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Cricket: A Case Study in Alberta's Sporting History
Daniel C. Randell

The game of cricket is widely perceived in Canada today as something foreign; after all, the game was invented in England, and clubs in Canada today seem to consist mostly of expatriates from various parts of the world where the sport is popular. It would be quite standard if, say, one were to ask residents of Calgary or Edmonton if cricket were a Canadian game, for any of those persons to respond with a resolute "No." Hockey is Canada's game, says the world, and in summer (officially), it is lacrosse. English cricket, however, boasts a rich history in this former British Dominion. It was played widely across the country and many current clubs can trace their origins at least back to the nineteenth century. By the start of the twentieth century, leagues and associations had formed nationwide.

At the same time however, another sport was making its rise and capturing the hearts of the Canadian people. Baseball had American origins, and though in Britain any bat and ball game besides cricket had been relegated to a position of unimportance, baseball was beginning to see significant gains in popularity in the Dominion of Canada.

This essay shall address the rise and fall of cricket in Alberta during the period 1885-1915 and offer an explanation as to why baseball came to overtake its English counterpart in Canada. More specifically, this paper will examine the history of cricket and its demise in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, two major sporting centres of the period. In addition, a cursory look at the establishment of Grande Prairie will serve to illustrate the extent of baseball's takeover at the end of the period as Alberta's favourite summer game.

To date, historians have largely glossed over this country's cricket history. Even an encompassing historical volume compiled by cricket expert Trevor Bailey makes virtually no mention of the sport's presence in Canada. Where attempts have been made to document cricket

activity in this country, reports are dedicated to the game's prominence in the eastern provinces, leaving the cricket history of the west largely unexplored.

Of all those historians who have considered the subject, perhaps the most extensive work on cricket's history in Canada has been undertaken by David Cooper. He describes the short life of cricket in Canada as "A Century of Rejection", in an article written for the *Journal of Sport History*. In the article, Cooper details the history of cricket in Canada between the period 1860-1960.¹ Cooper attempts to draw conclusions on a national scale, and though he covers a great deal of ground in this work, the history of cricket in Alberta remains largely untouched—even considering Cooper's extensive efforts to capture the story of the sport across the country. Sociologists Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson have also done some work to trace cricket's curious past in this country, in an attempt to explain why the sport failed to take root in the same way as it did in other former Dominions. Kaufman and Patterson however, focus primarily on the exclusivity of cricket, and do not explore in detail the affect which the style of play, as well as the culture surrounding cricket in Canada had on the sport's success.²

Alan Metcalfe, who has done excellent work on the history of sport in Canada, mentions something of the conflict between cricket and baseball which ultimately caused the former's downfall. In his book *Canada Learns To Play*, Metcalfe presents extensive research on the newspaper coverage of the two sports over the years just before and after the turn of the

¹ David Cooper, "Canadians Declare 'It Isn't Cricket': A Century of Rejection of the Imperial Game, 1860-1960." *Journal of Sport History*, 26, no. 1 (1999): 51.

² Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson, "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket." *American Sociological Review*, 70, no. 1 (2005): 88-90.

twentieth century, indicating cricket's slow fade from public popularity.³ He cites a variety of reasons for cricket's decline, from a lack of competitive opportunities to problems with scheduling and, ultimately, to the game being firmly rooted within the dominion of the social elite. Metcalfe also infers that cricket was in many cases dependent on a fresh supply of English immigrants to maintain its status as Canada's premier bat-and-ball sport.

Conversely, the history of baseball in Canada has been well documented by historians such as Metcalfe and William Humber. Books like *Sport in Canadian Society* and *Sport in Canada* too, devote more than a few pages in their respective volumes to baseball's colourful history throughout this country, and have examined in depth the amateur versus professional debates surrounding sport in the twentieth century.⁴ Their analysis is helpful in comprehending baseball's rise to prominence, and though both works are invaluable resources which identify broad themes in Canadian sport history, neither provides very specific insight into cricket's demise.⁵

It remains that Alberta's historic relationship with cricket has been largely unexamined, and little light has been shed on why precisely baseball was able to succeed in the modern era where cricket could not. For example, whilst *Canada Learns To Play* raises some very interesting arguments, and remains an important work, it is evident that in Alberta at least, competitive opportunities for cricket did exist after the turn of the century, not only in the form

³ Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987), 88.

⁴ Ann Hall, Trevor Slack, Garry Smith, and David Whitson, *Sport in Canadian Society* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Inc. 1992), 58-60.

⁵ Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2010), 64-65.

of challenge cups, but also in regional leagues.⁶ Additionally, it is especially evident from the newspaper archives in Western Canada that, contrary to Metcalfe's argument, cricket had been adopted by Canadian-born citizens in fair numbers, and did not rely solely on immigrants for expansion. This was especially the case in Calgary, where at least three clubs were in existence before 1900, many of whose members would have been identified as Canadians, not Englishmen; this is testified to in the frequent occurrence of Canadian vs. newcomers games.⁷ Thus, cricket in Alberta and specifically, its relegation in Alberta's sporting life to a second place position behind baseball, has yet to be sufficiently examined. The question that I am proposing is one which has been previously unexplored, and it is why exactly was baseball able to dominate the Alberta sporting scene? Specifically, how did baseball seemingly eradicate cricket from the many pitches scattered across Albertan settlements until the early twentieth century?

Cricket is a unique sport in that its history stretches back much further than many of the games with which we are currently familiar. In *A History of Cricket*, Trevor Bailey writes that the name of the game is probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'cricce,' an Old English word used to describe a staff or crutch. By the seventeenth century in England, the game had been firmly established as a pastime, and it grew increasingly popular throughout the eighteenth century. It is interesting that Bailey also notes that before the eighteenth century, cricket was "considered largely as a sport for common folk and schoolboys," but that the sport "gained in respectability" after 1800.⁸ By 1850, cricket had bloomed from its simple roots to become a national summer

⁶ William M. McLennan, *Sport in Early Calgary* (Calgary: First Brisebois Publishing, 1983), 231.

⁷ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 218. Kaufman and Patterson also affirm the existence of many Canadian-born cricketers (91).

⁸ Trevor Bailey, *A History of Cricket* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 9-10.

game, and was spreading across the world. Wherever the British went, there also went their culture, their language, and of course, their sport. In regards to cricket, Allen Guttman surmised the effect colonisation had on the game in his book *Games and Empires* by affirming that: “To the ends of the earth...cricket followed the flag.”⁹

Cricket made its first appearance in Canada in the eighteenth century, at which time British officers were the primary players of the sport. It is likely that the game was first played in Quebec by military men stationed there in the months following the Seven Years War. The Toronto Cricket Club was founded in 1827, and yet the first documented case of a cricket match between two Canadian teams is recorded as having taken place in 1834, between teams from Toronto and Guelph.¹⁰ In 1844, the first ever international cricket match was played between the U.S. and Canada in New York, and in 1859, the first trip by English cricketers to engage in overseas matches saw them stop in both Canada and the United States.¹¹ By 1867, the game had become so popular that Sir John A. MacDonald even declared that cricket should be Canada’s national sport.¹² In the prairie settlements of Winnipeg, Battleford, Regina, Edmonton, and Calgary, settlers took up the old country’s favourite pastime with great pleasure. Lacrosse was popular too, as was football (soccer), but if there was a bat-and-ball game to be played, cricket was it. Unfortunately for Sir John, Canadian cricket would peak in the 1860s, and as David

⁹ Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 18.

