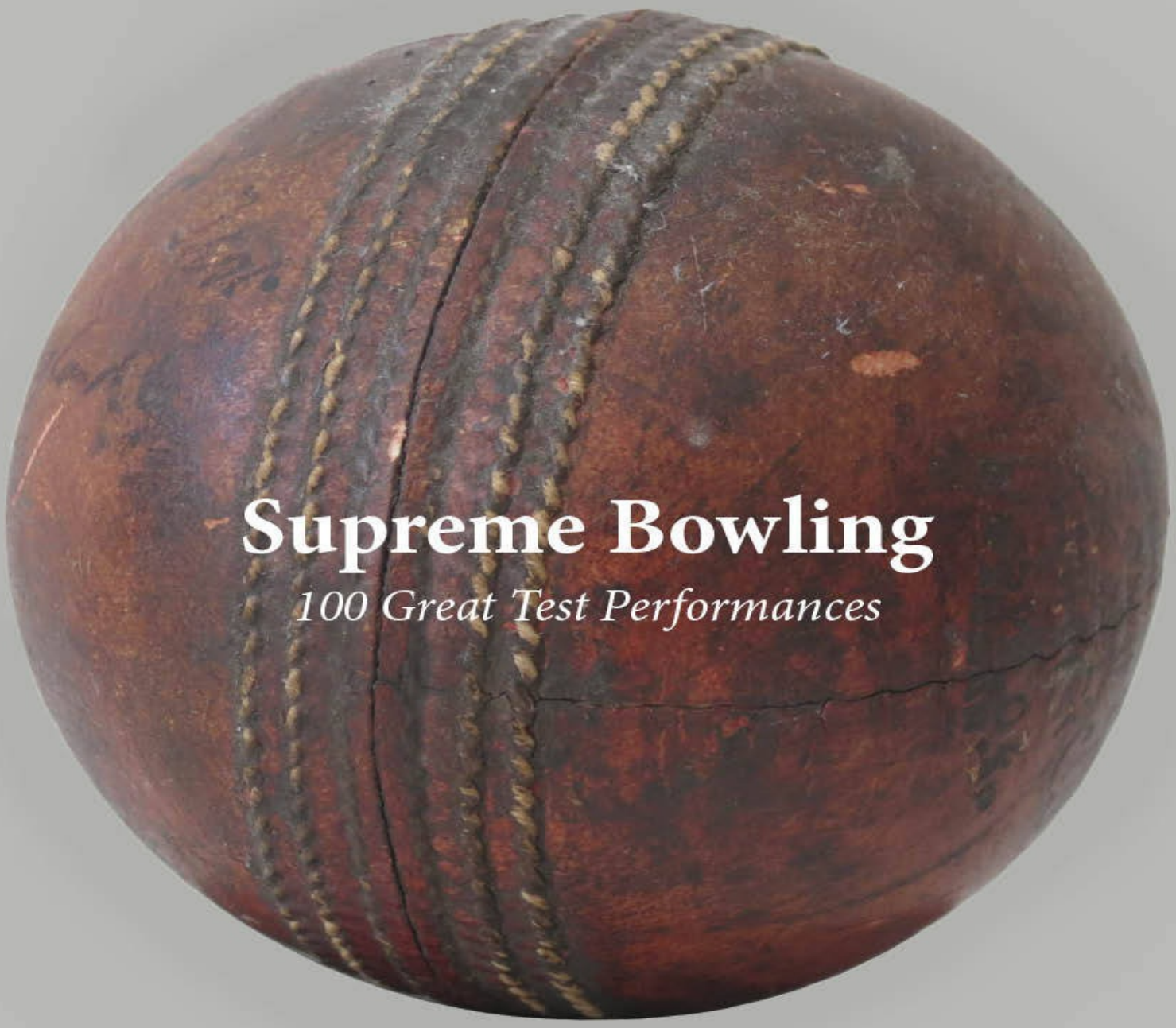

Supreme Bowling

100 Great Test Performances

Compiled and Edited by
Patrick Ferriday & Dave Wilson

How to assess a great bowling performance?

How to measure it in relation to others?

How to find, or attempt to find, the 100 greatest Test 'five-fers'?

These were the questions confronting an intrepid band of researchers, digging into all manner of documents, books, newspapers and websites for information that would help find the answers as they repeated their efforts in identifying the 100 greatest Test centuries in Masterly Batting.

Collating the information using statistics, mathematics, deduction and knowledge provided the database. Looking at seven categories – value, economy- and strike-rate, opposition, conditions, match impact, series impact and intangibles gave a home to this data. These categories provided the numbers and the numbers made the list. The innings on the list were matched with the writers and the resultant essays make this book.

The essays are no mere ball-by-ball reconstructions. There is room for the man, the match, the opposition and the age. There is room for context and consequence.

David Frith and Stephen Chalke relive the glory of English bowling in the 1950s; Daniel Harris, Rob Bagchi and Dileep Premachandran look at three Asian greats; David Tossell and Michael Burns return to subjects close to their hearts; Russell Jackson, Ken Piesse, Phil Walker and Rob Smyth capture the power and beauty of four modern speedsters while Dan Waddell investigates a gentler spinner's art.

Great bowling across the ages and continents is recognised here, from Melbourne in 1883 to Lord's in 1934, then Kingston 1954 to Delhi 1979 and finally across the continents in the modern age from Abu Dhabi to Centurion and from Christchurch to Colombo. Great players too: Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne, of course; Curtly Ambrose, Fred Trueman, SF Barnes, Imran Khan, Richard Hadlee, Anil Kumble and Allan Donald. But not only the accepted greats, some of the lesser names had stellar days too; Jerome Taylor, Sikander Bakht and Bill Whitty amongst them.

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Patrick Ferriday was born in London and educated in Manchester and Norwich before fleeing England to teach in Greece and eventually settling in West Berlin. After 15 years, and witnessing the fall of the Wall, he returned to England to take up freelance work as a horse-racing commentator. His first book, Before the Lights Went Out, was shortlisted for the MCC/Cricket Society Book of the Year in 2011. With Dave Wilson (and a cast of thousands) he produced Masterly Batting in 2013. He lives with his family in Brighton.

Dave Wilson was born in Co. Durham before eventually making his way to California. He is a member of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians as well as being Head of Features at cricketweb.com. Dave's first book, Rock Formations, concerned the etymology of rock band names, though its only mention of cricket pertained to Buddy Holly's backing band. Dave resides with his wife Joy in San Jose, where he can often be found explaining the nuances of our esteemed summer game to the locals.

Cover and Graphic Design by Lottie Warren, Cover image by Harry Brewer

'And as he reached his delivery stride there was no flailing of arms, arching of back or dropping of head; no lunge to reach the crease. His point of release was as graceful as the yards that had preceded it.'

-

1976

'In retrospect it seems wondrous: an out-of-form fast bowler, underprepared and of fragile confidence, running into the wind, heedless of pain and criticism, and flogging the life out of a lifeless surface, against a risk-averse opponent bent only on survival.'

-

2012

'A peerless performance, made all the more remarkable by the fact that it was achieved, as the allrounder himself attested: "Despite my own prodigious hangover"'.

-

1980

'"Sometimes you make mistakes, sometimes you're just not good enough and sometimes the opposition are better than you." On this occasion all three were true.'

-

2012

'"I shouldn't wonder if we don't have a bit of fun today"'.

-

1934

Cover Image: The ball used during the first innings of the Oval Test of 1912, England v Australia.

£15

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Introduction

After the publication of *Masterly Batting* in 2013 it became obvious that a companion volume on great bowling performances was the proverbial no-brainer. Not that we had attracted universal praise or gathered fortunes through the best-seller lists, but it sold well enough for a small publisher to venture another foray. Ample reviews and comment indicated that most readers were happy to enjoy it as a fun exercise with a rigorously researched backbone that raised questions, informed and acted as a catalyst to some fine writing and sturdy debate. There were also the slightly more barbed comments, mostly patriotic or age-based criticisms of the order of merit. Although almost every innings in the 100 was considered either too high, too low or a foolish inclusion and many outside the 100 were denounced as absurd omissions, at least the names of Graham Gooch and Brian Lara at the top seem to have been happily confirmed by almost one and all.

The absence of Mike Athertons Johannesburg rearguard, Billy Murdoch's 153 at The Oval (courtesy G Haigh) and Hanif Mohammad's epic 337 attracted particular scorn. VVS Laxman's 281 was considered vastly under-rated, especially in the country where this innings is something of a national treasure. And where were Jack Hobbs, Inzamam- ul-Haq, Barry Richards, Victor Trumper and Denis Compton when space was found for Bruce Edgar (twice) and Ian Smith?

As the cut-off date for *Masterly Batting* was 2012, it has been impossible not to look at all subsequent centuries with the criteria we used in mind. It seems pretty clear that the names of Brendon McCullum, Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal would be replacing Sachin Tendulkar, Ricky Ponting and Kumar Sangakarra. The cut-off date for *Supreme Bowling* is 2015 and already Stuart Broads 6-17 in Johannesburg has missed out.

No doubt the book now in your hands will attract similar comment and, with luck, provide similarly diverting entertainment.

The criterion for inclusion in this list is a minimum five-wicket innings haul which, like it or not, might be termed a 'five-fer' or a 'Michelle' (as in Pfeiffer). It seems as obvious a cut-off point as a score of 100 was in *Masterly Batting*. It is the point where the bowler (recently) or batsman holds aloft their trade tool to the crowd. They are the points where the honours-

board sign writer can dust down the brushes and record achievement for posterity.

This then excludes some great shorter spells, both those that only brought four wickets but also those that then, later, got diluted. SF Barnes, Keith Miller and Lance Gibbs are just three bowlers who put in extraordinary short bursts only to be unable to complete the job in the same vein. Barnes had 4-3 before getting 5-44 at Melbourne in 1911 and Miller had 3-5 at the same ground in 1954 but failed to get another. Barnes' illness and Millers' injury were considerable contributory factors. Curtly Ambrose went the other way at Perth in 1993 - a rather average spell of 0-24 suddenly became a match-winning 7-25. Some of these examples made the cut despite this dilution, others didn't.

It could be that good fortune was in play in these instances or that a bowler just found 'the zone' for a brief period of time but, either physically or mentally, couldn't sustain it. In the case of Ambrose he just ran out of victims. Andy Bull, in *The Guardian*, wrote about Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's three-point explanation of the conditions surrounding high performance. Defined goals and clear progress are the first, immediate feedback the second and a balance between challenge and skill the third. A perfect recipe but not one that can conceivably be cooked up - it just happens if the conditions and skill and luck are present in the right quantities.

Initially our hope was that measuring 'five-fers' would be relatively straightforward given our experience with batsmen. Surely there must be some kind of mirror-image approach? After all, they are all playing the same game with the same ultimate objective and the same rules. Where difficult batting conditions would score highly in *Masterly Batting* they would have an equal and opposite effect in *Supreme Bowling*. Some truths held completely. If a good bowling attack was a virtual prerequisite of a masterful innings then a good batting side was necessary to really test the credentials of great bowling figures. The actual figures themselves also align nicely - Brian Lara's 400 is the equivalent of Jim Lakers 10-57 although, as we shall see, they were rated very differently.

As 'The Measuring Stick' will show, this mirror effect only went part of the way and many of the methods used when assessing great centuries had to be either re-thought or ditched altogether. If you believe the oft-quoted maxim that 'bowlers win matches' then the approach must be modified. The most basic example comes in Match Impact and the ability to change a game

with one delivery.

Consider, for example, the oddsmakers at Melbourne in December 1932. England 1-0 up having easily won the first Test against a Bradmanless Australia but the home crowd certain that the return of their hero would put matters to rights. At 67-2, with Australia batting first, the stage was set for an epic double-century and surely the bookmakers were making Australia clear favourites even against the evil Douglas Jardine and his henchman Harold Larwood. Bradman pulled his first ball, from Bill Bowes, onto his wicket and left to the sound of pins and jaws dropping. Surely the price of an Australian victory went from 4/5 to 3/1 in a trice and it was all the work of Bowes. No boundary hit, however authoritatively, can ever have such an effect (although a boundary hit to give a single¬wicket victory is quite impactful!). The aftermath of that famous duck was that Bradman scored a match-winning century in the second innings and Bowes took no more wickets in the game or series; but that is beside the point. A bowler can effectively win a game in an hour (Stuart Broad at Trent Bridge in 2015 being an obvious recent example) but a batsman, even a Virender Sehwag or Adam Gilchrist, needs a day or longer to send the odds tumbling in the same way.

In working through the criteria of assessing great bowling it will become apparent that there are two inevitable omissions. The first is luck.

How often have we seen a bowler deliver ball after ball that could take a wicket only to see the stumps shaved, the tickle missed or umpires err? On another day his 2-90 might have been 6-50. And then the other day arrives and he bowls moderately only to find himself with a handful of unearned wickets. Luck is part of sport and can’t be quantified and neither should it be.

The second omission is more oppressive. Was the wicket as much the batsman’s doing as the bowler’s? Surely this is fundamental to the merit of the wicket taken and yet it is beyond measurement. The batsman charges down the pitch and is stumped by a distance - did the bowler see him coming and cleverly bowl a bit shorter and quicker? It is hard to tell in many cases. The batsman rashly flashes at a good-length ball outside off stump and snicks hard straight into second slip’s midriff. Was he being impetuous or had he simply been reduced to a slashing frenzy by his inability to score in any other way with not a loose ball in sight? Batsmen are sometimes accused of giving it away like a rabbit in the headlights but they have probably been sitting in the pavilion (or standing at the non-striker’s end) watching Muralitharan

spinning it half a yard or Ambrose produce throat balls from a good length. These bowlers have already done half the job before the said rabbit even takes guard and it is their skill that has prepared the kill.

It is quite simply impossible to subject every wicket-taking ball to an analysis that answers the question: batsmans fault or bowler's skill? However, there are the occasions when a team is denigrated in various reports as batting like headless chickens or some such and these should not be ignored. Imagine the mindset of facing 550 to win in six sessions on a tricky wicket with not a cloud in the sky. Not surprisingly the belief has already been sapped from the batting team, they know they are going to lose and it's just a matter of time and it is reasonable to factor this into the performance of the bowler. The greatest performances must usually come when the game is in the balance (or seemingly lost) and the pressure is at its greatest - this holds true for batsmen and bowlers alike.

There are a number of other points that appeared to deserve consideration. How about what we can call the Hadlee/Marshall conundrum? Any club bowler will know that it's much better to have a good bowler at the other end and Malcolm Marshall enjoyed this luxury throughout his career. But rarely did he have the chance of a big haul. As a result he often took three or four for not many while Joel Garner, Courtney Walsh or any of the others cleaned up the rest. Not so Richard Hadlee. With due courtesy to Ewen Chatfield and John Bracewell, their main role was to hold up a tight end while 'Paddles' knocked off the wickets. Two great bowlers with similar overall Test records - Hadlee 431 wickets at 22.29 (35.7% of all New Zealand wickets in matches he played) and Marshall 376 at 20.94 (27.9% of all West Indies wickets) - but very different records in terms of five wickets in an innings or 10 in a match; Hadlee 36/9 and Marshall 22/4.

It is hard, if not impossible, to build the supporting cast into the rating. With batsmen there was a clear case for downgrading the dominance of George Headley compared to Viv Richards. But with bowlers Hadlee had to carry the threat largely unsupported which made his job harder but gave him the opportunity of taking more wickets in an innings. Marshall knew that the batsman could never relax while he was resting so in some senses his job was easier but he would have to be mighty quick to take a large haul while others were slicing into the cake at a feverish rate.

Another feature than can barely be included but is almost always fundamental to a great bowling performance is the fielders, and very often the

slip cordon. How often was Glenn McGrath a happy and grateful man that he had Mark Taylor and Mark Waugh in the slips? Two great slip catchers can make the difference between figures of 4-80 and 6-35 and, with that, consideration in this book. It was astonishing in researching these 100 supreme bowlers how often wonderful fielding support was mentioned. With the ratings so closely bunched together a great catch or woeful drop can easily mean a rise or fall of 10 or 20 places.

One could argue that downgrading a wicket that requires an astonishing catch should be considered. In some senses that wicket belongs as much, if not more, to the fielder as the bowler. But bowling figures don't reflect this and it would be impossible to incorporate this factor with any level of either accuracy or consistency. Dropped catches are always mentioned in the reports of a great innings but only rarely in reports of great bowling, particularly as the great bowler usually gets his man quite soon after and so the missed chance was of no great importance.

What always holds true is the appetite for comparison. A recent study has compiled a 'Good Country Index' which makes cricket seem very simple subject for study. Different criteria may be required to measure bowling performances but it is just as rewarding as measuring the batsmen and throws up the same mix of the old and the new, the predictable, the surprising, the scarcely remembered and the old favourites.

The method is to use facts, mathematics and statistics where possible and multiple opinions where subjectivity is required. The system by which these performances were assessed has been constructed with rigour, thoroughness and a dash of imaginative flair and the essays written with imagination and flair tempered by rigorous construction.

A NOTE ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

As in *Masterly Batting* the essays are divided into three groups. The one- and two-page pieces are credited at the back of the book. The majority of these were written by the original research team of Andy Baynton-Power, Martin Chandler, Sean Ehlers, Patrick Ferriday, Sean Riley, Rodney Ulyate and Dave Wilson. The top 25 performances have again received the full treatment and authors are identified on each leading page. Our thanks to each and every one for their work.

Thanks are also extended to a range of experts and players who have given their thoughts and advice including Charles Davis, Bob Willis, Bob Massie, Graham Thorpe, David Boon, Justin Langer and Phil Tufnell.

The Measuring Stick

Initially points were awarded simply based on the average so that, for example, 5-30 is worth the same points as 9-54. However, it soon became clear that this is unfair. The bowler with nine wickets has completely dominated not only the opposition but also his fellow bowlers and is a rare bird that needs to be rewarded while not discounting a 5-30 merely because it is relatively commonplace. The details might make the smaller haul truly outstanding with the 9-54 less so. In this category it must be emphasised that we are comparing bowling performances purely on two numbers - the wickets taken and the runs conceded.

If everything else were equal, which it never is, then we could grade bowling performances using just these numbers. If it only it were that simple. Jim Laker is number one and Anil Kumble number two. But as the various other categories show, there are many other considerations. That is not to say that these numbers are not important. They are the first port of call and are part of the overall picture.

The answer to assessing these numbers (relative value) was to resolve all performances over Test cricket history into groups based on their rarity. As always, examples are the key to a better understanding. Let’s start with a baseline of the figures of 5-16 - there have been 20 instances of five-wicket bowling performances of 5-16 or better up to the end of 2015; if we used simply runs per wicket as our leveller as described above, the closest equivalent eight-wicket haul would be 8-26; that is 3.2 runs per wicket. However, figures of 8-26 or better have only been achieved three times up to the end of 2015, so clearly the rarity makes 8-26 worth much more than 5-16.

In fact, it turns out that the equivalent eight-wicket performance, with 20 performances achieved or bettered, is 8-52. We can’t even directly compare 5-16 to the equivalent nine-wicket haul of 9-29, as there have been fewer of these in total than there have been performances of 5-16. In fact the highest runs conceded while taking nine wickets (127) turns out to be equivalent to a 5-15 performance.

So a performance of 8-52 turns out to have equivalent ‘value’ to our 5-16 baseline. This may seem to be counter-intuitive, but looked at logically the value of this analysis proves to be robust, and as a nice aside we now have a more appropriate way to rank bowling performances. These have traditionally

been based first on wickets taken then by runs conceded; so for example all of the six-wicket performances outrank the five-wicket performances. Most people agree that to rate 7-150 above 6-8 is absurd. However, we can now say with confidence that 5-16 outranks, for example, 6-23 or 7-37.

We can then create a matrix relating bowling figures to points based on our equivalence table - this is shown below, with wickets shown on the left and points awarded along the top.

						R	A	T	I	N	G	
W		**9**	**8**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**
I	5	5/3	5/8	5/11	5/14	5/15	5/17	5/20	5/26	5/32	5/40
C	6	6/4	6/4	6/12	6/15	6/17	6/21	6/27	6/35	6/45	6/60
K	7	7/6	7/17	7/23	7/25	7/28	7/34	7/40	7/55	7/75	7/100
E	8	8/8	8/24	8/31	8/39	8/43	8/55	8/70	8/140	8/250	
T	9	9/30	9/50	9/57	9/90	9/110	9/150				
S	10	10/60	10/100								

Now, as in *Masterly Batting*, we must consider era. It turns out that we can use our baseline figures for most eras throughout Test cricket history, but there must be some adjustment for two eras, namely pre-World War I and the 1950s, when scoring was significantly lower than at other times.

But we're still not done. While we may be happy that these figures as they stand are now appropriately worthy, we must also take into account the match scoring. Once again, an example is necessary for clarity. At The Oval in 1976, Michael Holding struck fear into the England batsmen and certainly his first-innings figures of 8-92 look mighty impressive, but in the context of a high-scoring match they're even better. When we look at the runs per wicket for The Oval match as compared to the typical runs per wicket for the time, it turns out that Holdings 8-92 is equivalent to 8-52, a much rarer feat. There have been more than 50 Test performances of 8-92 or better, however there have been only 20 of 8-52 or better - this is now reflected in Holding's 'value' points.

Two - Economy-Rate and Strike-Rate

There are basically three types used in our measuring stick - quantitative,

qualitative and impact. Rates are quantitative and as such should prove a readily objective target, being based solely on freely-available statistics. Even though the current measures of both were not necessarily used as a means for comparison in the past, the raw data needed to obtain them has always been available. This is different to the situation we faced in *Masterly Batting*

- balls-faced information for batsmen was not complete until the mid-1970s, however for bowling we have virtually complete data for all innings as regards balls bowled, runs conceded and wickets taken, enabling us to ascertain economy- and strike-rates for all performances considered.

Economy-rate is simply the number of runs conceded per over, so the only statistical manipulation necessary is to convert to six-ball overs some earlier matches, played with four, five and eight balls per over.

Strike-rate for bowlers produces a similar magnitude figure as the equivalent method for batting. Runs per 100 balls for batting is transferred to number of balls per wicket, though the scale of quality is inverted - a high figure is better for batsmen, a low one for bowlers.

We must assess whether or not there is a variation over time at work here, and if so we must take that into account. However a check of our candidate innings shows that there is only a slight correlation between economy-rate increase and strike-rate to era, once the particular match figures are also taken into account. In fact, if we rank the economy- and strike-rates from low to high we find that there is very little correlation at all to chronology.

The best economy-rate of our candidate innings was achieved by Venkatapathy Raju in 1990 with 6-12 in 17.5 overs, 13 of which were maidens, while the worst was Jason Krejza's 8-215 on debut in Nagpur. The best strike-rate meanwhile was Vernon Philander's decimation of Australia in Cape Town, again on debut, his 5-15 coming in just 30 balls - the worst belongs to Tom Richardson, whose six wickets against Australia at Melbourne in 1895 took him no fewer than 272 balls.

The *importance* of economy- and strike-rate, has long been a matter for debate, certainly as a means of identifying high-quality bowlers. The importance of each is most obviously related to the relative importance of runs and wickets in the different forms of cricket but there is a large overflow between the two. Economy-rate is more important in one- day cricket, where there may not be time to get the opposition out, so it is of paramount importance to restrict the number of runs to limit the target required. Strike-

rate is more important in Tests, where time is less of an issue. However, taking wickets in a one-day game has always been recognized as of great importance in cutting momentum and having a ‘new’ batsman at the crease. Similarly in Test matches, a tight economy-rate allows pressure to build on batsmen which they seek to alleviate by taking risks in order to rotate the strike, spread the field or simply move the scoreboard on. As Australia discovered when Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist were scoring so quickly, speed tends to win both five-day and one-day matches. If nothing else it puts the opposition onto the defence and that is the first step to victory.

Three - Opposition

There is a nice little video on YouTube of Patrick Patterson bowling at the MCG in 1988 and taking 5-39. Geoff Marsh has no answer to a high-pace yorker, Allan Border is caught in the gully off a lifting brute and then Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes and Terry Alderman are quickly dispatched. The figures alone are impressive on paper but in reality Patterson has knocked over three tailenders and an out-of-form run-of-the-mill opener; only the wicket of Border has the merit of removing a top-class batsman.

Compare this then to Shoaib Akhtar bowling against Australia at Colombo in 2002. Ignoring all other factors such as the pitch or the state of the game it soon becomes clear that his 5-21 is in a different league. Ricky Ponting, the Waugh twins, Adam Gilchrist and Shane Warne make an impressive quintet of victims, removed, incidentally, without the intervention of another player. The most remarkable feature of the spell is that the batsmen knew what Akhtar was doing (fast, inswinging yorkers) but were powerless to stop him. Added to that the five victims had scored 293 runs between them in the first innings so were hardly bringing poor form onto the pitch.

Everything else being equal then, Akhtar’s performance is far better than Patterson’s. But by how much? The obvious database is the ICC ranking website and the figures for the date of each of these two bowling spells. On 29 December 1988, Patterson’s five victims had a combined batting ranking of 1577 for an average of 315.4. To put this figure into context, this makes this quintet easier to dismiss than five Mitchell Johnsons. On 5 October 2002 the combined value of Akhtar’s five victims was slightly lower than expected at 3232 or 646.4 each; that is Mohammad Hafeez or Imran Khan five times.

The reason for this figure being lower than anticipated is that both the Waughs were moving down (Steve from a high of 895 to 699) and Ponting was a mere 728 on his climb to 942, equal with Jack Hobbs and only surpassed by Len Hutton and Don Bradman.

There is, of course, any amount of scope for sniping at these ratings. Sachin Tendulkar never reached the magical 900 rating where Joe Root and Steve Smith currently reside and nobody in Australia can possibly believe that Simon Katich is worthy of a career high better than that of either Victor Trumper or Charlie Macartney. But they do tell many more truths than lies and remain by a country mile the best resource for measuring a player's worth at a given time or over an extended period - the latter being where Tendulkar excelled like no other. The biggest problem with these ratings is at the start of a player's career. On 23 January 1993 Justin Langer made his international debut in the famous Adelaide Test where Courtney Walsh broke a 40-run last-wicket partnership to win the game by one run. Langer's rating was 403 at this point which seems about right bearing in mind that nobody could know that he would become a reliable and doughty opening bat and play 105 Tests for his country. On that same date Nasser Hussain, who had already played three Tests back in 1990, was rated 191 - the same as Ian Salisbury and below Craig McDermott. This is clearly nonsense even if Hussain's Test career seemed to have run into a ditch at this point; a full rating is not applied until a certain number of Tests have been played.

There is not, and neither should there be, the luxury of knowing the future when fixing a date-specific rating. It is what it is on that date and the magical later form of a batsman or bowler may make it appear laughable in retrospect. But we have the advantage of hindsight and for this study it would be foolish not to use it. To iron out early-career anomalies we can introduce the career-high figure as part of the overall reading. By trial and error the fairest share was found to be 60% date-specific figure and 40% career-high figure. This changes the figures for Hussain and Langer in January 1993 to 422 and 554 respectively which are far more indicative of their respective merits at that stage even though both had career highs in the upper 700s.

Going back to the example of Patterson and Akhtar and introducing this 60%/40% dual figure, the average rating of the Australians that were out to Patterson now rises (as they all will unless they are at career-high marks in this match) from 315 to 355 per player and that of those mown down by Akhtar from 646 to 696. Neither of these changes are particularly dramatic

although they are much higher than average in this list, the highest being an upwards adjustment of 52 points for Curtly Ambrose's victims against Australia at Perth in 1993, but the adjustments allow anomalies to be eradicated across the board and give a fairer idea of just how good the batsmen were that our bowler dismissed.

It would be a mistake to stop there. After all, our bowler had to attempt to dismiss the other players in the team as well so we require a figure that includes all 11 opposition players which is arrived at by the same method. These two are then put together to arrive at a single figure which reflects both the quality of the opposition in general but places greater emphasis on the actual batsmen who were dismissed in this example of supreme bowling.

Four - Conditions

As was the case in identifying great innings, the biggest keys that unlock the great bowling performance are threefold; the impact on the match, the quality of the opposition and the state of the pitch. Where the first two can be assessed with plenty of assistance from statistics, mathematics and outside agencies such as ICC ratings the last of the three can only be reckoned by subjective methods, although even here ratings can be modified by reference to match context.

How much help did the bowler get from the pitch or the atmospheric conditions? Match reports will always offer an opinion but sometimes these can vary wildly. Take, for example, the vivid case of Bhagwath Chandresekhar at The Oval in 1971. His wonderful and match-winning 6-38 was achieved on a surface that was variously reported to have 'suited' him, 'offered little assistance', 'responded to spin' and 'offered little help to spinners'. These comments are indicative of Chandra's unusual ability to gain turn on almost any pitch, something he shared with, amongst others, Shane Warne, SF Barnes, Muttiah Muralitharan and a select few others. With vastly contradicting views sometimes offered there is the need to look further, and further again. Film where available and then from contemporary accounts we go to the often unreliable recall of the players themselves in autobiographies written, or ghosted, a decade or more after the events in question. A good grouping of sources should, however, give an accurate view. In this example it is worth noting that Ray Illingworth took 5-70 earlier in the match which would indicate that there was turn available for a regulation finger spinner.

There is no hard-and-fast reading to be given but two researchers with ample material should never differ by far in assessing the measure of difficulty. If they do, then get another to look.

Conditions can change during the game so we must pinpoint how they were as our bowler was taking his wickets. Furthermore we must assess them as they relate to the bowler and his method. This can be simple - a low slow Asian wicket of the 1970s is not going to help Dennis Lillee but it might offer some bite to Bishen Bedi. So it is reasonable to say that for the Australian quick bowler the mark would be at the top end, say eight out of ten - he would certainly name this kind of surface as his least favourite as the weapons of pace and bounce are neutered and there is not even movement in the air or off the seam to replace them.

For the Indian spinner it is different - batsmen struggling to time a ball that takes an age to arrive, he can play with his revolutions. The ball won't spit but it will turn, or not, as the bowler chooses. With so little bounce many of the batsman's favourite shots become risky and he becomes trapped and forced to take risks to break the deadlock that is suffocating him. It might not be a spinner's paradise but Bedi will know exactly how to extract every piece of frustration from it and for him it becomes maybe four out of ten.

If we move to the opposite extreme we find a hard, fast and bouncy wicket so beloved of the Perth curator until recently. The temptation for a genuinely fast bowler is to hurl down a succession of thunderbolts and let the wicket and the batsman's sense of self-preservation do the rest. That was the plan adopted by Lillee and Jeff Thomson in 1975 - they were belted out of the ground by Roy Fredericks. Later in the same game Andy Roberts showed considerably more restraint, while still bowling nearly 100mph, and took seven wickets. And here we have another clue which works particularly well within this example as the conditions changed little during the course of the game. The pitch may have been all that the WACA loves to celebrate but it wasn't a bowler's paradise. Fredericks was not the only batsman to make hay - Ian Chappell and Clive Lloyd both scored big hundreds and without the intervention of Roberts the game would have become a high-scoring draw. This must be factored into any assessment. It wasn't nearly enough just to hurl the ball down and collect the wickets; real skill was required.

The most famous example of this conundrum is probably Old Trafford in 1956. Jim Laker was certainly a better bowler than Tony Lock, but 19 times better? Any Australian player's memoir will tell you how the pitch was

made-to-measure for the Surrey pair and a scan of the footage will, at least partly, echo this nightmare. So how did it happen that Laker took 19 and Lock just one? Luck undeniably played its part but Laker was vastly superior over the three days. Lock's lack of reward only serves to emphasise the achievement of Laker who used the conditions perfectly while Lock tried too hard - increasingly so as his partner gathered wicket after wicket.

To return to a typical Perth track, the received wisdom is that it was paradise for quick bowlers and it must then hold that it was a tough one for the spinners. Shane Warne could get a degree of turn on any surface but what he couldn't do was get bounce from something soft and dead. Bounce with a bit of spin would be preferable to Warne to slow-and-low with double the turn. If it did spin it span fast. For Glenn McGrath the bounce and pace were certainly not unwelcome but a bit of movement in the air and off the pitch would be much nicer - maybe even a ridge or slope, like at Lord's. McGrath, like Warne, would take wickets anywhere but that doesn't mean he didn't have preferences and, more importantly, wasn't a much more threatening bowler on surfaces conducive to this style. Like all great bowlers he was adaptable to what he found but nothing ever beat an overcast morning with a hint of green on the pitch. Ditto Richard Hadlee.

So the skill of the bowler must be part of the calculation as to the conditions. A further complication is the state of the ball, and this has increased in the last 30 years. Back before Sarfraz Nawaz the match ball was a simple thing. Shiny and hard at the beginning and then gradually wearing and softening uniformly until it was replaced although this point has varied hugely through Test history, dipping to an absurd 50 overs and previously also taken according to runs scored. With reverse swing the deterioration in the state of the ball is much more subtle, and precious little is left to chance. Through completely legal means the two sides of the ball become very different, one still with some shine and the other scruffy and scuffed. Then the ball starts to do strange things. The conditions haven't changed but in the hands of a master such as Waqar Younis the ball nearly a foot outside the off stump which could safely be left now veered in alarmingly quickly and alarmingly late - in fact it's hard to imagine any ball that is harder to play, or survive. But the conditions haven't changed - it is the skill of the bowler that enables this phenomenon to happen and not many bowlers do it well.

There comes a point where the researcher can go no further. The left-arm spinner bowling over the wicket into fifth-day footmarks might set a left-

handed batsman an almighty task but to a right hander he's just a pain who is hard to score off but offers little wicket- taking threat. Do we then count the left handers in the batting side and assess their ratings as opposed to the right handers and tweak the conditions rating accordingly? At some point enough has to be enough for that way lies madness and there will always be another imponderable to ponder.

Five - Match Impact

The thesis put forward in *Masterly Batting* that the impact of a particular performance should not be tied to the match result remains a sound one; without that recognition, it is possible that every bowling performance featured within these pages would be achieved during the fourth innings of a victory for the bowling side. But while the assessment of that impact with regard to batting was somewhat straightforward, being based solely on the difference of the likelihood of winning when the batsman walked to the middle from that when he walked back to the pavilion (either dismissed or otherwise), it was clear that for bowling a more nuanced approach would be required. Again, examples are the key to understanding those nuances.

Take Pakistan against Australia at the MCG in March 1979. In a low-scoring match, Pakistan had failed to reach 200 yet still managed a first-innings lead of 28; an advantage then extended with the aid of a Majid Khan century, so that Australia were set the highly improbable target of 381. After Sarfraz Nawaz had snagged Whatmore, Hilditch and Yallop, Australia were 128-3 and still requiring more than 250 for an unlikely victory. However a fourth-wicket stand of 177 between Kim Hughes and Allan Border swung the match heavily in Australia's favour. Now, with 77 for victory, two batsmen well set, a bowling side in turmoil and seven wickets remaining they were now installed as firm favourites. That was when Sarfraz took over, an astonishing spell of 7-1 meaning that Australia lost by 71 runs.

Looked at as a complete performance, at the start of the innings Australia looked very unlikely to win and of course were beaten; however, that assessment hides the fact of Hughes' and Border's efforts. In terms of win probability if we only consider the start and finish, Australia had around a 7.7% chance of winning, so the change in win probability until the final wicket fell is basically 7.7%. However, after Hughes and Border had taken the Australian total to 305-3 her win probability was a extremely healthy

85%, and that must be taken into account.

So the solution is to refine the impact measure by looking at the change in win probability before and after the fall of each wicket to give us the full story. Once we do that, we find that Sarfraz had a total impact of 59.9%. If we had simply used the start and finish method his total would have been 90% of 7.7% (for taking nine out of 10 wickets), or 6.93%; a huge difference.

Well that was a win for the bowling side - now, how does the system fare in assessing a match which was lost by the bowling side but which featured a potentially impactful performance? A good example of that is Mitchell Johnson's 8-61 against South Africa at the WACA in December 2008. A bottom-heavy batting performance saw Australia recover from 15-3 to make 375, after which Johnson would provide the only potency in Australia's attack, including a spell of 5-2 in 21 balls. Looked at simply as the difference between win probability at the start and finish of Johnson's bowling, he would merit only around 6.5% of impact, however looking at the change in win probability for each wicket individually, his impact score rises to just under 32%. So the impact on the match status at the time each wicket falls gives us a more realistic appraisal of Johnson's influence. The fact that South Africa would embark on a world-record run chase was not known at the time of Johnson's performance and is completely irrelevant to our assessment of its impact.

So now we have a system which will provide an impartial assessment of a bowling performance regardless of the result. The next decision to be made was whether or not the bowler should receive credit for the full value of impact for each wicket. The impact on the match status is derived by comparing the change in win probability before and after the fall of each wicket. For example, say the win probability for the batting side before the fall of a wicket is 55%, and immediately after is 40%, that is a change of 15%. There may be three players involved in the fall of that wicket - the bowler, the fielder (if any) and the batsman. So the question is, how much of that 15% should go to the bowler, and should he receive more credit if no fielder is involved?

The latter part of that question is key. When a bowler takes a new ball, he will be thinking of a catch in the cordon as the most likely mode of dismissal over a bowled or an lbw. Similarly, the bowler may set up a player to hook to a fielder judiciously placed in the deep, as Hadlee did in tempting Andrew Hilditch in the first over of that famous Test at Brisbane. The bowler should

certainly not be penalised for using his field, and we therefore credit the bowler with the full share of the impact measure for each wicket.

Further wrinkles to be ironed out included the fact that our system doesn't 'know' if a match is high-scoring or low-scoring or if one team is particularly dominant, so this had to be accounted for. A good example of this adjustment is once again Laker's match. England knocked up 459 in the first innings, however Australia then totally capitulated, falling to 84 as Laker had what were, for a day at least, the second best ever Test-match figures. However in assessing the win probability our system doesn't know at the start of the Australia innings if this is a high-scoring pitch, if the England batting line-up is particularly on top of its game or if rain or deterioration has affected batting conditions.

The answer was to assume for the first few wickets that the match is not high scoring and to assess the win probability as if the first innings score was 'par', then use a sliding scale until a few wickets had fallen when it would be clear that this was, in fact, not a high- scoring match and that the team batting second was being outclassed or that conditions had changed dramatically. So why not just look ahead and modify the system to only consider matches which were high or low scoring? The reason we don't want to do that is because this reduces the sample size, ie the number of similar-state matches, and hence reduces the system accuracy. The same reasoning can be applied in the case of a particularly low score, such as Spofforth's match at The Oval in 1882, where again the system would initially assume that a very small target of 85 will be readily achieved even in a low-scoring game.

Having run through potential variables it is necessary to then see what figures the system produces. Does it particularly favour high-scoring over low-scoring games? Does it favour a bowler in a particular phase of the game or is it biased towards a bowler who ends up on the winning side? Any of these would be an indication that there is a fundamental flaw in the system which means that the match impact is skewed in favour of a particular set of circumstances and thus not offering a level playing field to all performances. Avoiding such a scenario is fundamental in every category and needs particularly rigorous testing. The final outcome is shown in the two tables below. The first shows the variation in the four innings and the second the variation according to the final result of the match of our 100 supreme bowlers.

INNS	AVG. IMPACT
1	31.8
2	34.5
3	32.3
4	41.1

RESULT	AVG. IMPACT
W	34.7
D	35.5
L	37.7

This was heartening - having assumed that it was during the fourth innings where most significance regarding the result resided, some bias towards such performances had been anticipated. Though there is some small increase, it can be seen that all innings have been fairly treated by the system. In addition, the second table shows that the system has removed virtually all impact bias towards wins over losses. In other words a bowler on the losing side in the first innings is being treated in the same way as a bowler on the winning side in the fourth innings. This is as it should be in this category.

Six - Series Impact

This is the one category that can remain completely unchanged from *Masterly Batting*. On the basis that it was fair then it is still fair now and that the state of the series before and then after the match in question is still the way to judge this.

To briefly summarise the method used, the two basic ingredients are how the result of the game under analysis changed the series standing and how important was that series. The second point is simple to describe. The longer the series the greater its importance, the better the two teams playing the greater its importance and the rivalry between England and Australia and India and Pakistan gives those two contests an extra frisson. Thus we arrive at the importance.

To assess the effect of the game on the series a matrix of all possible results on all possible series standings is required. Maximum points are given

when a five-match series is level after four games and the bowlers team wins - this can then be increased if the two teams are highly rated or an mainland Asian or Ashes series is involved. If a team is 2-0 down with one to play in a three-Test rubber then we are dealing with a 'dead match' and the result has little or no effect on the outcome although a 2-1 defeat is better than a 3-0 whitewash.

Below is the matrix for a four-match Test series.

Four-Match Series		Standing					Dead Rubber
Test	Result	+2	+1	E	-1	-2	
1st	Win			50			
	Draw			30			
	Lose			10			
2nd	W		70	60	60		
	D		40	30	30		
	L		20	10	0		
3rd	W	60	70	70	60	60	
	D	40	40	40	30	10	
	L	20	20	10	0	0	
4th	W		80	90	70		40
	D		50	40	10		20
	L		10	0	0		0

As an example we can use the series England versus Pakistan in 2010 and the bowlers who took five or more wickets in an innings.

- First Test: Standing before match: 0-0. Result: England win. Standing after match: 1-0. Points accrued: James Anderson 50 and Mohammad Asif 10.
- Second Test: Standing before match: 1-0. Result: England win. Standing after match: 2-0. Points accrued: Saeed Ajmal 0 and Graeme Swann 70.
- Third Test: Standing before match 2-0. Result: Pakistan win. Standing after match 2-1. Points accrued: Wahab Riaz and Mohammad Asif 60.
- Fourth Test: Standing before match 2-1. Result: England win. Standing

after match: 3-1. Points accrued: Mohammad Amir 0 and Graeme Swann 80.

The only adjustment required beyond the above totals is to account for the abilities of the two sides, i.e. was the series played by two great, good, average or poor teams? For that we turn once again to the ICC ratings, but this time we're interested in how they rate Test teams rather than players. Whereas with players we were also interested in their peak rating, only the current rating of our two combatants is relevant. The combined rating of the two teams is used as a basis to adjust the points awarded by reference to the matrix above, up or down depending on the strength of the teams and the Ashes/Asia' factor.

Seven - Intangibles

This is where we put anything of relevance that doesn't appear in the other categories. It may have either a positive or negative affect on the overall rating of the bowling performance under analysis.

On the positive side there is:

Illness or injury.

Sidelining an opposition batsman. This may be a contentious point but the reality is that the bowler has removed a member of the opposition.

Personal pressure such as captaincy, fear of being dropped, debut or previous difficulties with the opposition.

A major contribution earlier in the game.

Particular efforts of stamina, especially in hot conditions.

Outstanding fielding off the players own bowling. There are numerous examples of brilliant caught-and-bowleds in the following pages.

Dropped catches. In *Masterly Batting* an entire category was devoted to this element but this can't be so influential here as match reports are far less

rigorous in reporting such incidents when describing a great bowling performance. Sometimes they do, but not with the consistency we need and therefore they belong here.

On the negative side there is:

The perception that the batting team performed poorly irrespective of the bowling.

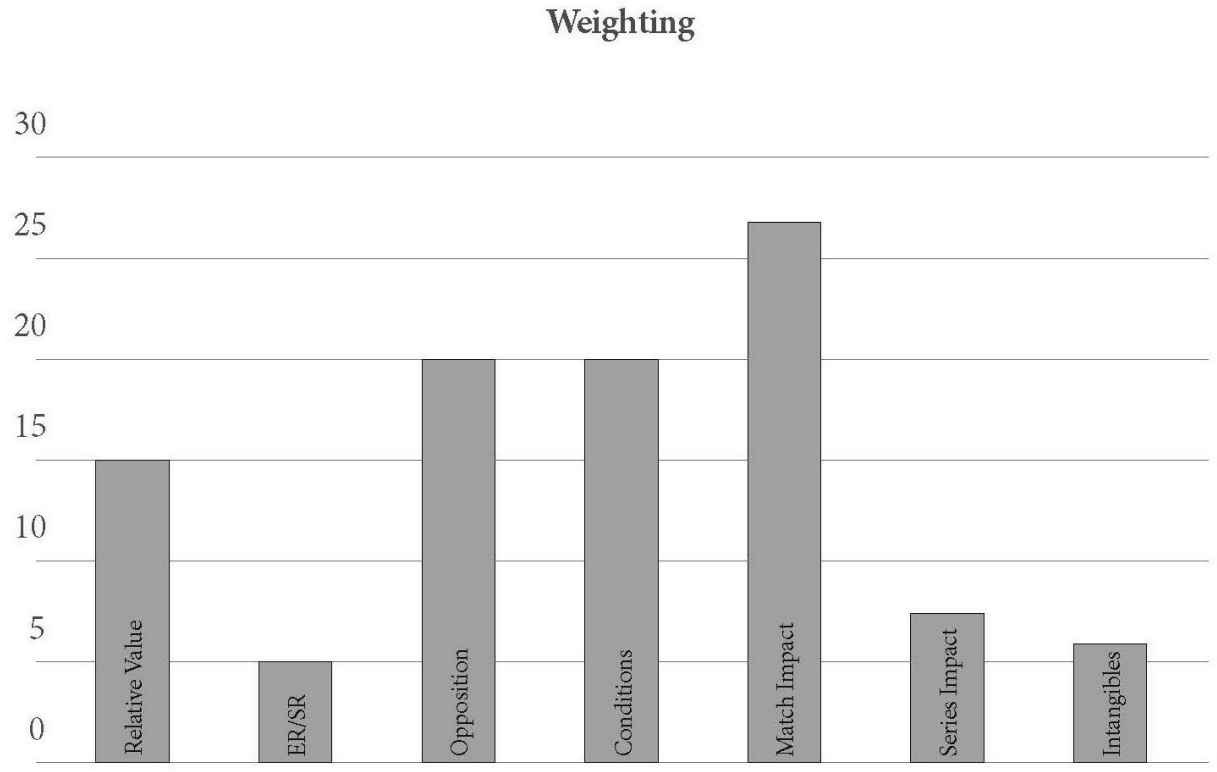
A general negativity expressed about the bowler's performance and the good fortune he enjoyed.

As in *Masterly Batting*, the written word is of elementary significance. How did the people who were there, either as players, spectators or reporters, assess the performance? One has also to take into account the players' own personal reminiscences but these tend to be less objective and are often influenced by personal significance. It is impossible not to be impressed when a performance on the scorecard that appears imposing is then supported by various reports that allude to 'the best spell I've ever seen' or 'outstanding bowling on a completely unhelpful wicket'. As we've used informed opinion in calculating some of the categories it would be simply foolish not to use expert contemporary opinion where it is available to further the accuracy of the calculation. Likewise a group of reports that indicate a bowler was fortunate or that he was gifted a number of wickets by foolish batting must have a negative effect on the rating.

Weighting

Having established the categories in which the bowling performances are to be judged and how those categories will operate there is now the necessary and difficult process of weighting the relative importance of each. There is no right and wrong here, just opinion.

Rather than look for a wide-sweeping democratic method we canvassed the opinions of the seven main contributors to this book who had all undertaken considerable research in compiling a long-list of some 400 potential candidates for inclusion. The results were inevitably varied, but not massively so. *Masterly Batting* had ten categories and the only two that were directly applicable to *Supreme Bowling* were Intangibles and Series Impact and it seemed correct to keep these two at the same level – six and seven per cent respectively. So the remaining 87 per cent was split between the five other categories. As in *Masterly Batting*, Conditions and Opposition were deemed to be of great importance but the overriding category was Match Impact as can be seen below.



Clearly there will be differences of opinion but these percentages were tried and tested to ensure that none combined to overwhelm the others. There is the danger of ‘leakage’ from one category to another hence Rates was given quite a low percentage as it generally had an influence on Value. In other words where the Rates were good the Value would almost inevitably be good as well. This does not apply to any of the three major categories. It is quite possible to bowl against a good batting side successfully under unfavourable conditions and still have little impact on the match and it is equally possible to bowl successfully against a relatively weak batting side under favourable bowling conditions and have a great impact on the match – or any combination of these three you care to name. The one constant is a successful bowling performance, for without that there would be no place for consideration of the bowler in question.

It is important to remember that each category is in place not only to reward a bowler but also penalise him against the others. If Series Impact is not considered then there is no way of rewarding the bowler who wins a series at the death and equally it becomes impossible to downgrade a performance that comes in a dead rubber.

Part One
Performances 100–51

Foothills

Tony Greig – 33-7-70-5

West Indies v England, Port of Spain 30 March-5 April 1974

It must be doubtful whether Geoffrey Boycott's 112 in England's second innings fully relieved his frustration at having been dismissed for 99 in the first, but without him England would have slipped tamely to a 2-0 series defeat. As it was West Indies were left to score 227 to win. On the penultimate afternoon they set about their task and before rain intervened had made 30 without loss. Openers Lawrence Rowe and Roy Fredericks had little trouble with Geoff Arnold, but both were troubled by Tony Greig's off cutters with the new ball.

This England XI would raise a few eyebrows today. Three spinners in Jack Birkenshaw, Pat Pocock and Derek Underwood, the only seamers being Arnold and Greig, and Greig had mostly been bowling off spin. He didn't change that rather jerky and angular run up, and his pace was not much reduced. But with his height Greig found turn and bounce and that, as he had shown in the first innings, gave him the edge over the specialists.

The sixth morning was bright and sunny and when drinks were taken after an hour Rowe and Fredericks had moved on to 63. Soon, however, it was 65-3. Birkenshaw made the breakthrough, Greig found the edge of Alvin Kallicharran's bat and then a fine throw from Boycott ran out Fredericks.

A shower interrupted proceedings, but just as Clive Lloyd started to dominate Birkenshaw, Greig persuaded Rohan Kanhai to chase a wide one and Keith Fletcher took the catch. The crucial moment came shortly afterwards when some extra flight from Greig tempted Lloyd to drive. Christopher Martin-Jenkins wrote that Greig, 'following through, first had to change direction, then with three enormous strides he was across the pitch and diving to hold the ball in a telescopic right arm.' Lunch was taken at 89-5. In an hour the complexion of the match had changed completely.

After lunch Deryck Murray and Garry Sobers put on 50 and threatened to wrest back the initiative before Underwood with, remarkably, his only wicket of the match, brought down the curtain on Sobers' magnificent career. Bernard Julien didn't last long but Keith Boyce then came out and took the

attack to England and brought his side within 60 of victory. By now Greig was visibly tiring and struggling with a sore spinning finger, but he still managed to take the vital wicket of Murray. The delivery was wide of off stump and flighted invitingly. Murray chose to drive, but the ball dipped late and ended up in the safe hands of Fletcher at slip rather than crossing the long-off boundary.

There was still time for Inshan Ali and Boyce to add 31, but then Inshan failed in an attempt to loft Greig over the infield and with Lance Gibbs quickly giving Arnold his first wicket the series was squared. It was 16 long years before England next beat West Indies.

Shaun Pollock – 16-3-40-5

South Africa v India, Port Elizabeth 16-20 November 2001

As Hansie Cronje's successor, Shaun Pollock took on the South African captaincy at a troubled and distracted time, and managed not only 'to rebuild the reputation of his country's cricket and the spirit of his team' but also to debunk an old myth. 'Captaincy', noted Peter Roebuck, 'has improved his own cricket where it has inhibited rivals.' Pollock had heard 'all these stories about how difficult it is to captain as a bowler, but I've always been a kind of captain of my own bowling.' As leader he took 103 Test wickets at an average of 21.36, moving *Wisden* in 2002 to dub him 'the most complete cricketer since Imran Khan.'

When the Indians arrived in 2001, he had lost a yard or two of pace since Adelaide 1998 (his other entry in this book), but his control had come on nicely, and he had now far more guile about him. 'He is a thinking bowler all the time', remarked Clive Rice, 'and I mean all the time.' Allied to an uncomplicated, repeatable action, and a natural ability to nip the ball both ways, he was at this stage of his storied career arguably the finest bowler in the world.

The wicket at Port Elizabeth looked perfect for all these qualities, so when the Indians won the toss they had no hesitation in electing to field. Warm sunshine on the first afternoon, and a stiff breeze the next morning, tranquilised the surface, allowing South Africa to mount a first-innings score of 362. With no lateral movement to speak of, either in the air or off the pitch, Pollock took the new ball and, in contempt of context, rived the heart out of the Indian batting. They were 15-3 inside the first 11 overs: Shiv Das trapped leg before and Rahul Dravid bowled through the gate, while Sachin Tendulkar pulled a short one down mid-on's throat. Pollock induced these errors by canny use of the crease, varying his line of attack, and by relentless exploitation of the corridor of uncertainty.

Sourav Ganguly staged a minor recovery, but his defiance lasted barely an hour before Pollock returned to deracinate his off stump. The visitors only avoided the follow-on through an 80-run stand between VVS Laxman and

Anil Kumble, capitalising on Pollock's mediocre back-up. The captain, it seemed, had to do it all himself; only when he had Laxman lbw, 'left floundering in what Ken Barrington was pleased to call "two-man's land"', was the innings effectively ended. Pollock, almost single-handed, had routed the pride of India. He finished with 5-40, firmly dispelling suggestions that he had lost his zip. Even in unhelpful conditions, he was as effective as he had ever been.

Rain broke up South Africa's run-chase on the fourth day, and the match was ultimately drawn. This is almost certainly why Pollock does not list this performance in his personal top ten. It was a shoo-in for this book, however.

Tom Richardson – 45.2-7-104-6

Australia v England, Melbourne 1-6 March 1895

98

When Andrew Stoddart led MCC to Australia in 1894-95 Surrey fast bowler Tom Richardson did not at first find the Australian wickets entirely palatable, as figures of 3-253 will attest. However, 11-63 in his third match confirmed he had come into form at just the right time. Indeed, Richardson was in the middle of possibly the finest four seasons of bowling ever produced, taking over 1000 wickets at under 15 apiece, and had by the time of the fifth and deciding Test amassed 23 wickets, helping England to enter the match with the contest all-square at two victories each. This series was the first great Ashes event, with even Queen Victoria following dispatches to keep up with developments down under, so there was huge interest in the denouement.

The Australian selectors made England's task a little easier by leaving out the great Charlie Turner and handing a debut to another Bathurst product, Tom McKibbin, who was renowned for a suspect action. As was customary at that time, Richardson opened the bowling with spinner Bobby Peel, but Australia made 414 in their first innings, Richardson having disposed of Harry Graham with a trademark break-back. In a high-scoring series of timeless Tests, England's reply fell less than 30 runs short following a fine century from Archie MacLaren. Australia's second innings was marked by strong winds blowing the dust around, Richardson striking early to remove Frank Iredale for 18. Australia then managed to temporarlily knock Bill Lockwood out of the attack so that, at lunch, the lead was 168 with seven wickets still remaining. The great all-rounder George Giffen considered Richardson to be most deadly on a wicket which gave him least assistance, and so it transpired as Giffen himself was bowled playing over a yorker, Gregory following for 30.

As Richardson began to flag, Lyons scored quickly until Briggs bowled him. The tall Surrey paceman then found a second wind and trapped Graham once again before bowling Albert Trott for a duck, then finally had McKibbin caught behind to end the innings on 267, leaving England a difficult 296 to win the Ashes. With two wickets down for just 28 England were second

favourites, but as every cricket traditionalist knows Jack Brown then saw fit to hammer one of the greatest Test centuries of all time and England had triumphed.

Calling on the stamina forged by dragging his kitbag to The Oval and back home again every day, a round trip of some 14 miles, Richardson had sent down 45.2 overs (87.2 in the match) in choking dust and heat and on an unhelpful pitch to record figures of 6-104. Perhaps understandably Brown's batting performance has overshadowed Richardson's epic feat of endurance somewhat, but Richardson's accomplishment was 'one of the most heroic performances in all Ashes history' in what *Wisden* described as the Match of the Century.

Phil Tufnell – 14.3-3-25-6

England v West Indies, The Oval 8-12 August 1991

Phil Tufnell gave the average park cricketer hope that even with poor ability in most aspects of the game they could still play Test cricket. They say that a poor fielder couldn't catch a cold. Tufnell couldn't even catch a sniffle. He showed no interest in progressing his batting either. When offered the opportunity to move from his position as a perennial No.11, he would say to his captain: "Nah, mate, I don't really like walking back to the pavy alone".

What Tufnell could do, and the average park cricketer could only dream of, was to spin the ball well enough to win Test matches. Tufnell, in his first home Test, didn't receive much of a mention leading into the final match of the 1991 series which England trailed 1-2. The pre-match press centred on the great Vivian Richards' final Test and how his team would send their captain out with a victory. The odds reflected this with an England win at 5/1.

If the Richards' party was to be spoilt it was hoped that the veteran Ian Botham, making a return to Test cricket, would wind back time and succeed against his bogey team. In fact there was no mention of the young skinny left-arm off spinner, as the visitors set out in pursuit of the impressive England first innings total of 419 made on a hard and fast pitch, against a continual stream of bouncers.

When Tufnell was brought on to bowl on the third day his overnight figures were 0-29 and the Windies had moved on to 158-3. Debutant Clayton Lambert, set on 39, showed no respect to the spinner, charging his first ball and attempting to hit him over the leg side only to be caught at cover. What a start. This seemed to be Tufnell's day, a dream spinner's breeze which enabled him to drift the ball in before turning it back with bounce and spin towards the slips.

This turn gave Tufnell his second as Botham held a good catch at first slip from the edge of Malcolm Marshall, 161-6. The next challenge was to bowl at his boyhood hero, Richards. The 'Master Blaster' attempted to save his farewell from turning into a disaster. He knew just one way to achieve this; attack. He charged Tufnell, attempted to hit straight, only to be beaten

by the turn and edge it to ’keeper Alec Stewart who took a superb catch.

The big Windies fast bowlers also decided to hit Tufnell out of the attack and met the same fate as their captain. Curtly Ambrose and Patrick Patterson fell to catches by the irrepressible Botham, while Courtney Walsh was done in flight and miscued to mid-off. All out 176.

Tufnell the ‘Cat’ later said that he knew “they’d get after me, you just got to keep your cool”. The Cool Cat did, claiming six for four off 33 deliveries which included three poles in an over. England went on to win, and draw the series, with Botham hitting the winning runs.

Bill Voce – 20.6-5-41-6

Australia v England, Brisbane 4-9 December 1936

On the eve of the 1936-37 series one bookmaker was confident enough to lay £4000 to £2000 that England wouldn't win a Test. The bookmaker was buoyed as the tourists failed to win their last four games before the 'Gabba first Test. Worse still their two big fast bowlers struggled. Ken Farnes failed to make the team while lefty Bill Voce had six wickets at 68.

The first Test pitch was benign and England captain 'Gubby' Allen had no hesitation in batting. The match began sensationally when Ernie McCormick dismissed Stan Worthington first ball, before reducing England to 20-3. It could have been worse had big Ernie not limped off with lumbago. England's innings of 358 finished three hours before stumps on day two, not nearly enough on a flat deck with Don Bradman in the opposition.

After Allen claimed an early wicket, Bradman arced to the crease to join Jack Fingleton at 13-1. He made his intentions clear starting with consecutive boundaries and raced to 38 before he misread Voce, who was making 'the ball kick and made things exciting for the slips', and was caught at gully. There has never been a more important wicket in history than that of 'The Don' and perhaps it inspired Voce to his great performance on day three.

Voce, 'bowling with invincible penetration and hostility' in 10 overs claimed 5-16 to give England a first innings lead of 124. First he had Stan McCabe caught at mid-on and in his next over had debutant Ray Robinson, in his only Test, caught in slips. Just before lunch he had three, when Arthur Chipperfield was caught behind at 202-5. Voce; 3-6 in the session.

Most expected Voce to be unleashed with the new ball, available after 200 runs, straight after lunch however Allen believed spin to be the more efficacious and left the fast bowler to cool his heels. The old ball did claim Fingleton for a comatose, albeit important, 100. When Voce finally returned his pace was too much for the tail as first 'keeper 'Bert' Oldfield was caught behind for six and then 'Tiger' O'Reilly was dismissed for three. Voce 6-41.

The Australian bowlers fought back and if it hadn't been for a hard hitting 68 from Allen, the hosts would have chased a lot less than the

eventual 381. On a still blameless pitch and with Bradman in the side, the home team still believed. By stumps on day four at 3-1, they believed less, with Voce, still in supreme form, bowling Fingleton with the first ball of the innings. It was a disgruntled Australia that left the field, after finally one of their repeated appeals against the light was upheld. Or as Denzil Batchelor evocatively wrote: ‘shortly afterwards, when the horse was out, the umpires shut the stable door, and drew stumps’.

That night it rained a Brisbane rain and the Aussies capitulated for 58 with Bradman a duck and Voce 4-16. Some said rain cost Australia victory. Poppycock, with the form Voce displayed in the match, England would have won regardless of rain or Bradman.

Harold Larwood – 14.4-4-32-6

Australia v England, Brisbane 30 November-5 December 1928

It is easy to forget that Harold Larwood toured Australia once before the famous ‘Bodyline’ series of 1932-33. He was just 24 when he was the lone spearhead in Percy Chapman’s side. After a strenuous season in 1928 a relaxing few weeks on board ship allowed Larwood to recharge his batteries and he showed his class in the early matches. The Australian pitches were harder than those he was used to, and after just a few overs the rough surface took all the shine from the ball. There was a consolation though, as Larwood found he didn’t need to pitch the ball short to make it leap at the batsman.

The opening Test was the first ever Ashes game to be played in Brisbane, and the only one ever at the Exhibition Ground. According to Larwood it was ‘like playing a match in Aden or the Sahara’, but the intense heat and dry atmosphere did nothing to hinder him or his team-mates. England batted and took the best part of two days to amass 521, Larwood recording an aggressive 70.

Australia had the final session of the second day to negotiate, but by the end of Larwood’s opening salvo both Bill Woodfull and Bill Ponsford were back in the pavilion. Woodfull went in the first over, caught superbly by Chapman in the gully after being consistently beaten for pace. Ponsford survived until Larwood’s third over before being yorked. Batting then looked easier until Larwood came back for a closing burst and was too quick for allrounder Charlie Kelleway. The veteran seemed to pull back a little from the first Larwood delivery he faced, and three balls later lost his off stump. Australia were 44-4 at the close.

After the rest day Australia subsided to a sorry 122 all out. Speed was the key and the Australians had never seen it at this level, Larwood ending with magnificent figures of 6-32. Hendry and Ryder almost weathered the storm at the start, but neither looked happy and in the opinion of Surrey skipper Percy Fender, correspondent for The Star, ‘they seemed inclined to pull away a bit’. Just as Larwood was about to take a breather Hendry missed a leg glance and was lbw. Whilst Larwood rested Ryder battled on, and although Tate

removed the debutant Bradman and Bert Oldfield the extra pace of Larwood was still needed to finally end Ryder's stout resistance and soon after he took the opportunity to shatter the stumps of Bert 'Dainty' Ironmonger to end the innings. Runs had been easy enough to accumulate on this pitch against all but one bowler.

Despite having a lead of 399 Chapman batted again in this timeless Test and did not declare until the end of another fine cameo from Larwood. The lead was 741 and Larwood then removed Ponsford before the close, which came at 17-1. Following overnight rain Australia were all out for 66 in just over an hour. England's margin of victory was 675 runs.

Lindsay Kline – 44-21-75-7

Pakistan v Australia, Lahore 21-26 November 1959

Lindsay Kline, fortified by a glass of whiskey, after suffering a high fever the previous night which required his bedding to be changed five times, was poised at the top of his mark. The rejuvenated Kline waited for the start of the final day of the second Test, at Lahore. The ground was packed as the fans flocked to watch Pakistan force an unlikely draw against the best in the world. The visitors were unsure how it had come to this. After all, at lunch on the third day Australia had declared with a first-innings lead of 245. A win on day four or early on day five, on the dusty wicket, had appeared a formality.

Even when Pakistan showed fight to start their second innings, Kline stifled them claiming both openers. First he bowled the watchful Alimuddin, after 68 minutes, for seven and then had the dangerous captain/'keeper, Imtiaz Ahmed well caught by O'Neill for an aggressive 54. At 87-2 and Kline bowling with great variation the Aussies looked on track for victory.

After the loss of the openers, Australia went for the kill and surrounded new batsman Shujauddin. This they implemented due to Kline's control. The 25-year-old, unlike most of his bowling type, kept a length, using his 'chinaman' only sparingly. Despite the dangerous Kline, and aided by a dropped catch, Shujauddin batted over five hours before dismissed, to a dubious lbw, for a laborious 45. His partner, Saeed Ahmed was still there to start day five on 152 and, scarily for Australia, new batsman Hanif Mohammad could bat ad nauseam. It was true that the pitch, the first turf wicket used for a Test in Pakistan, had held up well but the undeniable fact was that the hosts showed great heart and looked likely to force a draw. For Australia, the spin bowlers; Richie Benaud and Kline, had to win the game.

So in came Kline to bowl first on day five with the happy crowd cheering runs and blocks vociferously. With neither batsman troubled, only a great stumping by Wally Grout off Kline saw Saeed's vigil end after 457 minutes. Kline then bowled the original 'little master' Hanif, which meant Australia needed five wickets, plus a run chase. Kline was on top of his game as the batsmen struggled with his length and variations, although Duncan Sharpe's

charge and stumping, while his team battled for a draw, was inexplicable. One run later, Kline bowled Waqar Hasan and Pakistan limped to lunch at 331-7. It was still Pakistan's to lose; with two sessions, three wickets and a lead of 86 they held their own destiny.

The draw firmed after lunch when Kline dropped Mohammad Munaf off O'Neill. Luckily moments later Kline made up for his error and had Munaf caught at short mid-off. Benaud, who had bowled well, wrapped up the tail, leaving Australia 120 minutes to make 121. No easy task on a 'turner' and the blatant 'go slow' tactics employed by Pakistan. They made it with a few minutes to spare and inflicted Pakistan's first series loss at home.

Mitchell Johnson – 17.1-1-68-7

South Africa v Australia, Centurion 12-15 February 2014

It's possible that, as decades pass, the legend of Mitchell Johnson's 2013-14 summer and the fast-bowling carnage therein will obscure much else that he did, yet his ruthless evisceration of the world-beating South Africans in the Centurion Test a month after his miracle Ashes should forever stand as a fast-bowling monument.

It could so easily have been different. Playing at home, with a steady and united line-up, suffering none of England's emotional scars and boasting a greater sense of itself than any team in the world, the Proteas might have again stood firm and blunted Johnson's pace, chipping away one over, one session, one day at a time as they always did. But all that Mitchell Johnson saw 22 yards away from him as he set off for his first over of South Africa's first innings reply was fresh meat. By game's end the Proteas had been beaten, bullied and near-on humiliated.

Johnson's frightening, thrill-an-over spell also confirmed suspicions that the previous summer had been no mere flash in the pan. Once as calm and immovable as the mountain ranges surrounding his workplace, captain Graeme Smith crumbled under the assault of Johnson. Seeming to age a decade before our eyes, by series' end Smith had retired.

The specifics of Johnson's first innings spree were in equal parts magnificent and gory. Within four deliveries of his first spell Smith was gone, not just his wicket removed but also his pride when startled evasive action to a venomous bouncer sent the ball flying high into the cordon off the handle of his bat. It was a devastating symbolic blow. If a batsman as sturdy and unruffled as Smith could be made to look such a rube, what hope the rest?

Well, none. Alviro Petersen camped on the back foot and feathered an edge. Flint-hard Faf du Plessis had six of Johnson' s howitzers to survive but lasted only one, sparring hurriedly at a 151-kph nightmare bouncer that hissed off the shoulder of his bat to the vultures in Australia's cordon. His arms stretched to their fullest wingspan, Johnson stormed past the vanquished

batsman like a devious, swooping crow.

Through the brilliance and audacity of AB de Villiers alone, the Proteas rallied but then Johnson re-emerged malevolently. Ryan McLaren's defences were split almost comically by a jagging off-cutter. Robin Peterson had his nightmares come true, undone by another rearing snorter. The wicket of de Villiers proved the game's greatest irony; the only batsman capable of withstanding Johnson's heat fell to his slower ball. By game's end – after a five-wicket second-innings haul in which he'd made McLaren bleed, struck the serene Hashim Amla and broken Vernon Philander's bat – 49 wickets at 10 apiece from his previous six Tests left Johnson firmly entrenched as the most feared bowler in cricket.

Fred Trueman – 14.3-2-44-7

England v Australia, Birmingham 4-9 July 1963

92

At the start of 1963 a fascinating battle developed between Richie Benaud, Brian Staham and Fred Trueman to overtake Alec Bedser as the all-time leading Test wicket-taker. Going into the fourth Ashes Test of 1962-63, Statham was a tantalising single wicket away from equalling Bedser, with Trueman and Benaud a further six wickets adrift. As was always most likely, Statham it was who took the crown from Bedser, finishing that match with a new record of 241. But while Statham went home, Trueman carried on to New Zealand and, with 14 wickets in the two Tests, became the first player ever to bag 250 wickets.

It looked for a while as if that would be that for Trueman however, as on his return to England he announced that he would be retiring from Test cricket, no doubt brassed off by yet another dressing down (and fine) from team management. By the time West Indies travelled to England he had calmed down and proved himself to be in superlative form, having taken 11 wickets in the previous Test at Lord's, though his own heroics had been somewhat overshadowed by those of Colin Cowdrey; the thrilling draw keeping England's hopes alive against what *Wisden* described as 'an almost perfect side'.

The Edgbaston Test looked like being spoilt by the weather, with a downpour on the eve of the first day and further rain breaks throughout the first three days. England's low first innings total of 216 still resulted in a 30-run lead as Trueman netted 5-75, but 278 in the third innings left West Indies with a target of 309 at just over a run a minute. Bowling virtually unplayable fast leg breaks, Trueman induced Hunte to edge one to Barrington, 10 for two. Though Kanhai displayed elegant resistance, Trueman softened him up with a bumper after which a half-hearted sweep lolloped up to Lock in the leg trap.

Skipper Worrell took guard with six men around him, and soon Parks' appeal had him walking back for a duck, though he protested that the ball had hit his arm. There was no doubt about Deryck Murray's dismissal, as

Trueman produced what Daily Mirror correspondent Brian Chapman described as the greatest ball he'd ever seen – 'a ball that will haunt him throughout the long cricket years that lie ahead.' Taking care of Joe Solomon and the tail, Trueman had given them six of the best for just a lucky four runs in 24 balls.

Thanks largely to Trueman, England had triumphed by 217 runs – 'Headingley and the Oval: look out for two magnificent trials of strength!' screamed the Mirror. So much for that; defeat by 221 runs and eight wickets saw the series lost 3-1. By then Trueman had extended his record total to 284 Test wickets, but, by now, at 32 he would play just eight more Tests, though he was still able to become the first bowler to reach the pinnacle of 300, a record which the *Daily Mirror* thought 'could stand for all time'.

Bill Whitty – 16-7-17-6

Australia v South Africa, Melbourne 31 December-4 January 1911

Between November 1910 and March 1911 South Africa toured Australia for the first time. That they lost the five-Test series 4-1 against the full strength of their hosts is therefore not surprising, but the South Africans were a decent side, and had it not been for Bill Whitty's bowling the Australian margin of victory would certainly have been less.

The second Test was played at the MCG. Australian captain Clem Hill won the toss and, in this timeless encounter, chose to bat. The South Africans were doubtless happy to dismiss their hosts shortly before the close for 348, and even more pleased to spend the whole of the next day and part of the third taking a first-innings lead of 158, in large part thanks to 204 from Aubrey Faulkner.

Victor Trumper carried the attack to the South Africans in response and scored a run-a-ball 159, but no one else contributed more than 48 and 327 left the South Africans a victory target of just 170. The correspondent of The Adelaide Register reported that the match 'seemed to be almost a gift for South Africa', and that 'judged from the morning's play there was nothing in the state of the wicket to make them at all anxious regarding the result'.

Nonetheless the South Africans had some problems. Opening batsman Billy Zulch's back meant he would bat only in an emergency, and Dave Nourse had damaged his leg on the fence after chasing a ball headed for the boundary.

Whether a fully fit Nourse and Zulch would have made any difference must be doubtful because what looked like a thrilling finish in the offing turned out to be a procession and the South Africans failed to get even half way towards their target. The innings lasted just 32 overs, half of them from Whitty and all bar one of the remainder from Tibby Cotter.

With Whitty taking advantage of a southerly wind and swinging the ball back into the right handers the visitors were never in it from the moment Cotter removed stand-in opener Louis Stricker with just a single on the board. Even the first-innings double-centurion Faulkner was strokeless against the

swing, break and relentless accuracy, managing just eight runs in 52 minutes. Dangermen Percy Sherwell and Jimmy Sinclair were both removed before they could open their shoulders and the rest wilted. The Melbourne Argus commented that; ‘the amount of swerve and work he got when considered with the pace was remarkable.’ None of the batsmen could keep him out and it wasn’t until right at the end of the innings when Zulch managed a pull for three that an attacking shot against him succeeded. Little wonder, then, that after routing South Africa for just 80 Whitty’s bowling was described as ‘beyond praise’. In the conditions he had bowled to perfection where a few wayward balls could have tilted the balance and lost the game.

Shaun Pollock – 41-11-87-7

Australia v South Africa, Adelaide 30 January-3 February 1998

Hansie Cronje won the toss and elected to bat first. His South Africans were one-nil down with five days remaining in a close-fought series. With their bowling weakened by an injury to Allan Donald, it was crucial that they bat only once; they needed all the time they could make to bowl Australia out twice. In the end they got 517, which was more than enough to be getting on with.

The burden of spearheading the attack fell to the twenty-four-year-old Shaun Pollock, who would later confess to having found it “all a bit nerve-racking”. But there was no evidence of racked nerves in his demeanour, and we have seen already in these pages that responsibility had a way of bringing out the best in him. On a belter of a wicket, in heat so scalding that the umpires ordered an extra drinks’ break for every session of play, he found the rhythm, the pace, the bounce and the accuracy, but most importantly the stamina, to fire down 41 overs for a career-best seven for 87.

The first victim was Matthew Elliott, who failed to negotiate an effort ball. The second, Greg Blewett, fell to a preconceived ploy when he miscued a pull off the splice. The third, Mark Waugh, played possibly the ugliest innings of a beautiful career, savouring the generosity of Pollock’s fielders, before finally he was held by a forward-diving cover. The fourth, Steve Waugh, followed his brother an over later, caught behind off a good-length leg cutter. Although Ricky Ponting was not the fifth victim, he really ought to have been. Pollock beat both edges of his bat, and was twice denied a plumb lbw, but the pressure ultimately told at the other end. The fift h victim was instead Ian Healy, squared up by a short one after scratching around for 25 minutes.

Moments after dropping a sitter in the gully, Pat Symcox secured Pollock’s sixth victim, Andy Bichel, with a one-handed screamer in the same position. With his next ball Pollock completed the seven, as Shane Warne chased and nicked an outswinger. From the comfort of 207 for three, the home side had crumbled to 279 for eight, still 38 short of the follow-on

target.

That they avoided it was thanks entirely to more slovenly stuff in the field. That South Africa took only six second-innings wickets, thus drawing the match and losing the series, was attributable to the same cause, and also to their overreliance on one bowler, who laboured gallantly through a further 184 deliveries. Ten catches in all went to ground, a plurality of them off Pollock's bowling, so Mark Waugh's hit-wicket controversy need not detain us for a moment. But we are entitled to pause and wonder just how high up the list this performance would rank had it received even a modicum of the support of its rivals.

Vernon Philander – 7-3-15-5

South Africa v Australia, Cape Town 9-11 November 2011

On the morning of his Test debut, Vernon Philander was jolted awake, adrenaline pumping, having just bowled ‘my first ball there at half past five in my dreams’. He did it for real some four hours later, and started as he meant to continue: back of a length, with bounce and with movement. A wicket in his third over annihilated the straggling butterflies, and he finished with 3-63 in an innings of 284.

South Africa collapsed to 96 all out in reply, with Shane Watson claiming five in just 21 balls. Philander looked on with interest. ‘That’s actually right up my alley’, he thought. ‘This is my game!’ Following the Australian’s example, he convened ‘an inquisition two metres from the batting crease, and applied the screws to the minds of batsmen.’ Ricky Ponting fell to a preconceived plan, Phillip Hughes edged a Morne Morkel lifter into the slips, and Australia went into tea three wickets down.

The resumption heralded chaos. Mike Hussey drove and edged, Brad Haddin slashed dumbly, and Michael Clarke, the first-innings centurion, was pinned on the crease. Eighteen for six now, ‘and people started glancing over their shoulder, checking the reactions of the fans in the next row.’ Philander was covered in gooseflesh: ‘an awesome feeling; I was tempted to pinch myself, to see if it was real.’ When Mitchell Johnson cut one straight to point, Newlands’ groundsman Evan Flint had seen enough: ‘I went and had a cold shower when Australia were 21 for seven, just to work out: is this really happening?’

Across the Indian Ocean, at ten past one on Friday morning, former Australian captain Mark Taylor was stirred by the vibrations of his cellphone: ‘By the time I got to the TV to check it all out for myself, I just saw Shaun Marsh become Philander’s fifth wicket, and all of a sudden they were 9-21. I thought I’d missed a whole day of my life!’ For his part, Philander feared it might still be half past five on Wednesday morning: ‘Is this a dream?’ he asked himself repeatedly. In England, Stuart Broad was thinking along similar lines. “This is what bowlers dream about!” he exclaimed when he heard the news, thus elegantly foreshadowing his own chapter in this book.

Flint returned from his shower and gaped up at the scoreboard: ‘Bloody hell! What have I done?’ But there were no great cracks, no emerald patches; it was all down to world-class bowling and imbecile batsmanship. No wicket in the world is a 21-9 wicket. Philander finished with 5-15 – ‘something you only dream of happening on debut’ – and Australia only narrowly avoided the lowest total in Test-match history. They went on to lose by eight wickets. “It’s a bit surreal,” said Philander afterwards, returning to his trope of choice. “It’s...I mean, ja...I’m still...I’m still busy waking up from this, hey!”

Glenn McGrath – 23.1-8-50-6

Australia v England, Brisbane 23-27 November 2006

88

'Dad's Army' they were labelled, too many players on the wrong side of 30. The man most prominently in the sniper's cross hairs was 36-year-old fast bowler Glenn McGrath, an ageing soldier who had been hors de combat for the best part of 11 months. The fact that he had been caring for his wife, Jane, after the removal of a brain tumour earned little compassion. After all, this was the ultimate cricket battle. This was the opening conflict for the Ashes. McGrath watched the English opening bowler, Steve Harmison, bowl the worst opening ball in Ashes history. The 'double wide' was taken at second slip. This one delivery set the tone for both this Test and the series. On a flat track the Aussies rushed to an imposing 602-9.

While McGrath didn't have the same horror start as Harmison, he was not the metronome bowler of his prime. He bowled the occasional 'jaffa' mixed with loose deliveries and his old bones appeared to be taking their time in letting him reach his top pace, which in reality had never been express. After another loose start to his third over, McGrath tried a short delivery. Andrew Strauss mistimed his pull and Mike Hussey, in his first Ashes Test, claimed a contested catch while 'spiking' McGrath's opening partner Brett Lee.

Next, McGrath went around the wicket and delivered a typical McGrath ball which just moved away enough from Alastair Cook to take the edge through to first slip. After 11 months without a first-class match, and a rusty start, McGrath was on a hat-trick. It wasn't to be. By stumps, and with Stuart Clark claiming a wicket, England were in all sorts at 53-3.

McGrath began proceedings on day three with Lee and on the still flat pitch, although with some wide cracks, they found a tougher assignment in Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell. The pair took the score to 78 before McGrath summed up, in one over to KP, why he had been and was still a great bowler. The first three balls all demanded to be played, each moving slightly towards the slips. The next was slightly wider and KP shouldered arms expecting the ball to also leave him. Instead it jagged back to claim an lbw. Ooh ah

McGrath.

That wicket signalled the end of England's resistance. They capitulated for 157, with McGrath helping himself to three more cheap scalps for yet another 'Michelle' (his 29th and final). As he left the field he displayed the ball to where his wife sat in the stands. He was just happy to have Jane there to share the moment. As he started to lead the Aussies off the field he mockingly grabbed his back and imitated a decrepit old man, just to let the critics know that he was not yet ready to be pensioned off. This Dad's Army would win this Test by 277 runs and go on to become the first team in over 80 years to achieve an Ashes whitewash.

Trevor Bailey – 21-8-44-7

England v West Indies, Lord's 20-22 June 1957

87

Trevor 'The Barnacle' Bailey is usually remembered for his astonishing powers of concentration and occupation of the crease, often without the distraction of scoring runs. This is an unfair and one-dimensional recollection of his batting. Its true value could be measured by Keith Miller's words: 'You knew that if you could get this bloke out of the way, the chances were that you would win.' Bailey could also bowl. He was in fact a 'real' allrounder with his greatest feats in Test cricket achieved equally with bat and ball. He regularly opened the bowling with Alec Bedser and was often the stop-gap while Frank Tyson, Brian Statham or Fred Trueman drew breath on a pitch that didn't suit Jim Laker.

There were occasions when Bailey quite simply out-bowled his illustrious team-mates, his 50th Test match, at Lord's in 1957, a prime example. After May and Cowdrey had saved England at Edgbaston with a famous stand of 401 and with the weather set fair in London the crowds poured in to see the old favourites the three W's and the 'little pals of mine' supported by young guns Sobers, Kanhai, Smith and Gilchrist. The English team was also brim full of talent and the contest was anticipated with uncommon relish.

West Indies chose to bat first, expecting a morning of movement on a Lord's pitch that 'was as green as the outfield'. The movement was there; as much horizontal as vertical and Kanhai and Walcott fought bravely to deny the opening bowlers – Statham and Trueman. With 30-1 on the board Bailey replaced Statham, was smashed by Walcott to the Tavern boundary and then got to work. Within minutes he had his revenge against the first W before Kanhai steered a nasty lifter to gully. After lunch the process continued – Sobers fell to Statham and Bailey proceeded to add no less than Everton Weekes, Frank Worrell, Collie Smith and John Goddard to his list in an exhilarating exhibition of fast-medium bowling utilising all the help in the pitch. He rounded off his figures by collecting a stunning return catch. His haul of 7-44 more than matched that of England's greatest opening pair who

managed 3-76. The pitch looked considerably easier when England batted and, despite greater resistance from West Indies in the second innings, the game was duly won.

