



MAKING A PITCH FOR CRICKET!

MICHAEL BLADON EXPLORES THE INVERHAUGH CRICKET CLUB

Did you know that two billion people worldwide watched the 2007 Cricket World Cup final? Did you know that when Canada became a Dominion in 1867, the first Governor-General set aside land at the Vice-Regal Lodge (now Rideau Hall) for cricket practice and the Prime Minister declared cricket the national sport (Birley 1999)? However, what you may not know is that in the tiny Hamlet of Inverhaugh, located on the Grand River between Elora and Kitchener, there is a group of individuals known as the Inverhaugh Cricket Club who play the way the game should be played, on a turf wicket. Here Mr. Bart Singh and his wife Jan and associates have created, on their property, a cricket ground that arguably has one of the best grass wickets in Canada. They also have a tennis court which looks as if it was transplanted from Wimbledon! Bart's passion and commitment to the game and its playing surface is amply illustrated both daily

and in the 40 hours per week necessary to maintain this first class facility and in the money spent on the maintenance of his four acre 'field of dreams.'

History & Member Duties

The Inverhaugh Cricket Club was formed some 12 years ago. One of the rules of membership is that each member must contribute in some way to the maintenance, which ensures not all the work is left to the owners. Of the approximately 45 members, all have first been interviewed by Bart and Jan to determine the skills they bring, their interest in the game and to ensure that they are aware of what membership in the club means. Junior members must supply physical fitness details to ensure their safety at practices and matches. Furthermore, all members must respect that the playing surface is on the Singh's family property. Most members, including the juniors, work on the field on the various operations necessary



to keep it in top condition. The rest may have expertise in other areas such as pest control, landscaping, administration or painting.

Maintenance

Climate has a large bearing on the maintenance of cricket fields in Canada where the soil is frozen for at least four months of the year – particularly at Inverhaugh. Snow leaves about mid-April and maintenance begins. The entire field is dethatched, swept and aerated. Next the outfield and square are rolled using a self-propelled 2 tonne roller and a smaller one weighing anywhere from 350-700 pounds depending on the amount of water added. This operation takes about three hours.

The area known as the cricket square is the most highly maintained. The square at Inverhaugh is divided into 10 pitches or wickets, each three yards wide and 22 yards long. Three pitches are started within the square in spring, one for prac-

tice and two for games which begin some time in May. They are rolled length wise, diagonally, and then across, over several days or about 10 hours, to create the firm type of surface so necessary for good ball bounce. The same practice is used as each wicket within the square is readied for a game. Each wicket has about five games played on it over the season. Following rolling, a 16-8-8 fertilizer is applied. At Inverhaugh, the square is fertilized once a month and the outfield three times a year.



Mowing is a critical part of the maintenance of a grass wicket. At Inverhaugh, the outfield is kept at 3/4 of an inch, the square at 1/2 an inch and over several days the game wicket is brought down to 1/4 inch cutting height on game day using a greensmower. The wicket is mown three times a week, the square twice a week plus the outfield. The entire field to beyond the boundary stakes and square takes about two hours to mow. Herbicides are rarely used as most weeds are pulled by hand. The outfield measured at its widest is 420 feet and 180 feet in the other direction.

The club plays about 26 'friendly' matches each year plus practices, so there is a considerable amount of wear by sea-

son's end in September. A 'friendly' is a non-league contest (with tea provided by Jan) and a social time after the match. Work begins five days before match day rolling with a heavy roller, up to 15 hours, and watering tapering off toward game day. The square consists of a blend of three types of perennial rye, varieties Manhattan, Paragon and Pizazz, which largely due to their high lignin content, stand up well to the constant wear from rolling and play. In the first week of September, work parties are organized and the field is watered for several days to soften the soil which has become compacted from watering and rolling. This allows for aeration to begin, more thatch removal and sweeping. After aeration in two directions, worn areas are overseeded using the blend of ryegrasses mentioned earlier. Topdressing is also applied using a clay material from a secret location (this is quite the operation!).

The club has about 45 members, including 19 juniors, so can field three teams. The first team is able to recruit top players using Bart's contacts, depending on the level of competition for that match. Then a social team and finally a junior team are formed. There are three high school teams in the Guelph area. They play each other, including a tournament at a city park cricket ground before summer break. They also practice at Inverhaugh and play an additional four games there.

Without the foresight of Bart Singh and his wife Jan, the field that they and club members spend so much of their summer maintaining would never have reached the status it now enjoys. Why do they do it? Perhaps their motto 'propter ludi amorem' says it best, which translated means, 'for the love of the game.' ♦

References & Photo Credit

1. Canadian Cricket History: Some Stories, Some History, Some Facts, Some Observations, www.canadacricket.com/history/canada-1.htm.
2. Is This Really Cricket, Globe & Mail, Ian Brown, Saturday, April 28, 2007.
3. Cricket Heaven in His Backyard, Guelph Mercury, Greg Mercer, July 29, 2006.
4. Photos courtesy of John Metcalf.

Industry News

GORD DOL, president of Dol Turf Restoration Ltd., is pleased to announce that Ken Pavely has joined the company as sales consultant for golf and sports turf. Ken has over 35 years of experience in the turf industry covering golf, professional lawn care, landscape maintenance and construction and parks. Most recently, he was the IPM specialist for Landscape Ontario, developing the IPM Accreditation program now in use here in Ontario and in five other provinces.

Ken also worked with his local municipality on sports turf maintenance and construction, maintaining and rebuilding several pitches over the last two years using emerging products such as mycorrhizae, drought/heat resistant turf cultivars and biostimulants.

In a consulting role, he developed organic/pesticide-free programs for lawn care companies as well as provided training for municipalities and the public on IPM and pesticide free turf practices. For further information, visit www.dolturf.com or call 1-800-794-9664.



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