

= Herbie Collins =

Herbert (Herbie) Leslie Collins (21 January 1888 in Darlinghurst , Sydney , New South Wales ? 28 May 1959 in Little Bay , Sydney) was an Australian cricketer who played 19 Tests between 1921 and 1926 . An all @-@ rounder , he captained the Australian team in eleven Tests , winning five , losing two with another four finishing in draws . In a Test career delayed by First World War he scored 1 @,@ 352 runs at an average of 45 @.@ 06 , including four centuries . Collins was also a successful rugby league footballer , winning the 1911 NSWRL season 's grand final with the Eastern Suburbs club and also representing Queensland .

Collins was a keen gambler , a pastime that became habitual during his time as a soldier in the Great War . After the war , he played with the Australian Imperial Forces cricket team (AIF XI) that toured England , South Africa and Australia and was later appointed captain of the team . He was not a stylish or forceful batsman , preferring to rely on nudges and deflections to score runs . His slow left arm off @-@ spin , bowled from a two step run up , was seldom seen after the AIF XI tour . On return to Australia , he made his Test début against England at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) scoring 104 in the second innings ; the fifth Australian to score a century on Test début . He was appointed captain of the Australian team in 1921 in South Africa , when the previous captain , Warwick Armstrong , fell ill .

His Test career finished in disappointment and in a cloud of suspicion when Australia lost the Fifth Test and the Ashes against England in 1926 . While some former players and cricket administrators suspected a case of match fixing , no material evidence supporting this has emerged . After his retirement from cricket , Collins used his gambling knowledge to start a career in horse racing , working as a bookmaker and commission agent .

= = Early career = =

Collins was born in Darlinghurst , an inner suburb of Sydney , the son of Thomas , an accountant , and Emma (née Charlton) . He attended Albion Street (Superior) Public School , where he showed an aptitude for cricket and rugby union . He played his early cricket with Paddington Cricket Club , bowling left arm spinners and batting well enough to be selected at 19 for the New South Wales cricket team (NSW) .

He made his first @-@ class cricket debut against South Australia in 1909 ? 1910 and was disappointing , scoring three and one and taking 1 / 35 . He played one further match for the season , against Victoria . For the next two seasons , his opportunities at first @-@ class level were limited but he managed to play against the touring South African and English sides .

Collins also played first grade rugby league at this time in the New South Wales Rugby Football League premiership . He played at five @-@ eighth in Eastern Suburbs ' grand final win of the 1911 NSWRL season alongside the great Dally Messenger . He also played in Brisbane for Toombul 's club , gaining selection for Queensland in 1912 .

Collins 's first full season for NSW was in 1912 ? 1913 , playing ten matches and scoring 598 runs at an average of 42 @.@ 71 . He finished the season with 282 against Tasmania at Hobart . During the 1913 Australian winter , Collins was part of an Australian team that toured North America , playing Gentlemen of Philadelphia and a combined Canada ? United States team .

= = First World War and Services XI = =

In 1915 Collins was one of 417 @,@ 000 Australians who enlisted and was a member of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as a reinforcement for the Australian Light Horse . He served in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign and later on the Western Front , carting ammunition to the artillery shelling the German lines . At the end of the War , Collins was a Lance Corporal .

Following the war he was included in an Australian Imperial Forces cricket team , touring England in 1919 . Charles Kelleway , an officer , was the captain of the team for the first six matches . Despite Collins 's rank Field Marshal Birdwood , the former commander of the Australian Corps , asked him

to take over the captaincy for the remainder of the tour . Some of his colleagues were officers such as Jack Gregory and Nip Pellew . Collins proved a capable and popular skipper with the team losing only four of twenty eight matches during the tour . He scored 1 @, @ 615 runs including five centuries at an average of 38 @. @ 45 and took 106 wickets at 16 @. @ 55 apiece .

On their way home the AIF team played ten matches in South Africa , eight of them first @-@ class , remaining undefeated in this section of the tour . While Jack Gregory relished the conditions , the local newspapers acclaimed Collins as the finest player in the touring team . Collins scored 602 runs in South Africa at an average of 50 @. @ 58 and took 39 wickets at 16 @. @ 53 . In a match at the Old Wanderers ground in Johannesburg against the South African XI , Collins scored 235 from a total of 441 in the first innings as the AIF XI won by 8 wickets .

On arrival back in Australia , the AIF team played three first @-@ class matches , defeating the reigning Sheffield Shield champions New South Wales and perennial Shield powerhouse Victoria . A likely victory against Queensland was frustrated due to torrential rain . The results in Australia demonstrated the strength of the AIF team and within a few months of the team 's dissolution , Collins would make his Test début , along with his AIF team @-@ mates , Gregory , wicket @-@ keeper Bert Oldfield and the batsmen Johnny Taylor and Nip Pellew .

