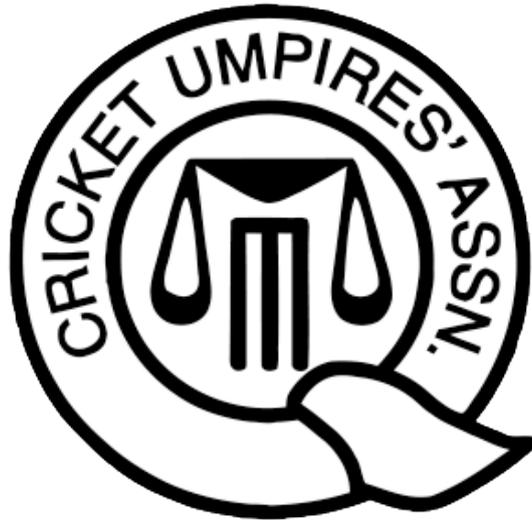


Queensland Cricket Umpires' & Scorers' Association Inc.



UMPIRES TECHNIQUE

MANUAL

INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS GOOD TECHNIQUE

Good technique is the ability to cope with all aspects of the game. On the field of play, knowledge of the Laws, the intentions and interpretations must be applied to ever changing situations. A decision made during the first session of play may not evoke the same emotional response from either the player or umpire as one made late in the day when the match is in the balance. Theoretical knowledge is one thing but being able to make reasoned and consistent decisions from split second actions when under pressure is quite another. There are many aspects which go towards attaining good technique including:

- Preparation
- Working as a team
- Focus and concentration
- Dealing with Captains and Players
- Self-Assessment
- Coping with pressure
- Earning respect

This manual has been introduced to assist umpires in carrying out their duties in a more consistent and competent manner. Some of the suggestions as written may not suit each individual umpire but can be refined to suit your nature and style and should not be rejected outright. It is recommended that, if you require clarification of these techniques, you should discuss them with the Training and Development Officer.

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SECTION 1: BEFORE THE MATCH

- Read the Laws the night before and familiarize yourself with Playing Conditions. Most umpires will be officiating under different playing conditions, sometimes on consecutive days.
- Check and pack gear and have an early night. This is a personal choice always remembering that optimum performance can only be achieved if you arrive at the ground refreshed, prepared and able to give yourself the best chance of umpiring a full day.
- Leave in plenty of time to allow for contingencies (traffic etc) and arrive at least one hour prior to scheduled start time.
- Meet partner, establish rapport and together check pitch area and seek out the groundsman. It is unlikely the ground staff will be in attendance all day so ask questions about the prevailing weather conditions and as to whether the ground absorbs water quickly.
- Ascertain if there are any other characteristics of the ground that would be helpful later in the day. Is sawdust available for bowler's run-ups and batsmen's stance position? What options are available for using the covers effectively and who will be responsible for laying them? How can the ground best be dried out after a sudden storm? This information could prove vital.
- Make sure the stump holes are moistened to allow easy re-making of the wickets during the day. This may sound a minor matter but a great deal of time can be saved if the wickets can be quickly and easily remade.
- If at all possible, get the ground staff to mark an extension of the popping crease about 15 to 20 metres out to cater for the possibility of having a runner for an injured striker. Check all other markings, set up wickets and choose or decide on ends.
- Check outfield for any obstructions or hazards, boundaries and local customs.
- If your partner arrives late, it is O.K. to check out the ground alone but never make any comment to players about your opinion on the condition of the ground – remember this is a decision for the umpires to "agree together". Generally it is best to wait until your colleague arrives. Umpires being seen working together before play begins is a positive sign to all concerned.
- Together meet and speak to Captains before toss, make sure team lists are exchanged and collected. Discuss any matters arising from ground inspection.
- Establish signals to be used with your partner, their timing and the co-ordination of your work together – two to go, catch carrying, leg byes, issue of warnings, fast short pitched bowling, high full pitches etc.
- Meet with scorers, note their position, check on established signals to be used and check timepiece and backup clock.
- Obtain match ball and inform teams you are going onto the field 5 minutes prior to start, wish them well and tell them to enjoy the game. Walk out together.

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SECTION 2 SIGNALS AND CALLS

- Make all necessary signals in accordance with the Laws. Signals requiring a call should be delivered in a clear voice to be at least audible within the square and to fielders in the ring. Finish the boundary four signal with your arm across the chest. How many times you wave is up to you. Be an individual with your signals but stick to the basic requirements of the Laws.
- Ensure you work as a team in all signaling procedures. Confer at the end of an over if there is a possibility that something could have been misunderstood.
- Call "pay", "time" and "over" clearly when appropriate. The call of "play" should be made with confidence. On most occasions, it will be the first time the players have heard you speak so the call should convey the message, "I know what I am doing, and I am ready for anything". Note that "time" should be called for all drinks intervals but it is not necessary to remove the bails.
- Deliver combination calls in the sequence they occur – i.e. no ball, byes or leg byes, boundary, penalty runs.
- Deliver relevant signals side on to scorers – e.g. leg byes, no balls etc. Ensure you position yourself so that the players do not obstruct the scorers view.
- Some signals require the call and signal to be made while the ball is in play such as no ball and wide. Signals and calls are made in the first instance to the players only. Repeat the signal to the scorers when the ball becomes dead. **Never signal to scorers while the ball is in play.**
- Do not allow the game to proceed until the scorers acknowledge all signals.
- Once established, signals to your partner must be continued for the duration of the match. Ensure clear understanding on what is required. Point of fact; did the ball carry? Did the batsmen cross? Was the wicket broken correctly?
- Get into the habit of signaling from square leg all the time. If something is clear-cut and your partner is not requiring confirmation at least make eye contact. This is a good way of keeping your concentration at a high level.

