

## **'Who are we...to tell the South Africans how to run their country?' The Women's Cricket Association and the aftermath of the D'Oliveira Affair, 1968-9**

### **Introduction**

In September 1968, the planned MCC tour to South Africa was cancelled by the MCC in the wake of the South African Government's rejection of the belated inclusion of the coloured cricketer Basil D'Oliveira in the touring squad. The D'Oliveira Affair, as it became known, marked the beginning of the isolation of South Africa from international men's cricket, and has probably been analysed more than any other single event in the history of Anglo-South African cricketing relations.<sup>1</sup> Yet its most immediate impact was actually felt within the women's cricket community. The England women's cricket team had organised a stopover in South Africa on their way to Australia and New Zealand, scheduled for December 1968. But in the wake of the D'Oliveira Affair the UK Government, suddenly alert to the now potent issue of continued sporting contact with South Africa, placed pressure on the British Women's Cricket Association (WCA) to cancel the visit.

The fact that this incident has until now gone almost unmentioned in the extensive literature on the D'Oliveira Affair is symptomatic of the chronic lack of research into women's cricket history in both England and South Africa. This extends to accounts of Anglo-South African cricketing relationships. Generally, cricketing women have been totally absent from the literature on colonial and postcolonial cricket; where they have been mentioned, it has been as a brief counterpoint to accounts which focus on sporting masculinity. The assumption, as Adair, Nauright and Phillips have explicitly argued, is that women's sport did not provide the same opportunities as male sport did to reaffirm or reject cultural connections with Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Yet an examination of the reaction of female cricketers in Britain and South Africa to the D'Oliveira Affair highlights how flawed this assumption is. By the time of D'Oliveira's selection for the MCC tour of South Africa, the British Women's Cricket Association had been in existence for 42 years, having been founded in 1926, and had formed a close relationship with the South Africa and Rhodesian Women's Cricket Association (SARWCA) since its formation in 1952. This relationship mirrored that of the MCC with the male South African Cricket Association (SACA); it is unsurprising, therefore, that in 1968 the WCA displayed a similar reluctance to the MCC to break their imperial bond with a nation whose cricketing development they had so strongly encouraged. In fact, the WCA felt just as firmly as the MCC did that sport and politics should be kept separate, and that, as England captain Rachael Heyhoe-Flint expressed in her autobiography: 'Who are we...to tell the South Africans how to run their country?'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For accounts of the D'Oliveira Affair, see J. Williams, *Cricket and Race* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 57-9; C. Merrett and J. Nauright, 'South Africa', in Stoddart and Sandiford (eds.), *The Imperial Game: Cricket, Culture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). See also *Wisden*, 1969, and B. Murray, 'Politics and Cricket: The D'Oliveira Affair of 1968', *Journal of South African Studies* 27.4 (2001), 667-684.

<sup>2</sup> See for example D. Adair, J. Nauright and M. Phillips, 'Playing fields through to battle fields: The development of Australian sporting manhood in its imperial context, c.1850-1918', *Journal of Australian Studies* 22 (1998), 51. See also P. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palsgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> R. Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe! The Autobiography of Rachael Heyhoe-Flint* (London: Pelham, 1978), 74.

The following pages use the cancellation of the intended 1968 stopover as a way to shed light onto Anglo-South African relationships within women's cricket. Firstly, the close, imperial relationship between the WCA and the SARWCA in the years leading up to 1968 is examined in some depth, in order to provide some context to the incident. The second section considers the rationale behind the intended 1968 stopover in South Africa, the reasons for its subsequent cancellation, and the WCA's reaction to the incident. Lastly, there is an analysis of the aftermath of the cancellation, and the ways in which both the British and South African WCAs reacted to South Africa's increasing international isolation. Throughout, the chapter draws on WCA archival material which has previously gone untouched by historians to give a new insight into the evolving attitude of the UK Government towards continued sporting contact with South Africa in the wake of the D'Oliveira Affair. Overall, it is argued that a study of women's cricket provides a crucial component of our understanding of Anglo-South African cricketing relations.

### Anglo-South African women's cricket, 1952-1968

While the British Women's Cricket Association had formed prior to the Second World War, in 1926, its South African counterpart was not founded until 1952.<sup>4</sup> André Odendaal has briefly outlined its origins; beginning with a league in Johannesburg and the dispatch of two Southern Transvaal teams to play against Rhodesia in 1947. In 1952, the SARWCA was established, and the first inter-provincial tournament was held in December that year. By 1956, an estimated 400 females were playing cricket in South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

What of the relationship between the British WCA and the new SARWCA? Generally, elements of the old colonial relationship were present in the WCA's dealings with all other national governing bodies of women's cricket, which at this time encompassed the Australian Women's Cricket Council (AWCC, formed in 1931) and the New Zealand Women's Cricket Council (NZWCC, formed in 1934), as well as SARWCA. From 1945, WCA rules dictated that 'A Council or Association now or hereafter formed in any part of the world outside Great Britain desiring to be affiliated shall submit a copy of its rules for the approval of the Women's Cricket Association'.<sup>6</sup> The WCA, as the oldest governing body, evidently saw its role as a paternalistic one, head of what we might term the female cricketing Commonwealth.

