

LEVEL-O CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CRICKET COACHING

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Lecture 60: How to coach

Hello everyone. Today, we will discuss the essential topic of how to coach. In the simplest terms, coaching is about guiding cricketers to improve their skills while respecting and enhancing their natural abilities. In any cricket academy, you will find coaches working with young and budding cricketers. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, professionally or intuitively, they use words, techniques, and teaching methods to bring out the best in players. However, in this particular session, we will focus more carefully on how to coach cricketers technically and thoughtfully.

The primary aim of good coaching must always be to coach while keeping each player's natural ability in mind. This means that if you come across a bowler or batter who, by their instincts, demonstrates technically sound skills, even if they do not strictly adhere to textbook methods, you should not try to change their style unnecessarily. Many great players like Muttiah Muralitharan, Lasith Malinga, Jasprit Bumrah, and Mahendra Singh Dhoni succeeded not by conforming to standard techniques, but by excelling through their unique natural styles. Their coaches allowed them to develop within their strengths rather than forcing change. If a coach unnecessarily changes a player's natural ability, it may damage the player's confidence and future potential. Therefore, coaches must consciously change their mindset. Techniques in cricket remain largely the same over generations, but the application and understanding of those techniques have evolved with the game's development. In modern coaching, maturity sessions should focus more on refining skills rather than imposing rigid forms. It is also helpful to conduct personal interviews with players and maintain player diaries to monitor their growth and challenges.

When coaching a batter during a skill session, special attention must be given to the stance. Stance is the foundation of good batting. If the stance is strong and balanced, the batter can watch the ball clearly and prepare properly for any stroke. Work carefully on the stance by checking the position of the feet, the alignment of the hips and shoulders, and the way the batter looks at the bowler. Once the stance is corrected, attention should be paid to the grip. Many young batters either grip the bat too low or too high. They should be encouraged to hold the bat in the middle of the handle firmly and naturally, without any gaps, to ensure they have control over vertical and horizontal shots.

In the batting skill session, coaches must also help batters develop both vertical shots like drives and horizontal shots like cuts and pulls. Feeding balls through sidearms or manually throwing the ball are good methods to enhance these techniques. Mental coaching is equally critical for batters. A batter's mindset must focus on scoring runs by playing strokes confidently, adjusting according to the merit of the ball. Defensive play should only come into action when a stroke is not viable. Players must be encouraged to play freely without fear, trusting their instincts, and expressing themselves on the field.

For fast bowlers, the focus in a skill session must begin with the running technique. Good bowling action starts with good running mechanics. Bowlers must run with a natural, relaxed style, landing heel-ball-toe without excessive upper body movement. Poor running technique often leads to inconsistent loading, poor release, and even injury risks. Correct running builds a solid foundation for the bowler's entire action. After the running technique, attention should move to how the bowler grips the ball. Young bowlers must be taught the correct grip basics before moving towards action-building drills, whether the action is side-on, front-on, or semi-open. Using drills like one-step bowling, two-step bowling, walk-and-bowl methods, and full run-up techniques, coaches can systematically build the complete bowling action. Particular importance must be given to the release point of the ball. Consistent release drills help bowlers develop control and accuracy. Similarly, if loading issues are observed, loading drills must be applied to correct the way the ball is brought up behind the head during the delivery.

When coaching off-spinners, a smooth and controlled run-up must first be established. Once the bowler is comfortable with the approach to the crease, the action must be refined carefully. Focus on the point of release, ensuring that the off-spinner releases the ball at the right height and with the right finger action. Spot bowling can be introduced by marking specific targets on the pitch where the bowler must aim consistently. Making use of crease variations also enhances a spinner's effectiveness. Spinners should be taught to spin the ball using the fingers properly, focusing on drills that enhance their ability to loop the ball in the air. For mature spinners, loop drills become essential in developing flight and deception. Finally, if an off-spinner struggles with loading, specific loading drills should be introduced to ensure a more efficient and powerful bowling action.

For leg-spinners, the focus is similar but with additional complexity. Ensuring that the bowler builds momentum correctly in the run-up is crucial. Action-building must focus on developing a strong front arm and an effective wrist position during the release. Again, spot bowling, crease usage, and spinning drills must be incorporated. Leg-spinners must

learn to use their ring finger effectively to impart spin. Mature spinners can then work on loop drills to add deception. Correct loading is especially important in leg-spin because a lot of the revolutions and control depend on the wrist's position and movement.

When coaching a left-arm spinner, whether finger or wrist spinner, the emphasis must remain on developing a smooth run-up, a well-coordinated action, and a consistent release point. Spot bowling should be practised regularly, and players must be taught how to use the crease smartly, varying their angles of delivery. Spinning drills and loading drills ensure that the spinner is using their fingers or wrist efficiently to maximise spin and control.

Wicket-keeping, often overlooked, must be given its due attention in coaching sessions. Wicket-keepers must be trained on their crouch position, which allows for balance and rapid movement. Footwork is critical in ensuring that the keeper can move quickly in either direction. Glove work should be sharpened through specific drills that simulate different types of deliveries. Drills for getting up quickly from the crouch, moving sideways, and taking clean catches should all be part of a focused wicket-keeping training program.

In fielding sessions, coaching must aim to build techniques systematically. Fielders should practice one-handed pickups and throws for quick returns and two-handed pickups for secure handling. The long barrier technique must be drilled to prevent ground balls from passing through. Retrieving techniques, overarm throws, low lob throws, and underarm throws must be practised consistently. Catching drills for high catches, flat catches, and close catches should be included to develop complete fielding skills. Progression is key: fielding drills should move from stationary balls to balls in motion to build players' judgment and reaction times naturally.

In conclusion, coaching is about developing a cricketer's complete game — technically, physically, and mentally — while preserving their natural style and confidence. As coaches, our job is not merely to teach technique but to inspire, guide, and empower players to bring out the best version of themselves, respecting their individuality and supporting their growth at every stage. Thank you everyone