

## **Cricket is not for oiks**

Oiks out! Cricket must not become “the new football”. I want cricket to be accessible to all, but I don’t want it to become “accessible”. I don’t want to read the philistine journalistic articles asking, “Is cricket now ‘The People’s Game’?” Cricket has nothing to do with the oiks and yobs. Let them keep their snotty noses out. I don’t want to see the intelligent, characterful and deeply spiritual game of cricket taken over by the vicious, chanting, lager-soaked mob of ignorant sentimentalists who infest everything from football matches to royal funerals.

It will ruin the personalities of the cricketers themselves for a start. Freddie Flintoff and his colleagues in the England team – not please the gormless “Team England” of the poisonous publicists – should be regarded for what they are: gentlemen not “the guys”. Imagine the absurdity of a commentator having to say, “And Michael Vaughan has set his field including a deep third guy”.

There ought to be a preservation order placed on the game of cricket. It is the last refuge of subtlety, intelligence and manners in a world made sickening by oafishness. The snarling yobs already have their mindless football, late-night town centres, most pubs and all the TV channels. They poison everywhere like leprous reptiles with their noise and their “music” and their cheap and gaudy communications gadgets. Nowhere is free from their ugly, snarling faces and their barrage of f\*\*\*\*\* this and f\*\*\*\*\* that. They F\*\*\* up everything they go near.

Here comes another lot of them now past my door, jeering and grunting like a choir of flesh-eating zombies. Except they’re not eating flesh – yet – only fistfuls of junk food that smells foul enough to put you off eating forever. See them throw their slimy packaging into the street. Last night – well, every night actually – they were shouting and fighting and f\*\*\*\*\* in the snickets between their vile nightclubs and the Smithfield meat market. And how they vomit! I suppose it’s a matter of pride with them that they can vomit and f\*\*\* at the same time.

Cricket is the last repository of brains, elegance and manners – all the qualities sneered at by “the people”. The oiks don’t understand it because they’re not capable of understanding it. To understand cricket you have to be able to observe carefully for hours, for years and decades. You have to be able to concentrate. The yobs who have lately discovered cricket as yet one more opportunity for their corporate drunken brawls haven’t the attention-span to concentrate on page three of a tabloid newspaper for more than ten seconds at a stretch.

Cricket is for elitists. It requires patience and nous, some mental input. You don’t have to be rich or “privileged” to learn to appreciate cricket. Damn it all, raised in the slums of Armley, Leeds in the 1950s, I was “disadvantaged” enough. But cricket was a road out of the filth and squalor of proletarian living by the jail and the gas works. It was one of the very few civilising influences available to a poor working class lad. It was salvation – like the Church of England and the grammar school.

The oiks in the streets have befouled public life in England. And the greater oiks in parliament and on the bench of bishops have destroyed the grammar schools and the

Church of England. At least, among the noise and vomit of a ruined nation, leave me one consolation. Keep cricket courteous.