

rounds, Wickets, and Creases

Grounds

the
in
Melbourne
to
meadows.
ideal
circular or
usually
fence.

Cricket grounds vary in size from
great arenas such as Lord's
London (5.5 acres) or the
Cricket Ground (9.25 acres)
village greens and small
Level turf of fine texture is the
surface. The limits of the
oval playing surface are
marked by a boundary line or

Wickets and Creases

A wicket consists of three stumps or stakes, each 28 inches (71cm) high and 1.25 inches (3.2cm) in diameter, stuck in the ground and so placed that the ball cannot pass between them. Two pieces of wood, called bails, lie in grooves at the top of the stumps. The whole wicket, which a batsman defends and a bowler attacks, is 9 inches (23cm) in width.

Two wickets face each other at either end of the pitch (also sometimes called the wicket), which is an area 22 yards (20m) long and 10 feet (3m) wide between the wickets in the centre of the ground.

Lines of whitewash, known as creases, are marked on the ground at each wicket. The bowling crease is a line drawn through the stumps and extending 4 feet 4 inches (1.3m) on either side of the centre stump. The return crease is a line at each end, and at right angles to, the bowling crease. It extends a short distance behind the

wicket. The popping crease is a line parallel to the bowling crease and four feet in front of it.

The bowling and return creases mark the area within which the bowler's rear foot must be grounded in delivering the ball. The popping crease, which is 62 feet (19m) from the opposing bowling crease, demarks the batsman's ground.

Bat and Ball

The blade of the paddle-shaped cricket bat is made of willow and must not be broader than 4.25 inches (11cm). The length of the bat, including the handle, must not exceed 38 inches (97cm).

The ball, which has a core of cork built up with string, is encased in polished red leather for the classical game and white leather for the "one-day international" (limited-over) variant of the game. Slightly smaller, harder and heavier than a baseball, the cricket ball must weigh between 5.5 and 5.75 ounces.

The Game

Conduct of the "One-Day International" Variant

One player on each team acts as captain. Two umpires control the game according to the laws. The object of the game is for one side to score more runs than the other.

At the start of a match, the captain who wins the toss of a coin decides whether his own or the other side shall take first innings (always plural), i.e., proceed successively as batsmen — the first two as a pair together — to the wicket and try to make as many runs as possible against the bowling and fielding of their opponents. The first innings is completed when ten batsmen have been dismissed, the remaining batsman, having no partner, being declared not out. The second innings is completed when either ten batsmen of the side batting last have been dismissed (meaning that the team which batted first has won the match) or when the side batting

last passes the other side's total before ten of its batsmen have been dismissed (meaning that the team which batted last has won the match).

The result of a match is recorded by the margin of runs if the side batting first wins, or by the number of wickets (i.e., batsmen still to be dismissed) if the side batting last wins.

How the Game is Played

The non-batting side takes up positions in the field. One man is the bowler, another is the wicketkeeper, and the remaining nine are positioned as the captain or the bowler directs. The various fielding positions in cricket are shown in the following diagram:

he first batsman (the striker) guards his wicket by standing with at least one foot behind the popping crease. His partner stands behind the popping crease at the bowler's end. The bowler tries to hit the wicket of the batsman on strike, or to dismiss him in other ways.

Runs

The batsman tries to keep the bowler from hitting the wicket (stumps) while also trying to hit the ball sufficiently hard to score a run, i.e., enable him to run to the other end of the pitch before any fielder can pick up the ball and throw it to either wicket to knock off the bails. If the wicket is "broken" (either by a thrown ball or by the wicketkeeper or bowler with ball in hand) before either batsman is in his ground, the batsman is dismissed.

The striker does not have to run after he has hit the ball, nor does it count in any way if he misses the ball. But if he gets a good hit and thinks he can score a run, he races for the opposite wicket and his partner (the non-striker) runs towards him. When each has made good his ground, one run is recorded to the striker. If there is time, they will run back for a second or more runs, crossing again. (If an even number of runs are scored, the striker will receive the next ball; otherwise, the non-striker becomes the striker for the next ball.)

Any runs thus made count to the batsman, otherwise they are extras. When a ball from a hit, or any of the extras mentioned below, goes as far as the boundary, the runners stop and four runs are added to the score. If the batsman hits the ball full pitch over the boundary, he scores six runs.

Extras

Only runs scored from the bat count to the batsman, but to the side's score may be added the following extras: (1) **byes** (when a ball from the bowler passes the wicket without being touched by the bat and the batsmen are able to make a good run); (2) **leg byes** (when, in similar circumstances, the ball has touched any part of the batsman's body except his hand); (3) **wides** (when a ball passes out of reach of the striker); (4) **no-balls** (improperly bowled balls).

(A no-ball is deemed to have occurred if the ball is thrown and not bowled (i.e., the arm is neither bent nor jerked), and if, in the delivery stride, the bowler's front foot does not land behind, or covering, the popping crease. A batsman cannot be out off a no-ball except as noted below.)

Overs

When a bowler has bowled six balls, not counting wides and no-balls, he has completed an over. A new over is then begun by a different bowler at the opposite wicket, with a corresponding adjustment to the field.

If the bowler delivers a complete over without a run being scored from the bat (even though the opponents may have scored extras by means of byes, etc) he has achieved a maiden over, a feat of some accuracy.

Types of Dismissal

The nine ways in which a batsman may be dismissed (put out) are as follows:

Bowled. The batsman is out bowled if the bowler breaks the wicket, i.e., dislodges a bail with the ball.

Caught. The batsman is out caught if the ball hit by that batsman is caught before it touches the ground.

