

## 2013/21: Is sledging damaging cricket?

### What they said...

*'Sledging is a clear example of inter-player maltreatment in sport that can pose a significant threat to the well-being of the individual'*

Keith D. Parry, a lecturer in Sport Management and Emma Kavanagh, a lecturer in Sports Psychology and Coaching Sciences

*'On the pitch, it's pretty much a war, isn't it? There are always going to be a few words, and I think that's pretty much how people want to watch cricket being played'*

The captain of the English team, Alastair Cook

### The issue at a glance

On November 25, 2013, the captain of the Australian cricket team, Michael Clarke, was fined 20 percent of his match fee after having been detected sledging during the final day of the first Ashes Test.

The stump microphone picked up Clarke threatening English bowler and lower order batsman James Anderson with 'Get ready for a broken f\*\*\*ing arm.'

Two days before Australian batsman, David Warner, had said of English batsman Jonathan Trott that he was 'pretty weak'. Trott later withdrew from the Ashes competition and return to England after it was revealed that he was suffering from a stress-related disorder.

Though there is no suggestion that Warner's comment caused Trott's condition the two episodes have lead to renewed debate that about the extent of sledging in cricket, the harm it causes and whether stronger action should be taken against it.

### Background

(The following is an abbreviated version of the material contained in the Wikipedia entry titled 'Sledging (cricket)').

The full text of this entry can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sledging\\_%28cricket%29#In\\_popular\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sledging_%28cricket%29#In_popular_culture)

*Sledging* is a term used in cricket to describe the practice of players seeking to gain an advantage by insulting or verbally intimidating the opposing player. The purpose is to try to weaken the opponent's concentration, thereby causing him to make mistakes or underperform. It can be effective because the batsman stands within hearing range of the bowler and certain close fielders; and vice-versa. The insults may be direct or feature in conversations among fielders designed to be overheard.

There is debate in the cricketing world as to whether this constitutes poor sportsmanship or good-humoured banter. Sledging is often mistaken for abuse, and whilst comments aimed as sledges do sometimes cross the line into personal abuse, this is not usually the case. Sledging is usually simply an often humorous, sometimes insulting attempt at distraction. Former Australian captain Steve Waugh referred to the practice as 'mental disintegration'.

There is disagreement over the exact derivation of the term; however, it is believed to have first been used in Australia. Although the practice of trying to distract opponents by verbal abuse is common to virtually all sports, "sledging" per se relates to cricket. Other sports sometimes have their own terminology for verbal abuse: for example, basketball calls it trash talk and in ice hockey it is called chirping. An exception is Gaelic football. Down Gaelic footballer Brendan Coulter has admitted to being targeted by sledging while on the field of play.

Verbal intimidation has long been an integral part of boxing, in which during the preliminaries (such as weigh-ins) and the fights themselves the boxers frequently verbally abuse each other and threaten dire consequences. This is usually intended to hype up the fight to attract more media attention and bigger crowds. Muhammad Ali was renowned for loudly rapping in which round he would despatch his opponent, but the most famous sledging was his more serious "What's my name?" roared at his fallen opponent, who had dared still call him Cassius Clay.

### Internet information

Cricket Australia's Code of Behaviour for Players and Player Support Personnel (effective as from 29 September 2013) can be accessed at [http://www.cricket.com.au/pv\\_obj\\_cache/pv\\_obj\\_id\\_F071D96DFAF24FDEF8F1D2007B8F9EAC38720900/filename/Cricket\\_Australia\\_Code\\_of\\_Behaviour.ashx](http://www.cricket.com.au/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_F071D96DFAF24FDEF8F1D2007B8F9EAC38720900/filename/Cricket_Australia_Code_of_Behaviour.ashx)

Cricket Australia's Anti-Harassment Policy can be accessed at [http://www.cricket.com.au/pv\\_obj\\_cache/pv\\_obj\\_id\\_300B9E52D87B08E05239351900DCE58C85770600/filename/20%20Anti%20Harrassment%20Policy.ashx](http://www.cricket.com.au/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_300B9E52D87B08E05239351900DCE58C85770600/filename/20%20Anti%20Harrassment%20Policy.ashx)

