



The Finger

Newsletter of the ACT Cricket Association Umpires & Scorers Council

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The Rising of the Finger

It's springtime, the grass is growing, as we look around at the flowering trees we realise that the opportunity to easily prune the fruit trees has been missed (again), the Sheffield Shield has already started... It must be time for us all to get out into the sunshine. Time, indeed, to pull The Finger out.

Those of you who are clear of mind may have noticed that The Finger missed the 2011/12 season completely. This was probably a mere oversight on the part of the editorial staff, who now number one, which is considerably more than there were at the start of last season.

As your new editor, I should first of all congratulate Andy Turner for his sterling efforts at producing this newsletter for the past few years. It was the general consensus that Andy was a hard act to follow, so nobody did.

Then at the February meeting of the Council some half-witted individual with more enthusiasm than sense complained about the apparently defunct nature of the newsletter. Three seconds later he became editor-in-waiting.

In fact the wait has been a little longer than expected owing to a number of contingencies that the budding editor had not taken into account, such as the fact that he would have to find the time to do it. Like many projects started in great optimism, the necessary opportunities to complete the requirements have not proven to be as readily available as expected.

Anyway, here we alight into the unknown. The intention is to publish an issue at around the first of each month during the season, after which a stocktake will be had.

The Finger will always be pleased to take contributions from budding authors, emailed to davjoma@hotmail.com although it would be preferable if any contribution was shortish and vaguely related to cricket. Your novel about the 2011/12 season, entitled 50 Shades of Rain, is unlikely to be published.

I am always happy to receive suggestions, although nothing that is physically impossible please.

News

Dinner: The Council's annual dinner was held at the Brassey Hotel on Monday 19th March 2012, presumably to celebrate the editor's birthday which fell on the same date. Owing to the fact that the editor was still in shock at having volunteered for the editorship, he neglected to bring a camera to the event. Mr Barry Thomas was appointed *pro tem* as the Council's official photographer and our thanks go to Barry for providing the photos that appear in this newsletter.

The dinner was a fine occasion – one highlight was that the trivia quiz was won by a table comprised of three first year umpires and their wives. A more experienced umpire noted that this would hardly surprise cricket players, who were of the view that the longer you umpired the dumber you became.

Some major awards, announced on the night of the dinner, were as follows: (if other important awards have been neglected, they will appear in an upcoming issue)

First grade umpire of the year – Andrew Shelley. Congratulations to Andrew, who is of course well known to all, including new and budding umpires for his outstanding teaching skills as well as umpiring skills.



Andrew delivers his acceptance speech. He said, and I quote, "Thanks".

Second grade umpire of the year - Ron Reinhard. The editor had the pleasure of umpiring a second grade game with the umpire of the year in the course of the season. Ron may have added to his chances of winning this award when he demonstrated a new string to the umpire's bow by running out a batsman. The bowler deflected the ball onto Ron's ankle whence it flew onto the stumps with the batsman out of his ground. I could only watch in awe.

There is no photo of Mr Reinhard, who perhaps wished to preserve his mystique so that people appointed to far flung outposts in 2012/13 would not know who to abuse.

Women's cricket umpire of the year (the Derek Gould award) – Barry Thomas



Barry with Mrs Gould

First year umpire of the year – David Crockart



David with the impeccably besuited Yohan

Founder's award – for services to the Association – Andrew Kopras

Andrew is of course one of the most popular of umpires, and I'm sure that has nothing at all to do with money.



Andrew at the lectern

AGM: The Annual General Meeting was held in July. Congratulations to all of those appointed to the various offices, and the Association gives its genuine thanks to those who served in the past. The current office holders are listed on the front page of this newsletter

The various literature necessary for the new season is available on the Association's website. Members, particularly the newer members, are reminded that, yes, most of the competitions do have different playing conditions, a fact that can be lost on umpires and players alike. This is also mentioned in the following item.

