

= Ron Hamence with the Australian cricket team in England in 1948 =

Ron Hamence was a member of Donald Bradman 's famous Australian cricket team of 1948 , which toured England and was undefeated in its 34 matches . As a result of this unprecedented feat by a Test side touring England , the team earned the nickname The Invincibles .

A right @-@ handed middle @-@ order batsman , Hamence was not instrumental in the team 's success . Regarded as the last batsman to be chosen for the team , his selection was the subject of controversy because many batsmen who had scored more runs in the preceding Australian season had been overlooked . Hamence and Colin McCool were the only squad members who did not play a Test on tour . Hamence was used in non @-@ Test tour matches so that the leading batsmen could conserve energy for the Tests , as play was scheduled for six days a week . Along with Doug Ring , Hamence and McCool called themselves " ground staff " because of their scant playing duties in the major matches , and they often created and sang ironic songs about their lack of opportunities . Bradman was reluctant to risk the team 's unbeaten record and as a result , Hamence did not receive many opportunities to bat high in the order , something that was the subject of criticism .

Hamence scored 582 runs at a batting average of 32 @.@ 33 , with a top @-@ score of 99 . He was the only frontline Australian batsman not to score a century . The remaining eight frontline batsmen each scored at least 973 runs and all averaged no less than 47 @.@ 30 . Hamence also occasionally opened the bowling in the tour matches with his gentle medium pace , allowing the team 's leading bowlers to recuperate between Tests .

= = Background = =

During the preceding 1947 ? 48 season in Australia , Hamence was dropped from the national team . He had played sporadically in the Test team , being selected in three of the ten matches in the previous two seasons . In those three Tests he scored a total of 81 runs at an average of 27 @.@ 00 . Returning to domestic cricket following his omission , Hamence scored 85 and 66 against Queensland , a performance which kept him in the running for a place in the national team . His selection for the 1948 tour of England under Bradman was the subject of considerable controversy , as many other batsmen were overlooked despite being more productive during the Australian summer . For his part , Bradman described his middle @-@ order ? Hamence among them ? as " an array of batsmen who could scarcely fail " . From the start , Hamence was on the outer with regards to selection in the Tests . He was not selected for any of the Tests during the English campaign , but in a 2008 interview , emphasised that he felt no resentment over his omission . Hamence was a popular member of the touring party and his cheerful nature and splendid tenor voice added to the good spirits of the team . His roommate during the tour was the seamer Ernie Toshack .

= = Early tour = =

Australia traditionally fielded its first @-@ choice team in the tour opener , which was customarily against Worcestershire . Being a fringe member of the squad and having made only sporadic Test appearances in previous seasons , Hamence was not selected . Australia promptly crushed the hosts by an innings .

Hamence made his debut on English soil in the second tour match against Leicestershire . Batting at No. 6 , he came in at 4 / 344 and made only seven . His dismissal triggered a collapse of 5 / 38 as Australia were bowled out for 448 before winning by an innings . The next match against Yorkshire , on a damp pitch that suited slower bowling , was the closest Australia came to defeat on the tour . Batting at No. 4 , Hamence made 12 in the first innings as Australia replied to Yorkshire 's 71 with 101 . He batted slowly , coming in at 2 / 24 before departing at 7 / 74 . After Australia dismissed the hosts for 89 in their second innings , Australia collapsed to 3 / 13 in pursuit of 60 for victory . Hamence came in and scored one before he was run out after being slow to set off for a quick single ; Australia collapsed to 6 / 31 . To make matters worse , Sam Loxton was injured and could not bat ,

so Australia effectively had only three wickets in hand and faced their first loss to an English county since 1912 . However , Australia scraped home by four wickets after a counterattack by Neil Harvey and Don Tallon , aided by a dropped catch and missed stumping .

Hamence was rested as the Australians travelled to London to defeat Surrey at The Oval by an innings . He returned for the next match against Cambridge University . Elevated to No. 3 by stand @-@ in captain Lindsay Hassett , Hamence came in at 1 / 64 and put on a partnership of 176 with Bill Brown , ending with 92 as Australia piled on 4 / 414 and won by an innings . Hamence scored mainly from the back foot , and Jack Fingleton opined " a nice innings it was , too , in its neat strokemaking " . Hamence also bowled for the first time on tour , sending down three overs for seven runs in the second innings without taking a wicket .

