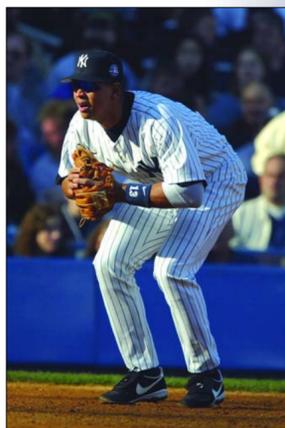
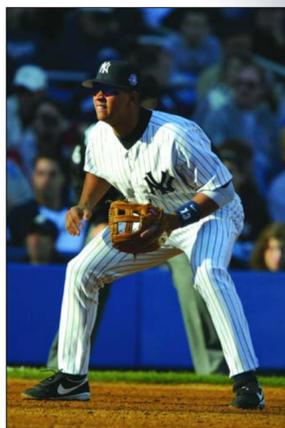


Alex Rodriguez 'Walking in'



The 'Set'



The 'Ready Position'

A Leader in the Field



Figure 1



Figure 2



ECB Coaches Association Technical Bulletin in partnership with the ECB Coach Education Office
 Telephone: 0121 440 4332. Email: coaches.association@ecb.co.uk. www.ecbca.co.uk, www.ecb.co.uk. Winter 2005. Issue Number 2

Coaches Matter

A Leader in the Field

ECB Communications Officer **Chris Dirkin** was fortunate enough to spend a morning with former Warwickshire CCC cricketer Trevor Penny who has recently been appointed Assistant Cricket Coach for Sri Lanka. The following is an edited transcript from their conversation to give ECB CA members an insight to the philosophy of fielding & coaching fielding by Trevor Penny, who is renowned as a World Leading Practitioner in this area.

chance; or miss the odd ball. My philosophy is total concentration combined with an ongoing battle with the batter during any given match, supported by quality practice and participation in other sports to help with natural leg / body movement.

As a junior player or a club player advise them to try other sports, particularly in the winter. Try to do sports that help quick foot movement like squash, tennis, badminton, hockey, basketball, indoor football. These sports are great for conditioning lateral leg movement. Don't forget this should be combined with regular gym work. Playing other sports twice a week is a healthy amount.



"Growing up in Zimbabwe, which is very much an outdoor country, we were brought up playing all sports. I've always been a firm believer in playing a mixture of sports and it has been without question a key factor with my success when fielding.

Sports such as squash and hockey generally keep you low to the ground, they stretch you out and make you strong in the quads and hips; you get good leg strength from these types of sports. You can get stronger in the gym; however, it is not quite the same, so the movement and anticipation / reaction with these types of sport helps with the movement / anticipation when fielding; particularly in the in-field.

Also the environment and culture I was brought up in helped me; walking home we used to throw stones at various targets, having target practice/ competitions with my friends, it was how life was out there. I also played a lot of baseball; this taught me how to throw baseball style. In all of the 18 years of playing professional cricket I've never injured my arm or shoulder because I have learnt a correct throwing technique from baseball.

I also used to practice a lot with my brother in our garden; throwing to one another using catchers mitts. It became natural to throw to the keeper in a match due to the practice I used to do throwing to my brother. I was conditioned to return the ball to the right area simply because of all the mitt work we used to do.

My philosophy for fielding comes from within; there are a lot of really good fielders in world cricket. You could, however, only really choose 5 or 6 world class fielders over the last 10, probably 20 years. The reason they stand out is because they really want the ball to come to them all the time, they are playing mind games with batters for the whole duration of the match. If the ball beats them they feel as if they have lost the battle. They are the type of fielders who don't switch off. Other fielders may relax a bit too much and miss a run out

Fielding in the infield like "Point" for example, fielders should adopt a game plan. Their game plan would be conditioned to who is bowling and who is batting. If the batters are looking to rotate strike off a fast bowler, they should look to field slightly closer than normal. Most fielders normally field too deep and walk in too far and are often still walking in when the ball is hit. This could cause problems because fielders have not created a base to "Bounce" from. You will see this not only on any given club ground but also as high as the test arena on occasions. A good example of a firm base would be similar to a tennis player ready to receive a ball either whilst preparing to volley or receiving a serve. This is called the "Ready Position".



