

= Bodyline =

Bodyline , also known as fast leg theory bowling , was a cricketing tactic devised by the English cricket team for their 1932 ? 33 Ashes tour of Australia , specifically to combat the extraordinary batting skill of Australia 's Don Bradman . A bodyline delivery was one where the cricket ball was bowled towards the body of the batsman on the line of the leg stump , in the hope of creating leg @-@ side deflections that could be caught by one of several fielders in the quadrant of the field behind square leg . This was considered by many to be intimidatory and physically threatening , to the point of being unfair in a game once supposed to have gentlemanly traditions , although commercialisation of the game had subsequently tended to elevate the principle of " win at all costs " above traditional ideals of sportsmanship .

Although no serious injuries arose from any short @-@ pitched deliveries while a leg theory field was set , the tactic still led to considerable ill feeling between the two teams , with the controversy eventually spilling into the diplomatic arena . Over the next two decades , several of the Laws of Cricket were changed to prevent this tactic being repeated . Law 41 @.@ 5 states " At the instant of the bowler 's delivery there shall not be more than two fielders , other than the wicket @-@ keeper , behind the popping crease on the on side , " commonly referred to as being " behind square leg " . Additionally , Law 42 @.@ 6 (a) includes : " The bowling of fast short pitched balls is dangerous and unfair if the umpire at the bowler 's end considers that by their repetition and taking into account their length , height and direction they are likely to inflict physical injury on the striker " .

The occasional short @-@ pitched ball aimed at the batsman (a bouncer) has never been illegal and is still in widespread use as a tactic .

= = Genesis = =

The Australian cricket team toured England in 1930 . Australia won the five @-@ Test series 2 ? 1 , with Don Bradman scoring 974 runs at a batting average of 139 @.@ 14 , an aggregate record that still stands . By the time of the next Ashes series of 1932 ? 33 , Bradman 's average hovered around 100 , approximately twice that of all other world @-@ class batsmen . England feared that without resorting to drastic tactics , they might not be able to defeat Australia until Bradman ? then aged 24 ? retired , something that might be over a decade away . It was believed that something new was required to combat Bradman , but it was believed more likely that Bradman could be dismissed by leg @-@ spin as Walter Robins and Ian Peebles had supposedly caused him problems ; two leg @-@ spinners were included in the English touring party of 1932 ? 33 . This view gradually came to change leading up to 1932 .

The idea of bodyline had originated in the Oval Test of the 1930 Ashes series . While Bradman was batting , the wicket became briefly difficult following rain . Bradman was seen to be uncomfortable facing deliveries which bounced higher than usual at a faster pace , being seen to step back out of the line of the ball . Former England player and Surrey captain Percy Fender was one who noticed , and the incident was much discussed by cricketers . However , given that Bradman scored 232 , it was not thought that a way to curb his prodigious scoring had been found . When Douglas Jardine later saw film footage of the Oval incident and noticed Bradman 's discomfort , he shouted , " I 've got it ! He 's yellow ! " Further details adding to the plan came from letters Fender received from Australia in 1932 , which described how Australian batsmen were increasingly moving across the stumps towards the off side to play the ball on the on side . Fender showed these letters to Jardine when it became clear that he was to captain MCC in Australia during the 1932 ? 33 tour , and he also discussed Bradman 's discomfort at the Oval . It was also known in England that Bradman was dismissed for a four @-@ ball duck by fast bowler Eddie Gilbert , and looked very uncomfortable . Bradman had also appeared uncomfortable against the pace of Sandy Bell in his innings of 299 not out at the Adelaide Oval in South Africa 's tour of Australia earlier in 1932 , when the desperate bowler decided to bowl short to him , and fellow South African Herbie Taylor , according to Jack Fingleton , may have mentioned this to English cricketers in 1932 . Fender felt Bradman might be vulnerable to fast , short @-@ pitched deliveries on the line of leg stump . Jardine felt that Bradman

was afraid to stand his ground against intimidatory bowling , citing instances in 1930 when he shuffled about , contrary to orthodox batting technique .

When Jardine was appointed England 's captain for the 1932 ? 33 English tour of Australia , a meeting was arranged with Nottinghamshire captain Arthur Carr and his two fast bowlers Harold Larwood and Bill Voce at London 's Piccadilly Hotel to discuss a plan to combat Bradman 's extraordinary skills . Jardine asked Larwood and Voce if they could bowl on leg stump and make the ball come up into the body of the batsman . The bowlers agreed they could , and that it might prove effective . Jardine also visited Frank Foster who had toured Australia in 1911 ? 12 to discuss field @-@ placing in Australia . Foster had bowled leg @-@ theory on that tour with his fielders placed close in on the leg side , as had George Hirst in 1903 ? 04 .

