Jim Morrison - cricket and travel, a dream come true

In this Q&A New Zealand Over 50s cricket feature Jim Morrison who is not only one of the pioneers of Over 50s Cricket in New Zealand but also around the world.

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Jim Morrison was the pioneer of Over 50s cricket in New Zealand and has played an integral role in the organisation of the two Over 50s World Cup in Australia and South Africa.

Jim has organised, managed in played in cricket tours in most cricketing nations.

Let's find out more about Jim's journey in the game

Jim Morrison at Claremont CC in Cape Town

What year you were born?

1976

Can you remember you first game of cricket?

I was a bit of a latecomer to playing cricket. My first proper game of cricket was at high school when I was 13. I've no idea how I went – probably not very well!

Tell us briefly about your cricketing journey?

I grew up in Wellington (New Zealand) and played for the Eastern Suburbs Club and Wellington High School. My overseas education took me to Canada, where I played at the Toronto Cricket Skating & Curling Club for 8 or 9 seasons. During this time I was introduced to the joys of cricket tours, as TCSCC would send a team to the Philadelphia Cricket Festival each year. I met some guys from the British Officers CC of Philadelphia and I joined them on tours of the UK in 2007 and 2009.

I lived in India for a year in 2008 and played some club cricket in Bangalore, which was an eye-opening experience. Most of the grounds were entirely devoid of grass and one had enormous anthills around the outfield, plus huge potholes. One guy on my team broke his leg when he fell into one of these holes while fielding.

I had always wanted to go on a cricket tour of India but couldn't find any clubs doing tours there, so I started the Occidental Cricketers. Not many of my friends wanted to go to India, so I put out a call to random cricketers all over the world. I somehow got about 25 strangers from England, Australia, Trinidad, the US, Canada and Dubai to take the plunge and come to India for a month in 2015. We played 18 games in 30 days in Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore and Goa and it was absolutely fantastic.

Because that tour went well, we repeated it for each of the next 4 years, visiting Australia/New Zealand in 2016, the West Indies in 2017, South Africa in 2018 and Sri Lanka in 2019. We were supposed to tour Ireland, Wales and England in 2020 but COVID-19 made that impossible.

One of the members of the Caribbean tour was Stirling Hamman, who at that time was starting to think about organising an Over-50s World Cup. I agreed to establish a New Zealand team when I got home (there was no over-50s cricket in NZ at the time) and help other countries around the world put teams together. That tournament was a big success and we took it a step further with the 2020 World Cup in Cape Town, which Roger Moult organised amazingly.

Jim Morrison batting while Jonty Rhodes fields, at the Philadelphia International Cricket Festival

If you can share with our audience, how would you describe yourself as a cricketer?

For my club, I'm an opening batsman who never gets a bowl. On tours, I end up bowling a fair bit of my slow-left arm stuff and bat anywhere depending on who needs to get a bat.

Who played the best innings you've seen firsthand playing with or against?

At high school I opened the batting with Graham "Billy" Murray, who went on to play a couple of first-class games, but is probably better known as one of the best indoor cricketers of all time. One time

we put on about 300 for the first wicket, with me scoring 40 and him getting the rest. He scored 267 that day, then followed it up a couple of weeks later with 283 (both 40-over matches). I'd struggle to say which of the two innings was better! I think he took an 8-fer in one of those games as well.

Graham was definitely one of the most naturally talented cricketers I have ever seen.

Who are the two players you admired most in terms of skills and competitive spirit in the competitions you played?

I am a big admirer of Greg Briggs, who was a regular on the Occidental Cricketers tours. He was a fantastic left-arm spinner (although he rarely turned one) and I loved watching him outfox batsmen who thought they could dominate him. He was also very modest and complimentary to others. He always played in the right spirit and is an all-round good guy.

Greg Briggs batting with Jim Morrison at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad

Another player I have heaps of time for is Adrian Dale, the captain of the New Zealand over-50s and a former county pro for Glamorgan for many years. I love watching him construct an innings – nothing flashy, but a true professional. I played a social match against him once and he batted #11, but he still went "into the zone" when he came to the crease and treated his innings like it was a first-class match. He is also unfailingly modest and wise and never makes it sound like he's better than anyone (even though he is!).

Adrian Dale

What was your favourite ground to play at?

I've been fortunate to play at a number of international venues with the Occidentals, such as Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai, Galle Stadium and P. Sara Stadium in Sri Lanka, and the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad. And I always enjoyed playing at the Toronto Cricket Skating & Curling Club.

I'm a real sucker for a beautiful, scenic ground. Groot Drakenstein and Claremont CC in South Africa are gorgeous spots and England is full of amazing village grounds. Also, Titoki CC in my home town of Nelson is a lovely little place.

Jim Morrison batting with Greg Briggs at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad

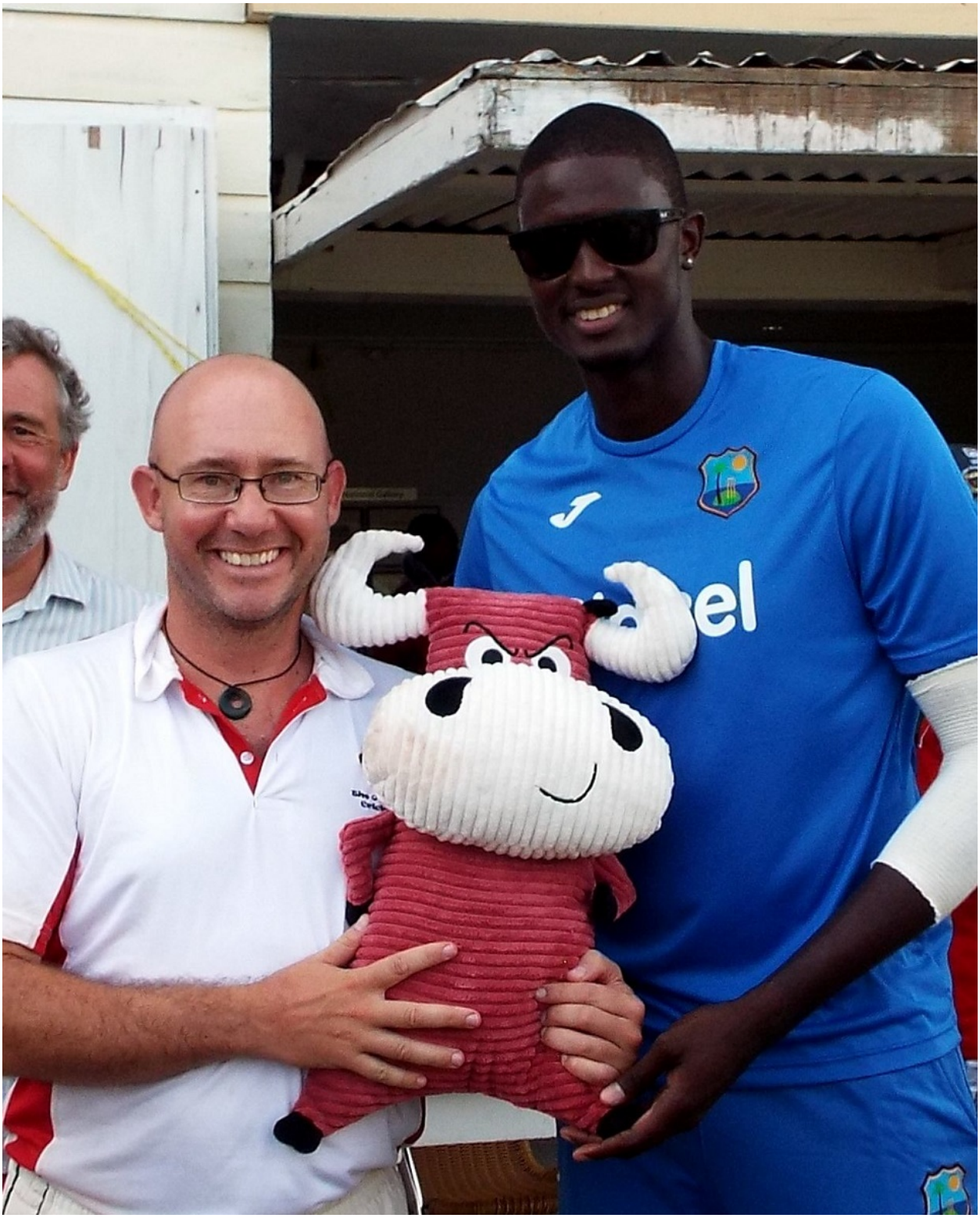
What's been your most memorable moment in cricket?

Two good ones and one bad one stand out.

Firstly, the two Over-50s World Cups were unforgettable experiences. There was such a feeling of excitement among everyone involved and I was extremely proud of the New Zealand groups that I was involved with.

Secondly, managing to get a game for the Occidentals at Brabourne Stadium against the Cricket Club of India was a real "coup" because I had no experience of organising cricket tours and no real idea of what I was doing. It had taken a huge amount of work to get the fixture, not to mention trying to find players for the tour, so when we finally stepped out on to the field that day, it felt like a significant achievement.

The negative one was dropping a catch to lose a match for the Occidentals in Sri Lanka. The opposition needed 6 to win off the last ball and the batsman hit the ball straight to me on the midwicket boundary. The ball fell through my hands onto my foot and then bounced 1 cm over the rope, much to the delight of the local crowd behind me.



Jim Morrison with Jason Holder and the Oxy, the Occidental Cricketers mascot

What's the best win you've been involved with?

The Occidentals have had a few games where we, as a motley bunch of – mainly – old and average cricketers have turned up to play a side of athletic, cocky youngsters who should thrash us … and yet we have beaten them. Those wins are always my favourites, where we get underestimated but play as a team and come away with the W.

You're heavily involved in Over 50s Cricket not just in New Zealand but the World Cup, how important in your opinion is Over 50s cricket and men of that age and older being out on the cricket field?

There are obviously health benefits for older guys playing cricket, but what I see the most is that the men love being able to play hard, competitive cricket against people their own age. Otherwise, their options seem to be playing against 20-year-olds who think they know everything or in "Golden Oldies" cricket that doesn't present any challenge or competitive edge. I hear very often that players don't lose their competitiveness just because they get older, and they love testing themselves against the best players in their age bracket and pushing for higher honours.

Jim Morrison with some members of the South African Over-50s side at the 2020 Over-50s World Cup (Dave Holgate, Louis Koen and Alan Dawson)

What advice would you offer anyone over 50 who is thinking about playing cricket again?

I can hardly think of anyone who has got into over-50s cricket and not loved it. That's what I tell potential over-50s players who aren't sure if it is for them.

What are your hobbies?

My two favourite hobbies are cricket and travel, so being able to combine them in the form of cricket tours has been a real dream come true.

What's your occupation?

I run an academic editing business. It's great because it gives me plenty of time to organise and play cricket.

Are you still involved in cricket and if so, in what capacity?

I still play club cricket, but going on cricket tours in a playing capacity hasn't been possible for a while now. Although I'm "only" 44, my primary interest is now organising over-50s stuff, both at the New Zealand level and as part of the Steering Committee for the Over-50s World Cup.

New Zealand Over 50s Cricket