

COACHES REPORT FOR 2014 TOUR OF SRI LANKA

SELECTION OF TEAM

Congratulations and thanks must go to all members of the selection panel and the state coaches for working well together on what is always a very difficult assignment.

Although not part of the selection panel and process I had regular contact before and throughout the National Championships with David Freedman (Cricket NSW – Chairman of selectors), Matthew Mott (Cricket Australia – Assistant Coach), Ian Bycroft (Team Manager and WA Manager) and Andrew Feeron (QSSCA Coach) as to the balance of the team and the team structure for a tour of the sub-continent.

The selection panel certainly selected a quality group of young men to represent SSA and they did so with pride and distinction.

Suggestion: *The coach could possibly be in attendance on the last 2 days of the National Championships in order to peruse the team at the end of the titles. If I were to be appointed coach again for the 2015 series I would have no hesitation and at my own expense be happy to attend the final 2 days of the carnival if the titles were on the east coast of Aus. The task would be more difficult if the titles were in Tas, SA or WA but I would also endeavour to attend for the final 2 days.*

TOUR PREPARATION AND TRAINING

With the advent of Cricket Australia support the tour party had a preparation that was second to none and the experience of a life time in itself.

The timing of the tour coincided with the Spin Bowling Camp at the National Cricket Centre. The squad were invited to participate with Australia's current spin bowlers and spin bowlers of the future. Training with the likes of Nathan Lyon, Brad Hogg, Steve O'Keefe and Adam Zampa to name a few was definitely a great preparation for the squad. Players, coaches and all members of the touring party definitely learnt from this experience.

With the support of Cricket Australia and the National Cricket Centre, the squad were also able to access all of the NCC's facilities for training and recovery. The use of the "MERLIN" bowling machine, pools (hot and cold), turf practice nets, indoor nets as well as the players' lounge to highlight a few were always available to the lads.

The tour group also had access to the experience and expertise of some of the world's greatest cricket minds. Greg Chappell, Belinda Clark, Graeme Hick, Troy Cooley, Darren Lehman all freely availed themselves for time with the team to talk cricket and the experiences and opportunities that lay in front of the squad on such a tour.

Greg Chappell also held an open forum and discussion with the tour group and presented the team with their SSA Baggy Green Caps in a low key but formal presentation.

Accommodation meals and transport for the pre tour camp were all of the highest standards and planned to the last detail. A perfect preparation.

Suggestions:

- *If it fits with the presenter of the caps possibly invite parents to attend the presentation of the address and presentation of caps.*
- *If time and resources permit - an actual warm up game v a real opposition so that players become used to playing cricket with each other. (running between wickets, fielding positions Etc.)*

- **FLIGHT TO SRI LANKA AND ARRIVAL**

Singapore Airlines looked after and catered for the needs of the tour perfectly. Check in, Customs and boarding of the plane and the timing of flights were good.

Limited flights into and out of Colombo obviously affect arrival time and cannot be helped.

On arrival in Sri Lanka we were met in a traditional Sri Lanka way with song, dance and friendly smiles.

The tour bus was there to meet us and transport us to our first destination, Beywurala.

This hotel was 2-2.5 hours away from the airport.

Suggestion:

- ***On arrival in Sri Lanka at well after mid night local time the 2 – 2.5 hour bus trip was unnecessary. First games on tour could easily be played in Colombo rather than in the Southern Provinces***

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GAME 1:

All the talks, lectures, practice, preparations, plans and experience from others is certainly helpful but **NOTHING** can actually prepare you for cricket on the sub-continent until you've done it yourself.

That's the lesson everyone learnt from game 1.

After some monsoonal weather game 1 v Southern Districts U17 team was transferred from Galle to Colombo.

The overall result of the day did not go our way after an impressive start, however the team had learnt a lot about themselves and cricket today.

After winning the toss and getting off to a great start and being 1/89 a somewhat arguable dismissal of Matthew Gilkes (lbw) for 28 gave the home team a much needed boost.

