

# Cricket Australia goes for **six** with digital fan engagement

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Two and a half years of the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the face of sport. Sport is part of a highly competitive battle for fan engagement, and the level of expectation for personalisation and fan connection has accelerated sharply. Cricket Australia rose to the challenge and has prioritised engagement through digital means.

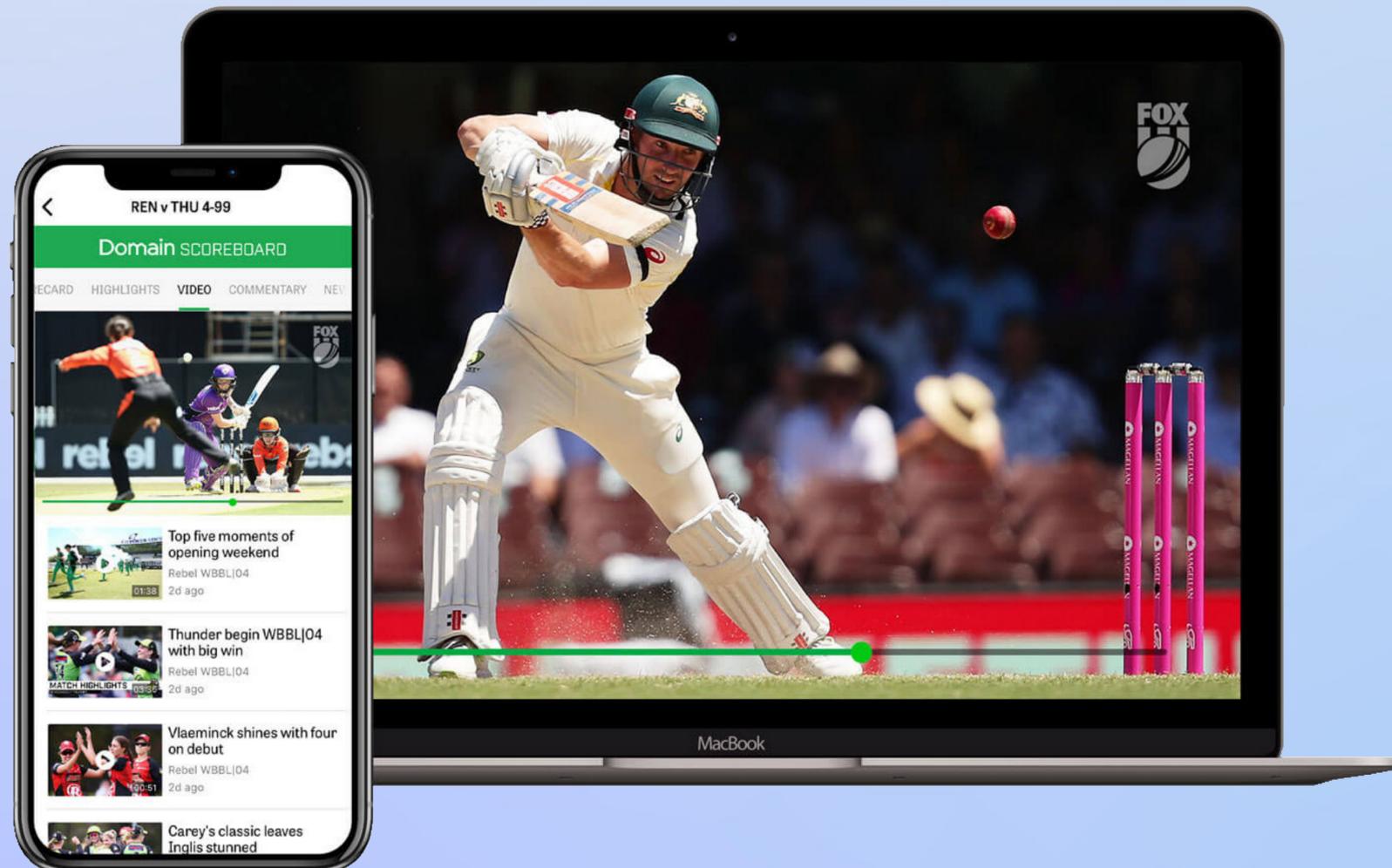
While the world was out for the count with COVID, teams across various sporting formats fought being disconnected from their fanbase by amplifying the digital experiences they offered, and now there's no going back.

Today, fans have revised their expectations regarding how digital content is being served up to them. They're looking to be engaged according to their unique preferences and they strive for connection to the hero players they want to see - their stories, their batting or bowling statistics and highlights of amazing catches or massive sixes. They also want the ability to rewind, see that content again, and see it in features like a highlights package. In these ways, heroes can also be local - significant sporting moments can be experienced all over the world, not just by our national teams.

