

= Bob Willis =

Robert George Dylan Willis MBE (born Robert George Willis on 30 May 1949) , known as Bob Willis , is an English former cricketer who played for Surrey , Warwickshire , Northern Transvaal and England . A right @-@ handed and aggressive fast bowler with a notably long run @-@ up , Willis spearheaded several England bowling attacks between 1971 and 1984 , across 90 Test matches in which he took 325 wickets at 25 @.@ 20 runs per wicket , at the time second only to Dennis Lillee . He is currently England 's fourth leading wicket taker , behind James Anderson , Ian Botham , and Stuart Broad . Willis took 899 first @-@ class wickets overall , although from 1975 onwards he bowled with constant pain , having had surgery on both knees . He nevertheless continued to find success , taking a Test career best eight wickets for 43 runs in the 1981 Ashes series against Australia , one of the all @-@ time best Test bowling performances . He was Wisden Cricketer of the Year for 1978 .

In addition to the Test arena , Willis played 64 One Day International matches for his country , taking 80 wickets , and was a prolific List @-@ A (one day) cricketer with 421 wickets overall at 20 @.@ 18 . With the bat , Willis made little impression as a tail @-@ ender with a best Test score of 28 not @-@ out (*) ; however , he managed two half @-@ centuries at first @-@ class level and for a time held a record number of Test not @-@ outs . Willis captained the England team in 18 Tests and 28 ODI matches between June 1982 and March 1984 . Under Willis ' captaincy England won seven , lost five and drew six Tests , and won 16 of the ODIs . Botham recalled Willis as " a tremendous trier .. a great team @-@ man and an inspiration " , as well as the " only world @-@ class fast bowler in my time as an England player . " The editor of Wisden wrote of him in similar terms : " His indomitable service to England is handsomely reflected in his great collection of Test wickets . Although often beset with aches and pains , he never spared himself when bowling for his country . "

Retiring in 1984 during a Test series against the West Indies , Willis found later work as a commentator with Sky Sports . He formed a noted commentary partnership with Botham ; however , Willis ' relatively low @-@ key style , in contrast to Botham 's ebullience , meant that from 2006 onwards Willis tended to be used as a second string commentator . He remains an often @-@ heard broadcaster , a published writer and an occasional critic of the modern game .

= = Early life = =

Willis was born in Sunderland , County Durham , and grew up in the Surrey village of Stoke d 'Abernon near Cobham , having moved there at the age of six . His father was an employee of the BBC , and Willis had an elder brother named David with whom he played cricket in the garden , and an elder sister . In 1965 , Willis added his third name " Dylan " by deed poll in honour of American musician Bob Dylan , of whom he is a fan . Willis was educated at the Royal Grammar School , Guildford , playing his early cricket for Stoke d 'Abernon Cricket Club , where he later became Vice President and Life Member , and two seasons for the Cobham Avorians . He was also an avid schoolboy footballer , but was not a natural athlete and loathed rugby , which was the school 's dominant sport . Willis recalled in 2009 that during his school years " in the winter when the muscled brethren were playing , I used to play football with the school old boys . This taught me how to drink cider and vomit it up on Surbiton station , and other life @-@ altering lessons . " Willis ' bowling potential was rewarded with selection for Surrey Schools and Surrey Colts , under the directorship of Watcyn Evans , who would become a close friend .

= = Playing career = =

= = = County debut = = =

In 1968 , Willis accepted an invitation to join Middlesex and Surrey Young Cricketers on tour in

Pakistan , and used this opportunity to further hone his skills . Upon his return he made early appearances for Surrey 's Second XI , his first being on 26 August against Worcestershire 's Seconds . Willis , 19 years of age , took one wicket for 48 runs in the first innings , and bowled four wicketless overs in the second . He was not called on to bat at all . Two days later , he faced Glamorgan and took three wickets . He played several further Second XI matches through May and June 1969 , before his first @-@ class debut on 6 August . Scotland was touring England that season and had already beaten Warwickshire . Willis took three wickets for 13 runs from 13 overs in his first innings , and two for 37 in his second , to help Surrey to victory by an innings and 97 runs . Willis went on to take 22 first @-@ class wickets that season at 17 @.@ 22 from six matches , placing him 15th in the national averages for that season 's County Championship . Surrey came third in the competition that year . Willis also played two List @-@ A games , but took only one wicket at 52 @.@ 00 .

