

**Cricketers'  
Trust**



# What Cricket Means To Me



**VOICES FROM THE CREASE, STORIES FROM THE HEART**



**Gill Smith and Neil Brinsdon**

# Dedication

*For everyone who has found friendship  
through cricket.*

For the sake of clarity and space, we have occasionally shortened the list of roles and teams linked to contributor's names, some have played or coached or been involved with many different teams and organisations. Please know these edits were made with respect and practicality in mind, and we hope no offence has been taken.

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First edition published February 2026.

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Published by What Cricket Means To Me Publications,  
United Kingdom.



I don't know what I would be doing without cricket, it might sound a bit of a cliché, but it's a fact.

I left school with few qualifications largely because exams are in the summer - cricket season - and I was already a professional cricketer.

After listening to Test Match Special from around 8 or 9 with Dad carrying a radio around the family farm, my first real break came when my dad took me to Alf Glover's school in Wandsworth for my 16th birthday treat. I had 3 to 4 days with Alf as a young fast bowler, not what Dad had wanted, he wanted me to bowl off spin like him.

Alf liked what he saw and I was whisked off to the Oval and joined Surrey for two seasons, largely in the 2nd XI. It was quite something, Dad was a Lincolnshire farmer and to let his son go to the big city at 16 years of age was a big thing. He found me digs with Mrs Bushell at Morden so I had an easy Tube route to the Oval.

There I was a professional cricketer whilst still at school and I still remember my first pay cheque, £20 cash that I had to give to Mrs Bushell and manage my Tube fares from! But, what a chance Dad had given me, it was a great start.

After those two seasons I wanted to return to Leicestershire, I found I wasn't a big city lad. So I joined Leicestershire and due to a few injuries was catapulted into the first team almost straight away.

It was amazing, I'd grown up following Lancashire and here I was playing against my heroes, Clive Lloyd, Colin Croft, David Lloyd.

Memorable moments for me - well playing it has to be getting Viv Richards lbw in the 5th Test at the Oval in August 1984. I'd got Gordon Greenidge out earlier in the day, but getting Viv was the highlight. Knowing my dad was in the stand watching and it was at the Oval where it all began for me, was very special.

In my commentating career, I've been lucky to cover some fabulous cricket, but it has to be that innings by Ben Stokes at Headingley in 2019, to commentate on that and so soon after the World Cup win was fabulous. I doubt I'll ever see another Test Match like that and to be able to commentate on it was an honour. I felt too I'd done the test winning achievement justice on commentary - I have felt sometimes, "Oh I wish I had said this or that" or "I should have mentioned....", but this time I felt I'd been able to capture the moment.

I love cricketers, I've always got on very well with cricketers, playing, commentating and just being in the cricket environment. People involved in cricket are generally really good people, honest, kind, generous and many have such a great sense of humour.

**Jonathan Agnew, MBE, DL**

**Leicestershire, England & Test Match Special**

## ***The Professional Cricketers Association***

*The PCA champions the ongoing interests of professional cricketers in England and Wales with current and past players leading the association since its inception in 1967.*





My journey began at three years old when I turned on the TV one morning and cricket happened to be on. My Dad came downstairs saw me watching and decided he was going to teach me to play.

My dad is by far the most competitive person I know so once he decided I was going to try something, I had to be the best. We spent countless hours in the garden with my brothers, playing fiercely competitive games that, without knowing it, prepared me for the pressure of international cricket. I promise you, the most pressure I've ever felt is trying to not get out to my brother in the garden when it's next wicket wins!

I was born with bilateral talipes (clubfoot) which affects my balance, limits mobility and causes constant pain. Doctors always said I shouldn't be playing sport if it hurt but I refused to let that define me.

At 17 I was chasing a professional career but started really struggling with my condition. A coach suggested trying out for England's Disability team. At first, I saw it as a backup option but looking back I know it was the best decision I ever made.

That environment helped me to accept my disability and inspired me to become a role model and to show others that anything is possible!

Since then, I've won England Disability Cricketer of the Year in my debut year, captained the Tridents to win the first ever Disability Premier League and am now Vice Captain for the first England Pan Disability team.

**Liam O'Brien**

**England Disability Cricket**



The Duncan Terrace

TYNEMOUTH C.C.  
1847

Tynemouth  
CRICKET CLUB  
**Attention**  
Consumption of alcohol is only allowed  
on these premises or in the ground  
purchased from the cricket club.  
Anyone not adhering to this will be  
asked to leave immediately.  
TYNEMOUTH CRICKET CLUB COMMITTEE

Tynemouth  
CRICKET CLUB  
**Warning**  
Cricket balls land in this area  
The club cannot be held responsible  
for any damage to property or injury.  
Vehicle owners park at their own risk.  
TYNEMOUTH CRICKET CLUB COMMITTEE

Cricket is not just a sport to me, it's a way of life.

It's something that lives in my heart every single day. Ever since I was a child, holding a bat felt natural, like it belonged in my hands. Watching cricket matches, mimicking my favourite players and dreaming of wearing my own jersey someday, that's how it all began.

As I've grown, cricket has become much more than just a game. It has taught me the values of hard work, discipline, focus and patience. It's where I've learned to stand up after failure and stay humble after success. Cricket pushes me to be better, not just as a player but as a person.

The field is my second home. When I walk out to play I forget everything else, no stress, no distractions, just the game and me. The pressure of tight matches, the joy of a well timed cover drive, the pride of taking a crucial catch, those are the moments I live for.

Through cricket I've met people who've become like my family. It has connected me with teammates, fans and mentors who've shaped me and believed in me. The journey hasn't always been easy, but it has always been worth it.

For me, Danish Ali, cricket is more than competition, it's passion, identity and dreams in motion.

It's the place where I truly feel alive.

**Danish Ali**

**Burmoor Cricket Club**



As a small child I had very little interest in cricket. My dad would play in the evenings and my brother would watch highlights, while I begged him to change the channel. Even when the 2019 World Cup came and went I still thought it was, well, boring.

Everything changed when my brother joined Wicketz Southampton, a programme offering free access to cricket in an inner-city. Watching him play I began to see what cricket was truly about, community, friendships and friendly competition. Curious, I asked if I could join a session but shortly after lockdown hit.

Even then I stayed involved, joining weekly Zoom calls, taking part in quizzes and trying drills at home. When restrictions lifted I finally stepped onto the pitch and became Wicketz Southampton's first female participant.

That moment changed everything. Since then, I've completed my coaching qualification and now coach on the same programme leading girls-only and women's sessions that have grown from strength to strength. I also joined a local cricket club, where I now captain the women's side and at college I founded a women's cricket team.

Beyond playing and coaching I dedicate my time to youth advocacy and sport, driven by the belief that every child deserves the chance to be active and experience the joy that cricket brings. I sit on several youth advisory boards and proudly serve as a Lord's Taverners Youth Ambassador using my voice to help make cricket accessible to everyone.

Cricket has given me so much more than skills. It has given me lifelong friends, confidence and a sense of purpose. From a child who once begged to change the channel to a coach, a captain and advocate, cricket is my passion, my community and my mission to ensure that every young person can find their place in the game, just as I did.

**Sara Yasin**  
**Lord's Taverners Youth Ambassador.**