Bill Bowes in *The Cricketer* bemoaned the ‘disappointing’ nature of the surface – ‘lively’ was the favoured adjective in the press box. But there was no doubting the skill and control shown by Bailey who had gauged what was needed by first watching the opening bowlers before achieving seam-bowling perfection. It was true that the pitch had pace and lift, but only Bailey was able to put the ball in the right place to allow the devils to perform. His captain thought he bowled ‘magnificently’ and the newspapers congratulated his ‘intelligence’ and unfailing length and line. Barnacle Bailey – Brilliant.

Matthew Hoggard – 18.3-5-61-7

South Africa v England, Johannesburg 13-17 January 2005

86

When the 2004-05 battle for the Basil D'Oliveira Trophy reached The Wanderers, two closely-matched sides had arrived at a precarious balance. England won the first Test with some ease but in the second, faltering in the first innings, they had failed to drive home their advantage and drew. In the third, a resurgent home side won by 196 runs. Johannesburg, with its capricious weather, altitude and infamous green mamba of a wicket promised a see-saw contest in tune with the series. And, though neither the weather nor the pitch played the part expected, so it proved.

With England on 411-8 in the first innings, Michael Vaughan, fearing rain, declared overnight at the end of the second day. He awoke to bright sunshine on the third morning however, and the green mamba remained coiled. With Steve Harmison pulling up with a calf strain in only the 13th over of the day, the England attack struggled as the home side hauled their innings into day four and a slender lead, courtesy of a masterly 161 from Herschelle Gibbs. Mathew Hoggard characteristically stepped into the breech and did the spade work for England, finishing with 5 for 144 from 34 overs, despite in his own subsequent estimation of having "bowled like a bag of spanners".

England's second dig stuttered at the start but was sparked into life by one of the great Test innings in Marcus Trescothick's 180, allowing Vaughan to declare just before lunch on the fifth day and leave South Africa with 325 to win in little more than two sessions. Many thought he had left it too late. He would later explain his thinking in his autobiography, Calling the Shots: 'I just wasn't sure what I was going to get out of my seam attack'.

What he got was a supreme display of bowling from Hoggard; the man who famously described his career role as being to 'brush up the debris off the shop floor'. First, AB de Villiers, trapped lbw for three to a perfect inswinger. Then, Jacques Rudolf bowled neck and crop for two to have South Africa at 18-2 and England in with a chance. Next ball, the real prize, Jacques Kallis, 480 runs in the series to that point, caught low down by Trescothick at

first slip to one that left him; 18-3. “A magic ball” crowed Bob Willis on commentary “Kallis gone for a golden duck, Hoggard the golden boy.” And with the ‘debris’ thus cleared, despite a combative 98 from Gibbs and a brave unbeaten 67 from the injured Graeme Smith, England got home with just 8.2 overs to spare. Hoggy, after adding Boeta Dippenaar and Mark Boucher to his haul, was brought back to polish off the innings. No ‘bag of spanners’ this; more a quiver of precision-tooled arrows of swing and seam, shot unerringly from the expert bow of the man Mike Selvey memorably dubbed ‘the hayrick-haired son of the soil.’ “He was incredible”, offered a more prosaic Vaughan.

Kapil Dev – 30.3-6-83-9

India v West Indies, Ahmedabad 12-16 November 1983

This was the first Test to be played at Ahmedabad's Gujarat Stadium and to ensure the new pitch held together plenty of grass had been left on the wicket. The first two sessions would be testing in the extreme but there was also the distinct possibility that it would be even worse on the final day. Given his side's recent batting struggles Kapil Dev feared being out of the game by lunchtime and so chose to field. Roger Binny quickly removed the stellar top three but Gus Logie and Clive Lloyd dug in before Jeff Dujon showed what was possible with a rapid 98. A score of 281 looked above par for a while but not by the close on day two with Sunil Gavaskar excelling in a score of 173-2.

The morning of day three was a disaster leaving the hosts 40 runs behind. This was the moment for Kapil to fight fire with fire – this is what all India hoped for and he didn't disappoint. With the ball, especially at the Pavilion end, still inclined to either rear or keep low he tore into his task with controlled fervour, using the pitch but conserving his strength. He knew that his contribution would decide the game.

Sandhu struck first, removing Desmond Haynes. After that it was just a question of who would bowl with Kapil as he single-handedly tore into the world's best batting line-up which boasted three of the top 10 and five of the top 20 in the world Test rankings.

Gordon Greenidge lasted only a few minutes, Viv Richards followed and then Larry Gomes and Logie went in quick succession. Kapil continued through the rest of the day with the tea interval his only respite. At 74-5 West Indies were wobbling, not something they experienced often even on a rough pitch. Even the calm assurance of the captain lasted only an hour and when Dujon fell at 114 the top seven were gone and the lead was just 154 on a pitch that was becoming slower. Inevitably Kapil began to tire and Malcolm Marshall and Michael Holding took advantage, staying to the close adding 38 precious runs and then following with 36 more next morning.

Once Marshall fell to Kapil the others went quickly enough. He had

bowled unchanged and his figures were, at the time, the fifth-best recorded. Where the Indian batsmen should have drawn strength from the batting efforts of Holding and Marshall they seemed demoralised to be chasing 242 to win when it might have been only 170. At 39-7 there was no way back and at 103 all out the game was lost and West Indies secured a 2-0 series lead they would not surrender.

The extraordinary efforts of Kapil Dev had been in vain, in this Test and ultimately the series. He showed his class and determination in topping the series bowling averages in front of the great West Indian speedsters but the odds against him were just too great.

Tom Richardson – 11.3-3-39-6

England v Australia, Lord's 22-24 June 1896

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There's a great photo of Tom Richardson in the *The Jubilee Book of Cricket*, showing the great height from which this huge man launched the ball – what a fearsome prospect that must have been for the helmetless 19th century batsmen. From 1893-1897, Richardson was without peer, intimidating almost 1200 first-class victims and taking twice as many Test wickets as the next best England bowler. When Australia came to England in the summer of 1896, the first Test at Lord's was Richardson's first since his heroics at Melbourne the previous year. Richardson had already taken his 100th wicket of the season, and this by mid-June.

The crowd of 30,000 for the first Test caused problems by encroaching on the field as well as, in *Wisden's* words, causing 'an absence of the quiet and decorum usually characteristic of the Lord's ground'. WG lost the toss and when Harry Trott elected to bat on a perfect wicket he was certainly anticipating a good score. Yet to the astonishment of the crowd three wickets were soon down for just four runs; Richardson's share was shattering the stumps of the captain, who complained that the lack of a sightscreen, and no doubt Richardson's high action, had left him unable to pick up the ball. Syd Gregory succumbed soon after to an unplayably fast delivery, and when Harry Graham went first ball Australia were reeling on 26-5, three to the Surrey man.

George Lohmann got the debutant Clem Hill moments later, but Darling settled in for an hour before Richardson also accounted for him, again clean bowled – Trumble's wicket made it 45-8 and when Jones was bowled Australia's deep and talented line-up had been put to the sword for 53 by just two bowlers in ideal batting conditions, leading George Giffen to lament: "We'd better pack up our traps and go home, boys!"

A second-wicket stand of 105 between Grace and Bobby Abel helped England to a first-innings lead of 239, and when Australia came in to bat again Richardson amazingly once more had two batsmen back in the pavilion for just three runs. However, Trott and Gregory then set about the England

bowling with a Test record stand of 221 in just 160 minutes, but Richardson finally claimed Trott's wicket and Australia went on to 347, something of a collapse from 283-3. So Richardson had another five-for to give him 11 in the match, and England soon knocked off the 109 runs needed for victory. For the first time a Test match at Lord's had been won by a genuine fast bowler. With 13 wickets in the second Test the Surrey paceman finished as leading wicket taker with 24 at 18.29 despite just six wicketless overs in the third and final Test. With almost 250 first-class wickets that season Richardson deservedly earned the honour of being selected one of *Wisden's* Five Cricketers.

Wes Hall – 31.2-8-69-7

West Indies v England, Kingston 17-23 February 1960

Twelve-year-old Albert Lindsey was excited, today he would watch his hero, Wes Hall, bowl against England. Albert took his seat in the grandstand, so crowded that hundreds perched on the roof. A plea from the announcer to vacate, for safety concerns, was ignored. From his seat Albert could see the gleaming pitch polished like cadet boots about to be inspected by a drill sergeant. He watched as his hero marked out 20 paces, looking every bit the menacing fast bowler. In the days of the back-foot no-ball law, the magnificently proportioned Hall, after ‘dragging’, appeared almost on top of the batsman before release.

England captain Peter May won the toss; Geoff Pullar faced Hall, with Colin Cowdrey the non-striker. Seemingly bowling wides or bouncers, Hall eventually settled and claimed the first wicket, an edge from Pullar. This brought Ken Barrington to the crease and the game all but ground to a halt as England crawled to lunch (45-1). After lunch, Hall and partner-in-speed Chester Watson, continued to pepper the batsman. Watson struck Barrington then dismissed him with another lifter. Hall bowled consecutive bouncers at new batsman May who awkwardly blocked one before tamely fending the next to a close catcher (68-3).

Hall was now consistently aiming at a patch just over halfway down the pitch. This he did with impunity as the batsmen were unable, or unprepared, to hook. CRACK! The stand Albert was sitting in collapsed with people falling through the roof onto the patrons below. Albert jumped from the stand and then another crack as Albert broke his leg. Just after this drama, about an hour post-lunch, Hall was rested until after the tea break.

Refreshed, Hall returned and almost immediately had Ted Dexter brilliantly caught at the wicket (113-4). Next, a searing yorker bowled Mike Smith. With five wickets down, and despite blistered feet, Hall saw his chance to expose the tail. He unleashed three consecutive bouncers at Cowdrey before another cannoned into the hand of Ray Illingworth. The batsmen felt they were in a war zone, only with no helmets. Frustratingly for

Hall, Cowdrey's classical technique and Illingworth's doggedness saw them reach the final over.

Despite his feet, Big Wes gave that last over everything and off his fourth ball claimed Illingworth. At stumps England were 165-6, with Cowdrey a subdued, although important, 75*. Hall, 5-35, headed to hospital to treat his blistered feet. While there he visited Albert, who excitedly asked his hero to "claim the last four wickets". Hall, despite a new ball, failed to achieve Albert's request. He was a member of the 'fast bowler's club' which meant no bouncers to fellow members. This enabled Truman and Statham to lunge forward with security and help Cowdrey to his century. Hall claimed two wickets to record his best Test figures of 7-69. His effort was in vain, the match ended in an oxymoron – an exciting draw.

Anil Kumble – 38-16-63-7

India v Pakistan, Kolkata 16-20 March 2005

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"That, I can assure you, was a lovely piece of bowling." Those were the words of the great Richie Benaud as Anil Kumble took his second Test wicket, that of England's John Morris, with a surprisingly rapid top-spinner. Benaud, as a former Australian leg spinner himself, was of course a connoisseur, few others would have seen the gangly 19-year-old as a future world-beater.

But the success of Kumble, whose career largely overlapped those of Shane Warne and Muttiah Muralitharan, was not short-lived. He lacked his rivals' dramatic turn, but as he went on, his array of nippy, little-turning deliveries developed, making him into one of the most threatening bowlers in world cricket. There were the famous 10 wickets in an innings against Pakistan in 1999, but an almost equally virtuoso performance was the 7-63 against the same opposition in 2005. Now aged 34, bulked up through thousands of overs and boosted mentally by years of studying his craft and the faults of his opponents, he was a man in true control. Kumble and his apprentice slow bowler, the young, aggressive off spinner Harbhajan Singh, took nine of the wickets to fall as Pakistan stumbled to just 226 in their second innings, tumbling to a first ever Test defeat at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

The older man's stamina saw him through 38 overs. Needing more than 400 to win, Pakistan looked to have at least a good chance of drawing the match as close of play approached on the fourth evening, the pitch playing few tricks. But, with the score on 93, Kumble managed to get opener Shahid Afridi, who, as usual, was hitting out, caught by Sourav Ganguly at fine-leg. An incision made, Kumble was unrelenting on the last day. He had Younis Khan stumped down the leg side – a ploy hatched with wicket-keeper Dinesh Karthik – for a duck. Pakistan's master batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq was bowled by one that somehow sneaked through. He then got Yousuf Youhana to prod one to forward short-leg.

Varying his flight and pace, with subtlety rather than youthful

obviousness, he had Asim Kamal caught, bowled Abdul Razzaq and had Mohammad Sami lbw. The array of dismissal types was testament to a keen cricketing intelligence at work.

‘Kumble showed yet again why he is our number one match-winner’, wrote Indian captain Ganguly in *The Hindu* after the match. ‘I have no doubt in my mind that he will end up with at least 600 wickets when he retires from the game. It would be tough to fill the void as bowlers like him are rare, but we will worry about that when the time comes.’

Kumble did indeed end up with more than 600 wickets – 619 to be precise, at an average a shade under 30. In a nation famed for its production of spin bowlers he reigns pre-eminent. His modesty and politeness never failed him. That, you can be assured, was a lovely career.

Fanie de Villiers – 23.3-8-43-6

Australia v South Africa, Sydney 2-6 January 1994

Shane Warne took 12 wickets in a Test twice, and won Man of the Match in neither of them. It's true that neither came in winning causes, but fate also decreed that on both occasions an opponent produced something special. Kevin Pietersen's 158 at the Oval in 2005 was a wonderful innings, but Fanie de Villers' effort, in only his second Test, 11 years earlier – on a slow pitch with South Africa seemingly dead and buried – was truly exceptional.

The Proteas had impressed since readmission with wins over India and Sri Lanka, but touring Australia was an altogether different challenge. The first Test in Melbourne had been a rain-ruined draw. In Sydney, they folded to Warne for just 169 in the first innings, and after Michael Slater had led Australia to nearly 300 in reply it needed a rearguard from Jonty Rhodes on day four just to keep the tourists alive. When Warne took the last of his dozen, Australia required just 117 to win. With hindsight, alarm bells should have been ringing. However, this was before Melbourne '98, Kolkata '01 or Mumbai '04 and Australia did not yet have the reputation – even when all-powerful – of crumbling before a small target. Slater played all over one which straightened gorgeously to give de Villiers an early breakthrough, but when the score passed 50 with no further loss Australia looked safe.

But Fanie – the Afrikaaner larrikin who'd never done things the easy way – had other ideas. Sprinting in, that all-arms-and-legs action ungainly but effective, his supreme control of swing and seam negated the pitch's lack of pace and bounce. He owed his second wicket to an ounce of luck, David Boon whipping off his pads only for Gary Kirsten to take an astonishing reflex catch at short-leg. There was no luck involved trapping nightwatchman Tim May plumb in front next ball though, nor in the immaculate leg cutter which dismissed Mark Taylor just before stumps. Legend has it Mark Waugh told the visitors over beers that evening: "Just put a couple of plebs in there, toss it up, and let's get this match over with."

If only. The procession continued on the final morning, in sweltering heat as bushfires encircled Sydney and the crowds were admitted free. Allan

Donald joined the party with two important wickets before de Villiers had Ian Healy playing on to a ball which jagged back. A direct hit from Hansie Cronje ran out Warne, and Australia had inconceivably lost seven for 24.

As the hosts regrouped and edged toward victory, Donald took his third scalp, one which had lasting ramifications. Damien Martyn's slog to cover – with just seven required – cost the West Australian not only his wicket but also six years of his Test career. But this was de Villiers' day. With the hosts five runs short, he caught last man Glenn McGrath off his own bowling and South Africa, somehow, were 1-0 up.

Harbhajan Singh – 37.5-7-123-7

India v Australia, Kolkata 11-15 March 2001

India vs Australia. Under-fire skipper. Under-fire bowlers. Home team trailing 0-1. Conceded huge first-innings lead. Asked to follow on. If you are a Bollywood fan, then you definitely know that these are the ingredients which make up for a spicy background before the hero rises and does something completely magical to turn the tables. But you know this stuff doesn't happen in real life. But boy, it did! Here, it did!

The 2001 Kolkata Test will be remembered for many reasons – Laxman's 281, Dravid's 180, Harbhajan's six-for and Tendulkar's three wickets in the second innings. But there was another crucial contribution – a historic one indeed, Harbhajan's 7-123 in the first innings, that included the first ever hat-trick by an Indian bowler.

On a track described by Harbhajan as having 'nothing to offer', the Indian bowlers began decently, bowling tight lines against Hayden and company. Zaheer Khan led the attack well but, it was the 'Turbanator' who was going to rule the day as the young 20-year-old off spinner, marred by controversies related to his action, brought out the best in himself and completely derailed a set Australian innings, relying on discipline and subtle variations.

With Australia sitting at 193-1 and Hayden looking well set on 97 the Indians were completely on the back foot. But Harbhajan provided the breakthrough, getting Hayden caught by the substitute fielder. Soon, 'Bhajji' picked up his second wicket when he managed to get the fluent looking Mark Waugh caught behind as Australia stumbled to 236-4. But it was the 72nd over of the innings that gave India and Harbhajan that first ever Test hat-trick. With Australia at 252-4, Harbhajan was looking all charged up after already having picked up two wickets. The second delivery was an arm ball that struck Ponting right in front of the wicket, plumb lbw. Now Harbhajan bowled a similar delivery to the new man Gilchrist, who was completely bamboozled, lbw first ball. Next came Shane Warne and he was greeted with a nice, tossed-up delivery that hit bat-pad and Ramesh at short-leg took a fine catch. The third umpire confirmed the dismissal as Eden Gardens erupted.

India now came up against their old problem, an inability to clean up the tail. With little support, India couldn’t maintain the pressure that Harbhajan had created. Eventually he claimed the last two wickets himself to end the Australian innings at 445.

His bowling had brought hope back into the dressing room and this hope was soon to transform the match through the deeds of Laxman and Dravid. India won the match from a seemingly impossible position, with Harbhajan bowling another brilliant spell. His first-innings effort will always remain one of the most cherished performances by an Indian spinner but who could have predicted that within 10 days he would produce even better?

Jack White – 64.5-21-126-8

Australia v England, Adelaide 1-8 February 1929

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Thursday 7 February 1929 was always going to be a tough day for ‘Farmer’ White. Australia needed another 325 to win with 10 wickets standing and with Harold Larwood, Maurice Tate and George Geary all carrying injuries he was England’s only fully-fit bowler.

White had already worked hard. In England’s first innings he had hung around for long enough to enable Hammond to complete his first century, and to eke out another 22 runs. Then he had bowled 60 overs, taking 5 for 130, before again batting resolutely in the England second innings to add 44 with Tate. Australia would chase 349 for victory.

Due to rain in the days leading up to the match the pitch was rather slow but it had held out well and wickets would have to be earned. In the opening overs White twice caught the edge of first-innings centurion and debutant Archie Jackson’s bat. He was eventually the first to go with the score on 65, caught by ’keeper George Duckworth from the bowling of Geary. It was the only wicket that fell to a bowler other than White.

Their tails up, England took two quick wickets either side of lunch. First Bill Woodfull went, by now a second slip in place. After the interval Stork Hendry was beaten in the flight and spooned the ball to mid-on. The 275 still needed looked far away.

At this point skipper Jack Ryder joined Alan Kippax and the pair put on 137. After a steady half-century Kippax essayed a booming off drive only to edge the ball to Geary at second slip who juggled it before Hendren helped him out by completing the catch.

The match tilted in England’s favour 13 runs later when Ryder went to hit White back over his head; the bowler’s left arm shot skywards and he completed a fine reaction catch. By now Percy Chapman’s rotation of bowlers was confined to one end as Larwood and Tate were employed as labourers for the farmer. Don Bradman and Ted a’Beckett put on 34 until just before the close a’Beckett was another to perish at second slip.

Next day with 89 needed and four wickets in hand Ron Oxenham and

Bradman reduced the target to 41 before White struck again. He held his nerve and line and Oxenham failed to time a drive, the bucket-like right hand of Chapman at silly mid-off taking the catch. In years to come one suspects that Bradman would have had the confidence to take charge, but this time he responded to a bad call from Bert Oldfield and was run out.

Oldfield's new partner was Clarrie Grimmett, and they slowly reduced the target to 23 before Grimmett was tempted to pull a clever shorter ball and found Tate at square-leg. White duped last man Don Blackie in the same way. Four deliveries were patted back to White, and then the fifth dropped a fraction shorter. Blackie went for the big hit and Larwood held a tricky catch at mid-off to seal England's fourth victory of the series.

Ian Johnson – 22.2-10-44-7

West Indies v Australia, Georgetown 26-29 April 1955

We arrived for the third Test one up in the five-Test series. Perhaps a nice position, but in fact I was stressed. I needed a win, especially as, earlier in 1955, I had become the first Australian leader to lose to England at home in over 20 years. Added to this I had Sid Barnes, ex team-mate now in the media, describing me, due to my recent Test performances, as ‘Australia’s non-playing captain’. Barnes, like most of the Sydney media believed Keith Miller should have succeeded to the captaincy after the retirement of Lindsay Hassett.

Miller was my deputy on this tour, although this did not stop him undermining me. This would come to a head in the next Test match after he, in front of my team, criticised my captaincy in the sheds after play “you couldn’t captain a team of school boys”. I challenged him to step outside to settle the matter – Miller declined, no doubt aware of my boxing reputation and the sniping, at least in front of the team, stopped. I wanted a good performance not just for the team. I wanted to silence the critics.

The pitch for the third Test looked likely to take spin, so it was no surprise whenWest Indies chose to bat. We started well and bowled them out for 182. At one stage, in reply, we were 135-1 before disappointingly collapsing to all out 257. This left the Windies 35 minutes to survive until stumps on day two which they managed. Late in the afternoon I really turned a couple and looked forward to bowling on this pitch the next day.

My assessment was right, the wicket was ideal for my off spin. I brought myself on early and by drifting the ball into the breeze, then gaining some pronounced turn I felt confident. Pleasingly, I also dropped onto a length which frustrated the batsmen. It was perhaps this aggravation which led Jeff Stollmeyer to drive a full-toss straight back to me and with my ‘mate’ Miller having claimed an early wicket the Windies were 25-2. That quickly became 25-3 after I tempted the new batsman, Everton Weekes, with a slower flighted ball and he was caught behind. One ‘W’ down; two to go. Clyde Walcott and Frank Worrell steadied and at lunch they were 92-3. I bowled

throughout the session: 13-6-25-2.

The two Ws threatened to reclaim the initiative with a partnership of 125 before both fell within 12 runs of each other and both out hit-wicket. With the ‘Ws’ gone I brought myself back on to test the new batsman on this real ‘Bunsen Burner’ – I was surprised when Cyril Depeiaza charged and was stumped however I was shocked when Denis Atkinson did the same thing and presented Gil Langley with another victim; 204-7 quickly became 204-9 when I claimed Norman Marshall to a catch and then bowled the youngster Garry Sobers. After Sonny Ramadhin became Langley’s third stumping, I finished with my best figures of 7-44 and we cruised to an eight-wicket win. Take that ‘Bagga’ and ‘Nugget’.

Albert Trott – 27-10-43-8

Australia v England, Adelaide 11-15 January 1895

On the back of a laundry ticket was scribbled a suicide note. The once-great cricketer Albert Trott, now a penniless alcoholic, bequeathed his landlady his wardrobe and his last £4. Hopefully his tortured mind found solace and his last thoughts were of his Test debut.

Australia arrived for the third Test, down two-zip in the five-match series, sporting four changes. Two of those were Sydney Callaway and Albert. Australian captain George Giffen won the toss and batted on a broiling day. The side struggled, especially after Albert's brother Harry was run out by Giffen for a comfortably made 48. By the time Albert, batting 10, joined Giffen, Australia was struggling at 157-8, on a benign pitch. Giffen, who had been extremely watchful, showed little confidence in Albert and was dismissed for 58 hitting out. Albert, after being joined by Callaway, began with a 'fiver' (six these days). The two batted sensibly and when Callaway was dismissed for 41, Albert had finished with 38*.

England negotiated the last 10 minutes, before experiencing an uncomfortable night in the pervasive heat. Perhaps lack of sleep contributed to their batting on day two, dismissed by Giffen and Callaway for 124, with Albert only required to send down three overs.

At stumps Australia were 145-4 with Frank Iredale 31*. Albert came in to bat on day three, after fielding substitute for England, with the score 283-8. He was still there when Iredale (140) was dismissed, his driving even more powerful than his senior partner's. Albert remained 72* and prepared to bowl his off spin/medium pace in, now, cooler conditions.

When brother Harry dropped Archie MacLaren at point, Albert was still searching for his and Australia's first wicket of the innings. Fortunately he didn't have to wait too long as Iredale caught the same batsman 'splendidly' in the outfield and next ball Albert split a stump in bowling Albert Ward. After Giffen claimed a wicket, England closed at 56-3.

Unsurprisingly on day four with no chance of an England win and, with this match played to a finish, no chance of a draw, England capitulated.

Albert, opening the bowling, soon had Jack Brown playing on for two, before Giffen dropped a straightforward chance in the slips from captain Andrew Stoddart who took advantage of the life and would remain undefeated 34. Stoddart combined with Bill Brockwell to drag the score to 102, before Albert claimed a ‘brilliant’ c&b off the latter. He jumped high, just managed to knock up a powerful drive and caught the rebound. Bobby Peel went the same way, although off a tamer drive and first ball. Harry then made amends, catching Francis Ford in the gully off his brother, before the irresistible Albert bowled Johnny Briggs for a duck and also claimed Bill Lockwood to make it 130-9. Albert caught the last batsman in the slips and promptly pocketed the ball. His figures of 8-43 on debut have never been surpassed.

Hedley Verity – 22.3-8-43-8

England v Australia, Lord's 22-25 June 1934

On Monday 25 June 1934 Hedley Verity surveyed the soggy London streets and spied the sun breaking through – "I shouldn't wonder if we don't have a bit of fun today". He hadn't had much so far that summer. The first Test had been won easily by Australia even though Bradman failed twice, and the second was heading for a tame draw on a flawless Lord's pitch. England 440, Australia 192-2 (Bradman out) at the half-way stage of the four-day game. But rain arrived on the rest day and continued overnight.

With the wicket wet Verity set to work and no bowler was better equipped to extract all the venom it possessed and there was no time to lose. If Australia could reach 290 and avoid the follow-on then England would find themselves facing Grimmett and O'Reilly on a still-nasty wicket with the possibility of easy batting on the final day and Bradman and McCabe rushing their side to victory. But Verity was, like all great spinners, a master on pitches that helped him and a master on those that didn't. He quickly realised that this one wasn't a horror but if the Australians thought it was, then it was. He helped them into their misapprehension with masterful line, length, variation and spin. By six runs the follow-on was forced and Verity had tucked away seven victims in all, pausing only when King George V interrupted play.

At 2.45 the teams were back out, but there was no guarantee of a repeat. The wicket was scarcely calming down and although it wasn't a true sticky, it was useless for all bar Verity in England's pace-dominated attack. Who better though than Bradman, McCabe and Woodfull to see off the worst of the conditions and then fill their buckskin boots?

Verity was not one to offer any looseners and the only surprise was that Bob Wyatt waited until the ninth over to bring him on at the Pavilion end. Within minutes he had removed McCabe but Woodfull was showing just what could be done with application and concentration. For once Bradman forgot himself, tempted by a lack of deep fielders he hit a steepling catch that Les Ames was to see in his dreams till his dying day – the thunderous look

passing from his captain to Boy Bradman could be seen from the pavilion. After two hours resistance even Woodfull succumbed to Verity's relentless pressure and the deed was all but done and four wickets followed for just one run. Fourteen wickets in a day – the conditions were in his favour but it's doubtful that any other bowler bar the watching Wilfred Rhodes could have taken such full advantage.

Douglas Jardine wrote, 'whether judged by standards of accuracy or of general ability, it may possibly have been equalled, but has certainly never been surpassed. For clear thinking and execution it may stand alone for all time.'

Tony Greig – 36.1-10-86-8

West Indies v England, Port of Spain 30 March-5 April 1974

Mike Denness won the toss and chose to bat in this vital Test at Port of Spain with West Indies one up after four matches. The innings started well, but the last six wickets fell for just 63, and 267 all out was a disappointment, particularly in light of the way that the West Indies batsmen then went about their business. There was a slight wobble after the openers, Lawrence Rowe and Roy Fredericks, put on 110, as Pat Pocock removed Fredericks and Alvin Kallicharran without scoring, but Clive Lloyd stayed with Rowe until the close of the second day, which came at 174-2.

Following the rest day West Indies, after losing time to rain, got to 208-2 by lunch. Tony Greig barely bowled in the morning session, but after lunch he was to embark on one of the finest spells the game has seen. Initially there was no clue as to what was to come as Lloyd pulled him high into the Erroll de Santos stand to reach his half-century, but perhaps that was just the inspiration that Greig needed.

Lloyd was the next to go, caught behind the wicket trying to force Greig through the off side. Three deliveries later, with the score still 224, Greig shattered the dreams of the many who wanted to see Garry Sobers go out in style by inducing a catch in the gully. Soon it was 232-6 as Rohan Kanhai and Deryck Murray both looked to drive Grieg without success. Neither got to the pitch of the ball. Kanhai gave a return catch and Murray a straightforward chance to extra-cover. In 19 deliveries the man who had not, before this tour, bowled off spin in anger since his schooldays, had taken 4-6.

Stability returned with Bernard Julien and he and Rowe added 38 before Julien went at 270. His was a classic off-spinner's dismissal, Greig turning the ball sharply and Jack Birkenshaw at backward short-leg taking the catch. Tea came with West Indies at 276-7, just nine in front. A shower delayed the restart but when it came Rowe batted serenely on and Boyce, although he promised rather more than he delivered, looked to attack and this pair took the score to 300, at which point both were dismissed. First Boyce hit Greig high towards long-off where Pocock held on safely. The batsmen had crossed

and the very next ball claimed Rowe. It was by no means Greig's best delivery, a straight full toss, but despite the 123 he had to his name Rowe could do no more than steer it to Boycott at mid-wicket.

The last-wicket partnership between Inshan Ali and Lance Gibbs was never going to last too long, although a betting man would have got decent odds on the way it ended, Greig's stentorian appeal for lbw against Inshan finding favour with Douglas Sang Hue, a man who by reputation entertained doubt about almost all such appeals. Greig had taken 8-33 on the day and changed the course of the match and ultimately the series.

Hugh Tayfield – 37.1-13-81-7

Australia v South Africa, Melbourne 24-30 December 1952

So one-sided did the Australian board expect the 1952-53 series to be that they only acquiesced to the tour after South Africa agreed to a £10,000 indemnity. The Springboks were undaunted. Largely built on scintillating fielding, they were out to prove, in the second Test at the MCG, the old adage 'a champion team will beat a team of champions'. Well almost. They had one champion; Hugh 'Toey' Tayfield – a right-arm off spinner, a type that is traditionally cannon fodder in Australia. He started with 6-84, including the greatest c&b in history. This restricted the Aussie lead to just 16 after the Springboks' 227 in their first knock. With Russell Endean's highest Test score of 162* in the second innings, Australia needed 373, on a pitch that 'never developed vagaries'.

Captain Jack Cheetham acknowledged that for the visitors to win, Tayfield would again have to take the lion's share of wickets. Tayfield's response was to roar! He commenced just before tea on day four. As always, he kissed the badge of his cap before handing it to the umpire, stubbed the pitch with his toe and then dropped on to an immaculate length. Lindsay Hassett, one player he never liked to bowl at, as usual looked in command. So perhaps it was a sign that this was Tayfield's match when he trapped him lbw at 76-3.

The next threat was Neil Harvey who played with dare and aggression making it impossible to set a field. His partner, Keith Miller, was also in touch, crashing the ball straight. The visitors knew the importance of this stand with these two capable of engineering a great win. Tayfield bowled tight until just before stumps, he then threw the ball up to tempt the batsman. Harvey's eyes lit up, with superb footwork he sashayed down the pitch, perhaps due to the proximity of stumps he didn't fully commit and was caught in the deep for 60.

Tayfield bowled from the start of the last day and due to his threat, Miller was desperate to protect nightwatchman Gil Langley. He was right to be concerned as when presented with the opportunity, Tayfield bowled Langley

for four. Miller became frustrated as powerful drives were repeatedly stopped by great fielding. In an attempt to break the shackles he tried to lift Tayfield over cover, missed and lost his leg stump. At 148-6, Australia was slowly being choked by ‘assassin’ Tayfield, who further tightened his grip, claiming the youngsters Graeme Hole and Richie Benaud. In 63 minutes Tayfield had claimed four wickets in 11 overs, while conceding just one run. No wonder the Aussies gasped for breath.

Still Australia fought, led by Doug Ring who was in good touch. Even when he was joined by last man Bill Johnston, 96 to win, the MCG crowd believed, recalling that this pair had scored 38 for the last wicket to defeat the Windies. The belief became stronger when Ring posted 50. It was not to be, with 83 required, he was bowled. Guess the bowler? – Roar.

Tim Southee – 24-6-64-7

India v New Zealand, Bangalore 31 August-3 September 2012

Beating Australia at Hobart in one of the great Tests of the modern era had sent New Zealand into 2012 in a positive frame of mind. Here was a team with a fine mixture of youth and experience. Beating Zimbabwe and competing, but ultimately losing, at home to South Africa were understandable but losing 2-0 in the Caribbean gave the horrid impression of a false dawn. India were in a not dissimilar position having seen their new golden batting line up mauled by Australia in their previous series seven months earlier.

Arriving in India to be filleted by Ravi Ashwin indicated a side that had climbed a stumpy ladder and were now slithering down the serpent's tail. Five Kiwi quick bowlers were vying for selection – Tim Southee with 45 wickets at 44 each was at the back of the queue but got the call for the second match.

Winning the toss, Ross Taylor put his team's blues behind them with a sparkling century in a solid total of 365, Praghan Ojha taking five wickets and becoming the first Indian spinner to open the bowling in a Test – yes, really. Now, could the bowlers follow the batsmen's lead? The simple answer was 'yes'. On a wicket doing little, the old hats Tendulkar, Sehwag and Gambhir were gone at 80-4 only for the young guard of Kohli and Raina to stop the rot and, aided and abetted by Dhoni move the score onto 283-5 at the close on day two. The rewards came through hard work but once the shine had gone there was no reverse swing or anything else to excite the quicks – Southee's bowling had been by some margin the best and his three wickets were scant reward. But with the new ball only two overs away Southee's overnight verdict was spot on: "The wicket is pretty good…so I guess now it's a pretty important time for us with the second new ball to see if we can pick up the rest of the wickets."

His bowling next morning was spot on too. In his second over with the new ball he deceived Kohli with an inswinger before repeating the dose on Dhoni in the following over. With new men at the crease it was once again

wide open. Another over and it was advantage New Zealand as Southee struck twice more. Another over and it should have been India all out for 329, Tim Southee 8-45, but Martin Guptill spilt the chance. The subsequent addition of an extra 24 runs was frustrating and demoralising in equal measure.

Aakash Chopra's incisive analysis of Southee's methods led him to conclude that here was New Zealand's new spearhead. This was the day Southee became a respected Test opening bowler, effective on any surface. The second half of the match belonged to India and their five-wicket victory wrapped up the series. Southee's post-Bangalore record up to the end of 2015 was 110 wickets at 27.43. An indication of what he had learnt.

Ian Botham – 27.4-6-103-8

England v West Indies, Lord's 28 June-3 July 1984

His detractors always say that Ian Botham couldn't hack it with the best of his time. They point to a batting average of 21.4 against West Indies, and the 35.18 that he paid for each of his wickets. Between 1984 and 1986 he was on the losing side in 10 consecutive Tests, and never did play in a side that beat the men from the Caribbean in a Test series. It is true, in common with everyone else, that Botham failed to dominate against West Indies. There was, however, one virtuoso performance, at Lord's in 1984, forgotten now by those who, if they mention the match at all, do so because of the remarkable unbeaten 214 from Gordon Greenidge that took his side to a nine-wicket victory.

Clive Lloyd won the toss and put England in. The 286 runs that followed did not represent a bad effort in the circumstances, and gave them something to bowl at. Botham scored 30. The Botham that then opened the bowling with Bob Willis was a reminder of his glory days. Back was the turn of speed that hadn't been seen since the golden summer of 1981, as was the outswinger he seemed to have lost. His opening five overs brought 3-12, as he removed Desmond Haynes, Greenidge and Larry Gomes.

By the close 35-3 had become 119-3. Lloyd and Viv Richards had rebuilt the innings, Richards going to 60 at his most imperious. The next day was the Saturday, and a packed ground and huge television audience saw Botham bowl unchanged through the rest of the West Indies' innings.

Those who saw what unfolded and didn't know any different would never have guessed that Richards and Botham were the greatest of friends. Botham looked as fast as ever he had been and swung the ball both ways. Richards was not so convincing now, and Botham's demeanour was a picture of frustration and anguish on each of the numerous occasions he got past his bat. It was disappointing that the great confrontation ended when Richards was given out lbw to a delivery that was destined to miss leg stump. Botham's appeal was decidedly half-hearted, and umpire Barrie Meyer later admitted his mistake although in Botham's previous over an excellent shout

had been turned down.

Botham then bounced Dujon out and shortly afterwards trapped Lloyd in front. There was then another recovery of sorts as Malcolm Marshall and Eldine Baptiste added 40. Never a man to shirk a challenge Botham was happy to bounce both fast bowlers before Willis took their wickets, with Botham removing Roger Harper and Joel Garner.

When England batted again they initially seemed likely to squander their precious 41-run lead, but Botham's 81 enabled David Gower to set West Indies 342 to win. England's first win over West Indies in a decade seemed on, but no one had told Greenidge.

Allan Donald – 28-4-84-7

South Africa v India, Port Elizabeth 26-29 December 1992

More than any other cricketer, Allan Donald led and symbolised the South African renaissance of the 1990s. In 26 Test victories in which he played in that decade, he took at least five wickets on no fewer than 17 occasions. The first was in 1992, when India made the inaugural post-apartheid tour. The conditions were hardly foreign to them: the wicket was flat, almost subcontinental, and with the Indian line-up vibrating with spin, the toss seemed crucial. But Kepler Wessels dumbfounded pundits and opponents alike by opting to field: "I was determined to land an early punch, and the obvious way of doing that was by letting our fast bowlers get at them."

Donald measured out his run. With speeds exceeding 90mph, he could flourish on any surface. In full bloom he was 'a thing of beauty, the Lamborghini of pace, whose action was a natural flowering.' But rhythm was of the essence; 'losing it could result in a palpable miscue, like a golf shank', and he had been struggling for it lately. Mediocre at the World Cup and jaded in the Caribbean, he had gone into this series eager to 'banish further this idea that I only do well consistently for Warwickshire and come home shattered.' He fancied himself, too, against the Indian batsmen, whom he publicly denounced as yellow. But he laid claim to just one wicket in the first Test, and improved only marginally in the sequel, before stumbling in the one-dayers and starting poorly here. The new ball went to waste; his body language was discouraging. "Okay, Allan," sighed his captain. "Take a rest."

The Indians flew high, and Wessels weighed his options at lunch. There were none. He reverted, despondently, to Plan A. This time thunder clapped and lightning struck, and the tourists were blasted out for 212. Donald had his rhythm back. Wessels was vindicated. But his batsmen failed to capitalise, establishing a lead of just 63. With 90 minutes left of the evening, he urged his star man to get out there and win the Test in the third innings.

On a lifeless surface, against batsman bred on lifeless surfaces, Donald did just that. Woorkeri Raman played a steepling delivery into his stumps, Sanjay Manjrekar was trapped on the crease, and Mohammad Azharuddin,

sparring loosely, nicked off to first slip. Donald's length was fuller than one might expect of a fast bowler; a large quotient of his Test victims were bowled, lbw or caught behind. But it was his line which had most improved since the calamity of the opening morning. He kept them playing and kept them guessing, and stimulated lapses at the other end, too. At 31-6, the match was effectively decided, not that Kapil Dev agreed. South Africa had their first Test win in 22 years, at the same ground as the last. Donald's maiden 10-wicket haul left little doubt that he was back to his best, and that at his best, in rhythm and on song, he was irresistible.

Ryan Sidebottom – 21.4-6-47-7

New Zealand v England, Napier 22-26 March 2008

England has a great tradition of producing pacemen who though not express are still very effective. Bowlers who are monotonously accurate, swing the ball, and in the right conditions, can be match winners. Legends such as Maurice Tate, Alec Bedser and Jimmy Anderson come to mind.

Ryan Sidebottom wasn't quite in this class but during a three-Test series against the Kiwis in 2008 he certainly belonged in their company: 24 wickets with a hat-trick in the series. Sidebottom's best performance was saved for the last Test, which the teams entered at one Test all. It wasn't Sidebottom's match to begin with. Nineteen-year-old Tim Southee, on debut, claimed 5-55 on a benign pitch, as England were rolled for 253 after electing to bat.

New Zealand commenced their innings early on day two on a still flat pitch looking to set the match up. Sidebottom had other ideas and struck early when, with the third ball of the first over, he trapped Matthew Bell, shouldering arms, lbw for a duck. Bell was lucky to last that long after Sidebottom had a confident lbw appeal turned down from the previous ball.

Despite Sidebottom, and to a lesser extent Stuart Broad, maintaining the pressure New Zealand appeared to be taking control and at one stage were 103-1. So it was a shock when they lost nine wickets for just 65 runs. A combination of intelligent, controlled swing bowling under the overcast conditions by Sidebottom and some poor shot selection were the reasons. Sidebottom started the rot by first removing his Nottinghamshire colleague and New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming, caught at second slip after he had reached a quick 59. Next he had another caught in the slips after he went around the wicket and drew the edge from opener Jamie How for a grafting 44. When Broad chimed in with a wicket and Sidebottom claimed Mathew Sinclair with a rare short ball, the Black Caps were in disarray at 119-5.

Now in the zone, Sidebottom celebrated his 50th Test wicket when he bowled a slashing Brendon McCullum for nine. Why McCullum tried to cut a left armer who was bowling around and angling the ball in was not clear but it reduced his team to 137-6 and gave Sidebottom his third Michelle of the

series. Still the wickets tumbled, with Grant Elliott no match for Sidebottom, feathering a lovely ‘slanting’ ball through to the ’keeper. Broad claimed two more before Sidebottom had the pleasure of taking the final wicket.

Both teams then showed that the pitch was indeed flat when each scored over 400 in their second dig before, eventually, England won the match and the series. Sidebottom deservedly won both the man of the match and player of the series awards. “Every dog has his day” was how the modest Sidebottom summed up his performance in that third Test.

Dean Headley – 17-5-60-6

Australia v England, Melbourne December 26-29 1998

Dad Ron batted for the West Indies and granddad George was an immortal of the game, the first great West Indian batsman, the ‘black Bradman’. To date, Dean is the only son and grandson of Test cricketers to play Test cricket. No pressure then. Luckily, Dean was, in his own words, “the best bowler in our family.” Tall and quick, he was good enough to take a world record equalling three hat-tricks in a season for Kent in 1995 – it would have been four but for a dropped catch.

England began the Boxing Day Ashes Test two down with two to play. Late on the fourth day, one of the longest in Test match history, as the teams made up time lost to a first day washout, Australia, chasing 175 to win, were in the catbird seat on 130-3 with the Waugh twins settled in on a hard-wearing pitch. The Ashes were there for the taking.

Then Headley struck. Earlier, he’d got one to nip back to trap Michael Slater but now he really hit his straps. He began by inducing Mark Waugh to edge to second slip. In his next over, bowling round the wicket, he got the left-handed Darren Lehmann caught behind. Soon after, he’d taken 4-4 in 13 balls, having dismissed Ian Healy and Damien Fleming for ducks. Suddenly it was 140-7 and he’d turned the tables. He continued to bowl accurate line and length, but the obdurate Steve Waugh was still there and, with his latest partner Matthew Nicholson, dug in and grafted. They took the score to 161-7 when at 7.22pm Waugh, sensing the win against tiring bowlers, claimed the extra half hour. The Aussie contingent had just begun breathing normally again when Headley struck again forcing Nicholson to edge behind for nine to make it 161-8.

Headley had bowled brilliantly, moving it both ways, and likely could have finished it off himself, but Steve Waugh, perhaps unwisely, took a single off the first ball of the next over and exposed Stuart MacGill to a pumped-up Darren Gough. The Yorkshireman delivered a trademark fast swinging yorker that slammed into the bottom of MacGill’s middle stump. Two balls later he struck Glenn McGrath’s toe in front to seal the win.

England had won by 12 runs and kept the series alive. “One of the most

exciting and dramatic things I've seen in Test cricket," enthused commentator Richie Benaud. Headley had out-Aussied the Aussies. Yet it was to be the only home match Australia would lose during a period of almost six years. Despite eight more wickets from Headley in the final Test, England lost the match and the Ashes.

It seemed England had finally found a quality partner for Gough; they took 53 wickets between them in the five Tests they played together, all against Australia. Such a shame he was only able to play two more Tests before persistent back problems ended his career.

Wagar Younis – 18-5-52-5

England v Pakistan, The Oval 6-9 August 1992

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Larwood and Voce. Lindwall and Miller. Lillee and Thomson. So many great fast bowlers have hunted in pairs (or, in the case of West Indians of a certain generation, in entire packs). It took Pakistan some time to produce a double act worthy of comparison, but when they did by God was it worth the wait. For a few years in the early 1990s Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis were as fast and destructive a pairing as there has ever been, and while Wasim was, through age and experience, the senior partner – and in the long term the more durable star – it was Waqar who, in his prime, was indisputably the quicker and deadlier.

The 1992 series was all square as England and Pakistan arrived in south London for what England's press were billing as a classic showdown. What it became was an exhibition of fast bowling at its finest to which the hosts had simply no answer. England were in trouble from the off – all out for 207 in a first innings which never got going, Wasim Akram the tormentor-in-chief. Useful contributions from several Pakistani batsmen in reply ensured a lead of 173, so as England's openers returned to the crease they knew a substantial second innings was required to even save the Test, let alone have any hope of victory.

Cometh the hour, cometh the man. Waqar had been outstanding all summer, but when it mattered most, with the series on the line, he was at his very best. Steaming in from the Vauxhall end, he broke the back of the English batting and had all-but ended the contest just after tea on day three. Alec Stewart was first to go, done for pace and trapped lbw trying to flick a straight ball through the leg side. Atherton nearly followed immediately, beaten by a glorious inswinger which rocketed into his pads but pitched just outside the line.

It was merely a temporary reprieve for the Lancastrian. A searing bouncer glanced off his helmet and flew to the boundary, before a nagging off cutter confirmed the inevitable, Atherton nicking behind for just four. When Graham Gooch edged one that held its line to slip just before tea,

Waqar had dismissed England's top three. Worse was to come after the break when David Gower shouldered arms to a delivery which straightened just enough to clip his off stump. England had lost their four best batsmen with less than 60 on the board, and Waqar's exhilarating spell had accounted for all of them. Wasim and Mushtaq Ahmed helped themselves to the lower order, before Waqar returned for the coup de grace, a scintillating in-swinging yorker which would have left far better batsmen than Devon Malcolm without a leg stump. Pakistan needed just two deliveries – one of them a wide – to knock off the five runs required to win both the match and series, and England had been well and truly 'Waqared'. They weren't the first, and they wouldn't be the last.

Saeed Ajmal – 24.3-7-55-7

Pakistan v England, Dubai 17-19 January 2012

Space had been the final frontier for Captain Kirk and the starship Enterprise and in 2012 the UAE and Pakistan were seen as similar subjects of exploration and conquest for Captain Strauss and the England cricket team.

The number-one Test side arrived on the back of six successive series wins, albeit in a moderate era, but, as Strauss recognised, this would be a new challenge and one he dearly wanted to overcome in order to seal the hegemony of himself and his side. The stumbling block would be the spin-heavy Pakistan attack led by Saeed Ajmal. The mischievous off spinner had already, Warne-like, warned England of a new 'mystery ball' that was being kept under lock and key and 24-hour guard at the training camp in Lahore. England's batting coach Graham Gooch flat batted the 'teesra' threat: "Saying one thing and doing it are two different things in my book." The three-match series was set up.

Batting first was a given and within an hour two men were down and Ajmal had barely joined the game let alone unfurled a new variation. But as Strauss and Kevin Pietersen dug in to rectify the damage, Ajmal began to take hold. The devils were in the minds and not the pitch and these grew and grew as the grip tightened with line and length but negligible turn. The captain tried to pull a ball too full, his replacement, Ian Bell, feathered a doosra and wannabe-captain KP prodded forward and reviewed a plumb lbw – 43-5 and not a teesra in sight.

While Eoin Morgan and Matt Prior tried to plug the deluge the pressure was retained. Nary a loose ball was seen as Abdur Rehman matched Ajmal until Morgan imagined a sweepable ball and departed lbw. Stuart Broad tried the same with the same result before Prior and Graeme Swann showed what could be done in a partnership of 57. Then Ajmal mopped up the tail and England had been sent packing for 192.

George Dobell likened England's demise to being mugged by a man with a plastic gun; it looked grimly real in the eyes of the English batsmen. 'Pakistan's bowlers utilised the timeless virtues of excellent control and

subtle variation. Maintaining a wonderfully nagging line, they preyed on England's insecurities as vultures might on dying lambs.'

As Pakistan closed the first day on 42-0 Bob Willis led the graceless English media to reel out the story of the bent elbow first reported in 2009 and later in the game there would be endless fussing about the shortcomings of hot-spot. The real story was the bowling of Ajmal. He had done the groundwork before the game but the success of the non-existent teesra rested on his reputation, confidence and ability to perform a conjuring trick. Pakistan went on to win comfortably and more was soon to follow at the hands of another spinner.

Andy Caddick – 16-5-46-7

South Africa v England, Durban 26-30 December 1999

In cricket the label ‘elite’ is reserved for only a few, those capable of performances that decide matches. The better Test cricketers, even those that are/were household names are usually only consistent contributors. Andy Caddick’s career figures scream consistent contributor; 234 wickets at just under 30. Those figures are misleading as Caddick could, on occasions, go missing in action. On his day however he was capable of producing an elite spell. In the third Test against South Africa in 1999 Caddick, in two inspired bursts, was at his mercurial best.

The hosts led the five-Test series one-nil and had dominated, through their two express bowlers. So captain Nasser Hussain was not dissatisfied after rain prevented the curator from producing the usual green track at Durban and elected to bat on the benign deck.

Sixty years previously, at this same venue, these two teams played a nine-day Test. Hussain batted as if back in 1939, as he lurched to a 635 minute undefeated 146. Thankfully for the crowd, Alec Stewart scored 95 in just 149 balls. A combination of Hussain’s scoring rate and inclement weather meant that Caddick didn’t bowl until the start of day three.

At 6’5” Caddick extracted bounce from the flat pitch that no other bowler could. This gave him his first wicket; the ball climbed, after pitching back of a length, and crashed into Herschelle Gibbs’ gloves and on to ’keeper Stewart. At these moments he baffled everyone. Why couldn’t Caddick bowl like that more often? He had a beautiful action, unashamedly modelled on Richard Hadlee, ability to move the ball and accuracy. It appeared that often Caddick lacked confidence which meant he could be emotionally fragile. Perhaps if he had modelled his attitude on ‘Paddles’ too he may have touched the heights more often.

On this day though, his confidence was up and he soared. Caddick’s pressure contributed to the next, his 100th Test wicket, as Jacques Kallis played at a rare loose one down leg and guided it to Stewart. He soon made it 101 as he moved one across Gary Kirsten for Stewart’s third catch; 24-3.

That ended Caddick's first purple patch of three wickets in 11 balls.

His second began after South Africa started a recovery through Hansie Cronje and Shaun Pollock. In five balls, Caddick took three more. First Cronje hung out his bat for another catch behind before Caddick yorked Mark Boucher. When he had Allan Donald caught at first slip, Caddick had seemingly sealed the follow-on with South Africa 84-8 still 83 short. Pollock then attacked and almost made the target before Caddick bowled him.

The follow-on was enforced but just as in 1939, assisted by Kirsten's attritional 275, the match was drawn. Caddick's fine bowling saw him share the match honours with Kirsten, before he returned to a mere contributor in a series which South Africa won comfortably.

Ian Botham – 26-7-48-7

India v England, Bombay 15-19 February 1980

You've just been drubbed 0-3 by the Australian team and derided by the Aussie public and we now want you to stop off in Bombay on the way home to play a one-off Test to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Cricket Board of Control. Understandable if a knackered and demoralised England had approached such an obligation with less than boundless enthusiasm. Eeyorism not an option, however, when you've got the irrepressible ebullience of a 24-year-old Ian 'Tigger' Botham in your midst. As he later explained in one of his many autobiographies, *Head On*: 'We were determined to win the game, but we were equally determined to let our hair down off the field'. 'Mr Iron Bottom' as he was dubbed by an adoring Indian public, certainly ensured his team-mates joined him in the latter; he himself looked after the former pretty well single-handedly:

Day 1: On an uncharacteristically grassy pitch under leaden skies, India win the toss and get off to a flier, reaching 102-1. Botham then has Sunil Gavaskar caught Taylor for 49 before proceeding to seam and swing his way to figures of 22.5-7-58-6. India all out 242. Taylor takes a then record seven catches behind the stumps, five of them off Beefy.

Day 2: India come back as England struggle in the face of probing swing and collapse to 58-5. Enter IT Botham. He bats for 206 minutes for 114 off 144 balls and hits 17 fours.

Day 2 (evening/night): Serious hair-down action ordered. 'I set Crash (Chris Lander of *The Daily Mirror*) and Deadly [Underwood] a challenge', Botham explains. 'Standing on the table, they had to drink some brandy, eat a tandoori chicken and read a passage from the Gideon Bible at the same time. They failed miserably.'

Day 3: Lander too ill to make it to the ground. Decidedly liverish Deadly, one of two specialist spinners picked for subcontinent conditions, relieved to be called on only for a single over; the other, Emburey, doesn't get to bowl at all. No need. Mr Iron Constitution steams in, using the bounce and movement still in the pitch, to take six of the first seven wickets to fall and India, ending

on 148-8, just manage to force the match into a fourth day. Gavaskar, Viswanth and the others are simply washed away.

Day 4: Botham and Lever polish off the innings before Gooch and Boycott bat England to a 10-wicket victory. ‘He bowled brilliantly’ recalled Dilip Vengsarkar, one of the few Indian batsmen Botham did not dismiss.

Supreme bowling. A peerless performance, made all the more remarkable by the fact that it was achieved, as the allrounder himself attested: ‘Despite my own prodigious hangover’. A man at the height of his powers, a moment in time when, as Simon Barnes puts it: ‘Botham’s sleep-when-you’re-dead philosophy achieved its perfect expression’.

John Snow – 17.5-5-40-7

Australia v England, Sydney 9-14 January 1971

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When John Augustine Snow, dubbed earlier the ‘Hostile Son of a Vicar’ by my local paper, the Brighton *Argus*, landed in Australia with Ray Illingworth’s MCC side in the English winter of 1970-71, he was already my hero. In the time of my adolescence, I watched, a riveted witness, the sinewy, side-burned cricket rebel emerge from the mist at the Sea end at Hove and when the mood so took him, pepper the rib-cages of a succession of county batsmen; or else, more often, scrutinised with the intensity of youthful idolatry, the brooding presence in the deep sticking out a desultory foot as an inside edge trickled past him to the boundary, his mind clearly on loftier matters. Poetry perhaps, or plotting the downfall of the be-suited ‘authorities’ who had dropped him for ‘not trying’.

By the start of the fourth Test at Sydney, with the third abandoned to rain without a ball bowled and the first two drawn, Snow, now palpably trying under the skilful handling of his anti-establishment skipper, had already made his mark on the series with several warnings from home umpires for ‘intimidatory’ bowling and 13 wickets, including 6 for 114 off 32 eight-ball overs in the opening match at Brisbane. By the end of it, following a second innings seven-hour 142 from Geoff Boycott, he had stamped his imprint on the history of fast bowling, skittling the home side for 116 and a loss by 299 runs.

It was a supreme display in which both Chappells, Ian Redpath, Keith Stackpole and Rod Marsh were together dismissed for under 40 and Graham McKenzie retired hurt after a bouncer to the face. As Dennis Lillee, an enthralled neophyte at the time, would later write: ‘This guy was pure strike and just exceptional. The Aussies held him in total respect’. EW Swanton considered he had not seen an Englishman bowl ‘faster or better’ than Snow at Sydney since Frank Tyson. ‘Super Snow Sets Ashes Alight’ ran the Argus headline, under which the parish priest of Bognor Regis was quoted proudly attributing his son’s success to the “Snow cussedness”.

This seminal seven-Test series was fractious throughout, ending in

acrimony in the final game when Snow's felling of the tail-ender Terry Jenner triggered crowd outrage and Illingworth to lead his players from the field. And throughout, while Snow's bowling (31 wickets at 22.8) was, as Bob Simpson said at the time "head and shoulders above all others" it can be seen too, to have spawned the exhilarating but sometimes boorish brutality of the fast men who followed him. It was also the first overseas series in which highlights were shown in the UK following the day's play down under and through those sketchy black-and-white images from the other side of the world, I watched exultant as my truculent anti-hero, along with the equally contrary Boycott, were bathed in sun-bleached triumph.

Billy Bates – 26.2-14-28-7

Australia v England, Melbourne 19-22 January 1883

Applying to join Yorkshire in 1877, the young trialist William Bates had written the lone word ‘bat’ under the heading ‘Your Special Proficiency’. He was always, however, a genuine allrounder; if anything, his aptitude for bowling was greater. In this match, for an English outfit flush with willowed riches, he came to the crease as low as nine, contributing a rakish 55 to a first-innings 294, and with the ball he did things that no Englishman had done before.

The conditions were assistive, damp and dark, but the new-ball partnership struggled to make inroads, and Bates was summoned to effect the breakthrough. Bowling slow-medium off spin with a round-arm action, he was ‘a genius at finding a spot to suit his delivery’, and soon lighted upon some rough stuff outside the off-stump. He warmed quickly to his task, ‘delivering with deadly, rhythmical accuracy, and reducing the Australian pair to helpless impotence’. First he perforated the dreadnaught defence of Alick Bannerman, and then bowled Percy McDonnell neck-and-crop. When George Giffen played his first ball straight back into the hand that delivered it, George Bonnor arrived at the crease.

The new batsman was famous for his long-handle tactics, but occasionally and unaccountably adopted what he was pleased to call his ‘sweetly-pretty game’. Guessing that he might adopt it now, Bates delivered a quicker one, short of a length and on the leg stump. Bonnor, bemused, pushed forward timidly. The ball popped up to silly mid-on, making Bates the first Englishman to take a hat-trick in a Test match.

He wasn’t done yet. Next he clean bowled Tom Garrett, who failed to get to the pitch, before his wicket-keeper spilt a chance off one which reared out of the rough. The bowler was probably sympathetic. As his own major failing was as a fielder, he was ‘remarkably tolerant of butter-fingered team-mates’. In this case it cost nothing anyway: he yorked Palmer immediately, and mopped up the tail with no further fuss. Australian were 114 all out. Bates had seven for 28.

The locals pled mitigation, arguing that the light had been ‘anything but favourable’, and that the rough was a product of the boots of Dick Barlow, who had been bowling left-arm over from the other end. A likelier cause was Australia’s own Fred Spofforth, whose spikes were larger and longer, and whose 34 overs would have left a great many more impressions than Barlow’s 22.

When Australia followed on, Bates picked up from where he had left off, taking another seven to secure an innings victory. No performance did more to ensure England’s triumph in the inaugural Ashes series. His name appears justly on the little urn itself.

Muttiah Muralitharan – 54.2-27-65-9

England v Sri Lanka, The Oval 27-31 August 1998

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Muttiah Muralitharan took five wickets in a Test innings 67 times, and 10 wickets in a Test match 22 times. So many spells cast over so many batsmen. But when asked to pick his favourite, it is always The Oval in 1998, a performance which proved he could succeed overseas two years after he had been the target of a brutal anti-chucking campaign in Australia. The shouts of "no-ball" heard at The Oval showed that he had his doubters in England too. But when England coach David Lloyd dared to question Murali's action on the fourth evening of this one-off Test, he was censured by both his employers, the ECB, and the home press. 'Welcome back to the land of paranoia', wrote The Guardian. Like many others, they had been seduced by a rubbery little genius with popping eyes who bowled an unfathomable hybrid of wrist and finger spin with the cheeky grin of a pickpocket.

On a slow pitch, England ground out a torpid first-innings 445, Murali's seven wickets costing 155 runs. But the game was blown open by a riotous double-hundred from Sanath Jayasuriya which allowed Sri Lanka to declare with a lead of 146 before tea on the fourth day, and the wicket beginning to turn. A highly sophisticated version of French cricket ensued, Murali sending down wicked, fizzing deliveries with the precision of a frog's tongue while a clutch of excitable close fielders gathered round the batsmen. He had Mark Butcher stumped and Graeme Hick lbw shortly after tea and England edged to 54-2 from 42 overs at the close – a grim but engrossing struggle.

Steve James' resistance finished 10 overs into the final day, caught at short-leg for a three-hour 25. 'It was a mental trial beyond comparison', James wrote of his ordeal. 'There was no physical threat, just an unremitting battle against a bowler of supreme accuracy and stamina, with pace and degrees of turn being varied almost imperceptibly.'

Alec Stewart was run out six overs later, and two balls from Murali either side of lunch exposed the tail: John Crawley bowled and Ben Hollioake lbw to the topspinner. Dominic Cork fell to the sweep and Ian Salisbury was pinned by a vicious turner to leave England eight down and 19 runs behind

with more than 50 overs to survive.

Now, though, an enthralling game of cat and mouse took the match deep into the final session. Mark Ramprakash, batting with furious concentration, shielded Darren Gough from the danger end as if protecting his own cub. But Murali was tireless and insistent, and after more than four hours Ramprakash succumbed to the mental trial when a loose flick lobbed to short-leg. Five minutes later Gough was bowled around his pads with a ball that spun like a leg break. Sri Lanka needed 36 runs from 14 overs; they scored them in five.

Murali had match figures of 16-220 while the other 13 bowlers took a combined 13-968.

Sydney Barnes – 23-9-44-5

Australia v England, Melbourne 30 December-3 January 1912

The England team which Plum Warner took to Australia for the antipodean summer of 1911-12 featured three opening bowlers in the veteran Sydney Barnes, 22-year-old debutant Frank Foster and vice-captain Johnny Douglas. With Warner falling sick early in the tour Douglas found himself promoted for the first Test, though he did not cover himself in glory with his first major decision as he himself opened the bowling with Foster. The world's leading bowler felt snubbed and did not give of his best as England fell to defeat.

Douglas was not about to make the same mistake in the second Test at Melbourne. He immediately handed Barnes the ball and the results were devastating. One-by-one Australia's finest batsmen fell to his guile; first Bardsley, bowled by one off his foot first ball, then Kelleway, failing to offer a stroke to an inswinger which trapped him leg before. Clem Hill fell for only four after an over of which the great batsmen said he had never seen the like, with every ball different: off spin, leg spinners, in and outswingers and the final break-back which bowled him. When Armstrong snicked one behind to Tiger Smith Australia were reeling on 11 for 4, so that by lunch Barnes had fashioned what many consider to be the best-ever spell of bowling in Test cricket history, his figures being an eye-popping 9-6-3-4 on a surface made for batting.

Foster then bowled Trumper for 13 and when Barnes had Minnett caught in the covers by Hobbs Australia were 38-6. They recovered somewhat to 184 all out, however by rights Barnes should have had a sixth when he bowled Whitty before he had scored, the umpire recalling him when he thought the ball had rebounded onto the stumps off the wicket-keeper. Barnes accounted for Trumper in the second innings with an unplayable ball; the Australian champion waxed lyrical over it all his life and England went on to win with eight wickets to spare.

Barnes' performance was made all the more remarkable when it subsequently transpired that the 38-year-old had himself been sick before the match. Despite the welcome gift of a medicinal bottle of whisky from Syd

Gregory on the eve of the Test, Barnes nonetheless had to be taken off for a while after his devastating spell that first morning when the Staffordshire man admitted he could barely see the other end of the pitch.

After having lost the first Test, Barnes' heroics propelled England on to a 4-1 series win, as he went on to take 34 wickets at a shade over 22 to equal George Giffen's record Ashes haul, while Foster also excelled with 32 wickets at 21.62. As Barnes himself admitted with classic understatement, "I think I did bowl well that day." Warner was more effusive – 'Barnes is an artist with the ball.' We have not seen his like since.

Jerome Taylor – 9-4-11-5

West Indies v England, Kingston 4-7 February 2009

There is still old-school romance in cricket. Listening to BBC *Test Match Special*, long wave, on a crackling transistor in central Paris is one. England being knocked over for a pittance by a West Indies pace bowler is another. To enjoy the combination is a rare treat.

The English attitude to Caribbean tours in the last decade has tended to the trip being a nice warm up before frying bigger fish. Funnily enough this goes down less than well on the islands. Yet the form prior to the 2009 series tended to support the view that England should be able to defeat West Indies on their own patch.

The opening Test at Kingston was an even match over the first three days as centuries for Ramnaresh Sarwan and Chris Gayle gave the hosts a first-innings lead of 74 on the fourth morning. But on a somnolent pitch (both Kevin Pietersen and Gayle had strike-rates of less than 60) a draw seemed a very likely outcome as Andrew Strauss and Alastair Cook walked to the wicket ready to bed in. Cook's helmet had barely touched the pillow when the nightmare began – Jerome Taylor's probing line and length induced a drive and slip catch. Ian Bell, frustrating (irritating, if you will) as always played the customary lovely shots before playing a daft one just before lunch. Big Benn struck. Ding dong.

This was just the precursor – the hour after lunch was carnage. Pietersen beaten all-ends up by a beauty that cartwheels his off stump, Strauss's 70 minutes of painful resistance finishes as he nibbles a pearler to the wicket-keeper, Paul Collingwood tries to run two off an edge that had bowled him and Matt Prior undone by a slower ball delivered with the precision of a cheese cutter. The much-vaunted English batting lay in tatters at 23-6 and Taylor was sitting on figures of 5-11. This was a throwback to the days of Curtly Ambrose.

Taylor, by now tiring, was rested and by the time his breath was back the match was over. England all out 51 and beaten by an innings. As it turned out this was the series decider as the remaining games were all drawn.

Little wonder that the *Sunday Jamaica Observer* boomed ‘Sweet Revenge’. There had been little to crow about in previous years and few had forgotten the indignity of the 10-wicket defeat and score of 47 in the corresponding fixture in 2004.

Sadly the game changed little – West Indies reverted to type and became T20 specialists. Bell was dropped but came back due to lack of competition and at least justified all the hype in one series. Within a year Jerome Taylor was laid low by a succession of injuries which kept him out of Test cricket for almost five years. His form after his return, as well as the determination he showed to get back to fitness, had been sorely missed by West Indies. And that day at Kingston was truly unforgettable.

Andy Roberts – 14-3-54-7

Australia v West Indies, Perth 12-16 December 1975

“Fast bowlers, marvellously controversial, aren’t they?” The words of Richie Benaud introducing a Channel 9 speed competition in the late ’70s. This was the first generation of ‘pace like fire’ and if its genesis can be pinned down to any one game then it must be the Test at Perth in December 1975 when Australia’s Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson took on West Indies’ Andy Roberts and Michael Holding.

England had been terrorised the previous year by the Australian pair and at the same time Roberts had given India, and the world, notice that he was every bit as terrifying even on sedate subcontinent pitches. Thirty-two wickets at 18.28 in his first full series was even more impressive than what Thomson had achieved against England. With Keith Boyce, Bernard Julien, Max Walker and Gary Gilmour in reserve, speed would be the order on a WACA surface made to measure.

With Australia having romped to victory in the first Test it was crucial to West Indies’ ambitions to be world number one to bounce back immediately. For three days over-excited fast bowlers got carted around the ground first by Ian Chappell and then, outrageously, by Roy Fredericks and finally by Clive Lloyd. The figures for ‘Lilian Thomson’ were 5-251 off 37 eight-ball overs.

Roberts had been ill during much of the first innings while his side’s astonishing batting gained a first-innings’ lead of 256. After tea on day three he got to work. It was a masterclass pure and simple that showed the other seven quicks what they had been doing wrong. Discipline was added to raw pace, mostly pitching the ball up but mixing in short deliveries he proceeded to humble the Australian batsmen. By the close of play and with four wickets to his name he already had the game won. Allan Turner went first ball trying to hook, Rick McCosker and Ian Chappell to balls moving away from the bat while Ian Redpath was pinned plumb in front by an incutter. It was a display of versatility that then continued the following morning as he knocked over the rest of the top order, the little matter of Greg Chappell and Rod Marsh included. An innings victory was a formality after this fusillade.

In typically understated fashion ‘Fruity’ Roberts commented that he’d bowled better in India. What he *had* done was to give Dennis Lillee, no less, a lesson. As luck would have it an early experiment at measuring ball speed was being conducted and Roberts was measured at 99.1 mph/159.5 kph. Lillee learnt well and Australia went on to win a contentious series 5-1 as West Indies wrestled with fitness, batting discipline and poor umpiring. Lloyd never forgot the humiliation and within two years had built a team that would dominate world cricket for the next two decades.

Glenn McGrath – 20-12-17-6

Australia v West Indies, Brisbane 23-25 November 2000

Here's the pitch: Christmas Day 1980 in the Australian outback. A lanky fair-haired kid is eating Christmas pudding. "I've found the sixpence", he cries. (Who cares if they don't got sixpences in Australia. This is Hollywood.) "Fair dinkum. Whaddya gonna do with it, son?" asks his mother. All excited, he replies, "I'm gonna place it back of a length, just outside off stump and bowl at it." Cut to the kid outside on a farm with the sun blazing down, sweat on his brow, bowling ball after ball with an oil drum as the wicket. Each delivery, the ball pitches near or on the sixpence and flies through to just skim the oil drum. Camera pans up to the sun-soaked sky and then down again to reveal a packed 'Gabba. Twenty years have passed and the kid is now a man. He stands, cricket ball in hand, ready to bowl…

It was the first morning of a five-match Test series. The pitch was slow with little bounce. Glenn McGrath had opened the bowling with five miserly overs for one run but no wicket. Then, an inspired first change, spinner Stuart MacGill broke the opening partnership. McGrath returned soon after.

…Facing him, the brilliant Brian Lara, linchpin and inspiration of the West Indian side. McGrath runs in and bowls. The ball pitches smack on his fabulous sixpence, draws Lara into the stroke, tickles the outside edge and flies through to the 'keeper. With one delivery our hero has inflicted a fatal blow to the psychological heart of his opponents…

West Indies managed to get to lunch on 45-2, McGrath 10-7-5-1. But after the break the carnage began in earnest. McGrath continued his meticulous line and length and eventually found the edge of tough nut Shivnarine Chanderpaul. Andy Bichel pitched in with a wicket and then there was a foolish run-out.

…Now McGrath gets real busy. Bam-bam! Bam-bam! Twice he's on a hat-trick. More sixpence pitches find the edge and one gets an lbw. From 63-5 to 67-9. Massacre! Our guy's figures from his first to last wickets are 11.2-7-8-6. Talk about on-the-money bowling…

The first four of his six wickets were of left handers but he didn't bowl

round the wicket to them. His unerring accuracy ensured they had to deal with the ball coming across them yet with the possibility of it nipping back onto their pads. It was near perfect bowling – even if McGrath himself felt he hadn't been at his best. He then added 13-9-10-4 in the second innings as Australia cruised to an innings victory, to record the third most economical 10 wickets in Test history. His 6-17 was also the 2000th five-wicket haul in Test cricket.

…That wicket of Lara kills West Indies. They never recover and are crushed five-zip. This kid from the sticks practises and practises and becomes one of the all-time greats. It's pure gold. Disney'll love it, man. We'll clean up at the Oscars. What are you laughing at?

Alec Bedser – 17.2-7-44-7

England v Australia, Nottingham 11-16 June 1953

The English do pomp and ceremony better than the rest and in 1953 they were at their celebratory best; the Queen's coronation, Hillary conquering Mt Everest and the Ashes. So absorbing was the cricket that serial killer John Christie requested score updates as he waited for the jury's verdict. The player most responsible for England recovering the urn, after 20 years, was Alec Bedser who began a superb series (39 @ 17.48) in this first Test.

By the time Bedser prepared to bowl in the second innings, under a leaden sky, Australia led by 105 runs on first digs despite Bedser's superlative 7-55 in the first innings. He refused to let his fine bowling be wasted, destroying Australia with another magnificent seven-wicket performance, although he nearly didn't bowl in the second innings.

Ray Lindwall, who used the atmospheric conditions almost as well as Bedser, hit the English spearhead on the instep with one of his famous yorkers. The pain was so intense that Bedser did not remove his boot once he returned to the pavilion, lbw Lindwall, for fear his foot would swell and he wouldn't be able to bowl at the Aussie openers.

Despite the pain, Bedser decided to bowl. He also faced a wet outfield, which made gripping the ball difficult, and with his team well behind. For some bowlers this scenario would be daunting. Not the broad shouldered 'Big Feller'. He thrived on this type of situation and the performance he delivered was his best in a great career.

After a warm-up over before lunch on day three, Bedser in 90 minutes after the break put England back on top. First he exposed the experiment of makeshift opener Graeme Hole as a failure when he bowled him with an inswinger. The Hole wicket broke the Test tally of the legendary SF Barnes who was present to witness the new mark. Next Bedser managed to find the only doubtful piece of real estate on the benign pitch and made one spit at Lindsay Hassett who was dismissed for five. Meanwhile 'Bedser's Bunny', Arthur Morris, was scoring at the fastest rate of the match, largely through facing little of Bedser.

Morris, watched from the other end as Bedser had Neil Harvey caught for two, Keith Miller taken off a slower-ball full toss for five, before he bowled Richie Benaud with a leg cutter for a duck. Bedser, with all five wickets for 28 runs had Australia in tatters before he finally agreed to take a break after 14 straight overs since lunch.

Roy Tattersall claimed the ‘Bunny’ for a ferocious 60 out of 81-6, along with the rest of the middle order, before Bedser returned to claim the tail. How bad was Bedser’s foot? He later wrote that if the following day had not been a rest day he would not have played; an insight into how incapacitated he was. Sadly more inclement weather denied England victory. Not that the draw detracts from the celebratory performance of the ‘Big Feller’.

Mike Whitney – 12.1-3-27-7

Australia v India, Perth 1-5 February 1992

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"If you asked me if there was one day where I thought that I was operating on a higher level of consciousness it was that day at the WACA. It was like a dream sequence. There were a couple of deliveries I actually saw in my head before I bowled and it went exactly as I'd seen it in my head walking back to the mark." – Mike Whitney

With Australia 3-0 up, the 1991-92 series was long finished as a contest by the time the final Test got underway and the Perth crowds – just 30,000 across five days – reflected this. Nevertheless, it wasn't without drama or landmarks. Mark Waugh and Geoff Marsh were dropped, Allan Border almost boycotted the match in protest, David Boon hit his third century in as many Tests, and Kapil Dev became only the second man to take 400 Test wickets. But towering above all – for one match, anyway – was Michael Roy Whitney.

The Test was well balanced for several days. Australia's first innings was slow going, Boon's patient ton anchoring a total of 346. India replied with 272 and Whitney, taking four wickets, foreshadowed his later heroics. The last of them, for a masterful 114, was a teenage tyro by the name of Tendulkar – whatever happened to him, I wonder? When Dean Jones and Tom Moody cut loose to push Australia's lead past 400 India's chances looked slim, but an 82-run opening stand gave them a glimmer of hope before debutant Paul Reiffel struck.

Enter Whitney. It may be barely 25 years ago, but these were the good ol' days when the WACA pitch was 22 yards of terror – fast, bouncy and with cracks that were wide and getting wider. Indian batsman Kiran More remembers one ball pitching middle-and-leg and flying straight to second slip, and smiling assassin Whitney exploited the conditions perfectly. After a fruitless first spell, his second was sheer carnage.

He kept four slips and two gullies, and five of his wickets were caught in that arc. It was little more than catching practice for 'keeper Ian Healy and Mark Taylor, Jones and Moody in the cordon as the ball jumped and jagged

off a length to the point of being almost unplayable, and a procession of hapless batsmen came and went. Proving he was no one-trick pony, Whitney's other two wickets were dangermen Azharuddin and Kapil Dev, both trapped lbw, the victims of the classic left-armer's trick of pitching and straightening.

When Whitney took his first wicket, the score was 90-2. When he took his last, India were 141 all out. Whitney's seven wickets had taken him all of 8.5 overs and Australia had won the series 4-0. The jovial paceman played only three more Tests, but his everyman charm made him a natural in front of the camera and within a couple of years he'd made the transition from Test cricketer to television personality with very popular – and to this day enduring – success.

Abdur Rehman – 10.1-4-25-6

Pakistan v England, Abu Dhabi 25-28 January 2012

Jimmy Anderson's hopeful hoick across the line was the final play of what would be deemed a hopeless run chase – England, needing 145 for victory, had failed to get halfway. Press-box scribes added the final sentences and pressed 'send' as the Andrews, Strauss and Flower, prepared for their Sky TV commitments.

Saeed Ajmal had skinned the collective rabbits in the first Test but England expected better on a ground that had been full of runs in previous games. Indeed they more than held their own through most of the match and had put themselves in a winning position on day four courtesy of six wickets from Monty Panesar. The wicket was dry and taking some spin but with by far the lowest total of the game required to win there seemed little cause for pessimism.

England crawled to 33-2 before Abdur Rehman set to work. Kevin Pietersen imagining more spin than there was, Eoin Morgan clueless on how to play a fizzer from the footmarks, Strauss caught on the crease, Jonathon Trott plumb in front and suddenly it was 68-6. With Saeed Ajmal at the other end there was no respite as Stuart Broad became Rehman's fifth victim, to a ball spinning hugely through the gate. Strict control, variation, occasional vicious spin and flight – all the characteristics of great spin bowling to a background of defending a small total where one poor over can shift the balance irretrievably. The final total of 72 was right up there with other famous English fourth-innings catastrophes but if they had hardly helped their own cause it should not detract from an exhibition of left-arm spin worthy of a Rhodes or Verity.

Scyld Berry mused that the batting was as 'substantial as a mirage' and recommended Kierkegaard as support against confusion and angst. Stephen Brenkley could sense an invisible rope tethering timid batsmen to the crease. For England captain Strauss this was a mortifying experience: "It is a struggle to think of a loss that has hurt more than this. It's bitterly disappointing to lose a game you should have won." His analysis of the

English failings were on the mark: “It is easy to get caught between two stools. You don’t know whether to be patient or to take the bull by the horns. There is always a balance to strike...and we didn’t do it right.” Didn’t do it right or weren’t allowed to do it right? By the end of this series it was clear enough that this vaunted batting line-up was completely and utterly in the pockets of the Pakistan spin attack. Ajmal in the first Test and Rehman in the second had applied pressure and menace in equal doses. Flower’s verdict was: “Sometimes you make mistakes, sometimes you’re just not good enough and sometimes the opposition are better than you.” On this occasion all three were true.

Alan Davidson – 24.6-4-87-6

Australia v West Indies, Brisbane 9-14 December 1960

Alan Davidson ranks unquestionably among Australia's very greatest cricketers, and as one of a group of two at the top of any list of history's finest left-arm quicks. Despite this, his modest manner and relative simplicity of execution means he seems never to quite get the recognition he deserves, from the general public at least, when champions of the past are eulogised. It's somehow fitting then that his greatest all-round Test performance – indeed, one of the best ever by any player – still managed to be overshadowed by the denouement of the match in which he achieved it.

Davidson's Test, the first of the series, had been a productive one even before he took the new ball for West Indies' second dig. He'd taken five wickets in the face of a Garry Sobers masterclass as the tourists racked up a big first-innings score, and then contributed 44 as Australia replied with an even bigger one, Norm O'Neill the shining star. In the second innings though, his bowling took the step up from excellent to magnificent. Coming in off his seemingly effortless 15-pace run, angling fast left-armers across the batsmen, Davo tore through the cream of West Indian batting with a stunning display of seam bowling.

The early wicket of the dangerous Cammie Smith was little short of a gift. Davidson bowled a loosener of a half volley outside off stump and Smith obliged by driving it straight to O'Neill, the only outfielder positioned anywhere in the wide expanses of the 'Gabba. Conrad Hunte and Rohan Kanhai dug in ominously to take the score near 100 before Ken 'Slasher' Mackay had Hunte snapped up by Bobby Simpson at slip. Davidson then made a particularly telling contribution, firstly dethroning the king, bowling the incomparable Sobers for 14, then shortly afterwards nabbing Kanhai caught behind. The relative comfort of 88-1 had become 127-4, and three of the Windies' champions had gone.

A dangerous partnership between skipper Frank Worrell and Joe Solomon – whose influence was to be even more significant in the game's final moments – was halted, again by Davidson, who had Worrell caught

behind for 65 before ramming home the advantage by skittling Peter Lashley two balls later. The tail wagged on the final morning, before Davidson fittingly closed proceedings with a slow yorker which removed Wes Hall's off stump. Heroic bowling, on a still-blameless pitch, had kept Australia in the ascendant.

Still he wasn't finished. Chasing 233 for victory, Australia famously made 232 and Davo – having joined the fray at 57-5 – scored 80. He was one of three men run out with victory in sight, Solomon's direct hit to dismiss Ian Meckiff confirming Test cricket's first ever tie.

As the dust settled on an extraordinary contest, it was difficult to imagine how the rest of the series could possibly live up to its opening act. Yet somehow, remarkably, it did.

Billy Barnes – 46-29-28-6

Australia v England, Sydney 28-31 January 1887

They loved him most who knew him least. With his shambling gait and his crooked posture, his pallid complexion and his epicurean moustache, Billy Barnes cut an endearing public figure. In private, however, he could be difficult. A heavy drinker, seldom punctual and often moody, he was no respecter of persons. Invited to tour Australia in 1887-88, "I'll go with any team," he declared, "that will give me my price. My price is £300."