= = Test career = =

= = = Début = = =

Test cricket returned from its hiatus in 1920 with the English touring Australia . Collins , also a selector , was one of six AIF XI players to make his début in the First Test of that series . The First Test was played on Collins 's home ground , the Sydney Cricket Ground and Collins had reason to feel at home , scoring 70 and 104 . Collins was only the fifth Australian to make a century on Test début . Collins scored another century in the Third Test at the Adelaide Oval , batting 258 minutes for 162 , helping Australia to a 119 run victory . Over the 1920 ? 1921 series , Collins made 557 runs at an average of 61 @. @ 88 .

The Australians toured England in 1921 , the first representative tour since the disastrous 1912 Triangular Tournament . Collins was included in the squad that would win the series comprehensively , three Tests to nil . In the First Test at Trent Bridge , Collins broke his thumb , ruling him out of the next two internationals . He returned to the team for the Fourth Test , after Australia had already wrapped up the series . England had fought back well and Australia were forced to defend grimly . Batting for over four and a half hours with what Wisden described as " inexhaustible patience " , Collins scored 40 runs in Australia 's only innings to force a draw . Collins scored 1 @, @ 222 runs in all matches on tour at an average of 33 @. @ 94 .

= = = Captain = = =

On the return trip to Australia , the Australian team stopped in South Africa for a short tour . Due to illness , captain Warwick Armstrong was unable to take part in any of the matches and as a result Collins was appointed captain in his place . The first two Tests were drawn but Australia won the third Test and the series at Cape Town . In the second Test of the series , Collins scored a remarkable double century (203) on the matting pitch at the Old Wanderers ground in Johannesburg , unearthing a range of shots he had rarely used . With Gregory , who scored 119 , the pair put on a partnership of 209 in 85 minutes , destroying the South African bowling . In six matches played , Collins scored 548 runs , including two centuries at an average of 60 @. @ 88 .

The next international visitors to Australia were the English team of 1924 ? 1925 , under the captaincy of Arthur Gilligan . In the First Test at Sydney , Collins opened the batting and scored 114 . Batting with a young Victorian in his début Test , Bill Ponsford , Collins was confident enough to shelter him from the brilliant swing bowling of Maurice Tate . Ponsford went on to make a century (110) on début . Ponsford later said " I was most grateful for Herbie taking [Tate 's bowling] until I

was settled in . I doubt I would have scored a century but for his selfless approach . " In the Second Test at Melbourne , chasing 600 , the English pair of Jack Hobbs and Herbert Sutcliffe batted throughout the third day for an unbroken partnership of 283 . Before play commenced the next day , Collins said to his profligate leg spinner , " You 're going straight on to get Hobbs if we 're to have a chance " . The first ball of the day , Mailey bowled a full toss . Collins moved the field , leaving a gap in the offside field . The next ball was another full toss and Hobbs , looking to hit it into the gap , missed it all ends up and was bowled for 154 .

The Adelaide Test was a thriller with England needing 27 runs to win the Test with two wickets in hand . Collins , ever the gambler , threw the ball once again to Mailey , who was not known for his accuracy or containment . The gamble paid off with Mailey dismissing Tich Freeman and Gregory removing Gilligan at the other end to win the Test by eleven runs and secure The Ashes . Australia won the series four Tests to one . During the Adelaide Test , Collins was approached by a " well known racing identity " who offered him £ 100 to throw the match . Collins rejected the approach and suggested to team mate Arthur Mailey that they throw the visitor down the stairs .

= = = Controversy and retirement = = =

The 1926 tour of England would be Collins 's last . Partly as a result of a wet English summer , the first four Tests of the five @-@ Test series ended in draws . Collins had a disappointing tour , suffering from neuritis and in constant pain from arthritis . He missed the Third and Fourth Tests when admitted to hospital but recovered to resume his place as captain for the Fifth Test .

The Fifth Test , played at the Oval , saw England win the toss and bat . They compiled 280 , Mailey taking five wickets . Australia responded with 302 , dismissed late on the second day . At stumps , England ? in their second innings ? were 0 / 49 . A violent thunderstorm inundated the ground overnight , rendering the pitch sticky . Collins attracted a great deal of negative attention by using the inexperienced Arthur Richardson as a main strike bowler at the expense of the likes of Mailey and Clarrie Grimmett . The English openers , Hobbs and Sutcliffe , took advantage of this by compiling a 172 @-@ run opening partnership . England were bowled out in their second innings for 436 , 415 runs ahead . Australia were dismissed for 125 , losing the match by 289 runs . The Test was to be Collins 's last .

Such was the disappointment at losing the Ashes , Collins was stripped not only of the New South Wales captaincy but also that of his local club , Waverley . Former players , including his former Waverley captain , the influential Monty Noble , publicly criticised Collins ' captaincy . Hunter Hendry , viewing the match from the stands , suspected Collins threw the match . Despite his reputation as a gambler , there is no material evidence that Collins ever fixed the result of any cricket match .

