



## CHANGES TO THE LAW CONCERNING CRICKET BATS A GUIDE FOR MANUFACTURERS

### *Why does cricket need a new Law for bats?*

The Marylebone Cricket Club (M.C.C.), as Guardian of the Laws of Cricket, has a duty to maintain the traditional balance between the bat and the ball. In recent years, it has been evident that the bat is starting to dominate. Furthermore, with the developments in technology and materials, a few cricket bats have appeared on the market with potential performance enhancing properties. M.C.C. believes that, if the cricket bat becomes too powerful, it will be detrimental to the sport.

Consequently, in May 2008, the M.C.C. membership approved the introduction of a new version of Law 6, together with a newly created Appendix E. The Law, which lays down details about the bat, was written following extended discussions with many bat manufacturers, willow growers and the I.C.C.

The new Law comes into effect on 1st October 2008.

### *What is the new Law?*

The new Law 6 is far more prescriptive than the previous version. Its purpose is to maintain the traditional construction and performance of cricket bats and to restrict the introduction of potentially performance enhancing materials. For the first time in Law, the handle is defined, the volume of the handle's constituent parts has been controlled and the thickness of protective coverings has been limited. However, bats made in the "traditional" way should not be affected by the new Law.

One important aspect of the new Law 6 is the grading of cricket bats. This grading system defines the differences between pure top-quality bats at Grade A and the lower level entry bats at Grade C. The decision about which grades of bat are to be used at different levels of cricket is to be made by the National Governing Bodies. Bats which do not conform to any of Grades A, B or C are regarded as below Grade C. They may be used only by special regulation or in special forms of the game played outside the Laws.

### *What is the process of grading a cricket bat?*

M.C.C. considered various options for approving the grading of a cricket bat and has decided that self-certification by the manufacturers is the easiest option for all parties. Consequently, it will be for manufacturers to decide into which Grade of bat each of their designs falls.

Once a bat has been produced, the manufacturer must show the grade to which the bat conforms by placing a sticker or brand on the back or shoulders of the blade or on the top of the handle. These stickers or brands should not include the M.C.C. monogram.

### *How does the manufacturer know which Grade a bat should be?*

Table 1 shows the pertinent features of the different Grades of bat. A good knowledge of the new Law 6 will also be helpful to the manufacturer when certifying a bat. This Law can be obtained from the Laws department at M.C.C. or online from the Lord's website: <http://www.lords.org/laws-and-spirit/>

Manufacturers are strongly advised to consult the M.C.C. Laws department on +44 207 616 8751 if there is any doubt which Grade a bat should be.

### *Table to show the various characteristics of Grade A, B and C bats.*

Bat Characteristic	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C
10% or less materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✓	✓	✓
More than 10% but not more than 20% materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✗	✗	✓
More than 20% materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✗	✗	✗
Anti-Scuff fitted (must not cause unacceptable damage to the ball)	✓	✓	✓
Blade covered with cloth	✗	✗	✓
Use of non-solid material (e.g. varnish) to improve resistance to moisture and mask natural blemishes.	✓	✓	✓
Toe insert	✗	✓	✓
Side inserts	✗	✓	✓

**Materials in the handle** – Some vibration reducing materials, such as rubber ‘springs’, are permitted in the handle of any bat. Such materials must not comprise more than 10% of the total volume of the handle in Grade A & B bats, with cane, wood and/or twine making up the remainder. Grade C bats may have up to 20% of materials other than cane, wood or twine. No bat may have a handle which has less than 80% of cane, wood or twine.

**Anti-scuff** – All bats may have a sheet of traditional style anti-scuff fitted. This sheet shall not exceed 0.04 in/1 mm in thickness.

**Blade covering** – Only Grade C bats can have a continuous cloth wrapping applied to them. The maximum thickness of this covering is 0.012 in/0.3 mm.

**Non-solid materials** – All grades of bat may be treated with varnish or similar products to improve moisture resistance and to mask natural blemishes in the blade. This treatment must not enhance performance. It also must not alter the colour of the blade significantly for Grade A and Grade B bats, which must remain their traditional colour. However, to allow manufacturers to produce bats at a price suitable for the lower end of the market, by using less good quality willow, it is conceded that for Grade C bats the treatment may make some significant colour change inevitable.

