

MARCH 2025 | No. 058

OUTRIGHT

THE PLAYERS' MAGAZINE



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OPENING THOUGHTS



As the summer of cricket draws to a close, we can reflect on what has been a truly memorable season. From thrilling domestic clashes to unforgettable international performances, cricket has once again captivated fans across the country. The Super Smash delivered its signature excitement, with the Central Stags and Wellington Blaze crowned champions, while The Ford Trophy, Hallyburton Johnstone Shield, and Plunket Shield showcased the depth of New Zealand's talent.

Following their amazing ICC T20 World Championship victory, the White Ferns continued to build momentum in a packed schedule. Equally impressive, the Blackcaps run to the ICC Champions Trophy final was a standout memory of the summer. Their resilience, skill, and ability to perform on the world stage further reinforced New Zealand's reputation in ICC events.

Beyond the on-field action, this summer has also been a time for recognising the people and programmes that contribute to the long-term well-being of players. Our services remain committed to ensuring that both current and past players are supported throughout and beyond their cricketing career. This year, two major initiatives stand out: the launch of BetterForm, our dedicated health and well-being programme for members, and the success of The Cricketers' Trust Inaugural Dinner,

which brought the cricketing community together to support those in need.

BetterForm, introduced in February 2025, provides members with access to essential health and well-being services. Through an annual voucher system valued at approximately \$300, past players can receive a comprehensive health assessment, a MoleMap skin check, a contribution towards dental care or education, or apply it towards their CPA Membership fee. Current players can also utilise the programme for MoleMap screenings or education support. Thanks to the generous backing of our current player members, BetterForm is set up to aid members, ensuring long-term support for those who have given so much to the game.

March 14th marked another significant occasion with The Cricketers' Trust Inaugural Dinner in Mount Maunganui. This special evening was a powerful show of support for the many past players facing hardship. The success of the event reinforced the strong bonds within the cricketing community and the importance of looking after those who have come before and whose lives have been challenged.

In this edition of Outright, the strength of community is evident with the initiative that saw Otago Sparks players undertake a working bee for former White Fern Louise Clough, whose garden received a much-needed makeover. We also

highlight the journey of Ben Wheeler, who transitioned successfully into a career in the plumbing industry. Off the field, Natalie Cox continues to make a difference as a Dean at Kaiapoi High School, while former international Todd Astle has been instrumental in using cricket as a platform to promote men's mental health through a charity match.

With the growth of franchise cricket, the sport's reach extends far beyond New Zealand's borders, so we asked Lockie Ferguson and Jimmy Neesham to share their experiences of playing in overseas competitions. Meanwhile, the Black Clash has once again provided fans with an entertaining fusion of sport and spectacle, and our Hooked on Cricket programme celebrated 20 years—giving over 7,000 children who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to play the sport a chance to give cricket a go.

As we wrap up another fantastic season, it's great to reflect on the many positive aspects of cricket in New Zealand, which has been built on a foundation through the strength of people and the relationships this creates. Whether you've been watching from the stands, following from home, or reflecting on your own cricketing journey, we hope this edition of Outright offers inspiration and insight into the stories that shape our game.

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Players better together

BREAKING BAILS AND BARRIERS

THE LOUISE CLOUGH STORY BY MARGOT BUTCHER

You really wouldn't have liked to have been batting in the Australian women's championships in Melbourne in 1968.

When they talk about the swinging sixties, they didn't mean this — a strong-shouldered, six-foot-tall woman you've never seen before steaming in and swinging it both ways, with nasty cutters as well, that could bounce up into your ribs at Lea Tahuu pace.

That was Louise Clough playing for Otago as they made a one-off guest appearance in the Aussie tournament. She took 8/11 against Western Australia, and 11 for the match (4/46 and 7/71) against South Australia.

Clough has a bag of other claims to fame.

- One-Test wonder
- Only known cricketer born in Rekohu Chatham Islands — her fisherman father moved the family to Port Chalmers when she was small
- Only person in her family with any interest in cricket — she self-taught herself her deliveries out of an English cricket book
- 184 first-class wickets (nine bags)
- Second eldest living Otago Spark
- Member of the first Otago team to win the Hallyburton Johnstone Shield.

At 87, Clough links the Sparks with a thriving past when women's club cricket was still a thing in Dunedin: 14 teams across two divisions before a steep drop-off she attributes to the arrival of television, and more things to do. About 23 years earlier, she was born to a mother who had been one of few people with a telephone, as the district nurse.

Clough lives in Sawyers Bay, still handy to Port Chalmers where she joined the Koputai Women's Cricket Club as a

striking, strong nine-year-old, to play in the second division, three years after she'd first noticed both men's and women's teams chasing the ball around the park.

Her family lived by the cricket ground where the Port School boys also played on Wednesdays — girls were supposed to play tennis. "I had no interest in tennis, so I talked them into letting me go play with the boys."

Leading into the 2024/25 summer, a bunch of the modern Otago Sparks paid a visit, garden tools whirring as they tidied up her overgrown section, a series of falls having reduced Clough's independence. Spark and White Fern Polly Inglis was among them, and this story is based on Inglis's interview with Clough, during the bee that day.

Test and Otago cricketer Alec Moir was fortuitously one of Clough's teachers at Port School, and an early encourager.

"I taught myself all the deliveries, out of this English medium-pacer's book. Then I experimented, throwing a ball at our garage doors. That's how my wrist and fingers became extremely strong.

"I specialised in fielding short, right up in the batsman's face, and because I got used to playing with men and the power hitting, I never got hit."

She could hit a ball herself when she got the chance, too.

"With my long arms, I could lift the ball over people's heads. I put a ball from Logan Park [Uni Oval] into the creek. I would have loved T20, because I was impatient back then. I either got a four or went out!"

But limited overs games for women only came in the season after she retired.



Louise showing Polly Inglis her cricket scrapbook

Clough made the Otago women's team when she was 17, and already the top bowler locally. She'd been good enough to go to nationals the previous year, but they felt 16 was too young — even though she wasn't afraid to hit anyone in the ribs with her cross-seamer.

"One of my favourite memories is my first wicket for Otago [Joyce Powell, Kilbirnie Park, 1955]. I didn't know she was a New Zealand opening bat, and she didn't know I was as fast as I was. I broke the bails. She gave me the bail as a souvenir."

Clough got a three-for (and two impetuous ducks) and she was on her way. She played until she was 34, her Otago career spanning 1955/56 to 1973/74 — with one rogue season for Auckland in the summer of 1960, after she and a friend set off on motor scooters for a working holiday to the North Island after she'd turned 21.

She was always very independent. At 16, she was catching the train in to Dunedin for trainings (it's a fair haul to Bathgate Park from out at the Port). Later on, she became a stores and office manager at the Port Chalmers shipyards, playing badminton as well, when she the time. Then golf.

But cricket was her number one.

"When my father bought a wee truck, I got a license so I could take the whole team up to the cricket. Eventually I got a campervan to go round to watch games — Alexandra, Invercargill, Christchurch to watch Otago, even one trip up to Wellington to watch a women's Test at the Basin."

Her own Test career, a three-dayer against Rachel Heyhoe-Flint's England side at the Basin in 1969, was a disappointment, mainly because the captain couldn't hold onto the catches that flew off her bowling.

You get the feeling she may have expressed that frustration.

