

Richard Stretch – a cricket icon (1952 - 2014)

I write this editorial with sadness as the death of my friend Richard Stretch is still fresh in my mind. Richard died on 27 October 2014 from complications arising from fairly routine surgery he had a week before.

I met Richard when we were both students in an honours programme at Rhodes University. We had both worked before continuing with our studies, making us slightly older than the other students in the class. We became friends immediately and remained good friends until he died. Richard played cricket at a high level, with an average of 25.9 runs in first division cricket. He captained the South African Country Districts Cricket team for a number of years as a wicketkeeper-batsman. He retired from active cricket in 1982 and after his cricket career he served on the Border Cricket Board, with a three-year term as president, and then on the Eastern Province Cricket Board. It was not surprising that he channelled all his scientific work into the game. As a former cricket player and cricket administrator he had an advantage as a scientist studying cricket because he had insight into relevant questions. He was on the South African Cricket Medical Commission for several years and chairperson of the cricket section of the World Commission of Sport Science. Richard was also responsible for organising the World Congress of Science and Medicine in Cricket, which coincides with the Cricket World Cup. There have been four of these events since its inception and he has been involved in every one.

As his academic career developed, he published papers on various aspects of cricket and developed a reputation as one of the top international cricket researchers. In 2005 he was invited to co-author a paper on guidelines for definitions for injury surveillance studies in cricket.^[1] This paper has defined the area and serves as the doctrine for researchers involved in cricket injury studies. Any researcher who does not use these definitions and tries to get their work published in mainstream journals will probably fail. Richard published 21 papers on various aspects of cricket in ISI-credited journals. These papers have been cited 262

times and were the reason why he became an NRF-rated scientist about 10 years ago.

Even though we lived and worked in cities about 800 km apart we had contact several times a year. Meeting him was always refreshing. He would start by updating me on his family news and ask with interest about mine. It gave me great pleasure to hear his stories about his three children, who made him so proud and who have grown up into exceptional young adults, and his wife Sandra who he clearly loved dearly. Richard will be remembered as someone who had a rich family life and who made a significant contribution internationally with his research on various aspects of cricket. He was able to maintain a balance between his family life and work; a balance that many people strive for, but which only a few attain.

It gives me pleasure to know that his last paper will be published in this edition of the journal. The paper, 'Junior cricketers are not a smaller version of adult cricketers: A five-year investigation of injuries in elite junior cricketers,' was accepted for publication about four weeks before he died. I know this paper meant much to him as it pulled together the knowledge he had gained from many of his earlier studies. Richard will be missed, but his contribution to the science of cricket, both locally and internationally, will remain forever.

1. Orchard J, Newman D, Stretch R, Frost W, Mansingh A, Leibus A. Methods for injury surveillance in international cricket. *J Sci Med Sport* 2005;8(1):1-14.

Mike Lambert
Editor-in-chief

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