

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Aboriginal Cricketer



Yvonne: Hello - this is '6 minute English' and I'm Yvonne Archer. And with me today is the lovely William Kremer. Hello William!

William: Oh hello Yvonne!

Yvonne: Today – a sporting programme as we hear the story of an extraordinary Australian cricketer. Sadly, he's only just been recognised - thirty years after his death. But before we find out more, let's get out today's big question! William, cricket balls have been made from the same materials since the 1700s. But what colour were they originally?

- a) white
- b) light brown or
- c) cherry red

William: Err... as always, I don't know but I'm gonna go for b) light brown because - cricket balls are made from leather and lots of leather things are light brown. So that's my guess – light brown.

Yvonne: Great answer, but are you right or wrong? We'll find out later on. But now, let's look at some of the language we'll hear in today's report. First, William - what is meant by 'indigenous Australians'?

William: Well, 'indigenous' people are the original people or native people of a country or land. So 'indigenous Australians' – who are also known as aboriginals or aborigines – have always been in Australia. And they were there thousands of years before Europeans arrived.



Yvonne: Can you explain 'indignities'...

William: Yes, 'an indignity' is something that makes us feel embarrassed or humiliates us and (makes us feel) of little importance. So to give you an example: prisoners usually have to shower in front of everyone else – and that's one of the 'indignities' that they have to live with.

Yvonne: And 'slights' or 'a slight' – what's that?

William: 'A slight' is a bit of an old fashioned word and it means a quiet kind of insult. So, if I give you an example: if I say hello to you Yvonne and you turn your back and start talking to someone else, well that's a bit of a slight – and in fact, I can say that you've 'slighted' me.

Yvonne: But of course, I'd never slight you, William. Now in today's report from the BBC's Nick Bryant, we'll hear about a very talented Australian cricketer who played many years ago. As you listen, try to find out what two things he usually needed before he could go and play against white cricketers...

NICK BRYANT

Eddie Gilbert played in the 1930s, when indigenous Australians were confronted with all kinds of indignities and slights. Even to make the journey to play cricket against white players, he needed written permission to leave his Aboriginal settlement and was normally chaperoned.

Yvonne: William, what two things did Eddie Gilbert need as an aboriginal cricketer before he could go and play against white cricketers?



William: Well, he needed to have something in writing – he needed 'written permission' to say that he was allowed to travel to the cricket match. And he was usually 'chaperoned' – so someone with authority had to go with Eddie even though he was an adult. And so in Eddie's case, the chaperone would have been a white man.

Yvonne: As we heard, aborigines like Eddie, lived in 'settlements' – areas where they were forced to stay by the Australian government of the time. But Australian aborigines during the 1930s were demanding equal rights and to be treated with dignity.

Now Eddie once bowled and hit the bat right out of the hands of one of the world's best cricketers - Sir Donald Bradman. So Eddie was the fastest bowler of the era, but as we'll hear, he never entered the 'pantheon of cricket'. William, can you explain that term for us?

William: Yes, 'a pantheon' here refers to a special group made up of the world's best cricketers in this example. And Eddie was never included in that 'pantheon' – that group of admired and honoured cricketers.

Yvonne: Yeah - it's believed that Eddie's many years of throwing a boomerang – an Australian type of hunting weapon – was the reason why he could bowl so fast. And there's another story about Eddie's skills but it might not be true...

NICK BRYANT

Had Eddie Gilbert been born white, he might well have entered the pantheon of cricket but he never represented his nation. Folklore has it that one of his deliveries burst through a picket fence and struck a dog with such force that the animal was killed.

William: Oh no – that poor dog!



Yvonne: Yes, but remember William, it's only folklore so perhaps the story about the dog isn't actually true. But thirty years after his death, what we do know to be true is that Eddie Gilbert was one of the world's greatest cricketers. So at least they're going to put up a life-size bronze statue in Eddie's home state of Queensland in his honour.

William: Ahh – so maybe Eddie Gilbert will be remembered in sporting history after all.

Yvonne: Let's hope so. Sadly, Eddie was buried in an unmarked grave so his statue is very important - especially to aborigines. And now, more people will know the name Eddie Gilbert.

Right William, today's big question: Cricket balls have been made from the same materials since the 1700s - but what colour were they originally? And your answer was...

William: ...My answer was light brown – and...

Yvonne: And you were right!

William: Yeah!

Y.... Well done to you. But that's we've got time for in today's "6 Minute English" from BBC Learning English.

W/Y: Goodbye!