The grassroots impact of fan engagement, for cricket, is significant - research tells us that 80% of cricket fans started their life-long love affair with the game through playing at a grassroots level, so it's critically important that cricket can engage and inspire the next generation of players from an early age.



# Beyond a website



With the acceleration of digital engagement platforms, there are exciting new options for fans who don't attend a match in person. Take the development of **cricket.com.au** and the **CA Live app**, key parts of one of Australia's most respected sporting properties and core to cricket fan engagement; in fact, the go-to app for cricket fans. Properties like this have signaled a step-up by moving from a single website to a multi-channel approach, so that engagement happens not only via the website but also via other CA apps like **Cricket Live** and the just launched **Cricket Australia Match Centre**, as well as global sources like the **Indian Premier League (IPL)**.

Now that the Cricket Australia Match Centre launched in October, the site is the source of all the best World Cup highlights - there are player profiles from all participating countries, not just Australia, as well as merchandise and ticket sales. Fans can select their favorite players and teams from across the world and can track every game's current score in real time - there are even options to live stream matches and commentary.

With experiences like this on offer, expectations are now firmly centered around much more consistent and relevant content through all channels, not just a website, and the competition for fans' time and attention has significantly increased. The engagement challenge is serving the most relevant and personalised content to the right fans through their preferred engagement channel.

Even with modern, receptive and engaging websites and apps, fan expectations have gone beyond content experiences. Now, every big sporting brand is intimately connected across multiple online platforms like Twitter and YouTube, inclusive of an integrated physical presence at a stadium for a big game or match.

# Grassroots player engagement taken to the next level

Cricket Australia is also taking grassroots player engagement to the next level. But, it's been a journey.

The platform has been on a digital evolution since the early 2000's. Twenty years ago, cricket clubs and associations did not have a competition management solution in place – all results were emailed or phoned in to the association and a competition ladder was published months afterwards.

In 2005 Cricket Australia implemented a web-based competition management platform which allowed clubs and associations to greatly simplify the administration involved with the fixturing, team selection and recording of results on a weekly basis, a major step-change for the time.

In 2018, after substantial participant research and feedback, this solution was extended with a mobile app (MyCricket Live Score app) to deliver scoring at games; another major innovation which, in the last season, saw over 65% of games live-scored and 2 million balls being bowled and recorded in real time every weekend – something that would have been unfathomable back in 2005!



**Despite the new capabilities being well received, our core architecture was still based on our original investment in the early 2000's, before iPhones were even available – we realised that we needed a fundamental restructure to leverage the power of the cloud” said Don Elliott, General Manager – Technology at Cricket Australia**

Back in 2019, right before the pandemic, Cricket Australia also made significant digitisation progress when they commenced a program of work to move from their old bespoke solution to a new cloud-based architecture where modern apps could be rapidly integrated through a set of common APIs to deliver the products and services required to support Cricket. HCLTech, their strategic delivery partner, were engaged from the outset to build out the foundation capabilities and integrate both the new competition management solution and their existing apps. This investment has now made it possible to accelerate innovation.

In addition to rolling out the new competition management

solution for this season, Cricket Australia and HCLTech are working with partners to deliver a new live streaming capability for community clubs that uses AI to identify key moments in a match and deliver highlights packages direct to player's phones through their MyCricket app. Through these innovations, Cricket is now starting to deliver incredible digital experiences to every player, their family and friends, that previously were only available at the elite level – this helps Cricket to build the next generation of fans for life!

The platform's strategy is moving them towards a seamless, integrated fan experience – from fans booking their ticket at the match, to scanning their ticket on entry, to finding their allocated seat, and preferred food vendor options.



**As we move into the future, cricket is no longer just competing with other sports for fan engagement – they are competing for an ever-decreasing share of people's attention against a whole new range of entertainment options including streaming video services, eSports/Twitch and the like – to stay relevant, we must deliver brilliant in-person and digital experiences to keep new audiences engaged”, continued Don Elliott.**

# Moving forward: personalised experiences and engaging stories

In the future, Cricket Australia's content, optimised for different streams and viewing channels, will deliver fans the ability to both see the game and interact with it in whatever way they choose, at the same time, virtually and physically. The aspiration is to provide more personalised fan experiences using real-time data analytics.

Where's digital engagement going to lead sport now? The hope is to engage and inspire the dedicated fanbase, convert sports followers to passionate fans, and intimately connect them to their heroes and teams through multiple digital platforms with a plethora of consumption options. This will not only drive the sporting economy but ensure it is agile enough to thrive alongside new content consumption models. This starts at the grassroots participation level and needs to be tailored to deliver brilliant experiences to every fan.