Willis had thus earned a second season at Surrey , and in 1970 played 14 Championship matches , taking 40 first @-@ class wickets at 28 @.@ 37 , and 31 one day wickets at 14 @.@ 65 . Surrey came fifth in the Championship that year . He achieved a noteworthy performance in the Gillette Cup quarter @-@ final against Middlesex . In a high @-@ scoring match , Surrey made 280 for the loss of five wickets . Middlesex appeared to be coasting to victory when they reached 240 ? 3 , but Willis turned the game , and they collapsed and finished on 272 ? 9 . Willis took 6 ? 49 in his 12 overs and won the Man of the Match award . Despite this , Surrey 's preference for Geoff Arnold and Robin Jackman kept Willis out of the side on occasions . He prepared to spend the winter employed at the Crystal Palace Recreation Centre while playing as a goalkeeper for local football club Cobham . However , Ray Illingworth and Colin Cowdrey , captain and vice captain of England 's Test side , contacted him via telephone to ask him to travel to Australia and join the current England tour there . Willis , who knew that Illingworth and Cowdrey had little knowledge of his bowling , later credited his call up to the influence of senior member of the touring party John Edrich , Willis ' long @-@ term friend , mentor and Surrey team @-@ mate .

= = = International beginnings = = =

Willis joined England 's 1970 ? 71 tour of Australia as a replacement for the injured Alan Ward , and played several warm @-@ up matches for the MCC in December . Wisden records that his " infectious enthusiasm and team spirit played no small part in Australia 's downfall " as England won the Ashes in the subsequent Test series . Willis ' first Test , on 9 January 1971 ? the fourth Test of the series , played when the series stood level after two draws and an abandonment ? saw him score 15 not out as England batted first and reached 332 . In the Australian first innings he bowled an economical nine overs for 26 runs , while Derek Underwood took four wickets to reduce Australia to 236 . Subsequently , an unbeaten 142 * from Geoffrey Boycott set Australia 416 to win . With John Snow routing Australia with 7 / 40 , Willis was only given three overs to bowl on a pitch " without pace " , but he managed to take his first Test wicket ? Ashley Mallett , caught by Alan Knott for six .

Willis remained in the team for the fifth Test at Melbourne , and rewarded the selectors with 3 / 73 in the first innings and 1 / 42 in the second as the match was drawn . Of the final two matches , Willis took three wickets in the drawn Adelaide Test , and four more in the final match of the series , a victory at Sydney Cricket Ground which gave England a 2 : 0 series victory . Willis finished his first Test series with 12 wickets at 27 @.@ 41 , and had also taken several " crucial catches " . He was retained for the second match of the two @-@ Test series against New Zealand in Auckland in March , where he took two wickets .

= = = Surrey to Warwickshire = = =

Willis returned in early 1971 to help Surrey win the 1971 County Championship title . However , friction was developing between the club and himself . During that season Willis took 31 Championship wickets at 28 @.@ 83 , but found himself unable to accept the contract offered to him

by the club . Though the county was reluctant to lose him , Willis sought another club . He took two wickets in his final match for Surrey against Hampshire on 11 September 1971 . After turning down Leicestershire and Lancashire he signed for Warwickshire , for whom he had immediate success , with 25 wickets at 29 @. @ 28 , including one five @- @ wicket haul (taking five wickets in one innings) . Willis , who under rules then applying was banned from playing for his new county before July , helped Warwickshire win the 1972 Championship , thus achieving the unusual feat of winning the Championship in consecutive years with two different counties . In his final match of the season , he took 8 / 44 to dismantle Derbyshire . His new team won nine of their 20 matches , drew 11 and lost none . He was not selected for the 1972 Ashes series in England , and travelled to South Africa as part of Derrick Robins ' invitation XI in January . On the tour Willis took 13 wickets from the six matches .

Willis spent part of the 1973 season injured with one of what would become several recurring complaints . He nevertheless managed 43 wickets in the Championship at 18 @. @ 95 , though his injury barred him from all but one Test against the West Indies cricket team . The West Indies amassed 652 / 8 declared . Willis took four wickets for 118 runs ? career @- @ best Test figures thus far ? and was the last batsman standing as Vanburn Holder and Keith Boyce routed England for 233 and 193 . He then make his ODI debut with two games against the touring side in September , taking 2 / 29 and scoring five not out as England took a one @- @ wicket victory in the West Indies ' first ever ODI match . Willis went wicketless and at conceded 5 @. @ 5 runs an over in the second , which the West Indies won by eight wickets .

