

The Strategies of Indoor Cricket.

(Please note that this information emanates from an Australian cricket blog. Some references may not apply to the indoor game in the UK, [number of runs scored, for example]. There might also be the 'odd' phrase of grammar! No matter. You will get the gist, I'm sure; and the guides and tips are extremely useful).

The secret about successful strategies in indoor cricket is . . . There's not really a secret.

It's all pretty basic stuff . . . read on . . . (FROM: www.indoorcricketworld.net)

Basic Strategies: With thanks to:

www.indoorcricketworld.net/What/strategy/index.html

-) Indoor cricket is not a complicated game.
-) When batting, the aim is to score as many runs as possible.
-) When fielding, the aim is to restrict your opponents to as few runs as possible.

To achieve these two aims, there are some basic, almost universal strategies. I say "almost" universal because there are always going to be some opponents who require something a little different, but for the time being we'll stick to what should serve you well in 99% of cases.

Batting

The basic strategy when batting is to try to score at least one or two runs for every ball faced. This does not mean you never hit 3s, 4s, 5s or 6s - it means you don't go into an innings thinking that's what you have to do to get a good score. If a ball is bowled that you know you can smack to the back net, then by all means do so - but keep in mind the first imperative

The First Imperative when batting is to not lose a wicket. When you do lose a wicket (as you almost certainly will), the Second Imperative comes into play - and that is not losing another. And so on.

Many players seem to panic when they lose a wicket, and try to recover the lost runs by trying to hit the back net off the very next ball. A much more successful strategy is to work even harder at not losing another wicket, and continuing to strive for the 1 or 2 runs per ball.

The absolute minimum a batting side should be aiming for is 100. That's only 25 per pair, which is virtually 1 run per ball faced. That means every 2 or more scored is a bonus. A score of 100 will win more often than lose.

The majority of runs scored in indoor cricket are 1s and 2s. A safe 2 is usually a better option than unnecessarily going for a high-risk 6, unless of course you are chasing a huge score. Chasing huge scores may mean you have to try to hit the back net often but consider this: a score of 2 off every ball faced gives a batting pair a score of 48. And there are 4 batting pairs. How big does a score have to be before it is out of reach of a team hitting 2's and not losing wickets?

A final word the safest and most effective shot in indoor cricket is the "down and up" shot. This is when the batsman hits the ball down into the ground, at such an angle that it then bounces over the fieldsmen and into the net very high up. This is most easily played off any ball pitched outside the

off-stump, especially if it is pitched too short. This shot can also be played to the "on" side, particularly to a ball pitched closer to the batsman and again, pitched too short.

A final final word . . . there are two other aspects of batting I've not yet touched on, but are very important: backing up and running.

a) Backing up. Some batsmen, when at the non-striker's end and awaiting the bowler to bowl, will stand well outside the non-striker's line, reaching back so the tip of their bat is just over the line. There are three main disadvantages to this strategy.

Firstly, the batsman is stationary. As the bowler releases the ball, the non-striker has to begin moving from standing still. More on that in a minute.

Secondly, the tip of the bat is just over the line. The slightest movement toward the batsman on strike and the non-striker's bat will slip over and outside the line, making for an easy Mankad (and yes, as long as the Mankad is a legal form of dismissal, ALL batsmen should take steps to avoid falling victim to it).

Thirdly, being stationary allows a fielder to stand on the two-line, virtually straddling the non-striker's bat. As the non-striker moves to run, that fielder can take one step forward and immediately he is legally blocking the non-striker from doubling back and trying to make his ground behind the two-line (if the batsman for example hit the ball directly to a fielder and called "NO" to the non-striker, the non-striker would have to double back and make his ground over the two-line).

