

# Cricket Explained

by Kerry Cue

***The Canberra Times 22 Dec 2010***

also The Illawarra Mercury, NSW

Cricket tends to cause great confusion among novice spectators, recovering alcoholics and Americans. It is, after all, a game where grown men stand around for days looking bored with no balls or madly hug and kiss each other following a duck. As a consequence, I have taken it upon myself to explain cricket to those who wouldn't know a gibbon from a googly.

The game of cricket came from that part of the world that also gave us golf, chess and Morris Dancing. Those who do not have the patience for golf, the lunatic grin of a Morris Dancer but who drink too much beer for chess play cricket. Players need good hand-eye co-ordination and a mum who knits white, woolly vests.

The game consists of two teams of 11 players each, 2 umpires and, in the case of Test Matches, an unspecified number of seagull substitutes to provide the fill-in action between overs and give the sports commentators something to talk about. Each team has a captain and a coach and instructions are relayed to the team on the field by 10,000 yelling yobs in the outer.

Some players in each team can bat, some can bowl and some are so good at standing motionless in the outfield for days they'd make good garden gnomes. It is the goal of the bowler to hit the wicket with the ball. Some bowlers add spin, some bowlers are fast and some bowlers take such a long run up to the crease that fans can arrive at the ground, drink to excess, riot and get thrown out without actually seeing any play. To add spin, a bowler often polishes the ball by rubbing the leather casing in his groin crease. Some bowlers spend so much time polishing the ball their team provides marriage counselling.

The batsmen try to defend the wicket by hitting the ball and scoring runs. Batsmen come in three groups. The opening batsmen can hit the ball, the middle-order are the hit and miss batsmen and the nightwatchmen just hope it's too dark for anyone notice. Batsmen wear so much protection including pads, cricket boxes gloves and helmets; it is not unusual for them to start padding up 3 days before they're called to bat.

Cricket is a very complicated game involving many statistics including numbers of runs, caught, bowled, lbw, sundries, byes, which all too often provide no result at all except when it rains then it's a draw.

Now that you understand the basics of cricket you should familiarise yourself with the following terms:

**The selectors:** A technical term for 'those idiots'.

**A century:** The average age of the umpires

**The umpires:** The chaps on the field dressed by the Queen's tailor in dated ensemble and dated hat who look after player's jumpers.

**Howzat?:** A call by the fielding team to the umpire meaning 'Are you bloody blind? He's out.'

**Field Positions:** Fieldsmen can be placed at gully, point, cover, silly mid-on, forward short leg or deep fine leg or, for beginners, the position known as 'Just stand there'.

**An Over:** Consists of 6 bowls. A bowler bowls an over until the over is over. Then he bowls another over.

**A Bouncer:** A high bouncing ball bowled in an innings or a bald, big guy who throws drunken cricket players out of nightclubs.

**A Cricket Box:** Groin protector for batsmen available in 3 sizes: English, Australian and West Indian.

**A Good Delivery:** The beer supply.

**Instant Replays:** Shown on the large screen at the grounds to create the illusion of activity.

**Swan Song:** What Ricky Ponting fears he is hearing whenever he faces the renowned English off-spin bowler.

**Appeal:** Strange pulling power of Shane Warne's sex texts.

**A Bye:** The text Warnie sends when it's time to bumper.

**WAGS:** Term used by English players, which means 'We Are Getting Some'.

**Barmy Army:** Crazy English cricket fans who tour Australia in funny hats waving madly at the crowds and cameras yet do not belong to the Royal Family.

**Merchandise:** The items that can be purchased at the ground usually including ties, caps, t-shirts and a few Pakistani players.

There is much intellectual debate about the meaning of cricket. It's quite simple really. Cricket was a game invented by groundsmen to keep seagulls off the grass. But it hasn't worked.