

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CRICKET FIELD."

"YOU will never have any good cricket in your school," said Joe Broadley, "unless every fellow who plays at all makes up his mind to be a bowler. I like to see stumps, big or little—at distances, short or long—all over the playing field, and one small boy bowling to another, and making the other bowl to him when the wicket falls."

I do not say that you should all be round-arm bowlers; some of the very best—witness Lillywhite, Broadbridge, and Cobbett—began as underhand bowlers; and I strongly suspect that we should form better round-arm bowlers from that kind of training than any other.

However, the style of bowling, fast or slow, round-arm or underhand, I would leave, with a few general hints, very much to the fancy of each of you.

But one piece of advice I have to give is this:—If you try with the round-arm, and find you have more than ordinary difficulty in using your arm and commanding the ball in that way, you had better take to the underhand at once. For, with the round-arm, the action of the muscles is so unnatural—that is to say, you work the arm in a manner so different from what nature intended—that not one man in a hundred can do much good with it. And good underhand—which is in the power of almost all who will take pains and practise carefully—is far better worth having than bad round-arm.

No doubt Cobbett and Lillywhite would get more wickets than any underhand bowler; but I am sure that the wild bowlers of the present day might, with much advantage, be changed for some after the old style. For I well remember when round-arm bowling was introduced, and at that time no one could hit the balls to leg, and no one scarcely could cut; so, while the straight balls threatened the wicket, the wide balls went unpunished; but now all is changed, and the first requisite of bowling is to be on the wicket—which ought to be the characteristic of underhand.

With all bowling, the great thing a learner has to do is first to decide on the style he can carry through, and then to keep to it; for every change in your delivery forms opposite and conflicting habits. The muscles are not only unused to the new style, but you have all the while been training them to act in another way.

Now for some simple rules for learning to bowl.

1. Small boys must not attempt to bowl twenty-two yards; begin at sixteen yards, and when you can bowl good lengths and straight at that distance, try farther back, by a yard at a time, till you can master twenty-two.

2. Supposing you feel you can make a fast bowler (I mean not professedly "slow"), do not strain at any high speed. All fast bowlers who are worth anything have been naturally fast, and can command a great pace without any desperate exertion; but accuracy of pitch and straightness are utterly inconsistent with violent exertion. Remember, therefore, if pace is in you it will be sure to evidence itself; and if it is not, how absurd for a weak man to attempt the style of a strong one! It is especially foolish if we consider that some of the very best bowlers have been men of only a medium pace.

Of course, all things in bowling cannot be taught by the pen. I presume you

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

will always have some professional or some experienced player within reach, and with him you had better consult as to the style of bowling—round-arm or underhand, fast, medium pace, or slow—to take up. After any man has been trying round-arm for a week I can always tell whether it is worth his while to go on with it.

Much is also learnt by imitation when you have adopted your proper style.

3. Old Lillywhite said six steps were enough for the preliminary run to deliver; also, be sure you run straight. Some men start behind the wicket, and run circuitously; but surely this is not the way to bowl straight, because your momentum is not straight at the end.

Again, some men run with one foot over the other, like a cow running; but the only reasonable way is to run straight, with your figure square and fully fronting the wicket, ending with your left foot pointing in the same line.

I would also advise you to bowl as near the end of the crease as you can; by bowling wide of the wicket from which you start you are more likely to bowl round your man and give a bias to the ball. Cobbett was very remarkable in his delivery—not to be imitated; the form suited him, and him only. When the ball left Cobbett's hand, he was at the very end of his crease with his right toe, and with his left foot crossed half-a-yard over his right; and thus, when the ball left his hand, his next step, to adjust his balance, brought him a yard wide of his return crease. Few men, however, could bowl in that form.

I say so much about the form and style of bowling because a great deal depends upon it; you should adopt a certain number of steps, and practise always in the same form; for accuracy in bowling depends on adopting a certain uniform and mechanical action. A first-rate bowler moves, as it were, in one monotonous swing, like a movable catapult or bowling machine. There is no change or variety in his action. He bowls, in effect, not only with his arm, but with his whole body—that is, the momentum of his whole body determines the amount of power and the direction, and as little as possible depends on the arm. If he thought about his arm, and any intentional action of the hand and fingers, he would never bowl true. Instead of this he has found out a certain swing and mechanical run, carriage, and action, and he knows that so long as he keeps to that form he will bowl true to the wicket.