Cricket Australia's Racial and Religious Vilification Code can be accessed at [http://www.cricket.com.au/pv\\_obj\\_cache/pv\\_obj\\_id\\_83F171862D8F21C5BFB23FB268A79647BB860600/filename/21%20Racial%20and%20Religious%20Vilification.ashx](http://www.cricket.com.au/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_83F171862D8F21C5BFB23FB268A79647BB860600/filename/21%20Racial%20and%20Religious%20Vilification.ashx)

On December 16, 2013, The Scotsman published a report by David Clough titled, 'Peter Siddle: Sledging is "just natural"'. The report focuses on the views of Australian fast bowler, Peter Siddle.

The full report can be accessed at [https://www.google.com.au/?gfe\\_rd=cr&ei=gyCwUv78EamN8Qe9n4CwCw#q=peter+siddle](https://www.google.com.au/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=gyCwUv78EamN8Qe9n4CwCw#q=peter+siddle)

On December 5, 2013, The Conversation published a comment by Keith D. Parry, lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney, and Emma Kavanagh, a lecturer in Sports Psychology and Coaching Sciences and a BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Scientist, titled 'Sledging is out of order in the workplace, so why not the sports field?'

The full text of the comment can be accessed at <http://theconversation.com/sledging-is-out-of-order-in-the-workplace-so-why-not-the-sports-field-20812>

On December 5, 2013, The Conversation published a comment by Lisa Martin, a lecturer in Sport Psychology at the University of the Sunshine Coast, titled 'Don't be so sensitive, sledging is part of the game'

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://theconversation.com/dont-be-so-sensitive-sledging-is-part-of-the-game-20929>

On November 30, 2013, The Sydney Morning Herald published an opinion piece by Peter FitzSimons titled 'Witty banter is OK, but threats just not cricket'. The full text of this article can be read at <http://www.smh.com.au/sport/the-fitz-files/witty-banter-is-ok-but-threats-just-not-cricket-20131129-2ygs0.html>

On November 26, 2013, The Conversation published a comment by Nigel Hancock is a part-time PhD research student with DMU's International Centre for Sports History and Culture.

The comment, which is critical of sledging, is titled 'It's time for cricket to clean up its sledging excesses'.

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://theconversation.com/its-time-for-cricket-to-clean-up-its-sledging-excesses-20736>

On November 30, 2013, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by former Australian captain Ian Chapell titled 'Verbal gamesmanship is part of the game; it's the abuse and chatter that leads to confrontation'

The full text of this comment can be accessed at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/sport/cricket/verbal-gamesmanship-is-part-of-the-game-its-the-abuse-and-chatter-that-leads-to-confrontation/story-fni2fnmo-1226772050957>

On November 30, 2013, The Mail published a comment by English bowler James Anderson titled 'I will keep on sledging! Gabba was the most hostile atmosphere I've seen... backchat is one of my key weapons to beat Aussies'

The full text of the comment can be accessed at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/cricket/article-2516205/JAMES-ANDERSON-I-sledging--backchat-key-weapons.html?ico=sport^headlines>

On November 26, 2013, The Roar published an opinion piece by Nick Richardson titled, 'English get a taste of their own medicine' in which Richardson argues that the recent sledging by Australian cricketers is legitimate because the English have sledged in previous Ashes series.

The full text of this article can be found at <http://www.theroar.com.au/2013/11/26/english-get-a-taste-of-their-own-medicine/>

On November 26, 2013, The Roar published a comment by Ryan O'Connell titled 'The return of the 'Ugly Aussies'? Utter rubbish'. The piece argues that the practice of sledging is widespread and its significance is often exaggerated.

