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Cricket in the Caribbean

Of all the histories of imperial cricket, the Caribbean game is probably the best documented. It provides an excellent example of the way in which cricket was taken to a new cultural environment by British colonizers, was embraced by a colonized people, and was subsequently a vehicle for the assertion of a separate and distinct 'national' identity. National is used here in speech marks in recognition of the fact that the Caribbean entity that plays international cricket – the West Indies – is a multinational conglomeration which remains something of a peculiarity in world sport.

The case of cricket in the English-colonized Caribbean has been described as a tale of 'the gradual supplanting of whites by blacks on the field and in society' (Yelvington 1990: 2). However, as the following sections show, this was not a simple, linear process characterized solely by dominance and subordination. Rather, the black population negotiated its way and, at times, was incorporated into the game by the white colonizers. At times various groups of non-whites also sought to discriminate against each other. At times British emigrants were constrained by their relationships with other emigrants, and with groups back in Britain. The history of cricket in the Caribbean is 'a complex mixture of accommodation and resistance ... (with) as many struggles over boundaries within and between the lower ranked social groupings as there were within the white elite' (Stoddart 1995a: 81). Indeed, C.L.R. James's (1963) seminal book, *Beyond a Boundary*, is essentially an autobiographical discussion of the seeming contradiction between an appreciation, acceptance and love of cricket (and the values and behavioural mores associated with the game), and a lifetime of resistance against the subordination of non-whites under imperial rule. The West Indian case therefore demonstrates the complexity of the influence of class and race relations on the development of the imperial game, as well as the ideological tensions over environmental determinism and the endurance of the ideology of imperial unity supposedly fostered by playing cricket. In addition to this, fast bowling features as a central aspect in this broader process of negotiation and thus further reveals the problematic linkage of Englishness, cricket, civility and violence.

Cricket in the colonial Caribbean

Beckles (1995a) notes that the first references to cricket in the West Indian press appeared in the *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette* in

June 1806. In January 1807 the paper included an announcement of a dinner to be held at the St Ann's Garrison Cricket Club. Two years later the *Gazette* publicized a 'grand cricket match' to be played between the Officers of the Royal West Indies Rangers and Officers of the Third West Indian Regiment for fifty-five guineas a side. These, and subsequent, press reports highlight the central role of the military in the organization of the early game in the region (Stoddart 1995a). Cricket pitches were often a central feature of garrisons throughout the Caribbean. The significance of military cricket was such that the St Ann's Garrison club, for instance, has been referred to as a 'pioneering West Indian social institution' (Beckles 1995a: 37).

Initially members of the military played between and amongst themselves. However, during the period of slavery, blacks had been encouraged to use what leisure time they had 'constructively'. Pursuits perceived as a threat (and this can be taken to mean almost any activity which was unfamiliar to colonists) were prohibited. Consequently, those activities which were familiar (i.e. cricket) formed the few permissible pastimes available to slaves. This is not to say, of course, that the slaves were entirely compliant in this adoption. Many (for example Yelvington 1990) have argued that there may have been elements within the play of blacks which effectively sought to satirize the colonizers' ways. Gradually, however, the slaves were 'incorporated' into the cricket games of the military officers. As Yelvington (1990: 2) notes, blacks 'performed restrictive roles. At first they were "allowed" to prepare pitches ... and a few were "allowed" only to bowl and retrieve batted balls during practice sessions'. Thus from this early stage, the cricketing roles performed by blacks had similarities with the experiences of the working-class professionals in English and American cricket.

While people throughout the British Empire adopted cricket as a signifier of inclusion, in the West Indian case three reasons were particularly apparent. First cricket allowed the white community to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown. Second, performances on the field of play served to prove that the heat of the tropics had not undermined British vigor as the logic of environmental determinism suggested it might (Stoddart 1995b). Third, once slavery was abolished (in 1838) cricket served to distance the elite from the "uncivilized" indigenes' (Beckles 1995a: 34). As Beckles (1995a: 36) puts it: 'In exactly the same way that whites defined a political system in which less than 10 per cent of the population was enfranchised as democratic, a place was found for blacks within the cricket culture that enhanced the divisions of labour insisted upon by the plantations.' Cricket's development rested on an uneasy alliance of imperial unity and localized division.