They did not give him his price. The first Test of 1886-87, at the SCG, was his last in Australia. He missed the remainder of the series, and most of what remained of the tour, after throwing a wayward punch at Percy McDonnell. At the same venue on the previous tour (in a sulk characteristic of a later, more famous Barnes), he declined to bowl in either innings, ignoring the supplications of his captain, as Australia won by six runs.

If this is how we remember him today, we have over-compensated for the ignorance of our ancestors. Barnes was among the finest allrounders of the day, 'a sparkling player who batted as though he loved it', and an excellent close-in fieldsman. His bowling is our focus, and in this he was ahead of the curve: one of the earliest exponents of swing, with 'a slight curl from the off,' abetted by a high delivery, at a time when the legacy of round-arm was still detectable in the actions of his coevals. He had good pace, a sharp off-cutter, and 'an awkward, alarming kick', particularly on crumbling or sticky wickets.

He obviously saw something in the wicket at Sydney. After his dismissal in England's second innings, for a chancy but chanceless 32, he turned back to tap it with his bat, 'implying by his action that the ground was not in a proper condition.' The crowd of 10,000 made unambiguous noises, and local reporters filed righteous copy. Barnes's denial was a feeble one. By the final day, with the wicket improving, and Australia pursuing just 111, the attendance had dwindled to 2000, and the conclusion seemed foregone but Barnes, usually a change bowler, led the attack to devastating effect, removing the top five unaided: McDonnell played around a straight one; Jack

Blackham was clean bowled; Sammy Jones sent a skier to long-off; and Charles Turner lofted another, which Barnes claimed for himself. Harry Moses then nicked a leg cutter to Arthur Shrewsbury in the slips, and when Billy Midwinter was trapped in front, the match was effectively won.

Relentless and resistless, at one stage Barnes delivered nine consecutive maidens (four balls in those days). Of the very few runs he did concede, a high proportion came through edges and miscues and overthrows. It was the most conspicuous triumph of the tour, and probably also of his career. It should be more famous than it is and it is how we should try to remember Billy Barnes.

Lance Klusener – 21.3-4-64-8

India v South Africa, Calcutta 27 November-1 December 1996

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Poor Lance Klusener: not a phrase that springs readily to mind. Strong as an ox with a mind of his own and skills to make him the envy of most people – has he ever really needed our sympathy? He'd certainly never ask for it. Yet at the tea interval on day four before the start of the Indian second innings of the Kolkata Test in 1996 it would have been a hard heart that didn't go out to him. This was his Test debut and for added pressure he was required to lead the South African attack. After taking a monumental mauling in the first innings, Klusener opened the bowling in the last, with India requiring 467 to win or, more realistically, needing to bat four sessions to draw and retain a 1-0 lead before the final Test.

The pitch remained true and the outfield fast with no sign of deterioration. Over 1,100 runs and five centuries had already been scored, the most violent and memorable of which came in 74 balls from the bat of Mohammad Azharuddin. To say he'd been harsh on Klusener would be an understatement – the new boy went wicketless for 75 runs in just 14 overs and compounded a hapless display of short-pitch bowling with eight no-balls. To make matters worse, Allan Donald would take no further part in the match. So the man who had surprisingly replaced Fanie de Villiers as Donald's partner would now take the new ball with Brian McMillan; the main support came from two spinners on a pitch taking no turn. The mission he had accepted was to try and remove Azharuddin together with Rahul Dravid, VVS Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar and seven others. Odds-on the draw.

Fortunately for South Africa Klusener was not a man for mulling overly on past failures and equally importantly he learnt well, in this case to keep the ball pitched up. By the end of the fourth day India were four down and fighting for survival with Klusener having removed Nayan Mongia, Sourav Ganguly and Laxman. A sustained spell of hostile and accurate fast bowling at and just outside off stump proved too much for the stellar Indian top order as Klusener dragged every ounce of life from a surface that had frustrated all

others. When Dravid departed early next morning Klusener settled down to pick his way through the rubble. His first-innings nemesis Azharuddin launched a brave counter attack but ‘Zulu’ was on the march as McMillan closed his big hands around three catches in the slips and Indian morale melted into the baked turf. Last man Hirwani’s leg stump was yorked out second ball and Klusener was engulfed by team-mates as the game was won with two sessions to spare.

Great careers have followed appalling debuts but never in the game’s history has such a dramatic bounce back come after only two days. Astonishingly, John Reid saw fit to hand the match award to Gary Kirsten for two rather dreary centuries.

Fred Trueman – 15.5-5-30-6

England v Australia, Leeds 6-8 July 1961

It's always amusing to see a large man cut down to size by a much smaller woman; in John Ford's *The Quiet Man* the huge bulk that was Victor MacLaglan sheepishly acquiesces to a tiny old woman yelling at him to wipe his muddy boots. And speaking of brusque men, it's hard to imagine the gruff Fred Trueman being cut down to size by a diminutive female. Yet by all accounts that's just what happened in the summer of 1961.

The location was Headingley, site of Trueman's adoring home crowd when England faced Australia in the third Test, already one down to a side alleged to be in turmoil. England's bowlers were facing a batting line-up featuring no fewer than six men who would go on to amass more than 1000 runs on the tour. However, there had been some controversy over the Headingley strip, which *Wisden* described as 'a whitish-green piebald surface', representing no small danger to the batsmen.

In Australia's first innings, they found themselves nicely placed on 187-2 before Trueman, capturing his great rival Norm O'Neill with his first ball on his return, went on to decimate them with five quick wickets as Australia collapsed to 208-9 before limping to 237 all out. Though England were restricted to a first innings lead of 62, worse was to come for Australia in the second innings.

After being well placed at 98-2 Trueman returned, having earlier seen skipper Peter May drop Neil Harvey on 10. On May's advice 'Fiery' shortened his run and bowled mainly off cutters to a leg-trap. Harvey always considered Trueman most likely to take his wicket, and sure enough he eventually holed out to Dexter in the covers to start the rout. Homing in on the patches of dust which had developed at the batsman's end Trueman produced a spell of 5-0 in 27 balls in one of the most devastating bowling spells in Test cricket history.

Trueman's analysis during the 35 minutes from his return was an astonishing 7.5-4-5-6. By dint of metronomic accuracy allowing no peace on an unpredictable wicket the Australians were simply blown away. His final

haul was 11-88, by far his best return in Tests to that point. His list of victims was no bury of rabbits, though, as he captured the wickets of Harvey, O'Neill, Simpson and Benaud in both innings, as well as Alan Davidson, Ken Mackay and Wally Grout.

And yet Trueman's wife Enid had reportedly achieved what the might of Australia could not – 'Fiery' had apparently spent the previous night sleeping in his car outside the Yorkshire ground; cut down to size by a spousal ultimatum. Maybe if he'd slept in the car more often he'd have finished with 600 wickets, not the 307 he retired with. As John Arlott said, 'Statham was accurate; Tyson was fast; Trueman was everything.'

Part Two
Performances 50–26

Ascent

Jim Laker – 51.2-23-53-10

England v Australia, Manchester 26-31 July 1956

In three days' time it would be one of the most famous Test matches ever played. For now Australia were 84 all out, Jim Laker having taken 9-37, one more wicket than he had managed in six previous Tests at Old Trafford. Peter May did not hesitate in asking Ian Johnson to follow on 375 runs behind. Having lost eight quick wickets after tea in their first try, Australia's ambitions at that stage would not have extended beyond survival until the close.

As in the first innings the openers made a start, but their progress was interrupted when Colin McDonald limped off with a knee injury in the 11th over with the score on 28. Having been dismissed in the first innings from Laker's best delivery of the match Neil Harvey then completed a king pair (the only one of his career) from his worst. It was a leg-side full toss that he hit straight to mid-on where Colin Cowdrey accepted a straightforward chance. Harvey threw his bat in the air in frustration as he walked off. Ian Craig then helped Jim Burke take the Australians to 53-1 at the close.

On the Saturday only 45 minutes play were possible. Australia added just six runs and lost the wicket of Burke who failed to add to his overnight 33. It was a classic off-spinner's dismissal by Laker via a catch by Tony Lock at backward short-leg.

Craig was joined by McDonald, resuming his innings on 11, and this pair kept the England spinners at bay for the rest of the short session, as indeed they did in the hour's play that was possible on the Monday afternoon, Sunday being a rest day in those days, during which the score advanced to 84-2.

As the final day dawned the weather was still damp, but in the end play began at 11.40, just ten minutes late. All the England bowlers tried to split up Craig and McDonald but the pitch had no pace for Trevor Bailey or Brian Statham, and while Laker and Lock got some turn it was too slow to be of much help. Australia went into lunch on 112-2. Another two sessions and they would have the draw and the morning's indications were strongly in

favour of this scenario.

Australian hopes were dealt a blow over the interval when a watery sun finally appeared. Gradually the clouds cleared and the sun shone harder. The surface of the wicket began to dry out and started to put some life into the pitch. Lock's first delivery after the resumption spun sharply to slip. The writing was on the wall and no one was surprised when Craig's dogged innings of 38 ended at 114 as he played back to a good length off break that turned and caught him plumb lbw.

Ken 'Slasher' Mackay came next and the left hander was greeted by three slips, a short mid-off and two short-legs as well as Godfrey Evans breathing down his neck. His dismissal at 124 was a carbon copy of his first innings duck, so Harvey wasn't alone in recording a pair.

Keith Miller was the next man in. In the first innings he had tried to clear the leg trap with some big shots. This time he went to the other extreme and refused to play anything with his bat unless he had to. After a stay of 17 minutes he was bowled, deciding at the last second to try and play a ball on a leg-stump line he had initially shaped to kick away. He too had not troubled the scorers. It was 130-5.

Two deliveries later Australia were six down. Ron Archer too failed to score. He was caught in the leg trap. McDonald was now joined by Richie Benaud, and the Australians, not without Benaud antagonising the crowd with some blatant time-wasting, recovered their composure and got to tea without further loss.

Again an interval did Australia no favours as the wicket was now at its most vicious and two balls after the resumption McDonald's fine innings ended when he too became a victim of the leg trap, more specifically Alan Oakman at what was almost a leg-slip. He had batted the best part of six hours for 89, much of it handicapped by his knee injury. He had not given a chance and no-one who saw the match seriously suggested that his was anything other than the finest innings of the game; Laker thought it 'Probably the best innings ever played by an Australian on a turning pitch in England.' He and Benaud had put on 51. It was 181-7.

The game was almost up with Benaud's dismissal at 198-8. While their future captain was still there, with his incessant gardening and taking a fresh guard every over, there was a chance England might run out of time. But for once Laker's length forced him onto the back foot and the turn was sharp enough to beat the bat and bowl him. That was Laker's 17th wicket, equaling

Syd Barnes' record.

If Laker was nervous or conscious of making history he didn't show it as he quickly removed Ray Lindwall and Len Maddocks at 203 and 205 respectively. Lindwall was caught in the leg trap and Maddocks lbw to a delivery that forced him onto the back foot and then turned past his defensive prod. For Laker it was 10-53 for the innings and 19-90 for the match. His were figures that sat comfortably within a victory by an innings and 170 runs.

There were a few handshakes in the middle, but no histrionics. Laker had to play again the next day for Surrey against the tourists, so in those pre-motorway days he had a long drive back to the capital. About half way home, in Lichfield, Laker famously stopped off at a pub for a sandwich. The bar was buzzing with talk of events at Old Trafford, whilst the hero of the hour sat anonymously at a table, unrecognised by anyone. It wasn't quite the same when he got back home to St John's Wood at around 2.15am. There were half a dozen photographers waiting for Laker, and his phone, which had been ringing continuously between 6pm and midnight, started again at 6.30am.

Brian Statham – 29-12-39-7

England v South Africa, Lord's 23-27 June 1955

By English standards Brian Statham's rise was a meteoric one. He made his Test debut in 1951 in what was only his 20th first-class match. Having performed with remarkable consistency for both Lancashire and England he retired 17 years later. Even in his final season his wickets cost him just 17.08 runs each, and at 38 he signed off with 6-34 in a 'Roses' match.

Throughout an England career that stretched over more than 14 years Statham was a captain's dream. Always ready to bowl uphill and into the breeze his accuracy and the pressure Statham applied was the perfect foil for the more charismatic and spectacular Frank Tyson and Fred Trueman. Every now and again, however, Statham would step out of the shadows and into the limelight and show the world he was a fine strike bowler in his own right. The second Test of the 1955 series between England and South Africa is the best example.

The wicket at Lord's was an experimental one, prepared to bring 'life back into Test cricket'. It was well grassed and whilst Peter May must have been tempted to insert the South Africans he chose to bat. When his side were all out for 133 at 3.20pm on the first day he must have bitterly regretted the decision. The damage was done by the ferocious pace of Peter Heine and the much subtler left-arm medium pace of Trevor Goddard.

South Africa struggled in turn and had lost five wickets by the close in overhauling England's total. It might have been close on first innings with favourable conditions for bowling but the second day dawned with what writer Norman Cutler described as 'perfect cricket weather'. The lead ended up at 171 and although England lost an early wicket the second day finished with England having nine wickets in hand and a deficit of 63.

Next day England began well on a glorious Test match Saturday at Lord's, but the South Africans, and off spinner Hugh Tayfield in particular, stuck to their task. The eventual victory target was a fairly modest 183. The visitors would doubtless have preferred not to have 35 minutes batting that evening and less so when Statham's second delivery of withering speed,

whipped back and burst through Jackie McGlew's defence and crashed into his pads. It was a pair for the South African vice-captain. Twenty-five minutes later Trevor Goddard got the faintest of touches in Statham's last over of the day, and the overnight score was 17-2. In between Statham's two strikes a Freddie Trueman bumper struck the Springbok's skipper, Jack Cheetham, a nasty blow on the elbow. The injury ended his involvement in the match.

When the sides reconvened on the Monday following the rest day the weather had changed, with a gloomy sky overhead. The wicket still had its pace though, and Statham bowled five successive maidens before finally coaxing nightwatchman Tayfield to give Godfrey Evans a straightforward catch. Five minutes later the umpires decided it was too dark, and Statham got a breather he hadn't been expecting.

It was at 2.30pm that the game restarted, although the light was still far from good. Roy McLean, South Africa's hero in the first innings, decided to take the attack to England. He smashed one Trueman delivery to the boundary, but when he tried the same tactic on Statham the inswinger comprehensively bowled him through the gate. It was 54-4, effectively 54-5 given Cheetham's indisposition. The control of both length and swing were simply faultless, Statham was in his element.

Russell Endean was offering stout resistance, but that ended with the total on 63. The bowler again was Statham, in Cutler's words 'the dour Johannesburg chartered accountant played too late at a spiteful, amazingly fast outswinger which found the edge of his bat, and Evans held a shoulder-high catch.' May must have thought about resting Statham, but couldn't bring himself to replace a man who looked like taking a wicket with every delivery. John Waite, a very sound batsman, led a charmed life for a while before playing back to Statham, misjudging the swing and being adjudged lbw.

The last South African frontline batsman was Headley Keith, who had contributed a fine half-century to the first innings. He hung on grimly for half an hour, in which just three runs were added, before becoming Statham's seventh victim. It was the outswinger that finally accounted for Keith, one of Statham's fastest, and the difficult diving chance given to Tom Graveney at first slip was gratefully accepted.

Statham, having removed all seven batsman at 78-7, was interrupted by the tea interval. To all intents and purposes the game was over. Following the resumption, Percy Mansell and Heine briefly found batting just a little easier,

and added 33 runs in 50 minutes when, from consecutive deliveries, both were caught in the deep by Don Kenyon attempting to drive Johnny Wardle's orthodox left-arm spin into the crowd.

Victory by 71 runs put England 2-0 up in a series that was to have some twists and turns before England won the decider at The Oval. But that was in the future and at Lord's Statham led his team-mates off the field to a thoroughly deserved standing ovation. He had bowled right through the South African innings in order to return what were to remain the best Test figures of his career. Little wonder then that he nominated this as his finest hour and Gubby Allen called it 'one of the greatest pieces of sustained fast bowling of the 20th century'. Cutler summed up his performance by writing: 'His length was impeccable, he varied his pace and swing beautifully and showed himself to be not only the best fast bowler in the world, but the most accurate since Harold Larwood' – there could have been no greater compliment.

Mushtaq Ahmed – 37-10-78-6

England v Pakistan, The Oval 22-26 August 1996

His arms probably didn't move any quicker than those of his rivals. It's just that they were so damned hard to follow. Mushtaq Ahmed's entire approach, from leap to follow-through, was a blur. He deployed googlies and top spinners seemingly at will, his aggression evident throughout, particularly in the early days when a little bit of aggro with the opposition batsmen was *de rigueur*. A front-on action meant the big leg break was more elusive, but the repertoire was impressive.

Mushy's finest hour in international cricket was Pakistan's unexpected winning of the 1992 World Cup. His mockery of England's Dermot Reeve and his inability to read his deliveries summed up a night in Melbourne when Graham Gooch's team, rampant throughout the tournament thus far, collapsed amid a barrage of flair.

But this vivacious character could pummel a team when it was down, too. An afternoon in the summer of 1996, again against England, this time far from dominant, remains vivid. Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram are rightly remembered as geniuses for their use of reverse swing at high pace to blast out Michael Atherton's side throughout that summer, but Mushy won the Oval Test to ensure the visitors took the series two-nil.

Mushy took two wickets in the first innings but the pitch had become dustier, although far from difficult, by the time Pakistan declared at 521-8 with a lead of 195. A win for England was out of the question but surely a face-saving draw on this surface and with just four sessions to play wasn't too much to ask? The first of those sessions could hardly have gone better for England – 74 without loss at the close, the England openers Mike Atherton and Alec Stewart having survived a withering onslaught. Overnight, Alan Lee in *The Times* counselled caution but thought the match 'should not be lost'.

On the final morning Wasim threw the ball to Mushtaq and asked him to bowl all day from the Vauxhall end. The sense of claustrophobia must have been unbearable as fielders stood a couple of feet from the bat as wicket-

keeper Moin Khan barked orders in Urdu interspersed with shouts of “Well bowled, Mushy” and “Good bowling, boy”.

Running in from a wide angle, Mushy leapt with ecstasy as Stewart inside-edged a straightening delivery to short-leg. Coming around the wicket, he coaxed Atherton to edge a leg break to silly-point. But at 166-2 and into the afternoon session the draw seemed the likeliest outcome. Then Graeme Thorpe fenced to slip, and Nasser Hussain went lbw soon afterwards to a ball that pitched outside leg stump. Suddenly England were in disarray.

Nick Knight, who had struggled to score, was caught and bowled, Mushy going on a wild sprint, punching the air with both fists. At this stage he had all five wickets to fall. His final wicket, Dominic Cork, bowled, left England eight down. Wasim Akram took the final two to administer a thrashing.

In Test terms, it was Mushy’s finest hour. He took 6-78 in 37 overs of focused aggression. There was an element of attrition too, England’s top order restricted much of the time to nudges and hopeful swats. Alan Lee had been right to doubt England’s batting but they had come up against one of the great bowling attacks, and he described Mushtaq’s performance as ‘one of the great spells of spin bowling in recent years’. Captain Wasim even dared suggest Mushtaq was better than Shane Warne!

Mushy couldn’t have seemed more exotic to an English live and TV audience raised on the certainties of finger spin and seam bowling. By that stage Warne’s destruction of the batting line-up had become a regular event and Anil Kumble, with his medium-paced subtleties, was established in the international game. Mushtaq, small and rotund, his face always full of mischief, was something else. He enlivened a dull day’s play not through his relentless tactical examination of batsmen, but his puppyish vivacity. Mushy, at international level, lived in the shadow of Abdul Qadir, responsible for a renaissance in interest in leg-spin bowling during the 1980s. He lacked the older man’s beauty as a bowler, but was effective; 185 wickets in 52 Tests, at 32.97. Despite this he was picked and dropped several times.

Perhaps Mushy found his true metier as an exceptional bowler in county cricket, where his exotic style was even more of an advantage than against England. First for Somerset, between 1993 and 1998, he took almost 300 wickets. But it was when he went to Sussex that he grew into a legend of the county game, becoming its leading wicket-taker for five years in a row. In 2003 he powered Sussex to their first championship with 103 wickets, the first man to exceed 100 for five years. He did it again, with 102, as the south-

coast side repeated the feat in 2006, and took 90 more as they made it a third in 2007.

By now the hot-head of the 1990s had become a cerebral, slower-moving figure with a long grey beard. This seemed to give him an air of wisdom and perspective – accompanied by a strong religious belief. Mushy no longer sought out confrontation, but attempted to prevent it. He retired in 2008 because of a persistent knee injury.

“I faced him once at Taunton when he was playing for Somerset and I have never felt more humiliated on a cricket field”, recalled the former England player Angus Fraser. “For five balls I groped forward like a drunken teenager and failed to make contact with the ball. Nobody was happier than I when the final delivery of the over bowled me.” Many felt the same sense of despair and relief, as he took 1407 first-class wickets.

With such vast experience and a likeable personality, it was an obvious move for him to enter coaching. Working with Graeme Swann, who mocked his still hyperactive verbal delivery, he helped recreate that sense of intimidation and strangulation that he had on England on that sultry afternoon at The Oval in 1996.

Stuart Broad – 12-1-37-5

England v Australia, The Oval, 20-23 August 2009

47

"Broad! Broad! Youuuu look like a lady!"

The Australian fans were having their usual fun with Stuart Broad, the chant – to the tune of Aerosmith's *Dude Looks Like a Lady* – mocking the England allrounder's long blond locks and boyish features. Notwithstanding his physical appearance, Broad was an easy target. Though clearly talented and with age on his side, he had been in the England Test side for nearly two years without pulling up any particularly large trees, and the first four Tests of this Ashes series had been no different. Even his six-wicket haul at Headingley had – as Mike Selvey so wonderfully described it – 'flattered him like a royal sycophant'. It was time for the great hope to show that he was more than just great hype.

Australia's team wasn't the all-powerful vintage it had been for the previous generation and recent form had been mixed, but there still didn't seem any reason to doubt that Australia would defend the Ashes that they had won so emphatically with their 5-0 revenge drubbing in Australia in 2006-07. They had lost in India late in 2008, but that was hardly a shock – far better Australian teams than this one had gone to India and returned defeated. A routine win against New Zealand was followed by Australia's first series defeat on home soil for 16 years at the hands of South Africa. However, honour had been restored in the return series in South Africa immediately before the Ashes tour, and this was enough to ensure that Australia arrived in England as favourites.

The first Test at Cardiff was a cliffhanger. Australia dominated throughout, only for the unlikeliest of last-wicket stands to deny them on day five when victory had seemed a foregone conclusion. England, emboldened, won at Lord's before honours were shared at Birmingham and Australia then clicked into gear with a crushing win at Leeds. Thus, the teams arrived in London for the final Test at The Oval with the series all square and the Ashes still very much in the balance.

England’s first innings was decent rather than spectacular, Ian Bell and captain Andrew Strauss the strongest of several useful contributors as the hosts totalled 332. Australia never looked comfortable in reply, but the openers weathered the early storms – the new ball partnership of James Anderson and Andrew Flintoff was seen off, as were Steve Harmison and spinner Graeme Swann for Australia to reach lunch with all 10 wickets intact. After 22 fruitless overs – and a 50-minute rain delay – Strauss threw the ball to Stuart Broad.

After 23 overs Australia were one down, Shane Watson dismissed lbw by a delivery which nipped in at him off the seam, and for once making the wise call not to review it. So began the defining spell of the 2009 Ashes series. Ricky Ponting’s powers had waned from his phenomenally productive peak earlier in the decade, but he was still the wicket England prized most and when Broad got him chopping-on to an off cutter which rushed and cramped the great Australian batsman, the joy within the England camp was palpable.

Bowling full and fast, moving the ball both in the air and off a pitch which was becoming more and more difficult to bat on, Broad ripped through the Australian top order. Mike Hussey was next to go, countering neither Broad’s pace nor his movement, and having positioned himself expecting an outswinger was trapped helplessly in front by one which swung into him, with the ball hitting middle and off. The pendulum had swung almost irreversibly in England’s direction and as the collapse set in, it went from bad to worse for Australia. Broad continued to wreak havoc, drawing Michael Clarke into an ugly drive outside off stump that he was never in control or to the pitch of, Jonathan Trott taking the catch at short-cover. Broad had taken 4-8 in a devastating 21-ball burst, and Australia’s innings – indeed, Australia’s entire Ashes campaign – was in tatters.

Graeme Swann made his mark as well, his guileful spin providing the foil to Broad’s pace and movement, taking the next two wickets to fall. Broad was not to be denied for long though, and he saved his best for last. Brad Haddin played across the line of a simply glorious full-pitched outswinger and as reward saw his middle and off stumps knocked back, after which Broad saluted the baying south London crowd from the middle of the pitch for his five-wicket haul, all taken within the space of just 47 deliveries. One of those cheering him on was his mother, who screamed so loudly that she lost her voice. When Swann claimed his third soon after, Australia had lost 58-8 on their way to 160 all out.

England’s second innings was driven by a classy century from Trott as well as half-centuries from Strauss and Swann to set a target that Australia were never seriously going to chase, even if a century stand between Hussey and Ponting briefly gave them hope. Flintoff’s final Ashes flourish to run out Ponting put an end to that, England went on to reclaim the famous old urn once more, and Broad was England’s new hero. As Rob Smyth wrote in *The Guardian*, it was a spell that changed Broad’s life: ‘Two weeks before, many wanted him dropped; two weeks later he was being interviewed by Jonathan Ross. In the Ashes decider, Broad reduced Australia from 73 for nought to 111 for seven. His wickets included a coming-of-age dismissal of Ricky Ponting and a gorgeous outswinger to bowl Brad Haddin.’ And it was just the start. On no fewer than six subsequent occasions has Stuart Broad taken five or more wickets in a single spell of bowling – an extraordinary statistic. Australia would suffer again four years later, while India, New Zealand and South Africa (twice) have all since been on the receiving end of a Broad special as well. This propensity to produce his best at the most decisive of moments led Smyth to conclude: ‘Broad doesn’t only win matches – he wins the matches that win the series.’ To top them all, of course, there was Trent Bridge in 2015. But that – literally – is another story.

Angus Fraser – 28.5-7-75-8

England v West Indies, Bridgetown 8-13 April 1994

"It's strange – you look back at some of your best performances and it seems each time something else has happened that the games are remembered for."

Was Angus Fraser, in this interview with ESPN cricinfo, merely confirming the description of him in *Wisden* as 'perennially grumpy…Scrooge in flannels'? Also somewhat unflatteringly described in the same *Wisden* article, ironically lauding him as one of its Cricketers of the Year, as having a style like 'a man trampling through a nettle-bed pursued by a swarm of bees', he nevertheless trampled his way to a number of massively impactful performances during his somewhat fitful England career.

Fitful indeed – between his debut in 1989 and the end of the 1995 season Fraser had featured in just 29 of England's 65 Tests, including 24 consecutive Tests missed as he recuperated from a debilitating hip injury. Prior to that, he had given a glimpse of his talents in Jamaica; in just his fourth Test, he watched Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes dominate his colleagues before sending West Indies crashing to 164 all out with a clinical spell of five for six. Of course, it was Allan Lamb who took the match honours for his first-innings ton – a sign of things to come for Fraser. Later that winter, Fraser managed a six-for at Melbourne, only to see Bruce Reid bag 13 wickets and the match award; it was this match in which his hip problems first surfaced.

Following an operation after the Ashes tour of 1990-91, Fraser had only been selected for one Test prior to England's visit to the Caribbean for the winter of 1993-94, that being the final Test of the 1993 Ashes with the urn already lost; Fraser excelled, taking eight wickets, and a rare match award, as England enjoyed a consolation victory. Selection for the upcoming West Indies tour was assured.

Things didn't start well in the Caribbean, however; entering the fourth Test England were already 3-0 down thanks partly to a devastating spell of

bowling by Curtly Ambrose in the third Test, as he utterly destroyed England for 46, just one run more than their previous lowest, posted 107 years earlier. England's confidence was in tatters. Significantly, in between the third and fourth Tests the players' families arrived in the Caribbean – would that see a change in fortunes?

The Bridgetown crowd was swelled by 6000 British holidaymakers, and it seemed the additional support was just the fillip England needed. Put in by Richie Richardson, Michael Atherton and Alec Stewart crafted an opening stand of 171, Stewart going on to 118 as England posted 355 all out. When West Indies batted, captain Atherton for some reason favoured Andy Caddick over Fraser, both at the start of the day and again after lunch. When Fraser at last came on, he soon had Desmond Haynes flat on his back avoiding a bouncer before a hand injury forced the great opener to retire hurt. Fraser then struck twice in the same over; first Richardson's uncertain nudge went to Atherton at third slip, then Keith Arthurton's leaden-footed drive found the sanctity of Jack Russell's gloves.

Returning after tea from the livelier Southern end and with blisters freshly dressed, Fraser was in inspired form. First he despatched Jimmy Adams, edging to slip, then the returned Haynes, who lolloped a catch to mid-off while favouring his injured hand. Junior Murray and Winston Benjamin, forced to push while Shiv Chanderpaul concentrated on survival, both wafted outside off stump and fell to the slips – four for one in just 17 balls, and West Indies were left reeling on 134 for seven. Such was the atmosphere of celebration at this time amongst the British throng that Paul Allott admitted that he missed the first two wickets of Fraser's burst. But despite overnight career-best figures of 6-47, there was no champagne – Fraser's celebration that evening consisted of roast beef and Yorkshire pud.

Though 170 runs were added for the last three wickets, Fraser still managed to extend his figures to 8-75, a lion-hearted display in which 'for once, the exploits of an English bowler had overshadowed those of Curtly Ambrose', as Vic Marks noted in *The Guardian*. Interestingly, all 10 batsmen were out caught. In his tour diary, Fraser noted rather dryly that 'It appears all of a sudden that I'm a world-class bowler again.'

When England batted again Stewart became the first England player to score two centuries in a match against West Indies, which allowed England the luxury of a rare declaration against them. The West Indians were never going to reach the 446 necessary to win and England notched a victory which

Wisden described as ‘fit to stand alongside the greatest of all Test wins’ – West Indies had lost at Bridgetown for the first time since 1935. Despite that, *The Daily Mirror* report from the last day doesn’t even mention Fraser’s performance – forgotten after just two days! Stewart was of course named Man of the Match, one of a series of performances (including Fraser’s) which *Wisden* contended would ‘be remembered as long as the game is played.’

Following another two-year hiatus Fraser was recalled to once again tour the Caribbean in 1997-98, and after the debacle of the first Test, abandoned after less than an hour’s play,

he once again skittled West Indies, this time for under 200. His 8-53 once more gave him personal best figures and gave England hopes of another unexpected victory. However Carl Hooper’s 94 not out steered West Indies to a target of 282 and, of course, pinched the match award. Fraser’s last hurrah was reserved for the South Africans at Trent Bridge in the following summer; this time he did take home the match award, but alas not the plaudits: “Ten bloody wickets and all people talk about is Atherton and Donald.”

Always the bridesmaid, never the bride.

Muttiah Muralitharan – 40-19-51-9

Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe, Kandy 4-7 January 2002

45

Has a fielding team ever been so sorry to take a wicket than when Chaminda Vaas had Henry Olonga caught behind at Kandy in 2002? The ball arrowed so easily into the hands of wicket-keeper Kumar Sangakkara that he could not possibly spill it. The Sri Lankans appealed instinctively only to hush themselves like a schoolboy who shouts out the answer and then remembers he was not supposed to. All eyes turned to umpire Asoka de Silva, and a pregnant silence prevailed. De Silva might have been weighing up the significance of his decision; he might have been confused by the timidity of the appeal (Sri Lankans were not known for reticence). But, like Sangakkara, he knew there was no option. De Silva raised his finger. And with that, Jim Laker's Test record innings haul of 10-53 in 1956 was safe.

Minutes earlier the players had taken the field on the second morning with Kandy poised to crown its local boy. Muttiah Muralitharan needed one wicket to supersede Laker after bamboozling a feeble Zimbabwe line-up to finish with 9-51 at stumps on the first day.

Straightaway he induced a relatively simple bat-pad chance to Russel Arnold at short-leg. Dropped. The fift h ball provoked a clamour for lbw. Declined. From the other end Vaas had the delicate task of not taking a wicket. A succession of wide medium-pacers duly followed. But to the sixth of them Olonga – refusing to play the game within the game – took a fatal wild swing.

The purists will be grateful for Olonga's intervention. After all, this was hardly comparable to Laker's performance on that dramatic final day at Old Trafford, when his spin twin Tony Lock was trying his damndest to prize the final (or any) Australian wicket from the other end. At Kandy the essential context of a Test match became briefly lost amid Murali's pursuit of history. As Laker's record came into view, Sri Lanka's concerted attempts to make sure that Murali took the 10th wicket became farcical.

We might also query the pedigree of the opposition, who were dismissed for 38 in a one-day international prior to the three-match Test series.

Zimbabwe had won only three of their 42 matches (excluding Bangladesh) since their first Test ten years earlier. Serving them up to Murali was perverse at the best of times: he took 87 wickets at less than 17 against them.

And these were hardly the best of times in Zimbabwean cricket, with frequent ruptures between the board and players over a shady selection process and dismal pay. Neil Johnson and Murray Goodwin, two of their most talented batsmen, had prematurely retired to pursue county careers while Alistair Campbell, the former captain, was inexplicably omitted from the touring party. Most staggering for a team in the subcontinent, Zimbabwe played all three Tests without a front-line spinner. Their only hope was the batting of Andy Flower and his brother Grant and the canny seamers of Heath Streak. By 2004 Campbell, Flower and Streak were all gone as Zimbabwe cricket imploded spectacularly.

Murali, however, was spellbinding. ‘Perhaps he is the perfect bowler’, wrote Charlie Austin, who covered the tour for Cricinfo.

‘He is unfailingly accurate, has seemingly limitless reserves of stamina, and a handful of well-oiled tricks. He bowls three basic deliveries: the off break, top spinner and floater, which straightens after pitching, but when you throw in changes of pace, trajectory, loop and fizz, you have an unfathomable assortment of variations.’

Murali’s nine wickets on the first day at Kandy followed his eight on the first day against India at Colombo four months earlier. He defied the logic which says that a spinner is most effective on a wearing pitch, with 230 of his 800 wickets coming in the first innings of a Test match at an average of 26.47, including a record 18 five-wicket hauls.

Murali didn’t need a sticky wicket; he could turn a snooker ball on glass (something he claims to have done). Sometimes a pitch would turn too much, as in the third Test at Galle, where he beat the bat endlessly and found it hard to win lbw decisions.

No, what Murali craved from a pitch was much what a fast bowler craves: bounce and pace. So he relished a fresh first-day surface such as the one he found at Kandy.

The Zimbabwe openers raced to 39-0 as if on borrowed time before Murali razed four batsmen in his first seven overs. Two were caught at slip off the boot attempting to sweep, including Andy Flower just before lunch. It

was harder work in the afternoon as the pitch dried and Grant Flower resisted. Murali was even briefly withdrawn after a spell of 5-25 in 17 overs. Brought back on in the 52nd over, he trapped Craig Wishart with a skiddy off spinner in his first over and had figures of 8-27 when Douglas Marillier was bowled through the gate shortly after tea. Laker's record was never more vulnerable.

But another 22 overs passed before Flower became the third batsman to fall to the sweep for an accomplished 72, setting up a tense and surreal half-hour to the close. From one end captain Sanath Jayasuriya bowled some dismal off spin to the last-wicket pair and there was a suspicious drop by Marvan Atapattu as the Sri Lankans took drastic measures to keep their bowler's record-breaking hopes alive.

The only man who was unaffected by the fuss was the selfless Murali, who in the last over of the day attempted an acrobatic catch on the square-leg boundary which left him with a dislocated finger. Richard Hadlee had done much the same thing at Brisbane in 1985 – the difference being that he took the catch that denied himself the chance to eclipse Laker. Both were national sporting icons – but always team players first.

Wilfred Rhodes – 15-0-68-8

Australia v England, Melbourne 1-5 January 1904

When I first became interested in cricket history, I struggled to identify the English players in team photos from the 1900s. The only two I could always recognise were the ubiquitous WG Grace and, due to his dreamy pale eyes, Wilfred Rhodes. It was no surprise to my impressionable youth, based on the appearance of his eyes, to read that Rhodes spent his last years blind. It was said that after he lost his sight Rhodes could tell the quality of a shot based entirely on the sound the bat made when it struck the ball. This was also no surprise as Rhodes played over 1000 first-class matches. He had a unique career too, starting as a left-arm spinner who batted 11, before eventually opening for England and hardly bowling at all, to then turning a full 360 and bowling England to an Ashes victory in 1926.

For the second Test of the 1903-04 series, the 26-year-old, who was in the first stage of his metamorphosis, was expected to lead the attack. The England captain 'Plum' Warner won the toss, which probably had the most influence on the end result, and elected to bat. The MCG of this period was a batsman's paradise unless, in this uncovered-wicket era, it developed into a 'sticky' and then it was a batsman's nightmare. Warner, doused in oil of lavender to keep the flies at bay, opened together with Tom Hayward. Despite tight bowling England received some barracking from the estimated 32,000 strong crowd, for their watchful defence. At stumps the score was 221-2. The match, which was to be played to a finish, looked set to be a run fest with both teams brimming with batting talent.

This changed on the morning of day two when the skies opened and the wicket was deluged. The 'sticky' was here. England, in the available time, finished at 306-6, with Johnny Tyldesley a 'magnificent' 97 not out, Rhodes lbw from the last ball of the day. There was still hope for Australia with the following day being a Sabbath rest. If there was no further rain the pitch would harden and it was game on! Alas, for the hosts, it rained all Saturday night and all day Sunday. The pitch by Monday was unfit until 10 minutes before lunch. Even in this short period, Tyldesley was removed for his

overnight score. After lunch, they were quickly dismissed for the addition of nine runs. England's capitulation didn't bode well for Australia especially against Rhodes, one of the best wet-wicket bowlers in the world.

The Aussies still hoped. If they could avoid following on and bowl England out cheaply, there was still a chance, as it was common for a Melbourne 'sticky' to roll out splendidly if given time to dry. Rhodes duly opened and bowled well from the Richmond end but his captain believed he would be more successful from the Pavilion end. The bowler disagreed and Warner thought it best not to insist.

It shouldn't have mattered which end Rhodes bowled, the follow-on appeared a certainty and would have been except for Victor Trumper and some inept catching. Trumper scored a breathtaking 74 out of 122. No-one else reached 20. As great as Trumper was, Rhodes must have been as frustrated as someone trying to deal with a helpline, having him dropped thrice. Rhodes' fine figures of 7-56 didn't impress cricket reporter Tom Horan: 'Rhodes was good, but not so good as I expected'. While Horan was perhaps harsh, he did praise Tyldesley's 48* out of 74-5 at stumps, describing his batting as 'even more meritorious than Trumper's'. Rhodes was again lbw to the last ball, this time for nine. Australia still had a chance if the rain stopped, as England's lead, with five wickets left, was a manageable 267.

The Aussies couldn't take a trick. It rained so heavily on Monday night that they now needed to keep England in until late in the day and hope that they were greeted by a better pitch on day five. England also knew this and once play started at 3pm, they threw away wickets. At one stage there were three batsmen on the field as they rushed to and from the pitch, with the last five wickets adding only 29. Tyldesley scored 62, the next best being 10.

Australia went in 110 minutes before stumps needing an unlikely 297. If they could defend until the close they may still have had a chance. This though wasn't the way Trumper played; he attacked the bowlers, especially Rhodes, who again opened. Trumper hit Rhodes into the stands for a five (out of the ground for a six) despite him having three out for the drive.

Rhodes bowled with skill, concentrating on taking the edge as a Melbourne 'sticky' typically saw the ball bounce over the stumps. He was soon rewarded as Reggie Duff was caught in slips, Rhodes' 50th Test wicket, for eight. This brought the two best Australian bats of the era together in Clem Hill and Trumper. Both were quickly taking sharp singles and used

their feet to smother the spin. To make it worse the visitors still had ‘dropsy’ and Hill was missed at mid-on from Rhodes, and he celebrated by hitting Rhodes to the fence.

The two stars scored 45 in just 25 minutes. Shortly after, Rhodes dropped a sitter from fellow Yorkshireman George Hirst. With the Aussies cashing in, Rhodes finally agreed to bowl from the Pavilion end and almost immediately had Hill caught for 20. The captain, Monty Noble, was next in and he watched as first Warner dropped Trumper before Noble himself was dropped by Tyldesley. Both misses were off Rhodes who by now must have been in despair. Finally a catch was held and it was the prized wicket of Trumper caught off Rhodes for an audacious 35 from 73. With Trumper out the resistance was all but broken.

Rhodes was seemingly involved in everything. First he took a one-handed catch in the slips off Hirst to dismiss ‘Tich’ Gregory for a duck, before he ran through the rest, mostly having them caught in slips, with no-one else passing seven. Still, there was another dropped

catch off Rhodes which brought the tally to eight. With figures of 7-56 & 8-68 Rhodes’ performance meant that no future England team would be complete in Australia without a left-armer. Horan believed that due to the weather ‘this second Test match was no test at all in the true cricket sense’. What couldn’t be questioned was that all Rhodes led to victory.

Hugh Tayfield – 37.7-14-69-8

South Africa v England, Durban, 25-30 January 1957

In the 1956-7 series South Africa had hoped to challenge England's status as unofficial 'World Number One' (England had beaten Australia thrice and South Africa twice in the 1950s), but the visitors had won at Johannesburg and Cape Town and the Springboks found themselves two down with three to play. The third game in Durban therefore became a crunch match.

Peter May won his third toss in the series and chose to bat on a flat, grassless Kingsmead pitch. After an opening partnership of 115 between Trevor Bailey and the left hander Peter Richardson, England finished at stumps on 184-4 with Bailey 71 not out. During this agonisingly slow day, the Durban-born Hugh Tayfield bowled 14 consecutive eight-ball maidens (extended next morning to a record 137 scoreless deliveries). Nine of the maidens were bowled to Bailey, who played forward to every ball regardless of length. May was Tayfield's only first-innings wicket. The England captain, having been drawn into playing at an away-drifter, was athletically caught at slip by Trevor Goddard. Out for two, this was another early dismissal for England's best post-war batsman who, after earlier flaying the provinces, had again failed – 15 being his highest score in his first five Test innings.

Day two saw England collapse to 218 (Bailey 80 in 394 minutes) and South Africa finish another grinding day on 140-3. The highlight of day three in South Africa's total of 283 was a hard-fought innings of 100 by Roy McLean. England ended the day on 48-1, Peter Richardson making 32 before being bowled by Springbok skipper Clive van Ryneveld.

Denis Compton and Doug Insole resumed the England innings at the start of day four, the Essex man taking the place of Bailey who, the evening before, had had his little finger broken by a Peter Heine bouncer. Only half-an-hour's play was possible before lunch, as drizzle drifting in from the Indian Ocean broke up proceedings. No England wickets were lost, despite Insole regularly playing and missing at the seriously fast Neil Adcock. Insole continued to struggle after lunch against the accurate Springbok attack but Compton was looking increasingly like the Brylcreem boy of old. So it came

as a surprise when, soon after driving Tayfield sweetly through the covers for four, he gently pulled a Tayfield back-of-length delivery (cleverly held up in the brisk north-easterly) to short mid-on. Skipper May came in to face the third ball of Tayfield's over. He left his first delivery, the second he played unconvincingly to cover-point, the next two were played cautiously back to the bowler, and the seventh he cut to third man for two. The last ball was faster and shorter; May attempted to pull, missed, and was given out lbw.

Colin Cowdrey joined Insole who in the next two hours, ground out a 65-run partnership against the relentless accuracy of Tayfield who was backed up by Goddard, bowling left-arm medium-pace over the wicket on a leg-stump line. As well as containing the batsmen, Goddard was also creating rough outside the right-handers' off stump, which meant extra spin for Tayfield. Despite the grip this pair had on Insole and Cowdrey, it was Heine who eventually made the breakthrough – a rapid delivery piercing Cowdrey's back defensive shot – the Kent man going lbw for 24, made off 127 balls (England 144-4).

Next in with England only 79 runs ahead, was the jaunty Godfrey Evans, determined to knock the returning Tayfield off his length, but after several ineffectual heaves he edged a straight-onner, and was bagged by fellow-'keeper Waite for 10 (England 167-5). To a great ovation from the South African crowd, the bandaged Bailey resumed his innings. And in the last half-hour 25 runs were added before the last over began. Bailey (who had had an appeal against the light turned down) faced Tayfield with three fielders almost close enough to pick the ball off the face of his bat. 'The Barnacle' kept out the first delivery but off the second the ball ballooned toward short-leg where van Ryneveld threw himself forward to take the catch. The South Africans walked off, certain the catch had been made, while Bailey stood cross-legged, leaning on his bat, waiting for a decision, eventually having to be almost dragged off by his partner. England finished the day on 192-6 (Insole 77*).

The last day of the Test started with England 127 runs ahead and the classic scenario of all four results a possibility. Sensing a victory, 15,000 people were present at Kingsmead for the start of play. Wardle, the new partner for Insole, made eight before he tamely stretched forward to Tayfield and was caught behind (England 203-7). Rather than keeping faith with his off spinner, van Ryneveld decided to take the new ball. This was a mistake. Next man in, Jim Laker, was comfortable against the quicks and, after 15

runs had been added in three overs, Tayfield came back and immediately had the Surrey man slashing and caught by Goddard at slip (England 220-8). Number 10 Peter Loader managed just three before missing a sweep and falling lbw to the still deadly-accurate Tayfield, persevering on a pitch which had given him very little help. Last man Statham came to the wicket with the score at 230, and Insole 97 not out. In the next over, with one of the straightest shots of his innings, he firmly pushed a Heine half volley back past him, and scampered the three needed for his maiden Test match century. The pair put on 24 for the last wicket before the Lancastrian leant forward to the seventh ball of Tayfield's thirty-eighth over, and was comfortably caught by van Ryneveld. England's total was 254, with Insole finishing 110 not out.

With a remarkable spell of bowling against England's much-vaunted batting line-up, Hugh Tayfield, on his 28th birthday, had taken 8-69: the best innings figures by a South African. Neither captain was prepared to risk defeat in pursuit of victory and the match subsided to a tame draw. But, thanks to Tayfield's marathon spell, South Africa were still in the series with everything to play for in Johannesburg. But that is another story...

Sikander Bakht – 21-3-69-8

India v Pakistan, Delhi 4-9 December 1979

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The truism, or cliche, that sport is a great leveller has an overwhelming tendency to the negative. There are, of course, rare sporting figures who seem never to get levelled – Usain Bolt and Don Bradman were protected from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune (give or take a Segway or Eric Hollies) by their breathtaking ability which, even when dipping slightly, left them clear of the pack. But many others have reached great heights, often only briefly, to then be cut down again – Shane Bond, Bob Massie, Lawrence Rowe; in cricket alone the list is lengthy. There is, however, the upside. The workaday player who has a moment of inspiration in the sun and defies all the odds for 10 seconds, 10 minutes or 10 hours.

In this current analysis of great bowling neither Lindsay Kline nor Jerome Taylor would receive much consideration when a list of outstanding bowlers is compiled yet, as we have seen, they had their great days and their records are in the book. Another bowler who falls into this category is Sikander Bakht who is remembered, if at all outside Asia, as the tall, gangly, stick-thin medium-fast bowler who pranged down the odd devilish outswinger but was largely a foil to Imran Khan with whom he played 19 of his 26 Tests. In those matches he took 48 wickets at 37 each while Imran had precisely twice as many at 24 each. Overall, Sikander's career total of 67 wickets in 26 Tests at 36 hardly smacks of a destructive force. Not so at Delhi on 5 December 1979.

India against Pakistan has, for the past half-century or more, been cricket's greatest rivalry, over and above the largely media-driven modern Ashes. In 1979 it was more so than ever as the contest had only just been rejoined after a 17-year hiatus between 1961 and 1978. Pakistan had triumphed 2-0 at home but now, a year and a day later, six Tests awaited in India

Sarfraz Nawaz had been one of the key figures in Pakistan's home success but he was absent in India. New captain Asif Iqbal felt unable to control this most unpredictable of characters and offered a simple ultimatum

– ‘Him or me’. Ehteshamuddin was handed his debut as Imran’s support in a spin-heavy attack. A dull draw followed and the debutant was jettisoned as the sides moved on to Delhi where the pitch, contrary to normality, showed signs of having some life for the quicks. Sikander was recalled.

Although there had been indications that the pitch might be interesting, Pakistan could hardly have reckoned on sweating under the covers followed by a liberal damp dousing from a dew-laden roller when they elected to bat. The result was that Kapil Dev made hay before Wasim Raja and Asif Iqbal shone and steered their side to a respectable but not imposing 273 just before lunch on the second day. Imran, rattling with pills to combat a virus, wasted no time, tearing in and disconcerting even Sunil Gavaskar with his pace but although the Indian batsmen could barely score off him he remained wicketless until disaster struck and he broke down with a side injury. This would at any time be a crushing blow but on a rare Asian pitch offering more help to the seamers than the spinners and with only Asif Iqbal to support the opening attack it was potentially match changing; but Sikander was already in his stride. Chetan Chauhan, caught behind, was quickly followed by the prize pair of Dilip Vengsarkar and Gundappa Viswanath, the former with a trademark outswinger, the latter with a fortunate deflection from the bowler which ran out the backing-up batsman. Lucky or not, India were now 46-3 and the tone was set – Sikander at one end and the rest his foils at the other, with Imran off the field.

Next to go was the big one, Gavaskar caught behind as Sikander, cleverly conserving his strength and bowling an immaculate line peppered the region just outside off stump. As the afternoon wore on and the ball got scuffed, the line got straighter and the swing was inwards rather than outwards, a trick he had learnt on the concrete and dirt of Karachi. Roger Binny, Syed Kirmani and Kapil Dev all missed straight balls and India’s woes multiplied. The tail was no match for the revelation that was Sikander as his spell moved into the third session and two more wickets followed. Only as he tired did the last pair manage to add 32, by some margin the largest partnership of the innings, before the innings was wound up at a paltry 126.

Twenty-one consecutive overs, even with a tea break, was a feat of endurance but to keep a consistent line and length while moving the ball both ways on a pitch offering only minimal assistance with precious little support from the other end was truly magnificent. A ‘superb spell’ recalled his new-ball partner who saw little from the treatment table. With this magnificence

Sikander had given his side a first-innings lead of 147 and the probability of establishing a series lead.

Things didn't pan out that way however. Pakistan batted poorly second time and India were set 390 in five sessions but with the pitch now easy the home side showed too little initiative and finished 26 runs short with four wickets in hand. Sikander toiled through 38 overs but the magic wasn't there this time after removing both openers. Once this pair was gone it took centurion Vengsarkar too long to realise that a win was possible and, despite some late hitting, a draw was the result.

The series had been of crucial importance to both sides far beyond the confines of mere cricket and India handled the pressure better. Imran felt that the publicity and huge partisan crowds played on the nerves of his side. Sikander's performances gradually dropped off but 24 wickets at 26.7 was a sound effort even if it couldn't prevent India landing the series 2-0. Delhi would, however, always hold treasured memories for the man from Karachi.

Shane Warne – 21-9-34-6

Australia v South Africa, Sydney 2-5 January 1998

In the late 1990s Mark Taylor's Australia were in their pomp, regularly laying waste to their opponents with the kind of ruthless efficiency borne of natural talent and utter dedication.

With the Waugh twins and a young Ricky Ponting in the middle order and Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne taking the wickets they feared no-one.

But South Africa believed they were a match for the mighty Aussies, and with Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock leading the attack, Hanse Cronje marshalling the troops and a young Jacques Kallis beginning to blossom, who would argue? They had yet to beat Australia in four attempts since returning to the Test fold, but they travelled across the Indian Ocean with confidence.

Australia may have won eight of their previous nine series, including a 2-1 victory in South Africa a year earlier, but the Proteas were nipping at their heels. They had

suffered only two series defeats since their readmission in 1992 – one against Australia and one on the subcontinent.

The tour was a sometimes bad-tempered clash of two heavyweights. It began with Warne threatening to send Daryll Cullinan back to his psychiatrist and ended with Cronje smashing a stump through the door of the umpire's dressing room.

The first Test in Melbourne was a cliffhanger. Set an improbable 381 to win the tourists hung on gamely to save the match. Warne sent down 44 overs in their second innings, 35 of them on the fifth day, but he finished with 3-97 for his efforts and the match ended with South Africa seven down after Kallis notched a maiden Test century.

The teams headed to Sydney two days later with Warne poised on 289 Test wickets, but all eyes were on Steve Waugh in his 100th Test. South Africa won the toss and batted, hoping to punish a jaded Australian attack still smarting from their inability to finish off South Africa in the opening match. But Cronje's team could not twist the knife and were eventually dismissed for a sub-par 287, with 28-year-old Warne, playing in his 63rd

Test, once again the workhorse, bowling 32 overs. He had finished the first day wicketless, but rediscovered his mojo on the second morning, taking the last five South African wickets to finish with 5-75.

Now it was Australia's turn to bat and they did not need a second invitation to take control, posting a formidable total of 421. The only disappointment was that it was Mark Waugh rather than brother Steve who reached treble figures. Steve fell 15 runs short of a hundred in his 100th match.

South Africa began their second innings on the fourth day 134 runs in arrears. And when Glenn McGrath and Paul Reiffel dismissed both openers within five overs it was clear that the tourists were facing a battle just to make Australia bat again. Any hopes the Proteas

had of rebuilding from 3-2 were dashed when Taylor tossed the ball to his blond leggie,

whose five-for in the first innings had taken him past Craig McDermott and made him the second highest Australian Test wicket taker behind Dennis Lillee. He was within striking distance of the magical 300 mark and he got there with a superb spell – a classic Warne masterclass of flight, drift, turn and variations.

Warne's first wicket, which came shortly before lunch, was critical. With Cronje at the crease South Africa were still in with a shout, but when he clipped the spinner off his pads and Ponting took a fine reflex catch at short-leg the tourists were 21-3 and staring down the barrel.

It was now a situation tailor-made for Warne's special brand of mayhem, and he ran amok after the break. In a 23-ball spell he took 4-7 to move to 299 Test wickets as South Africa slumped to 55-7. His first victim after lunch, and second of the innings, was Herschelle Gibbs. Like Cronje he was undone by drift from off to leg and was caught at short-leg by Greg Blewett. Brian McMillan followed soon after, bowled round his legs by a ball straightening just enough to brush the timbers.

A flatter leg break did for next man Pollock. He played forward but did not account for the amount of spin Warne was generating and the edge was caught at slip by Taylor. Wicket-keeper Dave Richardson did not last long. He was like a rabbit caught in the headlights and three balls later tamely chipped a floated delivery straight back to Warne, who gobbled up the catch. The spinner had figures of 5-13 and South Africa were done for.

A three-hour rain delay only postponed the inevitable, but it did prompt a

large part of the crowd to head home, believing that there would be no more play that day. Those who left would have cause to regret their decision as the match eventually resumed at 6.20pm under floodlights. Sadly, it meant few were on hand to witness Warne's 300th Test wicket. Kallis, who had dug in for an obdurate 45, was the victim, and it took a superb ball to end his resistance. Warne, bowling round the wicket, sent down a flighted delivery which drew the batsman forward in defence. It was a topspinner but Kallis was expecting a leg break and, playing for spin, left the smallest of gaps between bat and pad. The ball, travelling straight on, sailed through the gap and into the stumps. Warne celebrated his milestone in style, both arms aloft midway down the wicket as he was mobbed by his team-mates. It fell to Reiffel to claim the final two wickets, and the match ended shortly after 7pm with Australia winning by an innings and 21 runs.

The teams reconvened for the third Test in Adelaide where Australia had to work mighty hard to maintain their advantage. But just as South Africa had done in the first Test, they hung on bravely to finish seven down in the fourth innings of the match and secure a 1-0 series win and maintain their position as the top dogs of world cricket.

Imran Khan – 20.1-4-60-8

Pakistan v India, Karachi, 23-27 December 1982

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The finest cricketer yet to play for Pakistan, and undoubtedly one of the greatest allrounders the game has ever seen, Imran Khan missed over two years of international bowling having just earned an ICC Best-Ever Test Championship Rating (applied retrospectively to all the Test scorecards in history) of 922, the highest since the First World War and not improved on since. Considering how cricket favoured the bowler before 1914, it's not unreasonable to argue that this was the highest-ever level of performance for a Test bowler.

He picked up a stress fracture of his left shin bone during the 1982-83 Test series between Pakistan and India, but didn't recognise it as such. Instead he bowled through a lot of pain believing it to be just bad bruising. In fact he seriously aggravated the injury to such an extent that he couldn't bowl for two years after the series. Who knows what he might have achieved at his peak, but for the injury? It is testament to a great talent that, approaching his 34th year, he was to return to Test cricket and continue to bowl brilliantly, albeit with slightly less pace. However, if he'd known what was wrong with his leg earlier, we might not have witnessed one of the great spells of Test bowling, indeed one of the great series performances.

Having been made captain earlier in the year, Imran was leading Pakistan in only their sixth series against India, who had won the previous contest three years before and boasted a formidable batting line-up. However, his team were flying high, having recently thumped Australia 3-0.

After a drawn first Test, Imran won the toss in Karachi and put India in. The visitors limped to 169 all out with Imran taking three wickets. Pakistan then raced to 452 thanks to big centuries by Zaheer Abbas and Mudassar Nazar. Thus a tall order for India, but the conditions had clearly mellowed and they had the batsmen to dig in.

Sunil Gavaskar and Dilip Vengsarkar had taken the score to 102-1 when Imran began a new spell. That morning was the first time he'd experienced the pain in his leg and he felt it again when he began to bowl, well into the

evening session. But it soon disappeared as the adrenaline coursed through his veins and he began to deliver a magnificent exhibition of seriously fast swing bowling.

There was a cool breeze flowing across the ground which Imran used to full effect. He began by troubling Gavaskar with a series of difficult deliveries before nipping one back to blast through the defence of the original Indian 'little master'. Six runs later he produced one of the 'balls of the century'. The experienced, ever-reliable Gundappa Viswanath could only stand in disbelief as he offered no stroke to the ball which pitched nearly two feet outside off stump then swung in outrageously to clatter it. To add to the occasion it was Imran's 200th Test wicket and the capacity partisan crowd were going wild. Next up was Mohinder Amarnath, one of the finest players of pace, trapped middle and leg to another late nip-backer. India's premier batsmen were being sent back incredulous at what was happening. Sandeep Patil soon followed, beaten all ends up by speed and inswing. To add to the carnage, Abdul Qadir then took a wicket at the other end before Imran delivered the *coup de grace*, forcing his great allrounder rival, Kapil Dev, to drag the ball onto his stumps with yet another quick inswinger (or 'indipper' as many were calling the delivery at the time).

Stumps were drawn shortly after to end India's evening of pain. They had collapsed from 102-1 to 118-7 and Imran had taken 5-7 – four bowled and an lbw. Featuring incredible speed and immaculate direction, it was one of the first great displays of reverse swing, the now commonplace technique of swinging an older, worn ball. Developed in the late 1970s in Pakistan, Sarfraz Nawaz was the first renowned exponent and he taught the craft to his team-mate Imran. It took a while to be accepted and, indeed, after Imran's spell there were mutterings in the Indian camp, angrily denied by Imran himself, that the ball had been doctored. Indian opener Arun Lal summed the performance up more reasonably: "It was like a secret weapon that was unleashed, and we couldn't defend ourselves."

The next morning Vengsarkar, who had managed to survive the devastation of the previous evening, and Madan Lal delayed the inevitable for an hour or so before Imran struck once more, having Vengsarkar caught behind with a classic outswinger. He quickly wrapped up the innings taking the tailenders, first with an lbw decision and then by uprooting the No. 11's middle stump.

Eight for 60, an innings win and 11 wickets in the match. Imran went into

the third Test at Faisalabad still believing the leg pain was just bruising and proceeded to take another 11 wickets, hit a century and lead his team to a 10-wicket victory. It got worse for India in the fourth Test when Pakistan lost only three wickets on their way to another innings success. This time Imran bowled, he felt, the fastest spell of his life to take 5-3 accounting for the wickets of Gavaskar, Vengsarkar, Viswanath and Kapil. The final two Tests were rain- and riot-affected draws during which Imran, ever the warrior, bowled 66 overs despite visibly limping on occasions.

Imran finished with 40 wickets at an average of 13.95, a record series haul for a captain, 247 runs at 61.75 and an eventual visit to a specialist who was amazed that his shin bone hadn’t shattered considering the amount of stress he’d put on it.

Such was his pace and dominance that some fans began calling him the F-16 after fighter planes received from the United States during the series by the Pakistan Air Force. An apt epithet for the acclaimed high flyer.

Azeem Hafeez – 23-7-46-6

Pakistan v India, Lahore 17-22 October 1984

Azeem Hafeez was the tall, athletic, left-arm Pakistan paceman who was born missing two fingers on his right hand and who wasn't Wasim Akram.

Now, given that these are the two details for which Azeem Hafeez is best remembered today, by those who indeed remember him at all, it seems fitting to get them out of the way up front to allow the focus to move to where it should be – the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, on 19 October 1984. It was Azeem's greatest day in Test cricket, and it came barely a year after his debut. Perhaps more surprisingly, and certainly more disappointingly, his Test career was over four months later.

Azeem's entry into the side could scarcely have been more high profile. Just 20 years old, and with only a fledgling first-class career behind him, the young quick had been brought into the Pakistan team to replace Imran Khan – at that time arguably as close to irreplaceable for his country, both as a bowler and as a leader, as any player has ever been – as the great man recovered from a shin injury. To say that he had big shoes to fill would be something of an understatement. As if that were not enough, his debut Test series was to be away from home against India – his country's greatest and most passionate rivals.

Thrown in to such a cauldron, Azeem had performed commendably, taking 10 wickets in the three Tests before toiling tirelessly on the subsequent five-Test tour of Australia – in the face of unhelpful pitches and heavy run scoring – to take 19 further scalps and emerge as comfortably Pakistan's most successful bowler. If an unproductive rubber against England on his return home to Pakistan put the brakes on somewhat, he was still an automatic selection and he emerged from that setback in the finest of style when India arrived for the first Test of their return series in late 1984.

Batting first, Pakistan ground their way to a big total, Zaheer Abbas's unbeaten 168 the shining highlight of an innings which was declared at the close of day two with the score well past 400. But if the first two days belonged largely to Pakistan's batsmen, day three belonged to Azeem

Hafeez. The early loss of Anshuman Gaekwad, bowled by Jalal-ud-Din with the score on just seven, had been well recovered by Sunil Gavaskar and Dilip Vengsarkar. Both men made the most of a pitch showing no apparent assistance to the bowlers to take the score close to 100 and, with a strong batting line up still to follow, overhauling Pakistan's total in such favourable conditions seemed eminently possible.

Nine wickets and just 62 runs later, such hopes lay in tatters. Vengsarkar was the first to go, Azeem having the Indian number three caught behind by Ashraf Ali. Mohinder Armanath joined his skipper and briefly tried to rebuild, but when Azeem had Gavaskar caught at slip by Saleem Malik with the score on 112, the wheels fell off India's innings in dramatic style. Sandeep Patil went the same way as his captain – caught Saleem Malik, bowled Azeem Hafeez – for a duck, before Azeem followed that up with another pair of back-to-back identikit dismissals, Ravi Shastri and Kapil Dev both trapped lbw for a combined total of three runs. When Mudassar Nazar dismissed Roger Binny shortly afterwards, India had not only fallen from 94-1 to 120-7 but had – ridiculously, given the unhelpfulness of the pitch to the bowlers – lost their last five wickets for eight runs. Chief among their tormentors was Azeem Hafeez, already with five to his name and wreaking havoc in conditions under which he had no right to, moving the ball both ways and bringing both the bat's edge and batsmen's pads into play.

Armanath led a modicum of resistance to at least make the taking of the last three wickets harder work, but Azeem helped himself to a sixth by skittling Chetan Sharma and when Armanath was himself removed by one of Wasim Raja's googlies, India were all out for 156. On a pitch where earlier that day the match situation had read that more than 500 runs had been scored for the loss of just 10 wickets, the visitors now, almost unbelievably, found themselves forced to follow on.

They made a much better fist of the second time round, comfortably forcing the Test to go the distance to an eventual tame draw. But such batting comfort did little but put their first innings – and in particular, Azeem's bowling – into the perspective it deserved. To cause such mayhem to such a strong batting team on a pitch that was otherwise full of runs was a truly special performance, and one which deservedly won him the Man of the Match award.

The series was curtailed after the second, drawn, Test due to the assassination of Indira Ghandi and Azeem Hafeez embarked on what would

be the last few months of his Test career. It's not that he bowled particularly badly – in the six Tests home and away against New Zealand with which he finished his career, Azeem took 22 wickets and took at least one wicket in every innings in which he bowled. However, in the last of those Tests, in Dunedin in February 1985, another left-arm paceman – even younger, even faster and even better – took 10 wickets for the match, lit up the cricketing world, and became the golden boy for the next generation of Pakistanis. So did Wasim Akram effectively end the Test career of Azeem Hafeez. While he played another 15 years, at international level the hero of Lahore was put out to pasture although, he was not yet 22.

Azeem Hafeez was the tall, athletic left-arm Pakistani paceman who was born missing two fingers on his right hand and who wasn't Wasim Akram. Well, the handicap didn't stop him being a mighty fine bowler. And while he might not have been in Wasim's class, one day in Lahore in October 1984, he did something his successor would have been very proud of.

Muttiah Muralitharan – 34.1-9-87-8

Sri Lanka v India, Colombo 29 August-2 September 2001

"It's easy being a bowler. You make a mistake, you have another chance. Against me, batsmen only have one chance. One mistake and that's the end."

Asked to account for a five-hour eight-wicket spell against the Indians on the first day of the SSC Colombo Test in 2001, Muttiah Muralitharan made it sound so simple. It was an indicator of his surging confidence – 'I'll get you in the end' – but hardly does justice to what Dav Whatmore, the Sri Lanka coach, described as "an incredible feat of skill, fitness, concentration and determination".

At 29, Murali was gobbling up wickets faster than ever, with the invisible doosra increasingly emerging from his bag of tricks. In 2000 he had become the second-fastest bowler to pass 300 Test wickets (58 matches) and the first two years of the new century would bring him 155 victims in 22 Tests.

At Colombo he outwitted India on a largely benign batting surface, returning 8-87 to bowl out the opposition for 234. Harbhajan Singh, the masterful Indian spinner, managed 2-185 as Sri Lanka went past 600 in reply. "Murali is without peer at the moment", said the India coach John Wright. India were the traditional masters of spin. Five months earlier their batsmen had found an answer to Shane Warne, who bought his wickets at 50 runs apiece, as India staged one of the great Test comebacks against the mighty Australians. They were one of only two nations against whom Murali averaged more than 30 through his career. (Australia were the other, naturally.)

And on the eve of the decisive third Test at Colombo it seemed they were getting the measure of Murali once more, even without the injured Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman. In the previous match at Kandy, Murali had conceded 96 runs from 25 overs as Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid fashioned brilliant attacking innings to chase down 264 and square the series. Much was at stake at Colombo: India had not won a series abroad in more

than seven years, while Sri Lanka had not won a rubber home or away in 16 months.

When a spinner runs amok on the first day of a match in Sri Lanka it is reasonable to assume that the pitch was one of those dry, underprepared subcontinental pitches which turn square from the outset. But Sri Lanka were trying to prepare sporting surfaces to encourage attacking cricket and stave off the dustbowl draws while at the same time allowing the match time to evolve.

Indeed, India's lunchtime score of 91-0 was a far better indicator of the conditions than what happened thereafter. Murali's nine overs went for 28 runs as the openers Shiv Sundar

Das and Sadagoppan Ramesh looked to follow their captain's example in the previous Test. "You cannot let him settle down", was Ganguly's verdict on Murali. "If you defend and let him bowl where he wants to then it's just a matter of time before he gets you." Murali was unbowed. 'If they try to attack me I will get wickets, just keep the line and length.'

It all began in his second over after lunch. Das, rushing at Murali once too often, misjudged the flight and was bowled playing an ugly and desperate heave. Ramesh drove a floated tempter to slip six overs later. Ganguly, true to his word, advanced down the wicket to the eighth ball he faced from Murali but was struck on the pad. The Sri Lankans implored for lbw. The ball still had a long way to travel, and Ganguly might well have expected the benefit of the doubt, this being a time when ball-tracking was nothing more than a canine pastime. Instead, umpire David Orchard raised his finger and Ganguly had time to consider the gap between plan and execution. Murali's figures since lunch were 6-3-6-3.

Sri Lanka had to wait another 15 overs for the next one – and it didn't fall to Murali. Mohammad Kaif became Chaminda Vaas's 150th Test wicket. A left armer whose skill, stamina and cunning could stifle the best batsmen on flat Sri Lankan pitches, Vaas was the one bowler Murali could trust to apply pressure at the other end.

"Murali always told me: 'Try and bowl dot balls, I'll try to take wickets'", said Vaas. His contribution in this innings was a classic of its kind: 24-7-60-2. Batsmen could hardly breathe at either end, and Murali gorged on their frustrations. Together, they took 895 wickets in 95 Test matches, behind only Warne and McGrath (1001 in 104).

Rahul Dravid still stood between the Sri Lankans and the Indian tail. He

already had two fifties in the series, coming on the back of arguably his greatest Test innings: 180 against Australia at Kolkata in March. Murali against Dravid was one of the great duels of that era: two master technicians locked in a chess match. Batsman had outmanoeuvred bowler at Galle and Kandy by playing almost exclusively through the leg side with the turn and often meeting the ball outside off stump to smother the spin with soft hands, or else use his pads as a blockade. Now Dravid was at it again, creeping up ominously towards a half-century. Murali made his move, planting Hashan Tillakaratne at leg-gully and coming round the wicket to target middle and leg stump. Dravid flicked, Tillakaratne caught. Checkmate.

Wicket-keeper Sameer Dighe was lbw playing no shot in the same over: 192-6. Murali, aware of the riches now in front of him, resisted the pleas of his captain to have a rest and promptly mopped up the tail. On a blameless pitch India had lost 10 wickets for 137 runs in less than two sessions.

Murali bowled 34.1 overs without pause – save for lunch, tea and the merciful law in cricket which says a player cannot bowl from both ends. He followed it up with another 46.5 overs in the second innings to deliver Sri Lanka victory by an innings.

Four-hundred-and-eighty-six balls in the match – or 486 chances to take a wicket, as Murali would say. Bowling seems so easy when you put it like that.

Javagal Srinath – 11.5-4-21-6

India v South Africa, Ahmedabad 20-23 November 1996

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‘He looks like an accountant’ was my first thought on seeing Javagal Srinath in action. ‘Maybe he specialises in double-entry wicket-taking’. Not really very funny, and it would have worked better had he been a wicket-keeper, but he certainly didn’t seem to exude the same menace as the likes of contemporaries Allan Donald and Curtly Ambrose. That said, his fastest deliveries were in the mid-nineties and Imran Khan considered him one of the most underrated bowlers of his generation.

On a dusty pitch at Motera Stadium it would be his team-mates Anil Kumble, Sunil Joshi and Narendra Hirwani who would have expected to prosper, and indeed South Africa went with two spinners for the first Test of their 1996-97 tour of India. Australia were the number one Test team at the time but South Africa were not far behind. Unbeaten in two years and 10 Tests it was crucial to any ambitions of overhauling Australia to win in Asia.

Sachin Tendulkar won the toss and, noting the pitch was likely to deteriorate, chose to bat. The Indian team included debutant VVS Laxman and, with Sourav Ganguly injured, Rahul Dravid batted for the first time at number three. It would not be the last. India’s first innings was punctuated by the phenomenal fielding skills of Jonty Rhodes, as he first held a fantastic catch to dismiss Tendulkar, who top-scored with just 42, before running out Mohammad Azharuddin (who became in this match the first player ever to play against all of the then Test-playing nations) with a direct hit from cover.

Hobbling to 215-8 at stumps, India were all out early the next morning for 223. Another factor in that first innings was the umpiring of Shyam Bansal, who had a dreadful game, even if his ineptitude was at least equitable. The pitch played its part when India took over with the ball, the first seven South Africa wickets falling to spinners but, given the batting conditions, Fanie de Villiers’ partnerships of 63 with Pat Symcox and 60 with Donald were outstanding. Villiers finished on 67 not out as he steered South Africa from 119-7 to a first-innings lead of 21. In a sudden burst of penetrative bowling to close the innings Srinath took the last two wickets for

two runs – a sign of things to come.

Things did not improve for India when Donald dismissed both openers with the home side still behind and, at 124-7 the lead was barely 100. The debutant Laxman, playing the kind of innings for which he would become renowned, was able to help navigate his side to 190 all out, but a target of 170, even on a tricky surface, was surely within South Africa's reach.

Time to bring the Proteas to account. The general expectation was that Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad would use the shine on the ball before the spinners took over – India's second innings had shown that even Donald and de Villiers could get little response from a comatose pitch unresponsive to even the best pacemen. But with the fifth ball of the first over the equation changed. Srinath swung one into Andrew Hudson's pads and, though it looked on replay that it would have missed leg stump, up went umpire Bansal's finger. The very next ball, Cullinan edged one to Nayan Mongia – ha! Double-entry wicket-taking!

Srinath and Prasad were then rested as Tendulkar gave the ball to his spinners but, even though they took a couple of wickets, at 96-4 South Africa seemed to have wrested back the initiative. Then Tendulkar brought Srinath back; Dave Richardson was done for immediately as he wafted at one which carried to Mongia, and immediately next ball Rhodes, nursing a strained hamstring, was given out to a reverse-swinging yorker which was destined to miss. Umpire Bansal thought otherwise, and once again Srinath had two in two – less accountancy and more inspiration.

South Africa were now on 96-6 and things had shifted India's way. However, de Villiers, the thorn in India's side in the first innings, was still to come. Just four runs were added before Kumble bowled Symcox without him having troubled the scorer, then the Indian leggie completed the momentum shift by having de Villiers caught at the same score. Back came Srinath and 105-8 became 105-9 when Donald was bowled, and amazingly he made it two from two yet again when Paul Adams was bowled next ball by another vicious inswinger – double-entry wicket-taking *par excellence*. A tight line and judicious use of the shine on the ball had proved South Africa's undoing. Only the very best fast bowlers have been able to get a response from an Asian slow turner and on this day Srinath belonged to that group.

With South Africa all out for 105, skipper Hansie Cronje providing the only resistance on 48 not out, India had proved victorious by 64 runs; the last six wickets had fallen with just nine runs added to the total. Srinath was

deservedly handed the match award for what *Wisden* described as ‘devastating pace bowling’ as he notched his first five-for in what was his 22nd Test. In 2015 *The Times of India* nominated it the most memorable performance in India v South Africa Tests.

The second Test was won easily by South Africa by 329 runs, however India maintained its 10-series unbeaten record at home with an overwhelming third Test victory on the back of a magnificent century from Azharuddin. It was South Africa’s first series defeat since losing in a single-Test series to West Indies on its return from exile in 1992. Srinath managed 17 wickets for the series and he would go on to total 35 wickets in all in six consecutive Tests against South Africa during that summer. Srinath reached heights which few Indian pacemen have equalled, including becoming the first Indian bowler to reach 300 wickets in ODIs. His record of 236 Test wickets at just over 30 compares favourably with any of his countrymen and this day at Ahmedabad was his own nomination as his best performance. He might have resembled an accountant, but he didn’t bowl like one.

Kapil Dev – 31-2-77-6

India v West Indies, Delhi 29 October-3 November 1983

As the relative importance of the Test game dwindles in international cricket the word most highly featured amongst its many virtues is ‘narrative’. The swings and sways over five days can never be matched in any shortened form of the game. Test cricket continues to survive and will probably outlive any reader of this book but the greatest narrative associated with Test cricket has already gone – the long tour and the extended series of five-day matches. The Ashes alone remains and even that has been tangled. Any five-month tour will throw up stories, highs and lows, and very likely some great cricket as well. There are the previews and post-mortems, careers won and lost and time for analysis, pause and reflection.

When West Indies arrived in India in October 1983 there was more than just an air of expectation. There was little love lost since the ‘barbarism’ of the Sabina Park Test of 1976 which left the visitors looking like ‘Napoleon’s troops on the retreat from Moscow’. Accusations of deliberate beamers and a ‘bowl to kill’ policy were hurled at the home side who, fresh from a battering from Lillee and Thomson, offered scant sympathy. In 1978-79 India defeated a Packerless West Indies 1-0 and discovered her first proper pace attack since the 1930s, led by Kapil Dev. The next time the two countries met, Kapil was captain. Despite his best efforts with the ball India lost 2-0 in the Caribbean. This was 1983 and then came the World Cup and that famous day at Lord’s.

India returned home to be garlanded and lauded while West Indies licked their considerable wounds – only two months after that Cup Final trauma they arrived for six Tests and six ODIs and with a number of points to prove. In the calendar year of 1983 these two sides played 11 Tests and 11 ODIs against one another. A narrative worthy of Tolstoy.

The triumphant World Cup-winning captain, Kapil Dev, had only replaced the first Indian little master, Sunil Gavaskar, at the start of the year after an appalling tour of Pakistan and after that day at Lord’s his position was secure in a country swept by the euphoria of a major sporting triumph. Not that Gavaskar’s fame was dimming as he closed in on Don Bradman’s

record of Test centuries and Geoff Boycott's Test runs. Home crowds wanted to see records fall and a repeat of the great deeds in both forms of the game.

The 1983 West Indies touring party scarcely paid lip service to the perceived wisdom of playing in spin-friendly India, with the traditional battery of fast bowlers supported by part-time spinners. They believed that even on unhelpful pitches the sheer class and aggression of Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding and Wayne Daniel would be sufficient to bulldoze the home side into submission. Wes Hall, Andy Roberts, Graham Mckenzie and Imran Khan had all proved that it was possible to take wickets aplenty even on the most anodyne of subcontinental pitches and West Indies were confident that spin would prove more of a distraction than an asset. In the first Test Marshall proved the point and the first two ODIs were equally one-sided. Suddenly the joy of Lord's seemed far away.

The second Test, at Delhi, showed India in a different light. But it was hard to see how they could out-bowl West Indies – spinners Kirti Azad and Ravi Shastri were poor followers of the great '70s quartet and the potential match-winner, Kapil Dev, would need precisely the same conditions which would help West Indies' pace. The pitch showed no signs of being helpful; *Wisden's* description of 'bland' is itself tepid. Gavaskar, having re-thought his strategy, raced to his fastest century, off 94 balls, and equalled Don Bradman's total of 29. Dilip Vengsarkar further silenced the Windies big guns as India closed at 464. No doubt the home side now anticipated a long stretch in the field. Where Marshall and co. had laboured against India how could India winkle out Richards and co. any quicker?

The captain led by example giving the openers an 'unexpectedly torrid time' and removing Desmond Haynes before the close of day two. Next morning it was Azad who made two inroads before the prize wicket of Viv Richards went to Kapil leaving West Indies in a precarious position at 173-5. Now it was captain against captain. With the shine gone and the spinners neutered Clive Lloyd applied all his experience; the total rose as he and Gus Logie battened down the hatches. Even the second new ball brought no further success until, suddenly, Kapil drew on all his reserves for one last push to keep the game alive. The push became a shove and West Indies began to crumble. On a pitch still offering nothing to the bowlers a score of 304-5 dwindled to 370-9 – Kapil accepted a return chance from Gus Logie, took out Jeff Dujon and Marshall and then, finally, trapped Lloyd in front. On this pitch a return of 6-77 where even the West Indian battery had been

silenced was a remarkable performance of sustained effort and skill. Kapil had strictly adhered to his own mantra: ‘A paceman has to learn to bowl on all types of pitches. He should never allow negative thoughts to creep in. I was positive when I bowled in India. I was prepared for it’. With a first-innings lead of 80 and the best part of two days to play there was a glimmer of hope that a victory might follow.

It didn’t. India batted poorly and with wickets falling regularly it was impossible to accelerate sufficiently to think of setting a target. Vengsarkar and Roger Binny dug in to ensure an honourable draw. At the very least the wheels that had appeared to be coming off had been re-attached. Gavaskar had joined The Don, India had sniffed victory and Kapil’s great charge had only been halted by the newly obdurate Lloyd who would repeat his feat later on in the series to help seal a three-nil result.

Kapil’s career was littered with wonderful performances with both bat and ball in all continents on all kinds of pitches. Little wonder that he was rewarded with the prize he most cherished: *Wisden* Indian Cricketer of the Century.

Mitchell Johnson – 24-4-61-8

Australia v South Africa, Perth 17-21 December 2008

Perhaps content in its many great victories and the roll call of all-time greats it's bred, Australian cricket had never felt any great need to trumpet the arrival of young talent with quite the same fuss as success-starved nations. So when a member of the lineage as hyperbole-averse as Dennis Lillee proclaimed 16-year-old Townsville-born Mitchell Guy Johnson a "once in a generation bowler", heads immediately turned. Praise from Caesar had come after Lillee witnessed teenage Johnson sling down a mere trio of deliveries in the nets, after which the fast-bowling great phoned his old team-mate Rod Marsh at the Australian Cricket Academy and boldly proclaimed, "I've found one."

Yet it wasn't until a decade later that Australia got its clearest and most dramatic glimpse of what Lillee had indeed discovered, when in the Perth Test of 2008 Johnson wreaked unbridled carnage against the golden greats of South African batting. Previously upright and calm, Graeme Smith's tourists were laid waste as Johnson burned his way through their line-up to claim 8-61. This first great insight into his devastating potential would remain his most statistically potent by the time he called it quits from Test cricket late in 2015.

Here also was a marker of time down under; Warne and McGrath were assuredly gone, but the future of the country's bowling stocks seemed suddenly healthy and potent again. Though they didn't know it at the time, for the million or so Australians glued to their televisions at home it would also prove one of the last great spells of fast bowling they'd watch with the commentary soundtrack of Bill Lawry and Tony Greig. Change was coming.

