



Sticky wickets hamper Taiwanese cricket

DEVOTION: With just eight teams nationwide, it sometimes proves difficult to bring people together for a tournament, but Taiwan's expat cricketers are a determined lot

BY RICHARD HAZELDINE
STAFF REPORTER

Taiwan and cricket are two words people usually don't associate with each other, but dig a little deeper and one finds a thriving, albeit small, cricketing scene among the nation's expats.

With just eight teams up and down the country, it sometimes proves difficult to bring enough of them together for a tournament, given work commitments and travel arrangements, says Taiwan cricketing stalwart and Taiwan Southernners Cricket Club (TSCC) chairman Andrew Carrick.

Englishman Carrick, 37, should know: As organizer of the Taiwan Annual Cricket Tournament, he brought four of those teams — TSCC, Formosa Cricket Club (FCC), Pakistan Cricket Club Taiwan (PCCT) and newcomers Pakistan Badshahs — together on Dec. 13 and Dec. 14 to help the tournament he founded celebrate its ninth year.

The two-day competition was held in Pingtung and Kaohsiung.

Taiwan's troublesome climate means the season usually runs from around October through April.

But by far the biggest difficulty facing the teams is finding venues: In a place where baseball is king, there is a complete absence of playing surfaces suitable for cricket.

This problem can be overcome,

however, by placing mats in the middle of baseball fields. Although the results aren't perfect, the cricket is of a surprisingly decent standard.

The makeshift conditions and lack of facilities — most equipment has to be shipped in from places like Hong Kong and Dubai — doesn't mean that the teams don't take their sport seriously.

Take Formosa's Indian wicketkeeper, Maudul Islam, 29, for example.

Formerly in Taiwan, Maudul now lives in South Korea, but he stopped off to play in Kaohsiung on his way back to visit friends and family in India.

Or, as PCCT member Asif Tanoli from Pakistan put it: "The aim is not just to play, but to play serious, organized cricket."

Tanoli's sentiments are echoed by Carrick, who said: "The Pakistani teams [both formed in the last two years] have brought a new intensity to cricket in Taiwan, which is good for the game."

Another thing many of the players are serious about is the desire to promote the sport in Taiwan, a task that, despite their best efforts, is proving difficult.

"FCC has just three local members," club chairman Prem Purswaney said.

The other clubs also have a few locals involved, but apart from

wives, girlfriends and the occasional curious passerby, there was no Taiwanese talent on show at the recent tournament.

"The long-term goal is to introduce cricket into schools," Carrick said.

But some kind of international accreditation must be secured first in order to make that a reality, he said.

FCC captain Charl Esterhuizen has set his sights even higher, hoping one day to push the game to the international level.

"But to do that, we need to get more local players involved," Esterhuizen said.

Anything is possible, he added optimistically, citing Chinese women's cricket as an example. Their national team made the semi-finals in last year's Asian Women's Cricket Championship.

Until such a time arrives, however, the clubs will have to content themselves with spreading the gospel among fellow expats.

As one would expect with this most English of games, most of the players come from countries that were formerly part of the British Empire.

Some of the teams have also been successful in attracting people from nations with absolutely no cricketing tradition, such as the US.



“The long-term goal is to introduce cricket into schools.”

— Andrew Carrick,
Taiwan Southernners
Cricket Club chairman



Above right: Pakistan Cricket Club Taiwan batsman Shazad swings at a delivery from Formosa Cricket Club captain Charl Esterhuizen during the ninth Taiwan Annual Cricket Tournament in Kaohsiung on Dec. 14. Above left: Taiwan Southernners Cricket Club chairman Andrew Carrick holds the winners trophy for the tournament.

PHOTOS: (ABOVE RIGHT) COURTESY OF MARY MULLEN, (ABOVE LEFT) RICHARD HAZELDINE, TAIPEI TIMES

One such player is Kaohsiung resident and TSCC player Jason Cox from Texas.

Cox, 26, was first attracted to the game by the desire to learn something new, but he admits it was also because he thought the standard of baseball in Taiwan was too competitive for him.

