

# Hitting the Seam



COACHES ASSOCIATION

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## THE LIFE OF BRIAN



Most commentators didn't think England had much chance of retaining their status as World Champions going into this year's rugby World Cup. Indeed, some thought they would struggle to get past the group stages. And yet a spirited revival saw England fight their way to the final, beating old rivals Australia and the hosts, France, on the way. ECB CA Communications Officer Chris Glover was lucky enough to catch up with Brian Ashton, England Head Coach and the mastermind behind the revival. Ashton, a former Lancashire under 19 wicketkeeper, discussed his approaches to coaching, and what it takes to build successful teams.

**Q. When you are working as a national team coach you are working with people from different clubs. Do you find it difficult to get your messages and tactics across in a short period of time?**

It's not an easy challenge. For example, coming up to the Six Nations in 2008, we will go into the test match week against Wales after just one day together, and that's not a lot of time. I think the key to it is just simplifying things. You have to prioritise what you can do and what you can't.

One of the downsides is not spending much time with players, however on the upside you always have to remember these guys are international players. They are going to give you things you don't have to work on when you get out on the pitch because they are such good players. The key is simplicity of message.

**Q. What are the general characteristics you look for in your performance players?**

We work on a high level performance model that I developed when I was with the National Academy. It embraces a lot of areas, such as the technical side of the game, physical conditioning, which is obviously really important at top

level international rugby, and also the game understanding side. This refers to such questions as, why do we play like we play, how should we play next and all those things that traditionally, with rugby, have been left to a couple of players on the field to do in order to run the game.

Generally it has been nine and ten who have had that responsibility, but my feeling is that the more people who have that understanding of the game and can take on responsibility, the more likely the team is to play in the right way and go in the right direction.

There are other sides as well. One area we have dipped into, but nowhere near as much as we should, but we will do in the future, is mental skill. This is because at the top of the world game, as we saw against Australia and France at the World Cup, it is the side that can think clearly under pressure when fatigue sets in after 65 minutes which is probably going to be the side that comes out on top. Certainly in those two games I

*continued on page 2*

thought we had guys on the field who were mentally stronger than the Australian and French players. It is an area we have only dabbled in but we need to go to town on it because it does make a massive difference at the top of the world game.

The final side is lifestyle, the player as a person. So not just looking at them as a player but ensuring they are eating the right foods, getting the correct amount of rest and recovery and things like that.

In addition to these attributes, I look for players who are game intelligent but also confrontational. This is not only physically confrontational, which is a given in international rugby, but also mentally confrontational. By that I mean being prepared to do things differently and being prepared to take calculated risks.

I am a big fan of what I call, *Paradigm Shift Coaching*, which is trying to do the total opposite of what the opposition expect you to do. This has been difficult to achieve this year with England because of the personnel available, but going forward that is something we can hopefully develop.

For me international players, have to be different and they have to have an 'x factor' and that could be in any of the above areas.

**Q. Given your experience with the National Academy, what do you feel are the biggest challenges in allowing young players to make a successful transition to the next level?**

It is a really interesting question. You could get a player who, in his peer group of say under 18s, is world class, but there is never any guarantee he will make the transition. The most important thing has to be that the player has to play. You can do all the coaching you like and run through all the theory, but these guys need time on the field because that is where you learn to play the game.

That is one of the problems that needs addressing in rugby because a lot of players between the ages of 18 and 22, don't play the level of rugby that is going to challenge them. The other aspect is to ensure that with these players, step by step, you work not only on their weaknesses but their strengths. This will ensure a definite improvement over time in all areas of

their game. Goal setting at this stage is also important within all aspects of the high level performance model. I would encourage players to take that model and use it as a goal setting tool on a daily basis.

The key though, is that these players have to play. You can get situations where guys are playing for England at Under 20 level, especially the front five forwards who tend to mature a little bit later, and between the ages of 19 and 25 they actually don't play much meaningful rugby at all. So their development either stands still or goes backwards.

**Q. How do you think we can counteract that problem?**

There is not a clear answer at the moment. There are a few players in the front five who are beginning to appear in the Premiership at a younger age than they were previously. What we need to be looking at though, is that if these guys are at Premiership clubs and they are not getting much pitch time, they need to be playing a division down and starting in the first fifteen and then they will actually get a level of rugby which should still test them.

**Q. Do you think your coaching philosophy has changed over time?**

Yes, there is no doubt about it. When I started I suppose my first coaching was as a school teacher, and I would imagine I fell into the trap that all beginning coaches start with, and some never actually get out of which is a shame, of actually coaching from only your own experience of playing the game or being coached by someone else. That might be totally inappropriate to the situation you are in and the characters you have got. The way you coach reflects the way you think about life.

When I started coaching I was playing for Lancashire and I wasn't anything like the Lancashire coach in terms of character, but I tried to coach school kids like he was coaching Lancashire. Needless to say it was a disaster. It is only over a period of time and a combination of experience and confidence in your own ability that you will fully develop as a coach. For me you need to have a clear vision of how you want your side to play, and this is fundamental to being successful. If you bring those three things

together, experience, confidence and vision you will grow into the sort of coach you want to become.

**Q. Has your approach or philosophy differed between coaching at club and international level?**

It has to change to some extent because you spend less time with players. You have to get messages over more quickly as I mentioned before. I think in terms of the overall approach though, not really.

International rugby is very interesting. The way I approached the World Cup was totally different to the way I will approach England next season. That was because of the situation I inherited at the start of 2007 and the personnel that were available. The personnel reflected an approach to defend the World Cup and they were picked to do that in a certain way. Going forward now we will be looking for players to develop the English game and play in a different way and you coach and approach those guys in a completely different way to the World Cup squad. Flexibility is one of the key things.

**Q. How do you go about managing a team of coaches?**

We have a pretty strong management team. At the World Cup there were 23 of us, so it is a big challenge. I am what you would call a democratic, inclusive sort of coach and this was difficult at the World Cup because I hadn't appointed any of the management team. I inherited them.. It was someone else's management team which is obviously not an ideal scenario.

I think the key to a management team is to let everyone get on with their jobs. You assume the guys you appoint in positions of authority can do the job, and what you don't want to do is to be constantly meddling in areas they are in charge of. Obviously it is really important that everyone keeps in touch to ensure they are coaching in the same direction. I am a great believer though, in letting people get on with their jobs and unless there is a problem, not having a million and one meetings with no purpose.

**Q. Can you have success at club level as well as international level or is it a choice between one or the other?**

I think they can work together, and it is quite interesting that we are having this conversation today, because as we speak the RFU and the Premier League clubs are announcing an eight year deal which brings the two together looking forward at long last.

What that means is the national coach will get more access to the players and more influence over when the player plays and what position he plays in over the coming eight years. Hopefully that can do nothing but good for the national side.

In terms of player management between club and country, it will be better for the player as well. Both areas of the game, club and country will then be able to get the best out of the player.

**Q. You talked before about being a good coach, saying it is not just about coaching from your own experience. Do you think you can bring things in and learn from different sports as well?**

Oh yes, very much so. I spent a lot of time, when I was National Academy Manager, talking to Rod Marsh, who I have a massive amount of time for.



For two or three years I also lectured on the ECB Level 4 programme and amongst those guys were many county directors of cricket and some top players about to go into coaching. The cross-fertilisation of ideas and talking to people like that is just fantastic. Obviously, from our point of view, the nearest game to ours is rugby league. One of my best coaching friends is Brian Noble, who was coach of the Great Britain rugby league team and now coaches Wigan Warriors.

I have spent a lot of time talking with him about how he thinks his game should be played and whether there is any spin off into our game or not. It's quite interesting when you do talk about things like that, how many common areas there are. Going back to the conversation about the mental side of the game, I would think in cricket that would be even more important than it is in rugby. Playing international rugby your focus is about 80-85 minutes and Test cricketers have to focus for five days, and that is an incredible mental strain on people.

**Q. Do you employ a switch on switch off approach to the mental aspects?**

One of the things we talk about as international rugby players is that we play the game minute by minute. It is very rare in international rugby that any passage of play lasts for more than 60 seconds. You then get a 30 second period for a line out, scrum or an injury where you can switch off then switch back on when the ball comes back into play. To ask people to focus fully for 80 minutes, doesn't work because the human brain doesn't operate like that.

**Q. You must have enjoyed the World Cup. Is there anything you have learnt from it that can make you a better coach?**

Loads and loads of stuff, you are learning all the time. It is the first World Cup I have been to as a Head Coach and that is a massive responsibility. Its only when you actually get into the tournament itself you realise what a wow factor it is. The games just come thick and fast, there is no respite at all. Travelling the length and breadth of France, meant preparation time was reduced and because of the intensity of the games training times were reduced as well. Forward planning is important, but the thing I learnt most from the World Cup was that you had to almost manage by instinct. You worked to a 24 hour policy that you are working to ensure everything is in place to do what you want to do the next day.

You see how that day goes, because it was well chronicled that in our World Cup we kept losing players in the middle of the week. You would pick your side for Saturday then the next day two players would get injured in training, and we would just have to adjust again. So whilst

forward planning is important the ability to think and manage on your feet is just as critical in a tournament like that.

**Q. I would imagine that that sort of adaptability is important in all aspects of your coaching?**

Absolutely. Its quite an interesting word. I think I used the word adaptable at one stage in a press conference and I got criticised for it because I was told I needed to have a game plan. Only dumb animals have a game plan, because intelligent human beings are adaptable to what is going on around them at any given time.

If you ask that of your players then you have to be adaptable yourself as a coach. It is no good saying to players, I want you to be adaptable, I want you to be flexible in the way you think and play the game, and you, as a coach, set down the same line all the time. Unfortunately the two just don't marry together.

**Q. Would you describe English Rugby as being healthy at the moment?**

If we are talking England in general and not just the national side, two English teams contested the final of the Heineken Cup last season, and the national side against all expectation got to the final and were within 15 minutes of winning the World Cup again so there has to be some healthy aspects to the game.

It is no good resting on laurels though, and our game could be in a much better state. This agreement between the RFU and Premiership Clubs will be a massive stepping stone in improving the state of English rugby overall.