¹⁰ David Cooper, “It Isn’t Cricket”, 53.

¹¹ Frederick Lillywhite, *The English Cricketers Trip to Canada and the United States* (London: F. Lillywhite, 1859), 2-3.

¹² Kevin E. Boller, "The History of Cricket Canada." Cricket Canada Website [accessed April 11, 2018., <http://gocricketgocanada.com/web/about/history/>]

Cooper illustrates, just one hundred years later, the sport would fall into obscurity. How could Canada's one-time candidate for the national sport all but disappear from the popular consciousness? What factors might have contributed to the downfall of a game played enthusiastically across the country—indeed, from “sea to sea”? The rise of baseball is no doubt one obvious source of blame; however, looking specifically at the history of cricket in Alberta, this paper shall highlight the various reasons why cricket would ultimately fail to take a permanent hold on Canadians the way other sports (such as baseball) would, by first telling the story of the two bat-and-ball games in two Alberta cities, and secondly, examining the precise shortcomings of cricket, and the strengths of baseball in the Albertan context.

In nineteenth-century Alberta (at that time the Northwest Territories), cricket flourished. Even into the twentieth century, the sport remained popular and was played in nearly every corner of the province. Significant evidence exists for cricket activity in the archives of various Alberta newspapers. *The Calgary Weekly Herald*, *The Edmonton Bulletin*, *The Wainwright Star*, and the *Red Deer News* are but a few which report the formation of clubs as well as weekly meetings and match fixtures. As Penelope Routledge has documented in a 1978 MA thesis, the North-West Mounted Police were instrumental in introducing the game to Alberta.¹³ William McLennan writes that cricket first appeared in the province in 1874 at Fort Macleod, where members of the North West Mounted Police are thought to have played the game almost daily. McLennan also pegs the first cricket match between two Alberta teams at Fort Macleod in 1883, with the Fort's NWMP detachment recording a victory over the visiting Calgary police.¹⁴

¹³ Penelope Dawn Routledge, “The North-West Mounted Police and Their Influence on Sporting and Social Life in the North-West Territories, 1870-1904”, MA thesis (University of Alberta, 1978), 53-55.

¹⁴ William M. McLennan, *Sport in Early Calgary* (Calgary: First Brisebois Publishing, 1983), 216.

Residents in Calgary then were certainly playing cricket by 1883, though probably earlier, and Edmonton too, got started with the game very early on.

On the sixth of May, 1882 *The Edmonton Bulletin* reported to its readers that “The Edmonton Cricket Club has been organised and Mr. C.S. Wood has been instructed to procure the necessary tools while on his trip to the east.” By early June of that same year, the paper advertised “cricket practice every evening when the weather permits.”¹⁵ That same year saw cricket featured as the main event for Edmonton’s Victoria Day celebrations, and in 1884 the Queen’s birthday was celebrated with an inter-club match between the E.C.C. and the Fort Saskatchewan club.¹⁶ In the 1880s, cricket was expanding, and the sport would continue to serve as the primary attraction for many such events in Edmonton. Though Fort Saskatchewan seems to have been Edmonton’s most frequent (and nearest) rival, matches against Calgary were played as early as 1892.¹⁷ In 1899 an Edmonton XI journeyed to Calgary for a week-long tournament there, whereupon the E.C.C. returned the favour and hosted Calgary two months later in September, though that tournament turned into more of a social occasion when the matches were cancelled due to rain.¹⁸

Cricket was also popular among the younger inhabitants of Alberta’s future capital; the sport is listed as one of the amusements provided for children at an Edmonton Sunday Schools picnic in 1886, whilst another mention of the game comes in the form of a possible

¹⁵ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 May 1882, p. 3 AR00301, 3 June 1882, p.3 AR00301

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 May 1884, p. 4 AR00401

¹⁷ *Bulletin*, 11 August 1892 p. 1 AR00103

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1899, p. 2 & 5, AR00204, AR00503

neighbourhood disturbance, as the *Bulletin* writes: “the boys in South Edmonton play cricket in the streets in the evening.”¹⁹ A Presbyterian picnic in 1887 again lists cricket among its activities for children, although this year baseball was also being offered.

Baseball practically escapes mention in Edmonton’s newspaper before the 1890s. Aside from its inclusion in the line-up of activities at a Sunday School picnic, no record of the sport comes across in the *Bulletin* until 1892, when mention is made of the new opportunities for sport afforded by the construction of a railway between Calgary and Edmonton.²⁰ In that same year, the game is played on Victoria’s birthday for the first time, denoting the intrusion of baseball into holiday activities that had previously been the domain of cricket (though the latter was still clearly perceived as the dominant game).²¹ By the latter half of the decade and into the twentieth century, it appears things had begun to change in regards to baseball’s status, as the record begins to show the regular appearance of the sport in subsequent summer celebrations. Baseball and cricket certainly co-existed, but after 1900, baseball regularly replaced cricket at public events in Edmonton. On Victoria Day in 1901, for example, no cricket match was played; instead a baseball match entertained residents. The following year, baseball was again featured as a central event on 24 May, as well as football—cricket, it seemed, was no longer capturing the same audience it had prior to the turn of the century.

Nevertheless, cricketers persisted in promoting their sport, and the game continued to thrive among Edmonton residents. The establishment of the North West Cricket League in 1906

¹⁹ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 10 July 1886, p. 1 AR00104, 27 April 1893, p. 1 AR00103

²⁰ *Bulletin*, 20 February 1892, p. 7 AR00702

²¹ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 July 1887, p. 1 AD00105_2

and reports of cricket being played in Edmonton schools testify to the considerable presence cricket must have had in the province's capital.²² It seems however, that cricket's devolution as a public attraction and its simultaneous growth into a competitive sport indicates that cricket is best enjoyed when one is a participant, and that—at least in the opinion of early twentieth-century Edmontonians—baseball was simply the more exciting game to watch; thus its more frequent incorporation into summer holiday programmes.

