



Κυπριακή Ομοσπονδία Κρικετ  
Cyprus Cricket Federation

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## Stepping up! Cyprus Women in the top 30

2024 was an extraordinary year for Cyprus's women cricketers, Nadeesha Waruwangodage looks back



29<sup>th</sup> in the World! Cyprus Women's Team in a very damp Serbia celebrating beating the hosts 2-0 (photo Iresha Chathurani)

2024 was a historic year for Cyprus Cricket as the Women National Team made its International debut in 2024 at Happy Valley. Much credit for this is due to the team captain Iresha Chathurani who played cricket at an advanced level in Sri Lanka before moving to Cyprus. Iresha has recruited

players from all over Cyprus and helped to to establish the National Team.

Although the National Team played its first international in June 2024, the players have been training together with coach Andy Crawford for the

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# HURRY CURRY



last 18 months and the team played a series of ECL T10 games against Estonia with Cyprus emerging victorious with a 4-1 score line.

The T20i series against the same opposition started with Cyprus winning its first ICC sanctioned game in their first outing much to the delight of players, officials, and supporters – a historic moment for all involved with Cyprus Cricket. With one game abandoned, the T20i series finished 5-0 in favour of Cyprus.

A remarkable feat that was only made possible by the devoted group of players and the outstanding leadership of the captain Iresha Chaturani, coaching by Andy Crawford and the tireless support of team manager Muhammad Husain.

The Cyprus Women's National Team also participated in the Avala Cup in Belgrade, Serbia in September 2024. The matches took place at the Lisicji Jarak Cricket Ground and the two T10 matches were both won by the Cyprus team resulting in them returning triumphantly home with the Avala Cup. Out of the four T20i games, two were abandoned due to heavy rain. However the two successful matches enabled Cyprus to reach the 29<sup>th</sup> place in the ICC WT20i rankings – a proud moment for all and perhaps, the highest global ranking for any Cyprus team in any team sports.

2024, also saw for the first time women hardball domestic competition taking place in Cyprus. The two local teams that took part

in the Spring and Autumn competitions were Sri Lankan Lions Limassol and Moufflons Cricket Club.

Sri Lankan Lions Limassol won the spring competition 4-0 and thwarted off the Moufflons challenge 2-1 in the autumn competition.

Many of the players in the team are Sri Lankan nationals but residents of Cyprus. The efforts and dedication of the captain and coach have been paramount in the success of the team. The players attend the training sessions that take place every Sunday at Happy Valley which includes warm-ups, batting, bowling, fielding and wicket-keeping drills. The National team's on-field results are a testament to the motivation and camaraderie of the squad.



*If you're wondering about author, Nadeesha Waruwangodage's relationship to Cyprus cricket, strap in! She is a batter for the national team, she's also the wife of national team player Prasad, the sister-in-law of another (Mangala Pradeep), her sister is Nilusha Thilangi who is yet another national team player and, finally, she's the mother of a Sanudhi Shaakya who plays for Moufflons CC Women. Suffice to say, cricket is a big part of her life!*



*Skipper, Iresha Chaturani*

The off-season sessions in Autumn 2024 are focused towards the April 2025 tournament hosted by the Cyprus Cricket Federation with T20i matches against Denmark, The Isle of Man and Jersey and then a tour to the Czech Republic in May. The final international assignment of the year will be ECC-W in December at Cartama, Spain. The goal is to bring the trophy to Cyprus and to achieve a higher place in the WT20i ranking.

In celebration of a successful year, the team organised a get together in December where they shared ideas and made plans and targets for 2025. Their wish is that the success of women's cricket in Cyprus will attract more women to take up the sport.

Hopes for the future include a permanent coach, facilities to practice, equipment, sponsors, and more support from the Cyprus government.





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# Men's 2024 Season Review

*The women may have the headlines, but the men's cricket continued to thrive in 2024. Richard Boxall gives his review of the year.*



*MSN Punjab Lion's - winners of the Autumn League - the final fixture of the year (1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2024)*

Five separate competitions took place during the year, with five different winners, demonstrating the growing all-round strength of the men's game in Cyprus.

First came the **Spring T20** with a record 23 teams entered, seeking the winners' prize of a place in the European Cricket League in Spain. In the group stage only Lankan Sports Club won all their matches, only to suffer a heavy defeat in the semi finals at the hands of MSN Punjab Lions.

