



THE DEATH OF CRICKET
BY
ANDREW WINFIELD

Extract

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THE DEATH OF CRICKET

A tragedy by Andrew Winfield

Characters

Chairman of The Cricket Board of the UK

Chief Executive of The Cricket Board of the UK

Board Member 1

Board Member 2

Board Member 3

England Cricket Captain

Interviewer

SCENE ONE - A Press Briefing

CHAIR

I was appointed to this position 4 years ago and I have one more year to serve. In that time, I will hope to have achieved my aim. To transform the game of cricket. It's a far cry from my life running supermarkets. Stack em high. Sell em cheap. Fast food. Exactly my plan for this game. I loved selling baked beans and pot noodles. I fucking hate cricket. What a fucking boring sport. Give me boxing any day. Quick, to the point and over in a few minutes sometimes. Not this fucking nonsense which goes on for fucking days. I always say you don't have to like the product you sell, but you have a duty to mould it to your liking. And I mean to make this sport something that everyone wants. I don't care who stands in my way and who gets knocked over in the process. Progress. That's what we need to achieve. Progress. Not something that's boring, dead and fucking out of date.

CHIEF

We are so lucky with our Chair. He does speak as he finds and leaves you in no doubt about his aims and priorities. He is one of the clearest thinking businessmen I have ever worked with and a visionary of the game. I sincerely share his view that we have a duty to save this old-fashioned game from drowning in its own self-importance. In many ways, we have helped transform the sport in recent years with the increasing use of technology and the support for the 20/20 format across the world and the increased support for the women's game and we are looking to make further changes and bringing in new and exciting formats and using more and more technology. This is an exciting time for the sport, the players and the general public, many of whom we are targeting to enter the world of cricket - a new world, an exciting world and one which is finally accessible to all.

SCENE TWO - A TV Interview

- INTERVIEWER Welcome gentlemen, it's good to have you with us today for the important announcements which I know you are very keen to make. Firstly, Mr Chairman, you have made a number of controversial comments and outlined some significant changes in the game of cricket over the tenure of your office, do you think you are going to make more friends or enemies after today.
- CHAIR Well, as I mentioned before, I don't actually give a flying fuck what people think of me. My job is to take this sport and bring it into today. It can't be stuck in the middle of the 19th Century or whenever it was founded. My aim is to get every family in the whole of the country watching and playing cricket. Who can argue with that as an aim?
- INTERVIEWER I doubt anyone can, Thank you. Mr Chief Executive. We have seen the amazing changes in cricket brought about by the advent of the 20 over game and white ball cricket in general. What can we expect to be seeing in the future?
- CHIEF Well the 10 over game is already having a major impact and we are delighted it has the backing of one of our national captains who is totally behind the white ball format. Obviously the 100 ball plans are well advanced, and we are so looking forward to rolling this out. We do have plans to bring the 10 over game into the country and are looking at a further development which will see a whole competition in a day which will see a round robin format and knockout 10 ball game. Fantastic.
- CHAIR I think we should also add that we are trying new techniques within the game and so people should look out for that. I am fed up with this fucking complicated method of measuring the accuracy of the way in which a ball is bowled. It's just bollocks. The whole point of the bowler is to get it to the batter down the other end of the pitch. So, throwing will be quite legitimate. We expect to see more under arm stuff and as many bouncers as the guys care to bowl.
- INTERVIEWER Are you not worried about the safety of the players?
- CHIEF Of course we are concerned about that, but we have to measure that with the need for more excitement. The players have increasingly good protection and so we will make sure they are well catered for in that department. So, don't worry.
- INTERVIEWER And I believe technology will become an even more important part of the game
- CHAIR Umpires will be made redundant. Don't need them anymore. That make far too many errors. All bats and stumps will be fitted with electronic signaling devices and from that we will be able to see what has been hit and where. Same with batsmen's protection. Arm guards, pads, all will have sensors.

Automatic decisions will be made. No need for reviews. Just slows down an already slow game.

INTERVIEWER

Well, gentlemen, thank you. Exciting times. We will be back with you in a moment.