Attempts were made by the WCA from the outset to exercise influence over the conduct of women's cricket in South Africa. In 1951 Netta Rheinberg, the WCA's Secretary, wrote to Mrs Louise Goodall of the Southern Transvaal:

I am receiving frequent reports of cricket activities in your country and think that possibly the time for the formation of a South African Women's Cricket Association might have arrived.

As you may know, the Women's Cricket Association is the parent body for women's

<sup>4</sup> For an account of the formation of the WCA, see J. Williams, *Cricket and England: a social and cultural history of the interwar years* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> A. Odendaal, "'Neither cricketers nor ladies': Towards a history of women and cricket in South Africa, 1860s-2000s", *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28.1 (2001), 124-25.

<sup>6</sup> 'WCA Rules', WCA Yearbook, 1945, <http://www.womenscrickethistory.org> (accessed 1 July 2014).

cricket in much the same way as the M.C.C. acts for the men, and should a South African W.C.A. be formed we should most sincerely welcome its affiliation to us in the same way as Australia and New Zealand are affiliated.

From what you say in your letter I doubt whether you have drawn up any sort of constitution, but in case you or any other authority can draw together all your groups of enthusiasts into an association, I enclose a copy of our own, which might conceivably act as a basis.<sup>7</sup>

Evidently, though, the South Africans failed to take heed of this. When the Southern Transvaal sent a copy of their constitution in 1952, Vera Cox (Secretary and co-founder of the WCA) 'reported that having read their Constitution she did not consider this body ready for affiliation yet'.<sup>8</sup> Only in 1953 when a revised constitution was sent was their application for affiliation accepted, and then only on the basis that the WCA 'reserved[d] the right to request South Africa to conform to WCA dress regulations if a South African team ever visited England'.<sup>9</sup>

A South African tour of England did not eventuate prior to the D'Oliveira Affair, but the WCA's threat was carried out in the case of New Zealand, who were requested not to wear caps during their 1954 visit to England.<sup>10</sup> Australia, too, were not immune from criticism. In 1950 the WCA sent a letter to the AWCC objecting to the passing of a resolution which enabled trophies to be presented to individual players, on the grounds that 'as an affiliated body of the WCA this ruling was not in accordance with our principles'.<sup>11</sup> Two years later this rule was rescinded by the AWCC, possibly due to pressure from the WCA during the 1951 Australian tour.

The conduct of international tours in these years suggests that the WCA subscribed to the same moral code of cricket as the MCC espoused, and considered itself the true bearer of these standards. In 1956, Rheinberg wrote that the upcoming tour of Australia and New Zealand would have

a far-reaching influence on the conduct and standard of the game; tourists naturally benefit greatly themselves, but by passing on their knowledge and experience they help all players and the game as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

A key part of the consolidation of cricket's status as imperial sport *par excellence* was the staging of international tours. Landmark tours like Australia's 1878 tour of England and the MCC tour of India in 1926/7 were seen by the MCC as opportunities to spread the 'spirit of cricket' and assert their physical and cultural superiority over the colonies.<sup>13</sup> As time progressed and teams improved and nations gained independence from Britain, the MCC

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.stgeorgespark.nmmu.ac.za/content/women/displayarticle.asp?artid=wom\\_009](http://www.stgeorgespark.nmmu.ac.za/content/women/displayarticle.asp?artid=wom_009) (accessed 20 July 2014).

<sup>8</sup> WCA Archive, Lancashire, Executive Committee minutes, 18 April 1952.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 21 November 1953.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19 February 1954.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1950.

<sup>12</sup> *Women's Cricket*, 3 May 1957.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Bradley, 'Inventing Australians and Constructing Englishness: Cricket and the Creation of National Consciousness', *Sporting Traditions*, 11.2 (1995), 35-60, and R. Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian history of a British sport* (London: Picador, 2002), 323-30.

remained convinced of its own cultural (if no longer cricketing) superiority. This seems to have been the case for the WCA as well.

The first women's cricket tour had taken place in 1934/5 when England went to Australia and New Zealand, with Australia returning the visit in 1937. International tours were an integral part of women's cricket as they displayed female prowess on the world stage, attracted relatively large amounts of media coverage and raised levels of public interest in the sport. Netta Rheinberg's tour diaries during her time as England manager on their tours to Australia and New Zealand in 1948/9 and 1957/8 suggest that ideas of British supremacy remained potent for some female cricketers during this period. In 1949, she wrote:

We have tried our best here to instil into the Aussies the advantage of playing cricket merely for the love of the game, as it is done in England, and not for points altogether as is the case throughout Australia. This competitive spirit leads to jealousy and rivalries and personal animosities which are unknown in England. It will be interesting to see what influence we have had.<sup>14</sup>

In her 1957/8 diary, she critiqued both the Australian attitude and the 'New Zealand mentality'; the majority of matches ended in draws, and in Rheinberg's view this was due to the lack of sporting declarations by the opposing captains, Rona McKenzie and Una Paisley. Rheinberg wrote: 'Remarks made by various members of England team in dressing room are unrepeatable...I'd suggest a change of captaincy – as whatever Rona learnt in England she must have forgotten.'<sup>15</sup> The idea that touring teams to England could 'learn' the correct way to play there is a deeply imperialist sentiment, but evidently remained part of Rheinberg's mentality by the late 1950s.