## Re-development of 'Howzat'

The "Howzat" cricket education resource is currently being re-developed. Project manager, Chris Dirkin explains what's involved.

"Howzat 1st and 2nd innings, originally developed by David Leighton and Peter Ackerley, has made a significant contribution to the delivery of cricket in education establishments by teachers and coaches. Working in partnership with their county boards, primary schools had the opportunity to receive Howzat 1st innings and secondary schools Howzat 2nd innings as a valuable resource to support the delivery of cricket in state schools."

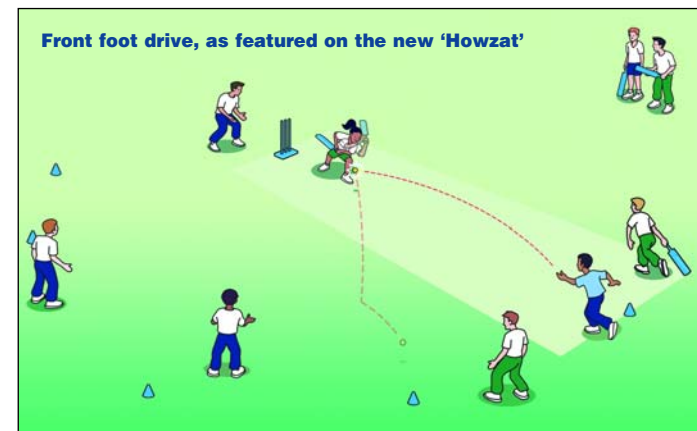
In February 2008 the new Howzat resource will be launched and available as a course resource to coaches who attend the new Working in Schools course and to teachers who attend coach education courses for teachers.

Dirkin explains; "The new Howzat resource has greater capacity. This means there will be far more

content available than on the original 1st and 2nd innings. This resource will now be available as a DVD which means coaches and teachers will be provided with a greater range of information to assist them when delivering cricket."

"One key function we have worked on is the ability to give coaches and teachers a greater range of games and practices for them to use during PE sessions and club sessions. The games and activity section provides coaches and teachers with 82 games and practices which they can use according to their need."

"We have also brought the games and activity section to life by designing illustrations, animations and short video footage for each game and practice. Coaches and teachers can also "Drag and Drop" games and practices into a bespoke session plan framework and then print them off to use in the field. 'In short, a whole bespoke batch of session plans can be created, by a coach or a teacher, to support a



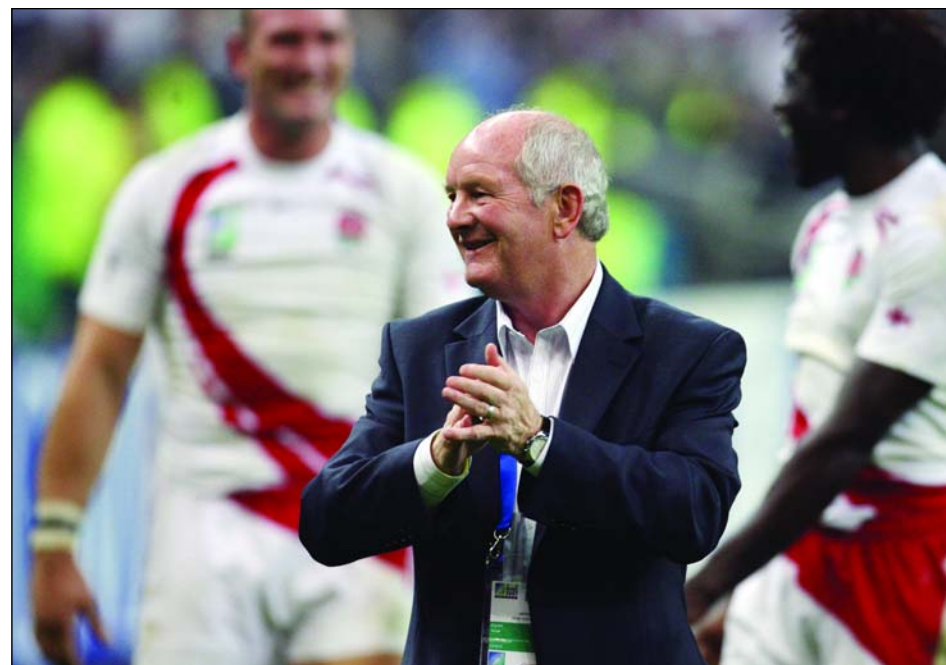
scheme of work for a striking and fielding unit at schools. This can suit national curriculum requirements or whole timetables of cricket activity for a club and in some instances, district or county age group sections at the click of a button.

The resource has many other functions such as jargon busting, laws of the game, risk assessment, international video footage, exemplar education lesson plans for cricket for key stage 1 through to key stage 4, resource sections, schemes of work, information about current grant aid schemes

and facility development; information about the ECB Coaches Association and the Chance to Shine appeal as well as many more functions."

The resource will have the same look and feel as current coach education products and include information about the Coaching Assistant course, Coach Award course, Young Leaders course and Working in Schools course.

More details regarding the new Howzat will be available soon. Please check the ECB CA website at [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk).



# MAKING MOVES

By **JANE POWELL**

Performance Coaching Manager, England Hockey

Within Cricket's Level 4 programme, we had access to football, squash, Tai Chi and it is becoming increasingly evident that there are a number of generic movement patterns that can translate across a number of sports. What we as coaches have to do is:

1. Recognise and identify the fundamental movement patterns.
2. Learn to apply the skills into our sports to enhance performance.
3. Encourage our performers to utilise access to other sports to add variety to our training programmes and as a result seek to motivate and inspire performance and development.

Having played and coached international cricket and hockey, I have spent some time transferring skills learnt across the two sports. There are a number of areas of hockey that will translate directly and some more tenuous associations to other aspects of the game:

SKILL AREA		LINK
<b>Cricket</b>	<b>Hockey</b>	
Fielding	Ball carry position	Direct
Wicketkeeping	Goalkeeping	Direct
Sweep (batting)	Push	Tenuous
Drive	Hit	Tenuous
Running 2	Change of direction	Direct
Shot selection	Pass selection	Direct

## FIELDING



Illustrated here is a fielder moving to pick up a ball, and a player carrying the ball (dribbling). The similarities are evident as far as body position is concerned. The strength and loading that the body has to deal with is high and both have a necessity not only for core strength but also quadriceps and hamstring strength (thighs).

Weight is, in both skills, on the front of the foot with body weight in front of the feet, enabling the player to move at speed in a forward direction. A question we, as cricket coaches, need to ask ourselves is when our players are moving in to field should we be asking them to consider their proximity to the bat and therefore what check position they adopt.

I would suggest that, within 10 metres of the bat, they should be checking their feet in a position of equality, as the movement is likely to be in a lateral direction. Beyond 10 metres, they should consider checking with one foot slightly in front of the other, as they are likely to have to move in a forward direction.

Foot position 10 metres or less from the bat where movement is likely to be lateral (A);

Foot position beyond 10 metres where movement is likely to be forward (B). Position (B) is one that all hockey players will adopt for over 80% of a game. Is it just a coincidence that 2 of the best fielders in recent years both played international hockey - Jonty Rhodes and Trevor Penney - or is it a learnt movement pattern that translates into a different game?



## WICKETKEEPING

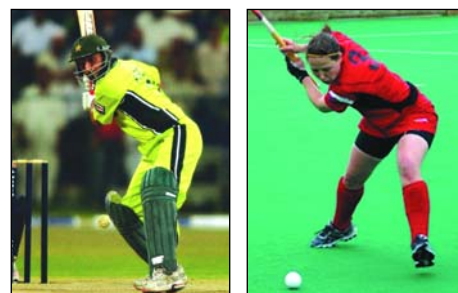


The ability to move laterally at speed is transferable for a wicketkeeper and a hockey goalkeeper and this is a key generic movement pattern - the skills at the end of this movement bear no resemblance to each other as a wicketkeeper will be seeking to catch the ball and a hockey goalkeeper can only deflect the ball and is not allowed to keep possession.

The body positions in each of the photographs show the similarity of movement, the arm & hand positions show a marked difference. However, the key fundamental is getting the body across and in line to be able to catch or deflect the ball.

Starting from a loaded position, in each case flexed knees which will enable a good push off. The development of these skills will be short sharp lateral movements leading to a lead with the head, co-ordinated with a push from both legs in the direction of the ball - although the leg furthest from the ball will have dominance.

## BATTING, OFF DRIVE - HOCKEY HIT



The keys to striking the ball are the same for hockey and cricket, the first stage of any key

contact will be a movement of the mass, followed by an engagement of the levers in a sequential co-ordinated movement.

In both of the photographs, you will see that the players have dipped the front shoulder and are about to let the bat/stick come through to strike the ball. The one danger of a hockey hit in cricket is a possibility of losing shape whilst on the downswing - there is a tendency in hockey to open the left shoulder and come round on the ball. This needs to be corrected in cricket-playing hockey players, otherwise they may play across the line of the ball.

We could debate the position of the ball in the strike. In hockey, the foot does not get near to the ball. In cricket, we try to ensure that the foot is close to the ball with the bat coming down and through in a vertical plane. However, Steve Waugh, Sachin Tendulkar and Kevin Pietersen have not always got the foot close to the ball and have experienced success at the highest level. The keys to both are the fact that the base is set before the downswing commences, both employ the shoulder rotation and an unloading of the levers - the head remains still and forward throughout the action.

## RUNNING BETWEEN THE WICKETS



Being able to run at speed carrying a bat or a stick is a skill in itself and the hockey player does appear to have learnt this skill well when transferring to cricket.

The ability to run at speed automatically puts you in an unbalanced situation and therefore there is a shift in the running pattern to accommodate. When moving at speed in the middle of the wicket, it is possibly advantageous to carry the bat across the body and use a cradling position (as in lacrosse), but towards the end of the run, it really is appropriate to be able to run and stretch the bat to prevent run outs. In each of the three pictures (above and below), we can see the agility needed to be able to make your ground.

