Twitter Thread by Sreejith

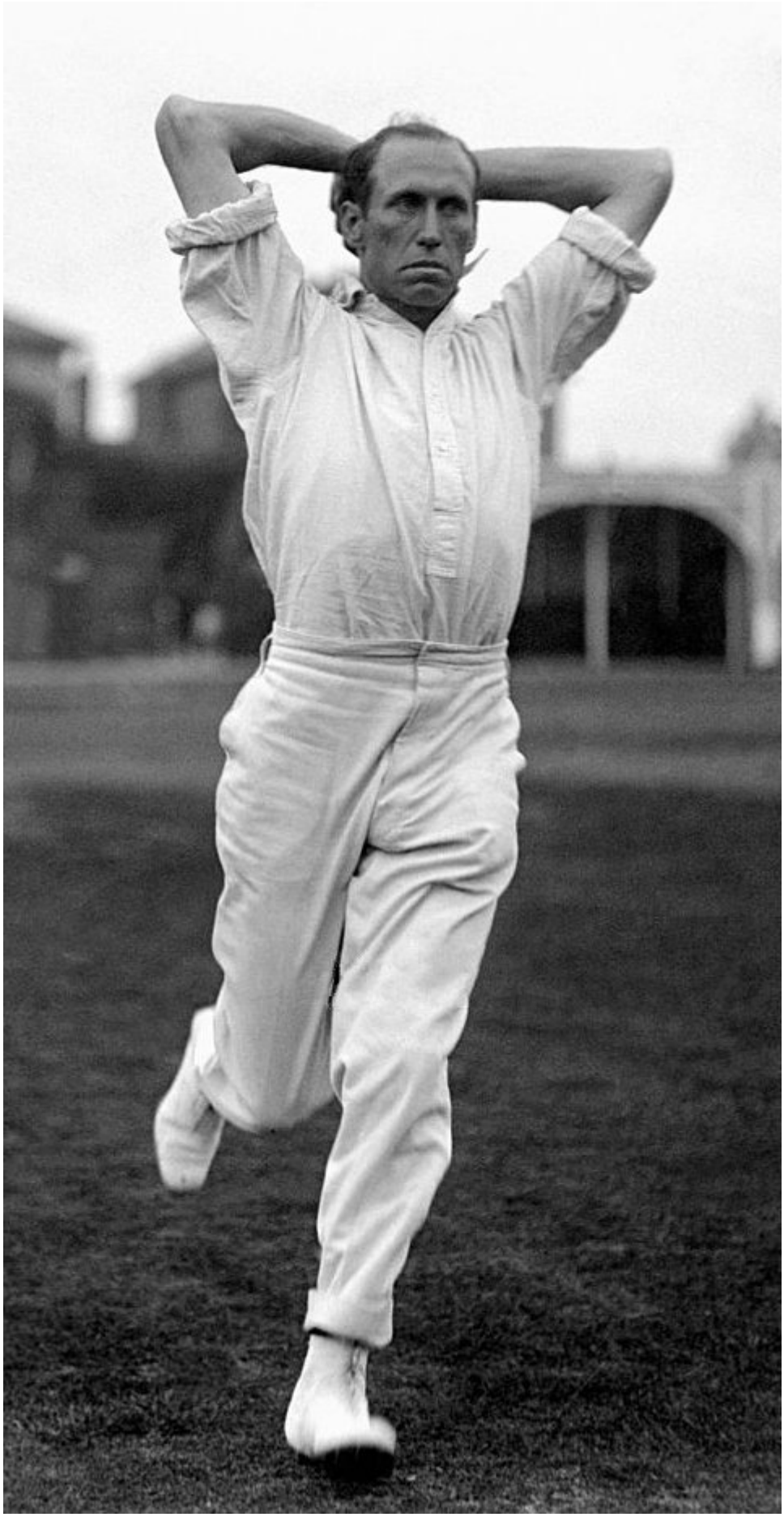


Sreejith
@sreereads

A thread (a mostly apocryphal yet would love to believe in story) on John Bart King: Greatest of all American cricketers. (Yes, they did played cricket during late 1800s to early 1900s)

Story from @Ram_Guha edited book, 'The Picador book of Cricket'

#Cricket
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The cricket championship tournament of Philadelphia was called The Halifax Cup. King used to dominate in this series. From 1904 to '08 he won the Batting Cup 3 times & the Bowling Cup 4 times, & he twice exceeded 300 in an innings, once in 1905 vs Germantown & in 1906 vs Merion

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It was during this period that one of my favourite cricketing stories has its origin. It has been told and retold so many times that obviously there are many versions of it, but all scepticism apart, I would like to believe it to be true.
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So the story happens at a Halifax Cup match between Belmont (King's team) vs Trenton at Elmwood. The Trenton captain missed his train, and when he arrived on the ground about an hour late he found that in his absence his side had won the toss and batted and were doing badly;
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by the time he had changed and got ready to bat, 9 of the side were out & he had to bat #11.On his way to the wicket the Trenton Cap apologized to his opposite for being so unpunctual, adding unwisely that his team wouldn't have been in such a mess if he hadn't missed his train
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This remark was overheard by King, whose sense of showmanship and the absurd was stimulated. King enjoyed nothing more than the comedy which deflates; a boast like that made by the Trenton captain called for a bathetic pay-off.
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Taking inspiration from a famous baseball pitcher, Rube Waddell, as the Trenton Cap took guard King called his fielders together & sent them to the pavilion. They needed some persuading at first, but such was King's personality & renown that they finally did as they were asked.
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The Trenton Cap watched all this uneasily. King walked back to begin his run, but as he turned he saw that the wicket-keeper was still in his place. 'Why, Eddie,' he called, 'whatever are you doing there? I won't need you either, Eddie. You'd better join the others.'
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The WK left the field, leaving just the 2 batsmen, 2 umpires, and King. The Trenton Cap was meanwhile torn between many emotions. King was clearly trying to make a fool of him, but at the same time he must surely have a unique opportunity of scoring in every sense off King.
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Fear of being made to look silly, however, was the dominant emotion, and he decided to protest to the umpires. Cricket was a game for two sides of eleven men; King's action was outside the laws and ought not to be allowed.
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After going into a huddle,the umpires decided that while the law demanded that the fielding side should consist of not more than 11 men,there was nothing to prevent King from dispensing with his entire field if he wished.The Trenton Cap was thus obliged to meet King's challenge
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King went back to his mark again, but paused again. His sense of occasion demanded some further gesture, & he called to the pavilion that he would want 1 fieldsman. A fieldsman duly appeared, & King placed him with elaborate care, 20 yards behind the wicket & 4 paces to leg.

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This pantomime of field-placing puzzled the Trenton captain so much that he rose to the bait.
‘For heaven’s sake,’ he demanded, ‘you said you didn’t want a wicketkeeper, but what do you want him for?’

‘He’s not a wicketkeeper,’ said King. ‘He’s not even a fielder.’
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‘What is he, then?’

‘I’ve given the umpires enough trouble already,’ said King. ‘He’s there to pick up the bails.’

King, so the story goes, then ran up and hit the stumps with a fast ‘angler’. The fieldsman bent down & gathered up the bails, which had fallen at his feet.

End

Am sure @NorthStandGang might be aware of this story. Still tagging them to get more stories from their archives.
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