

Last man stands

AOC's Phil Walker has found a new game...

I'd heard about Last Man Stands before, and not been that bothered. Eight-a-side? Doubleplays where you can take a catch and run a man out, all in one move? The next batsman umpiring at square-leg in his pads? Five-ball overs? Do me a favour...

Still, I'm always up for a game, and so on a Monday night in June I found myself wearing a red shirt in London's Finsbury Park, batting for a team called Corpus Old Boys. I'd been roped in at the last minute. Three hours, a few hits and one arse-nipper of a game later, I was officially hooked.

So what's so special about it? Last Man Stands founder Wayne Greve, a South African living in London who dreamt up the format in 2005 when he and his mates went looking in vain for a game of post-work cricket, takes up the story.

"There are a lot of nationalities in London and they don't all have the knowhow to get involved in a cricket club," he tells AOC. "There was a need for guys to still play cricket, but it's hard with travelling and family commitments, so we wanted to make

short, sharp competitive games that could fit in around people's lives.

"We designed the laws to ensure that all eight players get a game, but we realised there would be some real good players involved too, so we didn't want it just to be a social hit around. We wanted to find that competitive balance."

And his favourite rule? "It's got to be the last man standing." It's certainly mine; if you're the last unbeaten batsman, provided you only run twos and hit boundaries, you can keep on batting on your own. Genius.

With 28 leagues, London has a thriving LMS community, and the standard is broadly excellent; the cream of the crop are awarded county trials. Now plans are afoot to spread the format to other major UK cities and, eventually, to organise inter-city competitions.

There are even plans to take the format across the cricket world and create what Greve calls "a global league". Apart from the Asian bloc, all the major cricket nations now run organised LMS leagues. "We want to create something where everyone is playing towards the same thing," says Greve. Good luck to him. **PW**

For more info, and to hear about the upcoming LMS World Cup, visit lastmanstands.com

LAST MAN STANDS: THE LAWS

- Eight players per side
- Maximum four overs per bowler
- 20 five-ball overs
- Batsman must retire at 50 but can return at the end
- The last not out batsman keeps batting but must retain the strike
- Doubleplays - both batsmen can be out from the one delivery
- Any six struck from the final ball of either innings is worth 12