

Consultation on petition P-04-335 The Establishment of a Welsh Cricket Team
Response from Professor Rod Lyall

Wales and International Cricket: Some Key Issues

There can be no doubt that in both men's and women's cricket Wales could be one of the top six countries in Europe if its administrative structure could be adjusted to enable proper national sides to be fielded and official international fixtures to be played. More drastic changes would be needed to allow Wales to become an Associate member of the ICC since the links to the England and Wales Cricket Board would need to be changed for either the CBW or the WCA to be recognised as the official governing body. If Wales is serious about international cricket on a par with Scotland and Ireland, however, these issues will need to be addressed.

Roy Morgan, *Encyclopedia of World Cricket* (Cheltenham 2007), 237

Unquestionably, the current status of Welsh cricket is in many respects anomalous. Although there have been periods in which a Welsh national team has been regarded as an international side on the same basis as those of other countries – even participating in the first-ever ICC Trophy in 1979, despite the fact that Wales was not an Associate member of the International Cricket Council – this has never become an established practice, and for most purposes cricket in Wales forms a minor part of the England and Wales Cricket Board (significantly, referred to both by itself and by others as the ECB).

It should not be thought, however, that this is a unique anomaly, or that the relationship between national status in cricket and political statehood is self-evident. Rhodesia played in South African domestic cricket until 1979-80, for example, and many Rhodesian players represented South Africa at Test level. The West Indies has always been a consortium of many territories, only corresponding to a national entity during the lifetime of the West Indies Federation (1958-62). At present, players from the US Virgin Islands and the Dutch territory of Sint Maarten are considered eligible to play for West Indies domestic teams, and could presumably be selected to play for the West Indian 'national' side. As in rugby union, Ireland is also a transnational entity in cricket, comprising both the Republic and the UK territory of Northern Ireland.

Conversely, Scotland has since 1994 been an Associate member of the ICC, although it is a constituent part of the United Kingdom. Having previously been linked to the English Test and County Cricket Board, the predecessor of the ECB, the Scottish Cricket Union decided in 1992 to seek separate ICC membership, joining as an Associate member at the same time as Ireland. The intervening years have seen both countries more than replace their former funding from England with substantial ICC funding, much of it coming through their participation in the ICC's High Performance Program.

The fact that Wales is not an ICC member evidently has more to do with the particular history of Welsh cricket than it has with any political constitutional arrangements. A key factor is the existence of Glamorgan County Cricket Club, formed in 1888 and since 1921 a participant in the English County Championship. This has given cricket in Wales both a professional dimension which has been absent in Ireland and Scotland, and a structural interface with the English game. As one of the current 18 first-class counties, Glamorgan CCC derives substantial financial benefits from its membership of the ECB, and any change to the status quo would need to ensure that Glamorgan's position was suitably protected.

Founded in 1969, the Welsh Cricket Association is responsible for the amateur game in Wales, and is one of the constituent elements of the Cricket Board of Wales, formally the governing body of Welsh cricket. Any negotiations between the Welsh cricket authorities, the ECB, ICC and any other relevant parties would presumably be conducted by the CBW, whose views are therefore likely to be crucial.

Implications of ICC membership: cricket

There are at present three categories of ICC membership, although this is one of the topics covered by the governance review currently being undertaken on behalf of the ICC Executive Board by Lord Woolf. (He is expected to report early in 2012.) They are:

1. **Full** members, comprising the ten Test-playing nations. They dominate the ICC's decision-making processes, and take the lion's share of the money generated by the sport.
2. **Associate** members, including Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands and some 32 other countries where cricket is well established. Jersey and Guernsey also fall into this category. There are established criteria for Associate membership, covering organisational, infrastructural and playing factors. Normally, a country must have been an Affiliate member for at least three years before it can become an Associate, but there is provision for this requirement to be waived.
3. **Affiliate** members, where cricket is played and there is a recognised sole governing body.

It seems clear that Associate membership would be the most appropriate level for Wales to enter, although there would probably need to be confirmation of the national sides' playing strength before this could be achieved.

It is important to recognise, however, that the membership categories are only in part a determinant of playing status. The most striking case is Afghanistan, which does not (yet) satisfy the criteria for Associate membership but which has through the achievements of its national team qualified for the High Performance Program and gained the right to play full ODIs and to participate in the first-class Intercontinental Cup competition. On the other hand, Test status is a jealously-guarded closed shop, and entry to global events like the World Cup and World Twenty20 tournament is tightly restricted.

As an ICC member, Wales would participate in regional tournaments conducted by ICC Europe, including the men's Twenty20 championship, European 50-over and 20-over championships for women, and a range of youth competitions down to under-15. The exact format of these events has changed significantly over the past two years as a result of financial constraints and a shift in emphasis towards the Twenty20 format; discussions at global level may or may not produce further changes here.

As of October 2011, the principal competition structure for senior men is a three-division European Twenty20 championship, leading to places in a global qualifying tournament and potentially to the World Twenty tournament itself. Rankings in T20 also determine access to a regional qualifying tournament for the World Cricket League, a global 50-over competition which at present comprises eight divisions. This, too, is likely to be reviewed as a result of the debate about qualification for the World Cup and World T20, but it is reasonable to assume that the WCL will continue in some form, and that there will continue to be a regional qualifying process.

