

A Manifesto for World Cricket

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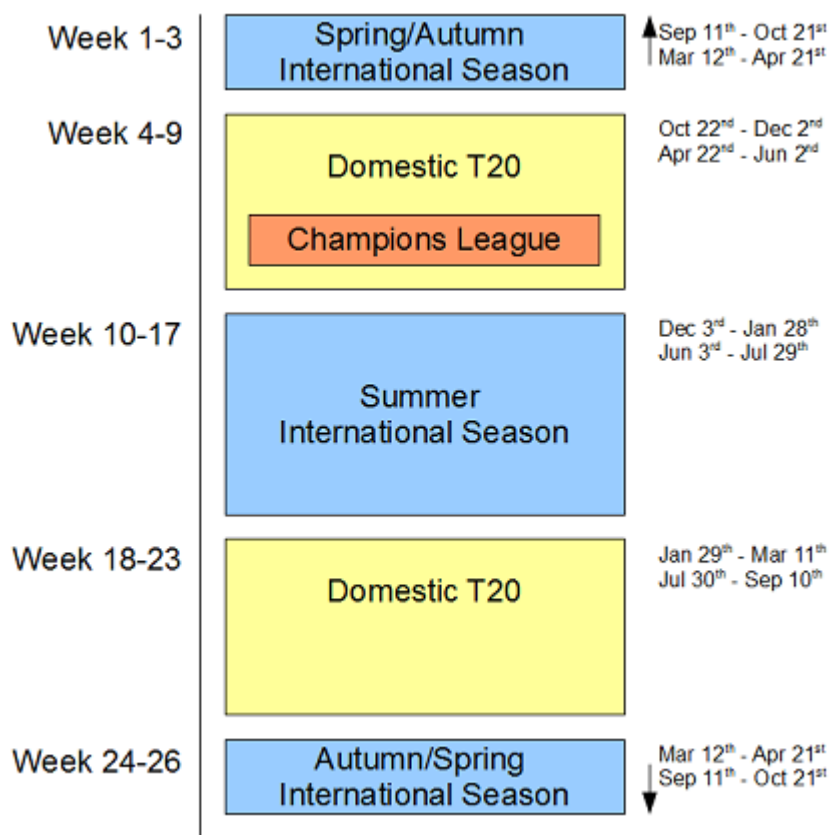
Executive Summary

This proposal looks at the future of world cricket a crucial juncture in its expansion and development. There is, amongst fans and commentators, diverse opinions on the future of the game, and widespread concern about particular aspects of the future of cricket in its various forms. Between October 2009 and March 2010, a series of articles were written on my blog (Idle Summers) proposing an alternate test championship and FTP structure. These have been collated and set forth in this document.

As a starting point for discussion, eight ideals are identified, as worth pursuing:

- a) Cricket should be amenable to international expansion
- b) All players should have the opportunity to play at the highest level
- c) Cricket should expand its professional playing base
- d) Games and series should be meaningful
- e) Marquee (profitable) tours must be preserved
- f) For each format, there should be some sort of world championship
- g) Regional rivalries should be built upon
- h) Domestic and international cricket need clearly defined windows

From those competing starting principles, three key ideas are put forward. Firstly, that the calendar should be divided between international and T20 domestic cricket, entailing a slight compression of first class seasons and a rationalisation of international tours.



Secondly, that world cricket should be split into regions with coincident summers. More precisely, that the existing regions be amalgamated into three - Asia, Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere - such that each has the depth to play competitive tournaments amongst its test and associate members.

And finally, that significant part of the international test calendar be amalgamated into regional and world test championships, such that, every four years there would be an official world test champion, as well as regional and one-day champions.



A formal proposal for a world test championship is then proposed, comprising the following elements:

Year 4 - a four test final, played home and away (2 games each) in September/October, between the top two nations.

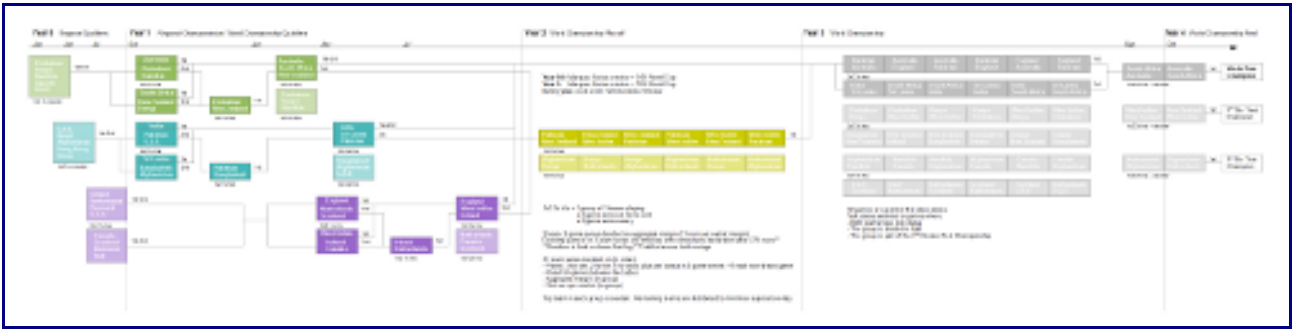
Year 3 - a 6 team world test championship, comprising two groups of 3, playing three test series, home and away over a one year period. The winner of each group progressing to the final.

Year 2 - a 3 team playoff, playing three test series, home and away over a one year period. Comprised of the third placed Asian and southern teams, and the second placed northern team, with the winner progressing to the world test championship, the others to a second-tier plate championship.

Year 1 - three regional test championships comprising 6 teams: the test teams from each region and the qualified associates. The championships comprising three stages to minimize uncompetitive games while providing opportunities for all teams to progress their cricket. The winners (and second placed Asian/southern teams) qualifying for the world test championship, the others for playoffs or plate championships.

Year 0 - a series of regional associate play-offs to determine qualification for the regional test championships.

A summary of the test championship proposal, with teams filled as per their ranking when it was created, can be found at the linked image below:



Three key beliefs underpin what I have tried to achieve in this document: that cricket can and should aim to be more widely played; that the existing structure of international cricket is not serving the game well, but rather causing players and fans alike to withdraw from the relentless but meaningless competition; and and that T20 domestic cricket will transform the finances of players and the emphasis of the game in a mostly beneficial manner.

With that in mind, the proposed test championship is put forward as a unique solution to the problem of meaningful test cricket that tries to balance the competing financial, playing and progressive needs of cricket's stakeholders.

Part 1: What to achieve

By dint of coincidence, in late October 2009, the (arguably) best two teams in both baseball and cricket faced off in seven game series . But in a year with a bit over 350 internationals, IPL and champions league games, the cricket series has been widely derided as meaningless over-kill that will injure and burn-out players, media and fans alike.

Yet, in spite of their being some 2454 games preceding the World Series no baseball writer has written that there is "too much baseball". And they'd be right, because there isn't, and nor is there too much cricket. In fact, in comparison to most sports there is nowhere near enough cricket, with few cities hosting their local (national) team on more than a dozen days a year.

What there is, is too many trophies. While even a trophy-laden football season is limited to half a dozen competitions, the Australian team will plays for twenty or more a year, mostly in short, meaningless, bilateral contests forced upon them by the Future Tour Program. Judging by the sounds from the ICC, players bodies, the media, fans, and just about everybody else, the consensus is that something must change. The question is how, and more specifically, what do we want the future structure of domestic and international cricket to achieve?

- a) It should be amenable to international expansion
- b) All players should have the opportunity to play at the highest level
- c) It should expand the professional playing base
- d) Games and series should be meaningful
- e) Marquee (profitable) tours must be preserved
- f) For each format, there should be some sort of world championship
- g) Regional rivalries should be built upon
- h) Domestic and international cricket need clearly defined windows

Each of these points is worth exploring in more detail.

1a. International Expansion

There are two aspects to the expansion of cricket. The first is empire-building. If you love a sport, you want to see it widely played and keenly contested. Few sports administrators don't have dreams of global domination, and the ICC has been active in pursuing a global expansion policy. So far so good.

Critics of this policy will (and have) claimed that it is a waste of time. That the money can be better spent improving the playing base in the existing cricket sphere. To me, this may or may not be true, but is an irrelevance to issues over structure and itineraries. This is not because I have unrealistic hopes of cricket fields popping up across the landscape, but because recent history suggests cricket has been missing opportunities to expand, purely because of the elitism inherent in the test/associate/affiliate distinction (important as that might be for political reasons).

Because, for so long, cricket has been defined by its powerhouses, we are blind to the vagaries of international competitiveness inherent in other sports. The idea behind test match status is that a team reaches that level and remains there. It hasn't worked like that. It did, for a while, in Zimbabwe, who were on the upswing when they achieved test status in 1992, and peaked in the late 1990s, but Bangladesh were at the end of their run in 1999, and have spent a painful decade rebuilding. Kenya, by contrast, were peaking when their test status was mooted in 2001, yet with the immanent retirement of Tikolo and others it is hard to say when they might return.

Cricket must eventually reject rigid divisions as fundamentally flawed. The abilities of most cricketing nations will fluctuate with their playing base, and the minor ones cannot be expected to maintain test standards year in year out, as do their larger counterparts. Yet, to deny them top level cricket because of that is to ignore the pressing case they will make when they are strong.

