

1. INTRODUCTION

Cricket is basically a bat and ball game played between two teams of eleven players. It is one of the oldest sports in the world and has its origin in 16th century in England. The expansion of the British Empire spread this once colonial recreational sport into a spirited game to all corners. Today cricket seems to be a virtual lifeline of many commonwealth nations. Cricket is a game in which two teams bowl and bat according to certain rules and regulations. The team which scores the greater number of runs will be the winner.

In olden days, the game was played in different names in different countries. The game of Cricket is developed from a simple game of hitting an object with a piece of wood. Basically it is the battle between bat and the ball, but the approach has changed from time to time. Cricket is played in many forms such as Test, One day International, First class Twenty 20, Super Six, Indoor Cricket, Double wicket and Single wicket. Cricket is played in more than 105 countries around the world.

Fitness plays a small though significant part in the success of a cricketer. There are several components of fitness that are important for the success of the players. Cricket has determined that balance and coordination is seen as one of the most important aspects of cricket fitness, followed by speed and power. Despite its long history and global appeal, relatively little is known about the physical, physiological, psychological and anthropometrical requirements of cricket.

Cricket training is not only exclusively an anaerobic focus. Players are often either stationed in the field or at bat for a number of hours at a time. Cricket, as both a traditional English summer sport as well as a competition played year round in warm, humid regions in India. Enhanced aerobic fitness and a strong cardiovascular system assist the players in dealing with the fatigue and impact on their attentiveness in the progress of a long match.

The key muscle structures that should be developed for the improvement of cricket performance include triceps (important in both throwing and batting), the upper chest muscles (batting and bowling), and the abdominal and oblique muscles of the torso (stability in all aspects of the game).

Cricket is a mental game. It is played with the mind as much as with the body. This will come as no great surprise to anyone. So surprising is that despite the fact that everyone knows cricket is a mind game, most players and teams practice their technique, but spend little or no time developing the mental skills that are required to reach and maintain their potential. Far too many players fail to reach their potential because they don't spend enough time working on the mental side of their game.

Tendulkar, an Indian Cricketer, who holds the record of most number of centuries and runs both Test and One day International Cricket, has said in press conference (2010), "When pressure builds up in the game I try to focus on the next ball with calmness without thinking of the future course of the match. My mood undergoes a change before every match as I start mentally preparing myself for the game," he added.

Bunchanan (2010) former Cricket Australian national coach says that there are four major performance skills for all elite sportsmen and women, these being technical, physical, tactical and mental. The later skill is one that can make the crucial difference for athletes performing consistently to their abilities.

Sport psychology has played a significant role in the understanding, training and ultimately the use of mental skills for peak performance. According to Smith R (1994), a former English Cricketer, "Cricket is played in the mind, more than any other game".

It is very significant to indicate that cricket is a sport in which concentration plays a very important role. While batsman hitting the ball or bowler bowls a ball, a player must also decide where to hit and where to bowl. Additionally, the batsman hit the ball from the bowlers must be anticipated. Finally, it is very important for the batsmen, fast bowlers, spin bowlers and wicketkeepers to prepare mentally for each and every ball. The following situations psychologically affect the performance.

1. If a batsman is good enough to regularly get to thirty or forty, then he is good enough to get to a hundred or more. Yet so few do it. It can't be that their technique is faulty, otherwise they wouldn't have made it to forty so often.
2. So many batsmen get to a hundred and then get out before reaching 110 because of their mind response and then psychologically get tired.

3. A team that is chasing 255 to win and has reached 200 for 4 so frequently loses from that position because of the less score and that they are mentally fixed we can score easily.

4. A bowler who usually bowls in good line and length, starts covering them all over the place after he's been hit to the boundary a couple of times in one over. The bowler suddenly forgot to bowl good line and length by being mentally affected and he immediately needs motivation.

5. Many batsmen have been under the impression that wearing a helmet, arm pad, chest pad when facing fast bowling helps to reduce anxiety

Research in sport psychology clearly and consistently demonstrates self- and team confidence to be one of the most important psychological factors for successful sport performance. High levels of confidence encourage cricketers and teams to enjoy playing under pressure, and give them the freedom to express their abilities and talents, resulting in increased performance. Interestingly, increased confidence sees individuals and teams work harder (increased effort), and prove more persistent in executing skills and tasks.

- For a Bowler, the nature of the position requires that a bowler should have the ability to move explosively in the run up to delivery, for a quick run up will physically transform into a faster delivery of the ball; the arm, shoulder, and core body strength and stamina are essential to deliver the ball repeatedly.

- For a Batsman, basic muscular power is not a problem to this position, but reaction time, batting technique, and balance in the crease are of primary importance. A batsman may be required to maintain his position for a number of hours. The cricket batting stroke relies upon core strength, particularly in the abdominal and oblique muscle groups, the gluteal muscles, and the upper arms and shoulders.

- A Wicketkeeper must be prepared to react to the ball when a batsman nicks or left out, to get a ball, field, throw and stumping are all a part of a game that may last for four hours or more. Speed of movement, flexibility, balance and agility are critical to this position.

Physical fitness is important for batsman, bowlers and wicketkeepers in cricket. To play efficiently in test match, one day match or T20 match, players need more fitness to stay

in the ground otherwise they cannot perform well. International players like Sir Donald Bradman, Sachin Tendulkar, Steve Waugh, Vivian Richardson, Matthew Hayden and Brian Lara performed well because they possessed high degree of fitness .They had played more than 150 matches and they have scored more than 10,000 runs in both one day and test matches. On April 12, 2004, West Indies batsman Brian Lara became the first man ever to reclaim the world Test batting record after scoring 400 not out against England at the Antigua Recreation Ground in St John's, he was at the wicket for 13 hours and he made it possible because of his fitness. Sachin Tendulkar was the only batsman who played 663 matches and scored 34,347 runs in both one day and test cricket and also he was the only batsman to score 100 hundreds in both one day and test cricket, without fitness it would not have been possible.