The WCA were thus keen to arrange tours with South Africa in order to facilitate the development of cricket there and to reaffirm the imperial bond which existed between the two nations. In Rheinberg's letter to Louise Goodall of the Southern Transvaal, she stated:

I have been interviewed several times by representatives of the South African Press who wish to know when a South African touring team may be visiting England, or when we might be visiting South Africa!

Naturally, if something of this sort could be arranged between us and a South African WCA, it would be a splendid innovation.<sup>16</sup>

By 1960 there was 'a steady trickle of South African recruits to [the WCA's] leading clubs'<sup>17</sup>. The WCA consequently enthusiastically accepted when, in 1956, South Africa requested England to tour during the English winter of 1960/61.<sup>18</sup> The tour, which was the first ever international women's cricket tour South Africa had ever participated in, subsequently took place, with four Tests being played, all on large, good-quality men's Test grounds. For England, it was an opportunity to reinforce their own cricketing superiority

<sup>14</sup> WCA Archive, Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 17 February 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 5 and 6 November 1957, 10 and 11 March 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Netta Rheinberg to Mrs Louise Goodall, 13 November 1951, [http://www.stgeorgespark.nmmu.ac.za/content/women/displayarticle.asp?artid=wom\\_009](http://www.stgeorgespark.nmmu.ac.za/content/women/displayarticle.asp?artid=wom_009) (accessed 20 July 2014).

<sup>17</sup> *The Times*, 1 December 1960.

<sup>18</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 22 June 1956.

over the South Africans; three of the Tests ended in draws, but the fourth was won by England, by 8 wickets. One of the England team, writing in *The Times*, reported during the tour that:

Crowds have been good, interest is lively, and the efficient, graceful fielding of the English girls has caused much comment. Members of the touring team are coaching South Africans at each of the centres they visit and, undoubtedly, South African women's cricket will benefit considerably from the tour.<sup>19</sup>

English cricket was clearly seen to be helping develop its South African counterpart during the tour.

However, by 1960 the apartheid regime was already becoming firmly entrenched within South Africa, and the English touring team were well aware of the difficult political situation. Before the team arrived, they were given a briefing on the 'correct' way to behave whilst on tour by a member of the Executive Committee, Elspeth Jackson, who had reportedly 'obtained information from friends in South Africa'.<sup>20</sup> One member of the team recalled this in an oral history interview:

we were given a little lecture at the beginning to say, I can't remember what the Afrikaans was, but you had to know, even if you went into the park for instance, there were seats that the blacks were allowed to sit in, and those that the whites were expected to sit in...And so we had a quick lesson on that, as to, we had to understand entrances into shops, all sorts of things like that. And we stuck to the rules, because we were guests. And so although we didn't like this, at all, it was totally foreign to us, we did what we were told. We were guests. And so we'd go in the right entrance to the shop, sit on the right benches...And no, we didn't like it. But as I said we were guests and we did as we were told.<sup>21</sup>

All coaching undertaken during the tour was within exclusively white schools, and the black population were forbidden to enter the grounds where the women's matches were taking place. Yet the tour did not engender any qualms whatsoever about continuing cricketing contact with South Africa. 'I found it strange and sad,' wrote Heyhoe-Flint, 'but retained the view that it was their country, and hardly the place of any English people to criticise.'<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the WCA Executive Committee reported that the tour had 'engendered...good will' between the two governing bodies.<sup>23</sup>

The WCA remained keen to support the inclusion of the South Africans in the touring schedule throughout the 1960s. This schedule was now mediated by the International Women's Cricket Council, which had been formed in 1958. Rheinberg claimed that the rationale behind its formation was as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, 1 December 1960.

<sup>20</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 22 July 1960.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mollie Buckland (nee Hunt), 18 June 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, 66.

<sup>23</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 29 July 1961.

