

## Cricket Bat Fact Sheet

It is widely accepted amongst good cricketers and good bat manufacturers that a bat is a tool of the trade, its raw materials are naturally grown and not man made. A good bat is produced by craftsmen and their aim is to combine excellent hitting power with durability. The combination is not always, if at all easy. Softer pressed bats tend to "go better" but are even more likely to crack. The harder pressed bats last longer but often hitting power is compromised. The bat maker's aim is to strike a balance between the two to make the best all round cricket bat.

You need to understand the importance of the pick up and feel of a bat. All bat makers and batsmen alike agree that this is far more important than the dead weight of the bat. With careful attention to balance, a bat maker can produce even say a 2lb 13oz bat with a very light pick up weight. There should be a weight range indication for all bats and a grade from light, medium or heavy where applicable to a particular bat. This enables you to select the exact bat you are looking for by selecting from the drop down lists provided with each bat.

Most bats are made from English Willow which by nature is a soft fibrous wood, with a "honeycomb" type cell structure. It is perfect for the manufacture of cricket bats because of its natural moisture and its ability to be pressed in the manufacturing process to give great ball striking qualities. Starter and particularly smaller Junior size bats tend to utilise more lower priced Kashmir Willow... this is harder and therefore more resilient but generally gives less ball striking satisfaction. The Willow grading guide is set out below:-

- **Grade 1 plus - G1+** The very best of English willow, often reserved for the manufacturers own Pro Players and utilised in such bats described as Limited Edition, Ultimate, SPS or Pro-Performance. Unbleached with straight even grains and absolute minimal marking or discolouration in the face
- **Grade 1 - G1** Top quality English Willow, used in such bats described as Pro, Original, Titanium, Premier or Players. Good straight grain structure and unbleached with minimal marking or discolouration in the face
- **Grade 2 - G2** .Unbleached English Willow with some irregular grain patterning and some minor blemishes and possible reddening in the blade
- **Grade 3 - G3** Usually unbleached English Willow with irregular grain pattern and some marking and discolouration in the blade
- **Grade 4 - G4** .English Willow usually bleached and often non oil with a covering to the face of the bat.

### Bat preparation and maintenance

Once you have your new bat we hope that these few tips will help you prepare and look after your new "pride and joy"....enabling it to give you many hours of run scoring enjoyment at the crease.

### A note about pre-prepared or pre-knocked in bats

...this means that they are part prepared in the factory, including oiling, pressing under a roller and some hand mallet knocking in. It is still recommended some further knocking in with a bat mallet around the perimeter of the face of the bat and some gentle net practice against an older, softer cricket ball before full match use.

**1.** Give your new bat a light sanding and a coat of linseed oil (natural face bats only), applied with the fingers, or a soft cloth. There is no need to oil the back or shoulders of the bat and please take care not to oil around the splice, as this loosens the glue. Please make sure you give the toe at least a couple of coats, this helps prevent water ingress into the bottom of your bat. Do not over oil, a couple of coats is ample.

**2.** Start the knocking in process, which should really involve between 1 and 2 hours total work time before match use. Knocking in is the process of compressing and knitting together the willow fibres to prevent ball damage to the surface of the bat. Use either an old softer cricket ball or preferably a bat mallet to do the job. Concentrate on the face edges, where a genuine 'nick' might make contact with the bat and keep working until they have a rounded and compacted appearance. Do not strike the side edges or toe of the bat. To prepare the face of the bat either bounce a ball on it or lightly tap with the mallet, increasing the force over the knocking in period.

**3.** Before match play, using an old cricket ball hit a few close catches and some throw downs in the nets. Once in full use, keep a close look out for any minor damage. Attend to any minor damage as it occurs with wood glue and fibre bat tape. Don't worry about 'crazy cracking' as in the picture down to the left, this is quite normal and will not adversely affect the performance of your bat. However the application of a clear anti-scuff sheet will minimise any surface damage.

**4.** Another useful addition for your bat is the new style Toe Guards or Toe-Tec as shown below. These protect against water ingress, friction and the dreaded 'yorker' and in our view will definitely prolong the life of your bat.



**5....** and finally enjoy scoring all those runs. When it comes to winter storage, give your bat a clean and a coat of oil and store it face up, laid down flat, best in a cool, dry atmosphere. Keep it away from radiators and do not store it in the airing cupboard!