Michael Vaughan adopting the "Ready Position".

Look to walk in 2 or 3 yards and get "Set". To adopt the "Set" position they have to ensure their weight is on the balls of their feet with their feet approximately shoulder width apart. Their body should be moving slightly forward during the "Set" position. It should feel as if they are slightly over balancing. To do this fielders have got to watch the ball being released from the bowler by using their peripheral vision. This reduces head movement and allows them to focus on the batter's movement. Fielders get "Set" and adopt the "Ready Position" just as the ball is released. The "Ready Position" is the completion of the "Set." Their hands and arms should be slightly forward and relaxed. Head position should be level with eyes focused. Slightly early in the "Ready Position" is better than being late. Timing is the key, this will allow

them to "Bounce" from the "Ready Position" and get a run out. "Bounce" and dive for a catch or "Bounce" and intercept a ball. Fielders should never adopt a "Ready Position" and stay still. They should look to create angles and close gaps; similar to a goal keeper trying to save a penalty.



Ashley Giles "Bouncing" from the "Ready Position" during training.

Judging the distance to stand away from the batter is pretty subjective; fielders need to find some mid ground initially. An area they know a batter cannot take a single, but not too close for them to not be able to react to a firmly struck ball. Fielders need to watch the batter's backswing; it will give you an indication of how hard the ball may be hit. Take into account the speed of the bowler and the pace of the pitch if you are looking to create fielding angles. Take into account the batters' grip, this will give them an indication of their potential hitting areas, (i.e. inside out grip, the ball may go squarer or behind square on the off side when playing normal off side shots etc).

Catches are spilled on most occasions by a fielder still walking in after contact. Fielders when practicing should create a "5 Metre Goal." To do this, use cones or mark the floor (see fig 1 and fig 2). Get someone to hit balls to them; this is their fielding area. The fielder should adopt "a must not pass" approach to anything hit in this area. Timing is the key to this practice, the "Set" and "Ready Position" should be complete just before bat contact on ball. In a game situation they should use the "5 Metre Goal" approach and philosophy. "Nothing gets past me; every catch is taken." Encourage them to do this where ever they field, particularly in the in-field.

Look at fielding as an individual sport. "It's me against the batter; it's up to me to win the battle." Captain's may put fielders in a certain fielding position, but on occasions once they have read how the batter is playing, they should occasionally change their angle of approach to anticipate where the batter may hit the ball. It is, however, still important to use the "5 Metre Goal". This style of fielding will help them keep focused and it sometimes may even create a run out opportunity because they have stolen half a yard. Captains and coaches should look to encourage fielders to do this.

"Kidology" comes in to it sometimes; fielders should try to kid the batter where they are fielding. For example when they field

at mid wicket to the off spinner, particularly when the batters are playing aggressively, they may field on the single, the next ball they could be fielding just on the inner ring because they have walked backwards. Doing this may increase the opportunity to take several more catches a season. Sometimes they can walk in sometimes they don't; all of this can come into play when fielders are trying to out wit their opponent. It doesn't always work and sometimes they will miss judge where the ball is going. However, if fielders adopt the philosophy of wanting to receive the ball all the time and combine this with the "5 Metre Goal" fielding area, incorporating the "Set" and "Ready Position" pre bat contact; they should save far more runs than they would lose through anticipation.

Fielders need to start walking in towards the batter when the bowler is half way through their run up. A good walking distance would be 3 to 4 yards. This would give them good momentum and allow them to get "Set" and adopt the "Ready Position". Walking in too far and too long contributes to poor balance at pre bat contact and also increases the likelihood of a lack of concentration.

To adopt "Set" and "Ready Positions" correctly you need to practice. To do this there are various fielding drills which can be used (see Fig 1 and Fig 2). Fielders can work in pairs or in groups of 4. Start with a slow moving ball which has been thrown under arm. Ask them to concentrate on walking in 3 to 4 yards until they arrive in between their "5 Metre Goal." The server releases the ball as the fielder gets "Set" and "Ready." This will improve timing and focuses the fielder's movement on pre-release as a simulation to pre-bat contact. Progress this skill by releasing the ball in the direction of the perimeter of the "5 Metre Goal." This will encourage lateral movement and also encourages the fielder to use a "Click" step thus avoiding foot cross over which effects balance.

