

Spin cycle



Coaches Matter

ECB Coaches Association Technical Bulletin in partnership with the ECB Coach Education Office
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Spin Doctrine

Having a strong spin attack as part of your bowling unit is essential for all well-balanced cricket teams. Quality spin bowlers provide variety in the attack, can bowl effectively with both the hard new ball and older ball, and make use of the worn areas of the wicket particularly in the latter stages of games. The aim of a good spin bowler is to deceive batsmen. There are more ways to do this than simply spin the ball off the pitch.

“It’s not just where the ball arrives, but how it arrives, when it arrives, where it came from, and where it is going”



Here are a number of skills that the quality spin bowler must acquire:

SPIN

The best exponents have the ability to spin the ball hard. Both finger spinners (off break and its variations) and wrist spinners (typically leg break and googly) have an ability to spin the ball in both directions off the pitch and beat the bat on both sides without any change in action which increases the number of wicket taking options e.g. bowled, caught slip, caught behind, caught silly mid-off, caught short leg and lbw.

There are four types of spin you can impart on the ball. The directions of revolution on the ball, as well as the rate of revolutions on the ball, will determine how it moves through the air and off the pitch.

1. Overspin

This leads to the ball dipping in flight, suddenly dropping. This is when the batsman is “deceived in the flight”. This spin also leads to more bounce, which can bring the close fielders into play.

2. Backspin

This leads to the ball carrying further through the air (the reverse of overspin with its sudden drop). Again this is key for deception in flight. The ball hangs in the air for longer than a batsman might anticipate.

3. Lateral Spin

This leads to the ball arcing or curving through the air. The best spin bowlers get the ball to curve through the air in one direction and then bounce off the pitch in another.

4. Barrel Spin

This leads to the classic sideways break a bowler generates off the pitch. It is the “turn” off the wicket and on the right surface is regarded as a spin bowler’s number one weapon. The more the seam can contact the pitch at right angles the bigger the turn.

Coaching Tip for Developing Spin

Coaches should encourage young spinners to spin the ball hard early on in their development even if that means some loss of control of line and length to begin with. Once the mechanics of bowling spin i.e. the use of fingers, wrists, arms, shoulders and whole body are honed, combine it with target bowling.

PACE

Every spin bowler will have a natural pace of delivery. The secret is to bowl the ball with enough revolutions

that even at a good pace it will still turn. If the ball is simply rolled out of the hand it won’t grip on the surface. Modern spin bowlers are able to vary their pace according to the pitch conditions. They are able to deliver a quicker ball without losing the shape to the delivery (i.e. it is not just firing it in flatter, but they retain flight and dip). Typically spin bowlers will deliver the ball between 50-60 mph, but this does vary, depending on the bowler, batter, pitch surface, wind speed, and even the stage and format of a game. An ability to mix up the pace of deliveries within an over, without changing the action, is a crucial skill for a spin bowler, especially in the shorter forms of the game.

Coaching Tip for Developing Pace

Find a bowler’s natural pace and develop its consistency. By developing a spin bowler’s ability to employ their whole body in the action they will naturally bowl with more purpose and pace. But never lose spin! Develop the two skills in tandem.

TRAJECTORY

It is easier for a batsman to judge the trajectory of the ball if the ball reaches him or her in a straight line from the hand. The bowler’s ability to get the ball to rise and

then drop gives the batsman a far more difficult perceptual challenge and is the sign of a high quality bowler and one of the most difficult skills to acquire. The spin bowler must deceive the batsman into making a false decision which they are committed to and can’t change. Trajectory or the ability to get the ball “up and down” is a high level skill and may take a long time for the young bowler to acquire.

Coaching Tip for Developing “Up and Down”

Spinning the ball hard and seam orientation will help achieve this delivery shape. Use a camera to see what is happening to the ball in flight or use an adapted ball (i.e. red and white) to understand the characteristics of the delivery. Be patient with developing this skill as it may take considerable time.

CONTROL

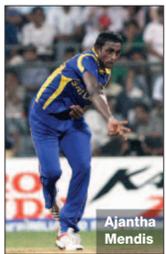
Control is the ability to deliver the ball accurately and consistently. It creates pressure on batsmen if they feel that scoring options are limited and they are being forced to score against “good” deliveries. For many young spin bowlers they will look to develop control at the expense of spin which isn’t surprising as control keeps you bowling and gets you into the game. But as they play against better batsmen spin bowlers will need to achieve control whilst still imparting spin, dip and shape on the ball. Control only comes with repetition and practice and requires a high level of skill and confidence.

Coaching Tip for Developing Control

The way to help your bowler’s develop control is to set challenging targets and replicate pressure situations in practice. Set up situations initially without batsmen which demand accuracy and control and record outcomes. For young bowlers you may set goals which require a min of 3-4 balls delivered in designated areas (without sacrificing spin), record and feedback and then extend the level of difficulty until a bowler feels able to deliver 5-6 balls where they want to. You may want to begin by encouraging control of a young spin bowler’s stock delivery before developing control over a sequence of different deliveries. When appropriate introduce a batsman to replicate game pressure.

POINT OF RELEASE

This relates to the angle, height and distance of the point of origin of the ball. From the “frog in the blender” Paul Adams, to the more classical Shane Warne, and from the purring simplicity of Graeme Swann to the improbable Ajantha Mendis, every bowler has the skill to release from a different point in a different way depending on the game demands. If the bowler can deceive the batsman with spin, pace, trajectory and control the action can be orthodox or unorthodox. By mixing up the point of origin batsman can be deceived. Clever spinners bowl deliveries from tighter and then



wider of the stumps, from closer to the no-ball line and then occasionally from level with the stumps or just behind (a 22 yard ball), or from a little higher and then lower. Never letting the batsman settle and be able to predict the delivery is key to a spin bowler’s success.



“To warm up - bowl into a net on the full. Rotate the hip and shoulder over the front leg. Power with the shoulders, creating energy with the hips and pivoting with the feet is the crucial thing for maximum spin”
Terry Jenner wrist spin coach

THE TACTICS OF SPIN BOWLING

The best spinners in world cricket are also the most intelligent which comes from experience of being in different situations against different batsmen on different pitch conditions. The execution of the skill only comes after the tactical options have been considered, or to put it another way a spinner needs to know what strategy is required for any given situation. Good spinners consider all the following factors every time they bowl a delivery. Experience enables a bowler to use second nature, or instinct, but a coach needs to look at a spinner’s performance in relation to the following:

- The batter’s strengths and weaknesses
- The bowler’s natural attributes
- The positioning of the fielders
- The condition of the wicket
- The format and stage of a game
- Your bowling partner at the other end

A TECHNICAL CHECK LIST

Every bowler will be unique and maintaining confidence is critical. Consider carefully about the nature of any intervention. Cloning bowlers seldom works because every spinner has a different natural action and physical make up. Celebrate diversity. Here are some areas to look at when observing a spinner, but before making an action change make sure as a coach you know the full impact of that change on what will happen to the ball and bowler:

- The grip
- The release
- The movement of the arms
- The shoulder rotation
- The alignment
- The delivery stride
- The approach
- The energy and speed of an action
- The head position
- The feet position in the crease



“Anyone can run in and land it on the spot and go for two an over, but real spinners try and spin the ball. If you’re not trying to really spin the ball you’re a charlatan, and you should stop pretending to be a spin bowler”
Graeme Swann