In my experience, the non-striking batsman is best served by beginning to walk toward the batsman on strike as the bowler approaches his delivery stride. As the bowler is releasing the ball, the non-striker is crossing the non-striker's line . . . but his bat is still well behind the line. If a Mankad is attempted, There is enough latitude in the non-striker's position to allow him to stop in time. But the main advantage is, the non-striker is moving as the ball is released, and it's easier and quicker to hit top speed from a walk or slow jog than it is from standing still, reaching back in the opposite direction to where you are about to run.

b) Running. Some batsmen run down and very close to the side net. In my experience, this is the worst possible line, for one reason: I have seen countless instances of a batsman's run being stopped as he was wedged between the net and a fielder. It is very, very easy for a fielder, in the act of fielding, to quite "innocently" close the gap between himself and the net, thereby blocking the passage of the batsman. Far better to run a couple of meters off the net, usually down the side of the front half where there is only one fielder (usually the leg side), so less fielders to "innocently" collide with. And running down this line helps make "traffic" in the front half, almost exclusively to the batsmen's advantage.

Bowling: The secret to being a successful indoor cricket bowler? No, it's not Testosterone . . . Despite all the hype, the main aim of a good indoor cricket bowler is not knocking the batsman's head off or breaking his / his ribs. It's actually a little more nuanced than that . . .

The basic strategy when bowling is to prevent the batsman from scoring. Failing that, it is to stop him from scoring 2's. At the same time, the bowler is trying to force the batsman to play the sort of shot which will increase the chances of his being run out - run-outs are by far the most common form of dismissal in indoor cricket. Catches are the next most common. Clean-bowled is the least common.

To prevent the batsman from scoring, or from scoring 2's, the bowler should be bowling within that old maxim, "line and length". The line (direction of the delivery) and length should be such that the batsman doesn't have the room to play the standard "down and up" shot so successful in indoor cricket (see above). The better bowlers try to hit the batsman on the leading leg, at or a little above knee-height. This makes it almost impossible to play down and up to the off side, and very difficult and risky to try to play the same shot to the on side. It also makes the ball very difficult to drive firmly. Quicker bowlers, or those who move the ball off the pitch, would be aiming to hit the batsman's leading leg a bit higher, more around the hip.

The result of such a ball is very often a ball played not too firmly to one of the in-close fielders. This in turn greatly increases the chances of a run-out, either as a result of the fielder tapping the ball straight back to the wicketkeeper, or taking it and throwing to the other end (remember, most batswomen will run whenever there is contact with the ball, so the chance of run-outs in this fashion can come around very frequently - if the bowler is doing the right thing).

By bowling this line, even an over-pitched ball becomes less damaging to the fielding side. An over-pitched ball in line with the front leg will almost certainly be driven to the ON side. The very worst result would be 4 scored. But if it is lofted at all, it becomes a chance for one of the back-half fielders to catch. On the other hand, an over-pitched ball on or just outside OFF stump stands far more chance of being hit directly to the back net, for a total score of 7, and no chance of being caught (hits direct to the back net are not out if caught off the net), whereas an over-pitched ball on or just outside LEG stump has less chance of being hit directly to the back net and more chance of being hit off the side net and caught.

The most common mistaken belief about bowling in indoor cricket, especially from Testosterone-soaked young males, is that faster is better. Well, if you are genuinely quick (and that means very, very, very quick), your pace alone can be enough to get you results. But for 99.999% of those who play, line and length are paramount.

Bowlers of spin, leg-spin in particular, will sometimes bowl a different line to the above, especially if they believe they can get a particular batsman out stumped or caught. But they too are generally best served by trying to hit the batsman on or around the knee of the leading leg.

Fielding: Fielding, including throwing and wicket-keeping. "Easily the most spectacular aspect of indoor cricket. The best fielders in any form of cricket are to be found on an indoor cricket court . . . trust me on this."

The fielders all have slightly different tasks, but they all have the same aim - to keep the ball from hitting the net wherever possible, and to take the wickets that present themselves.

Those in the front half of the net (i.e., the same half as the batsman on strike) are all very close to the bat. This means any ball struck firmly will be very difficult for them to field (you can't catch what you can't see). It also means if the bowler is bowling short-pitched deliveries, the front-half fielders are in grave danger of being hit by lusty pull-shots or cuts.

