

2 February 2009

Mr Mark Vergano
CEO
Cricket ACT

Cc Club Presidents
Grade Cricket Committee
Umpires' Council

Dear Mark

At this stage I would like to formally put on the record some issues to do with the administration of cricket in Canberra this season. Please note the comments on pitch preparation I have sent in an earlier letter.

The first issue of major concern is general umpiring competency. As you know I will continue to agitate for improved umpiring standards. It again appears that little is being done on this front. On Saturday I again witnessed a left hand batsman given out LBW to a right arm over the wicket bowler when the batsman was struck on the pads playing a shot some 4 feet in front of the batting crease. It seems that umpires do not understand "doubt". Given the nature of the ANU North wicket that day (please see earlier correspondence) it is inconceivable such a decision can be given.

It also appears that some high profile players are been given excessive latitude and favourable decisions by umpires. It is common knowledge certain umpires can be "pressured". I am sure that Mark Higgs, Cade Brown, Peter Radford, Heath Axelby and others will confirm this.

This leads on to the captains/umpires facilitation meeting after games. This process does not work and to an extent relates to my previous immediate comment. Objectivity is often compromised by the result of the game. The fact that these meetings occur immediately after the game and that captains are unable or unwilling to anonymously give negative comments further compromises the objectivity of these meetings. There is certainly a feeling amongst captains at all levels that adverse captain reports do not result in appropriate action by administrators. Captains perceive that it is not in their interests to provide negative reports as they are likely to have the same umpire allocated to their games in the near future regardless of their comments.

If these facilitation meetings actually worked the end result would be better umpiring which we believe is not the case. It would be better if Captains submitted an umpires report 24 hrs after the game and these reports were jointly reviewed by a representative of the Umpires Council and a Grade Cricket Committee

representative. We believe it is inappropriate that the Umpires Council alone reviews these reports, as systems where peers review performance can lead to allegations of bias and “covering up” of poor standards. All umpires reports should be made available to the GCC as a means of ensuring transparency in the system. It also would be a good idea to have the 1st Grade captains meet with the Umpires Council each month during the course of the season to discuss umpiring issues in a non adversarial environment.

My next issue of concern again relates to umpires and what constitutes a “report” or “mention”. We are all aware of the massive inconsistencies in this area. The game between Eastlake and NCGCC (10/17 January) saw NCGCC player Scott Meyers reported for dissent and asked to appear before the Disciplinary Committee. I believe Umpires Turner and Kidd managed this issue correctly. However, there have been a range of much more serious incidents this season which have been managed differently i.e. no report. The Umpires Council need to take guidance from the ACTCA and address this issue.

My last gripe relates to the Cricket ACT data management of player statistics. The new system clearly is a nightmare i.e. it does not work. I have raised this numerous times with Chris Doyle and still nothing has been done.

Mark with respect I feel that all of the issues I have raised further supports the views of all grade cricket clubs that the Cricket ACT needs to afford greater attention and funding to the grade cricket competition.

On a final note, I attended a breakfast last Thursday morning where James Sutherland was in attendance. It seems very clear to me that Cricket Australia has no intention of supporting a centenary test match in Canberra. Separate conversations with Andrew Barr further supports this view. Cricket ACT needs to carefully rethink how it might go about pushing for the test match, as we agree that this would be of enormous benefit to cricket in Canberra.

I look forward to your early response to the matters I have raised. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to all other Club presidents, the Grade Cricket Committee and the Umpires’ Council.

Rob Docker
President
North Canberra Gunghalin Cricket Club