**Toe insert** – Grade A bats may not have a toe insert placed in them. Grade B and C bats may have a toe insert fitted inside the blade, using minimal adhesive. This insert must not extend from the toe more than 2.5 in/6.35 cm up the blade at any point.

**Side insert** – Grade A bats may not have side inserts placed in them. Grade B and C bats may have side inserts fitted. Neither side insert may extend from the edge more than 1 in/2.54 cm across the blade at any point.

Manufacturers are reminded that the descriptions above highlight the differences between the various grades. However, they should be aware that in the Laws there are also specifications that apply to all bats.

**Adhesives** – All adhesives that are used should be minimal and used only where essential.

**Materials in handle** – Any materials other than cane, wood or twine may extend not more than 3.25 in/8.26cm into the lower portion of the handle. The lower portion of the handle is defined in Law 6.3(a).

**Binding and covering of the handle** – The twine binding on the handle may extend not more than 2.5 in/6.35 cm beyond the junction of the upper and lower portions of the handle.

The covering grip on the handle may extend not more than 2.75 in/6.99 cm beyond the junction of the upper and lower portions of the handle.

A short piece of electrical or similar tape may be used to secure the covering grip.

**Length and width of the bat** – The overall dimensions of the bat have not changed from the previous Law. The length of the bat, when the lower portion of the handle is inserted, shall not be more than 38 in/96.5 cm.

The width of the bat shall not exceed 4.25 in/10.8 cm at its widest part.

Except for bats of size 6 or less, the handle, measured from the top of the handle to the bottom of the splice, must not exceed 52% of the overall length of the bat.

Permitted coverings, repair material and toe guards, not exceeding their specified thicknesses, may be additional to the dimensions above.

**Commercial identifications** – The specifications for commercial identifications outlined in the new Law are drawn in part from I.C.C. regulations. Manufacturers are asked to consult I.C.C. if they have any doubt about the suitability of a commercial identification as it is in international cricket where this part of the Law is strictly enforced.

Identifications must not exceed 0.08 in/0.2 mm in thickness.

Identifications on the face of the blade must be confined to the top 9 in/22.86 cm, measured from the bottom of the grip.

Identifications on the back of the blade must not cover more than 50% of the total surface of the back of the bat.

#### **What if a manufacturer grades a bat incorrectly?**

All manufacturers will be expected to grade their bats correctly. M.C.C. will randomly check bats that are on the market to ensure that they are legal and that each conforms to its purported grade. This process will be carried out rigorously in the first few years after the Law's introduction. Any manufacturer that incorrectly grades a bat will receive a written warning in the first instance. Any further mis-grading will lead to steps being taken to ban the bats from the market.

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If M.C.C. discovers any illegal bats, rather than simply mis-graded ones, it will immediately contact the I.C.C. and National Governing Bodies to ensure that the bats are banned from all authorised cricket.

*What about bats already in shops?*

There will obviously be a lot of legal but ungraded bats in the shops. There is no need to get these graded – provided the bats are legal, retailers can sell current stock even though bats do not display gradings. However, retailers may be keen for the bats to carry a grade, so they appear more up to date. M.C.C. suggests that retailers could, if they so wished, consult manufacturers about grading particular bats and, if the manufacturers give approval and consent, apply stickers or brands themselves. These should be supplied by the manufacturers, who are advised to keep a record of what advice on grading has been given to retailers. It is important that all bats are correctly graded and manufacturers and retailers should work together on this.

*What about bats in professional cricket?*

All bats used in professional cricket after 1st October 2008 must be Grade A. This grading must be clearly shown.

*Junior bats*

The new Law applies to bats of all sizes. An exception for bats of size 6 or less refers only to the length of the handle.

*Any questions?*

M.C.C. is very keen to work closely with manufacturers to ensure that they understand the implications of the new Law. Questions may be directed to M.C.C. via email to [laws@mcc.org.uk](mailto:laws@mcc.org.uk) or by telephone to +44 207 616 8751. If you are in any doubt as to legality of a bat, M.C.C. would prefer that you check with us rather than produce a bat which may be illegal.

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