

BATTING Advice - By Dilip Vengsarkar

I do believe that if you need to become a top class batsman you got to have some basic talent ! Not prodigious talent, but at least, the natural gift of hitting the ball well. Add to that a strong passion and love for the game and you have in my mind the prerequisites to be batsman of high quality.

You got to have an undying love for the game. Can't approach it as a career that you will pursue till the age of 18 and then see how it goes.

My advice to such youngsters with such plans is, do not take up the game at all ! You have to be single minded about Cricket to be a Cricketer. You can have only one deviation and that's academics which is a healthy and also a sensible deviation.

Once you have the prerequisites that I mentioned go looking for a good school that encourages cricket, has a good coach and some serious nets. Start practicing. and more and more. The more you practice the better it is.

The role of a coach in a young cricketer's career is precious. Pick the right coach. One who does not change your natural game, but ,only makes adjustments. I just cannot stress enough on how important this is. I must share with you here my experience with a certain coach. One who was intent on changing my natural batting grip for the "*coaching book*" grip. I expressed my discomfort with the new grip but the coach managed to "*enforce*" the change. Till the end of my career I never was comfortable with my grip. One of the reasons why many a times, you may have seen, I wasn't ready when the bowler was! The biggest regret in my career remains my change of grip. I do feel, today if I had not changed my grip I would have scored more runs.

Temperament is a very important hutment of batting .Deficiencies in batting skills can be more than covered by a good, sound cricket mind. Playing more matches helps develop your temperament. Playing frequently in match situations and learning the finer points of the game all helps in increasing your aptitude for the game.

Learn to play for your team. Do everything possible to get your team to win and do not be selfish . I have no time for batsmen with an individualistic approach. Make playing for the team a habit. Another good habit to have, is of scoring big runs. 100, 150, 200 you must learn to go on. Make it a habit of carrying on after a hundred . Do not cheapen your wicket. Let the bowler earn it.

Let me take the opportunity here, to give some advice to the parent. Please do not pressurize your child into playing cricket. Pressure him into studies ! But let him develop as a cricketer on his own. And remember even if your child does not make it to the highest level in Cricket. You have a child with a very healthy indulgence. Playing a sport. Don't forget there are some avoidable temptations around.

One small word on choosing the right gear for batsman .If you can afford it, carry your own gear. Don't I repeat don't use a bat that is too heavy for you. It has become fashionable these days to play with a heavy bat. My advice is , use a bat that allows you to play all the shots. The bat that enables you to play freely is the right bat for you. Lastly, remember 12 to 18 is the age when your body is really developing. Work hard at this time and your body will serve you longer. Exactly what Kapil Dev did. So should you. And yes, one thing, late nights, drinking. smoking does not quite help in that effort.

GOOD LUCK !!!

BOWLING Advice - By Kapil Dev

O.K., You want to be a good bowler ? Start walking straight from now. Confused?

Well, let me elaborate .What I am trying to say is get your feet straight while walking and not pointing towards each other or wide apart.. Both feet should be parallel to each other in a walk. Toes pointing straight down. This, will help you in getting the **BALANCE** of your body right. That is the purpose of the whole exercise. To get the body in perfect balance. When you do that you have achieved 30 % of your goal of becoming a top class bowler.

SHOES are very, very important for a bowler. I cannot stress enough on how important it is to have the right footwear. The shoes should not be too big or too small. They have to be just right. If not, trust me, it will lead to cramps, knee problems and the back will also get affected. Believe me you do not want these problems. Yes, you will be surprised , good footwear can prevent all these injuries.

STRONG legs are absolutely a must for a bowler. Work hard on those legs. Strong legs will see to it that your 1st over of the day is as good as your last. Always my goal. Same should be yours. **WRISTS** especially in modern day cricket has become an important area to concentrate on for a bowler. If you are a fast bowler remember to keep the wrist well behind the ball at the time of delivery. Get that wrist to push the ball from behind. Nice strong, firm wrist pushing the ball is something a Batsman doesn't like to see. All great fast bowlers have had a great wrist action. If you are a spinner get that wrist **FLEXIBLE AND SUPPLE**.