2/89 quickly became 3,4,5,6/101 and the home team continuing to grow in confidence polished off the remaining batsmen to leave us with a meagre total of 124 (41) to defend.

The bowlers were up against it from the start but there was no lack of effort or enthusiasm in the field from our lads.

Some crafty left arm spin from Blake Parsons gave a slight hope but the opposition captain Charith put pay to any miracles with an impressive and well compiled 52*.

Gutsche	13
Burrows	27
Gilkes	28
Uppal	0
Hardie	3
Spoors	1
Parsons	8
Giniotis	8
Green	0
Sipple	3
Lea	6*

Total : 124

Lea	0/21 (3)
Chojnowski	0/13 (3)
Green	0/16 (2)
Hardie	0/9 (2)
Parsons	2/29 (8.1)

Sipple	1/26 (5)
Spoors	0/12 (2)
Total	3/123 (23.1)

GAME 2:

Looking to atone for Game 1 the lads batted with a steely resolve to compile a very competitive score of 9/304.

A flying start from Blake Gutsche, (54) got the innings rolling with Warner like punch drives and pouncing on anything short.

Well supported by Kyle Giniotis the lads went to drinks at 1/80 odd.

Anthony Hardie compiled a handy 41.

The highlight of the innings was Matt Gilkes 66 of less than 35 balls.

A mature 29* from DeMunari and 22* from Jon Merlo pushed the score past 300.

Three early wickets from Chognoski had the home team reeling at 3/30 and another from Lea had them on the ropes at 4/40.

A spirited partnership took the score to 98 before Sippel broke through. Another wicket courtesy of a great piece of fielding from Param had the score at 6/99 from 24 overs.

3 more wickets followed and then a frustrating last wicket partnership which was finally broken by a fantastic catch by John Merlo at deep mid-on.

The home side finally dismissed for 188 giving SSA victory by 116 runs.

Chjonowski	2/28 (9)
Merlo	1/16 (3)
Lea	1/15 (4)
Green	0/22 (4)
Sipple	2/32 (10)
Parsons	3/34 (10)
Spoors	1/12 (1.2)
Hardie	0/17 (2)

Gutsche	54
Giniotis	29
Hardie	41
Param	0
Spoors	28
Gilkes	66
DeMunari	29*
Green	2
Lea	1
Merlot	22*

Total	9/304 (50)
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Positives:

- * Ability to bounce back after game 1
- * achieving goal of batting 50 overs
- * Stroke play and aggressive batting - always looking to score
- * opening 10 overs from bowlers - 3 wickets - restricting scoring
- * Wicket keeper - very neat and set standard - quick hands for stumping

Areas for work and attention:

- * Game sense - losing wickets close to breaks
- * Intensity to get 10th wicket
- * Body language after fielding errors (dropped catch)
- * No balls - free hits (4 today)

Game 3: T20 v Central Districts

Won the toss and batted on what looked a greenish but deceptive pitch.

Par score appeared to be around 120.

Wickets to the visitors had us on the back foot early at 1/2 off 2 overs.

Aaron Hardie compiled a well-made 22 and Matt Spoors built a nice 48 in what became trying batting conditions.

A total of 9/101 was reached from our 20 overs.

A little under par and probably another 20 missed runs with a lack of urgency between the wickets at times.

Some sound line bowling kept us in the contest for a long period however the total was passed in the 18th over.

Positives:

Aaron Hardie
Matt Spoors

Areas requiring attention:

Running between wickets
Urgency and looking for runs - ball watching whilst at non strikers end.

Summary:

SSA 9/101 lost to Central Province U17 4/102

Game 4: T20 v Central Districts

Lost the toss and asked to field.

A change of tact and opened the bowling with left arm off spinner, Blake Parsons with instant success.

2 wickets in the first 3 overs followed by a run out and follow up wickets had the home side at 5/27 (8).

A continued disciplined bowling display saw the visitors close their innings at 9/80

The early loss of Gutshe and Gilkes saw Uppal and Hardie have to right the ship and at the half way stage SSA were 2/39

3/48 (11.3) with the loss of Hardie - run out

4/53 (14) Uppal a well compiled 20

5/75 (17) Spoors 17 great in the clutch.

