

School Cricket—“The Middle Leg”: Milton Boys’ High School, Bulawayo

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ABSTRACT

The current article explores cricket in one of the oldest schools in Zimbabwe and its introduction as a popular sport by the colonial administration of Britain. Zimbabwe’s most successful sport, cricket, survived isolation from international competition during United Nations imposed sanctions (1965–1980) and blossomed in stature thereafter. The sport was introduced in the 1890s, and the first match on home soil occurred in August 1890 near Masvingo.

Keywords: Britain, History, Milton, Rhodesia, School cricket.

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Zimbabwe’s most successful sport, cricket, survived isolation from international competition during United Nations imposed sanctions (1965–1980) and blossomed in stature thereafter. The sport was introduced in the 1890s, and the first match on home soil occurred in August 1890 near Masvingo. Sir William Milton, Rhodesia’s first administrator, and a former South African cricket captain, greatly encouraged the sport while, at the same time, the settler’s links with Great Britain ensured that a steady stream of top British players paid a visit to the country.^{1–4} Indeed, Milton had made his test cricket debut at Port Elizabeth in 1888–1889, was promoted to captain for the second test at Cape Town, and made his third and final appearance in Cape Town in 1891–1892. He played three other first-class games, including two for Western Province and one for Cape Town clubs. It was apt that a Bulawayo school be named after him.

After some outstanding achievements in sport in the country, particularly at the 1954 Commonwealth Games, the sports editor of *The Rhodesia Herald*, Cecil Whittaker, decided to set up a trophy award for Sportsman of the Year. Together with colleagues in the media, he formed the Sportswriters’ Association, and Southern Rhodesia’s premier sporting trophy was first awarded in 1956.⁴ From 1956–1986, the following cricketers were recognized—1962 Godfrey Lawrence, 1965 Colin Bland, 1967 Jackie du Preez, 1971 and 1972 Mike Procter, 1983 Duncan Fletcher, and 1985 David Houghton; or 22.6% of all sporting categories.

Milton Boy’s High School, situated in the sprawling suburb of Khumalo in Bulawayo, was born on 25th July 1910 and regarded as one of the best all-rounder schools in Southern Rhodesia, which not only produced fine sportsmen but had a significant proportion of Rhodes Scholarship recipients for tertiary education studies at Oxford University, in addition to many Beit Scholarship awardees. Other scholarships conferred included the Anglo-American Scholarship, Government Scholarships, Rhodesia Railways Scholarship, and Electricity Supply Commission Scholarship. On 5th August 1926, The Earl of Athlone described Milton Boys’ High School as “... undoubtedly the leading boys’ school in the Colony.”⁵ Indeed, many schools in the country, including post-independence, produced outstanding cricketers like David Houghton, the current Zimbabwean cricket coach who has produced a multiracial team of outstanding international performance.^{2,3} Cooper³ explores in depth the full

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historical background of cricket’s sporting heritage brought to the new colony of Rhodesia by British settlers. Milton Boys’ High School also molded some considerable talent in many sports, including cricket, and the subsequent talented students’ artistic impressions thereof. Permission was granted from the Old Miltonian Society to include excerpts from one of the historical school magazines, a 1979 edition, during a poignant time of transition from Rhodesia to multiracial Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (1st June 1979). Unfortunately, many of Zimbabwe’s school magazines are no longer produced and/or printed, and, as a consequence, significant achievements amongst teenage learners are neither recorded for posterity nor referenced for perusal by subsequent generations.

