



IT'S GREAT TO GET A MATCH OVER AND DONE WITH IN AN HOUR OR TWO

KEVIN PIETERSEN 'JUST ONE BIG SLOG'

This afternoon in Cape Town, England clash with big rivals Australia at the Twenty20 World Cup. Kevin Pietersen spoke to *Sport* about the new game – and how it ballsed up his wedding plans

ENGLAND

- Paul Collingwood (c) Age 31
- Stuart Broad 21
- Andrew Flintoff 29
- James Kirtley 32
- Darren Maddy 33
- Kevin Pietersen 27
- Matt Prior 25
- Chris Schofield 28
- Owais Shah 28
- Ryan Sidebottom 29
- Jeremy Snape 34
- Vikram Solanki 31
- Chris Tremlett 26
- Luke Wright 22

AUSTRALIA

- Ricky Ponting (c) Age 32
- Adam Gilchrist 35
- Nathan Bracken 29
- Stuart Clark 31
- Michael Clarke 26
- Brad Haddin 29
- Matthew Hayden 35
- Ben Hilfenhaus 24
- Brad Hodge 32
- Brad Hogg 36
- Michael Hussey 32
- Mitchell Johnson 25
- Brett Lee 30
- Andrew Symonds 32
- Shane Watson 26

IT'S ON TV!

SKY SPORTS 1
Australia v England
Friday 12.30pm

➔ **So, this year it is the first ever Twenty20 World Cup – what do you make of this ball-tonking new game?**

"I'm not a massive fan of Twenty20. I know it brings in the crowds and provides a lot of entertainment, but – and this will probably sound weird – it's not that suited to my game. I like to build an innings, so going out and smashing the first ball doesn't fit into my game plan. It's great entertainment, though, and that's great for both the sport and fans."

But, as a big-hitting batsman, surely you enjoy lashing out with the bat...

"You just have to go out and play the situation as it stands. Yeah, it's pretty much a slog, but it's nothing too serious – I've never taken a Twenty20 seriously."

So is the whole point of Twenty20 to have a bit of fun and produce an entertaining spectacle?

"Exactly, yes. Most of our games last between one and five days, so it's great to get one over and done with in a couple of hours. In that respect, it's pretty similar to football and rugby – it's done and dusted, and that's obviously appealing to the fans, too."

Do you actually enjoy playing Twenty20 cricket?

"Yeah, I do – it's great to play and then get off home."

Have you any special shots reserved for Twenty20?

"Not really, no – I play my full range in Test matches. I've reverse-swept Murali in a Test – I don't think there's any more stupid shot than that."

So you feel relaxed enough to play all your shots?

"Yeah, it's relaxed, very relaxed – the guys just go out and play freely."

You're normally tied up with England games, but Twenty20 county games are normally packed with fans. That's got to be good news...

"We're pretty fortunate to have full houses for every

game we play, so it's hard for us to go back to county games, where there's sometimes only 200 people watching you. But hey, there's a job to do – runs to be scored and wickets to be had."

Twenty20 games have plenty of fun, music and razzmatazz. Do the players enjoy all that?

"Yeah, it gets everyone involved. The guys like going out to music. At the end of the day, we're all entertainers. We go out there to make people happy (or sometimes sad), and Twenty20 gives us the opportunity to go out and play with a free spirit."

Is it nice to be back in South Africa?

"Coming back to South Africa gives me a chance to see my family, which is great. But the Twenty20 World Cup? We'll have to wait and see. To be honest, I wasn't looking forward to it that much – I'd planned my wedding for September, and then last year the Twenty20 World Cup was suddenly chucked in, so that mucked my personal plans right up. Getting married is something that is very important to me."



Fair enough. Can England mix it in Twenty20?

"Of course, yeah. It's just a matter of time – it's about getting more practice and experience."

In Twenty20, sharp fielding can be key. Is that something England have worked on much?

"Definitely. Strong fielding, good support, backing each other up – those are the ingredients needed for being sharp in the field."

Is Twenty20 quite tactical, or just a slog-fest?

"It can be quite tactical because 20 overs can last a little while – it's not like it's only five or seven overs. If you play well you can get a reasonable total, and there's always a bit of banter out there – either with your batting partner or when you're in the field."

Since Twenty20 was launched, normal one-day cricket has become more high-scoring and aggressive. Will Test cricket follow suit?

"Definitely. I think Test run rates are now increasing, and Twenty20 is bringing in more shots – players are hitting a lot more than they used to. Teams are now scoring at rapid rates in world cricket."

In time, do you see Twenty20 becoming a more respected form of cricket?

"It could do, yeah. You're no longer getting many Test matches going five days, and that's because of the direction in which the one-dayers and Twenty20 are taking the sport. Quicker scoring will appeal greatly to fans and increase Twenty20's popularity."

Is it important for a side like England to have Twenty20 specialists in the squad?

"You do get some players who are definitely more capable of putting balls in areas better than others – so yes, I guess they would be better equipped to play Twenty20 and give their team a distinct advantage."

DARREN CRUSH

Kevin Pietersen is a Volkswagen Ambassador. For more information, please go to www.volkswagen.co.uk

WEBLINK www.thetwenty20cup.co.uk