These factors contributed to cricket's dramatic spread in the Caribbean during the second half of the nineteenth century. The major centres of cricket – clubs and schools – were organized on the basis of social ranking with club membership determined on the basis of occupation, wealth and colour, rather

than playing ability. In Barbados, for instance, the sons of the white elite (and a few blacks who received scholarships) went to Harrison College, the sons of the plantocracy went to Lodge and the sons of the emergent middle-class coloureds joined white pupils at Combermere. Once they left school, each had their respective clubs to join. Old boys from Harrison joined the Wanderers club if they were white or Spartan if they were black. Lodge old boys joined Pickwick, and black and white Combermere old boys joined Empire and Pickwick respectively (Stoddart 1995a). Similar situations existed in Guyana, where the Georgetown Cricket Club was dominated by the Portuguese elite, in Trinidad (James 1963), and in Jamaica where the highly prestigious Kingston Cricket Club had restrictive policies preserving the club as a bastion for whites (St Pierre 1995). However, cricket clubs run by, and for, *non*-whites operated similar exclusion policies. Jamaica's Melbourne club was dominated by the coloured professional classes and instituted a complex fee structure which effectively, if not officially, limited working-class membership.

The game's competitive structures mirrored these exclusionary membership practices. The Barbados Cricket Committee (BCC), established in the late nineteenth century, was made up almost entirely of whites. Stoddart (1995a: 67) describes the BCC as 'a self-appointed, self-constituted, self-selected and self-perpetuated group', whose role was to organize local competitions and host touring teams. Although the BCC was superseded by the Barbados Cricket Association in 1933, such was the continuing feeling of exclusion amongst lower- and working-class blacks that the Barbados Cricket League was established three years later to cater for the cricketing needs of this section of the population. Similarly, where the concentration of Chinese and Indian populations was sufficiently large, they too established leagues of their own (Stoddart 1995c). Caribbean cricket, like Caribbean society, was organized as a 'multilayered pigmentocracy' (James 1993: 234).

After the incorporation of black slaves into military cricket practice and the post-slavery establishment of cricket clubs for blacks, the next significant dynamic in this development of Caribbean cricket was the institutionalization of inter-island competition. The first such match (between Demerara and Barbados) was staged in 1865 but by 1896 St Kitts, Antigua, Trinidad, Jamaica, St Vincent and St Lucia had all joined the regional cricketing network (Beckles 1995b). As with intra-island competitions these games were organized and played almost exclusively by whites. Significantly, however, inter-regional fixtures came to be seen as forums in which Island elites could demonstrate their superiority over their counterparts in other territories. Initially, the major consequence of this was that white and non-white players *within* the various colonies became increasingly integrated. While remaining largely excluded from the formal structure of both intra- and inter-island competitions, 'friendly' games between black teams and the white elite were organized in an effort to improve the skills of the white representative players. Status-emphasizing practices

similar to those used in England to distinguish amateurs and professionals were employed during this early phase of integration. For instance a degree of distance was maintained by the exclusion of black players from clubhouse refreshment breaks during and after the game. Blacks began to be employed on an individual basis with increasing frequency, with the role of the professional in English cricket as the template for their employment. As St Pierre (1995: 108) states, 'in Barbados ... the caste-like stratification system, based on race/colour, allotted to black Barbadians – they were known as “professionals” – the role of bowlers and fetchers of balls delivered during practice sessions in which whites batted and blacks bowled'. By 1895, the six Barbadian clubs employed fourteen (black) ground staff who performed similar bowling and pitch preparation duties to their white professional counterparts in England (Stoddart 1995b). The practices were probably both conscious attempts to signify status differences, but also an unconscious part of the colonists' cultural baggage.