When running two or even three the need to maintain balance is fundamental and lateral running with a change of direction is a fundamental of the hockey player's movement. An extra dimension can be gained with the ability to maintain balance whilst changing direction and moving at speed to players at the highest level. We have all seen good and bad runners between wickets - those who can make singles and those who cannot. This is not just a decision making exercise, it is also a technique that can be learned and enhanced. Keeping the head moving in the direction that the player wants to go gives a split

second advantage to the hockey player and so too the cricketer running two or three. The head will lead the body and this is where it is imperative to keep focus on the ball and not to turn blind.

This area of the game is often overlooked by cricket coaches but is key to improving the scoreboard and confidence of the players. It is an area where you can put pressure on the opposition and turn games. Conversely, playing against a team who do not get this right gives your team a great advantage. Speaking to a coach in India, he told me that when a team loses three wickets to run outs in the top six, this leads to that team losing 75% of matches. It is probably the area of the game that can be improved the quickest and to greater effect.

## SHOT SELECTION - PASS SELECTION

The batter has to decide which shot they should play based on the information they receive:

- Point of release
- Angle of release
- Speed of release
- Type of release - speed/spin
- Wicket condition
- Position of fielders

The hockey player has to decide which pass to make based on the information they receive:

- Distance of opposition
- Distance of pass
- Position on the pitch
- Stage of the game

The substantial difference for the hockey player is the need to be able to take in information from a 360° perspective, whereas the cricket player takes in the majority of information from a linear straight on direction. For the hockey player, the environment is continually changing; for the cricketer, once the bowler starts the run up, the environment (fielders' positions) are already logged.

The techniques are then key to the decision making capabilities and this is why we concentrate on the execution of technical skills - but the best way to practice these are not in isolation but in the pressure situation so that the decision making can be reinforced with regards to successful outcomes.

In summary, there are many other games that we can learn valuable lessons from as cricket coaches and hockey coaches and the only restriction is our own minds. The body fundamentally works in the same way. What we need to do is tap on the resources of the mind in conjunction with the body to take our players on to higher performance levels - we should not restrict but empower our players to greater heights.



# Loughborough's Women Continue to Lead

The profile of women's cricket is certainly on the rise in England & Wales. The past decade has seen many exciting developments within the game with increased funding and the development of the 'Super Fours' permitting a much more professional approach to the female game.

This winter has seen another positive step for the game, as Loughborough University have launched its own Women's University Cricket Centre of Excellence. ECB CA Communications Officer Chris Walker, Cricket Performance Manager at the University along with current student and England Vice Captain Nikki Shaw, to talk about what has been happening at Loughborough and the women's game in general.

Alexia, an England 'A' player herself, is obviously very proud of the progress that has been made at Loughborough, commenting "For the last four or five years we have been dominant in the women's game. That has been mainly due to Graham Dilley and his experience of and support for women's cricket. We have had some fantastic players here with us, England international's down to county level players. Going round other UCCE's we found that we were probably short changing some of our girls, that weren't going through our UCCE programme. So we pulled lots of strings, found some more pots of money and established a new Womens UCCE section which includes 13 players. "We've got our own little squad

now and we give them everything the men get. The whole strength and conditioning programme, all the psychology, nutrition, the one to one support, absolutely everything that the guys get. This is all with the objective of allowing as many women's players as possible go on to senior county, Super Fours and further their England careers as well, so its quite an exciting and hectic time at the moment."

Loughborough have always taken in quite a few more women than any other centre, and they argue that they have always taken it a lot more seriously than most of their UCCE counterparts. The girls are completely integrated in every aspect of the programme and every session is girls and boys together. Nikki Shaw, fresh from a busy summer with England was quick to promote the benefits of the Loughborough system for women's development. She said "A big thing for me is the facilities part really. A lot of the girls around the country struggle to get to good facilities without travelling an hour both ways and having that on your door step makes it so much easier."

Both Nikki and Alexia have reached the top level of the women's game, but interestingly they both got to the top through different avenues. Alexia explained, "For me it started at the age of 10 at primary school with a county coach coming in and doing a few cricket sessions. It just snowballed from there. Within 6 months I was playing for my under 13 county side. I didn't get any support at my high school, we didn't pick up a cricket bat, but I got a bit of help at College, I started playing a bit then

but then I got to university and that's when it really kicked on for me. I think within the women's game, more people go to university at the highest level of cricket than men do, so you are going to get more people in that system and it just means you're training against some of the best players in the country."

For Nikki however, her route into cricket was through a different means and she had to contend with playing in a men's league from a young age. She said, "I got into it through my family. I've got a pretty sporty family and background in terms of cricket. Then I played boy's cricket and men's cricket the whole time. I don't think I played women's cricket until I was 15. I just played for my local club side and then got into it through that, but I would have played county boys stuff until I was about 15 or 16."

When asked if she thought she was treated differently, Nikki was typically jovial as is her relaxed manner, replying "It's difficult to say because I grew up with it and you just get on with it regardless of whether someone tells you to go and make the teas or not. You don't really care because all you want to do is play cricket. You don't see that they're a boy and you're a girl, you just see the fact that you're playing and that's all I wanted to do so I didn't take much notice."

While they may have had different routes to the top, they are unanimous in their opinion of how women's cricket can continue to grow in popularity. The key message seemed to be raising the profile of the game in the press through success on the pitch.

Alexia said, "If we can get the England team winning, get the role models out there and get the Nikki Shaw's and these kind of names becoming as familiar as the Kelly Smith's and the Faye White's so that girls have got positive role models to push forward, then the sky's the limit. The structures are reasonably strong within women's cricket, so it's actually getting girls excited about cricket in the first place."

For Nikki and the England team then, the challenge will be to deliver that success this winter and next summer. Who knows, maybe we will see Charlotte Edwards on the Jonathan Ross show sometime next year.



For more information about the Loughborough Women's UCCE contact Alexia on a.i.walker@lboro.ac.uk

To read the full interview with Nikki and Alexia go to [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk)

Mark Dobson, England's Head Coach, gives us an inside into working with our top women

# COACHING ENGLAND WOMEN

While the Australian men may have got one over their English counterparts last winter, by winning back the Ashes they lost in 2005, England's women have been preparing hard all autumn to ensure the same fate doesn't befall them. **ECB CA Communications Officer Chris Glover**, chatted to **England Head Coach Mark Dobson** at Loughborough, before his team's departure for this winter's much awaited Ashes defence and tour of New Zealand.

## Q. How would you assess the state of women's cricket in England and Wales?

That's not easy for me to answer because I have only been involved properly with women's cricket for about a year. At international level we have a strong group of 14-16 players, and some good young talent behind that. There have been a lot of girls who get to their early and mid twenties and then drift away from the game so we need to try and keep them involved. If we can combine this with a strong Super Fours competition then, hopefully, that pool of players will increase and there will be even more competition for places.

## Q. How does the women's set-up compare to the men's in terms of contact time, financial support etc?

They get support from the English Institute of Sport where they receive strength and conditioning training and access to physiotherapy. They receive funding from the National Lottery of varying amounts. We get together for about five weekends through the winter, before we go on tour, and we get to see the players individually once a week. We also interact regularly with the player's individual coaches. The difficult thing is getting them together as a team. It's nice when we get together in the summer, and travel round as a team for a month. Likewise, when we go abroad as a team you feel you make a lot of progress during that time.

## Q. Does that make it difficult to build team spirit and get them to bond?

I don't think it makes it difficult, I think they come together very well. They are a decent group of girls who combine well and get on fine. There is a genuine blend of different characters so it is a good mix.

## Q. You have been involved in women's cricket for a year now and have been in your position as England coach for three months. Do you find a difference between coaching men and women?

Not a great difference no. I think the women really do listen. They take everything on board that is said. You say something one week, then something slightly different the next and they will remember and bring you up on the difference. They want real structure in their sessions. They like to know what they will be doing in advance.

## Q. So has that meant you have had to be more prepared then?

No, not that I have had to be more prepared. I like to plan everything in my head and be flexible about what we are doing. However, the girls do like to have a set plan and know what they will be doing and when so Vince Wells and I have had to build that into our coaching.

## Q. So when you are working with the girls, what do your sessions look like?

We try to get the girls to practice in match situations. So they work on trying to hit the ball over the top and manipulate it into gaps. We want them to get away from the purely one to one net session where you're working solely on technique. In the past there has been a huge emphasis on doing that, and we are trying to get away from that style of coaching and get the girls to play the game.

## Q. Why do you think that is important?

What I have gathered from a lot of the girls, is, technically they have all been very good and there hasn't been a lot of difference between them and a lot of teams. However, other countries have played more cricket and we haven't played the game as well as them. Perhaps we haven't been hard enough or streetwise enough. For instance, maybe we haven't hit the ball over mid on and mid off or worked it into gaps. That's what we have been working on.

## Q. How would you assess the summer and the series against New Zealand?

It was a really good series of women's cricket, well attended and very entertaining. We won the Twenty20 competition two games to one, then lost the ODI series 3-2. It was a close series with some good cricket played. There were a lot of high scores, some really attacking cricket and we learnt a lot from New Zealand, they were a good side to play having just played Australia. We played with much more freedom, started to strike the ball and work it into gaps so I was really pleased with how we progressed.

## Q. Is the women's game different from the men's in terms of the range of shots and areas the ball is hit?

The difference is becoming less significant. A few years ago the ball probably wasn't hit over extra cover so much, but we have been working on that and now the players can hit in a big arc, mid wicket, mid on, mid off, extra cover and also a lot more of the delicate sweeps have been coming in as well. They are starting to score all around the ground. The power is starting to improve as well. We have players hitting straight down the ground and New Zealand had a couple of players who were whipping it off their legs for six in a match at Derby so all of a sudden it's a different game.

## Q. Are the players at the international level becoming stronger and fitter?

I think we are more athletic in the field. The real thing with striking the ball well though, is not about big muscles but timing, and the fact they are playing more cricket. We also play in more



match situation practices now where players have got to solve problems themselves with match pressures on them. If a bowler comes up and bowls six good balls you can't just pat it back to extra cover as may have happened in the past. Now players are waking up to the fact they can use their feet and look to hit the ball over the top of these fielders if need be or work the ball around. We have been trying to create a risk free environment where players can try things and make mistakes in practice because it doesn't matter. For some that has been a bit of a culture change.

