

A full-page background image of a male cricket batsman in white kit, wearing a dark blue helmet and leg pads, in a batting stance. He is holding a wooden bat with 'Elephant' written on it. The background is a blurred crowd in a stadium. A yellow banner is at the bottom.

Batting

HOW TO PLAY, COACH AND WIN

Mark Davis & Sam Collins

WISDEN
COACHING

BATTING

HOW TO PLAY, COACH AND WIN

**Mark Davis
and Sam Collins**



CONTENTS

Foreword	viii
Introduction	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE BASICS	3
The set-up	3
The grip	3
The 'Vs' grip	4
The 'O' grip	5
The stance	6
The guard	11
Trigger movement	12
Back-lift	14
Equipment	16
Choosing a bat	16
Other equipment	18
Running between the wickets	19
Calling	19
Running	20
Turning for two	21
Line and length	23
Terms	25
Long hop	25
Bouncer	25
Short of a length	25
Good length	25
Half-volley	25
Yorker	26
Full toss	26
Beamer	26

CHAPTER TWO: SHOTS	29
Front-foot shots	31
Forward defence	31
Drives	36
Straight drive	36
On-drive	39
Cover or square drive	41
Back-foot shots	44
Back-foot defence	45
Back-foot drive	47
The hook	50
Pull shot	56
Ducking and evasion	59
The square cut	61
Other shots	64
Leg-glance	64
Back foot leg-glance	67
Late cut	69
Move down the wicket for lofted drive	71
Front foot press to spin	75
Sweep shots	77
Orthodox sweep	77
Paddle sweep	82
Reverse sweep	84
Reverse paddle	87
Slog sweep	88
Other variation shots	90
Switch-hit	90
The Marillier	93
The Dilscoop	94

CHAPTER THREE: THE ADVANCED STAGES	97
Tactics	97
Pre-match routine	97
Reading the pitch	98
Playing pace	99
Playing swing bowling	102

Playing spin	104
Batting order	107
CHAPTER FOUR: LIMITED-OVERS BATTING	111
Introduction	111
Key points for batting in limited-overs	112
Batting in long-form (50-over) cricket)	112
Chasing down a total	113
Twenty20	115
CHAPTER FIVE: THE MENTAL SIDE OF BATTING	117
Introduction	117
Coping with failure	117
Changing your thought process	119
Coping with success	120
CHAPTER SIX: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE	123
Introduction	123
Planning your winter and summer	124
Net practice	124
The future	125
Advice for coaches	126
Player and coach relationship	126
Appendix	128
Modes of dismissal	128
Miscellaneous	129

FOREWORD

Not one single batsman in the world has a perfect technique. The search for that perfect technique is the crux of everything a batsman does, but no one will ever get it – it's impossible to hit every ball in the middle of the bat. That's what's great about cricket – every batsman is human and we all have flaws. A batsman's skill lies in how they acknowledge, understand and deal with those flaws.

I remember scoring my first hundred on my eleventh birthday. Then it was all about that amazing feeling of emulating the heroes that I'd watched on the television. The higher up you go, the more recognition you get for those hundreds. Going to county and international cricket the roar from the crowd when you hit a boundary or score a century is addictive, and it's those moments that get you through the low times.

Yet the higher you get, the more complicated things can become, and the more advice you will be given. When you're going through a rough patch and you're sifting through that advice, the hardest thing to do can be to remember the simplicity of the game.

When anyone starts playing cricket it's just about trying to whack the red thing as far as possible and having fun doing it. That forms the basis of batting really – watch the ball and hit it. People make it more complicated than that, but it doesn't have to be. The biggest thing is to have fun, otherwise there's no point in doing it.

Of all the things I've learned at this early stage in my career, three things stand out. Graham Gooch said something to me when I was opening the batting at the World Twenty20 in 2010 that has stuck with me. He told me there is a difference between the art of batting and the art of scoring runs, and the art of scoring runs is more important. It's not how you get them it's how many.

While I am known as a stroke-maker, Graham Thorpe taught me a valuable lesson about the uglier side of batting. Batting is just as much about hanging in there when things aren't going your way. At those times it's about always working hard to get to the other end. Instead of trying to hit every ball for four, sometimes it's more important to get to the non-striker's end and take stock again. A single can be just as important as a boundary.

Finally, I remember playing against Lancashire in my debut season, and they had a brilliant bowling attack – Andrew Flintoff, James Anderson, Saj Mahmood and Glenn Chapple – all England internationals. I was a bit overawed



at the prospect of Freddie (Flintoff) running in at me, but Justin Langer (who was playing with us at the time) told me to imagine I was playing a club game, and to concentrate on the ball not the bowler. His point was that momentum is always shifting between batsman and bowler in cricket, no matter how good the bowler you are playing against is, but you have to convince yourself you can score runs against any bowler.

Above all, remember to respect and enjoy the game.

I got to know Mark Davis very well when I came across to Millfield School. He was probably the first coach that helped me to develop my game. We did a lot of hard work in the winter in the indoor school and he was very generous with his advice and the dedication that he showed towards helping me to develop as a cricketer. He gave me my first real chance by getting me the trial that got me my contract at Somerset, and from there I haven't looked back. I owe a lot to Mark because without him I might not be playing international cricket today.

CRAIG KIESWETTER (MILLFIELD, SOMERSET AND ENGLAND),
SEPTEMBER 2011

INTRODUCTION

Batting is a major trial before an 11-man jury.

RICHIE BENAUD, AUSTRALIAN CAPTAIN

Cricket is constantly changing. Ten years ago Twenty20 didn't even exist, now it sets the international agenda. With the changes come the new shots, the new deliveries, the fads. Ten years ago some of the shots in this book would not have featured, some had not even been invented. In ten years' time everybody may be playing them, or they may have been forgotten. That is change.