Serve the ball harder then move on to some flat catches from a hit ball, progress this by square cutting the ball from a thrown serve. Concentrate on the "Set" and "Ready Position" and ensure they practice this just prior to bat contact. I reinforce that timing is the key. **Don't rush these drills.**

This can be done for all in-field fielding positions. Practice these drills from several in-field fielding positions. Do 3 to 4 different positions at 5 minutes per position. These drills are great for all ages and abilities.

To ensure fielders consistently prepare their "Set" and "Ready Position" well, they must watch the bowlers approach. Ask them to start to walk in as the bowler reaches the half way mark in their run up. As the bowler begins to bound, they should start to adopt the "Set" and

"Ready Position"; their eyes now switch and should now focus on the batter's movement with the bowler in their peripheral vision.

Receiving the ball on the ground fielders need to ensure the pick up where possible is with two hands. Once a fielder has "Bounced" from their "Ready Position" they need to ensure their approach to the ball is low. Miss-fields normally occur when fielders approach the ball from an upright position. Again judgement is the key; ask them to adopt a low body position approx 3 to 4 yards from the ball. Fielders should be looking to slightly slow down at this stage to ensure a clean pick up. (Fast movement towards the ball should occur from the "Bounce" up until 3 to 4 yards before the ball) Relaxed hands on contact will avoid the ball bouncing out of them.



Gary Pratt "Bouncing" from the "Ready Position".

During pick up the front foot opens out this allows the fielder to pick the ball up underneath the head with a low and strong body position. Their head remains central to their base to stop them from over balancing. This strong base allows fielders to conduct a balanced "Crow Hop" enabling the fielder to transfer all of their body weight towards the target thus increasing throwing accuracy.

With a lateral moving pick up the same principles apply. Fielders need to work hard to get into a low and balanced position. The pick up on this occasion will generally be one handed. Fielders need to open out the front shoulder (none throwing shoulder) to allow the fielder to see the full vision of the stumps, even though they are concentrating on focusing on the ball. The pick up occurs when the ball is level with the front foot. (By this time the fielder should have already decided which end they are going to throw.)



Sourav Ganguly practicing throwing technique

Once the pick up is complete the "Next Step" is crucial to the accuracy of the throw. The "Next Step" should also be low to ensure balance. (They need to do this at a controlled pace; don't rush this.) In the mean time the throwing arm starts to rise and the controlled step ensures fielders can stand high. This allows the throwing arm to be high also. (Elbow above shoulder height.) This increases throwing accuracy.

If the lateral pick up and "Next Step" are done too quickly then the throw will almost certainly be side-arm, resulting in poor technique and a reduction in accuracy.

The back lift of the throw is the most crucial part of the throw. The fielders throwing arm extends behind the body and the throwing hand should be high with the knuckles facing the target. (The ball faces away from the target) By doing this, it allows the elbow to remain higher than the shoulder. During execution the wrist turns forwards and "Flicks" through, thus generating more pace with less effort.

A bounced return from the deep is sometimes quicker; particularly if some of your younger fielders are still learning their technique. Again to do this you need to practice this and ensure you assess the conditions of the ground to ensure they know where to pitch the ball. (This can be done during pre-match warm ups) Ultimately it is better to encourage a full return.



Coaches should encourage players of all ages to make a baseball fielding mitt a main piece of equipment in their kit bag. Always practice pre-match in pairs by throwing with full technique at approx 70 - 80% velocity over a distance of 15-30 metres. Do this for 5 minutes on match days and ensure the practice is quality by encouraging players to throw accurately every time. (Chest height, and visualise they are throwing to the wicket keeper)

Above all coaches should encourage players to enjoy fielding not only via match fielding it self; but also by adopting a "Mind Set" change to players methods of practice.

If players adopt the same "Mind Set" principles of practice for fielding as they currently do for batting and bowling then the standard of fielding would significantly improve throughout all ages and abilities.