The full text of this comment can be accessed at [http://www.theroar.com.au/2013/11/26/the-return-of-the-ugly-aussies-utter-rubbish/?utm\\_campaign=most\\_discussed](http://www.theroar.com.au/2013/11/26/the-return-of-the-ugly-aussies-utter-rubbish/?utm_campaign=most_discussed)

On November 26, 2013, The Guardian published a comment advising players how to deal with sledging. The piece is titled 'Sledging: how to deal with cricket's ugly little secret'

The full text of the comment can be accessed at <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/shortcuts/2013/nov/26/sledging-crickets-ugly-secret-ashes-michael-clarke-jimmy-anderson>

On June 26, 2012, Tony Greig delivered the 2012 MCC Spirit of Cricket Cowdrey Lecture.

The full text of this speech, which seeks to outline some of the traditional values of cricket, can be accessed at <http://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/the-2012-mcc-spirit-of-cricket-cowdrey-lecture-20121229-2c0f4.html>

### **Arguments suggesting sledging is a major issue in cricket**

1. Sledging is contrary to the International Cricket Council and Cricket Australia regulations

Opponents of sledging argue that many of the comments typically described as sledging are in direct violation of the regulations laid down by both Cricket Australia and the International Cricket Council.

Cricket Australia's Code of Behaviour for Players and Player Support Personnel has a regulation that prohibits 'Using language or a gesture that is obscene, offensive or insulting during a Match'. This is elaborated as 'Using language or gesture(s) that is seriously obscene, seriously offensive or of a seriously insulting nature to another Player or Player Support Personnel or any other third person during a Match.'

The Code additionally prohibits any 'Threat of assault on another Player, Player Support Personnel or any other person

(including a spectator) during a Match' and the 'Use [of] language or gestures that offend, insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, disparage or vilify another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, gender, colour, descent, sexuality or national or ethnic origin'.

The International Cricket Council's Code has virtually identical provisions against threatening and intimidating language and behaviour.

Michael Clarke's comments to James Anderson were judged to be a breach of the terms of the International Cricket Council's Code which prohibit using language or gestures that 'offend, insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, disparage or vilify another person'. Clarke was fined 20 percent of his match fee.

Critics are concerned that sledging involving similar threats or offensive language occurs regularly. They argue that the only reason Clarke was fined was that the on-field stumps microphone picked up his threat to Clarke and so it immediately became public knowledge.

It has been suggested that much of the sledging which occurs is in violation of cricket's regulations; however, it passes unpunished because it is not brought to the attention of the public. There is concern that umpires, for whatever reason, are reluctant to enforce the Code and so the practice of sledging continues.

## 2. Sledging seeks to take unfair advantage of opponents

The accepted practice in most ball sports is that a competitor should focus on scoring points or preventing his opponent from doing so. In games such as cricket, however, the rules require that this be achieved without what is referred to as 'playing the man'. This means it is improper to attack your opponent in any form as a way of scoring or preventing him from doing so.

On December 5, 2013, The Conversation published an opinion piece by Keith D. Parry, Lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney, and Emma Kavanagh, a lecturer in Sports Psychology and Coaching Sciences and a BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Scientist, in which they stated, 'Sledging is a clear example of inter-player maltreatment in sport that can pose a significant threat to the well-being of the individual. This form of maltreatment can be direct or indirect and relates to verbal interaction between players on the field of play or in reference to players through media or other channels.'

Parry and Kavanagh define maltreatment as 'a range of behaviours that have the potential to result in physical injuries and/or psychological harm to a person. As an umbrella term, it encapsulates behaviours perhaps otherwise known as abuse, harassment and bullying.'

This type of behaviour has been described as unfair because it does not rely on superior sporting prowess in order to gain an advantage over an opponent; rather it involves distracting or psychologically distressing the opposition.

Critics claim the consequences of this can be seen in the withdrawal of Jonathan Trott from the current English Ashes team. Parry and Kavanagh have noted 'Trott was the target of off-field sledging by Australia's David Warner, who described his performance - via the media - as "pretty weak". This is an example of direct emotional maltreatment, targeted at a particular player, which has the potential to be harmful to the well-being of the individual.'

It has since been reported that Jonathan Trott has been suffering from a stress-related disorder and thus may have been particularly susceptible to comments such as Warner's.

