

Case Study: Stuart Clark

Making his debut against South Africa in 2006, Stuart took 9 for 89, signalling his time had come to be taken seriously as one of the world's leading fast bowlers. Playing both forms of the game (Test cricket and one day internationals), Stuart spends approximately nine months of the year on the road.

Balancing cricket with studies and having a family gives me perspective on life. While I love playing cricket for Australia, there are other important things in life as well.

Playing for Australia was my childhood dream and I actually still have to pinch myself sometimes – I am actually doing what I dreamt of, and how many people get to do that? Although following a dream is wonderful, the reality is that the challenges of international cricket are no different to a normal job. You always have to perform. You are part of a team and the team relies on everyone to contribute. Having others relying on you in work or sport makes a difference – you're not just doing it for yourself, you don't want to let down your teammates.

In life you are always chasing ambition. Whether in sport, business or family you must define key indicators that help you balance ambition. In sport my belief is in 'working with your body, not against it'. I've learnt how to listen to what my body is telling me.

Maysie has also taught me a lot about personal accountability. At the end of the day, I need to do as much as I can so the selectors have every reason to pick me for the national team. For me, it's about controlling all of the controllables, and that's one of the most important things I've learnt.

The hardest thing at the elite level of any sport is consistently replicating high performance. We don't really have the opportunity to have an off day. And if we do, you'll

more than likely read about it in the papers the following day. Learning to sustain high performance is the difference between excelling and just doing okay.

Focusing more on what I do in between games has allowed me to play at a higher intensity. I don't get as stiff or tight as I once used to. I've learnt how essential it is to focus on proper recovery as it minimises injury risk. Preparation and understanding your body is the key. I find if I keep myself at a high level of fitness throughout it assists with my performance and recovery.