No bowler felt change like Mitchell Johnson. In the troubled times that would soon arrive, he came to be known as a bowler whose low-hanging, slinging action had a worrying tendency to fall apart. When it went really badly, that tended to circumvent his swinging of the ball along conventional lines. But here at Perth he was a model of Akramesque control, striking with devilish late swing in a spell of 5-2 in 20 deliveries using a Kookaburra ball

some 70 overs old and ragged. What's more, he worked with what the pitch had to offer in terms of pace and bounce but there were no free gifts – this was a good old-fashioned surface offering an even contest.

In reply to Australia's 375, the Proteas had been set fair at 234-3 with Jacques Kallis and AB de Villiers at the crease. Then, unbroken by the intervention of another bowler, Johnson removed a further six increasingly panicked South Africans in the blink of an eye, clearing out the players' viewing area so that the mess of pads, bats and opening doors resembled a Benny Hill skit. Once the show was over South Africa had been routed for 281 with barely enough time to process their own collapse.

The key weaponry here was late swing away from the right-handed batsmen. For his first wicket of the innings, Johnson had been the beneficiary of Neil McKenzie's injudicious shot-selection to a short, wide stock ball that never got up, while Graeme Smith chopped on to his stumps from a delivery that did duck in, but barely enough to hit a second set of stumps. After these, Johnson's celebrations appeared more a request for peer approval than the presence of any great swagger.

It was the wicket of de Villiers that sparked the collapse late on day two – the ball angling across the right-hander's bat and claiming the edge that sent the catalytic murmurs of panic through the sheds. An over later Kallis departed in identical style. If as patient and adaptive a customer as Kallis had failed to heed the lesson of de Villiers' dismissal, surely further calamity was afoot? The fielding side Kallis had subdued to the brink of siesta now screeched into hysterical fits of joy. Roused to this state by their spearhead, they'd keep the WACA cauldron at boiling point for the remainder of the day's play, that each incoming batsman could rely on.

But Johnson still needed to fire the bullets. Adjusting his angle for the left-handers JP Duminy and Morne Morkel, he removed them with a bouncer and slow yorker respectively. The specialist batsman had flashed at a ball he should have left and Morkel jammed out a catch off a leading edge, the pair undone by brawn and brain in equal measure. If the Proteas' once promising innings wasn't in tatters already, Paul Harris confirmed it by jumping at the late-afternoon shadows to flick an innocuous delivery of unthreateningly straight line to Jason Krejza at leg-gully. In a state of total command only an hour earlier, the Proteas' innings reached stumps at 243-8 in the smouldering state of a dumpster fire. Thirty-eight runs were added the following morning as Johnson increased his haul by one when almost decapitating Dale Steyn.

Shortly afterwards it was almost nine (and with it the best figures ever by an Australian) when a Mark Boucher pull fell agonisingly between Brad Haddin and Brett Lee.

Yet none of the chaos Johnson had wrought on day two could hope to compare with what followed and that came with an embarrassing kicker for the home side. Having claimed the last of his eight first-innings wickets and departed the field to a hero's reception from his newly-adopted state crowd, Johnson's deeds were undone across the following 48 hours as he and his team-mates lived out a kind of endless nightmare. Set an improbable 414 to win, not even Johnson's three wickets could prevent Smith, Kallis and de Villiers from pulling off one of the game's greatest heists as South Africa claimed a stunning comeback victory. It would prove an uncanny metaphor for Johnson's career: forever capable of spells that could decimate even the toughest batting line-ups, he also knew that as capricious a game as Test cricket was just as likely to punish and pain him a day later. Yet Dennis Lillee had been right – he, and lovers of fearsome fast bowling, had certainly found one.

Rangana Herath – 33.1-3-127-9

Sri Lanka v Pakistan, Colombo, 14-18 August 2014

It's tempting to think that Mahela Jayawardene, like many Sri Lankan cricket captains before him, would often be heard in the shower singing the old children's song:

Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Murali, Murali, Murali, Murali,
Life is but a dream.

What a luxury to have Muttiah Muralitharan to throw the ball to when you're fielding. But it couldn't last forever. On 22 July 2010 Murali finally called it a day, having taken eight wickets in a match where all the other spinners, on both sides, managed just two wickets between them in 129 overs. In some ways HMRKB Herath, who'd taken one of those wickets, was the obvious successor, but aged 32 with 22 Tests spanning 11 years and only 71 wickets at 37.88 under his belt, many saw him merely as a stopgap while Sri Lanka searched for a more talented replacement.

Rangana Herath dreamed other dreams. Could he be one of those slowly maturing spinners whose best years come late in a career, or did he need to come out from Murali's shadow to shine? Whatever, he successfully took over the role of principal spinner in the Sri Lankan team to such effect that he took more Test wickets in 2012 than any other player and repeated the feat in 2014.

A chunky, some might say rotund or even portly, left armer, with a quiet, generous disposition, Herath stood just 5ft 5in in his socks. His action was classically orthodox with few quirks. He had one that went the other way, but some said it was easier to read than *The Da Vinci Code*. He took his wickets through unerring accuracy, subtle variations of speed and flight and the stamina to bowl over after over. Sri Lankan cricket not being the most lucrative, he worked as a bank clerk during most of his career and perhaps

that’s where he learned the ability to maintain concentration during long spells.

Arguably he shone most brightly in the second Test of a two-match series at home against a Pakistan team that was third in the ICC rankings. He’d bossed and won the first match with nine wickets and a player-of-the-match award, and was now looking to finish the job. But the wicket was a good one and he would have to work hard and bowl well.

Sri Lanka chose to bat and Pakistan did well to restrict them to 261-8 by stumps. Herath came to the wicket at the start of the second day and was last out having helped add 59 crucial runs. Pakistan began their reply belligerently, biffing fours at every opportunity, and Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews turned to Herath after just four overs. The openers continued to attack, but then switched to defence as Herath found his accuracy. Before long he pitched one wider, inviting the drive, but it turned and caught Khurram Manzoor’s edge on its way to the ’keeper.

Pakistan took control for most of the afternoon session before losing two quick wickets, Azhar Ali to Herath. Soon after tea, he landed the stalwart Younis Khan, caught off his boot, and then a few balls later, had captain Misbah-ul-Haq caught behind with one that dipped and turned. Pakistan were teetering on 140-5 but they showed great resolve to finish the day on 244-6, five wickets to Herath.

The next day, although Pakistan continued to bat well on a pitch remaining true, Herath slowly and surely winkled them out with his trademark mixture of patience and cunning – and little help at the other end – ending with 9-127. He’d managed to peg Pakistan’s first innings lead to just 12 runs.

Herath was the 16th bowler to take nine or more wickets in an innings and curiously the first left armer to achieve it. But how great an achievement was this? Well, it’s an extremely rare feat, achieved only 18 times at time of writing. But why is it so rare? Primarily because the bowler’s team-mates take other wickets. The laws of averages suggest it’s a highly unlikely event, and it’s even more unlikely when you consider that the other bowlers, most of whom will be good players, together nearly always bowl more overs, often a lot more, and that there is a certain amount of fortune in taking a wicket, good ball or bad!

But not to crab the achievement, the iron-clad ingredient in the nine-wicket recipe is that you have to bowl really well, especially when little or no

pressure is being applied at the other end as was the case in this match. The pitch was good and Pakistan took more than 200 runs off the other bowlers for the loss of just one wicket. Herath bowled with determination, guile and skill to keep Sri Lanka in the game. This gave the Sri Lankan batsmen the chance to build a second innings lead of 270 and give Herath himself a chance to bowl out Pakistan for a 2-0 series win. This he duly did. With some help this time from his fellow bowlers he wrapped up the win by 105 runs, taking 5-57 in the process.

Pakistan batting coach Grant Flower said afterwards that Herath was the difference between the two teams in the series. “They came across the world’s best bowler who troubles the best in the world”, was his succinct analysis. Herath had taken 14 wickets in the match and 23 in the series, a record for a two-Test series (or in a series when the bowler played only two Tests).

And to cap it off, Jayawardene was playing his 149th and final Test. It would be nice to think that, post-Murali, his successors as Sri Lankan captain could be heard singing a different tune in the shower: “*Herath’s the way, aha, aha, I like it, aha, aha*”.

Anil Kumble – 26.3-9-74-10

India v Pakistan, Delhi 4-7 February 1999

India versus Pakistan – the mother of all cricket rivalries, and in 1999 the stakes were high as the two sides met in India for their first Test series in a decade. Relations between the nations had been tense in the intervening years, and within months of this tour the two countries found themselves at war in Kashmir. But Pakistan had travelled to India partly in the name of cricket diplomacy, following the historic visit of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Pakistan.

Cricketing ties had not been completely severed during the 1990s, and the sides had contested more than 40 ODIs. But the vast majority had been played at neutral venues such as Sharjah, Singapore and even Toronto, and it was Pakistan who had the edge. Incredibly, you had to go back to the 1979-80 series, for India's last Test victory over Pakistan.

But the home side now had young stars like Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and of course the 'Little Master' Sachin Tendulkar. But how would they fare against Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Mushtaq Ahmed and Saqlain Mushtaq in the longest form of the game? Both nations looked on with bated breath.

India were confident of their chances on home soil but Wasim's Pakistan team produced the goods in the first Test. India had been set 271 to win in the fourth innings and appeared home and hosed at 254-6 with Tendulkar unbeaten on 136. But when he holed out to Saqlain India collapsed inside four overs to lose by 12 agonising runs.

For India defeat in the second Test was unthinkable, and the team travelled to Delhi with the pride of a nation resting on their shoulders. India batted first and made 252, with Saqlain recording his third five-wicket haul in succession. The score looked no more than adequate until Pakistan were bowled out for 172. Anil Kumble obviously liked the wicket as much as Saqlain and finished with 4-75.

Saqlain responded with yet another five-for in India's second innings, but their 80-run advantage proved crucial as a total of 339 left Pakistan chasing

420 for the win. No team had ever scored that many runs to win a Test, and the pitch, vandalised by fundamentalists a month earlier, was deteriorating. But Pakistan's openers, Saeed Anwar and Shahid Afridi were unconcerned with history and swashbuckled their way to 101 without loss before lunch on the fourth day.

The equation had been rewritten. Pakistan now needed 319 and India still had to find a way to take 10 wickets. A nervous India remained favourites but they needed a breakthrough.

Kumble was India's best hope yet his figures read 0-27 from six at lunch. But after the break captain Mohammad Azharuddin made the inspired decision to switch ends. Bowling from the Pavilion end the awkward, moustachioed engineering student was transformed.

Two and a half hours later he was no longer a leggie who bowled too fast and with little turn, but cricketing royalty – one of only two men in history to take all 10 wickets in a Test innings. He was by no means a zero at the start of the innings (he already had 50 Tests, more than 200 scalps, 12 five-wicket hauls and a 10-wicket match under his belt) but by the end he was most definitely the hero.

Kumble's first, and most controversial, victim was Afridi, immediately after lunch. The free-scoring opener was poised menacingly on 41 but was sent on his way when he edged behind. But had he touched it? Many believe to this day that he did not. Afridi was incensed. He stood his ground and when he finally departed it was with a shake of the head, a slap of the bat on his pads and a volley of choice language. But the breakthrough had been made and the next two wickets were classic Kumble. Ijaz Ahmed was lbw first ball, trapped by a full, fast delivery. Inzamam ul-Haq survived the hat-trick but was bowled off an inside edge four overs later, playing for spin that never materialised. Kumble, sticking to his usual plan of greeting the new batsman with straight darts, had Yousuf Youhana pinned in front two balls later and Pakistan were 115-4.

India knew that Saeed Anwar's wicket was now key, even if he was starting to run out of partners. Moin Khan was next to fall, caught at slip with the score on 127. Soon afterwards Indian joy was unconfined when the left-handed danger man clipped a slower delivery to VVS Laxman at short-leg. India knew the game was theirs, and Kumble later admitted that his thoughts turned to the prospect of making history. But fatigue was setting in, and the seventh-wicket partnership of Saleem Malik and Wasim held on until tea.

After the break a rejuvenated Kumble struck again, bowling Malik as he tried to pull a shorter ball. Seven down. Mushtaq Ahmed was next to fall not long after, caught by Dravid off his glove at gully. As usual Kumble followed his wicket-taking ball with a full straight delivery and Saqlain was struck in front of middle. Up went the finger amid scenes of pandemonium as the crowd chanted Kumble's name. But that had been the last ball of the over. Kumble was stranded on a hat-trick with nine wickets to his name.

Against that fevered backdrop Indian skipper Azharuddin famously instructed Javagal Srinath to bowl wide so as not to take the final wicket. He did so, and it was clear no Indian fielder would have taken a catch. All eyes were back on Kumble. Wasim survived the hat-trick ball, but the disappointment was short-lived as he was caught by Laxman at short-leg two balls later.

Pakistan were all out for 207, India had beaten their rivals for the first time in 20 years and tied the two-match series. Kumble, who was carried from the field shoulder high, had become only the second man in history to take all 10 wickets in an innings, 43 years after Jim Laker.

Dale Steyn – 16.4-6-51-7

India v South Africa, Nagpur 6-9 February 2010

Fast bowling was in a seedy state. Pitches and playing conditions had colluded against it; workloads had become inimical. The slower, ostensibly subtler arts were all the rage – and that primarily for their defensive qualities. Cricket, more than ever, was a batsman's game. "Bowling", declared Kevin Pietersen, the new order's brashest beneficiary, "is for mugs! My tip to all bowlers? Learn to bat!"

Dale Steyn is no mug, and he never cared much for batting. His youthful aspiration was "to be Allan Donald through the air" but with the accuracy of Donald's new-ball partner: "I wanted to be the faster version of Shaun Pollock." In this he was successful beyond his idlest and wildest dreams. He has united the creativity of a maestro to the consistency of an automaton. "I'm through and through a strike bowler", he said recently. "I get a ball in my hand; you'll see something happen. It's either going to be 40 runs in four overs, or there's going to be a couple of wickets." More often than not there are wickets, which have come quicker to Steyn than to anyone else in this run-silly epoch; only Victorians and Edwardians rival his strike-rate. He swings the new ball and reverses the old, and can cut or seam it in any environment. He has learnt to bowl within himself, but can always find an extra gear. The informed observers are now consentient: This man is an all-time great; among South Africans, indubitably, he is the GOAT.

His only deficiency is said to be height, but even this seems debatable. If he were any taller than his 5'10", he might not whisk through his action with quite the same snap. Less bounce also means less to leave on length, which is why, if anything, he claims to "prefer bowling on low, slow wickets here in India." Although this seems an extraordinary thing for a fast bowler to say, his record in that country (26 scalps at an average of 21) bears him out; it bears comparison, indeed, with any of his predecessors.

The first Test of the 2010 rubber started promisingly, when South Africa won the toss, batted first and, on the back of megatons from Hashim Amla and Jacques Kallis, mounted the elephantine tally of 558 for six declared. The

surface was every bit as flat as this implies, but it mattered little to Steyn, who had observed in advance that "a ball bowled at 145 kph, whether it's in Jo'burg or Nagpur, is still 145 kph in the air." The plan as far as the pitch was concerned was simply to find what he called (*ad modum* Pollock) "*that* area" and to hit it hard. The location of "*that* area" differs from country to country, and from ground to ground – "if you go to the WACA, slightly fuller; if you are playing in Nagpur, slightly shorter" – but the goal, he says, is always the same: to hit the top of off stump, and to breed uncertainty in the minds of the batsmen.

Murali Vijay, playing only the fourth Test match of his young career, looked especially uncertain. In Steyn's fifth over, a full-pitched away-swinger caught him on the crease. The bowler, encouraged, visualised his next move:

> "If I can't see myself getting a batter out, then what's the purpose of me running in to bowl? If I am standing at the top of my mark and thinking, 'this guy is going to hit me for six', then he is probably going to hit me for a six. But if I am standing there thinking, 'I am going to pitch the ball on off; I am going to bring it back into him; I am going to hit the top of off stump…'"

…then he would do precisely that. Vijay shouldered arms and heard his stumps crackle. Steyn's memorable celebration, tongue out and charging at his team-mates, somewhat spoiled the back-story. "That kind of stuff just doesn't happen out in the middle", he confirmed afterwards. "We really planned it!" Sachin Tendulkar was the new batsman, about to embark on the most productive year of his storied career. He opened his innings by creaming a full one through the off side. Steyn was philosophical: "If you pitch the ball up, you'll get driven, but when you pitch it up you have a chance of finding the edge of the bat. If he's willing to drive, there's a chance I can get a wicket. That's the risk you take." He took it again next ball, delivered from marginally closer to the stumps, with a tighter line and a wider arc. Tendulkar attempted to repeat the treatment and found the edge.

The hosts were now in proper bother, but Virender Sehwag and S Badrinath mounted a recovery. Sehwag, watchful by his standards, was still destructive enough to take 34 runs from just 38 Steyn deliveries. (His team-mates between them managed only seven off the other 62.) He was also

destructive enough to destroy the ball, splitting its seam and forcing its replacement. Steyn has always been finical about his bowling apparatus. He likes it “oval-shaped, like a rugby ball. Very important. Must feel nice and small in my hand.” The new one obviously met with his approval. His first exertion with it was slippery and of good length, tailing into middle and leg, and Badrinath flicked it straight into the hands of short mid-wicket. Those who described it as a ‘soft’ dismissal did the bowler a disservice. One of the reasons he loves playing in India is that “I can have guys catching at short mid-wicket, short-cover; I can bowl straighter lines.”

He bowled another straight one two balls later, and debutant Wriddhiman Saha did a Vijay. Zaheer Khan and Amit Mishra were bowled, too, and Harbhajan Singh would have extended the vogue but for the intercession of his back pad. Steyn finished the post-tea session with five wickets for just three runs, paving the way for a comfy innings victory. It was, by wide agreement, one of the finest feats of bowling ever seen on Indian soil. By our reckoning there are only three better.

Muttiah Muralitharan – 30-10-70-8

England v Sri Lanka, Nottingham 2-5 June 2006

31

Lest we lurch into cliché, it is worth reminding ourselves that one of the chief reasons why sport is so compelling is that there is no script (assuming it's not all a fix). Events unravel without the steer of a creative mind, but instead with a curious will of their own. So when they reveal beautiful narrative arcs, it is all the more miraculous. Right up to the last ball of his immeasurable career, when he reached the Everest of 800 Test wickets, the story of Muttiah Muralitharan is filled with wondrous tales.

In 2006, eight years after taking 9-65 on his debut Test in England, Murali's final act on his beloved English soil was another deconstruction of the home team to produce the best pre-Broad Test figures at Trent Bridge and give Sri Lanka a share of the three-match series. And forced to watch from square-leg was the Australian umpire who had nearly driven Murali to retirement when he called him for chucking at Melbourne 10 years earlier.

Darrell Hair would have been powerless to intervene even had he been standing at Murali's end, following the ICC's decision in 2005 to increase the degree by which a bowler can bend his arm. As the little 34-year-old genius danced his way through England on a sunny Sunday afternoon, delivering 30 overs in one magnificent spell from the Pavilion end, it was hard to ignore the heavy presence of the bus controller figure at square-leg, eyes hidden behind shades and face betraying not a twitch of emotion. Murali could not have devised a more appropriate revenge had he strung Hair up and tickled his nose with a feather. Honestly, who writes his scripts?

It was a pity Hair didn't get a better view of a masterclass. Wicketless until his 10th over as the England openers briefly raised hope of chasing an improbable 325 on a wearing pitch with a stand of 84, Murali's next 17 overs brought eight wickets for 26 runs, with all but one of the English batsmen falling to defensive shots. Above all, it was a lesson in the dark arts of the doosra.

Murali had learnt the doosra – the one that spun the other way – from Pakistan's Saqlain Mushtaq in the 1990s, but it took years of practice before

he could land it with reliable accuracy. In 2004 he was briefly forced to withdraw this devilish weapon because the ICC had doubts about its legality. From a batsman's perspective it was indistinguishable from his stock off spinner, involving a subtle extra twist of his elastic wrist.

Until he had mastered the doosra, Murali had been more effective to right-handers, who were forced to confront balls snapping back into them. Lefties found his exaggerated turn easier to handle, with many of his deliveries passing outside off stump and, on occasion, offering room to cut. When he compensated by pitching outside leg, the batsman could plant his front pad in the way without risk.

'At a stroke, the doosra changed everything', wrote England batsman Graham Thorpe, who played Murali better than any of his colleagues:

'To a left-hander like me, it spun back into my legs. Now, I needed to be sure which ball he was bowling: was it the one that spun away or back in? If it was spinning into me, I risked being lbw. I had no choice but to play the ball off the wicket.'

Thorpe had retired by 2006 but England's top three at Trent Bridge were all left handers. One by one they were doosra-ed. Marcus Trescothick picked it alright – but only after the ball landed a foot in front of him, his bat jabbing down on the danger all too late. Alastair Cook, who in his first home series admitted to being "all over the shop" against Murali, was lbw on the front foot. Andrew Strauss was defeated by a straight ball which took the edge of his bat – but it was the threat of the doosra which had cautioned the batsman to play at a delivery angled across him and pitching outside off stump.

For an England team mired in the post-2005 Ashes hangover, facing Murali was akin to being attacked by your cat very early on a Sunday morning. He took 24 wickets across the three-match series; the next-best haul by a Sri Lankan bowler was five.

Only Kevin Pietersen appeared to have an answer to the bowler's invisible variations, making big hundreds in the first two Tests at Lord's and Edgbaston, the second of which Murali judged to be one of the greatest innings he had seen. 'He scored at virtually a run a ball against Muralitharan, relying on a long reach, confident footwork and an outlandish imagination,' wrote *Wisden*. At one stage Pietersen had morphed into a left-hander to slog sweep Murali for a six.

Part of Pietersen’s gameplan was to skip down the wicket whenever possible but the tactic was his undoing at Trent Bridge, Murali getting a top spinner to ricochet off pad then glove and into the hands of Tillakaratne Dilshan at short-leg. It was the first of three sharp catches Dilshan took in quick succession, a reminder of how Sri Lanka had become masters of the reflex catch. Andrew Flintoff was taken smartly off bat and pad, before Dilshan lunged low to his right to snare Paul Collingwood, who was unlucky to toe edge the ball onto his boot.

Geraint Jones became Murali’s seventh victim when he was bowled by a flighted doosra, the right hander departing with a look of Gatting-esque bewilderment.

The chance to take all 10 went with the run-out of Matthew Hoggard but Murali looked odds-on to surpass his Oval exploits when he pinned Jon Lewis in front.

Instead there was an astonishing cameo from No.11 Monty Panesar, England’s new cult

hero, who hit his fellow spinner for three fours and a swept six that drew wild cheers before falling to Sanath Jayasuriya. Murali, as always, kept grinning.

Shoaib Akhtar – 8-2-21-5

Pakistan v Australia, Colombo 3-7 October 2002

“Obviously you have to be mad. If you are not mad, how will you bowl?” Shoaib Akhtar was not the first fast bowler to make this observation – the honour belongs to Lenny Pascoe – but he is among the few who can state with authority that “you have got to be abnormal”. Fast bowling, he explains, “is not normal work for the body; pivoting and twisting your body when running in at full sprint is not normal”. But Shoaib’s is not a normal body and it has never done normal work. He likes to demonstrate the fact to wincing journalists by flexing his elbow 45 degrees in the ‘wrong’ direction, such ‘that his arm looks like the aftermath of a hideous industrial accident’. This accounts in large part for his ragged action and his record velocities, and also for the fact that more than one batsman, after facing him, looked for all the world as if he had been caught in the same accident.

Like many a mad and abnormal person before him, Shoaib was also something of a loner. He always bridled at the suggestion – his stock response: “You know what else stands alone? The sun!” – but there’s no use denying it. He would come down to breakfast at lunchtime, was always last on the team bus, and slipped into the hotel swimming pool only once all his colleagues had slipped out. At a beachside beauty contest a week before this Test match, while they were swaying to the music and admiring the talent, he sat in a corner by himself.

‘He didn’t always sound happy with life’, recalled Shane Warne, possibly his most sympathetic contemporary, ‘and his career seemed to be at a crossroads more often than he would have liked.’ This Test match was one such crossroads. Only six months earlier he had been clocked for the first time at 100 mph, but his performances since had been ineffectual, and he was dogged by the claim that he cared more for the speedometer than he did for his team.

Winning the toss on a tranquil surface, Australia piled on the runs. They fell short of 500 due only to a spectacular lower-order collapse, with Shoaib taking three of the last five wickets, but in response Pakistan barely avoided

the follow-on. Shoaib himself was the last man to go, slogging with manic abandon after a heated exchange with Warne. Not long after, opening the bowling in the second innings, he had an even hotter exchange with his long-time anathema Matthew Hayden.

The Australian gambit was transparent: to bait and taunt and badger, working him into a fit of temper and so busting his flush. In this mood, by Hayden's reckoning, he could get through only three high-quality overs at a time. He managed as many as four in this spell, but they were bootless and enervating, and he finished in a stupefied daze. It took him all of a quarter of an hour to regain his senses: "I knew the ball was coming to me, and I could field and throw it back on auto-pilot. That's about it. I never knew what was happening." Lunch arrived at 45 for no wicket. The lead was now 233. Shoaib sat under a cold shower and had a stern word with himself: *Why can't I get people out? I should do it!*

After a further word with Pakistan captain Waqar Younis, he stayed his return after the interval giving the ball a couple of overs to take on a cruder texture. The pay-off came almost immediately. Ricky Ponting, in the form of his life, was only halfway through his off-side punch when the ball blistered the underside of his bat and rearranged his stumps. If this was fortunate, Mark Waugh's first delivery was anything but: full and straight and reversing lavishly. Shoaib smiled. "On a good day", he later declared, "I can do almost anything."

"To be able to run in without pain, with rhythm like a smooth river – there have been only a few days in my life when I felt like that. And I just wanted to bowl and bowl and bowl all day. And then stumps tumbling around, the sound of the ball hitting the stumps… that yorker hitting the stumps. That smile, that pleasure it gave me – I can never get it from anywhere. That is the smile from inside. I am on the top of the world."

Australian captain Steve Waugh was not on top of the world. His form had been poor; self-doubt was evident. And now he had to face the hat-trick ball. Shoaib bucked in off an extra-long run-up, at which Waugh avoided looking 'until the last portion of it was upon me'. His studied self-distraction stood in lethal contrast to Shoaib's single-minded focus: "You have to shut everything else off. I used to see only the batsman; I used to narrow my vision to just the batsman." Waugh knew full well what was coming. *Keep the backlift short!*

he exhorted himself. *Play straight, and just get bat on ball!* He snapped into action as Shoaib entered the delivery stride – Now! – and managed, barely, to inside-edge it to safety. But the follow-up was too good, and Shoaib's first over after lunch, having started at 71 for one, thus ended at 71 for four. In the absence of a speed indicator, journalists consulted the outgoing batsmen, whose assessments varied from "bloody quick" to "#$@&%*!"

Of Adam Gilchrist, in next, Shoaib was wary: 'He lashes at you. He could be beaten by the same delivery and hit a similar delivery. The best idea was to get him out early…to bowl round the stumps and reverse it into him; otherwise he could hit almost everything.' But he did not hit this one, and to say that it hit his stumps is to euphemise the thing.

Asked about it later, Gilchrist shrugged his shoulders in impotent resignation. Shane Warne was dismissed in familiar fashion, and Australia wilted to 127 all out, leaving Pakistan 316 to chase. When the new ball was taken, the 'away' side needed five more wickets with just 74 runs in hand. Yet again that number presaged collapse, and Australia won the match by 41 runs. Few who saw it, however, now think of the result.

Frank Tyson – 18.4-1-85-6

England v Australia, Sydney 17-22 December 1954

29

Raw pace has long, but not always, been cricket's greatest draw card. The horrific bodyline blow to Bert Oldfield, the heroic comeback of Bert Sutcliffe and the comedy of David Lloyd's genitals were subjects of wonder. And all that with a flimsy plastic box, a couple of lightweight pads and some little rubber digit protectors. Then Philip Hughes died.

Before 1914 fast bowling was in its infancy. It hadn't really existed before 1890 and then Tom Richardson, Ernie Jones, JJ Kotze, Charles Kortright and Tibby Cotter cranked up the speed. Harold Larwood was caught on film terrorising Australian batsmen and after 1950 it was open season with Wes Hall, Jeff Thomson, Michael Holding and Shoaib Akhtar all being anointed with the crown of 'the fastest ever'. Yet speed alone was rarely enough. It was Akhtar's inswinging yorker or Thomson's barely-short-of-a-length throat ball that took wickets and not 100mph flyers outside off stump. It was Larwood's accuracy combined with consistent speed that made him a series-winning bowler.

How many of these legendary speedsters could maintain this genuine all-out pace for any length of time? None is the answer. Any number of quick bowlers could bend the backs for the odd ball over a decade, but none could consistently approach 95mph consistently for more than a series and those that tried generally disappeared quickly or re-thought their approach. If one bowler is famous for one summer's deeds then that bowler is Frank Tyson who many veterans thought the fastest they had ever seen, and they had seen Larwood.

Tyson had been given the chance of booking his passage to Australia in the final Test against Pakistan and his 4-35 on debut in the first innings was considered good enough even if the Australian press was warning readers about his drag, fitness and interminable run up. He found the Australian batsmen a different prospect in Brisbane as Len Hutton elected to field and then watched Australia score 601 on the way to an innings victory. Tyson's figures were 1-160 yet somehow he avoided the axe as Alec Bedser became

the scapegoat. The second Test, at Sydney, began almost as badly. This time Hutton elected to bat and in amiable conditions his side crumbled to 154.

A grand fight-back on day two kept England in the game and for the first time the Australians learnt to fear the ‘Typhoon’. Using the shortened run he had trialled in the previous game, he began to generate real pace without losing accuracy and his four wickets were crucial to keeping the first-innings deficit down to 84. On day three a masterpiece by Peter May again hauled England back in the game. Tyson for his part took a fearsome blow to the head from a Ray Lindwall bouncer that laid him unconscious. After precautionary

X-rays he returned to the fray. May’s century left Australia just 223 to win on a pitch that, despite the generally low scores, offered the bowlers little. Experienced observers Freddie Brown, Arthur Mailey, Lindsay Hassett and Bill O’Reilly agreed there was nothing in it for the bowlers, the pitch having got steadily easier over the course of the first three days.

The chase began 25 minutes before tea on day four and without doubt the game could be largely won or lost by the close of play. In fact the balance was kept perfectly. The openers were worked over and then dismissed by Statham and Tyson who was showing no ill effects despite a bump the size of an egg on his head. His dismissal of Les Favell was down to one thing – speed. But Jim Burke and Neil Harvey dug in for the final 80 minutes and saw the home side through to 72-2 at the close, requiring another 151 to win.

‘What power there is in bowling fast! What a sensation of omnipotence, and how great the gulf between this sublime sensation and ordinary, mundane everyday existence!’ The words of Tyson himself and the fifth day would be one of those days when he would find this sublimity. The corn-coloured pitch promised no harvest of wickets; if eight Australian batsmen were to be dismissed then it would be through the efforts of the English attack and neither Bob Appleyard nor Johnny Wardle had looked remotely dangerous on the previous evening. Hutton no doubt warned Tyson and Statham that they could expect plenty of work.

Despite the warning Tyson tore into his day’s labour and within minutes was producing a velocity unknown to seasoned spectators on a pitch living up to direst predictions of docility. In his second over Burke was yorked and four balls later an identical ball was too fast for Graeme Hole and the balance had swung drastically. Next man in, Richie Benaud, was later to record that Tyson was so quick that nothing else was required and perhaps it was the

pleasure of seeing him rested that led to an undignified sweep which ended in the hands of Tyson at backward square-leg. But with Ron Archer surviving to lunch and Neil Harvey seemingly in control it was still an even call.

Within 20 minutes of the re-start, and with Tyson and Statham recalled, the game was virtually over. Tyson ripped out Archer and then Lindwall without recourse to a revenge bouncer, while Statham removed Alan Davidson and Gil Langley before Harvey had the opportunity to protect them. But as the pacemen tired and Harvey began to control every facet of the game, the impossible began to seem possible again. Finally Harvey lost control of the strike and a full over of Tyson was too much for Bill Johnston. The day's play had been an astonishing affair – batting of unsurpassed brilliance by Harvey matched by Statham's control and stamina and the raw fury of Frank Tyson.

EW Swanton described what he had seen as 'the fastest a man has ever bowled'. It was two decades since England had produced such a devastating pair and the Australians were suddenly fighting a grim rearguard action after bossing the early exchanges. Worse was to follow, Frank Tyson was not nearly finished with them.

Bruce Reid – 22-12-51-7

Australia v England, Melbourne 26-30 December 1990

28

If only. Cricket is full of such tales of circumstance, misfortune and tragedy. If only Archie Jackson had been blessed with the health and vitality expected of a young man. If only politics hadn't conspired to restrict Barry Richards and Mike Procter to just eleven Tests between them. If only Mohammed Asif had resisted the allure of the lucre. And if only Bruce Reid had been able to stay fit.

A towering six-foot-eight left armer with a frame that to call wiry was to chronically overstate its bulk, Reid cut a gangly figure. Nevertheless – from this observer's viewpoint anyway – his action was easy and smooth and even at his quickest projected the impression that, if needed, he had more to give. But easy and smooth or not, two metres tall and rake-thin isn't ever going to be an archetype for the extreme physical exertion of fast bowling.

Injuries – so pervasive that Australian humourist Billy Birmingham essentially made him a meme before memes existed – and premature retirement mean it's easy to forget that Reid's Test career lasted seven years. Shorter than it should have been, but longer than a lot of people might remember. The problem was that during that time Australia contested 59 Tests, and Reid played just 27 of them. More starkly, during the last five of those years Australia played 43 Tests, Reid just 12. His first couple of years of international cricket were actually injury-free, and it was only after breaking down at Adelaide in 1987 – when still only 24 – that the problems really started, and they never stopped. If from that point his international career was lacking quantity, he made up for it with quality, never more so than in the Boxing Day Test of 1990.

The Test was Reid's 20th and, notwithstanding long gaps due to injury, he had proven himself a successful wicket-taker over the previous 19 – while yet to take a five-wicket haul, he had taken four in an innings on no fewer than 10 occasions. Australia had won comfortably at Brisbane and came to Melbourne looking to go two up. As in Brisbane, England took a 46-run first-innings lead, David Gower's elegant (did he ever make another kind?) century overshadowing Reid's six-wicket haul.

The visitors looked strong in the second innings too. Reid got Michael Atherton early on day four, caught behind fishing outside off stump with a ball that angled across him perfectly, but as Graham Gooch and Wayne Larkins took the lead to nearly 150 the biggest dilemma England faced seemed to be how to bowl Australia out again. Reid struck again after lunch, Gooch throwing his bat at a wide one and seeing it fly to Terry Alderman at slip. Reid's exhibition in 'Left-Arm Fast Bowling 101' continued with the dismissal of Robin Smith, another ball angled beautifully across the right hander and another edge to slip, Mark Taylor the recipient this time. Greg Matthews had Gower caught at bat-pad for a duck – cricket proving the great leveller after his superb first innings – but even at 147-4 England had no reason to panic.

That would all change with what England's team management called 'fift y minutes of madness'. First Alec Stewart slashed Reid to gully and watched Geoff Marsh take a superb catch. Reid then got Larkins with a carbon copy of his dismissal of Atherton, teasing the batsman outside off stump and getting the edge behind. Phil DeFreitas was his next victim, lbw – Reid digging into his bag of tricks for something different this time, straightening a killer off cutter back into the allrounder's pads.

Normal service was resumed when Reid squared up Angus Fraser with a beauty and Taylor took a gem of a catch at slip. Matthews then weighed in with two more wickets to wrap up the innings for just 150. England had lost their last six wickets for just three runs, the capitulation an astonishing 47-9 after Gooch was out.

Australia's chase was enlivened by umpire McConnell enraging England (Phil Tufnell in particular), but the hosts completed a comfortable eight-wicket victory on their way to a 3-0 series win. Reid's 13 wickets on a pitch that – those 50 minutes aside – held few terrors for the batsmen was not just the performance of his career but one for the ages. Indeed, bowling partner Alderman said later that those 13 wickets could easily have been 18, such was his dominance of the England batsmen.

A year later on the same ground he took 12 wickets to destroy India, and less than a year after that took another five-wicket haul in what turned out to be his final Test. He was just 29. He went on to become a respected bowling coach and, as Daniel Brettig noted in a superb article for Cricinfo, a valuable cautionary tale for the overworked young fast bowlers who have come after him.

How good was Bruce Reid? His limited career statistics place him comfortably in the company of all but history's very best. In an era where Australia was awakening from its deepest cricketing slumber to re-emerge as a major world power, it could call on the likes of Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes, Geoff Lawson and Terry Alderman, all of whom – if a level short of genuine greatness – were outstanding Test bowlers. Despite this there was common consent that, when fit, Reid was unquestionably the best bowler in the country. He should still have been bowling for Australia in 1995 when the West Indies were defeated in their own backyard to mark world cricket's changing of the guard. He deserved to be there at Australia's formal coronation. Then again, coach Bob Simpson observed that it shouldn't have even taken that long: "My biggest 'if only' is Bruce Reid. If he had stayed fit, there is no doubt at all that Australia would have been recognised as world champions two or three years before we were able to claim that position, simply because he was a great bowler, one of the finest bowlers I have ever seen." It's as fitting a last word as any. If only.

Hugh Trumble – 25-9-53-6

England v Australia, Manchester 24-26 July 1902

27

"It will never be forgotten, never be forgotten...They will always remember me for it", lamented Fred Tate. "In two or three weeks they will forget all about it...Don't worry go up and get your money, it's only a game" was the sage advice from fellow pro, Len Braund.

It was the fourth Test of the 1902 summer. Australia had entered the match holding the Ashes and one-nil up in the series; a draw or a win would retain the little urn.

Australian captain, Joe Darling, won the toss and elected to bat. On a wet wicket that was certain to become 'sticky' the England captain, Archie MacLaren, told his team that if the visitors were only 80 at lunch, England would win. So it was important for the openers to attack and in Victor Trumper they had the ideal batsman. Using his Fred Astaire foot work, he repeatedly danced down to drive the bowlers to distraction. By lunch Trumper, 103* out of 173, had become the first batsman to score a hundred in the first session of a Test. After the adjournment the sun shone and the wicket, as predicted, deteriorated. Australia all out 299, the last five wickets only managed 43. England in turn, at one stage 44-5, limped to stumps, 70-5, Braund and FS Jackson in.

The not out batsmen on day two were greeted by 'delightful' conditions: an 'excellent pitch' and a ground at bursting point with 20,000 fans. The home supporters were thrilled with the cricket. First England fought to 262, Jackson 128 ably supported by Braund 65 putting on 141. Interestingly, given later events, one of Jackson's drives was slowed by a small pile of sawdust which saved a boundary. Jackson, jokily, demolished the obstacle. Then Australia collapsed to 85-8 at stumps. It could have been worse had Tate held an 'easy' catch in the outfield from top scorer Darling (37) when seven.

Despite the miss and overnight rain, England still expected to win comfortably, with even the Australians resigned to losing. This belief strengthened when the last two poles were swept away on the final day with Australia having no answer to Bill Lockwood, once he could maintain his

footing. England needed only 124. Before England batted, MacLaren entered the opposition rooms and jovially quipped, “You old dogs, we’ve got you this time”.

England commenced at 12:40 pm, with the confident MacLaren promoted to open with Lionel Palairet. They were opposed by Hugh Trumble and, for the most part, Jack Saunders on a pitch wet but not yet a ‘sticky’. England were expected to imitate the Australian first-innings tactics and attack before the appearance of the sun. While the openers were ‘constantly beaten’ they did not attempt the ‘long handle’ and at lunch the score was 36-0.

After the break the sun appeared and also the first wicket, Palairet, out to Saunders. With nine wickets and 80 runs required it was odds-on an England victory, especially when the new batsman, the little dynamo, Johnny Tyldesley ‘merrily’ raced to 16 out of 68-1, nine wickets or 56 to win. The bowlers then struck, with Tyldesley caught in slips off Saunders, before Trumble claimed his 100th Test wicket. He had bowled tightly, so MacLaren’s eyes lit up when he was able to drive a ball to the boundary. Unfortunately for the English captain, next ball he attempted a similar shot and was caught by a running Reg Duff off his ‘shoe laces’. Just after this dismissal, rain stopped play for ten minutes with England 76-3.

Upon their return it was noted the batsmen, Prince Ranji and especially Bobby Abel, attacked more. Abel rode his luck and hit a few boundaries although he was dropped once off Trumble. Ranji was more circumspect and struggled to four before falling, plumb lbw, to Trumble at 92-4. Next to enter was the first innings hero, Jackson, who was still on nought when Abel was bowled by Trumble with a ‘splendid’ ball for 21. Trumble’s bowling, ‘always wily, tempting and deceiving’ but at 97-5, and only 27 needed on a now ‘sticky’ pitch, it was still England’s to lose.

Jackson and Braund were now together but there was no repeat of their first innings’ heroics as Jackson was caught from Saunders and Braund was stumped off Trumble, 109-7. When Trumble bowled Lockwood also at 109, the Aussies became favourites.

Wilfred Rhodes, arguably the best No.10 in history, brought the hat-waving crowd to their feet when he drove Saunders over the fence for four. ’Keeper Dick Lilley was also busy and moved the score to 116 with a brace although the crowd gasped as he would have been run out except for a ‘bad Clem Hill return’. Next ball Lilley lofted Trumble and it appeared a certain

four. Hill sprinted the best part of 23 metres in pursuit before he dived and held perhaps the best catch in Ashes history. “Oh Clem, what a bally fluke”, a disconsolate Lilley said to Hill as he passed towards the pavilion. Hill denied it but they both knew the truth.

As last man Fred Tate headed towards the wicket with eight to make, the rain came down and the players ran for the change rooms. Poor Fred was given advice from every quarter and was ‘shaking like a jelly’ according to Braund, before he headed out after 45 minutes just before 5pm. Luckily for Fred it was Rhodes to face the last four balls of Trumble’s incomplete over. Darling had beseeched Trumble to keep Rhodes scoreless so that Saunders could bowl at Tate. Trumble with a greasy ball and a slippery pitch, kept the eager Rhodes quiet. Trumble later wrote, ‘Those four balls tried me out more than any other four balls I ever bowled’.

Fred now faced Saunders with still eight to make. He snicked the first ball for four. The next two shaved the wickets, before the fourth knocked out the off stump. Australia had won by three runs with Trumble the hero. He appeared so dominant over the batsmen that a young Neville Cardus, who was at the ground, wrote he was like ‘a Gulliver amongst the Lilliputians’. Fred was right. They never forgot. He was blamed for the loss and the Test, after 114 years, is still, for all the wrong reasons, referred to as ‘Fred Tate’s Match’.

Colin Croft – 18.5-7-29-8

West Indies v Pakistan, Port of Spain 4-9 March 1977

'The prancing run was straight but the batsman saw only his head bobbing behind the umpire until he veered out wide of the crease just prior to delivery, leaning back and slanting the ball awkwardly in to the right-hander.'

Umpire Fred Goodall may take a different view, but Mike Selvey's description of Colin Croft's unusual run-up is as accurate as anyone's. In any case, his delivery was considered sound enough to earn him a Test call-up after appearing in just a handful of first-class matches prior to the West Indies' home series against Pakistan in early 1977. One of those matches was an appearance for the President's XI in the tour match prior to the first Test, which saw Croft serve notice with a 10-wicket haul that sent the tourists tumbling to an innings defeat. His Test call-up duly followed as he was drafted in to replace the injured Michael Holding and opened the bowling with Andy Roberts. Also making his debut was fellow paceman Joel Garner – not a bad selection of rookies.

Croft rewarded the selectors with seven wickets in the first Test, as well as surviving just long enough to help save a draw in a nail-biting finale which saw Pakistan come within one wicket of victory. It is worth remembering that, although many of this West Indies side would go on to be all-time greats, they were not yet the dominant force they would become under Clive Lloyd; in fact not until the home triumph over Australia the following year could they be legitimately dubbed world Test champions.

For the second Test the Pakistanis, having made a big score in the first game, left out the versatile but struggling batsman Javed Miandad, who had made just two and one, and brought in veteran leggie Intikhab Alam. They were immediately in trouble when Sadiq Mohammad was forced to retire after taking a painful blow on the arm from Croft, who shortly afterwards had Haroon Rashid caught in the slips. As noted by Gareth Bland writing for CricketWeb, Mushtaq Mohammad 'was exhibiting signs of shellshock

against pace, having received some rough treatment in Australia on the previous tour', and sure enough he lasted for just nine runs before being caught by Richards off Croft. Asif Iqbal faced just one 'brute of a ball' which had him caught behind – 21-3, potentially 21-4 with Sadiq injured. As Croft later recalled, "I remember walking back to the pavilion at lunch and looking up at the old scoreboard. Against my name, it said 3 for 21. I thought to myself, 'Not a bad session of work'."

Wasim Raja, a constant thorn in the West Indies side during this series, and Majid Khan then profited from Croft being rested and added 82 for the fourth wicket. But if Croft was content with his first session's work, he must have been ecstatic over his next spell. First, he took care of the resourceful Raja, clean bowled for 65, before catching the returned Sadiq off his own bowling. Intikhab then had a stump uprooted before Saleem Altaf suffered a similar fate – Croft's phenomenal pace bowling had seen Pakistan collapse from 150-5 to 161-9. When Wasim Bari was caught behind at 180, Croft had returned figures of 8-29, his second spell netting 5-8 in a little under 11 overs. This was fast bowling from the very top draw mixing brute force, youthful exuberence, mature control and intelligent versatility.

Though West Indies lost both Greenidge and Richards before stumps, a superb century by Roy Fredericks gave them a first innings lead of 136. With Raja once again top-scoring for Pakistan and Roberts and Garner this time doing the damage, the hosts were set a readily achievable target of 205, and though three quick wickets fell, West Indies still won easily by six wickets.

As Tony Cozier noted in *The Cricketer*, 'On a pitch containing a little preparation moisture everything was right – his line, length, pace, his sparing use of the bouncer and his ability to cut the ball off the pitch.' His remarkable figures in what was just his second Test had obliterated the previous best by a West Indian fast bowler, 8-92 by Michael Holding, the man Croft replaced. *Wisden* described his performance as 'A phenomenal exhibition of fast bowling.'

The third Test was drawn with five more wickets for Croft, then Pakistan won the fourth Test thanks to a fabulous all-round performance from Mushtaq, again at the Queen's Park Oval. The deciding fift h Test was won by West Indies, helped by seven wickets from Croft that gave him 33 for the series, breaking the record for a West Indian fast bowler in a home series and also equaling Alf Valentine's haul in England in 1950. Croft had achieved all of this in his first Test series and was deservedly named Man of the Series,

though he later lamented the fact that his prize amounted to just $500.

Five years after his debut, Croft would join the rebel tour of South Africa and earn himself a life ban – he finished with 125 wickets at the impressive average of 23.30 in only 27 matches; notable figures when one considers those with whom he had to share the wickets. A hugely interesting character, after retirement Croft taught mathematics for a while and was also an airline pilot, though hopefully with a more straight-on approach to landing his jets than he exhibited when bowling.

The man who Kim Hughes thought the most difficult to face and Geoffrey Boycott 'the fiercest, nastiest fast bowler' played down his Queen's Park Oval performance, stating: "My spell was more synchronicity than being in the zone." Tony Cozier wrote: 'Croft, in only his second Test, will hardly bowl as well again, no matter how long he plays.' While he never did bowl better, neither did any other of the great West Indian quicks – his figures of 8-29 remain the best ever by a Caribbean fast bowler.

Part Three
Performances 25–1

Pinnacle

Narendra Hirwani – 18.3-3-61-8

India v West Indies, Madras 11-15 January 1988

25

-Jonathan Harwood-

The 1980s was a decade when size mattered: the hair was big, the shoulder pads were big, and the cricketers were no exception, and those from the Caribbean were bigger than most.

Stepping out to play West Indies in those days was like walking into the land of the giants. Most of the team stood well over six feet tall, and even those that didn't, like Viv Richards and Richie Richardson, were still giants of the game – able to strike fear into the heart of an opponent.

India had experienced plenty of fear (and replied with recriminations) during the late 1970s and early '80s as the West Indies pace machine battered and bruised their batsmen. Then came 1983 – 11 Test matches and both series won by West Indies, but sandwiched between was the jewel in the crown; World Cup victory for India, beating West Indies at Lord's. After this marathon it was little wonder the two sides took a break from one another. West Indies continued to trounce all-comers while India went up and down – losing at home to England before gaining revenge away, a drawn series including a tie against Australia and then the pain of losing at home to Pakistan in 1987.

India and Pakistan were all-square going into the final Test in Sunil Gavaskar's last game only for India to come up 17 runs short of victory when Gavaskar was out four short of what would surely have been his most memorable century. For 16 years India had relied on this rock and now he was gone. Gone too was the wondrous spin of the previous decade although the emergence of Mohammad Azharuddin and the continuing excellence of Kapil Dev meant it wasn't all doom and gloom.

For their part, West Indies had taken a second-string attack to India in 1987-88 but Patrick Patterson, Winston Davis and Courtney Walsh were more than the equal of any other pace trio in world cricket. It was against these goliaths in Madras (now Chennai) in January 1988 that a timid young

leg spinner in tinted spectacles made his Test debut for an Indian side. It would have been easy to overlook 19-year-old Narendra Hirwani, who was one of three newbies in a makeshift team under the leadership of Ravi Shastri standing in for the injured Dilip Vengsarkar. History would show that Hirwani stole the show in spectacular fashion as he tore up the record books to claim 16 wickets and record the best-ever bowling figures by a Test debutant, the best bowling figures by an Indian, and the third-best match figures of all time.

Hirwani seemed destined for stardom as he led India to what was only their sixth-ever Test victory over the West Indies to level the series. And he did it bowling leg spin, an increasingly obscure art that appeared to have little place in the modern game.

Hirwani's heroics were the final and most dramatic act in an unusual Test series scheduled immediately after India had hosted the 1987 World Cup, with the country still in the thrall of cricket's shorter format. The one-day game was by now so popular in India that one of the West Indies' Tests was cancelled and replaced with two limited-over games to keep the fans happy. India were fortunate still to be in contention in this four-Test series having lost the first and been saved by rain in the second before a dull draw left the score at 1-0 to the tourists going into the final match. At the start of the tour, to have suggested that a leggie would decide the outcome of the series would have been preposterous.

Hirwani's subsequent career was something of a let down – he played just 16 more Tests and took only 50 more wickets. And that may have prompted a degree of scepticism when it comes to his achievement. Yes, the Chepuak wicket was in poor shape from the very beginning – it was 'deplorably under-prepared' said *Wisden* – and winning the toss proved to be crucial, as did a swashbuckling century from Kapil Dev. And yes, it is also true that West Indies committed collective suicide in their second innings. But the fact remains that Hirwani's astonishing effort in the first innings, when he finished with eight for 61, decided the match. It is also worth considering that while Hirwani went on to finish the match with figures of 16 for 136 off 33.5 overs – a strike rate of one wicket every 13 balls – the seven other spinners recorded combined figures of seven for 400 off 154 overs. As any spin bowler at any level will know the pressure is at its greatest when the potential rewards are the most abundant. How then was the pressure for this young man on a surface to suit against the best side in the world with a series

to be squared? Hirwani bewitched the most feared batting line-up in world cricket, bamboozling them in the first innings and tormenting them to such an extent that they resorted to kamikaze tactics in the second. It was a triumph, not just for Hirwani but also for the dying art of leg spin, which in those days was fast disappearing from the game. It was a staging post in the rehabilitation of the art, at a time when leggies were in danger of extinction.

It has been said that before Shane Warne arrived on the scene in the early 1990s leg spinners were as common as black rhinos. Even on the subcontinent they were a dying breed and by the late 1980s the only established international leg spinner was the ageing, eccentric Pakistani Abdul Qadir. The game was now dominated by batteries of fearsome quicks backed up by frugal off spinners. The advent of the one-day game was partly responsible, as leg spinners, who rely on luring batsmen into rash shots, were seen as ill-suited to the limited-overs format, where economy is key.

But little Hirwani, bustling in with his unbuttoned shirt billowing like a nightgown and squinting through his spectacles, reminded the world that on his day a leg spinner's weapons of flight, variation and turn can be almost unplayable, as one by one the Windies were sent packing.

He was picked, said *The Cricketer*, 'to exploit the West Indians' historical weakness against the ball spinning away from the bat'. But no-one could have foreseen his impact. It was, said the magazine, 'a vital blow for the preservation of the art of leg spin at the highest level of the international game'.

But who was this stout, bespectacled teenager, batting at 11 in a team that boasted four, yes four, other spinners? In truth he was not an unknown at all – he had been playing first-class cricket for three years and had enjoyed quite a debut in that format too – taking five for 101 for Madhya Pradesh against Rajasthan in December 1984 when he was just 16. Keen students of the game would also have been aware of his exploits on India's recent Under-19 tour of Australia where he had taken 23 wickets in a three-match series. What's more he won his call-up to the Test side after another impressive performance for an India under-25 team against the tourists.

But the young leggie from Indore was far from famous. As he later told the *Times of India*: "When I went to join the squad, nobody was there at the airport except for a few friends but when I returned after the match, there were around 5000 people."

There was little indication of what was to come from Hirwani on day one. Ravi Shastri won the toss on what was an undeniably substandard wicket and wisely chose to bat first.

India got off to a shaky start, recovering from 64 for three and later 156 for five to post an impressive total of 382. Arun Lal and Mohammad Azharuddin laid the foundations before the mighty Kapil Dev took the game away from the tourists as he blasted 109 off just 124 balls. A confirmed number 11, Hirwani's contribution to the innings was a single run, before he was last man out to Davis.

He had looked all at sea against the West Indian pacemen and things did not improve in the field. Accounts of the match suggest that he did little to inspire much confidence as he scurried around in the deep. But events took a dramatic turn, literally, when he was tossed the ball by Shastri, who removed himself from the attack to blood the teenager.

By that stage West Indies had lost openers Desmond Haynes and Phil Simmons, but were rebuilding with Viv Richards and Richie Richardson at the crease – perhaps the most potent batsmen in world cricket at the time. Hirwani was, by his own admission, somewhat daunted. "Frankly speaking, I was nervous", he recalled later. But the calming words of his captain Shastri were to have a profound effect on him and the match.

'For leg spinners to succeed in any format of cricket, they require the confidence of the captain', Hirwani recounts in Makarand Waingankar's book *Guts & Glory*. But Shastri eased his fears. 'He advised me not to use all my variations in the first innings because he wanted me to be the main bowler on the fifth day', he explained. Telling the youngster to concentrate on his leg break and googly turned out to be inspired captaincy.

Hirwani's first ball in Test cricket was to Richards. 'I had heard about him but I had only seen him on TV till then', he later revealed. It is unlikely Richards would or could have said the same about Hirwani, but he, and the crowd, took an immediate interest in the little leggie as his first ball ripped off the pitch. Richards must have been startled as Hirwani's first over in Test cricket was a maiden. It was not a sign of things to come.

The West Indians had been largely untroubled by the wiles of Shastri and Arshad Ayub (despite the apparent defects in the pitch) and soon decided they had the measure of Hirwani as well despite his unusual methods. In his second over Richards twice sent the ball to the boundary in typically dismissive fashion. With the score fast approaching 100 and the partnership

at 51, Shastri asked Hirwani to switch ends, and reinforced the message to keep it simple.

Straightaway the move paid off as Hirwani induced a mistake and had Richardson caught at point by Azharuddin for 36. He was up and running. Gus Logie stuck around for half an hour but was dismissed in a similar fashion, cutting the spinner to point for 12. The Windies were now wobbling at 128 for four and Hirwani was asking questions that batsmen in the 1980s were not used to answering. His third victim was Carl Hooper, trapped lbw in front of his stumps by a googly for two. The tourists ended the day on 147 for five, and Hirwani had every reason to be happy with his contribution. His figures were 11-2-35-3.

The next day was a rest day, but it must have been torture for Hirwani who was now straining at the leash, eager to show off his full repertoire of balls. He was particularly anxious to try his flipper out on Richards and the impatient teenager famously told his room-mate, Chetan Sharma, "uska danda maroonga" – I will bowl him. His reasoning was sound. 'The day before, I had observed Richards going on the back foot and taking singles easily off my leggies, since the speed of the ball is less when it spins', he explained. 'But with a flipper the batsman doesn't have as much time.' When play resumed on day three Shastri tossed Hirwani the ball immediately.

West Indies had obviously come out to attack and used their feet to good effect as early boundaries pushed the score along. However, it did not last. Richards had added only six to his overnight score of 62 when Hirwani struck in his second over of the day – and it happened exactly as he had said it would. King Viv took a stride down the pitch to Hirwani's flipper – a ball that does not turn but keeps low and hurries on – not realising that he was walking into his trap. He played for the spin, but there was none and the ball scudded under his bat and into his stumps.

The slightly awkward teenager in oversized specs had outfoxed the Master Blaster. Richards heard the death rattle and sauntered off the field still nonchalantly chewing his gum, but surely he was aware that at 163 for six the match was now tilting heavily towards India.

Hirwani was not done yet. As Arshad Ayub twirled away at the other end without success he had a befuddled Clyde Butts caught at mid-off for a duck trying to see off the leg spinner with brute force – a taste of what was to come in the second innings. Jeff Dujon, the Windies' last hope, fell to the very next ball, stumped by wicket-keeper Kiran More – again, a glimpse into the near

future. The tourists were suddenly 175 for eight, with fast bowlers Walsh and Davis at the crease.

They made it past the follow-on, but only just. Walsh departed with the score on 183, caught behind, and Davis soon followed, trapped lbw next over, to leave Patterson the last man standing. Who knows what the three fast bowlers thought of the mayhem that was being wrought by the timid Hirwani – the rabbit who had become a wolf.

The mighty Windies did not even last the morning session and Hirwani's contribution to their downfall had been five wickets for 18 runs in just 39 balls for overall figures of eight for 61 in 18.3 overs. They were, and still are, the best ever figures for a bowler in his first innings in Test cricket. Hirwani also joined an exclusive club of bowlers to take eight wickets in an innings on debut. At the time the only other members were Albert Trott, Alf Valentine and Bob Massie.

With the prospect of an embarrassing defeat looming, West Indies tried to muscle their way back into the match with speed rather than guile, but even at 37 for three India still had the upper hand, thanks to their first innings lead of 198 and without a spinner to rival Hirwani, West Indies were unable to turn the screw. A solid 83 from Woorkeri Raman, a fellow debutant, steadied the ship and India made it to the close of play on day three on 181 for four. There was a flurry of early wickets on the fourth morning, but Shastri hit a brisk 20 and declared the Indian innings at 217 for eight – to leave the home side with what appeared an unassailable lead of 415.

No-one had ever scored more than 400 in the fourth innings of a Test in India (they still haven't) and the world record for a successful fourth innings run chase at that time was 404. With five sessions left to play on a wicket that was by now 'a mockery' according to *Wisden*, the Windies had no chance. But there was little logic to what came next as they committed collective suicide in a vain attempt to bloody Hirwani's nose.

Openers Haynes and Simmons tried to dig in, but their fate was sealed when Shastri brought on Hirwani only half an hour into the innings. Simmons was first to go as he slapped a full toss to Armanath at mid-on and Haynes followed soon after lunch, when he failed to pick the googly and was trapped lbw by the teenager. Fellow spinner Arshad Ayub chipped in with his only wicket of the match as he had Richardson caught. But once again it was Hirwani who claimed the prize West Indian scalp of Richards. He played forward

to a perfect leg break and was caught at second slip by Kapil Dev for just four to leave the tourists 41 for four.

With Richards gone the game was up, but there was still time for another record. As batsman after batsman gave Hirwani the charge, only to see the ball bite the pitch and fizz past their blade, wicket-keeper Kiran More was having a field day.

The pitch was ‘dreadful’ recalled Haynes later. ‘The ball was turning a mile, but having said that our boys kept on charging down the wicket and getting stumped.’ Hooper was the first in the second innings to depart with the words ‘st More b Hirwani’ next to his name. Dujon was next after only five balls, replicating his dismissal in the first innings. He was Hirwani’s fifth victim of the day.

Gus Logie proved that he had a decent eye by smashing 67 off 62 balls before he was next to swing and miss and have his bails whipped off, ending a partnership of 59 with Butts.

Butts, whose innings contained three sixes, bucked the trend for stumpings as he was caught by Arun Sharma at cover-point to give Hirwani his seventh victim of the innings and 15th of the match. Debutant Raman then joined the party in his first over in Test cricket, as he had Walsh stumped by More, a dismissal that meant More had equalled the record for stumpings in both a Test innings (four) and a match (five).

Fittingly, it was Hirwani who applied the coup de grace as Davis also had his bails whipped off by More, to leave the West Indies 160 all out. India were victorious by 255 runs, More had two wicket-keeping records and Hirwani had eight for 75 to go with eight for 61, and the extraordinary match figures of 16 for 136, one run better than Bob Massie’s 16 for 137 at Lord’s in 1972.

Such a stellar debut was always going to be a hard, not to say impossible, act to follow (as Massie had found out 16 years before) and so it proved for young Hirwani. He took eight wickets in his next Test against New Zealand in Bangalore later that year, including six for 59 in the second innings, and performed well in the rest of the three Test series. But he came unstuck when he travelled overseas. West Indies got their revenge when India toured in 1989. Hirwani played the first three Tests, but not the fourth, and took six wickets at 57 apiece with a strike-rate over 100.

A year later in England his main contribution was to be the answer to trivia questions.He stood at the non-striker’s end at Lord’s as Kapil Dev hit

Eddie Hemmings for four successive sixes to avoid the follow-on. And it was a good thing he did, Hirwani was out to the first ball of the next over. Then at The Oval in the final Test of the summer, Hirwani set a record for the longest bowling spell in international cricket, as he sent down 59 overs without a break ending with figures of one for 137.

He lost his place in the Indian team soon after that tour, and the emergence of another leggie, the great Anil Kumble, meant that opportunities from then on were scarce. The selectors did not entirely turn their backs on Hirwani and there were recalls. He and Kumble bowled together against New Zealand in Cuttack in 1995 and Hirwani took six wickets, but it was a false dawn and he did not retain his place. His final two Tests came a year later against the touring South Africans, but Hirwani's career ended in very different circumstances to the way it had begun. In his final match in Kolkata he went wicketless and bowled just 25 overs, half as many as Kumble. Hirwani had claimed 36 wickets in his first four Tests but managed only 30 more in the next 13.

On reflection Hirwani's career was a curious affair, which began in curious circumstances. But despite the disappointments that followed, his exploits in Madras were vindication enough of his decision to turn down the chance to work in his father's brick factory in Gorakhpur, and instead chase his dream to become a cricketer.

India

K Srikkanth	c Davis b Walsh	23
J Arun Lal	c Logie b Hooper	69
M Amarnath	c †Dujon b Walsh	3
WV Raman	c †Dujon b Davis	9
M Azharuddin	c Haynes b Hooper	47
AK Sharma	lbw b Richards	30
N Kapil Dev	c Richards b Walsh	109
RJ Shastri*	b Davis	23
KS More†	b Davis	17
Arshad Ayub	not out	23
ND Hirwani	c Richardson b Davis	1
Extras (b15, lb4, nb9)		**28**
Total (all out; 104.1 overs)		**382**

Fall of wickets 1/30 2/38 3/64 4/153 5/156 6/269 7/313 8/342 9/369 10/382

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
BP Patterson	15	1	62	0
CA Walsh	27	3	85	3
WW Davis	18.1	0	76	4
CG Butts	24	4	62	0
IVA Richards	8	1	36	1
CL Hooper	12	3	42	2

K Srikkanth	lbw b Davis	17
J Arun Lal	lbw b Walsh	1
WV Raman	c †Dujon b Walsh	83
M Amarnath	c Richardson b Walsh	1
M Azharuddin	c Davis b Richards	39
AK Sharma	lbw b Patterson	23
N Kapil Dev	lbw b Patterson	5
RJ Shastri*	not out	20
KS More†	c †Dujon b Walsh	0
Arshad Ayub	not out	3
Did not bat: ND Hirwani		
Extras (b8, lb7, nb10)		**25**
Total (8 wickets dec; 76 overs)		**217**

Fall of wickets 1/3 2/36 3/37 4/124 5/185 6/185 7/190 9/194

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
BP Patterson	9	2	17	2
CA Walsh	16	5	55	4
WW Davis	6	0	20	1
CG Butts	21	1	62	0
IVA Richards	18	4	28	1
CL Hooper	6	1	20	0

West Indies

DL Haynes	c Kapil Dev b Shastri	13
PV Simmons	c & b Kapil Dev	8
RB Richardson	c Azharuddin b Hirwani	36
IVA Richards*	b Hirwani	68
AL Logie	c Azharuddin b Hirwani	12
CL Hooper	lbw b Hirwani	2
PJL Dujon†	st †More b Hirwani	24
CG Butts	c Raman b Hirwani	0
WW Davis	lbw b Hirwani	1
CA Walsh	c †More b Hirwani	8
BP Patterson	not out	0
Extras (b8, lb2, nb2)		**12**
Total (all out; 73.3 overs)		**184**

Fall of wickets 1/17 2/47 3/98 4/128 5/132 6/163 7/175 8/175 9/183 10/184

Bowling	O	M	R	W
N Kapil Dev	7	0	20	1
M Amarnath	3	0	8	0
RJ Shastri	13	6	29	1
Arshad Ayub	28	10	47	0
ND Hirwani	18.3	3	61	8
AK Sharma	4	0	9	0

DL Haynes	lbw b Hirwani	6
PV Simmons	c Amarnath b Hirwani	14
RB Richardson	c Amarnath b A Ayub	7
IVA Richards*	c Kapil Dev b Hirwani	4
AL Logie	st †More b Hirwani	67
CL Hooper	st †More b Hirwani	8
PJL Dujon†	st †More b Hirwani	2
CG Butts	c Sharma b Hirwani	38
WW Davis	st †More b Hirwani	7
CA Walsh	st †More b Raman	0
BP Patterson	not out	0
Extras (b4, lb1, nb2)		**7**
Total (all out; 41.2 overs)		**160**

Fall of wickets 1/22 2/24 3/33 4/41 5/61 6/79 7/138 8/153 9/160 10/160

Bowling	O	M	R	W
N Kapil Dev	4	3	8	0
M Amarnath	2	0	7	0
RJ Shastri	5	0	25	0
Arshad Ayub	14	5	33	1
ND Hirwani	15.2	3	75	8
WV Raman	1	0	7	1

Frank Tyson – 12.3-1-27-7

Australia v England, Melbourne 31 December-5 January 1955

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-David Frith--

There was still no television in Australia when Len Hutton brought his MCC/England team out in 1954-55. If you weren't at the ground, you listened to ABC radio, with dear old Johnnie Moyes, Arthur Gilligan and Vic Richardson on commentary, upholding the Anglo-Australian bond. There was widespread newspaper coverage, as well as the cosy milieu of the newsreel cinema. And afterwards, immortalising a great England victory, there came a rush of books on the series.

The authors had so many highly watchable cricketers to write about: Ray Lindwall, Keith Miller, Neil Harvey, Lindsay Hassett, Arthur Morris and Bill Johnston for Australia; Hutton, Denis Compton, the youngsters Peter May and Colin Cowdrey, Tom Graveney, left-arm spin conjuror Johnny Wardle, veteran Alec Bedser, Bob Appleyard (the 'new S.F.Barnes'), wiry and tireless Brian Statham, even Trevor 'Barnacle' Bailey. But if the series was to have one man's name stamped on it in perpetuity that name is Frank Holmes Tyson.

He was quickly branded 'Typhoon' as he swept through a plainly apprehensive Australian line-up. These fellows had for protection just standard leg-guards, a box, batting gloves, and a hankie in the forward trouser pocket. Helmets and forearm guards were for the distant future.

As it happened, Tyson himself became by some distance the most seriously wounded during the five-Test campaign of '54-55. So unsuccessful had he been (1 for 160 off 29 eight-ball overs) at Brisbane's primitive 'Gabba ground as England fell to an innings defeat in the opening Test that he was lucky to hold his place for the second, at the charming old Sydney ground. Here, Hutton shocked everyone, not least the man himself, by omitting the faithful Bedser, who had been England's tireless bowling backbone for eight years. But Tyson was retained…only to be knocked out cold by a Lindwall bouncer in England's second innings.

The tourists had conceded a first-innings lead of 74, then wobbled in their second innings before England's hopes were revived by a century stand by the young Varsity men Peter May and Colin Cowdrey. It was stomach-churning then to see Tyson struck on the back of his unprotected head by a fast short one from Lindwall. The Northamptonshire express was out for the count. The ground fell silent. Was he dead? It seemed a distinct possibility. That he returned to bat later on, and most famously scattered the Australian batsmen in the final innings to steal narrow victory for England and level the series, remains one of the truly top-shelf achievements in the lengthy chronicles of Ashes Test cricket.

Had this Sydney phenomenon destabilised the Australians? The pitch at Melbourne as December 1954 drew to a close looked a good one. E.W.Swanton wrote that 'the new groundsman here has produced a wicket with a far firmer appearance, which looks good for plenty of runs if there is the quality of batsmanship to make them.' He noted that the weather forecast was for hot northerly winds coming in from the baked red-soil interior. That might be ominous. The pitch could well dry and crack and become a batsman's nightmare.

Len Hutton wanted to miss this Test match, but was coaxed by the senior figures to front up. He was clearly unwell, and it wasn't physical. Denis Compton's return after injury cheered England, but Bedser was left to growl in his tent after missing selection again. In truth that lion-hearted hero had played his final Ashes Test, diminished by shingles. And soon Australia were on their way to reclaiming a series lead as the cavalier Keith Miller took 3 for 5 off nine overs, eight of which were maidens. The 22-year-old Cowdrey then kept England afloat with his maiden Test century, after the Lindwall-Miller onslaught had cooled, and a workable total of 191 was achieved after all. The innings of the calm and plumpish Cowdrey signalled the beginning of an outstanding career for a Kent and Oxford product whose eventual elevation to the House of Lords could never have been foreseen by anyone present. Indeed, His Future Lordship was deemed to have been cheating, Ray Lindwall spotting him three yards down the pitch as he bowled. The Australian champion held the ball over the stumps as a courteous warning, which was duly acknowledged.

On the second day, in front of another near-capacity MCG crowd of over 65,000, Australia crept up close to England's score, thanks to new wicket-keeper Len Maddocks, who finished 36 not out – later taken on to top-score

47. The over-rate had been dismal: only 54 eight-ball overs were bowled all day (the equal of 72 six-ball overs, yet with fewer change-overs). And Hutton's handling of the England attack drew criticism: not enough of Bob Appleyard's genius, though he picked up the wickets of Neil Harvey, bowled by a beauty, and Richie Benaud, whose continuing lack of achievement reheated the question: whatever did the Test selectors see in him? Ron Archer's misfortune was to be bowled by a shooter from Johnny Wardle, a pointer to insiders' concerns that this batting surface might not last.

After the Sunday of rest, Australia's tail wagged enough on the third day to get them a lead of 40, Brian Statham finishing deservedly with 5 for 60, and Tyson, Appleyard and Wardle sharing the other wickets. With England seeing the day out on 159 for 3 (magisterial Peter May 83 not out, raised to 91 on the fourth day), the match was tightly poised.

Twenty-four hours later the explosive side story was that the pitch was already showing signs of breaking up. And the similarity of the situation to that in the previous Test at the same stage was amazing: Australia were chasing a further 165 runs for victory with eight wickets in hand. At Sydney the requirement had been a further 151 to win, also with two wickets down overnight. The pitch then had not been of undue concern. But now, here at the MCG, unbeknown to everyone bar the select few who were afraid of derogatory comment should the surface break up, the pitch had been watered during the Sunday night (the rest day).

There were to be adamant denials, principally by Vernon Ransford, former Test batsman and now Melbourne Cricket Club secretary, who was so badly affected by the uproar that he needed several weeks off from the office.

It took time for the truth to emerge. Following investigation by Percy Beames, a former Victoria batsman and Aussie Rules star who now wrote for The Age, there was little doubt that the groundsmen (Jack Howse and Bill Vanthoff), distraught at the pitch's deterioration in the intense heat and fearing the heavy criticism which must inevitably follow, had broken regulations by trying to restore the surface with a light medicinal hosing, as well as some 'illegal' rolling. The cricket authorities strongly refuted the accusations, but the newspaper stood by the claim, and history now accepts it.

It was difficult, even fanciful, and perhaps impossible to estimate whether the nocturnal activities out in the middle at the MCG made things more awkward or otherwise for Australia's batsmen as they chased their victory target of 240. It was certainly no batsman's paradise. The ball tended to keep

low or veer off at an angle. Occasionally it kicked. One shooter and/or one kicker is usually sufficient to disturb a batsman's equanimity. The book on the series by Keith Miller and R.S.Whitington states quite firmly that the pitch was watered. And had it not been, then the half-inch cracks would probably have led to serious injury, and there would also have been huge loss of gate money.

What will remain in the chronicles of cricket forever is the fourth-innings total of 111, a figure warranting superstition (unlike the silly modern 87 'curse', which has no foundation) and which spelt defeat for Australia by 128 runs, a heavy margin in a contest of modest totals.

Also red-inked into cricket's history are Frank Tyson's figures: 12.3 eight-ball overs, one maiden, seven wickets for 27 runs (6 for 14 the decisive spell).

The penultimate evening had seen Arthur Morris (4) caught at short-leg by a diving Cowdrey off Tyson, and Les Favell bowled by Appleyard for 30, which was to be the innings top score. This left Australia 75 for 2 at the close, victory tantalisingly beckoning to either side.

Next day, the fifth, ended with Swanton forefingering the following into his typewriter:

'The history of cricket is a story of surprises, but in the chronicles of Test matches the suddenness and utter completeness of Australia's collapse today [eight wickets for 36 runs], which gave England victory by 128 runs, will rank as a startling curiosity many years ahead.'

Left-hander Neil Harvey, conceivably still the world's top batsman at this time, was the first to go that morning, caught for 11, glancing Tyson wide but into the leaping Evans's gloves, the finest wicket-keeper's catch Tyson ever saw. It left the bowler feeling that England would do it. Richie Benaud, who had been promoted to No.3 and was fretting at not being able to score, dragged on a desperate attempted pull against Tyson, having made 22, second-top for the innings. When, having kept out a couple of near-shooters, Keith Miller (6) edged Tyson fast to Hutton at slip, England's captain couldn't secure the fast-moving catch, but the rebound gave Bill Edrich, slightly deeper, a second chance. At this point Swanton remarked that 'Tyson and Statham were now sticking out their chests like champions at a show'.

Graeme Hole (5) was next to fall, caught behind attempting to cut

Statham. Len Maddocks, top scorer in Australia's first innings, played on to Tyson without a run to his name. Ray Lindwall did no better, trapped by Tyson in front of his stumps. 'I was bowling in a euphoric daze' Frank Tyson later wrote. Ron Archer was yorked by Statham for 15, and with Australia's skipper Ian Johnson 4 not out, the last wicket to fall was Bill Johnston, caught by Evans for a duck, sealing for Tyson his historic 7 for 27.

Much was written and spoken at the time about Frank Tyson's sensational performance, with less attention directed towards fellow Lancastrian Brian Statham, the lithe and tireless 'greyhound' at the other end. He took 2 for 38 off 11 overs, never allowing Australia any relief, though some desperate strokes were attempted. It was remarked that had Tyson's and Statham's bowling figures been reversed it would not have been unjust. As they left the ground, Tyson put his arm round Statham's shoulder.

The pitch had unquestionably worried the Australians. They had looked at it before the start of play on this final day, noticing the Englishmen paying special attention to its cracks – and the evidence of overnight watering. Among the theories floating around was that the MCG must be sitting on some sort of artesian bore. The answer was so much simpler than that.

Because Ashes cricket attracted so many books in the 1950s, there is a rich fund of first-hand opinion to draw upon just over 60 years on. 'Jim' Swanton, having made sure that Statham was not overlooked in the near-hysteria over Tyson's 7 for 27 (the best figures by any fast bowler in Ashes Test matches, he stated, seemingly forgetting Tom Richardson's heroic 8 for 94 in a losing cause at Sydney in 1898 – though it might reasonably be argued that seven cheap wickets trumps eight more costly ones), noted that the 'Typhoon' simply bowled very fast and straight. Cricket's laws ensured that there would be no concentrated leg-side field as in the 'Bodyline' series of 1932-33, when Larwood and Voce, with short-lived freedom to bounce the ball at the batsmen with almost all the fieldsmen on the leg side, were as effective as Tyson and Statham. Tyson took his wickets conventionally through catches to 'keeper Godfrey Evans, or in the slips cordon, or bowled (Benaud played on).

As for the far-reaching inquisition concerning the pitch, it was recorded by one careful observer, E.M.Wellings, that only one ball kept unreasonably low. That, of course, is often enough to distract batsmen. The studious and adamant Wellings was seldom in agreement with Swanton, and here again there was a difference. Swanton recorded that Keith Miller had to cope with

four near-shooters from Statham. Prior to that, Hutton had been done (lbw) by an off-cutter from Ron Archer which struck his ankle. So this was no perfect surface.

Sid Barnes, the former high-scoring Australian Test batsman, was predictably outraged at Australia's performance on this 'Black Wednesday'. He dubbed England's champion 'Tyson the Terrible', and contended that the Australian selectors' heads were now on the block. Barnes, then aged 38 and with a batting average of 63 from his 13 Tests, had been summarily excluded from the Test team only a couple of years before after a range of supposed misdemeanours, but was confident in his position in the press-box. He once preposterously suggested to Cardus that if he'd like to take some time off, he (Barnes) would write his stuff for him since their styles were pretty similar.

The unconscionable Barnes naturally had it in for the selectors: 'Australia's team had been allowed to degenerate into a junkyard of shattered prowess that had become as potent as a toy pistol in a naval engagement.' He asserted that the selectors (his primary objects of scorn) had pursued 'a policy of choosing crustaceans clinging to the ghosts of a shattered reputation'. Australian cricket was now 'a mortuary of buried idols' with 'feet of clay during the Tysonian avalanche'. Cardus material indeed. Having delivered his verdict on his country's disappointing batsmanship, obdurate former opening batsman Barnes turned to Frank Tyson: he had become 'a very fine bowler with his shortened run but having regard to the chickenfeed that was thrown to him for his hearty meal of wickets I had yet to be convinced he was something more than a double banger among a packet of penny crackers.' He then named his 'penny crackers': Hole, Benaud and Morris.

Margaret Hughes, a close friend of Neville Cardus, was unique in that she is the only woman so far to have written a book on an Ashes series. She was capable of colourful description:

'Tyson's third ball to Miller performed the same antics as a firework squib and Miller only jabbed down on it at the last minute. The agonised gestures of despair from Tyson suggested that he was strung up as tight as any G-string, and the ball started to fizz alarmingly from his hand, while Miller was grimly holding on, knowing the going was tough, but realising that if he stayed Tyson could not keep up this hurricane for any length of time.'

Genial 1920s England skipper Arthur Gilligan seemed slightly bewildered by

it all: he found Australia's collapse 'incomprehensible' before pointing to magnificent bowling, superb catching, and a lack of fight among the Australians. He marvelled at England's success without the bowlers who had won the Ashes in 1953: Bedser, Trueman, Laker and Lock.

Thoughtful Ian Peebles, former England legspinner, wrote a pleasant book on the series, and concluded that Tyson and Statham had received a measure of help from the pitch, but 'it was scarcely sufficient to explain another complete collapse'. Statham's three consecutive 'squatters' to Miller were received with 'a rather elaborate air of exasperation'. Perhaps Peebles's wartime eye injury had left him literally one-eyed in his assessment. The shooter, as he would surely have acknowledged, is one of the most lethal balls in cricket. His view that it was seeds of doubt that had undermined the Australians seems unchallengeable.

Alan Ross, as elegant a writer as cricket has known, created a vivid image of Tyson in his book *Australia 55*:

'Haunting images of Tyson's bowling in this match remain. He walks very loosely back to his bowling mark, chewing gum slowly. He has put on weight, making him less angular in movement, and is pleasantly tanned. He turns, moves back a pace, shuffles his feet as if wiping them on the doormat, lopes for three long strides, then quickens up for the climax of the delivery. As he runs he pushes his right hand, with the ball in it, twice from shoulder to waist, in the motions of an auctioneer knocking down an item. His left arm, as he approaches the umpire, is thrown up high and bent back near his right ear. His chest is turned inwards and fully expanded. The left foot, as he comes down on it, points nearer to first slip than long leg, but much less than it used. He has long arms and he brings the ball up from far back. When he is not bowling well, the initial shuffle is more pronounced, and his paces seem too close together for the distance of his run. After letting go the ball, he follows through, drops his shoulders and dangles his arms loosely in front of him, as though completely exhausted. His action is only striking at the moment of delivery; but for the few seconds that count he does most of the important things.'

Ross, a former fast bowler himself, further remarked on the 'determined application' that Frank Tyson had brought to the problems of fast bowling. 'Intelligence has governed his attitude to them: and he is a man of sensibility,

as well as heart.’

Broadcaster John Arlott, making his only Test tour of Australia, had spoken to some old-timers from the 1920s before play on the final day, and they had all expressed the view that Australia would get the runs. Harvey was out before the group broke up. Relishing England’s triumph, and with his feel for history, Arlott noted that the slip cordon of Edrich, Hutton and Compton had been the same as at The Oval in 1938.

Bruce Harris, who had covered the 1932-33 Bodyline series, declared the Sydney Test which preceded this one to have been the most exciting of all the Tests he had seen in Australia. Now, at Melbourne, continuing his unfortunate habit of referring to England as ‘we’, he relied on statistics as much as words, and the times alongside the topple of Australian wickets on that final day make dramatic reading: 12.04 Harvey; 12.23 Benaud; 12.27 Miller; 12.47 Hole; 12.53 Maddocks; 12.55 Lindwall; 1.12 Archer; 1.17 Johnston: eight wickets for 36 off 91 balls, from which only 22 yielded runs.

The pitch controversy was never satisfactorily resolved. Johnnie Moyes wrote that the temperature on that Sunday was 105 Fahrenheit in the shade, with a 50 mph gale blowing, and ‘the heat at night was so vile that it could have drawn water up under the canvas’. The sudden temperature drop later, he conjectured, could have rehabilitated the pitch. ‘Those of us who lived through that night felt that if the turf sweated as we did anything could have happened.’