Availability alert! It is understood that most, if not all, standing members have provided their availability details to Ron Reinhard by now. If there are any changes, please advise Ron as soon as possible in writing (email is fine), with possibly a quick call to alert him to the fact that you have sent the email if the change relates to the near future. If the change to availability is for the upcoming weekend (or the following weekend when the two days start) please ensure Ron is advised by Wednesday morning at the latest.

A first year umpire's impressions

It is pleasing to see a number of new umpires this year. There were also a few new umpires last year and some of us have even retained our (relative) sanity and good humour.

For those of you who have forgotten, here are some reflections made by an umpire with, now, one season's experience in Canberra cricket. When I started I intended to keep a diary of my impressions throughout my first season. Suffice it to say that this did not in fact occur, so that some of the recollections provided here are likely to be out of order at best, or at worst entirely inaccurate.

I found the greatest challenge during the season, apart from finding grounds which largely appear to be in areas of Canberra and Queanbeyan that I did not know existed, was to know what the rules and playing conditions were on any particular occasion. When I umpired in the City and Suburban grand final in March, I noted that this was approximately the twelfth different competition I had umpired in during the course of the season – if you don't believe me, I calculate Men's second grade two day and one day, Men's third grade, two day, one day, and twenty-twenty, fourth grade, fifth grade, junior rep under 15s and under 12s, Women's Premier League and Glenda Hall and probably some others I have blanked out. Even players get confused. I called a wide close down the legside in a one day game and the bowler was about to complain when he said, 'Oh that's right, I'm playing second grade, aren't I?'

Blimey. No wonder the other umpire and I managed to take a break at the wrong time one day (which in fact nobody else noticed and neither would we if we had not had to read the rules later about rain delays); or that towards the end of the season there was some discussion between the two umpires and the two captains, none of whom appeared to agree with anyone else, over what happens when a two day game becomes a one day game played under two day rules and then there is a rain delay on the second day, and when do we have to finish our overs by sir? It's 6.23 isn't it, the fast bowler has to go to a wedding reception – no, it's.... I think you get my drift.

Giving LBWs is the easy bit, even if most bowlers seem not to know the rules. What do you mean it hit him outside the off stump, what's that got to do with it? It's the decisions on ground conditions that can be difficult, so a big thank you to the organisers of the September seminar for having a session on this with an experienced curator.

The rainy days are difficult for a novice umpire. Instantaneous decisions are simple enough, even if you get them wrong. Trying to work out how long it will take for a wet patch to dry out on a ground that you have never been to before can be a bit more challenging. Perhaps we need more captains like a well known lower grade captain who advised in one game that he intended to start play on time and that if the umpires did not like it, they could sod off, as they weren't used to having umpires anyway.

One thing that impressed me particularly during the season was the camaraderie of the game – not just between the umpires, but between everybody. Certainly there was a competitive edge but my impression was that the spirit of the game, as envisaged by Lords at the start of the Laws of the game, is alive and well. Generally the players were nice to me, even when I managed to give my stinkeroo of the season, which was to call a wide when the batsman had apparently hit the ball off the middle of the bat. I was sure he had missed it down the legside, and that the ball had deflected off the wicketkeeper's pads. I was, apparently, alone in this belief. Don't worry, I've bought new glasses in the off season.

As with every umpire, probably, there were strange incidents that happen that stick in your mind. The run out at the bowler's end is always a good one. Umpiring a game at Deakin – I always seemed to be at Deakin and every time I went there it rained – one of the batsmen came out with a runner. Now this wasn't any problem in itself, except that after the first short single, which ended up looking like a scene from some slapstick comedy, the injured batsman decided that it might be better to just go the tonk.

The next ball, a reasonably quick half volley around off stump came back with considerable interest straight towards where the head of the umpire at the bowler's end was normally positioned. Just as the panicking umpire was about to dive for safety, the bowler made an extraordinary effort to effect a caught and bowled. The ball hit his hand so hard that he involuntarily withdrew it thus missing the catch. However the ball was sufficiently deflected to cannon into the stumps, and the umpire, regaining his senses, looked up to see the non striker sheepishly standing about two metres out of his ground, making the decision fairly easy.