7 required from 12 balls.

6/76 7 required from 10 balls.

3 required off last over

Home with 3 balls to spare.

Positives:

Discipline in bowling.

Very good length bowled.

Fielding - run outs

Good ground fielding on a very uneven surface

Areas for Improvement:

Soft hands and working the ball for 1s

Running (uncertainty due to lack of knowledge of each other's game)

Summary:

A very good day in terms of learning cricket. The boys learnt from the disappointing result of game 1 today.

Boys are continuing to learn and grow as players and young men.

GAME 5:

On what was always going to be a tough ask backing up after two T20 games in the searing heat and on a lifeless pitch the task was made even more challenging for the team with a few troops succumbing to the "BUG"

Down to essentially the bare 11 we lost the toss and were invited to have first throw of the leather.

As expected the lifeless 22 yards offered little encouragement for any of the quicks and the skipper quickly resorted to the mystery of spin. (When in Rome).

From the Ashes or should we say dust rose the Phoenix and some good length bowling saw the opposition dismissed for a competitive total of 203 (45).

A great effort and plenty of fighting spirit shown given the arduous challenge thrown at these lads today.

Wickets to:

Green (2)

Hardie (2)

Merlo (2)

Sippel (2)

Parsons (1)

And a run out.

An opening partnership between Gilkes and Gutsche (50 off 8 overs) laid a rock like foundation for the remainder of the boys to build on.

An aggressive approach saw the 100 reached in the 20th over for the loss of 3 wickets.

The loss of the captain (Uppal) also on 100 left the match teetering with 30 overs remaining.

A tragic run out on 128 (25) and the depleted batting line up left the job for the bowlers to complete.

7/140 and enter an ill Kyle Giniotis.
Unfortunately this was not to be a heroic day.

A final wicket partnership between Green and Merlo inched the total to 183 and in the quest for the final 20 runs from 3 overs Merlo was run out.

Summary:

Central Districts	203
SSA	183

Green	2/25
Sipple	2/41
Hardie	2/11
Merlo	2/15
Parsons	1/47

Gilkes	21
Gutsche	28
Hardie	17
Param	10
Spoons	30
Parsons	15
Green	24*

Positives:

Bowling length again
Fielding and catching

Areas for work:

- Partnerships
- Going on with it - 7 of the 11 bats all got to double figures this was discussed with all coaches and invited guests prior to the tour.

Looking forward to finishing on a high in the 2 day game in Colombo.

GAME 6: 2 DAY MATCH

Won the toss and elected to bat on the same ground and pitch where we scored 304 in our one day match.

Our innings was not to be a replica of this as the boys struggled to build partnerships after getting starts.

5 out of the 11 batsmen got to double figures but no one went on with it. Gutsche top scored with 32.

On what was a relatively fair wicket we were dismissed for an under par 155.

A good start with the ball with a couple of early wickets had the home side feeling a little pressure but in control at stumps at 4/68.

Another fair start by the home side on day 2 had them well in control at 4/83.

Combine some green and gold spirit a couple of outstanding bowling displays and a pinch of gloveman magic and the match turned on a dime.

4/ 83 turned into all out for 118

This game had another twist though as the locals refused to give up without a fight. A second innings collapse quickly opened the door for an outright result. DeMunari and Merlo to the rescue stalled the collapse but the door was left ajar for the locals when SSA were finally dismissed for leaving the home side a total of to chase from 16 overs.

The loss of 2 early wickets allowed the match to peter out to a tame but at times tense first innings win to SSA.

A great fighting win and a sensational way to end a great tour by a wonderful group of young men.

Positives:

Fighting spirit
Teamwork and attitude
Wicket keeper

Areas for attention:

Partnerships

SSA	155
SL CD	118

Players

Blake Gutsche:

Started the tour in a blaze of cuts and pulls but soon found out that playing horizontal bat shots is fraught with danger on the sub-continent. Consistent without getting to that "BIG SCORE". Good team man and plenty of heart and passion. A good bloke to have in the trenches with you.