The second aspect of expansion is the logistics of playing multiple teams over some narrow (probably 4-5 year) cycle. The problem is best expressed mathematically. It is reasonable to assume that most teams can play a maximum of 6 tests in a home summer. Even limiting series length to the widely reviled two games, that means three teams per year. With nine playing test teams (as now), you need to play a minimum of 16 home games over the cycle, plus 16 away, which is relatively straight-forward, and leaves some room for longer series. But add Zimbabwe, Ireland, Scotland, Kenya, Netherlands, Canada and Afghanistan to the mix - and we should be planning for this outcome, in light of their progress - and the number sky-rockets to 30 games: a five year cycle even with a two game maximum. Keeping in mind that those teams are themselves, not significantly better than the USA, Denmark, Bermuda, Namibia, Oman, Nepal, Uganda and the UAE and you can see the problem.

A 24 team or more test system is infeasible without an alternative structure to the current FTP. And even if we were to suppose that cricket is twenty years from achieving that goal, it has been six years since this [issue started to gain some traction](#). Change needs to begin soon, or cricket risks disenfranchising many more teams in the future. That has costs, on their fans, and more importantly, on the future of the sport in those places. There is, therefore, a practical morality for expansion; a point I will expand on shortly.

Pleasingly, none of this is new. It is widely accepted that cricket can and will expand, the dispute lies in how and when. It is equally widely acknowledged that the current FTP is working poorly. The tendency to persist with what is there is what is hurting cricket. That needs to change.

1b. Playing at the Highest Level

Perhaps more than any other sport cricket is narrow and elitist in relation to its playing talent. But it is worth outlining why because that points to how it might change.

Historically, cricket grew up around the tour, because in a sport confined to summer, international cricket all year round is logistically simpler than an extension of the domestic season. But domestic cricket remained relatively popular until Kerry Packer realised that television offered an opportunity to gain an audience day in day out, all summer, with a small but well paid group of players, touring from place to place. The local team became the national team and the benefits of cricket's wealth were therefore transferred to the 100 odd players who represent the "competitive" nations.

The problem with this elite system is best exemplified by two Zimbabweans. The first is David Houghton, probably their best ever player after Andy Flower, capable of averaging 40 in test cricket despite beginning his career at 35, and playing in a struggling team. And yet he could have been so much more, had he been able to play at the highest level a decade earlier. That is a tragedy for him certainly, but is at least as big a tragedy for cricket and its fans, denied the opportunity to see a potential great in his prime. Much is written about the tragic denial of Pollock, Rice, Proctor and co. but I think the loss is worse for Houghton or Tikolo, because it is self inflicted and unnecessary, and because it hurts the game most in the places where it is least strong.

The other Zimbabwean suffered less, but cost cricket more, and that is Graeme Hick. A player so talented he could play forgo his homeland to play test cricket and yet he too had a career that was unfulfilled. His talent, which should have bolstered a struggling team, served to make an unequal contest worse, by aiding England, before ultimately weakening the game's strength, when he was cast aside.

If Hick was a one-off then perhaps it would not matter, but in the past few years Amjad Khan, Ed Joyce and Eoin Morgan have all followed the same path, heightening inequalities and hurting the chances of their homelands becoming competitive at test level. Those who claim that Ireland and others should not ascend to test cricket until their cricket is good enough should note the implications of that policy: if any player who is capable of test cricket leaves, then by definition, only players below test standard will remain. Not attaining test strength is a certainty.

Cricket is unique in its elitism, much as it is unique in its emphasis on international contests. Other sports have elite competitions but are open and largely fair in their qualification processes. Great players might never play in a world cup, but only a great cricketer must leave home to even have a chance at the highest level.

The most compelling arguments in favour of restricting test cricket are increasingly irrelevant. Domestic T20 and the increasing number of associate players in first class cricket are expanding the professional playing base beyond a handful of national teams, reducing the players reliance on international tours. The future will probably look increasingly like other sports (particularly football) where the best players in domestic competitions for much of the year, before being let out for national duty, and less like the endless grind of perennial tours that we have now.

Cricket has done expansion badly in the past, admitting teams with decent results at associate

level but ageing players, that resulted in a troublesome transition. Trying to second guess the future strength of a side in ten or twenty years is difficult, and fraught with potential for lost opportunities. If the next Bradman emerged in an associate today he might never play test cricket. That is bad, for the game, for the fans and for the players. Letting results, not politics decide who plays at the highest level is both the best and the right thing to do.

1c. Expanding the Professional Playing Base

The previous two posts dealt exclusively with the need to allow an expansion of access to the international game. The financial realities of cricket, and indeed most sport, don't support an expanded international competition. The IPL, but more importantly, the ICL point to increasing pressures to expand the club based system.

With the current system of international cricket fixture dominating the coverage and therefore sponsorship and attendances, the total number of players making a living off their games (as opposed to being subsidised by their national team) is no more than a hundred. The system scoops the cream off the top of competitive cricket, and distributes the high earnings to an even smaller set of players: the top dozen players in Australia, England, India and South Africa.

This has ramifications for total potential earnings as well. TV coverage is limited to at most a dozen days worth of cricket footage (world-wide) per week, as are attendances, limiting international cricket to each stadium to less than a dozen days per year. By contrast, each major US domestic sport, operating in markets broadly similar in total size, but with closer to 30 teams competing, has upwards of five simultaneous games per day, and closer to fifty games per week (baseball, cricket's closest equivalent averages has close to one hundred). Local fans therefore, get thirty or forty days of sport per year, which makes better use of facilities, allowing stadium expansion, producing several times the revenue, albeit dispersed across more players.

The now defunct ICL recognised this potential, and as became quickly apparent, players outside the big-four test sides were extremely interested in making 5-10 times their existing income playing in a league system. That the venture subsequently failed had to do with two things: the restraint of trade (or threat thereof) imposed on those players by their home boards; and the introduction of the IPL to partly assuage the players needs.

Cricket has long been subject to these types of ventures, and a future attempt is not unlikely unless the playing base is expanded significantly, most likely to upwards of 1000 well paid professionals, in dispersed leagues (or conferences in a world league). Those types of numbers mean having around 50 teams playing T20 Domestic league cricket, for a minimum of 16 weeks per year.

That type of system has a number of advantages:

- It reduces the burden placed on international cricket to fund domestic cricket, allowing fewer and more meaningful international fixtures and competitions
- It gives fans much greater access to the game, making better use of facilities, and building a narratives around a season that will improve local attendances.
- It gives scope for franchise opportunities in nations with substandard cricketers, allowing game development in those nations.
- More players at a higher level will improve the general standard, improving international

competition.

The economics of team sports strongly favour close contests and locally based teams that play week-in week-out in the same stadium. Cricket has survived and prospered despite itself, but the advent of T20 means there are both good reasons for making a change, and a ground-swell of public interest in doing so. The international game will not die, and may even prosper, if the ongoing grumbles over meaningless fixtures continue to rumble. The alternative is players retiring earlier from the international circuit, and non-international players shifting loyalties to wherever the money is, which is far more likely to damage the international game, and that would be a pity.

1d. Meaningful Cricket

The refrain for the age is the need for "meaningful" cricket. But as [Ducking Beamers](#) rightly noted, there is no real way of defining what meaning is. In one sense, all cricket is meaningless, as is all sport, and one suspects, all of life. How can one explore meaning is a mere game when one cannot define it for our very existence. That type of question may well be too deep for what this project, being a practical exposition of the game's strengths and weaknesses, but we might practically draw an answer to meaning from philosophy itself.

Meaning must be, I believe, self-referential; drawing on Descartes idea that he must exist, because he thinks, we can say the same for cricket: it is meaningful when those involved, both on and off the field think it is meaningful. The question then becomes not existential, but one of motivation: why do players play, and why do fans watch?

The answer, I believe, is best conceived by making the analogy between sport and the [narrative that underlies all sports](#). The most meaningful contest in test cricket today is the Ashes. They have meaning because they are steeped in history, the players play regularly, both team's structure their selections and goals around winning that one contest. There is, therefore, a running narrative surrounding the game, starting in discussions over selection a year or more before, and carried throughout a long five or six test series.

Most other contests are not so lucky. The lamentable 7 match ODI series are forgotten almost before they have finished. Despite their popularity their narrative interest exists only in as much as they relate to selection issues and form leading up to the two tournaments where the trophy counts for something. The cricket, as a spectacle, is not to blame, nor is there too much of it, necessarily. The problem is a lack of over-arching narrative, expressed through overkill of short tournaments.

Other sports do better. Perhaps the most astonishing narrative in international sports concerns the elongated process for FIFA World Cup qualification. Each team undergoes it, sometimes playing teams so poor they would never agree to play if not compelled to, sometimes games with more drama than the best narrated movie plot. Australia's seven consecutive failures, normally at the last hurdle, completely captured a nation largely indifferent to the sport. The 2006 World Cup itself was an adventure in itself, but Australia's involvement ended well before the defining games of the tournament.

The important point to take from this is that good narratives relate to all teams. It is too much to hang the whole World Test Championship on the hats of the top contenders. Meaning for the ranks

of second tier test teams, and more importantly, the aspirational associate nations, depends on finding a path that lets them dream of the highest level, gives them scope for unlikely progression, historic upsets, and ultimately, in the interests of even competition and financial gain, their disappearance when the business end of the tournament concludes.