One of the fielders said to the bowler, "There you go, always looking for the easy dismissal". Of course, the only problem with all this was that it was the *other* batsman who was out – the guy with the runner was still there (but not for much longer).

The chat between team mates can always be a highlight. We all know that cricket is a team game and there is never any dissension between team mates. Ahem. In one game at Freebody - I spent all my time at Freebody when I was not at Deakin, although I must note that this story does not relate to Queanbeyan players - a normally competent wicketkeeper was having a poor day. Finally the batsman flashed at one and the keeper went up in a big appeal, only for the umpire to turn him down. The keeper was possibly not helped by the fact that a) he was the only person who appealed and b) the ball missed the bat by about a foot.

The keeper turned to his slip fielder and said, 'I thought he hit that'. "Nah," the slip fielder replied. "If he'd hit it you would have dropped it."

And lastly be careful what you say, even in jest. Somebody, and I won't reveal who, was heard to mutter that he would be looking for an opportunity to give the lefty out after a long partnership between a left and right hander, where they were taking

about five singles an over so that the umpire at square leg was getting quite a workout. Next ball, the very next ball, the lefty was run out at a certain umpire's end. By a long distance, but still...

And of course the next batsman in was a lefthander.



Dean and Don at the dinner. Dean appears to be considering the finer points of an IPL contract.

Mankading - The Wandering Batsman

There seems to have been an increase in Mankading type incidents in recent years, probably because of the increase in limited overs cricket and the necessity to run short singles. Back when the author played there were not many of these incidents. Then again in those days being at the bowler's end was generally regarded as a spot to have a rest – why would you want to take short singles, it was only the other bloke getting the runs? This attitude may help to explain the author's general lack of success in better grades of cricket.

The idea of the Mankad is an interesting test of cricketing ethics though. Is cricket the only game in the world where you can be called a cheat for playing by the rules?

The history: The Indian cricketer Vinoo Mankad managed to turn himself into a verb by twice running out Australian batsman Bill Brown at the bowler's end during India's first Australian tour in 1947/48. The first occasion was in a game against an Australian XI in Sydney before the First Test. At the time former great Bill O'Reilly, in a column in the Sydney Morning Herald, noted that:

"I have never seen a similar incident in first-class cricket. The bowler had warned Brown previously that he was taking a sour view of the way in which the batsman was backing up before the ball had been bowled.

"There is nothing in the laws of the game to say that the bowler shall even warn the batsman of his unfair play. The ethics of the game, however,

demand that a warning be given before any drastic action be taken. Mankad subscribed to the ethical rule, and very soon after he took the drastic action.

“He was quite entitled to do what he did, and his action showed plenty of strength of character. Brown was at fault and, having been warned, should not have continued to take the advantage which accrued from his quick ‘backing up’ in stolen singles.”

It may be relevant to mention that O’Reilly’s view on the rights and wrongs of the matter should be noted in the context both that he hated batsmen and that it was rumoured that O’Reilly and Brown did not see eye to eye and that there had been friction over the selection of Brown as captain ahead of O’Reilly for Australia’s first postwar Test. That, however, is a story for another day.

The run out incident in that game may have passed as a bynote in cricket history, except that Mankad repeated the dose in the second Test in Sydney, about a month later. This turned out to be Brown’s second last Test innings in Australia. Oddly, in his last he was also run out, for 99, albeit more conventionally when the 19 year old Neil Harvey played tip and run. There may well have been an awkward silence in the dressing room that night.

Most Canberra grade cricketers would willingly believe that umpires generally could recall events of 65 years ago, (even if they doubt that we can count as high as six). In fact some of us do not recall that one, but can instead call to mind a later incident when Victorian and Australian fast bowler Alan Hurst ran out Pakistani number 11 Sikander Bakht at Perth in March 1979.