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SECTION 3: DECISION MAKING

- All decision making must be unhurried. The impression must be given to the players that your decision has been objectively considered on the facts known to the umpire.
- It is important to note that decision making occurs on every ball, not just when an appeal is made. Consistent decision making is essential to the effective conduct of the game. Consistent judgment of wides, no balls, leg byes etc. will have a bearing on how well your performance is rated by the Captains.
- **LBW:** Always have the basics in mind. In judging the height it is a good idea to have doubts about any ball (except a full toss) that hits the batsman above the roll on the pad. When a left hand batsman is on strike to a right arm over the wicket bowler, you would like a short of a length ball to straighten either in the air or off the pitch to give earnest consideration for an out decision. The same principles apply for a right hand batsman facing a left arm over the wicket bowler. Always take into account how far the ball has to travel after impact before it would reach the stumps. Always try to pay attention as to whether the batsman is making a genuine effort to play at the ball with the bat. Take your time to weigh up all the possibilities and give your decision confidently.
- **Caught behind, bat/pad catches:** Consider your decision from where you are standing. Do not move away from the stumps before or after giving your decision. This gives the impression that you are unsure or have not given the decision due thought.
- Wait a moment or two for the appeal to finish and make eye contact with the batsman if you give him out. If he turns his back, make sure you hold your hand up until he looks at you. Similarly, unless there is a need to follow the ball further, make eye contact with the bowler when giving a not out decision. Always be confident and certain when giving decisions.
- **Wides:** Umpires are instructed to apply a very strict and consistent interpretation in regard to this Law in order to prevent negative bowling wide of the wicket. Any offside or leg side delivery that, in the opinion of the umpire, does not give the batsman a reasonable opportunity to score, shall be called a wide. A ball that passes clearly above head height of the batsman that prevents him from being able to hit it with his bat by means of a normal cricket stroke shall be called a wide by the umpire at the bowlers end. In limited over matches, lines shall be drawn on the popping crease parallel with the return crease measured 75cm from the off stump on both sides of the wicket. These lines shall extend back towards the bowling crease and forward from the bowling crease and be 30cm long.
- **Front foot no balls:** Keep your head still and only move your eyes from the foot to pick up the ball in flight. Establish a consistent approach to each consideration for no balls. For example, if the bowler has been OK with his foot placement and he then lands right on the edge of the line, rather than trying to judge a no ball by a millimeter, ask the bowler to come back. If the foot lands clearly over the line, even if it is the first time, no ball must be called.
- **Runs or leg byes:** Invoke established signal with your partner but remember, at all times, take responsibility for your own decision. If you receive a signal that is in conflict with your opinion, always go with your own view. When judging whether to allow leg byes, consider the position of the bat in relation to the pad. If the bat is well behind the pad, leg byes should be disallowed. Remember the batsman should not be allowed to just "show" the bat. Look for the bat either beside or in front of the pad.

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- ***Short run or boundary:*** Stand side on to watch both the ball and the running batsmen with quick glances either way. If the ball is close to the boundary and a batsman is about to touch down for a run, watching for the boundary takes precedence, as does a catch.

