

CRICKET, AND HOW TO EXCEL IN IT.

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CHAPTER VI.—LAWS.—Continued.

I.—The weight of the ball was fixed in 1774, but nothing was said about the circumference until later. In old days balls were badly made, and seldom lasted out a match, and even now they are not always well seasoned, and if played with in wet weather or much hit about, they lose their shape. In first-class matches a fresh ball is used each innings, but in small matches it is only usual to have one ball throughout. A good way to keep practice balls from wearing out quickly is to well grease them occasionally, especially after being played with in wet grass.

II.—This law was made owing to the appearance at the wickets of White, of Reigate, with a bat wider than the stumps. Bats of over four and a quarter inches are frequently played with, and there should be some means of enforcing the rule. The length, thirty-eight inches, was fixed in 1816, but this size is seldom made, bats being ordinarily about thirty-four inches long, twelve of which is taken up by the handle, and the rest by the blade. Of late years the practice of having longer handles, as already alluded to, has come in, with advantages more than counterbalanced by disadvantages. Bats are had from either being made of unseasoned wood, or from being badly made of good wood. The question is very often asked, "Who makes the best bats?" My answer is, "Never go by a maker's name." All the best-known present makers can make good bats if they like, and in choosing a bat you should depend not on the name on it, but on your own judgment or that of some experienced friend. Never choose too heavy a bat, the best weight is between two pounds one ounce and two pounds five ounces for full-grown players. Boys should have smaller bats, the blade and handle shorter but no narrower. A handle too large or too small should be avoided, it being much easier to play well with a bat whose handle fits the hand. Never lend your favourite bat; if it is a good one you will find no slight trouble in replacing it, and you will break it quite soon enough yourself. Bats should be occasionally oiled, and care should be taken of them; it does them no good to put them away in a lumber room, and forget them until the next season. Young players should have their own bats, and gloves, and pads, but their cricket bags need not contain a sample of everything used in the game. A couple of bats of about the same weight, pads, gloves, boots, and a ball, if practice is wanted, are about all they need carry (except, of course, their flannels, when wanted).

III.—Every ground should have a frame for making the creases, with three nicks in the centre of the bowling crease mark to guide the placing of the stumps, but if instead of a frame a straight-edge is used a very good plan is to lay the bails on the ground to get at the distance between each stump at the bottom. Bails are often made too long, and consequently overhang the side of the wicket, giving an advantage to the bowler. When this occurs they should be cut down to the right size, so that their ends are flush with the sides of the wicket. Plain stumps with no brass on them either at top or bottom are best. With brass-headed stumps the wicket-keeper in putting down the wicket is not unlikely to knock the skin off his hand.

IV.—There is just a yard between the outside stumps and the return creases for the bowler to deliver from. The returns should always be at right angles, the object of their existence being to prevent the bowler going far away from the wicket so as to send in the ball to the striker at an excessive angle. The creases should not be more than an inch broad, and should be sharply and unmistakably marked.

V.—The popping-crease is generally marked for about eight feet, it would be better if made about ten feet. It is taken as extending right across the field. Its length is unlimited, and thus the batsmen are enabled to get out of the way of the ball when thrown in and to keep off the pitch. In country matches, owing to the shortness of the crease, you often see the batsmen running straight up and down between the wickets, whereas were the crease longer there would be no temptation for any one to do so.

VI.—The bowlers used to pitch the wickets, not the umpires. A "chain," the surveyor's measuring standard, is the best thing to use, as tapes stretch. To save time it is the usual custom in all but first-class matches for the ground man to mark out and prepare the wickets before the players come on the ground.

(To be continued.)

COMMUNICATION.

HINTS TO CRICKETERS.

To the Editor of the Canadian Cricket Field.

DEAR SIR,—Having stated what appears to me to be the chief causes of weakness in play among Canadians, and how to remedy it, I will add a few more lines on other points in which Canadians, as a rule, show great deficiency.

First, I will take fielding. The Leviathan has gone into this subject very fully, and what he has written is admirable. I endorse all he says. Let every one try and follow out his instructions. There are, however, one or two points which I wish to impress more strongly upon the notice of Canadians. One of these is "*backing up*." Every man should be on the alert. When a hit is made let those near enough in the field be ready to cover the wicket to which the ball should be thrown. Don't back each other up *too closely*; there should be at least ten yards between each man. Not seldom has one seen two rushing after the ball and jostling each other, thereby causing delay in throwing it up, and possibly giving time for another run in consequence. As soon as a man finds the other will reach the ball sooner than himself, let him stop and return towards the wicket. It may happen, as in my own experience it has happened, that the ball may pass the wicket-keeper, either from bad throwing or otherwise, and another run made for an over-throw; then the ball thrown in and missed again and another run attempted, but the man who had returned towards the wicket, as I mentioned, was "all there," dashed in, threw the ball splendidly to the wicket-keeper, and ran the batsman out. Another instance of still finer fielding: Cover-point, under similar circumstances of bad throwing and over-throws, dashed across to the on side to back up, and succeeded in the same way, by good throwing, in running the man out. He saw the man who ought to have been there to cover was away, so at once he went over, and right well it told: it was a grand piece of fielding.

When you return a ball follow the Leviathan's instructions, "Aim at the wicket-keeper's head;" the ball is sure to drop to the right height. It is the habit, I am sorry to say, of many to throw at the *wicket* instead of the *wicket-keeper*. No doubt this has been caused mainly by that bastard system of wicket-keeping so generally adopted in this country. That system is execrable in every way, and more particularly in being injurious to fielding. In sharp hits and quick returns, when there is no wicket-keeper, the fielder has no one to throw to instantaneously. His eye is distracted by seeing a man scrambling to the wicket; it causes him to hesitate in his throw, and often to get the habit of throwing at the *wicket*, and consequently throwing badly. May the day come when such exhibitions of wicket-keeping will be things of the past, and treated with the contempt they deserve. Follow another instruction of the Leviathan: "Watch the ball" as it is bowled; see where she pitches; you