

Cricket Ball Fatal Head Injuries

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Dear Madam, I would like to draw your attention about cricket ball fatal head injuries. Cricket has a known history from the 16th century, a game for which England, Australia and South Africa were the founding members. India, West Indies and New Zealand became the Test Cricket nations before the Second World War and Pakistan followed soon afterwards. In the closing years of the 20th century, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh were also Test nations.¹

Twelve international cricket players have suffered fatal head, chest injuries and cardiac arrests resulting in their death. Out of them, six players who died of a head injury, are George Summers (England 1870); Ian Folley (England 1993); Raman Lamba (India 1998); Alwyn Jenkins (England 2009); Darryn Randall (South Africa 2013); and Phillip Hughes (Australia 2014). However, Andy Ducat (England 1942); Wasim Hassan (Pakistan 2006); and Richard Beaumont (England 2012) died due to a cardiac arrest on the ground. Zulfiqar Bhatti (Pakistan 2013) died due to a chest injury, and Wilf Slack (England 1989) died during the game with an unknown cause.^{2,3}

Phillip Hughes, a 25-year-old Australian test batsman was struck on the left side of the head by a ball and died after a serious head injury while batting at Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday, 26 Nov, 2014. Magnetic Resonance Imaging of brain showed massive bleeding between the meninges which lead to brain damage and death. Hughes's death was a heart wrenching day for global cricket and a mournful day for his family, fellows and fans.⁴

More recently, in a one-day match against New Zealand in Hamilton, Pakistan cricket team all-rounder Shoaib Malik came to bat without a helmet and was struck by New Zealand's player Colin Munro's throw on dated Jan 16, 2018. The ball was struck on the occipital lobe of the head while taking a run, Malik went down immediately with symptoms of head concussion.⁵

The cricket ball is a solid ball that consists of cork core

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covered by hard leather, weighs between 155.9 gm and 163 gm and routinely reaches a speed of around 130-145 km per hour.³ Bowlers use bouncers that are usually stern up from the ground towards the chest, head and neck of the batsman. While batting, cricket players usually wear helmets with a metal grill to protect the face and the head. But still these helmets leave the area at the lower temporal and postero-lateral occipital parts of the skull and cervical region.

Batsmen are continuing to sustain head, face, neck and dental injuries despite wearing helmets. The most common head injury is concussion, it includes traumatic brain injury with serious sequela, acute subdural haematoma resulted in fatal brain injury. Mostly, injuries occur following the ball impact to the helmet faceguard or ball penetrating the gap between the helmet peak and faceguard. Fractures, lacerations and contusions are the most common injuries.⁴ A Head injury due to the cricket ball can lead to serious consequences. Batsmen must wear a helmet that covers the head, face and cervical region of the neck. ICC should establish laws to stop the bouncers, to minimise the deaths related to the hard cricket ball. Moreover, change in the nature of the balls may decrease in the severity of fatal head injuries.

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