

High number of test match appearances linked to longer life

The more test matches a cricketer plays, the longer he is likely to live, suggests research published ahead of print in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. But captaining the team did not extend lifespan, the findings show.

The more test matches a cricketer plays, the longer he is likely to live, according to researchers at the University of St Andrews.

In the new study, Professor Paul Boyle examined whether occupational success influenced longevity among England test cricketers. He found that while higher numbers of appearances was associated with a longer life, captaining the team did not extend lifespan.

Professor Boyle, a health geographer, said, "We already know much about the relationship between occupational circumstances and mortality - those in lower social or occupational classes have shorter life expectancies. And we also know that poorer circumstances in early life may also affect longevity. However, little research has considered the influence of being 'successful' within a particular occupation.

"The unique contribution of these data is that we can measure occupational success taking into account prior social circumstances and the results do suggest that both early life circumstances and success have a role to play in life expectancy."

The researcher analysed the length of the lifespan of 418 cricketers who played for the England test team, born between 1827 and 1941, 69 of whom were still alive at the time of the study. He found strong associations between survival and year of birth with, perhaps unsurprisingly, players born more recently living longer than those born earlier.

A unique aspect of the data on English test cricketers is that a marker of social background is available. The records distinguish between amateur 'gentlemen' and professional 'players'. The amateur gentlemen came from privileged backgrounds and they lived longer than professional players, who came from working class backgrounds.

Success was measured by the number of test matches in which a player had appeared, with higher numbers of appearances associated with a longer life. Thirteen percent of the cricketers had taken part in 25 or more test matches. A similar proportion had captained the England side at least once. But although this might be considered the pinnacle of success for a cricketer, it had no impact on longevity.

Overall, the results showed that 'amateur gentlemen' cricketers who played in many tests had an average survival of 79.3 years, while 'professional players' who played in only a few tests had an average survival of 71.5 years - a difference of nearly 8 years.

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