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**'I tell people I play cricket and they think I'm talking about an insect': Meet the tea-sipping cricketers from Compton**

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

It is a neighbourhood renowned for its gangster rap and gangland shootings.

## So it is no wonder the Compton cricket team has knocked their 'hood for six.

Dressed head to toe in traditional whites, Compton Cricket Club players have sipped tea with Prince Edward at Buckingham Palace, played against Aborigines in the Australian outback, and swapped stories of violence-torn neighbourhoods with residents of Belfast.



Pioneers: The Compton Cricket Club is also known as the 'Homies & the Popz'

'I tell people I play cricket and people automatically think it's croquet or an insect,' said player Ricardo Cazarez. 'I just tell them go look it up on YouTube.'

Coming from Compton, California, the players are not the typical cricket types. Several players sport tattoos, which read 'cricket outta Compton' and 'from gats to bats', gats being street slang for guns.

The team, who call themselves 'the Homies and the Popz', raps cricket-themed songs titled 'Shots' and 'Bullets'.

A couple players have served jail terms. One missed the Australian trip because he was on parole. Another was killed in a driveby shooting. And two others died in traffic accidents.



Breaking the mould: Ted Hayes, co-founder, player and coach, is the 'Popz' of the ground-breaking Compton Cricket Club



Tats and gats: Isaac Hayes shows his arm tattoo of a cricket bat crossing out a gun, left, while Ricardo Cazerez bats for glory, right

'With these guys, seeing is believing,' said Katy Haber, a British film producer whose role as manager encompasses everything from fundraising for overseas trips to accompanying players to court appearances.

Team founder Ted Hayes was drawn to the genteel sport because of its strict etiquette and the life lessons he thought players could learn from it.

Arguing with the umpire and "sledging," or deriding opponents to distract them, are banned in cricket.

Players are expected to report their own outs if missed by the umpire and applaud good plays by opponents.

'This improves citizenship,' Hayes said. 'You're a much better person when you come off the field.'



Spinning: Ted Hayes bowls during one of the team's games

Hayes and Haber formed the team initially at a homeless shelter before recruiting young blood from local Compton schools.

'I don't want to go back to prison,' said, Efren De Lucas, 25, who has served time on weapons charges. 'I want to learn this.'

'I thought it sounded dumb, but a friend went and I liked the fact that you caught balls barehanded so I went,' said another of the players, Emidio Cazarez, 28.

'Growing up in Compton, you're always defensive. You don't talk to people. I'm more social.'



Determined: The cricketers come from Compton, a city on Los Angeles's southern border known more for gangster rap and gang shootings

Isaac Hayes, Ted's son, credited cricket with steering him away from gangs as a youngster.

'It takes guys who usually aren't kind to each other and makes them say "Hi, nice to see you again",' he said. 'It's helped me see the world is bigger than my backyard.'

'We get the odd American who wants to try it out, but it usually doesn't work out,' added Jeremy Reed, the team's captain. 'These guys have really taken to it.'

The team plays in a local league against expats originally from Britain and South Asia.

They have created quite a name for themselves despite fairly mediocre performances, coming sixth out of eight teams in their league.

**'When I first heard about them, I said "no way"', Mahmood Jadwet, founder of the Simi Valley Sloggers, a team on the outskirts of Los Angeles, said. 'But when we played them, it was amazing talent.'**