Cricket Club Contending for Championship

There may not be many students at WSU who know the rules of the sport of cricket, and even fewer who can play it at a high level, but there is a group of talented athletes that form one of the best cricket team’s in the region. The WSU club cricket team has won five of their last six games and is in a tight race to get promoted to the highest division of cricket in their league.

Cricket is similar to baseball in that you have a batter who is trying to hit a ball that is thrown by someone on the opposing team (in cricket called a bowler). There are also fielders trying to get the batter out, and batters are awarded additional runs for hitting the ball a long distance, like a home run.

The sport is very popular among countries colonized by the British, and the members of WSU’s club are primarily from or have direct ties to Southeast Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. While cricket isn’t a sport that many American’s grow up with, it’s not like that all over the globe.

“In India, cricket is really popular,” Club President Ravi Tadapaneni said. “It’s like American football here, kid’s play in the streets and everywhere they can find the space.

The kind of fanaticism that many American’s have about football is the best way to explain why a university an ocean away from any cricket playing nation has had a cricket team since 1978. The club has provided many students with the opportunity to play their favorite game, and given them a taste of home.

Coming to Pullman can be quite the culture shock for students coming from foreign countries, and the cricket club can help new comers adapt to their new life in more ways than one. Dr. Devendra Shah, an associate professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine, has been involved with the club as both a player and coach for 10 years. He has seen the impact that the club has had on student’s over the years.

Shah says that joining cricket club gives members an opportunity to meet people from similar cultures who have been at WSU for a few years. This experience can help new students adapt to WSU and not feel isolated in an unfamiliar place.

“Because we share the same culture there are a lot of other things happening, such as social gatherings,” Shah said. “You sort of develop your social group, which helps.”

Other club members echo the same sentiment and talk about how the team was very welcoming to them when they were adjusting to life in the states. While the club excels in the social aspect, it also takes its cricket very seriously.

Even with a limited talent pool, the cricket club has found a significant amount of skill and experience among the students at WSU. Many club members played cricket at the intercollegiate level in their home countries. College cricket in India is comparable to college football in the U.S.

With a talented roster, the Cougs have lived up to expectations this season and are competing for a division championship. The team started the year off with its annual exhibition game against UW dubbed the Apple Cricket Cup. WSU laid claim to the trophy with a win, as it has since the tradition was started two years ago.
The club is a part of the Northwest Cricket league, and plays in Division B, but that could change after this season. WSU is currently second in the standings, and the two top teams from each division of the NWCL get promoted annually.

The remaining game on the club’s schedule will be critical in determining their fate for next season. They were originally scheduled to play the Southside Hunters in Pullman Sept. 18, but the opposition was unable to make the trip. Their lone remaining game will be against the third place Redmond Stallions Oct. 1 in Tukwila, Washington.

Regardless of how the final game goes, one thing we do know is that cricket at WSU will continue to thrive.

“Cricket runs in the blood for every player, every student that comes in from cricket playing nations,” Shah said. “So once they get together there’s that drive to keep things running.”

For more information about the club you can visit the team’s Facebook page www.facebook.com/WSUCC/.

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