In the following match , Australia crushed Essex by an innings and 451 runs , their largest winning margin for the summer . On the first day , Australia set a world record by scoring 721 , the most first @-@ class runs added in one day . Halfway through the day , at 2 / 364 , all rounder Keith Miller came to the crease . A cavalier and carefree character , Miller resented Bradman 's ruthless attitude towards annihilating the opposition and often refused to try when Australia were in an unassailable position . He deliberately let the ball hit the stumps and was out for a golden duck . Hamence came in and struck 46 , adding 146 runs for the fifth wicket with Sam Loxton . The partnership took only an hour , and Australia went on to win by an innings . Miller later said that one of his reasons for gifting his wicket was to protest the lack of opportunities given to Hamence and other fringe batsmen . Batting at No. 5 in the next match against Oxford University , Hamence made only three as Australia made 431 and proceeded to another innings victory .

The next match was against the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) at Lord 's . The MCC fielded seven players who would represent England in the Tests , N- and were basically a full strength Test team , while Australia fielded their first @-@ choice team . It was a chance to gain a psychological advantage . Given Hamence 's early struggles in the English conditions , which saw him make only 161 runs at 26 @.@ 83 in his first six innings , while all of Australia 's first @-@ choice top six had made centuries , N- he was not selected ; Australia amassed 552 and won by an innings .

Recalled for the next match , against Lancashire at Old Trafford in Manchester , Hamence scored two while batting at No. 7 in the first innings and an unbeaten 49 at No. 6 in the second , putting on an unbeaten century partnership with Harvey as the match ended in a draw after the entire first day 's play was lost to rain . His second innings was praised for the aesthetic quality . It was the first match on tour that Australia had failed to win . Hamence was rested for the following match against Nottinghamshire , which was again drawn , before returning against Hampshire . He made five as Australia were dismissed for 117 in reply to the home side 's 195 , the first time the tourists had conceded a first innings lead during the season . He did not get another chance with the bat as Australia recovered to win by eight wickets .

Hamence had one last chance to make his case for Test selection in the match against Sussex at Hove , the last county fixture before the First Test at Trent Bridge . He came to the crease at 4 / 453 and made 34 in a stand of 96 with Harvey . His dismissal and Harvey reaching his 100 prompted Australia to declare at 5 / 549 . Bradman said that Hamence was " the unlucky player of the match " and that he was standing on the balcony ready to declare when Hamence fell on the last ball of the over . Australia went on to complete an innings victory . In the second innings , Hamence opened the bowling with Ray Lindwall . He took an early wicket before ending the innings by claiming the last man to fall , a stumping by Ron Saggers standing up to the stumps .

= = Test omission = =

Since World War II , the first five positions in Australia 's Test batting order had regularly consisted of Arthur Morris , Sid Barnes , Bradman , Hassett and Miller , while the sixth position saw many occupants . All of the first five were selected for the matches against Worcestershire and the MCC , and retained their positions for the First Test .

This left one position for the remaining batsmen in the squad . Up to this point , Brown had scored 800 runs on tour at an average of 72 @.@ 72 , with four centuries , and was on his third tour of

England . Brown had played in the first @-@ choice team in the matches against Worcestershire and the MCC . Harvey had accumulated 296 runs at 42 @.@ 29 , all rounder Loxton had 310 runs at 51 @.@ 66 , but was injured , while Hamence had made only 251 runs at 27 @.@ 88 and was the only one of the four to not have scored a century . Hamence was overlooked while Brown gained selection in the First Test at Trent Bridge , batting out of position in the middle @-@ order while Barnes and Morris were preferred as the first @-@ choice opening pair , whereas Harvey was dropped despite making a century in Australia 's most recent Test against India . This was the exact situation that had unfolded in the Worcestershire and MCC matches where Australia fielded their first @-@ choice team ; Brown batted in the middle order . Bradman explained the decision in his memoirs : " Hamence was not in good enough form and Harvey scarcely ready " . During the opening stages of the tour , Bradman spent little time talking to Hamence at practice sessions , leading analysts to conclude that the Australian skipper viewed Hamence as being highly unlikely to play in the Tests . Australia went on to defeat England by eight wickets , although Brown struggled and made only 17 .