The Lions themselves were heavily beaten in the final, only managing

122 in reply to the 161-8 made by Al Fatah, who claimed their first trophy. Waqas Akhtar of Al Fatah was the MVP (most valuable player), narrowly ahead of Punjab Lions' Neeraj Tiwari.

Running alongside the T20 was the **40-over League**, contested by 10 teams, although one was unable to fulfil its fixtures. There were 7 scores of over 300 during the competition, topped by Black Caps' 401-4. The most remarkable match was between Moufflons and Sri Lanka Lions in the semi final. Moufflons made 352-5, normally a winning score, but the Lions chased

it down inside 32 overs for the loss of only 3 wickets, led by 134 from Akila Kalugala - one of 8 centuries hit during the season.

In the final the Sri Lankans found Markhor's bowling a bit harder to face and fell to 194 in reply to Markhor's 262, leaving Malik Amir to lift the winners' trophy. The competition's MVP was Markhor's Zeeshan Ahmad, narrowly ahead of Kavindu Arachchilage of Sri Lanka Lions.

During the spring season the inaugural **National Championships** were held, an



event for clubs fully registered with KOA. This was won by Sri Lankan Lions after comfortable wins over Moufflons and New Limassol Moufflons.

In the heat of summer another new competition took place - the **Premier League**. The format of this event was designed to give the best players the chance to compete against each other, and the three teams were the "Best of Nicosia", "Best of Limassol" and the Cyprus National Team.

After fixtures against each other, all three teams were level on points, but the winners based on net run rate were Limassol. Strangely all three teams had a negative net run rate - I'm not sure how that is possible but the computer cannot be wrong, can it?

To spare the blushes of the Cyprus team, the two leaders as MVP were national team players Taranjit Singh and Mangala Gunasekara.

The cricketing year was completed with the **Autumn T20** competition, which again attracted a good entry of 19 teams and featured some close and exciting games with fluctuating fortunes.

Sri Lankan Lions had a convincing win by 7 wickets in the group stage over eventual champions MSN Punjab Lions, but then lost their semi final by an agonising one run against Markhor, who had won all their group matches but only finished second due to points deductions.

BFC (British Forces in Cyprus) and Cyprus Knight Riders both reached the quarter final stage for the first time, where the Riders came close to upsetting Sri Lanka Lions, who beat them with just 4 balls and 3 wickets to spare.

In the final Taranjit Singh took 4-15 to restrict Markhor to 111, before some sensible batting saw the Lions through to their first trophy of

the year. MVP for this event was Sachithra Tharanga of Sri Lanka Lions who had a remarkably consistent season with the bat, closely followed by Neeraj Tiwari of Punjab Lions.

Cyprus Cricket is grateful to all the umpires who have officiated during the year, in particular Martin Adams who has done the lion's share. The efforts of players and team managers are also appreciated, and we need to continue in a spirit of co-operation into a busy 2025.

There have sadly been a few issues of poor timekeeping and behaviour, including dissent at umpiring decisions. We are supporting our umpires to take firmer action about these in future and all teams and players are called on to ensure that the game is played in the proper spirit and with respect for the Laws and for opponents and officials.



*In the Autumn League Final, Punjab Lions almost contrived to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory as Markhor took 4 wickets for 4 runs - luckily for the Lions, they only needed 4 to win.*

# Ruel Braithwaite: Top Coach

*Cyprus Cricket is very lucky to have Ruel Braithwaite as the men's national team cricket coach. Andrew Pepper chatted to him about his cricketing life and how he ended up in Cyprus*



AP: Where did you grow up and how did you start with cricket - at school?

RB: I grew up in Barbados, a small island in the Caribbean sea where cricket to us is like football to Brazil. As children we would get together and play cricket anywhere, with bats carved from pieces of wood we would find knocking around. I used to watch the highlights of West Indies matches on the local news whenever their games were televised or listen to them on the radio and from the age of 6 years old, I dreamt of playing for them. I first started playing competitive, hard ball cricket at Primary school at around 8 years old. My first coach was the late, West Indies wicket-keeper Thelston Payne and his first bit of advice to me was that as a fast bowler my job was to either get them out or get them off the pitch, either one would do.

AP: Are you a batter/bowler/all-rounder?

RB: I started out as a fast bowler and was an opening bowler most of my career. I liked batting and had great hand-eye coordination but I was short-sighted and had to wear glasses. I hated batting in them because I would lose the ball at the last minute. It was only when I moved to England and got my first pair of contact lenses that my batting really came on. Later in my career, I batted in the middle order and consistently scored runs in County 2nd XI cricket for Durham and Hampshire.