Critics claim that any treatment that seeks to develop or exacerbate emotional distress in one's opponent is an attempt to take unfair advantage of that opponent.

## 3. Sledging provides a bad example to young spectators

It has been noted that sledging is particularly inappropriate in a game like cricket because many young people see famous cricketers as role models.

On December 5, 2013, The Conversation published an opinion piece by Keith D. Parry, Lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney, and Emma Kavanagh, a lecturer in Sports Psychology and Coaching Sciences and a BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Scientist, in which they stated, 'Sportsmen and women are commonly selected as role models or heroes. Countless young children look up to and aim to replicate the on and off-field behaviours of these athletes. Clubs and merchandising companies are happy to exploit this desire to copy through the use of athlete endorsers to sell not only sports-related goods but items from all realms of popular culture.'

Critics of sledging argue that cricketers have enormous power to shape the behaviour of their young admirers. They claim that this makes it particularly important that cricketers behave in socially responsible ways. Crude verbal abuse and intimidation are not, critics suggest, styles of behaviour that young people should be encouraged to emulate.

Keith Parry and Emma Kavanagh have noted, 'When this hostility/violence is committed by someone such as [Michael] Clarke - who is in a role described by then-prime minister John Howard as the most important job in Australia - there are worrying consequences...'

While it may be beneficial for fans to copy the onfield sporting exploits of these role models, it is concerning if the forms of maltreatment witnessed recently are also being copied.'

Concern has been expressed that when verbal abuse and intimidation are practised at the highest levels of the sport, it will encourage young players everywhere to behave similarly.

In an opinion piece published in The Age on December 9, 2013, Bob Maumill stated, 'By their actions and their abuse, some players, from both sides, are saying it's OK to taunt opponents, to pour scorn on members of the opposing team, to question their courage, threaten them with physical harm, and in doing so gain an advantage.'

Inevitably, their actions will be watched and mimicked by aspiring young cricketers across the country.'

Particular concern has been expressed about sledging as an apparent endorsement of bullying and there are those

who are anxious about the effect this could have on children.

Susie O'Brien in an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on December 10, 2013, suggested, 'We tell our kids to play the ball, not the man, but they see their cricketing heroes being lauded for acting like schoolyard bullies. These days, there aren't many schoolyards where this kind of thing would be tolerated. Ultimately, our kids are the ones who won't know where to draw the line, and they're the ones we need to look out for.'

#### 4. Practices like sledging are not accepted off the field

Opponents of sledging have argued that behaviour that is illegal off a cricket field should not be allowed on the field. Verbal abuse and racial and religious vilification are illegal in all states of Australia. If many of the comments that are being made routinely on the cricket field were made off field those delivering the abuse could be charged with an offence.

On December 5, 2013, The Conversation published an opinion piece by Keith D. Parry, Lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney, and Emma Kavanagh, a lecturer in Sports Psychology and Coaching Sciences and a BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Scientist, in which they stated, 'In the workplace, behaviour that threatens the safety of another employee - or that questions the sexual morality of an employee's wife or mother - would be classed as maltreatment. This behaviour would not be condoned and would be penalised.' The authors questioned why, if such behaviour is prohibited in the workplace, it is apparently sanctioned on the cricket field.

Susie O'Brien, in an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on December 10, 2013, wrote, 'Recently, workplace discrimination expert Integrated Human Resource Solutions included sledging in a list of "silly stuff that gets you sacked".'

It cited the example of a Fair Work Commission ruling that found that a bank manager was legitimately fired because of his treatment of fellow employees. This charming individual used to do things like write "get stuffed" on annual leave request forms, ask workers to stand behind imaginary lines, called co-workers "gay" and talked a lot about the physical appearance of women.'

O'Brien concluded that, just as in the workplace, 'there should... be boundaries on the way players are expected to behave.'

It has also been noted that the average person on the street would not accept being spoken to in the way many cricketers address their opponents.

In an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on November 25, 2013, Bruce Francis, who played three Tests for Australia in the early 1970s, stated, 'If Michael Clarke, David Warner et al behaved in a pub the way they conducted themselves on the cricket field they would get a well-deserved decent smack in the mouth.'