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SECTION 4: POSITIONING

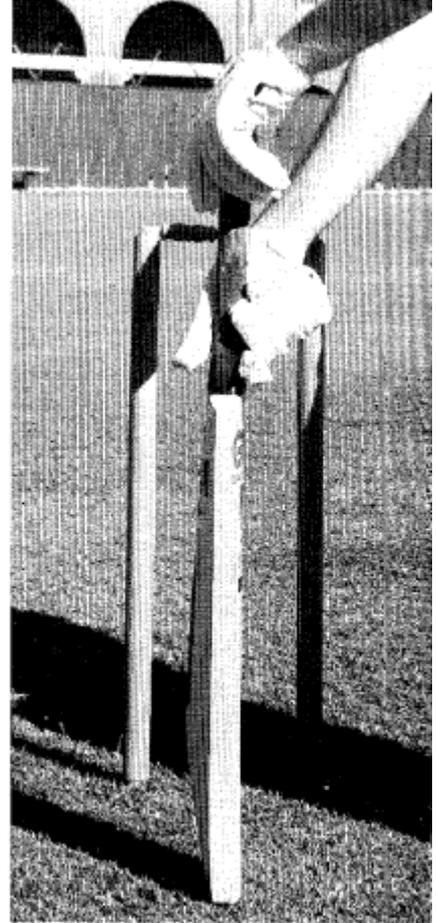
Bowlers end umpire

- Stand in line with middle stump so that you have a clear view of the popping crease. Work with the bowler on where to stand if he requests you to be further back or closer than you normally feel comfortable. When standing back, if you have to look through the stumps at the crease, adjust your position slightly so that you see the bowler's heel between the stumps. You will always be able to find an acceptable position and learn to feel comfortable in it.
- Always approach the bowler to take his cap or sweater. This saves time and helps with your relationship with the bowler.
- Watch the bowler return to his mark and as he turns, face the striker and switch on to full concentration. Take up your preferred position and do not leave it until the ball has been delivered and played into the field.
- Be ready and willing to work with the bowler if he wishes to know where his front foot is landing. Establish a consistent approach to advising bowlers in this way and do it for both teams. Be proactive if he is gradually creeping on the line. Rapport with the bowlers is a vital ingredient in an umpire's ability to handle a match effectively.
- Never move your head. Initially you should focus on the base of the stumps at the batsman's end and as the bowler runs past you, move your eyes only down to the bowling crease. As soon as the foot lands move your eyes up to pick up the flight of the ball.
- An alternative technique is to "let the ball come into view". Whilst it is important to judge any movement of the ball through the air, this will only be when the ball is fairly new or later in the innings it may begin to "reverse swing". You will be able to see whether the ball does swing by using your peripheral vision. Letting the ball "come into view" will allow you to judge where the ball pitches and any movement off the pitch will be clear and evident. This method is often a better option and can reduce fatigue as the day goes on.
- Give guard to a new batsman by moving up over the stumps. This gives the batsman the impression you are giving him your full attention and concentration. Should the batsman ask for confirmation of his guard at any later time, it is OK to confirm that guard from your normal position.
- Know the terminology, one leg (leg stump), two legs (middle and leg – half way between middle and leg). If the batsman shows you the full face of the bat and asks for "two please" he effectively wants two legs and the bat should cover both the middle and leg stump. You will rarely be asked for "middle to leg" (covering leg stump from the top to middle) or "leg to leg" (covering leg stump from the top of leg stump at your end). Always repeat back to the batsman what guard he asked you for – e.g. "that's middle stump there".

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Taking guard . . . leg stump



Taking guard . . . middle stump



Taking guard . . . middle and leg stumps

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- After the ball is struck into the field, most umpires move to the same side as the ball. A clear view of the stumps being broken is the major consideration here. This aspect of technique is a personal thing and you should always feel comfortable about where you place yourself. You may decide you will always go to the opposite side the ball is played. Once the decision has been made on each ball and you are committed, never change and try to get to the other side. In any situation, always be aware of the fielders in "the arc" between extra cover and mid-wicket. If you place yourself between the ball and the stumps, you may possibly obstruct or impede a fielder in his attempt to field the ball or have a clear throw at the wicket. On these occasions you must train yourself to move to the opposite side. Anticipation is the key as is the constant noting of where the fielders in the arc are placing themselves. Remember these fielders will usually be the quickest getting to the ball so your positioning time will diminish considerably. On all occasions, keep the ball in view – never turn your back on the play. Should there be a problem seeing if the wicket has fairly broken at any time you must always consult with your colleague.
- When a batsman with a runner is on strike, always move to the same side as your partner. It is a good idea for the umpires to confer as soon as the runner enters the field to confirm your intentions. Remember the golden rule – look for your partner and head for him.
- When the batsmen are running, stand side on with quick glances back and forth to detect short runs or a boundary. Never turn your back on the play when moving into position.

Square leg or striker's end umpire

- Stand no more than 20 metres deep, closer for a slow bowler or when no fielders are located near you. Move further back if asked by a fielder but try never to be more than 25 to 30 metres away. Stand with one leg either side of the line and your eyes in a direct line with the popping crease.
- When the batsmen start to run, move in a few paces so that you will be no more than 15 metres from the wicket. This has a twofold effect of being closer to any possible action and is a good concentration cue to ensure you are in the best possible position at all times. It will also save time crossing over when left and right-handed batsmen are at the crease.
- Should a close fielder be positioned so that your view of the crease, stumps and flight of the ball to the wicketkeeper or slips could be obscured **in any way**, move to the off side. You must put yourself in the best possible position **at all times** to see the ball.
- When an injured striker is batting, stand on the off side and place the runner at square leg. Prior to the match beginning you should have asked the ground staff to make a crease 15 to 20 metres out. If this has not been done, the runner will want to scratch a mark where he thinks the crease is. If he does so, confer with him and let him know the mark is for a guide only and that you will be judging the line as an extension from the center of the popping crease. It may be prudent to get him to make the mark a short distance behind the line to ensure he touches down correctly each time.
- When not on strike, the injured striker is to be placed behind you at square leg unless he may possibly obstruct a fielder in which case he may stand in front of the crease. In exceptional circumstances such as glare from the sun, both the umpires and injured striker may move to the off side. Again your overriding consideration will be to put yourself in the best possible position to see the ball.
- Always watch for hit wicket and never be in a big hurry to follow the ball into the outfield. The time taken to ensure the wicket has not been broken will not impinge on what you need to see in the outfield and can save an embarrassing moment if

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there is an appeal. A good adage to remember is: when the striker plays forward – look for a stumping. When playing back, look for hit wicket.

- Be ready to give assistance to your colleague with short pitched or full pitched bowling. Use the background as a guide for shoulder height and waist height, something like the top of the boundary fence. You will continually need to adjust your guide mark to cater for the different height of batsmen.
- Watch for catches carrying and batsmen crossing. Signal to partner if required.
- Cross to off side if sun or glare makes conditions unsatisfactory. Always inform the captain and batsmen.
- When crossing for left/right handed batsmen, anticipate the need to change and begin walking in while the ball is still in play. This will allow you to be in position without having to rush by the time the bowler begins his run up.
- Be watchful of fieldsmen behind you and always check for possible leg side infringement. If there is a deep field very square behind you, move over to point.
- Stand side on to the stumps to watch both the ball and the running batsmen with quick sideways glances. Never crouch down or totally take your eye off the ball. Only turn back to face square on to the wicket when the ball has been returned past you. This will eliminate any chance of being hit by the ball if you take your eyes off it.