= = = West Indies , Indian subcontinent and Australia = = =

Willis then travelled to the Caribbean as part of England 's winter tour , in what Wisden described as an " automatic selection " however he was to struggle against the top Test side . In the first Test , on 2 February 1974 , he took only one wicket , followed by three in the second , and one for a hundred runs in the final match . He was to struggle against the West Indies throughout his career . His bowling average against them ended at 36 @. @ 34 , whereas against no other team was it above 26 @. @ 14 .

Willis then returned to England , to face India and Pakistan , playing in one Test against each . Against India he took 4 / 64 ? a career best against that team ? and made a Test best 24 with the bat . Pakistan toured in early August , and Willis featured in one Test . He took one wicket for 133 runs . He also played one ODI where he took one wicket caught and bowled as Pakistan achieved a seven wicket victory . At this point , Willis was suffering from a recurring back injury . He played 13 Championship games for Warwickshire during the 1974 season , taking 44 wickets at 21 @. @ 56 including one five @- @ wicket haul . In November , Willis touring Australia during the 1974 / 75 Ashes series , playing in five Test matches . He took 17 Test wickets at 30 @. @ 70 , including a best of 5 / 42 , out of 26 first @- @ class wickets at 31 @. @ 19 overall . He was , however , playing with growing injury concerns which required several painkilling injections .

= = = Injury and operation = = =

Willis returned to England in January 1975 with a recurring knee injury which had caused him to collapse at a county game early that season , and underwent several operations to correct it . He had surgery on both knees , and suffered a post @- @ operative blood clot . He was forced to use crutches for most of the season , and reflected in 1978 that it was " similar to a 50 @, @ 000 @- @ mile service . " His recovery was particularly tortuous , requiring daily runs around the cricket field and an intensive gym program under the supervision of Dr. Arthur Jackson , an advocate of slow running therapy to build stamina . He played no part in the international arena in 1975 , and managed only four first @- @ class appearances , though these returned a healthy 18 wickets at 18 @. @ 77 . He was not to return to the Test game until 1976 , where he faced the West Indies in two matches in July and August .

That year , he had made a comfortable return to the county game from injury ? taking 16

Championship wickets at 26 @. @ 12 . He had also scored a career best 43 with the bat . After coming fit from injury , Willis was brought into the squad for the fourth Test against the West Indies on 22 July as part of wholesale bowling changes that saw Brian Close , Edrich , Mike Hendrick , Mike Selvey and Pat Pocock replaced with John Snow , Ward , Bob Woolmer , David Steele and Willis . He took three wickets for 71 runs and then a five @-@ wicket haul in the second innings . This both gave him career best figures and took him past 50 Test wickets . His last four wickets fell in 24 balls at the cost of three runs , described by Wisden as a " fine piece of fast bowling " . Tony Greig 's England , however , struggled to make any impression on the West Indies through the series , Viv Richards dominating with 829 runs across the series . Willis could only take one further wicket in the fifth and final Test , which the tourists won easily . By this time Willis , whose injury troubles were continuing , turned down a coaching opportunity in South Africa in order to not risk his fitness , and went on the dole .

= = = Revival in India and the 1977 Ashes = = =

Over the winter of 1976 / 77 , England toured India in a five Test series through December to February , and it proved to be a revival for Willis . Wisden recorded the India tour to be the time when he " put to flight any who doubted his right to be acclaimed as one of the world 's foremost fast bowlers . " Willis took 32 wickets for 15 @. @ 09 across the entire tour , 20 of those in the Test matches for 16 @. @ 75 . He took five for 27 in the second Test , and then six for 53 in the fourth ? earning him career best Test figures thus far , and taking him past 400 first @-@ class wickets . Four of his wickets came in four overs with the second new ball , " although he received no help from the pitch " . Wisden record that " His 20 wickets in the series stamped Willis as a bowler of genuine pace and in @-@ disputable class . "

The 1977 Ashes took place across five Tests between June and August that year , in all of which Willis featured . Preceding them were three ODI fixtures , across which Willis took a total of five wickets at 15 @. @ 80 . The first Test took place on 16 June , at Lord 's . Australia , batting second and looking to take a lead over England 's 216 all out , were dismantled by Willis who returned a career @-@ best 7 / 78 . After a century from Woolmer , Australia fell to 114 / 6 with two more wickets to Willis before the match ended as a draw . Willis ' " hostile speed " gained praise in giving " Australia a real fright . " Willis took four more wickets in the second Test to aid Underwood in restricting Australia 's totals and giving England a nine wicket victory , and was " fast and accurate " for his third Test five @-@ wicket haul , the match in which Botham made his debut . Willis went wicketless in England 's innings victory in the fourth Test , however he took another five @-@ for in the final match , including both Australian openers . His 27 wickets across the series was a record for an England fast bowler facing Australia in England , and his final wicket of the series was his 100th . Around these Test matches , Willis also made 10 County Championship appearances , netting 29 wickets at 19 @. @ 41 . This included a haul of 8 / 32 against Gloucestershire on 20 August , which would remain his best first @-@ class figures for his career .