"Then I got dropped for the second Test. I had severely annoyed the England batsmen, I know that. They were surprised myself and Wendy Coe were dropped. But I only got one wicket — the England opener."

Clough is White Fern cap number 54, and instinctively still says old school "batmin" — the word rhyming with women — instead of batter. The newer lingo around the women's game is just a sliver of the mass change she's witnessed since her retirement.



1969 New Zealand Women's Cricket Team - Louise Clough middle row, second from right

"Women's fielding has changed the most," she says. "They can throw in from the boundary now; we usually needed someone at halfway. And it's marvellous that women are getting paid now and can be professional.

"Even all the kit that they get! The only thing I got from playing for New Zealand was a blazer, two pair of culottes, two pair of socks, two blouses and my airfare to Wellington."

That kit's now in the Otago Museum. Most of her cricket friends have died off, and she's one of only two Otago women from her era still kicking, so continuing to ardently follow the Sparks through the decades has kept a special connection alive.

Suzie Bates and Katey Martin have been her favourites to watch, and now Otago are back-to-back winners of the Hallyburton Johnstone Shield.

When Clough won it, in 1963, there was a big crowd at Dunedin's Kensington Park that had walked over from a men's game. The Four Seasons' "Big Girls Don't Cry" was top of the New Zealand charts.

Otago won by miles but it would be 50 years before the Association won the national title again. In that time, Dunedin club cricket went through an inverse bell curve, from healthy to unhealthy to recovering playing numbers. Clough has seen it all, but you can't help but wonder if a six-foot-tall, cricket-minded natural young athlete might have a few more prospects, and international caps, in the game today.



Louise Clough With Otago Sparks ready for their working bee



FROM BOWLING TO BOILERS

BEN WHEELER'S NEXT CHAPTER

BY MARGOT BUTCHER

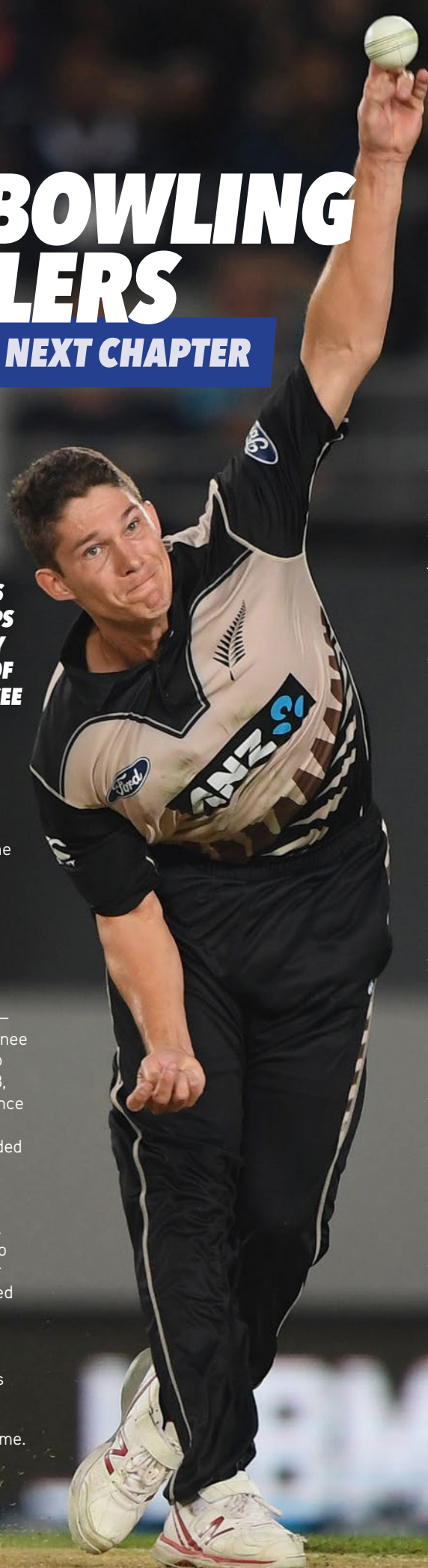
CD CRICKETERS HAVE ALWAYS FORMED STRONG FRIENDSHIPS OFF THE PARK, AND YOU ONLY HAVE TO HEAD TO A COUPLE OF BLOCKS IN HAWKE'S BAY TO SEE THAT TRADITION IN ACTION.

Tom Bruce, Dane Cleaver, Blair Tickner, Angus Schaw, Jack Boyle and Ben Wheeler, their partners and families all live around the corner from each other and, for the last name in that group, it's helped continue a special bond with the team and game he had to retire from too soon.

The left-arm allrounder made it from Blenheim all the way to the Blackcaps during his 11-year career, but it was a journey plagued with painful injuries — stress fractures in his back, serious knee trouble with a few injury hangers to still remind him. Although he's only 33, it's been three whole years already since he played his last game for the Stags (before something else broke, and ended it for good).

So perhaps moreso than his contemporaries, Wheeler was mindful he'd eventually need something else to do in his life that he enjoyed, and after the stress fracture business, he started working backstage at Craggy Range Winery in Havelock North, in his mid-20s — bringing back memories of his earlier jobs as a lad on grape harvests in Marlborough.

He combined that with cricket, for a time. Behind the glamorous shop window,



wineries have a whole maze of pumps, pipes, gadgets and hose connectors that all have to work perfectly to stop thousands of dollars worth of precious juice going to waste.

"I started to realise I really enjoyed the hands-on, manual work with the fittings and so forth, and problem-solving on jobs with other people," says Wheeler.

"That last part ticked the same boxes as bowling, actually. So I figured, well, plumbing covers a lot of those bases — and that's where the idea of getting an apprenticeship came from."

Enter the man with a thousand connections, former NZCPA Personal Development Manager Sanj Silva. During his own Central Stags playing days, Silva used to play senior club at Cornwall CC in Hastings, alongside Grayson Allen — owner of Peak Plumbing & Gas. Within weeks, Wheeler was having a coffee with Allen, and started his formal apprenticeship with him soon after.

Looking back now, Wheeler candidly says he can't believe he stuck it out with cricket for as long as he did — not solely because of all the injuries and uncertainties it brought him, but because he and wife Paige had two wee daughters, as well.

"It's been great for them that Dad's been home more, and a bit more regular at turning up at the end of the day," he says.

"It's been different to cricket in that it's long days from Monday to Friday when you're on the grind, but those weekends and evenings are usually free — unless you're still trying to get someone's water on for them.

"I'm home a lot more in summer, we've had a couple of summer holidays which has been nice! So life has certainly changed, and Paige and I look back now and think, 'Geez, how did we even do this for the last three years of my cricket career?' — with the two kids, and me being away a lot."

A plumbing apprenticeship takes about six years, blocks covering standard plumbing, drainlaying and finally gasfitting. He's now a registered tradesman in all three and, after a further couple of years' experience on the job, will get his full certification, at which point he can sign off on his own work as well.

He's still working for Peak Plumbing "and there's a whole range of skills I'm still learning, and really enjoying it. I certainly miss the competitive side of sport, and continuously trying to make yourself better, but in plumbing, I get a taste of that last bit, still.

"Hopefully my body can start to come right now so I can play some kind of social sport."

