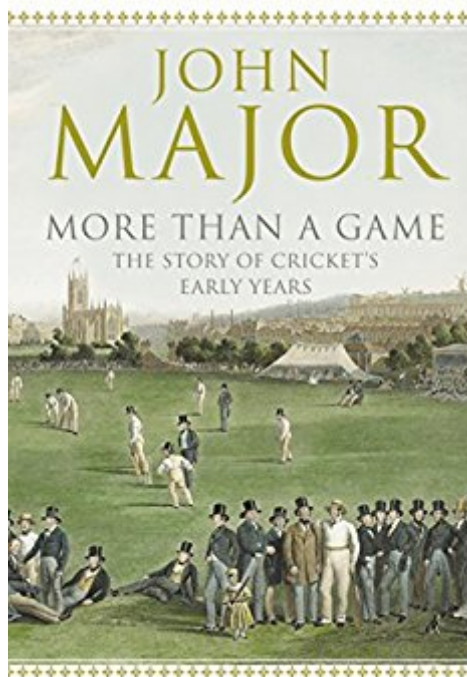




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More Than A Game: The Story Of Cricket's Early Years



Synopsis

The former Prime Minister examines the early history of one of the great loves of his life in a book that sheds new light on the summer game's social origins. All his life John Major has loved cricket. In *More Than a Game*, he examines it from its origins up to the coming of the First World War. Along the way he considers the crucial role of the wealthy patrons who gambled huge sums on early matches; the truth behind the legends that have grown up around the famous Hambledon Club; changes in rules and techniques, including the transition from underarm to overarm bowling; the long-standing, but often blurred, distinction between 'gentlemen' and 'players'; the coming of the MCC and its role as the supreme arbiter of the game; the spread of cricket throughout the British Empire; and the emergence of the county game and international competition. It is a story rich in anecdote and colourful characters. Many of the great names from the 'Golden Age' of cricket – C.B. Fry, Ranjitsinhji, 'Demon' Spofforth and of course the towering figure of W.G. Grace – are still well-known today. But long before then the game already had its stars: men like the Kentish innkeeper's son 'Lumpy' Stevens, who played at the highest level until he was nearly sixty; 'Silver Billy' Beldham, who was taught how to play by a gingerbread baker; the notoriously avaricious and ill-tempered Lord Frederic Beauclerk, a direct descendant of Charles II and Nell Gwynne; and the mighty 'Lion of Kent' Alfred Mynn.

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Customer Reviews

I had seen a review of this book in the Economist a few years back, and had put it on my "to read" list. Finally got around to downloading it while on holiday in Hawaii. I've only started reading it, but I can tell you that it is very good. I know nothing whatsoever about cricket, and I wanted to learn. Mr. Major is an excellent writer and he brings the sport to life. If, like me, you know nothing about cricket and want to have a comfortable and enjoyable read, I recommend this book. Also, because Mr. Major followed Mrs. Thatcher as PM, I always had a view of him (as did, no doubt, others in the US) as somewhat bland; he is not. The book gives you an insight into Mr. Major's personality that makes for fascinating reading.

This is fabulous! This is a VERY pleasant reading experience. This author was wasted as a Prime Minister: he is a brilliant, enthusiastic, and precise cricket sportswriter. This is a pre-WW I history of cricket, and is unexpectedly detailed and brilliantly witty! My only complaint is that it stops at WW I. I'd like to have read about the aftermath of WW I on the game, and of the Interwar Years. Did the breakdown in the class system damage cricket, or alter its character? This is a love story for England. Well done!

One of the best written histories about the game. Yes, the author John Major is that Sir John the former Prime Minister of Great Britain! This is a superior piece of work and one that anyone who has an interest in Cricket will enjoy reading.

Very detailed, but boring

For More Than A Game, John Major uses the same formula he used for his autobiography: he starts with a chronological account then switches to topical subjects. In the first half he presents a chronology of cricket from the very early days when records reveal something called cricket was played but that was probably nothing more than hitting a ball with a stick, if even that. Major continues with successive chapters describing successive periods until he reaches the late 18th

century by which time cricket had become something fans would recognize today. Major then switches to topical chapters which are still in a loose chronological order but with considerable overlap. He has a chapter on the evolution of bowling from under hand to round arm to over hand. One chapter describes how troupes of players began being paid to tour the country while another describes the slow controversial ascendancy of these professionals. Major even devotes one whole chapter to the people who keep game records, and manages to keep it interesting! The last chapter ends with how the Great War killed many promising young cricketers. The book is wonderfully well written. Major's prose is clear direct and forceful; it's not perfect and he waxes a little too lyrical on occasion and quotes poetry that only a cricket lover could forgive. And the editor should really have insisted on a better title. Again, John Major shows himself to be a pragmatic conservative. As he valued the Tory party above the issues that tore it apart (e.g. Europe) Major values the institution of cricket above any single characteristic. He sees the game isn't now what it was at the beginning of the 20th century, but he recognizes that the game needs changes like one-day cricket if it is to maintain its place among other sports. While his book is about cricket's past, readers may feel cricket has a great future lying ahead. Vincent Poirier, Dublin

Like the author, this gem of a book is, on the surface, dry and serious, but as you get to know it you uncover self-deprecating charm and subtle humor as the former British prime minister expounds on the real love of his life, cricket. If you love cricket, give it a try-and give it a chance. Also like the author, it will, against all perceived odds, grow on you.

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