

THE NANJINGER

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BATS & BALLS

By Misha Maruma

All Abuzz with Cricket

We are deep into winter here in Nanjing but I recently felt the first rays of spring shining a warm glow onto my face, at least metaphorically anyway. I was alerted to the news that the quintessential warm weather sport cricket will be starting again in Nanjing soon.

Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics Cricket Club (NCC) will be holding a cricket tournament at the university campus in Jiangning starting in March this year.

The tournament will be played over three weeks starting on Saturday, 28th March.

The first weekend is the qualifying round. 12 teams will each play one game after which four teams will be eliminated, the winners progressing to the Super 8 round to be played the following weekend.

The Super 8, essentially the quarter-final stage, will whittle the teams down by half. The semi-final and final will be played on the weekend commencing 11th April.

The tournament is being organised by NCC with the aim of "brining awareness of cricket to a Chinese audience", according

to Suhaib Khan, the head of the organising committee.

There are many cricket lovers in Nanjing from countries such as Pakistan and India, he further explains. The tournament is a chance to bring all these cricket lovers together and show the local population, who are mostly unaware of cricket, what the game is all about.

The tournament will start the same weekend as the final of the ICC Cricket World Cup being held in Australia this year. The organisers hope that the buzz around the Cricket World Cup will filter into the Nanjing tournament.

Teams will consist of 11 players. The standard rules of cricket will apply with the only difference being the use of a 'tennis' ball. In Pakistan and India, where cricket is hugely popular, tennis ball cricket is played as a street form of the game.

The ball is slightly harder than a normal tennis ball and is a bit heavier; therefore it doesn't have the same bounce. This form of cricket can be played on all surfaces and does not require the batters to wear padded protection.

Each game runs for 10 overs with the final and semi-final increasing to 15 overs for each team.

The fee to enter a team is ¥350 with the winner taking a cash prize of ¥1,200 and a trophy. The runner up will take a cash prize of ¥750 and a medal for each member of the team.

The tournament fee includes all the necessary equipment from bats to balls. The organisers will also provide basic refreshments and space for spectators to watch the games. Teams must be registered by 14 March.

One week before the tournament starts the team captains will meet at a pre-tournament party to pay the subscription fees and be briefed on the final arrangements for the tournament.

The organising committee are currently looking for sponsors for the tournament. They hope to appeal to those looking to reach both a foreign and Chinese audience.

NCC is further hoping to recruit long-term sponsors for the cricket club as they move into the future. If you or anyone you know would like to get involved with sponsoring the tournament or club then please contact Suhaib Khan as follows:

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The Rules of Cricket

My American friend Brian has been asking to join my cricket team for ages. As we play on Sunday mornings, he never seems to make it, but that doesn't stop him thinking he'll turn up and be the best.

You see, he already plays baseball and is convinced that he'll master cricket in no time. That may well be true but one problem is the different rules, or laws as they are called in cricket, he has to learn.

So to help Brian and his friend Ryan get in the know, I sat down and answered their myriad of questions as they fired them at me...

Are there balls and strikes like baseball?

Not quite. You have a bowler and he bowls an over at a time. An over is six balls. He uses these six balls to try and remove the batsman in a number of ways. It doesn't matter if the ball is hit or not.

How do you get out?

The best way to get the batsman "out" is to hit the batsman's stumps; the three sticks he's trying to protect. The batsman is also out if the ball is hit and caught without it touching the ground.

Why are they called a bowler?

The bowler is the guy who "pitch- es" the ball, but the action is totally different to baseball. Rather than sling the ball, his arm must come over his shoulder in a circular motion. He releases the ball from above his head.

Why does the ball bounce? Why not use a rubber ball?

A cricket ball is made of leather. The ball bounces to add more variety to the game. Rather than just having a good eye, batters must be able to deal with a spinning ball, variety of bounce and also a swinging ball. That is a ball that moves from left to right or vice versa before it bounces.

How do you win? Do you score more than the other team?

There are two ways to win in cricket. For example, a team bats first and scores 200 runs. If the team batting second scores 201 runs while only losing four of the 11 batsmen, the team batting second wins by six wickets. That is the remaining amount of batsmen still left to come. It's not seven wickets because a batsman can't bat on his own, he must have a partner.

Using the same example, if the team batting second this time scores 192 runs and all the batsmen are out or the overs are complete then the team batting first wins by eight runs.

Is there an equivalent to a home run? How far do you have to hit it?

There's no equivalent really. When batting the most a batsman can get from one shot is six runs. He does this by hitting the ball in the air over the boundary rope. If the ball hits the ground but still goes over the boundary rope then this is four runs.

Why do they use paddles instead of bats?

What do you mean? It is a bat.

Can you hit the ball backwards? Is it in play if you hit it backwards?

Yes, the batsman can hit the ball anywhere they like. The captain can also put the fielders anyway on the playing field that he likes too.

Is there no such thing as a foul ball?

There is a foul ball if the bowler breaks the bowling rules. These include bowling the ball above chest height without the ball bouncing, and overstepping the bowling line. These result in a run being added to the batting team's score and an extra ball being bowled.

How far away is the pitcher from the batter?

Cricket is played on a wicket, which is a flattened piece of grass. The distance between the stumps is 22 yards. That is 20.12 metres for anyone who does not use the imperial system.

Does it matter if you're a left-handed bowler or batter?

No, not at all. In fact some people believe left-handed batsmen are seen as more graceful and difficult to bowl against. Left-handed bowlers are quite rare these days.

Are there any good American players in cricket?

I think you know the answer to that question...

If you're interested in learning more about cricket and would like to play in Nanjing, feel free to contact the Nanjinger at thenanjinger@sinoconnexion.com. 