In recent times, that's been limited to cycling over to Gus Schaw's place to watch the rugby on weekends. That's because even after hanging up his cricket

kit, the war wounds came back to have another crack at him. Late last year, he had to take time off work for another back operation — this time for a fully prolapsed disc. Ouch.

"It might have started from all the running that I had had to do for my rehab after the knee reconstruction," he explains.

"It started with leg pain; my feet started to go numb; and then it was really bad for a month or so when I could hardly move. But after the operation, it was instant relief and I think we're on the right path now to being fully mended."

Oh lord, the emotional rollercoaster of all those injuries. "My body unfortunately did not enjoy my bowling as much as my head did," he says with the Wheeler family trademark of an eternally wry sense of humour.

The other good thing that happened late last year was he got back involved with the Stags in a mentoring capacity. Obviously he'd stayed close to his teammates — literally, with Cleaver owning the house next door to him as a rental investment ("I'm his maintenance man!").

He and Tickner got chatting one social afternoon about the pace bowling group and influx of young fellas coming in, and the idea came up that Wheels might be a good extra set of eyes and sounding board for them.

"Ticks mentioned it to Smudge [Stags T20 coach Ben Smith, in the UK] and

"MY BODY UNFORTUNATELY DID NOT ENJOY MY BOWLING AS MUCH AS MY HEAD DID."

Smudge got in touch before he came over to New Zealand for the Super Smash, this season.

"The timing worked pretty well with my back op recovery and a bit of time off from work, so I was able to spend some time with the pace bowling group, and just watching their games from afar to pick up the little things they might not have the time, between the games, to review and see.

"It was especially nice to continue a role with Razor [Ray Toole] that we had had towards the end of my career, when he was the left-armer coming through. We really are a different kettle of fish!

I understand what it's like for a left-armer when they go in and out of the squad; it takes a while to build up the experience you need — especially in white-ball."

So, Wheeler's Left-Arm Mentoring Services Ltd might be on call now.

"I really enjoyed getting back around the boys' environment," he says. "There's a nice crop coming through and it was nice to be back involved."



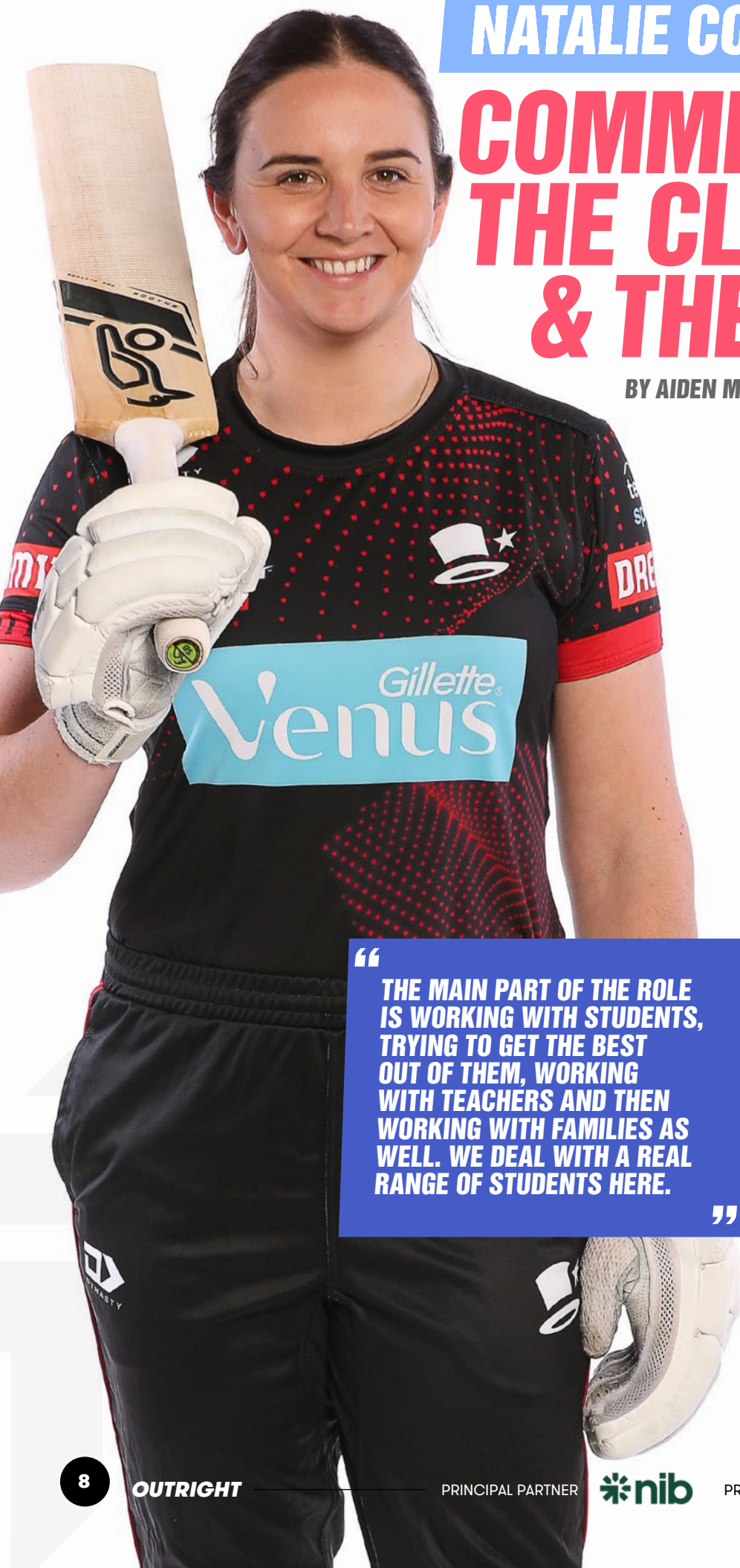
Ben Wheeler with his family.



NATALIE COX

COMMITTED TO THE CLASSROOM & THE CREASE

BY AIDEN MCLAUGHLIN



“THE MAIN PART OF THE ROLE IS WORKING WITH STUDENTS, TRYING TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THEM, WORKING WITH TEACHERS AND THEN WORKING WITH FAMILIES AS WELL. WE DEAL WITH A REAL RANGE OF STUDENTS HERE.”

As any teacher knows, it's anything but an 8:30am-3:30pm job.

As any professional cricketer knows, it's anything but match day duties only.

So, when you're fully committed to both endeavours like Natalie Cox is, you're naturally going to be time poor. But the 30-year-old Canterbury Magician wouldn't have it any other way.

Cox is in her fifth year at Kaiapoi High School. As well as teaching Business Studies and Economics, she's now in her second year as a Dean, looking after Tōtara House.

One of four houses, Tōtara has approximately 270 children across years nine to thirteen, which means plenty of responsibility for Cox.

“The main part of the role is working with students, trying to get the best out of them, working with teachers and then working with families as well. We deal with a real range of students here,” Cox says.

“Community is one of our school values so it's about trying to get around each other and support people and understand that everyone's got a different background.”

Cox was presented with a huge opportunity by the school last year, a genuine once in a lifetime experience.

“I got to go to China in July last year with school. It was a pretty cool experience. We took 14 students over for a leadership camp and a cultural experience. It ranged from year nine to year 13. They had to apply. It was a phenomenal experience,



Natalie climbing the great Wall of China

going on the Great Wall etc. It was somewhere I probably wouldn't go myself to travel so being able to do it fully paid was really cool,” Cox says.