Baseball and cricket were on comparatively similar growth tracks in regards to the expansion of competitive sport that took place in early twentieth-century Alberta, but baseball's growth as a spectator sport was unrivalled. In the same year the North West Cricket League was formed, Edmonton was at work building a new baseball ground complete with a grand stand, bleachers, and ticket box. While baseball was going commercial, Edmonton cricketers did not even have their own cricket ground. (It was a primary concern of Edmonton club members to procure a pitch as the prospects of inter-city league play became a reality with the advent of the NWCL.)²³ Now, it is likely that if a crowd was anticipated for a particular match then cricket would be played on the Edmonton baseball grounds (as was the case when Calgary cricketers came to play Edmonton in 1909), but the fact that cricket was usually played at an alternative location at which it is apparent the means for hosting a crowd of onlookers did not exist speaks to cricket's sinking reputation as a spectator sport.²⁴

²² *The Saturday News*, 6 January 1906, p. 12, AR01202, 24 March 1906 p. 2, AR00205

²³ *Bulletin*, 8 February 1906, p. 5 AR00503

²⁴ *Bulletin*, 21 June 1909, p. 6 AR00620

The North West Cricket League was announced with some excitement to the public, as an article in Edmonton's *Saturday News* boasts of "first-class cricketers" throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan, and says that "[citizens] may look forward to a most successful season for the new league...[as] a considerable number of contests will take place."²⁵ The future of Edmonton cricket at least looked sustainable now, if not bright. Unfortunately though, no further mention of the North West Cricket League is made in the Edmonton papers following the winter of 1906, and though Edmonton did compete in challenge matches for the Central Alberta Cup—donated by the citizens of Red Deer—and manage to bring it home, the NWCL never came to fruition that year.²⁶ With 1907 came a renewed effort in establishing a league for cricketers. On 3 May, the *Bulletin* reported that "It is now likely that fourteen clubs will join the proposed Alberta Cricket league," but this second attempt failed too, after a meeting between Calgary and Edmonton at Red Deer at which a cricket match was to be played and the matters of the league discussed, was called off due to snow.²⁷ Thus cricket has a rich history in Edmonton, even demonstrating a firm hold on the public before the turn of the century, but following 1900 the game experienced difficulties appealing to crowds as well as organising league play.

It appears that cricket may have been somewhat more popular in Calgary than it was in the province's capital city. Though enthusiasm for the sport waxed and waned before the twentieth century, at one time, Calgary boasted no less than three cricket clubs.²⁸ Cricket got its

²⁵ *News*, 6 January 1906, p. 12 AR01202

²⁶ *Bulletin*, 14 July 1905, p. 8 AR00806

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9 May 1907, p.5, AR00509

²⁸ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 218.

start in Calgary in early April of 1884, when a Mr. Frank Hardisty advertised in the *Calgary Weekly Herald* for the city's first cricket club to be formed. By the middle of the month, the organisation had twenty-five players, and an additional number of honorary club members.²⁹ In that same summer, plans were made for Calgary to co-host a week of cricket matches with the Macleod club in August of 1885. It was hoped that clubs from Moose Jaw, Regina, Medicine Hat, and even Winnipeg would participate; alas, the scheme never came off, but the 1885 season did see a good many matches played between Calgary and High River, and following seasons saw Medicine Hat join Macleod as another regular rival for the Calgary club.³⁰ By 1890, Calgary had three cricket teams: the Alberta Cricket Club (the Calgary club had reorganised in 1888 under a new name), the Fire Brigade club, and the NWMP club. McLennan writes that each of these organisations had their own cricket pitch—a significant achievement in those days—and a schedule was worked out for the summer of 1890 for all three teams to compete against one another. Cricket was developing at a rapid pace until 1892, when unfortunately, successive drops in membership meant that the police and fire teams were forced to amalgamate, until in 1893, it was suggested that Calgary cricketers concentrate their efforts on a single club for the coming season.³¹

1897 exhibited a real spike in cricket interest, as the *Herald* reported “more new names on the membership roll than any other previous year,” and news of a country versus city match that year that saw “a crowd of spectators on the grounds far more than ever to go to a cricket

²⁹ *The Calgary Weekly Herald*, 2 April 1884 p. 1 Item # AR00104, 16 April 1884 p. 2 Item # AR00204

³⁰ *Herald*, 21 May 1884 p. 4 AR00401, 8 July 1885 p. 4 AR00403

³¹ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 217-218.

match in Calgary.”³² Similar to in Edmonton, Calgary cricketers often found themselves central to the entertainment when it came to municipal Dominion Day or Victoria Day celebrations. A highlight for Calgary cricket before the turn of the century was in 1898, when a tournament was held in the city, which included teams from both Millarville and Innisfail. A number of ladies are said to have accompanied the visiting teams to take in the matches, and admission was charged for all spectators of the tournament: fifteen cents for men, and ten cents for women. The following year Calgary hosted Edmonton for a week of cricket in July. The tournament was purported to be “one of the year’s biggest sporting events” and once again admission fees were charged for a crowd of spectators.³³

It is evident that cricket in Calgary not only proved popular as a pastime, but also as a game to watch, at least for a time. The fact that Calgary’s cricket pitch could facilitate a large number of onlookers as well as afford to charge admission means the sport must have garnered significant attention from the locals and been a popular form of entertainment.

In contrast, baseball fared less well than cricket in Calgary’s early years. At first, the American game seemed off to a fair start in Calgary, with tournaments having been successfully organised for baseball prior to those for cricket. There is record of organised baseball being played in Calgary as far back as 1884, yet it appears that prior to 1888, the game had gained little traction, and was mostly enjoyed as a pastime, as most reports from the *Herald* concerning baseball are limited to the sport’s activity in other parts of the country or else in the United

³² *Weekly Herald*, 15 April 1897, p. 3 AR00307 29 April 1897, p. 5 AR00506

³³ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 223.

States.³⁴ It was not until 1888 that consistent record begins to appear of organised baseball matches being played in the city. The most shocking reports regarding baseball's situation come all from the same year. The *Herald* relayed in April of 1897 that “no attempt” would be made to organise a baseball team in Calgary that summer. Then, a few months later an editorial reflecting on the state of the game surmised that, “today baseball is practically a dead letter in town”. Meanwhile, cricket had “shown a decided increase in popularity”, with matches played “nearly every Saturday afternoon during the past summer”, and a note on club membership increasing significantly.³⁵ There is little doubt that baseball was still played in Calgary on a recreational basis, but no form of organised baseball existed for the duration of the 1897 season—a very late date considering the widespread growth and popularity of baseball across Canada during this period. Efforts to re-organise were made in 1898, and a letter to the editor of the *Herald* in 1899 suggests the formation of a city league for that year, in which the Fire Brigade, the C.P.R. Road Department, the C.P.R. Station Department, and the city would all organise themselves into teams to compete.³⁶ 1897 was certainly a problematic year for baseball's development in Calgary, and though the C.P.R. and Fire Brigade were able to compete against one another again soon after, inter-city competition would not resume until 1900.³⁷

Calgary then most definitely had an abundance of passionate cricketers, and baseball had its troubles in the city, but once the latter had regained its stride, it would slowly begin to take

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁵ *Herald*, 29 April 1897, p. 5 AR00506, 14 October 1897, p. 4 AR00410

³⁶ *Herald*, 9 March 1899, p. 4 AR00405

³⁷ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 130.