## Q. What have we got to look forward to then this winter?

We've got Australia in January and February, and then New Zealand at the back end of February and into March. We will be playing a Test Match against Australia for the Ashes then five One Day Internationals followed by a Twenty20. Then in New Zealand we play five more ODI's.

## Q. So why are we only playing one Test Match?

Because Test Matches seem to be out of fashion in women's cricket, which is a shame. New Zealand don't play Test Matches anymore, but we do have the Ashes and then next Summer Tests against South Africa to look forward to. The One Day International focus is good for women's cricket though, as it encourages them to play positively.

## Q. Do you have any difficulties getting the full squad available for winter tours due to work commitments?

It is a six and a half week tour and it isn't easy for some people who are part time cricketers to get that time off. It has been tricky for Holly Colvin for example, who is in her final year at Brighton College and wants to go to Cambridge. She is only going on the Australia part of the tour and is then being replaced for the New Zealand leg by Charlie Russell who happens to be out there playing. It hasn't been a huge problem though as all the girls give a massive commitment to their cricket despite some of the challenges they face.

## Q. What are your main objectives then for the winter, and where do you want England to be this time next year?

It would be lovely to have had a successful series in Australia and New Zealand, and importantly we are building up to a World Cup the following winter in early 2009, so our cricket is based around ensuring we are real competitors in that competition. It would be great to win out there this winter, but the experience we gain from it as a team will be invaluable as we build up to that World Cup.

## Q. So who are the big forces currently in world cricket?

The strongest teams are Australia, New Zealand then England and India. They are the big four sides and it up to us now to establish ourselves as number one.

## Q. How have you found working with Charlotte Edwards as captain?

Charlotte is wonderful. She is a great leader on and off the pitch but also a fantastic cricketer. When she didn't play in the summer we missed her significantly.

## Q. Has the advent of Twenty20 cricket changed the women's game?

Absolutely. I think it has expanded the range of shots, the ball is going in different areas now. Players have had to adapt their game and are becoming much more willing to take chances. Batters are much more willing to take bowlers on, bowlers have to be prepared to bowl lots of variations in games with control and the fielding is sharper as well so it has been good for the game.

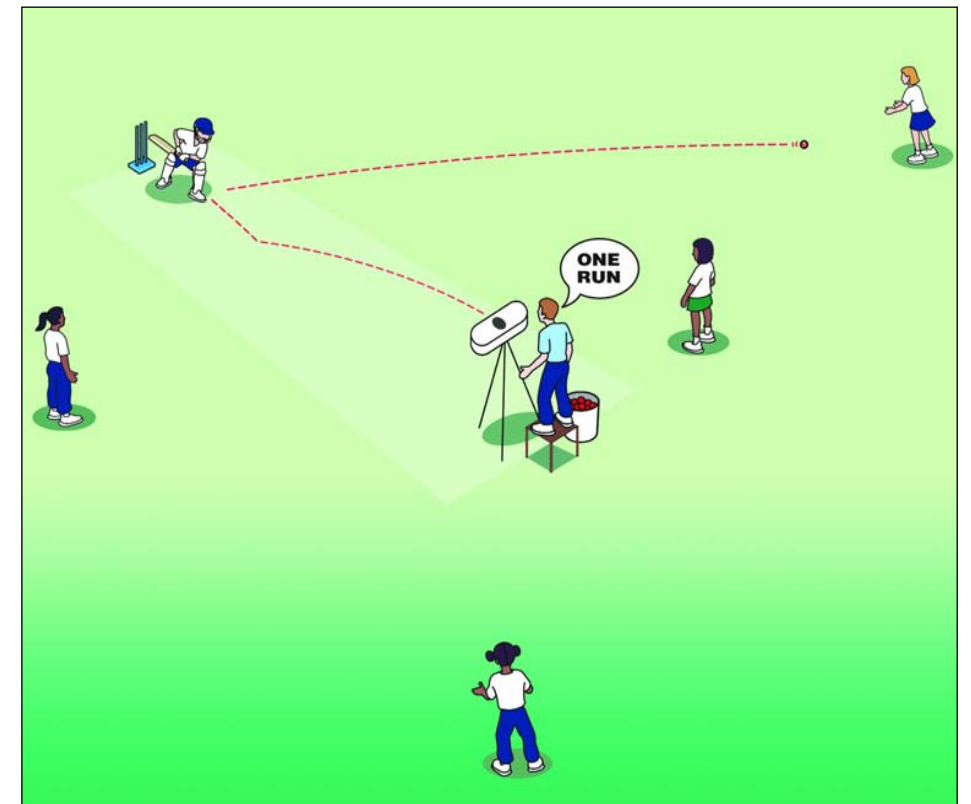
## Q. Who should be looking out for to shine this winter then?

Charlotte Edwards, Clare Taylor, Sarah Taylor, Jenny Gunn as an all rounder and then Holly Colvin as a left arm spinner. We also have Nikki Shaw and Isha Guha. All the players are there on merit though and we have discussed the fact they should all be capable of scoring runs and taking wickets, but most importantly being flexible in their approach. That means opening the bowling but then being able to come on later in the innings and still put it on the spot or scoring runs from difficult positions in the middle order. All our practices are built around potential game situations.

## Q. We have seen the England women's football team gain a lot of national recognition this summer. How can women's cricket raise its profile in a similar way?

Well by being successful this winter and next summer. We do play games which are televised on Sky Sports, and then the World Cup is important as well. If we do well in that in 2009 it will undoubtedly raise the profile. There are lots of good players to watch and it is very entertaining. The amount of people that told me last summer how good it was and that they didn't know women's cricket was so entertaining. They promised to return to watch. That has to be a good thing.

## Mark Dobson batting practice



### Organisation

- Set out the activity as shown in the diagram
- Place cones to signify the target positions (use fielders if outside)
- The batsman has to hit the ball down the ground
- To begin, give the batsman the following field; extra cover in the circle, long off out, mid on in the circle, deep midwicket out.
- The batsman then has to decide where to hit the ball to score runs
- They can hit over the top of extra cover or mid on, or they can choose to take singles to long off and deep midwicket
- Give the player a target of runs and a limited number of balls in which to get them

### Easier/Harder

- Half way through the session, change the field. Bring mid off in and send long on out. Bring midwicket in and send extra cover out.
- Make the batsman run the runs, so they are batting in an even more match realistic environment
- Change the situation so that there is only one wicket left and so any mistake ends the game.

### Equipment

- Bowling machine
- Bowling machine balls
- 1 set of stumps
- 8 cones

# ECB link up with the West Indies

## Over the past 12 months the ECB Coach Education dept has been working to build a strong relationship with the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) Coach Education.

During February this year, a group from the ECB travelled to the West Indies to embark on a process of idea sharing and to foster relationships. This will, hopefully, lead to a mutual partnership that will help the development of cricket in the West Indies and England & Wales.

The second stage of this partnership saw 6 WICB members visit the UK during a hectic week at the end of July. The coaches took part in ECB Tutor Training during the early part of the

week before spending time with ECB Coach Education at their offices at Edgbaston. The trip was completed with days spent at Lords and the National Cricket Performance Centre at Loughborough, before a 2 day Assessor Training course and a flight home.

The feedback from members of the West Indies party was positive, with all 6 stating that they had learnt much during the exchange. Kumar Rampat, Trinidad & Tobago Cricket Development Officer, commented, "It may have been a week in terms of time, but it has been a lifetime in terms of what we've achieved on this course. There were so many fresh

things that we were exposed to. The new 'how to coach' skills seems very attractive to us, and is a real instrument for how we can get our coaching done effectively. I think the review process is extremely valuable in that we can look within ourselves for answers and find out where we may have gone wrong or what we could have done right given another situation; that's very revealing in itself."

Philip Service, Development Officer from Jamaica was equally delighted; he said, "I think coming out of the visit of the ECB to the Caribbean in January and now our visit to the UK, has shown our willingness to work together. "I'd love to see us look at how we can revise our courses in the West Indies for those who understand how to coach and develop both the human and physical resources needed in the field."

Wendell Coppin of Barbados recognised the potential benefits of the relationship to the ECB, he said,

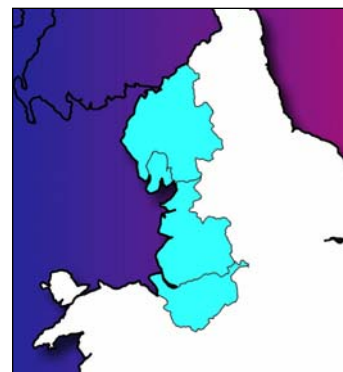
"I would love to see the day when an English young cricketer wants to come to the Caribbean to develop his skills and likewise a young English coach come to the Caribbean to work with our local teams, national teams, clubs and schools."

Former West Indies women's international Stephanie Power was delighted with the new relationship. She commented, "Apart from being beneficial, I think it is amazing that England is not focussed on 'We are up there and let's let West Indies step down there'. Their big picture is cricket, their love of cricket, the development of cricket and to me that's amazing. I can't thank the ECB enough for what they're doing for West Indies cricket, I think they're doing more for West Indies cricket than we are doing for ourselves!"

This mutual relationship looks set to continue with further interaction planned in 2008.

# YOUR REGION A round up of what's been going on near you

## NORTH WEST



### Membership:



### North West News

■ **Cheshire** have just completed the fourth and final year of their 'Beyond Fundamentals' approach.

### Catches Win Matches



#### Coach

Chris Glover is the current ECB CA Communications Officer. While he currently lives in Loughborough and plays cricket in the Leicestershire League, he still has links to his home town club Lancaster. This is a practice he uses there with players of all ages that proves to be popular.