Meaning therefore, demands the best possible set of narratives, for each team, the elimination of games that lack meaning - the short bilateral tours that lack history or rivalry - and the development of a new format that develops its own twists and turns as the season(s) progress.

Mooted plans for a tiered system of test cricket, with home and away fixtures between a limited number of nations, and relegation every year or two allow this, to an extent, because there is a lead-up to a final, or competition winner. But it is not the only possible narrative format, and I don't believe the best one, leaving aside the deeper issues that are preventing it from gaining broader acceptance. Nevertheless, meaning, to me, means having a narrative, that puts each game into a context, whether that context is a tournament, or what is possibly the world's longest running sporting rivalry.

1e. Preserving Marquee Tours

Having ended the last section by proposing a test championship, I will now retract my unqualified support for same. The bulk of test nations recoil from a tiered system because of 1b - providing access to the highest level, for players, but also teams - where the possibility of relegation to a lower level will prevent them from engaging in tours to the places that pay well, and (ultimately) subsidise the game as we know it: India, Australia, England and South Africa.

Those big four teams are opposed for their own, equally selfish reasons. A proper tiered tournament - not the unholy compromise currently tabled - entails playing equal amounts of cricket in every nation, which will rarely be as profitable as a five game series between the big four. It would also, potentially, prevent those tours happening at all, should one member of the match-up be pushed down a level.

The idea that the Ashes might not happen for several years is anathema to most cricket fans in both countries, and down-right frightening to the administrators in each. The financial ramifications are too great to even risk it, which means, practically, that any test championship must find a way to preserve the marquee tours.

Leaving aside practicality, it is worthwhile for the previously cited reason, to preserve and enhance these historic rivalries, steeped as they are in history. The rivalries have their own, internal narratives that span decades, on which the new histories are built. To destroy, or diminish those would be a great loss to a sport that has made those histories such a central part of its character.

Fortunately, there is a relatively straight-forward way to preserve them, and that is to ensure that any format for a test championship has open windows for them to played. Logistically, that implies that a test championship could occupy no more than two seasons in four, allowing time for the long marquee tours on the traditional rolling four year cycle, and setting aside the periods currently devoted to so-called "meaningless" tours to the championship.

Those teams currently excluded from marquee tours have several options in this period. Certainly,

where test cricket is unpopular, they may be tempted to ignore it completely, albeit at the expense of necessary practice. Alternatively, the aim should be to build new rivalries, between neighbours and close competitors. It would not be the end of the world if teams play less international cricket, but all these are problems for a different section.

1f. World Championships

On the surface, the need for a world championship is a facile point. Almost every neutral observer agrees on the need for one. But in its absence, and given the inherent difficulties of organising a championship for the elongated test match format, it is worth discussing the options available for instituting one.

There are, broadly, three standard methods of finding the "best" in a sporting context: a ranking system, a league system, and a championship (or cup). Most sports use a combination of several, and cricket is no different. Each has certain advantages and disadvantages, most particularly with respect to "[meaning](#)".

If you want an accurate measure of the best team, a *ranking system is unparalleled*. Most sports have some sort of ranking system in addition to competition, because no competition can be a perfect indicator of the best team. Luck plays too big a role, even in test cricket. Cricket's existing rating system is not flawless, but it does a reasonable job. The problem with a rating system is that they are fluid measures, with no end and no beginning (except 1877, I suppose).

Tennis works around this problem with a year end rating, but tennis also structures its tournament system around that year, allowing year-on-year comparisons. Cricket has no such luxury, with even the mooted 4-5 year cycle of the FTP being heavily compromised, and the ratings of different sides with it. Thus, the narrative of a rating-based championship is of constant flux - this series will decide the number on ranking, as will the next one, and the one after, until we tire of knowing that every game is equally important, and equally unimportant.

In most sports, a *league* provides both the narrative context and the necessary structure. Every team plays each other, normally twice, and the winner is the team with the most accumulated points, or the winner of a play-off, should a final be organised. But test cricket is poorly suited to a league system. The big teams shy away from long series against un-financial sides, and gravitate towards extended series with the history and interest those bring. The FTP always intended that all teams would play each other, but political reality and logistical constraints have prevented it being implemented, and will likely continue to do so.

Those logistical constraints are even more acute if cricket is to expand. Nine teams, playing two teams per summer can rotate through a full roster in four years. But 11 teams, or 15, require 5 and 7 years respectively, at which point the earlier games are a distant memory (and an irrelevance when judging quality); with the marquee series unreasonably separated. The standard proposed solution is a tiered system, be it eight - if for no other reason than there have been, in the recent past, eight decent sides - or six. But a tiered system has little support. The teams in danger of falling off the top tier are averse to the financial burden that would impose, the teams assured of a place at the top, averse to a structure that prevents them maximising revenue from marquee series.

That leaves a *cup* format. For ODI and T20 cricket this exists already, with most teams structuring their programs around the four year cycle of preparation and infrequent competition the World Cup and Champions Trophy bring. But test cricket is different. A two month tournament would lack the ebb and flow of normal test match series, around which the game has always based itself. Neutral venues would struggle to attract crowds, be heavily biased towards the home side, and it is extremely difficult to schedule more than a bare handful of matches.

A non-neutral cup, played over a season or more is more feasible, but must be structured carefully, as, unlike football or tennis (in which the Davis Cup is a good example), a cricket team is limited to home games in their summer. September/October and March/April offer the only period in which all teams can reasonably schedule games, and would therefore be the ideal time for a final series on alternate home grounds. Preliminary rounds, more easily scheduled, could be played across the year, allowing the cup to unfold its narrative as the finals approach.

Just as importantly, a test world championship would need to be restrictive in the number of teams playing, to allow decent length series (at least 3 games) between teams, and the time period over which it is played. Qualification therefore, becomes paramount, such that every team should have reasonable opportunity to progress to each subsequent stage, with the vagaries of fortune reduced as much as possible. This type of qualification therefore entails a broader scope than normal for cricket. Rather than a single quadrennial tournament, a test championship must be a quadrennial program of games that move through a series of stages, culminating in a final.

How this might work will be reserved for the third part of this series. The conclusion from this post is that much effort expended on test championships are misguided, focusing too much on either rankings or leagues to provide champions, and wedded to the idea that all teams should play each other - an idea only feasible with an excessively restrictive cricketing family. A cup is the most natural and flexible format for a true world championship, as evidenced by the numerous sports that use it for national competition. The difficulty is providing an acceptable format for that form of competition.

1g. Regional Rivalries

International cricket teams have odd relationships with their neighbours. Cricket's most celebrated rivalry, the Ashes, is not regional at all, yet it is played more regularly than any other contest for a simple reason: Australia and England have always been able to schedule tours in their off-season, and their opponents summer. By contrast, the contest between Australia and South Africa, while every bit as keen, and usually of the highest quality, is limited to three tests a piece, with the South African leg shuttled into March, and the South African administrators having to forgo their traditional December/January test program.

While scheduling isn't always a problem - India and Pakistan have tended to fluctuate from playing almost monthly, to not at all, depending on the political climate - cricket's best potential rivalries are often stunted affairs. New Zealand have always been far more likely to play Pakistan or Sri Lanka than their tri-nations rivals they really want to contest against; the Asian Test cup was last seen bereft of Indian involvement; and despite being surrounded by high profile associates, England play just two ODI games a year against their near neighbours.

Other sports have much better regional rivalries. Football has as its main structure world cup qualifiers and regional championships; likewise, rugby is centred around the tri-nations and six

nations tournaments. And for obvious reasons: travel is cheaper and less burdensome on players, allowing more games to be played; regional rivalries build on the natural tendency of people to aspire first and foremost to beat those most like themselves; and the absence of regular games against more exotic locales brings greater interest to those games when they occur.

While world championships have often been cited as a way of introducing greater *meaning* into test cricket, regional championships are rarely considered. Yet, for many teams, being regional champion (or finalist) is a far more realistic goal than world champion. Regional championships too, serve a useful purpose in providing a structure to introduce smaller nations into the fray against major teams without them needing to travel across the world, nor, more importantly, requiring more than one of the game's heavy-weights to play the minnows in any qualification sequence.

There is a question over what constitutes a "region". Depth is important. With so few top class teams, it makes little sense for a championship to follow the ICC development regions, where only the Asian region has a real contest for the local champion. Here, I favour regions sorted by scheduling arrangements, split between those teams playing in the Northern Hemisphere's summer (England, West Indies), those playing in the Southern Hemisphere (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Zimbabwe) and those playing in the Asian semi-tropical zone (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh).

This arrangement has the advantage of being relatively even. While the Northern hemisphere is weakest in its test sides, it has the best associates (Canada, USA, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Bermuda, Denmark, Italy). By contrast, the Asian zone has strong test sides, but weak associates (UAE, Nepal, Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Oman) and the Southern hemisphere lies in the middle (Kenya, Namibia, Uganda, PNG).

Scheduling a regional championship is more problematic, requiring a whole summer of densely scheduled games to contest even the most basic of championships. Yet that density may be a blessing for players, instead of ad hoc scheduling where blocks of games are preceded and followed by a few weeks rest, a more organised schedule and extensive breaks would allow better recovery times from injury. Unfortunately that is not the only scheduling issue that needs resolving.