In the summer terms, Cox does have an opportunity to see both careers collide in the same workplace, if only briefly.

“We've got a big group of girls who love cricket and there's a tournament once a year and it's a bunch of girls who aren't actually cricketers, they just love going out and playing,” Cox says.

The structure of the domestic season, with Hallyburton Johnstone Shield (HBJ) matches played on Saturdays and Sundays, and SuperSmash games largely played during the school holidays, works well for teachers, but that's not to say that the school doesn't do its bit to help,

allowing players to travel to HBJ venues on Friday mornings, thereby missing school time.

“The contract for teachers is really good. We get paid leave for representative sport. I'm very lucky in that sense because if I was in different job in the corporate world I'd have to take leave for that day, or get a later flight and rush and not train the day before.”

“I think the pressure point is coming back to school in term one after having six weeks off and just focussing on cricket. Coming back to full-time work and still trying to do the same amount of training that I was when I was on holidays is challenging and quite busy.”

The right-handed batter, who made her debut for the Magicians in 2012, hasn't

always been in the teaching profession however. In fact, she's worked behind the scenes for Canterbury Cricket as well, having held the positions of Operations and Marketing Coordinator, and Marketing and Communications Manager.

“I did a commerce degree at Lincoln university on a cricket scholarship and then I actually stopped playing cricket in my third year because I just wanted a break and a bit of a social life and then approached Canterbury cricket about some part time work over the summer,” Cox says.

Cox's responsibilities across both roles saw her in charge of social media, working on communications with print, radio and tv media, and also running the gameday.

From there, she joined Brandex Limited as a Marketing Coordinator, but a change of career path wasn't too far away.

“I coached netball a lot and really enjoyed it, so I thought, that's similar to teaching as you're teaching people new skills and stuff like that, so I thought I'd give teaching a go. I did a year at grad school, a private education service in Christchurch. That was 2019 and now here I am,” Cox says.

Personal Development Manager Jo Murray has been a great sounding board for Cox when things are tough and busy. But tough and busy has become a way of life for her as she juggles two passions.

“People always ask me how I manage it, but it's something I've always done. I've always found a way and it's my normal.”



ASTLE'S PERFECT HAT-TRICK: CRICKET, CHARITY, AND CHANGING LIVES

BY AIDEN MCLAUGHLIN

TODD ASTLE HAS PLAYED PLENTY OF CRICKET AT HAGLEY OVAL, BUT 8 DECEMBER 2024 SAW A VERY DIFFERENT TYPE OF MATCH TO WHAT HE'S USED TO.

Just a week after the venue had hosted a Blackcaps Test against England, and after months of planning and preparation, game day arrived for the BetterMan v Movember Charity T20 match – and it didn't disappoint.

BetterMan, founded by Astle, his brother Ryan, and former rugby player Ged Robinson, is a charity that focuses on helping men become better versions of themselves. They aim to help men improve their wellbeing and mental health through engaging events, workshops and initiatives.

"I broached the idea of us doing a BetterMan versus Movember game in early 2024, and it was a case of when we'd be able to do that with all of the international and domestic games that are scheduled at Hagley," Astle says.

"It all came together so beautifully. To be able to bring together two teams of guys, who all at some stage or another, have played sport at 'different levels', to then get to play on a world-class cricket wicket under lights at Hagley Oval."

With ex-All Black Colin Slade lining up for the BetterMan team, Movember signed

their own former Rugby World Cup winner in the form of Kieran Read, and the line-ups started to take shape. Astle and Read have common cricket history, having both been named in the same NZ U17 cricket tournament team many years ago, and given Read's career with the Crusaders has seen him live in Christchurch for many years, it's a friendship that has been in place for a while.

"It's a nice way of bringing together people that you don't see that often, but when you do, it's just like old times. That's the real beauty of these games. It's health by stealth and fostering relationships. Games like these are such great social catch-ups with the connections and friendships that you've made over the years, plus the chance to make new ones too," Astle says.

After the bat toss between captains Astle and Read, it was Movember who had the choice, and they elected to bowl first.

It was a strong start for BetterMan with the bat, with openers Slade and Stephen Murdoch both retiring after scoring 30 each.

Although Astle, along with the likes of former Canterbury cricketers Carl Frauenstein and Tim Johnston, kept the score ticking along for BetterMan, there was great fielding on display from the likes of Aaron Mauger and Marty Banks, which saw wickets falling regularly. But when it came to bowling, one Movember player stood out, a certain G Lane from The Alternative Commentary Collective.

"A great highlight of the day and special feat achieved was G Lane getting a five-fer. A lot of the ACC guys claim that they don't have much cricketing ability, but Mike Lane definitely showcased his prowess in that game, and that was the cool thing, witnessing some of those priceless moments," Astle says.

With 181 on the board at the halfway point of the contest, it was time to head inside for a Q&A session with Read, Country Manager for Movember in New Zealand, Robert Dunne, and special guest, the Minister of Mental Health, Matt Doocey.

"To have the Minister come along and be part of the Q&A, it was really special for us," Astle says.

The panel all spoke about the importance of using sport as a tool to get men together.

"For men, a structured activity like cricket can be a great catalyst for a catch-up. This brings the benefits of exercise but, most importantly, the social connection and laughter that inevitably comes with the game. And plenty of stories to rehash over the ensuing years," Read said at the time.

Dunne and Doocey both emphasised how important it is for charities like BetterMan and Movember to help support men and that their efforts are important in helping ease the strain on an already overburdened mental health system.

Partially refreshed, achy bodies returned to the field for the second innings. After some early wickets, another former

Canterbury cricketer, Jeremy Benton, and Read put together a 50-run partnership to bring the match back into the balance.

Movember required six to win off the last over, and with Astle bowling, the pressure was being felt by both sides. With five runs scored halfway through the over, it seemed certain Movember would take the spoils.

However, it was Astle who would have the final say, bowling a hat-trick with consecutive wrong 'uns that saw the match end in a tie.

It was a fitting conclusion and result for an occasion that meant so much. Hopefully, it's just the start for this fixture. There's certainly plenty of interest in a repeat.

"It's helped to put us on the map and shows the things we're trying to do with BetterMan. We are passionate about creating a community of men that want to become better versions of themselves. We do this through our events and education, enhancing those key relationships that a man has, first and foremost with themselves, as a partner or husband, as a father, with mates, in work settings and so on," Astle says.

"That's where we run loads of these different events and initiatives, and this one celebrated more the sporting side of things and coming together with mates. And I guess, flowing on from this game, people have seen what we're doing and love what we're about."



Todd Astle with his Children, Flynn and Summer



WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT CREATING A COMMUNITY OF MEN THAT WANT TO BECOME BETTER VERSIONS OF THEMSELVES.



Television Presenter Joey Wheeler coming in with some pace

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

THE INAUGURAL CRICKETERS' TRUST FUNDRAISING DINNER



Guest Speaker Brian Barrett



THE CRICKETERS' TRUST

Q&A session with Ben. Their insights into the game, camaraderie, and personal experiences provided a special touch to the night.

Reflecting on the purpose of the Cricketers Trust, Brendon McCullum

shared, "It's incredible to see the cricketing community rally together to support those who've given so much to the game and going through some rough times. Nights like this make a real difference." Kane Williamson echoed this sentiment, adding, "The Trust is doing

some incredible work, and it's an honour to be part of something that gives back to those who need it most."