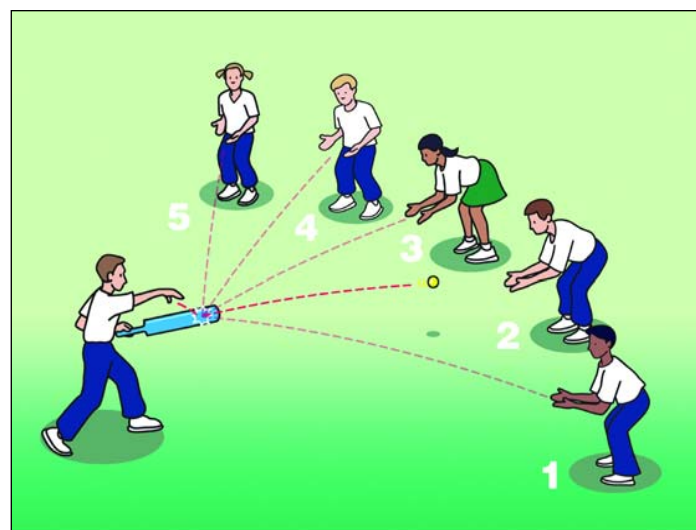
#### Background

This game is a fun game which encourages competition and an appreciation of the importance of catching well in the slips. The game is dependant on the coach providing a good, match realistic feed to the participants. They do this by throwing the ball onto the bat, then using the bat to deflect the ball off at angles (See 'Wings to Fly - Part 4, Peter Moores - Wicketkeeping' for an explanation of the technique). The deflection off the bat, creates a real situation where a player has to react late to a change in direction. It also means players need to communicate and understand which balls to go for.

The achievements of the scheme gave evidence that the system of looking long term at player development will produce players who, among many other things know how to win matches. The strategy used for this group of players, has now been adopted by the u12-u15 age group teams in Cheshire from 2008. For more details and to read about the scheme visit [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk)

■ **Lancashire** have just run three workshops based around Long Term Athlete Development for their coaches. They were well attended and were run by Paul Connolly, a Lancashire CA member who also works for Sports Coach UK.

■ **Cumbria** have planned one UKCC 1 and one UKCC 2 for early in 2008. They have also had two more coaches go through tutor training who will hopefully be signed off in the coming weeks.



#### Organisation

- Organise players into a slip cordon around the coach as illustrated above
- Game works best with five players but you can have more or less depending on your group size.
- Number the players 1 - 5
- Begin to feed catches to the group in a random fashion (e.g. catch to 4 then 2 then 5 etc)
- Upon someone dropping the ball, game stops
- Whoever dropped the ball scores no points and moves to position 1
- Everyone else scores the points that their position states (e.g. position 5 scores 5 points, position 4 scores 4 points etc)
- All players in a position below the catch dropper move up one position
- The game then continues. Proceed until one player reaches or exceeds the target score (for a group of 5 target score could be 30)
- If two players go for the same catch and drop it, they both move to the bottom and score no points for that round
- If two players leave a ball between themselves they also both move to the bottom and score no points

#### Easier/Harder

- It is important to focus catches on players in positions 3,4 and 5 as these players are in the high points scoring positions
- Coach can vary the distance from which he/she stands from the group
- Ask players to catch with just one hand
- Use a different ball such as a tennis ball which rebounds more so is harder to catch

#### Equipment

- Cricket bat
- Cricket ball/ tennis ball

## WEST MIDLANDS



### West Mids News

- **Shropshire** have appointed Chris Dirkin as CDM. He will start his new role in January after a successful stint as the ECB CA Communications and Resources Manager. The county have already run a UKCC 1 course and have a UKCC 2 course ongoing. There will be three more UKCC 1 courses running across the winter along with some Coach Development Workshops
- **Staffordshire** have various courses running across the winter

### Baseball

#### Coach

Chris Dirkin, formerly Communications and Resources Manager for the ECB CA, is working as Cricket Development Manager in Shropshire. He is a Level 3 coach and field based trainer also works at Wellington Cricket Club and with Shropshire under 11s.

#### Background

This is a small sided game to work on catching and throwing under pressure. It also incorporates running between the wicket and the match pressures of running someone out. When running the practice it is important to emphasise good technique to the players participating.

### Membership:



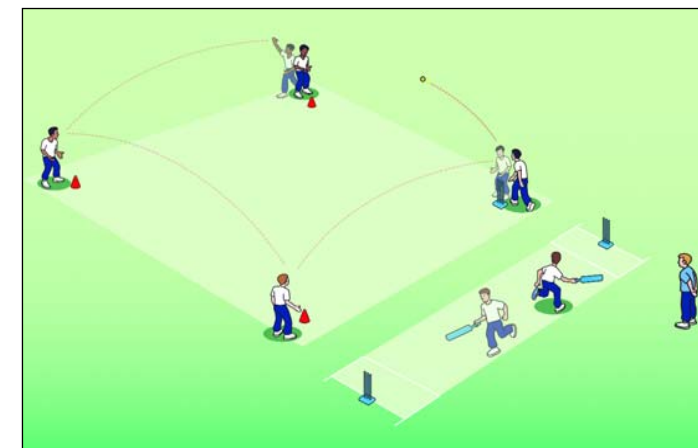
months

- **Worcestershire** had a very successful summer which saw their under 17 and under 15 teams win promotion to the top flight of their respective age group cricket. The under 13 and under 14 teams both won the Taunton Cricket Festival
- Gavin Haynes has been appointed in charge of Worcestershire's Emerging Players Programme
- Worcestershire also have a full programme of coach education courses planned.



#### Organisation

- Groups are organised as illustrated
- Players - groups of 8
- On command the fielders throw the ball over arm from fielder to fielder around the square starting and finishing with player 1
- At the same time the batter runs to the far crease set between the two far cones and back before the ball is returned
- If they are successful they are awarded 2 runs
- No runs are scored if they do not complete 2.
- Batters rotate until all are out
- Teams swap after a completed innings.
- The team with the most runs are deemed winners



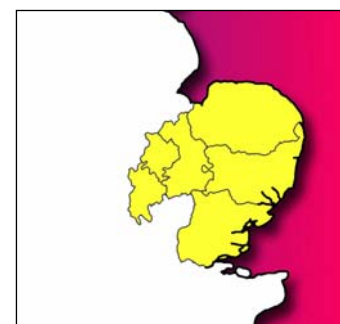
#### Easier/Harder

- Increase / decrease throwing distances
- Increase / decrease running area
- Add another fielder
- Add another runner
- Add another run
- Catch one handed
- Use a different ball

#### Equipment

- Tennis balls - 1 per group
- Cones - 6
- Stumps - 1 set

## EAST



### Membership:



### East News

- **Cambridgeshire's** U13's and U14's made it through to the quarter finals of the ECB National Cup this summer
- Cambridgeshire Coach Kevin Scully became Regional Winner for the East in The ECB Sky Sports Coach Awards
- An all women's UKCC 1 course is to be run once again in Cambridgeshire as part of a busy coach education programme
- In **Essex**, five new tutors are going through tutor training which will take their tutor workforce up to a total of ten. The county have also employed a specific Coach Education

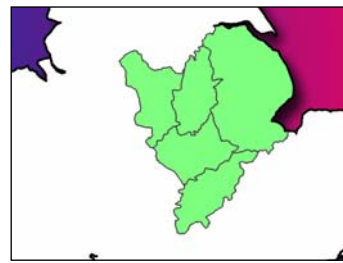
#### Administrator

- Essex are aiming to run seven UKCC 1 courses and two UKCC 2 courses during the winter as they continue to drive forward their coach education programme
- In **Norfolk**, Richard Honner has become the CDM replacing Godfrey Batley who has retired
- **Huntingdonshire** are planning for a busy winter having already run some of the Coach Workshops. They have just started a UKCC 2 course and will be running a UKCC 1 after Christmas. They also have a Coach Development Day in the pipeline
- The **Suffolk** CA have been very busy. After launching a

newsletter 'The Agricultural Shot' in July, a second edition has just been published with a third planned for April.

- Suffolk CA ran two "Have A Go" nets for the Suffolk Family Health Day at Woolpit CC on Sun 26th Aug 2007, which included a game vs Lashings
- The Suffolk CA are also helping with appointment of coaches to run the Suffolk District Cricket program for 2008. One exciting scheme in the county is the creation of a "Pool of Coaches" who are available for all Suffolk clubs to call upon when their needs require. This is currently being 'piloted' with a couple of clubs to see how the relationship will work.

## EAST MIDLANDS



### Membership:



### E. Midlands News

■ Les Hall has replaced the long serving John Bown as **Derbyshire** CA representative. The county are running four UKCC 1 courses and one UKCC 2 with the possibility of another in spring

■ **Derbyshire** have had their most successful and fulfilled District Cricket programme ever in the 2007 season, despite the weather. All their seven Districts took part from North to South at both U13 and U15 level. Player pathways are being clearly established with players moving both up and down through Club, District and County levels

■ The new team at **Leicestershire** have been busy organising a hectic programme of courses through the winter

■ In **Northamptonshire**, they have been involved in the launch of the Fred Truman Cricket League to attempt to bring cricket back into state schools

■ **Nottinghamshire** are running six UKCC 1 courses and one UKCC 2 through the winter. John Leaf has just qualified as a tutor which takes their tutor workforce up to five

### “Happy Days” Fielding Game



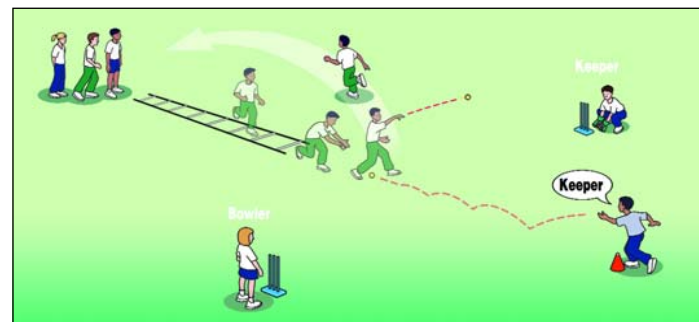
#### Coach

Andrew Fletcher is currently working towards his UKCC 2 Award. He coaches cricket at Bushloe High School in Leicester and at Kirby Muxloe Cricket Club. He plays his cricket for Leicester Ivanhoe in the Leicestershire Premier League and he represented Leicestershire Youth as a youngster. Andrew studied Sport and Exercise Science at UWIC and has also coached in Australia.

