

# MASTERCLASS

FOR ANY  
YOUNG LADS  
OUT THERE...



## HAWKEYE MASTERCLASS

### MIKE HUSSEY BATTING THE MIDDLE OVERS

Batting through the middle and end overs of an ODI is a tricky business. After the Powerplays, the field goes back and opportunities for boundaries are reduced. The challenge is to keep the scoreboard ticking with clever shot placement. Australia's Mike Hussey, capable of blasting or accumulating to equal effect, has turned it into an artform.

The key to scoring in the middle overs is an ability to work the ball around and to try and score off pretty much every delivery faced.

Graphics 1 and 2 show a Hussey innings of 64 not out off 98 deliveries, not an overly rapid innings by ODI standards, but crucial in the context of a low-scoring CB Series match against Sri Lanka at Melbourne in February when the Aussies made only 184/7 in 50 overs but still won.

The beehive confirms that Hussey only hit one boundary (yellow) but was still able to keep the scoreboard ticking over through his adeptness to work ones and twos (blue dots). This is further illustrated by the wagon which shows his solitary boundary in red (and a three in green), while the rest are ones (white) and twos (blue). Hussey can score all around the wicket, but opportunities to cut and pull (and score square of the wicket) are limited in the middle overs: most of Hussey's runs here come in front of square and down the ground. He faced 35 balls from Murali and 40 from the quick bowler Ishara Amerasinghe.

Too often players get frustrated because they hit the fielders and then feel compelled to go for the big shot, but Hussey's great strength is that he can work the ones and twos so well that he keeps the scoreboard ticking at 4-6 runs an over without taking risks.

## THE BATTING DOCTOR

### FINISHING POSITION AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

The start and finish position of any shot are the most important areas to work on when coaching, writes **Gary Palmer**. The finished position of any straight bat shot (including the flick off the legs and leg glance) must finish with a high leading elbow position. The diamond shape created in the back swing should be maintained throughout the shot and should be maintained in the finished position, to allow you to play straight effectively.

The 'check' drive is the most efficient and successful way of playing a drive. By 'check' drive, we mean finishing the shot with the bat pointing in the direction of where you have hit the ball. Think of Kevin Pietersen or Andrew Flintoff hitting a straight six: as the ball crosses the rope, they are holding their finished position, with the bat pointing straight down the pitch.

Some amateur players may feel that a 'full' drive – which has more of a flourish,

with the wrists breaking and the bat ending pointing backwards over your shoulder – offers more power. However, the check drive guarantees more consistency and better contact: it ensures that the full face of the bat will hit through the line of the ball for an extended period of time.

Doing this will minimise your chances of getting out to the ball that moves in the air or off the wicket. When practising, try to exaggerate these finished positions and hold the shapes of the shot for a few seconds so that you'll embed it in your memory and will be able to recreate it in a match situation.

### TOP TIP

Aim to get your front arm in front of your face as you follow through. Try to look through the bottom forearm on completion of all front and back foot drives. Finish the shot with high hands above the line of your head. Your bottom hand should be relaxed, with your top hand in charge of the shot.

### COMMON FAULTS

- Collapsing the leading elbow too early.
- Bottom hand too tight, therefore restricting the flow of the arms and bat through the shot.

### CONCLUSION

Great players have a good basic technique but also have the ability to attach their natural flair when they need to improvise in match situations. When great players play on bad pitches or come up against an exceptional spell of bowling, they have their good technique to fall back on.

There is no substitute for correct technique – and when learning the various shots the straight bat shots need to be perfected first. Playing straight will improve your consistency and build your confidence. Master the basics and the runs will come. *Gary Palmer has been batting consultant to a roster of counties. His academy runs programmes for club players and would-be pros throughout the year. ccmacademy.co.uk*