Yet they are the main source of run outs. Therefore, to maximise the number of run out chances presented (and to keep on friendly talking-terms with your team mates), the batsmen must be prevented from playing firm shots (see "Bowling" above). The extreme importance of the previously mentioned "line and length" should now be apparent.

The front-half fielders will most of the time slap a ball back to their wicketkeeper to effect run outs. Those front-half fielders who play at the top level practise slapping the ball back to the 'keeper more than any other skill. However, they must also be adept at taking the ball and throwing it to the fielder at the back stumps. Sometimes the ball does not come direct to hand, and the non-striker would have made his ground by the time they could effect a slap back to the 'keeper. A quick, accurate throw to the back stumps could still be a chance for a run out. Similarly, if a ball is hit quickly and directly to a front-half fielder, and she fields it cleanly and immediately, a quick throw to the back stumps is always going to beat the batsman running to that end.

I am a firm believer in whenever possible having two left-handed fielders on the off-side (for a right-handed batsman). Left-handers have no advantage over right-handers when slapping or throwing to the 'keeper, but have a huge advantage when it comes to throwing to the back stumper. For the same reasons, I believe the leg-side fielder should always be a right-hander.

UPDATE. August 2017. A lot of off-side front-half fielders (still with me?) over the past few years have adopted what I call the jumping screen technique. This involves leaping vertically just before the ball is struck, timing the jump such that if the batsman plays the classic down-and-up shot, the fielder will be in position to possibly stop the ball bouncing over him as the ball will reach the fielder as the fielder is at the top of his jump. The better batsmen and women will counter by hitting the ball along the ground, under the jumping fielders and into the net. I feel that if a bowler is being "picked off" by a batsman and having the down-and-up shot played with ease, the jumping screen will at least force them to alter their approach, making it worthwhile. But if the bowler is hitting that awkward length that prevents the batsman from playing forceful down-and-up shots, the jumping screen become more for show and makes the front half less effective.

The fielder who takes the throws to the back (non-striker's) stumps is usually referred to as the back-stumper. His job is to take the throws to his and effect the run out, and to patrol the back net. It is not a position for the faint-hearted or soft-handed - in fact, if the fielders all throw at 3 million miles an hour and at the ground at the back stumper's feet, it's not a job for anyone. But those are many who love the position.

The remaining two fielders are usually positioned on the "two line" (the non-striker's crease line). Whether they stand against the net or more toward the pitch is a moot point, but the favoured shot of a particular batsman may determine where they best stand. Ideally they will start to move into the front

half as soon as the bowler has bowled, to increase the traffic in the front half and to increase the chances of the ball being fielded quickly and a run out effected (see photos below). Of course, if the bowler is dishing up over-pitched or short-pitched deliveries, these two fielders place themselves at great risk of having the ball driven or pulled with force into tender parts of their anatomy (and when a new indoor cricket ball is smashed by the batsman, every part of a fielder should be considered tender and worthy of protection). Once again, we see the importance of "line and length" bowling.

Throwing

There's throwing, and there's throwing. Most of the time, a throw should be to the wicketkeeper or the back stumper - it is considerably easier to throw within these fielders' reach than it is to hit the stumps, especially from side-on to the stumps. The only time a fielder should have a direct throw at the stumps is if the 'keeper or back stumper are not in position, or the play is so close only a direct hit will effect the run out (or the fielder is so close to the stumps she simply couldn't possibly miss ... I'll let readers guess how many times I have seen good indoor cricketers miss the stumps from two feet away). Trust me, the throw to the fielder is the better option in almost all cases.

A good throw will be directly over the stumps, at an easily catchable height. Throws at the head, off to the side, or excessively fast from close by are going to make the 'keeper or back stumper's job very difficult.

