

# Summary of Law changes

On 1st October last year, there were several changes to the Laws of Cricket – which we highlighted in detail in Issue 6 (Sep10). Now, as a pre-season prompt, we have asked **MCC's Laws Manager, Fraser Stewart**, to summarise the words and place them in context from both the players' and our points of view...

## **Bad light – batsmen no longer to be offered the light**

This important change means that the umpires will no longer 'offer the light' to the batting side. In bad light, umpires will now only suspend play when they consider it to be unreasonable or dangerous and it is their decision alone – the captains or batsmen will have no say. 'Unreasonable' is to be regarded as being inappropriate for proper play, rather than conditions simply not being very good. The speed of the bowling will be taken into account. The decision to stop play should come at a later stage than when they would have previously offered the light to the batting side. The reason for the change was that the decision to stay on or come off the field was often made on tactical grounds, based on what best suited the batting side, rather than on grounds of safety or visibility. The new Law should result in less playing time being lost and should be fairer to both teams. (See Laws 3.8 & 3.9)

## **The Toss – umpire to be present and immediate decision required**

The toss should now be made in the presence of one or both of the umpires. Only in games where no umpires are appointed and it is done by the players, or in the unlikely event of neither umpire being at the ground within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time, can this Law be ignored. The meeting of the captains and one or both umpires at the toss provides an ideal opportunity to run through various points to be agreed, such as drinks intervals, timings and any local rules. A further amendment forces the captain winning the toss to notify his decision to bat or field to the other captain straight away. The previous Law stated this notification could be delayed until 10 minutes before the scheduled start of play and some teams were exploiting this Law as a means of gamesmanship to give the other team less time to prepare. For information, the toss should take place anywhere on the field of play between 30 and 15 minutes before the scheduled start of play. (See Laws 12.4 & 12.5)

## **Practice on the field – practice is limited further and must not waste time**

The pitch and the strips on either side of it must never be used for any kind of practice. Practice on the rest of the square must not take place later than 30 minutes before the scheduled or re-scheduled start of the day's play – so may not be used during intervals. A ban has been placed on fielders partaking in

practice with a coach or 12<sup>th</sup> man during play. It had been noticed that such practice was becoming more prevalent – often it was the fine-leg fielder warming up to bowl – and MCC felt it should not be allowed. With slow over-rates becoming an increasing problem, the fact that practice should not waste any time is reinforced more strongly than before. This would include a new bowler bowling some practice balls to mid-off when everyone else is ready to play. It is also clarified that deliberately bowling the ball into the ground in practice will contravene Law 42.3 (The match ball – changing its condition). So, if the bowler has the time to bowl a practice ball to a teammate at mid-off (for example, while the sight-screen is being moved), he must bowl it on the full, rather than it bouncing. (See Law 17)

## **Ball beyond the boundary – first contact must be inside boundary**

The new Law requires that a boundary fielder's first contact with the ball must be when some part of his person is grounded within the boundary or, if he is airborne, that his most recent contact with the ground before touching the ball was within the boundary. However, he may make subsequent contact from a position beyond the boundary, as long as he is not in contact with the ground and the ball at the same time. In recent years, increasingly athletic pieces of fielding on the boundary have brought this area of the Law into the spotlight. MCC felt that it would be wrong to allow a fielder, seeing a ball flying over his head and over the boundary, to retreat beyond the boundary and then to jump up and parry the ball back towards the field of play. (See Law 19.4)

## **Front foot No-balls – front foot must not go too far across stumps**

The new part of this Law will only be relevant to certain slow bowlers but the bowler must not put his front foot right across the stumps in his delivery stride – he must have some part of his foot, either grounded or raised, on 'his side' of an imaginary line joining the two middle stumps. It became apparent that some slow bowlers were going right across the stumps to deliver the ball and MCC felt this was not fair, particularly taking into account the positioning of the sight-screen. It meant that a bowler could, for example, say that he was bowling over the wicket but release the ball as though bowling round the wicket. The wording of the new Law is quite complicated and should be read in

full by umpires and slow bowlers who bowl from that kind of position. (See Law 24.5)

## **Wicket put down – any part of the bat can put the wicket down**

The Law has been amended so that any part of the striker's bat, however big or small, is capable of putting the wicket down. Although it is a rare occurrence, MCC is aware of situations where the bat has broken while hitting the ball and a part of the bat has flown off and hit the stumps, putting the wicket down. It was felt that, whilst this would be an unfortunate method of dismissal for a batsman, a part of a bat that has broken off should be treated in the same way as a bat that has fallen out of the batsman's hand. (See Law 28.1(a)(iii))

## **Batsman out of his ground – airborne batsman given more protection**

A batsman who has been running to make his ground will be considered to be in his ground if, having grounded some part of his foot behind the popping crease, and still with continuing forward momentum, he loses contact with the ground. This will particularly be useful for replays in televised games where a player has clearly made his ground but, at the moment that the wicket was put down, he is not in contact with the ground because he is running and, for example, his bat has flicked up off the ground after passing through a bowler's foothole. It is in the nature of running that in every stride, both feet are simultaneously not in contact with the ground. It would therefore be unjust if a batsman were to be out in such circumstances. In non-televised games, however, it is unlikely that this amendment will often be relevant. (See Law 29.1)

## **Batsman damaging the pitch – only one warning before penalty runs**

The batting side now receives one less warning than under the previous Law. Previously, on the first offence, the batting side is warned; on the second offence, there is a further warning and any runs scored are disallowed; on all subsequent offences, any runs scored are disallowed, and 5 penalty runs are awarded to the fielding side, and a report is lodged with the appropriate Governing body. In the new version, there is a warning on the first offence but any repetition will see any runs scored disallowed, 5 penalty runs awarded to the fielding side, and a report being lodged with the appropriate Governing body. This is consistent with Law 42.13 (Fielder damaging pitch), where there is only one warning before penalty runs are issued. (See Law 42.14)

**Further information on the changes, including a video with examples, can be seen on the Laws pages of [www.lords.org](http://www.lords.org)**