AP: What level did you play at - school/club/region?

RB: Whilst I was at school in Barbados, I represented my country at U-15 and U-19 levels. School cricket was played to a very high standard and at the age

of 16, I joined Combined Schools and played in the local 1st Division Tournament. We played against the strongest teams in the country, where the West Indies players played during their international off-season, and we really competed. On occasion, we even beat a few of these teams we came up against.

Once I moved to England, I played County 2nd XI cricket for Surrey and Leicester before I signed professional contracts with both Durham County and Hampshire County respectively. I also represented Loughborough University and the University of Cambridge in the County 1st Class competition. Whilst in England I was called up to represent the West Indies whilst studying at University and played against England Lions.

AP: Do you have a favourite cricket memory as a player?

RB: I do have quite a few but one occasion really stands out. I played for the MCC Combined Universities in a warm up game against Sri Lanka. They were on a tour to England and I was selected in a team to play against them, in preparation for the series. I opened the bowling and executed the perfect delivery to Mahela Jayawardene to bowl him between his bat and pad. I had a bit of pace but this ball swung away in the air and after pitching on the perfect length, nipped back and bowled him. The gap



*Ruel (2<sup>nd</sup> from the left) with some of the national team*

was narrow and closing fast and in the cricketing fraternity, we all joke about the 'barn door' Jayawardene bats with. No-one gets past his world famous defence, so to break through, it was a moment to cherish.

AP: How did you end up in Cyprus?

RB: I met my wife whilst studying at university for my first degree and she is Cypriot. I visited the island many times over the years for holiday and after we had our two little ones, we decided that we wanted them to grow up around family. Cyprus is a great place to raise a family and we get to give our children the gift of a second language. We both hail from beautiful islands and have big, close knit families so either option was going to be a win. We



will continue to visit the Caribbean regularly though.

AP: What attracted you to coaching?

RB: I am a very analytical and highly intrinsically motivated person and when I won a scholarship to Dulwich College in the UK, I had access to some amazing facilities. I would set up my own personal training sessions on evenings after school and when my peers found out, they would ask me to let them know so they could join. These became very competitive sessions and I would naturally offer guidance whenever I saw an area of weakness or area for improvement. I really enjoyed watching them improve and it made these sessions even more competitive. Parents who were collecting their children from school would pass by and started to approach me to have one-to-one sessions with their children. I also then picked up some coaching with London Schools and never looked back.

AP: What do you look for in players?

The age old saying "Cricket is 10% physical and 90% mental" holds a lot of truth, so one of the things that I look for in players is mental toughness/resilience and a never say die attitude. Those players who take the fight to the bitter end and who believe in their ability to get the job done, no matter the circumstance, are like gold dust. They can lift their performance and that of their team's, to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Secondly, I look for a strong work ethic and welcome those players who go out and work on their game when no-one is watching. One of my favourite sayings is "Train hard, play easy" and I believe it's this deep, personal work that brings the most development.

The third thing I look for is a team player. Cricket is a team game and a team is only as strong as its weakest link. At any one time only 11 players can take to the field, meaning that players will miss out. Not playing doesn't

mean you can't affect your teams success. The attitude and encouragement exhibited by 12th, 13th and 14th men can play a pivotal role in affecting the teams spirit and cohesion.

AP: A related question; if someone is qualified to play for Cyprus, is it just statistics that will get you a seat on the plane?

RB: Qualification is just one of the requirements for playing for the National Team but it's definitely not the only thing. Those qualities mentioned in my response to the previous question, along with experience, performance (statistics) and the overall balance of the team are other factors.

AP: A lot of overseas tournaments have been in Northern Europe where conditions are very different; how do you coach for that kind of change?

RB: I do agree that conditions are very different in the Northern European countries but the one constant that in many ways levels the playing field is that all European cricket is played on an artificial surface. Saying that however, there are some difference such as the swinging ball, pace of the outfield and catching in the grey overcast skies that we must prepare for.

We can use specialist equipment like the swing balls or narrower bats to combat playing the swinging ball. We have plans to introduce smaller, more targeted



*Ruel (right) with England's Roland Butcher*

training groups, where we can focus on technical aspects for batters and target bowling for bowlers.

Regarding the pace of the outfield, we have been drilling our ground fielding by reducing the distance so the ball comes quicker and also by working on attacking the ball, quickly closing down the angle and speed of release, when fielding balls hit to either side of the player.

The grey skies are more difficult to replicate but we have been working on our high catches, focusing on speed to the ball and the use of various technique whilst catching, and I believe the clear blue, cloudless skies in Cyprus, creates a similar effect.