Up to the present time, overseas Associations and Councils have affiliated to the WCA which acted as the parent body. Now that they are all recognised and well established it is felt that they should be on equal terms within a main Association.<sup>24</sup>

This reeks of imperial sentiment, and it was also glossing over the facts. It does not seem that the WCA had any particular desire to form an international organisation. However, in November 1954 at an Executive Committee meeting, Vera Cox, the WCA's Chairman, reported that

the Australians had some international organisation in mind, but [she] thought it would be advisable for the WCA to send a definite proposal first on this matter. She therefore put forward the following proposition:

There there should be formed an organisation to be known as the International Women's Cricket Council. Each country would pay an annual affiliation fee, the sum to be determined between the member countries. The Council's function would be to discuss all matters pertaining to international women's cricket and future tours.<sup>25</sup>

The WCA thus quickly latched onto the idea: 'The inauguration of any world wide organisation is an opportunity for aiding the ideals of international peace and happiness,' wrote Vera Cox in 1958. Nonetheless, the real appeal seems to have been that the organisation was viewed as a way in which the WCA could continue to exert their influence over other bodies of women's cricket in a more structured way.

In truth, of course, the IWCC in 1958 was not the world wide organisation Vera Cox had described: just as the Commonwealth had been up to 1948, it was an organisation of the former white Dominions. Four of the founder members were England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and at the 1960 meeting it was agreed to write to Canada and Ireland to encourage them to join – despite the fact that women's cricket in both these countries was almost non-existent.<sup>26</sup> All founder members seem to have initially respected the WCA's leadership of the IWCC; while Ruth Preddey of the AWCC took the chair at the inaugural meeting, held in Melbourne in 1958 during England's tour of Australia, Rheinberg reported that

I guided her along...It was very gratifying to note the respect with which England's delegates were held, and it was possible to give a lead in many directions...<sup>27</sup>

The WCA's keenness to continue to embrace the SARWCA in the international women's cricket community, and include the South Africans in the touring schedule throughout the 1960s, was therefore initially respected by the other former Dominions. The onset of apartheid did not go undiscussed by the IWCC; the minutes of the 1958 meeting state:

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<sup>24</sup> *Women's Cricket*, 30 August 1957.

<sup>25</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 5 November 1954.

<sup>26</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 28 December 1960. Women's cricket associations did not form in West Indies and India until 1973. The fifth founder member was Holland, which complicates things somewhat. However, Holland tended not to send a representative to meetings, and was therefore not a particularly influential member of the organisation in its early years. The point about the organisation being entirely 'white', of course, still stands.

<sup>27</sup> WCA Archive, Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 19 February 1958.

During discussion of possible future tours to other countries, the question of colour bar arose. Miss Robison (South Africa) explained that the South African team would be unable to visit Pakistan for instance, owing to political drawbacks which all the sporting bodies in South Africa very much regretted.

Mrs Poulter (New Zealand) expressed very strong sentiments on this question, fearing embarrassment should a Maori be included in any team to South Africa. Miss Robison stressed that everything possible would be done to ensure the smooth running of the tour. Miss Rheinberg (England) pointed out that politics should not enter a Council such as the IWCC and Miss Preddey (Australia) endorsed this remark and said the Council should keep a dignified attitude and players would have to bear with the country who had these laws.<sup>28</sup>

Rheinberg's more personalised account describes this as 'A rather anxious moment...this question obviously arouses the deepest feeling and has to be handled with utmost care'.<sup>29</sup> Yet despite the hesitance of the New Zealanders, England's suggested tour schedule - which would see New Zealand visit South Africa in 1966, and South Africa visit Australia and New Zealand in 1975/6 - was adopted by the meeting. Indeed the South African representative, Miss Robison, stated that attending the meeting was 'a proud moment for South Africa' and that 'they would do everything in their power to keep up the goodwill' felt within the community towards her country.<sup>30</sup>

South Africa continued to be welcomed into the international fold throughout the 1960s. The second meeting of the IWCC was hosted by the SARWCA in Durban in December 1960, during England's tour there, and at the next meeting in 1963 Miss Robison of South Africa was elected as the new IWCC President.<sup>31</sup> And when the AWCC postponed a scheduled tour by South Africa to Australia in 1966, reportedly due to financial constraints, the other members of the IWCC reacted strongly against this decision:

Miss Whitehorn advised she had received no correspondence from Miss Verco on the subject and South Africa stated that they had received no communication from Australia on the subject of a further postponement.

The meeting deplore the apparent discourtesy on the part of the Australian Council in not advising the interested parties concerned...  
the Acting Secretary was instructed to write to Australia requesting them to reconsider their decision...<sup>32</sup>

The decision was not reconsidered, but the Australians did agree to the continued inclusion of South Africa in the tour schedule. While a cleavage had begun to emerge from the late 1950s in the ICC, with India, Pakistan and West Indies all questioning the position

<sup>28</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 20 February 1958.

<sup>29</sup> WCA Archive, Netta Rheinberg tour diary, 20 February 1958.

<sup>30</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 19 February 1958.

<sup>31</sup> Unlike the ICC, whose presidents were nominated by the MCC, it was agreed from the outset that IWCC officers be elected by all member associations, and that Council officers 'shall not be drawn from the same country in succession'. See IWCC minutes, 19 February 1958.

<sup>32</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 4 August 1966.

of white South Africa within the organisation, the lack of non-white members of the IWCC meant that a similar process did not take place within the women's council.<sup>33</sup> If anything, in the build-up to the D'Oliveira Affair, it was the women's cricket community who continued to wholeheartedly embrace South Africa, over and above their male counterparts.

