

Twitter Thread by Abhishek Mukherjee



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I often come across gobbledygook like "Spirit of Cricket" or "Gentleman's Game" or "That's Not Cricket".

These comments often remind me of what Archie McLaren did to Charlie McLeod (in photo).

And that happened on this day, 1897-98, at Sydney.

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In those days, SoC and GG were often defined based on whether MCC were the enforcers or victim.

Before getting into the incident, a bit on McLeod.

McLeod's name never comes up when cricketers who overcame disabilities are listed.

He was hearing impaired.

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So he could not hear snicks, appeals, even the non-striker's call.

Yet he had 3,321 runs at 21 and 335 wickets at 24 in First-Class cricket.

His numbers were not great in Test cricket (17 Tests, 573 runs at 24, 33 wickets at 40), but he had one great series.

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The series in question.

McLeod was playing his second Test match, three years after his debut.

McLaren, on the other hand, was filling in for Andrew Stoddart, whose mother passed away just before the Test match.

England amassed 551 before bowling out Australia for 237.

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McLaren enforced the follow-on.

Till this point, McLeod had 3/80 and 50 not out (from #9).

He was promoted to #3 in the second innings. At stumps on Day 3 he was unbeaten on 20.

He added 6 more the next morning when it happened.

Tom Richardson bowled a full-toss.

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McLeod missed the line completely and the ball hit the stumps.

McLeod started to walk away, but Charles Bannerman (yes, that one, then umpire) had already yelled "no-ball".

But McLeod's disability prevented him from hearing this.

He continued to walk.

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The ball had rolled to wicketkeeper Bill Storer behind the stumps.

Storer threw the stumps down.

Square-leg umpire Jim Philips ruled McLeod run out.

It took some time for McLeod to figure out what happened.

Let us now take a moment to think what England had done to him.

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Would you have done it?

How would you react if you saw this happen?

It really hurts and angers me to think what McLeod went through.

He requested Bannerman to overturn the decision – but Bannerman did not have the authority to do this.

McLeod walked away.

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If you had not heard of the incident, it is probably because nobody wanted you to.

Wisden, for example, does not mention a word of this in their three-paragraph match report.

The crowd obviously booed the Englishmen throughout the afternoon.

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The legitimacy of the dismissal was also discussed.

One person who felt guilty was Storer, who "regretted at having acted as he did, and said he did so under orders."

Spirit of Cricket.

Gentleman's Game.

England won by 9 wickets, but the incident left McLeod fuming.

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His subsequent contributions were

2nd Test: 112

3rd Test: 31 and 5/65

4th Test: 2/11 and 64*

5th Test: 64

Australia won all four Tests.

McLeod finished the series with 352 runs at 58.67 and 10 wickets at 23.60.

MacLaren had managed to irk him all right.