1h. Domestic and International Windows

No doubt, until two years ago, the idea that there should be times available in the international calendar for domestic cricket was laughable. Domestic cricket made no money, international cricket dominated the media and television schedules, and that was the way it was. Then came the IPL.

The impact of T20 Domestic leagues are a long way from playing out, but given their increasing popularity with the fans, and the obvious benefits for players currently struggling to maintain a regular place in their national side, it is not hard to envisage a time when international cricket intrudes on domestic schedules, as happens in most other sports.

International players will become quickly disgruntled if they are not granted full access to the riches of the T20 domestic leagues, and that will put pressure on administrators to reform the international calendar. This is no bad thing. At the moment, tours are a disorganised mess, players have substantial breaks over the course of the season, but there is always some international

cricket on, somewhere. The most straight-forward reform of the international calendar is not to reduce the number of games, but to ensure that when international cricket is on, all teams are involved, not just one or two. Once this is achieved, large slabs of the season will be free, allowing all players to participate in the league system, further strengthening that part of the game.

It would be nice, at this point, to see test players return to first class cricket as well, given the sharp reduction in appearances at that level that has occurred in the past two decades, and the consequent diminished standards at that level, and quite probably, at test level as well. It is hard to see that happening, however, not unless ODIs were substantially reduced in number or excised completely from the calendar.

Nevertheless, there is still a question over how large a window is necessary. While other nations have failed, to date, to challenge the IPL with their own big money national or regional T20 leagues, it is almost certainly only a matter of time. A much larger window than has currently been shoe-horned in for the IPL will be necessary soon. As with the scheduling of international cricket, regional summers affect the amount of time available in different places. In the non-tropical parts of the world, it would be possible to have two months (8-9 weeks) set aside for domestic T20 games, but little more without a reduction in international cricket. In Asia, however, both domestic windows are feasible, allowing up to four months of domestic cricket a year.

Given the worries over scheduling conflicts and the drop-out of big name players from international competition, fitting several extensive domestic league windows into the schedule is feasible and desirable. More than anything, it is the international schedule that needs work, by forcing the current mess of tours starting and finishing any time they are able, into a strict timetable. The sooner players are able to move between international and domestic cricket without conflict, the stronger both the international and domestic games will be.

Part 2. Guiding Principles

Aims are not, by themselves, sufficient to produce a plan of action. They must be balanced against one another, striking a balance between the financial forces that drive the game forward, the emotion and history that make it great, and the logistics of scheduling games across three formats, diverse seasonal conditions and a seemingly infinite number of competitions.

The second part of this manifesto will deal with those issues, developing an over-arching competitive structure to produce competitive and meaningful fixtures, a domestic schedule to rationalise the existing mess of international tours and, now lucrative and expansionistic, domestic cricket seasons, and some general principles of tournament play to ensure fairness.

2a. Structural pillars

The international side of the game has always been at the centre, and it is that that needs straightening first. The recent FTP driven expansion of the fixture list has not been kind to the sport, burning out players and fans alike on meaningless games. As a corrective I propose that the international fixture list be pared back to a handful of core fixtures played over a four year cycle: world and regional championships in each format and the marquee test tours.



There are a number of reasons why this is both desirable and possible. Firstly, the emergence of domestic T20 leagues reduces the need for money spinning limited overs friendlies to generate revenue. Given they have been, for a long time, merely used to prepare for the world cup and

champions trophy, their almost complete removal will be lamented by few and will open up much needed space in the schedule.

Secondly, the expansion of world cup places to minnows has resulted in a bloated tournament while delivering only limited development opportunities. Pushing the development emphasis to a regional level allows both more opportunities to the smaller nations and a tighter, better world cup.

Thirdly, many lament the lack of interest in test cricket outside the major teams. In reality, the fans of those nations recognise those tours for what they are: perfunctory obligations of little value. Structuring the vast bulk of test matches into year long tournaments, and freeing them from the burden of short series should both increase the interest in test cricket in those nations and, as above, free up scheduling space for T20 games that will vastly improve the financial status of players in those nations.

Finally, by scheduling for marquee series every second season, there is ample room to continue playing those traditional series, such as the Ashes, upon which much of cricket's heritage, and no little interest or money, rests.

A final word then, on the future of one day cricket. As someone who gave up watching it some years ago, I was tempted to expunge it from the schedule entirely. That would be presumptuous and premature. The fact remains however, that ODI cricket is faced with dwindling interest and numerous challenges. Something that should be obvious from the rule tinkering that has beset the game of late. It has few core supporters, being neither as short or action packed as the t20 game so loved by the general public, nor as stern a test of character as the preferred format of the purist. Like games of professional vs players, or xxii vs xi, its time has passed. I suspect the only real question is how long will it linger.

2b. Scheduling

Perhaps no aspect of cricket has been so neglected as the introduction of sensible fixturing. Even disregarding the sudden quandary T20 has introduced, the international schedule is a mess of haphazard tours, marked by uneven spurts of games and odd lulls.

The problem rests with leaving the individual boards to determine the schedule, resulting in the popular teams sliding tours in whenever and wherever one might fit, yet still playing not much more frequently than one day per week. The less popular teams, bereft of opportunities, but unwilling to play each other, much less than that.

The introduction of universal domestic T20 windows offers the chance to correct two glaring problems. The first, obviously, to provide a space free from international commitments for players to play in what is likely to be both the most popular and lucrative form of the game. The second, to rationalise the international schedule so as to provide a balance between time spent playing, resting and travelling.

The first consideration when devising these windows must be an answer to the question: what is their appropriate size? The answer, I believe, is the minimum amount necessary to complete the tournaments outlined previously. Anything larger unnecessarily restricts the T20 game and will be under constant pressure to be reduced. Anything smaller and players will be forced to choose

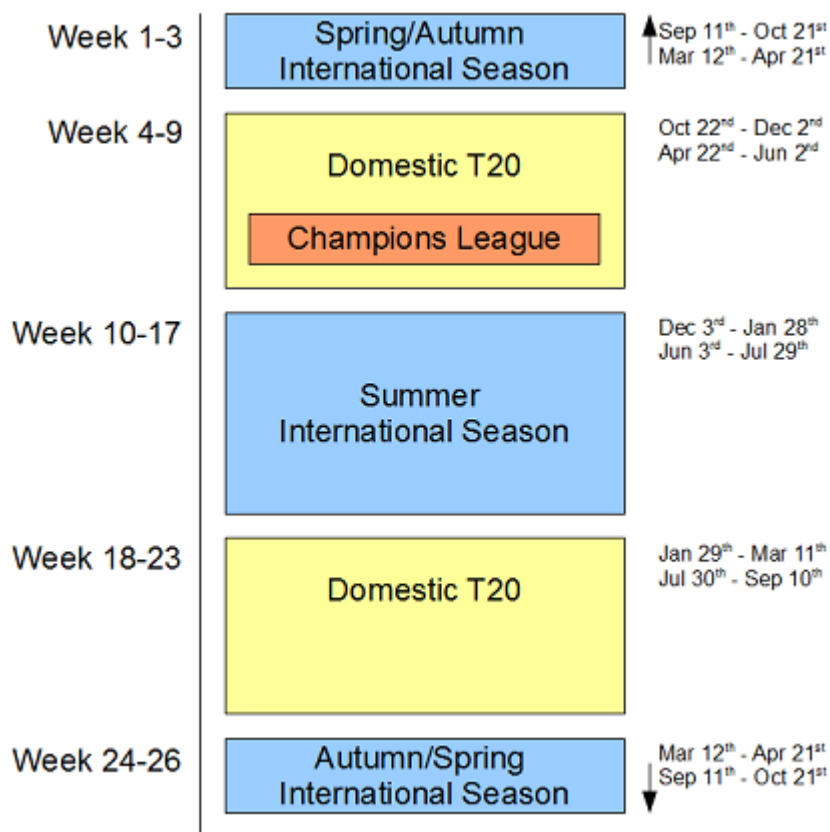
international commitments over a larger contract, which is bound to be problematic.

Taking first the non test championship years. These have scheduled T20 and ODI regional championships and world cup competitions, along with some sort of marquee tour at home and away, or world test championship qualifiers. Both test requirements extend to 6 tests per home summer, with regional limited over competitions consisting of 8-12 teams and the world championships 12-16. Any additional time might be used for friendly limited overs games, preparatory tour games, or travel.

One necessary change is the reduction of world cup length, long a bloated two month long march of irrelevant games leading to the semi-finals. The main cause of this, is the insistence of administrators (and no doubt tv companies) that each round of games (not involving a minnow) be played on a separate day. Thus 24 games (in say four groups of four), which might be dispensed with in just 5-12 days, are played over nearly a month. A reasonable length for a small regional championship is two weeks. For a world cup: three weeks. Allowing 7-8 weeks for six scheduled tests and a week of friendlies, the total international season for one hemisphere can be reduced to 14 weeks. That leaves 12 for the domestic T20 competition. A regional test championship, being the most difficult to schedule (on account of it being conducted in the same hemisphere) would need to fit within that 14 week period. This is possible, as will be seen.