### Women's cricket and the D'Oliveira Affair

The D'Oliveira Affair brought the matter of continued contact with apartheid South Africa to a head within the men's cricketing community. The public outcry surrounding D'Oliveira's initial non-selection by the MCC for their scheduled 1968/9 tour of the country, in the wake of his 158 at the Oval in the last Test of the 1968 summer, reflected the suspicion (later proved true) that, behind the scenes, it had been made clear by the South African Government that a team which included D'Oliveira would not be able to tour. The protests surrounding his non-selection, however, were too vocal for even the imperialist MCC to ignore. He was subsequently called up to the squad and, on 24 September 1968, the MCC cancelled the tour after the South African Government refused to accept D'Oliveira.

This was to have unanticipated repercussions within the women's cricket community. It had long been decided that the England Women's cricket team would tour Australia and New Zealand in 1968/9. But in April 1967, during the planning of their touring schedule, it was agreed by the WCA Executive Committee that they would include a ten-day stopover in South Africa en route to Australasia, as a way to partially acclimatise to the differing conditions.<sup>34</sup> Thus, at some point later that year, the WCA Executive Committee, independently and without consultation, went ahead and purchased plane tickets incorporating the stopover in South Africa.

It was a point of pride for the WCA that they had always organised their affairs totally separately from the governing bodies of men's cricket: in 1950, when discussing the role of men within the Association, the WCA's Executive Committee concluded that 'of the fundamental principles on which the WCA was founded, one of the most important...was that women should run every aspect of it'.<sup>35</sup> This was all well and good, but there was a new consideration which did not seem to factor into their thinking: the England team were due to be the recipients of government grant-aid for the 1968/9 tour.

Involvement by the UK Government in sport greatly increased during the 1960s, the result of a growing public demand for an expansion of opportunities for sport and recreation within an economic context of a new affluence, as well as a fresh interest in the pursuit of excellence due to Britain's perceived 'decline' in international sport in comparison with the successes of East Germany and the USSR.<sup>36</sup> The Wolfenden Committee, assembled to investigate the position of sport within British society and to which the WCA supplied a written statement, had also placed pressure on the government when it recommended in its 1960 Report that increased government funding be given to governing bodies of sport, and that a Sports Development Council be established to distribute these funds. In 1959, just £165 000 was given by the Ministry of Education to national voluntary sporting bodies

<sup>33</sup> See C. Merrett and J. Nauright, 'South Africa', 68.

<sup>34</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 22 April 1967.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 19 May 1950.

<sup>36</sup> B. Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport* (London: Routledge, 1991), 27.



to spend on coaching; by 1965 the total grants offered were worth £457 000 and involved 58 governing bodies of sport, including the All England Netball Association and the All England Women's Hockey Association.<sup>37</sup> The WCA was one of the first women's governing bodies of sport to benefit from these increased investments when, following secretary Miss Riley's application to the Ministry of Education in June 1962, the WCA was awarded an initial grant towards coaching costs of £200, for the year 1962/3.<sup>38</sup> Liaison was maintained, and an HM Inspector came to watch one of the England-Australia Test matches in 1963; the following year, the WCA's grant was increased to £600.<sup>39</sup>

After a Sports Council was set up by the Wilson Government in 1965, as recommended by Wolfenden, the ability to award grants was transferred to this organisation, and the total amount was vastly expanded, rising from £195 922 in the financial year 1960-61 to £1.27 million in 1970-71.<sup>40</sup> The WCA Executive Committee reported in 1965 that they 'welcomed the formation of the Council' and that their initial request for grant aid had been successful, with £600 being made available in the first year of the Council's existence.<sup>41</sup> In 1967, the Council provided grant-aid for the Young England team's visit to Holland, and in May 1968, it was confirmed that the Council would provide £2 000 towards the travelling costs of the WCA's 1968/9 tour to Australia and New Zealand.<sup>42</sup> Naturally, this was welcomed by the WCA Executive Committee. Yet it was to have severe consequences for the WCA's touring plans.

Precisely how or when the Sports Council discovered the WCA's plan for a stopover in South Africa is not clear. What is apparent is that at some point between 24 September, the date that the MCC announced the cancellation of their tour of South Africa, and 7 October, when the UK press broke the story, the WCA Chairman wrote to WCA members announcing the cancellation of the South African leg of the forthcoming tour.<sup>43</sup> On 7 October 1968, *The Times* reported:

The England women's cricket team have cancelled the South African part of their winter tour. They were due to visit South Africa for 10 days at the end of November on their way to Australia and New Zealand, but the party will now travel direct to Australia on December 3.

Miss Audrey Collins, chairman of the Women's Cricket Association, said: 'It was an independent decision by our executive committee. I have no further comment.'<sup>44</sup>

Minister of Sport Denis Howell was quoted as welcoming the decision: 'This is a right decision and has been taken quite independently. It would have been incongruous for them to play in South Africa because of the MCC cancellation. You can't play cricket where apart-

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives, Kew (TNA), T 227/2416.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, ED 169/79.