The year ended with Willis on winter tour to Pakistan and New Zealand . Willis took dismissed seven Pakistani batsmen for 27 @. @ 14 runs each , though did not appear in any of the ODI matches . In New Zealand he took a further 14 wickets at 18 @. @ 21 , including 5 / 32 in the first Test .

= = = Wisden Cricketer of the Year ? 1978 = = =

Willis made 10 Championship appearances in the 1978 season , taking 37 wickets at 18 @. @ 27 . He was also third in the national averages for the Benson and Hedges Cup that year , with 16 wickets at 6 @. @ 75 , including four wickets for four runs in one innings . That year also saw Pakistan and New Zealand return to tour England between June and August . Though Botham took Man of the Series for his 13 wickets , Willis also netted 13 Pakistani batsmen for 17 @. @ 92 , including a five @-@ wicket haul in the second Test . He also earned a Man of the Match award for his 4 / 15 in the first ODI . Against New Zealand , Willis took 12 Test wickets at 19 @. @ 08 , and

passed 150 career Test wickets with his 4 / 16 in the third Test .

Wisden noted Willis ' achievements against Australia in 1977 , stating that " the new @-@ ball fire power of Bob Willis , which yielded 27 wickets , was of special significance in England 's high summer of success . No England bowler of authentic speed can boast a comparable record in a home series against Australia " . In continued : " It was singularly appropriate that team and personal triumph should go hand in hand , for few players have given such loyal and unstinted service to England as the wholehearted Willis ... Happily determination is one virtue Willis does not lack , and his re @-@ emergence as a top ranking fast bowler was well and truly deserved . " Across all first @-@ class matches that year , Willis had taken 65 wickets at 18 @.@ 41 , the most of any season of his career . His 35 List @-@ A wickets was also the second highest he would achieve for a season behind the 45 of 1983 . Wisden also praised him for refusing to partake in Kerry Packer 's World Series cricket , and proclaimed him a Wisden Cricketer of the Year along with Botham , Hendrick , Alan Jones and Ken McEwan .

== = 1978 ? 79 Ashes == =

In the winter of 1978 / 79 , Willis travelled to Australia for that season 's Ashes series , which England won 5 ? 1 against an Australian team depleted by the rebel Packer tour . The tour commenced with four first @-@ class fixtures against South Australia , Victoria , New South Wales and Queensland . Willis then bowled 1 @,@ 123 deliveries during the Test series , taking 20 wickets at 23 @.@ 05 . In the first Test on 1 December 1978 , he took 4 / 44 and 3 / 69 in a seven @-@ wicket England win . He then took 5 / 44 in the second match on 15 December , as England secured a 2 : 0 lead with a 166 run victory , and following an abandoned ODI match on Boxing Day failed to take a wicket as Australia won the third Test to bring the series to 2 : 1 .

The fourth Test followed on 6 January , and England took a 93 @-@ run victory with two wickets to Willis , before a repeat of the first ODI was attempted and again abandoned after 7 @.@ 2 overs . England then played three first @-@ class matches before a second ODI on 24 January . Australia , batting first , were routed for 101 all out by Hendrick and Botham , Willis bowling a wicketless but economic spell of eight overs for 15 runs and four maidens . England reached the target with seven wickets to spare . In the fifth Test that followed , Willis picked up 3 / 41 in Australia 's second innings , however with the bat he made 24 from 20 balls , with three fours and a six . With this cameo knock , he both surpassed his previous best Test score , and passed 1 @,@ 500 first @-@ class runs .

In the sixth and final Test , England took a nine wicket victory to seal the series convincingly 5 : 1 . Graham Yallop , the Australian captain , had opened the Australian bowling attack with an old ball and two spinners , Bruce Yardley and Jim Higgs , in an effort to disrupt the English openers . Willis took 1 / 48 and managed to hit 10 runs with the bat . Willis " struck early and decisive blows " through the tournament , although struggled for rhythm between the second and fifth Tests , whereupon he " suddenly regained his fire and rhythm . " In all first @-@ class fixtures of the tour , Willis had taken 34 wickets at 20 @.@ 47 , though this was the third highest average of the England bowlers . His tail @-@ end batting had netted him 115 runs at 12 @.@ 77 .