AP: Do you have any (printable) anecdotes about coaching/ playing?

RB: A few pop to mind but none are printable!

# First Women's Tour is a win

*Having been lucky enough to travel on a couple of cricket tours as a photographer (not as a player, obviously), I can say they are brilliant fun. Muhammad Husain accompanied the women's team to Serbia and gives an insight into the unique world of cricket tours.*



*The Cyprus & Serbian Womens' teams in a cold, damp Serbia celebrating a 2-0 series win (photo Iresha Chathurani)*

Cricket tours are perhaps the best way to make new friends and explore the world. Cyprus Cricket Women National Team tour to Serbia in September 2024 was one such experience. It was the first ever outbound tour by Cypriot women cricketers and it turned out to be a celebrated moment in the history of Cyprus cricket.

The idea was discussed between the Presidents of the two cricket Federations on the side lines of the ICC Europe Regional Conference in Athens in April 2024.

The tour was originally planned for June but was postponed until September because of the exorbitant mid-summer air fares.

Initially, the teams were to play a bilateral series of six T20i games. However, to provide an opportunity to upcoming players who are not yet qualified to represent the National sides as per the ICC eligibility requirements, it was agreed to play a two game T10 tournament on the first day followed by four games of T20is on the last 2 days.

The Cypriot ladies were accompanied by their coach Andrew Crawford and Roshan Siriwardanage – who went with the team to officiate the games as an umpire (there's an interview with Roshan on page 11). I was due to join them the day after the T10 games.

The team played the T10 games which allowed them to get accustomed to the pitch and outfield, which didn't look that different to the ones at Happy Valley ground in Cyprus.

However, the same cannot be said about the weather. The Cypriot cricketers realised very quickly that they require warmer clothing if they have to survive the remaining two days of the tour. The captain and the coach were on the phone to me after the first day's play, asking me to bring warmer clothing with me. I somehow managed to stuff thirteen items of warm clothing into my hand luggage for the team. In the meanwhile, The women cricketers were full of gratitude to the hosts for their loans of warm clothing and one lucky member of Cyprus squad

felt very proud wearing Serbian Cricket Federation ex-President Vladimir Ninkovic's police sweater.

The weather did threaten to disrupt play on the second day, however, the games eventually got underway after a slight delay. After Cyprus recorded a convincing win in the first T20i, the hosts made a strong comeback in the second game bowling out Cyprus for 90 runs. However, the Cypriot women showed remarkable self-belief and conjured up a 22 run win just in time before the rain arrived. Though, there was no dancing in the rain but Haris Djac, the Serbia Cricket Federation President, claimed it was worth the loss to hear Cypriots singing together after the game.

The singing continued well after the game as the bus driver found out even before starting the engine that there is no need to turn on the music system as the joyous cricketers made their way back from the ground after the second day's play.



The cheerful cricketers had realised that they have created history, they have done enough to get on the ICC WT20I ranking charts and that too in style – a top 30 ranking - which is perhaps the highest ranking for any team sports for Cyprus. A historic moment for all involved with Cyprus cricket and a very proud moment for all women cricketers, their families, and friends. Though, the members of the touring group were aware that they will achieve a top 30 ranking if they don't lose on the tour but as they were playing the Serbian team for the first time and that too away from home there was a bit of fluctuation of heartbeat at times. The reassurance provided by the team management and the support group back home helped the cricketers as they met the expectations with exemplary team-work.

Two T20Is were scheduled for the last day of the tour, however, the weather that threatened to disrupt play a day earlier; treated the cricketers with the sound of thunder and a lightning show in tandem with cloudbursts that eventually ruled out any possibility of play on the last day and forced the cricketers to take shelter in the flying school's restaurant for the day.

A tour that started with a visit to the Belgrade fortress and shopping frenzy on the first day was about to culminate with more memories to be created with old and new friends at the Lisičji Jarak Airfield's restaurant. The hosts' warm hospitality was once again on display as some freshly baked pizzas were bestowed in abundance before the restaurant prepared and served the lunch.

The day was rounded off with the presentations and the two Presidents complimenting players and the Federations. I was particularly impressed that the players managed to stay awake during my sermon.

The Cypriot players got the chance to get a good nap in the plane, as they embarked on their early morning direct flight



*Cyprus batter, Thamara de Silva (photo, Dylan Budge)*

back to Cyprus. A blessing in disguise - as usually for most cricket tours, Cyprus players have to make a stopover before reaching their final destination. Most of the touring party reported back to work after landing at the Larnaca airport in the early hours of Monday morning while some had a sleep in the car before driving back 150 kilometres to reach home.

