

# HOW TO PRACTICE PROPERLY



*A view of the net practice at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.*

There is truth in the old saying that you play as you practice since practice makes permanent. It is very important that to get maximum benefit out of your practice workout, it should be well planned and systematic affair with a definite purpose behind it. ***Remember it is perfect practice that makes one perfect rather than the slip shod approach many players adopt during the nets.*** In fact, such a practice does more harm than good. It is nothing but sheer waste of time and effort.

The sole purpose of practice is to make you a successful batsman who can score runs in the matches under every condition and situation. If you get into bad habits at practice, you are likely to take them into a match.

Concentration and discipline alongside quality and intensity, are an



essential pre-requisite for a good practice workout. No matter how talented you are it does not absolve you from the need to practice hard and as often as possible. There is no short cut to achieve excellence. You have to practice relentlessly day after day. ***Remember the three Ds discipline, dedication and determination.*** You can get only as much out of the game as you put into it; as simple as that.

## **THE PURPOSE OF NET PRACTICE CAN BE SUMMED UP AS FOLLOWING:**

- (A)** Development of natural abilities.
- (B)** To assess your strong and weak points.
- (C)** For experimentation with possible changes and rectification of a fault.
- (D)** Forming correct and positive mental attitude.
- (E)** To simulate match conditions at practice.
- (F)** To improve and stabilise the correct technique.

## **THE FOLLOWING POINTS SHOULD BE CHECKED AT NET PRACTICE:**

- The condition of the net pitch is as important as that of the match. The batting surface should be in good conditions so that a batsman can learn to play his strokes correctly and also develop confidence in his abilities. It is not possible to develop a good batsman on bad practice pitches.
- Netting must be safe, there should be no holes in it. If there are two or more nets side by side then the dividing net should extend right up to the bowling crease.
- The pitch length is measured correctly (66 feet) and all the creases are correctly marked. The net should be at least 12 feet wide.
- Coaches and players should wear white clothing. A white top is a minimum requirement.



- Coaches should ensure players of similar ability are placed in the same group.
- Suitable equipment is available for players and they can pad up in safety. When batting the players should always wear appropriate protective equipment as serious injury can occur any time.
- The bowler's background should be clear because a batsman can't practice properly if he can't sight the ball well.
- First aid box is available.
- The allocation of time for each batsman should be decided before hand and each batsman given his batting order in the nets. The captain or a senior player may act as a time keeper so that the coach can concentrate on his main task i.e coaching.
- The players are properly warmed up. It can be done in a group as well as individually. It should last for at least 15 minutes. It prepares the players physically as well as mentally for the task ahead. It also reduces the chance of a muscular injury.
- While returning the ball to the bowler the ball should be lobbed back to the bowler at a comfortable height. It is unpardonable to hit the ball back to the bowler thus making him bend unnecessarily. His job is already hard enough. Why make it harder.
- No more than four bowlers should be in action in the net at any point of time. This enables the batsman to have some thinking time between the deliveries thus aiding his concentration.
- While batting the stray balls from the side netting should be collected using the bat and not the hand. Keep your head away from the side netting.
- Bowlers and coaches should at all times face the batsman.
- Practice running between the wickets in between the shots simulating match like situation.
- Do the cool down at the end of the practice session because it is



as important as the warm-up although it is neglected by some coaches and players. In the cool-down the exercises decrease in intensity, usually ending with stretching exercises. The light activity at the end of a workout is important for the removal of lactic acid and other waste products.

## **THE CORRECT APPROACH TO BATTING**

### **PRACTICE IN THE NETS:**

The net practice will yield maximum benefits only if it is a full dress rehearsal of what you intend to do in a match as you can't practice in one way and perform in another. It is all a matter of forming what may be termed correct batting habits till it becomes second nature to you.

Practice as if you are playing a mini innings in the middle. You would do well to make and keep up the following resolve.

- I will play straight initially in an arc between wide mid off and wide mid on. You must assess the quality of bowling, the pace and bounce of the pitch before playing too many strokes. In other words, play yourself in.
- I will concentrate hundred per cent and play each ball on its merit.
- I will, as a general policy, keep the ball down. In other words keep the ball on the floor all the time.
- I will not get out today. During net practice many batsmen can't bat for 15-20 minutes without getting out even once or twice. It is very simple. If you can't preserve your wicket for such a small duration in the nets, how would you compile a big score in a match? Pride yourself in not getting out at all.
- I will dominate the bowlers. This mental attitude is very important for your success. Never be overawed by a bowler's reputation; remember you play the ball and not the bowler. Show the bowler who is the boss. In a game you may be asked to get some runs quickly without taking too many chances or resorting to slogging. Think in the nets the way you think in the middle.



■ *Ask yourself, is there more that I can do at practice, so that I am better prepared mentally for match conditions.*

## **SPECIFIC BATTING PRACTICE:**

Do not think that nets is the only place where you can practice your batting strokes. You can do a lot on your own only if you are keen enough. Many top class batsmen carry out 'shadow' and 'mirror' practice, especially during off season as this grooves the movement of the body for each stroke. It is important to play the stroke to an imaginary ball.