Between Tests , Hamence earned selection for the match against Northamptonshire , batting at No. 4 and scoring 34 ; he partnered acting captain Hassett in a stand of 104 for the third wicket . He took 1 / 11 in the second innings as Australia won by an innings . In the second match before the Second Test , which was against Yorkshire , Hamence made 48 and six not out , and took a total of 1 / 17 as the game ended in a draw . He batted slowly and cautiously ; Bradman gave him few opportunities , so he had to make the most of them . The first innings 48 was a determined performance on a sticky wicket that helped Australia to 249 ; Bradman felt that Hamence 's grit was a notable factor in Australia managing to pass 200 . Harvey made 49 and 56 while Brown made 19 and 113 as an opener . This was enough for Brown to retain his middle @-@ order position for the Second Test at Lord 's , where Australia fielded an unchanged team . Australia went on to a crushing win by 409 runs but Brown made only 24 and 32 .

The next match was against Surrey and started the day after the Second Test . As the Test players were tired , Bradman gave them a lighter workload and assigned Hamence and Loxton to open the bowling . Both took two wickets and Hamence snared opposing captain Laurie Fishlock and Eric Bedser to end with 2 / 24 . Brown injured a finger while fielding , so he was not able to bat in Australia 's first innings . Hamence was thus elevated to open the batting . Hamence made a duck , but Australia nevertheless took a 168 @-@ run lead . Hamence opened the bowling for the second time , although he was unable to take a wicket and ended with 0 / 30 . In the second innings , Harvey volunteered to play as a makeshift opener alongside Loxton and they chased down the 122 runs for victory in less than an hour to complete a 10 @-@ wicket win .

For the following match against Gloucestershire before the Third Test , Brown and Hamence did not play . Harvey made 95 and Loxton ended on 159 not out as Australia reached 7 / 774 declared , its highest of the tour , underpinning an innings victory . As a result of the performance , Loxton seized Brown 's middle @-@ order position for the Third Test at Old Trafford .

During the drawn Third Test , opening batsman Sid Barnes was injured . This opened up a vacancy for the Fourth Test . Hamence made 30 as Australia defeated Middlesex by ten wickets in their only county match before the Fourth Test at Headingley . Hamence was overlooked for the vacancy as Harvey was called in . Australia scored 3 / 404 to set a world record for the highest successful Test run chase ; Harvey scored a century .

Immediately after the Test , Hamence made 21 at No. 6 as Australia amassed 456 and defeated Derbyshire by an innings . In the next match against Glamorgan , Hamence was yet to bat when rain ended the match at 3 / 215 in Australia 's first innings . He was rested as Australia defeated Warwickshire by nine wickets . Hamence was recalled as Australia faced and drew with Lancashire for the second time on the tour . He made 14 in the first innings and was unbeaten on 10 in the second when Australia declared , having batted at No. 5 both times . In the last match before the Fifth Test , a non @-@ first @-@ class fixture against Durham , Hamence scored 24 batting at No. 6 in Australia 's 282 . The match was a rain @-@ affected draw that did not reach the second innings . Hamence was overlooked for the Fifth Test , as Australia won by an innings to seal the series 4 ? 0 ; the drawn Third Test was Australia 's only non @-@ victory .