Thus, with underhand bowling, you see a man square himself with the wicket, let his arm swing true as a pendulum, increase his speed gradually to the last step, and, with a certain mechanical check or lock at the shoulder, he delivers the ball.

This will best explain my meaning. No doubt a very practised man will presume upon his proficiency, and bowl in various other ways, but this is the way proficiency is attained; whereas the bowler who tries "everything by fits and nothing long" will never be fit for an eleven.

This is the way to learn two great points in bowling—to bowl straight and good lengths. Without these qualities no bowling deserves the name.

4. The next thing to endeavour to acquire is a difficult style of bowling; for, so far, your bowling may look very good, but be the wrong kind to do any execution. Redgate's bowling did not look any better than Jackson's, but, though the pace was no faster, the rise off the ground was quicker, and the ball touched the ground with such a spin that there was remarkable variety about it. Therefore I would impress that you will never be an effective bowler unless, besides bowling

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

good lengths and straight, you can also send the ball revolving round its own axis (as we say scientifically), or spinning from the hand.

The ball ought to be quicker after the pitch than before. What! when the friction with the ground must tend to make it slower? Yes, for this reason: if the ball is spinning over and over in the air, this spin makes it take a little jump when it touches the ground, which spin adds more to the pace than the friction takes away.

You see this law of motion when you spin a top. Send the top spinning away from you with a movement towards the wall. It may reach the wall, perhaps, at the slow rate of a yard a minute, but the moment it touches (instead of this slow pace being slower still by the friction), away it whizzes ten times as fast as before. You would think the wall was hot and the top did not like it, so feelingly does it fly off at a tangent. Now, why is this? Because a spinning top, like a spinning ball, has two motions, and the motion round its own axis (the spinning motion) only adds to its speed when it comes into contact with something else. Of course, the more spin the more the speed is increased when the ball touches the ground.

Such is the effect of a spinning delivery—it adds quickness to the rise; it also makes the ball often rise abruptly for catching; twists either in or out, and sometimes shoots. All this variety results from the spinning delivery—how or why we cannot here explain, having set it all forth in “The Cricket Field,” in the chapter on “Bowling,” to which we refer for much more information.

The question now arises how to attain to a fine lively and spinning delivery—how to send the ball rotating from the hand. It is impossible to teach any one exactly how to do it. It is a kind of delivery that comes naturally or not at all to most persons. Still, a few hints may assist many a man in falling into the knack of spinning who otherwise would have failed.

With the round-arm nothing helps a spin more than a fair delivery; that is, a low delivery most unlike a throw. A throw has no spin at all: the ball quits the finger and thumb without any power of spin whatever. A ball delivered too much from the palm of the hand does the same. But with a horizontal and nearly a level delivery, as you will find by watching a good bowler, a man can hardly let the ball go from his hand without spinning.

This we can illustrate from several instances. Cobbett in bowling had a delivery nearly level with his elbow—his bowling would have been fair by the law that required the hand to be under the elbow—though now the law is, “not above the shoulder,” and some of the members of the Marylebone Club proposed the words “not above the head”—and Cobbett’s, being the fairest, was also the most spinning of all the bowling I ever saw. The ball looked so easy till it touched the ground, and then it cut, and shot, and twisted almost like a living thing. I have chopped down upon one of Cobbett’s balls, and afterwards seen it curling and spinning like a top about my block-hole.

This spin Cobbett attained, not only by his low delivery, but also by holding the ball with the fingers lapped round the ball, and the ball went from his finger’s joint by joint, just as a whipping-top does when you set it spinning.

Redgate was also remarkable both for the spinning and for the fairness of his delivery, though his hand was higher. There was a turn over of the hand and a lively action of the wrist, not possible, of course, to be described.

At the same time, it is very difficult to attain a low round-arm delivery. The

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

muscles act naturally if you bowl lower than the horizontal line, as with plain underhand bowling; they also act naturally when the hand is above the shoulder, as with a throw; but not one man in a hundred will attain accuracy of pitch and straightness with the hand a little below the level of the shoulder.

