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With a role in the IPL, ex-Coaster Ricky Aitken has found the...

# Grass is greener on the other side

By CHLOE HOPE

CRICKET is like a religion in India, and former Coaster Ricky Aitken gets to hang out with the gods.

He just mentions in passing spending nights out on the town with Adam Gilchrist and a smattering of the stars of international cricket.

The Burnie boy has come a long way from green keeper at the South Burnie Bowls Club.

His art is in demand in India, where cricket is big business.

Aitken has just completed the Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket season with the Deccan Chargers, in Hyderabad.

"In the time I have been here I have been involved with many social outings with the Deccan Chargers as I am considered part of the group," Aitken said.

"Many of the experiences have led to the early hours of the morning which has been interesting in more ways than one."

The Chargers are owned by local newspaper the *Deccan Chronicle*, and unfortunately finished last in the inaugural season.

But it was still a blast for ground curator Aitken.

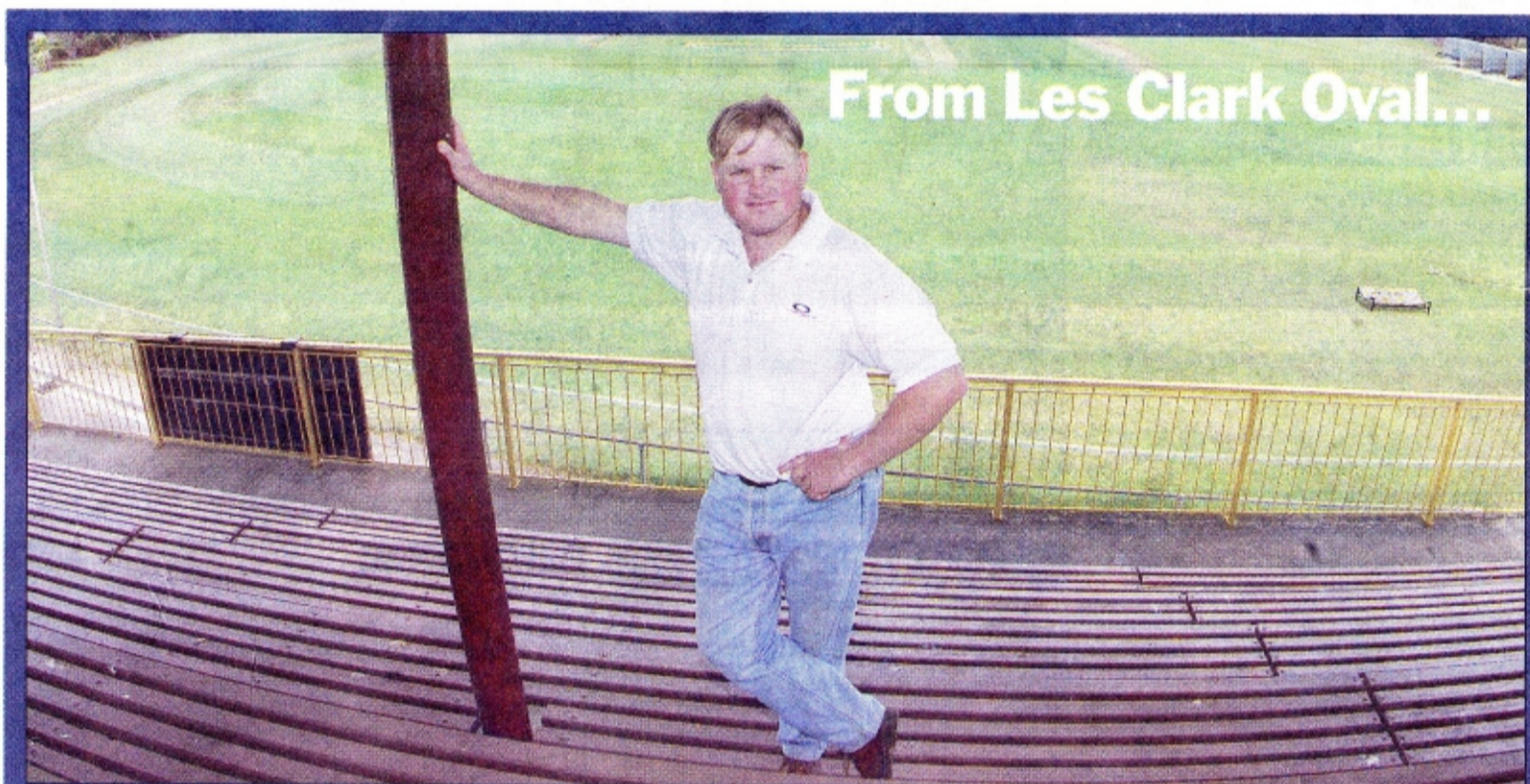
"The atmosphere at the matches is electric, they have a similar feel to the Premier League soccer matches in England," he said.

"Cricket is almost like a religion here in India, almost everyone has a keen interest in cricket here, and everyone likes to be involved in some way or another."

Being a ground curator is a high-powered role.

"As a foreigner, almost everyone has an interest in what I am doing and wants to know all about the pitch and its playing characteristics, just so they can get an insight into the match and how it might pan out," Aitken said.

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ABOVE: Ricky Aitken in his role as the Les Clark Oval ground curator in 2002. BELOW: Former Burnie lad Ricky Aitken at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium, India, in his role as the Deccan Chargers' ground curator during the recent Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket season.