= = Later tour matches = =

Seven matches remained on Bradman 's quest to go through a tour of England without defeat . Australia batted first against Kent and Hamence made 38 . Hamence was the ninth man to fall as partners ran out and Australia lost their last seven wickets for 89 to end at 361 . Despite this , they completed an innings victory . In the next match against the Gentlemen of England , Hamence batted at No. 7 and only had a limited opportunity to contribute , coming in at 5 / 532 and scoring 24 before Bradman declared at 5 / 610 when Hassett reached 200 . Hamence bowled in both innings for a total of 1 / 41 as Australia won by an innings . In the next match against Somerset , Hamence put on 195 for the fifth wicket with Ian Johnson to take Australia to 4 / 501 with his score on 99 . The other batsmen had all made centuries , and the Australian players were keen to see Hamence do the same . With his score on 99 , the rest of the team left their card games in readiness to applaud his impending milestone . However , Hamence hit two balls from the middle of the bat , only to see them travel directly to the fielder , yielding no runs . Anxious to reach his century , Hamence then charged down the pitch and was then stumped for 99 , his highest score for the season . According to Bradman , Hamence " fell to what everyone said was the best ball all day " . Nevertheless , Australia won by an innings and 374 runs . In the following match against the South of England , Hamence made seven as Australia declared at 7 / 522 . The match was washed out ; Hamence bowled three overs without success in the hosts ' only innings .

Australia 's biggest challenge in the post @-@ Test tour matches was the fixture against Leveson @-@ Gower 's XI . During the last tour in 1938 , this team was effectively a full @-@ strength England outfit , but this time Bradman insisted that only six players currently in England 's Test team be allowed to play for the hosts . Bradman then fielded a full @-@ strength team , so Hamence was left out . Australia led by 312 on the first innings and were well in control , but the match ended in a draw after multiple rain delays . The tour ended with two non @-@ first @-@ class matches against Scotland . Hamence batted once in each match , scoring six and 15 as Australia ended the tour with two innings victories .

= = Role = =

During the tour , Hamence played 19 first @-@ class matches and scored 582 runs at an average of 32 @.@ 33 . An occasional bowler who delivered 56 @.@ 3 overs of medium pace during the tour , he took seven wickets at 21 @.@ 42 and completed nine catches . He was the most successful of the specialist batsmen with the ball , occasionally opening the bowling in the tour matches , such as in both innings of the second match against Surrey and the second innings of the second match against Yorkshire . This allowed Bradman to rest his first @-@ choice bowlers to keep them fresh for the Tests . Hamence 's primary role was to allow the leading batsmen an opportunity to conserve energy for the Tests ; the Australians generally had six days of play scheduled every week . In most of the matches , Hamence batted in the middle order at Nos. 5 , 6 and 7.N- Along with Loxton , he was given 22 first @-@ class opportunities with the bat , whereas the other eight frontline batsmen had at least 26 innings . Loxton scored 973 runs , while the others all scored more than 1 @,@ 000 . All of the batsmen other than Loxton averaged at least 47 @.@ 30 @.@ and as Australia won many of their matches by an innings or by eight or more wickets , he seldom batted in the second innings . On four occasions , he was unbeaten when Australia either declared , reached their target or time ran out .

Teammate Sid Barnes criticised the omission of Hamence from much meaningful cricket on the tour . Referring to the match against the Gentlemen of England , Barnes criticised the fact that Bradman , Hassett and himself all made centuries , while Hamence was only given a short innings in the lower order and was not out on 24 when Australia declared . As the tourists were already in a strong position , Barnes reasoned that Hamence " could have been sent in [at] first wicket down , where he batted with his interstate team ... Despite this , Hassett still went in before Hamence in the next game , against Somerset ... Hamence batted No. 6 ... but he should have been sent in No. 3 . "

Barnes reported that Hamence , along with the other frequent omissions Colin McCool and Doug Ring , termed themselves the " ground staff " . He added : " In the dressing room during county games they would break out into ironic song about the few chances they got . " Loxton reported that these songs included the " odd risque limerick " . Bradman did later state that " because of the strong array of batsman ahead of him , [Hamence] seldom had an opportunity to make big scores " but " was an extremely useful reserve who could have been played in the Tests with confidence " . Following the 1948 tour , Bradman described Hamence as " a fine batsman of the strictly orthodox type . Very sound and reliable with his game based on driving " and a " very safe fieldsman " . Bradman added that Hamence had few opportunities because of Australia 's batting strength but " always batted well and often at a critical moment made valuable runs " . Bradman said that Hamence " could have been played in the Tests with confidence " and praised his contributions to team morale . Fingleton said " there was criticism of his selection in this side , but had the war not intervened he undoubtedly would have made a [n] [Ashes] trip before " .

= = = Statistical notes = = =

= = = General notes = = =