For those to whom Sikander Bakht is a mystery, he was a tall, extremely, thin fast bowler. Lenny Pascoe reportedly said of him that if he did not play cricket he could have had a sporting career as a snooker cue. In the third innings of the Perth game Sikander, a natural number 11, was engaging in a last wicket stand with Asif Iqbal, who was farming the strike to an extraordinary degree. The match records show that Sikander faced three, count them three, balls in an innings of 37 minutes. Now Asif was a very fast runner between wickets, but Sikander was not, and it is said that one of the Australian fielders pointed out to Hurst that the reason that Asif was keeping strike so successfully was that Sikander only had to run about 10 metres after Asif hit the ball.

So Hurst ran him out, thus ensuring himself a little place in cricket history for that, and by finishing with bowling figures of 24.7 overs etc, which meant that he was the last Australian to bowl an eight ball (or I suppose a seven ball) over in Test cricket. Remember that for trivia quizzes.

It is fair to say that Pakistan were not particularly chuffed by the Sikander run out, and retaliated later in the day by appealing successfully for handled the ball against Andrew Hilditch when he picked up the ball and tossed it to bowler Sarfraz Nawaz. The unkind, when thinking about the last Ashes series, may claim that this was merely the first of a number of poor cricketing decisions by Mr Hilditch.

How about nowadays? The rule on such run outs is now well defined – although the interpretation of the words is not universal. Law 42.15 says that:

The bowler is permitted, before entering his delivery stride, to attempt to run out the non-striker. Whether the attempt is successful or not, the ball shall not count as one of the over.

If the bowler fails in an attempt to run out the non-striker, the umpire shall call and signal Dead ball as soon possible.

'Before entering his delivery stride' is perhaps the difficult bit. Is it taken to mean that the bowler cannot run out the non-striker once the bowler's back foot has landed in preparation to bowl? For games under its direct control, Cricket Australia has interpreted the law somewhat differently, being that the cut-off point is when the bowler's front foot has landed. Mind you, any bowler who can take off the bails after the back foot has landed in the delivery stride and before the front foot has landed should probably be working as a contortionist rather than a bowler.

If the bowler does try a run out after entering the delivery stride the umpire should, besides not giving the batsman out, call dead ball. The ball does not, of course, count as one of the over.

As Bill O'Reilly said all those years ago, there is no legal onus on a bowler to warn the non-striker. In practical terms, most cricketers would still regard it as ethical to warn a batsman who goes wandering; although maybe not so somebody who was trying to 'steal a base'. The nature of warnings can vary – cases have been seen of a bowler actually flicking the bails off, and then saying to the non-striker, "Next time I appeal".

There are still varying views among cricketers, even cricketers in the same team, on Mankading. For the umpire faced with such a decision it may also help to remember Law 27.8, which says:

The captain of the fielding side may withdraw an appeal only if he obtains the consent of the umpire within whose jurisdiction the appeal falls. He must do so before the outgoing batsman has left the field of play. If such consent is given, the umpire concerned shall, if applicable, revoke his decision and recall the batsman.

Post script: Since this piece was originally drafted there have been more such incidents. An Australian batsman was run out by a Bangladeshi in the Under 19s world cup in Queensland. The usual arguments applied – some going so far as the call either the bowler or the batsman a cheat.

The author's personal view? Frankly I think that the batsman at the bowler's end should make sure that he is in his ground; and that if he is not and gets given out, I cannot see that he has any cause for complaint. There is a big white line painted on the ground – it's not that difficult. Nobody complains if a batsman gets stumped when he lifts his foot momentarily, even though his foot is well behind the line – what is the ethical difference?

A conundrum

You may have seen what has been called in some circles the Finn incident over the winter. England fast bowler Steve Finn bowls from very close to the stumps. Very close. He has been renowned for knocking the bails off at the bowler's end in his delivery stride.