An interesting overview of Milton School was published.¹ Within the context of 1970–1985, cricket was mentioned numerous times as contributing to its status as a leading school. In spite of Unilateral Declaration of Independence, various sporting activities, including cricket, flourished together with athletics, baseball, basketball, cross-country, gymnastics, hockey, judo, rugby, shooting, soccer, squash, swimming, tennis, and water polo, and were coached to a high standard. To commemorate the diamond jubilee, two projects were dedicated to being permanent memorials of the occasion. The first was the Scholarship and Bursary Diamond Jubilee Trust with a target of £30,000 in order

to provide assistance to Miltonians in further education and, in some cases, whilst still at school. The sum was raised together with a substantial amount devoted to the Jubilee Pavilion. The cricket pavilion of 1940 was small and remote, and a new building was appropriate with a tuck shop, store rooms, kitchen, and toilet facilities, including a main hall to seat 160. There were delays in granting Ministry approval for the plans due to been sited on government land; 1972 saw the construction of the facility, and the pavilion was formally opened on Sports Day on 31st March 1973 by Mrs S Palte. The building satisfied the hopes of its visionaries and has also served as a small hall for many events, including boarders' film shows, 100 club gatherings, meetings, private societies, a polling station, and so on. The pavilion welcomed many well know and famous dignitaries, parents, grandparents, friends, and families to sit in the shade and watch a cricket match. Regarding notable sportsmen, in July 1971, the Head Boy in 1966, Mr P Jones, was elected Oxford University's Captain of Cricket for 1972. He was Oxford's sixth successive Rhodesian cricket captain. The second from Milton, Mr G Ridley, was his predecessor in 1967.¹

Cricket as a compulsory sport commenced in the earliest year at Milton High School (Fig. 1). The motto of Milton Boys' High School, AvdipiGiodi, or "Oh, quit yourselves like men. Be strong, be strong!" gazed upon by an impressive African bull elephant totem, encompasses three sociological aspects. It includes the quality by which pupils do what they know is right; it's the quality by which pupils control and keep in place their feelings and emotions; and, finally, it is the quality by which pupils resist any external threats, any pressures from sources outside themselves. The school committee justifiably stated in 1979 that it was in a period of change that the young men of Milton should remember their motto and abide by it, to the very end, echoing the words of the Earl of Athlone.⁵

Humor reference to schoolboy cricketers was made *via* pencil illustrations (Fig. 2). The following critical yet interesting and detailed excerpts on cricketing at Milton Boys' High School were extracted from The Miltonian,⁵ with permission and reveals the classic respect conferred to sports masters in addition to the invisible yet powerful arm's length distance imposed between teachers and students. An analysis of the cricket results was performed, and the following notable details were obtained. The third term of 1978 was recorded as a disappointing season with few stars, although it did contain plenty of spirit and determination, as typical of the Rhodesian culture. Regarding the 1st XI cricket team, there were six school competitors, including Christian Brothers' College (CBC), Gifford, Hamilton, Plumtree, Falcon, and Old Miltonians (OM). De Villiers scored an impressive 3-24, 3-54, 5-43, and 40 against Hamilton, Plumtree, Falcon, and OM's, respectively. However, the highest

final average batting was scored by Viljoen of 172, 7 innings, and 0 not out. The highest average bowling was achieved by Kettle at 34.4. Smith achieved the highest number of runs, (282) 97 overs, and 27 maiden overs. Smith was the most successful bowler. It was noted in the first term of 1979 that de Villiers proved to be the most successful pace bowler and an attacking and useful middle-order batsman. A detailed, constructive critique of all 11 team members was given. The U15A cricket team recorded one draw and five wins, ranging from 112 runs to 5-8 wickets, and hence were praised as having achieved an unbeaten season. The U15B Cricket Team won by 26 runs against Falcon but lost by 43 runs to Hamilton. It was pointed out that only two matches were played as there were few Bulawayo schools that could create a U15 side. Various players were commended. The U14A Cricket Team began poorly, but their hard work and determination paid off, resulting in the team playing "responsible cricket." The U14B Cricket Team had three wins against Gifford (by six wickets), CBC (by three wickets), and Hamilton (by an innings and 79 runs). The U13B Cricket Team enjoyed a successful season in the first term by defeating most opponents. Hard workers with a good team blend and team spirit were praised. Thanks were also given for dedicated parental support (Fig. 3).

