

JONATHAN AGNEW



Two weeks ago few people might have heard of Adnan Januzaj, but if he is selected to play for Manchester United this weekend, the 18-year-old will be very much under the spotlight. This is partly because of his wonderful start in the Premier League but also because of the debate that followed about his eligibility to play for England. Januzaj was born in Belgium but

for five years he could qualify to play for England under FIFA's residency requirement. The Arsenal and England midfielder Jack Wilshere took to Twitter to ignite a familiar argument: 'If you live in England for five years, it doesn't make you English', he said. Alan Shearer added that you need to be born in England to play for England.

We are used to this debate in the cricket world because the England team has become home to a growing number of players of South African origin in particular: Andrew Strauss, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen and Matt Prior all came from the Republic, and of the 32 players to represent England in international cricket in 2013, 12 – or 37.5% – were born outside the country.

But this is far more complicated than simply the place of one's birth. Two of the most iconic captains of England, Colin Cowdrey and Ted Dexter, were born in India and Italy respectively. And let's spread the net wider – what about Mo Farrah (Somalia), Chris Froome (Kenya) and Justin Rose (South Africa). The fallout from the British

Empire, modern-day travel and politics all play a role. A number of our South African cricketers found themselves caught up in the quota system that was introduced to encourage the development of black players, and chose to develop their careers in England – Pietersen's cause helped by having an English mother. All the cricketers in question have dedicated

themselves to their adopted country but I do think it is fortunate for the image of the team that their European-sounding names are not instead Van de Merwe, Van Zyl, Oosthuizen and du Bruin.

The selectors must be responsible in choosing only genuine imports to maintain the sport's credibility. Cricket slipped up badly with Darren Pattinson, a Grimsby-born Australian who was suddenly picked for one Test in 2008. As he was awarded his England cap, I asked him if he had spent his life dreaming about this moment. 'No mate!' he replied.

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