

Many problems in junior cricket

(By
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Although the Saturday morning primary schoolboys' cricket competition has ended for the season, many of the problems it presented are only just beginning for the Junior Advisory Board's executive.

In the last seven seasons, the number of schoolboy players has doubled. In the 1969-70 season, 14 clubs and schools contributed 42 teams. In the 1975-76 season, there were 28 clubs and schools contributing 96 teams.

A number of clubs have had to turn boys down because of the lack of facilities and coaches. As it is, with more than 1000 boys appearing each weekend, it has required a lot of organising to supply grounds, gear, team supervision and transport.

"It seems rather illogical that schoolboy cricket should be the only summer sport where a two-month holiday gap occurs," said Mr Derek Cockburn, president of the J.A.B.

The gap means that the cricket season is broken into two periods. The first runs from mid-October to December (10 Saturdays), and the second from the beginning of February until the end of March (seven Saturdays).

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At present some January weeks are taken up with coaching, inter-city club fixtures, and "mixed teams" matches, but some consideration is being given to running twilight schoolboy cricket matches during the week, Mr Cockburn said.

The present ruling of the J.A.B., that third form high school boys are banned from playing in its competition, has caused problems, both for the executive and clubs.

It means that boys who played in the October-December "season" are not eligible to play in the second half of the competition if they begin high school in February.

This year, particularly, the problem of re-casting teams and finding agreeable grades for boys, after the "promotion" of players to high school, has been serious.

A number of third form high school boys created problems for the J.A.B. by returning to teams, because they were unable to play for their high schools on Saturdays. This meant that newly-promoted players were pitted against players with more experience.

Another problem that has caused concern is the encroachment by winter codes, with grading matches and weigh-ins, on the last Saturday mornings of the cricket season.

"Most administrators of winter codes are aware of the agreement made a few seasons ago, and have made alternative weigh-in or registration times, but new coaches and clubs may be ignorant of this agreement," Mr Cockburn said.