The Cricketers' Trust was established by current professional players and the New Zealand Cricket Players' Association to assist past cricketers who have fallen on hard times. While today's players benefit from modern contracts and financial stability, previous generations played in a completely different environment, and many now face significant challenges. The Trust aims to ease the hardship that former players and their families may be experiencing, providing both financial and pastoral support.

One of the most heartfelt moments of the evening came from Brian Barrett, a recipient of support from the Trust, who shared his personal story of hardship and recovery. "The Cricketers' Trust helped me get back on my feet when I needed it most. The support I received was life-changing, and I can't thank everyone enough for making this possible." Stories like Brian's highlight why the Trust's work is so important helping those who dedicated their careers to the sport navigate tough times with dignity and support.

Since its inception in 2007, the Trust has assisted numerous players facing financial struggles, health concerns,

and other life challenges. Many of these situations remain confidential out of respect for those receiving assistance, but every story reinforces the importance of the Trust's mission. More players have reached out for support over the years, and the need for funding continues to grow. Events like the fundraising dinner ensure that the Trust can continue to provide help where it is needed most.

Heath Mills, CEO of the NZCPA and Trustee of The Cricketers' Trust, emphasised the impact of the evening:

"THE WORK WE DO WITH THE TRUST IS SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK WE DO. THIS EVENT IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST RAISING FUNDS—IT'S ABOUT RAISING AWARENESS AND ENSURING THAT PAST PLAYERS KNOW THEY ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN. CRICKET HAS GIVEN US ALL SO MUCH, AND IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT WE GIVE BACK TO THOSE WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING. THE GENEROSITY WE'VE SEEN TONIGHT WILL GO A LONG WAY IN MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES."

Another highlight of the night was undoubtedly the auction, which featured some incredible items generously donated

to help raise funds. Guests eagerly bid on once-in-a-lifetime experiences, including a luxury weekend escape at Kane Williamson's beachfront house, "The Common," a deluxe golf experience with All Black legend Christian Cullen at Paraparaumu Beach Golf Club, Kane Williamson's World Test Championship match winning shirt, a Queenstown and Milford Sound Experience, and an original artwork from renowned New Zealand artist Karl Maughan.

The generosity displayed throughout the evening ensured that The Cricketers' Trust can continue its important work. More than just financial aid, the Trust provides a crucial support network for players in need. Often, reconnecting with former teammates and receiving emotional support is just as valuable as monetary assistance. The Trust quietly works behind the scenes to ensure past cricketers receive the dignity and care they deserve during tough times.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to those who made the night such a success: Kane Williamson, Brendon McCullum, Brian Barrett, Brett and Sandra Williamson, Peter Blackwell, Kelvin Jones, Jenny Gough, Mike Wright, Grant Child, Paul Hobbs and our fantastic emcee Ben Hurley. Their contributions helped create an unforgettable evening and a promising future for The Cricketers' Trust.

THE CRICKETERS' TRUST HELD ITS INAUGURAL FUNDRAISING DINNER ON MARCH 14, 2025, AT THE STUNNING BAY OVAL IN MOUNT MAUNGANUI, AND WHAT A NIGHT IT WAS! WITH OVER 250 GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE, THE EVENT WAS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS RAISING OVER \$60,000 OF VITAL FUNDS TO SUPPORT CRICKETERS IN NEED.

The evening was emceed by the ever-entertaining New Zealand comedian and Alternative Commentary Collective member Ben Hurley, who had the audience in stitches throughout the night. Special guests included Blackcaps legend Kane Williamson and former Blackcaps captain Brendon McCullum, who took to the stage for a captivating



Will Somerville and Colin de Grandhomme



MC Ben Hurley Q&A with Brendon McCullum and Kane Williamson



During March 2025, we celebrated 20 years of pioneering the Hooked-on-Cricket programme across Aotearoa. The programme, designed to provide current players with an opportunity to give back to the game in their own unique way, has endured through the past two decades due to its simple and clear purpose:

To provide kids from any walk of life a chance to express themselves through cricket, embracing their natural love of sport, while also providing a platform to

showcase the amazing sporting talent and skills that kids throughout New Zealand have.

Hooked-on-Cricket was established in 2005 and continues the legacy of current players contributing to the diverse future of the game while remaining one of the most important activities for the NZCPA and our members. Our domestic players play a key role in the programme; their presence is inspirational, and the way they promote the game across each of the eight teams at each tournament was great to see.

Hooked-on-Cricket seeks to inspire the next generation of Kiwi kids to be successful in what they do and to encourage them towards success in sport and life.

Were it not for Hooked-on-Cricket, these children would not even think about playing cricket, let alone actually play it.

Hooked-on-Cricket is made possible by the very generous and tremendous support of the Queen Street Cricket Club (QSCC) – a cricketing charity with a shared purpose and great value to the programme. QSCC provides grants

and scholarships to schools, clubs, and students throughout New Zealand, with the objective of encouraging youth from non-traditional regions to play cricket and develop the attributes of sportsmanship, fair play, and good character.

We are also thankful to the North and South Trust for their funding support and the amazing contribution from our domestic members.

“ I DON'T SEE A LOT OF KIDS AT OUR SCHOOL PLAYING CRICKET AT LUNCHTIME, I GUARANTEE YOU TOMORROW THE CRICKET SETS WILL BE OUT IN FORCE. HOOKED ON CRICKET CREATES A SNOWBALL EFFECT FOR OUR KIDS, THE WAY THE DAY IS RUN, IT'S SUPER WELL ORGANISED, THE KIDS ARE ENGAGED, THEY ARE ACTIVE AND THEY ARE HAVING FUN, WE COULD EASILY BRING 15 TEAMS NEXT YEAR. CHRIS HERLIHY, PRINCIPAL TE UHO O TE NIKAU PRIMARY SCHOOL ”



“ OUR SCHOOL HAS BEEN COMING TO HOOKED ON CRICKET FOR AT LEAST 10 YEARS. WE GOT ABSOLUTELY SMASHED THE FIRST TIME PLAYING HERE, BUT THE KIDS LOVED IT. AS A RESULT OF THAT A COUPLE OF OUR TEACHERS STARTED A SATURDAY CRICKET TEAM AND THE KIDS IMPROVED SO MUCH THAT THEY WENT A SEASON UNBEATEN. I CAN'T THANK THE COACHES ENOUGH FOR GIVING OUR KIDS THIS OPPORTUNITY THEY ABSOLUTELY LOVE IT! ANTHONY CURRY, DEPUTY PRINCIPAL BAIRDS MAINFREIGHT PRIMARY SCHOOL ”





INSIDE FRANCHISE CRICKET

WITH LOCKIE FERGUSON & JIMMY NEESHAM

CRICKET'S FRANCHISE LEAGUES ARE REDEFINING THE GAME, OFFERING PLAYERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. WE SAT DOWN WITH NEW ZEALAND CRICKETERS LOCKIE FERGUSON AND JIMMY NEESHAM TO DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES IN TWO OF THE MOST EXCITING T20 LEAGUES—THE ILT20 IN THE UAE AND THE SA20 IN SOUTH AFRICA.

LOCKIE FERGUSON CAPTAIN, DESERT VIPERS ILT20

What was the most exciting part of playing in the ILT20 for the Desert Vipers?