over the public sphere in a similar fashion to the way baseball had in Edmonton. Contrary to the summer of 1898, when cricket had been the biggest spectator sport in Calgary, McLennan writes that just four years later, at the city's fall exhibition of 1902, baseball was the main attraction. By this time, the American game was gaining momentum across the prairies in general, and by 1905 Calgary had no less than five baseball clubs.³⁸

Interest in cricket made something of a resurgence in 1908, when the Southern Alberta Cricket League was formed. The Calgary Cricket Club “was considered the undisputed champion of the league” winning the league's cup prize, and the following year, the C.C.C. embarked on a west coast tour, with stops in Revelstoke, Vernon, and Victoria—even playing matches against some American teams. Although “a large crowd gathered at the station to see them off and wish them luck” when they made their departure, this is contrasted by the fact that coverage of cricket in the local sporting news had reached an all-time low. Calgarians were now more interested in baseball.³⁹

The first competitive cricket opportunities for Alberta clubs came in the form of tournaments. Throughout the years, there had been challenge cups and inter-club play within cities, but a regular schedule of play never materialised—the proposed creation of the North West Cricket League would have been the first, had it not failed, but competitive opportunities for cricket did not exist in Alberta until the Southern Alberta Cricket League finally managed to organise. There had been much discussion of league play prior to the 1908 season of the SACL, and while Edmonton were keen to lead in the creation of a provincial organisation, all attempts to

³⁸ Ibid., 130.

³⁹ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 231.

unify the cricketing communities of the territories were foiled until the summer of 1910, when the Western Canada Cricket Association hosted its first tournament in Winnipeg. Another tournament was held the following summer, and in 1912 The Alberta Cricket Association was established to represent the province at future WCCA competitions. Cricket started to become more regulated as recurring competitions were hosted by the above associations, but by-and-large the sport had seen its heyday in Alberta. McLennan writes that “by 1913 the Alberta Cricket Association was not very active,” and later that summer, in what should have been an exciting tour of the Australian Cornstalkers cricket team to Edmonton and Calgary, the first game in Calgary was recorded as having drawn a “disappointingly small crowd.”⁴⁰ The final blow for the organisation of Alberta-wide cricket came in the summer of 1914, with Britain’s declaration of war against Germany. Canada was automatically involved, and a publication by the Alberta Cricket Association in 1949 details that very little cricket was played in the province during the war years, and that “the war took a very heavy toll on those who had played cricket up to 1914.”⁴¹ Following consecutive years of trying and failing to establish a provincial body to regulate matches, the limited success of the Alberta Cricket Association in the pre-war years, and the devastating effects of the First World War, cricket would ultimately fail to recover its nineteenth century position of prominence in Albertan society.

Baseball started off in the prairies in a similar manner to cricket, with challenge matches, cups, and eventually tournaments, but the American game differed in that scheduled league play was organised and sustained much earlier than cricket. For example, the Southern Alberta

⁴⁰ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 242.

⁴¹ *Dominion Cricket Tournament, Riley Park, Calgary, Alta., Thursday, Friday and Saturday, July 28th, 29th and 30th, 1949: A Brief Outline of Calgary Cricket* (Calgary: Alberta Cricket Association, 1949), 3.

Baseball League was successfully established in 1904, with a schedule for forty games to be played from Victoria Day all the way to September.⁴² This is a packed calendar of matches, much more akin to the professional sports leagues of the twenty-first century, and an accomplishment cricket was unable to achieve prior to the First World War. By 1907, the Western Canada Baseball League was formed, consisting of teams from Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. League play did not come off in 1908, but in 1909 a revived league commenced play in early May. This was truly a western Canadian organisation, with teams from all three prairie provinces represented, including Winnipeg, Brandon, Moose Jaw, Regina, Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. The 1909 season of the WCBL was foundational in establishing consistent league play and also incredibly broad in scope for the period, bringing together players from three provinces. Despite financial problems and some fluctuation in membership, the WCBL went on to play five consecutive seasons following the success of 1909; the 1914 season finished just as the First World War began.⁴³

A summary analysis of the newspaper coverage from the period 1885-1915 serves to illustrate cricket's decreasing popularity with the public, and the simultaneous rise of baseball. Alan Metcalfe has demonstrated in *Canada Learns To Play* how coverage of both sports in the nation's largest newspapers speaks volumes to their respective popularity throughout the period. For example, at the beginning of the era, cricket was the third most popular sport in the pages of the *Toronto Globe*, occupying 12 per cent of its total sports coverage, where by 1915 just a mere

⁴² *Bulletin*, 31 May 1904, p. 7 AR00704

⁴³ William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball In Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 69.

0.3 per cent of the paper's athletic news was devoted to cricket.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, baseball in 1915 was the second most reported sport by the *Globe* filling 23.5 per cent of the coverage. In Edmonton too, the American game was the number one reported sport, occupying 32 per cent of the total sports coverage at the end of the period.⁴⁵ In sum, by 1915 the coverage of cricket deteriorated drastically from its nineteenth century status, and the game would become a much less frequent topic of discussion, with the papers favouring baseball instead.

To further demonstrate the fall of cricket and rise of baseball between 1885-1915, the historical association with bat-and-ball games in the city of Grande Prairie provides valuable insight. Grande Prairie was first incorporated as a village in 1914—just prior to the outbreak of the First World War—but a thorough search of the city's newspaper archives yielded no trace of cricket ever having been played in the northwestern Alberta settlement. Conversely, much evidence exists for the presence of baseball in Grande Prairie, stemming all the way back to before the village's incorporation. An article in the *Grande Prairie Herald* from 8 April 1913 for example, details the various settlements in the area which will be involved in league play that summer and calls for proper baseball diamonds to be built. Members of the league listed in the article include Grande Prairie, Beaverlodge, Lake Saskatoon, and others.⁴⁶ The following year, a packed schedule of matches was planned for the "Twi-Light Baseball League", with no less than thirty games running from 16 May to 5 September. Grande Prairie was playing baseball in a league capacity even before the town was incorporated, having erected a proper baseball

⁴⁴ Metcalfe, *Play*, 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁶ *Grande Prairie Herald*, 8 April 1913

diamond by the time it had become a village.⁴⁷ Yet no cricket pitch would be found there until the late twentieth century following an influx of immigrants from cricketing countries like England and India. This serves to indicate how, by the dawn of the First World War, cricket had given way to baseball to the extent that a new settlement in Alberta like Grande Prairie played the American game only, rather than the British bat-and-ball game which had been enjoyed by previous generations of Albertans. By this time, baseball had saturated the province and cricket had ceased to dominate the sporting landscape of the province, only managing to hang on in the cities where it had been firmly established decades before, particularly Calgary and Edmonton.

Baseball was able to survive the war and grew exponentially in Canada during the interwar period. Why was this so? The answer to the question is multi-faceted, and comprehension of the end result can be gleaned by cross-examining both cricket and baseball in the context of each sport's specific characteristics, and their respective abilities to appeal to Albertans. For a number of reasons, the American game was able to find good soil in Alberta and proved more successful at establishing a framework for consistent inter-city play than cricket. By employing some of the evidence which has been cited in the current scholarship on the sports, as well as through the use of Alberta newspapers, I shall now explicate the reasons why cricket failed to maintain dominance in twentieth-century Alberta, and why baseball succeeded.

