

LEVEL-O CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CRICKET COACHING

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Lecture 57: Wicket Keeping Standing UP

Wicketkeeping is often described as one of the most challenging and thankless jobs in cricket, but also one of the most enjoyable roles. It demands sharp reflexes, extreme focus, agility, and mental toughness. In cricket coaching sessions, wicketkeeping is a crucial and lovable skill because it involves intense activity and precision.

Wicketkeeping encompasses various technical aspects, including stance, glove work, ball handling, footwork, positioning behind the stumps, and movement when standing up close for spinners or standing back for pace bowlers. Each aspect requires careful training and repeated practice.

First, discussing the standing-up position during wicketkeeping, the wicketkeeper usually stands close behind the stumps when a spinner or medium-pace bowler is in action. Here, the wicketkeeper must create what is known as the "T-zone." To form the T-zone, the wicketkeeper imagines a line from the off-stump and steps back about two shoe lengths (or roughly two feet) behind the stumps. Then, using the inner part of the right foot or the inner nail as a guide, he marks a line straight back. This vertical line represents the body alignment, while the horizontal crease line (the popping crease) creates a "T" where the two lines meet. The wicketkeeper's position should be precisely at this junction, slightly crouched and ready to move. This technique allows the keeper to cover the ball effectively, whether it turns or stays straight after pitching.

Moving to the stance and crouch position in wicketkeeping, the wicketkeeper should stand with both feet shoulder-width apart, parallel to each other. The body weight must be balanced on the balls of the feet (the padded area behind the toes) rather than on the heels or toes themselves. The knees should be flexed naturally, and the body slightly leaned forward, maintaining balance without excessive strain. Both hands, wearing gloves, must

be placed between the legs, forming a comfortable cup shape, ready to receive the ball. From a side view, the keeper's heels should be slightly raised off the ground to help quick lateral movement. If the keeper places too much weight on the toes, it can cause instability, and if the hands are extended too far away from the body, catching becomes difficult. Therefore, maintaining compactness and balance is key.

In coaching sessions, these aspects must be corrected actively. Coaches should ensure that the wicketkeeper's feet are aligned properly and at the correct width. The back should be naturally bent, not slouched too much. Hands must stay inside the line of the knees, forming the catching cup without sagging towards the ground unnecessarily. If needed, coaches should manually correct the body posture, raising the heels slightly and adjusting the arms to avoid excessive reaching. The keeper must always be able to see the bowler and anticipate the point where the ball will pitch.

Footwork is another vital component of wicketkeeping while standing up to the stumps. A wicketkeeper must move sideways either to the right or left, depending on the line of the ball, maintaining a straight line of movement parallel to the crease. When moving towards the offside (the batter's bat side), the left foot, which is closer to the off-stump, should stay anchored unless the ball is wide. If the ball is wide, both feet should move together, maintaining balance and reaching out to collect the ball. Conversely, when the ball moves towards the leg side, the right foot (near the leg stump) becomes the anchor and the left foot moves in a straight line, flexing to gather the ball smoothly.

The key is that the wicketkeeper must always move quickly but smoothly without lifting the body too much vertically, as unnecessary vertical movement reduces reaction time. Correct footwork allows the keeper to stay low and balanced, which is critical, especially when the ball turns or bounces unpredictably.

Finally, when practising with the ball during drills, the coach should observe whether the keeper is maintaining the correct footwork, stance, and glove positioning. Foot placement must always be checked for a proper sideways movement pattern without crossing the feet awkwardly, and the weight transfer should be fluid.