This famous match had drawn massive attendances on all five days, the cumulative total (just over 300,000) having left little free capacity throughout in a stadium soon to be substantially developed for Melbourne’s 1956 Olympic Games. A few elderly people will still recall this extraordinary Test match, almost all of them Australians, since it pre-dated the mass ‘invasion’ of fans from overseas. They will muse that Tyson hadn’t the beautiful rhythm of Ray Lindwall or the sling-shot action of Jeff Thomson. There was no smooth, menacing Holding approach. If Tyson’s action resembled that of any modern fast bowler it might have been the heavy-legged run-up and explosive release of Shoaib Akhtar of Pakistan, although come Melbourne, Tyson had abandoned his extraordinarily long approach.

And his baldness was a striking source of deception. It gave him a scholarly appearance and made him seem much older than his 24 years. By the same token, he seemed hardly to have altered half a century later, when I came to know him well. With our wives we would picnic in the McPherson

Range in southern Queensland, when his heavy work with that arthritic ankle on the brake pedal on the winding mountain road had the ladies in the back gasping in alarm. We would speak French to each other in Gold Coast restaurants, with Monsieur Tyson winning hands down. He would go to his sideboard and bring out that historic cricket ball, which I would touch reverently, even covetously, and which he would refuse to sell. When we had a casual evening net down at the Dolphins ground, he would be agitated when I treated his gentle half-volleys so respectfully. What he couldn't know was that I was still vividly picturing the 1954-55 Tyson, and feared that by some near-miracle he would suddenly unleash a 100 mph ball short of a length.

In 2005, Frank Tyson revived it all with a book, written with profound feeling, a tender and detailed celebration of that long-ago 1954-55 Ashes summer in Australia (where he had long been settled) and of mourning for his departed team-mates. *In the Eye of the Typhoon* was the product of a sharp memory and some 50-year-old scrapbooks, and takes the reader into the England dressing-room and elsewhere in those comparatively relaxed days. His account of this famous Melbourne Test includes the telling remark that 'by an ironic twist of fate, the actions of an Australian groundsman spelt defeat for his own team.' The water treatment allowed England to get into a slightly advantageous position before the Australian batsmen got the worst of the pitch. Tyson was amused at the memory of thousands of meat pies remaining unsold at the MCG on that sensational last day, when Australia lost their last eight wickets before lunch.

A famous victory concluded, Tyson remembered Len Hutton casting off his usual parsimonious cloak by opening the dressing-room door to the Australians as the champagne flowed. Then Frank Tyson and his Northants pal wicket-keeper Keith Andrew went to the pictures.

England

L Hutton*	c Hole b Miller	12
WJ Edrich	c Lindwall b Miller	4
PBH May	c Benaud b Lindwall	0
MC Cowdrey	b Johnson	102
DCS Compton	c Harvey b Miller	4
TE Bailey	c †Maddocks b Johnston	30
TG Evans†	lbw b Archer	20
JH Wardle	b Archer	0
FH Tyson	b Archer	6
JB Statham	b Archer	3
R Appleyard	not out	1
Extras (b9)		**9**
Total (all out; 67.6 overs)		**191**

Fall of wickets 1/14 2/21 3/29 4/41 5/115 6/169 7/181 8/181 9/190 10/191

Bowling	O	M	R	W
RR Lindwall	13	0	59	1
KR Miller	11	8	14	3
RG Archer	13.6	4	33	4
R Benaud	7	0	30	0
WA Johnston	12	6	26	1
IWG Johnson	11	3	20	1

L Hutton*	lbw b Archer	42
WJ Edrich	b Johnston	13
PBH May	b Johnston	91
MC Cowdrey	b Benaud	7
DCS Compton	c †Maddocks b Archer	23
TE Bailey	not out	24
TG Evans†	c †Maddocks b Miller	22
JH Wardle	b Johnson	38
FH Tyson	c Harvey b Johnston	6
JB Statham	c Favell b Johnston	0
R Appleyard	b Johnston	6
Extras (b2, lb4, w1)		**7**
Total (all out; 100.5 overs)		**279**

Fall of wickets 1/40 2/96 3/128 4/173 5/185 6/211 7/257 8/273 9/273 10/279

Bowling	O	M	R	W
RR Lindwall	18	3	52	0
KR Miller	18	6	35	1
RG Archer	24	7	50	2
R Benaud	8	2	25	1
WA Johnston	24.5	2	85	5
IWG Johnson	8	2	25	1

Australia

LE Favell	lbw b Statham	25
AR Morris	lbw b Tyson	3
KR Miller	c †Evans b Statham	7
RN Harvey	b Appleyard	31
GB Hole	b Tyson	11
R Benaud	c sub b Appleyard	15
RG Archer	b Wardle	23
LV Maddocks†	†Evans b Statham	47
RR Lindwall	b Statham	13
IWG Johnson*	not out	33
WA Johnston	b Statham	11
Extras (b7, lb3, nb2)		**12**
Total (all out; 63.3 overs)		**231**

Fall of wickets 1/15 2/38 3/43 4/65 5/92 6/115 7/134 8/151 9/205 10/231

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FH Tyson	21	2	68	2
JB Statham	16.3	0	60	5
TE Bailey	9	1	33	0
R Appleyard	11	3	38	2
JH Wardle	6	0	20	1

LE Favell	b Appleyard	30
AR Morris	c Cowdrey b Tyson	4
R Benaud	b Tyson	22
RN Harvey	c †Evans b Tyson	11
KR Miller	c Edrich b Tyson	6
GB Hole	c †Evans b Statham	5
RG Archer	b Statham	15
LV Maddocks†	b Tyson	0
RR Lindwall	lbw b Tyson	0
IWG Johnson*	not out	4
WA Johnston	c †Evans b Tyson	0
Extras (b1, lb13)		**14**
Total (all out; 31.3 overs)		**111**

Fall of wickets 1/23 2/57 3/77 4/86 5/87 6/97 7/98 8/98 9/110 10/111

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FH Tyson	12.3	1	27	7
JB Statham	11	1	38	2
TE Bailey	3	0	14	0
R Appleyard	4	1	17	1
JH Wardle	1	0	1	0

Michael Holding – 20.4-6-57-6

England v West Indies, The Oval 12-17 August 1976

-David Tossell-

Tony Greig strode down the pavilion steps for one final time during this heatwave of a summer, advanced a few of his long strides across the parched outfield of The Oval and then paused. Usually he would have marched directly towards the middle, chewing gum purposefully, windmilling his arms as he went, his bat looking like a toothpick in his massive grasp. On this occasion, however, the England captain stood to attention and allowed the boos and catcalls of the West Indies fans to cascade around him. If he was going to be the figure of hate for the opposition supporters, well, he might as well milk it. Give them what they want.

What Michael Holding wanted was one more shot at him. The 22-year-old Jamaican, playing his first series in England, prayed that his older colleague, Vanburn Holder, would not follow up his dismissal of Peter Willey by making quick work of the new batsman. Let him get to my end, he thought. Holding had already taken three of the four England wickets to fall in this second innings of the fifth Test and 11 of the 14 so far in the match. He had cleaned up Greig the previous day. Once more would put a neat exclamation mark at the end of the story of the summer.

In his second season as skipper, Greig, England's leading player and biggest character, had created the backdrop against which the 1976 series would be played when he sat atop the Hove pavilion during the tourists' match against Sussex immediately before the first Test. Having already created a stir by recalling 45-year-old Somerset skipper Brian Close to his England team in an attempt to blunt the edge of the West Indies' emerging pack of fast bowlers, he offered his view of the coming contests for the following day's Sportsnight, the BBC's flagship midweek sports programme. Frustrated at what he perceived as the interviewer's dismissal of England's chances, he argued:

“I like to think that people are building these West Indians up, because I’m not really sure they’re as good as everyone thinks they are. I think people tend to forget it wasn’t that long ago they were beaten 5-1 by the Australians and struggled very much to handle them, and only just managed to keep their heads above water against the Indians just a short while ago as well. Sure, they’ve got a couple of fast bowlers, but really I don’t think we’re going to run into anything any more sensational than Thomson and Lillee and so really I’m not all that worried about them. You must remember that the West Indians, these guys, if they get on top they are magnificent cricketers. But if they’re down, they grovel, and I intend, with the help of Closey and a few others, to make them grovel.”

“The part that everyone remembers, and which caused such a stir, is when I said ‘I intend to make them grovel’ but the lead-up to that line was my response to the fact that the guy had almost written us off”, Greig would explain:

“The West Indies were, at the time, a team that could run really hot or really cold. It doesn’t seem there was much middle ground in their cricket. I knew immediately that the guy sitting on top of the roof there now had the big story and that it was going to flash around everywhere. Once it had been on television it would be in the press as well. You had to live with that sort of thing if you had the approach to the media that I adopted.”

Greig was seen – and had modelled himself – as something of a saviour of English cricket since arriving from his native South Africa in 1967. At 6ft 8in and with a shock of blond hair, he cut a dashing figure on the field, batted boldly, fielded with brilliance and offered a versatile, sometimes game-changing, array of bowling styles. After the shellacking England had taken at the hands of Australia’s Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson in 1974-75, he had inherited the captaincy from Mike Denness one game into the following summer’s series against the same foes and had immediately steadied the ship. His comments on Sportsnight were initially reported uncritically by a media contingent who had become entranced by the fact that here at last was an England captain who understood how they operated and could invariably be relied upon to provide a headline.

His latest words were presented as the same kind of rallying cry to the

country that Prime Minister James Callaghan was frequently delivering as inflation and unemployment rose, productivity fell and Britain prepared to go cap-in-hand to the International Monetary Fund. But then those same journalists became aware of the offended reaction of the West Indies team and Britain's Caribbean community. The word 'grovel' being used by a white South African in relation to a group of black men was, they were made to realise, somewhat incendiary. In his biography of Viv Richards, the broadcaster Trevor McDonald recalled the tourists perceiving Greig's words as 'a formal declaration of war'.

Articulate and engaging off the field, as well as being a colossus on it, Greig was felt by many to be too intelligent to have made a simple slip of the tongue. Holding remembers being angered by the manner in which he had slipped the offending word into his conversation. When I interviewed him for my book Grovel! he said:

"Everybody took exception to the comment. He was sat there at Hove with a cup of tea in his hand and he said 'I intend' and almost as a second thought added 'with Closey and a few others'. We thought, 'Right. This guy needs to be put in his place.' He was a white South African and 'grovel' was an offensive word for him to have used. It smacked of racism and apartheid. He got our backs up and made us more determined."

In fact, there was no cup of tea in sight but Holding's memory is indicative of the air of casual superiority he and his colleagues felt Greig exuded and which made their hackles rise so dramatically.

Over time, Greig's assertion that there was no intended insult – simply a clumsy use of language – became widely accepted. As team-mate Bob Willis points out, "It was just Greig being Greig and overdoing the relish. Obviously, he had to eat a fairly large slice of humble pie because, at that time in the political world, it wasn't a wise thing to say."

Indeed. Britain in 1976 was an island full of racial tension, culminating in unrest and violence, while Greig's own homeland was in the midst of murderous turmoil. He could not have chosen a worse time to have put his foot in it. During a period of severe economic hardship, sectors of Britain's white population were quick to blame the country's woes on the influx of visitors who'd been arriving from the Carribean since 1948. Others resented the immigrants' desire to duplicate the culture of their homeland. On

television, the racist views and taunts of *Love Thy Neighbour*'s Eddie Booth, upset by the arrival of a black couple next door, was too dangerously accurate a portrayal to be considered funny by many. Racial violence had erupted in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958 and would do so again at the former before the end of this long, baking hot summer.

As Greig was making his *faux pas*, a new Race Relations Act, dealing with equality in employment, education and the provision of goods and services, was being prepared for Parliament, bringing the debate about immigration numbers further to the fore. Metropolitan Police chief Robert Mark was admitting that relations between the police and young blacks were in a critical condition, exacerbated by the introduction of 'stop and search' powers, which the black community felt were exercised indiscriminately. Meanwhile, in the South African township of Soweto, students were rallying against the mandatory use of Afrikaans for more than half their subjects. Two days of riots left almost 100 dead, 800 injured and 250 arrested.

As well as being politically insensitive, Greig's remarks were badly misjudged even on a purely cricketing level. Talk about poking a stick at a slumbering beast. West Indies captain Clive Lloyd states:

"I don't know if he knew what the word meant, but some of our team took it personally. They wanted to show him that we were not a side that would capitulate under pressure. We were not calypso cricketers. We were players who had mental strength, could fight through tough situations and could play hard. He had that perception about West Indians, that we are not professional. Yes, we are exuberant about the game and play exciting cricket, but we can be professional about it."

"You prat, Greigy," was the reaction of England's Surrey spinner Pat Pocock. "What have you done? You don't do that sort of thing; winding them up for no reason."

While letters of condemnation followed Greig around the country, the West Indies fans delighted in chanting 'gro-vel, gro-vel' at him at every opportunity as they turned out in their thousands.

"Cricket was all you had at the time," recalls former England Test bowler Gladstone Small, who arrived from Barbados in the mid-'70s and found himself seeking out connections to his homeland.

“My parents and the parents of the kids then were very much West Indians. Cricket linked them to the culture they knew and remembered and had brought from home. West Indies cricket was probably the biggest product to leave the Caribbean. It brought the islands together and was a big source of identity for the West Indians who lived in the UK.”

Sir Bill Morris, the former head of the Transport and General Workers Union – who arrived in England in 1954 – told a BBC Radio documentary, “One of the great joys of a tour of the West Indies to England is that it uplifts the Caribbean community in the United Kingdom. Recognising that Caribbean people living in England hadn’t got many heroes to look up to… for us, cricket fulfilled that role.”

The writer and West Indies cricket historian Hilary Beckles was a student in Hull in 1976, experiencing the various prejudices of British life and noting that, in Yorkshire, “those like myself whom God had blessed with an adequate quantum of melanin were disenfranchised with respect to the local cricket culture”. He would write that the arrival of Clive Lloyd’s team that summer ‘was charged with concern about past injustices, current anxieties, and future expectations’.

Even to an American-born observer Mike Marqusee, whose love of cricket was just awakening, “the political and racial context was inescapable. As a product of the American protest culture of the ’60s, I saw the West Indies as the cricketing embodiment of Black Power and the onrushing anti-colonial tide.”

Greig’s infamous comment had been like casually tossing a match into a parched hayfield. And with England’s grounds becoming more scorched with every passing day of a Caribbean-style heatwave, the touring team set about ensuring that those incendiary words blew up in his face. A Trent Bridge draw dominated by Viv Richards’s first double-century of the series was followed by another stalemate at Lord’s. But then the West Indies overwhelmed England by 425 runs at Old Trafford and won an exciting game at Headingley to clinch the series, despite a century and half-century by Greig. Now they had set England 435 to win at The Oval. Meanwhile, Greig recalled, “I continued to do my best to try to explain myself. I didn’t hide from anything.”

There had certainly been no hiding place for him on the field. Holding and fellow fast bowlers Andy Roberts and Wayne Daniel had gone hard at

him, on the basis, according to Holding, that “if you attack the head the body will wither”. He added, ‘His bravado and choice of words made him a marked man.’

The sight of Greig’s stumps spread-eagled by a fast yorker became a familiar one, his efforts at Headingley his only personal triumph. Holder, the fourth and least fearsome member of the West Indies pace quartet, says, “Greig rubbed people like Andy and Michael the wrong way. Whenever Tony came to the wicket, even if those guys were on their knees, they seemed to have got life from somewhere.”

Holding continues:

“Everybody stepped up, but it was only partly because of what he said before the series. We liked to attack the opposition captain. If he is not doing well as an individual then he may not lead the team so well in the field. He may be thinking about other things and the team might not rally around him in the same way. Plus, you knew Greigy was a competitor.”

He was also a showman which led to the events of the fourth afternoon of the fifth Test at The Oval after Richards had racked up 291 and Holding had shot England out with a magnificent return of 8 for 92 (a performance featured in detail elsewhere in this book). Instead of enforcing the follow-on, Lloyd let openers Roy Fredericks and Gordon Greenidge thrash an unbroken 182 by the 32nd over of the innings before declaring with a lead of 434.

Greig’s team, battered and bruised physically and mentally throughout the summer, had been flailed to humiliation. Opening batsmen Dennis Amiss and Bob Woolmer scurried off to prepare for an awkward final half-hour of play but, instead of following them directly to the pavilion, Greig headed towards the open stands where the West Indies fans had been cheering, chanting and banging out Caribbean rhythms on their beer cans. He smiled at them. He dropped to his knees and began crawling. Delightedly, the West Indian broadcaster Tony Cozier told BBC Radio listeners, “For three of four paces he has, in his own words, grovelled.”

Greig explained, “It was just a bit of fun. I was walking on my knees. I realise I made a mistake in using that word at the start of the series and they haven’t let me forget it.” And now Holding was going to give Greig and his team-mates one more performance to remember.

He started innocuously enough, harpooning the first ball of the innings

down the leg side and across the straw-coloured outfield for four byes. Looking as though their batsmen's interlude had been too brief to give them sufficient recovery time, neither he nor the usually-malevolent Roberts were in the least threatening and England raced to 43 without loss before stumps. Perhaps a placid wicket that Holding had defied in his first-innings effort was about to claim him as a victim after all. England went to bed with reasonable hopes of a face-saving draw.

The final morning found Holding shaking off some still visible lethargy by getting the ball to climb against Amiss, the double-century hero of England's first innings. Back and across the stumps the Warwickshire man went, in the manner that had been so effective earlier in the game, but all he could do was fend the ball to Greenidge and the first wicket was down for 49.

Bob Woolmer had established high expectations by scoring a game-saving marathon century on this ground against Australia a year earlier, his breakthrough innings for England, for whom he had first appeared as a lower-order seam bowler in one-day internationals. His failure to build on that against the West Indies, despite his gradual elevation to an opening spot, had been one of the home team's biggest disappointments of the summer. Having moved serenely to 30 it appeared as though this might once again be his lucky ground, but Holding's speed was fatal against any batsman who was indecisive in his foot movement and Woolmer nudged tentatively to present an easy catch to wicket-keeper Deryck Murray, the bowler's 10th victim of the match.

The fact that England had turned to Chris Balderstone, a journeyman county batsmen in his thirties who was known more for his dual career as a Carlisle United footballer than any serious Test potential, said much about England's batting problems. Their attempted solutions in this series had included veterans such as Close and John Edrich, thirty-somethings Balderstone and Mike Brearley, previous discards Barry Wood and Frank Hayes and a dizzying succession of opening partnerships, five in as many matches.

By the time he bowled his second ball at the over-matched Balderstone, Holding, gliding in from the Vauxhall end, was approaching full speed. A leg-stump yorker was simply too quick for the Leicestershire batsman, striking him on the foot. He survived and played an uncomfortable prod that was lucky not to produce an edge. For 25 scoreless minutes he continued in similar painful fashion before Holding put him out of his misery by removing

his off stump with another yorker, the batsman's second duck of the game.

David Steele, the Northamptonshire fighter plucked from county cricket on Greig's recommendation a year earlier to become a folk hero with the way he fronted up to the Aussies, took half an hour to turn Holding for a boundary. He also survived an lbw appeal against Holder, but Peter Willey, his county team-mate, was out to the same bowler when he edged an attempted cut low to Greenidge.

And now came Greig. After his grand entrance, which he rounded off with a salute to no one in particular, he arrived at the crease and pushed a single off his third ball to keep the strike for Holding's next over. Just where the bowler wanted him; not that you would have known it from the nonchalant way he strolled back to his mark, hitching up his right sleeve and casually polishing the ball, almost as an afterthought, on his left leg. Wicket-keeper, three slips and two gullies crouched as Holding floated towards the crease and unfurled a yorker length ball that was little more than a blur. Greig's leg stump shot off towards square-leg and the middle stump slumped back to forty-five degrees as The Oval erupted in the kind of roar that can never before have greeted the removal of an England skipper. Holding leaped in the air, colleagues engulfed him and West Indian fans hopped across the boundary rope to dance their celebrations in the outfield.

It was the fifth time in the series that Greig had suffered such a dismissal, but this was the most emphatic of all; the story of the summer encapsulated in one split-second of devastation.

What happened after that seemed like a mere postscript. At 78 for 5, Alan Knott's quirky defiance joined Steele's stubborn defence to add 50 in the remaining hour and a half of the morning, with the West Indians' part-time spinners and medium pacers allowing the fast men to have a breather. Normal service was resumed, however, while the luncheon plates were being cleared away. Holding was back into the attack, twice slamming the ball into Knott's pads and inducing an edge from Steele that fell just short of Collis King at slip.

It was Holder who removed Steele for 42, caught by Murray. Even more unlikely was the fact that Richards took the next wicket, his quicker off-spinner bowling Geoff Miller shortly after Knott had reached his fift y. Three wickets remained to be taken, and Holding was back on centre stage.

The fourth ball of his new spell, before he had warmed up enough to remove his sleeveless sweater, nipped sufficiently off the seam to remove

Knott's off stump, one of his few wickets in the match earned by more than pure pace. He had now become the first West Indian to take thirteen wickets in a Test. Roberts at last got his first of the match when Underwood was caught by the diving Lloyd in the gully but Holding, appropriately, finished things off. Another yorker; another vain attempt to get bat on ball; and Willis was out lbw as the ball struck his foot. Holding had taken 6 for 57, an effort amplified by the eight-wicket haul he had already bagged in the match, giving him combined figures of 14 for 149. All this on a wicket offering nothing to the bowlers.

"It was such a flat pitch that if I had been more experienced I would have said, 'This is not working. It is not worth all this hard work and strain on my body'" Holding insists. "When you are young and excited you just run in fast and do what you do."

Willis notes, "Having bowled on the pitch, I know that there was nothing there to help the pace bowlers. But Michael managed to make it seem perfect for speed."

Lloyd immediately hailed Holding's achievement in the match as "the finest fast bowling I have ever witnessed in Test cricket. For sustained speed and accuracy, it would be impossible to improve on Holding's performance."

Mike Selvey, who had toiled away fruitlessly in England's cause, says:

"In later years, it would have been the perfect wicket for Waqar Younis or Wasim Akram to come on and take five for something with reverse-swing yorkers. But no one knew about reverse swing back then. What he did was bowl very fast, very straight and very full. To put it into context, look at the figures of all the other pace bowlers in the match."

In the sponsor-free post-game interviews on the pavilion balcony, Greig was asked for a final summing up of the series. "We have taken a hiding", he admitted. None more so than he. None administered more mercilessly than by Michael Holding.

West Indies

RC Fredericks	c Balderstone b Miller	71
CG Greenidge	lbw b Willis	0
IVA Richards	b Greig	291
LG Rowe	st †Knott b Underwood	70
CH Lloyd*	c †Knott b Greig	84
CL King	c Selvey b Balderstone	63
DL Murray†	c & b Underwood	36
VA Holder	not out	13
MA Holding	b Underwood	32

Did not bat: AME Roberts, WW Daniel

Extras (b1, lb17, nb9)	**27**
Total (8 wickets dec; 182.5 overs)	**687**

Fall of wickets 1/5 2/159 3/350 4/524 5/547 6/640 7/642 8/687

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RGD Willis	15	3	73	1
MWW Selvey	15	0	67	0
DL Underwood	60.5	15	165	3
RA Woolmer	9	0	44	0
G Miller	27	4	106	1
JC Balderstone	16	0	80	1
AW Greig	34	5	96	2
P Willey	3	0	11	0
DS Steele	3	0	18	0

RC Fredericks	not out	86
CG Greenidge	not out	85

Did not bat:
IVA Richards, LG Rowe, CH Lloyd*,
CL King, DL Murray†, VA Holder,
MA Holding, AME Roberts, WW Daniel

Extras (b4, 1b1, w1, nb5)	**11**
Total (0 wickets dec; 32 overs)	**182**

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RGD Willis	7	0	48	0
MWW Selvey	9	1	44	0
DL Underwood	9	2	38	0
RA Woolmer	5	0	30	0
AW Greig	2	0	11	0

England

RA Woolmer	lbw b Holding	8
DL Amiss	b Holding	203
DS Steele	lbw b Holding	44
JC Balderstone	b Holding	0
P Willey	c Fredericks b King	33
AW Greig*	b Holding	12
DL Underwood	b Holding	4
APE Knott†	b Holding	50
G Miller	c sub b Holder	36
MWW Selvey	b Holding	0
RGD Willis	not out	5
Extras (b8, lb11, nb21)		**40**
Total (all out; 129.5 overs)		**435**

Fall of wickets 1/47 2/147 3/151 4/279 5/303 6/323 7/342 8/411 9/411 10/435

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
AME Roberts	27	4	102	0
MA Holding	33	9	92	8
VA Holder	27.5	7	75	1
WW Daniel	10	1	30	0
RC Fredericks	11	2	36	0
IVA Richards	14	4	30	0
CL King	7	3	30	1

RA Woolmer	c †Murray b Holding	30
DL Amiss	c Greenidge b Holding	16
DS Steele	c †Murray b Holder	42
JC Balderstone	b Holding	0
P Willey	c Greenidge b Holder	1
AW Greig*	b Holding	1
APE Knott†	b Holding	57
G Miller	b Richards	24
DL Underwood	c Lloyd b Roberts	2
MWW Selvey	not out	4
RGD Willis	lbw b Holding	0
Extras (b15, lb3, w8)		**26**
Total (all out; 78.4 overs)		**203**

Fall of wickets 1/49 2/54 3/64 4/77 5/78 6/148 7/196 8/196 9/202 10/203

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
AME Roberts	13	4	37	1
MA Holding	20.4	6	57	6
VA Holder	14	5	29	2
RC Fredericks	12	5	33	0
IVA Richards	11	6	11	1
CL King	6	2	9	0
CH Lloyd	2	1	1	0

Sarfraz Nawaz – 35.4-7-86-9

Australia v Pakistan, Melbourne 11-15 March 1979

22

-Rob Bagchi-

Tall, medium-paced swing bowlers are the game's dandies. Slaves to clouds, humidity and, latterly, a Janus ball with one handsomely burnished and one grossly but propitiously disfigured face, they profit when capricious conditions fancy them with their favours. Deceptively tough, they go into the fray while hostages to the whims of their mercurial gifts. They survive on boldness and impudence because they navigate a precarious path between mesmerising batsmen with movement, luring them to destruction with the siren song of seemingly irresistible hittable pace, and being cannon fodder if the ball refuses to bend – or a batsman defies reason and audaciously links him inextricably for all eternity with a Headingley confectionery stall.

At their best, swing bowlers ought to conjure up the simultaneously bewitching and sinister pipe organ of the *Tales of the Unexpected* theme tune in the batsman's head. The tidings should beguile and unsettle him. When the quickest thing about a bowler is the snap of his wrist, deceit is his *modus operandi* and as such relies on his guile but also the complicity of the victim. The greatest wizards of wobble rejoice when a batsman leaves the crease cursing himself more than the bowler. After all, as Charles Baudelaire wrote: 'The finest trick of the devil is to persuade you that he does not exist.' Many a swing bowler, martyrs on inauspicious days to hecklers shouting "bend your back, you big Jessie", must have allowed themselves a smile of sly recognition when Kevin Spacey gave their seductive credo fresh fame in *The Usual Suspects*.

At times the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan (as it then was), some of his team-mates, one-time friends, significantly more opponents and the sundry players and officials who have been the subjects of his choleric criticism over the past 40 years could have been forgiven for judging the singularly voluble Sarfraz Nawaz an especially irksome kind of scoundrel, if not quite the devil incarnate.

Given that the mouth of this inveterate contrarian has so often plunged him into controversy, it seems incongruous to report, as Wasim Bari told Peter Oborne, that Sarfraz required a throat operation during his first England tour in 1971 because his voice was so puny his appeals were disadvantageously muted. How his enemies must curse that surgeon.

Sarfraz was born in Lahore in 1948, 15 months after Partition, and was raised in Mozang, south of the Walled City, in the heart of town. His father, Malik Muhammad Nawaz, owned a thriving construction business and employed his son, on matriculation from high school at the age of 14, as a building contractor. In 1965 when war broke out between India and Pakistan he was working on a contract for Government College Lahore when the project was mothballed because of the conflict.

He had never played formal cricket but was persuaded by his employees and some of the kids using the college field – who included fellow middle-class Punjabi future Test players Wasim Raja, Saleem Altaf, Shafiq Ahmed and Aftab Gul – to exploit his height and athletic physique in a scratch game. He picked up the fundamentals straightaway and made such an impact with the ball that he was immediately hooked. For some novice late converts the appropriate adjective would be smitten, but Sarfraz, incorrigibly intellectually curious, was intrigued by the game and absorbed by its practical and creative challenges.

Batsmen in the past typically obsessed more about their equipment than bowlers, becoming ‘bat tragics’ in the dressing room, eternally primping the face with glass paper and tinkering with grips. Sarfraz was a ‘ball tragic’, experimenting in the nets at Mozang Link Cricket Club and at the Lahore Gymkhana with balls in varying degrees of degradation from smartly lacquered to absolutely knackered. His first weapon developed on matting pitches was a spitting off-cutter which earned him plenty of wickets as he quickly progressed from his club side to matches with Government College and into the first-class game with Lahore Greens, Punjab University and Lahore.

His rise was propelled by a tremendous work ethic and accompanied by an ability he tirelessly honed in the nets to make the ball hoop both ways. Farrakh Khan, who had asked Alf Gover to teach him how to bowl an inswinger when touring England with Pakistan Eaglets, passed on his knowledge in the nets at Lahore Gymkhana some time in 1966. “He told me

how, if the ball gets old enough on one side while remaining fairly new on the other", Sarfraz told Osman Samiuddin for *The Unquiet Ones*, "bowlers can generate extravagant late swing with it. He didn't know why and he only gave me the idea about it." The rest, said Sarfraz, understandably protective of his position as the creator of reverse swing, was down to him and hours of rigorous thought and application. Bowling is one of the few occupations where sweat is a functional side-effect and Sarfraz exploited it vigorously to shine and weight one half of a ball. Gradually but tirelessly he became a self-taught virtuoso.

The 1968-69 MCC tour of Pakistan was played out to a backdrop of protests, riots and fear. Certainly this is what it is remembered for as each of the three Tests finished in draws. The last, in Karachi, was given an extra day to help determine the series but had to be abandoned early on the third morning after the main gates were stormed by a mob who ran on to the pitch, uprooted the stumps and charged the police who were patrolling the stands. Sarfraz's footsore debut in this Test, when he bowled 34 economical yet wicketless overs, was the most febrile in history. England opener Roger Prideaux was on the plane home the same night, the scouting of Sarfraz for Northamptonshire his most significant memento.

In the English spring of 1969 Sarfraz took up Prideaux's offer and joined his compatriots Mushtaq Mohammad and his younger brother Sadiq at Wantage Road. Sadiq and he spent the summer in the seconds, playing at Horton and Ashton, Oakham, Retford and Leamington Spa. He settled well, refined his technique on a variety of pitches, continued to improvise and try out his hypotheses. A whole season's bowling strengthened him in more ways than one.

Day-to-day, we know the Championship can be a grind but personal success both on the field and in the dressing room familiarisation process are uplifting, dismantling psychological barriers and any sense of deference or unworthiness. "All that sledging we did during that time", he told Samiuddin, "when you are playing around the world and performing, say, in county cricket, that complex goes away. There is greater exposure and you feel you are a better player than the others."

Northampton shaped him as much as Lahore. It was where he became a professional and, like Mushtaq, where he felt best respected and rewarded. When the PCCB omitted Mushtaq from the 1971 tour over his demands for a tour fee commensurate with the county salary he would be foregoing, they

quickly caved in to the outcry and announced he would be available for selection after all. It was typical of the board: initial high-handedness ultimately giving way to pusillanimous backsliding. So Mushtaq behaved like an England player, turning out for his county in the Championship and his country in Tests.

Like Mushtaq, Sarfraz was to indulge in a county versus country controversy on this tour. It was to Northamptonshire that Sarfraz turned in June when he absented himself from the party. Dissatisfied with the standards of medical care, he left the tour in June for physiotherapy on his back. He had taken 59 wickets in the Championship the year before and for their side of the bargain Northants had taken care of him, paying him well and footing his expenses. At Wantage Road he was 'Sarf', very much one of the boys amongst a group with Colin Milburn as their irrepressible ringleader who knew how to enjoy themselves. He returned there even when not required for first-team duty, turning out for the seconds in 1972 and 1973 as he toiled to establish himself in the Pakistan side. He grew his hair and fashioned a Zapata moustache, taking on the confident air of someone who looked in the mirror and observed Omar Sharif reflected back at him even if the rest of us saw Peter Wyngarde.

Northampton was his bolthole, his safe place, returning there repeatedly during the decade, often in a midnight flit, when peeved by the Pakistan board over a range of issues from paltry per diems to freedom of speech, reputation-wrecking dreary pitches, selection disputes and delays in reimbursing the cost of his flights home to play for the Test side. From 1973 he was pretty much a regular for Pakistan, combining the things he had worked so hard to teach himself and the lessons he had learnt in England.

Sarfraz was fast medium, decidedly not a trundler, and had the instincts and nerve of a genuine quick. In 1975, his first full Championship season for five years, he retaliated against Jeff Thomson's barrage of bouncers in the match against the tourists both verbally and in kind. Sarfraz was included in a preposterous 'World's Fastest Bowler' event for Channel 9 in Australia in 1979, lured by the prize fund and driven by testosterone, but even though he slipped one or two through very rapidly, it was a category error. He was comfortably outranked but never outclassed.

An attractive feature of swing bowlers is the diversity of their approaches to the wicket. Terry Alderman sidled up in the manner of a spiv with some illicit

snout to shift. Ian Botham was a Tiggerish bounder. Others waddled, Dominic Cork bustled but Sarfraz trotted on his tip-toes, short-striding like Marlies Göhr in slow motion.

He would hold the ball in both hands until three strides in front of the crease and then his right hand would flop down, like a faulty trafficator, before he would gather and deliver. He didn't drive through the crease but relied on the remarkable strength of his shoulder as his arm whirred through. Sarfraz made every delivery look like an effort ball. It was as if the brain was more refined than the body but it had worked out a utilitarian method that gave his mind a vehicle to express itself. He was not so much a bowling machine as a bowling Dalek.

When he arrived in Australia at the end of February 1979 for his third tour Sarfraz was in peak form. His 15 wickets at Lahore and Karachi four months earlier had contributed significantly to twin eight-wicket victories over India in their first series for 18 years and he had followed that with five 'one-day international' appearances in World Series Cricket for Tony Greig's World XI. He had not been one of the original rebels but his presence in both camps symbolised the Pakistan board's rapprochement with Kerry Packer whose organisation's nimble diplomacy in Islamabad dynamited the fault lines in the official game's solidarity.

He had been oddly out of sorts during the first two Tests of the damp tour of New Zealand that preceded their series in Australia and rain persisted to dog them during their first warm-up match against New South Wales at Canberra. Off the pitch, however, the atmosphere was simmering. Should you ever require a trump card to defeat the contention that Australians do not whinge, the only ammunition you need is Graham Yallop's diary of the 1978-79 season, '*Lambs to the Slaughter*'.

In mitigation, the meat of the book concentrates on Australia's thrashing in the Ashes series and the veneration of Mike Brearley's captaincy that ultimately turns Yallop green. His position as the establishment's man weighs intolerably on his shoulders and even if legitimate criticism of his callow leadership understandably irritates him, his prickly rebuttals make him sound paranoid and petulant. The vibrant quality of World Series Cricket contrasted discordantly with the fortunes of the rump, official side and the thing Yallop needed least was a contest against a united team drawn from the two supposedly rival factions, especially one that had learnt the value of needle and aggressive resistance on its last visit there in 1977. Worse still for the raw

and twitchy Yallop, Asif Iqbal, one of the players with dual loyalties, a ‘Packeristani’ if you will, began the tour by taunting the hosts. Suffice to say, the word ‘mediocre’ featured heavily in Asif’s analysis of the Ashes participants.

If we are to believe the Australian captain, Asif’s words were pinned up in the home dressing room at the MCG on the eve of the first Test, an act, whether metaphorical or not, that must be much the most hackneyed motivational cliché of all. Yallop won the toss and sent Pakistan in, hoping Rodney Hogg, Alan Hurst and Wayne Clark would have the best of a moribund, end-of-season pitch. And so it proved. Hogg added four wickets to the 41 he had taken in his debut series but tenacious knocks from Mushtaq Mohammad, Imran and Sarfraz of 36, 33 and 35 respectively turned the tide. General whooping from the home side greeted Asif’s dismissal at 40 for four but the captain and his two gun bowlers dug in to extend the innings to 196 when Sarfraz was the last man out.

Imran made four of the first five breakthroughs but Australia, whose calamitous running had hobbled them repeatedly that summer, contributed farcical and fatal cock-ups. First the opener Graeme Wood ran straight into his partner Andrew Hilditch, hit him on the arm with his bat, jarred his own wrist in the collision and had to retire hurt. Soon after another disastrous call left Kim Hughes stranded. Sarfraz, pounding in rhythmically in support of Imran, was kept on long after the burden of eight-ball overs had earned the strike bowler a breather. Wasim Raja chipped in with two wickets before Javid Miandad, an incorrigible arsonist in such circumstances, gleefully tossed a match on the tinderbox tension between the two sides when Rodney Hogg defended a Sarfraz no-ball. After playing the shot, the batsman indulged in a spot of gardening oblivious to Miandad, with an urchin’s cheek and gumption, picking up the ball, breaking the stumps while he was down the pitch and appealing. Hogg was given out and began to depart but Mushtaq recalled him only for the umpire to insist his decision was irrevocable. Hogg then whacked the wickets with his bat and stomped off. These absurdities were to escalate in the next Test at Perth where a Mankading and a contrived handled-ball dismissal punctuated a rancorous end to the eight-ball-over era.

Back at the MCG, Pakistan built on their first-innings lead of 28 to set Australia 382 to win in four and a half sessions after Majid Khan sternly collared the leg-spinner Peter Sleep and made a splendid century with elegant

support from Zaheer Abbas. Sarfraz struck twice on the Wednesday evening off a nine-pace run, inducing Dav Watmore to play-on off his glove when surprised by the bounce and then bowling Hilditch round his legs for 62.

It was an extraordinary dismissal: a right-arm over bowler knocking back a well-set Test opener's leg-stump is a rare triumph indeed and reward for Sarfraz's ability to manoeuvre a notoriously skittish batsman across the crease. The ball arced in smoothly, pitched and kept going. Hilditch lined up a leg-glance, over-balanced and walked off affronted as if he had been swindled. On the surviving footage, as hazy and mottled as a foxed watercolour wash, its shape looks like reverse-swing but the shot Hilditch played and Sarfraz's subsequent explanation scream that it was not. Masterly orthodox swing was good enough to disorientate the batsman. At the end of play Australia required 265 with eight wickets in hand.

Erratic bounce caused Yallop difficulty at the start of his innings but on the final morning he conspired with Pakistan to ruin his painstaking exertions by running himself out after 30 minutes. Australia's 13th kamikaze sacrifice of the summer was even more unpalatable because it was Asif, a Clouseau-like irritant to the twitchy, vengeful Australia captain's Chief Inspector Dreyfus, whose throw beat Yallop by 10 yards. At an all but deserted MCG, Pakistan cheers muffled the groans.

Yallop's dismissal brought together Allan Border and Kim Hughes, the contrasting crown princes of the official team, and they embarked on a partnership where their defining traits, aggressive robustness and dashing instinctiveness, rubbed off on each other. The pitch continued to frustrate the batsmen's composure but they dug in, not altogether figuratively, to repel shooters, protect their ankles and metatarsals as well as the stumps. At the other end Imran fortuitously made a couple of deliveries ramp off a good length and whistle past their chins but they battled for two minutes short of four hours – past lunch, throughout the afternoon and beyond tea – helped by dropped catches and their own diligence. Mushtaq put himself on but neither his nor Wasim Raja's leg spin nor Majid's off spin threatened to quash Australia's dogged chase.

In the visitors' dressing room at tea and with defeat a genuine prospect, Sarfraz proposed going back off his full run to waste time. In the half hour after the final interval, Border built measuredly on his maiden Test century and the pair broke the record for Australia's fourth-wicket partnership against Pakistan by five runs. At 305 for three, Australia had 30 minutes plus 15

overs (120 balls) to make the 77 required for victory.

Border, as he would continue to do for the next 15 years, had scored heavily between fine-leg and mid-on. When Sarfraz came round the wicket and pitched on off and middle, Border eased across into position to whip the ball with a bottom-hand flick in front of square. The ball arced in, pitched and fizzed through like a leg break to beat the inside edge and crash into leg stump via the batsman's left kneecap. It was a sublime delivery – with swing and seam working in harmony to raid through Border's gate. Sarfraz threw both his arms upwards and leapt vertically in characteristically stiff celebration. Demolition of a batting side is an old-fashioned craft. One explosive does not fell it; instead you knock out the supports one by one until disintegration of its structural integrity becomes unstoppable. Border, even at that callow stage of his career, was the mainstay. And he had gone.

Enter Wood with his flaccid wrist and virile approach. Yallop had told him to hold up an end and let Hughes be Hughes. As if sensing that time was friend not foe now, Sarfraz cut his run back to nine paces and hung the ball outside the left-hander's off stump. The opener could not resist, tried to cut, nicked off to Wasim Bari and immediately became eligible for the Primary Club.

Sleep, the leg spinner chosen in preference to Jim Higgs because of his superior batsmanship, joined Hughes with the same command Wood was temperamentally unsuited to obey. Imran softened him up with a bouncer and Sarfraz finished him off with an inswinger that crept between bat and pad as the ball scuttled through. Once the pitch joins physics in the intrigue against them, fatalism breeds recklessness in batsmen.

Kevin Wright followed his captain's instructions and saw out the remainder of Sarfraz's over, not convincingly, but getting forward quickly enough to stun the inswing and mitigate the inconsistent bounce. Hughes's orders, though, were still to advance. Yallop would sound the retreat only if his swashbuckling vice-captain perished in the pursuit.

More judicious use of the short ball by Imran kept the batsmen in a state of siege. Hughes had to break it and took aim over mid-wicket, failing to consider that Sarfraz had taken three wickets for no runs with deliveries that tailed and dipped late. The movement was enough to betray Hughes' swing, he sliced the ball off a leading edge to Mohsin Khan at mid-on and was gone for 84.

The ball lingered in the air enough for the batsmen to cross which

allowed Wright to cap Sarfraz's run of dot balls at two overs when he squirted a single down to backward-point. Yallop had told the new batsman Wayne Clark to "close shop" but he could not even close his gate. If playing back to a good length, in-ducker was unwise, his failure to get his bat down in time when the ball shot through at ankle height and crashed into middle and leg stump was pardonable but irredeemable. Up went Sarfraz again, as straight-backed and prim as a Morris Man. The literalists at World Series Cricket had come up with 'Daddles' the animated duck who would quack off the scoreless batsman and the MCG scoreboard, now WSC was staging games there too, had replaced the zero with a duck symbol. Clark's was the second golden one in 20 minutes.

At the end of Sarfraz's 34th over the umpires called for drinks to signal the start of the final hour on resumption. Fifteen overs for two of numbers eight, 10 and 11 to survive. Twenty-five of the 120 balls, 16 from Imran and nine from Sarfraz, were seen out by Wright and Hogg, the latter surviving a loud appeal for a catch at short-leg. Sarfraz changed nothing, plodded in and bowled inswinger after inswinger until another stayed low and trapped Hogg in front of leg and middle. Two balls later the Test was won when Hurst instinctively shied away on to his back foot and wafted off the edge to the 'keeper. The scorebook shows Sarfraz's final three balls as WoW.

Sarfraz had improved his figures from two for 85 to nine for 86, taking seven for one in 33 deliveries – seven for four in modern parlance with three no-balls interspersing the 30 legal deliveries. From eating their tea whilst savouring the thought of pulling off the third highest run-chase in history and rehearsing what they would say to Asif once they had, Australia had lost seven wickets for five runs off 65 balls.

Sarfraz's team-mates chaired him off but were defeated after a few strides by his bulk and shrewdly turned to the daintier Mushtaq. Interviewed at the end of the awards when he had chosen to say only "Pakistan Zindabad" after being named man of the match, Sarfraz told the ABC: "I was just trying to bowl line and length, to contain them just like England."

And then, perhaps forgetting despite the "Pakistan Zindabad" that the pictures were being transmitted at home, he gave us a brief glimpse of 'Sarf' when asked how he would celebrate. "A few drinks, that's all", he said followed by a pause, a realisation and a twinkling smile. "Soft drinks", he emphasised. "We can't drink any hard liquor because of our religion."

Somewhat appropriately, his correction notwithstanding, the scoreboard

panel displaying his final figures is now hung on the wall of the Percy Beames Bar in the members' area of the MCG. They commemorate an outstanding spell, one in which he built the momentum entirely by himself. There was no crowd to pitch him along, no atmosphere of any kind, save for home anxiety and resignation. But after slipping through Border's defence, his hooping swing and a spiteful pitch ensnared six more batsmen.

It makes no sense for him after all these years to deny it was reverse swing if it was, unless he is utterly incapable of not being 'seditious' as Oborne pertinently describes him, particularly since he would rather not be portrayed as the harbinger of the art but the Pied Piper for Imran, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, to name only the greatest of his heirs. It is quintessential Sarfraz, however. One of the game's great conjurers has left us with a perplexing riddle.

Pakistan

Majid Khan	c †Wright b Hogg	1
Mohsin Khan	c Hilditch b Hogg	14
Zaheer Abbas	b Hogg	11
Javed Miandad	b Hogg	19
Asif Iqbal	c †Wright b Clark	9
Mushtaq Mohammad*	c †Wright b Hurst	36
Wasim Raja	b Hurst	13
Imran Khan	c †Wright b Hurst	33
Sarfraz Nawaz	c †Wright b Sleep	35
Wasim Bari†	run out	0
Sikander Bakht	not out	5
Extras (b2, lb7, nb10, w1)		**20**
Total (all out; 61.7 overs)		**196**

Fall of wickets 1/2 2/22 3/28 4/40 5/83 9/99 7/122 8/173 9/177 10/196

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RM Hogg	17	4	49	4
AG Hurst	20	4	55	3
WM Clark	17	4	56	1
PR Sleep	7.7	2	16	1

Majid Khan	b Border	108
Mohsin Khan	c & b Hogg	14
Zaheer Abbas	b Hogg	59
Javed Miandad	c †Wright b Border	16
Asif Iqbal	lbw b Hogg	44
Mushtaq Mohammad*	c sub b Sleep	28
Wasim Raja	c †Wright b Hurst	28
Imran Khan	c Clark b Hurst	28
Sarfraz Nawaz	lbw b Hurst	1
Wasim Bari†	not out	8
Did not bat: Sikander Bakht		
Extras (b4, lb6, nb9)		**19**
Total (9 wickets dec; 81.5 overs)		**353**

Fall of wickets 1/30 2/165 3/204 4/209 5/261 6/299 7/330 8/332 9/353

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RM Hogg	19	2	75	3
AG Hurst	19.5	1	115	3
WM Clark	21	6	47	0
PR Sleep	8	0	62	1
AR Border	14	5	35	2

Australia

GM Wood	not out	5
AMJ Hilditch	c J Miandad b Imran Khan	3
AR Border	b Imran Khan	20
GN Yallop*	b Imran Khan	25
KJ Hughes	run out	19
DF Whatmore	lbw b Sarfraz Nawaz	43
PR Sleep	c †Wasim Bari b Imran Khan	10
KJ Wright†	c Imran Khan b Wasim Raja	9
WM Clark	c M Mohammad b W Raja	9
RM Hogg	run out	9
AG Hurst	c & b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
Extras (b1, lb5, nb8, w2)		**16**
Total (all out; 61.6 overs)		**168**

Fall of wickets 1/11 2/53 3/63 4/97 5/109 6/140 7/152 8/167 9/167 10/168

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
Imran Khan	18	8	26	4
Sarfraz Nawaz	21.6	6	39	2
Sikander Bakht	10	1	29	0
Mushtaq Mohammad	7	0	35	0
Wasim Raja	5	0	23	2

DF Whatmore	b Sarfraz Nawaz	15
AMJ Hilditch	b Sarfraz Nawaz	62
AR Border	b Sarfraz Nawaz	105
GN Yallop*	run out	8
KJ Hughes	c M Khan b Sarfraz Nawaz	84
GM Wood	c †W Bari b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
PR Sleep	b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
KJ Wright†	not out	1
WM Clark	b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
RM Hogg	lbw b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
AG Hurst	c †W Bari b Sarfraz Nawaz	0
Extras (b13, lb13, nb9)		**35**
Total (all out; 92.4 overs)		**310**

Fall of wickets 1/49 2/109 3/128 4/305 5/305 6/306 7/308 8/309 9/310 10/310

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
Imran Khan	27	9	73	0
Sarfraz Nawaz	35.4	7	86	9
Sikander Bakht	7	0	29	0
Mushtaq Mohammad	11	0	42	0
Wasim Raja	3	0	11	0
Majid Khan	9	1	34	0

Jim Laker – 16.4-4-37-9

England v Australia, Manchester 26-31 July 1956

-Stephen Chalke-

The Ashes were at stake. The series, level at one-all, was in its fourth match, and there was a band of heavy rain heading towards Manchester. On every one of the nine Australian tours since 1905 the Old Trafford Test had ended in a draw, most of them spoilt by the weather, one abandoned without a ball bowled. If the forecast was right, there was every possibility that this would be a tenth successive game without a result.

'Que sera sera,' sang Doris Day on the latest hit record. 'Whatever will be, will be.'

Friday 27 July 1956. England's innings closed on 459, and at four o'clock a crowd of more than 30,000 spectators sat attentively in rows, watching the Australian openers as they proceeded cautiously and without alarm. Twenty-eight overs had been bowled – 10 of pace from Brian Statham and Trevor Bailey, 18 of spin from Tony Lock and Jim Laker – and the scoreboard showed a total of 48 for no wicket.

'The future's not ours to see.'

The newspaper headlines were all of Colonel Nasser, the Egyptian President, and his sudden decision to nationalise the Anglo-French Suez Canal Company. If the imperialist powers do not like it, he told a cheering crowd of supporters in Alexandria, they can choke to death on their fury. Eleven years on from winning the war, Britain was in no mood to accept such a threat. A strongly worded note of protest was sent to the Egyptian government, warning them that they must face the consequences of their actions.

'Que sera sera. What will be, will be.'

Peter May was the England captain. He was no great tactician – had never led a team other than England – but, in his own words, "I was always a great believer in variety if one was not getting anywhere. So I switched the two bowlers round." Left-armer Tony Lock would now come in from the

Warwick Road end, Jim Laker from the Stretford end.

Laker trotted in for the first ball of his tenth over. It pitched on middle-and-leg, spun in a little and the right-handed Colin McDonald failed to reach the pitch of it. The ball caught the edge of McDonald's bat and finished in the ever-safe hands of Lock at backward short -leg. Laker had drawn first blood. Australia were 48 for one.

'There have been off-spinners – though few – who spun the ball as much as Jim Laker,' wrote John Arlott. 'Some of them had comparable control. But no one has ever matched him in those two departments and had, also, such a quality of intelligence.'

"He had everything you look for in an off spinner," Glamorgan's Don Shepherd reckons. "He was a big lad. He had a lovely action. He spun it, he had flight, he had change of pace and he could bowl round the wicket, too. If you're going to be an off spinner, you'd want to be like Jim Laker."

"To me Jim was an absolute artist," his Surrey team-mate Micky Stewart says. "His control was immaculate, and the spin he imparted on the ball was incredible. I fielded at short-leg, either at bat/pad or forward close in, and I could hear the snap of his fingers, followed by the zzzzzz of the ball coming down the pitch. My forward position was real 'Bomb Alley', but such was Jim's accuracy that I never felt in any danger. He was the number one finger spinner that I've ever seen."

"Jim was in a class of his own," was Trevor Bailey's opinion. "He was surely the finest off spinner in the history of the game."

The best ever, that is now the common wisdom, but it was not what people thought at the start of the summer of 1956. The 34-year-old Laker, in and out of the England team throughout his career, had played only two of the last 16 Tests before that year. Indeed, he might not have been at Old Trafford if Yorkshire's Bob Appleyard, so magnificent in Australia in 1954-55, had stayed fully fit.

Australia had gone one-up at Lord's, but England had levelled the series at Headingley with an innings victory on a pitch that started to crumble on the second day. Surrey's Tony Lock had been recalled in place of Yorkshire's Johnny Wardle, and he and Laker took 18 of the 20 wickets as the Australians, unhappy to find themselves batting on such a surface, were all out for 143 and 140. 'The loss of the toss cost us the match,' the Australian skipper Ian Johnson wrote. 'The pitch was so much out of character in the way it collapsed after the first day. Normally it plays beautifully for three

days at least. Still, we reasoned, those things are part and parcel of the game, and we could make amends on a true surface at Manchester.'

And why not? The Old Trafford Test the previous year had been a five-day classic of high run-scoring, won by three wickets by South Africa with three minutes to spare. 'Here at Manchester,' Jim Swanton wrote in his eve-of-match report for the Australian game, 'the various factors – the weather, the absence of recent cricket on the ground and the availability of covers to keep off more moisture than is welcome – have all combined favourably, and there can be no excuse for anything but a true wicket that lasts.'

Some time before the toss on Thursday morning Jim Laker was drinking a cup of tea in the Old Trafford pavilion when Don Bradman, now an Australian selector, returned from the middle. "What do you think of the track?" Laker asked him, and the Don replied cheerfully: "It's nice and flat, isn't it? It's just what our fellows have been waiting for. They'll get a packet of runs out there."

Laker had already formed a different opinion. The pitch had an unusual reddish-brown colour, the result of the plentiful marl the groundsman Bert Flack had been using that summer, and it was dry. 'I knew the ball would turn,' Laker wrote. 'There was no grass to bind the wicket. It looked good, but it was not solid enough.'

Had England instructed the preparation of such a pitch? Or was it part of a general malaise in which counties were preparing result wickets? Or just an accident, the result of over-marling?

Geoffrey Howard, the Lancashire Secretary, was in Blackpool on Tuesday afternoon where the county were playing Gloucestershire. He was busy chartering an aeroplane to fly the two county teams south when there was a phone call from Bert Flack, the groundsman at Old Trafford. "The wicket's a bit dry," he said. "I think I ought to give it a bit of water."

Minutes later, the telephone rang again, and Peter May came through. "What's the wicket like?" he asked, wanting to think through his final team selection.

"As far as I know, it's exactly the same as last year," the Lancashire Secretary replied.

"Bert Flack's just been on the phone. He said he's going to put a bit of water on it."

"Oh, don't put water on it."

"I should have said, 'That's nothing to do with you'," Geoffrey Howard

reflected years later. “But, when you’re in the middle of doing something else, you don’t think things through. So I rang back to Bert Flack. I didn’t tell him not to water it, but I told him what Peter May had said.”

The pitch needed another watering, but it never took place.

As at Headingley England left out a paceman in favour of a second spinner, won the toss and made first-day runs on a slow, easy-paced track. At 174, moments before the fall of the first wicket, the BBC commentary team welcomed the old Lancashire and England wicket-keeper George Duckworth into the commentary box. He knew Old Trafford well. What were his thoughts on the pitch? “I wouldn’t like to be a pace bowler on there,” he said, “but spin bowlers should get something out of it in a day or two.”

The England top-order, with Hutton retired and Compton out of action, had been unsettled all summer, and for this Test they called up the Reverend David Sheppard, the former England captain who was now a curate in Islington. Three months into the season, he had found time to play just four first-class innings, and he strolled out to bat “in rather a light-headed mood”. His first ball from Ray Lindwall was a bouncer, and it reminded him that, unlike his recent London Clergy fixtures, this was “a serious game”. He buckled down and, shortly before lunch the next day, cheered on by a group of boys from his parish, he completed a fairy-tale century.

With hindsight there were signs that the pitch was already becoming more difficult. On the first evening May was caught at slip off a leg break from Richie Benaud that turned sharply and lifted to catch the shoulder of his bat. Then between innings, when the groundsmen brushed the wicket, the clouds of reddish dust that blew up – “more akin to the Sahara than Manchester” – caused consternation among the Australians in the press box. Yet at four o’clock, with the score 48 for one, there was no sense of what was about to unfold.

The Lancastrian crowd sat in rapt attention, all but a few boys who were busy collecting stray bottles that would fetch them threepence each in a new scheme at the ground. One enterprising lad is said to have made himself four pounds while others were rumoured to have brought empty bottles from home.

Number three in the Australian line-up was the left-hander Neil Harvey, the star batsman in the side. Eight years earlier, as a teenager, he had scored a century on Ashes debut in the famous match at Headingley in which they had hit a record-breaking 404 for victory. England’s only front-line spinner that

day was a young Jim Laker, whom they punished severely.

"In his early days Jim used to lose it a bit if someone got after him," Tom Graveney reckoned. "George Emmett used to say, 'Have a go at him. He won't bowl so well.' But he soon got over that."

Laker was a mature bowler by 1956, and his third delivery to Harvey pitched on the line of the left-hander's leg stump, spun past his outstretched bat and clipped the off stump. 'It was a ball that might have bowled anyone,' the journalist Bruce Harris wrote. Jim Laker went further: "It was the ball that won the Test series."

Harvey stared at the pitch before departing and, though Jimmy Burke and the young Ian Craig took Australia to 62 for two at tea, there was already a growing feeling of apprehension in the Australian camp, fanning the sense of grievance that they had carried across the Pennines from Headingley. At this point Laker had figures of two for 29 off 13 overs.

What a summer it was for slow bowlers! Of the 23 men who took 100 wickets, 17 were spinners, led by Don Shepherd, who had that year converted from bowling medium pace and who took 177 wickets with his off breaks. Laker took 132, though he missed several county games to rest his over-worked spinning finger. "It was twice the size of the one on his other hand," Micky Stewart recalls. "Also, from time to time, the seam of the ball would split the finger to the bone, which he treated with friar's balsam."

Back in May, playing for Surrey at The Oval, Laker, bowling round the wicket as he mostly did at Old Trafford, had exposed the weakness of the Australians against finger spin, taking all ten first-innings wickets in the tourists' first defeat at the hands of a county side since 1912. The pitch did not reward turn as it did at Headingley and Old Trafford, leading Laker to consider it "from a technical point of view" the best of his performances that summer. Indeed, such was his psychological hold over the tourists, even at that stage of the season, that five of his ten wickets came from deliveries that did not turn.

When play resumed after tea at Old Trafford, Burke fell to the first ball, caught at slip off the bowling of Tony Lock – a wicket that, in time, would achieve a significance nobody could have dreamt of. Then, off Laker's first ball at the other end, Craig played back – as the Australians were inclined to do – and was lbw to "a nasty one that fizzed off fast". It was enough to destroy any last calm that existed in the Australian camp, and the sight of Ken Mackay striding out only made matters worse. His approach to batting at

Headingley, Neville Cardus wrote, ‘probably spell-bound his younger colleagues into the delusion that the pitch was a pitfall … He defended with his pads as though not to one spinning ball only but to several, aimed at him simultaneously from all parts of the ground.’

Within the over Mackay had edged the ball into the hands of Alan Oakman at slip. “I am no fairy foot,” he admitted later, “and my antics at pad play must have resembled an elephant on ice.”

The tall, fair-haired Oakman was playing in his second and last Test for England – and what a pair of Tests they turned out to be! Dropped after an unsuccessful debut at Headingley, he had got a late call-up from the Chairman of Selectors when Tom Graveney withdrew with a bruised finger. “I was at home in Hastings on Tuesday evening when the doorbell rang. There was a policeman there, leaning on his bike. We weren’t on the phone, and Gubby Allen had rung the station. ‘Do you know where Alan Oakman lives? … Can you tell him to get to Old Trafford tomorrow?’” In the field David Sheppard asked not to field in the leg trap – “I haven’t been playing much cricket; my reflexes aren’t what they used to be” – and Oakman found himself in the firing line, where he held five catches in the match.

In two overs since tea 62 for two had become 62 for five, and nobody in the Australian camp had the calmness of mind to prevent the situation degenerating further. ‘The fellows were angry,’ Ian Johnson wrote. ‘They succeeded in hiding their feelings from the public at large, but they “blew up” in their batting. As things worked out, if we had kept something of our first innings alive that evening, we could have saved the match and, with it, the rubber.’

In Australia 18 months earlier they had been undone by the pace of Tyson and Statham, and they had arrived in England expecting a fresh barrage of fast bowling, only to find themselves up against Laker and Lock and for the second match in a row “trapped on a stinker”.

The veteran allrounder Keith Miller brushed at the dusty pitch with his glove. “Fellows, I think we’re going to have an early end to this match,” he said, and he promptly hit Lock for a straight six. When Miller faced up to Laker, Oakman took up position at short-leg, almost in touching distance of the batsman. “If you don’t look out, I’ll hit you in the bollocks,” the Australian told him.

“I thought, ‘He’s kidding me.’ I wasn’t wearing a box or anything. Then I thought, ‘Is he?’ But he just stabbed at it, and that helped it on its way to

me.”

“He batted like a complete novice,” was Laker’s verdict.

Richie Benaud did no better, attempting a big hit that landed in the hands of Statham at ‘cow-shot corner’, a position where, even on the stickiest wicket, Laker insisted on having a man. For the third time Laker had taken two wickets in an over, and off the first ball of his next Ron Archer charged down the pitch, swung recklessly at the ball and was stumped.

The counter-attack had failed spectacularly, but orthodox defence fared no better, with Maddocks and Johnson, both playing back, bowled in Laker’s next over. In 22 balls since tea the Surrey off spinner had taken seven wickets for eight runs.

‘Batting bereft of all heart and skill,’ Alan Ross called it, but the Australians in the press box reserved their fire for the wicket. ‘Let’s have it straight,’ Bill O’Reilly wrote. ‘This pitch is a complete disgrace. What lies in store for Test cricket if groundsmen are allowed to play the fool like this?’

What a controversy it was! Late in the match, when the groundsmen were working flat out to dry the ground, Bert Flack ran past the Australian captain. “Blimey,” he said. “They won’t even give me time to cut my throat. Thank God Nasser’s taken the Canal. Otherwise I’d have been plastered over every front page like Marilyn Monroe.”

The *Manchester Guardian*’s Denys Rowbotham even managed to turn the Australians’ complaints into an attack on post-war social policy: ‘In this Welfare State age of all things on a platter and made easy, is a turning wicket a dishonour and no longer a challenge to personal skill? If it is, it is the humbug of sentimental socialism.’

“The pitch was not that bad,” Peter May thought. “Jim just dripped away at their nerves, realising that they had got a little obsessional about him and the wickets.”

‘Naturally I was proud of my return of nine wickets,’ Laker wrote, ‘but it would never have been as profitable if there had been much sanity in the Australian display.’

From four o’clock to 5.15, with 20 minutes for tea, Australia had collapsed from 48 for no wicket to 84 all out. On only one other occasion since 1900 – South Africa at Edgbaston in 1924 – has a Test team lost all its ten wickets inside an hour of playing time, and this one at Old Trafford was in a contest between the two best countries in the world at the crucial point of an Ashes series. There has never been another collapse as momentous, and it

was executed almost single-handedly by one man.

The crowd stood to applaud as Laker, with an air of nonchalance, sauntered off the field with figures of 16.4 overs, nine wickets for 37 runs. To this day, after 341 matches spread across 140 years, they remain the second best bowling figures in an Ashes Test, one of only three instances of a bowler taking nine or more wickets in an innings.

The only better Ashes figures came in the second innings when, across four wet days,

Laker took all ten wickets for 53 runs to give him the greatest match statistics of all time: 19 for 90 off 68 overs.

Bowling one more over than Laker, Tony Lock managed just one for 106. The discrepancy was extraordinary and, in the years that followed, Lock took plenty of ribbing. “We used to say to him,” Don Shepherd recalls with a chuckle, “‘Tell us about that match at Old Trafford when you and Jim shared all those wickets.’”

“I felt a bit sorry for Locky,” Alan Oakman says. “He was a great trier, but he didn’t even look like getting a wicket. He got quicker and quicker, and he finished up bowling at leg stump. At the start he’d been applauding Jim’s wickets, but by the end you could see him just folding his arms.”

“Tony tried too hard,” Trevor Bailey reckoned. “He was closer in temperament to a fast bowler, and at the end the ball was coming down at fast-medium. If Johnny Wardle had been bowling at the other end, Jim would never have got 19 wickets.”

If Lock was excitable on the field, Laker was quite the opposite, even by the unexpressive standards of the 1950s. His appeals were quiet, his reaction to wickets matter-of-fact, his bowling without hurry or fuss. ‘He moved to his mark with a constabular stroll,’ John Arlott wrote. ‘In the moment before he turned, he looked up into the sky, often with half a smile.’

“If anybody hit him for four,” Bailey said, “he would regard his finger and go back to his mark.”

“He told me how he once talked to Bobby Locke the South African golfer,” Micky Stewart recalls. “Locky trained himself never to do anything in a hurry. Everything was in the same slow way: walking on the fairway, addressing the ball. ‘By nature I’m quite excitable,’ he said. ‘I’ve schooled myself so that I’ve got total control, so I’ve got repetitive rhythm.’ And Jim did the same. He didn’t rush about.”

Colin Cowdrey, writing of Laker’s performance at Old Trafford, called

him ‘the calm destroyer’: ‘He was in perfect rhythm. The batsmen played and missed so often, yet you couldn’t tell from his expression.’

Nor could you tell at the end of the match, as he strolled off the field, his sweater slung over his shoulder, that he had won the Ashes for England with the greatest bowling figures in cricket history.

Nineteen for 90. Like Bradman’s batting average of 99.94, it is off the scale of other Test-match statistics. Yet, like that 99.94, it falls tantalisingly short of the perfection of ‘all 20’, as Laker himself – with his delightfully dry wit – acknowledged in the final Test at The Oval. He was standing in the gully when the first Australian wicket fell, a diving catch by Tony Lock off Frank Tyson, and he turned to David Sheppard. “I haven’t really got anything to play for in this match now.”

England

PE Richardson	c †Maddocks b Benaud	104
MC Cowdrey	c †Maddocks b Lindwall	80
Rev.DS Sheppard	b Archer	113
PBH May*	c Archer b Benaud	43
TE Bailey	b Johnson	20
C Washbrook	lbw b Johnson	6
ASM Oakman	c Archer b Johnson	10
TG Evans†	st †Maddocks b Johnson	47
JC Laker	run out	3
GAR Lock	not out	25
JB Statham	c †Maddocks b Lindwall	0
Extras (b2, lb5, w1)		**8**
Total (all out; 158.3 overs)		**459**

Fall of wickets 1/174 2/195 3/288 4/321 5/327 6/339 7/401 8/417 9/458 10/459

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RR Lindwall	21.3	6	63	2
KR Miller	21	6	41	0
RG Archer	22	6	73	1
IWG Johnson	47	10	151	4
R Benaud	47	17	123	2

Australia

(followed on)

CC McDonald	c Lock b Laker	32
JW Burke	c Cowdrey b Lock	22
RN Harvey	b Laker	0
ID Craig	lbw b Laker	8
KR Miller	c Oakman b Laker	6
KD Mackay	c Oakman b Laker	0
RG Archer	st †Evans b Laker	6
R Benaud	c Statham b Laker	0
RR Lindwall	not out	6
LV Maddocks†	b Laker	4
IWG Johnson*	b Laker	0
Extras		**0**
Total (all out; 40.4 overs)		**84**

Fall of wickets 1/48 2/48 3/62 4/62 5/62 6/73 7/73 8/78 9/84 10/84

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JB Statham	6	3	6	0
TE Bailey	4	3	4	0
JC Laker	16.4	4	37	9
GAR Lock	14	3	37	1

CC McDonald	c Oakman b Laker	89
JW Burke	c Lock b Laker	33
RN Harvey	c Cowdrey b Laker	0
ID Craig	lbw b Laker	38
KD Mackay	c Oakman b Laker	0
KR Miller	b Laker	0
RG Archer	c Oakman b Laker	0
R Benaud	b Laker	18
RR Lindwall	c Lock b Laker	8
IWG Johnson*	not out	1
LV Maddocks†	lbw b Laker	2
Extras (b12, lb4)		**16**
Total (all out; 150.2 overs)		**205**

Fall of wickets 1/28 2/55 3/114 4/124 5/130 6/130 7/181 8/198 9/203 10/205

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JB Statham	16	10	15	0
TE Bailey	20	8	31	0
JC Laker	51.2	23	53	10
GAR Lock	55	30	69	0
ASM Oakman	8	3	21	0

Ishant Sharma – 23-6-74-7

England v India, Lord's 17-21 July 2014

-Patrick Ferriday-

Edgbaston, August 2011. India already twice thumped and, with the exception of Rahul Dravid, their batsmen looking weary, uninterested and overfaced in a toxic triad. The solution? Bring back Virender Sehwag, the most destructive Test opener of his era (and maybe any other). The problem in this simple solution was that Sehwag had been out of first-class cricket for seven months. An operation in 2009 had failed to cure the problem and by early 2011 it was clear another was required.

What to do? An immediate procedure would rule out the IPL and commitments to the Delhi Daredevils. A delay until after the IPL would rule out some, if not all, of the English Test series starting in July. What, indeed, to do?

Playing through the pain Sehwag produced two masterful T20 innings before his shoulder cried 'enough' and the surgeon was ordered. After two months rehabilitation and 30 minutes 'in the middle' in a non first-class match at Northampton he was back. His golden pair at Edgbaston illustrated how physically and mentally unready he was for such a test.

Sehwag, and those with a vested interest, had opted for IPL over Test cricket for India in the clearest possible manner. It was inevitable that such a clear-cut choice would arise as the tentacles of T20 and a pay-per-play philosophy began to wrap themselves around the revered old oak of Test cricket. It would be hard to blame Sehwag – his best Test days were past but he was still to be feared in the shortest form and for that reason he would be handsomely rewarded.

As each year passed since its inception the IPL had become more entrenched and its little brothers started to sprout their wings all around the world. The pressure increased on the big-hitting stars to prioritise. In most cases T20 won. And since this time battle has raged in boardrooms and the media from Mike Jakeman's *Saving the Test* to Kimber and Collins' *Death of*

a Gentleman. The primary question being: can Test cricket exist alongside T20? At the heart of this question are the two countries that seem to be at the opposite ends of the spectrum, India and England.

Hence when India arrived in England for a five-Test series in 2014 it was, inevitably, on the back of an arduous series of IPL games – 60 matches in 48 days, the first 20 of which were played in the UAE before switching to India for the latter stages. The majority of the side had done their fair share of thrashing or being thrashed – Ravindra Jadeja 16 times, MS Dhoni 15, Virat Kohli 14, Shikar Dawan 14, Buvneshawar Kumar 14 and so forth. As in 2011 the preparation was, by necessity, perfunctory. Two non first-class games and then, after less than two weeks in England, straight off to Nottingham for the first of five Tests. Nothing had been learnt from 2011, or if it had then nobody actually cared enough to do anything about it.

England were a team far from settled and wondering how to replace Kevin Pietersen, Jonathon Trott and Graeme Swann – all recently departed under circumstances ranging from sad to absurd involving an Ashes thrashing. Furthermore the captaincy and form of Alastair Cook was under scrutiny and the team were only two bad defeats away from a 1990s-style meltdown.

The general feeling around India was that this was an exciting new side, particularly in batting, going the right way in Test matches and this was an opportunity for Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and the others to consign their immediate predecessors to the history books. Most of the pre-match talk was of the intricacies of the Indian selection – would Dhoni bat at six and would Stuart Binny be offered a surprise Test debut. The more fundamental question of physical and mental preparation and appetite for five Tests was largely ignored.

One bowler who would certainly be playing, although not to the sounds of universal rejoicing, was Ishant Sharma who had been largely a spectator in the IPL that year. After becoming the first Indian to record 150kph in a competitive match, he had won an Indian Premier League contract worth $950,000 with Kolkata but this was hardly looking like money well spent.

Writing on Cricinfo, Abishek Purohit mused that ‘It is not in Dhoni’s nature to carry baggage – good or bad – around, and if Ishant Sharma can survive that bowling average after 55 Tests, he can survive anything.’ The average in question was 37.56 for 164 wickets; under three per game. Certainly his survival owed more than a little to a dearth of opening bowlers.

When Sharma made his debut in 2007 the Indian attack had long been built around Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh with Zaheer Khan and his ‘plus one’ the prelude to the spinners.

Ishant could bowl, of that there was never any doubt. He could bowl very well on occasions but that deadly epithet ‘enigmatic’ was beginning to plague him at around the same time as it did Stuart Broad in England and Mitchell Johnson in Australia, and he paid the social-media price. Against New Zealand earlier in the year Sharma had taken 6-51 in the first innings and looked a world beater. In the second innings his figures were 0-164. In his time he had roughed up Ricky Ponting and been flayed by Leicestershire Seconds; little wonder frustration turned to irritation.

Neither Sharma nor any other bowler would answer any questions (or pose any) at Trent Bridge as groundsman Steve Birks, to his own chagrin, served up a low, slow pitch on which a result was a long shot and which was purgatory for all bowlers, frustrating for all batsmen and miserable for all spectators. But at least India had shown that they’d apparently washed the T20 mindset right out of their hair and were prepared to put in the long hours and hard yards. Conditions for the second Test at Lord’s would prove to be very different.

The bowling omens looked helpful enough for Cook to insert on winning the toss and with a score of 140-6 at tea it certainly seemed that he had read the signs correctly. Slightly less so after Rahane had battled to a hundred and the lower order had helped the total to 295 early on the second morning. Battling continued well into the third morning as Gary Ballance’s century and Kumar’s six wickets kept the game tightly poised, England 24 ahead. Then followed four more absorbing sessions of Test cricket as England’s pace battery first misfired India to 118-1 and then found their range to reduce them to 235-7 by mid-morning on day four. With batting conditions still good and only 211 behind, English hopes were high but then came a stand of 99 between Jadeja, earmarked as the match winner as a bowler, and Kumar. When England’s openers emerged, 35 minutes before tea, the target was an imposing but not impossible 319.

This was real Test cricket; something in the pitch for everyone, ups and downs, pleasure and pain and now a gettable target but with Jadeja set to spin his magic on a surface increasingly responsive. Dhoni had no intention of holding back his ace and Jadeja was introduced in the sixth over to startling

effect, taking the wicket of Sam Robson with his first ball. The ball hadn't spun but Robson's head clearly had. Equally worrying for England was one that did spin three balls later even if the lack of a leg-gully saved the captain. One over later it was time for tea and the crowd settled back for a match-defining session and the understandable presumption that Jadeja would work through England supported by a rotation of the three seamers at the other end. Unless of course Cook was at his obdurate best or Root's youthful genius could grow more new blooms. The permutations were endless – Test cricket would be the winner.

For the next 80 minutes and 58 runs Ballance and Cook stood firm. Jadeja supported by Kumar, then Vijay introduced for an all-spin attack as Jadeja changed ends. Dhoni continued to try and prise a wicket by bringing back Sharma. Still no sign of success but Dhoni was never one to let things slide and he decided to remove his trump card and bring back Mohammed Shami whose two early overs had promised little. One ball was enough; a snick behind and Ballance was gone for 27 hard-earned runs. With England temporarily down Sharma seized his opportunity.

Operating from the Pavilion end his second ball to Ian Bell was a peach. Cutting back from a good length and keeping a touch low the ball smashed into the off stump and, for all his head shaking at the injustice of it, Bell could reflect that a very good ball and his own slight misjudgement had cost him his wicket. Equally good or even better followed in Sharma's next over; now bowling round the wicket to Cook he tempted the captain forward as the ball held its line and a faint nick and Dhoni's gloves completed the procedure. Not only were England now 72-4 but they had lost their top four and the captain had extended his run of fiftyless innings to nine. A 'blancmange moment' was the surreal verdict of Cricinfo's Alan Gardner.

With 14 overs still to go on day four and England's predilection for dismal collapses, ticket holders for the final day could have been excused for making other arrangements. But Joe Root and Moeen Ali were made of firmer stuff than their predecessors. Jadeja was hurriedly brought back, but to no avail. Suddenly the pitch looked easier and the bowling less threatening and at 105-4 stumps was called with England clinging on grimly.

As the fifth morning progressed the *modus operandi* began to change for the English pair of Root and Ali. Survival in the early stages was replaced by growing confidence and a search for runs always tempered by common sense. Dhoni shuffled, dealt, played and returned to square one and as the

morning wore on it became increasingly a countdown to new-ball time shortly after lunch. Then, for the 74th over with England on 156-4, Sharma was recalled and Root hit him for three boundaries in four balls to add to the meagre quartet that had come in the preceding 100 minutes. As Sharma prepared for the final over before lunch the bookies were calling it 7/4 each of three results with England needing 147 with six wickets in hand. Enter Dhoni equipped with a master plan and an unwilling accomplice.

With no slips and two men short on the leg side Sharma banged in three to the well-set Root and had him struggling. Two more followed to Ali but sailed harmlessly down leg before the final ball before lunch homed in on the target of Ali's throat. The batsman turned, raised his bat in defence and the ball deflected off the glove to the bemused Pujara at short-leg. The timing was perfect to whet the appetite for the post-lunch session.

With Matt Prior now joining Root and batting for his career, 20 runs were added in the first two overs after lunch. The odds on a draw soared and those on England contracted. Sharma continuing his short-pitched attack and both batsmen showing how easy it was to dispatch anything slightly wayward. Then, two balls before the new ball was due, a quicker, straighter delivery from round the wicket was a fraction higher than Prior had estimated and instead of steering it down and square for four he hit it up in front of square and into the grateful hands of Vijay. The idea was fine, the execution marginally wrong. The same could not be said for the next man, the woefully out-of-form Ben Stokes. With the sensible remit being to support Root, Stokes chose to climb into another short ball from Sharma. Instead he climbed under it and swirling into the grey-blue sky it went before landing in the grateful, waiting hands of Pujara moving round from mid-on.

The batsmen having crossed, it was now Sharma on Root and three balls later the Yorkshire youth-genius was en route to the pavilion. He had played the short balls well up to this point. Well aware of the deep catchers he was happy to paddle down and around for singles and twos. But this time the ball was onto him a fraction quicker and on to the top of the horizontal bat and into the hands of Binny at backward square-leg. Mortified, Root first dropped his bat and then tried to bite it, as if to stifle a Munch scream. Undone by a trifle more pace and bounce.

After that it was just a question of time. Time enough for Sharma to add one more, Broad, and the game to finish with a comic run-out which would encapsulate the black humour of England's afternoon.

By and large the English press concentrated on the alleged lunacy of the home batting side and the supposed untenable position of its captain. In retrospect it's amusing to read the wise suggestions of Michael Vaughan and Geoffrey Boycott. The Yorkshire pair variously opined that: 'It is as if England have no direction and there's no common sense in the dressing room. Cook needs to go as captain and maybe stay for one more Test as a batsman only' and 'I am sick of seeing us do things by the book…so how about bringing in Eoin Morgan as captain for the rest of this series?' Fortunately for English cricket nobody listened, least of all Alastair Cook.

"It gets harder and harder the more we don't win and that all gets heaped on me at the end of the day. Until someone taps me on the shoulder and says we don't want you to captain any more, I am desperate to try to turn it around."

There were casualties; Matt Prior had been palpably unfit and never should have played and despite his best efforts his Test career was over. The reports of Ben Stokes' demise proved to have been exaggerated and by the end of the summer England had something of a settled look.

The critics sharpened their quills to analyse the collective folly of England's batsmen in face of short-pitched bowling and most took the one-size-fits-all approach. The five dismissals of this type were very different. Ali didn't try and hook, in fact he didn't do anything much and was left in two-man's land gloving to short-leg. Prior quite rightly was prepared to respond to the bouncer – his dismissal was down to failing to get over a vicious delivery, he was trying to hit a four not a six. Stokes can't be redeemed, out of form and newly at the crease was not the time to pull, the only excuse might be that he had been struck on a previously injured thumb and was throbbing with anger – that, then, would be another victory to Sharma. Root was attempting to paddle, a reasonable option, but took a top edge and Broad was still fearful of the short ball and it showed. It wasn't collective suicide, there were mistakes but overwhelmingly it was top-class bowling. Ishant Sharma was "on fire" (copyright S Warne).

It wasn't all about England. They had been beaten fair and square by a better team over the five days. The two sides had traded blows in an enthralling fashion until Sharma landed a mixture of body shots and sucker punches to leave England senseless against the ropes.

The stars had aligned at Lord's and Sharma bowled perfectly and he

deserves his due. To produce enough venom with an old ball on a tired surface when following captain's orders against your best instincts is a truly magnificent effort for team and country. Maybe the idea wasn't his but the execution was and Dhoni knew that he had a bowler of sufficient skill to make his plan work.

Best of all it was real Test cricket. A passage of play, albeit the last, within a five-day drama that brought together tragedy, comedy, farce and great bowling. It was only India's second victory at Lord's in 82 years and their first away win in three. India's coach Duncan Fletcher had a hand in it – he knew the England players and he knew what they had suffered at the hands of Mitchell Johnson and suspected that an element of machismo might prove their undoing. That is doing your homework, playing on the opposition's weaknesses and exploiting them. That is sport in the age of micro-planning, minute computer analysis and big bucks. But without the man to carry out the plan, Fletcher and Dhoni would have been nowhere. Dhoni's recollections make fascinating reading.

"To start with it was very difficult to convince him to bowl short or around the wicket. You have to tell him that it still counts as a Test wicket when you are bowling short, not only when you get a nick to the keeper. At times it becomes difficult to make them understand even if you are saying it in simple words. So I set a field to him so he couldn't even think of pitching it up; that was the start. I gave him the field that forced him to bowl the way I wanted him to bowl. Once he got his first wicket he was eager enough to try that attack for a consistent period of time. He works really hard on his fitness and on his bowling and doesn't shy away from bowling long spells. Whenever you ask him to bowl, whatever situation, he gives his 100%."