These regional matches plus the reciprocal tours with England that started in 1895 'signaled the beginning of the non-racial democratizing process in selection policy' (Beckles 1995b: 197). The inclusion of black players enabled territories such as Trinidad to compete with the most powerful cricketing teams such as Barbados. Moreover, English administrators such as Pelham Warner noted that unless black players were selected for the West Indian team the region would remain far behind the 'Mother Country' in playing terms and when the West Indies side came to England they would risk having embarrassing defeats inflicted upon them by the English counties. White attempts to hold on to their dominance within the sport (and, indeed, society more broadly) worked in opposition to these integrative forces. The Guyanese representative side remained dominated by the members of the Georgetown Cricket Club and was always captained by a white or Portuguese player from that club. During the 1890s, Barbados refused to play Trinidad in the Challenge Cup if the latter included black players (Beckles 1995b). While the skills of the Barbadian professional William Shepherd were particularly influential in gaining black representation against touring teams from 1902 onwards, calls for the inclusion of black professionals in the Barbados Cup competition were consistently rejected on social rather than 'sporting' grounds.

The growing desire for playing success meant that Pelham Warner's words were heeded when the 1900 West Indian tour party to England was selected. The party of fifteen included five black players. This tour – the first to England by a West Indian side – was not granted 'first class' status and most of the games were lost. Tellingly, however, of the five black players, three were bowlers and two were all-rounders. When the subsequent tour party to England was selected in 1906, the team consisted of seven black and seven white players. This time the MCC decreed that all games would be 'first-class', but again, the composition of the tour party provides evidence of the positional segregation of

black and white players and the continuity of 'class' distinctions in the English game. Four of the seven whites were picked primarily as batsmen whilst four of the seven blacks were picked primarily as bowlers.

Despite the growing number of blacks playing at all levels of West Indian cricket, selection committees rarely included black or 'coloured' members. Even as late as 1985 four of the thirteen executive officers on the BCA management committee were white. Moreover, as Stoddart (1995a) notes, there were fierce debates over the selection of regional sides until well into the 1920s. James (1963) for instance, discusses the non-selection of the black Trinidadian Wilton St Hill for the 1923 tour to England. Significantly St Hill was primarily a batsman, and 'the social aspirations to which his batting gave eloquent voice were those of the popular masses' (Lazarus 1999: 167). In contrast the inclusion of black bowlers was less contentious although judgements about appropriate temperament meant that some fared better than others. In 1923 Herman Griffiths was arguably the finest fast bowler in the Caribbean but H.B.G. Austin (the white captain) chose instead to travel to England with George Francis because he considered Francis more docile than Griffiths. As a result of the limited opportunities for non-white players in the Caribbean, talented black players began to look elsewhere for employment. Some played for teams in North America but most came to Britain. Due in part to the stricter residency regulations, but also to the greater status-exclusivity of county cricket in England in the 1920s, cricketers from the Caribbean found it easier to obtain contracts in the Lancashire League. Learie Constantine's employment by Nelson Cricket Club (Hill 1994) was perhaps the most notable example of this.

Thus, while black Caribbean cricketers gradually came to represent their home territories, the region as a whole, and even towns in the North of England, certain cricketing roles remained more open to non-white participants than did others. The employment of blacks as groundsmen and bowlers became common but batting and the captaincy remained 'beyond a boundary'. The inclusion of black players, it seems, was crucial to improving West Indian playing standards and 'test status' was subsequently granted in 1928. St Pierre's (1995) analysis of the relative playing performances in early test matches illustrates how significant blacks continued to be to the success of the side. Between 1928 and 1960 the West Indies played England in ten test series. During this time white West Indians made no double or single centuries and only 25 scores over 50. In contrast, non-white West Indians made seven double, 29 single and 56 half centuries. Similarly white West Indians took four or more wickets in an innings only twice whereas non-white West Indians achieved this on 44 occasions. St Pierre (1995: 110) concludes that, 'since whites were not normally picked as bowlers and they did not perform as batsmen, then they must have been picked for some other reason'.

Moreover, from 1928 to 1960, with one exception, every manager, captain and vice captain of a West Indian touring team to England was white.

