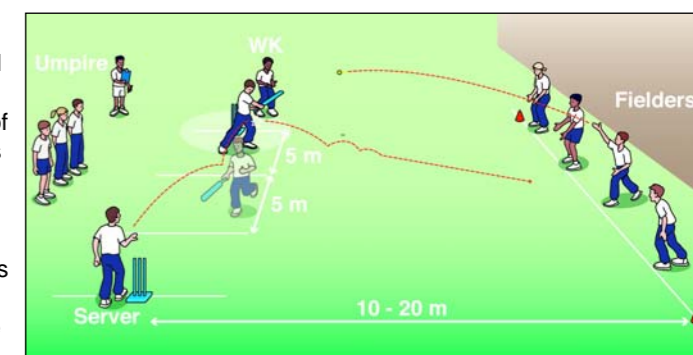
Preparation

TB: The majority of the preparation takes place just prior to the season starting and is scenario based to create match like situations. It is important for each batter to understand their own strengths and weaknesses as well as a game plan against a variety of bowlers and variations bowlers may have.

TR: Batters are now able to hit sixes from low full tosses which has come about because batters will practice hitting them on the bowling machine and work out the best way to deal with this type of delivery. Some players will look to hit it straight or through the leg side. A one size fits all approach is counter productive as its better to have a batting line up where one batter can deal with a low full toss by hitting it over extra cover whereas another batter will hit it over square leg - This causes problems for the opposing captain when setting the field.

TB: The fundamentals of striking the ball remain the same with the creation of a solid base and the head remaining still throughout the execution of the shot. An unrestricted swing of the bat is becoming prevalent with the batters open up the pitch for greater scoring options. The successful innings throughout 2008 have been built around effective execution of 'proper' cricket shots with batters using a wider range of shots in their repertoire early on in their innings.

Games and Practices



It is important to allow the players to experience success and develop an understanding for what success really is. A good practice is to encourage young batters to try and hit a length ball, fed by the coach, straight for six with a free swing of the bat. Bring in the boundary rope and make sure the hitting distance is relevant to the ability of the players. Letting the players experience it without any intervention will enable you to see whether any feedback from the coach is required.

The sweep game is a fun way of introducing the different sweeps and it is simple to set up. The coach can feed the ball underarm or over arm and ask the batter to sweep every single delivery. By doing this the batter will start to understand what happens when they are more successful and what line and length they are more effective at playing the sweep shot. This game can be set up like the Lord's Game used for the pull shot (illustrated above).



Graham Napier in full flow