<sup>39</sup> By comparison, the AEWHA received £1750 for the financial year 1963-4. See TNA, ED 169/79.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, AT 30/15.

<sup>41</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 26 March and 10 September 1965.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 26 May 1968.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 26 October 1968.

<sup>44</sup> *The Times*, 7 October 1968.

heid applies without in some measure condoning it, even if you don't want to.<sup>45</sup> Howell thus clearly linked the WCA's actions in the minds of the public to the MCC's cancellation of their own planned tour to South Africa.

It is interesting that both the WCA and Howell were keen to stress publicly that the decision to cancel the stopover in South Africa had been taken independently. In fact, oral history interviews have made it clear that there was enormous pressure placed on the WCA by the Government to cancel the stopover; privately, Howell threatened to withdraw the entire travel grant of £2000 unless the WCA altered their plans. England wicket-keeper on the 1968/9 tour of Australia and New Zealand, Shirley Hodges, recalled:

The government said if went we would no longer get any grants whatsoever... they just said, 'you're not to go. You can't go.' ... It was a gun to our head.<sup>46</sup>

Given that the WCA was an entirely amateur organisation and the tour could not have gone ahead at all without Sports Council funding, Howell's threat effectively forced the WCA to cancel the South Africa leg of the tour. The public outcry surrounding the D'Oliveira Affair had evidently made it apparent that the Council could not, as a public body, be seen to be funding a tour to South Africa when public opinion was beginning to turn against sporting contact with the apartheid regime.

Indeed, in the wake of the whole affair the Sports Council felt compelled to clarify their policy with regards to grant-aided tours, as the *Guardian* reported:

The cancelled tour shows up one loophole in the Government's policy of sports promotion which is now being investigated. The grant of £2,000 to the women's team was made to contribute to their Australian and New Zealand cost, not to help them go to South Africa, and it is understood that there was indignation when tickets were bought which took them on the detour.

The Sports Council...now has a subcommittee investigating how in future the Government can be sure that it is not helping to subsidise trips to South Africa.<sup>47</sup>

Sports Council minutes show that the issue of visits to South Africa was discussed at several meetings in the wake of the WCA incident. On 18 December 1968, the Council concluded that they 'should not be involved in considering the rights or wrongs of visits and matches against South African teams, and that governing bodies should be advised that a decision in these matters rested with them'. But it became clear that this was insufficient, as governing bodies continued to approach the Council for advice as to whether they should arrange matches against South African teams, presumably concerned that they too might have funding withdrawn were they to do so. Finally, on 16 April 1969, at the suggestion of Howell, it was agreed that 'in future the International Committee should refuse to offer grant assistance to international teams for tours which

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<sup>45</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 October 1968.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Shirley Hodges, 5 June 2014.

<sup>47</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 October 1968.

included a visit to South Africa'.<sup>48</sup> This statement solidified the beginning of the almost total isolation of South Africa from international sport, confirmed by the Gleneagles Agreement eight years later.

The WCA, though, were clearly extremely dissatisfied with the position in which they had been placed, and were not slow to express such sentiments publicly. The Chairman, Audrey Collins, was reported to have stated: 'One is always disappointed when matters beyond one's control affect amateur sport. It is the only way to promote friendliness and it seems such a pity that it is not to happen.'<sup>49</sup> Collins later suggested that several members of the Executive Committee had wanted to go ahead with the stopover in spite of Howell's threat, but had been outvoted.<sup>50</sup> Presumably this included England captain Heyhoe-Flint, who told *The Times* that she was 'very disappointed'.<sup>51</sup> She later wrote in her autobiography, published in 1978, that:

I deplored this intrusion...[if] the British Government consider it their duty to register their disapproval of South African policies I suggest they cut off every contact with them, including banking and trading links. For, as things stand, sport is merely being used as a political lever. Who are we, in any case, to tell the South Africans how to run their country?<sup>52</sup>

The view that sport and politics were separate arenas and that one should not influence the other appears to have been held by many within the WCA (as it was by the majority of MCC members).

What of the South African response? Although the President of the WCA had written personally to the President of the SARWCA to convey the cancellation, she actually discovered the news when it was broadcast by the South African media, the letter arriving late due to a postal delay.<sup>53</sup> Given the lack of archival research which has been conducted into South African women's cricket to date, it is hard to gauge the SARWCA's immediate reaction. Nonetheless, some insight can be gained from both the IWCC and the WCA Executive Committee minutes in the months following the departure. The first IWCC meeting after the incident was held in February 1969 in Wellington, during England's tour of New Zealand, and the SARWCA representative used the opportunity to express their anger and concern over the incident. She stated:

Cricket in South Africa was at present kept alive through international tours. Their Government was helpful to teams both coming and going overseas...They urged the IWCC to step up the tour programme, as they felt that without the international competition, better competition could not be obtained, and brighter cricket and greater interest would result from such tours.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> TNA, ED 249/1, Sports Council meeting minutes, 18 December 1968, 12 February 1969 and 16 April 1969.