In 1947–48 there was much political manoeuvring in order to install the black batsman George Headley as captain of the Jamaican team to play England. The major ‘breakthrough’ came in 1960 when the black Barbadian, Frank Worrell, was chosen to captain the West Indies side on a tour to Australia. Coming at a time when the case for a region-unifying West Indian government was being made most vociferously (see James 1963: 217–243), Worrell’s appointment has been interpreted as ‘a classic statement of the link between emergent nationalism, anti-colonial struggle and sporting culture’ (Searle 1990: 35). By this time all the region’s political leaders were black and exclusion from the cricket captaincy increasingly came to be seen as untenable. Pro-Worrell campaigners noted that he had regularly captained teams representing the Commonwealth and had enjoyed considerable success. As James (1963: 224) noted, ‘in cricket these sentiments are at their most acute because everyone can see and judge’. Worrell, of course, was primarily a batter. Moreover, despite a relative humble background, he had acquired an English university degree and had become ‘acceptable within establishment circles in the Caribbean’ (Stoddart 1995c: 249).

As stated in this chapter’s introduction, the development of West Indian cricket has been documented in great detail and much of what is chronicled here – the complex interplay of individual agency and structural incorporation – is relatively well-established. Analytically however it is important to recognize the interdependence of ideologies, some specific to cricket (the relationship between class and playing role segregation) and some with wider currency (black docility, black physicality) in structuring the cricketing opportunities of black Caribbeans. This re-description of the development of West Indian cricket is therefore necessary for, as we will see, these ideologies would continue to contour the expression of social relations through cricket in the post-colonial era. Specifically, what is less well-charted (or at least less explicit) is the way these historical interdependencies subsequently shaped national self-assertion in the Caribbean and cricket-related identities. Moreover, this discussion highlights the analytic importance of conceiving of interdependencies in the round, and being equally cognizant of their intended and unintended outcomes for, it should be noted, it was the divisions between *whites* that were highly significant in enabling one power resource (playing ability) to assume the significance that it did. In the next section we see how identities, playing practices, and habitus (particularly attitudes towards, and perceptions of, violence) converge.

Cricket in the post-colonial Caribbean

The captaincy of the West Indian team by a black player, and therefore the removal of all white players from the side, signaled a selection policy guided more than ever by meritocratic principles. It was to establish the preconditions for the assertion of Caribbean self-identity and a concerted challenge to both

the authority of the British within the game and the related notion of racial supremacy. The form of this challenge was partly structured by the historical legacy of the way in which the game was introduced as part of the colonization of the Caribbean. It also represents continuity in the significance of the mediating role of violence in cricket's development.

In the period from 1980 to 1994 the West Indies team won an unprecedented 79 per cent of all tests played and sixteen out of 24 test series, drawing seven others and losing only one (Wilde 1994: 176). More particularly the West Indies continually and comprehensively beat the England cricket team, winning all five tests in England in 1984, in the Caribbean in 1985/86 and four out of five tests in England in 1988. The team was now entirely composed of black players but the method by which the team dominated world cricket reflected the developmental dynamics of West Indian cricket. There were, of course, some very talented West Indian batsmen at this time but, as Wilde's analysis of the period between 1974 and 1994 shows, the side's dominance was based on fast bowling. Of all the fast bowlers who achieved fifty test wickets (and therefore relative success at this level) over a third (nine out of 26) were West Indian. Aggression, violence and injury (to the batter) were inextricably linked to fast bowling. Patterson (1995: 145) talks of 'the beautiful, sweet violence of the act' of fast bowling where, so often, 'it is "us" versus "them"'. "Us" constitutes the black masses. "Them" is everything else – the privileged, the oppressor, the alien, dominant culture'. In this the West Indies also dominated. In all test matches, played throughout the world between 1974 and 1994, a total of 88 batsmen retired from their test innings through injury (some were accused of feigning injury due to intimidation). Of these almost half (40) retired whilst playing against the West Indies (Wilde 1994). Thus, as the power of whites in the West Indies waned, black West Indians developed a cricket playing style which was far removed from the white-determined traditions of the game.

The reliance on fast bowling was not a specifically West Indian tactical innovation. Precedents had been set by England in the infamous 'Bodyline' tour to Australia in 1932/33 (see Chapter 3). Indeed the West Indies had a history of trying to use variants of this fast bowling tactic but, reflecting the broader structure of social relations, had censored themselves due to actual or perceived criticisms of status violation. During the 1926 England tour to the West Indies, England bowled bouncers to the West Indian captain, H.B.G. Austin. When the West Indies' Learie Constantine retaliated in kind and bowled bouncers at the England captain, the Hon. F.S.G. Calthorpe, he was implored by his colleagues to stop. James (1963: 111–112) recalls:

'Stop it, Learie!' we told him. He replied: 'What's wrong with you? It is cricket.' I told him bluntly: 'Do not bump the ball at that man. He is the MCC captain, captain of an English county and an English Aristocrat. The bowling is obviously too fast for him, and if you hit him and knock him down they'll be a hell of a row and we don't want to see you in any mess. Stop it!'