Captaining the team was a standout experience for me. I had done it briefly with the Blackcaps, but leading a franchise for an entire tournament was a new challenge. I hadn't played with most of the team before and only knew a couple of the coaches briefly, so stepping in and finding my leadership style was daunting. But taking the group to the final was incredibly rewarding.

What was your overall impression of the league?

It was a fast-paced tournament, with games every second day, which was particularly tough as a fast bowler. The standard was high, with nine overseas professionals per team. Pitch conditions changed throughout matches, so you had to adapt quickly. Fortunately, my decisions as captain worked out more often than I expected! The league was well-organised and of a high standard, especially in the later stages.

How was the team environment?

The Desert Vipers had one of the best team environments I've been part of. The Blackcaps and Sydney Thunder are also in the same realm, but from a franchise perspective, the Vipers stood out. Owner Avram Glazer took a hands-off approach, leaving director of cricket Tom Moody and head coach James

Foster to run things smoothly with a no-nonsense policy. I've had varied experiences with other franchises, particularly in Southeast Asia, but the Vipers' professionalism gave players confidence and helped them settle into the tournament—often the toughest challenge in franchise cricket.

How did that environment compare to domestic/Blackcap teams back home?

The Desert Vipers' environment was on par with the Blackcaps in terms of care for players. In franchise cricket, results often come first, and players can be quickly replaced. That's understandable, but the Vipers went beyond that, focusing on player well-being off the field. They checked in on how players were coping away from home, whether they felt included, and even organised team events to build camaraderie. That level of care made a big difference—when you feel valued beyond just performances, it's easier to relax and play your best. Along with the Sydney Thunder, the Vipers were one of the teams where I truly felt that.

What was your biggest learning experience in the UAE?

My biggest lesson was managing my body through a condensed schedule with a match every second day. A rolled ankle led to a hamstring issue, making it tough to balance fitness work with rest. While my experience helped on the cricket side, handling so many games in a short time was a new challenge. Moving forward, I'll focus on better recovery

and maintenance to stay fit for the entire tournament. Missing the final after playing the semi was devastating—I don't want that to happen again.

What was it like outside of your cricket commitments, did you have a chance to play tourist for a bit?

Not much, it was tough to find downtime. My wife Em was with me, which was great, and we celebrated our one-year anniversary with a night in the desert. But as captain, it was a constant cycle—playing, reviewing, recovering, scouting, and planning for the next game. There wasn't much time for anything else, but Em was incredibly supportive, giving me space to unwind when I could. I did squeeze in a couple of rounds of golf, though my game was pretty ropey!

Were there any peculiar moments, or things that did not go quite right?

Not really, but there was a big moment in the final. Rovman Powell was stumped, but the umpire ruled that the keeper's gloves were in front of the stumps, making it invalid. It was a debatable call, but the decision stood, and Powell went on to score 70-odd, win Man of the Match, and lead his team to victory. Finals always have these moments—you don't blame just one ball, but they can be game-changing, especially with a player like Powell. It was frustrating watching from the sidelines as we fell just short, but there's always next year.

JIMMY NEESHAM PRETORIA CAPITALS SA20

What was the most exciting part of playing in the SA20 for the Pretoria Capitals?

The best part of playing around the world is forming relationships with different players. With the SA20, I've had a three-year contract, and it's been amazing to see players develop from young domestic players in year one grow into key players or even South African internationals by year three.

What's your impression of the league's development?

It's really gone from strength to strength. I think it's fair to say now that it's the second biggest league behind the IPL. Considering the situation Cricket South Africa was in before year one it's a seriously impressive accomplishment.

How was the team environment?

It was great. We had a similar group together for the three-year cycle so by the end guys got along really well and knew what to expect of each other. Unfortunately we were ravaged by injuries in years 2 and 3 so the results didn't really reflect that.

What was your biggest learning from playing in South Africa?

I think apart from my own game it would be getting familiar with the conditions at the different South African venues. I

remember arriving for my first tour in 2013 and nobody really knew what to expect at different cities or grounds. Now it's like a second home for me, right from pitch conditions and weather forecasts, to golf course contacts and dinner spots! If we ever tour South Africa again I'll certainly be playing tour guide for the lads.

Did you get time to play tourist?

The schedule was even more packed than usual, but we still got out a bit. We had a solid golf group, though a broken finger early in the tournament kept me off the course for a few weeks!

Any unusual or peculiar moments?

I wouldn't say so much in the SA20 but I did sign in Bangladesh for the final on the way home. I then arrived for my one and only game to be told I wasn't in the playing eleven! I sat on the sideline, lifted a trophy then flew home. It's certainly the least effort I've ever put in for a win.

What is the chat among other international players about the way these leagues are emerging?

I'd say they're not "emerging" anymore—most leagues are now well established. Over the next 5–10 years, competition for players will be interesting. The great thing is that these leagues allow

cricketers to extend their careers. In the past, players retired in their mid-30s. Now, guys are pushing 40 or even 42, still playing and making a great living.

Both Ferguson and Neesham recognise that franchise cricket is changing the sport. While they remain committed to New Zealand, they acknowledge that leagues provide valuable opportunities.

"Players are still figuring out how to balance franchise and international commitments," Ferguson said.

"Captaining a franchise has given me a new challenge, and it's about finding the right balance."

Neesham added, "The game is evolving fast. These leagues are taking cricket to new places like the UAE and the U.S., and viewership is rising. It's a great time to be a cricketer."

With franchise cricket firmly established, many of our current players are at the heart of its evolution—navigating a new era of the game while keeping their passion for international cricket alive.



JOHN SPARLING A LIFETIME OF LEADERSHIP

BY TREVOR AUGER

WHEN 19-YEAR-OLD LACHIE STACKPOLE MADE HIS RED BALL DEBUT FOR THE AUCKLAND ACES AGAINST CENTRAL DISTRICTS AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH, HE WAS HONOURED TO RECEIVE HIS CAP FROM AN AUCKLAND CRICKET LEGEND.

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT AUCKLAND CRICKET PATRON AND NZCPA LIFE MEMBER JOHN SPARLING HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN SUCH A CAP PRESENTATION. AS WAS THE WAY BACK IN JANUARY 1957, HE HAD BEEN HANDED HIS CAP WITHOUT ANY FANFARE ON HIS FIRST-CLASS DEBUT, ALSO AS A TEENAGER AND ALSO AGAINST CENTRAL DISTRICTS.

It was the perfect way to start a memorable day for Sparling, as he was honoured for his service to the game he started playing as a schoolboy more than 80 years ago.

Auckland Cricket, with the support and assistance of the NZCPA, hosted John and more than 80 other guests to A Day at The Cricket, enjoying the first day of the Plunket Shield match and celebrating all Sparling has contributed to the sport.

A year after his Auckland debut, Sparling was selected in the 1958 touring team to England, his first time out of New Zealand on a trip that lasted almost six months. He was only 19 when he made his Test debut, and that sat alongside meeting Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace as highlights of his time away.

A few years later, in the summer of 1961-62, he was part of the playing XI in both New Zealand's first two Test victories overseas, against South Africa at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

Back home Sparling took over the captaincy of Auckland, a role he filled with distinction for nine consecutive seasons. In that time his team only once finished outside the top three in the Plunket Shield points table, and his

John presents debutant Lachlan Stackpole with his cap

leadership earned universal respect and admiration.