The second consideration is when each format is best scheduled, taking into account patterns of fan attendance and support, and the need to build a coherent narrative across a summer. Recent crowds in Australia suggest the folly of scheduling day games outside the traditional holiday period. Given T20 is played predominantly in the evenings, it is likely to be more resilient to scheduling, and is well suited to the start and tail-end of a summer. International cricket should therefore remain as the centre-piece, allowing the scheduling of test matches in their traditional slots - Boxing Day for example. Similarly, by scheduling internationals at the very beginning and end of each hemispherical summer, some overlap into each is theoretically possible (and potentially useful in years with a large number of intra-regional games).

The proposed schedule, therefore, is for a 3 week international break to be followed by the first half of the domestic T20 season (6 weeks), the international season (and the bulk of the domestic first class season) for 8 weeks, followed by the concluding half of the domestic T20 season, and a final 3 weeks of internationals to conclude the summer.



Leaving aside the international schedule for a time, this has several implications for the domestic T20 game. Firstly, a 12 week season, with a week set aside for finals, would allow a 10-12 team home and away league to operate. Secondly though, and more importantly, in light of recent global developments, by allowing players to play a full season in one hemisphere, and therefore, one competition, we can put an end to the farce of players playing for multiple teams, in multiple competitions, which threatens to make the champions league a joke. Given the Indian summer can (at least theoretically) extend across the full 24 weeks of the domestic T20 window, a player would seem to have two choices: play for an Indian T20 outfit; or play for a southern hemisphere outfit *and* a northern hemisphere outfit. The latter is undesirable, as it, again, could lead to divided loyalties. However, it is possible, even desirable, that the northern and southern hemisphere teams could be linked (in the manner suggested by the new Royals franchise), such that players signed for one are signed for the other, with the added bonus that while the individual summer competitions might conclude in 12 weeks, the champions league could be played across a year (with the "home" venue shifting with the seasons).

The T20 game's detractors might equate the franchising scenario being played out with other detrimental aspects of the T20's glitz and glamour: all show and no substance. I don't believe the T20 game need be an entertainment vehicle full of gimmicks. The debatably useful bowling and fielding restrictions, the cheer-leaders, music and fire-works, are all undesirable, but the game is still fundamentally skillful and entertaining, with enormous potential to develop cricket in hitherto unforeseen markets. Turning something as fundamentally valuable as a champions league into a selection farce is not in the best interests of the sport (not just T20). The sooner the national boards get together to reform the scheduling the better.

2c. Tournament Play

To conclude the discussion of principles, before moving onto the specifics of competition structure, where most discussions begin, I want to talk briefly about structuring competitions. Unlike FIFA, and more particularly UEFA, who seem to have hit upon a standard structure for tournaments that works, the cricket World Cup format has been problematic.

Three general principles should be followed for any tournament: firstly, they should be *succinct*, being no longer than it takes to determine a winner; secondly, the "best team" should win, meaning the eventual result should not be subject to too much luck, and there need be enough games to demonstrate that the winner is, if not the best, at least worthy; and thirdly, the draw should be fair to all participants, allowing any team an opportunity to win, and if not to win, then to progress as far as their ability allows, rather than the certain teams - particularly those so-called "minnows" - being beset by endless challenges, while so-called "better" teams sail through the early rounds without a challenge.

From the perspective of a fan, a tournament should build a "narrative". Following, in general, that most generic but exciting of literary tropes: [The Quest](#). The quest works as an analogy because sporting teams are heroes, a tournament victory (or even qualification) a goal, and the tournament itself is a journey, usually physically, for the fans and players, and always metaphorically. The only difference with the literary quest is that, in this case, there are dozens of questers, most of whom will fail miserably, if occasionally heroically.

From those general principles and aim, some specific recommendations can be drawn. In no particular order:

- The tournament should build to a final, each stage becoming increasingly difficult, and increasingly shorter temporally. This is at odds with several cricket world cups where the latter stages were extended so most fixtures were between top teams. The absence of big names and/or the hosts at the super-six stage in favour of minnows in each of the past three world cups demonstrates the folly of this approach.
- All teams should compete at each stage. This allows minnows to play against the bigger teams without clumping them into the tournament finals, and allows a slow build up of easy fixtures.
- The number of teams qualifying should be 25-50% larger than the number of competitive teams at the next stage. The tendency of cricket authorities to tier the qualification to ensure only the top-8 progress makes it almost impossible for smaller teams to achieve worthy, if minor, goals (such as qualification into the second round).
- Regional qualification, as well as being logistically easier and cheaper, allows more fans to attend and better delineates the qualification from the main event. The current world league system results in very strange match-ups with little to no existing rivalry. Similarly, football does well in avoiding regional match-ups in the finals, to diversify the opponents.
- Seeding every team risks turning the tournament into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The advantage of including extra teams at successive stages is that seeding can be reduced, allowing groups of more mixed ability. Seeding should not extend past the number of qualification spots, and should be pooled (1-4 drawn against 5-8, rather than 1 vs. 8, 2 vs. 7 etc.).
- In general, at least two teams should proceed out of a group, or, if this is not possible, one plus a playoff. This reduces the possibility of an unlucky draw (or game) knocking out a top team early on. Early rounds in a tournament should be more lenient than later ones.
- The optimal tournament format is groups of 4, with 2 qualifiers, leading to either more groups, or a knockout. Groups of 4 have a reasonable number of teams, but few fixtures -

just 6 to remove half of all teams.

Based on the above, the optimal size for a limited overs world cup is currently 12. 3 groups of 4, dropping to a super-six and then a final; or two groups of 6 with semi-finals and a final. The latter being a shorter tournament (20 days versus 27) but with a higher number of games against minnows. The preferred size should be 16, with 4 groups of 4, then 2 groups of 4, semi-finals and a final, although it is worth noting that FIFA, upon reaching 100 member nations, expanded their world cup to 24.

For a test match tournament, some other prescriptions should be followed, and a method for resolving drawn encounters decided upon:

- Home advantage matters a lot in a test match. Playing home and away fixtures is preferred (if logistically challenging).
- Test match-ups should be at least a three match series, unless played in a league format (such as a regional championship). A test match final should be played over at least four games - preferably home and away.

Because test match series often end in draws, and, as the Shield final invariably demonstrates, it is extremely undesirable to allow a draw act as a win for one team, there needs to be a resolution method for drawn series.

Two possible scenarios can occur:

A series is drawn leading into the final game - a result is required.

The days of timeless tests are gone, but as limited overs cricket has demonstrated, that need not prevent a result based on time. In these one-off games 6 days should be set aside for play (allowing a maximum of 540 overs), but each side should be, across their two innings, be limited to 225 overs each (leaving the final day to make up time lost in the event of rain). It is quite rare that a single side bats for 225 overs in a game, so it is unlikely that both sides will do the same. However, in the event that it occurs, the team batting third must compulsory declare at the 225 over mark, and the team with the most runs at the conclusion of the game wins. In the event that the team batting third uses up fewer than 225 overs, then the team batting last must score the runs inside the total time available (450 overs), not just their 225 overs.

In a two-test series, teams are tied 1-1 after both games

In this situation, where two results have occurred (if the first test had been drawn, the first scenario would have been in play), the tie should be broken on aggregate run margin. A victory by an innings should be worth 250 runs. Each unbroken wicket in a chase should be worth $250/11$ or 23 runs. The side with the largest victory of the two games is then considered the winner. The advantage of this method, apart from being simple, is that it is obvious for both teams what the goal is, and therefore what declaration might be required.

In the event that teams are still tied, then numerous tie-breakers are possible: net runs-per-wicket, total runs, and a coin toss.

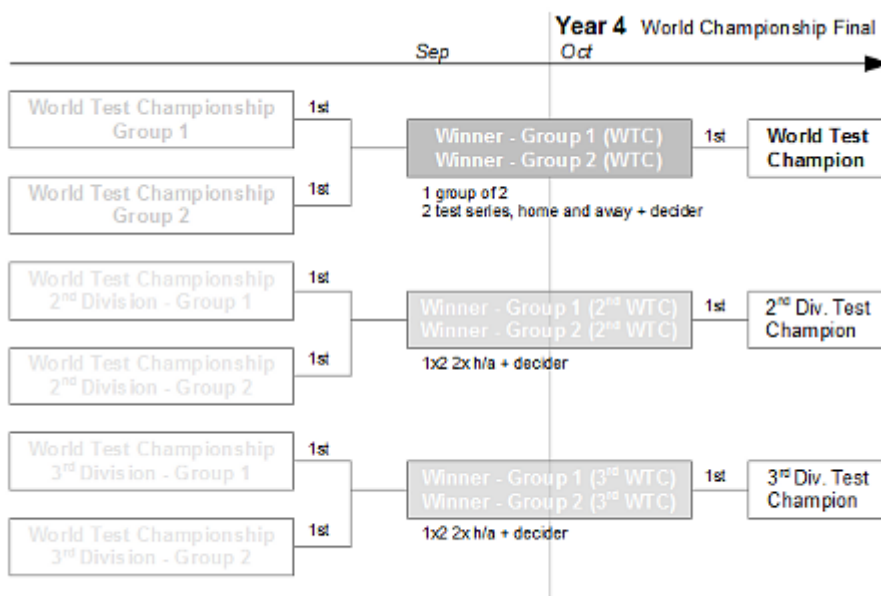
In the final part of the manifesto, I will detail the substantially more complex format for world and regional test match championships.

