

How to Keep Wicket

SOME ADVICE TO BEGINNERS.

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The art of wicket-keeping has always been to me a fascinating one, and if, in offering a few hints to beginners, I can be of assistance to the rising generation, the pleasure and interest aroused will be mutual. In the first place, let me advise the aspirant never to take up the position behind the stumps unless he is properly equipped with the gloves and pads necessary for the purpose, for, unless attention be bestowed upon these very important details—they are important, however trifling they may seem to some cricketers—he will be courting failure. Another elementary consideration, but one none the less important, is the position of the feet and the method of standing. Observe our greatest batsmen, and note the ease and elegance of their footwork, which is so instrumental in enabling them to bring into operation all the known strokes. Bad footwork will militate against the scoring abilities of the batsman, and it places an equal limit on the opportunities of the wicket-keeper.

The Wicketkeeper's Attitude.

In assuming the stooping attitude too much care cannot be exercised in bringing this about in as natural a manner as possible. Whilst stooping, moreover, the body must never be cramped; otherwise much difficulty will be experienced in regaining the upright position in order to take a rising ball. To admit of the best possibilities, the wicket-keeper should stand with the middle of the left foot in a line with the leg stump. The right foot should then be extended only far enough to be quite easy, and it should be slightly drawn back, so that the toe of the right foot may come in a line with the "ball" of the left foot. This will give greater freedom and additional play to the right arm, and also increase the facilities in following the ball.

I cannot impress upon the young "keeper" too strongly the importance of standing with the feet perfectly flat, and never getting on the toes. Not only is it necessary to stand flat-footed for the purpose of obtaining a firmer grip of the ground with both legs, but it enables one to move more rapidly on to the leg-side. It affords a quicker and steadier start for this action, and it is equally advantageous in making a move to the off-side. Should the wicket-keeper be on his toes, he is likely to over-balance in making either of the movements indicated.

On the Leg Side.

The ball on the leg-side should be taken with a similar movement to that which is adopted in taking the ball on the off. Of course, it is much more difficult to see the approaching object when the batsman is obstructing one's sight. The only manner in which the probable spot can be gauged where a leg-ball comes along under these conditions is to make one step to the leg and slightly lean the body on one side, but never sufficiently to prevent the wicket-keeper from getting back to the wicket for a possible stumping. Where the ball will come when it has passed the obstructing batsman can only be judged by careful watching and practice as to the type of delivery, and the method adopted by the batsman in playing it.

The best stumping I have made on the leg-side has been when the batsman has leaned forward to play the stroke, and by so doing has raised himself on his toe, and for the time being has thus been out of his "ground"; before the batsman had had time to replace his heel within the crease the ball has been gathered and the ball removed. This can only be achieved by taking the ball and displacing the balls with one and the same action.

Position of the Hands.

Probably the most important factor for success in wicket-keeping is the position of the hands. These should always be held with the fingers pointing downwards, and, having assumed the stooping attitude in preparation for the ball to be bowled, the fingers should on no account be held horizontally with the wicket-keeper; that is to say, facing the ball—if they are placed in this position a dislocation or breakage of the digits may

be the result. On the contrary, if the hands are held with the palms turned downwards, as I have indicated, the ball so strikes this part that it gives way slightly, and so the danger of sustaining damaged fingers is minimised. It is also desirable to let the hands hang loosely, so as to "give" as much as possible when they come in contact with the ball. If they are held stiff the ball may rebound from the palm; in the other case the impact is calculated to have the effect of closing the loose hands and so fixing the grasp on the ball.

A Word of Caution.

I would strongly caution the beginner never to make a grab at the ball. By such action he will be merely hitting the ball and increasing its pace, instead of "giving" to it, and so diminishing the speed at which it is travelling and arresting its progress. An apt illustration of my meaning is provided by the trick which is such a favourite amongst conjurers, of throwing an egg some distance into the air and catching it on a tray without breaking the shell. The secret of success lies, of course, in lowering the tray immediately on contact, and so reducing to a minimum the force of the impact. I have known wicket-keepers who have been incontestably good in all other particulars, but this holding of the hands has been their great blemish, and the one which has brought about their downfall. It has been impossible for them to last, and they have sought an early retirement with damaged hands and fingers.

Further, a wicket-keeper must have infinite confidence in himself to take any kind of bowling, and should he receive a few of the knocks incidental to his position in the field, he must accept them cheerfully as a part of the game. These mishaps are only to be expected, and the best of wicket-keepers cannot escape some of them. I do not say it vaingloriously, but I have kept wicket throughout a whole day with a broken finger; and whilst I do not for a moment suggest the desirability of others doing the same thing under similar circumstances, this is the spirit which, in my opinion, should animate all aspirants for the position of wicket-keeper. Keeping the wicket is not all honey, but when you feel you have achieved some measure of success there is something quite fascinating in it.

The Incomparable Blackham.

In my time the greatest of all wicket-keepers in his day was Jack Blackham, the Australian, and he was a man who religiously observed the points I have enumerated. At the time he first visited England I was serving my novitiate, being then quite a newcomer to county cricket, and I closely watched the then great master of the art. The observance of his perfect movements was greatly to my advantage, and it was a matter of great pride to me when, to show his appreciation of how I had succeeded, he presented me, eighteen years ago, with a pair of wicket-keeping gloves, accompanied with a few kind words of encouragement. On my last visit to Australia I had the pleasure of again meeting Blackham, and he insisted upon us being photographed together, being evidently gratified that I had answered the expectations he had formed of me so long before.

