

How about learning to cop it sweet?

SO the umpires gave a couple of dodgy decisions last week concerning Ed Cowan and Michael Hussey. The response has been disproportionate, to say the least.

Debutant batsman Cowan has the temerity to demand that video technology be compulsory. Not bad for his first Test.

He, like Hussey, may have been duded by a less-than-generous decision. But the umpire called it as he saw it.

The problem is that this will inevitably happen in cricket. I know, as I used to umpire cricket in England.

I once gave a poor decision. It was one of those moments when a nano-second decision was necessary. I heard a noise and gave the batsman out caught behind. I still remember the aggrieved player's name - Michael Tal. He was angry, but he went. I am still, to this day, uncomfortable about it. At tea, I apologised and said that I made the call as I saw it. He had sufficient charity to take it on the chin and say that he didn't hit it, but accepted I saw it differently.

The ball nicked his pad and not the bat. But the rabid overreaction as to whether Cowan and Hussey were out or not is illustrative of something else. We no longer accept the umpire's decision in just about anything. Take the courts, for example.

If a judge hands down a sentence or makes



IN MY VIEW

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a decision, there will be, as a matter of course, an appeal. This is clogging the judicial system and wasting court time as lawyers encourage defendants to appeal decisions. There is no such thing as copping it sweet any more.

Parking inspectors come in for a fair bit of slagging-off as well if they have the gall to write a ticket. We just don't take a decision that goes against us or what we want. In my suburb, parking contractors are actually taking photographs of cars to prove - yes, prove - that a car was in the wrong. Their word, like cricket umpires, is no longer seen as enough.

Would video footage help reduce the angst over a Test match decision? Maybe. Equally, it would surely prematurely end some Test umpires' careers. But is this fair?

The pressure umpires are under is considerable already. If they deferred to video imaging as in limited-overs games, then something special is lost. This is the ability to put your trust in the integrity of somebody else.

Tennis had John McEnroe's inability to accept a bad line call, forcing the introduction of "Hawkeye" technology. In his recent book, *High Strung: Bjorn Borg, John McEnroe and the Untold Story of Tennis's Fiercest Rivalry*, author Stephen Tignor gives much space to McEnroe's "pits of the world" view of umpires.

Brinkmanship is accepted in sport. Bullying umpires into reversing a decision is not part of the game. Already we see this in international soccer. A referee makes a decision and he is surrounded by berating players.

If we refuse to accept the umpire's decisions in sport, let alone the courts and just about everywhere else, we lose our sense of anyone being able to arbitrate fairly.

Instead, we encourage a culture of review and appeal and not accepting rules of all kinds. And there is something else at stake as well.

What do we teach kids if we continually discredit umpires and judges, teachers, police and politicians? We endorse the message that a lack of respect and preparedness to go with a tough decision is part of life.

Whether Cowan or Hussey were out is not for them to say. A stronger, more dignified message would have been silence and not giving umpires the finger.

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