



Q&A with National French Cricket Coach Dave Szumowski

No players, no facilities and no coverage - these are just some of the problems facing cricket in France. However French cricket is beginning to grow. Andrew Marmont goes one-on-one National French Cricket coach Dave Szumowski to find out more.

Q: How did you end up coaching France?

A: Firstly, I followed a French girl all around the world before settling in Lille, north of France, and I decided to stay in France to do my best at developing cricket. At the end of 2005 I discovered the ICC European Cricket Council and contacted France Cricket. A month later I became the national coach.

Q: What is your greatest highlight as coach?

A: My greatest achievement as the French coach was when I captained and coached the French team at the Indoor Cricket World Cup played last year in England. Most had never played indoor cricket. We beat Pakistan twice to contest the Plate Final against England. Result-wise, last years second place at the ICC under-23 European Division 2 Championship was a pleasing effort.



Dave Szumowski

Q: Tell me about a typical training session with the team.

A: The most difficult part of coaching is knowing how many players will attend not only training sessions but also tours and even tournaments! Our players are amateurs who must sacrifice work and families for the team and because of irregular player attendance there are many difficulties for management and coach in planning the season. This year's squad has shown more commitment and desire than in previous years and there are often a good number of players at training. Most players we identify have raw talent and at the senior level some of these players do not have the time to change particular techniques.

Two areas of the game we have tried to improve on are player strength and the standard of our fielding. Along with the use of a bowling machine for the first time we are trying to make players more adept in the modern game and ensure all the basics are done correctly and consistently.

Q: What equipment/facilities are available for coaching/training?

A: Due to the weather we are often restricted to indoor sports halls. The only facilities close to Paris are two public cricket grounds with astro-turf. Whilst they are vacant in winter, mid-summer means championship matches are delayed or canceled. People use the grounds for friendly football matches, picnics, flying kites and sun bathing, with no comprehension of what cricket is or why eleven men dressed in white are chasing a little red ball around an oval.



French Cricket Team

Q: What cultural differences do you find when being involved with a French sporting team as opposed to an Australian sporting team?

A: When I think of sport culture in Australia I think of so much passion, public interest, professionalism, hard work, epic battles and traditions. When I think of sport culture in France I think of football, football and football. A real challenge is trying to create a similar sporting spirit amongst my squad to get the most out of them on the field, along with the mix of ethnic cultures.

Q: Are there any particularly funny incidents that have taken place over the course of your time as coach, that make you think, "This would only happen in France"?

A: Apart from national championship matches being cancelled due to picnics and kite flying on the ground?

- An umpire calling dead ball five times in a national championship match because the ball was lost (inside the boundary) due to long grass.
- My first training session with the senior national team was conducted with tennis balls.
- A first-time club player taking the field with batting gloves on to field the ball.
- Club players at training dropping the bat to run.



Coach Dave Szumowski talks to his team on bowling tactics

