

## Cricket was once a popular sport in the U.S.



The recent T20 tournament between the West Indies and New Zealand which was held in Florida drew a number of criticisms from some so-called fans of the sport. Many who were of the opinion that the sport does not have any future in the U.S. However, if they had taken some time to check out its history, they may have thought otherwise.

To the average American cricket today is a somewhat mystifying game. But if one was to do a brief research of the sport, one would find out that the game was once very popular in the U.S. The history of the game in the U.S. can be traced back to 1737. It was reportedly played at that time at the nearby coastlines by many of the colonists who had brought the game with them from England. In fact, the first international game between England and the U.S. was played in Hoboken, New Jersey, on October 3, 4 and 5, 1859.

Before the bitter Civil war which broke out in 1861 between the North and South, cricket was an established game in the U.S. There was a time when Philadelphia cricket was judged good enough to play in first class English counties competition. And at one time, America had one of the top bowlers in the world, J. B. (Barton) King, who went to England to play. Baseball at the time was mainly a backyard sport that was played by students and neighborhood children as a past-time.

Because it became somewhat difficult to get equipment and to maintain the playing area during the four years of the conflict, with the end of the War, it was decided to establish baseball as the national game. It was much easier to throw down four bags to mark bases and play baseball on any ground that was available. Ironically, most of the early baseball players were former cricketers, notably Henry Wright and A. G. Spaulding. Both of whom formed sporting goods firms that are still active today. It is also understood that it was a group of English cricketers who actually started the sport of baseball.

In 1965, the United States was admitted to the associate membership of the International Cricket Conference (ICC) and is today a regular fixture in their trophy tournament in which teams from all over the world take part.

Although the game has taken a backseat among the American populace, today the game in a way is still flourishing in places like New York, which at one time had as much as 200 teams that participate in a variety of leagues during the summer