== = 1979 World Cup == =

In 1979 , England hosted the Cricket World Cup . The host nation played a 13 @-@ man squad : captain Mike Brearley , Botham , Geoffrey Boycott , Phil Edmonds , Graham Gooch , David Gower , Hendrick , Wayne Larkins , Geoff Miller , Chris Old , Derek Randall , Bob Taylor (cricketer) (wk) and Willis . England , who had no warm @-@ up games , played their first match against Australia on 9 June at Lord 's , who the " breezed " past . Willis took one wicket for 20 runs from his 11 overs , surpassed by Boycott ? who would be an unlikely bowling hero during the tournament ? who took 2 / 15 . Reduced to chasing 159 , England proceeded slowly , with Brearley 's 44 coming from 147 balls , and they reached the target at 47 @.@ 1 overs . Their next game , against Canada , saw the visiting team routed for 45 with Willis taking 4 / 11 and Man of the Match Old taking 4 / 8 . Boycott and Gooch finished the game within 13 @.@ 5 overs . England 's final Group A match on 16 June

saw them defeat Pakistan by 14 runs . Willis hit three fours in his 24 from 37 balls to help England to 165 / 9 , and his one wicket for 37 runs , along with Boycott 's 2 / 14 , helped England keep Pakistan from the target .

England thus qualified for the semi @-@ finals against New Zealand . Willis managed to chip one run from his two balls as England reached 221 / 8 , and then took a single wicket to keep New Zealand to 212 . During the match , however , Willis fell to injury . He had left the field before the end of the match with a recurrence of his knee injury and was ruled out of the final . With Pakistan defeated in the other semi @-@ final England were left to face the West Indies in the final at Lord 's on 23 June . England , winning the toss and choosing to bowl first , conceded 286 runs from the 60 @-@ over innings thanks largely to Viv Richard 's 138 * , which Botham recalls as one of his " greatest innings " . Though both Brearley and Boycott reached half @-@ centuries , the hosts were dismissed by Joel Garner 's five @-@ wicket haul , falling to 194 all out , and the West Indies secured the title . Though he missed the final , Willis took seven wickets across the whole competition at 15 @.@ 57 runs each ? placing him fifth in bowling average across all the teams , and his economy rate of 2 @.@ 44 runs an over was the fourth best .

Willis followed his recuperation from injury by playing the first , third and fourth Test matches against India , taking 10 wickets at 29 @.@ 80 . Between his international appearances , he struggled with nine Championship wickets at 42 @.@ 00 , as Warwickshire came fifteenth in the country .

= = = 1980 , Australia and the West Indies = = =

The winter of 1979 / 80 and the followed summer saw difficult tours for Willis : the Benson and Hedges World Series Cup and a Test tour in Australia followed by a home series against the West Indies . Willis partook in all seven of England 's matches for the World Series Cup , however he struggled with six wickets at 41 @.@ 00 . England did secure the highest number of points however they were beaten in both finals by the West Indies . In the midst of these matches , England and Australia played three Test matches in which Willis took only 3 wickets at 74 @.@ 66 , going wicketless in third Test . In the county front , however , his position at Warwickshire was reaffirmed as he was appointed county captain .

Two ODI matches back in England commenced the West Indies tour , with Willis being included only in the team for the second match , here he took two wickets and two catches in a three @-@ wicket England victory . Willis then faced the West Indies Test team across four matches , the first on 5 June . He took four wickets for 82 runs in the first innings , and five in the second ? passing 650 first @-@ class wickets in the process though the Man of the Match award was given to Andy Roberts ' 5 / 72 and 3 / 57 , the West Indies winning by two wickets . The second Test was a draw , though Willis collected three wickets . He only managed 1 / 99 in the third match , however , and equalled his Test best score of 24 with the bat in the fourth Test , passing 500 Test runs in the process . The West Indies secured a 1: 0 series victory . Willis had marked his improved form with 14 wickets at 29 @.@ 07 , and had fared better in the County Championship that year , taking 27 wickets at 31 @.@ 70 . He had also taken 23 one day wickets that season at 25 @.@ 95 .