A memorable, historic, exploratory tour where lots of new friendships were made comes to a conclusion and as it

is said what happens on the tour stays on the tour.

The Cypriot women cricketers will have a lot more opportunities to sing and make people dance to their tunes as they look forward to the home assignment in April against Jersey, Isle of Man, and Denmark. Followed by an away bilateral series in May against Czechia and the prospects of making their debut at ECN's European Cricket Championship (Women) in December 2025.



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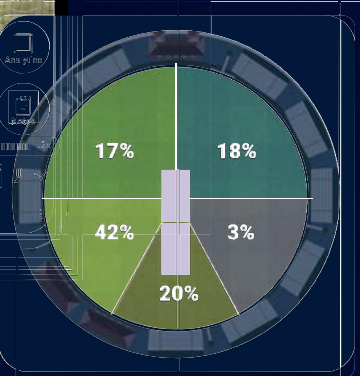
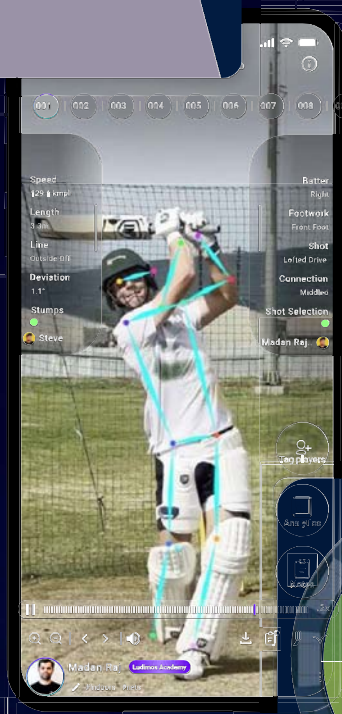
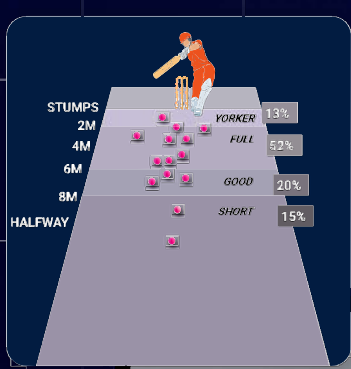
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# Who's Zat?

Roshan Siriwardanage is not only a fine cricketer but also a qualified umpire; he chatted to Muhammad Husain about his umpiring life



MH: How did you get involved in to cricket?

RS: I got involved into cricket at a very young age in Sri Lanka. I was part of my school team at various age-group levels U-13, U-15, U-17, U-19. Later on, I played cricket at district level and 'A' level in Sri Lanka.

MH: Please share with us your umpiring journey.

RS: I only started umpiring games after relocating to Cyprus few years ago. I umpire regularly in Cyprus domestic competitions – both men and women games and occasionally, junior cricket games. Also, after acquiring my umpiring qualifications last year, I stood in my first ever T20i game.

MH: What opportunities Cyprus Cricket has provided to you to develop as an umpire?

RS: The Cyprus Cricket Federation has very effectively promoted and rolled out the ICC courses available through EdApp and this has seen a rise in number of coaches and umpires in Cyprus. I have benefited tremendously from these courses as I acquired my coaching and umpiring qualifications with the help of Cyprus Cricket through ICC courses.

Furthermore, the presence of ICC Master tutor during the course provided a great opportunity to gain some invaluable experience.

MH: What was your most memorable moment as an umpire?

RS: It's more of an unforgettable moment. While umpiring a WT20i game, I gave an LBW decision – much to the disliking of the batter. However, after the game, I spoke with the player

about the decision and viewed the game recording together which helped player understand the decision and consequently appreciated the decision.

MH: What are some challenges you've faced as an umpire, and how did you overcome them?

RS: Umpiring in domestic cricket is also about educating players. Quite a few players are social cricketers who lack knowledge about the laws and playing conditions and hence question umpiring decisions. I try to get on with the game and speak with the player after the game and provide further clarity on the decision.

MH: What is more challenging? Umpiring in domestic cricket or international cricket (T20is)?

RS: Both have its challenges. In domestic cricket umpires not only are umpiring but also educating the players about the rules and regulations. Whereas, in the International games there is the pressure of the live streaming.

MH: What is more challenging? Playing International cricket for Cyprus or umpiring a T20i game?