"When I first started playing it was extremely difficult to resist running upon every contact," he said with a smile, adding that his

other American friends found it hard not to drop the bat.

Cox enjoyed a baptism by fire. Asked to bowl with the scores level in his first-ever game, he sent down a match-losing wide with his first ball.

But despite a rough start to his cricketing life, after just a few months, Cox is already hooked — although the same cannot be said for his wife, who is Taiwanese.

"She finds it slightly less interesting than watching paint dry," he said.

Some players, however, said their families were much keener, following them up and down the country to cheer at tournaments.

Indeed, the social aspect of the clubs is very important to the players and their families. The clubs organize a wide variety of events, including camping trips, year-end

dinners and birthday celebrations — all designed to help their willow-wielding members feel comfortable in their adopted home.

To join one of the clubs, please contact:

Formosa Cricket Club: Charl Esterhuizen, 09-1735-1749. Taiwan Southerner's Cricket Club: Andrew Carrick, 09-1955-7896. Pakistan Cricket Club Taiwan: Amjad Zafar, 09-2022-1793.

PIGEON POST

Visa-free entry for transit travelers from five countries

VISAS

Taiwan will grant visa-free entry for qualified transit travelers from five Asian countries — India, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia — beginning on Jan. 20 as part of its effort to attract upscale tourists.

A Tourism Bureau official said citizens of the five Asian countries who possess US green cards or Canadian maple cards have been allowed to enter the country without a visa since Dec. 1. At the suggestion of the Tourism Bureau, the official said, the Executive Yuan has agreed to simplify travel to Taiwan for more citizens from the five countries, granting them visa-free entry if they have visas or plane tickets to the US, Canada, Japan, any of the EU countries, Australia or New Zealand.

Community Services Center closed for the holidays

SOCIETY

The Community Services Center closed yesterday for the holidays and will reopen on Jan. 5. The Center's crisis counseling service can still be reached at 0932-594-578. The Center has released its Spring/Summer Activities catalog, which can be viewed online at www.community.com.tw. People interested in signing up for classes are advised to book early, as space is limited.

Democrats Abroad Taiwan announces meeting

POLITICS

Democrats Abroad Taiwan invites all US citizens over the age of 18 to join an organizational meeting for next year on Saturday, Jan. 17, at Famous Larry's Pizza in Taipei. Participants must register at www.democratsabroad.org. At the meeting, board members will be elected and formal steps taken to update the country committee to a full committee. Candidates are needed for the director and supervisor positions, the organization said. The chair and the vice chair positions must be of the opposite gender under Democratic Party rules. Those who are interested in running for the positions must inform the committee beforehand to ensure there is enough time to prepare the ballots. For more information, contact the organization at democratsabroadtaiwan@gmail.com.

Toy drive organized for orphans

CHARITY

The Australia and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with The Brass Monkey and the Taipei Baboons, are sponsoring a toy drive for the Harmony Home Association Taiwan, an orphanage for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Donors are welcomed to drop off toys or children's clothing at 166 Fuxing N Rd in Taipei. For more information, call The Brass Monkey at 02-2547-5050 or check the Australia and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce Web site at www.anzcham.org.tw.

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA



STICKY MATTERS

Women from Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia make sticky rice balls at an activity celebrating "dongzhi" — the winter solstice — in Kaohsiung City last Friday.

PHOTO: HUANG CHIH-YUAN, TAIPEI TIMES

TAS aims for a unique education

BY JENNY W. HSU
STAFF REPORTER

Stepping into Taipei American School (TAS) can be quite a *deja vu* experience for anyone who went to school in the US. It's not just the sight of the US flags, the sound of American English in the hallways or the cut-outs of jack-o-lanterns and goblins when Halloween is approaching — the high energy and vibrant go-getter spirit leave that unmistakable impression of a US school atmosphere.

Located in the heart of Tianmu (天母) and spanning 62,192m², the hulking red brick building has become a landmark.

What started out with only eight students in 1949 in the basement of the Presbyterian Theologian Seminary on Zhongshan N Road has developed into a school with a student body of more than 2,200, while the faculty has steadily grown to 280 staffers.