#### 5. Sledging is contrary to the traditional values endorsed by cricket

It has been argued that cricket has a long-standing tradition of sportsmanship and fair play and that the practice of sledging directly opposes this.

On June 26, 2013, Tony Greig delivered the 2012 MCC Spirit of Cricket Cowdrey Lecture. Greig stated, 'When you talk about the spirit of cricket you are talking about not just the game, but a way to live your life; you are talking about embracing the traditions of the game and sharing your experiences with friends and cricket lovers alike; you are talking about caring for people less fortunate than us...'

The spirit of cricket is not just about adhering to the laws of the game. It's about something far more enduring, adhering to a set of values that can elevate you above the hum drum, above the cynicism that can drag you down if you let it.'

Greig went on and explained further, 'Almost since its inception cricket has been synonymous with fair play. "It's not cricket" - another way of saying "it's not right" - was an expression used throughout the English speaking world - not just in cricket playing countries. It was a gentleman's game. More than any other sport, the people who played, and the people, who followed cricket, knew they were special.'

Tony Greig was particularly concerned that sledging was one of those developments that was undermining the decency and sense of fair play which he believed were fundamental to the sport of cricket.

Greig claimed, 'As a result of sledging, I don't think following generations inherited a game that was as special in the community's eyes [as the one] that my generation inherited. Sadly, these days, captains don't earn or receive the same adulation that Richie Beau and Sir Frank Worrell rightly received in their day. Players also no longer have the same relationships with each other that say Keith Miller and Denis Compton had.'

On December 6, 2013, Winnipeg Free Press published a commentary by their commentator in Australia, Michael Madigan. Madigan wrote of the current sledging controversy in relation to cricket's traditions. He stated, 'The British gentry gave birth to [cricket] and it has kept its air of courteous restraint for centuries, moving at such a sedate pace a Test cricket match can be played over five days with regular breaks for cool drinks...'

It's that lofty distance from physical violence and the more brutal impulses of the competitive spirit that make sledging strike an oddly discrepant note in cricket.'

### **Arguments suggesting sledging is not a major issue in cricket**

1. The International Cricket Council and Cricket Australia have regulations in place to prohibit seriously inappropriate language and behaviour

Those who argue sledging is not a serious issue in cricket note that there are regulations in place to prevent it becoming excessive. They note in particular that offensive comments based on race or religion are specifically prohibited.

Cricket Australia's Code of Behaviour for Players and Player Support Personnel has a regulation that prohibits 'Using language or a gesture that is obscene, offensive or insulting during a Match'. This is elaborated as 'Using language or gesture(s) that is seriously obscene, seriously offensive or of a seriously insulting nature to another Player or Player Support Personnel or any other third person during a Match'.

Also prohibited is 'Pointing or gesturing towards the pavilion by a bowler or other member of the fielding side upon the dismissal of a batsman during a Match' and 'Deliberate and malicious distraction or obstruction of a Player or Player Support Personnel on the field of play during a Match'.

The Code additionally prohibits any 'Threat of assault on another Player, Player Support Personnel or any other person (including a spectator) during a Match' and the 'Use [of] language or gestures that offend, insult, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, disparage or vilify another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, gender, colour, descent, sexuality or national or ethnic origin'.

The International Cricket Council has identical provisions in its Code.

The Code does not attempt to prohibit offensive language entirely. Rather it acknowledges that some instances of challenging language use are essentially trivial and that this decision needs to be taken by the umpire.

The Code states 'It is acknowledged that there will be verbal exchanges between Players in the course of play. Rather than seeking to eliminate these exchanges entirely, Umpires will be required to report such conduct that falls below an acceptable standard. This offence is not intended to penalise trivial behaviour.'

When assessing the seriousness of the breach, the Umpire shall be required to take into account the context of the particular situation and whether the words or gesture are likely to: (a) be regarded as seriously obscene; or (b) give serious offence; or (c) seriously insult another person.'