SCENE THREE - A Meeting

CHAIR My big bugbear is what to do about this idiotic county set up. I mean, who has ever been to fucking Worcestershire? I don't even know where it is and no one knows anything about Derbyshire and Durham is in the Arctic isn't it? No, this is something that needs to be dealt with.

CHIEF I think we will face quite some opposition to the reduction in the number of counties.

MEMBER 1 But I am inclined to agree with the Chairman. We cannot bail out these counties who do not run their business well. We have to make them realise that cricket is a commercial enterprise. I have no interest in the game itself. I am only keen to know about the balance sheets.

MEMBER 2 Seconded. We have already tried to get shot of Durham, we must try harder. I suggest we swing the blade on at least 10 counties.

CAPTAIN As captain of the national team I think that might be a few too many, we are in danger of the pool being too shallow.

CHAIR Don't be daft. There is going to be so much going on that you will have plenty to choose from and they will be better quality. Too many shitty little players around. Too old, too young or too fat. Get shot of them.

CHIEF So, what would your suggestion be?

CHAIR We keep the big ones. Yorkshire.

MEMBER 3 Hear hear.

CHAIR Yorkshire, Surrey of course - the golden egg. Middlesex

CAPTAIN Thank goodness!

CHAIR I suppose we will have to have Lancashire

MEMBER 1 They'd be another war of the Roses if you scrapped them.

CHAIR Don't tempt me. Essex probably. Nottinghamshire

MEMBER 2 What about the Welsh?

CHAIR Yes, well, I would rather not.

MEMBER 3 They will rebel too.

CHAIR Gloucestershire I suppose as well as the Welsh. How many is that?

CHIEF That's your eight.

MEMBER 2 No Hampshire?

CHAIR Swap Essex for Hampshire. Essex is a shithole.

MEMBER 3 No Somerset?

CHAIR Too small. Never win anything.

CAPTAIN No Kent?

CHAIR Too near Surrey. No Northamptonshire, no Leicestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire..

CHIEF Edgbaston Chairman?

CHAIR Mmmmmmm get rid of Gloucester then. Birmingham in then.

MEMBER 2 Good call Sir.

CHAIR Durham is out as I said and Sussex. What do you think of that?

CHIEF You don't want to keep another 2?

CHAIR No, its 8. Only 8. Close the rest of the clubs down. Perfect for supermarkets and car parks.

MEMBER 1 Looks good to me. Means we can save millions funding them, make millions selling the real estate and spend more promoting the new formats.

CHIEF Exactly. And get rid of some troublemakers into the bargain.

CHAIR Some hard decisions had to be made. We were all chosen to be in charge of the game because none of us understand it or have and liking for it at all. So, we need to keep up this momentum.

CAPTAIN Well I rather like it and understand it.

CHAIR Well, of course, but you are the exception. A cricketer who despises test matches and county cricket played over more than a few overs. So, we include you.

CAPTAIN Thank you Mr Chairman. I really favour all these changes. I think there are more we could make. The short sharp nature of the game is rather like baseball in my eyes.

CHIEF That's very interesting. It was something that was said when the 20/20 format was first introduced. In my book that's a really good comparison. Look how the baseball stadiums pack them in.

CHAIR Bring back the dancing girls I say. Get more sex into the game. It's about as sexy as a wet weekend in Whitby at the moment. It needs more filth. Get some of the players - men and women - doing centre-fold spreads. Get the Mums in! Sex sells.

MEMBER 1 Is that not a little politically incorrect?

CHAIR I don't give a fuck. I want bums on seats and if those bums are bare then I don't care!

MEMBER 2 But what about the children.

CHAIR Don't get all namby-pamby on me. Kids watch worse on TV.

MEMBER 3 What about the international game? Will we be getting objections from overseas?

CHAIR From where? No one watches Test Cricket anywhere. Not even on Sky! The sub-continent is way ahead of the game - they can't bear the boring stuff, so they are gradually junking it too. But I say we get even bolder and we do it. Definitely. Definitely. We have the power to make changes. It is our duty.