#### Background

This activity is used as a link between technique work and small sided games that are played during training sessions. It is best suited to groups of between 8-10 players, as the short, quick, movements allow high levels of involvement and low waiting times between repetitions. The practice is designed to allow work on the movements, retrievals and throws most commonly occurring within cricket. The small numbers within the group allows quick and effective communication with the players should the coach feel the need to make group coaching points at any stage, reinforcing ideas and the correct technique taught prior to the practice.

### Organisation



- Set out the activity as shown above
- Ensure players are a safe distance behind the agility ladder and that there nobody walks behind the stumps at which the ball is being thrown.
- Feed the balls at a pace and time suitable for the player's ability level.
- Call an end for the player to pick up and throw the ball to, either 'bowlers end' or 'keepers end' (players are informed which is which at the start of the practice)

#### Easier/Harder

- Vary the distance between the stumps and the agility ladder dependant upon the ability level of the group.
- Remove the agility ladder and have the players walk towards the stumps as they would within a game situation.
- Change the foot patterns on the agility ladder prior to fielding the ball.
- Vary the pace, bounce and direction of the feed dependent upon the individual ability of the player.
- Remove the keeping gloves but keep the 'keeper's end' scenario. Get the players to follow their throw, so they then become the keeper / bowler until somebody else throws to them.
- Ask players to use one hand pick up/ turn and chase/ or diving one hand throw.
- Feed a catch instead of a ball along the floor.

#### Equipment

- 5/6 cricket balls
- Agility ladder
- 2 sets of stumps
- Small cones (if no agility ladder)

## NORTH EAST



### Membership:



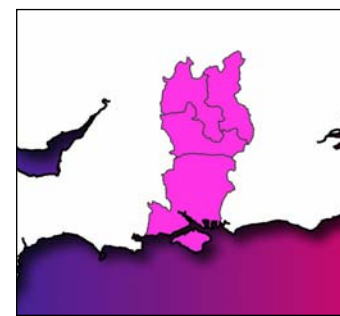
### North East News

■ In **Durham** there are three UKCC 1 courses organised

with many more courses in the pipeline. They are also pleased to add Alistair Maiden and Ron Young to their tutor workforce

■ In **Yorkshire**, 100 coaches attended the YBCA Conference at Bradford & Bingley Cricket Centre Headingley on 17th November. There were presentations on fielding by John Sadler (Derbyshire CCC) and John Stanworth (Lancashire CCC) in the morning and a choice of one of three Coach Education Workshops in the afternoon. Nine Coach Assistant and eleven Coach Award courses currently registered in the county with more in the pipeline.

## SOUTH



### Membership:



### South News

■ **Hampshire** CA have been trialling running all six Coach Development Workshops in a row.

They have been doing this through their district coaches who will then give feedback on how it worked. They have been subsidised in doing this through a bursary from Sport Hampshire and Isle of Wight

■ It has been an encouraging year in the **Isle of Wight**. The under 16's won their festival for the first time, and the under 15's won three games in the county competition

■ The Isle of Wight CA are running a UKCC 1 course in December and are looking to reintroduce a coach mentoring programme to support coaches development

■ In **Buckinghamshire** they are running three UKCC 1's and two UKCC 2's over the winter as well as a programme of Coach Development Workshops. They are running a Young Leaders course with each of the eight School Sport Partnership's in the county and using the video to help promote them.

## SOUTH WEST AND WALES



### Membership:



### South West News

■ **Wales** are running a full programme of coaching courses through the winter. This will include 16 UKCC 1's, four UKCC 2's, 16 CDW's and one conversion course from the old Level 1 to the UKCC 2

■ **Dorset** have a busy winter of courses planned. They are running two UKCC 1 courses and one UKCC 2 along with the Coach Development Workshops. The Dorset Cricket Academy is up and running and they will be beginning their winter training programme for their squads shortly. Their district sides are hoping to play more games outside of the Dorset area in the coming season

■ The past two years has seen **Devon** reach regional finals at U13, U15 and U17 in the ECB girl's competitions. Devon as a county has started to focus on producing a senior county side capable of playing in the county championship. To read more about the development of women's cricket in Devon visit [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk)

■ Coaches from Devon visited Mpumalanga in South Africa during October 2007 in order to contribute to their coach education programme. See page 14 for more details

■ **Gloucestershire** are running four UKCC 1 and four UKCC 2 courses across the winter

■ **Somerset** have just run a UKCC 2 and have a UKCC 1 currently on-going. They also have a conversion course from the old ECB Level 1 also in the pipeline

■ **Wiltshire** have just appointed a Head of Performance, Alan Crouch. They also have a busy coach education programme with four UKCC 1's and one UKCC 2

## Thinking Outside The Box

### Coach

Stephen Wilson is currently in his 4th year at Bournemouth University studying BSc Sports Development & Coaching Sciences. He is the holder of an ECB level 2 coaching qualification and works extensively with Dorset County and District players. He has been appointed Head Coach of the Dorset Under 12's for the 2007/2008 season. He is also a member of the coaching team at Bryanston School, Blandford working with the 1st XI and U14's. Stephen has represented Dorset at youth level and latterly at Under 21 level. He is also a member of Bournemouth University's 1st team who play in the BUSA Premier League A.



### Background

■ This is a practice that Stephen uses in the warm-up prior to a match. The practice recreates the situations that players often find themselves in during match play. It is based around the modern thinking of 'hunting in pairs'. It requires high levels of communication and teamwork.

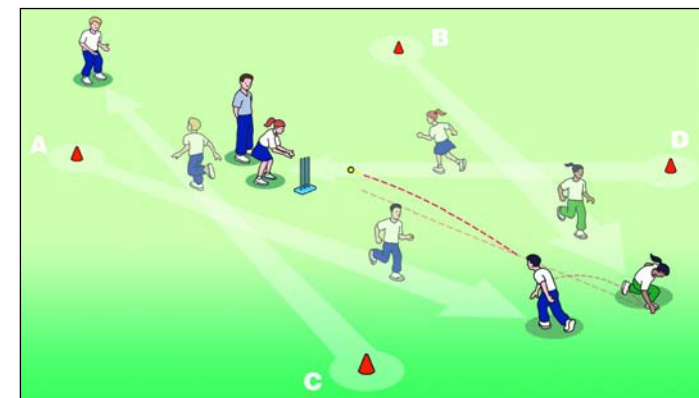
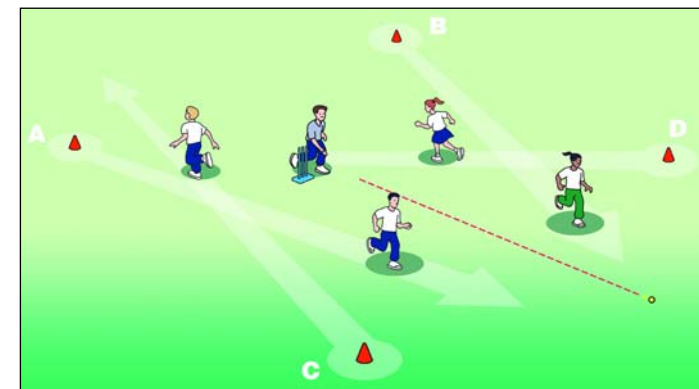
### Organisation

- Set out as shown in diagram
- Ball is thrown by coach from central stumps in between players C and D
- Players A and B chase down the ball
- Whichever player reaches the ball first (e.g. A), flicks the ball to the other (e.g. B) who turns to throw at the stumps
- In the meantime, players C and D have to run in the opposite direction in order to get into a position to back up the resultant throw (from player B)
- One player positions themselves to receive the ball at the stumps, and the other player takes a more defensive position to tidy up any misdirected/missed throws

### Easier/Harder

- Throw the ball in any of four directions, for example in between C and A or D and B, so players then have to also work out who their partner is
- Ask players to aim for a direct hit at the stumps
- Throw/hit a catch instead of a ball along the floor, asking the players to communicate who will take the catch

**Equipment** ■ 1 Ball, ■ 1 set of Stumps, ■ 4 Cones



## LONDON



### Membership:



### London News

■ **Sussex CA** are still in the process of reorganising, but they have many events planned for the Winter months. They are currently running several Coach Development Workshops and are planning the Annual Conference Day to be held in March. They have also run the pilot course for the Club Coach Award

■ In **Middlesex**, the integration

between Coach Education and the first class game is tightened as Toby Radford is appointed as First Team Coach and Graeme West is appointed as Director of the Academy. Most of the playing squad have completed courses and David Nash, Alan Richardson and Chris Silverwood are keen to do their Level 3. Ian Hutchinson is on a current L3 course and Alan Coleman is a very successful tutor on courses.

■ Middlesex's Coach Development Workshops were fully subscribed. The video work

was supported by their tutor Roger Cook who is also the First Team video analyst. He used the Cric Stat lap top to illustrate what can be achieved at first class and international level.

■ Middlesex ran a very successful UKCC L1 in Tower Hamlets for two new clubs which was supported by Borough Grants (see photo below)

■ In 2008 Middlesex will be concentrating on offering courses to those clubs who have identified their needs by completing the Club Development

Planning Process after downloading templates from [ecb.co.uk](http://ecb.co.uk)

■ **Kent** held a Coaches Development Day on Sunday 18th November where 120 coaches were expected to attend. Sessions were delivered by part of Kent's newly appointed team Phil Relf & Jason Weaver, along with Neil Taylor, James Medhurst, Ray Willis, Richard O'Sullivan, and a question & answer session hosted by John Warnett of BBC Radio Kent with Geraint Jones and James Goodman



## The Ball Train

### Coach

Anish is 21 years of age, and studies Sport and Exercise Science at Loughborough University. He represents the University, and plays his home cricket in Hertfordshire with Radlett Cricket Club, who are currently in the Home Counties Premier League. He has represented Middlesex CCC through the age groups from 12 to 17. Anish is currently an ECB Level II qualified coach who is looking to complete his UKCC III in the next year. He is currently playing an active role with the recently formed Barmy Army Colts, developed by Mark Stear. The setup integrates county colts from Midlands and the South of England, and provides them with an opportunity to represent the Barmy Army against other counties and tour abroad.