A cordon of close @-@ in fielders would be arrayed behind the wicket and on the leg side to exploit batting errors elicited by this bowling line . In these circumstances , a batsman can either duck and risk being hit , or play the ball . Defensive shots rarely score runs and risk being caught in the cordon , while the pull and hook shots can result in a catch on the boundary , for which two men were usually set in " leg @-@ theory " bowling . Leg theory had been practised previously without resort to short @-@ pitched bowling , usually by slow or medium @-@ pace bowlers . This type of leg theory was aimed outside the line of leg stump ; the object being to test the batsman 's patience and force a rash stroke . It was occasionally an effective tactic , but was unattractive for spectators and never became widely used except by a handful of specialists such as Fred Root , the Worcestershire bowler and Warwick Armstrong , the former Australian captain .

However , there had been instances of what would later be recognised as bodyline prior to 1932 . In 1925 , Australian Jack Scott first bowled a form of bodyline in a state match for New South Wales , but his captain Herbie Collins disliked it and would not let him use it again when he was captain . Other Australian captains were less particular , including Vic Richardson who let him use those tactics when he moved to South Australia . He repeated them against the MCC in 1928 ? 29 . In 1927 , in a Test trial match , " Nobby " Clark bowled short to a leg @-@ trap field . He was representing England in a side captained by Jardine . In 1928 ? 29 , Harry Alexander bowled an early form of bodyline at the MCC tourists . Larwood used a form of bodyline on that same tour , bowling fast leg theory to a leg @-@ side field in two Test matches , although not with the same intensity and duration as came later . Bob Wyatt later claimed that Learie Constantine unsuccessfully used bodyline in 1929 ? 30 in the West Indies .

Larwood and Voce practised the plan over the remainder of the 1932 season with varying but increasing success and several injuries to batsmen . Ken Farnes experimented with short @-@ pitched , leg @-@ theory bowling but was not selected for the tour . Bill Bowes also used short @-@ pitched bowling , notably against Jack Hobbs .

= = Antipathy between Australians and Jardine = =

Jardine 's first experience against Australia came when his Oxford University team played against the 1921 Australian touring side . In the second innings , Jardine was 96 not out when the game ended , having batted his team to safety . The tourists were criticised in the press for not allowing Jardine to reach his hundred , but they had tried to help him with some easy bowling . There has been speculation that this incident helped develop Jardine 's antipathy towards Australians , although Christopher Douglas denies this . Cricket historian David Frith believed it is possible that the abrasive Australian captain Warwick Armstrong could have addressed sarcastic comments to Jardine but Wisden believed his slow approach cost him his century .

Regardless of what happened in 1921 , Jardine 's conflicts with Australia solidified after he was selected to tour the country in 1928 ? 29 . He began the tour with three consecutive hundreds . During the first century , the crowd engaged in some good @-@ natured joking at Jardine 's expense , but he was jeered by the crowd during his second hundred for batting too slowly . Jardine accelerated after another slow start , during which he was again barracked to score his third century . The crowds took an increasing dislike to him , mainly for his superior attitude and bearing , his awkward fielding , and particularly his choice of headwear . His first public action in South Australia

was to take out the members of the South Australian team who had been to Oxford or Cambridge universities . Then , he wore a Harlequin cap , given to successful cricketers at Oxford . It was not unusual for Oxford and Cambridge cricketers to wear similar caps while batting , as both Jardine and MCC captain Percy Chapman did so on this tour , although it was slightly unorthodox to wear them while fielding . However , this was neither understood nor acceptable to the Australian crowds . They quickly took exception to the importance he seemed to place on class distinction . Although Jardine may simply have worn the cap out of superstition , it conveyed a negative impression to the spectators ; his general demeanour drew one comment of " Where 's the butler to carry the bat for you ? " Jardine 's cap became a focus for criticism and mockery from the crowds throughout the tour . Nevertheless , Jack Fingleton later claimed that Jardine could have won over the crowd by exchanging jokes or pleasantries with them . It is certain that Jardine by this stage had developed an intense dislike for Australian crowds . During his third century at the start of the tour , during a period of abuse from the spectators , he observed to a sympathetic Hunter Hendry that " All Australians are uneducated , and an unruly mob " . After the innings , when teammate Patsy Hendren remarked that the Australian crowds did not like Jardine , he replied " It 's fucking mutual " . During the tour , Jardine fielded next to the crowd on the boundary . There , he was roundly abused and mocked for his awkward fielding , particularly when chasing the ball . On one occasion , he spat towards the crowd while fielding on the boundary as he changed position for the final time .