Equally fascinating was the response of the 'him' in question:

"When I go out on the cricket field, I give all that I have, every time. Sometimes, I feel like my efforts are never appreciated by people other than my team-mates. Because I got all these wickets, people are praising me. But had I gone for runs, had the plan failed, no one would have appreciated the fact that I was continuously bowling bouncers with an 80-plus overs old ball…The wicket had slowed down considerably over the five days and because of the footmarks there was a lot of variable bounce. It was very

difficult for the batsmen to leave the bouncers; they had to play it and they had to go for the pull or hook”

For Derek Pringle it was a ‘one-man show of naked hostility’, Mike Selvey saw ‘an inspired spell of pace bowling’ and David Hopps thought it ‘one of the most memorable spells in the history of Indian fast bowling’.

The set-up for the rest of the series was perfect. India one-up but three to play. So where did it go so wrong? The absence of Ishant Sharma from the next two games, having bowled himself into the ground, was hardly reason enough. England scored 569-7 at Southampton and India never looked like saving the game and went down by 266 runs. Still level with two to play and on to Old Trafford. India 8-4 after five overs and the game gone in 30 minutes, eventually being lost by an innings in three days. But still there was a chance to level the series at The Oval, Ishant’s return. India 43-5 at lunch on day one and on the way to a three-day submission.

After showing such fight to win at Lord’s how did such a talented side implode so quickly and so comprehensively? True, England came back strongly but that can hardly account for the spectacular fall from grace of Vivay, Kohli, Rahane, Sharma and Pujara.

So often the old cliche about ‘wanting it more’ is rolled out in sporting journalism but this time it seemed both appropriate and true. England, and particularly her captain, were battered and bruised by events at Lord’s but Bell, Ballance, Cook, Root and Jos Buttler prospered thereafter and suddenly the bowlers looked like world beaters. India, by contrast, sank into a sorry mess and looked for all the world as if they would rather be anywhere else than playing five-day cricket in England. The obvious question had to be asked. Did the Indian appetite fade and die as soon as they were on the back foot? Did it just simply matter more to England? It certainly looked that way. At Lord’s an even contest had kept the visitors stimulated and they had been fired to victory by a spell of outstanding bowling but when things started to unravel there were no hidden reserves to draw on. It just wasn’t important enough.

There are a number of ways of looking at the performance of Ishant Sharma but the overwhelming evidence is of a bowler who bowled to orders and executed those orders to a tee. The short-pitch attack that his captain foisted upon Sharma wasn’t to his liking and didn’t, apparently, play to his strengths but on a pitch where bounce wasn’t a given by any stretch of the

imagination he bent his back and delivered with venom and accuracy. The detractors would point to the mistakes of the batsmen but that is part of the point of such a sustained barrage especially from a non super-quick bowler on a tired pitch. Put three men back on the rope on the leg side behind square and you have a crapshoot that will appeal to the machismo of the batsmen and the English dressing room was well equipped with testosterone. Dhoni played on this and in Sharma he found his conduit. Games like this one at Lord’s will save Test cricket and performances like that of Ishant Sharma are its lifeblood.

India

M Vijay	c Ballance b Plunkett	24
S Dhawan	c Ballance b Anderson	7
CA Pujara	b Stokes	28
V Kohli	c †Prior b Anderson	25
AM Rahane	c & b Anderson	103
MS Dhoni*†	c †Prior b Broad	1
RA Jadeja	lbw b Ali	3
STR Binny	lbw b Anderson	9
B Kumar	b Broad	36
Mohammed Shami	c Cook b Stokes	19
I Sharma	not out	12
Extras (b17, lb10, nb1)		**28**
Total (all out; 91.4 overs)		**295**

Fall of wickets 1/11 2/48 3/86 4/113 5/123 6/128 7/145 8/235 9/275 10/295

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JM Anderson	23	7	60	4
SCJ Broad	22	5	79	2
LE Plunkett	15	5	51	1
BA Stokes	17.4	5	40	2
MM Ali	14	2	38	1

M Vijay	c †Prior b Anderson	95
S Dhawan	c Root b Stokes	31
CA Pujara	c †Prior b Plunkett	43
V Kohli	b Plunkett	0
AM Rahane	c †Prior b Broad	5
MS Dhoni*†	c Bell b Plunkett	19
STR Binny	c Cook b Ali	0
RA Jadeja	c Cook b Stokes	68
B Kumar	c Bell b Stokes	53
Mohammed Shami	c †Prior b Ali	0
I Sharma	not out	0
Extras (b19, lb9, w1)		**29**
Total (all out; 103.1 overs)		**342**

Fall of wickets 1/40 2/118 3/118 4/123 5/202 6/203 7/235 8/334 9/338 10/342

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JM Anderson	29	11	77	1
SCJ Broad	23	6	93	1
BA Stokes	18.1	2	51	3
LE Plunkett	22	6	65	3
MM Ali	11	3	28	2

England

AN Cook*	c †Dhoni b Kumar	10
SD Robson	c †Dhoni b Kumar	17
GS Ballance	c †Dhoni b Kumar	110
IR Bell	c Jadeja b Kumar	16
JE Root	lbw b Jadeja	13
MM Ali	lbw b Vijay	32
LE Plunkett	not out	55
MJ Prior†	c Dhawan b Mohammed Shami	23
BA Stokes	b Kumar	0
SCJ Broad	c Dhawan b Kumar	4
JM Anderson	c Rahane b Jadeja	19
Extras (b5, lb10, w2, nb3)		**20**
Total (all out; 105.5 overs)		**319**

Fall of wickets 1/22 2/31 3/70 4/113 5/211 6/214 7/265 8/276 9/280 10/319

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
B Kumar	31	10	82	6
Mohammed Shami	19	5	58	1
I Sharma	24	5	61	0
STR Binny	10	0	45	0
RA Jadeja	18.5	1	46	2
M Vijay	3	0	12	1

SD Robson	lbw b Jadeja	7
AN Cook*	c †Dhoni b Sharma	22
GS Ballance	c †Dhoni b Mohammed Shami	27
IR Bell	b Sharma	1
JE Root	c Binny b Sharma	66
MM Ali	c Pujara b Sharma	39
MJ Prior†	c Vijay b Sharma	12
BA Stokes	c Pujara b Sharma	0
SCJ Broad	c †Dhoni b Sharma	8
LE Plunkett	not out	7
JM Anderson	run out (Jadeja)	2
Extras (b13, lb16, w1, nb2)		**32**
Total (all out; 88.2 overs)		**223**

Fall of wickets 1/12 2/70 3/71 4/72 5/173 6/198 7/201 8/201 9/216 10/223

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
B Kumar	16	7	21	0
Mohammed Shami	11	3	33	1
I Sharma	23	6	74	7
RA Jadeja	32.2	7	53	1
M Vijay	4	1	11	0
S Dhawan	2	0	2	0

Courtney Walsh – 20.4-7-37-7

New Zealand v West Indies, Wellington 10-13 February 1995

-Phil Walker-

In the 187 pages of Courtney Walsh's autobiography, *Heart of a Lion*, his recollections of the West Indies' tour of New Zealand in 1995 and the match at Wellington in which he took 13 wickets for 55, amount to this: 'We had a happier time in New Zealand, winning the series, happy to have Curtly back although we were still without Richie and Des Haynes.' And that's your lot.

Now, no one questions the joy of having Curtly back in anybody's fold, nor doubts the loss to a scene for the absence of Richie Richardson and Dessie Haynes. For all that, it's hard to believe that these details usurp all other memories of Courtney's blitz at the Basin Reserve, and yet this is what we have to work with. Something must have happened, right?

In Bob Dylan's *Chronicles* the old rascal has this to say about the mythical motorbike accident that many thought had ended his career, if not his life, and which has led to fevered conjecture ever since: 'I had been in a motorcycle accident and I'd been hurt, but I recovered.'

In the taciturnity stakes, Bob's got nothing on Courtney. Walsh's book has been heavily (and a little unevenly) ghosted, so much that it's written in the third person, but this is still his account, of his life, in his game. And within that, we have one of the most startling scorecards in Test history, containing what must be one of the greatest individual performances, so completely ignored that one gets to wondering not just how it happened, but whether it happened *at all*…

It throws up all kinds of existential posers. If a bowler uproots some poles in a ground but no one is around to see it, does it constitute a wicket? Can we assume the unobserved world functions the same as the observed world? And can anybody tell us how good Courtney Walsh was at Wellington in February 1995?

A trawl through YouTube throws up nothing. Getty Images? Just one well-hidden picture, but it's a beauty. Ditto the major news sites. A brief

report from *Wisden* lends a dash of credence to the idea that maybe it did take place after all, but even allowing for the old yellow bible's propensity for understatement, you'd be hard pressed to get any convincing sense of the scale of what may or may not have happened that week in Welly. Just this:

'Outstanding bowling by Walsh secured West Indies the fourth-biggest victory in Test history and New Zealand's heaviest defeat, despite a Basin Reserve pitch made for batsmen. With awkward bounce unobtainable, Walsh concentrated on an immaculate line and length.'

Eventually some old copies of *The Cricketer* surface and a few parchments of the *New Zealand Herald*.

So, it *did* happen. At least we've got that. The paucity of material available to us tells us a few things. On one level, it reminds us of the vast space between 'big' cricket – the marquee stuff – and the bits that merely fill the schedules. Moreover, post the Crowe/Wright/Hadlee era, New Zealand's cricket was in a state of mourning, harbouring a sense of loss which had begun to feel terminal under the determinedly underwhelming captaincy of Ken Rutherford, a man who would average 27 over 56 Tests and infuriate all the more for his touches of promise on the edges of failure. The young left hander Stephen Fleming had at least emerged, offering to fulfill the cerebral-stylist role, but he was no Crowe, just as Simon Doull was no Hadlee.

What's more, this was one of the earliest examples of the 'two-Test series', an ugly blight on the game's competitive integrity and yet, as we continue to see two decades later, a remarkably resilient one. It also tells us how tough a sell a Test match can be, especially when one team, invariably the weaker, is down on itself and the other gets ahead early. History doesn't record the attendance, but it's hard to imagine a paper shortage in the ticket office. The only clue is in that Getty shot; sprawling on grassy banks rather than sardine-like in bucket seats.

More than anything though, it recalls an era in which West Indies were scrapping so desperately with Australia for the right to call themselves the greatest team on earth that everything else was pushed to the side; and it was futile as well as desperate, as three months later, West Indies surrendered their proud home record to Australia and with it, forevermore, their crown.

Wellington was not, then, the symphonic salvo of a vibrant team so much as the last, aching notes of a drowning string of fiddlers. Still, what music.

Here are the raw facts, found on a scorecard scrunched down the back of the sofa. In the second Test from the Basin Reserve, West Indies, captained by the 32-year-old Jamaican fast bowler Courtney Andrew Walsh, playing in his 70th Test, won the toss and chose to bat first against Rutherford's New Zealand. It was the sixth time Walsh had tossed up as captain; in the final analysis, 22 of his 132 Tests would carry an asterisk next to his name. It was a good toss to win. On a pitch Jimmy Adams rated "nine point plenty out of ten" he and Junior Murray scored centuries. These plus 147 from 181 balls from Brian Lara took West Indies to 660-5dec. Of the five New Zealanders used over 169.2 overs, the off spinner Matthew Hart returned the worst figures, nought for 181 from 46 overs. In reply, New Zealand occupied 84.4 overs in their first innings, making 216 and, following on, 122 in their second. Walsh took 7-37 in the first innings and 6-18 in the second; 36-15-55-13. Twelve New Zealand wickets fell to single-figure scores. The margin of defeat was then the fourth biggest in Test cricket's 1289-match history. At the time of writing it is the sixth.

That line in Walsh's book of having a 'happier time' in New Zealand didn't relate exclusively to the fluctuating fortunes of that particular West Indian vintage, but to past fraught tours to the country, the most notorious being the 1979-80 series, when New Zealand's dogged competitiveness – and some extravagantly patriotic umpiring – had consigned the West Indies to their last series defeat. Though it may have been more than 15 years since Michael Holding's stump-uprooting combustion produced one of cricket's most iconic photographs, old scores are rarely settled quickly in West Indian cricket. Holding was Walsh's boyhood hero. There would, one thinks, have been more than enough motivation.

Though the drawn first Test had been heavily affected by the weather, New Zealand had still taken a lead on first innings thanks to a century from the wicket-keeper Adam Parore. Walsh and Ambrose had shared five wickets between them, Danny Morrison had whizzed through six West Indians in response, and that was the end of that. So Wellington was, in effect, a one-off Test.

New Zealand went into it in a pickle. Their premier fast bowler Dion Nash was crocked. Rutherford had a sprung hamstring. The allrounder Shane Thomson had gashed his leg on an advertising hoarding during practice and wouldn't bowl in the match. Doull was nursing a chronic knee problem and had already booked himself in for an arthroscopy straight after the match, and

Crowe was hauntingly absent.

In the spring of 1995, Brian Lara was happening. This was to be his 21st Test match. Ten months earlier, Lara had been embraced mid-pitch by Sir Garfield as all around them the Antigua Recreation Ground throbbed to history being made. Two months after that, Durham would be taken for 501 undefeated runs from a single human in a single innings. Lara had three Test hundreds going into Wellington. His 147 here was the smallest of his Test hundreds to date. The century came off 181 balls, and the whole innings contained 24 fours, many struck, wrote DJ Cameron in the Herald, with 'the deft authority of a maestro's baton'. While *The Cricketer*, we can now reveal, didn't hold back either:

'So sublime was his batsmanship that even the most rabid local supporter could only stand and admire as he drove, hooked, pulled, cut and wove his magic thread in four delectable hours. Some fancied his delicate late cutting, others his ever-so-balanced leg-driving. He was Donnelly and Sutcliffe to the power of two.'

Though a much-reduced draw for the good patrons of Wellington, Jimmy Adams was, too, a man in his prime. Languidly circumspect, a subtle admix of loose limbs and blade-choking defence, Adams was the Horatio to Lara's vexed prince and the pair would add 221 before, late on the first day, Morrison burst through Lara's defence to gain a marginal lbw. His dismissal, with the bouncer bells still ringing in his ears having been pinned moments before, 'stopped what might have been a record-breaking crowd' for the second day which, adds the *Herald*, '[would have] helped to drag the tour gate-takings a little further out of the red'.

A smattering was instead in situ on day two as Adams ploughed on to his own hefty hundred. With the wicket-keeper Murray's 88-ball century completing the job and 600 passed, Walsh called them in. New Zealand had three-and-a-bit days to bat to save the match. At the close they were 23-0, and believing that the docility of the pitch would save them. Curtly Ambrose recalls in his autobiography Time To Talk that the New Zealand coach declared after the close on day two that the pitch was flat and it would be a drawn game. 'That motivated us and put pressure on their batsmen.'

Of all the modern greats, Courtney Walsh is among the least likely to blow his own conch shell so others must do it for him. Peter Willey is not a

man given to hyperbole but there was a dreamy look in his eyes when he stated: “Courtney could bowl out a team on one leg”. Modesty and reserve allied to an understated patriotism cut through with more than a dash of Orwell’s Boxer puts Walsh in an almost unique position among the immortals. In the words of his old team-mate Lance Gibbs: “Courtney would have been just as acceptable at a Gentlemen v Players match of the 1820s as he is in the hustle and bustle of what passes for Test cricket today.” And though Gibbs doesn’t elaborate on this hypothetical class tussle of the early 19th Century there is little doubt which gate Walsh would have been walking through. He may have been a Gentleman, but throughout his career Walsh was resolutely and unflinchingly a Player. He was also, so Gibbs argued, something of a dying breed. “He is never rude. His quiet, conservative speech hides a brilliant cricketing mind.” His team-mate Jimmy Adams’s assessment was altogether more relaxed: “He’s a mellow fellow with a fast arm and an even faster smile.”

Walsh was not the first great fast bowler to combine grace off the pitch with bloodlust on it, but few can have stretched those extremes so far apart from one another. Other quicks may have transmitted greater malice – Ezra Moseley was mean, Patrick Patterson had the evil eye, Sylvester Clarke, according to Winston Davis, was simply “a nasty piece of work” and even Colin Croft’s mum told him to pitch it up – but Walsh could mix it with the best of them, as he showed Graham Gooch at Lord’s. His slow bouncer was dead-batted away; next ball, the quick bouncer split Gooch’s chin. It was Walsh’s skit to be driven by duty, beholden to the job in hand, forever prepared to do the lifting and carrying and digging and burying that all Test teams needed from their soldiers. Tony Becca, writing in The Gleaner’s supplement to celebrate Walsh’s great career achievement:

‘As he has demonstrated on pitches that have left great fast bowlers looking to their captains and begging for mercy, Walsh is not only skilled – he is also a big man with a big heart and, most importantly, and as he demonstrated on those occasions when he was dropped, he is a man who never gives up - a man who believes, has always believed, that his destiny lies in his own hands.

Courtney Walsh was not born great and greatness has not been thrust upon him. He has achieved greatness, and coupled with his accomplishments and his humility, that is why he is so popular, why he is so loved by the people. To them, to his multitude of fans, he is one of them. His has been the

triumph of the common man, the triumph of the underdog.'

And in all of that, it sometimes meant getting nasty.

Every so often a game of cricket just detonates randomly. There doesn't have to be any reason for it, sometimes it just goes off. It's Barbados in 1990, and England are scrapping to stay in a belting series and Robin Smith, a good egg and a fine player, is preparing to bat out the 30-minute period before tea with Allan Lamb. What follows is a vintage festival of violence from Walsh, who decides to unleash a succession of short pitchers, one after the other, all at Smith's open-faced helmet. A great player of fast bowling, Smith ducks, weaves, chins, heads and deflects the ball away, until, with the penultimate ball before the tea interval, Walsh snakes one back into his unguarded jaw and smashes it to pieces. It's horrific, a bulbous mark emerging within seconds as the extent becomes clear, and Walsh goes to offer a hand, before turning back to his mark, running in even quicker, and sending down another bumper. Smith drops his hands, sways back, and walks off for tea. It's this scene that the director of the *Fire In Babylon* documentary chose for his homage to West Indian cricketing soul.

The director did not choose Wellington, 1995, though had he wanted to, he'd have had a job getting hold of the footage. On the third morning New Zealand's openers progressed to a fifty partnership. This, wrote the *Herald* journalist DJ Cameron, merely underlined 'the fact that the pitch was likely to make this a totally unequal battle between bat and ball'.

Then Walsh won a contestable lbw decision against Bryan Young to make it 50-1, and from that moment on it was a bloodbath. From the written scraps that we do have, we can at least ascertain that, unlike at Barbados, Walsh made his incisions with scalpel rather than pickaxe.

Andrew Jones became Walsh's second victim, caught behind by Murray. Meanwhile at the other end to the quicks, the leg spinner Rajindra Dhanraj was twirling away effectively, holding up an end and slipping one past Rutherford for his first wicket. Ambrose then chipped in, pinning Darrin Murray for a slow but steady 52, before Shane Thomson, crocked already, went for six, bowled by Walsh. But things only got really out of hand when Walsh returned for his second spell, Cameron writing of 'a last, withering burst of 4.4 overs, 15 runs and four wickets' as New Zealand collapsed, 444 behind on first innings.

They didn't just have Walsh to deal with. Curtly Ambrose was the most

feared quick in the world at the time and formed with Walsh as notorious a fast-bowling partnership as any in history, taking 421 wickets between them from 49 Tests. But while bowlers often hunt in pairs and invariably share the love, it doesn't always work like that. In that first innings at Wellington Ambrose got through 19 overs for his single wicket. Walsh bowled 10 more deliveries than Ambrose and took 7-37. Hardly Laker and Lock in 1956 but a huge disparity nonetheless.

New Zealand were shot. Following on, they slumped to 52-3 at the close, with a wicket each for Walsh, Ambrose and Kenny Benjamin. Thirteen wickets in a single day, with eight to Walsh, on a pitch described by Lara as a batsman's paradise; one man's paradise, he may have added, is another man's hell. As for the man himself, Walsh would only say: "Coming downwind I got my rhythm and was feeling good. It's not a wicket I'd like to bowl on every day."

One can only imagine the fresh hell that greeted New Zealand on that fourth day. Murray, the opener, made 43. Fleming got up to 30. When the No.11 Danny Morrison nicked off to give Walsh his sixth wicket of the second innings, he could boast a rather dashing 15-ball 14. Aside from these three, no one got past eight. New Zealand lost the match by an innings and 322 runs.

There is nothing quite like the fag-end of a Test match, when the home side is getting beaten and beaten badly, and batsmen are filing past each other, heads down to a man, and the only noise coming from an empty stadium is the flutter of papers being drawn up in committee rooms, to provide us with a vision of sport darker in despair and more poignant in its futility than anything else available. 'Seldom have New Zealanders put themselves and their people through such agony', concluded the Herald.

On a flat pitch with Ambrose pedestrian at the other end, Courtney Walsh, 32, had taken his best and next-best Test figures in a little over 24 hours. In the process he went past 250 Test wickets; and yet was still only halfway there.

Wellington was soon forgotten, if it was remembered at all. West Indies returned home to more pressing matters. A few weeks later, Australia and West Indies are locked at 1-1. Ambrose stands mid-pitch glowering over Steve Waugh, and Richie Richardson has to step

in to pull him back. Ambrose doesn't want to go. Never had to before. Waugh stands there, wipes his brow with his red flannel and re-takes his

guard. Australia win by an innings. ‘It was always going to end sometime’, Ambrose later wrote in his autobiography. ‘All cycles must come to an end.’

Six years and 55 Tests after the West Indies lost a Test series to Australia for the first time in 18 years, Courtney Walsh slipped an inducker into Jacques Kallis’s front pad to become the first man to 500 wickets, and a Test career spanning 17 years was almost done.

By then the empire was falling. They were even getting beat by England. Walsh had made his debut at Perth in 1984 as part of a bowling attack comprising Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding and Joel Garner. In April 2001, on his home ground at Jamaica, he played his final Test with Merv Dillon, Cameron Cuffy and Dinanath Ramnarine for company. It was the final Test of the series, South Africa already out of sight. Still, West Indies rallied, and won the game for their man. And Walsh? Creaking, busted, out on his feet, coming up to 14,000 first-class overs. Six for 92. A brace of three-fers, and two of the last three to fall. The most durable of them all.

Since the publication of that 1999 autobiography, either Walsh has had time to ruminate or his ghostwriter is still searching for the scorecard that slipped down the back of the sofa. In an interview given in 2012 Walsh was asked about his best performances:

“The most memorable Test match for me personally was the one where I took 13 for 55 against New Zealand in February 1995 at Wellington and we went on to win that Test match. It remains a special match for me as it was the highest number of wickets that I got in one Test match in my career.”

So it *did* happen, we have his word. He doesn’t mention that the pitch was a flat-track ‘belter’. But then he wouldn’t.

West Indies

SC Williams	c †Parore b Doull	26
SL Campbell	c Su'a b Morrison	88
BC Lara	lbw b Morrison	147
JC Adams	Su'a b Doull	151
KLT Arthurton	run out	70
S Chanderpaul	not out	61
JR Murray†	not out	101

Did not bat: CEL Ambrose, CA Walsh*, KCG Benjamin, R Dhanraj

Extras (lb6, nb10)	**16**
Total (5 wickets; 169.2 overs)	**660**

Fall of wickets 1/85 2/134 3/355 4/449 5/521

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Morrison	29	5	82	2
ML Su'a	44	4	179	0
SB Doull	37.2	5	162	2
MN Hart	46	4	181	0
AH Jones	13	2	50	0

New Zealand

(followed on)

BA Young	lbw b Walsh	29
DJ Murray	lbw b Ambrose	52
AH Jones	c †Murray b Walsh	0
KR Rutherford*	lbw b Dhanraj	22
SP Fleming	c Lara b Walsh	47
SA Thomson	b Walsh	6
AC Parore†	c Adams b Walsh	32
MN Hart	c Lara b Dhanraj	0
ML Su'a	c †Murray b Walsh	6
SB Doull	b Walsh	0
DK Morrison	not out	0
Extras (b1, lb14, nb7)		**22**
Total (all out; 84.4 overs)		**216**

Fall of wickets 1/50 2/52 3/108 4/135 5/160 6/196 7/197 8/207 9/211 10/216

Bowling	O	M	R	W
CEL Ambrose	19	9	32	1
CA Walsh	20.4	7	37	7
R Dhanraj	33	6	97	2
KCG Benjamin	12	1	35	0

BA Young	b Walsh	0
DJ Murray	b Walsh	43
AH Jones	lbw b Benjamin	2
KR Rutherford*	lbw b Ambrose	5
SP Fleming	b Walsh	30
SA Thomson	b Dhanraj	8
AC Parore†	not out	5
MN Hart	c Ambrose b Dhanraj	1
ML Su'a	c Arthurton b Walsh	8
SB Doull	lbw b Walsh	0
DK Morrison	c †Murray b Walsh	14
Extras (lb2, nb4)		**6**
Total (all out; 40.2 overs)		**122**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/3 3/15 4/70 5/93 6/93 7/97 8/106 9/106 10/122

Bowling	O	M	R	W
CA Walsh	15.2	8	18	6
KCG Benjamin	8	0	36	1
CEL Ambrose	5	1	17	1
R Dhanraj	12	2	49	2

Merv Hughes – 37-9-87-8

Australia v West Indies, Perth 2-6 December 1988

18

-Ken Piesse-

Test match eve, Adelaide, 1985: going stir crazy in his hotel room and knowing his friends from back home in Werribee are downstairs partying hard in Charlie's Bar, Merv Hughes joins them for some calming pre-Christmas fluids. Sipping mainly soda waters in between a couple of Stubbies, Hughes is his normal loud, effervescent and endearing self, regaling his mates with stories from Werribee to Darwin where he'd spent the off-season. The clock strikes midnight, but they continue…until almost 1 a.m.

Among the eye witnesses is a Test selector, Australian cricket's media manager and a brace of touring cricket writers, several of whom are totally unacquainted with Hughes' mischievous spirit and personality-plus ways. Another debutant Geoff Marsh is also at Charlie's, but is tucked away in a quiet corner with captain Allan Border.

Adelaide is a big country town and the bush telegraph is soon into overdrive, reporting how one of Australia's chosen XI for the big Test against the visiting Indians had been seen after midnight in a hotel bar on the very day of the Test – the inference being that he'd been drinking a mountain of stubbies and not sodas.

Later that day in the change rooms, Greg Chappell – the selector in the bar – tells Hughes the spotlight on any Test player, particularly a first-gamer, is so significant that they had to keep a lower profile after cricketing hours. He knew that Hughes had only had a few beers, but in future he and his thirst needed a quieter venue, preferably free of journalists.

Australian cricket had been in free-fall ever since the retirements of Dennis Lillee, Greg Chappell and Rod Marsh within weeks of each other in the New Year of 1983. Having meekly forfeited the Ashes in England in 1985, the team plunged into an even deeper abyss in Brisbane where champion New Zealander Richard Hadlee took 15 wickets. Having been beaten for the first

time, home and away in a Test series by its trans-Tasman neighbour, a cricketing minnow, an exasperated Border seriously considered resigning. ‘I’ve just about said all I can to that lot’ he said.

Come the start of the fresh series with India, the team was very much in a rebuilding phase with three first gamers included for the opening Test in Adelaide: Merv Hughes, fellow fast bowler Bruce Reid and top-order batsman Geoff Marsh.

Having just won the limited-overs World Championship of Cricket played for the first time under lights in Melbourne, the visiting Indians boasted some of the world’s most celebrated batsmen including Kris Srikkanth, the little master Sunil Gavaskar, Mohinder Amarnath, Dilip Vengsarkar and Mohammad Azharuddin coupled with the sublimely gifted allrounder Kapil Dev.

Despite some inclement early weather, Adelaide’s famed white, wide pitch was at its absolute best, guaranteed to last for all five days, making for a full week of celebration among the scores of cricket-loving visitors, many on their annual visit to the Big Smoke. Two Australians reached three figures in a score of almost 400. Just 100 minutes remained late on the Saturday as Srikkanth and Gavaskar skipped down the member’s steps to mount a reply.

Overlooking the inexperience in the attack, being led by Queenslander Craig McDermott just out of his teens, the large Saturday crowd had expectations of three, or even four wickets, Border’s umbrella field designed to take full advantage of any early nicks. Operating into the breeze, Hughes rushed in almost from mid-off, the sheer length of his meandering run an immediate talking-point with those watching from the old timber-floored press box side-on to the pitch.

At his match-eve team dinner, Border’s tactics were simple: cramp Srikkanth for room by honing in on his off stump. And don’t pitch anything middle and leg to Gavaskar. Just weeks earlier in a lead-up game in Melbourne, Hughes had dismissed Srikkanth with a short one down the off side. Surely ‘AB’ wouldn’t mind him digging a few in early, especially with the ball nice and new? Hughes was fast but whether it was nerves or the big occasion, he was also wildly erratic and only the athleticism of wicket-keeper Wayne Phillips saved the embarrassment of multiple lots of four byes. Srikkanth cashed in on the short ones, racing to an even-time fifty in an exhilarating master-class. While he fell right on stumps, at 1-97 India already had designs on a substantial first-innings lead.

When he opposed Gavaskar, Hughes was too full and one overpitched on leg stump rocketed away to the unguarded square-leg fence just as Border had warned. The big fella's first seven overs cost 50. Never before had he encountered such a plumb batting track or such a crack set of openers. If he was to make a go of this Test cricket caper, he had much to learn…

India was to make 500-plus and have, by far, the best of a rain-affected draw. Courtesy of three dropped catches, Hughes' figures blew out to 1-123, to go with a duck from No.11, when he batted behind everyone, even Reid. Despite his misfortune, he was always keen to have another over, Border impressed by his willingness to compete. But his sheer workload weighed heavily. He lost his balance at the crease, falling away in his delivery stride and sliding the ball down the leg side.

Despite the blooding of three of the best young talents in the country, it seemed Australia's days as a Test easybeat would be continuing. Reid had shaped promisingly, but Marsh missed out, being asked to bat at No.3 rather than in his normal opening position. The condemnation of the team's efforts, particularly Hughes' unflattering start was brutal. 'The thing about Merv Hughes,' said Ian Chappell in a lengthy article 'is that he thinks he's a fast bowler'.

Hughes was immediately dropped for a fit-again Dave Gilbert and had to wait almost a full year before re-winning a place.

As a rookie fast bowler he had little idea of the nuances required to be a success at the higher level. He was fit but he lacked the condition to bowl lengthy spells. And there was little or no support mechanism for the young ones, so inherent in the national teams of the new Millennium. At the time no national coach had been appointed and team manager Bob Merriman, in shirt and tie, hit slips catches to the Australians as they warmed up late on the Saturday.

Had Hughes been privy to more hands-on specialist advice he may not have spent so much time in the backblocks. In the next three years he was dropped three more times in six Tests and by the spring of 1988, was seriously re-considering abandoning cricket and doing something else for a living.

Australia's momentous victory in the World Cup in India in 1987 coupled with the rapid improvement in some of the advancing ones like David Boon, Steve Waugh and Dean Jones raised expectations that maybe the Test team

could also compete successfully, even against the much-vaunted West Indians in the full-length Test series scheduled from late in 1988.

Hughes had rarely been fitter for the start of a new season. He'd sworn off beer, stopped playing football and was endeavouring to at least count his calories. Until then, as he liked to joke with his mates, he was on a seafood diet: "See food and I eat it!"

The wickets he desperately needed to remind the selectors of his talents, however, continued to elude him. And others were still being preferred, including his Footscray pal Tony Dodemaide, who bowled at a less-intimidating pace but was far more consistent, and the burly West Australian swing bowler Chris Matthews, named as McDermott's opening partner for the first of the five Calypso Tests.

For all his bravado, big smile and boisterous manner, Hughes was seriously beginning to doubt whether his best was good enough. Were all his sacrifices worth it? Sheffield Shield payments were miniscule and the soreness in his lower back was once again becoming a constant.

Having conceded almost 200 runs and taken just one wicket in Victoria's first Sheffield Shield games of the year, Hughes had reached his own personal crossroad. Match figures of 0-99 against New South Wales were damning. So morose was he that his long-time friend and team-mate Dodemaide sat him down for a heart-to-heart saying he believed Hughes had lost his edge and appetite for the fight. He wasn't competing or creating the chances like he used to. He was good enough. He just had to again believe in himself and the opportunities would re-open. Few could make batsmen feel they were in a war zone like Hughes. Raise the heat. Build and maintain the pressure. "Mate", said Dodemaide, "you're just one five-for from being back at the Big Dance" (in Test contention).

Later that week, against Queensland at St Kilda's Junction Oval, Hughes captured a career-best 7-83 on his way to his first ever '10-for' in a representative match. Significantly, seven of the 10 were in Queensland's top order and included notables Trevor Barsby, Greg Ritchie, Stuart Law, Glenn Trimble and opener Peter Cantrell, first ball. "He was ferocious", said Dodemaide. "AB (Border) was also playing but he couldn't get him out – he needed his mate (Dodemaide) to do that, twice!" The feedback from the captain to the national selectors afterwards was unequivocal: Hughes, 27, had to play in the next Test.

In Brisbane, the West Indies had won by 2.30 p.m. on the fourth day and

lost only 11 wickets all match. Matthews, with 0-80, was wayward and expensive and ended up breaking down. On the final morning when he happened to pitch one on the stumps, he received a Bronx cheer from the small crowd.

So dismayed were the selectors at yet another capitulation that McDermott, who'd taken three wickets for the match was dropped to 12th man in Perth, a new-look attack being assembled headed by Geoff Lawson and Hughes. Dodemaide was again the third seamer.

On the eve of the game, the two teams trained side by side, several of the West Indians, most notably Courtney Walsh, wondering if Australia had erred again by selecting another pace bowler who seemed excessively big. Matthews had finished with a side strain having bowled just 25 overs in Brisbane; surely the 15-stone Hughes would also struggle to bowl long spells, especially in the anticipated Perth heat.

"We hadn't heard much about him [Hughes] before 1988-89", Walsh said. "We were quite surprised that a guy of his size could bowl for so long with the same pace. He got a lot of lift and hurried the batsmen along. For someone who was relatively new to put in that kind of performance was a big effort. He was very impressive."

Keen to make the most of the overcast skies, Border sent the Windies into bat. Viv Richards reckoned Border and his Australian top order was trying to hide as the batting conditions were ideal. Both Lawson and Hughes created early chances, but it wasn't until the afternoon session that the Aussies actually held onto a catch.

Hughes was fast and bouncy and when reintroduced alongside Steve Waugh after lunch, Carl Hooper immediately called for a chest guard. Dodemaide was competitive but every time he overpitched or was a little offline, he was hit for four. He conceded just six scoring shots in his first five overs, all of them boundary hits.

Bowling non-stop for the first 90 minutes, Hughes had Gordon Greenidge (9) dropped by Waugh at first slip before Desmond Haynes (11) succumbed lbw. At 3-126 with Richie Richardson well set, captain Viv Richards ambled to the centre, flexing his shoulders and looking every bit like a player with 100 first-class centuries to his credit. So hard did he immediately hit the ball that Hughes wondered if he should be bowling to him with a helmet on. "He was intimidating. You felt like he didn't have a weakness", he said. "He was the master of body language and nothing ever seemed to worry him."

After one drive was smashed through extra-cover, Hughes turned to umpire Robin Bailhache and asked if Richards' bat should be checked for steroids. Richards top scored with an almost even-time 146, more than 100 of his runs coming in fours and sixes.

Lawson and Hughes sent down the majority of the overs, Hughes taking the last three wickets in quick succession to finish with 5-130. He'd bowled 36.1 overs and taken his last two with his last two balls, tour rookies Curtly Ambrose with the sixth ball of his 35th over and Patrick Patterson with the first of his 36th. Unlike in Adelaide years earlier when he'd bowled far too short, he attacked the stumps almost exclusively.

A scoreline of almost 450 was a virtual guarantee against defeat, especially on a wicket noted for its widening cracks the longer a match progressed. But the Australians showed the mettle of a team on the rise, going to tea on the third day at 4-319 with local left hander Graeme Wood on the verge of his ninth and final Test 100. He and Waugh added 200 for the fifth wicket, Waugh at one stage back-cutting Patterson for an extraordinary six which soared over the third-man fence into the crowd.

Hopes of a first-innings lead, however, were dashed when Ambrose and Malcolm Marshall mowed through the bottom order with the second new ball, the last four falling for 28. Lawson, in at No. 10, had his jaw broken by Ambrose and was stretchered off. Border immediately closed Australia's innings, conceding a 54-run lead.

Many of the Australians in the rooms were badly shaken up to see Lawson so seriously injured. Border was ropable. This was yet another instance of an Australian player being injured by a West Indian fast bowler. Lawson's helmet had earpieces, but no grill. His jaw was shattered in several places and he lay on a bench spitting blood into a beer jug.

Less than 20 minutes play remained, the fired-up Australians walking out to shouts to "get into 'em". As Hughes paced out his run, the crowd yelled like it was a football Grand Final.

Sprinting in, Hughes bowled full and straight at Greenidge, who was late on his defensive shot. The lbw appeal to umpire Terry Prue was triumphant. Greenidge was plumb, first ball. So pumped was Hughes that he continued down the wicket and told Greenidge to "Fuck off.. What did you say? Fuck off… get off." In the emotion of the hour, with Lawson hurt and the Australians desperate to claw back some lost ground with an early wicket or two, Hughes had badly overstepped with his barrage of abuse.

No-one in the middle, especially Hughes himself, realised he'd taken a hat-trick…the most convoluted in Test annals, spread across three overs and two innings. "Are you sure?" said Hughes, when informed of his feat in-between overs by Steve Waugh who had been boundary riding. "Yeah, I heard it over the public address system."

Only four overs were possible. No more wickets fell and afterwards, Hughes was told by Australia's team manager Ian McDonald that he must immediately apologise to Greenidge. Not only was his send-off unnecessary and totally against the spirit of the game, it had been beamed back to millions of households in the east. It was a public-relations disaster.

Hughes marched into the West Indian dressing rooms with some Coke for himself and a six-pack for Greenidge but the West Indian refused to talk to him and simply turned his back. Hughes again tried but again Greenidge turned away. "Look Gordon", Hughes said, "I didn't mean what I said out there and I don't want you to take it personally." Greenidge snapped back: "I don't believe you. I don't want your beer…you don't mean a word of what you're saying." And with that he turned his back on Hughes again and headed to the team bus where he sat alone until it departed 45 minutes later.

It was a defining moment in Hughes' career. He realised he'd never be able to endear himself with everyone, especially opposition batsmen. With Lawson nursing his jaw in the rooms and Dodemaide again under high attack, Hughes became Border's key bowler in the West Indian second innings, sending down three explosive spells of seven, 10 and 16 overs, all at unrelenting high speed from the Lillee-Marsh Stand end. Even Richards seemed unsettled by Hughes' menacing aggression. The big fellow was exhausted but somehow found a way to keep bustling in. Bowling unchanged in the final session, he took 5-53. Every time Border threw the ball to Hughes, he waited for him to return it. But he never did.

'Marvellous Merv Bags a Record', said the *Melbourne Age*. 'Merv-Racking', said the *Melbourne Sun News-Pictorial*. Hughes celebrated every wicket with gusto, particularly when he trapped Richards lbw and King Viv didn't even wait for the umpire's decision.With eight wickets in the innings and 13 for the match, Hughes had rejuvenated his career in his eighth Test and become an automatic selection for the rest of the summer.

Several of the old Australian Test players including long-time critic Ian Chappell, who had been so damning in his assessment of Hughes after his first Test match three years earlier, knocked on the door of the Australian

dressing rooms to pass on their congratulations.

Chappell said Hughes' Herculean efforts made him proud to be an Australian. The big fella with the gigantic moustache had finally been accepted as an equal, Chappell later wrote: 'From the moment Lawson went down, Merv seemed to grow in stature. In that Test he went from someone who had played a number of Tests to an accredited and accomplished Test performer.'

His hat-trick was the first by an Australian in 31 years – and only the seventh by an Australian since Test cricket first started. Having bowled 73.1 overs for the match, Hughes collapsed onto the rubdown table and called for multiple icepacks for his hamstrings, groin, back and shoulder. His game figures of 13-217, the best ever in a Perth Test, had rejuvenated what was to become a headlining career. His efforts transfixed the nation's cricket lovers, most of whom had watched the Test from the eastern States on prime-time television. In Melbourne, Hughes' home-town, master cartoonist Ron Tandberg in The Age drew an image of a West Indian batsman marching off with Chappell watching on. 'You're right Ian', said the punchline. 'They should never have picked him.'

Despite Hughes' heroics, Australia tumbled to a 169-run loss. The West Indies won again in Melbourne to secure the Frank Worrell Trophy 3-0 after the first three games. But a new champion of the game had been unearthed, Hughes in time joining an elite group of Australian pacemen to take 200 or more Test wickets, his big heart pivotal in a string of match-winning performances.

Long-time state and Test team-mate Damien Fleming said there was no better competitor than Hughes. Wicket-keeper Ian Healy regards Hughes as his all-time favourite team-mate.

After an altercation with the big Victorian who spat in his direction during a heated moment New Zealander Mark Greatbatch said if cricket allowed players to get physical, Hughes would certainly have crossed the line.

Shane Warne said Hughes was a working-class hero who loved his mates and loved representing Australia. "I know of no-one who has a bigger heart or tried as hard as Merv."

West Indies

CG Greenidge	b Lawson	40
DL Haynes	lbw b Hughes	11
RB Richardson	c Boon b Hughes	66
CL Hooper	c Boon b Lawson	26
IVA Richards*	c Dodemaide b Lawson	146
AL Logie	c Waugh b May	93
PJL Dujon†	c Veletta b May	32
MD Marshall	c Veletta b Hughes	4
CEL Ambrose	c †Healy b Hughes	8
CA Walsh	not out	0
BP Patterson	c Dodemaide b Hughes	1
Extras (b1, lb12, nb9)		**22**
Total (all out; 123.1 overs)		**449**

Fall of wickets 1/16 2/82 3/126 4/180 5/343 6/421 7/426 8/440 9/448 10/449

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
GF Lawson	32	7	97	3
MG Hughes	36.1	7	130	5
AIC Dodemaide	17	1	79	0
SR Waugh	28	3	90	0
TBA May	10	3	40	2

CG Greenidge	lbw b Hughes	0
DL Haynes	c †Healy b Hughes	100
RB Richardson	c †Healy b Hughes	48
CL Hooper	c Dodemaide b Hughes	64
IVA Richards*	lbw b Hughes	5
AL Logie	b Hughes	30
PJL Dujon†	c Dodemaide b Hughes	9
MD Marshall	c †Healy b Dodemaide	23
CEL Ambrose	c Wood b Hughes	15
CA Walsh	not out	17
BP Patterson	not out	6
Extras (b14, lb9, nb9)		**32**
Total (9 wickets dec; 98 overs)		**349**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/103 3/216 4/236 5/246 6/259 7/300 8/310 9/341

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
MG Hughes	37	9	87	8
AIC Dodemaide	24	2	101	1
SR Waugh	23	1	70	0
TBA May	14	1	68	0

Australia

GR Marsh	c Richardson b Walsh	30
DC Boon	c Logie b Ambrose	80
MRJ Veletta	run out	11
GM Wood	c Richardson b Ambrose	111
AR Border*	c †Dujon b Ambrose	6
SR Waugh	c †Dujon b Ambrose	91
IA Healy†	lbw b Marshall	8
AIC Dodemaide	not out	7
TBA May	c Richards b Ambrose	2
GF Lawson	retired hurt	0

Did not bat; MG Hughes

Extras (b5, lb9, nb35)	**49**
Total (8 wickets dec; 100.3 overs)	**395**

Fall of wickets 1/83 2/138 3/152 4/167 5/367 6/374 7/388 8/395

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
MD Marshall	23	3	84	1
BP Patterson	16	1	95	0
CA Walsh	19	3	58	1
CEL Ambrose	23.3	3	72	5
IVA Richards	14	0	43	0
CL Hooper	5	0	29	0

GR Marsh	c Logie b Marshall	6
DC Boon	b Patterson	4
MRJ Veletta	c †Dujon b Marshall	13
GM Wood	c Greenidge b Walsh	42
AR Border*	b Hooper	26
SR Waugh	c Hooper b Patterson	26
IA Healy†	c Logie b Ambrose	52
AIC Dodemaide	lbw b Ambrose	11
TBA May	not out	8
MG Hughes	c Logie b Ambrose	0
GF Lawson	absent hurt	-

Extras (b5, lb4, nb37)	**46**
Total (all out; 63 overs)	**234**

Fall of wickets 1/14 2/14 3/46 4/93 5/138 6/140 7/190 8/232 9/234

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
MD Marshall	12	0	50	2
BP Patterson	14	2	58	2
CEL Ambrose	17	1	66	3
CA Walsh	15	1	46	1
CL Hooper	5	2	5	1

Richard Hadlee – 23.4-4-52-9

Australia v New Zealand, Brisbane 8-12 November 1985

17

-Dave Wilson-

Growing up as a fan of Newcastle United there were many jokes doing the rounds lampooning the relative weakness of near neighbours Sunderland (though I hasten to add, as the son of a Sunderland fan myself, I didn't join in as vociferously as my friends). One such joke that I do recall concerned Sunderland's practise methods – manager Alan Brown, in order to try and improve the team's dribbling skills, instructed the trainer to set out dustbins at various points on the pitch to provide 'opposition' for the players to negotiate. After training was over, Brown asked the trainer "How did it go with the dustbins?" "Not so good, boss", replied the trainer dolefully, "the dustbins won 2-1."

So it is with near neighbours where one is considered, or considers themselves, superior to the other. Such was certainly the case with New Zealand, considered very much the underdog to close rivals Australia, who in fact had deigned to play them in just one Test before Richard Hadlee made his debut in the antipodean summer of 1972-73. Up to that point, New Zealand had won just seven of 102 Tests, with no victories over either England or Australia. Yet by the time New Zealand travelled to Australia for a three-Test series in 1985-86, she had enjoyed four victories over England (one away from home) as well as two over Australia, though both of those triumphs took place at home. Much of that success had come on the back of Hadlee's play, and in particular his bowling.

The momentous first victory over England was very much down to Hadlee, who returned figures of 10-100 as he and Richard Collinge skittled out England, chasing a target of just 137, for a meagre 64. New Zealand's second victory over Australia was part of a purple patch of nine Tests with four victories and only one defeat. During that time Hadlee had shortened his run-up in Test matches due to ongoing injury issues, though this was in any case in keeping with what he was already doing in Sunday League cricket for Nottinghamshire. He had received a certain amount of criticism for that adjustment, not least from national skipper Geoff Howarth, and had also resolved to withdraw from county cricket. However, his decision to make the

shortened run-up a permanent feature of his game saw a change of heart with his adopted county side, and would prove to be the launching pad for a stellar international career that would simultaneously catapult New Zealand from perennial whipping boys to one of the best teams in world cricket.

Exactly to what degree they improved can be demonstrated by reference to the ICC Test team ratings; the ICC has published regular ratings for all of the Test-playing nations and though these only began in the early 2000s, with a rainy afternoon to fill I once went back and calculated all of the Test team ratings from the dawn of time, well, 1878 (note that the ICC ratings site did post historical ratings for a while, though these are no longer available and in any case were not complete). Prior to Hadlee's debut the national side's highest rating was 90 following their first ever series win over Pakistan in 1969 (for an idea of what a rating of 90 represents, think England mid-1990s or the post-1987 Ashes Australia). With Hadlee leading their attack, New Zealand finally climbed to a rating of 100, the threshold for international respectability, following victory over India in 1980-81. The peak rating of 116 was achieved when holding the West Indies to a draw in 1986-87, probably the only side which was superior to New Zealand at that time. By way of comparison, late '80s Pakistan (Waqar, Wasim, Imran, Javed et al) achieved around the same level.

But when New Zealand arrived in Australia in 1985-86, it was fresh from a resounding defeat in the West Indies where Hadlee, despite his noted reliance on life- and cricket-affirming mantras, had not been especially successful; 15 wickets in four Tests was small beans for one so talented. Neither was Australia in the best of shape, as two successive rubbers were lost to West Indies (where Rodney Hogg had thrown a punch at skipper Kim Hughes on the field at Port of Spain), followed by surrendering the Ashes in England. One thing in the home side's favour was that New Zealand had never won a Test in Australia, but set against that was the retirement of Dennis Lillee, Greg Chappell and Rod Marsh along with losing several players to the rebel tours – eight members of the vanquished Ashes squad had already secretly signed up to tour South Africa prior to arrival in England.

Any difficulty which the New Zealanders had in finding the necessary motivation soon dissipated at the pre-series luncheon. Australian Cricket Board chairman Fred Bennett rose to make what was expected to be a welcome speech however he proceeded to ignore the visitors, instead proselytising on Australia's plan for future success, which involved monetary

rewards in a desperate attempt to turn the heads of those prepared to chase the almighty Rand. As New Zealand journalist Don Johnson put it, ‘they were treated more as the country cousins.’ Any inferiority complex was about to be put to bed for good.

But first Hadlee had to take care of one or two technical issues; his performance in the lead-up matches had not been too good with only four wickets for 136 runs. Legendary opener Glenn Turner was by now cricket manager and he persuaded Hadlee, who wanted to rest before the first Test, to drag his paddle-like feet to the training ground to work on bowling closer to the stumps. Turner had noticed that Hadlee was being forced wide by the umpire’s position and wanted to bring Hadlee in, hoping that the straightening of his line would allow the swing to create more havoc, particularly to an Australia side with so many left handers. At first, Turner stood in position to represent the umpire while Hadlee bowled, however when Turner had to leave he dragged a dustbin on to the field to stand as the umpire. The impact was immediate and long-lasting, as batsmen would be forced to make a stroke more often – Hadlee would request umpires to position themselves one-and-a-half metres behind the stumps for the remainder of his career.

“I want to be the best – so work for it!”

Day one of the first Test dawned hot and overcast with some grass and a little moisture on the pitch, what journalist Noel Mengel described as ‘once in a lifetime conditions’, so Jeremy Coney had no hesitation in electing to bowl first. Hadlee indulged in his traditional ritual of careful selection of the match ball, his right as senior destroyer, finally choosing his weapon and etching it with his fingernail to prevent any attempts at subsequent subterfuge – he would later swear that this particular ball seemed to talk to him.

First up was Andrew Hilditch; Turner had contacted his ex-Worcestershire team-mate Norman Gifford prior to the tour to discuss how best to handle each Australian batsman – Gifford had been working with the England team which had recently reclaimed the Ashes – and the England coach had stressed that Hilditch was an impulsive hooker. After only five balls, Hadlee sent down a shorter ball which Hilditch couldn’t resist, skying one to Ewen Chatfield, who, after a long practise catching high hooks, had been positioned at deep fine-leg in readiness – first over, one down and only

one run on the board.

"It's always the next ball the wicket will fall!"

Kepler Wessels and David Boon then settled things down somewhat, taking the score to 70-1 before Hadlee found an edge off Boon to second slip, the perfect fillip just before lunch. The momentum shifted further with the first ball after lunch when reluctant Aussie skipper Allan Border hit a wide leg cutter straight to cover, followed shortly afterwards by Greg Ritchie – Australia were now 82-4 and reeling after losing three wickets for just 12 runs. Wessels once more settled things, aided by Wayne Phillips, so that when bad light stopped play around tea Australia were reasonably placed on 146-4. As Border said, "We expected 300 from there". Richard Hadlee, with 4-35 off 15 overs after day one, had other ideas.

With the second day also being humid, Hadlee struck early by removing Wessels after the addition of just two runs to the overnight total, dismissed lbw without offering a stroke. Hadlee himself describes the next wicket – '[Greg] Matthews got hit in the nuts first ball and the second one got his middle stump. It was a classic dismissal through the gate', leaving Australia on 150-6 and 300 looking some way off. Only nine more runs were added before

Phillips, rooted to the spot, was bowled off an inside edge. When Craig McDermott edged to Coney at second slip, Hadlee had improved on his own New Zealand record innings haul, and also by the way had all eight wickets to fall so far – considering how he was playing, all 10 was not at all out of the question.

"You must want to do it!"

Yet it was Hadlee himself who was to rain on that particular parade – 'Vaughan Brown came on. Geoff Lawson swept into the air and I ran around and took a simple catch'. By doing so Hadlee confounded those who considered him to be obsessed with his own statistics – possibly they had confused a keen student of cricket history as a statistics-obsessed egotist, possibly not. In any case, he never thought of not trying for it or of purposely dropping it – 'You take every chance that you can'; considering the impact on Hadlee, Frank Keating would refer to it as the catch of the century. Shortly after, debutant Brown returned the favour by catching Bob Holland

and that was that, Australia all out for 179 and nine wickets to Hadlee; actually he was on the scorecard for all ten wickets counting the catch off Brown. His final figures were 9-52 having ripped through the Australian innings with 5-17 in the first hour of day two.

Hadlee's obsession with history notwithstanding, he was a little off when he discussed the impact of his performance on the record books in his autobiography Rhythm and Swing – '...outside Laker's 10 for 53, the figures were the best at test level this century', which of course ignores Laker's other performance in that Old Trafford match, his 9-37 in the first innings. Nonetheless, Hadlee's was a performance of singular brilliance; as John Reid put it:

'For every wicket he took, he must have beaten the bat four or five or six times. It was an absolute masterclass, in terms of line and length, hitting the seam, just that little bit of movement in the air.'

The Cricketer was similarly fulsome in its praise: 'His control was extraordinary, he scarcely wasted a single ball and it did not seem possible that he could beat the bat so often without finding the edge.'

The brilliance of Hadlee's performance was brought into stark relief when New Zealand batted. The Aussie bowlers could extract nothing like the degree of malice that Hadlee had found, suddenly the pitch appeared to be favouring the batsmen. After John Wright fell with score 85-2, Reid and Martin Crowe both reached centuries off consecutive balls as the score climbed to 309. By the time Crowe was out for 188 bringing Hadlee to the crease,

New Zealand had a lead of almost 300. Hadlee was able to hit out freely, scoring 54 of 78 off just 45 balls with three sixes.

To say New Zealand had capitalised on Hadlee's bowling performance is an understatement – their 553-7 was a Test record. Writing in 1993, Crowe considered his innings to have been his best in Test cricket. It got so dark towards the end of the day that Ian Smith couldn't find the gate to enter the pitch, but when offered the light New Zealand had declined and rubbed it in – clearly they were enjoying showing up the Aussies.

"Confidence breeds success!"

'Charlie' Chatfield had bowled with metronomic control in Australia's

first innings and started the second innings with no less accuracy, grabbing the crucial scalps of Wessels and Boon. Then Hilditch repeated his first innings hook to Chatfield in the deep.

"Think Hilditch, think bouncer, think hook shot, think catch, think out!"

"He hangs his head in shame as Hadlee enjoys the moment" was Ian Chappell's view from the commentary box. The score then was 16-3 and by the time Ritchie and Phillips had both trudged back to the pavilion Australia were five down and still a distant 307 runs in arrears. Third seamer Martin Snedden had been very unfortunate not to join the Aussie bashing as first Hadlee then Wright put down chances.

Greg Matthews, who had endured headlines of 'Matthews must go' when succumbing to a Hadlee jaffa in the first innings, then joined Border in the middle. Ninety-seven runs later, he became the first player since Ken Barrington to reach his maiden Test century with a six, and possibly the first to run off to find his girlfriend in the crowd, celebrations which Hadlee considered 'way over the top'.

"Beat your opponent – do the job better!"

Sadly for Australia, Matthews' joy was short lived as Hadlee found an edge and he was out for 115 – both he and Border later opined that had he lasted until stumps Australia might have had a chance of saving the match, though to be honest this seemed unlikely and unfairly taints Matthews' performance. Next morning Hadlee sent back three of the four remaining batsmen in front of a nearly-deserted 'Gabba, and New Zealand had a historic first victory in Australia, and by an innings to boot. Hadlee's six-wicket haul gave him a match total of 15 wickets, at the time only exceeded by three other Test bowlers.

It is hard now to gauge the effect on the nation and the confidence of the cricketing community. Ever scorned by the big brothers across the Tasman, New Zealand had finally paid back years of hurt in a resounding victory and at the heart of that victory stood one man. With conditions in his favour he had bowled in exactly the way required and methodically picked through the Australian batting with the precision and professionalism of a surgeon performing a delicate operation. Maybe he had found the 'talking ball' but he

exploited it like a master ventriloquist and no Australian batsman had any answers to offer to the relentless probing and prodding, always laced with the threat of the unplayable one being not far away.

New Zealand Herald correspondent Don Cameron noted that it had got quieter and quieter in the press box as victory became assured; 'We behaved ourselves, didn't get too cocky…some of the older hands in the Australian press said "you've outplayed us."' Border told the media "You start to wonder where you're heading…you start to wonder whether you're the right bloke from the job." Martin Snedden summed up New Zealand elation:

"This was like climbing Mount Everest. It was a mental breakthrough given Australia's dominant history". In the early 1980s we felt the Australian greats, including a number of television commentators, looked down their noses at us.We took exception. There was satisfaction, particularly on that tour, when a fairly arrogant Channel Nine had to change their tune by the end of the series."

Martin Crowe summed up the general feeling in his autobiography Out on a Limb, 'We had given Australia their worst nightmare.'

The second Test in Sydney was won by Australia on a pitch which offered nothing to pace bowlers, though Hadlee still managed to extract enough from it to take seven wickets. New Zealand had lost, despite a first innings lead of 66, largely through errors in the field, and John Bracewell, the left-arm spinner brought in to exploit the wicket, took the match award having scored 83 at number 10 as well as contributing five wickets of his own.

Hadlee was back to his brilliant best on a new Perth strip much more suited to his game, his 11 wickets helping secure the series for New Zealand and bringing him both the match and series awards. His final haul was 33 wickets at 12.15 in the three-Test series, which had only been bettered by Englishmen George Lohmann and Sydney Barnes, both against South Africa; Hadlee took five wickets or more in five of the six Australian innings. He remains the only player to take nine wickets in an innings (and 15 in a match) and also score a half-century in Tests.

Hadlee was to state of his only Test nine-for: 'It was the closest I came to excellence.' On the other hand, following Border's offer to resign at the end of the series, *Wisden* editor Graeme Wright was to write in that year's

Almanack on ‘The parlous state of Australian cricket’. Certainly New Zealand had been fortunate that Australia was in a state of rebuilding, as the Australia selectors would use fully 24 different players during that 1985-86 season. Nonetheless, to beat them on their own turf was no small achievement for New Zealand.

Hadlee had a tantalising 299 Test wickets following the series in Australia, and would go on to a world record of 431, passing Ian Botham’s record along the way – the next best New Zealander at that time was Lance Cairns with 130 wickets. There’s certainly a case to be made that beginning with the 1985-86 Australia series until he retired in 1990 Hadlee was the world’s best Test bowler, certainly if one looks closely at his statistics (as he surely did). In that time he bagged 17 five-fors in just 29 Tests, the next best being nine by both Malcolm Marshall and Terry Alderman. And Hadlee topped it all off when he took a wicket with his last ball in Tests.

But that famous series in Australia in 1985-86 was his launching point to true greatness, and as Alan Brown’s Sunderland were unable to do, New Zealand had managed to usurp their local nemesis with the aid of judiciously-placed dustbins, and, coincidentally, by exactly the same score as the dustbins had knocked off the hapless Sunderland, 2-1. The talking ball probably helped a bit, too.

Australia

KC Wessels	lbw b Hadlee	70
AMJ Hilditch	c Chatfield b Hadlee	0
DC Boon	c Coney b Hadlee	31
AR Border*	c Edgar b Hadlee	1
GM Ritchie	c MD Crowe b Hadlee	8
WB Phillips†	b Hadlee	34
GRJ Matthews	b Hadlee	2
GF Lawson	c Hadlee b Brown	8
CJ McDermott	c Coney b Hadlee	9
DR Gilbert	not out	0
RG Holland	c Brown b Hadlee	0
Extras (b9, lb5, nb2)		**16**
Total (all out; 76.4 overs)		**179**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/70 3/72 4/82 5/148 6/150 7/159 8/175 9/179 10/179

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RJ Hadlee	23.4	4	52	9
EJ Chatfield	18	6	29	0
MC Snedden	11	1	45	0
MD Crowe	5	0	14	0
VR Brown	12	5	17	1
JV Coney	7	5	8	0

KC Wessels	c Brown b Chatfield	3
AMJ Hilditch	c Chatfield b Hadlee	12
DC Boon	c †Smith b Chatfield	1
AR Border*	not out	152
GM Ritchie	c Coney b Snedden	20
WB Phillips†	b Hadlee	2
GRJ Matthews	c Coney b Hadlee	115
CJ McDermott	c & b Hadlee	5
GF Lawson	c Brown b Chatfield	7
DR Gilbert	c Chatfield b Hadlee	10
RG Holland	b Hadlee	0
Extras (lb3, nb3)		**6**
Total (all out; 116.5 overs)		**333**

Fall of wickets 1/14 2/16 3/16 4/47 5/67 6/264 7/272 8/291 9/333 10/333

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RJ Hadlee	28.5	9	71	6
EJ Chatfield	32	9	75	3
MC Snedden	19	3	66	1
MD Crowe	9	2	19	0
VR Brown	25	5	96	0
JV Coney	3	1	3	0

New Zealand

BA Edgar	c †Phillips b Gilbert	17
JG Wright	lbw b Matthews	46
JF Reid	c Border b Gilbert	108
MD Crowe	b Matthews	188
JV Coney*	c †Phillips b Lawson	22
JJ Crowe	c Holland b Matthews	35
VR Brown	not out	36
RJ Hadlee	c †Phillips b McDermott	54
IDS Smith†	not out	2

Did not bat: MC Snedden, EJ Chatfield

Extras (b2, lb11, nb32)	**45**
Total (7 wickets dec; 161 overs)	**553**

Fall of wickets 1/36 2/85 3/309 4/362 5/427 6/471 7/549

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
GF Lawson	36.5	8	96	1
CJ McDermott	31	3	119	1
DR Gilbert	39	9	102	2
GRJ Matthews	31	5	110	3
RG Holland	22	3	106	0
AR Border	0.1	0	0	0
KC Wessels	1	0	7	0

Kapil Dev – 23.4-7-56-7

India v Pakistan, Madras 15-20 January 1980

-Daniel Harris-

Cricket is infatuated with numbers. There are those which mean things on their own – 501, 154, 800 and 99.94, say; those which summarise every game, also known as the result; and those which belong to every player, which every player can recite by heart. And rightly so: which of us layclowns wouldn't fancy ourselves a set? But there's more to it than that, more than simply the story of a career – numbers are beautiful and humans appreciate that, hardwired to analyse and appreciate patterns from the fight or flight days.

Nowadays, we enjoy these things differently: numbers are placid, certain and dispassionate, increasingly relieving in an increasingly subjective world, but very little to do with cricket. The game brings us joy, comfort, intensity and inspiration, feelings which can barely be described let alone quantified, but which represent the apex of existence; roughly we're talking about love.

And Kapil Dev represents all of this, a person and personality in whom coalesced the essence of everything. Which is to say that his 434 Test wickets and 5234 Test runs are worthy of note – you'd probably take them – but still details. Still nice details, yes, but details nonetheless.

Growing up in the sporting city of Chandigarh, Kapil quickly discovered himself to be that rarity, an athlete and a player, his lean, whippy build complemented by bionic eyes and Don Juan hands. Because things came so easily to him, he could simply get on with enjoying them, and though he later became famous for his work ethic – "you relax for a minute and sport will pin you to the floor in half that time", he reckoned – that defining quality never left him.

At the age of 15, he was sent to a camp in Mumbai for emerging talents and, playing at the Brabourne Stadium, was challenged when he sought seconds of lunch. "I'm a fast bowler", he explained; "No, we don't produce fast bowlers in India", shot back the reply.

Kapil said nothing, simply vowing to prove ‘we’ wrong; no-one was telling him that he couldn’t. So in 1975, aged 16, he made his first-class debut for Haryana, returning figures of 6-39, and by 1978, aged 19, he was in the Test squad for India’s tour of Pakistan – the first series between the sides in almost 18 years. Such was the fear of losing that the two previous encounters had been drawn 0-0, and since then had been fought two wars, in 1965 and 1971. Such is the savage, tragic beauty of cricket: its contests are conflicts and its rivalries real.

The plan was for Kapil to gain experience in different conditions and at a different level, in order to be of use for the imminent visit of West Indies. But such were his performances in the warm-up games that the management had no choice other than to include him immediately.

On the first morning at Faisalabad, the hosts won the toss and batted; Bishan Bedi tossed Kapil the ball and waited. But not for long. In his first over, a beauty forced Majid Khan into an edge that was missed by the ’keeper and in his second, a bouncer was directed towards Sadiq Mohammad’s phizog; ‘very likely the fastest delivery from an Indian bowler since independence’ wrote Ramchandra Guha. Quickly, Sadiq exchanged cap for helmet and just as well, for he was soon hit on it, while in the slip cordon, excitement was palpable: this was not Indian cricket, rather cricket.

It mattered little that Kapil’s numbers that week were not great, but they soon improved anyway. In the second Test at Lahore, he scored 43, and in the third at Karachi came India’s fastest ever Test half-century, off 33 deliveries; it turned out that he was even more destructive with bat than with ball.

India lost that series 2-0, but a month later West Indies arrived. Though their best players were banned for playing in Kerry Packer’s World Series, they still had Larry Gomes, Alvin Kallicharran and Sylvester Clarke, as well some kid called Malcolm Marshall.

Thanks to pitches and captaincy that were undeniably superlative but only in the deadest, flattest sense, five of six Tests were drawn, the odd one out coming at Chepauk, India’s quickest wicket. There, Kapil sent down a crowd-pleasing variety pack of teeth-ticklers, nose-rattlers and chin-strimmers, only to be accosted by a dressing-room dressing down. “So you enjoy bowling bouncers, do you”, chided Chetan Chauhan. “Now who is going to face them when they start bowling short?”

Baffled by such reaction from someone whose bravery he admired, he kept quiet – though that was the way in those days anyway. The stuffy

vestiges of colonialism (does anything else even have vestiges?) lingered long, so senior players such as Dhiraj Parsana and Srinivasaraghavan Venkataraghavan were addressed as “Sir”, with younger players expected to handle kitbags, procure drinks and deliver cigarettes. As late as 1984, a year after Kapil led India to the World Cup, Sunil Gavaskar praised him as “courteous to the senior cricketers”.

Gavaskar, though captain at the time, was less vocal during Chauhan’s monologue, eventually asking for calm – for all the difference it made. Kapil was nothing but, and anyway, this was India’s bounciest ever track; as if he wasn’t wading right in. He took four wickets in the first innings, three in the second, and then with his team chasing 125 to win but tottering at 84-6, he came out to bat despite a high fever and thrashed 26 of the 41 runs required. Then, in the next Test came a maiden century, his 126 not out coming off just 124 balls.

The win over West Indies – or, more properly, the emergence of the ‘Haryana Hurricane’ – was a key moment in Indian culture. Before Kapil (BK), fielders would roll the ball back to the bowler to rid it of its pesky shine; after Dev (AD), it became fashionable to charge in hard, and even those who couldn’t still wanted to attack. No longer were India the ‘dull dogs’ of international cricket; they had an icon and a symbol, a prophet who preached freedom, feel and zest. In a country growing in self-confidence, it was not a big stretch to adopt and transpose those values, both personally and collectively.

And if that was just the bowling, the batting and fielding came about in the same way, a bloke having fun doing precisely what he was meant to do. Given how few of us experience anything remotely comparable, this could easily have been overbearing and intolerable, but with Kapil it never was. His comfort in his own skin came without pretension, and as such there was pleasure in his pleasure.

Kapil also had the good fortune to emerge during cricket’s alpha-male era. It was a time of instinctive, aggressive characters, bristling braggarts who devoured life and played with everything that they had. Quickly, Kapil became one of them, moustache and all, and not only that: he also joined Ian Botham, Richard Hadlee and Imran Khan in the allrounder clique, superego to their super egos. Cricket had never been more exciting.

Once the West Indies series was done, India travelled to England – but with Venkatar-aghavan replacing Gavaskar as captain. The official

explanation was experience in the conditions; the common belief was punishment for considering the World Series. Either way, Kapil was not impressed with the touring conditions. ‘If a young, hungry cricketer were to walk up to the gentleman in charge of the catering, and ask him for a second of third helping of any kind of food’, he wrote, ‘he knows he will never be refused in India. They see it differently in England. Everything is measured there in money terms. Some of the lads were refused a second helping of ice cream and dessert.’

In turmoil, India lost 1-0, and when Australia visited a few months later, also without their best players, Gavaskar was back as captain. This, reckoned Kapil, was part of India’s ‘obsession with personalities’, though by this stage he was one too – one who fancied Gavaskar’s mantle for himself. His 28 wickets helped deliver a 2-0 series win, and his yorker helped deliver Bruce Yardley a crushed toe; India had a new hero.

It was during that series that the world opened up for Kapil; he was now a small-town boy who went to big-town parties. As a consequence, he became a more confident, outgoing character, the development feeding straight back into his cricket, all the more so as dressing-room culture changed and younger players began contributing to team discussions. But until this point, Kapil had been playing without pressure; not any more. In November 1979, Pakistan arrived for their first visit since 1960-61 and because they had won so easily the previous year, most expected them to do so again.

The first Test in Bangalore ended in a high-scoring draw. Conditions offered no help to pace bowlers, and it was difficult for spinners to deliver sufficient wickets against batsmen expert in handling them. Another draw then followed in Delhi, where Kapil improved from three to nine wickets, but made only 36 runs as opposed to 38. Of greater relative significance, though, was the contribution of Imran Khan. In Bangalore, he’d opened and closed the bowling, sending down 28.4 of 164.4 overs; this time, he managed only one out of 131 in the second innings. His problem was a back injury, officially sustained in the line of duty, but Kapil, grizzled veteran of the circuit, was less certain. ‘There was no after-cricket life to speak of in Pakistan’, he wrote, ‘but out here in India people were falling over themselves in inviting the Pakistanis to parties. It must have been great for the Pakistani boys. In their country, visitors hardly get invited to parties and even in the few that are held, you will be lucky if you can meet a lady and strike conversation with her.’ So the tourists availed themselves of everything

that was going.

Mumbai was the venue for the third Test, and prior to it, Gavaskar felt compelled to criticise Kapil to the press. “In the last two innings he made less than 25 runs”, he said.

“But, according to me, Kapil can’t make runs because he doesn’t have the commitment to make even 50 runs essential for an impressive score. So…you know! Which is why he’s not able to score even 50 and I don’t think he will ever score above 50.”

Kapil was shocked. The two had first met as opponents in a Wills Trophy match, and during it Gavaskar told him that bowling from closer to the stumps would help the outswingers that were his staple. This advice, along with other general encouragement, was greatly appreciated, so despite ‘weaknesses of leading his life as a loner in the midst of the excitement of cricket’, Kapil held his captain in the highest regard.

Not anymore. It “hurt me badly”, Kapil said of behaviour he considered unfair as well as unnecessary; in his mind, he was a bowler and fielder who’d fallen into batting. Eschewing a response on grounds of dignity – after all, his hero was the gentlemanly and discreet GR Viswanath – he made a note never to act similarly should the captaincy ever become his.

But in the meantime, he top-scored on a raging bunsen, vindicating his attacking method in the process. His 69 from 79 balls contained 11 fours and was the highest score of the match; it helped his team to a first-innings total of 334 that was also the highest score of the match.

Walloped by 131 runs and with a day to spare, naturally Pakistan turned their ire on the groundstaff, whom they accused of doctoring the pitch once the match had started. But

the reality was that they were simply unfortunate to lose the toss; just three weeks earlier, Australia had been beaten similarly quickly after doing the same.

Nor was that all: there was also umpire-related aggravation. With Pakistan chasing 322 to win, Javed Miandad was going well until he was given out for 64, the victim of an avant-garde lbw decision which went under appreciated in the visiting changing room.

Gavaskar, meanwhile, claimed credit for needling a reaction out of Kapil, who’d spotted him cheering when he brought up his fifty. So, after receiving

further congratulation in the pavilion, he decided to speak up.

“At the first instance, when I heard that you made deriding remarks against me to the press, I got very annoyed. I was really miffed. But when I reflected on your remarks, I felt perhaps you said all this to provoke me and score well.”

Whispering, Gavaskar put his finger to his lips: “Keep your decibel level low. If some media guy overhears us, it will ruin the impression of our seeming enmity.”

The fourth Test at Kanpur was played with English balls and on a green-top, yet India, set in their ways, still opted to bat first. They were duly dismissed for 162, at which point a positive result seemed inevitable. But Kapil responded with 6-63, breaking Graham McKenzie’s record of 71 Test wickets in a calendar year and restricting the deficit to 87. Then, without the recuperating Imran, Pakistan could not bowl India out a second time in an increasingly ill-tempered contest; Sikander Bakht kicked down the stumps following the rejection of an appeal, and Asif Iqbal talked of coming home. ‘It is the Pakistanis who think of cricket as some kind of a *Jehad*’, Kapil later noted.

A two-week break meant that Imran was back for the Madras Test and what Kapil considered both the most sporting pitch in the country. It was also, he wrote, a personal ‘soft corner’, which meant the ball coming onto the bat and ‘a platform for a sustained spell of fast-medium seam bowling’.

Though a win would secure the series India picked a side to avoid defeat, going with just four specialist bowlers despite the difficulty of wheedling wickets. And they might well have regretted it when Asif Iqbal won the toss and elected to bat on an absolute belter, even by the standard – all the more so when Kapil began wildly. But thanks to Syed Kirmani’s brilliant catch, he still had Mudasssar Nazar caught behind leg-glancing, and after changing ends to find an off-stump, good-length line, Sadiq Mohammad went in the same way.

This brought to the wicket the formidable but formless Zaheer Abbas, Kapil treating him to a swift but thorough working over, an eight-ball duck ending with an inswinger learnt in England, which gave Kirmani another catch. Majid Khan and Javed then followed, meaning that three of Pakistan’s

top five scored 45 or more, but none could do better than 56 – and even Majid contrived to run himself out.

Or put another way they made an absolute bollocks of it, 257-4 at the end of day one and 272 all out not long into day two. Kharson Ghavri did well to finish with 3-73, but it was Kapil whose 4-90 decimated the top order.

Sitting in the changing room, Gavaskar took the decision to bat Pakistan out of the match, so Chauhan spent 64 minutes compiling five with the aid of just two scoring shots, and Dilip Vengsarkar took 56 balls over his 17, before finally relenting to be caught on the drive. Gavaskar, meanwhile, ploughed on; at the close of day two, he had 92 of India's 161-4.

The following morning Yashpal Sharma went for 46, so Kirmani was sent in above Kapil, effectively to keep the scoring-rate down. But when he was bowled by Imran shortly afterwards, India were tottering; their 279-6 meant that Pakistan were still in the game.

Kapil, though, was positively incapable of negativity. In 131 Tests, he was dropped only once, against England in 1984, when, with India batting to save the match, he hit his first ball for six, then holed out to long-off. Then, on his return to the team a game later, he stretched for a wide one first up, smashed it through mid-off's hands, and waved his bat at the dressing room. He could do no other.

So as tired bowlers trudged in, he threw hands. Anything pitched up was driven over the top on the off side, and anything short was clouted through or, in Imran's case, over the leg side. Everything came off the middle of the bat that came at the end of the most exaggerated swing imaginable, and quick-smart, Pakistan were gone.

Nonetheless, between every over Gavaskar reminded Kapil that the aim was a lead far bigger than the one they already had, until, on 166, he drove Imran into the off side and called for a single; misjudging the path of the ball, Kapil turned him down. And the error was compounded when the next delivery was edged to gully, ending an innings of some 593 minutes duration, a new Indian record. But this simply brought to the crease Roger Michael Humphrey Binny and he went after it too, so by the end of day three, India's lead was 103.

Gavaskar, though, could only discuss his dismissal, insisting that he was out solely because of Kapil's error. Somehow, Kapil refrained from suggesting an alternative interpretation of events, drawing attention to the trench dug by Imran outside off-stump; 'Stoop to conquer was then my

motto’, he elegantly explained.

When play resumed following the rest day, India resumed the assault, it being Binny’s turn to hook Imran for six. But he responded to trap Kapil inside-edge before wicket, for a dazzling 84 off 98 balls.

India’s first innings closed on 430, their lead 158. But conditions were still heavily in the batsmen’s favour, and with a stellar line-up embarrassed by their first innings carelessness, the chances of knocking them over quickly enough to knock off the runs seemed remote. If Pakistan could bat for just over a day, they could rustle up a lead of around 200, which would be sufficient to keep them in the series.

There are certain sportsmen able not only to influence but to dominate matches with force of personality as well as ability, turning narrative into character study. It does not necessarily mean they are the best – few would rate Stuart Broad above James Anderson, for example – but they are surely the most interesting, able to convert pressure into buzz into bursts of unplayable venom.

When the Pakistan openers came out for the second time, Kapil took the Gate end from the start; the slightly higher bounce for batsmen facing at the Pavilion end suited his style.So, in he flowed, back arched and eyes fixed, quickly removing both openers, who, spooked by the deficit, tried to bludgeon their way out of it and were caught.

Next to go was Zaheer Abbas, glancing Kapil into the leg-side trap he had prepared specially, before Ghavri tempted Majid Khan with bouncers; two were dispatched, the third caught at long-leg. Meanwhile, at the other end, Kapil was addressing the body from around the wicket, having Asif Iqbal caught behind to leave Pakistan reeling on 58-5, before going off. In his absence, they were able to regroup, Wasim Raja bashing 57 in a partnership with Javed worth 89 before the slow left arm of Dilip Doshi did for both; at close of play, the score was 178-7, the lead just 20.

But there was still work to do: Imran Khan resumed in the morning 11 not out and with him was Wasim Bari, scorer of five Test fifties. Both were capable of batting time, and if they could get to lunch, India would have a problem. In Kapil’s first spell, Wasim Bari played back to a half volley and went lbw, after which Imran and Iqbal Qasim batted with discipline and restraint as Ghavri, Binny and Doshi toiled. With time running out, Gavaskar needed a hero; he turned to his hero.

In just 10 balls, it was done. Faced by his all-round rival, Imran couldn't help but revenge-hook, caught at long-leg to cover himself in vainglory. Then Sikander Bakht got nowhere near a fast yorker that was wasted on him, giving Kapil 3-19 for the morning and 7-56 overall; Pakistan were all out for 233. But more than that, far more than that, he had devastated a rival and settled a series; he had branded memories, established heritage and redefined the possible. People felt things.

But even in that context, this was something special. Unlike the vast majority of elite quicks, Kapil had no back-up and no one getting him wickets from the other end, so batsmen knew that if they saw him away, scoring opportunities would follow; they could not. And though bowlers hit purple patches relatively frequently, rarely does that happen in consecutive sessions on consecutive days. Kapil ended the match with figures of 11-146 to go with an innings of 86; this was not only the first time both facets of his game worked at the same time, but remains one of the finest all-round performances in the history of cricket.

So Gavaskar and Chauhan knocked off the 78 runs required for victory and that was that: India were two up with one to play, and those lucky enough to be in attendance celebrated with firecrackers.

"India have outplayed us in every department", admitted Asif Iqbal. "We have batted badly and I am as much to blame as anyone else." Though perhaps not as much as Imran. 'People said all sorts of things about how he ruined his health in India', Kapil wrote. 'This meant he had let his side down badly. Hence no one could say we did not beat Pakistan fair and square. If their full side was not available for strange reasons, it was certainly not our fault.'

Gavaskar, meanwhile, tried building bridges. "Although it is true that we batted with more application than the Pakistanis", he said, "the difference between the two sides is represented by the all-round ability of Kapil Dev". It was not considered redemptive, all the more so when, wittingly or otherwise, he made it all about him, announcing his resignation as captain. Already sitting out India's forthcoming tour of the Caribbean on account of dicky knees and general exhaustion, he thought it best that his successor move in for the final Test of the series; 'Unconvincing for a player of his calibre', wrote Kapil.

The final Test at Kolkata was drawn, though during it Kapil became the youngest man to reach the double of 1000 Test runs and 100 Test wickets.

Later that year, he won the prestigious Arjun Award, and in 1981 he cemented his frankly absurd status by ignoring a thigh injury to return 5-28 at the MCG.

Eventually, in 1983, he was appointed captain, his calmness and positivity helping India to a surprise World Cup win. Well, that and an innings 30 years ahead of its time which rescued India from 17-5 against Zimbabwe, and a crucial catch to dismiss Viv Richards in the final.

Eventually, after a long, arduous home stretch, in 1994, Kapil became Test cricket's leading wicket-taker. Of all the men to reach the 400 mark, there is only one who also scored 4000 runs, and of his 434 dismissals, a remarkable 217 of them came in India; despite carrying a sub-continental attack for 15 years, he missed not a single match through injury, tribute to a healthy mind as well as a freakish body.

But impressive though that all is, to define Kapil by digits is to miss the point. Kapil was excitement, emotion and sensation, the spiritual father of Virender Sehwag, Zaheer Khan, Virat Kohli and the rest. No one did more to shape the game in the world's most fanatical and most influential territory and no one else could have imbued an entire population with energy, fantasy, dignity and hope. His 7-56 at Madras describes precisely how and why.

