

LEVEL-O CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CRICKET COACHING

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Lecture 45: Key points of ground fielding, base up, and attacking

Hello everyone, today let's talk about fielding in cricket. There's a wonderful quote by Colin Bland, one of the greatest fielders in the history of the game. He said, "Fielding is part of the attack. If you attack the batter like a fast bowler, you have to field well." This quote beautifully captures the spirit and importance of fielding. Once again, just to emphasise, fielding is not a passive role — it's an active part of a team's attack against the opposition.

Understanding why fielding is so important is crucial. Fielding involves the techniques related to receiving and delivering the ball, and it's arguably the most essential and enjoyable part of the game. Players spend up to 80% of their time in a match fielding, not batting or bowling, but fielding. That statistic alone shows how vital good fielding is to the outcome of a match. Effective fielding can completely shift the momentum of the game — one brilliant stop, a sharp catch, or a direct-hit run-out can lift a whole team's spirit and put pressure back on the batting side.

When we say good sides field for more than 50% of the match time, what we mean is that they are constantly alert, moving, diving, attacking the ball, and backing up throws. Fielding is a technique that involves receiving the ball cleanly and delivering it effectively using proper throwing techniques, which is why coaching fielding properly is emphasised by cricket boards like the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

There's a certain art to fielding, too. Cricketers often say they enjoy being on the field because fielding, when done well, feels almost like a dance — moving into the ball, staying low, picking up cleanly, and firing the ball back in one smooth motion. Good fielding doesn't just prevent runs; it attacks the opposition by constantly creating pressure.

Now, if we think about the qualities that make up a good fielder, we have to mention anticipation first. A good fielder must watch the batter very closely — analysing the stance,

the footwork, the bat's blade angle — to predict where the ball might be played. Then there is agility, the ability to quickly adjust body position depending on where the ball is hit. Courage is also key, the courage to dive, to throw themselves at the ball, to attack the situation even under pressure.

If you wonder about the difference between a good fielder and a brilliant fielder, it lies in their mindset. A good fielder *expects* the ball to come to him, while a brilliant fielder *wants* the ball to come to him. That hunger to be involved, to make a difference, is what separates the two.

Talking about the role of a fielder further, it's clear that they have multiple responsibilities: helping to dismiss batters, saving crucial runs, and maintaining pressure on the opposition. Fielders are as much attackers as bowlers — playing both attacking and defensive roles depending on the situation.

Next, let's dive into ground fielding — both attacking and defensive styles. Ground fielding starts with what we call moving in with the bowler. In professional matches, you will often notice fielders moving a few steps forward in sync with the bowler's delivery stride. When the bowler jumps into the loading position, the fielders should take 2-3 small, quick steps forward, staying light on the balls of their feet, with knees bent and hands relaxed in front of the body. This movement is called the "base up" position, which sets up the fielder to react quickly.

The proper fielding platform includes keeping the feet about shoulder-width apart, weight balanced on the front part of the feet, knees slightly bent, the head still, and the eyes level, sharply focused on the batter and the likely contact point of the ball. This foundation gives the fielder the best chance to react quickly and efficiently.

When it comes to moving to the ball, the fielder must anticipate the likely direction based on the batter's shot. Movement should be with short, quick steps, maintaining a low body position to allow for better balance and quicker reaction. Adjusting body position properly is key to ensuring a clean pickup.

Receiving the ball properly is another fundamental skill. For effective receiving, especially when attacking the ball, the fielder's back foot must be angled towards the line of the ball. This acts as a second line of defence in case the ball is not picked up cleanly. Maintaining a low body height, opening the front hip slightly, and positioning the body with the head still are crucial. The fielder must watch the ball right into the hands, extending the arms,

and receiving the ball towards the body to cushion the momentum. These basic principles are stressed heavily in modern coaching programs like those recommended by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

When we talk about attacking fielding, it mainly happens within the 30-yard circle. Fielders stationed here must be quick, aggressive, and ready to pounce on every ball. The concept of receiving and throwing in one motion, especially using two-hand pickups for stability, is vital to attacking fielding.

So, in conclusion, fielding is not just about stopping runs or taking catches. It's about changing the game's tempo, lifting teammates, and putting relentless pressure on the opposition. As Colin Bland emphasised, fielding is truly a part of the attack.

Thank you, and keep practising your fielding skills — because the best fielders not only save runs but also win matches!