<sup>49</sup> *The Guardian*, 7 October 1968.

<sup>50</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 26 October 1968.

<sup>51</sup> *The Times*, 7 October 1968.

<sup>52</sup> Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 26 October 1968.

<sup>54</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 19 February 1969.

The following month, the SARWCA wrote directly to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, to express their dissatisfaction at the decision, and to enquire 'whether the cancellation of the proposed stop-over on the outward journey to Australia had been brought about by any pressure on the WCA by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] or by the Sports Council'. The reply, sent by the FCO and approved by the WCA's President Amy Bull, stated that 'the WCA had taken an independent decision after reviewing the proposed itinerary in the light of the events leading to the cancellation of the MCC Tour to South Africa'.<sup>55</sup> As outlined above, the idea that the WCA had taken an independent decision was in fact false, but this was the official government line, and it seems that the WCA felt obliged to adhere to it in their communications with SARWCA. While the South Africans would have to have been extraordinarily naive not to realise what was actually going on behind the scenes, it is likely that the incident did damage the relationship between the English and South African associations, at least in the short term.

Both the WCA and the MCC were strongly in support of continued cricketing links with South Africa during and in the wake of the D'Oliveira Affair. In December 1968, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the MCC rejected a proposal to end cricketing contact with South Africa; the reaction to the cancellation of their 1968 stopover suggests that, had a corresponding meeting of the WCA been held, a similar result would have eventuated. The WCA, though, did not have that option open to them. What becomes clear from the incident described here is that they were acting under severe government pressure; as an amateur organisation reliant on Sports Council grant-aid to enable them to go ahead with the 1968/9 tour of Australasia, the government had much greater control over their actions than they had over the independent, private members' club that was the MCC. In fact, then, the MCC's actions surrounding Basil D'Oliveira actually affected female cricketers more immediately and more intensely than their male counterparts.

### **The aftermath: South Africa's isolation from international women's cricket**

The outcry surrounding D'Oliveira's initial non-selection made the MCC's perusal of continued tours from the country an increasingly problematic one, due to the perceived threat to national security. This was made plain by the response to South Africa's planned visit to England in 1970, which sparked off a virulent 'Stop the Seventy tour' campaign and saw the Labour and Liberal parties, some Conservatives, the trade unions, and even the royal family publicly come out against the tour. It was ultimately cancelled, but only when the Home Secretary James Callaghan formally requested it two weeks before it was due to go ahead. The government pressure which had so strongly impacted on the WCA's tour plans was finally being brought to bear on their male counterparts, and this combined with the influence of the newer members of the ICC (India and West Indies from 1926, and Pakistan from 1953) ensured that by 1971, a full cricketing boycott of South Africa was instituted.

South Africa's isolation from the women's game was not quite so complete. While the SACA had lost representation at the male International Cricket Conference in 1961 due to their departure from the Commonwealth, by contrast the SARWCA continued to send representatives to IWCC meetings until the early 1980s. They also, even in the wake of the

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<sup>55</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 15 March 1969.

D'Oliveira Affair, continued to be included in the tour schedule: at the 1969 IWCC meeting, it was agreed that South Africa would visit England and Holland in 1972 and that Australia would visit South Africa in 1974/5. In 1973, in the wake of the inaugural World Cup in England, the IWCC voted in favour of hosting the second such tournament in South Africa in 1977/8.<sup>56</sup> The English WCA continued to be a major proponent of embracing South Africa internationally.

Yet there were two factors which made this position increasingly difficult for the WCA to sustain. The first was continued pressure from the UK Government, who as we have seen hardened their position with regard to sporting contact with South Africa in the wake of the D'Oliveira Affair. Following the 1969 meeting of the IWCC, the WCA advised the Foreign Office that the agreed touring schedule provided for an invitation to the SARWCA to tour England in 1972. By October 1969, they had received a reply which expressed in no uncertain terms 'that no invitation should be sent at the present time'.<sup>57</sup> It was subsequently agreed at the July 1970 meeting of the Executive Committee that 'it would not be possible to invite South Africa to tour in 1972' - though, in keeping with the WCA's desire to include the South Africans in the touring schedule, this was only done 'most reluctantly' and was evidently a decision made as a result of government pressure rather than any kind of reversal of opinion within the WCA regarding contact with South Africa. The WCA continued to express their hopes that circumstances would alter at a later date, but must surely have recognised that they were unlikely to do so.<sup>58</sup>

The second factor also made it unlikely that circumstances regarding South African tours would alter in the foreseeable future: the widening membership of the IWCC from the early 1970s. The formation of the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) and the Caribbean Women's Cricket Federation in 1973, and their admission to membership of the IWCC at the 1973 and 1976 meetings respectively, was deeply significant for women's cricket.<sup>59</sup> Importantly, it had been agreed at the first ever IWCC meeting, and entrenched in the constitution, that each member country would be entitled to two voting delegates, and as such 'each member should have equal power in the Council'.<sup>60</sup> Thus the influence of the newer members could immediately be brought to bear on the South African question.