Constantine also recalled the 1933 tour to England during which he resented 'the blindness of some of our critics who professed to see danger in those balls (bouncers) when we put them down and not when English players bowled them' (cited in Marqusee 1998: 167). Twenty-five years later Ray Gilchrist was ostracized from the West Indian team and sent home from the tour of Pakistan and India for what West Indian cricket administrators deemed to be the inappropriate use of bouncers.

The West Indies were far from alone in exploring the use of these techniques. During the 1951–52 test series against the West Indies, the Australians regularly deployed bouncers to undermine the batting of the '3 W's' (Clyde Walcott, Everton Weekes and Frank Worrell) (Rae 2001). Similarly, during the 1957–58 South African series against Australia, one 56-ball spell of bowling by Heine and Adcock of South Africa included a total of 53 bouncers (Williams 2001). Criticisms were raised periodically. Rae (2001: 151) describes *Wisden* taking 'its traditional dim view' of events in 1951–52. In 1964, *Wisden's* editor talked of bouncers as 'one of the curses of modern cricket' (1964: 92) and two years later the editor reiterated his feelings, arguing that treating cricket like 'warfare' had led to various controversies, including 'the use of the bumper to frighten and threaten the batsman with bodily harm' (Wisden 1966: 78–79).

Indeed the origins of the dramatic escalation in the use of short-pitched fast bowling from the mid-1970s did not lay with the West Indies but can more properly be located in England's tour to Australia and New Zealand in 1974–75. Prior to the mid 1970s short-pitched fast bowling was rarely used against the weaker batters. There was commonly thought to be a 'fast bowlers union', an informal, unspoken agreement that fast bowlers would not bowl bouncers at each other (note the class-notations of the term 'union'). But in 1974–75 a number of English players suffered at the hands of a new Australian pairing of fast bowlers, Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson:

Dennis Amiss and Bill Edrich had their hands broken; David Lloyd's box was, in his own words 'completely inverted'; [Brian] Luckhurst, Fred Titmus and Derek Underwood all took crunching blows; and Thomson got a ball to cannon into the covers via Keith Fletcher's skull. Lillee bowled a beamer at Bob Willis, while the bumper he bowled at Geoff Arnold was described by Jim Laker as the most vicious ball he had ever seen. Willis, Underwood and Arnold were all established tail-enders. (Rae 2001: 158)¹

Some (though not all) of these injuries occurred when batters faced short-pitched fast bowling. England also bowled short and fast and, like the Australians, targeted the weaker batsmen. When England moved on to New Zealand, debutant and tail-end batsman Ewan Chatfield had to be resuscitated at the wicket. England's matches in Australia and New Zealand inspired the editor of *Wisden* to address the issue of short-pitched fast bowling in *four* separate pieces in the Editor's Notes section of the 1975 edition.

Thus neither the proliferation of short-pitched fast bowling nor the decline of conventions protecting certain players were West Indian innovations.

Rather the continued use of short-pitched fast bowling can more closely be linked to Australia, and the involvement in cricket of media baron Kerry Packer. As a consequence of his failure to secure the rights to televise Australian test cricket, Packer, recruited players for his own, rival, competition. Marketing glamourized the confrontational and dangerous aspects of 'Packer cricket', leading one commentator to describe him as 'the Godfather of fast bowlers' (Wilde 1994: 68–9). Injuries occurred regularly. England's Dennis Amiss stated that 23 batsmen were hit on the head during the first Packer season (Wilde 1994). Ray Robinson (1978), writing in *The Cricketer*, counted a *mere* sixteen during the Australian 1977–78 season as a whole. Fuelling this alarm, no doubt, was the active role Australian crowds took in encouraging this style of play, through chants such as 'Kill, kill, kill, kill' (Rae 2001).