There are at present nine European countries in various divisions of the WCL: Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland in Division 1, Italy in Division 3, Denmark in Division 4, Guernsey in Division 5 (having recently won promotion), Jersey in Division 6, Germany in Division 7, and Norway in Division 8. Wales would presumably need to qualify for the lowest division via the European T20 competition, and then work their way up: depending on the issue of player eligibility (see below), it might be anticipated that it would take two or three years for them to find their level in the upper

divisions, and hence to have a chance of reaching a qualifying tournament for the World Cup and/or entering the lucrative HPP.

As indicated above, none of this need have any direct implications for Welsh cricketers' continued access to the higher echelons of the game via the ECB's competitions. There is no reason why Glamorgan should not remain a first-class county, or why Wales should cease to enter a team in the Minor Counties championship, or Wales Women cease to play in the Women's County Championship. By the same token, Welsh youth teams could continue to take part in the ECB's age-group competitions. After all, Scotland and the Netherlands play in both the Clydesdale Bank 40 League (men) and county championship (women), with Ireland also participating in the latter.

Implications of ICC membership: player eligibility

The ICC has strict rules on who is allowed to play for any country, and there can be little doubt that separate Welsh membership would pose certain questions. The main criteria are:

1. the *Player* was born in the relevant country;
2. the *Player* is able to demonstrate (by his/her possession of a valid passport issued by the relevant country) that he/she is a national of the relevant country; or
3. the *Player* is a *Resident* of the relevant country, in other words:

3.1 the *Player* has resided in the relevant country for a minimum of 183 days in each of the immediately preceding two years (female *Players* only);

3.2 the *Player* has resided in the relevant country for a minimum of 183 days in each of the immediately preceding four years (male *Players* only); or

3.3 the *Player* has resided in the relevant country for a minimum of 183 days in each of the immediately preceding seven years (male *Players* only).

In addition to these criteria, there are some additional requirements for eligibility to play for an Associate or Affiliate member, with some global events being excepted. These 'development criteria' are:

4. the *Player* has played in a minimum of 50% of the domestic league matches that his club team was scheduled to play within the relevant domestic structure in any 3 of the preceding 5 domestic league seasons;

5. the *Player* has spent a cumulative total of at least 100 working days in the relevant country coaching cricket, playing cricket or working in the administration or development of cricket in that country in the immediately preceding 5 years; or

6. the *Player* has previously represented the relevant country at Under-19 level or above after satisfying the additional *Development Criteria* in these *Regulations* or similar requirements under predecessor eligibility regulations.

At least one of these must be satisfied for the player to be eligible to play for an Associate or Affiliate member, with the exception of the World Cup and World T20, other full ODIs, the Intercontinental Cup, and global qualifying tournaments.

There are further rules governing movement between one country and another: in summary, a male player seeking to transfer to an Associate or Affiliate member may not have played international cricket for any other member in the preceding four years, while there is no such restriction on a player moving from an Associate or Affiliate member to a Full member. In other words, an Irish player could appear for Ireland and England on consecutive days, but would then have to wait for four years before requalifying to play for Ireland (as Ed Joyce has recently done).

In the particular circumstances pertaining to Wales, especially the existence of Glamorgan as an English first-class county, player eligibility would need careful definition, but in many respects the situation is little different from that in Ireland or Scotland – or, for that matter, in the Netherlands. Young Welsh cricketers could continue to aspire to play for England, and playing for Wales in the meantime need be no barrier to that ambition; having once played for England, however, they would be barred for playing again for Wales for at least four years.

Anyone contracted to play for Glamorgan would, presumably, qualify to play for Wales, either by birth or after a period of residence; such a player would arguably also satisfy eligibility criterion 5, and therefore meet the development criteria.

There is, however, a considerable difference between eligibility and availability, as Associate countries with county-contracted players know very well. Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands have all had problems securing the release of their county-contracted players during the English season, even though there is in theory a mandatory release system which should work in their favour. In Ireland's first-ever ODI against England they were unable to field their first-choice wicketkeeper because he was not released by his county; the reason was that he was the deputy to the England keeper, who had naturally been released to play!

It should, therefore, be assumed that for many tournaments the Welsh national side would look more like the team which plays in the Minor Counties Championship; it could scarcely be anticipated that Glamorgan would release their entire squad for a European Division 3 or Division 23 Twenty20 tournament in mid-season, even if all the players were deemed eligible. On the other hand, there are several top Welsh cricketers who play for counties other than Glamorgan.

Implications of ICC membership: finance

Others are better qualified than I am to speak on this matter, but again there is need for a degree of caution: while substantial funding can become available through the ICC's development programmes, much of it needs to be earned on the field, and this would certainly not happen overnight. Furthermore, much of the ICC's funding is earmarked for specific purposes, such as participation in tournaments, and its use is tightly controlled.

Any negotiations with the ECB would therefore need to be very carefully handled if the threatened loss of income were to be avoided, and at the very least there would need to be bridging arrangements in place until such time as Wales could play a full part in the global game and derive the appropriate benefits, such as Scotland received.

Conclusion

In the end, it is for Welsh cricket to determine its own future, and to decide whether the possible financial consequences of ICC membership and the difficulties which might well accompany any renegotiation of the relationship with the ECB would be outweighed by the advantages of Wales establishing an autonomous identity in international cricket. It is not a simple question, but it is a debate which undoubtedly ought to take place.

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