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# Over and Out

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## Still alive and kicking

**T**O misquote the great Mark Twain “Reports of the death of cricket have been greatly exaggerated” – at least if the summer of 2019 is anything to go by.

The World Cup could not have showcased cricket any better – especially from an England point of view. Sky deserve credit for allowing the final to be broadcast on free to air television, opportunities such as this need to be capitalised on, both from the participation point of view and from their own viewing figures point of view.

The final denouement will never be repeated if recent reports of the change from boundary countback to a second (or more) super over as a way of deciding the result are to be believed. This method is certainly in use in some domestic competitions already and seems much more satisfactory.

It also highlighted the pressures of being an ICC international umpire. There were without doubt some disappointing displays from one or two of our brethren. Yes, they are supposed to be the best, but they are still only human. Strangely one of the most high profile of incorrect decisions – the number of runs awarded when the ball hit Ben Stokes’ outstretched bat and found its way to the boundary – was one we’d all hope to avoid.

Would you swap places? The way their decisions are endlessly dissected and criticised in front of (and by) a worldwide audience puts our issues with a couple of captains and/or players on a Saturday afternoon into perspective. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the thought process gets scrambled every once in a while.

After all that excitement, we would surely have a nice quiet return to “proper” cricket with the arrival of the Ashes series. It took England at least one Test too many to adjust to the different demands of a five day contest. Steve Smith, in his own inimitable style, showed that it is truly a marathon not a sprint and still England couldn’t catch him – or bowl him or get him lbw or stumped etc.

In the second Test, England found a way to remove him as he succumbed to the newly introduced concussion protocol. There is still a question mark over why he was allowed to return when, as anyone who witnessed his batting after the incident will testify, he was obviously affected by the impact. Fortunately common sense prevailed the following day and he was withdrawn. In the process, Marcus Labuschagne became the first concussion substitute and went on to be a thorn in England’s side for the rest of the series!

This unfortunate incident – particularly Smith’s untimely return – presents a learning opportunity for all of us. The need to have players assessed and, if deemed fit to continue, carefully observed during the rest of the match in case of a delayed reaction, becomes something we need to be very aware of. With the sad death of Phil Hughes still reasonably fresh in the memory, this serves as a reminder of how hard that little red ball is.

This brings us onto the matter of umpire safety and what we should be doing to protect ourselves from that projectile. I know of umpires who as a matter of course wear an abdominal protector (to give it its polite title – a box to you and me). What other protection should/could we consider? Bruce Oxenford’s shield seems unwieldy but, if it gives him the confidence to continue, then so be it. We have seen, on more than one occasion, umpires wearing helmets, particularly in the Big Bash. Could we see the day where umpires are clad in a similar way to baseball umpires? This is something that is exercising the grey matter of various “high ups”. Given the age profile of our “profession” it would seem remiss to not at least discuss/consider alternatives to purely relying on our reaction times.

For those of you on social media, you’ll be excited to know that we now have a Twitter page, our handle is **@hertsaco** - we hope that this will provide another avenue for us to keep in touch with each other.

Inside this issue, we have Mark’s second crack at Chairman’s corner. We are an organisation for our members so, as Mark explains, what would you like to see?

Jon Holland outlines how the umpire grading system is structured and how your grade is decided.

Nick Hall has details of the winter’s training schedule – he also adds to the themed cricket matches, this time with player names that feature locations.

John Sweedy reports on the appointments made during the summer – a good job done by all!

We also have a brief ditty from one of our long term contributors, Allen Wells.

The Secret Scorer has, amongst other things, chosen to dip a toe into the vexed field of gender politics – you have been warned....

*Tim Caldicott*  
General Secretary

## **THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER**

Chairman's Corner number two for me and I'm pleased to report that the HACO has not collapsed and cricket has been played the length and breadth of Hertfordshire.

I'm sure most of you watched the recent Cricket World Cup Final and suffered the rollercoaster emotions of the occasion. Much discussion has been had among those umpires I have seen since the final about the deflected overthrows and the rights and wrongs of the decisions that were made on the day. I'm sure you have your own thoughts.

In the previous Chairman's Corner, I introduced you to Inspiring Generations – the ECB strategy for 2020/24. Unfortunately, I don't have much of an update this time around other than the **strategy** is being "progressed". I hope to be able to share a more informative update with you in future Corners.

Turning thoughts to the off-season, we have published the dates of our S1 and S2 courses for November. More dates will be announced for 2020 as well as our always well attended CPD courses.

At our recent committee meeting, we had our perennial head-scratching debate about Members' Evenings. The Captains' Evening we hosted for the first time this year was well received and is certainly something we want to repeat. Our law refresher and quiz evening has been running for several years now but still seems to generate interest. The evening with Angus Fraser was extremely well attended and was possibly the highlight of our close-season programme.

What I'd be keen to know from our membership is what you would like to see on our agenda. Is the framework of hosting meetings in January, February and March still the right thing to do? If you have any thoughts on this, please drop an email to me at [members.haco@outlook.com](mailto:members.haco@outlook.com). I can't promise anything at this moment in time, but it would be good to get some other views.

That's it from me. I hope you enjoyed the season.

**Mark Callaby**

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## **Training, Education & Personal Development**

One of the roles of the County Development Officer is to update Umpire grading on an annual basis and this is done for the ACO at the end of the season to enable them to send out new grades (in this case for 2020) round the end of the calendar year.

Grading was introduced to enable umpires to know what level of cricket they were currently umpiring at and, for those with ambitions to progress, to advise them what the next step up would be on the progression pyramid.

It also gives appointers an indication of those who may be able to stand at a higher level, either because they are ready to progress or because they have umpired successfully at that level in the past and are still considered capable of doing so. All grading is evidential based on where an umpire has officiated in the previous season.

There are now 7 grades as follows:

C1 – umpire has been appointed to a minimum of six matches in ECB Premier Leagues.

C2 – umpire has been appointed to a minimum of six matches in a league designated by the ACO as the second tier of cricket in the county.

C3 – umpire has been appointed to a minimum of six matches in a league designated by the ACO as the third tier of cricket in the county.

C4 – umpire has been appointed to a minimum of six matches in a league designated by the ACO as the fourth tier of cricket in the county.

C5 – umpire has been appointed to a minimum of six matches that are in a league designated by the ACO as the fifth tier of cricket in the county, or are deemed by the County Development Officer to be of an equivalent standard.

C6 – I am unaware of the level of cricket in which the umpire is standing. In these cases the umpire should make contact with me to advise where he or she may be umpiring so that the correct grading can be given

C7 – umpire is no longer actively umpiring.

Some umpires may have umpired at a higher level but now, for whatever reason, choose to stand at a lower level. If such umpires are still considered capable of standing at that higher level this will be made clear in the grading. Therefore an umpire who stands in a third tier league but who has previously stood at C1 would be graded C3+2.

Hertfordshire league grades for umpires are as follows:

