



MCC CLARIFIES LAW ON NON-STRIKERS LEAVING THEIR GROUND EARLY

During a Big Bash game earlier this month, there was an incident in which bowler Adam Zampa attempted to Run out the non-striker, Tom Rogers, who was given not out by the umpires.

MCC released a statement on this incident, clarifying its interpretation of this Law, which has been consistent for some time. The umpires were correct in their decision.

However, we acknowledge that while this Law has generally been understood well by players and umpires, there is ambiguity in the wording which could lead to confusion. MCC has therefore moved to change the wording of Law 38.3 to deliver better clarity. The current wording led some to think that if the non-striker left his/her ground before the expected moment of release, then the Run out could happen at any moment, even

after the bowler had gone through the bowling action. That was never the intention of this Law, nor the way it was ever interpreted by MCC.

It is important to note that this does not change the way the Law should be interpreted - it has been interpreted that way for the past 6 years, without much misunderstanding. However, the intention is that this will make things clearer.

The new Law reads:

38.3.1 At any time from the moment the ball comes into play until the instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball, the non-striker is liable to be Run out if he/she is out of his/her ground. In these circumstances the non-striker will be out Run out if he/she is out of his/her ground when his/her wicket is put down by the bowler throwing the ball at the stumps or by the bowler's hand holding the ball, whether or not the ball is subsequently delivered.

38.3.1.1 The instant when the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball is defined as the moment the bowler's arm reaches the highest point of his/her normal bowling action in the delivery swing.

38.3.1.2 Even if the non-striker had left his/her ground before the instant at which the bowler would normally have been expected to release the ball, once the bowler has reached that point it is no longer possible for the bowler to run out the non-striker under this Law.

Laws 38.3.2 and 38.3.3 remain unchanged.

This becomes Law immediately, and is in effect from January 19th 2023. Because this is not a material change to the meaning of the Law, MCC will not be re-printing Law books, but the change has already been reflected in all online materials.

The following document addresses the most frequently asked questions about this Law, and MCC's stance on the running out of non-strikers.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Following a number of high-profile incidents, MCC calls for a re-education of non-strikers in the art of backing-up at the bowler's end. The dismissal of a non-striker in this manner is within the Laws of Cricket but often leaves many saying that it is not within the Spirit of Cricket.

There is one very simple way that almost all confusion and controversy around this form of dismissal can be eradicated: by non-strikers remaining within their ground until they have seen the ball being released from the bowler's hand. It is impossible for a non-striker to be run out if he or she does this. As the picture of New Zealand's Kane Williamson (above) shows, he is able to get about a yard in front of the popping crease to help

shorten any run that he takes, yet he is still lawfully in his ground and is carefully watching for the moment of release. Players and coaches would be best advised to hone a similar technique.

The habit of 'backing-up' can be a subconscious, ritualistic one, with a player wandering towards the striker's end with only a vague awareness of the bowler's movements. When 'backing-up' is a more focused and deliberate act, the non-striker only leaves the sanctity of the popping crease once the ball has been released, or having accepted the risk of being Run out. If all non-strikers deployed this very simple technique, there would never be another such dismissal again.

MCC WISHES TO ANSWER SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THIS LAW.

■ *Should the bowler give the non-striker a warning?*

A warning for this type of dismissal has never been required under the Laws of Cricket. In some countries, there has been a convention to offer a warning but this is by no means universal, even within those countries. A warning may be welcomed and the captain of the fielding side also has the right to withdraw an appeal if he/she does not want the dismissal to stand.

■ *Are there other ways for the Laws to deal with this problem, with a less punishing outcome?*

MCC believes that it has explored every conceivable way of finding an alternative solution to this situation, but none is practicable and enforceable by two standing umpires without recourse to technology. The Club got as far as considering a draft for a Law during the formation of the 2017 Code - this would have involved the calling of "short run" if the non-striker left his/her ground early. While consulting with umpires, however, the overwhelming feedback was that it would be impossible for them accurately to adjudicate on this while also concentrating on the landing of the bowler's feet. It was felt it could also lead to the undesirable situation of fielders hounding the umpires for not noticing an early departure from the crease. Yes, the umpire needs to know where the

non-striker is to adjudicate on a run out attempt by the bowler, but there will be a split-second when the umpire can see what is starting to happen, so he/she can alter their focus accordingly. For the vast majority of deliveries, however, the umpire's attention will and should be on the bowler's positioning. In televised professional games, the option exists for a playing regulation to be written allowing the TV Umpire to check if the non-striker had left early, disallowing any runs if so, but such a rule could not be put into the Laws of Cricket, which cater for the vast majority of matches which do not have recourse to technology.

Some people have called for umpires to make a subjective decision on whether the non-striker was trying to gain an advantage or had just wandered out of their ground absent-mindedly. That is highly undesirable and would place umpires in the very difficult position of judging both intent and how far out a non-striker could reasonably stray out of their ground before being at risk of dismissal.

Others have suggested that a warning should be made mandatory under the Laws. This idea was dismissed as it would effectively legitimise the non-striker getting a head-start until a warning has been given. MCC believes that the presence of this method of dismissal within the Laws is suitable warning. A striker who leaves his/her ground when the wicket-keeper is standing up to the stumps accepts the risk of being out Stumped, with no warning expected. MCC feels it is no different at the non-striker's end.



■ ***Why not have a clearer point after which the non-striker is safe to leave their ground?***

From 2000 to 2017, non-strikers could safely leave their ground once the bowler entered the delivery stride, which was defined as the landing of the back foot. Once TV replays started to be used to monitor No balls, it became apparent how much ground non-strikers were lawfully making before the release of the ball - it was clearly too much. Consequently, the Law was changed in 2017, ensuring that the non-strikers remained in their ground until the instant at which the bowler would be expected to deliver the ball.

This is defined as when the bowling arm reaches its highest point. MCC did not want bowlers holding onto the ball after completing the delivery swing and then attempting the run out, so the expected moment of release was felt to be the most appropriate moment. Once the bowler's arm has reached its highest point in the delivery swing, it is too late to attempt a run out. However, if the bowler has not released the ball, and has not completed their delivery swing, the non-striker is liable to be Run out, regardless of where the bowler's feet may have landed. It is therefore worth stressing, again, that the best way to protect their wicket is for the non-striker to watch the ball until it is released.

These matters have now been clarified in a change to the wording of this Law in January 2023. That change did not alter MCC's interpretation of the Law, but has made it somewhat clearer.

■ ***What Law is this covered by?***

Until 30 September 2022, it was Law 41.16 (Non-striker leaving his/her ground early).

From 1 October 2022, this form of dismissal moved from Law 41 (Unfair Play) to Law 38 (Run out). The non-striker is run out in this process and, although it is unfair play by the non-striker in leaving his/her ground early, the Run out Law is a more natural home for the dismissal. In 2017, the title of the Law was changed from "Bowler attempting to run out the non-striker" to the current title of "Non-striker leaving his/her ground early" to help to emphasise the fact that it is the non-striker who is at fault.

■ ***Is this dismissal against the Spirit of Cricket?***

Cricket is a broad church and the spirit in which it is played is no different. As custodian of the Spirit of Cricket, MCC appreciates its application is interpreted differently across the globe, and indeed differently within each country. Respectful debate is healthy and should continue. Where one person sees the bowler as breaching the Spirit in this form of dismissal, another will point at the non-striker gaining an unfair advantage by leaving their ground early. The incident in the photo above caused much debate when it happened in the IPL in 2021, as the bowler was penalised for a No ball where he was marginally over the line, while the non-striker went unpunished having stolen at least a yard. Is such 'backing-up' within the Spirit of Cricket?

The Laws permit this type of dismissal. Whilst it would be within the Spirit of Cricket to offer the non-striker a warning, it is not against the Spirit of Cricket to effect such a Run out, within the permitted time-frame, without giving a warning.

■ ***Why is this form of dismissal referred to as a "Mankad"?***

The Indian all-rounder Vinoo Mankad twice dismissed Australian Bill Brown in this fashion in 1947, having previously warned him for backing-up too early. Mr Mankad's name has unfortunately been associated with the dismissal ever since. When asked later about the incident, Sir Donald Bradman stated that he could not understand why Mr Mankad was tainted by the incident, adding that the dismissal should be known as "being Browned", as it was Brown who was at fault. MCC no longer uses Mr Mankad's name in association with this type of dismissal, which has been well received by his family. Whilst it may take a while for everyone to refrain from using Mr Mankad's name, MCC calls on media organisations to update their terminology.

MCC Laws Department - 19 January 2023