### Background

This game is to be used at the beginning of a training session, when performers are not usually completely psychologically and physically activated to work at full intensity. There is a 'lag phase', where they settle into their environment and indeed the session. This is a great exercise that Anish uses after the warm up to counter this 'lag phase' and raise the activation levels of the performers..

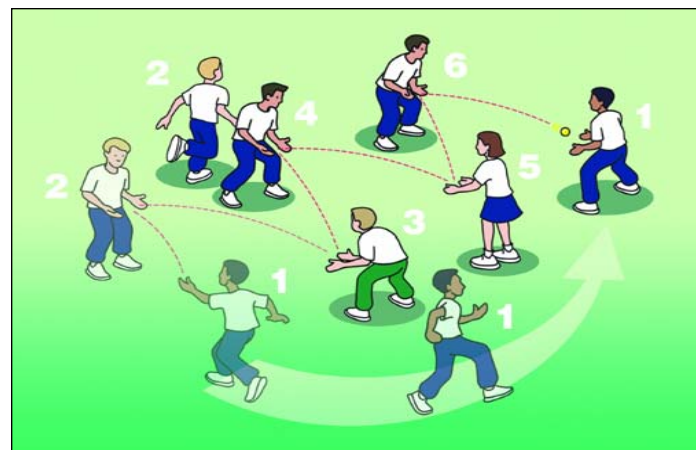
### Organisation

- Organise group into teams of six participants
- Performers should line up opposite each other in a low slip catching position (as in diagram)
- The train of three balls are given to player 1
- On the whistle, player 1 passes ball to player 2
- Player 2 then throws the ball immediately to player 3 ready to receive second ball from player 1
- Player 3 feeds the ball on to player 4 and so on

- Once player 1 has released the third and final ball, they peel away and sprint to the opposite end of the line ready to receive the train of balls from player 6
- On passing the third ball, player 2 will then rejoin the end of the line to receive balls from player 1
- Essentially, once every player has passed on the last ball of the train, they run to the end to build more track for the train to run on with the target of getting to the finish line before the other team(s).

### Rules

- No player can hold two balls at anytime
- If any ball touches the ground before the finish line then all performers must reassemble in formation from the start, with player 1 holding all three balls to start again
- All throws are underarm and should travel around two or three metres



### Easier/Harder

- Increase/decrease the number of balls in the train
- Ask participants to catch with only one hand
- Ask the throws to be over arm or bounce the ball

## EUROPE



### Membership:



### Europe News



**An interview with Maija Scamans - Finland's Cricket Development Officer**

Any ECBCA member would be forgiven for thinking that one actually has to live or coach in England or Wales to be a member of the England and Wales Cricket Board Coaches Association. Nevertheless, such a member would be mistaken. Membership to the ECBCA does in fact extend to those coaches fortunate enough to have gained an ECB qualification despite living and coaching outside of these two countries.

This opportunity comes as part of ECB's ongoing support of the ICC European Development Program. ICC Europe, in partnership with ECB continues to role out ECB coaching courses to Europe's coaches giving them a recognised qualification, which would not otherwise be possible.

Maija Scamans of Finland is one such coach. This remarkable lady has held the position of Cricket Development Officer for the Finnish Cricket Association (FCA) for the past five years - a period which has seen dramatic developments in cricket in the country.

As the ICC European Development Program continues with its quest to develop cricket across the continent, Finland is leading the race among the ICC Affiliate members to development the sport at the grass roots level. According to ICC research figures, participation numbers in Finland have increased from 474 in 2002 to 2,800 in 2007, of which nearly 2,500 are juniors who have been introduced to the game over the past five years.

Below are extracts from an interview Maija gave to **Susan Lowrey, ICC European Project Officer**. To read the full interview go to [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk)

### Q. So Maija, how did you first get involved in cricket?

Well, I first started out as a player. My husband was amongst a group who had formed a club in Helsinki (my hometown), called SKK, made up mainly of ex-patriots, and I became a "social" member of the club, watching and socializing with the players. There were no women involved in the game itself and I half jokingly asked "Where's the women's cricket?". Out of this one question the club organised 10 free sessions for women to attend in the spring of 2001. I went along as a player, and I that is where it all started!

### Q. You now have an ECB Level I coaching qualification. How did you get from playing to coaching?

To be honest I was rather bullied into taking the Level I course! It was about one year after I had started playing, and there was very little junior cricket taking place in Helsinki, the centre for cricket in Finland at that time. As a teacher, I had access to a school, contacts in other local schools and was familiar with the school system. Because there was no one to coach the youngsters at our club I was asked if I would take the course and try to get some children playing the game. The course which I took was only the 2nd coaching course that the FCA had ever run. The ICC Development Program sent across the European Development Officer to tutor the course and before I knew it I was an ECB Level I qualified cricket coach!

### Q. The schools programme has clearly taken off over the past five years, with thousands of kids now playing some form of cricket. How did you get cricket into Finnish schools?



Setting up a schools programme in Finland was a big challenge! The FCA does not have the funding to pay for any full time coaches, so every coach, including myself, is a volunteer and we must schedule cricket activities around full time jobs. It is therefore difficult to send coaches into schools, but we have found that the best option is to try to get full time University and other students to begin coaching. Their time is much more flexible and they can go into schools in the daytime to help with the PE sessions.

### Q. And this has proved successful? Have you managed to get cricket into PE lessons?

Yes, the sport is now played in schools all over Finland. Over the past five years we have been encouraging PE teachers to introduce cricket into their lessons. In 2006 we staged a demonstration of cricket at Finland's Sports teachers' Annual Seminar. We only had a one hour slot which we split into three 20 minutes demonstrations, however this year we actually managed to stage two sessions at the seminar. Our demonstration was so popular that we had teachers queuing up to see cricket in action and try out the

sport. We handed out the ECB "Time to Play" coaching manuals translated in to the Finnish language and actually sold around 50 Kwik Cricket sets for these teachers to take back and use in their schools - which was great! Teachers find cricket a creative sport which they can use as something new and exciting with which to engage their pupils.

Thanks to the ongoing ECB Introductory courses the number of coaches in Finland has more than doubled to 70 over 5 years.

### Q. Do you have any plans to run an UKCC 2 course in Finland?

I am actually now an ECB course tutor myself and we held the European Pilot course for the new ECB Coaches Assistant course for around 15 cricketers in Kuortane a year ago. Philip Hudson the ICC European Development Officer and Philip Knappett Middlesex CCC Youth and Coaching Manager, came across from London to help run the course for the FCA. It was a huge success and it is vital that we continue to stage such courses to ensure we get more qualified coaches in Finland. As for a Level II course, yes, it would be great to run one and I would certainly sign myself up this time round, but at present we are just too busy! There is much to think about - the venue and dates, participants, funding and it is a much longer course than the Level I, so to fit it in around our day jobs and other cricket commitments is a big task!

For further information on the development of cricket in Finland visit <http://www.cricketfinland.com> and to find out more about European cricket visit [www.ecc-cricket.com](http://www.ecc-cricket.com)



## DCB COACH EDUCATION VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

Devon Cricket Board has well established links with South Africa and each February the Under 15 squad tour Western Province and Mpumalanga playing a combination of 50 over and two day games.

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to visit South Africa as part of a cricket tour will be well aware of the tough competition that will be encountered. They will also testify to the wonderful hospitality and warmth of reception likely to be experienced.

Reciprocating this hospitality is a daunting prospect so we were delighted when the opportunity came to visit Mpumalanga during October 2007 in order to contribute to their coach education programme. The idea originated through an informal arrangement whereby Alan Swift would run a short course for students and teachers at Skukuza School in Kruger National Park during a social visit to South Africa. What eventually emerged was a request for two courses to take place at White River, one for teachers and pupils from the rural areas and another for managers and coaches of the Mpumalanga representative teams. It was realised that this programme went some way beyond the original plan and arrangements were made for Matt Theodou to accompany Alan on the visit.

The first course took place over two days and was attended by 56 people comprising 21 boys and 35 teachers from 19 schools. It certainly presented a few challenges, apart from the large

numbers very few participants had knowledge or experience of cricket, for most English was their third language and there was a need to run a teaching course for the boys while at the same time providing the teachers with understanding and ideas to take back to their schools.

It was decided to mix the teachers and pupils and wherever possible approach learning through the use of small sided games. Fielding was fairly straight forward apart from the techniques specific to wicket keeping while the batting skills improved considerably after some time was spent on the basics of grip, stance and backswing.

The boys showed a remarkable capacity to acquire basic bowling skills through copying demonstrations and surprisingly, little intervention was needed. This was not the case for most of the adults however who found the unnatural technique of bowling difficult and some considerable time had to be spent in helping them. It would be stretching the point to claim total success but by the end even those who still had suspect actions were able to distinguish the difference between bowling and throwing.

The game of pairs cricket was introduced and proved to be very popular; it also provided the opportunity to put the work covered into context and to explain other features of playing a game such as field placing (we used marker discs to help), running between the wickets, umpiring and scoring.

At the end of the two days the participants were given an attendance certificate from the Devon Cricket Board and the overall feeling was of a most enjoyable and worthwhile experience.

The second course (over one and a half days) was attended by managers and coaches of the various Mpumalanga representative teams together with their current U12 squad. The requirement here was very different to the first two days and we were asked to provide examples of activities used by coaches in Devon which might enhance the work they do with their youth players, a broad agenda and with some uncertainty as to what would be an appropriate level.

We eventually settled on a programme which included examples of fielding practices commonly used by coaches in Devon, the use of middle practice as part of team preparation and video analysis as a means of helping with the development of individual players. Interestingly the inclusion of fielding games was in response to a specific request by those attending the course. Some time



was spent on these together with discussion and activities relating to pre match preparation. The ideas appeared to be well received with plenty of interaction and discussion as the session progressed. We noted on the second morning (during the time that the coaches and managers were involved in video analysis work) that the boys, unsupervised, were setting up and practicing the games covered. An indication perhaps that we had done something right!