Unfair high bowlers, with a pelting delivery, are only difficult on rough ground. This kind of delivery Willsher, among others, used to fall into for ease, but we know now that he can bowl good balls—perhaps with more spin and bias—when he bowls low; still he is not so accurate, and we shall soon see that hard work will tell upon him with so cramped and unnatural a delivery.

I believe that without a strange conformation no man will make a good round-arm bowler. Old Lillywhite's throw was much the same as his bowling. We have also seen Atkinson, one of the best of the present day, throw a ball fifty yards quite in the form in which he bowls.

If you decide on taking up the old-fashioned underhand bowling, this may be either Fast or Slow.

Fast underhand. This, with a little bias, is well worth learning. I have repeatedly seen underhand beat the round-arm bowling. One or two of the best of the All England Eleven have succumbed to it in the Devonshire matches. Mr. Curwan was very effective in this style; his bowling was very fast. When playing against the Marylebone Club he once took ten wickets in one innings. I remember seeing in Sir W. Dixie's park a miller whom he had taught to bowl. The man's arm worked with mechanical precision, like a windmill, and you had a straight good length ball nearly every time he attacked your wicket.

Last year, while at Lord's, Mr. Blake, a famous Bury player, was with me, counting all the balls wide of the wicket, and the cuts and the leg-hits made off them. "Now," said Mr. Blake, "one of our old Bury players has bowled thirty-five balls out of thirty-six that would hit the wicket. Certainly you could hit them more before wicket; but set against these hits the loss by leg-hits and loose balls, and what advantage has the round-arm bowling now?"

Such is the opinion of a first-rate player, equally accustomed to both styles. My own opinion is, that the old bowling is so little practised, we do not all know the state of perfection to which it might be brought.

Sparks among the old players, and also Ashby, gave considerable bias to the ball; and if there were good men out of so small a number as played cricket in those days, what might we not find among the thousands of the present day, if they all practised in the more natural style?

It must never be forgotten that every round-arm bowler is trying to use his arm in a way for which nature never designed it.

I argue thus strongly in favour of underhand bowling because it is a pleasant exercise; and many a boy will be encouraged to persevere in that style, who, with the round-arm, soon gives up the attempt in despair.

Slow bowling. On this point I should say a few words about William Clarke, the reviver of it in modern times. As to Clarke, Tom Barker, the most experienced of umpires, says that his success was owing entirely to this—he had been kept in the background till all players who had ever been used to the underhand had passed away, and then the old style came forth as a novelty. I have no doubt, from what Clarke told me, there is much truth in this observation; for there was Warsop at Nottingham, and William Lambert, the great All England player, who

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

both bowled in the same style as Clarke, and Clarke spoke of them so highly, that it was evident to us that he did not think his bowling was any better than theirs.

But, independently of the novelty, Clarke showed that "slows" admit of two effective qualities well worth considering. Every one of Clarke's balls was pitched so true that Lockyer would not have any long-stop behind him. This placed one more man out in the field. So much for their straightness. And any one may expect to bowl straight when the pace is such that the ball is completely within his command. But Clarke could also pitch exactly the leg length most puzzling to the batsman, and his judgment was so great that he descried any weak point in a moment. He used to walk round the ground, like a deep old fellow as he was, while the adversaries were practising batting, before the match began, and his observations then were amusing to hear. "There—I must remember that gentleman again; he plays fast-footed. I know how to serve him." "See there again; that man thinks he can go in and hit 'slows.' Well, so you might; but that is not the way to do it, and I know what will trap him."

This leads me to observe, that, if you adopt "slows," one great advantage is, that you may aspire to that degree of proficiency which will enable you to bowl the exact length the batsman cannot hit, though, with any violent sort of bowling, no one but professionals—and very few of them—know what stump they are bowling at, or what exact length the ball will be.

Another advantage of "slows" is, that you must hit them to score, and, for the most part, you must leave your ground to hit; and very few men can "go in" repeatedly without giving the wicket-keeper a chance.