Firstly, cricket was significantly more exclusive than other sports of the period. It is imperative to note that even in Alberta, each sport played at this time was associated with a certain socio-economic class, and cricket for the most part, was the sole domain of the Anglo-Canadian aristocracy, whereas baseball was more closely associated with the working classes.

⁴⁷ *Grande Prairie Herald*, 19 May 1914

Baseball also exposed cricket's drawbacks as a spectator sport, for when compared to its American counterpart, cricket seemed slow, and the style of the game meant that a love of leisure and considerable free time were necessary components for participants and spectators alike. Finally, baseball did not shy from professionalism, whereas Canadian cricketers fiercely opposed it, ultimately devastating cricket's ability to move forward and be successful in the twentieth century.

Exclusivity

Sport in the twentieth century conformed to many of the patterns of the twentieth century; for example, systems of racism and class pervaded sport in the early days because they were upheld as natural aspects of twentieth-century society.⁴⁸ Though sport also became a vehicle for breaking the barriers of race and class, as a result of persisting societal structures, prejudices played a part in every game. As such, each sport became associated with a certain sort of people. In late nineteenth, early twentieth-century Alberta, all games exhibited partiality in one form or another, and this played into how they developed from pastimes in to professional sports. Cricket was no exception. "The English game", as it is often referred to in the record, no doubt favoured the participation of those with ties to the motherland, but, more importantly, cricket appealed to players who belonged to the Anglo-Canadian elite. These included Englishmen, and Britons in general, but more specifically wealthy professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and bankers—even sometimes of non-British descent. That being said, cricket was inherently English in its every aspect. Besides lacrosse, it was easily the oldest game in Canada, with ties to a centuries-old

⁴⁸ Morrow, Wamsley, *Sport In Canada*, 65.

tradition of gameplay in England. Matches nearly always broke for tea around halfway, as they could stretch for hours, and this practice alone was characteristic of English society and a staple activity of the Anglo-Canadian upper class. It is not unlikely then that cricket appealed to Albertans who were either British by birth or who had British roots. The fact that cricket identified itself so strongly as the English national game may alone have inhibited the desire among non-English folk to participate, meaning that cricket could only expand insofar as there were enough upper-class Canadians of British descent available to sustain its membership growth.

Cricket was also not particularly taken up by the working classes. Working class individuals were welcome to spectate, but if the price of membership for the Calgary and Edmonton cricket clubs are any indication, only the wealthy were invited to play. In Calgary, a 1901 edition of the *Weekly Herald* writes that the cricket club's membership "is the same as it has been in former years, namely \$3." Meanwhile, admission to the Calgary Rangers Baseball Club in the same year was just fifty cents.⁴⁹ The Edmonton baseball association membership fee matched Calgary in the same year and was broadcasted as "open to all", while the Edmonton cricket club is attested to charging two dollars a year in 1905 (up from a dollar in 1897).⁵⁰ The gap in Edmonton is less significant, however when one considers that membership to the cricket club cost at least double that of baseball, it is obvious that cricket was looking to the upper echelon of Albertans for its patronage, and it leaves little to the imagination as to why a greater percentage of the population would choose baseball as their primary bat-and-ball game. In

⁴⁹ *Weekly Herald*, 18 April 1901, p. 6 AR00603

⁵⁰ *Bulletin*, 3 May 1901, p. 6 AR00613 7 April 1905, p. 7 AR00703

Diamonds of the North, William Humber asserts that there was an overall lack of interest in extending membership to those beyond the upper class within cricket clubs.⁵¹ Furthermore, Alberta's newspaper archive yields the results of numerous cricket club meetings detailing the officers and captains selected, as well as regular members enlisted for that year. A cursory glance at the names of club members reveal that the majority of them possess British surnames, and a good number also boast professional titles such as "Judge", or "Dr.", while other members held an officer's commission.⁵² Notes from the election of officers to the C.C.C. in 1893 list a Major Jarvis as Vice President of the club, and Dr. H.C. Wilson was a long-time member of the Edmonton Cricket Club.⁵³ Members were very rarely pulled from the working class, but would have come from the ranks of the upper-middle class at the very least; Alberta's cricket clubs were, on average, composed of a more sophisticated clique. This exclusivity maintained by cricketers in turn enforced an unnecessary limit on membership, which would ultimately stifle the game's growth across the country.⁵⁴

In contrast, Humber dubs baseball "the workingman's game".⁵⁵ Alan Metcalfe goes so far as to assert that "nowhere was the working class more visible [in Canada] than on the baseball diamonds." The working class fit fundamentally with baseball, as it was cheaper, and non-class orientated. "Barbers, butchers, bankers, doctors, lawyers...all played baseball."⁵⁶ Baseball also

⁵¹ Humber, *Diamonds*, 132.

⁵² *Herald*, 31 May 1893, p. 4AR00404

⁵³ *Bulletin*, 2 May 1891, p. 3 AR00303

⁵⁴ Humber, *Diamonds*, 132.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁶ Metcalfe, *Play*, 93.

did not have the same nationalistic sentiment pinned to it as cricket did. Cricket was “the great”, “English”, “Imperial” game, meant to build character in public schoolboys, and make them “staunch in [their] allegiance to [their] King.”⁵⁷ Although baseball was heavily associated with America, there was no stigma dictating that Americans should be the only ones playing it—there were no ulterior motives to playing the game (such as inspiring Britishness in boys)—baseball was universal, played by all nationalities and social classes.⁵⁸

With cricket, on the other hand, it seems that the English always identified the sport as belonging to them. As Kaufman and Patterson have stated: “Cricket was first played in England, and since its earliest years, global diffusion of the game has been controlled by Englishmen and their cricket clubs.”⁵⁹ This holds true in Alberta too, as the Alberta Cricket Association is to this day governed by the rules of the M.C.C.⁶⁰ Cricket maintained its Englishness in Alberta, and this contributed to its exclusivity. For example, the *Herald* in 1901 wrote that a side of Englishmen would take on a “team of Scots, Irishmen, Welshmen, Canadians, and other foreigners” in an upcoming match. The English united on one side would no doubt serve as representatives of their national game, whilst the other Britons and Canadians were relegated to the opposing team. Additionally, the same article states that “North Pole Jews, Fiji niggers, journalists and other cannibals” would be barred from the match.⁶¹ In this instance cricket is far from an inclusive

⁵⁷ *Toronto Patriot* as cited by Hall, Slack, Smith, and Whitson, *Sport in Canadian Society*, 56.

⁵⁸ Metcalfe, *Play*, 93.

⁵⁹ Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson, “Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket.” *American Sociological Review*, 70, no. 1: 85.