We were limited by time for the middle practice which meant that the match situations presented to the players were fairly short '4 overs left and 26 required to win', '6 overs left with 2 wickets remaining in order to secure a draw'. The idea of the fielding side and batters formulating their own strategies without coach intervention was stressed along with the need for post practice discussion of what had taken place.

It is interesting to note that the players, who were of a good standard, showed no more idea of how to try and take wickets at the end of a time format game than our own players in Devon (and probably the rest of the UK). Given the fact that the batting side required 150+ runs with only 2 wickets and 6 overs left, the first over was bowled with only one close fielder, 1st slip together with sweepers on both sides of the wicket - it did however provide us with plenty to talk about.

At the end there was general agreement as to the value of conditioned middle practice in helping players to formulate strategies and make sensible decisions relating to match situations.

The video analysis work was approached by asking the coaches to complete an observation sheet for a batter and bowler during a live net session while the same two players were also recorded for subsequent discussion and analysis. As

anticipated the difficulty of making accurate observations of a players techniques during play quickly became apparent

The benefits of using video was illustrated by completing the same observation sheets for both players but using the recordings together with slow motion and still frames.

As is usually the case when running similar courses in the UK we found it necessary to ensure that all headings used on the sheet were fully understood and stressed the need to simply record what was happening rather than looking instantly for faults.

On both courses all those we worked with were delightful people who approached every aspect with great enthusiasm while their capacity to generate a lively atmosphere ensured that the coaches also derived much pleasure from proceedings!



Much of the work covered over three and a half days reflected the methods and ideas which underpin coach education in the UK and it is pleasing to record that both courses were well received. Informal discussion with coaches on the second course emphasised that whilst our international team might be behind Australia in the test ranking and struggling in the one day game, the support provided by our coach education programmes are second to none in the world.

Work done it was back to Skukuza in Kruger. We were invited to dinner at the local golf club where we had the dubious pleasure of watching the Rugby World Cup Final in the company of 200+ South Africans!! Who was it that said winning was not important?

# Take a look at LITTLE STOKE CC



The most famous example came in 1997 when Alan Richardson (pictured right) became a 1st class cricketer having started as a junior at the club. He bowled his way into the Staffordshire Minor Counties Team and was then contracted by Derbyshire. Now at Middlesex, Alan has a reputation as a wholehearted competitor and has turned out match winning bowling performances.

Tradition is one thing, but, in 2003, the club realised, maybe a little late, that they weren't developing 1st team players anymore. Despite having junior teams with coaches, there were few achievements and little success. The set up seemed to pay lip service to cricket with no objectives or goals. It was a recipe for disaster and the proof was in the performances.

With his playing career coming to an end, and a seven year old son mad about cricket, Tim Fielding decided to commit himself, with the help of other parents, to develop the junior section of the club. Given his vast coaching background (having qualified in 1987 and then becoming a staff coach by 1997), Tim found himself ideally placed to evaluate, and assess, the problem.

Having spent a weekend at the ECB CA National Conference at Warwick University in November 2003, watching and listening to Rod Marsh, Troy Cooley, Istvan Balyi, John Hamer and the sadly missed Bob Woolmer, Tim realised what he needed to be done. Using ideas largely taken from that weekend and with the background and the support the ECB provided, he drew up a structure for Little Stoke for the future.

**Background:** Little Stoke CC in Staffordshire has a long tradition of finding, and developing, young talent.

**Coaching Structure:** After receiving the 'Wings to Fly - Part One' video, Tim set to work with more ideas, running the first ever Long Term Athlete Development Course (LTAD) for under 9's. Four years on, all those players who attended the course are still playing a part in the success at Little Stoke. One course followed another and then another, taking place both in winter and summer. The group formed a team which won all their games in a newly formed softball league. Tim observed that the Little Stoke boys were faster, technically advanced and had the desire that had come from the coaching.

This was the first rung in the ladder of development which has taken Little Stoke to where it finds itself today. It can't just be LTAD that has made the difference; and Tim suggests there are other elements that effect performances.

- "First you need to work with motivated youngsters; we have produced a squad system for all our teams that gets the best out of players.

- Secondly you need the very best coaches. Last year we formed the Little Stoke Cricket Academy which has brought top coaches to the club, supporting the work of our excellent current coaches.

- Thirdly we have a Coach Mentoring Programme that will help a cricketer become a coach and then give them skills and opportunity to increase their qualifications and gain more experience.

- And finally you need to recognize a Development Path for young players. This dovetails into our LTAD programme and can be described as The Key Stages of Development."

**Recent Developments:** They now produce a Coaching Programme that straddles most of the year. Tim has started a new LTAD course for next year's Under 9 Development Squad where four coaches will work with a squad of 12 youngsters. These youngsters

benefit from top quality work, which includes The ABC's, Technical Models and constant referral to more advanced work like Shaping and Chaining.

With so many activities going on this year, Little Stoke were surprised and pleased that Nottinghamshire CCC have come onboard to assist with their academy.

The club wrote to a number of counties asking for advice on how to develop an academy. Notts replied immediately and offered support in terms of planning, having run an academy since 2000.

The help offered by Notts complements the work the club are doing and, in addition, allows the club to develop clear goals and overall objectives.

Finally, the future looks bright for Little Stoke next season with two more teams, taking the total to 12 junior sides. They are building a new cricket ground with plans to have a cricket school on site.

**Achievements:** In spring 2006 Little Stoke became a Clubmark Club. Part of the accreditation was that they encouraged the use of their Playcricket website, which opened up huge opportunity for them. They now post weekly club information to their members via the members database and include their coaching plans and courses. For those clubs who haven't yet understood its importance to a club's development go to [www.littlestoke.play-cricket.com](http://www.littlestoke.play-cricket.com) and see what can be achieved. 2007 has been a record breaking season at Little Stoke. Their juniors have won 10 junior titles and 12 of their members have, this year, played for the Staffordshire Youth Charity.



All parts are in place for future development but can they find another Alan Richardson? Watch this space.

On 8th November, 20 Coaches enjoyed a day at the National Cricket Performance Centre as part of the celebrations surrounding the first anniversary of the Sky Sports sponsorship of ECB Coach Education. The coaches, all Sky Sports Scholars themselves (an initiative where Sky Sports pay for half the cost of their UKCC 2 course), were invited to Loughborough to take part in a wicketkeeping masterclass coaching session run by Peter Moores. This was followed by a tour of the facilities at Loughborough, lunch, then a session in the afternoon on batting with Dave Houghton, the former Zimbabwe international.

The first year of the Sky Sports sponsorship has seen 5500 people trained, 50% more than was initially targeted. England Head Coach Peter Moores said, "Thanks to Sky Sports' backing, the ECB's Coach Education Programme has put more

# Peter Moores Masterclass proves big hit with Sky Sports Scholars



coaches into cricket than ever before. This is a crucial area and these figures are down to the support and commitment of Sky Sports and the hard work of everyone involved with the Coach

Education team."

Also attending on the day was Geraint Adlam from Wales (pictured below with Dave Houghton), the winner of the first prize in the ECB CA Research Programme for 2007.

Geraint was delighted with the day, commenting "I can't thank the ECB CA enough. Today has been fantastic and it was such a surprise as I have never won anything before in my life!"



## ECB appoint 4 Regional Training Managers

This autumn has seen the appointment of some new members of the ECB Coach Education workforce. Four new Regional Training Managers (RTMs) will be working for the ECB as part of the four regional teams.

Their role is to ensure an appropriate high quality and effective tutor workforce is in place to deliver ECB Community Coach Education and Development activities nationally. They will also be responsible for delivering ECB Tutor training and development courses at a national level as well as training and CPD regionally and locally as required.

The initial priorities for the RTMs will be to establish contact with each County and begin meeting key people including, Cricket Development Manager's (CDMs), Approved Centre contacts, Tutors, Field Based Trainers (FBTs) and assessors.

The RTMs will support counties by helping develop their coach education and CPD plans and help evolve them to meet their needs. A particular focus will be on identifying future needs and capacities. The RTM has the ability to work both strategically and practically. They can provide in field practical support for the tutor workforce as well as strategic support to counties by developing coaching workforce plans in the short, medium and long term.

RTM for the Midlands, Cookie Patel, is delighted with the new role. He commented "I believe our roles will have the largest impact on community coach education that we have seen for a long time. We will be working with county cricket boards to help shape the future and identify strategically how each CCB will work towards achieving their short, medium and long term outcomes. We will also have the opportunity to work with tutors, Field Based Trainers and Internal Verifiers to maximise the workforce in each county and ensure we are working towards becoming the best and most respected coach education system in the world by 2009. I look forward to the challenge and working with you all"

In addition to Cookie, the other three RTMs are Gary Worgan (South and West), Hartley Bishop (London and East) and Paul Shaw (North).

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2008



The ECB CA National Conference 'Setting the Pace' 2008 is fast approaching over the horizon. The event to be held at Warwick University on the 19th and 20th January will see 400 ECB CA delegates hear from some of the top coaching names in the game along the central theme of fast bowling. The Conference follows on from the successful ECB CA 'Wings to Fly' DVD of the same name released earlier in 2007.

All ECB CA members were sent an application form and event flyer at the start of November. Just some of the names presenting workshops in January will be Dave Alred (formerly Jonny Wilkinson's kicking coach), Kevin Shine (ECB Fast Bowling Coach), Dave Houghton (Former Zimbabwe captain) and Ashley Giles (Former England spinner and Warwickshire Director of Cricket).

The ECB CA National Conference will also see the culmination of the ECB Sky Sports Coach Awards where sixteen regional winners will hear if they have been awarded one of two national awards that will be presented at the Gala Dinner.

If you are interested in coming to the conference there may still be some limited places available. Please go to the ECB CA website [www.ecbca.co.uk](http://www.ecbca.co.uk) for further details in this great opportunity.