In addition, Cricket Australia has an Anti-Harassment Policy, focusing on 'comment, conduct, or gesture directed toward an individual or group of individuals which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive' and a Racial and Religious Vilification Code.

## 2. Sledging is an established tactic in cricket that enhances the game

It has been claimed that verbal exchanges between players are a long-standing practice in international cricket that add to players' competitive spirit and so enhance the game.

On November 26, 2013, The Guardian published the following comment by Stephen Moss. 'Every sport produces verbal aggro, but sledging - the systematic abuse of a batsman to try to disturb his concentration and weaken his will - is unique to cricket because of the nature of the game: two batsmen surrounded by 11 fielders...An individual innings can last for hours, giving enormous scope for sustained abuse.'

The coach of the current Australian cricket team, James Lehmann, has stated, 'I like them [the players in the Australian team] playing hard cricket. I like our boys being aggressive without crossing the line. It will be always hard-fought between Australia and England. It certainly was in England and has been over the years...'

Australian fast bowler, Mitchell Johnson, similarly stated, 'I love getting in a bit of a scrap, and so do a few of their boys. If you can keep your emotions in check and just keep playing your game and it comes off, then it's good.'

The celebrated Australian spin bowler Shane Warne has remarked, 'Gamesmanship, banter, trash talk, sledging... whatever you call it, has been part of cricket for a long time. We will play hard to win and anybody who plays us will be tested both physically and mentally. If they aren't up to it, we'll win easily.'

The current captain of the English team, Alastair Cook, has stated, 'On the pitch, it's pretty much a war, isn't it? There are always going to be a few words, and I think that's pretty much how people want to watch cricket being played.'

Referring to the tactical dimension of comments which he made, Australian batsman, David Warner, has stated, 'I made those comments for a reason...Look, yesterday, the bounce and pace got to them [the English batsmen] again.'

A similar judgement was made by English fast bowler, James Anderson, who has stated, 'What happened on the field is how the game is, and not one of our players or management uttered one word of complaint. I regard sledging, chirping, whatever you want to call it, as one of the weapons at my disposal. I think my bowling is helped by the way I go about things.'

I try to get myself into a battle. It heightens my concentration. Certainly in the past few years I think I've developed it as a skill and it has helped me take the wickets that I have.'

## 3. Critical responses to sledging tend to exaggerate its significance

It has been claimed that critical responses to sledging are extreme and exaggerate the significance of the practice.

Sports commentator, Anthony Sharwood, from The Daily Telegraph, has stated, 'The main point here is that the sledges of Michael Clarke and his team-mates were nothing. So the Aussie captain wished a bit of bodily harm upon an English bowler. Boo-bloody-hoo...'

It has been noted that sledging is something that most players expect and accept and that many practise.

English fast bowler James Anderson, who was sledged by Australia's captain, Michael Clarke, has since commented, 'I have absolutely no problem about any of what the Australians were doing on the field. I probably dish it out more than most in the field, so I generally get it back more than most. I expect it and accept it.'

It has also been noted that there is generally no personal animosity between players, despite sledging.

In this regard James Anderson has claimed, 'The bottom line from our point of view is that what happens on the field stays on the field. And at the end of the game, I shook every single Australian player's hand, as we all did...'

Contrary to what some have said, from our point of view there's no personal animosity towards any of the Australian players. We have the utmost respect for them.'

#### 4. Sledging is not meant to be heard by spectators who receive only an incomplete impression of what has occurred on-field

In terms of the negative impact sledging may have on some spectators, especially young followers of the sport, it has been noted that sledging is not meant to be heard by anyone off the field. The primary purpose of sledging is to intensify competition and to put one's opponent temporarily off their game.

The recent incident involving Michael Clarke and the remark he made to English bowler James Anderson when Anderson came out to bat was not meant to be heard by anyone other than Anderson. It only came to public knowledge because it was picked up by the on-stumps microphone and transmitted by Channel 9 when broadcasting the game. Starts at Sixty published the following comment and anecdote by Kate Chaundy, 'In highly emotional situations it seems that all players seem to sledge and this has been going on for the past 136 years. It is just now that microphones are starting to pick up the banter.'