= = = 1981 Ashes = = =

Australia arrived in England for the 51st Ashes series in 1981 . Willis , who was selected to play in all six Test matches , came into the series on a run of good county form . He had played four county matches , commencing with 5 / 61 against Yorkshire on 6 May , and 3 / 58 against Lancashire on 10 June . The first Test took place at Trent Bridge , Nottingham , on 18 June . England , batting first , were cut down for 185 all out thanks to four wickets for Terry Alderman and three a @-@ piece for Dennis Lillee and Rodney Hogg . Only Mike Gatting passed fifty , and Willis was dismissed for a first @-@ ball duck . Willis , however , combined with Dilley , Hendrick and Botham to reduce Australia to 179 all out , with three wickets for Willis . England could not take advantage , however , as Lillee and Alderman shared the host nation 's ten wickets equally between them to leave Australia only

132 to win . Dilley took four wickets and Willis snatched Graeme Wood for eight to reach 200 Test wickets , however the tourists won the match with four wickets to spare .

Between the first and second Tests , Willis went back to Warwickshire to face Gloucestershire in a County Championship match , grabbing three wickets . He returned to face Australia on 2 July for the second Test , and England batting first . Thanks to 82 from Peter Willey , and a second half @-@ century from Gatting , together with five runs from Willis , England reached 311 ? though Geoff Lawson took seven wickets . Australia surpassed this and were dismissed for 345 , with three wickets for Willis and three for Dilley . The England bowlers suffered from no balls , Willis alone bowling 28 . England declared late in the game on 265 / 8 , and Willis picked up another wicket as Australia reached 90 / 4 at the close of play . Botham , who had captained the side until then , was sacked and replaced by Brearley . Willis , who was struggling for fitness and had a chest infection , was dropped from the side . He sat out a Warwickshire county match and after speaking to Alec Bedser was given back his place in the team on the condition that he played in a 40 @-@ over match , played a Second XI game , and bowled 12 overs in the nets . He succeeded in these tasks , and was tentatively let back into the squad over a spinner .

The third Test ? Willis ' 60th ? came on 16 July , and England were able to level the series 1 : 1 thanks to Botham 's Man of the Match performance (seven wickets , century and half century) and Willis 's hostile bowling in the second innings . Willis bowled 30 wicketless overs in Australia 's first innings , and made one one and two with the bat , before returning to bowl with Australia requiring 130 runs . At this point , England had been quoted at 500 ? 1 to win the match . Willis began an " inspired " bowling performance , having requested to bowl downhill from the Kirkstall Lane end once Australia were 56 / 1 . Trevor Chappell , Kim Hughes and Graham Yallop were caught by close fielders , while Rod Marsh and John Dyson were caught at fine leg and behind the wicket respectively trying to play the hook shot . Dennis Lillee was caught from the only ball Willis pitched up . Then when Willis uprooted Ray Bright 's middle stump Australia were bowled out for 111 , losing by 18 runs . Willis took 8 / 43 , his career best Test figures . Two of his victims had been out for zero , and three others for single figure scores . John Dyson had top @-@ scored with 34 before Willis removed him . Willey recalled it as an " amazing spell " while Wisden called it " the most staggering bowling of his life when his place again seemed threatened . "

England then moved into the fourth Test 1 : 1 in the series . Again batting first , Alderman 's five @-@ for took England to 189 all out , with Willis making 13 runs . He then bowled a wicketless but " stormy " 19 overs " as if the devil were at his heels " and , after England had set Australia a final target of 151 runs , took two wickets which along with Botham 's five @-@ wicket haul dismissed the Australians for 121 and handed England a 29 @-@ run victory and a series lead . Willis played for his county against Middlesex between the fourth and fifth Tests , taking one wicket . He then rejoined his team for the fifth Test at Old Trafford . England reached 231 thanks to partly to a " priceless " 56 @-@ run late partnership between Paul Allott (52) and Willis (11) before Willis then led the bowling attack with four wickets to restrict Australia to 130 all out . Another century from Botham took England to 404 , setting the tourists 506 runs to win . Yallop and Allan Border both scored centuries , however three wickets for Willis and two for Paul Allott , Botham and John Emburey dismissed them for 402 , 103 runs short of victory .

Willis continued to enjoy some form with the bat with 33 * against Nottinghamshire in the interval between the fifth and final Tests , though he went wicketless . On 27 August , Australia and England met for the sixth Test at the Oval . The tourists reached 352 thanks to a century from Border , while Willis took four wickets and Botham six . A century from Boycott then defied Lillee 's seven wicket haul to take England to 314 , and in reply Hendrick and Botham took four wickets each to set their team a target of 383 runs to win while Willis went without a wicket in the second innings . With half @-@ centuries from Gatting and Brearley , England reached 261 before the match ended as a draw . England were victorious in the series 3 : 1 , and Botham 's efforts led to it being unofficially referred to as ' Botham 's Ashes ' .

