

Greg Chappell in Plano

A brief Synopsis

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Background:

Greg Chappell and Ian Frazer visited Plano's Russell Creek park on the major weekend of 6/19/04 and 6/20/04, when USA National Championship games were going on. Suhas Nayak organized his visit and coordinated the class with Greg and Ian. They wanted to have four different classes for coaching, captaincy, youth play and adult play. But due to US games and availability of people, turn out was low. So it was all clubbed into one loose get-together, without any clear-cut format and time schedule. A casual hang out of serious cricket lovers under one of the blue shade pavilions at the park, not affected by rains. Felt like a Gurukul ambience of Upanishad, sitting under a tree listening to the sage's discourse.

Conclusion:

Mind is everything, rest are details!

Tips from class on playing and coaching:

These are numbered not in any specific order but as I recall them, because there were no notes written or video recorded.

1. For coaching/practice. Get in a closed quarter, like under pavilion shade. Place trash cans or big markers in a close rectangle. Bat with tennis ball. Bowler shoots variation in the delivery and asks batsman to hit each of these markers, varying the order. This is to train the nervous system for finding a solution to a problem. The problem is the goal defined by the bowler - to hit the particular marker at square leg, mid-wicket, long-on, long-off, covers, and point direction.
2. Same as above, but on the real pitch on ground with cricket ball. Distance of markers is increased away from batsman adding the difficulty. This is again to stimulate nervous system for finding a solution on it's own, but now with real cricket ball and on the pitch.
3. Same as # 2 settings, but a 15 over game to rotate batsmen running between the wickets. 8 runs if hit straight between long-on direction marker and long-off marker. Also, 8 runs if hit in point and in square leg direction markers. 0 runs behind the wicket. For all other areas on field, have to run to score, no boundaries.

4. With the ball hanging on rope, at home garage or outside, hold your bat with your top hand. Left hand for right handed batsman and right hand for left handed batsman. Do not use other hand. With one hand, keep hitting the ball first at slow pace, as many times as you can without missing it. Do not stand on flat feet. Stand on the ball of your feet, arch your back gradually and move your feet all the time. This is critical for feet, hands, eye co-ordination, as well as not getting a backache. This drill is also done in a ballet dance room. It had large mirrors on the walls. You can hit tennis or rubber ball against the mirror and keep shifting from one wall to other while moving with your feet, Not flat feet, but on the ball of feet. This is especially good for batsmen like me, who incorrectly use right hand for power, instead of using it for guiding the left hand. Exceptions are of course the pull and hook shots. Practice this every day for a week before the game.
5. Warming up on field before game starts with static stretches and exercises is a waste of time. Instead, get in the rhythm of body movements that you do at fielding, such as running and bending the back to pick the ball, or jumping up with hands stretched to catch, jogging around on the rope, throwing the ball to keeper while running, running with back bent leaning to ground, etc.
6. This drill can be done at home, at pavilion, when it's rainy outside. Two guys across a long table, like picnic table or even dining table. Throw the ball at other end's edge. If you drop 3 times or fumble to catch it perfect, you're out. This is to help hand-eye co-ordination and get you going on seeing the ball.
7. Sachin T had an issue and was playing like ordinary batsmen. He was getting all sorts of expert advise if he's moving hid head too much on the off, or front foot movement not right and so on. A lot of segmented information, that can keep a batsman even more occupied and concerned. Instead, goal is to focus. Focus on the ball being delivered from bowler's hand and aim to hit it beyond bowler. That is it. Not to think of how your body is moving, how far is your back-lift and so on. The focused mind will orchestrate entire set of movement to meet the goal. Remember this, learn this, inculcate this and make it your habit. Use visual aids if you have to regain it, in case you lose the focus in future during a patch.
8. One of the American soldiers was captured in Vietnam war. He was locked in a bamboo box, size of not too bigger than a washer/dryer for 3 or 5 years. He did one thing to not go mad. He knew to play golf. Every day, he visualized the whole range of movement from standing to taking the stance to pulling his hands behind his back to looking at the target to following through of full swing. He survived and returned back to US. After a few months of relocation, he went and played golf tournament and won, after having not played for years. Moral is to play before you play in your mind. Greg used to imagine Andy Roberts going to his bowling mark, turning, making the face, his facial expression when about to jump up and every move in his mind over and again in his hotel when going to bed. Studying bowlers body talk he was going to face and enacting that in mind and playing helped him 90% of the time.

9. Greg did mental preparation before, during and after the game day to delay making a mistake. Getting out is eventuality, so he used mental techniques to elongate his stay. Before he took the guard for next ball to face, he'd count the 9 number of fielders starting from slip region to off and back to leg side. This helped him focus on next ball, even if he had hit a boundary or got beaten on prior delivery.
10. Bowling exercise or fielding is same, requiring mental focus. To pick a target and focus. Simple at home or around practice of turning your back to a section of wall and then throwing the ball at the target as you turn without looking to aim at it for example. Or being on the ball of your feet at point position, anticipating ball's direction based on bowler's length of pitch and batsmen's feet movement.
11. For most of us with years of league level experience, we've got what we got. There isn't really whole lot of room or youth years left for skillset improvement. But there's one thing that can help us tremendously in improving our game is mental focus. For batsman, to train his mind to focus on the delivery and aim to hit it behind the bowler. Not to complicate it with thinking of feet movement or predetermined forward or backward step, etc.
12. For sledging on the field, Greg used to respond first negatively, then graduated to responding with a smile looking straight at the sledging fielder's eyes. This confused to the fielder and Greg went on his routine of counting 9 fielders before taking the guard to face next ball. Some like to receive sledging and intentionally excite the fielders to get sledged. This is another personal mental techniques to get sledged in order to get pumped up, suited to some.