

Reading -7

The Game I Like Most is Cricket. Cricket is a game of English origin and it is regarded as the mains game of English. It is probably a development of soft ball which was in vogue in the Middle Ages and still survives in parts of Sussex. The game had attained considerable popularity by the 18th century and a London club was formed in 1700. The Hambledon Club was started in 1750 and at its ground, at Broachalf Penny Down, county cricket originated. Thomas Lord started a ground in Dorset Square in 1787 which was moved to St. John's Wood in 1814 and became the headquarters of the Marylebone Cricket Club (M.S.C) - the ruling authority of the game. Gentlemen vs. Players, Oxford vs. Cambridge and Eton vs. Harrow matches started about this time and cricket took its present form.

Cricket has achieved some popularity in the Netherlands and is played to a certain extent in other countries, but it has spread from England as far as popularity and standards of paly are concerned, mainly to the countries of the commonwealth --- Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, the West Indies, Pakistan and India. An England team paid first visit to Australia in 1876. Four years later Australian eleven paid a return visit to England and that tour was really the inaugurations of what is called TEST MATCH CRICKET. The struggle for the ASHES between these countries has taken place at almost regular intervals but, in the first cases game there is no trophy or toward symbol of success. A remarkable level of equality between cricketers of Elysian and Australia has marked these matches between these two countries. Up to the Second World War, for instance, Australia had been victorious on 57 occasions, England on 55, while 31 matches had been drawn. Test matches between

England and South Africa were started in 1907, between England and New Zealand in 1929 and between England and India in 1932. In 1942, Australia and South Africa sent teams to England simultaneously to take part in a triangular tournament. But the experiment has never been repeated.

At every match there are two umpires who adjudicate on all points of law and are the sure judges of fair and unfairly play. The captain who wins the toss may decide if his team shall bat first or may put the opponents into bat. His decision is governed by the state of the pitch, perhaps also by his forecast of the weather. An innings lasts until all the players of the side have been into bat and two innings of both teams are taken alternately. To each of these rules there is an exception. Subject to condition of scores and time laid down in the rules. A captain may declare his side's innings to be closed. He may want his opponents to bat when the pitch or light is difficult or when his side having scored what he thinks may be a winning number of runs. He may think how will not be able to get his opponents out in the time remaining for play, if he goes on batting. The other exception is that if the team batting second is more than certain immediately to follow on its innings. Then there are definite rules about the weight and circumference of the ball, the length and width of the bat, the width of the wicket and the number of stumps, the distance at which the two wickets must be placed from each other, the length of the creases, the manner in which the ball must be bowled, how the runs to be counted, how the fieldsmen are to field and how a batsman may be declared out.

Cricket is one of the most fascinating games from the point of view of the spectators. Public interest in it has never suffered decline in any of the cricket-playing countries including India. During test matches, enthusiasm runs high. There is a mad rush for admission into the stadium. There is wide applause at each masterly strike. There are speculations as to how the various players are likely to fare.