He was not selected for the First Test against South Africa which the visitors won by a gazillion. Restored for the Second Test he was brought on to bowl at first change. In his first two overs he knocked the bails off three times with his knee. Apparently,

the South African captain Graham Smith and the other batsman Alviro Peterson approached the umpires and advised that they found Finn's habit of knocking the bails off distracting. I suppose it is something that you could notice out of the corner of your eye, which would not assist you when facing a bowler who regularly bowls at more than 140 kph.

The next time that Finn hit the stumps, very shortly thereafter, umpire Steve Davis called dead ball under Law 23.4, which says in part that the umpire shall call and signal dead ball if

(vi) the striker is distracted by any noise or movement or in any other way while he is preparing to receive, or receiving a delivery. This shall apply whether the source of the distraction is within the game or outside it.

The call of dead ball may well have passed as a minor incident, except that Smith snicked it and was 'caught' at slip. At the time Smith was 6 and he and Peterson went on to put on 120 for the first wicket. For the rest of the day, dead ball was called on each occasion that Finn ran into the stumps, although you would have to wonder how distracted Smith was as he hit at least two of the dead balls to the boundary (for no runs – they were of course, dead balls).

Cricinfo writer George Dobell quoted an MCC spokesman as saying:

"Whether the batsman is distracted - or indeed has time to be distracted - is a moot point. Smith hit two subsequent balls for four when Finn had broken the wicket but the runs were disallowed as dead ball had been called. If the striker really feels he is distracted, he can try to pull away and make no attempt to play the ball, although this may not always be possible with a fast bowler like Finn.

"A precedent may have been set but it remains to be seen whether dead ball will be called on each occasion that this happens for the remainder of the match. Unlike some other Laws, there is no specified warning procedure for this situation. MCC's Laws sub-committee will discuss the matter at its next meeting and will work closely with ICC on issuing guidance to umpires.

"Of course, what the umpire feels is distracting to the batsman is entirely subjective, but Davis was within his rights to signal dead ball if he was sure that Smith was indeed distracted."

Dobell noted that a similar incident had occurred, with a different bowler, earlier in the English season, and commented that:

The issue of 'repeat offending' may be key here. The MCC are reluctant to intervene in one-off issues where bowlers brush the bails with their hand as they pass the stumps, but Finn and Turnbull have gone through periods of bashing into the stumps unusually heavily and unusually often.

It's probably the lawyer in me but I note that the Law says that the striker **is** distracted, not the striker **might be** distracted. This makes the law inherently difficult for an umpire to apply, unless he or she is psychic. In Steve Davis's case, he was assisted by the batsman advising him that he found the practice of knocking the bails off distracting.

So here's the conundrum. What are you going to say when Albert Jones from Charnwood thirds gets bowled and then points to the bowler's bails being down and

says, 'That distracted me'. What do you do then? (Maybe the correct answer is to tell him to spend more time at batting practice and less time reading Cricinfo.)

The coming season

OK boys and girls. Time to stop worrying about another decision that you might have to make when Mr Clumsy the bowler knocks the bails off at the bowler's end.

Cricket starts on October 6 at a ground near you, although if past seasons are anything to go by you probably won't get appointed to a ground near you.

The Stop Press news is also hardly surprising. Notwithstanding a long run of perfect spring days, the forecast for the first day of the season was for rain. Messrs Duckworth and Lewis must have been rubbing their hands in glee.

This issue of The Finger, if printed earlier, would have included advice on pre season training but It's a bit late for all that now so we might as well continue our bad habits. The best pre-season training regimen seen was in a book by Michael Green called The Art of Coarse Rugby. It contained useful pre season advice such as cut down smoking to three packets a day, and start going home from the pub at 10.30 instead of 11. If only we could all maintain such a strict regimen.

Best of luck to everyone, and as they say, may all your snicks be loud ones.



More learned gentlemen at the dinner, one of whom is no doubt plotting his run at the presidency.