During the journey to Australia , some players reported that Jardine told them to hate the Australians in order to defeat them , while instructing them to refer to Bradman as " the little bastard . " At this stage , he seemed to have settled on leg theory , if not full bodyline , as his main tactic .

Once the team arrived in Australia , Jardine quickly alienated the press by refusing to give team details before a match and being uncooperative during interviews . The press printed some negative stories as a result and the crowds barracked as they had done on his previous tour , which angered him .

= = In Australia = =

Although English bowlers did aim at the batsmen 's body in the opening tour matches , they did not follow through by packing the leg @-@ side field until Bill Woodfull led an Australian XI against the tourists in Melbourne on 18 ? 22 November , in what was effectively a Test rehearsal . Jardine was rested from that match and his deputy , Bob Wyatt , deployed the full bodyline tactics for the first time on the tour . The match was drawn and Woodfull struggled , making 18 and a duck . Utilising his hopping technique and attempting to play unorthodox shots resembling overhead tennis smashes , Bradman failed to make an impact , and England were buoyed ahead of the Tests . Seeing the bruising balls hit the Australian batsmen on several occasions in this game and the next angered the spectators .

The English players and management were consistent in referring to their tactic as fast leg theory considering it to be a variant of the established and unobjectionable leg theory tactic . The inflammatory term " bodyline " was coined and perpetuated by the Australian press (see below) . English writers used the term fast leg theory . The terminology reflected differences in understanding , as neither the English public nor the Board of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) ? the governing body of English cricket ? could understand why the Australians were complaining about what they perceived as a commonly used tactic . Some concluded that the Australian cricket authorities and public were sore losers . Of the four fast bowlers in the tour party , Gubby Allen was a voice of dissent in the English camp , refusing to bowl short on the leg side , and writing several letters home to England critical of Jardine , although he did not express this in public in Australia . A number of other players , while maintaining a united front in public , also deplored bodyline in private . The amateurs Bob Wyatt (the vice @-@ captain) , Freddie Brown and the Nawab of Pataudi opposed it , as did Walter Hammond and Les Ames among the professionals .

During the season , Woodfull 's physical courage , stoic and dignified leadership won him many admirers . He flatly refused to employ retaliatory tactics and did not publicly complain even though he and his men were repeatedly hit .

Australia lost heavily by ten wickets in the first Test at Sydney , when the bowling spearhead of bodyline , Harold Larwood , took ten wickets . Bradman missed the first Test due to illness , although Jardine refused to believe this and thought the real reason was that the batsman had suffered a nervous breakdown due to his tactical scheme . The only Australian batsman to make an impact was Stan McCabe , who resolutely stood his ground and impulsively hooked and pulled everything aimed at his upper body , undeterred by the prospect of taking a potentially lethal blow to the head . He scored 187 not out in four hours , an innings described by leading historian David Frith as " among the most stirring innings Test cricket has ever produced " .

Before the second Test in Melbourne , Woodfull had to wait until minutes before the game before he was confirmed as captain by the selectors . This caused the toss to be delayed and fomented speculation that the Australian Board of Control was considering the possibility of removing Woodfull because of his absolute refusal to allow his bowlers to use retaliatory tactics . His deputy Victor Richardson had advocated retaliation along with several other players . Richardson recalled Woodfull 's private response :

There is no way I will be influenced to adopt such tactics which bring such discredit to the game . I know Tim could do it but I am not going to participate in actions that can only hurt the game .

The media advocated the selection of Eddie Gilbert , an indigenous bowler of extreme pace , in order to return the bodyline barrage . In one tour match , Gilbert had bloodied Jardine and left a bruise the size of a saucer . Another suggested means of retaliation was Laurie Nash , whose notoriously abrasive personality and aggression saw him regarded as a thug . However , Woodfull was totally unmoved by such suggestions .