You will be amazed if I told you the secret of my long career as a fast bowler. One of the main factors for my durability as a fast bowler was "**CLEAN SOCKS AND CLEAN UNDERWEAR**" I would not mind a sweaty, wet shirt but a change of socks and underwear at every interval was an absolute must . It gave me a fresh lease of energy. It also gave me 434 wickets !

And of course one last thing, all that I have mentioned above has to be complimented with **HARD WORK** The harder you work the better it is.

GOOD LUCK !!!

FIELDING Advice - By Mohammad Azharuddin

If you have a good physique, speed, agility and a sense of anticipation you have the natural gift to be a brilliant fielder. However a young boy who may not be as gifted, does a few of the following things right, he could just surprise you by becoming as good. Work on your fielding and it will never let you down. Batting and Bowling could let you down on a day. Fielding can be your saviors on that crucial day.

I remember the Test match in Karachi in 1989 when I was playing for a place in the Indian team. and maybe also for my career. I did not score too many in that Test but I took 4 catches in 1 innings and I got myself another Test match , another chance. Got a hundred in that one and established myself in the Indian team. It is year 2000 now and I'm still there. Fielding has been my most dependable friend through all these years. Few things that helped me a great deal- **PRACTICE**, practice and practice taking catches close in as well as in the deep.

Always try and practice with 3 guys at a time, NOT TOO MANY.

INTENSITY in practice is important. It should be like as if you are playing a match. Learn to **PRACTICE UNDER PRESSURE**. Get used to excelling under pressure ,in match situations. I have seen many , brilliant in practice who would suddenly develop slippery hands in a tense situation. Practice throwing accurately. You should do this so often that you should be able to hit the stumps **7 TIMES OUT OF 10**.

Modern day cricket requires you to slide and save that extra run . Look for a good outfield and **LEARN TO SLIDE AND RECOVER**, to throw quickly. Yes. its important to recover instantly after the slide or it is a waste of effort.

Do a lot of **SHORT SPRINTS**, about 50 meters. Ideal training for a fielder.

You have no chance of becoming a good fielder if you have those **EXTRA KILOS** to carry. Maintain a good diet . I know how it feels to have that extra weight. It does not feel good. Fortunately for me that feeling was a long time ago.

Lastly, ENJOY IT. You absolutely must enjoy fielding to be a good fielder. Devise fielding methods that keep the fun element intact. Oh, I loved fielding .So will you.

Good Luck !!!

FITNESS Advice - By Robin Singh

The first step to being a very fit cricketer is do not play, just Cricket !

What I mean is when you are growing up and even when you have set your mind on being a serious cricketer, **PLAY OTHER GAMES**. I grew up in the West Indies and when a boy, played a lot of foot ball, squash and other games on the beach. Play any game you like that could keep you active. This will get you to become a good athlete. without even realizing it. Without all the regimented training programs that I see some very young ones put through. **I ENJOYED** my ride to fitness. Shouldn't you?

When you grow up and become a full fledged cricketer and start playing more and more matches continue playing those other games during the off season. Sachin Tendulkar still drops in to join his friends for the odd game of Table Tennis in between his hectic schedule.

As I got older I concentrated on **MAINTAINING** my fitness. Did a lot of running, cycling etc. Its always a good idea to have company when you are running. The **COMPETITIVENESS** with your partner can only help. Try beach running and run with **INTENSITY**. Yes, Intensity in your training will give you that little extra which will make you different from the rest. Concentrate on those legs . A cricketer needs strong legs.

QUICK SPRINTS should always be a part of your training program. Great preparation for those quick singles in One day matches.

I am a believer in **NATURAL FITNESS** but I have also done a bit of weight training over the years. **NOT TOO HEAVY WEIGHTS**. Concentrate on that **ABDOMEN**. Strong abdomen, that's where the power comes from. The power to hit those big sixes !

Always wise to train during the **OFF SEASON**.

If you have to train hard you need to **EAT WELL**. I don't believe in eating less to control weight. Eat well and train hard that's my motto. I'm a non smoker and non drinker and **AVOID LATE NIGHTS**. I rest whenever possible.- I reserve everything for those 6 hours on the field.

Good Luck!!!