RS: My personal feeling is that umpiring is a lot more challenging than playing. As a player, you only have to manage your own game, but as an umpire you are managing the whole game and players expect you to be mistake-proof which is not the case as umpires are also humans.

MH: How different is it umpire a men's game as compared to women's game?

RS: Both have their own unique intricacies, however, with women's games I have noticed a lot more extras are conceded by the teams which lengthens the



*Roshan (2<sup>nd</sup> on left) umpired in the recent Serbia v Cyprus*

game as compared to men's cricket.

MH: What is your advice/recommendations for umpires in Cyprus?

RS: To excel you need to seek knowledge continuously and gain more experience by umpiring as many domestic games as possible and, if provided opportunity, to umpire T20is alongside more experienced umpires. Umpires should be impartial and always give the correct decision without any pressure.

MH: What are your recommendations for Cyprus Cricket?

RS: Cyprus Cricket is working tirelessly to train and educate players and is encouraging them to avail the opportunities to acquire coaching and umpiring qualifications. I would recommend to continue providing opportunities and keep educating players about the laws, rules & regulations, and the playing conditions as it makes the umpires work easier. Additionally, Cyprus Cricket could look into further use of technology to assist officials.



# Notches and Fieldsmen

*If you've a lot of time on your hands, why not read old cricket laws? That's what Andrew Pepper did and he prised out some surprising nuggets*

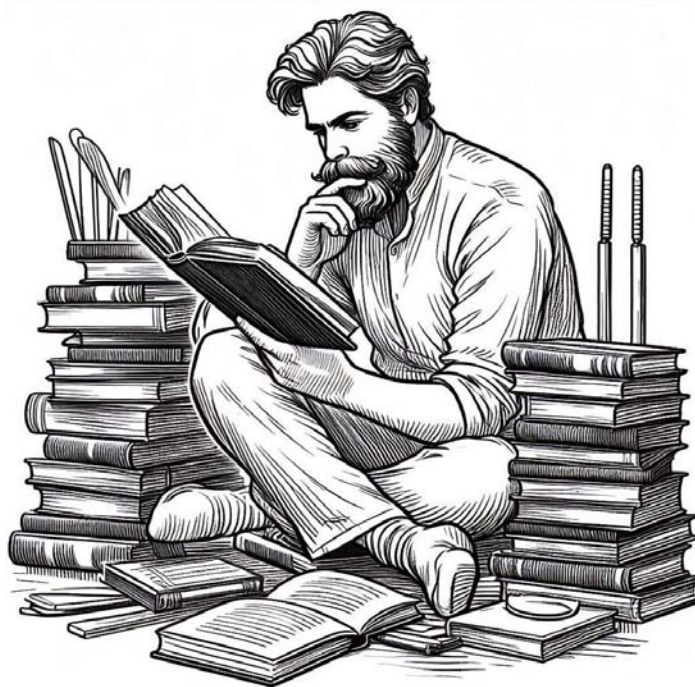


The laws of cricket were first printed in 1755 and an "agreed upon" version was produced in 1774 at the Star and Garter tavern in Pall Mall. The Star and Garter was more like a Gentleman's Club frequented by "wealthy and reckless young men" with a keen interest in money and, in particular, gambling (the Star and Garter was also the location of the first meeting of the Jockey Club in 1750).

The 1755 version of the laws had a nice first law: "The Pitching the first Wicket is to be determined by the Toss of a Piece of Money." Alas, that turn of phrase was removed in 1774.

One of the first things to strike me when I read the original 1774 laws was that teams didn't score boundaries - boundaries didn't come in to the laws until 1884 and, even then, the score for a boundary seems to have been up for negotiation on the day. There was a way to score a 4 introduced in 1809; if the ball was declared lost, then the "striker shall be allowed 4".

Teams didn't technically score runs until the 1884 laws. Before then, they scored "notches" - because scorers recorded runs with notches on tally sticks. Runs weren't mentioned at all in the 1774 edition and one of the laws was "If the strikers run a short notch, the Umpire must call No Notch." "No notch" is an expression I'd encourage umpires to re-introduce into the game.



*Time on your hands? Old cricket books can be the perfect diversion.*

One thing I noticed with the 1774 laws, bearing in mind they were drawn up by wealthy, young men in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were surprisingly gender neutral. In 2021, there was a bit of stir in the cricketing world when the MCC announced that the laws of cricket would be changed, replacing "batsman" with "batter". Some of the reactions to the change could be described as "disproportionate", especially as the 1774 laws are actually a model of inclusivity - there is no reference to "batsmen" - the ball is bowled by a "bowler" and struck by a "striker" - in fact, the term "batsman" wasn't introduced until 1947.