On the opening day , Bradman wildly hooked at Bill Bowes ' first ball (a non @-@ bodyline ball) and was dismissed for a golden duck , leaving the entire stadium in shock . Jardine , who was known for being extremely dour even by the standards of the day , openly exulted and danced wildly upon Bradman 's demise . Australia 's eventual victory was met by widespread public jubilation , as many believed that Australia had found a means of overcoming the tactics . Bradman scored a match @-@ winning century in the second innings , but it turned out to be his only triple figure score for the series , while Larwood was hampered by a bloodied foot and a slow pitch .

The controversy reached its peak during the second day of the Third Test . On 14 January , an all @-@ time record Adelaide Oval crowd of 50 @,@ 962 watched Australia finish off England 's first innings . Shortly after the start of Australia 's innings , Larwood , bowling to a conventional field setting , struck Woodfull an agonising blow under his heart with a short , lifting delivery . Woodfull was struck when he was bent over his bat and wicket , and not when upright as often imagined . As Woodfull bent down over his bat in pain for several minutes , an image that became one of the defining symbols of the series , the huge crowd began jeering , hooting and verbally abusing the English team . Jardine reacted by saying " Well bowled , Harold . " Tension and feelings ran so high that a riot was narrowly averted as police stationed themselves between the players and enraged spectators .

Jardine then ordered his team to move to bodyline positions immediately after Woodfull 's injury . Jardine wrote that Larwood had asked for the field , while Larwood said that it was Jardine 's decision . The capacity Saturday afternoon crowd viewed this as hitting a man when he was down . Journalist ? cricketer Dick Whittington wrote that Jardine 's actions were seen as " an unforgivable crime in Australian eyes and certainly no part of cricket " . Mass hooting and jeering occurred after almost every ball . Whittington noted that " [Umpire George] Hele believes that had what followed occurred in Melbourne the crowd would have leapt the fence and belaboured the English captain , Larwood , and possibly the entire side " . Some English players later expressed fears that a large @-@ scale riot could break out and that the police would not be able to stop the irate home crowd , who were worried that Woodfull or Bradman could be killed , from attacking them .

During the over , another rising Larwood delivery knocked the bat out of Woodfull 's hands . He battled it out for 89 minutes , collecting more bruises before Allen bowled him for 22 . Later in the day , the English team manager Pelham Warner visited the Australian dressing room to express his sympathies to Woodfull . Woodfull had remained calm in public , refusing to complain about Jardine 's tactics . Woodfull 's abrupt response was meant to be private , but it was leaked to the press - the

Adelaide leak :

I don't want to see you , Mr Warner . There are two teams out there , one is playing cricket . The other is making no attempt to do so .

Woodfull reportedly added " This game is too good to be spoilt . It 's time some people got out of it " , hinting that he might withdraw his team from competition in protest . Australia 's Leo O 'Brien later reported that Warner was close to tears following Woodfull 's rebuke .

The leaking to the press of Woodfull 's comments to Warner angered the Australian captain . He had intended the comments to be private , and ill feeling grew in the Australian camp as speculation about who leaked the incident to the press grew and many of the team privately pointed the finger at Bradman . (Bradman strenuously denied to his dying day that he had been responsible ; others , including Plum Warner , pointed the finger at Bradman 's team @-@ mate and journalist , Jack Fingleton . However , in his autobiography , Fingleton claimed that Sydney Sun reporter Claude Corbett had received the information from Bradman .)

The next day , Larwood fractured wicket @-@ keeper Bert Oldfield 's skull . This occurred when Oldfield mis @-@ hit a hook , which flew from the top edge off a traditional non @-@ bodyline ball ; Oldfield later admitted it was his fault . As a result of the injuries , the costs of insurance cover for players doubled . At the end of the fourth day 's play the Australian Board of Control for Cricket sent the following cable to the MCC in London :

Bodyline bowling has assumed such proportions as to menace the best interests of the game , making protection of the body by the batsman the main consideration . This is causing intensely bitter feeling between the players , as well as injury . In our opinion it is unsportsmanlike . Unless stopped at once it is likely to upset the friendly relations existing between Australia and England .

Jardine however insisted his tactic was not designed to cause injury and that he was leading his team in a sportsmanlike and gentlemanly manner , arguing that it was up to the Australian batsmen to play their way out of trouble . He also secretly sent a telegram of sympathy to Oldfield 's wife and arranged for presents to be given to his young daughters .

