

BOWLING WHEELS

STEP BY STEP

1



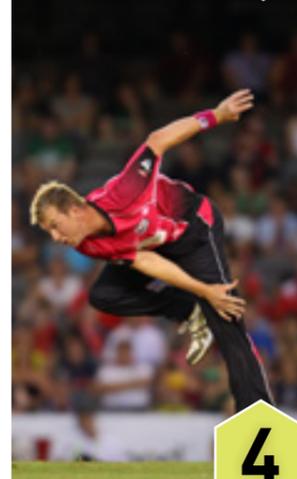
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1 BACK FOOT IMPACT

Run up: It doesn't have to be absolutely gun barrel straight, but avoid an overly angled run. High ground speed is good, but run ups are functional – they're important for generating momentum, but they're just your journey to work: the real work is done in the crease.

Hang time: It isn't important to jump at all – but a lot of bowlers say it feels right for them – and that's okay, because fast bowling is a feeling. Whatever bound you have it's got to be balanced, it's got to be FORWARD, otherwise you lose your ground speed. It's long jump, not high jump. You should be jumping at least three times as far forward as you do up in the air.

Back foot landing: The angle your back foot lands will depend on whether you are a side-on or front-on bowler – but both feet will need to land at the same angle.

2 FRONT FOOT IMPACT

Aligned with your back foot landing, this happens within micro seconds through the crease.

The quickest bowlers land with a straight leg and your front foot blocks the momentum you've built up with your run up and landing. The energy is then transferred from the lower body to the upper body. It's a rapid deceleration at the base, which creates rapid acceleration at the top. You then end up bowling against your front leg, to generate pace.

3 RELEASE POSITION

Body shape: You actually get quite low in the action, contrary to popular myth. That creates a 'V' shape on its side at the point of release (where the bowling arm and front leg are the two branches of the V) You become a human catapult with your front leg a rod to bowl against.

After landing you smash your hips through the crease: power comes from the core. You leave the arm as far back as possible and then use your hips to pull it. The reason Malinga is able to bowl so fast is because he takes his arm so far back behind him. It's not brush your ear, high arm, traditional textbook stuff – which doesn't lead to pace or bounce; that's a fallacy. The quickest bowlers will drag their back foot across the ground through the crease, because if you lift it off the ground you lose some power at the base.

Whether you've started side-on or front on, when you release the ball your hips and nose should be facing the batsman; we all bowl front on when we let the ball go. You have to face where you're bowling the ball.

4 EXIT STRIDE

Follow through – leaving the crease: Drive out of your action at pace following the direction of the ball. Use your momentum in straight lines to take you out of the crease, your head and chest leading and all movement continuing along the line of the ball.

PRACTISE THE 'FOUR TENT PEGS'

Split the four positions apart, practise them separately, put them together very slowly, build it up. Do this over and over again until you become comfortable with all the positions. You do them in slow motion, from a static position, hold each position for a few seconds, look in the mirror, check yourself, feel what muscles are working, keep doing it thousands and thousands of times. The drills are ones anybody can do.



IAN PONT IS AN EXPERT ON FAST BOWLING WHO'S WORKED WITH THE LIKES OF DALE STEYN, SHOAB AKTHAR, AND DARREN GOUGH. NOW HEAD COACH OF THE BPL'S DHAKA GLADIATORS, HE'S ALSO WORKED AS BOWLING COACH FOR BOTH BANGLADESH AND THE NETHERLANDS. HE'S THE AUTHOR OF THE FAST BOWLER'S BIBLE AND MORE RECENTLY, ULTIMATE PACE SECRETS. HERE IS HIS GUIDE TO BOWLING WHEELS.

PACE AND ACCURACY: PERFECT PARTNERS

Bowling fast is all about maximising the action. You can take somebody who has a raw talent and develop it right the way to the end and turn them into a great fast bowler.

People still think you have to slow down to bowl a line and length. I want to hit my area at high speed. The most accurate you can be is when your mechanics work well, and your speed is high. If you get your action right, you just become a human bowling machine. People with strange actions can still be great fast bowlers, but the majority will all have certain fundamentals working well.

For a demonstration of the four positions practiced in sequence, go to www.alloutcricket.com/player/coaching/ianpontcoaching

PONT'S FOUR TENT PEGS

There are four things in the crease that are vitally important to bowling fast. These 'four tent pegs' are the things that hold your action in shape.

- 1 Back foot impact
- 2 Front foot impact
- 3 Release position
- 4 Exit stride

THE MODEL: A simple bowling model is Brett Lee. Most bowlers get into my 'four tent peg' positions in their own way, but if you were to produce an android for bowling fast, you'd have Brett Lee's bowling action.

WARM UP LIKE THE PROS

Middlesex head physio Pete Waxman runs through the six stages the county's players go through to minimise the risk of injuries and maximise performance.



1 Prehab: Each player has a set of individual exercises to do before the warm-up itself. We do screening during the off-season and based on that – plus any previous injuries and the player's role in the team – we'll set a five-minute programme of exercises to do before getting into the warm-up.

2 Team talk to switch on: At Middlesex the captain and coach always deliver the team talk on the pitch before the main warm-up to ensure the players are switched on from the start. A good warm-up should be stimulating and interesting so that players really focus on the day's work ahead.

3 Dynamic stretching: Our strength and conditioning coach steps in at this point and takes the players through some dynamic stretching. This could involve lunging, side-stepping movements, and loosening the arms.



4 Game with a fun element: We often play football at Middlesex but also handball games. The games are good for additional stretching and coordination but must have a competitive element.



5 Functional activities: Then we're into the functional movements the players will replicate during the day's play. Players will get in pairs with a catching mitt and throw a ball to each other over five metres, then 10 metres and so on. Some will also use medicine ball throws or therabands at this point.



6 Specialist skills: Finally, it's over to the coaches for the players to work on their specialist skills. By then they should be physically ready, fully switched on and ready for the day.



7 Final thoughts: Try to do this warm-up as close to the start of play as possible. If you bat first, try and perform dynamic stretches at regular intervals while waiting to go in. A good warm-up isn't just about avoiding injuries – it will improve your performance, so don't cut corners. Do the preparation, and the results will speak for themselves.

Pete Waxman is head physiotherapist at Middlesex and works for Optima-Life. He has worked with the professional squad at Middlesex for the last six years. Visit www.optima-life.com for details.

To find a physio near your club, visit csp.org.uk and use the physio2u search tool.