

THRIVING UNDER PRESSURE WHEN COMPETING

- *A bowler chokes when he lets anger, doubt, fear or some other extraneous factor distract him before he delivers his bowl.*
- Distracted, the player (team) then fails to do one or more of the things he normally does. He fails to follow his routine, particularly his mental routines.
- He forgets his game plan. He fails to accept his deliveries. He stops trusting his delivery. He starts going through a checklist of errors to avoid.
- Quite often under pressure, a **distracting doubt of fear turns** on the conscious mind.
- He gets tight and careful. When he's tight and careful, his body must work against gravity, rhythm and flow. His muscles get spastic, his feet stiff, and he loses his natural grace and tempo. He delivers a bad bowl, relative to his ability. *That's all that choking really is.*
- *Choking is not synonymous with being nervous. The fact is that, at one time another, all bowlers are nervous – being nervous can help performance*
- A successful bowler either has learned, or instinctively understands, that the pounding heart and the trembling hands are nothing to worry about.
- A successful bowler knows that rather than concern himself with stilling the hands and quieting the heart, he must focus the mind, blocking out distractions and attending to routine and strategy just as meticulously as if this were a practice delivery, on his home green at twilight, with no one else around. The body can and probably will stay excited. The mind must not.
- If a delivery is good enough to repeat itself during practice, it is good enough to repeat itself during competition, as long as the bowlers' thoughts remain consistent. Deliveries don't hold up under pressure. People do.
- Even the greatest players are human, human beings commit mental mistakes, and all bowlers can learn from the study of those mistakes.
- Common mental mistakes a bowler makes under pressure (1) He had his thoughts drift into the future. He had started to dwell on the scoreboard or winning (2) Then he compounded the error by introducing a new mechanical thought, about his delivery mechanics. (3) He started trying to be too bold, by playing the difficult shots, instead of the safe- and more conservative shots.
- **How to cope with pressures** – First stay in the present and keep your mind sharply focused on the delivery immediately in front of you. Second, avoid mechanical thoughts. Instead, strive to become looser, freer and more confident. Third, stick to your routine/process and to your game plan.
- If you make some mistakes and fall behind early in the game, there's no reason to try to make up the deficit with bold, risky strategy. You're far more likely to come back by playing steadily well and giving your opponent a chance to make some mistakes of his own.
- Finally, the play of your opponents can be a nervous distraction. A player should always assume that his opponent will deliver the best possible bowl. Then, if it happens, he'll be prepared to cope with it.

WHEN THE SCOREBOARD LOOKS AT YOU.

- One of the most common mental errors committed by bowlers under pressure is letting the scoreboard distract them from what they ought to be thinking about.
- For most players, it's easier, in my opinion, to pay no attention to the scoreboard. There is nothing you can do to affect your opponent's scores. You can maximize your chances to win by refusing to think about anything but your own routine/process and your own game plan.

MLR