

The Axis of Not Cricket



On the launch of a new cricket season, some people *still* don't care.

The thing about cricket is — well, it's cricket isn't it? Most people in the free-thinking world love it, that's a fact, but there remains a recalcitrant minority. A report released by the Bureau of Accurate Information yesterday confirms the existence of 'rogue' states still yet to adopt cricket as their national pastime. Two neighbouring 'hamlets' called North and South America, a dysfunctional union some call Europe, a tiny place called China no-ones ever heard of, most of a little peninsula called Africa no one goes to and a few mostly vacant lots throughout Asia no one even talks to...Japan, Korea? — I'm looking at you guys. Unafraid to name names, it further alleges that these 'anti-cricketers' have organised themselves into what the bureau calls The Axis of Not Cricket, and when asked about their stance towards the game have simply replied, "Not loving it."

To find out what "loving it" does mean though, simply head to places like the subcontinent, where for half a billion Indians a good googly is like a good breakfast — essential for a young man's development. If that's gone over your head, there's a fair chance you're in a happy Vietnamese cocoon of a non-cricket situation, and leather-on-willow just isn't your thing. You'll never understand the vagaries of the five-day test, nor ponder the value of an extra slip before tea. You'll remain apathetic about the T20 mercenary, and it's likely that you'll never enjoy a well-timed pull without some element of adolescent guilt. Leg before wicket? Go back to jumping rope.

The Allies



For those of us of the opposite persuasion however, start jumping for joy. Last month in Saigon saw the return of the Vietnam Cricket Association's multinational T20 league. Now in its 9th edition, and still being played on the best oval and only cricket wicket in Vietnam, the action has already gone tropical — along with the heat.

Now, in cricket as in life, there is no room for impartiality, modesty or balance when it comes to the facts. For example the United Cricket Club (UCC) will win the league this season (there you go — I said it). But nice guys don't often win in this game, rather they get smashed for 27 off an over, bat down the order and end up scoring with their Mum - ruing the day they ever got involved because the English Cricket Club (ECC) were one short.

Nevertheless, it is these type of people that make the game great and one of them is John Patrick, or JP to his fans. An emerging spin bowler and the most enthusiastic outfielder in the game, JP makes the game great on two fronts. He's an American who thinks he might be Australian, which makes him a renegade, and we all love a renegade, but more importantly, he's achieved something special before his teams even bowled a ball this year.

The Florida native and self-confessed former volleyballer, science teacher and "massive Gators fan" has had a huge offseason by taking it upon himself to get the Australian team's crest tattooed on his upper-thigh. You're reading that correctly. He's had what essentially amounts to the Aussie coat of arms tattooed permanently on his body, and it's not small.

Any American who will do this is alright with me, and any cricketer who will do it deserves a place in the hall of fame. Credit has to go to the Saigon Australia Cricket Club (SACC) administration, who immediately rewarded the act with a free lifetime membership at the club. Correct weight boys, you've earned some respect back there.

"The original idea was beer-fuelled," admits JP. "We had just won the cup, sure, but it reminds me of a tough time and some great guys that got me through it. The fact that they gave me a life membership for as long as I'm in town is a bonus."

And that right there is why I still love cricket. A great leveller, a good clean way to spend your Sunday morning in Saigon and a game that's loved by all, a few recalcitrant minorities aside. — *Jon Aspin*

Meet JP, Congratulate the UCC and Check out the action at RMIT's South Saigon campus any given Sunday from 8am, when the first of two weekly games kick off. The season runs from now until the end of May. Check [facebook.com/VietnamCricket](https://www.facebook.com/VietnamCricket) for more info