The positive togetherness rendered by a team sport and the competition fostered between schools encourage the seeking of collectiveness and social responsibility within communities. Likewise, the caring sociability of the packs of dingos on Fraser Island, located off the east coast of Australia, has a lot to teach humans about quitting the conflict, bickering, jealousy, pilfering, and selfishness ingrained within their families' psychology! The old settler law of bounty hunting the dingo is a very destructive and retrogressive way of looking at things, as these apex-predator canines have an important role in ensuring invasive species and other predators, including aerial ones, are kept in check. When the dingos become too familiar, usually as a result of being fed by humans, they end up being culled by the parks and wildlife authorities. Currently, the purebred species of dingo on Fraser Island, formerly left by Aboriginal tribes who were driven off by the British, number just over 100, and, together with inbreeding among domestic dogs, there is a strong likelihood that the pure wild dingo will become extinct! Hopefully, the native Aborigines will one day be fully respected and their spiritual regard for all creatures cherished, a part of which is for the beautiful, golden-furred, deep golden brown-eyed dingo. Cricket-like dingo behavior is an unusual



Fig. 1: A remarkable photograph of Mr R Bing umpiring at U/13 boys' Milton cricket match



Fig. 2: A schoolboy cricketer

analogy and collaboratively brings people, including those from opposing sides, together.

As an examination-passed and fully qualified Grade C Zimbabwean Cricket Umpire and a Level 1 England Cricket Umpire, I strongly advocate that cricket continues to excite, enthuse and cultivate interest in all schools in Zimbabwe, not only amongst boys but also girls. Surely a school can only be as great as its pupils.⁵ The

Zimbabwean National Cricket Academy and the country's National Cricket Team have, in spite of certain significant historical setbacks (since 2000), achieved some amazing and very commendable results, particularly during the 2022 World Cricket Tournament in which they beat significant well-performing teams like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia, New Zealand, United States of America, and so on. Their position within the top 10 cricket nations is well

1st XI CRICKET TEAM

Coach	Mr K.Hawkins				
Captain	A.Viljoen				
Team Members:	A.Viljoen, M.Benning, I.Benning, P.Brownlee, D.de Villiers, M.Einhorn, D.Gibbs, J.Hardman, L.Kettle, M.Pettican, W.Smith				
Results	Vs. C.B.C. CBC 79 (Smith 5 - 25) Milton 80 for 2 (Smith 55, Einhorn 42) Milton won by 8 wickets				
	Vs. Gifford Gifford 111 (Smith 4 - 33) Milton 112 (Viljoen 59, Smith 35) Milton won by 8 wickets				
	Vs. Hamilton Hamilton 149 (de Villiers 3 - 24) Milton 103 for 7 (Viljoen 42) Match drawn				
	Vs. Plumtree Plumtree 310 (de Villiers 3 - 54, Smith 4 - 95) Milton 121 (Smith 43, de Villiers 32) Milton 165 (Viljoen 44, Hardman 46) Milton lost by an innings and 24 runs				
	Vs. Falcon Falcon 192 (De Villiers 5 - 43) Milton 90 for 6 Match drawn				
	Vs. O.M.'s Milton 170 (De Villiers 40, Gibbs 45) O.M.'s 172 for 8 (Smith 4 - 30) Milton lost by 2 wickets.				

Final Averages: (Batting)

Name	Innings	Not Out	Top Score	Total	Average
Gibbs, D.	5	3	45 n.o.	51	26
Viljoen, A	7	0	59	172	25
Smith, W	7	0	55	156	22
Einhorn, M	7	0	42	124	18
De Villiers, D	6	1	40	87	17

Final Averages: (Bowling)

Name	Overs	Maiden Overs	Runs	Wickets	Average
De Villiers, D	71	15	180	15	12
Smith, D	97	27	282	20	14,1
Pettican, M	43	5	155	7	22,1
Kettle, L	52	10	172	5	34,4

COMMENT

Third Term 1978 : A disappointing season for a team with so much potential. It contained no real stars but plenty of spirit and determination and was unlucky to lose so many matches. Lance Smith proved to be good as an opening bowler while Lange bowled very well from the other end. The batting was however brittle with no one excelling with the bat. I feel the disappointing season was due to a lack of concentration and hard work at practices. Results : Lost 2 - Won 1.