Willis meanwhile , travelled to India with England in November 1981 for a six Test series against India and one against Sri Lanka . He took 12 wickets at 31 @.@ 75 against India , and three more Test and two wickets ODI against Sri Lanka . Between these international fixtures , Willis had

secured 13 County Championship wickets at 28 @. @ 55 , though Warwickshire came bottom of the table .

= = = England captaincy = = =

Willis began the 1982 county season with five County Championship fixtures , featuring his first half @-@ century with the bat , a career @-@ best 72 , while leading Warwickshire against the touring Indian side on 9 May . He also took two wickets . He also reached his 750th first @-@ class wickets with his 2 / 71 against Yorkshire on 19 May . India were scheduled to play three Tests and two ODI matches that tour ; however , before the matches began , the England selectors dropped Fletcher , the captain . Willis , though seen as an unlikely candidate and ambivalent towards the role , was awarded the captaincy . On 2 June , the new captain faced India as part of the England ODI squad , taking two wickets and effecting a run @-@ out with the help of Botham , who also took four wickets . England restricted India to 193 and achieved victory by nine wickets . The second ODI match followed two days later , and England also won ? this time by 114 runs with Willis taking 1 / 10 from seven overs .

With two victories under his belt , Willis led his team to the first Test on 10 June . Batting first , he hit a career @-@ best 28 runs in a last @-@ wicket partnership with Allott (41) worth 70 ? an England record against India ? which took the hosts to 433 all out . Willis then set about taking apart the Indian batting line @-@ up with 3 / 41 and 6 / 101 to leave England 65 runs to chase , which they reached for the loss of three wickets . Wisden described Willis as " bowling near his fastest " and he took his 250th Test wicket during the match . Willis took two further wickets in the second Test ; however , centuries from Botham and Sandeep Patil , who hit Willis for 24 runs in an over , ensured large innings scores that pushed the match to a draw . Botham followed with his career @-@ best 208 in the third match to take England to 594 all out , and Willis then took 3 / 78 to keep India to 410 . He then declared England 's second innings at 191 to leave India 376 to win , and collected the wicket of Ravi Shastri before India closed out the final day with 111 / 3 . Willis thus completed his first Test series in victorious fashion , with 15 Test wickets of his own at 22 @. @ 00 . Willis was available for only three more first @-@ class games that season , and finished it with a total of 24 wickets at 35 @. @ 08 . He promptly travelled to Australia to lead England in the 1982 @-@ 83 Ashes .

Over the winter of 1982 / 83 , England 's winning Ashes team travelled to Australia under Willis ' captaincy . Willis took two three @-@ wicket hauls in two warm @-@ up first @-@ class matches ; however , he was absent from two others and Botham took over the captaincy . By now , continuing injury problems were beginning to plague the ageing bowler 's body . He took 3 / 95 in the first Test as Australia reached 424 in reply to England 's first innings 411 , of which Willis had made 26 . Derek Randall 's century in England 's second innings took them to 358 , and Australia reached 73 at the close of play on the final day for the loss of two wickets , both of which were taken by Willis , leaving the match drawn . Willis picked up 5 / 66 in the second Test ; however , Australia easily reached a low fourth innings target to go 1 @-@ 0 up . The third Test followed a similar pattern , with England replying with two low scores in the face of Australia 's first innings 438 , and Australia taking an eight @-@ wicket win to take a 2 @-@ 0 lead in the series , despite Willis ' three wickets . England achieved what was then the narrowest Ashes victory margin of three runs in the fourth Test at Melbourne , with Willis taking three wickets . Willis commented on the game that " You never give up and you never think it has gone . " The fifth match ended in a draw , so Australia won the series 2 @-@ 1 . Across the entire tour , Willis took 28 first @-@ class wickets . In the following World Series Cup between England , Australia and New Zealand , England were knocked out despite 14 wickets for Willis at 21 @. @ 14 .

