

# HOWZTHAT...



"It's your cricket final today," Dad chipped in.

"Oh, yeah, I'm excited," I said.

4 I didn't like hurting Mum and Dad's feelings; they were so happy that I was playing a sport. I'm not the kid who wants to play — I'm the kid who has to play. I would rather be on my computer, reading a book or working with my electronics kit.

5 After breakfast the whole family jumped into the car. My older sister, Kate, complained about having to come and watch me play.

"He's hopeless!" she said. "And I hate cricket."

That was about the only thing Kate and I had in common.

1 Last Saturday started out like any other day. I was spread out across the lounge, enjoying my usual six-thirty cartoon-watching bonanza. It was bliss, until I heard Mum's voice telling me to have a shower and get ready for the day.

2 After getting dressed, I reluctantly picked up my cricket bag and trudged into the kitchen for some breakfast. Mum and Dad were waiting there, huge smiles across their faces, with a plate of bacon and eggs and an orange juice for me.

3 "Are you excited, Tom?" asked Mum.

"Should I be?" I asked.

6 When we arrived at the ground for the big match, I could almost hear my team-mates groan. I am such a bad player, I actually felt sorry for them. We warmed up and, as usual, the balls rolled between my legs when I was fielding. Some of the other team members even whispered, "Strike!" whenever I swung the bat and missed the ball. They thought I couldn't hear.

7 We played against a really good team that day. Their bowlers caused our batters some trouble. We had only scored 96 runs and I was up as the last batter. I walked on. Mum and Dad clapped while some of my team-mates covered their faces. As you probably expected, I only lasted two balls before I was bowled, middle stump. The umpire lifted his finger. We were all out for 96.

8 During the short break, our coach, Mr Draper, gave us a pep talk about the second half of the game.

Dad tried to tell me how he once won a game of billiards, despite impossible odds. I think he thought it might inspire me to greater cricketing heights. My sister just called me hopeless.

9 My team played really well. They bowled and fielded brilliantly in conditions that were worsening. Clouds filled the sky and a blustery wind whipped up, making the game difficult for both teams. Luckily for my team, I was on the boundary behind the batsman and only one ball had come my way, rolling to a stop before it reached me. Mum and Dad were so excited to see me pick it up and lolly-throw it back to the wicketkeeper, stopping another run.

10 The other team only needed six runs to win. It was the last over and I seemed to be the only

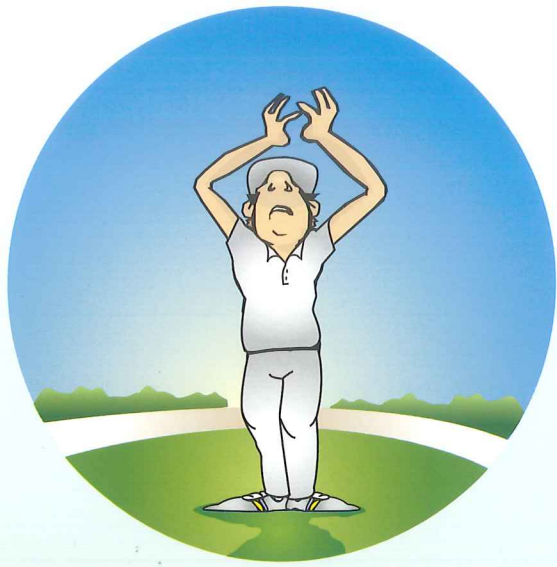
person in the team who was not nervous. Our bowler, Con, was copping it the worst — they had scored four runs off his last four bowls. Con approached the wicket and bowled his fifth delivery. Smack! The ball was hit hard and fast along the ground to a fieldsman who stopped it dead and threw it back before a run was scored. Everybody on the sideline clapped and cheered madly. We were still in the game.

11 The tension was now immense; they needed to hit more than a single run to win the game. We knew it was going to be a big slog so a lot of the fieldsmen moved back to stop it. Con steamed in with the last delivery. The ball hit the wicket with great speed and reared up high at the batsman who took an almighty swing. Crack! The ball came off the top of the bat and flew straight towards me. I wasn't worried because it looked like it would clear the fence.

12 Unfortunately the wind was strong enough to bring the ball down fast. It was aimed straight at my head. My feet were frozen to the ground. I stood helpless as the ball grew bigger and bigger, bound for the point right between my eyes. Out of sheer self-preservation, I put my hands over my face with my palms facing out. I was hit with great force and knocked to the ground. For a few moments I just lay on my back, my hands still pointing to the sky. I heard people yelling "Howzthat!" as they ran towards me.

13 Then I saw it — I had the ball in my hands. I had actually caught a huge hit! The whole team piled on top of me, making a little mountain.





When they finally got off, people streamed down from the stands to congratulate me.

- 14 After we all settled down, Mr Draper made a speech and congratulated all the boys on a great match. When he said that I had won the game for the team, everyone cheered. Some of the other boys even slapped me on the back. The best surprise of the day happened when we got home. Mum and Dad sat me down and said that I didn't have to play cricket anymore, if I didn't want to. I thought about it for a moment. Call me crazy, but I told them I'd give it another go next season. Howzthat, eh?

## Questions

- 1 When Tom told his parents that he was excited to play the final he was
  - a really excited.
  - b telling the truth.
  - c not telling the truth.
- 2 What is meant by "conditions that were worsening"?
  - a The other team only needed six runs to win.
  - b Tom's sister called him hopeless.
  - c The weather had become cloudy and windy.
- 3 How did the other players make fun of Tom?
  - a They whispered "Strike!" when he was practising batting.
  - b They jumped on top of him when he caught the ball.
  - c They moaned when he fielded the ball during the game.
- 4 What made Tom catch the ball?
  - a lots of practice
  - b self-preservation
  - c determination
- 5 When Tom went out to bat, his teammates would have expected
  - a him to get lots of runs.
  - b him to save the match.
  - c him to get out quickly.
- 6 How did Tom's dad try to encourage him?
  - a He told Kate not to call Tom "hopeless!"
  - b He gave the team a pep talk.
  - c He told Tom a story at the break.

## Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues. The brackets show the text sections ( ).

umpire blustery reluctantly  
self-preservation immense

- 7 A word meaning hesitantly (2)
- 8 A person who controls a game (7)
- 9 A word to describe the wind (9)
- 10 Huge and intense (11)
- 11 To protect yourself from danger (12)

## Alphabetical Order

The following words appear in the text. When placed in alphabetical order, which one would be **first**?

- 12 electronics, eggs, excited, enjoying
- 13 should, strike, Saturday, sport
- 14 between, bonanza, breakfast, bacon
- 15 their, two, team, trouble

## Back To The Text...

- 16 In which part of the library would you find this text?
  - a fiction
  - b non-fiction
- 17 Another good name for this text would be:
  - a Not Another Season of Cricket
  - b Mr Draper's Last Innings

- 18 What would be a good sub-heading for section 8?

- a It's Just a Game
- b The Pep Talk

## Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19 a Tom had a shower.  
b Tom had breakfast.
- 20 a Dad told Tom about the billiards game.  
b Dad told Tom it was the cricket final.
- 21 a Tom covered his face.  
b Tom lay on his back looking at the sky.

## Think About This

- 22 The image on page 3 refers to which of the following sections?
 

a eleven	b twelve
c thirteen	d fourteen
- 23 The half time break is described in which of the following sections?
 

a five	b six
c seven	d eight

## Challenge Option

Drawing: Draw a picture of you playing your favourite sport.