Chaundy went on to suggest that the public should be very careful when drawing conclusions about the nature and extent of sledging that occurs. Inevitably the impression the public receives is partial and incomplete. Spectators must also remember, before any take offence, that the remarks they are responding to were not meant for their hearing. A similar observation was made by Australian bowler, Peter Siddle, who commented 'It's just natural. It wasn't any different to normal. If it hadn't of been on the mic a lot of people would not have said so much about it.

The most disappointing thing is that it actually came up (on the broadcast). It's not meant to at that time and it is very stiff for Michael [Clarke].'

Siddle went on to suggest that James Anderson typically delivers a lot of sledging himself which the public is not aware of because it has not been picked up by on-field microphones.

Siddle concluded, 'Anderson brought it on himself. So fair's fair. There was a lot of other stuff going on and James Anderson was in the thick of it and a culprit for it all happening.'

Siddle's judgement was another warning that the public should not over-react to on-field comments that are inevitably out of context and which are not intended for spectators to hear.

#### 5. Cricketers can learn to deal with sledging

Supporters of sledging claim it is just one of a range of strategies that one team uses to combat another and that the only reasonable response is for all competitors to learn to deal with it.

Lisa Martin, a lecturer in Sport Psychology at the University of the Sunshine Coast, has stated, 'By taking the time to work on developing effective concentration and cognitive strategies, athletes can learn to ignore or reframe any comments that are thrown at them by their opposition to inspire them to engage in higher levels of performance.'

Martin has further noted, 'Performance routines and relaxation techniques are two strategies players commonly use to cope with sledging.'

A study on the effects of sledging in cricket undertaken through extensive player interviews was published in The Journal of Clinical Sports Psychology. It included the observation, 'Numerous associated coping strategies were mentioned, the most frequently used being variations of self-talk. Other noteworthy coping strategies included routines, external support, showing frustration, avoidance coping, and relaxation techniques.'

Some cricketers are even able to view being sledged as a form of compliment, believing that the more the opposition sledges them, the better they are likely to be playing.

Former England captain, Graham Gooch, has stated, 'In my career, players I've seen who've dealt with it best either smile at the opposition or take it as a compliment.

Generally, if you get sledged, you're doing okay.'

#### Further implications

It seems unlikely that stronger action will be taken against sledging in first class cricket. The primary reason for this conclusion is that the practice is rarely brought to the immediate attention of the public. Sledging usually occurs between players on the field outside the hearing of the spectators.

For example, it seems likely that the threat Michael Clarke directed toward James Anderson was only put before the International Cricket Council (ICC) because it had been detected by the on-stump microphone and was then broadcast by the Channel Nine coverage team. It is accepted practice not to broadcast what the stump microphones detect and Channel Nine has since apologised for having done so.

Most players make their knowledge of sledging incidents public only after they have retired. Further, most do so in a way that suggests sledging enlivens the game. Thus it seems unlikely that action will be taken against sledging in the immediate future.

Player reports of verbal exchanges occurring during the game suggest that most umpires do not see it as a significant occurrence worthy of referring to the ICC. Until sufficient significant incidents occur that have been made known to the public any change in umpire leniency seems unlikely to develop.

Part of the difficulty faced by umpires is that it can be very difficult to discriminate between acceptable banter and intimidation and abuse. This problem is exacerbated for the umpire by the fact that he has so many other elements of the game to monitor.

Perhaps part of the solution might be to have all cricketers wear microphones and have their comments recorded. In that way all players would have to give full consideration to any comment they made as they would know that their words could be vetted by someone other than the umpire.

**Newspaper items used in the compilation of this issue outline**

The Australian: December 4, 2013, page 12, comment by Janet Albrechtsen, 'Cricket's verbal biff sign of resilient time'.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/crickets-verbal-biff-sign-of-resilient-time/story-e6frg6zo-1226774524442>

The Age, November 30, 2013, page 21, comment by Tony Wright, 'Ain't no Sunshine in these boys'.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/aint-no-sunshine-in-these-boys-20131129-2yh58.html>