Both Umpires

- Watch the crease, not the bat or the stumps in the case of close run outs or stumpings. Your peripheral vision will show you the wicket being broken. In the case of the quick single and a direct hit, again focus on the crease. You will hear the wicket being struck. If in any doubt about the wicket being put down fairly, you must consult with your colleague.
- When the strikers end wicket needs remaking, always check the alignment with your partner prior to moving back into position. If the bowlers end wicket is remade during an over, wait at the end of the over and ask your colleague to check it when he walks into position.
- Keep a notebook for all necessary information like, players leaving the field, batsman on strike and who bowled the last over before an interval and the multitude of penalty runs and unfair play situations. Also note runs scored off overthrows etc. so you can check with the scorers at the next interval.
- **Bowling Injury Prevention:** It is also important to keep a record of Under 19 and Under 17 bowlers on the number of overs each are allowed to bowl consecutively and the maximum number of overs they can bowl per day. All notes should be kept until the conclusion of the match.

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SECTION 5: GROUND WEATHER AND LIGHT

Should rain interrupt play, involve the Captains and use the Laws and Playing Conditions to get as much play as possible. If they disagree the following guidelines may be helpful:

Ball or grass wet and slippery – there should be no delay in starting or suspension of play just because the ball or grass is wet and slippery. Always carry a small towel and ensure sawdust is available during the day. (This should have been one of the pre-match requests so the groundsman).

Reasonable footholds – if the bowlers have reasonable footholds, the fielders (within 30 metres) have the power of free movement and the batsmen can play their strokes and run between wickets, then there should be no suspension or delay in restarting the match. Similarly, small areas of surface water in the outfield should not hold up play.

Bowler's run ups – notwithstanding that the bowler's footholds in his delivery stride may be acceptable, the area of the bowler's run up to a distance of 10 to 15 metres from the stumps should be dry enough to run on without slipping or sliding. Again, ensuring sawdust is available will help keep the game going.

Wet pitch – particular care and attention must be paid to the pitch area. If the whole pitch is damp there is a possibility that play could take place providing the factors above are taken into account. In all likelihood the pitch will play consistently. If however there is a mixture of very wet and dry patches the umpires should take extra care not to start play when there could be an obvious and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire. As a general rule, if you can easily push your thumb about 1.27cm (½ in.) into the pitch, it will be unfit for immediate play. In those situations you should be making frequent inspections to monitor both the drying of the pitch and any improvement in weather conditions. Whilst it is not primarily the umpires' duty to decide how the pitch will play, we need to be fully aware of our duty of care to the participants. Also there should be no pressure on the umpires to ensure that conditions are the same for both sides. Your only decision is as to whether it is safe for play to take place.

Showery conditions – umpires must be willing to persevere through showery conditions. If there is a possibility of the shower passing over, umpires should endeavour to play on even though it might get heavy for a minute or so. Consultation with your partner will be necessary to ensure that conditions do not get so slippery that bowlers and batsmen have difficulty in keeping their feet.

Obviously the onset of a thunderstorm or heavy rain will see an immediate cessation of play and it may be the best option to try to get the pitch covered quickly so that play may resume at a later stage. With regard to a restart of play in very light rain after an interval – umpires should consider whether in the same conditions they would have suspended play. If not, they should make every effort to commence after the interval in the same conditions.

Bad light – light conditions can be governed by background, trees, buildings, sightscreens etc. and can also vary quite radically from one end of the pitch to the other. Conditions that may have been satisfactory when a slow bowler is on need not necessarily be considered satisfactory when a fast bowler is operating and vice versa. It is impossible to lay down a general standard but to err on the side of caution is the better alternative. Law 3.9 requires careful study and the umpires have been given a duty of care to protect the players of both sides. The safety of umpires is also a consideration. You should consider conferring during an over which may give the fielding Captain a hint on your thoughts. This could bring about more cricket being played with the introduction of slower bowlers.

Finally in evaluating the conditions of ground, weather and light the state of the game is irrelevant in arriving at a decision.

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SECTION 6: ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM BOWLERS OR CAPTAINS ON DECISIONS

- Umpires should never offer explanations for decisions or enter into heated post mortems. It is acceptable however to answer a reasonably asked question at the end of the over provided you do not get into a protracted discussion. Indeed the Captain is within his rights to seek a clarification on some decisions or aspects of the Laws. The modern game is increasingly demanding on umpires and there is pressure to give some explanation on nearly every decision.
- It is important that you be seen as a good listener and have a genuine concern for the Laws and their application. This type of interaction and communication between umpires and players can only be good in fostering acceptance and respect. Sometimes a query such as "*What was wrong with that one?*" could be answered with a simple "*It cannot pitch outside leg stump*" or "*the ball must hit him in line with the stumps*". This type of answer can alleviate further animosity and indeed further futile appeals. A different degree of detail can be used as you build up a rapport with Captains and players. This takes time and experience to develop fully.
- It is usually best to deal with all queries such as this at the end of the over. This has a twofold effect by allowing aggression to dissipate and not affecting your concentration. Always answer with an even voice, be unhurried and show complete confidence. Never volunteer information or try to justify a decision if you are not asked. Remember there is a huge difference between answering a simple query and justifying your every decision.
- If the player becomes rude or abusive during any conversation, remind him of the reason for the discussion which is to clarify what in your opinion, you have seen and heard, not what he would have liked to happen. Be firm but relaxed.
- Never admit to making a mistake or offer apologies for errors. If you do make a mistake, learn from it and move on. Do not compound a mistake with another one.
- **Never, ever** contemplate "evening up" as two wrongs do not make a right and **you will lose the respect of the players.**

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SECTION 7: CONFLICT SITUATIONS

The handling of conflict situations requires special personnel management skills. Animosity on the field can arise from two sources – player vs player or player vs umpire.