The situation escalated into a diplomatic incident between the countries as the MCC ? supported by the British public and still of the opinion that their fast leg theory tactic was harmless ? took serious offence at being branded " unsportsmanlike " and demanded a retraction . Many people saw bodyline as fracturing an international relationship that needed to remain strong . Jardine , and by extension the entire English team , threatened to withdraw from the fourth and fifth Tests unless the Australian Board withdrew the accusation of unsporting behaviour . Public reaction in both England and Australia was outrage directed at the other nation . The Governor of South Australia , Alexander Hore @-@ Ruthven , who was in England at the time , expressed his concern to British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs James Henry Thomas that this would cause a significant impact on trade between the nations . The standoff was settled only when the Australian prime minister , Joseph Lyons , met with members of the Australian Board and outlined to them the severe economic hardships that could be caused in Australia if the British public boycotted Australian trade . Given this understanding , the Board withdrew the allegation of unsportsmanlike behaviour two days before the fourth Test , thus saving the tour .

The English team continued to bowl bodyline in the remaining two Tests , but slower pitches meant the Australians , although frequently bruised , sustained no further serious injuries . England won the last three Tests to take the series 4 ? 1 .

In the Test matches , Bradman countered bodyline by moving toward the leg side , away from the line of the ball , and cutting it into the vacant off side field . While this was dubious in terms of batting technique , it seemed the best way to cope with the barrage , and Bradman averaged 56 @. 57 in the series (an excellent average for most , but well short of his career average of 99 @. 94) , while being struck above the waist by the ball only once . His team @-@ mates fared worse , with only Stan McCabe scoring a century .

= = In England = =

Bodyline continued to be bowled occasionally in the 1933 English season ? most notably by

Nottinghamshire , who had Carr , Voce and Larwood in their team . This gave the English crowds their first chance to see what all the fuss was about . Ken Farnes , the Cambridge University fast bowler , also bowled it in the University Match , hitting a few Oxford batsmen .

Jardine himself had to face bodyline bowling in a Test match . The West Indian cricket team toured England in 1933 , and , in the second Test at Old Trafford , Jackie Grant , their captain , decided to try bodyline . He had a couple of fast bowlers , Manny Martindale and Learie Constantine . Facing bodyline tactics for the first time , England first suffered , falling to 134 for 4 , with Wally Hammond being hit on the chin , though he recovered to continue his innings . Then Jardine himself faced Martindale and Constantine . Jardine never flinched . With Les Ames finding himself in difficulties , Jardine said , " You get yourself down this end , Les . I 'll take care of this bloody nonsense . " He played right back to the bouncers , standing on tiptoe , and played them with a dead bat , sometimes playing the ball one handed for more control . While the Old Trafford pitch was not as suited to bodyline as the hard Australian wickets , Martindale did take 5 for 73 , but Constantine only took 1 for 55 . Jardine himself made 127 , his only Test century . In the West Indian second innings , Clark bowled bodyline back to the West Indians , taking 2 for 64 . The match in the end was drawn but played a large part in turning English opinion against bodyline . The Times used the word bodyline , without using inverted commas or using the qualification so @-@ called , for the first time . Wisden also said that " most of those watching it for the first time must have come to the conclusion that , while strictly within the law , it was not nice . "

In 1934 , Bill Woodfull led Australia back to England on a tour that had been under a cloud after the tempestuous cricket diplomacy of the previous bodyline series . Jardine had retired from International cricket in early 1934 after captaining a fraught tour of India and under England 's new captain , Bob Wyatt , agreements were put in place so that bodyline would not be used . However , there were occasions when the Australians felt that their hosts had crossed the mark with tactics resembling bodyline .

In a match between the Australians and Nottinghamshire , Voce , one of the bodyline practitioners of 1932 ? 33 , employed the strategy with the wicket @-@ keeper standing to the leg side and took 8 / 66 . In the second innings , Voce repeated the tactic late in the day , in fading light against Woodfull and Bill Brown . Of his 12 balls , 11 were no lower than head height . Woodfull told the Nottinghamshire administrators that , if Voce 's leg @-@ side bowling was repeated , his men would leave the field and return to London . He further said that Australia would not return to the country in the future . The following day , Voce was absent , ostensibly due to a leg injury . Already angered by the absence of Larwood , the Nottinghamshire faithful heckled the Australians all day . Australia had previously and privately complained that some pacemen had strayed past the agreement in the Tests .

= = Origin of the term = =

Although Jack Worrall claimed that he had invented the term " bodyline " , it is more likely that it was coined by Sydney journalist Hugh Buggy who worked for The Sun in 1932 , and who happened to be a colleague of Jack Fingleton . Buggy sent a telegram to his newspaper from the Test after a day 's play . As a substitute for " in the line of the body " he used the term " bodyline " to keep the cost down , and the new term quickly became established .

