

## Playing cricket -- 'the glue that brings people together'

Waterloo club hosts Toronto women's team for a friendly match to attract a new crop of young players

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WATERLOO

Cricket has been played in the Kitchener and Waterloo area since at least 1905, but it still isn't a woman's game -- here anyway.

The Waterloo Sunrise Cricket Club men's under-19 team played a team from the Toronto Ladies Cricket Association in a friendly match Sunday afternoon on the cricket ground at Waterloo Park. Sunrise won 180-100.

The match wasn't meant to be a battle-of-the-sexes showdown, though. It was billed as having a "special focus on women and children" and was intended to attract local youth, both female and male, to the club and to raise awareness of cricket in the community.

"It's about a healthy community," said Yogesh Shah, club secretary. "It's about encouraging the youth and providing them with physical education."

"Cricket is the sport of many new Canadians," said Shawky Fahel, the club president. "Cricket is the glue that brings people together. This is an attempt to bring girls in."

Waterloo Sunrise Cricket Club has 80 to 100 active members, most with roots in India, Pakistan, the Caribbean or Afghanistan, all areas where cricket is played and often as ferociously supported as soccer is in Europe and Latin America.

"Your support here is great for women's cricket," Toronto captain Mona Persaud said as she accepted a commemorative trophy from Fahel. "I'm hoping next time we come we'll have a women's team to play against here."

Getting both sexes involved in the sport in Waterloo Region may be tough -- like "batting on a sticky wicket," as a cricket player might say. What Fahel called "old moralistic cultural values" may come into play.



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Mona Persaud (left), captain of the Toronto Ladies Cricket Association all-female team, received a commemorative cup in Waterloo Sunday.

In cricket, two teams of 11 players compete on a grass field, at the centre of which is a 20-metre-long area called the pitch. At each end of the pitch is a set of parallel sticks called a wicket, made up of three vertical stakes -- the stumps -- with two loose pieces of wood across the top called bails.

The bowler, a position like baseball's pitcher, hurls a heavy fist-sized ball down the pitch and tries to hit the wicket to knock the bails off, usually bouncing the ball off the ground in the process.

The batter tries to defend the wicket by hitting the ball with a flat wooden bat.

If successful, the batter runs to the other end of the pitch while a teammate runs the opposite way.

The team scores one with the exchange. And the scores build up quickly.

"In Indian tradition, the parents don't want their little girl to play cricket," said Mukesh Jeranie, a team manager and umpire. "It's possible, but it's a slim chance for us to see a women's team of 11 play here."

Jeranie said he wouldn't want his own two girls playing cricket. He has been injured a number of times in the sport.

Monali Patel of Kitchener plays with the Toronto Ladies Cricket Association team and with the national women's team.

In about two weeks, she and Persaud will be competing against international-level women's teams from Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina and Bermuda at the Canadian Women's Cricket Tournament in King City.

Patel said the sport first needs more recognition to bring locals, including women, out to play in Kitchener and Waterloo.

She said she used to play on a men's team but heard sexist comments regularly. She now plays in Toronto on an all-female team.

"You've got to feel welcome when you play for a team," she said.

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