

History and Sports

The Story of Cricket

Test cricket is a unique game in many ways. Discuss some of the ways in which it is different from other team games. How are the peculiarities of Test cricket shaped by its historical beginning as a village game?

Test matches are played over a longer period of time (five days presently). Originally, cricket developed in the form of test matches. There were certain features of this game that made it different from other games.

- Test matches were open-ended games. There was no definite time limit. They would go on and on till the match was decided. (Presently, a test match is a five-day game; if no result is achieved in five days it is declared a drawn game.) There was no other game with such a long game time.
- In cricket, the length of the pitch is defined at 22 yards. But the size or shape of the ground is not defined. This is not so in any other game.
- In cricket, all the important tools are made of natural materials, unlike golf and tennis where man-made materials are used.
- In cricket, a player is a member of a team. He plays for the team and not for individual laurels.

These peculiarities of the game of cricket were shaped by its historical beginning as a village game.

One, the rules of cricket were made before the Industrial Revolution. The rhythms of village life were slower. A match could go on and on till it was decided. The games that were codified after the Industrial Revolution were strictly scheduled to fit the routines of the industrial city life.

Two, cricket was originally played on common lands in the countryside. The size of the common lands varied from village to village, and region to region. Therefore, it was left open to decide the boundaries of the ground in the area in which the match was being played.

Three, unlike other games, the most important tools of cricket are all made of natural, pre-industrial materials. The bat is made of wood, as are the stumps and the bails. The ball is made of leather, twine and cork.

Describe one way in which in the nineteenth century, technology brought about a change in equipment and give one example where no change in equipment took place:

In the matter of protective equipment, cricket has been influenced by the technological change. The invention of vulcanized rubber led to the introduction of pads in 1848. Protective gloves were introduced soon thereafter. Helmets made of metal and synthetic lightweight materials became an important part of the protective equipment.

But the technological change did not materially alter the essence of the basic tools of the game, viz., bat, stumps, bails, and ball which are made of natural materials.

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Explain why cricket became popular in India and the West Indies. Can you give reasons why it did not become popular in countries in South America?

India and Caribbean islands (popularly known as West Indies) were under the colonial domination of England.

The game of cricket had originated in England. It was considered too noble and aristocratic. The colonial rulers took it long with them to their colonies. But they were careful to keep the game of cricket to themselves. They discouraged the natives from entering this game.

This was true everywhere in all colonies. But, for the natives, cricket became an emotional challenge. It came to symbolize a measure of racial equality and political progress.

Natives did all they could to excel in the game. The objective used to be to give expression to the feeling that they were in no way inferior to their English rulers. The same set of factors explains why the game of cricket did not become popular in South America. The colonialists did not introduce cricket there.

Give brief explanation for the following:

- The Parsis were the first Indian community to set up a cricket club in India.
- Mahatma Gandhi condemned the Pentangular tournament.
- The name of the ICC was changed from the Imperial Cricket Conference to the International Cricket Conference.
- The shift of the ICC headquarters from London to Dubai.

The Parsis were the first Indian community to set up a cricket club in India.

The Parsis were the first Indian community to set up a cricket club, known as Oriental Cricket Club, at Bombay. The Parsis could take this initiative principally because of two reasons:

- The Parsis had interest in trade; this brought them into close contact with the English.
- The Parsis were the first community to westernize and, hence, were considered closer to the English.

Mahatma Gandhi condemned the Pentangular tournament.

Quadrangular was the name of the first-class cricket tournament in India in which four religious communities participated through their teams- the Europeans, the Parsis, the Hindus, and the Muslims. The tournament came to be called Pentangular when a fifth team, namely the Rest, which comprised all the left over communities such as the Indian Christians, was added.

Thus, the Indian cricket was organized on communal lines. It sought to keep Indians divided along these lines. Mahatma Gandhi condemned the Pentangular tournament as a communally divisive competition that was out of place in a time when the nationalists were trying to unite India's diverse population.

The name of the ICC was changed from the Imperial Cricket Conference to the International Cricket Conference: -

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The Imperial Cricket Conference was responsible for the regulation of the game of cricket throughout the world. It was dominated by the members from two nations, England and Australia. They had the veto rights. With the disappearance of the British empire, the organization of world cricket also underwent a change. Two major changes suggestive of decolonization and de-imperialism were:

- The name of Imperial Cricket Conference was changed to International Cricket Conference.
- The veto rights were abolished and equal membership to other cricketing countries was introduced.

The shift of the ICC headquarters from London to Dubai: -

The shift of the ICC headquarter from the London to Dubai signified that the balanced of power in cricket was shifting from ex-colonial power and white men to the south Asia, which has come to dominate the world cricket.

How have advances in technology, especially television technology, affected the development of contemporary cricket?

Advances in technology have dramatic effects on the game of cricket. On field, the concept of 'Third Umpire' has been put into practice. A number of major decisions on field can be referred to him as he has the benefit of replays of every event from all possible angles. Stumps carry cameras; umpires can talk directly to the ground staff and others from their radios. Score-boards have become more functional and informative. Off field, the organization of matches has become much more convenient with easy flow of required information.

With the advent of telecast, cricket has become a marketable game which can generate huge revenues.

- Cricket boards have become rich by selling television rights to television companies.
- Television channels have made money by selling television spots to the companies which are happy to pay large sums of money to air the commercials for their products to the cricket's captive television audience.
- Continuous television coverage has made the cricketers celebrities who, besides being paid better by their cricket boards, make even large sums of money by making commercials for a wide range of products, from tyres to colas.
- Television coverage has expanded the audience for the game by telecasting cricket to small towns and villages.
- It has also broadened the social base of cricket. Children who never had the chance to watch international cricket match, because they lived outside the big cities, where top-level cricket was played, can now watch and learn by imitation their heroes.
- The technology of satellite television and the worldwide reach of multinational television companies have created a global market for the cricket.