- **Player vs player** – in this situation it is very often wise to allow the players to have their say so that both know how they feel about each other. By jumping in too quickly here the umpire will only incur the wrath of both players. They will be intent on having their say anyway – but the umpire in control will allow it for a short time only and then step in with words like *"You've made your feelings clear now let's get on with the game"*.
Some umpires have a dislike for getting involved whilst others may step in too quickly. If either of these paths is chosen, the umpire will quickly lose the respect of the players. A few important matters need to be considered. These include:
 - **Never react too quickly.** A disappointed bowler needs a little time to cool down. If the incident occurs during an over, consider waiting until the over is completed before saying anything. An astute Captain will realize his bowlers cannot perform to their optimum if they are rattled and will quite often speak to the player. If this happens, wait to see if it produces the desired effect. If not, you should have a quiet word saying something like *"Come on mate, don't let things get too heated out here"*. This is a non-threatening way of defusing a potential problem further into the match. If the bowler shows no interest in improving his behaviour, involve the Captain immediately and request him to take action.
 - **Player vs umpire.** Often the fielding team will feel aggrieved over a decision. To show that the umpire is in control and of good temperament, he should stand by his decision and reject any feelings of guilt. You may need to show you are in control by saying, *"It's obvious we disagree on what has happened but the decision has been made so let's get on with the game"*. If an error has been made, umpires must never try to even up as two mistakes over the one incident leads to a loss of respect.
 - **Player Conduct Reports.** In the first instance, request the Captain to control his players in accordance with The Spirit of Cricket. Should you need to speak to a player, never walk towards him in an aggressive manner or point fingers in an animated way. Always involve the Captain and your fellow umpire so that all concerned will know what was said. Any reports emanating must be made together with your colleague even if you have not heard what was said. You will know by the reaction of the player that there was a problem and your input into the report will be crucial when a hearing takes place.
 - Any comment or dissent by a player should be evaluated by you and if in your opinion it was a spur of the moment reaction, or of a minor nature, then you should ignore it or handle it in a low key way. However, if you deem it of a serious nature, or if the player's behaviour was abusive or intimidatory towards you, then deal with it in accordance with Law 42.18.
 - Umpires must expect, due to the nature of their decision-making role, (i.e. making decisions that have implications for others), that conflict or dissent will occur at times. Umpires must not be daunted by this. Rather they should have developed strategies to enable them to meet such a challenge in a positive and confident manner.
 - Never think that being an umpire gives you immunity from having to take a little criticism. It's part of umpiring so plan on it happening. Successful umpires know how much to take before acting under the code of conduct.

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SECTION 8: LET PLAYERS PLAY THE GAME

Use the Laws with commonsense

One of the best things an umpire can do to avoid conflict situations is to let players play the game. Umpires shouldn't be looking for minor technical violations or any other circumstances just to show people they know the Law book backwards. With the new 2000 Code of Laws now firmly in place, umpires should look to use certain Laws as a deterrent rather than a solution. Always try to solve problems they occur.

Such situations may involve Penalty Runs for breaches like damaging the pitch or time wasting. Your proven techniques for dealing with past instances should not be discarded. Successful man management skills that have averted conflict situations need to be continued with minor adjustments. The powers that have been given to us by the strengthening of the unfair play Laws and awarding of Penalty Runs must be treated with care. The ultimate sanction of awarding Penalty Runs in some situations could be a poor reflection of your competence and capability.

For instance, the case of a batsman running on the pitch may not be considered as unfair play the first time it occurs. You will probably take many things into account and issue the quiet "unofficial" warning also adding a gentle reminder that penalty runs are a consequence of further breaches. Remember, the spirit and intent of this Law is not to penalize an accident or unintentional incident caused by a batsman or bowler changing direction to avoid injury/collision. Any pitch damage must be deliberate to be considered unfair. Ask yourself three questions:

- (1) "Why did this particular player commit a particular act?"
- (2) "Was it because the player wanted to gain an unfair advantage?"
- (3) "Did the player really know what he was doing?"

The same can be said of other situations like the wicketkeeper encroaching or a bowler getting in close to protected area of the pitch. Sometimes the nonstriker will be only too keen to point out a couple of footmarks made by the bowler. Let him know you are on top of the situation by saying something like "*I'm keeping an eye on it*". A quiet word at the first instance will make the player aware of the possible infringement and alleviate a lot of animosity between players and umpires.

Use common sense when applying the Laws. One of the worst tags an umpire can get is that of being a "Law Book" umpire. Unfortunately, it's a reputation that will stay with you for a long time.

Be complimentary

Good umpires know how to interact with players and there are many opportunities to do this during the course of the match. If the wicketkeeper removes the bails and then immediately replaces them, say "*Thank you*". Your colleague at the bowlers end will indicate if the wicket is correctly aligned or not.

If you have cause to speak to the Captain about player behaviour, always finish your request with "*Please*". After he has spoken to the player, always say "*Thank you*". Remember, you are not trying to be their buddy, just showing simple courtesy. Whether this courtesy is returned or not is irrelevant and should not affect your future endeavours.

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SECTION 9: CONCENTRATION

FOCUS

"To concentrate attention or effort"

What is proper mindset of an umpire? Is it staring straight at an unobstructed view of play, ready and willing to make a decision as everything slows down and fractions of a second seem like full minutes? Now this umpire IS *focused*. Too bad you are watching on television and it's only your dream and ambition to be out there making the split second decision that turns a Test Match.