Pakistan

Mudassar Nazar	c †Kirmani b Kapil Dev	6
Sadiq Mohammad	c †Kirmani b Kapil Dev	46
Majid Khan	run out	56
Zaheer Abbas	c †Kirmani b Kapil Dev	0
Javed Miandad	c Vengsarkar b Kapil Dev	45
Asif Iqbal*	c †Kirmani b Ghavri	34
Wasim Raja	c Kapil Dev b Doshi	15
Imran Khan	run out	34
Wasim Bari†	c Binny b Ghavri	13
Iqbal Qasim	not out	3
Sikander Bakht	c Vengsarkar b Ghavri	1
Extras (lb3, nb16)		**19**
Total (all out; 73.4 overs)		**272**

Fall of wickets 1/33 2/79 3/80 4/151 5/187 6/215 7/225 8/266 9/268 10/272

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
N Kapil Dev	19	5	90	4
KD Ghavri	18.4	3	73	3
RMH Binny	10	1	42	0
DR Doshi	26	6	48	1

Mudassar Nazar	c Vengsarkar b Kapil Dev	8
Sadiq Mohammad	c Binny b Kapil Dev	0
Majid Khan	c Patil b Ghavri	11
Zaheer Abbas	c Chauhan b Kapil Dev	15
Javed Miandad	c †Kirmani b Doshi	52
Asif Iqbal*	c †Kirmani b Kapil Dev	5
Wasim Raja	c Viswanath b Doshi	57
Imran Khan	c Doshi b Kapil Dev	29
Wasim Bari†	lbw b Kapil Dev	15
Iqbal Qasim	not out	19
Sikander Bakht	b Kapil Dev	2
Extras (lb3, nb17)		**20**
Total (all out; 66.4 overs)		**233**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/17 3/33 4/36 5/58 6/147 7/171 8/197 9/229 10/233

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
N Kapil Dev	23.4	7	56	7
KD Ghavri	14	0	82	1
RMH Binny	13	2	33	0
DR Doshi	16	3	42	2

India

SM Gavaskar*	c Iqbal Qasim b Imran Khan	166
CPS Chauhan	c Iqbal Qasim b M Nazar	5
DB Vengsarkar	c Ja Miandad b Imran Khan	17
GR Viswanath	c M Nazar b Iqbal Qasim	16
SM Patil	c J Miandad b Sikander Bakht	15
Yashpal Sharma	b Iqbal Qasim	46
SMH Kirmani†	b Imran Khan	2
N Kapil Dev	lbw b Imran Khan	84
RMH Binny	not out	42
KD Ghavri	b Iqbal Qasim	1
DR Doshi	c J Miandad b Imran Khan	9
Extras (b1, lb2, nb24)		**27**
Total (all out; 134.2 overs)		**430**

Fall of wickets 1/30 2/88 3/135 4/160 5/265 6/279 7/339 8/412 9/413 10/430

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Imran Khan	38.2	6	114	5
Sikander Bakht	32	5	105	1
Mudassar Nazar	16	3	54	1
Iqbal Qasim	37	13	81	3
Wasim Raja	2	0	19	0
Majid Khan	9	1	30	0

SM Gavaskar*	not out	29
CPS Chauhan	not out	46

Did not bat: DB Vengsarkar, GR Viswanath, SM Patil, Yashpal Sharma, SMH Kirmani†, N Kapil Dev, RMH Binny, KD Ghavri, DR Doshi

Extras (nb3)	**3**
Total (0 wickets; 18 overs)	**78**

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Imran Khan	5	1	20	0
Sikander Bakht	6	0	37	0
Mudassar Nazar	2	0	2	0
Iqbal Qasim	4	1	12	0
Sadiq Mohammad	1	0	4	0

Phil Tufnell – 46.1-25-47-7

New Zealand v England, Christchurch 18-22 January 1992

-Dan Waddell-

You can tell much about a sportsman from the way he reacts to a champagne soaking in the aftermath of a victory. Quite naturally, most flinch, or hunch their shoulders to seek to minimise the drenching as their jubilant team-mates pour booze over their heads. Not Phil Tufnell.

As the England players celebrated their improbable Test victory over New Zealand at Christchurch in January 1992, a triumph for which he was almost solely responsible, someone leans over and starts to pour a can of bitter – this was the 1990s and they were sponsored by a brewery – over his head. Tufnell tilts his head back helpfully and lets the beer cascade over his face. You get the impression he'd take a shower in ale every morning if he could.

Later he posed for photos with a champagne bottle on his head. Then he gave a press conference with a cigarette dangling from his lips. With this match-winning performance, Tufnell had arrived, both as a Test match bowler and larrikin. Nostalgia affords us a fond smile: we think primarily of 'Tuffers', 'The Cat', Jack the Lad and TV personality. We forget how expertly he bowled in that Test in Christchurch to tease an unlikely, memorable victory from the yawning jaws of a dull draw.

It's his playing career in microcosm. We remember the character but forget the cricketer. The wisecracking, bad-fielding rogue with the street urchin grin of popular memory was, on his day, a high-class spinner with cricket brain as sharp as any.

The late 1980s and early '90s were a monochrome time for English cricket. Micky Stewart and Graham Gooch, both cricket men to their spikes, sought to weld discipline and an emphasis on fitness into a team that, rightly or wrongly, was widely viewed as a dissolute mess.

Initially the results were positive, with Gooch leading from the front.

There was a momentous Test win against the West Indies in Jamaica in February 1990, followed by hard-won series victories against New Zealand and India at home in 1990, and a thrilling 2-2 draw against the Windies in 1991. But there was a sound 3-0 defeat in the 1990-91 Ashes, a bi-annual thrashing England fans would soon become familiar with.

There was the also creeping sense that more individual, less hard-working cricketers, at least in the sense of being willing to do shuttle runs and complete bleep tests, were unwelcome. This would reach its apotheosis later in 1992 when David Gower was omitted from the squad to tour India that winter, causing uproar among the romantically minded, even if the cricketing reasons for Gower's inclusion were not as strong as the aesthetic ones.

But there had been prior evidence of the Roundhead mind when Tufnell was drafted in the 1990-91 Ashes. He bowled well, but his fielding and batting were revealed to be less than ordinary. Gooch believed in laps and graft; Tuffer's 'fags and gags' approach was always going to curdle. The only bleeps he was comfortable with were those which punctuated his post-match interviews.

So for the summer series that followed against the West Indies, when the selectors were at last bold enough to pick a spinner, they first went with the more prosaic charms of Richard Illingworth. It seemed an attacking spinner like Tufnell was a luxury England could ill afford.

But 2-1 down, with a Test to play at a parched Oval, like a shower-ring salesman in Vegas the selectors cast off their conservatism and went 'all in': they brought back Ian Botham in favour of Derek Pringle; dropped Graeme Hick, who had been all but destroyed by Curtly Ambrose, and bravely replaced him with the wayward but occasionally lethal pace of Syd Lawrence; and eschewed Richard Illingworth's much-vaunted control for Tufnell's flight and spin.

The improvement was instant: Tufnell took 6-25 as the West Indies collapsed from 158-3 to 176 all out and were made to follow on. England eventually tied the series, ending a run of seven series defeats to the Windies in a row.

Tufnell was now England's first-choice spinner. But he knew this was akin to being a sommelier in a Spud U Like. One bad performance, or a green seamer, and his place was in doubt. That winter saw a three-match series against New Zealand, to be followed by the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. In the Test series, at least, the hope was that England might build on

a promising series of results and put themselves in good order for the coming summer.

New Zealand were a capable side, at home especially. England had only managed to draw their three-match series there in 1988. Richard Hadlee had retired but in Chris Cairns, Danny Morrison and Chris Pringle the home side had a potent seam attack, while John Wright, Andrew Jones and the peerless Martin Crowe meant there were runs. Where England had the clear advantage was spin: Tufnell was far better than either Shane Thomson (who bowled spin and medium pace, neither with distinction) or Dipak Patel, an honest and faithful servant for Worcestershire for many years, and capable of useful runs, but unlikely to trouble the likes of Gooch, Allan Lamb or Robin Smith who had duffed him up on the county circuit for a number of seasons.

Spin would prove important because the first-Test pitch at Lancaster Park was flatter than a factory floor. Gooch won the toss, batted and England amassed 580 in a few overs shy of two days, thanks to a century from Alec Stewart and half-centuries from Smith, Lamb, Chris Lewis and Dermot Reeve, playing the first of his three Tests.

Depending on which way you view it, Reeve either became another victim of the belt and braces regime or his own personality. As *Wisden Almanack* editor Lawrence Booth once put it: ‘His international career would have been longer if his ability to irk opponents hadn’t extended to his team-mates.’

In response, New Zealand scored 312. Tufnell took four of the top five for 100 runs, but 99 from Patel and 61 from the promising Cairns saw off genuine danger at 139-6 and took the best part of another two days from the game. Following on, the home side lost Blair Hartland late in the fourth day but at 81-1 slept reasonably soundly knowing the pitch had not deteriorated. Ward off Tufnell and the match would be drawn.

Nothing that happened the next morning would spread any nerves in the Kiwi dressing room. Lewis removes nightwatchman and hapless rabbit Danny Morrison for the 13th of his 24 Test ducks with the second ball of the day, but soon Wright and Jones are making serene progress on a sun-drenched day, against a persevering but uninspired attack, Tufnell aside. Early in his spell he tosses one up to Wright, too inviting for the usually dour and cautious left hander to refuse a cover drive, only for it to spin out of the rough and past and over leg stump. Tufnell is not a man to let such hideous luck

pass by unnoticed and turns, head thrown back into his hands, gazing accusatively at the azure Christchurch sky. A few overs later Tufnell again tempts Wright forward only for a bat-pad to evade Smith at silly-point. If England are to win, it's clear there is only one man capable of winning it for them.

Yet Wright and Jones survive until lunch (the last over before the break is bowled by Robin Smith, which suggests how flat Gooch considered the pitch to be). Tufnell changes ends after lunch but with no change to his luck and soon the new ball is due, which provides the New Zealand pair with no problems whatsoever.

The game is meandering to a draw. However, one of the many beauties of Test cricket is how a match, which has dozed for four days, as pundits and fans bemoan flat and dead pitches and make hurried pronouncements on the death of Test cricket, can burst into glorious, dramatic life. Some Test matches smoulder and slow burn for longer than a biblical epic.

The unseasoned cricket watcher, seeing Derek Pringle bowl tame long hop after tame long hop to Andrew Jones, might have left Lancaster Park's cavernously empty, echoing stands and headed for the local winery. But then one of those horrific Pringle half trackers tempts

Jones into a pull, which he gloves to Russell on the edge of tea. But even then the New Zealanders are 201-3 at the last break, 67 runs from making England bat again.

According to Tufnell, the England side sensed there was little chance of victory, even then. "The pitch was flat", he recalls now. "*Really* flat. There was not even any turn. Nothing in it for the seamers. We thought we'd be shaking hands at 5.30."

Even more so now that Crowe was at the wicket. A critic once said of Bill Murray's role in *Ghostbusters*: 'It appears that he's acting in a different movie. And it's a great one.' The same might be said of most innings Crowe played: he seemed to be batting on a different pitch, with a different ball, often against different bowlers, obeying different laws of time, to everyone else involved. Immediately Pringle is swatted to the boundary with the sort of withering contempt only Viv Richards might muster, but brandishing a rapier rather than a broadsword. "He was a lovely player, God rest his soul", says Tufnell.

"They had some good players but he was their only truly world-class bat. The

one you wanted to get early because he could hurt you. He could play spin or fast bowling, off front or back foot, great use of the feet, and he had so much time."

Gooch eventually tires of his seamers and reintroduces Tufnell. Runs have come steadily but Tufnell has not bowled a loose ball. "I thought I was bowling really well, without much luck or any real help from the pitch", he says. In 34 overs he has conceded 33 runs. Wright is on 99 and a run away from his 12th Test hundred, one to place alongside his finest, having ushered his side to the verge of a hard-fought draw. But the chances of a long hop or a full toss, or a loose ball to ease into the covers or nudge behind square are slim with the Middlesex spinner in such parsimonious mood.

Some batsmen are belligerent and flashy enough to premeditate their shot. Others are best playing as they see it. Wright, a canny cricketer chiselled from Darfield granite, belonged in the latter category. Yet before Tufnell has even delivered the ball, Wright is on his way down the wicket to smash it for four. Tufnell sees him coming, throws the ball wider and Wright is stumped, and so becomes one of only three Test batsmen to be out twice in Tests on 99. Perhaps the memory of being out one short of a hundred, five years earlier, haunted him still and forced his ill-advised charge?

"Jack Russell and I both heard him say 'Oh no!' as he missed it. It was very unlike him to come down the wicket like that."

It was a gift for England. Two games of cricket then develop. In one Crowe is batting on a shirt front, against a wilting attack; in the other, Tufnell is tormenting and tempting everyone else by doing what he always did best: tossing the ball high, getting some drift, trying to turn it.

"I think they had mentally relaxed in the dressing room because they thought it was going to be a draw. Wright was there and Crowe too, and they thought there was nothing to worry about. Then Wright got out and we could tell there was a little bit of panic. They started playing down the wrong line, leaving balls they shouldn't, and looking at the scoreboard and wondering whether they should go for the runs to make us bat again."

First to go is Mark Greatbatch, a few months away from successfully inventing pinch hitting at the 1992 World Cup, but here a victim of a hapless lunge which he bat-pads to Robin Smith at silly-point for a duck. Shane

Thomson comes in and is set up by a beautifully flighted, turning delivery, then pads up to an arm ball that dips, skids on and is palpably lbw. Tufnell's backside-shaking dance in appeal is more Northern Soul than South Island but Steve Dunn raises his finger and England sense victory.

There is a short intermission while Crowe drives and sweeps Tufnell, and batting looks simple once more. As Tufnell suggests, the Kiwis are clearly mindful that if they make England bat again, precious time will be taken out of the game. But more importantly, Tufnell is aware of this. So he floats one up to Dipak Patel who can't resist trying to launch him into space but only succeeds in skying it to Pringle at mid-off. Seven down, 32 needed to make England bat again.

"We thought, 'Hang on, maybe we won't be shaking hands at 5.30. They might mess this up.' But more importantly they started thinking 'We might mess this up.' And that played havoc with their minds. I just kept doing what I had been doing."

Cairns is the next to go, perhaps one man who should have gone down blazing, but instead pokes Tufnell meekly to Smith after a hesitant, 16-ball duck. At eight down New Zealand appear gone, but Morrison's promotion earlier means that Ian Smith is in next, the stalwart Kiwi 'keeper who less than a year ago had scored 173 not out batting nine against India. Except here he gloves a looping Chris Lewis long hop behind for one.

Now with only Chris Pringle for company, Crowe decides to farm the strike, but more pertinently hog Tufnell and protect his partner by leaving him the seamers. Crowe glides and caresses New Zealand to within four runs of making England bat again.

Three overs remain. Tufnell is bowling. One boundary and with two overs lost for the break in innings, the game is saved with one swing of the bat. Meanwhile, blocking out means that Crowe and Pringle have to survive 12 balls of Tufnell and six balls from Chris Lewis.

In this situation it would take a bold spinner to toss one up to one of the finest batsmen the game has seen, who appears to have been batting on an astral plane since coming to the crease, and risk the boundary that would cement a draw. Far better, surely, to bowl a bit quicker, see if one bites and turns and takes an edge, or let him work a single and see if he takes it, get the other guy on strike, or even tie Crowe down and let Lewis have six balls at

number 11?

But a good cricket brain also senses an opportunity that comes with risk. Both men do. It's a perfect moment in time. Crowe knows that if he miscues his lofted drive the game is lost, but if he connects the game is saved. Tufnell knows that if he overpitches, or does not see Crowe come down the wicket, he will be hit straight, or that any width will be punished by a cut, cover drive or sweep.

Tufnell, modest as ever, plays that down now. "I was just trying to get them out. I'm not sure if I was aware of the overs and runs and everything. Goochy might have been." It's important to note that 'I was just trying to get them out' wasn't always the mindset of the English spinner, then or since.

Tufnell kicks his back leg, skips and jumps and ambles in, shoulders hunched in his curiously unathletic way. He gives the ball plenty of air. Ideal for Crowe, who kicks off his back leg to sashay down the wicket, too good to make Wright's mistake of leaving his crease too early. But Tufnell has been getting drift into the right hander all day, and this one loops and then dives towards the leg side. Crowe, perhaps the most impeccable, measured batsman who has ever lived, has come down the wicket and slightly across his stumps, to open up mid-on and mid-wicket as a place to score, but also to be able to cover any spin and be able to hit straight. He believes it's full enough to be hit straight over mid-wicket. He flourishes his bat, certain the ball is there for the shot. But as sharply as it drifted in, it hits the pitch and grips. Crowe swings and realises the ball isn't there after all. Like the surest magician, Tufnell has deceived him. The batsman's right hip follows through as his bat skewers in his hand. As his next trick Tufnell has made the world's most stylish batsman seem ungainly. The ball loops high to mid-off as Tufnell shouts "Catch!". Pringle takes it. England win. Tufnell has taken 7-47 in 46.1 overs.

"It was an amazing session of cricket after what had been four and half pretty dull days. The match sprang to life and they became very anxious. One thing I do remember is that this was a fantastic game of cricket, with an amazing finish full of tension, yet there were only about two people in the whole stadium! But you can't blame them for not coming because the previous four days had hardly been thrilling."

Phil Tufnell bowled out New Zealand and won a famous victory for his

country. But to crown it all, he also managed to outwit and defeat one of the finest batsmen many of us have seen. No-one should begrudge him the fame and comforts his success beyond cricket have afforded him, but it’s worth remembering that cricket’s cheeky chappie was an excellent bowler who, perhaps, should have enjoyed more sun-kissed, beer-soaked days of triumph like this.

England

GA Gooch*	c †Smith b Morrison	2
AJ Stewart	c Crowe b Morrison	148
GA Hick	lbw b Cairns	35
RA Smith	c Greatbatch b Pringle	96
AJ Lamb	b Patel	93
RC Russell†	run out	36
DA Reeve	c Jones b Pringle	59
CC Lewis	b Pringle	70
DR Pringle	c Greatbatch b Patel	10
PAJ DeFreitas	not out	7

Did not bat: PCR Tufnell

Extras (b5, lb10, w1, n8)	**24**
Total (9 wickets dec; 163 overs)	**580**

Fall of wickets 1/6 2/95 3/274 4/310 5/390 6/466 7/544 8/571 9/580

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Morrison	33	5	133	2
CL Cairns	30	3	118	1
C Pringle	36	4	127	3
SA Thomson	15	3	47	0
DN Patel	46	5	132	2
AH Jones	3	0	8	0

New Zealand

(followed on)

BR Hartland	c Smith b Tufnell	22
JG Wright	c Lamb b Tufnell	28
AH Jones	lbw b Lewis	16
MJ Greatbatch	c Stewart b Tufnell	11
SA Thomson	b Tufnell	5
DN Patel	run out	99
MD Crowe*	c Stewart b Pringle	20
CL Cairns	c Hick b Reeve	61
IDS Smith†	lbw b DeFreitas	20
DK Morrison	run out	8
C Pringle	c Hick b DeFreitas	6
Extras (b1, lb7, nb8)		**16**
Total (all out; 127.4 overs)		**312**

Fall of wickets 1/51 2/52 3/73 4/87 5/91 6/139 7/256 8/279 9/306 10/312

Bowling	O	M	R	W
PAJ DeFreitas	32.4	16	54	2
CC Lewis	30	9	69	1
DR Pringle	15	2	54	1
PCR Tufnell	39	10	100	4
GA Hick	3	0	11	0
DA Reeve	8	4	16	1

BR Hartland	c Smith b Tufnell	45
JG Wright	st †Russell b Tufnell	99
DK Morrison	c †Russell b Lewis	0
AH Jones	c †Russell b Pringle	39
MD Crowe*	c Pringle b Tufnell	48
MJ Greatbatch	c Smith b Tufnell	0
SA Thomson	lbw b Tufnell	0
DN Patel	c Pringle b Tufnell	6
CL Cairns	c Smith b Tufnell	0
IDS Smith†	c †Russell b Lewis	1
C Pringle	not out	5
Extras (b1, lb7, nb13)		**21**
Total (all out; 132.1 overs)		**264**

Fall of wickets 1/81 2/81 3/182 4/211 5/222 6/222 7/236 8/241 9/250 10/264

Bowling	O	M	R	W
PAJ DeFreitas	23	6	54	0
CC Lewis	22	3	66	2
DR Pringle	21	5	64	1
PCR Tufnell	46.1	25	47	7
GA Hick	14	8	11	0
DA Reeve	2	0	8	0
RA Smith	4	2	6	0

Mitchell Johnson – 17.2-8-40-7

Australia v England, Adelaide 5-9 December 2013

-Russell Jackson-

Inspired by the multi-arena spectacular Mitchell Johnson had performed with the cricket ball across the 2013-14 Test summer, it's easy to imagine Australian parents spending what remained of that year making excuses to proudly name their newborns Mitchell. In actual fact, Melbourne's *Herald Sun* ran the numbers at the end of 2014 and discovered that for boys, Oliver, Jack, William, Noah and Thomas were the names *du jour*, while Mitchell languished well down the list in 76th place. Nowhere in the report was a conclusion made as to what this said for the future of Test cricket down under.

Mitchell Guy Johnson was himself a summer baby, born on November 2, 1981, right as the West Indies' golden generation of fast bowlers arrived for a three-Test series against Australia. The local attack was then led by hirsute and hostile Dennis Lillee, avatar of the dominant genre of Australian masculinity that prided itself on ruggedness, bravery, prodigious drinking prowess and an inordinate capacity for the growth of facial hair. Lillee was also the man who discovered a teenage Mitchell Johnson wheeling away in some far-flung cricket nets and on the evidence of a few artless projectiles, thought he'd seen the future of Australia's fast-bowling stocks.

But that was the 1990s. By late 2013 Johnson was yet to fulfill Lillee's prophecy fully, which is not quite as harsh an assessment as it seems. He'd certainly made the grade by the definition of most mortals, having taken 205 Test wickets and maintaining a knack for the odd captivating spell – also proving himself a highly competent late-order batsman capable of Test centuries – but along the way he'd also endured the kind of public humiliations the likes of Lillee could never comprehend.

On the field Johnson's form had always seemed to fluctuate with his moods. Confidence suddenly draining from his body as his line and length deserted him and relentless taunts came from beyond the fence. Along the

way his private life became public property too when a rift developed between Johnson's mother and Jessica Bratich, the woman he'd eventually marry. The cricketer had relocated to Lillee's Perth to be with her, also seeking a reset button for his career. By then his bowling action was under such ongoing deconstruction and reconstruction it needed both a therapist and scaffolding. Results were accordingly patchy, each hot streak countered with a sustained lull. Australian selection policies reflected that output but also projected a lack of faith. Once the first picked, Johnson in time became the easiest man to drop.

Opponents also thought they had his measure. 'He's the sort of bowler who can release a huge amount of pressure from you with a bad spell', Andrew Strauss once wrote, 'but at the same time he can get three or four of you out in the space of twenty minutes.' Strauss claimed he was always happy to see Johnson's name on Australia's team sheet. For Johnson's own captains it was far more complicated. Forthright with his opinions, Ricky Ponting would label the paceman's inconsistency 'maddening'. A case in point was his spell of 5-2 in 21 deliveries on the way to a barnstorming 8-61 in the WACA Test of 2008-09. A game later, in Melbourne, Johnson looked incapable of taking a single wicket.

The setting for his renaissance was unlikely: England, during a long-forgotten one-day international series at the tail-end of a 2013 Ashes campaign in which Johnson's services had not been required. Something just clicked. His mind and body co-operated and conspired against batsmen rather than Johnson himself. Used to taking him apart the minute things went wrong, England's Ashes-winning batsmen were now a little rattled by Johnson's coherence and his raw pace.

Upon the paceman's return home it was Lillee who called Australia's chairman of selectors John Inverarity to the nets at Hale School in Perth and let him know that after a few technical adjustments (Johnson's approach to the crease was shifted a mere metre across, his arm positioning at the point of release altered ever so slightly and his right arm now played a greater role in the follow-through) his pupil was perfectly equipped to dismantle the touring Englishman when it mattered – in the heat of an Ashes series. Johnson mightn't have believed it himself quite yet, but his limited-overs form, the faith of Australian captain Michael Clarke and the word of Lillee were enough for the selectors.

When a batsman takes guard during a Test match at the Adelaide Oval, at once he sees both his own future and cricket's past. He swivels around and notes the old scoreboard on which so many mountainous totals have been displayed but he also normally surveys the short square boundaries at which he'll aim his cuts, drives and pull shots for the rest of the sunny afternoon. But in the Friday afternoon gloom late on day two of the second Ashes Test of 2013-14, no scene so bucolic can have occurred in the minds of England's opening batsmen, Alastair Cook and his new partner Michael Carberry.

For one, Cook's side had already been so thoroughly eviscerated by Johnson in the series opener in Brisbane that their doughty and dependable number three, Jonathan Trott, enduring stresses nobody quite understood at the time and under a hostile barrage from an antagonistic opponent, had returned home. It added symbolic weight to theories one might have developed by merely witnessing Johnson slice through the touring batsmen at the 'Gabba. England were obviously rattled by Johnson's frightening pace and if the pattern held, he looked capable of winning back the Ashes single handedly.

Accustomed to dour, attritional cricket on the lifeless wickets prepared for their own home series months earlier, Cook's men simply weren't able to adjust to racier conditions, nor the intimidating velocity of the bowling from Johnson and his wily, potent offsider Ryan Harris. Add in the abrasive public persona of their new coach Darren Lehmann and the recast image of captain Clarke ("Get ready for a broken fucking arm", he'd hissed at England tailender Jimmy Anderson in Brisbane, further shedding the pretty-boy reputation he'd once laboured under) and Australia was transformed from the dithering mess they'd presented in the Micky Arthur era preceding.

Still to be discovered at the start of that Australian summer was that the touring side was now actually well beyond its peak. Even as dynamic a player as Kevin Pietersen, who'd scored an authoritative 158 at Adelaide on the 2006 trip and a monumental 227 in 2010, would soon discover that his salad days were over. The mere mention of Pietersen's name in the context of 2013-14 is now enough to signal how wracked the England squad was by insubordination, in-fighting and old-fashioned fatigue, as senior players waged cold wars among themselves and others defaulted to self-preservation.

The mood hadn't been helped by coach Andy Flower's decision to deploy his touring squad on a disastrous SAS-style boot camp before setting off for Australia. There, having been told they were replicating a military

surveillance and counter-insurgency operation, bored players ended up sitting in classrooms for hours on end. Tasked with tracking an invented criminal, Stuart Broad and allrounder Ben Stokes drove aimlessly around Stoke for three days eating fish and chips and samosas. Even Flower would later admit the exercise had been a farce, apologising to players. All would come to view it as the worst of omens.

But the disaster of Brisbane and Trott's withdrawal thereafter was the clearest public sign that all was not right with the tourists. Before heading out to his second innings failure at the 'Gabba, Trott was on the verge of tears according to Broad. Weighed down by the brutal and unrelenting schedule, England's spin hero Graeme Swann would follow him home a couple of games later, retiring after the third Test an exhausted and beaten man. So used to maintaining their relationship through Skype, Swann's son had once pointed at a laptop thinking it was where his famous father lived. At least now he'd have a three-dimensional dad.

The Englishmen who remained in Australia faced hostility not just from Johnson and his thunderbolts but also the local media and fans. 'There is simply nowhere worse in the world to lose matches than in Australia', Broad would later note, 'because they are so ready to rub it in your face.' He was certainly qualified to judge. Over the course of that summer the Englishman would peer over fences at local fans wearing t-shirts that read 'Stuart Broad is a shit bloke', while a Brisbane tabloid newspaper gained attention for its coverage by proudly refusing to print his name at all. It ended up the kind of tour where that was actually no bad thing.

If the Brisbane Test was like a Hollywood movie trailer that revealed a few too many spoilers, Adelaide was a fully-fledged disaster film. It was a fate Cook and Carberry might have sensed as they arrived at the crease late on the Friday following Australia's mountainous first innings of 570. For that, Clarke's 148 provided the steak and his lieutenant Brad Haddin's 118 the sizzle. In the England reply that followed an entire eleven would barely outscore the Australian captain.

The only English batsman to fall on day two was Cook, but the symbolic damage of his premature demise was monumental. Johnson had just fizzed down the nine fastest deliveries of the game before Cook's defences were split by a 148kph scorcher that firstly suggested inswing before deviously wobbling away to cannon into his stumps.

The sight of the touring skipper lunging at fresh air as his off stump bent backwards at a 45 degree angle would prove an enduring image of the summer. A run glutton against Australia in series gone by, Cook had suffered a lean run in England's portion of the twin Ashes but regained a measure of confidence with 65 at the 'Gabba. Now the formerly unflappable left hander looked like Dan Ackroyd's well-heeled stockbroker being mugged in *Trading Places*. Johnson, on the other hand, had been a reputational pauper not long before. Now he was moving with more swagger than a Wall Street trader in boom times. In what would become a familiar sight for England, he raced past the vanquished batsmen to be greeted by his shrieking team-mates.

At the start of the summer there'd been something a little comical and not at all convincing about Johnson's facial hair – an exaggerated handlebar moustache that was more the dress-up party version of Ian Chappell's wild and wooly sides of the 1970s. By the summer's conclusion Australian newspapers would be photoshopping him onto their front pages made up as Hannibal Lecter – such a gruesome customer that local broadcasters ought to have aired a parental advisory warning whenever he came on to bowl.

Somehow, Carberry and newly-promoted number three Joe Root survived until stumps, but not before the latter had been struck a jarring blow to the chest and his partner, seemingly keen to avoid the strike, had almost run himself out. At 35-1 by the close of play, things would turn sour for England in the morning.

What Mitchell Johnson did to England on day three, and what England did to itself therein, pre-empted the demise of several international careers. Least scarred but first dismissed was baby-faced Joe Root, injudiciously sweeping at Nathan Lyon. Pietersen departed quickly, madly charging down the wicket and clubbing a gobsmackingly irresponsible stroke into the safe hands of George Bailey – one of two men placed at mid-wicket on the hunch that England's most lavishly talented batsmen could not suppress his ego against the likes of metronomic Peter Siddle. At the very least, Pietersen's preparations had been sincere. Before taking guard at Brisbane he'd made England's spin bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed pelt wet tennis balls at him on a bouncer length. "Just try to take my head off", he instructed the coach.

Having survived so many of Johnson's thundering best, stoic and admirable Carberry did himself in facing one of Shane Watson's worst. Consumed by the threat of Australia's fastest bowler, England had slackened culpably against his support crew.

That warm-up act done, the main attraction stepped up with a memorable main event in the afternoon. Debutant allrounder Stokes departed lbw in the strangest circumstances he could have imagined for his first Test innings, gathering four overthrows off what he'd hoped was an inside edge into the pads only to be shown the umpire's finger when Australia called for a DRS review. Matt Prior, having watched his opposite number breeze through the kind of team-lifting century in which he himself had once specialised, was bombarded into submission by Johnson's short stuff until he nicked to Haddin when the ball was belatedly pitched up.

What followed could hardly be blamed on the English tail, but it did illustrate how thoroughly outmatched the England side was. Having developed creditable reputations with the bat as a Test centurion and technically-correct trier respectively, Broad and Jimmy Anderson surrendered meekly for a pair of golden ducks. Broad had delayed play for several minutes after asking that shiny bolts on the sightscreen be covered lest they obstruct his view, but if his eyes had actually picked up the ball that got him, it wasn't immediately obvious. Shuffling across towards point he lost his leg stump in farcical style, putting Johnson on a hat-trick. Once upon a time encounters with England had Johnson slumped in fretful contemplation, now he leapt into the air in glee.

Throughout the series Australia's tail would wag to great effect but England's was a mere series of props in Johnson's sideshow. 'You very seldom hear people in your own team saying that they are physically scared', Pietersen would later write, somewhat unkindly, 'but our tail-end batsmen were scared. I heard Broad, Anderson and Swann say they were scared. When you've got that, you know that a bloke in the other team is doing damage.'

Supporting that thesis, Swann's wild slog to send a catch to Clarke in the cordon spoke of a man keen to exit the arena briskly, no matter how badly it let down his courageous and resourceful team-mate Ian Bell, stranded at the other end. There followed the splattering of Anderson's middle stump, which prompted Johnson's showiest post-wicket celebration, a reflection of both the exhilaration of the moment and the lasting enmity between the pair from previous battles.

Admirable and restrained Bell would finish undefeated on 72, he and Carberry having contributed almost 77 per cent of their team's total, but even that small mercy owed a debt of gratitude to Monty Panesar. His two runs

should not exist in the same statistical sphere as the failures of his team-mates that day for the fact he laboured over them for a full hour. If Australia's first innings run-spree had negated the argument that England were undone by the conditions and not a supreme display of bowling by Johnson, Panesar's innings also showed just how insipid the efforts of the earlier batsmen had been.

Unfortunately for England, they found this toxic group-dynamic impossible to reboot. Once a player they'd laugh off or mock, Johnson was now ripping them apart at the seams. England would go on to lose the match by a demoralizing 218 runs and the series in a 5-0 clean sweep. By the time it was all over Johnson had quite literally proven himself worth two of England's men; the tourists' two best bowlers, Broad and Stokes, finished with 36 series wickets between them, one fewer than Johnson had managed on his own.

Mitchell Johnson's heroics in Brisbane and those seven first-innings wickets at Adelaide were not in the end the kind of flash in the pan that the cricket world – and more specifically the Australian public – might have predicted. His transformation across the 2013-14 summer from a fragile and unpredictable talent to the mustachioed restorer of Australia's sporting pride was a pop cultural phenomenon that cannot be oversold.

In summers gone by Australians had come to the nagging conclusion that the golden generation of Warne, McGrath, Ponting and Gilchrist had passed them by and that what followed could well hurt. The new world order in which Australia lost Ashes series after Ashes series chastened them. The whitewash of 2013-14 breathed life into Australian cricket. The sighs of frustration that had once greeted the mere mention of Mitchell Johnson's name were now purrs of satisfaction and snickers of schadenfreude at the expense of the old enemy.

Having slowly but surely ground Australia into the dirt through their strict adherence to process and dour-faced dependability, England had been undone by Australia's old-fashioned aggression and the wild-eyed menace of Johnson's miracle summer. Accordingly, for once and for all he became entrenched as 'Mitch', only the slightest abbreviation but a lasting step away from the tone of paternalistic disappointment that Australians had previously tended to use in relaying his full name.

Johnson had also pulled off the considerable feat of making fast bowling

dangerous and cool again. Yes, Brett Lee and Shoaib Akhtar had spent the previous decade pushing each other towards the magical 100mph barrier and boasted rock-star profiles to match, but there was throughout Johnson's renaissance that summer a genuine novelty about his extreme, unmanageable speed. It sat at odds with the world T20 cricket had wrought; once-explosive pacemen pragmatically toggling themselves down to manageable speeds in order to fulfill their expanded scheduling commitments, ever aware of the need to maintain fitness and prolong their lucrative careers. Fast bowlers were no longer particularly fast, or as Mark Nicholas put it, they had 'settled for something that gets them through the day.'

But Mitchell Johnson didn't settle for that. The He-Man fitness freak with the Hell's Angels moustache said 'bollocks' to self-preservation and 'up yours' to workload management. Johnson just wanted to bowl fast. He wanted to win Australia an Ashes series in which the doubters felt he had no place. So he steeled himself, asked Dennis Lillee to rebuild him and did everything necessary to ensure he could bowl four-over spells of the kind of flame-throwing pace that could destroy any batting line-up in cricket. The results were staggering and unexpected.

Johnson's success also banished the enduring hoodoo of his career. During the 2009 Ashes, at Lord's no less, he suffered a crisis of confidence that looked set to haunt him forever. With Johnson's bowling disintegrating in front of a packed house, Andrew Strauss whip-cracked him for eight boundaries on the way to an undefeated 161, an innings that set up England's first win against Australia at Lord's in 75 years. Before this personal torture was done, Johnson had stirred the Barmy Army into infamous verse:

He bowls to the left,
He bowls to the right,
That Mitchell Johnson,
His bowling is shite

Then there was the 2010-11 Ashes. During it England had handled Johnson so comfortably that Kevin Pietersen mockingly joined in that infamous singalong in the final throes of England's victory at Melbourne. Such was the state of his fortunes then, Johnson could only laugh along. But with his dismemberment of his old tormentors in 2013-14, he was not only freed but reborn in the public imagination. For the best part of three months across that

triumphant summer.

What Johnson and the rest of us didn't know was that this would be the final summer of cricket in which aggressive, dangerous and intimidating fast bowling that threatened limbs as much as it did stumps could be enjoyed in a bloodthirsty, guilt-free atmosphere. At the beginning of the following summer, right as he was determinedly working his way back into the baggy green cap he so cherished, Johnson's team-mate Phillip Hughes died. In one tragic instant, cricket changed.

Immediately it made you think of the enduring bravery of batsmen when they face bowling as fast, unpredictable and near-on unplayable as the type Johnson bowled in 2013-14. Petty rivalries faded a little. The appeal of striking batsmen on the helmet waned for many bowlers. Johnson, fit as a fiddle and still a formidable bowler, shrunk just enough from his role as the enforcer of Australia's attack that his retirement barely a year after Hughes' death came as no great shock and for the man himself, perhaps even a relief.

Because no fast bowler could have differed more wildly in his demeanor on and off the field than Mitchell Johnson. Once opponents got to know him the difference shocked them. 'You'd expect him to be ultra-aggressive, almost like a football hooligan, because of the way he conducts himself on the field', Graeme Swann wrote in 2011, 'but when you get talking to him he's as soft as you like, almost like a big kid.' 'He's such a lovely, lovely guy', Dennis Lillee would later concur.

By its end, Mitchell Johnson's Test career had oscillated between the laudable and laughable, but his 37 wickets across that wondrous Ashes summer will stand as his master work and one of the most compelling individual displays by an Australian fast man. For his part, Lillee was proven right – no Australian bowler of the post-McGrath generation conjured spells so devastating to batsmen and viscerally thrilling to spectators as Johnson. So he, like that barn-burning 2013-14 Australian summer – Mitchell Johnson's summer – will outlive all of us who bore witness.

Australia

CJL Rogers	c †Prior b Swann	72
DA Warner	c Carberry b Broad	29
SR Watson	c & b Anderson	51
MJ Clarke*	c Anderson b Stokes	148
SPD Smith	b Panesar	6
GJ Bailey	c Swann b Broad	53
BJ Haddin†	c †Prior b Broad	118
MG Johnson	c Broad b Swann	5
PM Siddle	c †Prior b Stokes	2
RJ Harris	not out	55
NM Lyon	not out	17
Extras (b8, lb1, w1, nb4)		**14**
Total (9 wickets dec; 158 overs)		**570**

Fall of wickets 1/34 2/155 3/155 4/174 5/257 6/457 7/474 8/483 9/529

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JM Anderson	30	10	85	1
SCJ Broad	30	3	98	3
GP Swann	36	4	151	2
MS Panesar	44	7	157	1
BA Stokes	18	2	70	2

CJL Rogers	c †Prior b Anderson	2
DA Warner	not out	83
SR Watson	c Carberry b Anderson	0
MJ Clarke*	b Panesar	22
SPD Smith	not out	23

Did not bat: GJ Bailey, BJ Haddin†, MG Johnson, PM Siddle, RJ Harris, NM Lyon

Extras (b1, lb1)	**2**
Total (3 wickets dec; 39 overs)	**132**

Fall of wickets 1/4 2/4 3/65

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JM Anderson	7	1	19	2
SCJ Broad	6	0	19	0
GP Swann	9	3	31	0
BA Stokes	7	3	20	0
MS Panesar	10	0	41	1

England

AN Cook*	b Johnson	3
MA Carberry	c Warner b Watson	60
JE Root	c Rogers b Lyon	15
KP Pietersen	c Bailey b Siddle	4
IR Bell	not out	72
BA Stokes	lbw b Johnson	1
MJ Prior†	c †Haddin b Johnson	0
SCJ Broad	b Johnson	0
GP Swann	c Clarke b Johnson	7
JM Anderson	b Johnson	0
MS Panesar	b Johnson	2
Extras (lb3, w2, nb3)		**8**
Total (all out; 68.2 overs)		**172**

Fall of wickets 1/9 2/57 3/66 4/111 5/117 6/117 7/117 8/135 9/135 10/172

Bowling	O	M	R	W
MG Johnson	17.2	8	40	7
RJ Harris	14	8	31	0
NM Lyon	20	5	64	1
PM Siddle	14	4	34	1
SR Watson	3	3	0	1

AN Cook*	c Harris b Johnson	1
MA Carberry	c Lyon b Siddle	14
JE Root	c †Haddin b Lyon	87
KP Pietersen	b Siddle	53
IR Bell	c Johnson b Smith	6
BA Stokes	c Clarke b Harris	28
MJ Prior†	c Harris b Siddle	69
SCJ Broad	c Lyon b Siddle	29
GP Swann	c Clarke b Harris	6
JM Anderson	not out	13
MS Panesar	c Rogers b Harris	0
Extras (lb1, w4, nb1)		**6**
Total (all out; 101.4 overs)		**312**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/20 3/131 4/143 5/171 6/210 7/255 8/293 9/301 10/312

Bowling	O	M	R	W
RJ Harris	19.4	3	54	3
MG Johnson	24	8	73	1
PM Siddle	19	4	57	4
NM Lyon	26	7	78	1
SR Watson	6	3	6	0
SPD Smith	7	0	43	1

Trevor Bailey – 16-7-34-7

West Indies v England, Kingston 30 March-3 April 1954

-Martin Chandler-

Trevor Bailey was sometimes referred to as a poor man's Keith Miller, in much the same way as a Mazda RX-7 is referred to as a poor man's sports car. Miller was a Ferrari who could hit speeds of 100mph if the mood took him, both when bowling or when belting the ball out of a ground. Bailey was less dynamic although more consistent. While Miller demanded pole position, invariably batting four or five and, when fit, always opening the bowling, Bailey could handle any spot on the grid.

It was not uncommon for Bailey to open the batting in one Test and then come in at eight in the next, or to share the new ball and then bowl third change. Nobody raised an eyebrow at this, as Bailey was flexible and uncomplaining. Len Hutton relied on this flexibility in the fifth and final Test of the 1954 series in the Caribbean, having Bailey open both the batting and bowling.

The Caribbean was looking forward to seeing Hutton's side in early 1954. They were the fourth England team to visit the West Indies, and were aiming to be the first to win there. Their predecessors had drawn one series and lost the others, including the only other post-war encounter in 1947-48. For all three defeats the selectors had badly misjudged the strength of the opposition and, by choosing touring parties that were not truly representative of the strength of English cricket, had contributed to their own downfall.

This time there was only one unarguable omission from what would otherwise have been the strongest combination that could have been selected. Alec Bedser, by then 35 but having just made a major contribution to the regaining of the Ashes in Coronation year, wintered at home for what were described simply as 'business reasons'.

With West Indies having won the previous encounter between the sides and England having just beaten an Australian side that had defeated the West Indians in 1951-52, the series was billed as one that would see the winners

crowned as World Champions. Given their poor record in the Caribbean and the heavy defeat they had suffered four years earlier at home against much the same side, England were under considerable pressure.

There was a distinct lack of Carribean experience, only three members of Hutton's side had been selected for the previous tour, Jim Laker, Godfrey Evans and Johnny Wardle. Hutton himself had been flown in part way through when the inadequacies of a side became clear. For the England captain the sort of 'fraternisation' and indulgence in generous hospitality that had characterised the previous visit was not to be repeated. He wanted his men to avoid socialising with their opponents and to concentrate on victory. It was this mentality that sowed the seeds of the discontent that followed rather than, as is sometimes suggested, any wider political considerations relating to the Caribbean nations desiring independence.

The lead up to the first Test was marked by the arrival from England, paid for by public subscription, of the great George Headley, for his first Test for six years. It was, unsurprisingly, a bridge too far for the 44-year-old who contributed just 16 and 1, but for the most part the match was dominated by the home side. England ended up chasing a distant 457 for victory, and whilst there must have been hopes of a famous victory at 277-2 the batting then collapsed and West Indies' winning margin was a comfortable 140 runs.

This Test was not without incident. There was much antagonism shown by the Jamaicans towards umpire Perry Burke after he gave an lbw decision against debutant opener and fellow Jamaican John 'JK' Holt who was on 94 at the time. Feelings ran sufficiently high for Burke to receive threats, and in the crowd his wife and son were jostled. Later in the game Burke was in the news for another reason, becoming the first Test match umpire to no ball a bowler for throwing, Tony Lock's quicker delivery being the culprit.

England's inconsistent batting continued in the second Test. For West Indies there was 220 from Clyde Walcott in the first innings, and Holt's first Test century proved to be not long delayed by Burke as he scored 166 in the second. A West Indian victory by 181 runs suggested the series was running away from Hutton.

It was mainly due to the fierce determination of Hutton himself, and a top-class innings of 169, that England won the third Test. It was in the run up to and during this match that complaints about the umpiring came to a head, and the game was stopped when bottles were thrown on to the outfield by many of the crowd when local favourite Clifford McWatt, the West Indies'

wicketkeeper, was adjudged, correctly, to have been run out.

With England back in the series the fourth Test at Port-of-Spain looked, on paper, to be a fascinating game of cricket in the offing. On the mat however a dull draw was always likely and so it came to pass. Jeff Stollmeyer declared West Indies' first innings on 681-8, to which England replied with 537. By the time the West Indians began their second innings it was strictly batting practice only.

The final Test was scheduled to begin just six days after the close of the fourth Test. With Brian Statham, by some margin the most successful quick bowler on either side, succumbing to a rib injury Hutton's side for Sabina Park contained three of England's greatest-ever spin bowlers in Laker, Lock and Wardle, but the seam attack had a threadbare look about it. There were just two of them. Trevor Bailey had played in all four previous Tests, and had taken six wickets at 61.83. His new-ball partner was the tyro Fred Trueman. In what was a controversial tour for the 22-year-old his three matches in the series thus far had brought him just four wickets, and he had paid 73.25 runs each for them.

West Indies were not without their own injury worries, orthodox left-arm spinner Alf Valentine had not recovered from the injury that had kept him out of the fourth Test and the selectors decided another slow left armer was the order of the day. The man they picked was just 17, and his first-class bowling record amounted to nine wickets at a cost of 381 runs in two matches. It was to be the first, but by no means last time the name Garry Sobers appeared on an international scorecard.

England's selection of three front-line spinners was not entirely unexpected after the success in Georgetown when they had come back into the series. In addition the selection of a four-man seam attack, with just Lock for variety, had proved ineffective in the first Test, also played at Sabina Park.

Hutton was not a captain who enjoyed much luck with the toss. Prior to the match he had, called 'tails' when he had the chance and had lost eight of his previous nine. He ventured tails once more and was again disappointed. Stollmeyer, to the surprise of no one, chose to bat. At the end of the first day of the first Test on this ground West Indies had only lost two wickets, and it was not just the expectant crowd who were looking forward to seeing something similar with, perhaps, just a few more runs than the 168 achieved then. England too feared the worst. Bailey wrote later: 'I still treasure the

despairing look on Len's face when he returned to the pavilion having called incorrectly.'

In years to come Trueman would doubtless have had something to say about not being given the first over, but Hutton put Bailey in charge of the opening salvo this time. The decision was quickly vindicated as Bailey's fifth delivery accounted for Holt. The local man was known to be vulnerable to the ball coming in to him. Despite the intense heat there was a breeze to help Bailey's inswinger and Holt turned one ankle high towards Lock at square short-leg. One of the safest pairs of hands in the history of the game Lock took the ball two-handed and held it firmly to his chest before losing his balance once the catch was complete. There was doubtless a broad smile on his face as he lifted himself up and dusted down his flannels.

The next three overs produced just two runs for the home side, from Stollmeyer off Trueman from a shot that went perilously close to forward short-leg. The man stationed there was Bailey – there was no relaxing spell at third-man between overs for England's allrounder. With the ball in his hand Bailey's accuracy was such that Holt's replacement, the mighty Everton Weekes, never looked like getting the run he needed to get off strike and in Bailey's third over he was beaten by an inswinger that, via the pad, knocked his off stump out of the ground. In the bowler's own view it was his best delivery of the day.

Modern eyes would have been struck by the scene on the pitch between wickets. The days of high-fives and vociferous congratulations were a long time in the future, but in view of the disturbances that had occurred in the earlier Tests Hutton had instructed his players to avoid any overt celebrations at all. Thus there was not even a slap on the back for Bailey, as his team-mates gathered in small groups dotted around the square.

Frank Worrell was next to bat and it was he, in Bailey's fifth over, who finally took a run from the Essex man. Straight away Stollmeyer then pushed one through the covers for two, but if he was trying to show his more illustrious team-mates how to score off Bailey he paid the price from the final ball of the over when an expansive straight drive resulted in a hard snick to Evans who comfortably held a regulation catch. Stollmeyer was as good a player on the leg side as any in the world, but Bailey never fed a batsman's strengths.

Thirteen for three became 13-4 in the very next over as Trueman claimed Worrell. A brute of delivery from the Yorkshireman climbed rapidly into

Worrell from only just short of a length and the best he could do was fend it away as it homed in on his chest. England had stationed two leg-slips. The ball ballooned just over the head of a despairing Lock but Wardle, despite briefly being unsighted, had the foresight to get behind his team-mate and was able to take the catch. After just 45 minutes the West Indian innings was listing badly.

The task of rebuilding fell to Walcott and Denis Atkinson. At 29 it might have got much worse. First Graveney put Atkinson down at slip from Wardle's bowling. Moments later, this time facing Bailey, Atkinson gave the slips some more practice, but despite Willie Watson's dive the ball did not quite carry. After that England made no further progress before lunch, although West Indies only inched forwards to 38-4. At the interval Bailey's figures were 8-5-11-3. Beyond the breeze, Bailey was getting precious little help from the conditions but his accuracy and length were making run getting a difficult and perilous pursuit.

For a time after the resumption it looked like a different game as Trueman and Lock took up the attack, Walcott in particular looking like he had the measure of Trueman. Eventually Hutton replaced Trueman with Bailey, but the fact that Bailey was bowling at the other end from where he had caused all the damage in the morning made no difference. In the second over of the spell Atkinson missed a straight one and was lbw to make the score 65-5, and in Bailey's next over it was 75-6. Gerry Gomez started with a leg glide to the boundary, which suggested he might be in form, before he then attempted an off drive to a straight one that went away from him just a shade, and Watson at third slip took a comfortable catch.

The next West Indian batsman to join Walcott was wicket-keeper McWatt. He had ridden his luck in the first four Tests but had held England up on several occasions and he did so again now, keeping Walcott company whilst 35 were added. At that point, having just gone to his 50, Walcott was caught by Laker at mid-on from the bowling of Lock. His dismissal brought Sobers to the crease and Hutton, as any decent captain would, brought his field in to crowd the youngster and, hopefully, unnerve him. If that wasn't enough the light drew in too, and then a sprinkling of rain brought an early conclusion to the afternoon session. Sobers walked back to the pavilion still not off the mark, but he had shown the broad blade of his bat to everything, and despite all of Hutton's ploys had not looked in any difficulty.

After tea Bailey was back in the attack and McWatt did not last long,

good fortune for once deserting him. He pulled a delivery that was pitched on leg stump. The ball hit the middle of the bat and was still rising when Lock, at backward square-leg, managed to pluck the ball out of the air with his left hand to make the score 115-8. The big fast bowler Frank King wasn't going to hang around, and he and Sobers attacked Trueman, who was troubled by the touch of dampness on the ball, but King couldn't repeat the treatment to Bailey, and in attempting to make room for another big hit he was bowled behind his legs. Soon afterwards Trueman trapped Ramadhin lbw and West Indies were 139 all out. The future

of West Indies cricket was unbeaten on 14. Despite criticism in years to come that he did not bat high enough in the order this was one of only two occasions in 93 Tests that Sobers ran out of partners.

The inevitable question when a side like Stollmeyer's, containing top-class batsmen aplenty, capitulates so tamely, is what caused the mayhem? Before the match began English writer Alex Bannister described the wicket as 'not unlike a cold marble slab on which crazy paving tracings had been made'. Hutton's eve of the match viewing prompted him to write later:

'The groundsman said the side batting first ought to make 700. Looking at the strip, rolled and rolled again until it shone under the Caribbean sun, I was inclined to agree. I thought our only chance was to win the toss, aim for 400 plus, and hope by some miracle to bowl the West Indies out twice.'

Sobers' comment was 'the pitch was good and the light perfect.'

In the contemporary accounts of the series the only hint that there was any help for Bailey was the concession made by some that right at the start of the day's play there was a little life in the wicket from the morning's preparation. Years later however the former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, in his acclaimed 1998 history of the game in the West Indies, suggested the conditions did suit Bailey when he wrote:

'It had rained heavily during the previous three weeks and although the pitch was hard at the start, there was a lot of water underneath, which, as it was drawn upwards by evaporation, kept the grass moist and made the ball seam disconcertingly.'

Manley was undoubtedly looking for an explanation but there must be some merit in what he says. The conditions in Jamaica were certainly humid, and

that would have resulted in the sort of atmosphere that an English seamer like Bailey would have been very familiar with. It is also clear from the accounts of the innings that Bailey, who was never truly fast at any time, cut his pace by a yard or two to take advantage of the late swing he found.

Although the combatants offered no great insights in their various autobiographies Alex Bannister, on the spot throughout for *The Daily Mail*, felt able to express the view in his account of the tour:

‘The general opinion of the players about the West Indies collapse was that it was due to the high bounce of the ball (accounted for by the hardness of the new ball on the hard surface), the extra something which bowlers always manage to pull out when they are on top, plus the presence of a little grass on the top of the wicket.’

As for the man himself Bailey, whilst he always acknowledged that the performance was his best with the ball, was typically modest:

‘I simply experienced one of those dream days when everything went right. The ball moved more than I expected, though not to any great extent, and the bounce remained even, but every time a shot was played in the air it went to hands which accepted the chance gratefully.’

Most observers however, whether neutral or not, were unstinting in their praise.

As for the West Indian public they were none too impressed. The Jamaican Gleaner pulled no punches, its description of the home side’s display being: ‘Madness. This can be the only reason offered for a West Indian batting side accepted as the best in the world scoring only 139 on a perfect wicket.’

Bailey’s work was not finished with Ramadhin’s dismissal. There were 35 minutes for England to bat before the close. In the first three Tests of the series Hutton had opened up with his fellow Yorkshireman Watson. In the fourth match however he switched to Bailey. Watson had scored a fine century in the first Test but had struggled in the next two. When he then scored runs from down the order in the game against Trinidad Hutton decided to leave him in the middle order. May was also considered for the opening slot but in the end the imperturbable Bailey got the job, and even those magnificent figures of 7-34 didn’t bring him a rest at Sabina Park.

With such a short time to bat King could concentrate on bowling as quickly as he could, and Bailey bore the brunt of the short spell which contained plenty of what in years to come would be called chin music. To some of the bumpers Bailey just swayed out of the way and to the others he used all his height to play them with the straightest of straight bats at chest level, true to his reputation and nickname. At no time did he try to hook King, neither did he look like losing his wicket. At the end of the day England were 17 without loss, with Bailey on nine and Hutton eight.

Next morning Bailey again drew the short straw and took on a fresh and firing King, and the result was the same as he and Hutton dug in with such determination that the first 19 overs of the day produced just 13 runs. Soon after the interval Bailey was the first to go, for 23 with the total on 43. He had seen King off though, despite taking one bumper on the jaw

– fortunately for him there was some glove involved to draw some of the pace, and without that there might have been a nasty injury. The dismissal itself was, surprisingly, from an

expansive shot, an attempted cut from a delivery that was rather too close to the stumps. McWatt took the catch, and Sobers had the first of his 235 Test wickets.

After Bailey's dismissal West Indies took wickets regularly. Only two batsmen scored more than Compton's 31, and one of those was Wardle who, batting at eight, scored a typically aggressive 66. Unfortunately for the home side however the successful England specialist batsman was Hutton, and when he was eventually seventh out the score was 392. In his second momentous innings of the series Hutton had batted almost nine hours for 205. The final total was 414, so England took a lead of 275.

West Indies fared rather better in their second innings, but only two men got past 50, skipper Stollmeyer with 64 and a solid 116 from Walcott. The last man out was Sobers, who had batted impressively again in compiling 26. They hadn't scored enough though, leaving England plenty of time to score the 72 they needed, something they did for the loss of a single wicket. This time Bailey did get a rest and was not required to bat. He had bowled another 25 accurate overs in the second innings, although this time he was rather less penetrative than in the first. He took just the wicket of Atkinson, and conceded 54 runs.

Following his trip to the Caribbean Bailey continued to be a fixture in the England team for another four years, his international career ending only after

the disappointing Ashes series of 1958-59. Overall his record does not look outstanding, and is undoubtedly an example of statistics not always painting an accurate picture of the value of a cricketer. All told Bailey played 61 times for England scoring 2290 runs at 29.74, and taking 132 wickets at 29.21, but his worth was very much greater than that. Many years later Hutton wrote that he ‘was one of the most capable and intelligent cricketers of our time. He was every captain’s ideal: responsive, perceptive, guaranteed to be a tactical move ahead of his shrewdest opponent and never overawed or intimidated.’ If there was one day when he showed all of these qualities it was 30 March 1954.

West Indies

JKC Holt	c Lock b Bailey	0
JB Stollmeyer*	c †Evans b Bailey	9
ED Weekes	b Bailey	0
FMM Worrell	c Wardle b Trueman	4
CL Walcott	c Laker b Lock	50
DS Atkinson	lbw b Bailey	21
GE Gomez	c Watson b Bailey	4
CA McWatt†	c Lock b Bailey	22
GS Sobers	not out	14
FM King	b Bailey	9
S Ramadhin	lbw b Trueman	4
Extras (lb1, nb1)		**2**
Total (all out; 60.4 overs)		**139**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/2 3/13 4/13 5/65 6/75 7/110 8/115 9/133 10/139

Bowling	O	M	R	W
TE Bailey	16	7	34	7
FS Trueman	15.4	4	39	2
JH Wardle	10	1	20	0
GAR Lock	15	6	31	1
JC Laker	4	1	13	0

JKC Holt	c Lock b Trueman	8
JB Stollmeyer*	lbw b Trueman	64
ED Weekes	b Wardle	3
FMM Worrell	c Graveney b Trueman	29
CL Walcott	c Graveney b Laker	116
GE Gomez	lbw b Laker	22
DS Atkinson	c Watson b Bailey	40
CA McWatt†	c Wardle b Laker	8
GS Sobers	c Compton b Lock	26
S Ramadhin	c & b Laker	10
FM King	not out	10
Extras (b4, lb3, w1, nb2)		**10**
Total (all out; 170 overs)		**346**

Fall of wickets 1/26 2/38 3/102 4/123 5/191 6/273 7/293 8/306 9/326 10/346

Bowling	O	M	R	W
TE Bailey	25	11	54	1
FS Trueman	29	7	88	3
JH Wardle	39	14	83	1
GAR Lock	27	16	40	1
JC Laker	50	27	71	4

England

L Hutton*	c †McWatt b Walcott	205
TE Bailey	c †McWatt b Sobers	23
PBH May	c sub b Ramadhin	30
DCS Compton	hit wicket b King	31
W Watson	c †McWatt b King	4
TW Graveney	lbw b Atkinson	11
TG Evans†	c Worrell b Ramadhin	28
JH Wardle	c Holt b Sobers	66
GAR Lock	b Sobers	4
JC Laker	b Sobers	9
FS Trueman	not out	0
Extras (lb3)		**3**
Total (all out; 176.5 overs)		**414**

Fall of wickets 1/43 2/104 3/152 4/160 5/179 6/287 7/392 8/401 9/406 10/414

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FM King	26	12	45	2
GE Gomez	25	8	56	0
DS Atkinson	41	15	82	1
S Ramadhin	29	9	71	2
GS Sobers	28.5	9	75	4
CL Walcott	11	5	26	1
FMM Worrell	11	0	34	0
JB Stollmeyer	5	0	22	0

TW Graveney	b King	0
W Watson	not out	20
PBH May	not out	40

Did not bat: L Hutton*, TE Bailey, DCS Compton, TG Evans†, JH Wardle, GAR Lock, JC Laker, FS Trueman

Extras (b12)		**12**
Total (1 wicket; 15.5 overs)		**72**

Fall of wickets 1/0

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FM King	4	1	21	1
DS Atkinson	3	0	8	0
S Ramadhin	3	0	14	0
GS Sobers	1	0	6	0
FMM Worrell	4	0	8	0
ED Weekes	0.5	0	3	0

Fazal Mahmood – 30-11-46-6

England v Pakistan, The Oval 12-17 August 1954

12

-Sean Ehlers & Patrick Ferriday-

Fazal Mahmood had spent a large part of his young life striving for cricketing greatness and in August 1947 it seemed within reach when his embryonic career was overtaken by the march of history. Ready and eager to join the All India tour of Australia he made his way to Poona for a training camp only for rain to prevent any semblance of sport. That he survived the return journey to Lahore was down to a mixture of money, connections and extreme good fortune – he had become caught up in the greatest mass migration in history.

With the British hurrying to leave and a no 'exit strategy' in place, India and the newly created Pakistan were rent asunder by an orgy of slaughter and panic. Muslims moved east or west while Hindus and Sikhs from east and west to the centre – and the movements were massive. An estimated 14 million people were displaced – Karachi was emptied of its Hindu population which stood at nearly 48% while 33% of Delhi's population fled the other way. Around 700,000 died and scars, both literal and metaphorical, were deep and long lasting.

Fazal Mahmood would never play Test cricket for India, either through conscience or practicality, but he would not give up the game he loved and maybe one day he would play for Pakistan. In those dark days it must have seemed an impossible dream but within five years it had become reality.

The driving forces that pushed Pakistan cricket forward were Justice AR Cornelius and AH Kardar, the national captain, and their plan was simply to associate cricket with national identity and development of their new country. Through this they hoped to raise sponsorship from state-owned institutions which would allow for the growth of a first-class infrastructure and a national side which would, in turn, make the country proud. In this they were fighting both the Indian cricket authorities and MCC who showed an astonishing lack of understanding of the national development and history. Both initially advocated that Pakistan should somehow continue to play as part of an All-

India side!

Pakistan's cricketers had shown visiting teams from England and West Indies that they were doughty opponents on their matting wickets and political cogs had been oiled. Finally it was recognised that it would behove Asia and the world to include Pakistan and membership of the Imperial Cricket Conference was offered in 1952. The proposers, India, then offered a five-match series to their neighbours. Although India won the series the real achievement was that the two teams could take the field together and in some small way begin the healing process required by the great upheaval. For Fazal it was a triumph as he emerged as Pakistan's leading bowler and was almost single-handedly responsible for their victory in Lucknow, a game that had most of Pakistan clustered around radio sets. For Cornelius and Kardar the significance was even greater. If a Pakistan team could perform so well with little or no support just imagine what could be achieved with real backing.

With MCC having rubber-stamped Pakistan's place in world cricket the next step was to offer a tour and Test matches and in April 1954 a young and largely gauche group of young men landed on a wing and a prayer without a scorer or pressman and with so little money that they spent the summer washing their own kit. If there was precious little experience of Test cricket at least many had visited England in the previous two years to experience turf wickets and come under the watchful eye of coach extraordinaire Alf Gover. This meeting was particularly beneficial to Fazal – the mysteries of swing bowling were bestowed upon him and he learnt with such alacrity that his stock inswing and three-finger leg cutter brought Alec Bedser to mind in the eyes of Gover. Fazal also attended the final Test of that summer of 1953 and saw Len Hutton standing on The Oval balcony acknowledging the cheers for his side that had just recovered the Ashes.

It was one thing to spend a summer being coached and learning the rudiments of batting and bowling on uncovered turf pitches but it was quite another to return the following year to play against hardened professionals, six days a week for over four months, travel the length and breadth of the country and also try to beat the best team in the world over four Test matches. But this doughty squad of 17 players showed what determination and unity could achieve when aligned with a degree of talent. Gover had been impressed with those he had coached, particularly Fazal and young Hanif Mohammad but his predictions for their summer were realistic – he expected 'good performances' against the counties but doubted they would be capable

of winning a Test match.

For cricket journalist Fazal Khan, writing in *The Cricketer*, the tour was of huge significance. Would he ever see cricket again in the way he had seen it before partition in 1947? Pakistan had no stadiums such as those in Bombay or Calcutta, she had no players of the calibre of Vinoo Mankad, Lala Armanath or Vijay Merchant: 'Indeed cricket was just another of those innumerable things in which Pakistan had to make a start from scratch, and create a world almost out of nothing'. But that was 1947 and this was 1954:

'More satisfying than everything else is the tremendous interest and enthusiasm which now exists for the game throughout the country. Cricket has gone straight to the heart of Pakistan's youth. More and more youngsters are taking up the game and devoting all the time and money they can spare to the learning and playing of it…In those early days following partition of the country we possessed only a sprinkling of class players who had been handed down to us by the pre-partition India…Thanks to some unselfish work done by those having the good of this country's cricket at heart it is a different story today.'

Enthusiastic as he was, Fazal Khan was also a realist:

'Far be it from me to suggest that our cricket has attained anything like maturity or even near-maturity. It is still in the making, and we realise only too well that the process is nearer its beginning than its end.'

Not for nothing was Kardar's account of the tour entitled *Test Status on Trial*.

The summer of 1954 turned out to be a wet and miserable one and for week after week the tourists alternated from sitting in the pavilion gazing at the falling rain or standing out under the clouds on unfamiliar wet grass wishing they were back inside. Nonetheless, they acquitted themselves well, remaining unbeaten and giving a strong MCC side a good run for its money. The Lord's Test was ruined by rain but there was time for Pakistan to be bundled out for 87, Hanif to display his skill and resolution and Khan Mohammad to york Len Hutton for a duck. Less satisfactory was the idea that the English selectors would be using the four Tests primarily to trial players for the tour of Australia the following winter. This impression displayed cockiness verging on arrogance but the brief passages of play at Lord's did little to dent English confidence.

The Trent Bridge Test, on the back of a beating at the hands of Yorkshire, fulfilled the darkest prophecies about Pakistan's admittance to the Test club being premature. Butchered by Denis Compton and skinned by Bob Appleyard, Pakistan lost in four days after looking beaten in the first hour. Even the fielding was third rate.

Caught on a wet wicket at Old Trafford in the third Test the tourists were spiralling to another innings defeat when the rain came and washed out the last two days. The majority of the English press showed scant sympathy even though the pitch had turned from easy-paced to plain nasty after England had batted. Neville Cardus assessed Pakistan as no better than an average county side and refused to accept that the weather had been their undoing. This lack of support for a young nation was a source of bitter disappointment to Kardar.

This left just The Oval before the humiliation could finish and the vanquished could disappear back to sunnier climes after a few late-summer warm-downs. But neither Kardar nor Fazal could be dragged down by the doom and gloom. Fazal was all for issuing a gung-ho statement that Pakistan would win the final Test while Kardar, despite dark thoughts in private, later wrote of 'great optimism that prevailed at this stage'. On the face of it there seems to have been no earthly reason to pursue this line.

"Give us a dry wicket, instead of this eternal mud and rain", lamented Pakistan tour manager Fida Hussain as the precipitation tumbled down on the eve of the Oval Test. It continued to fall on match day which delayed play until 2:30 pm. It was one of those tosses that captains are almost happy to lose and Kardar, without a lot of conviction, chose to bat. The England attack was without their number-one opening bowler Alec Bedser, who was rested along with allrounder Trevor Bailey to allow Frank Tyson and Peter Loader to make their Test debuts. This selection policy of England again showed continued contempt for the visitors. With the series still alive they took the opportunity to blood tourists for the 1954-55 Ashes tour and without Bailey their tail was longer than a kangaroos'.

The English arrogance looked justified after their debut bowlers were the most successful with the visitors dismissed before the end of day one on a 'comfortable pitch that was never fast'. Their score could have been even worse, at one stage they were 51-7, only making their final tally of 133 thanks to a determined 36 from Kardar and a late tail wag. England in the remaining two overs managed 1-0.

What the Pakistan manager and players thought of the second day is not recorded but again “eternal mud and rain” was to the fore and not a ball was bowled. Fazal had ideal conditions for day three, an unpredictable drying wicket and a practically new ball. Perhaps, as it was Pakistan Independence Day, the gods decided to remind the tourists of their homeland and greeted them with a sunny clear day. Fazal, to celebrate and perhaps to bring himself some luck, decided to wear the kit he donned when he claimed 12 wickets to help defeat India in 1952. He bowled unchanged from the Pavilion end in the England innings of three hours and 20 minutes, claiming 6-53 which handed Pakistan a narrow but psychologically important first-innings lead of three runs. Fazal, often bowling with three slips and up to five short-legs, broke the game open by removing English captain Len Hutton for 14, Peter May for 26 and Tom Graveney for one to have England teetering at 63-4.

Just as Kardar had held the Pakistan first innings together so Dennis Compton was the England saviour. He played an unorthodox and streaky innings of 53 before Fazal had him caught at the wicket. Compton was one of wicket-keeper Imtiaz Ahmed’s four catches off Fazal in the innings. Some commentators, for example Jack Hobbs, thought Fazal used the conditions superbly. Others, such as Dennis Rowbotham writing in the Manchester Guardian asserted rather uncharitably that on that pitch, Fazal should have helped to bowl England out for less than a hundred.

A bigger lead than just three appeared necessary if Pakistan were going to stay in the match after they collapsed to be 63-4 at stumps although at least Kardar was still there on four not out. For the first time in the match the spinners were taking the wickets with Johnny Wardle claiming two and off spinner Jim McConnon, whom history would show was playing in his second and last Test, had one. Hutton assessed the pitch quickly, bringing on Wardle after just 30 minutes. Even with the success of the spinners it was clear the pitch was losing its vagaries and England were still strong favourites.

The pitch on day four was the antithesis of the previous three. It was easy paced, had little for the fast bowlers and although it took spin it was only slow turn. This didn’t stop the now expected Pakistan collapse as they lost four for 19 in the morning session, with Wardle at his best claiming three. He caught and bowled Kardar for 17, trapped Alimuddin lbw for a duck and then bowled Fazal for six. At 82-8 the match, especially on a batsman-friendly wicket, looked over and England had restored what the cricket world considered to be the natural order.

Hutton now made a baffling decision. With Wardle on the hunt (he had taken 3-11 in four overs) and Pakistan ripe for the kill, Hutton removed his number-one spinner and replaced him with his pace bowlers. Was this the ultimate in English arrogance? Did Hutton want to give his new fast bowlers another chance to bowl in Test-match conditions before the Ashes tour? After all some in the English press were now describing the match as ‘a cake walk’ for the home team.

Given the opportunity to face some now average pace bowling on an unsuitable surface, Pakistan scrambled to lunch at 111-8. After lunch Wardle was again held back and despite eventually returning to claim the last two wickets, Pakistan had doubled their score and set England a mildly competitive 168 for victory.

This target, on a placid strip and with Hutton, Compton and May in the line-up, had the crowd and the press expecting England to score the runs before the end of play. This opinion was still valid even after Fazal claimed Hutton for just five, caught at the wicket off a beautiful leg cutter. Fazal did not believe that Hutton could pick either his inswinger or leg cutter, and at one time he wrapped Hutton on the pads three times in an over. In frustration Hutton went for the long handle and was lucky a mishit did not go to hand. As Hutton passed Fazal he quipped to the most technically-correct batsmen in the world: “This is not Hutton-like”. Fazal took his wicket with the next ball he bowled to him. After Hutton’s wicket, Simpson and May went on the attack and by tea, 50 minutes later, England were 49-1. This left the very gettable target of 119 in the 125 minutes that remained plus the final day.

After tea Kardar persisted with Fazal and Zulfiqar Ahmed, whose flighted off spin stemmed the run-rate. It was the pressure of Zulfiqar that finally broke the partnership. His flight and accuracy caused Simpson to mistime a straight drive which Zulfiqar brilliantly took off his own bowling; 66-2. Kardar rested Fazal for the first time in the match and when he brought him back he switched him to the Vauxhall end. Some match accounts have the flowery version that Fazal snatched the ball from his captain while asking angrily: “Do you want to lose this game?”

On small details such as a change of ends are cricket matches sometimes decided. Fazal now became irresistible. First a slower ball saw May’s fine innings of 53 ended as he mis-drove for Kardar, at cover, to take an easy catch; 109-3. Seven wickets in hand and only 59 needed, plus the first-innings hero Compton set. England were still cruising to victory.

Hutton now made another odd call. He promoted wicket-keeper Godfrey Evans over the young up and coming champion Tom Graveney. Was he trying to hit to victory before the end of the day? Fazal exposed this decision as a poor one when he bowled Evans with a beauty and England were now 115-4. It quickly became five down when Shujauddin trapped Graveney lbw for a duck. England, with stumps fast approaching, had only their long kangaroo tail to bat with Compton.

Five minutes to stumps. Compton versus Fazal. Both looked like cricketing gods with immaculately kept thick black hair which earned them, in their respective countries, the sobriquet of 'Brylcreem boy'. The beautifully proportioned Fazal moved in off his smooth run up and bowled his best ball, the leg cutter, the same delivery that accounted for Hutton. Fazal's stock delivery moved into the right hander so the batsman always had to play. The capless Compton had no choice but to commit to a stroke as the ball pitched full on a perfect length, took the edge and was comfortably held by the 'keeper. Compton out for 29 and for the first time Fazal had installed Pakistan as favourites. The home team had lost four wickets for 12 runs and finished the day at 125-6.

That night while Fazal relaxed in his room after a hot bath he had words with his captain after a pessimistic Kardar asserted that Pakistan would lose. This exchange resulted in a rebuke from manager Fida Hussain. Fazal, now angry, told the manager: "Sir instead of giving me this sermon give it to Kardar so that he should conduct himself like a captain who believes he can win".

England needed 43 runs to win on the last day, which should have been a 50/50 contest but now the lack of Bailey meant that the English tail would be exposed. Perhaps fearful due to the long tail, England decided on all-out defence. Even the big-hitting Wardle kept lunging forward which allowed the combination of Fazal and Mahmood Hussain to apply pressure. The Pakistan fielding which had been nothing short of poor all series now threatened to cost the visitors a Test, as Mahmood Hussain drew the edge from Wardle only for it to be turfed at slip by Alimuddin. Fazal then had two confident lbw appeals denied, also against Wardle. While the rejection of the lbw appeals was disappointing it was a sign that Fazal was now at his supreme best, controlling movement, length and pace. Finally the inevitable error came as it often does when batsmen eschew any attacking strokes. Fazal drew the edge from Tyson, after 25 minutes and just six runs, for yet another catch

at the wicket; 131-7. He then added another nail when Wardle's luck ran out, after he lunged, edged and was caught by Shujauddin who had just been moved to short-leg; 138-8. Fazal claimed it was his suggestion to move Shujuddin to short-leg, while his captain insisted it was his brainchild. Mahmood Hussain claimed Loader with no addition to the score and then the 'little master' Hanif ran out McConnon with a direct hit from cover, after he attempted to farm the strike, to record a 24-run win.

Fazal ran to Hanif and the two started to dance with joy and when they returned to the dressing room they found Alf Gover in a similar spirit declaring to all and sundry: "We've won, we've won". The Pakistan players and support staff realised the importance of the win, with this Test triumph still perhaps, apart from the 1992 World Cup, the most important victory in Pakistan cricket history.

The hero was Fazal who helped to claim the last eight English wickets for just 34 runs. Kardar, despite his strained relationship with his star player, fittingly held the team back to allow the champion bowler to lead them from the field.

As Fazal stood on the very balcony where he had watched a triumphant Hutton wave to joyous fans, 'tears rolled from his eyes as a shiver went up his spine' as he too waved to an adoring crowd, a few of whom were yelling "PAKISTAN ZINDABAD" – long live Pakistan.

Fazal was caught in a moment of joy and exhilaration that only few cricketers have ever achieved. His contribution on the field had been enormous and the ramifications off the field were greater still. The English media led with their side being 'Fazal-ed' and as news crossed continents the response in Pakistan was overwhelming. All educational establishments were given a national holiday as Prime Minister Ali cabled his best wishes: 'Well done. We are all very happy and very proud of you. You have put Pakistan on the cricket map of the world'. A cheque for R1000 was also drawn in Fazal's name.

Len Hutton, almost grudgingly, accepted the skill of Fazal: 'As good [of his type] as any I've played against', but couldn't resist mentioning what Bedser might have done. But Bedser hadn't played and having carefully laid down a banana skin the English team had obligingly trodden on it and, mostly due to Fazal, slipped to defeat.

Fazal could look back on "the happiest day of my life" for many long years as his country grew in stature and maturity through difficult times.

‘Cricketing success was one of the early bonds of nationhood’ wrote Omar Kureishi and Fazal’s role would not be forgotten by later generations. When Fazal died in 2005 Shoaib Akhtar praised a great man: “A great chapter of fast bowling has ended today. He was always kind and generous to me and it’s a loss for all the cricket players in Pakistan for he was the torch bearer.” A great chapter indeed and the purplest of many purple passages was his 6-46 in the shadow of the gasometers in south London.

Pakistan

Hanif Mohammad	lbw b Statham	0
Alimuddin	b Tyson	10
Waqar Hasan	b Loader	7
Maqsood Ahmed	b Tyson	0
Imtiaz Ahmed†	c †Evans b Tyson	23
AH Kardar*	c †Evans b Statham	36
Wazir Mohammad	run out	0
Fazal Mahmood	c †Evans b Loader	0
Shujauddin	not out	16
Zulfiqar Ahmed	c Compton b Loader	16
Mahmood Hussain	b Tyson	23
Extras (nb2)		**2**
Total(all out; 51.4 overs)		**133**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/10 3/10 4/26 5/51 6/51 7/51 8/77 9/106 10/133

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JB Statham	11	5	26	2
FH Tyson	13.4	3	35	4
PJ Loader	18	5	35	3
JE McConnon	9	2	35	0

Hanif Mohammad	c Graveney b Wardle	19
Shujauddin	c May b Wardle	12
Waqar Hasan	run out	9
Maqsood Ahmed	c Wardle b McConnon	4
Imtiaz Ahmed†	c Wardle b Tyson	12
AH Kardar*	c & b Wardle	17
Alimuddin	lbw b Wardle	0
Wazir Mohammad	not out	42
Fazal Mahmood	b Wardle	6
Zulfiqar Ahmed	c May b Wardle	34
Mahmood Hussain	c Statham b Wardle	6
Extras (b3)		**3**
Total (all out; 92 overs)		**164**

Fall of wickets 1/19 2/38 3/43 4/54 5/63 6/73 7/76 8/82 9/140 10/164

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JB Statham	18	7	37	0
FH Tyson	9	2	22	1
PJ Loader	16	6	26	0
JE McConnon	14	5	20	1
JH Wardle	35	16	56	7

England

L Hutton*	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	14
RT Simpson	c Kardar b M Hussain	2
PBH May	c Kardar b Fazal Mahmood	26
DCS Compton	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	53
TW Graveney	c H Moh'd b F Mahmood	1
TG Evans†	c Maqsood b M Hussain	0
JH Wardle	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	8
FH Tyson	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	3
JE McConnon	c F Mahmood b M Hussain	11
JB Statham	c Shujauddin b M Hussain	1
PJ Loader	not out	8
Extras (lb1, w1, nb1)		**3**
Total (all out; 59.3 overs)		**130**

Fall of wickets 1/6 2/26 3/56 4/63 5/69 6/92 7/106 8/115 9/116 10/130

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
Fazal Mahmood	30	16	53	6
Mahmood Hussain	21.3	6	58	4
Zulfiqar Ahmed	5	2	8	0
Shujauddin	3	0	8	0

L Hutton*	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	5
RT Simpson	c & b Zulfiqar Ahmed	27
PBH May	c Kardar b Fazal Mahmood	53
DCS Compton	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	29
TG Evans†	b Fazal Mahmood	3
TW Graveney	lbw b Shujauddin	0
JH Wardle	c Shujauddin b F Mahmood	9
FH Tyson	c †I Ahmed b F Mahmood	3
PJ Loader	c Waqar Hasan b M Hussain	5
JE McConnon	run out	2
JB Statham	not out	2
Extras (lb2, nb3)		**5**
Total (all out; 68 overs)		**143**

Fall of wickets 1/15 2/66 3/109 4/115 5/116 6/121 7/131 8/138 9/138 10/143

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
Fazal Mahmood	30	11	46	6
Mahmood Hussain	14	4	32	1
Zulfiqar Ahmed	14	2	35	1
Shujauddin	10	1	25	1

Morne Morkel – 16.4-7-23-6

New Zealand v South Africa, Wellington 23-27 March 2012

-Rodney Ulyate-

Contributors weren't exactly lining up to take on this chapter. One rejected it outright. He knew little of the performance, he said, and thought even less of the performer. His attitude is widespread. Morne Morkel's six for 23 has never been a YouTube staple; it has never won extended tributes in prose. Nor, for the matter of that, are there very many features on Morkel himself. Admittedly he is a timid beast and, in English especially, not his first language, has difficulty opening up. But still it seems curious that he should have attracted so little attention from those whose vocation it is to write about the game. He is, after all, the one constant or invariable in the pre-eminent bowling attack of the past half decade. He also enjoys the highest esteem of his peers. To date he has collected almost 250 wickets. And yet so incurious are the game's journalists and thought leaders that even the most striking thing about him, his height, remains a mystery. Estimates vary from 1.96 to 2.02 metres, and we are now some 10 years into his career, but as of this writing there is nothing definitive. Apparently no-one has thought to check.

The preferred mode in writing about Morkel is the viscous jeremiad; the preferred tone is 'more in sorrow than in anger.' Firdose Moonda and Ryan Vrede, of Cricinfo and SA Cricket respectively, wear this countenance as well as anyone, but even they are starting to wear it thin. They have written the same essay, or rather typed it, about a half-dozen times between them. Casting their subject as a lumpen grock and a one-trick pony, they bewail his inconsistencies and deplore his squandered talent, and oh! how they wish he had more 'mongrel.' The bulk of this critique, now regnant, has its roots in prejudice and stereotype. Morkel may be tall and ungainly, and shy and awkward, and he may have a dense Afrikaans accent, but that doesn't make him a gormless yahoo. In point of fact, he is quite possibly the most thoughtful professional on the circuit today. He has to be, because he's not really all that talented.

To those who conflate or equate talent with physique, this appraisal will seem astonishing. Their astonishment may be disregarded. Tallness is in no sense a talent; it is only an attribute. The talented bowler, quite simply, is one to whom bowling comes naturally. For all his inches, it does not come naturally to Morkel. “I don’t enjoy my run-up”, he confessed recently. “I have been working on it forever, basically”. On his first-class debut, in 2004, it rendered him seventeen no-balls in a single five-over spell. During a T20 international in England eight years later, his malfunctioning action spat out a delivery so wide as to give comfort to Steve Harmison. Like all mortal strugglers, Morkel has a harder time getting out of bad habits than into good ones. Take that characteristic twirl at the top of his mark:

‘I am trying to get that turn out of my game, actually, but I have been doing it for so bloody long; it is tough to do it. When I first started, I felt my run-up was too short. I struggled, if I was standing stationary, to get enough momentum to the crease, so that little circle helped me to start on my left foot and give that extra momentum. Also, it helped in terms of not running in from too much of an angle...’