Part 3. World and Regional Test Championships

In this section, I will outline a format for playing world and regional championships, on a four year cycle, as discussed in the previous post [on structural pillars](#). It make sense to work backwards, from the goal to the journey's beginning, outlining each of the five stages in turn.

Year 4: The World Test Championship Final

Naturally, a championship ends with a final. Because this is test cricket, and because this series should be the pinnacle of the game, it should be a four test series, played home and away, with two tests for each finalist. In the event of a drawn series, the host of the second leg should host a fifth, and deciding game. Because this potentially requires the crossing from one hemispheric summer to another, the sensible time to hold it is in the September/October international break, playing the four or five games across the six available weeks.



In addition, two plate championship finals, for the test teams that didn't qualify for the world championship finals, and the associate teams, should be played. Producing, in effect, three divisions, each with their own champion.

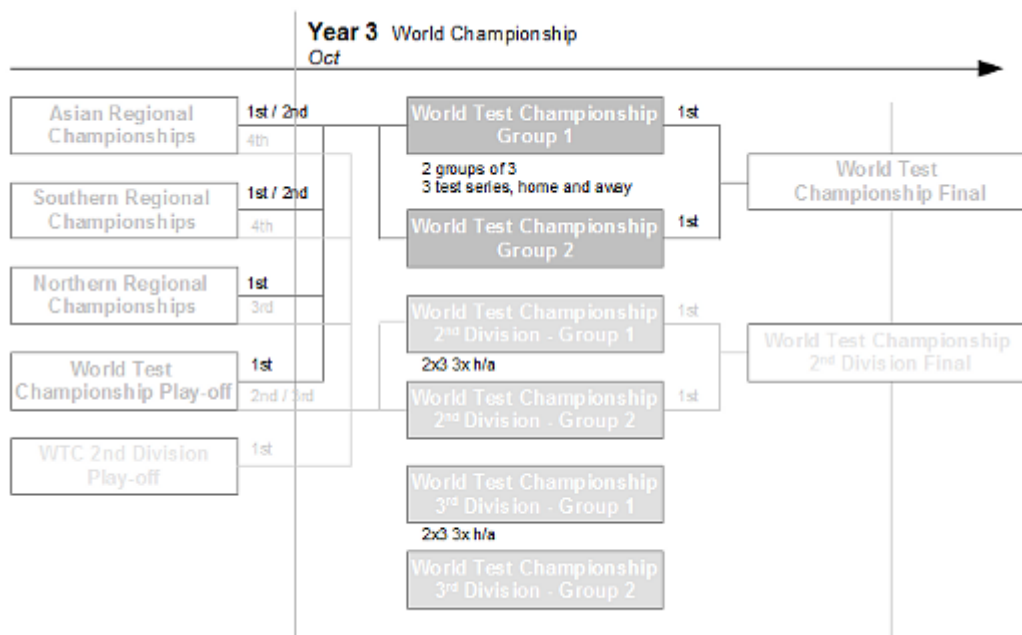
Year 3: The World Test Championship

In order to have a final, you must first play a championship. This section is the central idea for the whole test championship. Numerous people have proposed leagues and finals, but most fall short on logistical grounds, requiring endless overseas travel, and removing from the equation that unique aspect of test cricket: the series. As [previously discussed](#), the aim here is to create a tournament, one that emphasises the good points of test cricket, for the elite teams, but structured such that any team might qualify. Given those points, the twelve test limit on the number of matches a team might reasonably play in a year, and the need to schedule around different seasons, and emerging T20 tournaments, the structure chosen is, I believe, the best that

can be achieved.

The test championship would be contested by *six* teams. There are several advantages to this. Firstly, six covers enough of the test playing nations that the middling sides have ample opportunity to compete, but also allows a competitive second division, between the bottom four test sides and two associates. Secondly, six teams, playing in two groups of three, can play two home three-test series each, completing the entire championship inside a year.

Thirdly, six fits nicely with the existing qualities of the three regions discussed in part one. The Southern and Asian regions, with four test teams each, will have two teams automatically qualifying. The Northern region, with only two test sides, just one. That makes five sides. The final, sixth place, is drawn from the next best side in each of the three regions, as will be explained later.



The championship will be organised as follows:

The draw

For logistical reasons, regional teams need to be kept separate, as far as possible. The rules relating to the draw aim to achieve this end.

- The top two teams are seeded, and placed in group 1 and 2 respectively.
- For each region, beginning with the region with the most representatives:
Draw each team,
if one group has more representatives from that region place team into the other group,
otherwise, draw a group number for that team and place in that group.

The play

Each team plays a three test series at home against the other two teams in their group, playing 12 games in total, 6 at home, 6 away. Games are scheduled into the international windows, beginning in October, and ending in the following July.

Points are awarded for each match as follows: a win: 3 points, a tie: 2, a draw: 1, a loss: 0. Bonus points are awarded for a series victory: +1 point for each game not drawn.

Result	Winner	Loser	Result	Both Teams
3-0	12	0	1-1	4
2-1	9	3	0-0	3
2-0	9	1		
1-0	6	2		

The top team on points in each group progresses to the World Test Championship Final. In the event of a tie, teams will be separated by:

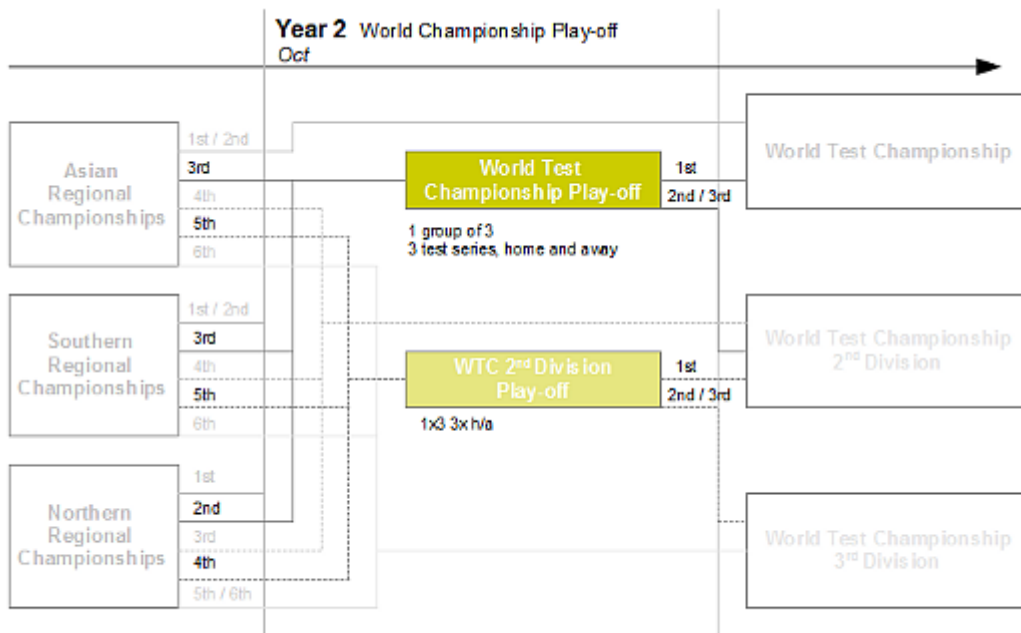
- Aggregate margin (23 runs per wicket for margins by wickets, 250 runs per innings for margins by an an innings)
- Net runs per wicket.

There is very little about this structure that I would change. The number of matches is perfect, and it leads to a dramatic conclusion. The use of series instead of individual games, and a home and away structure instead of neutral venues are all superior to the shorter tournament formats often suggested. There are, however, more complex problems at the qualifying stage.

Year 2: The World Test Championship Play-off

A test championship with regional qualification has some clear losers. New Zealand and the West Indies, on recent form, are highly unlikely to qualify above their regional counterparts. For this reason, the sixth spot in each division is determined via a play-off between the next best team in

each region (teams not involved in the play-off are free to play marquee tours in the international window).



The format for the play-off is the same as for the world test championship. Each team plays a three test series home and away to the other teams in the play-off. The top team, again based on points, then aggregate margin, and finally net runs per wicket.

The top team in each group moves takes the sixth spot in the world test championship (or second division). The remaining teams are the two seeded teams in the second division (or third). This maintains reasonable regional parity through-out the divisions (a maximum of three teams from any one region).

The play-off system is not perfect. It is possible for the 6th best team to miss out to the 7th (or worse). An alternative system would be to have world, not regional qualifiers - four groups of four, and a play-off between the four second placed sides. But there is no inherent improvement in fairness with this approach: the third best side in a group may deserve to be in the finals; it is logistically more problematic, with shorter series, and potentially more overlap in group scheduling; more mismatches; and it doesn't allow rivalries to build up from regular regional championships.

Having said that, teams from strong regions are at a disadvantage with this approach. The fourth placed teams in the Asian and Southern regions (normally Zimbabwe and Bangladesh) are generally excluded, although they will meet the two losing test sides in division two. But conversely, the sides on the border of the world group get meaningful and competitive fixtures against other test sides. An examination of the past 30 years indicates that the competitiveness and variety of the play-offs is quite high. Based on the ratings at the time, all the top 8 test teams would have failed to qualify on at least two occasions; would have qualified either directly or through the play-offs on at least 10 occasions; and would have been seeded at least once. Zimbabwe too, would have taken part in the play-offs at least twice, and been seeded first in the second division. But perhaps just as importantly, financially speaking, the major teams are almost

always present in the finals.