What about the fact that the bowler "*lives on the line*", it is 35 degrees, the pitch is up and down and it is session 3, day 5 of the deciding match in a 5 test series. What really happened before you saw the 5th replay from every conceivable angle?

This is the life of not only the International Umpire, but also every umpire officiating in any match on any given day of the year. Umpires jobs are hard enough given the multitude of Laws and Playing Conditions to remember, extensive techniques to perfect, diversity of personalities with which to interact and the challenge of the judgment calls they're faced with every time they walk onto the field. Combine all these factors with the pressure of a game situation and even the most *focused* officials face a difficult task.

Regardless of how good you are in a natural sense with your experience and feel for the game, your performance will be diminished if you are not able to maintain your *concentration* and *focus* during a game.

COMMON FACT NO. 1: As soon as you lose concentration, that's when something happens that calls for such focus.

This is the usual admonition, challenging you to maintain your *focus* constantly during a game. You caution yourself that, if you allow your attention to wander for an instant, something will happen to exploit your lapse. The truth is, this type of "happening" occurs throughout most cricket matches. The reason it seems that they happen only at bad times, (when something critical occurs), is because the other occasions are not noticed because nothing happens to call you into action. You have not been called upon to make a decision when you were in fact not ready to make that decision anyway.

COMMON FACT NO. 2: Normal game circumstances lead to abnormal mistakes.

Contrary to our beliefs, there is no magical force out to get you as an official even though it seems like it sometimes. Maintaining your *concentration* and *focus at all times* is important because when you lose it, common match circumstances lead to uncommon mistakes. A lapse in *focus* can cause you to be in poor position for a call or to interpret a Law incorrectly. Becoming uncomfortable and flustered when dealing with tension and pressure can also lead to a lapse in *focus*. Concentration and focus is foundational in that when it is lacking, the other skills an aspects of your umpiring will break down.

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COMMON FACT NO. 3: The *focus* ability of the better umpires is at a different level.

The ability to put all other matters aside and *focus* entirely on the job at hand is what separates the elite umpires from the rest. These umpires are never in the wrong place, never surprised when the unexpected happens and never unprepared to deal with any situation that may arise even in the most tense of situations. Every game is different but the principles remain the same and flexibility in applying Laws and techniques is the key.

Because the last game involving the same teams was difficult and tense does not mean the next one will be the same. Umpires who go into a game with a preconceived set of ideas are not *focused*. Keep in the here and now.

COMMON FACT NO. 4: Focus *must* exist before the start or restart.

For the correct *concentration and focus* to be maintained throughout a match, it must exist prior to the commencement of the match. If you miss a call or get a decision wrong, players will assume you were not concentrating at that time. This perception by the players is often based on the fact they are told to *focus* on their particular part of the game. Quite often this conclusion is incorrect but you will be judged more harshly if they feel you had a lapse in concentration than for an error in judgment. Make sure you are prepared and *focused* from the time you walk onto the field, as it will be your best weapon to get through the day unscathed.

Why officials lose focus

Outside pressures or personal life issues are a reality for all umpires and can certainly affect anyone's mindset during a game. *The better umpires are able to put all outside issues aside for the period of time necessary to do the job.* Any umpires aspiring to that level of competence must be able to make themselves aware of the common things which happen during a game that can cause a lapse in focus. You can work 99 perfect overs out of 100 for the day and a lapse in *concentration and focus* in the final over can ruin not only your day but that of the players. Players resent the fact you were not "with it" on a vital decision. Strangely, most umpires are forgiven on a mistake at the start and it is quickly forgotten but the opposite happens at the business end of the game.

One pitfall that brings a lot of umpires undone is a relaxation together with the rhythm of a smooth game and he loses the edge that is necessary in a tight situation. A good golden rule to apply is to always use a smooth match as a reason to step up your *concentration and focus* thus eliminating the possibility of being caught by surprise in a tough situation.

Another (and possibly the most common) reason for loss of *concentration and focus* starts with a small scale lapse with far reaching consequences. For instance, your mind wanders for a moment causing you to be out of position for a run out. It's a direct hit and the fielders are adamant it was out. You say not out and you may have got the call right. Reality tells you that you only had a 50/50 chance of being right, as you know you were out of position. This causes you to think too much about your lapse that leads to a loss of *focus* when the next appeal is made which could be as early as the next ball. **The bottom line is not to allow anything that has occurred in the past effect your *concentration and focus* in the future.**

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The 3 + 3 effect

There are 3 main reasons why umpires lose focus and it affects 3 different types of umpires. It depends solely on the personality of the umpire. Understand which type of umpire you are and be willing to make changes.

- 1) **Querying Decisions:** A player or Captain constantly querying decisions might distract the over assertive umpire. Protracted discussions take place with the umpire trying to get back "control" of the situation when in fact the source of the distraction was out of his control anyway. He is distracted in his *concentration and focus* thereby opening the door to the possibility of a poor decision.
- 2) **The Missed Call:** The perfectionist umpire will dwell on a missed call. Even the best umpires are not perfect so don't feel you should be. Your pride may be dented but accept the mistake and get the rhythm back quickly.
- 3) **Doesn't Want To Upset Anyone:** The "social umpire" might be too concerned with being liked by everyone and lose sight of the task at hand. Excessive appealing and constant pressure will rattle the social umpire and all he wants to do is get things over with resulting in a rash of poor decisions.

It is essential that you begin to understand what personality type you are and what goals and aspirations you have. It is important that you realize and understand what buttons get pushed in certain situations.

