

CRICKET

# Cricket coming to Colorado State Games in Colorado Springs in July

By Irv Moss

*The Denver Post* (<mailto:imoss@denverpost.com?subject=The Denver Post:> )

POSTED: 06/20/2014 11:13:14 PM MDT | UPDATED: 4 DAYS AGO

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If Rockies catcher Wilin Rosario played cricket, he would be called the wicket keeper.

And he would be the only defensive player on the field allowed to have a glove — and he'd have one on both hands. If his bowler (pitcher) hits one of the wickets (wooden target) by getting the ball past the batsman, it's one of 10 ways to get an out in a sport that resembles baseball.

Fans attending the Colorado State Games this summer in Colorado Springs can look for other connections between cricket and baseball. For the first time at the State Games, a 12-team cricket field will play games July 19-20 and July 26-27 at Memorial Park.

"I wouldn't call cricket a complicated game," said Raymond Mascarenhas, the scheduler for the Colorado Cricket League and a player on the Colorado Springs Cricket Club. "If you know baseball, it's very easy to pick up this game. It's just a matter of going out on the field, hitting the ball and scoring runs."

But it's helpful to know a few basic things. There are 11 players on a team instead of nine as in baseball, and they play on a cricket pitch. A bowler (pitcher) throws six balls (pitches) to make an over, but then leaves the bowler position to a teammate. The original bowler can't throw successive overs, but can return to the rotation that leads to 40 overs, or 240 pitches a game. There are 10 outs in an inning.

Rockies relief pitchers would rejoice because there isn't such a thing as a walk, but a ball hit out of the park is worth six runs.

Games are one inning per team in duration and can require game times of half a day.

Rockies manager Walt Weiss wouldn't be needed. There aren't managers or coaches in cricket, leaving the decisions to team captains. Players on teams that are not scheduled to play become paid umpires, but they have to be certified. There are two umpires for each game.

Mascarenhas, Mike Riley of Fort Collins and Dan Ruparel of Denver have played significant roles in attempting to put cricket on the sports map in Colorado.

"We've been playing cricket here on an organized manner for more than 30 years," said Riley, an Australian. "I was part of the first schedule back in 1981. We had players who drove over from Grand Junction to play in the games. We've all done our share in attempts to get the game going here."

Again this year, Riley is bringing a couple of prominent teachers from England to Fort Collins to conduct clinics.

Ruparel, an American who grew up in India, has turned his attention to developing interest in cricket among young athletes. In 2005, a program initiated at Lois Lenski Elementary in Centennial with coach Davis Williams was judged the best school program in the United States by



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New Zealand's batsman Mark Craig plays a shot during the second innings on the last day of the second cricket Test match against West Indies in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Friday, June 20, 2014. (Arnulfo Franco, The Associated Press)

the International Governing Body of Cricket.

"Cricket has deep roots in the United States that go back to the 1700s," Ruparel said.

Mascarenhas has found it to be a sticky wicket in attempts to popularize a sport he grew up playing in India. He came to Colorado Springs in 2001 and works in the high-tech industry.

"It has been very hard to get Americans interested in playing cricket," Mascarenhas said. "Most of our players are immigrants from former British Commonwealth countries. In our whole league, we maybe have 10 American players."

Mascarenhas found cricket to be a hard sell in his own family. One son, Travis, plays football at Doherty High School and the other son, Ryan, played lacrosse for Palmer High School.

"I tried to get them to play cricket," Mascarenhas said. "But they don't think there's any future in it. Almost every kid in India plays cricket, just like here (with) football and baseball."

Mascarenhas is hopeful the exposure at the State Games will fuel interest in his sport. The Colorado Cricket League season runs from April to October, with games in Colorado Springs, Denver, Longmont and Fort Collins.

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