Despite these antecedents, it was the West Indian team which would become 'the most vilified and maligned in sporting history' (Williams 2001: 117). In part this stigmatization stemmed from race-ideologies of black physicality and violence. Sport remains one of the few areas of social life in which relatively violent conflict is largely tolerated (Elias and Dunning 1986) and, as Carrington (2010: 96) notes, 'the fantasmatic figure of the uncivilized and uncivilizable black athlete' has a long history. The use of short-pitched fast bowling stemmed from the historical legacies of the development of cricket in the Caribbean, but the West Indian refinement of this tactical approach produced the 'most efficient form of attack yet devised' (Wilde 1994: 10). Perceptions of the danger posed by this style of bowling were heightened because cricketing success became inextricably bound to the assertion of a West Indian 'national' identity. As Carrington (2010: 5) notes:

Sports have historically provided an opportunity for blacks throughout the African diaspora to gain recognition through *physical struggle* not just for their sporting achievements in the narrow and obvious sense but more significantly and fundamentally for their humanity in a context where the structures of the colonial state continue to shape the 'post/colonial' present. (Emphasis in original)

A key turning point in the West Indian tactical development was their defeat by India in Jamaica in 1976. Clive Lloyd declared the West Indian second innings leaving India to score what at the time seemed an impossible 403 to win the game, but India reached this target and calls for Lloyd's resignation soon followed. Determined to win the next game, Lloyd replaced a spin bowler with an additional fast bowler (making three in total). The trio repeatedly bowled bouncers, hitting the Indian batsmen several times. Indian captain Bishen Bedi declared their first innings closed with four batsmen still to come to the crease and had five players 'absent hurt' in the second innings, in what was 'the nearest anyone has come to surrendering a test match' (Wilde 1994: 55).

A significant motivation behind this development may have been the West Indian desire to shed the image of 'happy go lucky' players (Wilde 1994: 51), or the perception of being talented but 'less cautious and more flamboyant' cricketers (Williams 2001: 116).² Others, however, place more emphasis on the role of violent and aggressive resistance. Burton (1985), for instance, has described the West Indian style as a mix of 'flamboyant', 'contemptuous' batting and 'attacking', 'violent', fast bowling. According to Burton as the power of whites in the West Indies waned, black West Indians developed and negotiated a cricket playing style which was far removed from the white traditions of the game. But regardless of player motivations, this form of cricket proved very popular with spectators in the Caribbean. As St Pierre argues, 'Performance before an audience of West Indians equally emphatic about violent and aggressive cricket, conspired to produce a change in this "beautiful, difficult English game"' (St Pierre 1973: 15). For Searle (1990: 36) this was 'cricket of resistance and assertion, which mirrored an entire people coming into their own, rejecting colonial divisions imposed upon them and bringing a new confidence and will for cultural construction'.

The nomenclature used by critics of the West Indian use of fast bowling is also revealing. 'Brutal', 'vicious', 'chilling', 'thuggery', 'vengeance' and, commonly, 'violent' were terms which regularly appeared in the English mainstream and specialist cricket press. The West Indian slip catchers became known as 'Death Row', and whereas in 1963 Wes Hall had been described as the 'cheerful executioner' (cited in Wagg 2005: 188) from the 1970s their bowlers acquired nicknames such as 'Whispering Death' (Michael Holding). Malcolm Marshall was referred to as 'a cold blooded assassin' (cited in Williams 2001: 117). Wisden carried articles, pictures, or editorial notes commenting on short-pitched fast bowling in eight of the ten issues between 1975 and 1984 and thrice more in the next eight years. In 1979, for instance, the editor noted: 'In modern times, the act of deliberate intimidation to make the batsman fearful of getting some severe injury has become almost systematic with all countries, except India, exploiting this evil deed' (Wisden 1979: 79–80). In 1984, the Editor added 'the viciousness of much of today's fast bowling is changing the very nature of the game'. Eight years later Wisden's editor invoked the game's aristocratic roots in arguing that, 'there was never any reason for cricketers to behave like members of the House of Commons. Cricket should be a civilised game and a civilising one, and if that sounds high-falutin I make no apologies' (Wisden 1992: 49).