At this point I was going to do a little spiel on wicketkeepers, but they're such a weird mob, in a world of their own, that I've decided I'll get an experienced 'keeper to write it for me. While I try to talk one into writing it, any offers of contributions are welcome - who knows, your wise words could find themselves, fully acknowledged of course, on these very pages.... and we do indeed have a couple of contributors:-

Thanks to Dave Clements of Ballarat, Victoria, and Kelvin Lingard of Townsville, Queensland, for the following contributions.

Wicket-Keeping Techniques - by Kelvin Lingard.

(Kelvin plays for a local suburban team each week and represents Townsville in the men's B state competition).

The Wicket keeper is one of the most valuable fielders in the game. A good understanding between the Wicket keeper and the receiver at the other end of the wicket can achieve a lot of dismissals. With a few good deliveries, a good wicket keeper can turn a game very quickly.

Keeping in indoor cricket is a very specialized position and takes a lot of skill and practice. It differs from outdoor keeping in several major aspects - the keeper in indoor cricket must stand right at the stumps for all bowlers, fast and slow the fielders are all close to the pitch, which means that the keeper's reaction time is for the most part very short (for balls returned to him). He must have one hand free to throw, which means wearing a catching glove on one hand and on the other a throwing glove, or no glove at all.

Because of these conditions and the speed of the game, it is easy for a keeper to sustain injury. The best way to avoid injury is to develop good, safe techniques. I have provided below some of my own techniques for good

wicket keeping. These have been developed over many years and will, hopefully, not only prevent injury but also help improve wicket-keeping skills.

FIELDING THE BALL

It is important to try to field every ball that is bowled. My aim is to glove every ball that beats the bat. I pretend that I have no net behind me and concentrate on the ball. This requires pretty much 100% effort but with concentration and persistence I find it has improved my game considerably.

POSITION

The best way to position yourself is in a squat, with your "inner" foot in line with off-stump. This remains the same for both left and right handed batsmen, however, depending on the batsman's stance you may need to vary it a little to retain a clear view of the ball's path.

Hands are cupped on the pitch and close to the stumps.

As the bowler prepares to bowl, I stay crouched, hands cupped out in front and elbows bent a little. Hands should stay on the pitch until just before the bounce. I stay low to judge the bounce of the ball; I rise slowly as the bowler approaches but still only to a crouched position with hands still cupped in front.

Without crossing my feet, I slide a little from either side of the wicket. When I receive the ball in my glove I move toward the direction of the stumps to increase my chances of a stumping.

HAND AND HEAD POSITIONS

For a normal bounce, I always have my hands cupped, fingers pointing down a little. Balls that bounce high, at around eye level, are best taken with fingers pointing upwards.

You should keep your head in a comfortable position but, as much as possible, in line with the ball. It is most important not to snatch at the ball. If your head is in the right position, your eyes will be able to follow the ball and you can let it drop into your hands.

When you catch the ball, have your elbows bent, let your arms give a little and take the ball back to absorb some of the shock and avoid injury and the probable loss of the ball.

STUMPINGS

First of all, it is important not to get too excited or rushed when the batsman dashes out of the crease as this will bring about a mistake.

For a ball that bounces at wicket height, I keep slightly crouched (low). For a ball that pitches at close range to the wickets, like a Yorker, a full pitch delivery or when it's almost at your gloves, I would have my feet spread a little and elbows bent then it's like a scooping method from either side of my body. For a ball that pitches a high bounce, firstly, get this! You will probably need to be in a standing position. With hands cupped and fingers pointing upwards, take the ball and just bring it down to the stumps. I position myself in line with the ball or slightly to the side, depending on the delivery.

It is important to be patient (don't snatch) and watch the ball right into your gloves. When the ball has been received, take the bails off quickly, try to

operate in easy reach of your stumps at all times. A technique I use when I find myself away from stump reach is a one-handed technique. I receive the ball, quickly transfer it to the hand nearest the stumps and then take the bails off.

