



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA

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ISSN 1652-7224 ::: Published 1 September, 2010

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The Cricket World Cup has taken place every four years since 1975, when the event was held in England, and is the world's fourth largest and most viewed sporting event. In 1975, eight nations participated, the championship was played over two weeks, and it won by the West Indies. In 2007, the championship, which took place in the West Indies, lasted for six weeks, with 16 participating nations and with Australia emerging victorious. The Cup was criticized for high levels of commercialization, the tickets were considered too expensive, and the International Cricket Council imposed harsh restrictions on the distribution of outside food, signs, copies of the equipment and musical instruments – all of which are part of the Caribbean cricket tradition. To the world outside the former British Empire, cricket is often seen as something exotic, but it is deadly serious for the countries involved.

Two years ago, a book called *Cricket, Race and the 2007 World Cup*, compiled by Jon Gemmell and Boria Majumdar (Routledge) was published. We turned to a British sports researcher, Guy Osborn, for a review. Our reviewer finds that the individual contributions in the book, which was originally a special issue of *Sport in Society*, give a comprehensive picture of racism in international cricket and that the book is an important contribution to the literature in the field. However, says Guy Osborn, the book is impaired by a startling omission: there are very few references to the 2007 Cricket World Cup!

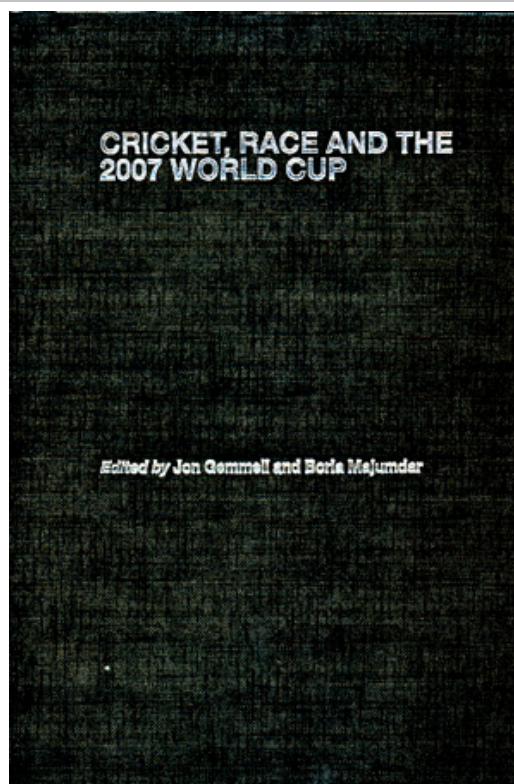
Useful compilation, but too little about ICC WC 2007

Guy Osborn

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Jon Gemmell & Boria Majumdar (red)
Cricket, Race and the 2007 World Cup
192 pp, hc.
Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 2008
(Sport in the Global Society)
ISBN 978-0-415-37164-3

The intersection between race, nationality and cricket is something that has been explored in detail classic cricket texts such as *Beyond a Boundary* (CLR James, 1963) exploring the issue. (In)famously in the UK, issues of nationality and cricket have been evoked within the political sphere in the UK in the past, with Norman Tebbit's 'cricket test', a question of which side one cheered for in cricket, being offered as a contentious barometer of nationality. Similarly, the issue of South Africa's apartheid regime underpinned the Stop the Seventy Four movement which protested against involvement with South African sporting teams when such exclusionary policies existed, and, as in association football, there have been grass roots campaigns to attempt to tackle elements of supporter racism, such as [Hit Racism for Six](#).



So, as can be seen, the issue of race has been an important one. At the same time issues of commercialisation have been increasingly important in cricket. In the 1970s Kerry Packer saw the potential of cricket to become an

economically attractive sport, and cricket has evolved remarkably in recent years. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the advent of Twenty20 cricket and particularly the Indian Premier League (IPL) with its player auctions and associated money-spinning ventures. So, at the outset the premise of this book is promising. Using the world cup as a vehicle or focus via which to interrogate the race issue, whilst at the same time tackling issues of commercialisation and globalisation, is pregnant with possibilities.

This volume is another addition to the well respected *Sport in the Global Society* series, edited by J.A. Mangan and Boriia Majumdar. This series is extremely well established and can lay claim to a number of important and seminal texts in sport studies over the past decade or so. This particular book appeared originally as a special issue of the journal *Sport in Society*.

The book is divided into ten chapters, preceded by an Introduction. The chapters all examine the issue of race, for the most part focussing on the issue within a specific territory or area. For example, Steven Wagg examines issues of nationality and ethnicity within English cricket whilst Majumdar himself looks at India, the new superpower of world cricket, and looks at this from the perspective of post colonialism.

These, and other chapters in the collection are generally interesting and apposite.


” *The book is hung on the peg of the 2007 Cricket World Cup, so it is most surprising to read very little reference to the event itself.*

There is however a startling omission. The book is hung on the peg of the 2007 Cricket World Cup, so it is most surprising to read very little reference to the event itself. The essays contained within are certainly valid and useful, but it is not always clear how their coverage fits into the avowed theme. Perhaps ‘Cricket, Race and Globalisation’, or something alluding to the implications of commercialisation, might have been a better title more accurately reflecting the coverage of the collection. Certainly Gemmell begins his introduction by saying that; ‘[a]s cricket evolves into a global sport, it has become increasingly associated with national identity’. Perhaps the chapters could have been refocused slightly so that this could have been their individual point of departure.

That is not to decry the chapters themselves, all of which are valuable additions to the literature, and that query about the title aside, the book raises some very pertinent questions. It charts many of the key changes and shifts that have taken place with new members joining the ICC, see the chapters of Dasgupta on ‘Bangladesh Cricket: Scoring on passion, but little else?’ and Kampmark’s ‘A Matter of Necessity: The minnow and world cricket’ for good examples of this. In addition, various manifestations of the commercial reach of cricket are excavated. As is made clear, cricket’s history and heritage hugely informs the debate, with issues of class also to the fore. Indeed cricket has a long history of exclusion, and race is but one manifestation of this, as the text makes clear.


All in all there is some important and timely work in this collection, all of which will be valuable for scholars of cricket, and indeed sport generally, in the future. I would have preferred to see some more specific engagement with the 2007 World Cup as presaged in the title, but that does not detract from the chapters themselves. It is also clear that the IPL presents us with a beautiful opportunity to create a new collection that examines the implications for cricket, our understanding of nationality, and the role of sport itself. I hope to see a new addition to this groundbreaking series in the near future dealing with these issues.

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