Wade Burrows:

Unfortunately fell victim and fell hard to the "BUG". Missed a few games and tour days through to illness. Game back to play the last game.

Aaron Hardie:

Before the tour was probably one of the 2 standout batsmen. Not the first to realise how tough the sub-continent can be. Very consistent in getting starts. Would probably himself say that he didn't have the best of tours in terms of numbers but certainly learnt the most. Great contributor with the ball when the pressure was on. Bowled a superb, "SUB-CONTINENT" length and picked up big wickets at big times. Good player.

Param Uppal:

Maturity beyond his years and can handle exterior pressures without it affecting him personally. Consistent throughout the tour. Great leader on field and off. A good tactician and always willing to listen to feedback. Good player of spin and pace. Numbers and stats will not reflect what he has gained from the experience.

Cameron Green:

X ? There is just something about him that says he can play at this level. Needs to mature a little and accept "HIS ROLE" in the team as opposed to what he thinks his role is but certainly has the goods. Has good rhythm and the ability to move the ball in the air and off the pitch. It could be said he watches a little too much TV and needs to develop his own style which again will come with time. Very affable character and certainly not out of place at this level.

Josh DeMunari:

It's not very often that you can say that a wicket keeper can turn a match but this kid is good, very good. Small in stature but not spirit and was certainly a highlight of the tour. A through and through professional with a future in the game.

Jarred Sipple:

Very young and introverted. Numbers suggest that he was not out of place in this group and this level. Will need to improve on his intensity levels but that will come with maturity.

Blake Parsons:

Certainly a match winner in these conditions. Good variety and changes of pace and adapted well to the conditions. Will need to develop another string to his bow to enhance his prospects at higher levels though. Needs to be more than just a good bowler. Certainly takes on leadership roles and always wanting to learn more. A fine young man and a pleasure to work with.

Matthew Spoors:

Good returns in relation to numbers and achievements on tour. Like so many of the top order though failed to convert any of these good starts. Definitely a player to monitor in terms of the future. Has a great range of scoring options and is courageous. On a personal level needs to become more self-assured in his own ability. Always looking to have his tyres pumped up. At this stage is certainly one to monitor.

Kyle Giniotis:

Would say himself that he never got the chance to get out of second gear. Due to the nature of matches, conditions and catching the "BUG" at the wrong time limited his opportunities to dominate. Certainly has the shots to do so though. Showed he has the determination by going out to bat late in an innings after being "BUG" affected for the majority of a day. Good in the field and certainly well respected amongst his peers. Would like to see more of him in different conditions.

Josh Chojnowski:

The pick of the quicks. Consistent wicket taker in all forms of the game. Played under duress all tour with a floating bone in his knee. Will be interesting to see how he comes back in season 2014/15 after off season surgery. Would benefit from some strength and conditioning as he always looks like he is physically struggling but that may have been due to the knee.

Griffin Lea:

Good natural speed and natural athlete. Great competitor and passionate. Solid lower order bat. Needs to learn the value of the "TEAM" before "I" but that should come with more maturity and experience. Always looking to be in the game which is not a bad thing.

Jono Merlo:

Big strong and a great team man. Plenty of toughness and never stops trying. One of cricket's good guys. Probably a little out of depth in some cases but commitment and effort can never be questioned.

Matthew Gilkes:

Pocket rocket that drew similarities with David Warner. A very busy cricketer. Won't go down without a fight and full of passion. A hard worker and took feedback and constructive criticism well. Used this feedback to continually improve throughout the tour. Has the goods to go somewhere.