Keeping Yourself Focused – Pre Match

The first step to establishing and maintaining *focus* must start before the match. Talk to each other about what level of support and assistance you want during the day. Most umpires understand that your *focus* should be at a high level the moment you step onto the field. Try this approach to improving your *focus*.

- Understand that the nature of the job dictates that you will get distracted and upset from time to time. Pressure affects everyone and you are no exception. No one is perfect and no one ever will be. All umpires make mistakes – the better ones make considerably fewer and are always working towards "zero tolerance".
- Start to understand and recognize the patterns of your anxiety. Combined with your personality type, seek to learn which circumstances are most likely to cause a loss of *focus* –e.g. excessive appealing, bowlers overstepping, sledging, weather conditions, physical fatigue etc.
- Start to practice skills to combat the cause of you losing *focus*. Positive self talk or relaxation exercises are two skills you can employ to stay focused when circumstances dictate otherwise.
- In the case of missed calls, realize and understand that you will possibly make mistakes. When you do, regroup quickly and acknowledge the mistake to yourself and let your emotions go. Refocus and deal only "**in this moment**" forgetting about the past over which you have no control and concentrate on the next ball.

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Keeping Yourself Focused – During the Match

The goal should be to know when, how and on what to concentrate. It should also include recognition of opportunities to relax, as relaxation is crucial.

The time to concentrate is *when the ball is in play*. When a passage of play commences, the focus of attention should be broad, taking in a range of issues, for example:

- The readiness of the batsman.
- If appropriate, the locations of the fieldsmen.
- An awareness of attempts to distract the batsman by the wicket keeper or fieldsmen.
- Any plan or trap set by the fielding team to exploit a batsman's weakness.

The umpire needs to be aware of such aspects and have them all under a broad field of observation.

As the bowler moves in so the umpire's focus of attention narrows, the batsman is ready, the field is in the correct place, there is no attempt to distract the batsman, so now the umpire's attention has progressively narrowed exclusively to the position of the bowler's feet at point of delivery.

Immediately the ball is released the focus of attention moves quickly to the flight of the ball, and remains fixed on the ball. Some umpires may prefer to let the ball come into view rather than make a conscious effort to pick up the ball in flight.

Where next to focus attention is dependant upon the outcome of what the batsman does. If the ball is allowed to pass, the focus remains on the ball all the way into the wicket keeper's gloves, or if missed by the wicket keeper, the focus broadens to take in the fieldsmen and the batsmen running for byes.

If the ball is edged behind the wicket, the focus is on the ball until it is in the hands of the slip fieldsmen or wicket keeper, or if it passes them, the focus broadens to take in the fieldsmen and the batsmen running.

If the batsman plays the ball to other parts of the field the focus broadens to take in the fieldsmen and batsmen as necessary.

In the event of a potential run-out the focus will quickly narrow again from the fieldsmen and the batsman running to the crease, the ball hitting the wicket or being taken by the wicket keeper or a fieldsmen and the position of the batsman in relation to the popping crease.

If the ball hits the pads, the focus must be on recall and evaluation of all 5 components of LBW to decide the outcome of the inevitable appeal and then, if appropriate, quickly broaden to take in the fieldsmen and the batsmen in the event of leg byes. As soon as the ball is *dead*, the umpires should take the opportunity to relax, both physically and mentally. This routine is repeated for every ball throughout the match. To develop a successful routine takes *practice, patience* and *persistence*. In summary, the routine is as follows:

- As a passage of play commences, a wide field of observation with broad range of focus.
- As the bowler moves in, observation and focus narrows progressively to the position of the bowler's feet at the point of delivery.
- After the bowler releases the ball, focus remains on the ball in flight or letting the ball come into your line of vision.

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- After the batsman plays the ball, focus either remains on the ball or, if appropriate, broadens to take in the fieldsmen as well as the batsmen.
- If a run-out is on, focus progressively narrows to the batting crease, the putting down of the wicket and the position of the batsman.
- When the ball becomes dead, broaden focus totally and *relax, relax* and *relax*.

Broad

Narrow

Ball Dead relax	Play begins	Ball delivered	Ball dead relax	Out fielder involved	Run out on	Ball dead relax	Play commences
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The ability to concentrate can be acquired through the development of a set routine by practicing the routine at local club training sessions, and then consistently implementing it under match conditions and monitoring and evaluating how well it is done on a continuous basis.

Keeping Yourself Focused – Post Match

You might not think that concentration levels would be an issue after the match but the need for an evaluation at the end of the day prepares you for the next day. This can be in the form of a self-evaluation or done with the help of your colleague. Start from the last over of the day and work backwards to the beginning. The end of the day is fresh in your mind and most often if a lapse occurred that will generate the most information for evaluation. If you have been *focused* all day you will be surprised at the amount of detail you can recall. If however you were not *focused* all day there will be “black holes” in your memory which was more than likely when mistakes could have occurred. Ask yourself honestly, “Was that a lapse in concentration or an error in judgment?”

If you don't have this evaluation on your level of focus you cannot compose a blueprint for improvement.

Focus Techniques for You and Your Partner

Good umpires take responsibility for each other's *focus* throughout the match. The importance of constant eye contact, if possible after every ball is vital. For example a batsman previously batting on the crease may not be taking strike a metre outside the crease. Picking these instances up and relaying them to your partner is part of the concept of working as a team.

Teamwork automatically keeps you focused and leads to a cohesive pair that is constantly on top of their responsibilities. Intervals in play create the most likely opportunity for lost *focus*. The problem is that the level of focus required is hard to reacquire and remember common fact no. 4 – focus must exist before the start/restart. Both umpires should talk about what is going to happen when play resumes, who is bowling/on strike, how many overs etc before walking back out. Enjoy the break in play but enjoy getting back out there.

