

A WEEK AT A TIME

Who is the Australian cricketer ranked as the No 1 batsman in the world while also maintaining the No 1 rank as an all-rounder?

**Steve Smith** doesn't come close and **Cameron Green** isn't your man, either. **Ellyse Perry** is probably your best guess but you'd be wrong.

His name is **Simon Keen** and he plays a format of the game you may never have heard of. It's likely you've seen it though if you've ever driven past a cluster of cricket fields any time of year and seen some brightly coloured teams playing a hi-octane form of the sport.

It's called Last Man Stands and should soon be able to claim 200,000 players around the world — an eight-a-side T20 game that is run and won within two hours and is so hi-tech you can stream every game live and follow the rankings of every team and player on the planet.

"It's an underground giant that could be just about to go to the next level," says **Trent Thomson** who runs LMS competitions out of the NSW Central Coast and Taree-Forster with his third league about to start in Tamworth and Armidale.

He also has Australia's first LWS (Last Woman Stands) league up and running on the Central Coast.

"There hasn't been a cent spent on advertising — it's all Facebook, social media, word of mouth. We put all the effort to promote it in ourselves."

LMS emerged in 2005 thanks to a couple of England-based South Africans who were looking for a way to keep time-poor cricketers in the game. It took another four years to find its way to Australia where the first league was launched with six teams at Moore



Last Man Stands cricketing superstar Simon Keen

Park in Sydney. There are leagues in England, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Singapore, the US, Scotland and even Sweden.

So why is it called Last Man Stands? Here are the rules...

Generally the format follows ICC T20 rules but with only eight players in each team there are plenty of gaps in the field.

All eight wickets are needed to bowl a team out so when the seventh wicket falls, the Last Man Stands on his own. The Last Man can only score 2, 4 or 6 off any ball and he can only be run out at the keeper's end.

There are double plays — a player can be run out after his batting teammate is caught — and batsmen retire at 50. There are also home runs — if a player clears the ropes off the last ball of the innings it is worth 12 runs.

Overs are five balls each and teams bowl from the same end for the first 10 overs before swapping,

and teams have an hour to get through their 20 overs.

Games are over quickly and are live-streamed, usually by the umpire. The app and website (lastmanstands.com) are so good you can watch your mates if you're stuck at work late or relive your last heroic innings.

Until he found LMS, Thomson could boast about the time he won the NSW CHS title, the Davidson Shield, in 1999 alongside former NSW player **Aaron Bird** at Taree High School. But now he can track his own world rankings — he's the 227th best LMS batsman in the world and ranked 40 as a wicket-keeper. Yes, everyone who plays LMS gets a world ranking using an algorithm that considers not just your runs, wickets, strike rate etc but which ground you are playing on and the strength of the opposition.

Thomson plays for the Sydney branch of the Primary Club (world ranking 131), a charity-based team

which raises funds for sporting equipment and facilities for the disabled.

He plays alongside a couple of fellas you might know — **Guy Sebastian** (world batting ranking 5635) and **Heath Shaw** (27,230).

"It's great for guys who can't spend all day playing and it's good if you're new to an area and want to find a team," Thomson says.

"It's really easy to start a team and it's creating a big cricketing community. (Until COVID) there were mini tours and world championships."

There is a team in Sydney formed by asylum-seekers from Sri Lanka who met in the Villawood Detention Centre after braving the open ocean in rickety boats — "Ocean 12" would eventually become champion of Sydney.

And then there is Keen, who played Big Bash cricket for the Sydney Thunder and Sixers, and has emerged as Australia's best player — the **Shane Watson** (non-Test version) of the LMS world. He averages 109.4 with the bat (he's had to retire at 50 41 times in 71 innings) at a strike rate of 227.58. He's the 11th-best bowler in the world and easily the best all-rounder. That's significantly better than former Proteas superstar **Herschelle Gibbs** who is eight innings into his LMS career and has a world batting ranking of 76,746.

Keen, Gibbs, Sebastian, Shaw, Thomson ... Tom, Dick or Harry. If you're looking for a hit or a chance to roll the arm over again, you've just found it.

## Sporting superwoman

A mere 11 days after giving birth to her new baby girl, Stella, harness racing driver **Kerryan Morris** will jump back into the race bike at Menangle on Saturday evening.

Morris, also a champion trots

trainer, will drive **Dance For Glo** in race one, **Gold Sovereign** in race four, **Aldebaran Ursula** in race five and **Petes Said So** in the last.

Yes, 11 days. Is this a sporting record?

SIMON M'CLOUGHLIN