In the early laws fielders aren't mentioned at all. Judging from the 1774 laws, they could stand where they liked, wear whatever they liked

and do a juggling act behind the bowler's arm if they wanted to, and there was nothing the umpires could do about it.

Fielding wasn't brought into the laws until 1884. But, in a foreshadowing of the batter/batsman controversy, the players in the field were then called "fieldsmen" and in case you're thinking this is a long obsolete Victorian term, "fieldsmen" was still in the laws in the 1980 edition and, it has to be said, the switch from "fieldsmen" to "fielder" didn't attract the same attention as the one from "batsman" to "batter".

What's striking about the 1774 laws is there is a section on betting. When one first looks through the list of topics, it seems quite forward thinking to have a gambling policy so early in the game's history, but if you recall the nature of the Star and Garter, it's more obvious what the section is about; it is there to explain what should be bet on, to quote: "If one party beats the other in one innings, the notches in the first innings shall determine the bet."

The final thought about the 1774 laws is the omissions; for example, it didn't say if "notches" before the ball is caught would be counted; I can imagine some heated debates if a striker was caught out after completing the one notch they needed to win the game and trying to claim they'd won the game before the catch, in 1809 it was made clear - notches don't count if the ball is caught!

# Next in - Veronika Shchukina

*Veronika Schukina is 14 years old and has been playing cricket for a long time. Muhammad Husain chatted with her.*



MH: Where do you get your interest in cricket?

VS: I got my first interest in cricket when we were playing it in my old school, during our PE lesson. I remember that I really enjoyed this particular PE lesson, but since I didn't know anything about cricket at that time (I was 9 at that moment), I forgot about it for a while, but when I came to the Heritage School in 2020 and noticed that there was a cricket club offered by the school, I immediately asked my parents to sign me up. And from that moment my love to cricket became unstoppable.

MH: When did you start playing cricket?

VS: I first started playing 'softball cricket' when I was in Year 5. During our first lesson we practised fielding, and throughout year 5 we were taught the basics of cricket - how to bowl properly and how to bat (we practised in the nets). In year 6, I decided to test my cricket skills that I achieved throughout the year, so I took part in my first cricket tournament that was hosted by our school. Though we couldn't win the tournament, I received a lot of new experience, practice and memories.

MH: Do you get coaching in Cyprus?

VS: I get coaching at my school's cricket club along with my classmates and students from other classes. I also participate in the Cyprus youth cricket club that gets hosted on Saturdays. In addition to that I would like to mention (and thank) my first coach Mr Mathew Wall for his endless support throughout the years that I've been at Heritage School and for helping me to improve my cricket skills and making me a better player. I

would also like to thank you for hosting the Saturday youth cricket club and giving me the opportunity to train with the Cyprus Women's National cricket teams (Muhammad blushes).

MH: Do you support a particular team and/or player?

VS: I support the English Cricket Team because I think that they are a decent team that has got a lot of excellent players. I also support the Cyprus Cricket Team because now I have a lot of friends there and it is a national team of my homeland.

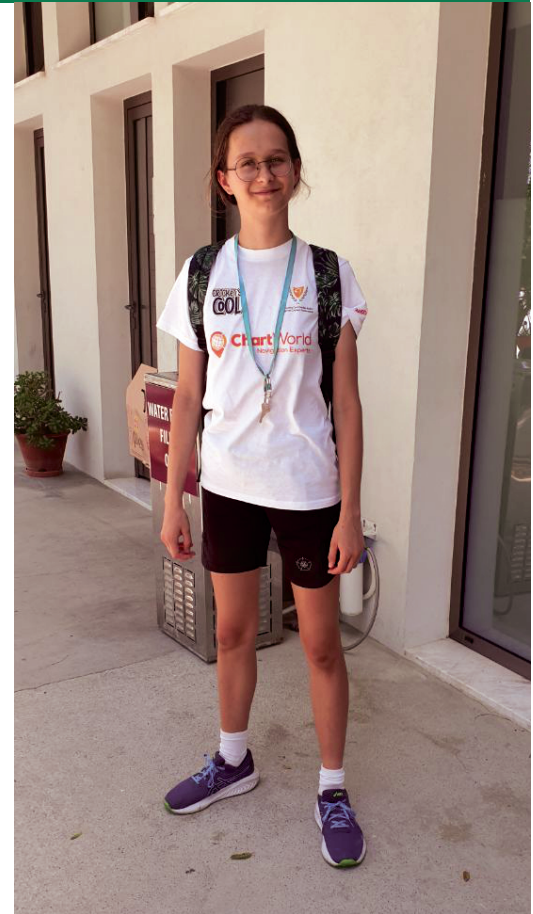
Also I am a fan of the English cricketer James Anderson because he is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest bowlers in the history of cricket and he is also a great author. I have read one of his books called "Bowl. Sleep. Repeat" and I really enjoyed reading it.