= = Rugby league career = =

In the 1911 cricket off season Collins played rugby league for Sydney 's Eastern Suburbs club . A five @-@ eighth , Collins played alongside rugby league " immortal " , Dally Messenger when the Eastern Suburbs club won its first ever premiership . In the 1912 season he played in Brisbane for Toombul 's club and represented Queensland on three occasions .

= = Outside cricket = =

Collins was an enthusiastic gambler , renowned by his team mates for finding any reason to bet . Mailey stated that Collins 's haunts " were the racetrack , the dog track , a baccarat joint at Kings Cross , a two @-@ up school in the Flanders trenches and anywhere a quiet game of poker was being played . " His New South Wales team mate Hal Hooker remarked of Collins :

He would bet on anything ? perhaps he was the original of the saying about flies crawling up the window . Waiting on a railway line he would bet on how many trains would pass through the opposite platform. how may carriages would be on the next one , how many carriage windows would be open . In a train he would produce a brass top stamped Put and Take ? he paid or collected

according to which way it fell when it stopped spinning .

Collins was known for all night poker sessions before going out to open the batting but refused to play against his fellow cricketers , seeing no challenge in taking money from novices . His gambling attracted some criticism and Collins was seen by many , including some cricket administrators , as an inveterate gambler .

He turned his interest in gambling into a career , taking out a bookmakers ' licence for a period and he served as a steward at pony races in Sydney . Neither role appealed to him as much as acting as a commission agent for other bookmakers . Collins would " lay @-@ off " for bookmakers over committed on certain horses , placing large bets carefully and with cool calculation . He won and lost two fortunes on the track and at one stage required the assistance of the New South Wales Cricketers Fund to support him and his invalid mother . He re @-@ enlisted in the Australian Army during the Second World War , stationed at Victoria Barracks with the rank of sergeant .

In 1940 , Collins , then aged 51 , married 24 @-@ year @-@ old Marjorie Paine , the daughter of a race steward . The marriage produced a son before ending in divorce eleven years later ; a petition served by Collins was not defended by his wife . After his divorce , Collins continued to frequent gambling clubs at Kings Cross , participating in all @-@ night poker sessions . Despite giving up smoking late in life , his lungs failed him and he died of cancer in 1959 , aged 70 .

= = Playing style and personality = =

Collins was short , no more than 5 ft 8 in (173 cm) and slight . As a batsman , he was not an extravagant strokeplayer , preferring to avoid risk and leave balls on a good length where possible . He batted with very little backlift and at first inspection could seem strokeless , scoring only from pushes and prods , nudges and dabs . His patience was renowned with the contemporary cricket writer Ray Robinson remarking " [Collins] had an implacable trench warfare style that in difficult times earned admiration from his own side , put bowlers on the road to exasperation and sent onlookers through the doors of bars . " His one bold shot was an over @-@ the @-@ shoulder hook shot , finishing standing on his right foot , his left foot six inches in the air . Deficient in driving power , bowlers learnt to lessen his scoring power by pitching the ball well up . He often batted without the protection of gloves , especially on easy pitches .

Collins bowled his slow left arm spinners off two steps , with seemingly little effort . In South Africa while bowling , a batsman was heard to yell " Collins is getting weary , Why don 't you carry him to the wicket ? " After his efforts for the AIF team he seldom bowled long spells again .

Popular with his men , Collins was respected for his faith in his team mates and his ability to relate to different personalities . The Test leg @-@ spinner , Arthur Mailey noted , " I learnt more of the psychology of cricket from Collins from all the hundreds of cricketers I met . " Bert Oldfield said of Collins , " He studied every player 's temperament and acted accordingly . " Collins was undemonstrative , expecting his fieldsmen to look at him every after every delivery and adjust their position in response to his slight hand movements or even a bent finger . He was last to shower at the end of a day 's play , preferring to sit in a corner in silence . His team mates assumed that he was contemplating the day 's action and pondering on the next day 's possibilities . He was a successful Test captain , leading Australia to five wins and two losses ; four matches finished in draws .

Many nicknames attached themselves to Collins , including " Lucky " and " Horseshoe " as a result of his reputation for fortune , especially when it came to tossing the coin . His players called him " Maudy " (probably because of his left @-@ handedness) and " Nutty " ; it is unclear if this was because he used his " nut " (head) or was a hard nut to crack . Mailey nicknamed him " The squirrel " , claiming that Collins eyes glowed at night , enabling him to see better at night than by day . Collins has a bohemian character who enjoyed all night poker and baccarat sessions and evenings at the opera . " Poker Face " , indeed , was another of his nicknames . He had a light tenor voice himself and would sometimes sing at parties . While in the army , Collins became a chain smoker but he remained a teetotaller , save for an occasional glass of celebratory champagne .