= = Changes to the laws of cricket = =

As a direct consequence of the 1932 ? 33 tour , the MCC introduced a new rule to the laws of cricket for the 1935 English cricket season . Originally , the MCC hoped that captains would ensure that the game was played in the correct spirit , and passed a resolution that bodyline bowling would breach this spirit . When this proved to be insufficient , the MCC passed a law that " direct attack " bowling was unfair and became the responsibility of the umpires to identify and stop . In 1957 , the laws were altered to prevent more than two fielders standing behind square on the leg side ; the intention was to prevent negative bowling tactics whereby off spinners and slow inswing bowlers

aimed at the leg stump of batsmen with fielders concentrated on the leg side . However , an indirect effect was to make bodyline fields impossible to implement .

Later law changes , under the heading of " Intimidatory Short Pitched Bowling " , also restricted the number of " bouncers " which may be bowled in an over . Nevertheless , the tactic of intimidating the batsman is still used to an extent that would have been shocking in 1933 , although it is less dangerous now because today 's players wear helmets and generally far more protective gear . The West Indies teams of the 1980s , which regularly fielded a bowling attack comprising some of the best fast bowlers in cricket history , were perhaps the most feared exponents .

= = Legacy = =

Following the 1932 ? 33 series , several authors , including many of the players involved , released books expressing various points of view about bodyline . Many argued that it was a scourge on cricket and must be stamped out , while some did not see what all the fuss was about . The series has been described as the most controversial period in Australian cricket history , and voted the most important Australian moment by a panel of Australian cricket identities . The MCC asked Harold Larwood to sign an apology to them for his bowling in Australia , making his selection for England again conditional upon it . Larwood was furious at the notion , pointing out that he had been following orders from his upper @-@ class captain , and that was where any blame should lie . Larwood refused , never played for England again , and became vilified in his own country . Douglas Jardine always defended his tactics and in the book he wrote about the tour , *In Quest of the Ashes* , described allegations that the England bowlers directed their attack with the intention of causing physical harm as stupid and patently untruthful . The immediate effect of the law change which banned bodyline in 1935 was to make commentators and spectators sensitive to the use of short @-@ pitched bowling ; bouncers became exceedingly rare and bowlers who delivered them were practically ostracised . This attitude ended after the Second World War , and among the first teams to make extensive use of short @-@ pitched bowling was the Australian team captained by Bradman between 1946 and 1948 . Other teams soon followed .

Outside the sport , there were significant consequences for Anglo @-@ Australian relations , which remained strained until the outbreak of World War II made cooperation paramount . Business between the two countries was adversely affected as citizens of each country avoided goods manufactured in the other . Australian commerce also suffered in British colonies in Asia : the North China Daily News published a pro @-@ bodyline editorial , denouncing Australians as sore losers . An Australian journalist reported that several business deals in Hong Kong and Shanghai were lost by Australians because of local reactions . English immigrants in Australia found themselves shunned and persecuted by locals , and Australian visitors to England were treated similarly . In 1934 ? 35 a statue of Prince Albert in Sydney was vandalised , with an ear being knocked off and the word " BODYLINE " painted on it . Both before and after World War II , numerous satirical cartoons and comedy skits were written , mostly in Australia , based on events of the bodyline tour . Generally , they poked fun at the English .

In 1984 , Australia 's Network Ten produced a television mini @-@ series titled *Bodyline* , dramatising the events of the 1932 ? 33 English tour of Australia . It starred Gary Sweet as Don Bradman , Hugo Weaving as Douglas Jardine , Jim Holt as Harold Larwood , Rhys McConnochie as Pelham Warner , and Frank Thring as Jardine 's mentor Lord Harris . The series took some liberties with historical accuracy for the sake of drama , including a depiction of angry Australian fans burning a British flag at the Sydney Cricket Ground , an event which was never documented . Larwood , having emigrated to Australia in 1950 , received several threatening and obscene phone calls after the series aired . The series was widely and strongly attacked by the surviving players for its inaccuracy and sensationalism .

To this day , the bodyline tour remains one of the most significant events in the history of cricket , and strong in the consciousness of many cricket followers . In a poll of cricket journalists , commentators , and players in 2004 , the bodyline tour was ranked the most important event in cricket history .