But "slows" require head-work. You must bowl judiciously according to each man's play. So the first thing is to learn to bowl any length and at any stump you please, and the next thing is to learn what to bowl for; that is, a slow bowler must get, first, the power, and secondly, the sense to apply it.

The great difficulty of slow bowling (as more exactly explained by diagrams in "The Cricket Field," chap. viii.) the batsman experiences in the curves. Fast bowling comes point-blank nearly from the hand to the pitch, and rises nearly in straight lines too, but slows describe curves before the pitch and after; and a ball moving in a curve is very difficult to judge till the latest moment. The moment the ball is out of Jackson's hand, and has passed three yards in the air, I know where it will pitch; but with Mr. Vincent Walker's bowling, or with Bennett's, describing a curve in the air, and a little "chucked up," no man could judge the ball till it began to descend to the ground; and this leaves very little time for making up your mind what to do with a slow ball.

"A good elevation," therefore, is one great point to try for with slow bowling. It must also be delivered—and some experienced slow bowler must be asked to explain how this is done—with a slight twist. You should pitch just a very little outside the leg stump, and have twist enough to take the off or two off; and, with most batsmen, the best fieldsmen is wanted square to the leg, with another man placed as a near long-slip, to catch the balls that so often fly up into the air from the mistakes the batsman makes in his anxiety to hit across to the on-side. One of Clarke's most frequent dodges consisted in bowling a twisting and high-rising leg long-hop, to tempt a man to hit square to the leg—a catch to one of the near fieldsmen on the off-side being the very common result. "Before bowling

JOE BROADLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS IN BOWLING.

such a ball," said Felix, "Clarke would say, 'Now this ball I think we shall have an accident;' and, when he said that, it was wonderful how often he was right."

This kind of prognostication reminds me of a match I once played at Kingscote, in Gloucestershire. The last man went in; three runs only wanted to win—a very nervous point of the game. One of the adversaries said to this last man, "Now, mind you don't put your leg before the wicket, as you always do." "No, sir," said John Trot, for this was our friend's servant, a very decent player, put in on an emergency. But cotton stockings and plush breeches, on a sunny day, look queer in the cricket field. However, second ball, John's leg, like a very old offender, edged into its old place, covering the two leg stumps; and as our bowler walked back to deliver the ball, he whispered, "Look well at that leg, umpire, for I mean to hit it." He did hit the cotton stocking—very cruel, no doubt; and while John Trot was hopping with pain, the umpire answered, "Out," and the game was over!

We will end this article on Bowling by a few of Joe Broadley's "bowling dodges."

I have hitherto spoken of the power of bowling—now for the application, or "blow with the head," as it is called; for, of two men with equal command of the ball, one would do far more execution than another.

1. When a man first comes in, Wisden (among others) was very fond of pitching the first ball or two farther up than he dared to do when the man had more confidence in playing out as he should do to such balls. Then the batsman, being cramped by mistaken back play, would often lose his wicket, especially if Wisden attacked the leg stump.

2. Old Lillywhite, and after him Clarke, practised the following ocular illusion:—After pitching one or two balls for forward play, they would give one with a higher curve (called a "dropping ball") pitched a little shorter. The curve would make it appear nearer instead of farther off than the others, and the bowler would thus betray the batsman into playing beyond his reach, to the peril of his innings.

3. Lillywhite would also, more carefully than any bowler I ever saw, keep on pitching up, inch by inch, till he had driven into forward play the man who wanted to play back; he would also pitch continually shorter lengths, till he had drawn the forward player into a dangerously long forward reach. "When I catch my man in two minds," said the cunning old boy, "then is the time for his wicket." He meant, when the man doubts whether to play back or forward; and, actually, to throw him into this state of mental perplexity was quite a point in Lillywhite's (as it should be of any other bowler's) game; and, by alternating a longer and shorter pitch, with change of pace and change of curve, he said, a man "whose head was set on right" ought to attack the wicket. As to monotonously pelting at the wicket with every ball the same, this, even with the best delivery, will not succeed with good players.

4. A good bowler is always judging from the play in what point the batsman is weak, and gives him the very ball he does not wish to have.

Our next must be on Batting.