"What really sets TAS apart from all the other international schools is the student body itself," said Sharon Hennessy, the school superintendent and an acclaimed educator with three decades of experience.

TAS students are "hardworking, well-rounded and intrinsically self-motivated," Hennessy said.

The school's campus includes

libraries on virtually every floor, including a Chinese-language library. There are also two gymnasiums and an indoor swimming pool, computers and video editing labs, an indoor climbing wall and two softball fields.

One of the walls at the Lower School is covered with large pictures of characters from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, making it a perfect reading corner to nestle up and share good books with good friends.

"The beauty is that TAS students have high desires to achieve their goals and the push does not always come externally, but from the students themselves," Hennessy said.

TAS is not only modeled on, but also follows developments in the US education system.

It offers 22 advanced placement — or college preparatory — courses and 34 International Baccalaureate courses, ranging from art history to statistics to dance.

Many TAS graduates continue to top universities in the US and other countries, including Switzerland, China, Poland, Singapore, Canada, Japan, Australia, Norway and, of course, Taiwan.

Hennessy, formerly a French teacher, a guidance counselor at

both private and public schools and an adjunct professor at Boston University, said that while other schools may face the challenge of motivating students to learn, TAS focuses more on preparing them for a fast-paced world.

TAS focuses on giving students the skills to be good global citizens, she said.

"In this school, the cool thing to do is to be good," she said.

For Hennessy, in addition to fostering academic excellence, helping students grow up to be ethical — honest, responsible, respectful and tolerant of different cultures and backgrounds — is part and parcel of offering a good education.

Students volunteer at several charities. A board put up by the Community Service Club shows pictures and letters of appreciation from the Eden Foundation and other groups.

Recently, a group of 34 students went to Cambodia on a humanitarian trip in collaboration with the Tabitha Foundation to build homes for underprivileged families.

"Even though TAS is just a school, in many ways it depicts reality in terms of the different people you meet. You become more respectful of other's thoughts and

opinions and in return you are more careful with your actions and words," said Andy Huang, a member of last year's graduating class.

Huang, a Canadian-Taiwanese who now attends medical school in Australia, credited his involvement in the Orphanage Club while he was a student at TAS with helping him learn to count his blessings and give back to the community.

Aside from a rigorous academic curriculum, the school also offers strong arts programs. Each year, the students' drama productions, which in the past have included *Alice in Wonderland* and *Twelfth Night*, draw hundreds of people.

For Brian Challengberg of the class of 2005, who now works in Shanghai, the highlight of his TAS experience was his involvement in the Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asian Schools.

The program let him travel to Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta and Manila to compete in sports.

"The school gives you a chance to meet some lifelong friends, because most people can relate to each other, since lots of them are from an international background," Challengberg said.

Sluggish economy taking its toll on Filipino workers

BAD NEWS: Between 2,400 and 3,000 workers could be displaced by the end of the month and another 3,000 dismissed in the first quarter next year

AP, MANILA

More than 2,000 Filipino workers have lost their jobs in Taiwan because of the global financial crisis and that number could triple by the end of the first quarter next year, Philippine diplomats said last Tuesday.

Manila Economic and Cultural Office Managing Director Antonio Basilio said that 2,073 workers had been dismissed from 49 factories since October.

"It's part of the global recession because the economy here is export-dependent," Basilio said by phone from Taipei.

“It's part of the global recession because the economy here is export-dependent.”

— Antonio Basilio, Manila Economic and Cultural Office managing director

Labor attache Rodolfo Sabulao said between 2,400 and 3,000 workers could be displaced by the end of the month and another 3,000 could be dismissed in the first quarter of next year as the financial crisis continues to batter Taiwan's export sector.

About two-thirds of an estimated 90,000 Filipino workers in Taiwan are employed in factories.

Basilio said the situation was "not as dire as some people have speculated," citing continued hiring of Filipino workers as maids, caretakers, construction workers and service industry employees.

The two countries have agreed to allow direct-hiring of Filipino workers by accredited Taiwanese companies starting in January.

This will relieve Filipino workers from paying exorbitant placement fees to job recruitment firms and monthly fees to employment brokers.



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