⁶⁰ <https://albertaonrecord.ca/alberta-cricket-association-fonds;rad> <https://www.albertacricket.com>

⁶¹ *Herald*, 6 June 1901, p. 4 AR00404

gathering of Alberta's citizens for some afternoon sport, but rather looks like the meeting of an elite cultural club reserved for a particular breed of people. As is widely known, baseball had serious race issues in its earlier days, but the culturally-exclusive mantra that appears evident in cricket's status as an English sport did not exist in the American game, which is why it was able to appeal to all sorts of people, even unite new Canadians.

R.C. Edwards, one time editor of the *Calgary Eye-Opener*, provides a helpful contrast of cricket and baseball during the period, highlighting the respective class-orientations typical of each game in a 1911 editorial. Edwards emphasises the "Englishness" of cricket and is slightly scathing in his portrayal of the sport, satirically warning any of his readers that intend on heading out to witness a match that: "If you find you have left your English accent in your other pants, you better go back and get it. Without an English accent you won't be allowed near the pavilion where the ladies and the tea things are." Contrast this atmosphere with baseball, where Edwards advises spectators to "throw a few beers under your belt as a precautionary measure."⁶² The presence of tea at one match and beer at another (a beverage typically associated with the working class) signals how quite different the two events really were from one another. Cricket was not at home with carousing, beer-drinking crowds, but was more suited to garden parties. For cricket moving forward in the twentieth century, it was as Metcalfe writes, only "as a society game that it had any degree of permanency."⁶³ This observation becomes apparent when faced with the comparison between cricket and baseball offered by the *Eye-Opener*. Cricket was a

⁶² *The Calgary Eye-Opener* 29 July 1911, p. 1 AR001012

⁶³ Metcalfe, *Play*, 98.

society game, to be indulged by the Anglo-Canadian upper class, whereas baseball was the real mainstay of the working class, both in terms of participation as well as entertainment.

Cricket was also as much a social occasion as a sporting event; it was the game of Calgary and Edmonton high society, and a critical component of the elite classes' summer social life.⁶⁴ This social aspect to the game meant that the match itself was almost never the extent of the day's activities. Tea at some point in the afternoon was a minimum requirement, but especially at tournaments, the occasion of a visit from another city's XI usually involved grand suppers, dances, and smoking parties.⁶⁵ At one Edmonton Cricket Club ball, the dancing was reported as having gone on until three o'clock in the morning on a Thursday.⁶⁶ Obviously, a soiree of this sort would be an exclusive luxury of the upper class. After all, it is highly doubtful that a member of the working class would attend such an event in the middle of the working week. Even if attendance at extra-curricular functions such as club parties was optional for players, most tournaments were two or three-day events at the minimum, and individuals who had to work consistently for a living would not be able to afford a multi-day sporting trip unless they were being paid for it.

Making one's sport exclusive to players of a particular socio-economic background is a poor way to capture the attention of numerous people. Of course, for cricket this was not the goal. The objective for Alberta's early cricketers was to play the game for the game's sake—including those outside the clique was not. Cricket was a pastime for the Anglo-Canadian elite,

⁶⁴ Metcalfe, *Play*, 83.

⁶⁵ McLennan, *Early Calgary*, 228.

⁶⁶ *Bulletin*, 7 September 1899, p. 5 AR00503

and even when it came to drawing crowds, cricketers would have seen public attention as a byproduct, attracting crowds was not the priority, as it would become for baseball managers.

Style of Play

On 16 October 1859, *The New York Herald* published a lengthy essay comparing baseball and cricket, finally coming to a critical conclusion which did not favour the latter: “Cricket is very dull after looking at a game of baseball...it is suited to aristocracy who have leisure and love of ease; baseball is suited to the people.”⁶⁷ Though cricket was in its heyday in Canada around the time this article was published, the New York paper’s deductions could have predicted the future of the game in Canada and its eventual demise upon baseball’s intrusion. Ever since cricket was adopted by the British aristocracy, the sport began an evolution which would tailor it more toward the upper class; consequentially, the game became less geared to those with limited time on their hands. Working class individuals could still play cricket, but on more of a pick-up basis, and watching matches could be difficult unless time was set aside either by the government in the case of a national holiday or by employers in the case of special matches.⁶⁸

For a variety of reasons, cricket was simply not accommodating to the working man’s schedule. Games were often unpredictably long (originally two to three days), and though it seems Albertan cricketers managed most often to call a match after just one day of play, it was not common at this time for an innings to be limited, either by overs or by time. Instead, the game (or an innings) only ended when one team had successfully dismissed all of the opposing

⁶⁷ *The New York Herald*, 16 October 1859, p. 1

⁶⁸ Humber, *Diamonds*, 69.

team's batsmen. As David Cooper observed: "The pace of the game was leisurely, and to the uninitiated there could be long periods of play when little was happening...the game was hardly an exciting spectacle when compared with the faster-moving game of baseball."⁶⁹ Even an Australian player touring Canada and the United States in 1913 said, "as a game to watch...I'll admit, [baseball] cannot be beaten..."⁷⁰ A game of baseball had a definite end with a limited number of innings—meaning if a working man were to attend a baseball match, he could more or less predict at what time the game would finish and he could return home. This is less easy to do with cricket, and obviously less of a concern for those with an abundance of free time; cricket was characterised by the nonchalance of the Anglo-Canadian elite, who perceived the game as a pastime for gentlemen, rather than a professional sport.

In regards to watching a cricket match, a key difference between the English and the American game can be found in game timelines; for years cricket did not abide to a rigid schedule, meaning anyone who wanted to take in a match could not rely on the start time advertised in the paper, or forecast at what hour the game would end. The *Calgary Weekly Herald* and *Edmonton Bulletin* provide ample examples of cricket matches beginning an hour or more after their scheduled start time. For cricket players, the game was meant to be casual and leisurely, and this often meant that the game started at whatever time best suited each individual player. It was a common occurrence for games to be slow starting due to club members arriving late.⁷¹ Sometimes games did not come off at all when the opposing team completely failed to

⁶⁹ Cooper, "It Isn't Cricket", 66.

⁷⁰ J. Barton King, "Baseball and Cricket Can Flourish Jointly on the American Continent." *Sporting Life*, 62, no. 2, 34.

⁷¹ "Cricket Tournament" *Herald*, 20 July 1899, p. 8, AR00831

make an appearance. R.C. Edwards notes the tardiness characteristic of cricket matches in his 1911 article:

In the case of a cricket match, the first thing to be done is to find out when it is supposed to commence. If announced for two o'clock in the afternoon, you will be in plenty of time if you leave home by three. Don't hurry...By the time you get there...the two first batsmen, who should have been at the wicket over an hour before [will be] standing around in careless attitudes, attired in white flannel...sipping a final cup of tea before engaging in the coming fray.⁷²

This scene describes quite a casual event, and an exceptional delay of game, Surely nothing could motivate the masses to attend a cricket match unless they had little else to do!