The weight of opinion led English, Australian and Indian cricket officials to seek to curb the use of short-pitched fast bowling (and thus West Indian success). In 1976 the ICC condemned the intimidation of batsmen, urged umpires to enforce the law more rigorously, and insisted that test match sides should attempt to bowl a minimum of 17.5 six ball overs per hour (curbing a development concomitant with the dominance of fast bowling, which led

to both an intentional – to reduce the batting team's rate of scoring – and unintentional – ironically fast bowlers take longer than slow bowlers to complete their overs – reduction in the number of overs bowled). The following year the ICC accepted a recommendation that countries could mutually agree to restrict the number of bouncers to two per over and not more than three in any two consecutive overs (Williams 2001) but this, and a similar scheme introduced in 1979 (Wisden 1979), faltered when players unilaterally abandoned their agreements during play. A 'bouncer immunity' scheme for non-specialist batsmen was tried but again faltered due to problems of defining which batsmen should be included in the scheme and in defining how long the immunity lasted for tail-end batsmen who scored a significant number of runs (Wilde 1994). All such regulations remained voluntary until 1991 when the ICC introduced a three-year experimental scheme which limited bowlers to one short-pitched delivery per over (defined as any ball which would pass over the batsman's shoulder). In 1994 the laws were revised to permit two bouncers per over ('dangerous and unfair bowling' are regulated under Law 42.6).

These incidents illustrate that the West Indian dominance of world cricket post-1974, facilitated as it was through a reliance on fast bowling, signaled a final stage in the 'gradual supplanting of whites by blacks' (Yelvington 1990: 2). Given that the early 'excesses' of 1976 were not subsequently repeated, we can only assume that elements of West Indian self-censorship continued. However, in contrast to previous controversies of this nature, West Indian players objected to the implication that their success was 'based not on skill but on intimidation and brute force' (Holding and Cozier 1993, cited in Williams 2001: 119). The West Indian authorities actively and openly opposed the new rule changes perceived to have been imposed as a challenge to their cricketing success and style. Clyde Walcott, President of the West Indian Cricket Board called it 'a fundamental and unnecessary change in the way the game is played', while the West Indian cricket captain, Vivian Richards, spoke of racism and hypocrisy: 'I know damn well that there are people at the top of the cricketing establishment who feel that the West Indies have been doing too well for too long' (cited in Wilde 1994: 195). In 1991 the *Caribbean Times* asked whether there had been 'a white supremacist plot to undermine Westindies long-standing status as kings of cricket' (cited in Williams 2001: 125).

Conclusion

The debate over short-pitched fast bowling during the 1970s and 1980s undoubtedly had a 'racial' dimension. West Indian cricket, and black West Indian cricketers, had developed to such an extent that they exerted a significant influence over the cricket world. The ascent to unequivocal world leaders was closely related to the neo-colonial assertion of a West Indian

‘national’ identity. It simultaneously represented a challenge to the traditional balance of power. Notably, however, the nature of this challenge was rooted in the legacies of the colonial development of Caribbean cricket.

The importance of the West Indian case to the study of cricket and empire lies in the fascinating balance of incorporation and resistance, of co-operation (i.e. playing cricket) and conflict (adaptation of cricketing conventions) which it reveals. It shows quite acutely how relationships formed during one phase of the colonial process came to have significant unintended consequences generations later. In many ways it is the archetypal example of cricket as the imperial game and it provides an important segue into the final section of this book in which we look at the influence of cricket and its historical legacies on the identities of black diasporic and other post-colonial migrant communities in Britain. Writ large in this analysis is the interdependence of identity, cricketing practices and their regulation. Emotions and psychological life (as gauged through (in)tolerance of practices perceived by some to be violent) directly relate to large scale processes such as de-colonialization. A propensity to use violence, and the almost inevitable censure of such a successful tactic, were structured by the inequalities fundamental to imperialism.

In the next chapter, however, we consider a development of cricket which radically disrupts the notion of cricket as the (British) imperial game; namely cricket in the Celtic nations of the British Isles. This examination both raises questions about what does or does not count as ‘successful’ cultural diffusion, and forces us to be conscious of the lazy elision of Englishness and Britishness which is required to sustain this idea.