Betting on Racehorses.

SOME FAMOUS WAGERS.

£50,000 TO A WAISTCOAT.

All sorts of exaggerated ideas in connection with betting on racehorses are held by the uninitiated. The trial of a Liverpool bank clerk a few years ago brought out some curious facts in this connection, the poor dupe, thinking it was possible to invest £50,000 on a racehorse an hour before the time set for the race. A plunging bettor may certainly nowadays invest £50,000 on an important handicap; but this amount would have to be judiciously, and with much diplomacy, divided amongst the principal bookmakers, on the same principle that fire insurance offices share the risks of enormous insurances. The bettor would certainly find a remarkably short price on offer against his fancy at the finish, as the betting market is entirely regulated by the law of supply and demand.

Yearling Book on the Derby.

Some historic bets were made in con-

nection with Hermit's snowstorm Derby. The late Duke of Hamilton laid Captain Marshall the large bet of £180,000 to £1000 against Hermit winning.

The sensational winner of the great Epsom event was then only a yearling, and actually started at more than double these odds on the day of the race. The plunging Marquis of Hastings would not believe that Hermit had a ghost of a chance, and lost a fortune, no less than £105,000 in bets going to Hermit's owner, Mr. Chaplin. The lucky jockey, Daley, who was only engaged to ride at the last minute, was presented with the whole of the stakes, 7000 guineas.

Some years ago it was fashionable for sporting noblemen to make yearling books on the Derby—that is, when the entered horses were only a year and, in some cases only a few months old. Sir Joseph Hawley, upon one occasion took the long odds of £200,000 to £3000, split up on the chances of his five Blue Ribbon candidates.

Lord George Bentinck was one day dead tired, and fast asleep in White's Club, after an all-night's debate in the House of Commons. Several of the members tried to rouse him from his heavy slumber, but unavailingly. Lord Glasgow, however, bet a fellow club man £100 that he would wake the sleeper with less than a dozen words, and, going up to him, he bawled out, "I want to make a bet with you, Bentinck!"

Instantly Lord George, who was remarkably keen on gambling—he would bet on the merest trifle—woke up and stated his willingness. "I want to back the produce of Miss Whip against that of any mare you like to name for the Derby of 1848." "Done," said the awakened sleeper. "I name Crucifix. How much?" "Five thousand," said the challenger. Lord George's lucky awakening won him that sum, as Crucifix shortly after foaled Surplice, who entered away with the Derby.

When Crucifix just managed to finish a few inches in front of Poll Meil, after the latter had been badly hampered in the race, a sporting peer asked the late George Payne, who had supported the second, what difference the short head had made to him. "One hundred thousand pounds," was the calm reply.

A Gigantic Bet.

Mr. Henry Chaplin, who landed such a large sum in bets when his horse Hermit won the English Derby, essayed to bring off another big betting coup over Holy Friar for the same race. Henry Steel, the Sheffield levithan, who afterwards presented a church to the steel town, laid him the gigantic bet of £105,000 to £15,000 against his fancy proving successful. Mr. Chaplin's judgment was, however, at fault this time, as Holy Friar turned out a bad roan. Nevertheless, the plucky backer was in luck, as a few weeks before the race the non-inimator of the horse died, and thus the big bet was rendered void. After the settling over Thormanby's Derby, Mr. Merry, the owner, covered his drawing room table with his winning notes and gold to the extent of £109,000.

Some years ago two bookmakers were having a heated argument on Bath Racecourse as to the probable winner of the forthcoming Derby. One of the pencilers was so disgusted with the fancy of his brother bookmaker, which was Adams—that he actually laid him £50,000 and a suit of clothes to a waistcoat. The layer of these remarkable long odds must have trembled when he saw the race being run, as the despised outsider finished third, very close up. Indeed, thousands of spectators were of opinion that Adams actually won the race.

The Englishman at Home and Abroad.

A recently published book of essays, by Professor Andrew McPhail, of McGill University, contains the following humorous passage on the Englishman:—"An Englishman loves to believe that he can do nothing for himself—when he is in England. No man in the world can do more when he is abroad. He pretends that he is the most helpless person in the world—that he cannot carry his bag, open the door of his club, find an address in the directory, use a telephone. He loves to believe that he is living in the 18th century. He carries a bundle of rugs lest the coach may be tired and himself compelled to spend the night in the open. He imagines that he may be attacked by footpads, so he carries a bludgeon for protection. In every city which

he visits he buys a new one, and comes home laden down with a bundle of fagots. He expects that his luggage may be stolen, so he places it by his side or above his head in the railway carriage. He thinks that rain is universal, so he carries an umbrella, even to the Sahara or Los Angeles; and knowing that it may be stolen, he carries two. If England got rid of her half employed, Englishmen would be obliged to alter somewhat their domestic and social arrangements; to do for themselves what is now done for them by half footmen and other indolent servants."

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10th—11.45 a.m.	3.45 p.m.	2 p.m.	4 p.m.
13th—11.45 a.m.	5 a.m.	No str.	5 a.m.
16th 9.15 a.m.	7.30 a.m.	8 a.m.	No str.
19th 9.15 a.m.	11 a.m.	9 a.m.	11 a.m.
22nd—9.15 a.m.	11.45 a.m.	No str.	Noon.
25th 9.15 a.m.	1 p.m.	11 a.m.	No str.
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2nd—11.45 a.m.	5 a.m.	8 a.m.	No str.
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