	AUS	ENG	SAF	WI	NZ	IND	PAK	SRI	ZIM	BAN
1982	1098.84	1074.75	0	1275.64	933.26	1069.73	1045.33	881.5	0	0
1983	1072.01	1056.22	0	1237.76	946.44	1015.34	1183.78	838.63	0	0
1984	1114.1	1049.73	0	1315.08	1000.6	998.88	1121.45	789.48	0	0
1985	1076.62	1006.94	0	1447.88	1097.77	946.4	1082.3	792.89	0	0
1986	950.2	1093.86	0	1441.13	1127.55	920.39	1065.79	821.78	0	0
1987	929.01	1057.97	0	1419.22	1153.78	989.2	1085.11	801.7	0	0
1988	951.19	1023.19	0	1281.07	1101.73	1026.45	1187.72	786.66	0	0
1989	944.02	978.92	0	1337.25	1084.04	1083.67	1198.55	777.28	0	0
1990	1079.54	873.71	0	1267.99	1101.31	1109.02	1172.18	785.48	0	0
1991	1099.47	923.17	0	1250.17	1033.09	1076.36	1192.05	809.11	0	0
1992	1128.47	997.21	1022.24	1201.68	957.12	1035.76	1169.64	851.67	0	0
1993	1133.52	987.47	1054.67	1258.19	946.19	1083.55	1161.91	933.86	835.28	0
1994	1226.74	902.91	1119.94	1223.7	889.2	1151.27	1147.97	879.21	855.72	0
1995	1244.76	936.28	1108.27	1202.62	850.13	1149.5	1157.72	857.71	865.53	0
1996	1273.79	979.87	1091.62	1171.02	855.57	1127.36	1094.22	902.45	867.69	0
1997	1270.8	983.37	1108.74	1152.39	849.48	1077.52	1113.85	913.82	841.83	0
1998	1256.46	970.37	1131.84	1059.79	881.37	1100.96	1144.83	960.74	801.35	0
1999	1222.98	1003.7	1152.67	1009.66	899.62	1086.18	1096.63	967.3	856.41	0
2000	1246.66	985.63	1188.95	963.76	998.59	1008.47	1060.91	1009.41	819.56	0
2001	1288.05	1052.73	1183.32	969.5	1033.57	1020.89	1089.51	998.19	814.85	771.78
2002	1375.36	1014.17	1115.85	967.23	1072.63	998.08	1117.27	1135.72	750.92	546.83
2003	1416.08	1025.47	1161.29	955.06	1074.57	1043.14	1095.52	1086.86	743.63	477.63
2004	1339.86	1079.57	1184.61	902.71	1082.42	1123.16	1037.86	1064.45	711.34	525.3
2005	1387.54	1168.62	1129.17	839.6	1045.15	1117.37	1018.5	1134.86	617.83	499.33
2006	1362.76	1169.63	1129.05	856.8	1064.39	1124.31	1107.22	1066.75	556.79	532.2
2007	1395.03	1144.28	1110.15	879.34	1079.5	1094.34	1097.8	1082.82	556.79	532.2
2008	1384.99	1120.77	1162.07	891.99	1030.74	1135.03	1080.76	1090.18	556.79	519.61
2009	1230.87	1069.25	1217.08	983.37	950.65	1182.5	1077.06	1122.18	556.79	534.44
2010	1211.56	1129.63	1187.88	926.27	937.62	1209.46	1073.9	1103.96	556.79	618.17

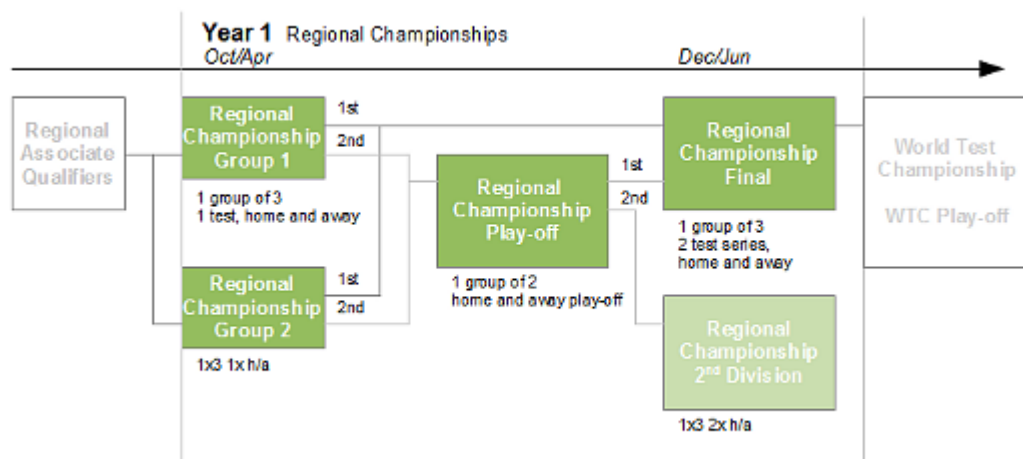
Dark colours represent regional or play-off winners; yellow represents play-off participants; boxed teams are seeded teams.

Year 1: Regional Test Championships

The creation of a world test championship satisfies the key goals of meaningful cricket and an elite competition without burdening the schedule. It leaves unresolved the problem of qualification and inclusiveness that is necessary to provide opportunities and goals for emerging nations. The proposed solution to both of these is a regional championship, played, as in football, two years prior to the world championship, also pitting the best six teams from each region against one another.

Unlike the world championship however, the appropriate format is not two groups of three. In that format, the regional heavy-weights would spend almost all summer thrashing minnows. To prevent that, and for logistical constraints imposed by the participants coinciding summers, the regional tournament is staged.

While regional variations are possible, and perhaps even desirable given the disparate levels of competitiveness each region contains, a standard format is here proposed, that can be completed across an 18 week international summer.



The final stage is a three team league, played over 12 weeks, with each team playing four tests at home and four away. Points are counted as described previously, and the top team is considered the regional champion. A final was considered but considered problematic. Firstly, the competition is already very long, potentially spilling over into the "off-season" in places where cricket is still playable. Secondly, a final like the inevitably dreary Shield final would be of no great benefit to the game, and in any case, would only be a single game in the competition (making most of the preceding 12 games meaningless). Thirdly, in such a small league, several group games will already have been decisive in determining the champion, and there is no need to devalue them in favour of another result.

As [described previously](#) each region will send either one or two teams to the world test championship, as well as one team to the playoffs. A plate competition needs to be held concurrently to determine places four through six.

The first stage is also a three team league, but with the competition split into two groups and each side only playing two tests at home, and two away (one of each against each side). As before, points will determine the winner, with the group champions going into the final stage, and the two second placed sides going into the second, intermediate stage. This stage is designed to ensure that a random draw doesn't prevent a good side from making further progress. It is proposed as a two leg play-off, with the winner decided on [aggregate margin](#).

There are numerous issues with the regional championships. Firstly, eventually the problem of playing against minnows has to be addressed. The regional approach minimizes mismatches, but does so at the expense of more games for those teams. You cannot have both, and there will inevitably be winners and losers in the process. Some team, somewhere, must be cut.

Bangladesh and Zimbabwe are the clear losers, being likely to lose their respective regional playoff games, and be relegated to playing the associates. It is possible to play, over the same time frame, a tournament with four in each group, but this results in teams playing every week, with no rest (as described, a team will only play two weeks in three). The Northern regions lack of test teams makes that interesting. In the past 30 years it would almost never have been competitive, with either England or the West Indies dominating, and the northern associate merely making up the numbers. The rapid turnaround in the fortunes of the test teams in this group is sufficient reason to hope one of those associates can shortly match it with their counterparts, but it is difficult to say how long that might take.

Nevertheless, necessary exclusions and too few games aside, the regional championship provides a fair balance between the competing objectives surrounding associate cricket, and the promise of reasonable competition at the pointy end of the tournament.

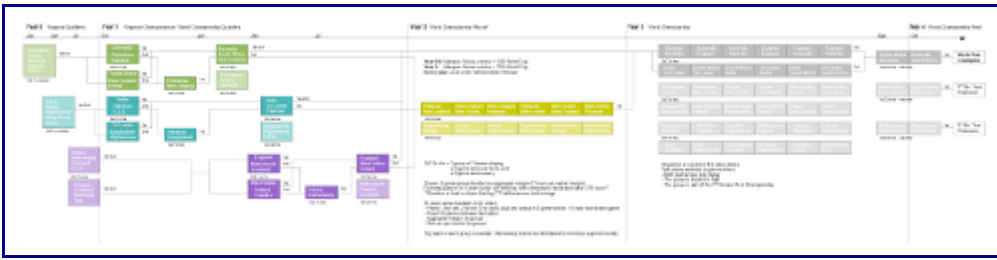
Year 0: Regional Associate Qualifiers

There is no graphic, or proposed format for this, as associate and affiliate cricket is too close to its infancy to be sure how this might develop. Only eight associates will move forward from the regional qualifiers, two in the Southern and Asian regions, and four in the (much stronger) Northern region. Some sort of first class tournament is required to decide who this would be - test sides, understandably, need not be included at this level.