SCENE FOUR - Another TV Interview

INTERVIEWER Welcome back. So, Mr Chairman, you have further plans for cricket which you have freely admitted will upset some people.

CHAIR In any battle, there is going to be collateral damage.

INTERVIEWER And what is the nature of this collateral damage?

CHAIR The old buggers. The members. Those who dote on the past and cannot see any advantage in change. The conservatives - small and big C probably.

INTERVIEWER They are in for a shock, are they?

CHAIR I do not care what they think. They are not in our thoughts. We are only interested in the future; the past is the past. Let's look to a glittering future.

INTERVIEWER As Chief Executive how do you see remuneration being addressed for players.

CHIEF We will be looking at more sponsorship. Individual players will be sponsored - and as there will be so many fewer players we will be looking at large investments.

INTERVIEWER So, we will have a Sainsburys player, a Tampax player and so on.

CHIEF Something like that - it will obviously be good advertising for them as their name is emblazoned all over kit. We are broadening the interest in the game amongst the business community.

CHAIR Pay big. Pay the best. Ditch the rest. We will be working with so many fewer players you can stump up the big bucks.

INTERVIEWER So, many professional cricketers will be made redundant.

CHAIR They won't be missed.

INTERVIEWER Don't you think you are being a little harsh? It's a terrible shock to be losing your job.

CHAIR Then they should have made more of an effort and got to the top earlier. It's their own fault. I won't have slackers in the sport or those who lack ability. Waste of space.

INTERVIEWER So, when you finally leave your position, what do you think will be seen as your legacy?

CHAIR As a saviour and a reformer.

INTERVIEWER

Interesting.

CHIEF

We plan to leave office with the sport in a far better state than we found it in.

INTERVIEWER

By ruining it?

CHIEF

By developing it and taking it forward.

INTERVIEWER

By dismantling it.

CHAIR

Oh fuck off.

SCENE FIVE - Another Meeting

CHAIR So, you will front it?

CAPTAIN Of course. I am fully behind it.

CHAIR Sure?

CAPTAIN Positive.

CHAIR It's a big step. It's a new dawn. A new day. A new sport.

CAPTAIN That's what makes it so exciting.

CHAIR It will put behind us the dross and boredom of the past. A fast-paced. Noisy. Cash-rich adventure.

CAPTAIN Can't believe the money you are suggesting for me.

CHAIR You will earn every penny I am sure!

CAPTAIN Well it certainly sorts out the future for me and my family.

CHAIR And you don't mind being painted as the bad boy of the game.

CAPTAIN I have always had a rebellious streak. I have never conformed. That isn't me. I am content to go out on a limb.

CHAIR I knew you were the man for the job.

CHIEF (entering) All ready. Contracts signed. Set for the news conference?

CHAIR Certainly am. The moment I have been waiting for.

SCENE SIX - A News Conference

INTERVIEWER Good evening and welcome to this special report live from Lord's Cricket Ground. This is a momentous day when the future of the national game of cricket is announced by the Chairman of the Cricket Board of the UK. Mr Chairman

CHAIRMAN It has been an interesting and rocky road. We have looked at all the alternatives. We made lots of recommendations and suggestions. We scrapped the lot. We had complaints, representations and protests. We didn't listen to any of them. Cos at the end of the day we knew we were right. So, I am delighted to announce that the boring and dull game of cricket has now been consigned to the scrap heap of history.

Looking around the world, we have considered many options and our captain made reference to the growing similarity of the old game with that of baseball. So, that's what we are going to be bringing you. But nothing long-winded. We don't want people to have to sit through hours like in the USA – let's get it done to 15 minutes. Wham, Bam, Thank you Ma'am. Get a tournament done in a day. Pay the players tons and get it on TV. Get the Mums and Kids in - even they can cope with something that lasts 15 minutes.

Let's get on with it, I got stacks of money coming into the game and I got players coming from across the world to be involved. Pity that we don't need most of the old grounds any more, but we have managed to sell most of them off and even this old fossil is going to become the biggest supermarket in the country. Cricket is finished. Ended. No more fucking cricket. It's a dead sport. Thank fuck!