Willis returned to Warwickshire for the 1983 season , struggling in the county season with 21 wickets at 36 @. @ 76 in the County Championship , though finding more success in the one day arena with a career @-@ best 45 wickets at 16 @. @ 24 . He also led England in a four Test series against New Zealand , finding greater success with 20 wickets at 13 @. @ 65 including a five @-@ wicket haul . This , coming in the second Test , took Willis past 850 first @-@ class wickets and 300

Test wickets . England won the series convincingly 3 : 1 , and returned to New Zealand over the winter . In the drawn first Test , Willis overtook Fred Trueman 's record England tally of 307 Test wickets when he dismissed Lance Cairns in the first innings . England lost the second Test by an innings despite 4 / 51 from Willis . With the third Test ending as a draw , England lost the series . Willis , with increasing physical and mental weariness and now using hypnotherapy to reduce stress and focus his game , took three wickets in the following ODI series , in which England beat New Zealand 2 : 1 .

England played a three Test series against Pakistan in early 1984 , however Willis was unable to contribute more than two wickets in the first match due to injury . He made only five County Championship appearances , taking only nine wickets at 42 @. @ 22 . Willis , with pressure mounting due to injury and poor performances by the England team , was sacked as captain before the upcoming Test series against the West Indies , and replaced by Gower .

As a captain , Willis has subsequently received mixed assessment . Botham retained fond memories of Willis the player , but remarked that Willis found it difficult to captain him because the men were of similar age . Willis , often noted for his enthusiasm , became an " effective motivator " as a captain ; however , he was " no outstanding tactical genius " and " towards the end his feelings bordered on disgust at the conviction that some of England 's cricketers accepted failure too readily . Nor was he able to close himself off against media comment . " He was also characterised as a loner in the game , and a reluctant captain grateful to be placed back within the ranks after repeated defeats while he was at the reins . His 18 Tests as England captain saw 7 victories , 5 defeats , and 6 draws , while he led England in 29 ODI matches , winning 16 and losing 13 .

Willis played in the next Test series against the West Indies , taking two wickets in the first two matches. and before the last match played against Derbyshire for his county , taking three wickets . Willis took to the field on 12 July for the third Test and took only two wickets for 123 runs as the West Indies , particularly Michael Holding , " hammered " his bowling ? Holding hit 59 from 55 deliveries . Willis conceded 40 more runs from eight overs in the second innings , which Wisden referred to as " the death throes " of his career . He announced his retirement from all cricket immediately after England 's defeat .

He finished his career with 325 Test wickets , at the time second only to Dennis Lillee , and 899 wickets in all first @-@ class matches . Only James Anderson , Ian Botham , and Stuart Broad have since surpassed his number of Test wickets for England . Willis also retains the world record for most Test wickets without a single 10 @-@ wicket haul in a match .

= = Commentary = =

After retiring from playing cricket , Willis established himself as a television commentator on Sky . He began in 1985 , and was initially in partnership with Botham in the commentary box , " his laconic style did not suit all " and he was dropped from the " front @-@ line commentary duties " . Willis appeared on BBC TV Cricket between 1989 and 1990 as a summariser before joining Sky Sports in 1991 . He also appeared on David Tomlinson 's This is Your Life in 1991 , A Question of Sport in 2004 and 20 to 1 in 2005 .

Willis has continued to work for Sky Sports , largely commentating in the county game , where he has been vocal on the need for changes in English cricket , particularly through a group of former players known as the Cricket Reform Group . He was critical of Mike Atherton during the England tour of Zimbabwe in 1997 . In 2006 he criticised the then England coach Duncan Fletcher 's practices , England 's performance in the 2006 @-@ 07 Ashes , and was vocal in calling for the retirement of out @-@ of @-@ form national captain Michael Vaughan in 2008 .

Willis has attracted detractors due to his somewhat melancholic style . The Independent commented on the 1995 Texaco Trophy that Willis had " trenchant content , dismal delivery . As a player Willis had trouble getting to sleep . As a commentator he struggles to stay awake . His voice remains on one note ? the drone of your neighbour 's mower . " Andrew Smith wrote in 1999 that " On Sky TV , Willis is often discourteous and unfair to players . Didn 't he ever make a mistake ? " though the Daily Mail , for whom Willis had begun writing , defended his commentary style . CricInfo

's launching of two polls on cricket commentary both returned negative views of Willis ' " hyper @-@ critical " commentary . Willis received only 15 % of the vote , above only Dermot Reeve and Allott .

= = Personal life = =

Willis married his wife Juliet in 1980 . They have a daughter , Katie , born in 1984 . In 2005 it was reported that Willis ' relationship with his wife had ended . Willis had previously admitted an extra @-@ marital affair between 1991 and 1995 , when it became public after he was seen leaving the address of secretary Lauren Clark .