

YORKSHIRE CHAPLAIN REVEALS TOUGH LIFE OF CRICKETERS

Helping players who are hit for six



NOT OUT... Max Wigley is Yorkshire County Cricket Club's chaplain

THE worlds of theatre and cricket don't always mix together automatically – but Max Wigley is one exception to the rule.

After 28 years as a theatre chaplain and a minister, he found himself at a loose end in 2003 – that was until Yorkshire County Cricket Club came calling.

"My son was a professional cricketer, and he was with Yorkshire and didn't want me to be chaplain while he was there! But he then moved to Worcestershire, so when he was gone I went to Yorkshire and it's been great," says Max.

"It's been like having my little parish all of my own, because it's a big set up there. There's a big office staff all-year round, so I'm not just chaplain to the players, I'm chaplain to the whole club.

I just love rubbing shoulders with ordinary people who wouldn't normally darken the door of a church. It's a pastoral role, a holistic role really. Very, very rewarding."

BREAKDOWN

This kind of role is becoming ever more important in the world of leather upon willow. As Max explains, cricketers have particular needs and vulnerabilities which need to be addressed.

"Cricketers have the highest incidence of suicide and of marriage breakdown [among sportspeople]. I asked my son why he thought the statistics were as they are and he said that the thing about cricket is that you start training after Christmas and after that you start playing from the end of March, beginning of April.

"You play until getting on for the end of September. And it's not like in football where you play a couple of hours per game, then go

The cricket season gets underway this month. We caught up with the chaplain of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, Max Wigley

back home – you're on the road, so you eat, sleep and play with these guys 24/7.

"You might be playing in Taunton against Somerset, and then you get on a coach and drive up to Chester-le-Street to play Durham, so you're on the go all the time. You're never away from one another. And therefore, when all of a sudden you're released, what do you do? You're just lost.

"My son was with Northamptonshire until 18 months ago but had to have an injection in his back for a hamstring problem he had, but they went in too far with the needle and injured his spinal cord.

He was desperately ill for about a month, and when he came round he wasn't fit to play again that season. He got to the end of the season and he was out of contract and they just released him. No qualms, no loyalty or anything. He just drove to the club and emptied his locker, put it in the back of the car, drove out and then had to return his sponsored car.

"So that's the difference between cricket and other games – it's less predictable – so I will e-mail players if they're going through a hard time or they're out of the game and just say, 'Hope things get better, keep your head up,' so that's the pastoral side."

This side of Max's job was nurtured at the Alhambra Theatre in Bradford, where he was chaplain for 28 years.

During his time there, he mixed with a whole host of household names – several of whom came to faith. But one of the most notable encounters came in 1986 when Cannon and Ball came to the Al-

hambra. The comedy duo were at the height of their fame but were barely on speaking terms. Fortunately for them, and particularly for Bobby, Max stepped in.

"Bob and Tom and I became friends, and one day I said to him: 'I really think you and I ought to have a chat, Bob.' So I went in, in between the matinee and evening performance, and we sat and talked, and he came to faith.

CHAT

"But it wasn't on that night because he was so frightened. He said, 'Can I come and see you at home on Friday?' which was later on in the week, so he came and we had a chat in my study, and he knelt down on

the floor and asked Christ into his life. And then Tommy came to faith about four years later. So that was the turning point and they've been going on ever since."

And this description is an appropriate one for Max himself. Still going strong at the age of 74, he is in no mood to stop his chaplaincy work any time soon.

"One of the Yorkshire coaches once said to me: 'Having you around is like having a steel rod going through the centre of the club,' which was rather nice because you do feel you're appreciated. At the moment, it seems to be going well and so I hope to carry on until I get too old to drive – although hopefully somebody will have the guts to tell me when they feel it's time I drew stumps!"



Miguel Tejada

I turned my back on life of partying

A BASEBALL player revealed how he turned his back on alcohol and partying to live a life dedicated to Christ.

Miguel Tejada, who plays for the Houston Astros, has become popular amongst supporters for his impressive average.

But beside his sports career, 37-year-old Miguel has other priorities, notably his faith in God. But his beliefs weren't always so strong.

He said: "I was like many Americans where I believed in God, I believed in Jesus, but I didn't have a personal relationship with him. That's the difference.

"I lived my life to please myself. I went to college. I drank beer, partied with my friends, chased girls, you name it. I just did things that I thought was best for me, but it left an empty feeling."

However, things changed after his mum gave him a Bible. He recalls: "I just made a decision. I said, 'It's time to grow up. It's time to start living for the Lord, do things the right way.' I accepted the Lord, and it changed my life, just a complete 180."

Life for Miguel has never been the same.

"I read the Bible every single day," he says. "I believe God created sports for a good reason. It's recreation. It's something that we enjoy. It teaches us a lot as well – I believe God is a sports fan."

Now that's lots of extra time...

BRAVE blokes from Youth for Christ are attempting to break the record for the world's longest game of football this month.

The lads will attempt to play non-stop for 48 hours on April 30. The current world record is set by two Canadian teams, who competed for 42 hours.

Youth for Christ's Gavin Calver said: "We're passionate about football and keen to smash a world record that we care about – a one that isn't silly like lying in a bath of beans!"

Gavin hopes the publicity generated by the challenge will raise the awareness of Youth for Christ's work in Britain.

It's Brazilliant!

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years later the FIFA association granted me the Fair Play award as the world's most loyal soccer player I had played in the German league for four seasons without ever receiving a single red card!"

Jorginho, now 48, has managed several teams since in Brazil since his playing days ended.