

Book review

By Myrtle Aberdeen

Ewart Rouse's novel, *Sticky Wicket, Vol. 1, Watkins at Bat*, covers one day in the life of the protagonist, Frederick Alfred Watkins, the recently retired manager of Fernwood Cricket Club in Fernwood, New Jersey.

Watkins, much to the dismay of his wife, Gina, reopens the recently closed book of his cricketing life after getting a challenge from the captain of Jamaica Rebels Cricket Club, a top-ranked team which the very weak Fernwood had ousted from championship contention last season in a fluke.

Rouse gives his reader a ringside view of Watkins' recruiting of players for what both sides now regard as a grudge match. This activity is not without humor and results in a 'potpourri' of players. Gina's protests were not the lone source of conflict; other wives also were opposed to their husbands deserting their families for the game.

Though the novel may, at first, seem simply to entail a game of cricket, it embraces much more. The theme of power permeates it: power in the home, power on the field; power for the field.

One of the benefits of reading the novel is a heightened sense of awareness of the game of cricket and its similarities, as well as differences, between cricket and the all-so-familiar and well-liked American game of baseball.

Rouse skillfully weaves that information into the fabric of the novel as the game of cricket interestingly unfolds.

-Myrtle Aberdeen is a New York public school teacher and literary critic.

About the author:

Ewart Rouse is a former editor at the Philadelphia Inquirer. He previously reported for the Trinidad Guardian and The Associated Press and taught journalism at Temple, Rutgers, Arcadia and Rowan universities. A native of Trinidad, he manages a cricket club in the United States.

Praise for “Sticky Wicket, Vol. 1, Watkins At Bat.

“Sticky Wicket, Vol. 1, Watkins At Bat, is a wonderful addition to contemporary cricket literature. The plot weaves the age-old themes of the sport into modern life.... This first volume is a strong opener for what should be a successful series.”

-Paul Hensley, president of C.C. Morris Cricket Library at Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

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“The scheming plots involved in getting some of the players, both young and old, away from their wives to the playing field... will surely give any reader who enjoys a good laugh lots to laugh about.”

-Carol Quash, Trinidad Guardian

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“To the cricket-initiated, the volume is distilled mirth.”

-Tom Baldwin, Gannett News Service, and author of “Big Storm, Small Ship.”

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*“A bit of Watkins resides in all our hearts and homes. An entertaining narrative about the interaction of cricketing families in the United States, chronicled in a jocular way that makes reading *Sticky Wicket* fun and a must read for all cricket enthusiasts.”*

-Shelton Glasgow, president, Garden State Cricket League; regional director, Atlantic region of the United States of America Cricket Association, and USACA board member.

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*“Watkins At Bat, the first in the *Sticky Wicket* trilogy, is an entertaining romp with a motley cast of characters by an author whose love of the game of cricket is evident on*

every page. A wonderful adventure!”

- Glenn Walker, owner/moderator of *Writer Circle*:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/writercircle/>

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“The author has used his favorite game as a metaphor to bring his feisty characters to life in a sparkling and humorous manner that is a delight. Ride along with Rouse’s imagination in *Sticky Wicket, Vol. 1, Watkins At Bat*, and hurry; the ‘cricket train’ is about to leave the station. Be on it!”

-Paul Gordon, author of the novels “*Concrete Solution*” “*Van Gogh’s Last Painting*” and “*Bogey-man on Gaston Street*.”

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“It was hilarious reading how these fellows got away from their wives on Sundays to enjoy a game that we all grew up playing. I also was moved to see how cricket brought so many different races together.”

-Adrian Rahim, captain *Jersey City Cricket Club, Jersey City, New Jersey*.

“I read the novel during a flight from Philadelphia to Jamaica and laughed so hard, and so often, that passengers near me must have thought I had lost it.”

Paul Francis, co-founder Echelon Cricket Club, Voorhees, New Jersey.

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“I thought I was reliving my playing experiences in America while reading of the exploits of Frederick A. Watkins. It was hard to put down once I started it. I finished the book in one sitting. I was glad I didn't have to go out to bat during that time!

Dan Ruparel, president, *The Littleton Cricket Club* and *Colorado Junior Cricket Association*, and former president, *Colorado Cricket League*.

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“I enjoyed reading this first volume quite a bit and look forward to reading further volumes.”

- Ron Knight, umpire, *Mid-Atlantic Cricket Conference, Chapel Hill, North Carolina*.