First Term 1979 : This season, the team proved to be successful. The team though fairly young, settled down to play some good exciting cricket. Einhorn and Smith showed that they had matured into fine cricketers, while De Villiers proved to be the most successful pace bowler and an attacking and useful middle order batsman. The rest of the team is made up of talented players such as Brownlee, Hardman, Kettle, Gibbs, Pettican and the Benning Brothers.



(Cont....)

There was a marked improvement in the batting this season and good scores were recorded by Smith, Einhorn, De Villiers and Viljoen. The team seemed more determined to make runs than in the previous year and players didn't throw their wickets away. The bowling however lacked the speed required, but the opening pair of Kettle and Pettican made up for lack of speed by bowling a good length and line. There was good support from both Smith and De Villiers, Smith being the most successful bowler.

CRITIQUE

Viljoen, A. (Captain)	A competent right hand opening bat who played several fine innings. A very keen Captain who tended to be rather conservative but will improve with experience. A safe fielder whose form with the ball deserted him.
Benning, M.	Right hand batsman and medium pace bowler; a player with a lot of determination and ability. A good swing bowler able to move the ball both through the air and off the pitch, but very unlucky not to have taken many wickets. An alert and safe fielder.
Benning, I	Right hand batsman. A young player with a lot of talent. Although a slow run getter, he keeps his end up well. Should do well next year.
Brownlee, P	Right hand batsman; showed that he can make runs when he sets his mind to it. A very determined fielder though perhaps a little slow.
De Villiers, D	Medium pace bowler and right hand batsman; a most successful pace bowler, able to bowl long tight spells. Also a useful middle order batsman, but his fielding lacked the concentration it requires. He must show a more dedicated approach towards the game.
Einhorn, M	Right hand batsman; a very keen and determined cricketer who always gave of his best. He batted well throughout the season, though was often out early trying to force the pace. A safe and reliable fielder.
Gibbs, D	Right hand batsman; an inconsistent batsman who has not realised his full potential. A little more concentration and determination is required. A safe cover fielder.
Hardman, G	Right hand opening batsman; a little nervous to start with, but showed his ability in making runs towards the end of the season. A good wicket-keeper who plays well to spinners.
Kettle, L	Opening bowler; a medium fast bowler who bowls a nagging length, though occasionally a little short. A quick and agile fielder.
Pettican, M	Opening bowler; a determined and consistent bowler. What he lacks is speed, but makes up with accuracy and length.
Smith, W	Left-hand batsman and offspin bowler, probably the most talented player in the side, but must adopt a more mature attitude. A consistent run getter and the most successful bowler. His fielding was, however, a little sloppy.

UNDER 15A CRICKET

Coach	Mr D. Bowyer		
Captain	P. Grobler		
Vice-Captain	D. Bennett		
Team Members :	P. Grobler, M. Grobler, M. Vickery, D. Bennett, R. Pearson, G. Salomon, T. Finch, G. Faulds, B. Sellars, H. Seligman, D. Feigenbaum, I. Parsons		
Results	Milton 208	CBC 40-1 (Rain)	Draw
	Milton 238 for 5;	Gifford 116	Won by 112 runs
	Milton 83 for 5;	Founders 33	Won by 8 wickets
	Hamilton 139;	Milton 143-3	Won by 7 wickets
	Plumtree 61;	Milton 122-2	Won by 8 wickets
	Falcon 89;	Milton 90-5	Won by 5 wickets

(Cont...)

Comments: The Under-15A side had a very successful season as proven by an unbeaten season. Starting the season very casually this was soon changed by our coach, Mr Bowyer, who brought in a great deal of discipline. Although we had our dreary periods we managed to win all our matches by five or more wickets except for the match against CBC which was stopped by rain. Vickery and Pearson were our most successful batsmen especially Vickery who scored 104 runs not out against Gifford. The most successful bowler was P.Grobler who took 18 wickets in the last two matches. Once again David Bennett played very well at wicket keeper.