Stumped. The batsman is out stumped if, in playing a stroke he is outside the popping crease (out of his ground) and the wicket is broken by the wicketkeeper with ball in hand.

Leg Before Wicket (LBW). Essentially, LBW is illegal interference, whether accidental or intentional, with a ball that otherwise, in the opinion of the umpire, would hit the wicket. The batsman is out if he intercepts, with any part of his person (except his hand) that is in line between wicket and wicket, a ball that has not first touched his bat or his hand and that has or would have pitched (hit the ground) in a straight line between wickets or on the off side provided the ball would have hit the wicket.

Run Out. Either batsman is run out if, while the ball is in play, his wicket is broken while he is out of his ground. If the batsmen have passed each other, the one running for the wicket which is broken is out; if they have not crossed, the one running from the wicket which is broken is out.

Hit Wicket. The batsman is out hit wicket if he breaks his own wicket with his bat or any part of his person while playing the ball.

Handling the Ball. Either batsman is out if he touches the ball with his hands while it is in play.

Hitting the Ball Twice. The batsman is out if he hits the ball, except in the defence of his wicket, after it has been struck or stopped by any part of his person.

Obstructing the Field. Either batsman is out if he wilfully obstructs the opposite side.

Of these nine types of dismissal, the first five are by far the most common. The final four types are very rare indeed.

Strategy and Technique

The disposition of the field will vary widely according to the techniques of the bowler or the batsman, the condition of the pitch, the state of the game, and the tactics determined by the captain. The captain may place his fieldsmen as he thinks best, and he may alter their positions, if he wishes, after each ball.

There are no foul lines in cricket so a hit in any direction is a fair ball. The objectives of the captain of the fielding side are: (1) to place his men in positions where the batsman may give a catch; (2) to save runs, i.e., to block the path of the ball from the batsman's scoring strokes. The tactical possibilities for a thoughtful and ingenious captain in directing the battle of wits between bowlers and fieldsmen and the batsmen are manifold and constitute one of the attractions of the game for player and spectator alike.

As there are only 11 players on a team and two of them must be the bowler and

wicketkeeper, only nine other fielding positions can be occupied at any one time. The field is spoken of as being divided lengthwise into off and on, or leg, sides in relation to the batsmen's stance, depending on whether he bats right or left-handed. The off side is the side facing the batsman, and the on, or leg, side is the side behind him as he stands to receive the ball.

To sum up, the objective of the bowler is primarily to get the batsman out and only secondarily to prevent him from getting runs. The objective of the batsman is to protect his wicket (i.e., not get out) and to make runs, for only runs can win a match. The objective of each fielder (and of the general distribution of the field) is, firstly, to dismiss the batsmen, and, secondly, to prevent the striker making runs. The arts of batting, bowling, and fielding are therefore a fusion of attack and defense, but ideally attack dominates — especially in the one-day variant of the game

Bowling

Bowling can be right or left-arm. For a fair delivery, the ball must be propelled overhand without bending the elbow. The bowler may run any desired number of paces as a part of his delivery, with the restriction that he not cross the bowling crease. The ball generally hits the ground (the pitch) before reaching the batsman, although it need not.

The first requisite of a good bowler is command of length ; i.e., the ability to pitch (bounce) the ball on a desired spot, usually at or slightly in front of the batsman's feet, and varying with the pace of the bowler, the state of the pitch, and the reach and technique of the batsman. The second requisite is command of direction or line . On this foundation a bowler may elaborate with variations such as finger-spin, swerve, alteration of pace and flight, the path of the ball, and the manner in which it is propelled. All this lends deceptiveness and uncertainty as to exactly where and how the ball will pitch. A good-length ball is one that causes the batsman to be uncertain whether to move forward to play his stroke or to move back. A half-volley is a ball pitched so far up to the batsman that he can drive it fractionally after it has hit the ground without having to move forward. A yorker is a ball pitched on or inside the popping crease. A full pitch is a ball that the batsmen can reach before it hits the ground. A ball which is short of good length is said to be short of a length .

The primary purpose of the spin in bowling is to bring the ball up from the pitch at an angle or in a direction that is difficult for the batsman to anticipate.

The two swerves are the inswinger , which moves in the air from off to leg, and the outswinger , which swerves from leg to off.

Batting

A batsman may hit right-handed or left-handed. Good batting is based on a straight (i.e., vertical) bat with its full face presented to the ball.

The chief strokes are: (1) forward stroke , in which the batsman advances his front leg to the pitch (direction) of the ball and plays it in front of the wicket (if played with aggressive intent, this stroke becomes the drive); (2) back stroke , in which the batsman moves his rear leg back before playing the ball; (3) leg glance (or glide), in which the ball, when pitched in a line with or outside the batsman's body, is deflected behind the wicket on the leg side; (4) cut , in which the batsman hits a ball on the up-rise (after it has hit the ground on the off side), over and down behind the wicket or through the slips with a vigorous whip-like action of the wrists.

Fielding

The ideal fieldsman is a fast runner, with keen eyesight, quick reactions, and the ability to throw straight and far. He should be able to anticipate the batsman's strokes, to move quickly to cut off the ball in its path, and to pick it up and throw it to the stumps in one movement. He must be able to judge the flight of the ball in the air to make a safe catch. By his alertness and skillful play, he can save runs and contribute to a batsman's downfall.

Wicketkeeping

The wicketkeeper is a specialist position requiring abnormally quick reactions, sharp eyesight, and courage. He is the hardest-worked member of the team and must concentrate on every ball, whether standing 12 to 15 yards behind the stumps for the fast bowlers or crouching close to them for those of slow or medium pace.