MH: Do you prefer batting or bowling? Why?

VS: I prefer bowling because I practised my bowling skills every lesson since year 5, whereas I didn't have that much time to practice batting. In addition to that, I feel a bit uncomfortable while batting, because the ball could come to me at any speed (and I once got a small injury, because of that).

MH: How long have you been playing "hard ball" cricket?

VS: I have had encounters with hardball cricket when I was in year 6 and 7, but we only practised bowling and batting in the nets. Unfortunately, we stopped playing it due to the fact that it seemed that somebody



*Veronika (photo by ace photographer and Veronika's Dad, Artem Shchukin)*

was always getting injured. But I have actually started playing hardball cricket from the start of 2024 during our Saturday youth cricket club, and I have enjoyed it really much.

MH: What's your best moment on a cricket pitch?

VS: Being on a cricket pitch itself and being involved in a game already makes me happy. But truly the best moments of all time happen when I bowl someone out (when the ball hits the wickets clearly) or when I catch the ball in the air before it hits the ground and the batsman gets out because of that.



MH: What are some challenges you've faced in cricket, and how did you overcome them?

VS: One of the challenges that I usually face in cricket is playing badly during the first lesson after the end of the holidays. The second challenge is the struggle to switch from soft ball to hard ball cricket (since I have had to adapt to use the equipment that differs significantly from the equipment that we used for softball cricket), but I have overcome it by participating in the Saturday cricket club. The last

challenge that I still face now in cricket is the inability to remain calm after making mistakes. I get really mad after I make mistakes because they reduce the team's chances to win.

MH: What's your cricketing ambitions? Do you hope to play for Cyprus someday?

VS: I'm aiming to become a better version of myself in cricket and my dream is to participate in international competitions playing for Cyprus, but I know that there is a lot to do to make my dream

come true.

MH: What are your recommendations for Cyprus Cricket? How can Cyprus Cricket improve youth cricket?

VS: I would be really excited if Saturday Cricket duration can be extended - it would be hosted more often and that the lessons would be longer. And also I wish we would have more school cricket tournaments during a year or even a league.

# Cricket in 2025

*Andrew Pepper consults his crystal ball and, more usefully, the CyCF schedule to see what's planned for the year*



Following CyCF's recognition by the Cyprus Sports Organisation (KOA), there's a lot planned for 2025. In April, Cyprus hosts a quadrangular women's T20i. In the following month, the women's national team tour to the Czech Republic for a T20i competition and in December they go to Spain for the Women's European Cricket Championship (ECC).

Meanwhile, the men's team are in Croatia in August for T20i and ECL games, Spain in October for the Men's ECC. In October, Cyprus hosts a Tri-series versus Bulgaria and Serbia. Timetables for the coming year are below.

In home news; CyCF is organising coaching for state school PE teachers so that the demand for cricket I saw last year can start to be met. In related news, the Cricket for Care charity has made a very generous donation of cricket equipment (including 30 sets of Kwik cricket equipment) for young cricketers in Cyprus.

Men's Domestic Cricket	
Feb 1	40 Over Tournament Starts
Mar 23	Spring T20 Starts
May 3	Summer T10 Starts
Jun 15	National T20 championships
Sep 21	Autumn T20 Starts
Sep 28	Six-a-side competition

Women's Domestic Cricket	
Mar 3	Spring T20 Starts
Jun 8	Summer T10 Starts
Sep 21	Autumn T20 Starts
Sep 28	Six-a-side competition

Men's National Team	
Aug 7-8	T20i vs Croatia
Aug 9-10	ECL vs Croatia
Oct 4-5	T20i vs Gibraltar
Oct 8-10	ECC
Oct 31-Nov 2	T20i vs Bulgaria & Serbia

Women's National Team	
Apr 18-20	T20i vs Isle of Man, Denmark, Jersey
May 2-3	T20i vs Czechia
Dec 1-6	ECC-W





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