UNDER 15B CRICKET

Coach Mr P.Hannay
Captain G.Wentzel
Vice-Captain S.Ryder
Team Members: R.Simon, G.Wentzel, S.Ryder, A.Center, N.Peel, S.Savva, M.Vaughan, D.Coetzee, N.Desai, S.Gilhooley, C.Murie, P.Danvers, C.Evans, O.Von Kalkstein (Reserve)
Results Falcon 93; (Evans 6-19, Ryder 3-6)
Milton 119: (Murie 28, Evans 25)(Wentzel 19) Won by 26 runs
Hamilton 142 (Centre 4-27, Ryder 2-15, Savva 3-50)
Milton 99 (Desai 23) Lost by 43 runs
Milton won the toss on both occasions.

Comments: The Under 15B Cricket Team only had these two matches during the first term, against Falcon College and Hamilton, because not many Bulawayo Schools can raise an under 15B side. However, the games that were played were thoroughly enjoyed by all the players who really gave of their best at all times. Simon proved to be an able wicket-keeper and Wentzel performed well both as Captain and as a solid batsman. Other batsmen who played well were Evans, Simon, Desai and Murie. Center, Evans, Savva and Ryder proved to be capable bowlers, while Coetzee and Gilhooley fielded well.

UNDER 14A CRICKET

Coach Mr R.I.Howie
Captain W.Wentzel
Vice-Captain D. Gammon
Team Members: D.Hulley, S.Venn, R.Feigenbaum, J.McCullough, P.Pilosoff, D.Mower, M.McCormick, G.Wallace, M.Fouche

The team started off in poor fashion. However, with hard work and determination, they were beginning to play responsible cricket. Wentzel, Venn, Feigenbaum and McCormick bowled well and were unlucky not to take more wickets. Hulley and Gammon made a number of fine innings and showed they could bat well when they concentrated. The team's fielding also improved during the season and back-up work and catching was good. With determined effort next season the team should do well.

UNDER 14B CRICKET

Coach Mr L.Schurmann
Captain E.Van Ryneveld
Vice-Captain P.Pilosoff
Team Members: E.Van Ryneveld, B.Blatch, A.Morland, P.Pilosoff, G.Johnson, G.Hagemann, G.Cunard, R.Spits, R.Parkinson, D.Brenner, C.Naude, D.Fouche, A.Haynes.
Results Vs. Gifford Milton won by 6 wickets
Vs. CBC Milton won by 3 wickets
Vs. Hamilton Milton won by an innings and 79 runs
Comment : Milton Vs. Hamilton :- Milton scored 141 runs for 3 wickets, declared in the first innings, Morland scoring 56 not out. Hamilton replied, scoring 25 all out. Fouche of Milton bowled a hat-trick and took a total of 8 wickets for 12 runs in the first innings. Hamilton batted again scoring 37 all out. Van Ryneveld managed a hat-trick (actually he took 4 consecutive wickets in his second over), taking a total of 6 wickets for 8 runs in the second innings.

UNDER 13A CRICKET

Coach Mr R.Bing
Captain N.Rix
Team Members: N.Rix, R.Pattison, B.O'Callaghan, D.Caygill, D.Waddy, D.Finch, B.Kendall, R.Cloete, H.Ziemkendorf, M.Halleran, K.Whyte, N.Gilhooley, D.Trevenan, R.Hancock.
Comment : This year's under 13A side enjoyed a successful season in the first term. They defeated most sides although often the end left their coach a little short on fingernails. The side is well balanced with its fair share of really talented players and the usual hard workers of cricket in the lower orders. The blend was a happy one and the team spirit was good throughout the season. If the reason for our success was enjoyment of the game, I believe we were exceptionally successful.
My thanks also, always, to the good parents who came and supported the team. It is a valuable contribution you make.

Fig. 3: An excerpt from Milton High School magazine featuring cricket scores

deserved. Furthermore, I suggest that more local Zimbabwean citizens should publish proficient articles on cricket and, gratefully, as a consequence, the recent fully-referenced articles of Cooper^{2,3} have generated research projects among students enrolled at Zimbabwean universities, in addition to numerous reprint requests from academics and researchers located all over the World.

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