It is likely, in the same vein as the UEFA Champions League qualifiers or FA Cup, that there might need to be several stages of competition, perhaps over several years prior to Year 0. Better sides would enter in the latter stages, culminating in a final tournament, or group competition that leads to the regional qualifiers. Every team that qualifies for the regional qualifiers would be entered in a division of the world test championship, making three tiers, and 18 teams in all.

3a. Outlining a Schedule

Having completed the proposed tournament format, it is now possible to lay it out in its entirety, to track the progress of teams from stage to stage. To help enable this process, a sample tournament has been constructed with teams filled in (the results being a reflection of the ratings a few months ago).



Using the tournament(s) as a base, and taking into account adjunct series - notably the marquee series - it is possible to construct a workable future tours program across the four year cycle of games. Below shows this for five different sides of varying levels playing within the same region.

Every one of the top 18 teams are basically full time professionals for the four year period in question, playing between 35 and 50 games. In the event professionalism is not an option for the associates, then the friendly series, and (potentially) the extra divisions can be shortened or scrapped. It is reasonable, however, to assume that a modest level of revenue from the regional championships would be sufficient to fund a team fully, and allow them to compete year round. The income to be gained from T20 domestic leagues for competent associate players will also, eventually, make the problem of funding operations via international cricket less acute.

	Australia	New Zealand	Zimbabwe	Kenya	Namibia
Year 0	Dec-Jan H v ENG (5T)	H v SRI (3T) H v PAK (3T)	Assoc Test Qual	Assoc Test Qual	Assoc Test Qual
	Mar-Apr ODI Reg Champ A v IND (4T)	ODI Reg Champ	ODI Reg Champ	ODI Reg Champ	ODI Reg Champ
	Jun-Jul T20 World Cup	T20 World Cup A v SRI (2T) A v IRE (2T)	T20 World Cup A v SCO (2T)	T20 World Cup A v CAN (2T)	T20 World Cup A v USA (2T)
Year 1	Sep-Oct H/A v NAM (2T) H/A v ZIM (2T)	H/A v RSA (2T) H/A v KEN (2T)	H/A v NAM (2T) H/A v AUS (2T)	H/A v RSA (2T) H/A v NZ (2T)	H/A v ZIM (2T) H/A v AUS (2T)
	Dec-Jan H v RSA (2T) H/A v NZ (4T)	H/A v ZIM (2T) H/A v AUS (4T)	H/A v NZ (2T) H/A v KEN (4T)	H v NAM (2T) H/A v ZIM (4T)	A v KEN (2T)
	Mar-Apr A v RSA (2T)	A v RSA (2T)	A v NAM (2T)	A v NAM (2T)	A v ZIM (2T) H v ZIM (2T) H v KEN (2T)
	Jun-Jul				
Year 2	Sep-Oct T20 Reg Champ A v SRI (2T)	T20 Reg Champ A v PAK (3T)	T20 Reg Champ	T20 Reg Champ A v AFG (3T)	T20 Reg Champ A v UAE (2T)
	Dec-Jan H v IND (4T) H v SRI (2T)	H v PAK (3T) H v WI (3T)	H v BAN (3T) H v IRE (3T)	H v AFG (3T) H v NED (3T)	H v USA (2T) H v UAE (2T)
	Mar-Apr ODI World Cup	ODI World Cup	ODI World Cup		
	Jun-Jul A v ENG (5T)	A v WI (3T)	A v IRE (3T)	A v NED (3T)	
Year 3	Sep-Oct A v PAK (3T)	A v BAN (3T)	A v KEN (3T)	H v ZIM (3T)	A v AFG (3T)
	Dec-Jan H v PAK (3T) H v ENG (3T)	H v BAN (3T) H v IRE (3T)	H v WI (3T) H v KEN (3T)	A v ZIM (3T)	H v AFG (3T) H v CAN (3T)
	Mar-Apr			H v WI (3T)	
	Jun-Jul A v ENG (3T)	A v IRE (3T)	A v WI (3T)	A v WI (3T)	A v CAN (3T)
Year 4	Sep-Oct A v RSA (2T) H v RSA (2T)	A v WI (2T) H v WI (2T)			

Finally, the most frequent criticism of ideas that promote games between so-called minnows and others is the issue of mismatches. Ignoring, again, the marquee series, which are organised between boards and therefore not relevant to this discussion, the table below shows the frequency of games between teams in four groups: The big 4 (India, England, South Africa and Australia), the other competitive test teams (New Zealand, Pakistan, West Indies and Sri Lanka), the other test teams and leading associates (Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Ireland and Kenya), and the other associates (Afghanistan, Scotland, Canada and the Netherlands). This excludes Namibia and the UAE, who would add another 6 mismatches if they were put in the bottom group but would play 18 competitive (or better) games.

Year 0	Test 1-4	Test 5-8	T/A 9-12	Assoc 13-16	V.Competitive	Competitive	Mismatch
Test 1-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Test 5-8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T/A 9-12	0	0	1	2	1	2	0
Assoc 13-16	0	0	2	2	2	2	0
Year 1							
Test 1-4	4	24	8	8	4	24	16
Test 5-8	24	4	14	4	4	38	4
T/A 9-12	8	14	4	10	4	24	8
Assoc 13-16	8	4	10	14	14	10	12
Year 2							
Test 1-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Test 5-8	0	18	0	0	18	0	0
T/A 9-12	0	0	0	12	0	12	0
Assoc 13-16	0	0	12	8	8	12	0
Year 3 / 4							
Test 1-4	16	24	0	0	16	24	0
Test 5-8	24	4	24	0	4	48	0
T/A 9-12	0	24	12	0	12	24	0
Assoc 13-16	0	0	0	16	16	0	0
Total							
Test 1-4	20	48	8	8	20	48	16
Test 5-8	48	28	38	4	28	88	4
T/A 9-12	8	38	17	24	17	62	8
Assoc 13-16	8	4	24	38	38	24	12
TOTAL					101	110	20

Games are considered very competitive if they are played against another team in their group, and competitive, if it is against a team in an adjacent group.

Two points are worth noting from the table. Firstly, there are only 26 games listed as a mismatch in the entire tournament. Of those games, 22 would be played in the first six weeks of year one, making them no more than a brief pre-season interlude before the actual competition starts. Secondly, those 26 games compare with over 100 games that are competitive and more than 100 that are very competitive. Of the 84 games played by the big 4, just 16 are against teams of Bangladesh's standard, or worse; the 5th to 8th ranked nations meanwhile, (rightly) split between the top test sides (48 games) and the next level (38 games). While there are a handful of mismatches, and no region can expect to always have stiff competition for either places in the World Test Championship or for Regional Champion, this is a highly competitive structure where few games can be taken for granted, and almost all have some meaning in the narrative sense.

Concluding Remarks

In the first part of this [manifesto](#), eight principles were put forward to guide the future development of cricket. They are not without controversy, as the implications of them involve a substantial change in the traditions of touring and the existing international flavour to the game. Regardless, I believe strongly in three key ideas that underpin what I was trying to achieve: that cricket can and should aim to be more widely played; that the existing structure of international cricket is not serving the game well, but rather causing players and fans alike to withdraw from the relentless but meaningless competition; and that T20 domestic cricket will transform the finances of players and the emphasis of the game in a mostly beneficial manner.

Despite this, I believe strongly in the historical traditions that underpin the game, and am a devoted follower of test cricket, even to the exclusion of other forms of the game. Thus while the manifesto seeks to balance multiple competing ideals, it does so in a way that ultimately reflects my beliefs in what I would like to see played, and the competitions I would take an interest in.

With that in mind, three key ideas were put forward. Firstly, that the calendar should be divided between international and T20 domestic cricket, entailing a reduction in first class seasons (a problem most keenly felt in England) and a rationalisation of international tours. Secondly, that world cricket should be split into regions, or more precisely, that the existing regions be amalgamated into three, such that each has the depth to play competitive tournaments amongst its members that would include the test and associate nations. And finally, that half the international test calendar should be set aside to play regional and world test championships, such that, every four years there would be an official world test champion.

Of those three ideas, the first is controversial, but I suspect inevitable, if the growth of T20 cricket continues as it is likely to do. The second is controversial only insofar as many people are deeply reluctant to bring associate teams into the circle of test playing nations. Politically, this is understandable, as full member status carries with it broader implications. As was recently argued by [Roy Morgan](#) however, full member status need not be tied to playing test matches. The growth of cricket on the fringes is rapid, and they will shortly clamour for more opportunities. Regional qualification competitions are a tried and true way of bringing smaller nations into competition without hurting the overall "product".

The third idea is not new, in the sense that everybody has their own preference for how a world championship should be played. I only proffer mine on the basis that its incubation has been long (almost a decade) and rigorous thought been applied to the intricacies of the problem. The combination of a 6 team world championship, played inside a year, a qualification play-off, and regional qualifiers is, I believe, a unique approach, which addresses the principles outlined at the beginning of this process. I put it forward now as a serious suggestion for the enhancement of the game, at a crucial juncture in its development and growth.