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During a tense period the kind of support you give and receive from your partner can be crucial in the final judgment on your performances. Some umpires like to be left alone while others may want a kick in the pants to jump-start their concentration. Make sure there is no doubt whatsoever about what level of support you or your partner need and prepare for the contingency before the game.

SUMMARY

- Every match you umpire must begin with you being entirely focused on the job at hand.
- Ensure you are prepared pre match so that your focus is at its highest level.
- Establish eye contact with your colleague at every possible moment.
- Establish proper techniques for maintaining concentration during the match.
- Take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Rely on your partner to do likewise.
- Double your effort if you feel your colleague is losing focus.
- Take the time to have a post match evaluation.
- Recognising your weaknesses is the first step towards solving them.

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SECTION 10: AFTER THE MATCH

- Agree with the scorers as to the correctness of the scores and sign the books. Laws 3.15 and 4.2 require the umpires and scorers to work together during the match but it is up to the umpires to ensure the scores are correct. It is essential that umpires establish an understanding and have good communication with the scorers in all matches.
- Review the match in detail with your partner and if both of you agree, ask for opinions on areas they think you could improve on.
- Get to know the players over a drink or two if invited. This can be helpful in knowing the characteristics of players you may be dealing with later in the season. Never get into long-winded discussions about decisions, just stick to what you told them earlier. Many an excellent decision has been spoilt due to mediocre explanation.
- Do not discuss your colleague's performance in his absence – at all times stay loyal to the third team no matter what you really think. Do not stay too long as judgment and inhibitions tend to diminish as the evening grows older.
- Finally, remember that every ball of every match you umpire is a way of practicing and honing your skills. Sometimes a "boring" match can be your best opportunity to practice the skills you are less competent at.

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SECTION 11: COPING WITH PRESSURE

Pressure manifests itself in many ways and in general, will affect logical thinking and optimum performance. The aim of this section is to pass on knowledge to assist everyone to cope and perform better under pressure.

There are good and poor ways of coping with pressure.

Recognising Pressure Symptoms

- There are external and internal sources of serious pressure
- Pressure breaks your attention span leading to a lapse in concentration.

Pressures usually and most always cause feelings of:

- A lack of control over the situation
- Tightness of your muscles and breathing
- Loss of feeling for the game, its values and participants

This results in:

- Loss of basic technique and discipline
- Complete breakdown in skills

Results in handling pressure well:

- **THOUGHTS** are positive, confident and flowing in accord with the game.
- **FEELINGS** are calm and in control with a sense of enjoyment and anticipation without effort
- **FOCUS** – on the 'here and now', looking for the seam on the ball and wanting the next decision to be yours

Impact of anxiety of performance:

One of the most frequent causes of poor concentration and therefore a build up of pressure is anxiety. Under normal conditions, attention is continually shifting back and forth across a variety of wavelengths.

Under pressure, three things happen:

- Attention becomes inflexible
- Attention becomes narrow
- Attention becomes more internally focused

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Dealing with impact of anxiety

- Realise that you must have flexibility to be able to deal with pressure
- If you allow your attention to narrow, the pressure mounts and it becomes difficult to attend to several things at a time. This is the most dangerous period.
- You feel rushed, overloaded and it results in poor decision-making

SYMPTOMS:

- Increased heart rate
- Lump in the throat
- Upset stomach
- Withdrawal or reluctance to talk to players

Try these simple suggestions:

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent
- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles
- Direct your thoughts inward and realize how tense the rest of your body may be
- Try to breathe normally
- Feel the heaviness that occurs
- Now take a deep slow breath (at least 5 seconds) and feel the tension leave
- Continue with a few more deep breaths. Clear your mind of irrelevant thoughts
- Focus on the next ball

Thought control – turning negative thoughts into positive

POSITIVE: **“Nobody likes it but I can cope with it”**

NEGATIVE: **“I can’t stand this pressure”**

POSITIVE: **“Stay calm and watch the ball”**

NEGATIVE: **“I hope I don’t make any mistakes”**

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SECTION 12: TEAMWORK AND SUPPORT

Throughout this manual there are constant references to the umpires "working as a team". The Laws provide for many instances where the umpires "agree together". It is essential that this teamwork is carried onto the field and implemented throughout the day's play.

Regardless of any personal feelings you may have for each other, either misplaced or valid – to earn respect you must maintain teamwork and professionalism.

As umpires we have all experienced it at some stage. The help you thought you were getting never arrived. Your colleague has to be there for you and vice versa – **NO EXCUSES**. You almost immediately lose respect for an umpire who tries to show up his colleague. You are a team out there and you have to support each other. The support can be subtle and go unnoticed to all but those close to umpiring.

Loyalty towards a colleague must be complete and resolute.

During conflict situations there can be no value in going on the attack as soon as a possible problem arises. Always watch how your partner is handling a problem and be ready to give support whenever needed. If things get out of hand or bubble over for a long time after the incident, you should walk towards the other umpire at the end of an over and say something like "*everything OK?*" or "*should we speak to the Captain?*"

Never get caught not paying attention. Even a slight shrug of the shoulders if you are asked for help is a negative sign. Even if you do not agree that the incident requires a caution to the player or Captain, make sure you both attend to the matter. Quite often a Captain or player will not want to carry on with the problem if he is of the impression that both umpires are working together.

Not backing up your partner is the quickest way to lose respect of not only your colleague but the players as well.