BATTING FIGURES

	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G6			
	50	50	20	20	50	2 day	2 day		<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>AV.</u>
Gilkes	31	66	0	5	21	17	34		174	24.9
Gutsche	13	56	1	4	28	32	18		152	21.7
Spoors	1	28	46	17	33	7	13		145	20.7
Hardie	3	43	23	18	17	2	0		106	15.1
Uppal	1	5	5	22	10	26	10		79	11.3
DeMunari	DNB	30*	DNB	DNB	5	8	22		65	21.7
Giniotis	6	29	2	5	1	18	0		61	8.7
Green	0	2	1*	DNB	24*	21*	0		48	16.0
Merlo	DNB	23*	DNB	DNB	6	0	12		41	13.7
Parsons	8	DNB	4	5	15	DNB	DNB		32	8.0
Burrows	27	DNB	DNB	DNB	DNB	4	0		31	10.3
Lea	0*	1	7	5	5	DNB	DNB		18	4.3
Sippel	3	DNB	DNB	DNB	DNB	0	0*		3	1.5
Chojnowski	DNB	DNB	0	DNB	DNB	DNB	DNB		0	0.0

BOWLING FIGURES

									<u>WKTS</u>	<u>RUNS</u>	<u>AV</u>
Parsons	2 29	3 39	1 12	1 12	1 41	3 20	0 13		11	166	15.1
Sippel	1 26	2 29	0/15	1 17	2 41		1 7		7	135	19.3
Hardie	0/9	0/17		2 8	2 11	2 10			6	55	9.2
Green	1 16	0/22	0/15	1 14	2 26	2 20			6	113	18.8
Merlo		1 16	1 6	1 18	2 16	1 31			6	87	14.5
Chojnowski	0/13	2 26	0/17		0/19	2 38	1 4		5	117	23.4
Lea	0/21	1 15	1 21	1 9	0/28		0 9		3	103	34.3
Spoors	0/12	1 12	0/13		0/19				1	56	56.0

BATTING LESSONS:

- Interesting to note the number of starts (10+) that this team got. 30 / 70 in total = 42% of all innings.
- Starts for top 7 batsmen. 22 / 45 for top 7 batsmen. 48%
- From that 48% of starts the conversion rate to scores of 50+ was extremely poor 2/45 = 4%
- This was a major issue in all games on tour and was repeatedly emphasised. It was discussed amongst all team members and everyone who spoke to the boys at the NCC and before the tour. Once you get a start it is essential that the individual go on. One of those things that you can tell, tell, tell but only until you experience it does it become reality.
- Partnerships – Even though most players didn't go on with their individual performance partnerships and batting time became very important and players did this well. Particularly lower order players.

BOWLING LESSONS:

- Length and pace – its different everywhere – Bowlers adapted well to the conditions
- Bowling different lengths at different stages of matches
- A tough tour for quick bowlers

- **THANKS:**

A heartfelt thanks to all involved in the organisation and compilation of the tour. There are far too many to name and being in another world (North Queensland) it is hard to know who did what and when it happened. I have no doubt that there were close to over 100 people involved from the start to the finish of this wonderful experience.

I do need to mention though the outstanding crew that was assembled to work with on tour: Ian Bycroft and Peter Finch are certainly the ultimate professionals in team management. These wonderful men leave no stone unturned in the preparation of the daily events, tour organisation and general day to day organisation of the tour group. They are certainly the definitive experts in tour management and organisation.

Matthew Mott, an ally from days gone past. A trusted friend, a wealth of knowledge and a great tourist. Certainly is always a pleasure to work with. An expert in "keeping it real" and a fountain of knowledge that all members of the tour party learnt from.

Alex, the go to man. Pills, potions, band aids, scratches, and most importantly, mosquito repellent and hand sanitiser. This was the first time that I have had the opportunity to have a full time physio as part of the touring group. Alex was outstanding with the players and has superior skills and knowledge and should be commended highly on his hard work and persistence in keeping the health and welfare of not only the players but staff as his highest priority.

Thanks also to Brad Allen, Peter Smith and all of the staff at SSA and to Belinda Clark and Melanie at the NCC. Without your support and assistance the young players of the future would not have been able to experience this life fulfilling event.

SUMMARY:

An outstanding experience for all involved. A wonderful opportunity and I am very grateful to have been a part of such a talented group of people and a once in a lifetime opportunity.