Firstly, while the South Africans were not invited to participate in the 1973 World Cup directly, the International XI which competed alongside teams from England, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago appears to have been conceived as a way of including SARWCA players in the tournament without taking the controversial step of issuing them with a direct invitation; five South African players were personally invited to participate. Yet at the last minute the WCA was forced to withdraw the invitations to the South African players, in order to ensure the participation of other countries in the competition - namely the two Caribbean nations. Heyhoe-Flint wrote of her disappointment at this decision in her autobiography:

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<sup>56</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 19 February 1969 and 1 and 2 August 1973.

<sup>57</sup> WCA Archive, Executive Committee minutes, 15 March 1969, 11 October 1969.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July 1970, 10 October 1970.

<sup>59</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 1 and 2 August 1973 and 9 August 1976.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, IWCC minutes, 19 February 1958.

Unhappily, politics won again. The West Indian teams threatened to withdraw if any South Africans played, and we were advised that it would be an unwise and potentially disruptive move, so the WCA were forced to back down.<sup>61</sup>

While government advice regarding the issue of national security did help dictate the WCA's decision to 'uninvite' the South Africa players, it was pressure from their fellow IWCC members that forced their hand.

This pressure would only increase as the 1970s progressed and the WCA's imperial influence within the IWCC continued to decline. At the 1976 IWCC meeting, held in London, discussion on the next planned World Cup tournament in 1977 again took place. This time around, though, it was recognised by all members that it would be impossible for the South Africans to stage the event, despite their wish to do so. The minutes state that members 'expressed sympathy' with the plight of the South Africans, but:

as all Associations were involved with politics – because of financial grant-aid, etc. - they were unfortunately bound by government regulations. As an international body our first concern was cricket, but regrettably powers outside our control were affecting the situation.<sup>62</sup>

It is interesting, too, that there was a 'nucleus of acceptances from the members' of the suggestion by the WCAI at the 1976 meeting that they would be willing to serve as an alternative host for this next World Cup tournament. As it was obvious that the South Africans would not be able to take part in a World Cup in India, the agreement in fact served to completely exclude South Africa from the future international schedule, for the first time in the IWCC's history. Their isolation would increase progressively thereafter: after 1982, they did not send any representative to IWCC meetings, and no further official women's tours by or to South Africa took place until 1997, well after the ending of apartheid. The cancellation of the planned stopover by the WCA in 1968, therefore, ultimately put paid to the WCA's last chance of official contact with the South Africans for several decades.

## Conclusion

The D'Oliveira Affair was a key turning-point for Anglo-South African cricketing relationships, both within the men's and women's games. The public reaction to the initial non-selection of D'Oliveira, which was front-page news in England, showed up for the first time the strength of feeling against continued sporting contact with the apartheid regime. It would become increasingly difficult in the wake of this for either the MCC or the WCA to continue to embrace South Africa. Additionally, the issue highlighted the loss of influence of both organisations within the international cricketing community; both the ICC and the IWCC would eventually reject the former, imperial-based leadership of Britain and elect to exercise their own preferences regarding tours by and to South Africa.

Nonetheless, this chapter has highlighted the importance of studying the women's cricket community in conjunction with the MCC, SACA and ICC. As Netta Rheinberg stated at the inaugural meeting of the IWCC in 1958, 'the women's associations did not necessarily fol-

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<sup>61</sup> Heyhoe-Flint, *Heyhoe!*, 119.

<sup>62</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 9 August 1976.

low the men's lead'.<sup>63</sup> As independent organisations, their interactions are highly informative about the varying ways in which South Africa was regarded by female cricketers internationally, and are worthy of study in their own right. In fact, the last official cricket tour of South Africa to take place during apartheid was the three-Test tour by New Zealand Women in early 1972, a fact which is often overlooked in histories of South African cricket. Furthermore, the pressures acting on female cricketers were often different to those acting on their male counterparts: in the WCA's case, it was the pressure from the UK Government which could be brought to bear upon them as an amateur, publicly-funded governing body of sport which forced the cancellation of their planned 1968 stopover in South Africa. The MCC simply did not face the same overt government pressure.

There is a great deal more research to be conducted into women's cricket, in South Africa and internationally; the WCA, SARWCA and IWCC as organisations are all ripe for future study. This chapter has shown that continuing to ignore the relationships between the WCA and SARWCA, and within the IWCC more generally, overlooks a key component of the story of cricket and apartheid South Africa. Indeed historians who continue to make assertion about 'the cricketing world' without featuring discussion of the women's game do so at their peril.

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<sup>63</sup> Private collection, Surrey, IWCC minutes, 20 February 1958.