

# Where's the Cricket at?

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Cricket is well past its glory days, let's admit that straight off the bat. As a young girl I grew up watching and learning from Mark Waugh's impeccable elegance and timing, Mark 'tubby' Taylor's captaincy, Brian Lara's perfect batting technique and Wasim Akram's flair.



As I grew older it seemed cricket was getting weary as well. Football (soccer) fever had converted many fans who preferred the fast pace and excitement as opposed to the staid pace of test matches. Twenty/20s initial years created a furore, but on the whole - several factors led to the decline of the cricket mania I grew up with in the 90s. The first reason had to be the decline in form and eventual retirement of several cricketing greats. The Waugh brothers, Lara, Taylor, Akram and for me Gilchrist was the last straw. The second reason was match-fixing, while a bit of controversy surrounding any game increases its allure and heightens interest, the constant bickering and match fixing allegations took away the passion for the game itself. After all, if the players are not playing for the love of the game, why should the audience love the game?

The last and most annoying reason was Australia's domination of Cricket during Ponting's captaincy. While initially it was a great feeling of success, the Australian team's arrogance and domination mixed with rumours of slugging on field and racist slurs led to a gradual disinterest in cricket. Very few cricketers took this as a challenge to their game... but those that did have created a hype that looks to breathe fresh life into the gentleman's sport.

Sachin Tendulkar. That name alone is enough to make almost any man woman or child in India or the subcontinent break out into a proud smile. At an age where most batsmen think of retiring, Sachin has taken the challenge to revive cricket almost single-handedly! His current form against Australia has helped him return to top of Test batsmen rankings for first time since 2002. Tendulkar's man-of-the-match display in the second Test against Australia was enough to secure him the No.1 spot eight years after he last occupied it. The 37-year-old's 214 and unbeaten 53 inspired India to a seven-wicket win over the tourists and secured a 2-0 victory in the series. Tendulkar has jumped from fourth to edge out Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara and compatriot Virender Sehwag and top the ratings for the ninth time in his career.

And if that wasn't enough to put a smile on a desi dial, the underdogs have taken up the challenge to reinvigorate cricket and keep the more established teams and players on their toes. Bangladesh have won the series against New Zealand in an attempt to

establish themselves as worthy contenders. Bangladesh played like spirited tigers to win at home for the first time against a full fledged opponent. 241 wasn't a match winning score by any means but the spinners pegged the New Zealand middle order with some disciplined bowling. They didn't really allow the game to slip at any stage despite a good partnership between Williamson and Nathan McCullum. Their talisman cricketer Shakib has once again proved why he is the Number One all-rounder in the ICC ODI rankings and he won the Man of the Match for his knock of 106 and his bowling figures of 3/54.

This amazing performance by Bangladesh was by no means a fluke. New Zealand put up a good fight with a maiden century from Kane Williamson but it wasn't enough to guide the New Zealand cricketers to victory in their fourth one day international against Bangladesh. New Zealand needed 242 to win after winning the toss and electing to field, but they got off to a poor start, losing their first three wickets for a measly 35 runs. Williamson kept the Kiwis hopes alive with a world-class performance, becoming the youngest New Zealander to reach an ODI century in the process.



New Zealand needed 16 runs from the last over with just one wicket in hand, but Williamson was caught out on the boundary with three balls remaining. Williamson top scored with 108, while the debutant Hamish Bennett was the best of the New Zealand bowlers, claiming 3 for 44 off his 8 overs. Bangladesh won by 9 runs, to claim their first series victory against a top-flight opposition. Bangladesh should be proud of their performance played out in front of packed crowds that went wild with celebration.

This is what Cricket needs, good performances by upcoming talented players with immense potential to create exciting competition and reinvigorate the age old gentleman's sport.

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