

VISCUS 2018 AGM – Report on Umpiring System

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1) Good news first:

- a) The objective of the VISCUS system is surely that the players can enjoy competitive games of cricket, knowing that they will be umpired fairly and competently by two neutral, qualified umpires. In 2018, there were 68 VDCA league and playoff scheduled, three of which were cancelled or forfeited. Of the remaining 65, 57 had two scheduled umpires who turned up and did their jobs. And of those 57, only one had a really bad review and one had a mixed review. That means that 85% of the matches were umpired as scheduled without complaint. We should of course continue to aim for perfection, but a system that yields an 85% success rate is surely not doing too badly.
- b) In previous years various laws and their interpretation have given rise to complaints or queries. There has been very little of that kind of comment this year and I would conclude that issues of interpretation are being dealt with, on the whole, better than they have been in the past. Nonetheless I would recommend that the kind of meeting on laws that was held at the start of this season be repeated each year. The bouncer/beamer rule, the no ball rules and, of course, lbw are always worth refreshing. The question of the legality of certain bowling actions has been in the background for a number of years and I gather is to be discussed separately.
- c) On the administration side, the number of umpires who had to be chased to submit their match reports was about the same as last year. But the good news is that captains were very responsive when I contacted them and I thank them for that.

2) Areas for improvement:

- a) There were at least four games where scheduled umpires simply did not turn up, without any notification to anyone. There were two more games where, despite weeks of asking, no match reports were ever submitted and so I cannot tell whether scheduled umpires turned up or not. In two other matches clubs were able to deliver only one umpire which, while a fall from the standards we aspire, is perhaps to be expected. Even a self umpired match is not the end of the world if it is the rare exception. But for it to happen four, or maybe six, times in one season shows a lack of commitment from some clubs and for it to happen, ever, without notice is astonishing lack of respect for colleagues and the game. One club was responsible for the majority of these incidents and hopefully that situation will be remedied at the club level.
- b) While we have a heartening number of people who have taken the courses, sat the exams and qualified as umpires, we also have too many who then fail to register each year. This is again disrespectful to those colleagues who take the trouble to register but also careless in the attitude towards insurance. Hopefully we will never see an injury where insurance for medical care is refused because someone did not register, either as a player or an umpire.
- c) 47 different people umpired games this past season, which is really very good. However, of the 119 umpiring slots that were actually filled this season, 43 were filled by just three people. Without their commitment we may have had many more solo umpired games or even self umpired games. It is good to have dedicated, capable senior umpires willing to devote so much of their time to the game. But to come to rely on that is dangerous and maybe even a bit unfair. Clubs should, as much as they can, pair up their less experienced umpires with more experienced

- umpires and encourage an average of around three games a season for these umpires.
- d) Only about a quarter of the match reports had any comment on the umpiring form the captains. While no news may be good news, it might also be taken as indifference. Getting more feedback always helps, even if it is a simple 'well umpired'.
 - e) There have been a number of comments on what people see as a loss of the spirit of the game particularly in disrespectful on-field behaviour. Umpires can only do so much to rectify that but it may help, as part of a broader discussion, to re-examine what umpires can and should do when unpleasant behaviour starts to occur.

In conclusion, we only improve by being willing to acknowledge and examine where we have fallen short and the last few comments are presented in that spirit. Nonetheless, from attending some (alas too few) games and reviewing every match report submitted, it is my opinion that taken as a whole, umpiring continues to improve and a number of captains are setting great examples in trying to ensure that the game is played in the right spirit. We need to follow those leaders; certainly we need to seriously examine those areas where we need to improve but hopefully in a spirit of realism and optimism for the game in this region.