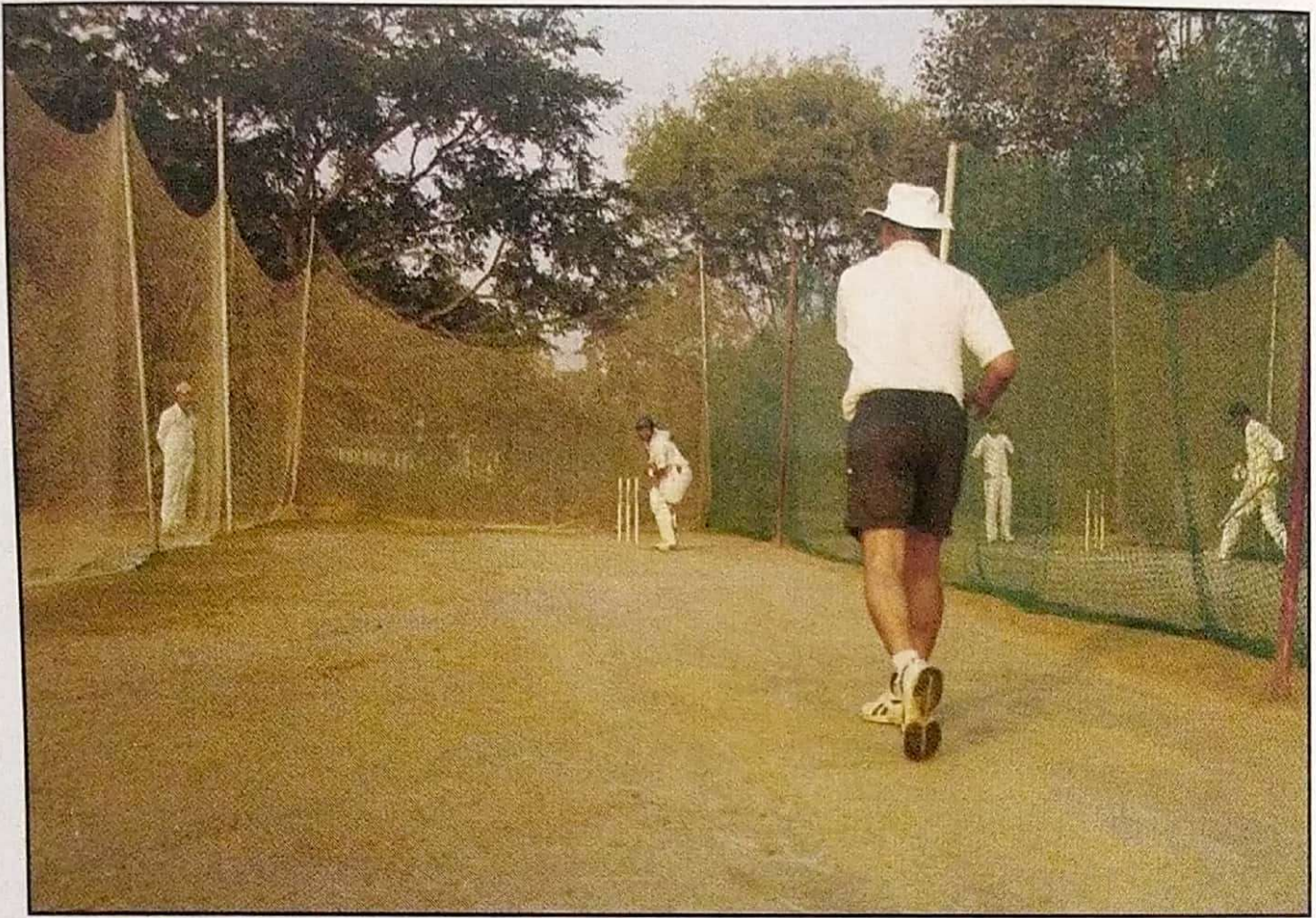
### **(A) MIRROR PRACTICE:**

It is a very useful method to practice your strokes in front of a full length mirror because it enables the batsmen to make a check on his footwork, body movement and the back lift and down swing of the bat. When you practice a stroke over and over again the movements become automatic. When you get a delivery for that particular stroke the body automatically moves in the correct manner and position. It is said that Dennis Amiss, the former English batsman, even after scoring 150 runs in a county match, came back to the dressing room and went straight to the mirror and started playing his shots in search of remedy for a particular stroke. He was the most self critical player in English cricket. Even Sir Garfield Sobers used to do a lot of shadow practice. Many Test cricketers practice in front of a mirror to their advantage. If it is good for them you can well imagine how necessary and useful it can be for the cricketers learning at the junior level.

### **(B) PRACTICE FROM SHORT RANGE (10 TO 15 YARDS):**

This is, to my mind, the best form of practice a batsman can have whether he is developing and improving a particular shot or trying to rectify a defect in a stroke. The bowler stands about half way down the pitch and either bowls or throws the ball to the batsman suitable for that particular stroke. The distance being short enables the bowler to bowl with great measure of accuracy and also prevents the batsman from moving too much or too early before playing a stroke, thus





*The author giving practice to a trainee from short range  
to develop a specific stroke*

significantly improving a batsman's technique. Another advantage of this kind of practice is that a batsman can play a shot, say off drive for many times. A practice opportunity he may not have had during net practice lasting for an hour. The batsman remains on the chosen stroke until he is happy with it before moving on to the next one. Long period of this sort of practice should polish up defence and also develop full range or repertoire of strokes.

In countries like England, Australia and South Africa, the use of a bowling machine to give practice to a batsman for developing a specific stroke is also very common.