You can lose an opportunity to stump by over reacting. If this happens, you will find the ball will hit your fingers and bounce away. Do not give up if this happens! Stay alert for a second play at the stumps. Make sure you get in position to receive flicks or throws from front court fielders and other fielders. I like to stay low for these attempts. (ICW: we couldn't agree more with Kelvin here -- there's nothing bugs a front-court fielder more than a 'keeper who leaps out from behind the stumps and isn't three to take a quick flick back at the stumps).

LEG SIDE STUMPING

This is one of the hardest to perform, though with the correct techniques, it can be easy.

My technique is to stay low (crouching position), depending on the bounce of the ball that is bowled, and, as always, keep hands in front with fingers cupped. Judge the line of the ball and it's bounce. From this stance, slide foot to foot across to receive the ball. The foot-to-foot sideways slide technique helps you maintain balance and puts you in a good position to receive the ball.

The biggest problem with leg side takes is that you lose sight of the ball because of the batsman's position. Therefore, you must anticipate and move to be in the right spot to receive the ball as soon as it arrives. Good anticipation and regular practice of this move will enable you to sight the ball as early as possible thus giving you a better opportunity to remove the bails and stump the batsman should he be out of his crease.

If you find yourself too far away from the stumps, as sometimes happens in getting yourself in line with the ball, simply transfer the received ball into the hand closest to the stumps and remove the bails. In performing this action, remember to maintain your crouched position with hands out in front and do not cross your feet. In this way, you should receive the ball cleanly and be able to take off the bails.

THROWING AND RUN OUT THROWS

The keeper is responsible for a large amount of run outs at the receivers end. To do this, the keeper takes the ball cleanly, attempts a stumping, then returns the ball to the receiver to run-out the non-striker. A good strong and accurate throwing technique is essential.

I aim to receive the ball and be balanced when throwing it to the receiver. The technique I use involves using all of the shoulder and back muscles. Don't throw with your arm only! A side arm throw standing front on action could lead to injury. When I throw I try to keep my arm bent with the ball at level with my head, keeping it close to my ear. Step forward front leg out a little. This gives you more power and uses all of the muscles in the shoulder and back. From this stance, throw the ball.

I like to throw a bounce ball to the receiver so he/she can receive the ball cleanly and effect the run out. Sometimes a full throw is needed, but this is

faster and therefore harder for the receiver to take. The technique I use when throwing is specifically to prevent injury. When I was younger I threw incorrectly - using just my arm and throwing hard. This led to injury. The injury was fixable though I have to be careful to use the correct technique to keep my arm in good condition. So, I cannot stress enough how important it is to be well balanced when throwing and to use all of your muscles, not just your arm.

Finally, my most important tip of all is to stretch before, during breaks in the game and after the game. This prevents sore muscles, injury and loosens you up so you can play better.

Kelvin Lingard, Townsville.

Wicket-Keeping - by Dave Clements

The first priority of a wicket-keeper in the game of indoor cricket, is to cleanly glove the ball (as often as possible). This leads to:

-) stumpings;
-) run outs at the non-strikers end;
-) avoiding runs on fumbles into the corners;
-) reassurance and inspiration to team mates, and above all,
-) nervousness in the batting side that they will be out if they offer a sniff of a chance.

You might also take a catch, if it is not too thick an edge.

A wicket-keeper should always stand at the stumps, and should work hard at watching the ball, and moving quickly to the leg-side for that "team motivating leg-side stumping off the quick". A wicket-keeper enjoying his/his game will also enthuse and inspire the remainder of the team, and this will assist in team effort and in applying pressure on the other team.

A more general comment on strategy. As implied in Indoor Cricket World's discussions on strategies (above), minimising your own mistakes (bowling, fielding batting and 'keeping) and taking opportunities, will increase the pressure on the opposing team and lead to an increased number of errors from them. To me, this is the most significant tactic of the game.

Dave Clements.

More useful tips can be found here: <http://www.pitchvision.com/ask-the-readers-what-are-your-indoor-cricket-tips#/>

....and here: <http://www.bigcricket.com/community/threads/indoor-cricket-tactics.30215/>