

New Zealand cricket

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MCH, 2016j

Cricket is New Zealand's major organised summer sport and enjoys the fourth-highest playing numbers. Five-day test matches don't attract large crowds, but one-day international matches (ODIs) are another story, drawing good crowds and big television audiences.

Many New Zealanders can relate to a game of backyard cricket and hitting a ball through a window or over the fence for 'six and out'. Driftwood stumps can often be seen sticking out of the sand at the end of an impromptu game on the beach. But cricket is not a sport of great worldwide significance. Only 10 nations have full test status. Like rugby, its popularity is largely confined to present and former members of the British Commonwealth, and, like rugby, the game originated in England. This may be why many former colonies take immense satisfaction from beating the English at their own games.

New Zealanders relish wins against England and Australia. Beating England, our former colonial masters, and Australia, our closest sporting rival and one of the consistently strongest teams in the world, is seen as a true benchmark of success.

Development of cricket in New Zealand

Cricket quotes

'Turned the boys out to play cricket ... Very expert, good bowlers.'

Henry Williams, 20 Dec 1832 – after the first recorded game in New Zealand

'Cricket has been introduced too, and we flatter ourselves that the Wanganui eleven would not be sneered at even at Lord's.'

W.J.T. Power, 1849

'I tell the boys in summertime to play at cricket and play well, that those who are the best cricketers most likely will be the best readers and writers.'

E.G. Wakefield, 1850

D. McGill (ed.), *The Reed book of New Zealand quotations*, Reed, Auckland, 2004

Cricket came early to New Zealand. Anglican missionary Henry Williams organised a match in Northland in 1832, and the first match in which scores were recorded was played at Wellington in December 1842. In 1864 international cricket arrived in New Zealand in the form of George Parr's professional 'All-England Eleven', which had been playing in Melbourne. The English team won four matches against 22-strong teams representing Otago and Canterbury.

By the late 19th century cricket had established itself as a major sporting code. There were thriving inter-club competitions in the main centres. In 1906 the Plunket Shield was presented by the governor, Lord Plunket, as the symbol of provincial supremacy. Teams played for the trophy on a challenge basis until the 1920–21 season, when it became a league competition. The original provinces of Auckland, Canterbury, Otago and Wellington were joined by Central Districts (in the 1950–51 season) and Northern Districts (in the 1956–57 season). The Plunket Shield was replaced by the Shell Trophy in the 1975–76 season, which was in turn succeeded by the State Championship in the 2000–01 season.

The first recorded women's cricket match was played in Nelson in 1886, but women's cricket did not become firmly established until the late 1920s and early 1930s. Women cricketers compete domestically for the State League, representing the same provincial associations as the men's State Championship.

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An encyclopaedia of New Zealand 1966 has a good account of the beginnings of men's cricket in New Zealand. Cricinfo – New Zealand is also an authoritative site with useful match statistics from the past up to the present.

International cricket

In 1930 New Zealand became the fifth test-playing nation (after England, Australia, South Africa and India) when it played its first test against England at Lancaster Park (later Jade Stadium, now AMI Stadium), Christchurch. In what was to become an all-too-familiar trend, the English won by eight wickets. New Zealand did not achieve its first test victory until 1956, when the West Indies were defeated at Eden Park. Up to the end of December 2008 New Zealand had played 345 test matches.

New Zealand played their first ODI on 11 February 1973, defeating Pakistan by 22 runs at Lancaster Park.

The New Zealand women's team played their first test match against England at Lancaster Park in 1935.

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