He quietly slipped from the first-class scene in 1971, making himself unavailable for the following season, but the end of his first-class cricket was by no means the end of his involvement with the game.

There was a spell as a selector of the Auckland team, he served as President of Auckland Cricket, and has been accorded Life Membership. In 2017 he succeeded Sir John Graham as Patron, a position he continues to fill with distinction. John has been a staunch supporter of the NZCPA and is one of our Life Members, as well as being recognised with Honorary Membership by New Zealand Cricket. He also spent 20 years on the Eden Park Trust Board.

The centrepiece of Auckland Cricket's event in his honour came over lunch in a packed Bert Sutcliffe Lounge at Eden Park, as, outside, the Central Districts batters enjoyed their day out in the middle.



“WE WEREN'T SO KEEN TO DO WELL FOR OURSELVES, WE JUST WANTED TO PERFORM WELL FOR JOHN.”

BOB SUTTON, FORMER AUCKLAND PLAYER

Two of Sparling's successors as Auckland captain, Mark Burgess and John Wiltshire, spoke eloquently and with feeling of the impact Sparling has had on their lives, both in cricket and beyond. Burgess talked of the early influence of Auckland Grammar on both he and John, and then of Sparling's calm leadership, his ability to make newcomers so welcome and comfortable in the side and his knack of inspiring loyalty and commitment to the team.

Like Wiltshire, he emphasised Sparling's humility, something which may have led him to underestimate just how important he has been to those whose lives he has touched.

That was followed by a fascinating Q and A session with the NZCPA's Dennis Katsanos, chatting with Sparling about his cricketing experiences, including bowling an 11-ball over in a Test match – without any wides or no balls – and selecting Emily Drumm for what had hitherto been an Under-14 Boys tournament.

Auckland Cricket Chair Brendon Gibson presented Sparling with an inscribed bat, signed by all those present.

Speaking volumes of the respect in which Sparling is held in Cricket circles, the audience included Test cricketers from the 1960s, like Burgess and fellow NZCPA Life Member Graham Vivian, through to the recently retired Will Somerville. Other NZCPA Life Members attending included

Phil Horne, Dipak Patel, Martin Pringle and Warren Stott.

Bob Sutton, Auckland left arm opening bowler from the 1960's and still a close friend, flew from Napier to be a part of the day. His admiration of Sparling's leadership was clear as he explained, “We weren't so keen to do well for ourselves, we just wanted to perform well for John.”

Several of Sparling's old Auckland University Cricket Club colleagues had also travelled from the Waikato to join many other former clubmates for the occasion. John is still a regular attendee watching the University Premier side in action, and the club's records show his playing career spanning 52 years. At the centenary celebrations in 2008, Sparling had been named their Player of the Century.

As the afternoon unfolded, the stories and reminiscences flowed as old friends and opponents recalled their days together on and off the field. Sparling delighted in renewing acquaintances with so many of the friends who had been a part of his cricketing journey and was humbled by the admiration and affection he was shown. As he said at the end of the day, “It was an occasion I will never forget.”

Out on the field the viewing was rather better if you were a Central Districts supporter, but there were no complaints about the quality of the batting on display as Tom Bruce went past 200 on

his way to the Eden Park record first class score of 345.

Having received his cap from an Auckland cricket icon, debutant Stackpole finally took guard for his first innings shortly before lunch on the third day. He went on to score an invaluable 87, precisely 87 more than John Sparling had managed in his own initial first-class innings.



Brendon Gibson presents John with the signed bat



Former Blackcap
Lou Vincent with
West Indie Cricketer
Chris Gayle

BLACK CLASH AS POPULAR AS EVER

Black Clash, the sports entertainment event – or Sportainment in modern parlance – proved to be a ratings bonanza in the seventh edition of the Clash, which pitted a cast of rugby stars against their cricketing counterparts to reach a tick over 1 million Kiwi fans across TVNZ platforms.

The fun but competitive T20 match attracted a vibrant crowd to the sold-out Hagley Oval, continuing the Black Clash's reputation as one of the most entertaining sporting events in New Zealand. The packed crowd at the magnificent Hagley Oval was treated to another spectacular event with non-stop action throughout, with a nail-biting finish elevating the crowd to try to inspire a famous Team Rugby victory.

Kieran Read was optimistic about leading Team Rugby to victory this year, with 'Universe Boss' and West Indies cricketing legend Chris Gayle on board and the return of Will Jordan, among others. Read was especially buoyant with the news that Team Cricket captain Daniel Vettori was unable to participate in the match due to a back injury. Despite the talent in Team Rugby and the obvious will of the crowd, they were unable to find the necessary runs and came up agonisingly short of their target, which allowed Team Cricket to lift the Lomu Trophy again in 2025.

The crowd queued at the gates early to ensure a great vantage point for the wildcard match-up that saw Chris Gayle feature alongside league legend Shaun Johnson. The entire venue was buzzing throughout the match, which saw some great action and players from both codes getting involved with the crowd and showcasing their obvious talents.

The in-ground experience was high-octane throughout, with an amazing list of event sponsor activations and Duco Events' innovative approach ensuring the capacity crowd was left with a massive smile on their collective faces.

As a contest, it was Team Cricket who took control early, with Hamish Marshall anchoring partnerships with Lou Vincent and Neil Broom on his way to a match-high 78. Despite the fast-paced start, Joey Wheeler channelled some of his backyard experience from his brother (former Blackcaps and CD player Ben Wheeler) to end with 4 for 25 from his four overs.

The imposing total of 210 was made even bigger when Team Rugby's batting revelation over recent clashes, Kieran Read, was on his way back to the pavilion for only 1. When Chris Gayle and Will Jordan were involved in a massive mix-up that saw Jordan run out for 10, the task looked a long way off.

Gayle resurrected the innings with Andy Ellis before Ellis, Colin Slade, and Leon MacDonald all made excellent contributions to position Team Rugby for a late push for victory. The strategic use of the Ford Double Play with MacDonald and Riley McCullum at the crease took the contest into the last over.

The stage was set, with MacDonald requiring six from the final delivery from Todd Astle. A wrong'un was expertly delivered by Astle to pass on the inside of

TEAM CRICKET

Daniel Vettori*	210 AFTER 20 OVERS
Shaun Johnson (wildcard)	
Nathan McCullum	
Lou Vincent	H Marshall 78 (40)
Grant Elliott	N Broom 39 (17)
Kyle Mills	L Vincent 34 (24)
Adam Parore	J Wheeler 4-25 (4)
Anton Devcich	C Gayle 3-25 (4)
Hamish Marshall	A Ellis 1-18 (3)
Chris Martin	
Neil Broom	
(*Todd Astle replaced Daniel Vettori due to injury)	

TEAM RUGBY

Kieran Read	205-6 AFTER 20 OVERS
Chris Gayle (wildcard)	
Will Jordan	
Colin Slade	
Ofisa Tonu'u	A Ellis 59 (39)
Andy Ellis	L MacDonald 54 (30)
Leon MacDonald	G Elliott 2-44 (4)
Jason Spice	S Johnson 1-23 (3)
Jason Eaton	
Kaylum Boshier	
Joey Wheeler	
Riley McCullum	

MacDonald's swinging blade, crashing into the stumps and confirming the victory for Team Cricket.