Acknowledging Edwards' likely exaggerations, it is certain that a working person could not easily spend an entire day at the local cricket pitch unless in the case of a holiday, and cricket matches—even in Alberta—were at least an all day affair. Though in the early days of Alberta some cricket matches took place on holidays to great fanfare, most tournaments occurred on regular weekdays, when the working classes were busy making a living.

On the opposite end of the spectrum was baseball, about which Edwards wrote that if a game was on, and “the game is scheduled for 6:45 p.m...at a quarter to seven the players are in their places and the umpire [will cry] ‘Play ball!’”⁷³ Baseball conducted business in a timely fashion—it was not for the enjoyment of the upper class only, but it stuck to a tight schedule, so that working class audiences could plan on spending only a certain amount of time at a game. Baseball could begin a game in the evening and be over before dark, meaning common folk could watch a match after a day's work. Cricket on the other hand, would be scheduled to start at

⁷² *Eye-Opener*, 29 July 1911, p. 1 AR00102

⁷³ *Eye-Opener*, 29 July 1911, p. 1

10 a.m., not actually commence play until 11 a.m., break for tea at mid-day, and then go all afternoon! In this aspect alone, the *New York Herald* was prophetic in proclaiming that baseball is the bat-and-ball game suited to the people.

Baseball was not only better suited as a spectator sport due to the style of gameplay, but it was also being tailored for audiences by the twentieth century, something Alberta's cricketers never bothered to do. Wealthy investors saw the potential business opportunities brought on by commercialised baseball and began to accommodate spectators as a result.⁷⁴ In Edmonton, for example, W.F. 'Deacon' White, founder and playing manager of the Edmonton WCBL team introduced the concept of "twilight baseball" by having games start in the late afternoon so as to allow working class folks to attend. In Saskatoon, local entrepreneur J.F. Cairns funded the construction of a 6,000 seat ballpark for the 1914 season, and on opening day, the local team played to a sell-out crowd.⁷⁵

Professionalism

Being paid to participate in sport was a hotly debated topic in the early twentieth century.

Amateurists advocated for recreation in sport for the sake of the gentlemanly spirit of enjoyment which came with playing a game, while professionalists advocated compensation for those who could not afford to play full-time. Champions of professionalism in sport were seeking the best possible players for their teams in order to turn a profit by means of attracting spectators.

Amateurs were often members of the Anglo-Canadian upper class, who could afford to spend

⁷⁴ Kaufman & Patterson, "Diffusion", 95.

⁷⁵ Humber, *Diamonds*, 67, 69.

time playing a variety of sports; leisure time was a large component of their lifestyle. The Canadian Association of Oarsmen in 1880 defined amateurism as such:

An amateur is one who has never assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood, [but] who [participates in sport] for pleasure and recreation only during his leisure hours, and does not abandon or neglect his usual business or occupation for the purpose of training for more than two weeks during the season.⁷⁶

The definition of an amateur is exclusive of working class members of society, who could not enjoy the same aspects of competitive sport as their wealthier counterparts. Owing to their economic status, ordinary Canadians could not extend their athletic capabilities in some of the best competitions as they had an obligation to work full-time in order to make a living. Many talented athletes during this period arose from working class backgrounds, but in order for them to compete with a club over the course of a few days, a week, or in consistent tournaments or an organised league, these players would need monetary compensation. The bottom line for working class athletes was that if they were going to pursue sport at more than a recreational level, they would need significant time away from work, and as a result need to be paid.

In *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, Bruce Kidd writes that the idea of an ‘amateur code’ was meant to restrict participation in sport “on the basis of class and race, reflecting the upper classes’ desire to reproduce the social hierarchies of Victorian England and the British Empire, and to maintain the primacy of sports as an expression of manly honour and elegant display.”⁷⁷ In a sense, the promotion of amateurism in sport was a way of keeping sport in the hands of the

⁷⁶ Cited in Keith L. Lansley, “The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism”, PhD dissertation (University of Alberta, 1971), 17.

⁷⁷ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 27.

aristocracy. Amateur athletic associations across Canada barred professionals from competitions, and sometimes even barred those who had competed with or against professionals.⁷⁸

Professionalism completely revolutionised the world of sport, which had previously been the pursuit of only the wealthier members of society. With the advent of professionalism, anyone who was good enough could pursue athletics at the highest level. For the Anglo-Canadian aristocracy, professionalism had the capacity to ruin the “spirit” of sport, for once an individual had been compensated to compete, the recreational, more gentlemanly aspects of a sport—the idea that a game ought to be played for the game’s sake—became void. It was particularly difficult for the aristocracy to find that working class citizens were often more than capable of beating them at their own games. Richard Gruneau highlights this sentiment shared by the elite:

As the Canadian class structure began to elaborate, and as meritocratic liberal values began to develop widespread support, members of the dominant class apparently became unable to tolerate the possibility of defeat at the hands of those they considered to be their social inferiors. They also may have become progressively alarmed at the prospect that commercialism in sport could very easily get out of hand under such conditions and vulgarise traditional upper-class views of the ‘nobility of play.’⁷⁹

Prior to compensation being provided for sporting activity, the best athletes were drawn from a limited talent pool, as only upper-class sports enthusiasts were endowed with the ability to spend considerable time at sporting events. By the turn of the century however, this had changed. Kevin G. Jones summarises the paradigm shift that resulted from professionalism in twentieth century sport in an article for the *Journal of Sport History*: “By 1900, the professional

⁷⁸ Morrow, Wamsley, *Sport In Canada*, 70.

⁷⁹ Richard Gruneau, *Class Sports, and Social Development* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 108-109.

athlete was no longer determined by his social status, but by the monetary rewards he received for his physical performances.”⁸⁰ One of the most fundamental reasons for baseball’s success over cricket going into the twentieth century is baseball’s relative nonchalance regarding the intrusion of professionalism in the game. Baseball was gaining traction as a form of entertainment among Alberta’s residents, and as such, there was significant money to be made in the advancement of the American game. As Metcalfe writes, “The increasing visibility of professionals was paralleled by the involvement of entrepreneurs in the promotion of sport as a spectacle.”⁸¹ If baseball teams could inspire greater attendance numbers by paying top-quality working-class athletes to play for their team, this presented serious opportunities for investors to profit from the game. For amateurs, this was a vile corruption of the spirit behind sport; professionalism was now opening the doors for all social classes to be involved in elevated sporting competitions and perverting the amateur ideal.

There are multiple instances of baseball teams signing managers and players in the archives of Alberta newspapers with evidence of payment being offered to players all the way back to 1906.⁸² In 1909, Edmonton signed manager Dinny McGuire out of Toronto, who was then commissioned to seek out and sign an all-Canadian roster for the Edmonton ball team.⁸³ In the same year, another report from the *Bulletin* relays the work of Lethbridge manager Jack

⁸⁰ Kevin G. Jones, “Developments in Amateurism and Professionalism in Early 20th Century Canadian Sport.” *Journal of Sport History*, 2, no. 1, 29.