If a batsman wants to know what they should take from this book, or any coaching textbook, they should look at the English batsmen Alastair Cook, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen and Eoin Morgan as proof that the answer is everything and nothing. Cook and Bell are textbook run-scorers of every era, system-nurtured batsmen of very different techniques that meet in the middle at their orthodoxy. In contrast Pietersen and Morgan are the two most exciting developments in the recent history of English batting yet are coaching book mongrels, men who have walked their own path, made their own systems, and developed their own very unorthodox styles. One of Morgan's former coaches told me last year that he had only had the freedom to develop an individual technique because he was brought up away from the strait-jacketing of ECB academies.

The best thing about those four batsmen is that they show better than any book that there is no right way or wrong way to bat. All four have scored centuries in limited-over formats and Test cricket for England. Good players can score runs in any form of the game. As to which type a batsman might want to copy, if at all, that's their call. Whatever the build, the personality, or the type of game a batsman might already have there is hope.

Coaching books can sound so definitive: 'Do this or else.' Sometimes that's true, but largely it's not. This book, and any other coaching book, is just a framework. This book gives suggestions that a batsman might want to follow. It is there to enthuse, to fire the imagination, to start the thought process about which shots are still to be mastered. The main aim is to help each batsman understand their own technique.

This page intentionally left blank

THE BASICS

1.

THE SET-UP

Before we get on to the shots it's important to start at the basics of any batsman's technique – the **grip**, the **stance**, **back-lift**, **taking guard** and **trigger movements**. These comprise the batsman's **set-up**, and if a batsman ever wants to smash a quick bowler through the covers or play the perfect reverse-sweep, they'll need to get these right first.

Patience is key when working on these skills. The batsman may find them difficult to master straight away, but it'll be worth it in the long run.

This may be step one of lesson one in batting, but don't underestimate its importance. It is surprising how many of the technical problems a batsman may experience down the line can be fixed simply by going back and following these set-up basics.

It's also important to remember that every batsman might have a slightly different set-up. That is no bad thing, as long as the basic principles are adhered to. A good set-up should ensure the batsman is balanced and comfortable at the crease, can see the ball correctly, and their bat is coming down in a straight line. Beyond these key principles the batsman should **do whatever works for them**.

The grip

What it is

Before doing anything, a batsman has got to know how to hold the bat correctly. The right grip is vital to give control of the bat and power in the shot, not to mention making sure that the ball goes where the batsman intends it to. A good grip ensures that the bat comes down straight to meet the ball – the basis for all the shots the batsman will learn about.

There are two main types of grip – the 'Vs' grip, and the 'O' grip. Once the batsman is happy and confident with these basic grips, they can adapt the grip to suit their game or particular challenges they might face, but are advised to remember that **a grip should allow them to swing the bat in a straight line in a pendulum motion**.

However the batsman holds the bat, they shouldn't squeeze it too hard. The top hand should be the dominant hand, gripping the bat firmly, while the bottom hand acts as support. The batsman's arms should feel relaxed.

The 'Vs' grip

How to do it

- Place hands together on the bat handle with two 'Vs' created by the shape of fore finger and thumb. Both 'Vs' should line up between the splice of the bat and the outside edge.
- The top hand should be about an inch from the top of the bat with equal pressure by the hands on the bat. The back of the top hand should be facing between mid-off and extra cover.
- The top hand is in control of the pick-up. It is essential that the bat path swings like the pendulum of a clock. The top hand is in control and the bottom hand acts as a support.
- Some players operate a simple 'two finger and thumb' grip, where this lighter grip with the bottom hand sees it act merely as a support. As the shot is played, the bottom hand is engaged fully into the shot.



Practice drill

- Simple techniques are to place the bat on the ground and pick it up naturally with both hands together. The batsman should line up the two 'Vs' or place the bat on the front thigh and repeat the process.



The 'O' grip

What it is

As batsmen develop, some tend to find the traditional 'Vs' grip is not powerful enough. They will then slip into an 'O' grip. The 'O' grip is good for improving general back foot play, i.e. pull shot, back foot punches. However, it can be restrictive when driving through extra cover, or playing square of the wicket off the back foot. There are notable exponents of the 'O' grip including the South African opener Graeme Smith, but young players should be wary of the limitations it imposes at a young age.

How to do it

- The 'O' grip is where the right hand slides down to the bottom of the bat with the fingers wrapped around the bat. This often happens if the bat is too heavy or the player is searching for extra power in the shot.



Problems and fixes

- *Bottom hand becomes too dominant and goes round in the grip.* Maintain the strength in the top hand.
- *Bat face closes on impact with the ball.* Release the grip with the bottom hand and allow the top hand and the front elbow to be dominant. The top hand and the front elbow is the guider, and the bottom hand is the enforcer – one can't work without the other.

The stance

What it is

A comfortable base is essential for any batsman – batting is hard work and it's important for the batsman to be as relaxed as possible. The stance should keep the batsman's head and eyes level and looking at the bowler, and enable them to move backwards and forwards in the crease as quickly and as easily as possible.

How to do it

- Start with feet about shoulder-width apart and parallel to the crease. Knees should be slightly bent and relaxed. Draw an imaginary line down from the groin – the head should not push level or beyond the front foot, or go over the balls of the feet to the offside. Done correctly this will give the batsman the balance required to access all areas of the crease.

N.B. The batsman must keep his foot or bat grounded behind the line of the batting crease.



- The batsman's heel and toe should have contact with the ground, while head and eyes should be in line with the balls of the feet.