The in-ground experience was high-octane throughout, with an amazing list of event sponsor activations and Duco Events' innovative approach ensuring the capacity crowd was left with a massive smile on their collective faces.



Introducing BetterForm

Supporting our Past Players Beyond the Game

In February 2025, the New Zealand Cricket Players' Association proudly launched BetterForm, a dedicated health and well-being programme designed specifically for our past player members.

For many years, we have been committed to expanding our member benefits and support services, ensuring that past player members continue to thrive beyond their playing careers. BetterForm is a key step in this journey, providing meaningful support and helping us stay connected with our past player community.

What is BetterForm?

BetterForm is a structured programme that offers past player members the opportunity to access an annual voucher, valued at approximately \$300, to be used for one of the following services:

- A comprehensive health and well-being assessment
- A MoleMap skin check
- A contribution towards a dentist visit
- A contribution towards approved education or training
- A CPA Life Membership fee (for those not already Life Members)

Current contracted players are also eligible to receive a voucher for either a MoleMap skin check or a contribution towards education or training.

We are excited about the potential of BetterForm and will conduct a review of the programme in July 2025 to assess its impact and explore ways to expand the range of services available. Our goal is to continue growing this initiative, ensuring it remains relevant and valuable for our past player members.

The programme is administered by NZCPA Member Services Co-ordinator Kali Rapley-Inia, alongside Ginny Fail from our Personal Development team.

We extend our sincere thanks to our current player members, whose collective support has made this initiative possible. Through their agreement to allocate funds from a variation agreement negotiated by NZCPA reserves, we have been able to create an ongoing investment income to sustain this programme.

We are proud to enhance our support for past player members and encourage you to engage with BetterForm. If you need support, we urge you to take advantage of this initiative and continue thriving beyond your playing days.



UPCOMING EVENTS

THE PLAYERS' CONFERENCE

14 & 15 April – Eden Park Auckland

NZCPA MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA



The NZCPA has recently reviewed our membership criteria following the launch of the NZCPA BetterForm member benefit programme.

There are two categories of membership to the NZCPA.

CURRENT PLAYER MEMBERS

Players who are party to a current playing contract with NZC or a Major Association and/or who currently play First-Class, List A, or T20 matches for the Blackcaps, White Ferns, or a Major Association team.

Current Player Members will automatically transfer to become a Past Player Member when they retire (or are no longer available for selection).

PAST PLAYER MEMBERS

Players who are retired (or no longer selected) and have played First-Class, List A, or T20 cricket for the Blackcaps, White Ferns, or a Major Association team.

New applications to become a Past Player Member can be made by completing the past player membership form on the NZCPA website.

Past Player Member membership fees are as follows:

- Former male international or domestic players who were contracted as a Current Player Member at any time since 2002 have paid their membership fee via the Master Agreement.
- Former male international or domestic players prior to 2002 – membership fee is \$300.
- Former female international players who were contracted as a Current Player Member at any time since 2010 have paid their membership fee via the Master Agreement.
- Former female domestic players who were contracted as a Current Player Member at any time since 2018 have paid their membership fee via the Master Agreement.
- Former female international players prior to 2010, or domestic players prior to 2018 – membership fee is \$300.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



PREMIER PARTNERS



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THE INSIDER



NEW ZEALAND AT THE CHAMPIONS TROPHY AND ALL ITS PREVIOUS PSEUDONYMS BY PAUL FORD

I was hoping this column would be the delicious black icing on top of a multi-tiered, Champions Trophy-winning cake. But, alas, it was not to be after India staggered past New Zealand in the 99th over of the final match of the 2025 edition of the tournament.

The tournament is a bit of a peculiar one, with an erratic history, and from a Kiwi perspective it should be down the pecking order behind the World Test Championship, the Cricket World Cup, and the T20 World Cup. But I think it has an elevated significance after the legacy of the 2000 win means there is always anticipation New Zealand could do well, plus its mercifully rapid-fire schedule means a team just needs a short-term burst of luck and magic to get a shot at the title.

I remember Jacob Oram taking 5 wickets against the shemozzle that was the USA team in 2004, after Nathan Astle (145*), Scotty Styris (75) and Craig McMillan (64*) went berserk and pulverised the hapless American bowling for 136 off just eight overs at one stage. Cricinfo described it as a 'torrential downpour of sixes': 13 to be exact but this was a phenomenon in 2004.

There was also a sensational bowling performance from Shayne Barry O'Connor in the semi-final of the 2000 edition of the tournament - his 5/46 understandably overshadowed by the history-making deeds that were to come in the final - despite being New Zealand's first ever semi-final win in an ICC event.

New Zealand overhauled star-studded Pakistan's 252 with six balls to spare thanks to a Twose (87) and McMillan (51*) masterclass. But New Zealand should have been chasing a hell of a lot more with the men in green 236/6 in the 46th over and Razzaq and Akram making hay. O'Connor exited both set batters, then Mahmood and Mushtaq in his last three overs, having taken the opening wicket of Nazir as well.

With the Pakistani scalps in their back pocket, the Kiwis could quietly dare to dream, out of the public eye. "I would be lying if I said that we hadn't thought about or talked about winning the tournament at all," O'Connor said. "But the only time I can remember talking about what would happen if we won the tournament was in the changing room after we had beaten Pakistan, and it never really came up outside of that."

New Zealand's greatest Champions Trophy performance was undoubtedly in 2000, in turquoise, and in the unlikely environs of Nairobi.

At 132/5 victory chasing 264 seemed extremely unlikely for a good chunk of the run chase, especially up against the wily might of the Indian bowling attack led by Anil Kumble and Zaheer Khan. It was a rockstar-laden Indian team too: Tendulkar, Ganguly, Dravid, Yuvraj and Kambli.

But as always the Indians had all the pressure of a billion people on their light blue backs, with the entire world apart from a few diehard Kiwi supporters (like the people reading and writing this

column) expecting nothing less than a victory march from their heroes.

And as first Cairns and McMillan, then Cairns and Harris rebuilt the New Zealand innings. They used Kumble's pace against him, keeping the scoreboard ticking over and taking advantage of the Gymkhana ground's small boundaries. It wasn't a blazing run chase, but it was a patient, pressure-absorbing, then pressure-exerting one. A hundred needed off the last 15 overs, then 70 from 10, then 44 from 5 and the pair of Cantabrian Chrises zeroing in on victory.

The moment when Cairns unleashed a monster six off Kumble elevated expectations in my lounge: it was 30 from 20, then 24 from 19 and my hope transformed into belief. We are going to bloody do it! The fairytale continued as Cairns brought up his century in the penultimate over.

The images of the back-from-injury centurion tearing down the pitch after whacking a full toss into the onside to secure the win, arms aloft, then doing the low, double fist pump and receiving a koala bear hug from Adam Parore is indelibly etched in my memory.

I love the yarn about the win triggering New Zealand Cricket CEO Chris Doig, an accomplished opera singer, to belt out a song for the team in celebration. His one and only performance in that environment. And still the Black Caps' one and only white-ball trophy-winning performance.

Paul Ford is co-founder of the Beige Brigade and part of The Alternative Commentary Collective. He has never been a champion or won a trophy.

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail and tattoos on her arms is stretching her leg on a grassy field. A man is sitting next to her, also stretching. The background is a soft-focus sunset with trees.

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