⁸¹ Metcalfe, *Play*, 162.

⁸² *Bulletin*, 4 May 1906, p. 1 AR00104

⁸³ *Bulletin*, 15 March 1909, p. 7 AR00707

Corrigan in signing several players for the upcoming season.⁸⁴ Though admission to both cricket and baseball games had been charged since the late nineteenth century, baseball teams in Alberta by at least 1906 were leaning into professional sport by paying players and hiring salaried managers to coach their teams. This marked the real beginning of the commercialisation of sport, to which baseball was a huge contributor. By 1914, the WCBL had raised its individual salary maximum from \$1500 to \$1800 and were allowing teams to sign a total of 14 players.⁸⁵ Paying players increased baseball's capacity to appeal to spectators, as game-goers were avid about seeing the best players perform for their home team. As well, paying players created an opportunity for exemplary athletes to play the game full-time, meaning baseball did not have to be restricted to a recreational activity only—playing the game could actually be profitable for working class citizens. Coupled together, these factors surrounding the professionalisation of baseball increased the sport's popularity in Alberta immensely.

Contrast this with cricket, where the amateur ideal was held in the utmost regard above all else. The Victorian ideal of amateurism in sport was perpetuated among the upper classes', and it was they who formed the majority of membership to cricket clubs across the province. It is thus no coincidence that Alberta's cricketers fiercely opposed professionalism. The Anglo-Canadian elite were the primary advocates of amateurism in sport, but they also dominated the nation's cricket pitches, meaning professionalism and cricket would be hard-pressed to ever go together. The fact that journalists were publicly ordered to stay away from a Calgary cricket match in 1901 leads one to infer that the private nature of cricket stumped the sport's potential

⁸⁴ *Bulletin*, 23 April, 1909, p. 11 AR01102

⁸⁵ Humber, *Diamonds*, 69.

growth. Baseball matches nearly resulted in public frenzy, and it would be odd today to think of reporters being forbidden from any sporting grounds.

Cricket was in every aspect a game meant to be played for the sake of the game only, and it would be decades after the First World War before cricket would finally manage to evolve from a pastime into a professional sport—at which point it would be too late for Albertans to resume interest. Alan Metcalfe writes that Canadian cricketers strictly insisted on the amateur ideal because it embodied the “ethic” of Victorian England— “hard work” and “structured inequality”, whilst baseball held to no such ideal.⁸⁶ It is easy to infer then from the trajectories of the two bat-and-ball games in Canada that David Cooper is correct in asserting that cricket’s adamant advocacy for amateurism was a major factor in “severely retarding the development of the game” in Canada.⁸⁷ As a result of cricket’s diametric opposition to professionalism and baseball’s acceptance of it, the latter, along with other professional sports like ice hockey and football were able to survive the First World War and prosper, whereas cricket would eventually become irrelevant with the Alberta public and fade into obscurity.⁸⁸

In addition to the above factors, when one takes into consideration the relatively short summer season that exists in Alberta for sports played on grass, cricket found itself in fierce competition with other sports when it came to summer recreation. Although cricket membership was mostly made up of an elite group, this did not mean that the Anglo-Canadian elite only played cricket. There was baseball of course, played by all classes, but also lacrosse, soccer, and

⁸⁶ Metcalfe, *Play*, 46.

⁸⁷ Cooper, “It Isn’t Cricket”, 62.

⁸⁸ Jones, “Developments”, 40.

rugby—all vying for the top position in summer sport. Soccer and rugby for example had their own playing season in other countries, but in Canada all of the above sports were competing directly with cricket, and as cricket was less of a spectator and more of a participatory sport, it would be forced to compete with sports like baseball, lacrosse, and soccer for its membership base. Baseball adversely, succeeded because of its appeal as a spectator sport. Though still in competition with other forms of summer recreation, by the turn of the twentieth century, baseball was leagues ahead of sports like rugby and lacrosse in terms of professionalisation. The latter two games fell under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union, which resulted in many attempts to withhold them from turning professional.⁸⁹ The attempt by the CAAU to keep lacrosse and rugby football (as well as ice hockey) amateur would eventually prove futile, however baseball in Alberta was already accelerating toward commercialisation with crowds of spectators, gate admissions, and paid athletes, all before lacrosse and rugby were able to emerge from the pseudo-amateurism maintained by the CAAU and openly participate in professional competition. Meanwhile, whilst other summer sports moved toward professionalisation, cricket maintained its amateur status—essentially seating cricket permanently behind the competition. Though cricket’s spectator status had diminished, by the outbreak of the First World War, it was still popular among participants, but this too would change as baseball began to make leaps and bounds at professionalising after the war.

Thus, cricket experienced a relative period of success—even dominance—in Alberta between the years 1885-1915. Clubs were organised from Edmonton, to Red Deer, to Calgary—even as far off as Wainwright—but the sport’s supremacy was short-lived, and by the time

⁸⁹ Morrow, Wamsley, *Sport In Canada*, 70-71.

Grande Prairie was established in 1914, baseball had sufficiently saturated the province enough that residents of the northeastern settlement are never recorded to have ever played the English game. The American game was well-organised by the outbreak of the First World War, and able to reign supreme following the war as the dominant summer game for the next half-century, both in terms of participation and spectatorship.

In conclusion, cricket in late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century Alberta failed to modernise and adapt the way baseball did. Perhaps its English aristocratic roots were too deeply ingrained, but the American game proved itself perfectly adaptable to a Canadian context, whereas cricket did not. Cricket was the transplanted game of the British upper class and was never modified to any great extent to appeal to players or spectators in Alberta. As Cooper says, “It remained reminiscent of England,” and never “assimilated” to Canadian culture.⁹⁰ Cricket clubs remained exclusive, favouring a particular demographic in terms of membership, ultimately failing to include the great swathes of new Albertans who belonged to the working class. Additionally, the style of the game remained largely unchanged from its eighteenth century format even up to the beginning of the twentieth century. This meant that cricket functioned primarily as a leisurely pastime with little concern for a rigid schedule, concerning itself more with the game’s function as a social event, leaving its potential as an audience entertainer largely untapped. Lastly, cricket failed to professionalise, when all other sports started to move in this direction by the turn of the century. Competing with other summer sports hindered membership potential, but baseball’s eagerness to commercialise absolutely killed cricket, just as baseball began to see revenue potential faster than any other summer pastime in Alberta and take

⁹⁰ Cooper, “It Isn’t Cricket”, 75.

advantage of its potential to entertain the masses. This saw baseball take a massive leap over cricket, establishing itself as the definitive bat-and-ball game for Albertans. It is obvious that cricket has a rich history in Alberta, but it's exclusivity, leisurely pace, apathy towards appealing to crowds, and staunch adherence to the amateur ideal ultimately doomed the sport's success in Alberta. The sport has a brief history here in this province, and though amid recent waves of immigration the English game has seen some resurgence, baseball remains the only bat-and-ball game for the majority of Albertans to this day.

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