Dale Steyn and Vernon Philander, his long-time collaborators, would scarcely grasp the language used here. For them it is a simple matter of running in. But to Morkel, perforce, considerations like these are crucial. He is obsessed with the enginery of his action and the mechanics of his approach, and takes the rudiments as seriously as a novice. When I downloaded his ‘Smart Trainer’ video series, with its almost insultingly simple drills, my first instinct was to suspect a piss-take. By all accounts, though, he carries them out himself. No platitude is intended when he speaks of “sticking to the basics” and the same is true of “giving 100 per cent.” According to his bowling coach Charl Langeveldt, he takes the palm as “the hardest worker ever...one of those guys who never opts out of an optional training.” But he shrugs when congratulated on his industry: “I have to work hard.” He has no choice.

These facts have not escaped his critics, but they have been subservient to the demands of the ‘narrative,’ and in Morkel’s case there are narratives aplenty. One more, before we move on:

‘Even when Morkel was part of what was being labelled as the world’s best

opening pair, it was Steyn who did put fear into the hearts of batsmen intentionally, using swing, pace and a bullying glare. Morkel had the ability to hurt them, and sometimes he did, but he never tried to do that with anything other than the ball. There were no clever, or even not so clever, quips, no piercing stares that cut through a batsman's confidence, and no over-heating to approach combustion, the way a typical fast bowler fumes.'

That was Moonda. This is Vrede:

'His genial nature...makes for wonderful pub company, but is a quality not shared by the very best fast bowlers the game has seen. They were snarling dogs, frothing at the mouth, ready to strike simply because you were in their domain.'

Unless, of course, their names were Shaun Pollock, Tom Richardson, Trent Boult or Lasith Malinga. The great West Indies attacks of the 1980s rarely sledged either, for the simple reason that they had no need to. Nor does Morkel, or the Steves Harmison and Finn, who have been dogged forever by the same asseverations. Our suspicion must be that these, too, have their rootage in the urge to stereotype. You never hear it said of a diminutive off spinner, for example, that he could benefit from effing and blinding and knitting his brows. To demand it of Morkel is to demand it of one who is quite intimidating enough without it. He really can let the ball do the talking.

Early on in his career, callow and impressionable, and over eager to impress, he had been too attentive to these carping non sequiturs. "He was hearing so many things from the outside", recalled then-coach Mickey Arthur, "and he wasn't sure what to believe. Because Morne is such a nice guy, he gave everybody who wanted to tell him something the chance to do so, and that only confused him more." His solution was to redouble his workload, but "the harder I tried to prove people wrong, the deeper I got into trouble." ("He's at his best", confirms Allan Donald, his long-time mentor and sometime tutor, "when he's not trying too hard, when he's just backing his ability.") "As soon as I started focusing my energy on just enjoying my cricket, the results went my way." Hence, too, his embrace of the basics.

It also helped, in 2010, to be deputed to take the new ball. It gave him "greater clarity about my role in the team." As Richard Pybus, his franchise coach, drove home at the time, "He's a strike bowler. He's nobody's first-

change bowler. He needs to get that new ball in his hand and let it rip!" Opening every innings of the calendar year (of which by far the majority were in the fast-bowling necropoleis of the Caribbean and the subcontinent), he finished it with almost 50 wickets at an average at 24.06, compared with 61 at 34.49 in previous years. Moonda and Vrede claimed vindication, adducing greater consistency and a new-found streak of nasty.

Midway through the following season, they were again deploring the want of these things. Philander had arrived and (as documented in a prior chapter) usurped the new ball in his very first match. Morkel admits that his confidence was totalled. Even on the gamey pitches of that South African summer – the Australians were rolled over for 47, and the Sri Lankans for 180 and 150 – his average in the new role surmounted 37. After a galling display against New Zealand at Dunedin in March, he sat down with Donald and Gary Kirsten, then on the Proteas coaching staff, "and we discussed my lengths; at times I was a touch short". Or, as Donald elaborated, "he was guilty of bowling a safe length that looked good when it went through to the keeper." Shorn of the hard ball, and its movement and bounce, he was not brave enough to attack. "We've encouraged him to go a bit fuller, to get into the 'hot zone': the six-yard area where his bounce really comes into play."

The second Test brought no statistical improvement, but there was a marked advance in the quality of his performance. It nurtured the environment in which Steyn and Philander flourished, grabbing 15 wickets between them as South Africa swept to a three-day victory. Morkel's contribution was less amenable to measurement, and inevitably drew brickbats from those who believe that cricket is played on a calculator, but his colleagues were in no doubt as to its value. Philander was almost rhapsodic:

"This attack gives me the freedom to do what I need to do. We've got guys who can keep it tight. They keep a hold on the game and give me the chance to strike all the time and to put my skills on show."

In this role, at his best, Morkel is a holding bowler with a difference. Where others 'keep it tight' with monotony of line and length, he builds pressure through discomfort, and with the latent threat of physical harm. 'He applies the basting', Moonda would observe, 'so someone else can do the roasting.' A couple of opposition batsmen confided privately to the journalist Neil

Manthorp ‘that facing Philander – and even Steyn – is more “comfortable” than facing Morkel, whose extra pace and bounce have made life extremely awkward.’ Despite the fuller length, he hit the splice repeatedly, discomposing the front-foot rhythm into which they had settled against the other two.

The premature termination of the Hamilton Test left the South Africans with two full days off. Some spent the time visiting old friends in the diaspora. Others went in for fishing and tourism. Morkel, restless, drove to Wellington a day in advance, to be greeted by biblical flooding and gale-force winds. Roofs had been torn from buildings; twenty-ton trucks were blown off the roads. The first pre-match practice session, booked at the Basin Reserve, was relocated to the interior facilities of Westpac Stadium’s School of Cricket, on whose concrete nets, hard and bouncy, Morkel was precluded from operating at more than fifty per cent. “The only good thing about this”, he sighed, “is that it lets us get out of the hotel.”

After successive days of useless indoor activity, and of violent activity out of doors, the gods took mercy, the sun emerged, and the South Africans paid their first visit to the Basin Reserve. There they perambulated the outfield and inspected the wicket, trying to “get a feel for the place, for those who haven’t been here before.” All this was especially important to Morkel, whose habit it is, before any big match, to

‘choose a point – usually at the top of his run – and then slowly walk towards the pitch. Then he’ll go into his “gather,” much as he would do when he bowls, do a gentle follow-through, stand at the crease and just stare, straight ahead.’

He sets great store by these visualisation techniques, but it would be some time before he could put them to use in this match. Despite encouraging early signs, the elements permitted only 79 overs on the first two days, by the end of which, having lost the toss, South Africa were 246 for two.

Morkel went for a jog that evening with conditioning coach Rob Walter – what with one thing and another, he had hardly broken a sweat since Hamilton – and happened to bump into Manthorp, who eyed their bright green tracksuits with concern:

‘“You look a bit conspicuous”, I suggest. “Couldn’t you wear something a bit

more ‘anonymous’?”
“No problem”, says Walter. “This is rugby country.
Barely 200 metres down the road, there was an animated yell from a first-floor window. “Morné! Morné!” It turned into a chant by a chorus of at least ten people – students as it transpired. Morkel looked perplexed, wary that it was either a prank or potentially aggressive. In fact, it was pure, unadulterated fan worship. He gave them a wave, followed by that boyish, endearing grin.’

The weather turned again on day three. When Morkel went out to bat, the sky was naked and the air almost warm, and he celebrated by booming his first ball into the road beyond cow corner. The innings was declared an over later at 474 for nine.

The New Zealand openers, Martin Guptill and Daniel Flynn, started solidly enough: sixteen without loss in six overs, and not a single delivery going past the edge. But then came Morkel and a volley of bouncers, most of them levelled at Flynn, who took jabs to the hip, the trunk and the gloves. Having never played against him before (this being his first Test in years) Morkel had reconnoitred the video archives in preparation. They disclosed a vulnerability to the short ball. Flynn endured, just about, and by close of play was unbeaten on 35, but day four brought no respite. ‘The relentlessness of the pace barrage was ferocious and frightening from the commentary box’, recalled Manthorp. ‘God knows what it must have been like in the middle.’ Flynn, softened up again by Morkel before losing his wicket to Philander, tried to give an impression:

“They’re at you the whole time. It’s a quality attack, and there are no freebies out there. I think you’d find a lot of people would probably say they are the best seam-bowling attack going around in world cricket at the moment.”

Comparisons were made freely with the great Caribbean batteries of 30 years before, especially when Ross Taylor took a wanning blow to the forearm. The damage was visible immediately, and the magic spray was unavailing, and Taylor lasted only one ball more before retiring hurt. He would have to undergo surgery, jeopardising his uninsured $1.1 million contract with the Indian Premier League. Morkel, slated to appear alongside him for the Delhi Daredevils, was unapologetic. “I don’t think the Delhi people are going to be

happy with me", he grinned, "but that's part of the game. I can't pitch every ball up!"

New Zealand avoided the follow-on by a solitary run. Morkel's figures, none for 54, again belied his excellence, which was recognised that evening with some very welcome news. 'Think I'm getting the yellow jersey!!' he tweeted the next morning. (This was Morkel-speak for 'taking the new ball'.) 'Bn up since 3am!! What to do!!' His first thought was to dial up friends and family, but in his excitement he inadvertently erased every contact from his mobile phone. Instead he committed the nervous energy to playing with Kirsten's children, and before leaving for the ground took a steadying 20-minute bath. Graeme Smith declared an hour into the final day, leaving New Zealand a target of 389. With South Africa already one-nil up, he saw no reason to lend them a lifeline: "I didn't think they deserved any more".

Morkel was keen to start strong. "The first twenty balls", he recently observed, "any batsman in the world is vulnerable." His fourth, to an extremely vulnerable Guptill, was as strong as they come, hooping in before nipping away and drawing the outside edge. It fully deserved a wicket, but then so did the follow-up: nasty, brutish and short. Guptill took his eyes off it, and in turn it took his glove, but again he got lucky. The injustice was immediately corrected when Flynn parried a lifter to wicket-keeper Mark Boucher for the 999th (and final) dismissal of his international career. The score was one for one.

Brendon McCullum, in at number three, was greeted by another short ball, smacking his thigh and pegging him back for the sequel, which hit him on the full in front of leg stump. When the appeal was upheld and the review overruled, Morkel's figures were perfection itself: 2.5-2-0-2 quite justified his promotion. Smith described it as "a captain's hunch". South Africa had gone wicketless with the new ball in the first innings; just 21 minutes into the second, they already had two. Morkel's next over, to the new batsman Kane Williamson, found the edge once more, but silk-soft hands smothered the momentum, and it dropped well short of the cordon. The same thing occurred in the over after that, when Guptill couldn't choose between playing and leaving, and ended up doing a bit of both. There were other near things before lunch, but no further damage accrued.

Having taken a restorative shower, Morkel returned in fine fury, and with his seventh ball of the afternoon session all but decapitated Guptill. Runs dried up at both ends, Steyn going for just three in nine overs, Williamson

taking about the same length of time to move into double figures, and Guptill dead-batting anything he could not leave. With no attempt to ease the pressure, it could not be long before it told. Another hot-zone delivery, jagging in from outside off, kissed the blade and fell to Jacques Rudolph in the gully, and after 99 minutes of stifling immobility, Guptill was out for 18. The score, 32 for three, should have been 33 for four not long after, when Williamson cut one through the hands of the same fielder.

The scoring picked up when Morkel availed himself of a 13-over breather. In 85 deliveries, Williamson and Dean Brownlie moved to their second 50-run partnership of the match. But when Morkel returned he brought the shackles back with him, extracting speed and spring from a wicket his fellows were pounding in vain. His manipulation of length was canny and controlled; his height (approximately three metres at the point of release) made these variations almost impossible to pick. In the space of four deliveries, each one shorter than the last, he pushed Brownlie deep into his crease, with all his weight on the back foot. The yorker that followed was even better than McCullum's. 83 for four.

When Daniel Vettori took guard, he braced himself for a similar sequence, but the bowler was a step ahead. There would be no set-up this time, no preliminary bouncer; instead he went straight for the yorker. The stumps parted compliantly. Morkel vanished beneath a scrum of team-mates. His figures, 10-5-8-5, were the stuff of fiction. In the wicket-taking role, he recognised, "you can't just be a one-dimensional, one-length bowler. You need to mix it up."

He continued to mix it up for the new batsman, his former compatriot Kruger van Wyk: first a good length outside off; then straighter, shaping in towards middle; then back of a length on off stump; then a bouncer; and then, finally and unavoidably, the yorker. But van Wyk passed the test, more or less, and New Zealand entered the break 38 overs from safety. Their chances improved markedly on the resumption, when Morkel felt a squeeze in his lower back and retired from the field. The sheer effort of the thing was beginning to tell.

South Africa made no inroads in his 14-over absence. He returned with the knowledge that it was all on him. To his first delivery, pitching in that hot zone around off-stump, van Wyk fashioned one of those leaves of whose merits and intentions only the batsman can be certain. There was a collective exhalation as the ball passed over the stumps. A yorker-cum-full-toss

appeared to have leavened the tension – it was the first boundary off Morkel's bowling, in the 60th over of the innings – but then he struck van Wyk in the box. The batsman was unnerved and unmanned. The bowler could sense it. Immediately he went fuller. The ball pinged off a reluctant drive, and Morkel held a superb reflex catch, taking his numbers to six for 18 (the best of his international career), and making him the first South African in over a century to secure the first six wickets of an innings.

Only nineteen overs and the tail-enders remained. Doug Bracewell was the first of the latter, but on current form, with three consecutive ducks, by some distance the least promising. Twice he dallied outside the off stump, once to Steyn and once to Morkel, but Williamson warded the strike cleverly, reaching his century with 12 overs to go. Morkel retired to the outfield in pain. It was at this point that Taylor, recuperating at a nearby hotel, heard his phone ring: Would he be able to bat, if needed? He took barely a moment to consider: "You don't often get to save a Test match."

The Proteas blew their last chance while he was negotiating the Wellington traffic, when AB de Villiers dropped Bracewell off Steyn. Morkel returned at the death, but the zip had gone out of his bowling. He tried everything, an over of full stuff following an over of short stuff, and might conceivably have done harm with the second new ball, but Smith's declaration had left only 81 overs. After four bootless deliveries, the players shook hands, the sparse crowd rose to its feet, and Morkel walked away with what remains the best analysis of his first-class career.

In retrospect it seems wondrous: an out-of-form fast bowler, underprepared and of fragile confidence, running into the wind, heedless of pain and criticism, and flogging the life out of a lifeless surface, against a risk-averse opponent bent only on survival. His pace and bounce were extraordinary, a feat as much of athleticism as of skill. Moonda and Vrede, inevitably, put it down to the emergence of his 'mongrel,' and to a new-found 'consistency' but there had been no sledging or glowering, or pouting or chuntering, and in a sense it was precisely because of his inconsistency – his elusive modifications in line, length and speed – that he harvested such a bounty. Only one other entry in this book's top twenty overcame the handicap of not having furthered a winning cause, the next best being at number 18. It is appreciated on its own terms. One day, hopefully, the same will be true of Morkel.

South Africa

GC Smith*	c †van Wyk b Bracewell	5
AN Petersen	lbw b Martin	156
HM Amla	c †van Wyk b Gillespie	63
JP Duminy	c Taylor b Gillespie	103
AB de Villiers	b Martin	38
JA Rudolph	c †van Wyk b Gillespie	11
MV Boucher†	c Williamson b Gillespie	46
DW Steyn	c Guptill b Gillespie	0
VD Philander	c Flynn b Gillespie	29
M Morkel	not out	10

Did not bat: M de Lange

Extras (b6, lb1, w3, nb3)	**13**
Total (9 wickets; 148.4 overs)	**474**

Fall of wickets 1/13 2/106 3/306 4/362 5/381 6/388 7/404 8/459 9/474

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CS Martin	28	5	95	2
DAJ Bracewell	30	3	106	1
MR Gillespie	33.4	7	113	6
DL Vettori	42	11	98	0
DG Brownlie	2	0	20	0
KS Williamson	13	1	35	0

AN Petersen	run out (Bracewell/†v Wyk)	39
GC Smith*	c Bracewell b Vettori	41
AB de Villiers	c Williamson b Bracewell	68
JP Duminy	not out	33

Did not bat: HM Amla, JA Rudolph, MV Boucher†, DW Steyn, VD Philander, M Morkel, M de Lange

Extras (1b3, w3, nb2)	**8**
Total (3 wickets dec; 29.4 overs)	**189**

Fall of wickets 1/77 2/106 3/189

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CS Martin	10	0	44	0
DAJ Bracewell	6.4	0	47	1
MR Gillespie	6	0	55	0
DL Vettori	7	1	40	1

New Zealand

DR Flynn	c †Boucher b Philander	45
MJ Guptill	lbw b Philander	59
BB McCullum	c †Boucher b Steyn	31
LRPL Taylor*	retired hurt	18
KS Williamson	c †Boucher b Steyn	39
DG Brownlie	c Steyn b Philander	29
DL Vettori	c Rudolph b Philander	30
CFK van Wyk†	c sub b de Lange	7
DAJ Bracewell	b Philander	0
MR Gillespie	c de Villiers b Philander	10
CS Martin	not out	2
Extras (lb2, w2, nb1)		**5**
Total (all out; 96 overs)		**275**

Fall of wickets 1/86 2/136 3/145 3/160* 4/219 5/242 6/263 7/263 8/263 9/275

Bowling	O	M	R	W
DW Steyn	23	8	41	2
VD Philander	22	4	81	6
M Morkel	20	6	54	0
M de Lange	21	1	74	1
JP Duminy	10	0	23	0

MJ Guptill	c Rudolph b Morkel	18
DR Flynn	c †Boucher b Morkel	0
BB McCullum	lbw b Morkel	0
KS Williamson	not out	102
DG Brownlie	b Morkel	15
DL Vettori	b Morkel	0
CFK van Wyk†	c & b Morkel	39
DAJ Bracewell	not out	20

Did not bat: LRPL Taylor*, MR Gillespie, CS Martin

Extras (lb6)	**6**
Total (6 wickets; 80.4 overs)	**200**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/1 3/32 4/83 5/83 6/163

Bowling	O	M	R	W
M Morkel	16.4	7	23	6
VD Philander	18.4	6	29	0
M de Lange	17.2	4	77	0
DW Steyn	15	9	14	0
JP Duminy	13	2	51	0

Richie Benaud – 32-11-70-6

England v Australia, Manchester 27 July-1 August 1961

-Patrick Ferriday-

After four days of play, and four tough days at that, Australia's captain Richie Benaud was able to relax alone in his hotel room with the game in the balance and aware that this was the calm before the storm. As he plotted England's demise for the following day he entertained himself with tapes of the light opera of Gilbert and Sullivan. Just maybe the lines from *The Mikado* fell upon his ears:

> *But I have a left shoulder-blade that is a miracle of loveliness. People come miles to see it. My right elbow has a fascination few can resist…It is on view Tuesdays and Fridays, on presentation of a visiting card.*

But it was his right shoulder-blade (and elbow and wrist and fingers and, above all, brain) that would decide the Test match and this joint was now, finally, in perfect working order after collapsing on the first day of the tour at Worcester. And the next day would be a Tuesday.

The death of Richie Benaud in 2015 was inevitably and rightly followed by an outpouring of tributes, reminiscences, anecdotes and in-depth appreciations. Nobody has been so omnipresent in the game of cricket over the last 60 years – his glorious glow spreads across the game as player, captain, teacher, writer, broadcaster, sage and facilitator. Privately, his influence as friend, advisor and sometime-critic influenced generations of players, spectators, journalists and administrators. It wasn't just that he was armed with great skill, a sharp mind and understated verbal dexterity. He was equipped with unstoppable belief and optimism; two qualities he employed both on and off the field. After retiring in 1964 with a reputation as a top-class allrounder and a great captain, it was cricket's good fortune that Benaud chose to give another five working decades to the game and so became

familiar to generations of fans and not just those who had grown up watching grainy images of Fidel Castro, Yuri Gagarin and Rocky Marciano. And what changes he saw, described and illuminated.

On 21 July 1961, bottom-of-the-table Northamptonshire were on the cusp of a famous victory over the touring Australians in the gloaming of the final day; the scores were level with two balls left and four wickets in hand. The home side couldn't lose. The first of the two was hit into the covers and the second went through to the wicket-keeper – non-striker Albert Lightfoot calmly sat on the splice and the game was drawn.

Benaud had been enduring a difficult summer but this game at Northampton and the one after at Middlesex were the first he had played without pain. This was not the final valedictory trip to England he had envisaged, Charles Fortune recalled thinking: 'Poor chap. He's been a fine cricketer and captain but this time it's gone. No wickets, no runs. Sad this should happen when he's captain but that's the way it goes.'

Having led his side to an unexpected and comprehensive trouncing of England in 1958-59 and victory in the greatest series ever against West Indies in 1960-61, not to mention beating both India and Pakistan away in one exhausting five-month tour, his third trip to England was a personal crusade after the torments of 1953 and 1956. The side he led included two world-class veterans in Alan Davidson and Neil Harvey; a clutch of scrappers in Ken Mackay, Wally Grout, Colin McDonald and Peter Burge; a group of largely unproven batsmen in Bill Lawry, Bobby Simpson and Norm O'Neill and top fast-bowling prospect Graham McKenzie. On paper England appeared to have the stronger bowling for English conditions and with Peter May, Colin Cowdrey, Ted Dexter and Ken Barrington the batting was hardly shabby.

England had recovered from a poor start to draw the first Test. Lawry's runs and the double spearhead of McKenzie and Davidson had secured victory at Lord's under the captaincy of Harvey. Benaud returned at Leeds, on a wicket branded a 'disgrace to cricket' by Ray Lindwall, where his contribution was a pair and 2-108 in an eight-wicket defeat as Fred Trueman's 11-wicket fusillade was too much for all bar Harvey. One-all with two to play and one victory required to keep the Ashes down under.

Benaud had done nothing all summer but now he was properly fit he felt sure he had a major role to play. Certainly his place in the team was never questioned. With the two Colins, McDonald and Cowdrey, injured both sides

selected three seamers and only one specialist spinner, Benaud and David Allen, with support from part-timers Brian Close and Simpson if required. England's decision to play Jack Flavell rather than Tony Lock was the only contentious selection.

Benaud could hardly have helped having a degree of apprehension going in to the match. After victory in the Leeds match, most commentators believed that the impetus was with England especially as Brian Statham was now back for England in time for his home Test. The Australian press was hardly gung-ho and Benaud used one article that included the words 'temperament' and 'disintegration' as a dressing-room door red-rag to his bulls. He was sure of his men – he knew they were not the greatest side but he also knew that they were united, under his leadership and, equally importantly, had bought in heavily to the ethos of bright and attractive cricket.

It's easily forgotten that the young Benaud of the mid-'50s was a controversial and sometimes lambasted figure with his shirt open almost to the navel while hopping, pirouetting and hugging team-mates – not quite Elvis but a far cry from Jim Laker's laconic nonchalance as he calmly took his sweater and chucked it over his shoulder on completing his 19-wicket rout of Australia. Benaud found huge joy and excitement in cricket and was never afraid to show it, resembling an electrified marionette though far removed from the fist-pumping machismo of the present day. On assuming the captaincy after Ian Craig contracted hepatitis, a surprise in itself as vice-captain Neil Harvey was overlooked, he quickly established a fresh approach. Team meetings became the norm with all players asked to contribute to the success of the side both on and off the field. He also gave great thought and energy to public relations; Ray Robinson thought he was so far ahead in this department that binoculars would be needed to keep up with his progress. The reality was that Benaud had found his forte as Johnnie Moyes recognised:

'Often in life and in cricket we see the man who has true substance in him burst forth into stardom when his walk-on part is changed for one demanding personality and a degree of leadership. I believe that this is what happened to Benaud.'

After hanging up his flannels, that joy in cricket was given much quieter expression but his relish and consideration shone through every sentence and pregnant pause. He bestowed countless games, players and individual performances with his own brand of understated kudos and brought legitimacy to everything he touched. He worked hard at all his trades and sought out the best to teach him, from Bill O'Reilly's leg breaks to the precise brevity of legendary BBC voices Dan Maskell and Henry Longhurst. When he joined Kerry Packer as an advisor and commentator then World Series Cricket had, for thousands, arrived as a real alternative to the established order. Then when the BBC surrendered its coverage of Test cricket it was the sight of Benaud at a microphone emblazoned with the Channel 4 logo that gave instantaneous credence and credibility to the new broadcaster. Somehow we all trusted Benaud not to climb into bed with some two-bit fly-by-nights. He had the happy knack of backing the right horse and doing the right thing; a rare and valuable combination. He was lucky so often that it clearly wasn't just luck and that was how he had played the game as well.

In July 1961 luck seemed to have, if not deserted Benaud then at least been on the ebb but he was heartened to see that one newspaper at least, *The Times*, thought things might be about to change for Australia's captain.

'As soon as Benaud was able to bowl in his old form the Australians looked a different side…if their captain is allowed to play on England's nerves his recovery could decide the series.'

His first move was to win the toss and bat on a 'green but true' wicket. But with the weather overcast and the English ship stuffed to the gunnels with seam-bowling menace he was gambling on the skill of his batsmen to weather the early storm and set a true course to victory. When play was halted for the day after just 150 minutes it seemed he had erred. The pitch had been as lively, and more, as expected and the cream of the Australian batting had been curdled at 124-4. It had been a harrowing and painful passage of play for all batsmen but Norm O'Neill had endured a nightmare. Struck painfully four times he expelled his breakfast before staggering into his stumps after being hit by a Trueman bouncer. He'd looked a novice. Lawry, however, stood firm with a snappy, unbeaten 64.

Play began on time the following day and if the pitch was playing slightly more easily the Australians couldn't see it. With Statham in flying form and Dexter an able foil, the innings melted away for just 190. In 20 minutes to play before lunch Davidson launched a full-blooded assault and was rewarded with the wicket of Raman Subba Row but as the day progressed England asserted. Captain May was at his pristine best and the day closed with him sitting smartly on 90 and England at 187-3. Little wonder that on the Saturday 32,000 spectators were shoehorned into the ground with all the grass behind the ropes covered with schoolchildren ready to celebrate May's century and a match-winning lead.

The day started brightly; Close smashed Benaud back over his head for a six and then smoked two more boundaries off the new ball. Then both batsmen fell, May five short of his century, and Barrington and 'keeper John Murray set about regrouping. At lunch the lead was 78 and by tea it had stretched to 171 with the pitch playing well. Another sudden lurch saw 'nine, ten, jack' fold tamely to Simpson's leggies and with that Australia faced an unenviable 83-minute onslaught and a deficit of 177. Not since 1894 had an Ashes game been won against such a first-innings minus and then it required a rain storm on the night of the fifth day creating a sticky for a showered-to-sobriety Bobby Peel to spin England to victory.

Those 83 minutes were fundamental to the outcome of the match – not only would the fall of any wickets make the arrears a match-deciding discrepancy but it would also break the back and hearts of the Australian side as surely as it would gird the loins of the English. That rookies Lawry and Simpson survived and expunged 63 of the deficit were the bare facts. That Subba Row floored a chance at slip added pain to those facts but perhaps most significant of all was a puff of dust. The bowler was Allen, the batsman left-hander Lawry and the culprit the footmarks of Trueman. The ball lifted, span and went straight to first slip. Sitting on the players balcony side-on to the pitch Benaud stroked his clean-shaven chin (courtesy of Smoothex), pondered what he had just seen and filed away the information. He'd be having a debrief with his openers at stumps and the views of this right/left-hand combination were not the only ones he sought.

The Monday after the rest day saw the gates closed and Australia batting like a team on the front foot – which they weren't. This was 'brighter cricket' in the flesh. Simpson completed his fifty, Lawry closed on his century and Harvey went after Allen. At lunch with nine wickets standing the gap

between the teams was down to just 27.

Benaud, while breakfasting on his favoured lamb chops, had thought to spend time with O'Neill. The youngster had been all-but humiliated in the first innings and was known to be a nervous starter but he was also a dashing talent who could turn a game on its head in an hour. Benaud felt this might be his kind of match and sought to improve his chances of being a 'lucky' captain by calmly talking through the day's possibilities. When Harvey was out it was time for O'Neill to face the music and when Lawry followed, shortly after completing his century, O'Neill was senior partner to Burge. Benaud's one-hour investment plan now paid handsome dividends as O'Neill led his partner in an attack on the new ball. They added 64 in good time until the game took yet another lurch in the final session as Statham removed O'Neill for a sparkling 67 and Dexter winkled out Burge and debutant Brian Booth leaving Mackay and Davidson to limp to stumps with their side again on the back foot with a lead of 154. The day had swayed to and fro but in the end honours were about even. For Benaud there was just one place to be as the huge crowd began their train journeys and walks to all parts of Manchester and beyond, and that was the centre of the square. How had those footmarks developed and would they form the core of his attack on the morrow?

While considering his approach, that of the team and the possible permutations on the final day Benaud sought the counsel of Ray Lindwall, recently retired and now working on his tour book The Challenging Tests. The question was, 'round or over'? The England team had five left handers including both openers but the real danger men were May and Dexter, both right handers. Could Benaud countenance bowling round the wicket to them and using the footmarks outside their leg stump? He recalled seeing Tony Lock at Sydney turning the ball out of Big Fred's 'rubbish' and the trouble it caused. He had used the tactic before to blunt big hitters but this was a different matter; Lindwall thought it worth a go and offered a warning with a grin: "But get off line and they'll kill you". He added that Benaud should return to over-the-wicket with defensive fields if England got on top. Harvey's wisdom was also summoned and the pair agreed that they had a decent chance of winning or at least getting England into a defensive position.

The day dawned bright and clear and the prospects could hardly have been

more exciting yet a ‘mere’ 15,000 were in the ground as play began. Benaud had ordered the heaviest roller with the obvious idea of trying to break up the wicket and Peter May trusted to spin and the rewards were bounteous – in 15 balls Allen had taken three wickets for no runs and Benaud’s plans were being hastily redrawn as he made his way back to the pavilion having fallen lbw for just a singleton. ‘Difficult to win from here!’ was his assessment and Davidson greeted the last man to the wicket with the words “Just play straight Garth and we’ll see what we can do”. The lead was an insufficient 157.

They did plenty. As Davidson shielded McKenzie from Allen, May was provoked into bringing on Close with spin clearly being the thing. Close could turn the ball but he was no Tony Lock and McKenzie climbed into two overs of filth and he was on his way. Davidson in turn launched a furious attack on Allen and the spell was broken as his last over went for 20. Statham and Trueman were recalled without success and by the time Flavell disturbed McKenzie’s stumps the pair had added 98 runs in even time. This left England requiring 256 to win in 230 minutes with 20 minutes batting before lunch. “We’ll do these jokers, Rich” were Davidson’s words as he unbuckled his pads and prepared for the last laugh.

In the press box the opinions of the great and the good were divided. Frank Worrell believed England could win if they were prepared to lose, Jim Swanton thought England would give it a go before settling for a draw and John Woodcock’s assessment was “we’ll lose three or four chasing them and then come to grief against Richie”.

Level in the series and with two to play but bidding to regain the Ashes, England were clearly minded to give it a shot. With strokemakers such as Dexter and May in the side this was no forlorn hope and Barrington, Close, Murray and Allen had all made runs in the first innings and could surely shore up the ramparts if incursion threatened. Furthermore the pitch was still playing well bar the footholds outside the left-handers’ off stump and three of the bowlers were inconvenienced by injuries – Davidson’s back, McKenzie’s knee and Mackay’s calf being the afflictions. Twenty without loss by lunch in even time was England’s statement of intent.

After lunch the score doubled, still at a run-a-minute, before Pullar pulled a long hop into mid-wicket’s hands. This setback was soon forgotten as the out-of-form Dexter rediscovered his genius. Subba Row coped, just, as Benaud wheeled away from the Stretford end while Dexter confidently, and with great orthodoxy, began to puncture the field as Australian hopes began

to deflate. The acceptance of mid-afternoon drinks was taken as an indication that Benaud was now playing for time. In fact it was a ‘time-out’ he wanted and an over-rate of 21 in the hour before tea was hardly that of a team fiddling for a draw.

During the afternoon session Benaud continued to occupy one end while rotating his other bowlers at the other but to no avail. Dexter’s assault continued in thrilling fashion. In this form and mood he was unstoppable; neither Barry nor Viv Richards could have been more imposing than this ‘modern Ajax’ as he raced to his fifty in an hour. The century stand came up in 79 minutes, Subba Row hit two boundaries, Dexter smashed Mackay over long-on for six and for all money the game was in the bank.

What was in the mind of the Australian captain? He’d tried almost everything and his final throw of the dice was to switch the angle of attack to Dexter. He’d already decided that a draw was now out of the equation; set a defensive field and England would pick up regular singles without risk and then be able to thrash the last 50 with wickets in hand, so attack was the only option and like all great generals he marshalled his forces. “Get into it then, I’m with you”, was the support from Harvey and “Good luck” from Grout as he surveyed Benaud’s chosen field. The effect wasn’t immediate as Dexter simply altered his axis and continued to plunder and Grout reminded Benaud that he had wagered a tidy sum on an Australian victory to which Benaud replied: “Stick with me Wal, we’re going to win this game”. He couldn’t possibly have believed his own words, could he?

Gradually Benaud began to tie down the rampant Dexter. At 150-1 the first crucial over began. Five perfectly pitched dot balls kept even the Sussex maestro quiet and when the sixth was pitched slightly shorter it seemed ripe for the picking. Dexter made to cut but a smidgeon of extra bounce took the edge and from there into Grout’s gloves. There is a wonderful image of the moment: Benaud is twisting round to appeal, Grout tossing the ball in the air, Simpson at slip in mid air and Subba Row, even from the rear, manages to look crestfallen. Benaud called it the ‘finest short innings’ he had seen in a Test while Ray Lindwall said ‘He murdered the Australian attack in a way I had never seen it treated at any time in my life’. With only 106 needed, in-form skipper May made his way to the crease to applause overlapping that for the departing hero.

If Subba Row had been dismayed and disturbed by the fall of one wicket he was also wise enough to realise that a second would be a disaster as he

scrabbled through a maiden from Mackay to leave captain-on-captain at the other end. Continuing round the wicket and leaving gaps in the leg-side field to invite May to play against the spin another crucial over began. The first ball was played safely back but the second, pitched well outside leg, looked sweepable and May swept without covering his leg stump. The ball jagged back and England's two finest were gone in a trice. The sight of Close rather than Barrington walking to the wicket was, however, an indication that victory was still England's stated aim. They had, after all, seven wickets in hand.

Close's brief stay has been described largely with opprobrium although Benaud himself thought the tactics reasonable but the execution poor. The left hander decided he would sweep and this was one of the moments in his career that was to define him as a heroic failure in Test cricket. Repeated botched attempts went unheeded although one superb strike over long-on scored six before Benaud placed his best fielder, O'Neill, at backward square-leg and Close obligingly top-edged the ball into the safest of hands. Then the sheet anchor was removed. Benaud drifted a beauty into the toes of Subba Row who sensed the chance to drive but was beaten as the ball went between bat and pad and took the stumps. An absolute ripper and with that the heart had been removed from the English batting. Remorseless attack, brilliantly executed had been rewarded with three choice wickets in 19 balls.

Two quick boundaries briefly altered the equation but it was a false dawn – Murray was taken in the slips from an orthodox leg break and then Barrington fell lbw to Mackay and the tail was fully exposed. When Allen hit two boundaries to show that the fat lady was still in the house, Benaud returned to his over-the-wicket attack and was rewarded, via an astonishing catch by Simpson who he rated the finest slipper he saw, with another breakthrough. Allen would have a long time to mull the dismissal on the slow train to Pontypridd that evening. With 67 required in 50 minutes the skipper dangled the carrot of Simpson's leg breaks in front of Trueman and returned Simpson's favour at first slip. As the score went past 200 and with the last pair at the wicket Benaud decided he would change ends and brought back Davidson who calmly bowled Statham to win the match and retain the Ashes. Sweet revenge indeed for the ignominy of the previous Ashes Test at Old Trafford and Laker's 19 wickets.

The captain had taken six wickets and conceded just 31 runs in doing so. He had taken out England's finest under the greatest pressure exploiting the

one man-made flaw in the pitch – Shane Warne could not have done it better. Ray Lindwall summarised this great performance:

‘I cannot praise his bowling too highly. It had been on a par with the batting of Davidson and Dexter in a momentous day’s cricket. At a time when it was imperative that he should not lapse in length or direction, Benaud bowled with the economy of a slow left-hander. Few back-of-the-hand spinners have been able to do that.’

He might also have mentioned the razor-like precision of the balls that took the wickets of Dexter, May and Subba Row. Not only had Benaud bowled Australia to victory, he had captained them to victory. While Peter May was dour and fearful at a number of crucial junctures, Benaud pushed forward. His belief and optimism enabled him to grab the winning chance when it presented itself; it was a model of aggressive captaincy and this, combined with his bowling skill, enabled Australia to fight back from a seemingly impossible position to win one of the greatest Tests ever played. England had indeed ‘come to grief against Richie’ as prophesied by John Woodcock, not for nothing the ‘sage of Longparish’.

As the Australians celebrated a famous victory and were graciously congratulated by the vanquished, Benaud sat with a glass of something sparkling in his hand when Norman O’Neill came over and, pointing at the team bath, said: “Go on Rich, dive in. With your luck you won’t get wet.’

Benaud had always claimed that captaincy was nine-tenths about luck and the small remainder skill. For once it’s possible to take issue. There was luck involved in the victory at Old Trafford but so much skill had made that luck possible that the two had become indistinguishable.

Australia

WM Lawry	lbw b Statham	74
RB Simpson	c †Murray b Statham	4
RN Harvey	c Subba Row b Statham	19
NCL O'Neill	hit wicket b Trueman	11
PJP Burge	b Flavell	15
BC Booth	c Close b Statham	46
KD Mackay	c †Murray b Statham	11
AK Davidson	c Barrington b Dexter	0
R Benaud*	b Dexter	2
ATW Grout†	c †Murray b Dexter	2
GD McKenzie	not out	1
Extras (b4, lb1)		**5**
Total (all out; 63.4 overs)		**190**

Fall of wickets 1/8 2/51 3/89 4/106 5/150 6/174 7/185 8/185 9/189 10/190

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FS Trueman	14	1	55	1
JB Statham	21	3	53	5
JA Flavell	22	8	61	1
ER Dexter	6.4	2	16	3

WM Lawry	c Trueman b Allen	102
RB Simpson	c †Murray b Flavell	51
RN Harvey	c †Murray b Dexter	35
NCL O'Neill	c †Murray b Statham	67
PJP Burge	c †Murray b Dexter	23
BC Booth	lbw b Dexter	9
KD Mackay	c Close b Allen	18
AK Davidson	not out	77
R Benaud*	lbw b Allen	1
ATW Grout†	c Statham b Allen	0
GD McKenzie	b Flavell	32
Extras (b6, lb9, w2)		**17**
Total (all out; 171.4 overs)		**432**

Fall of wickets 1/113 2/175 3/210 4/274 5/290 6/296 7/332 8/334 9/334 10/432

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
FS Trueman	32	6	92	0
JB Statham	44	9	106	1
JA Flavell	29.4	4	65	2
ER Dexter	20	4	61	3
DA Allen	38	25	58	4
DB Close	8	1	33	0

England

G Pullar	b Davidson	63
R Subba Row	c Simpson b Davidson	2
ER Dexter	c Davidson b McKenzie	16
PBH May*	c Simpson b Davidson	95
DB Close	lbw b McKenzie	33
KF Barrington	c O'Neill b Simpson	78
JT Murray†	c †Grout b Mackay	24
DA Allen	c Booth b Simpson	42
FS Trueman	c Harvey b Simpson	3
JB Statham	c Mackay b Simpson	4
JA Flavell	not out	0
Extras (b2, lb4, w1)		**7**
Total (all out; 163.4 overs)		**367**

Fall of wickets 1/3 2/43 3/154 4/212 5/212 6/272 7/358 8/362 9/367 10/367

Bowling	O	M	R	W
AK Davidson	39	11	70	3
GD McKenzie	38	11	106	2
KD Mackay	40	9	81	1
R Benaud	35	15	80	0
RB Simpson	11.4	4	23	4

G Pullar	c O'Neill b Davidson	26
R Subba Row	b Benaud	49
ER Dexter	c †Grout b Benaud	76
PBH May*	b Benaud	0
DB Close	c O'Neill b Benaud	8
KF Barrington	lbw b Mackay	5
JT Murray†	c Simpson b Benaud	4
DA Allen	c Simpson b Benaud	10
FS Trueman	c Benaud b Simpson	8
JB Statham	b Davidson	8
JA Flavell	not out	0
Extras (b5, w2)		**7**
Total (all out; 71.4 overs)		**201**

Fall of wickets 1/40 2/150 3/150 4/158 5/163 6/171 7/171 8/189 9/193 10/201

Bowling	O	M	R	W
AK Davidson	14.4	1	50	2
GD McKenzie	4	1	20	0
KD Mackay	13	7	33	1
R Benaud	32	11	70	6
RB Simpson	8	4	21	1

Curtly Ambrose – 18-9-25-7

Australia v West Indies, Perth 30 January-1 February 1993

-Rob Smyth-

When one reign of almost 15 years is followed by another, it's appropriate that the changing of the guard should involve an almighty struggle. This was the case in the first half of the 1990s, when West Indies and Australia produced a trilogy of memorable Test series that ended with one all-time-great team succeeding another. Australia were on the up, West Indies in slow decline, and they met halfway during an epic contest in 1992-93. At that time there was almost nothing between the sides. In fact, there was only one thing: Sir Curtly Ambrose.

The teams went to Perth for the fift h and final Test with the score 1-1. It was a Test Championship final in nature if not name, and there was widespread anticipation of an unyielding battle to determine who was the best team in the world. Not on Curtly's watch. He took such devastating advantage of a helpful pitch that the match and series were over by tea on the first day. Anti-climaxes don't come much more memorable.

His figures of 18-9-25-7 are spectacular enough, yet within those came one of the most famous spells in Test history: seven for one in 32 balls. Those numbers are a decent summary of everything that was great about Ambrose: his ability to sense and seize the moment, his constant wicket-taking menace, and – crucial, this – his suffocating economy. Seven for one. Seven for one. Seven for one.

Most of Ambrose's greatest performances came when he or his team were under extreme pressure. Nothing energised him like adversity. In that 1992-93 series, West Indies were 1-0 down with two to play, and knew an Australian win in either match would end their 13-year unbeaten run in Test series. Curtly was not having that.

The rivalry really got going two years earlier, when Australia went to the Caribbean fancying their chances of dethroning West Indies. A nasty series ensued, during which Australia were put in their place far more emphatically

than the 2-1 scoreline suggested.

By the time West Indies went to Australia in 1992, things had changed. They were playing their first Test series in 15 months and the first without the trio of Sir Vivian Richards, Jeff Dujon and Malcolm Marshall. Sir Richie Richardson was captaining them in a full series for the first time, and Ambrose was irritated that even the people of the Caribbean seemed to think they had little chance.

He was almost comically unlucky in the first three Tests yet still had a fine return of 14 wickets at 25. There are some who feel that the turning point of the Test series came during a one-day international. In the Benson & Hedges World Series finals against Australia, played between the third and fourth Tests, Dean Jones asked Ambrose to remove his white wristbands. Ambrose rarely lost his temper, but when he did there were consequences. After failing in his attempt to 'knock Dean Jones out with the ball', he settled for combined figures of eight for 58 in the best-of-three finals. The third match was not required. From there it was straight to Adelaide for the fourth Test, where he took 10 for 120, including Steve Waugh and Allan Border in both innings. The brutish lifter to dismiss a fiercely determined Border for one in the second innings was quite devastating.

Australia, chasing 186, slipped to 74 for seven before heroic batting from the debutant Justin Langer and the tailenders Tim May and Craig McDermott inched them towards a series victory and immortality. The fact it was Australia Day, and May's birthday, added to an increasingly powerful sense of destiny. As the Aussies got closer to their target, the crowd started singing Waltzing Matilda in an attempt to alleviate the tension.

Border sat with the rest of the Australian players in the viewing area. He had an old cricket ball that he played with in times of stress, flipping it from hand to hand, shining it and picking the seam. No ball in cricket history has been worked on as much as Border's worry ball that afternoon. This, as Gideon Haigh put it, was Border's Moby Dick. For over a decade he had been beaten and beaten up by West Indies, losing six consecutive series. He was one of their most respected opponents – nobody who played five Tests or more against them in the 1980s had a higher average than Border's 46.41 – yet his Australia teams could not lay a glove on them until now.

The last pair of May and McDermott, who came together with 42 needed, moved to within one run of a tie, two of victory. A McDermott pull shot hit the shin of the short-leg Desmond Haynes, who knew little about it. "There it

is!" said the commentator Greg Chappell. "Oh no it's not." Two balls later McDermott tried to avoid a lifter from Courtney Walsh and was given out caught behind by Darrell Hair. Walsh did not turn round to appeal and was halfway through a lap of honour when Hair raised his finger, so certain was he that McDermott had gloved it. To this day, however, it is unclear whether that was the case. Had DRS existed, the third umpire would probably have had a nervous breakdown.

When McDermott was given out Border stood up and slammed his worry ball into the ground with such force that it rebounded to hit the ceiling. Steve Waugh reckons it was 15 minutes before anyone in the Australian team said a word. 'AB took it hard', wrote Ian Healy in his autobiography, Hands & Heals. 'That was his big chance, and probably his last chance, to beat the West Indies, who'd been bouncing him since 1979. Geez, this game can hurt.'

To compound Australia's numbing misery, the deciding Test would be at Perth – the fastest, bounciest wicket in the world, where the West Indies' fast bowlers had smashed Australia out of sight in three previous Tests. When Border was reminded of West Indies' record at the WACA in early January, just after the third Test, he was bullish. 'Different personnel, different wicket, very different team…I wouldn't write us off yet', he said. 'We were supposed to win here [at Sydney]. Maybe we'll win at Perth.'

That confident hypothesis did not take into account the manner of their defeat at Adelaide – cricket's equivalent of an injury-time equaliser, when gold and green ribbons were already being metaphorically tied to the Frank Worrell Trophy – or the inescapable reality of facing Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Ambrose, Ian Bishop and Ambrose on a trampoline. There were only four days between the Tests; Australia could have done with four weeks. 'Perth came too soon after Adelaide', wrote Healy. 'I think the despondency we carried contributed to our effort there. We were crabby, distracted and looking for enemies.' There was an unusual, if understandable negativity among the Australian team as they wrestled with the impotent frustration of watching their dream evaporate. 'We didn't expect to lose in two and a half days at Perth', said Healy, 'but we hardly thought we had a chance of winning either.'

Mark Taylor was dropped after a poor series, which meant Justin Langer took on the unusual role of opener on his home ground. "In many ways I'd come

off this great high of my first Test match, which I still talk about to this day, but it was also a low because we'd lost the Test and we had to play the West Indies at the WACA", he says. "I also knew that us losing at Adelaide had an impact on Allan Border. The pressure was really on him, the pressure was therefore on us, Mark Taylor had been dropped, there was a lot going on. And the West Indies, true to form in those days at the WACA, they made a mess of us didn't they?"

The contrast with the mood in the Australian and West Indies' dressing-rooms could barely have been more acute. "Going to Perth, we knew we were going to win that Test", said Jimmy Adams. "Don't ask me how. We just knew." They had celebrated their win at Adelaide with a limbo party, at which Richardson played guitar and sang a few songs. Sir Garfield Sobers addressed the room, announcing that "form is temporary and class is permanent". West Indies, who were so close to going 2-0 down, were now 1-1 with power to add.

They were even happier when they saw the pitch on the first morning. The curator Scott Hamilton, worried about cracks opening up, left an unusual amount of grass on the wicket; that, allied to a bit of moisture and the trademark bounce, had Ambrose salivating. 'We looked at the pitch on the morning of the game, and it looked ripe for fast bowling', he said. 'I remember saying to Richie, "Skipper, if you win the toss, we will win the match".' (Ambrose liked to make such promises. Before the Melbourne Test of 1996-97, with West Indies 2-0 down, he matter-of-factly told the dressing-room: "Gentlemen, don't worry, I'm taking 10 in this match." He was wrong, but only just: his figures of nine for 72 settled the match inside three days.)

Richardson didn't win the toss, but it didn't matter because Border batted first. The decision received hardly any criticism, at the time or subsequently, more evidence of cricket's peculiar value system whereby only those captains who err by fielding first go into infamy. 'I was shocked, totally surprised, and could not understand their decision', said Ambrose in his autobiography, Time to Talk. 'I'm not just saying this because we won the game but any team would have had to have bowled first on that pitch. It was a big mistake on Allan Border's part as we would have had a hard time negotiating Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes and Jo Angel on that surface.'

West Indies had not only Ambrose but also Bishop and Walsh, both close to their peak, and the debutant Anderson Cummins. Australia started reasonably well, reaching lunch on 59 for two; Bishop dismissed Langer and

Steve Waugh, who was enduring a short and largely unsuccessful spell at number three. He never batted there again after this Test. Plenty thought that, at 27 and with an average of 35.76 from 49 Tests, Waugh was finished. In the next 11 years he played another 119 Tests and averaged 57.73. But on that day a combination of the pitch, the bowling and Waugh's mental state meant that he almost threw the towel in.

'Only once in my career did I face up and say to myself, "I don't know how I'm going to score any runs. This is too hard"', he wrote in his autobiography, Out of My Comfort Zone. 'The pitch was as hard as a cat's head and came complete with a green tinge and bounce that reared off a length like a cobra striking at a mongoose…I was "cooked" mentally, like a pulverised boxer awaiting the death knell. No escape seemed possible.'

And that was before Ambrose hit his straps. He did not make the batsmen play enough in the morning and said 'the radar was way off'. Though he had good-looking figures of none for 14 from eight overs, he knew he was nowhere near his own standards. Ambrose didn't go around telling people he was a perfectionist; he just was. During the lunch break he sat alone – 'the guys knew when to leave me be' – and administered a furious self-bollocking. At the end of the interval, his captain Richardson finally approached.

"Big fella, how you feeling?"
"I'm ready to bowl."

He found his range straight away. Mark Waugh was dropped at second slip by a leaping Phil Simmons and then almost dragged a big off cutter onto the stumps. There was little need for anything more spectacular than accuracy, such was the dual impact of Ambrose's bounce and the pitch. This was Perth squared – the batsmen had to worry about the usual

vertical threat and also the unusual horizontal movement. That was demonstrated by the monstrous delivery that dismissed Mark Waugh for nine. It moved a little off the seam and roared from a good length to take the edge as Waugh pushed defensively. The wicket-keeper Junior Murray took the catch and Ambrose celebrated by slugging the air with both hands. He was into his work now.

In his next over he landed a devastating one-two to completely change the mood of the match. One moment Australia were 90 for three; two balls

later they were 90 for five and had lost their twin rocks, David Boon and Border. The in-form Boon, restored to his old position of opener for a year to bridge the gap between Geoff Marsh and Michael Slater, had played superbly to reach 44, an innings full of meaty cut strokes. Ambrose had no interest in feeding Boon's cut, and instead got one to spit on off stump. Boon had to play and was caught off the splice by the diving Richardson in a wide slip position.

The length to dismiss both Waugh and Boon, just full of good, was immaculate. Ambrose called it the Perth-fect length. He didn't attack the top of off stump, he attacked the top of the bat. Six of the seven were caught behind or in the slips. Against Ambrose it was normal for the ball to get big on a batsman; at Perth it got huge.

"Some guys would get carried away with that bounce and also the movement, but Curtly identified that to take advantage you had to bowl particular lines and particular lengths", says Boon.

"He exploited pretty much every bit of help in that pitch. His greatest strengths were his control, his ability to obtain bounce out of any pitch – let alone that one at Perth – and to identify what his length should be. Once he did get on a roll, he was quite relentlessness. To come in on a pitch like that, with a guy that good and bowling as well as he could, was always going to be a difficult task."

Border could vouch for that. He was the next man in, and needed 50 runs to overtake Sunil Gavaskar as the leading run scorer in Test history. At 37 and with the next West Indies series two years away, this was his last chance to defeat them. He walked busily to the crease as usual, and then Ambrose mowed him down first ball. It was another snorter that lifted, seamed and demanded an instinctive defensive stroke that ended with an edge through to Murray. "An absolute beauty" was Richie Benaud's verdict on Channel 9. Ambrose's celebration, easily the most delirious of his seven wickets, was a huge compliment to Border. It would not have felt like it at the time. In perhaps the two most important innings of his career, spread across four days, he had scored one run and received two entirely unplayable deliveries from Ambrose.

Border would go on to get the first pair of his first-class career at the cruellest time.

Healy came into the match after a pair at Adelaide, and made it three ducks in a row when he edged an injudicious drive to first slip.

This was a tough, brilliant Australian batting line-up – between them the top seven would end up with 850 Test caps and over 54,000 runs – but Ambrose broke their will. It was too much for them: the pace, the bounce, the movement, the accuracy, the aura, the post-Adelaide fatalism.

And the grin. “He was like a smiling assassin”, says Langer.

“He smiled all the time, and it used to kill you. Some other bowlers would get angry and sledge you. Ambrose was the opposite. If you played and missed, he’d smile. If you left the ball, he’d smile. If he hit you on the body, he’d smile. If you hit him for four, he’d smile. If he got you out he did that double handclap and was laughing! It was really intimidating. It was a bloody nightmare.”

Merv Hughes, the next man after Healy, spooned a drive that was well taken by Keith Arthurton running back from cover. By now the scorers were scrambling around for details of Ambrose’s spell – five for nine since lunch, five for one off 23 balls since he dismissed Mark Waugh.

Langer grew up at the WACA and knew how hard it was to start an innings on that pitch at the best of times, never mind against a rampant Ambrose. “If it takes 20 balls to get in on most grounds around the world, at the WACA it takes 30. It’s a really hard place to get in, but when you do there’s no better place to bat. Our blokes just couldn’t get in that day.” Once Australia’s demise started with the wicket of Mark Waugh, only Damien Martyn hinted at getting in – and even he was out to his 30th delivery, edging a drive to second slip. The debutant Angel also edged a drive and Ambrose had seven for one in 32 deliveries. No bowler has taken seven or more wickets for fewer runs in a Test; and though Sarfraz Nawaz famously took seven for one in Australia in 1979, that included three no-balls in the days when they were not included in a bowler’s figures.

He finally conceded two runs in his 18th over, though he might have had an eighth wicket when McDermott somehow survived despite being hit on the pad in front of middle and leg by a very full delivery. Shane Warne was run out soon after, a consequence of Australia trying to get as many as possible at the other end, to complete a stunning demise from 85 for two to 119 all out.

The timing of Ambrose's performance could not have been better. "I firmly believe that he bowled within himself the majority of times", says Boon. "and he had the ability to step it up when he really needed to do so." There was enormous mutual respect between

Ambrose and Walsh and the Australian batsmen – the kind you only get when true champions recognise one another as worthy adversaries. 'He was the most complete bowler I played against,' said Steve Waugh, 'and the guy who tormented Australian teams more than anyone else.'

Ambrose rated it his fourth best spell overall – behind more overtly match-winning efforts in the fourth innings against England in 1990 and 1994 and South Africa in 1992 – but his best for rhythm. 'There was no one in world cricket at that time who could have subdued me', he said in Time to Talk. 'Not even Sir Donald Bradman in his pomp, or Sir Viv Richards or Sir Garfield Sobers. I was unstoppable. Everything was perfect.' The pitch was helpful but wickets did not come for free; the other fast bowlers took two for 86 between them.

There are times when Ambrose was driven by emotion and pride to spectacular effect, such as against England at Port of Spain in 1994, but this was a clinical, almost dispassionate dismantling. You can understand why, after the wicket of Martyn, the commentator Greg Chappell said "it's not really a six for one spell". There were no throat balls or flying stumps. But greatness takes many forms, and is often about the mundane demonstration of excellence under pressure. Ambrose's spell, in more ways than one, was a masterpiece of economy.

The only run in his 32-ball spell came from an inside-edge. He may not have said anything on the field but he sure knew how to nag batsmen. "When you face Ambrose it's like batting in a fishnet", says Langer.

"You feel suffocated because you can't move, you can't score. If you've got some physical courage and you're not intimidated by the thought of getting hurt, the biggest pressure in the game is when you can't score runs. That's what Ambrose did. You just could not score runs off him. I got off the mark in Test cricket with three runs down the ground at the Adelaide Oval, and I honestly reckon that's the last time I ever drove him. I played another six Tests against him and I never drove him. It was unbelievable."

When West Indies batted, Richie Richardson launched a calculated counter-

attack to ram home the advantage. He made 49 from 40 balls. By the close West Indies were 135 for one and the rest was a formality. The wicket became a little easier; more relevant was that Australia's spirit had been crushed. Simmons panelled 80 and Arthurton 77 to secure a lead of 203, and Bishop took six for 40 to bowl Australia out for 178 in their second innings. Ambrose settled for a couple, which gave him match figures of nine for 79 and a series record of 33 wickets at 16.42.

In that period, Ambrose was at his absolute peak. For a four-year period between 1990 and 1994, bookended by his match-winning spells against England, he played 28

Tests and took 150 wickets at 17.80. His career average of 20.99 is behind only Malcolm Marshall (20.94) and Joel Garner (20.97) of those with 200 Test wickets. He rarely did bad balls, never mind bad days. Astonishingly, in an five-year period from 1991 to 1996 he was never outside the top two of the ICC Test bowling rankings – and this in a golden age of fast and slow bowling.

The dramatic twist was a brutal blow to Australia and particularly Border. He retired in 1994, a year before Taylor's side finally dethroned West Indies with a 2-1 win in the Caribbean. Steve Waugh stood up to Ambrose on a vile pitch in Trinidad and then made 200 in the series decider at Jamaica. "It was fantastic to finally beat them in a series during my career", says Boon, who then answers the next question before it has even been asked. "The only disappointment I had with that was that Allan Border wasn't able to achieve that during his time, having fought for so long. That was a little sad and disappointing that he couldn't be playing, but the godsend was that he was there as a commentator and he could join in those celebrations."

Border and the former coach Bob Simpson, who between them picked Australia off the floor in the mid-1990s, were in the dressing-room after the series victory. It belonged to them too. "AB was probably the last to leave the celebration", says Langer. "I was in awe of him, but I gave him a few hugs that night. I didn't face one ball in the Test series but it's my favourite ever tour."

Ambrose says the 1992-93 series was easily the best victory of his career, because 'it was a team half full of rookies and no one gave us a chance'. At the end of the match he received the keys to a four-wheel drive as part of a clean sweep of honours: Man of the Match, Man of the Series, International Cricketer of the Year. The entire squad celebrated with a joyous lap of the

ground in Ambrose's new vehicle.

The Aussies were irritated by a few of the West Indies players wearing T-shirts that said *Form is temporary, class is permanent*, presumably in reference to Sobers' comments after Adelaide. Those T-shirts weren't quite right. With Ambrosein the early 1990s, even form was permanent.

Australia

JL Langer	c †Murray b Bishop	10
DC Boon	c Richardson b Ambrose	44
SR Waugh	c †Murray b Bishop	13
ME Waugh	c †Murray b Ambrose	9
DR Martyn	c Simmons b Ambrose	13
AR Border*	c †Murray b Ambrose	0
IA Healy†	c Lara b Ambrose	0
MG Hughes	c Arthurton b Ambrose	0
SK Warne	run out	13
J Angel	c †Murray b Ambrose	0
CJ McDermott	not out	2
Extras (lb8, w1, nb6)		**15**
Total (all out; 47.2 overs)		**119**

Fall of wickets 1/27 2/58 3/85 4/90 5/90 6/100 7/102 8/104 9/104 10/119

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CEL Ambrose	18	9	25	7
IR Bishop	11	6	17	2
CA Walsh	11.2	2	45	0
AC Cummins	7	0	24	0

DC Boon	b Bishop	52
JL Langer	c sub b Ambrose	1
SR Waugh	c sub b Bishop	0
ME Waugh	c Richardson b Bishop	21
SK Warne	c †Murray b Ambrose	0
DR Martyn	c Ambrose b Cummins	31
AR Border*	b Bishop	0
IA Healy†	c †Murray b Bishop	27
MG Hughes	c †Murray b Walsh	22
J Angel	not out	4
CJ McDermott	c Lara b Bishop	8
Extras (b1, lb6, nb5)		**12**
Total (all out; 57 overs)		**178**

Fall of wickets 1/13 2/14 3/66 4/67 5/95 6/95 7/130 8/162 9/170 10/178

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CEL Ambrose	21	8	54	2
IR Bishop	16	4	40	6
CA Walsh	12	2	46	1
AC Cummins	8	3	31	1

West Indies

DL Haynes	c †Healy b Hughes	24
PV Simmons	c SR Waugh b Angel	80
RB Richardson*	c Langer b McDermott	47
BC Lara	c Warne b McDermott	16
KLT Arthurton	c SR Waugh b McDermott	77
JC Adams	b Hughes	8
JR Murray†	c †Healy b ME Waugh	37
IR Bishop	c †Healy b ME Waugh	0
AC Cummins	c ME Waugh b Hughes	3
CEL Ambrose	not out	9
CA Walsh	b Hughes	1
Extras (b4, lb10, nb6)		**20**
Total (all out; 90.4 overs)		**322**

Fall of wickets 1/111 2/136 3/184 4/195 5/205 6/280 7/286 8/301 9/319 10/322

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CJ McDermott	22	4	85	3
MG Hughes	25.4	6	71	4
J Angel	19	4	71	1
SK Warne	12	0	51	0
SR Waugh	6	3	8	0
ME Waugh	6	1	21	2

Bob Massie – 27.2-9-53-8

England v Australia, Lord's 22-26 June 1972

-Sean Ehlers-

As he walked off to a standing ovation, Bob Massie bowed his head, reluctant to lead his team-mates from the field. That he deserved the praise and adulation was not in doubt. After all, he had all but won a Test for his country and in dismissing 16 batsmen on debut had established the record for the most wickets in a Test at the home of cricket, Lord's.

Massie had given a master class of swing bowling beating the groping bats of the Englishmen so often that forever more the Lord's Test of 1972 would be known as 'Massie's Match'. His control, especially in the second innings, was akin to a knife thrower meticulously hitting balloons. Over the wicket, around the wicket, such was his command it would not have surprised if Massie, for a finale, donned a blindfold. An unknown before the series, he appeared set for a long and successful Test career.

As the plane touched down in Perth after the 1973 tour of the West Indies, less than 12 months after his magnificent Lord's performance, Massie was keen to make his way to the bowling nets. His eagerness was due to the fact that he had lost his 'length' and for a medium-fast bowler that equated to easy pickings for quality batsmen.

Massie, despite his bowling issues, still believed this was a temporary problem contributed to by his decision to change his action due to the lack of favourable swing conditions in the Caribbean. With the bare pitches and barren outfields, the ball would not swing after the first 10 overs, so Massie had begun to dig the ball into the pitch to try and generate movement off the seam.

The change of action had not been particularly successful with Massie not selected for any of the five Tests in the West Indies although he believed he was close to a call up for the last. Still, that was in the past and Massie had always demonstrated an ability to 'land' the ball in both Australia and Great

Britain so he was confident that once back in Perth, he could quickly iron out any technical issues. Massie was adamant that he never lost the ability to swing the ball.

Robert Arnold Lockyer Massie was a natural bowler acquiring the mysteries of swing early and by the age of 14 he was selected for the West Australian (WA) team for the Australian schoolboys' carnival in Brisbane. The team was captained by another future 1972 tourist in Rod Marsh and the two became firm friends on this tour. By the age of 16 Massie was playing first-grade cricket in Perth for Bassendean-Bayswater and by 18 he had made his Sheffield Shield debut.

Massie went wicketless in his first Shield match and was not selected again for the rest of the summer. He admitted, at age 18, he simply wasn't ready for first-class cricket "but it gave me an idea about how much improvement I needed so I came up with the idea of going to Scotland". He applied for a position as a professional at Kilmarnock and several other teams in the Scottish cricket league and, helped by a recommendation from fellow WA bowler, Jim Hubble, he was soon Scotland bound. Massie made an instant impression for Kilmarnock, claiming 10 in an innings in his first game.

Massie would spend three years alternating between Scotland and Australia. He found the experience of having to bowl on such a variety of pitches, to different batsman and indifferent catching, helped to improve all aspects of his game. He developed more control to compliment his number one weapon – swing. He had also married a Scottish lass; Nancy Coulthard. The marriage created its own challenges; with the need to start planning and providing for a family, he now had a mortgage. In Perth, Massie was a trainee bank clerk and to supplement his meagre income he took a second job performing odd jobs at the WACA.

By the start of the 1971-72 season and despite being a more fully-rounded bowler, the 24-year-old Massie was still not totally established in the WA team. Admittedly it was a tough side in which to secure permanency. The new-ball bowlers were the veteran Graeme 'Garth' McKenzie and a young tearaway who had made his Test debut the previous season, Dennis Lillee. Massie, by specialising as an into-the-wind bowler, increased his chances for selection as both 'Garth' and Lillee liked the wind at their backs.

Massie was probably fortunate when the planned 1971-72 tour by South Africa was cancelled due to expected apartheid demonstrations. To fill the

breach a World XI was hastily organised. The five internationals played between the World XI and Australia were not officially recognised as Tests and as such the selectors Jack Ryder, Phil Ridings and Neil Harvey took the opportunity to experiment.

More due to the selectors' flexibility and less to his performances, Massie found himself selected for the third 'Test'. After a middling performance, he came to the fore in the fourth match of the series. Bowling with fine control he claimed 7-76 in the first innings. His haul included Garry Sobers, Sunil Gavaskar, Zaheer Abbas and Graeme Pollock. Perhaps surprisingly given later events, Massie rated this as his best-ever bowling performance.

His efforts against the World XI probably earned Massie selection for the 1972 Ashes tour; he certainly believed so. He learnt of his selection at his mum's house via the radio. Just after he received the news he took a telephone call from fellow WA player Graeme Watson, who told Massie that Victoria had defeated South Australia and as such WA had won the Sheffield Shield by just one point. He invited Massie out for a celebratory drink with the rest of the team at a Perth pub. Massie asked about the announcement of the Ashes squad and Watson admitted he hadn't heard it, so Massie had the great pleasure of telling his mate that they were both in the team.

The selection of the team was not without its controversies, albeit more for the players who missed out than those included. The biggest non-selections were Bill Lawry, the best opener in the country, new-ball bowler McKenzie and solid middle-order batsman Ian Redpath. 'Garth' was at the WA Shield team celebration and according to Massie he was in good humour despite his omission from the Ashes party. Massie and the rest of the WA players believed McKenzie was a certain selection and even when he was omitted from the Australian team during the World XI series they assumed it was simply to let him rest before the heavy workload of an Ashes campaign.

With the quality of the players such as McKenzie and Lawry left at home it was no surprise that the Aussies were labelled the worst Australian team to ever embark on a tour of England. Ladbrokes confirmed this assessment installing England as favourites at 6/4 and Australia at 3/1. Ian Chappell, one of Australia's best-ever captains and a great man-manager tried to be positive, describing his players as a team of 'goers'.

A picture of the Australian team shows a hirsute and generally scruffy lot much in keeping with the times. At slightly under six foot and 79kg, Massie was easily identifiable, sporting long mutton chops. Some would later,

disparagingly, write that his sideburns were longer than his Test career. Initially shy, Massie quickly endeared himself to team-mates by his ability to make strangers believe he was of Scottish extraction. Apart from his flawless Scottish accent he could mimic legendary broadcaster, John Arlott. Massie's party tricks saw him bestowed with the cricketer badge of acceptance, the use of a nickname, 'Fergie', derived from the tractor firm Massey-Ferguson.

The first few weeks of the tour were stereotypically English, with the Aussies hardly completing one day of cricket without the intervention of precipitation. Massie made a steady start and appeared on track to debut in the first Test at Old Trafford before he tore an intercostal muscle which he said made it feel like he was "being stuck in the ribs with a knife" when he tried to bowl.

The injury meant Massie was unavailable for selection for the first Test although he bowled in the nets to fellow West Australian, Ross Edwards. He found that when he bowled over the wicket he struggled to keep his feet due to the wet pitch. At Edwards' urging he tried bowling around the wicket. It felt comfortable and Massie was able to control the ball at pace and, perhaps more importantly, to generate late swing. He had already considered, on the flight over, the possibility of bowling around the wicket to stifle England opener John Edrich's ability to leave the ball.

Despite a valiant effort from Lillee, eight wickets in the match, Australia lost the first Test by 89 runs. After the defeat there were two glaring problems for the visitors. One was that they required a penetrative opening bowling partner for Lillee and the other was the need to strengthen the batting, a position that either Lawry or Redpath would have adequately filled.

The weakness in the batting was not helped by captain Ian Chappell's penchant for the hook. He was out to the stroke in both innings of the first Test. Sections of the press were strident in their criticism, urging him to give the shot away. Chappell, ever his own man, stated: "We only had a couple of hookers in our team and I felt it was my job as captain to lend support and lead by example".

Between the first and second Tests, Massie bowled in a couple of tour matches achieving nothing of note. Despite his indifferent form the desperate selectors, Ian Chappell, Keith Stackpole and John Inverarity included Massie for WA team-mate Graeme Watson. They also brought in Edwards for Inverarity. Both Massie, at the age of 25, and Edwards, 29, would make their Test debut. They were two of nine Aussies selected under the age of 30,

while England had seven aged over 30 and two over 40, which saw the press label them as ‘Dad’s Army’.

The young Aussies went into the second Test in a positive frame of a mind after their pre-match meeting. Manager Ray Steele stood up, after Ian Chappell had spoken, slowly removed a newspaper headline from his pocket and read it with feeling. ‘Aussies take loss lying down’, screamed the headline. Steele looked slowly around the room and loudly shouted “pig’s bloody arse we do!” – Chappell’s youthful team of ‘goers’ were ready for Lord’s.

The first day was, ideal for swing bowling, overcast with a heavy atmosphere and the pitch itself had a tinge of green. Still, Richie Benaud described it as a good pitch on which to bat, the option English captain Ray Illingworth had no hesitation in choosing after winning the toss.

Bowling into the wind from the Nursery end, Massie admitted he was nervous, which hadn’t been helped by a 25 minute rain delay before the match commenced. This meant 77 hours lost to rain since the start of the tour. The jitters combined with the famous Lord’s ridge and the ball swinging appreciably caused Massie to struggle with control. Like a boxer spraying haymakers his lack of control, bar a lucky blow, was unlikely to trouble seasoned scrappers such as England openers Edrich and Geoff Boycott.

Massie was not totally overawed by the occasion. He was still thinking clearly. The away swing was there, even if his radar was sometimes awry. He knew that swing without control meant the English openers simply left anything that pitched too wide of the stumps. So he decided to try an outswinger to Boycott, pitched up just outside the off stump. Frustratingly, and yet again, he couldn’t put the ball where he wanted. It pitched too full, on middle stump, which turned the ball into a full-toss. Boycott misjudged the delivery and in attempting to hit through the leg side turned the ball into a yorker which crashed into the middle stump. One of his haymakers had connected.

It had taken Massie six overs to claim his first Test wicket. The relief was palpable and he later recalled: “Once you get that first wicket it’s like the monkey’s off the back, you’ve got a wicket at least; if nothing else happens at least you’ve got a Test wicket”. From this point on Massie bowled with supreme control and consistently troubled all of the batsmen. It was exhausting work, which saw him suffer leg cramps and forced him to take a break after 20 consecutive overs. By the end of the day Massie had claimed

5-75, from 28 overs, out of an England score of 7-249.

At the start of the second day, Massie had a new ball and still-favourable conditions to work in. He now, too, started to bowl around the wicket more frequently and was successful early claiming the last three poles, although only the last was around the wicket, to finish with 8-84. The England final score of 272 was, especially with John Snow in the team, competitive. England were right in the match. Snow would later write 'the conditions had improved when it came to the Australian's turn to reply'.

Whatever his opinion of the conditions, Snow quickly helped reduce the visitors to 2-7. This brought the Chappell brothers together and although they added 75 for the third wicket there was always an air of inevitability to Ian Chappell's dismissal. Snow simply played the odds and kept feeding Chappell bouncers until he top edged one and was caught in the deep.

At one stage, Australia were a precarious 4-84 with England needing one more wicket to expose the lower order. Snow, at his best 'bowling with fiery speed and superb control', just couldn't make the breakthrough. That the elegant, 23-year-old, Greg Chappell was able to combat Snow at his peak on a still difficult pitch indicates the quality of his 131, and unsurprisingly at the end of his career, Chappell rated this his greatest Test innings. (Although it didn't make our top 100 in *Masterly Batting*, we did include two other Chappell masterpieces).

Thanks to Greg Chappell and a late flurry from Marsh, Australia eked out a 36-run lead which, given they would be batting last, did not appear enough. The wicket too, for England's second innings, was in good condition with John Arlott writing 'there could be no complaints about the pitch'. Ian Chappell, although not a great believer in speeches, decided to say a few words to his team before they took the field 95 minutes before tea on Saturday, the third day. "Listen guys, just before we go out, I would like at least one wicket before they pass us, preferably two" – with those seemingly simple words from the captain, Australia filed out onto the field and tore England apart.

Chappell's simple words fired up Lillee who sidled up to Massie and told him that it was their responsibility to "knock off one of these openers". Lillee, who had bowled superbly in the match, stormed in and with sheer pace beat Boycott. The ball hit the top of his pad bobbled over his shoulder and dropped onto the stumps. Lillee leaped high with excitement and with adrenalin still pumping, just four runs later, he had Brian Luckhurst caught at

the wicket – England 2-16. The Aussie contingent of fans in the huge crowd at Lord's alternated their rapturous chant between "Lill-ee, Lill-ee" and "Mass-ie, Mass-ie". With the crowd in his ears, Mike Smith walked to the middle at the loss of Luckhurst's wicket, and shaped as one of the few able to cope with the twin perils – the pace of Lillee and the swing of Massie.

From this moment on, and despite the defiance of Smith, this Test was destined to become 'Massie's Match'. The Massie of the second innings was not affected by nerves and he appeared to be in complete control of both the in and outswinger in front of a capacity crowd of 31,000. He also bowled faster and more from around the wicket in the second innings. The first scalp, Edrich from around the wicket, was the culmination of his plan hatched on the plane to England. The delivery was a beauty it pitched middle, which gave the batsman no chance to leave the ball, swung across Edrich and took the outside edge – straight to 'keeper Marsh. The second wicket was another almost unplayable outswinger to Basil D'Oliveira which took the edge and was brilliantly caught by Greg Chappell at third slip.

At tea, the one wicket Ian Chappell requested, and the two he hoped for, was a match defining 4-29 and England's innings was in disarray. While Lillee was the quicker and by far the more intimidating, especially in this pre-helmet era, it was the mystery of Massie that had the English batsmen glued to their dressing room television screens in an attempt to find a clue to his 11-pace run-up and action. The only things they discerned was that although he bowled both 'ways' from wide of the crease he moved his right arm closer to his ear when bowling the inswinger.

That morsel of information did not appear to help the Englishmen as, after the tea break, Massie had Tony Greig taken at first slip for just three before having Alan Knott caught at third slip. England were now 6-52, and Australia looked ready for the kill, with the three slips and gully, poised, expecting an edge off every Massie delivery.

The catchers didn't have to wait long as Massie claimed two wickets with consecutive balls. First he induced a catch to second slip from the English captain and then he had Snow caught by Marsh. The Snow delivery was a perceptive piece of bowling, as he dug the ball in short after he noticed Snow took a step down the pitch as he was about to release the cherry. Massie missed the hat-trick but soon after claimed the prized wicket of top scorer Mike Smith for 30. Smith's dogged innings ended after he tried to whip Massie off his pads and was easily caught behind square-leg by fellow

debutant Edwards.

With the Smith scalp, Massie became the first Australian to claim 15 wickets in a Test match. With fatigue setting in he was unable to take the last wicket, which would have been a fitting finale in front of the huge crowd, and at stumps on day three England were 9-86. So dominant was Massie that Richie Benaud wrote: ‘You could have thrown in any batsman from any country in any era on that Saturday at Lord’s and they would have had the same problems against Massie.’

After stumps an exhausted Massie, “I was very tired I know that”, was the last Australian player to the leave the ground. After bowling 24 overs in the day, he had every right to feel fatigued. In the last half hour he had really struggled, having to take salt tablets to stop the onset of cramp. After he left the ground Massie met up with an Australian dentist friend for a few drinks and dinner.

With Sunday a rest day, Massie returned to the Australian team hotel just before midnight. He was greeted by Daphne Benaud, who performed the unofficial role of assistant to the manager. Richie’s wife informed Massie that an English reporter and photographer would collect him in the morning and take him to Madame Tussauds for a photo shoot with the wax figure of Garry Sobers. At the time he thought nothing of it as the players were often paid for promotional gigs from which all money went into a kitty and was divvied up at the end of the tour.

On the way back from the museum the reporter pulled up at the Lord’s nets and told Massie that they were going to take some footage of him bowling and asked him to demonstrate both his inswinger and outswinger. It suddenly occurred to Massie that the whole photo-shoot was a ruse to capture close-up film of his bowling action. He proceeded to use an old ball and bowled “with an odd grip and action which confused them”. This bizarre farce gives an idea of just how desperate the English had become to solve the Massie mystery and the impact of his bowling on the country as a whole.

When the players returned on Monday for the fourth, and what turned out to be the final, day both Massie and Lillee struggled to take the last wicket on a still-placid pitch. Finally Massie induced yet another edge and had the last man, John Price, nicely caught by Greg Chappell at third slip. Massie, 7-38 overnight, finished with 8-53 having bowled unchanged throughout the innings. Australia easily knocked off the 81 runs required to record a comfortable eight-wicket win and that was the end of ‘Massie’s Match’.

In the aftermath of this grand bowling there were some disappointing allegations from Ted Dexter, Illingworth and Snow, who intimated that he had used a substance on the ball, most likely lip balm, to generate swing. Fortunately these baseless allegations have been contemptuously dismissed by the majority of those involved. The praise has generally been unstinting although some believe that Massie overly benefitted from the pressure established by Lillee from the other end.

Snow wrote in his autobiography: ‘For although Massie took the wickets he would be the first to admit that he owed many of them to the fire and control of Lillee rushing in from the other end. Lillee was very difficult to score against. We tried to take them off Massie instead and paid the penalty’. Massie disputes this claim: “If Snow thought they were trying to attack me he must have missed the innings as there were hardly any attacking shots played against me but a lot of runs through the slips”. Notwithstanding his attempts to discredit Massie’s performance Snow, to his credit, stuck his head into the visitor’s dressing room, before Australia’s second innings, and simply said “Well bowled Bob”.

After the completion of his match, Massie only claimed a further seven wickets in the three remaining Tests. Fortunately for the Aussies, with Lillee at the peak of his form they managed to draw the series two-all. What might have been with McKenzie as the third seamer can only be conjectured but throw in the batting of Lawry and Redpath and Australia would surely have regained the Ashes. If the selectors can be criticised for those selection blunders, at least they should be given unstinting praise for taking a chance on Robert Massie and making his dream, an Ashes tour of England, come true.

England seemed a long time ago as Massie arrived at Perth airport after the West Indies tour, eager to make his way to the nets and work out his length issues. Unfortunately once he reached the nets he found that he still struggled and was unable to consistently land the ball. To his credit he didn’t just accept his fate, he had always been a thinker on the game. He consulted cricket coaches and his WA captain, Inverarity, recruited Ray Strauss the WA swing bowler from the 1950s to assist. Alas it didn’t help. Occasionally there was success when Massie regained his length however like an ageing opera star who can no longer, on cue, hit the ‘money notes’ each time his ability seemed to have returned it would only last for a few spells.

At the age of 27, a time when most pace bowlers are at their best, Massie announced his retirement, telling the WA selector that he “had enough and they knew where to find me if they wanted me”. Massie was philosophical. He stated he had achieved more than most cricketers; he had played for Australia and enjoyed an Ashes tour. “And there wasn’t any money in it either.” He added that cricket in his era paid the same as he earned as a bank clerk. Massie did concede that he would have loved to have played more Test matches “but that’s just the way it goes”.

Compared to most players with natural talent, Massie’s Test career was of an ephemeral nature. What he does have that very few with longer Test careers do not is a match which is permanently linked to his name. Massie agrees that in that Lord’s Test in June 1972 everything came together for a swing bowler: perfect conditions, great catching, the Duke ball which he loved to bowl with and most importantly a swing bowler at the peak of his powers.

To the joy of all those who watched, listened or read about his conjuring show at Lord’s his performance will never be forgotten.

England

G Boycott	b Massie	11
JH Edrich	lbw b Lillee	10
BW Luckhurst	b Lillee	1
MJK Smith	b Massie	34
BL D'Oliveira	lbw b Massie	32
AW Greig	c †Marsh b Massie	54
APE Knott†	c Colley b Massie	43
R Illingworth*	lbw b Massie	30
JA Snow	b Massie	37
N Gifford	†Marsh b Massie	3
JSE Price	not out	4
Extras (lb6, w1, nb6)		**13**
Total (all out; 91.5 overs)		**272**

Fall of wickets 1/22 2/23 3/28 4/84 5/97 6/193 7/200 8/260 9/265 10/272

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Lillee	28	3	90	2
RAL Massie	32.5	7	84	8
DJ Colley	16	2	42	0
GS Chappell	6	1	18	0
W Gleeson	9	1	25	0

G Boycott	b Lillee	6
JH Edrich	c †Marsh b Massie	6
BW Luckhurst	c †Marsh b Lillee	4
MJK Smith	c Edwards b Massie	30
BL D'Oliveira	c GS Chappell b Massie	3
AW Greig	c IM Chappell b Massie	3
APE Knott†	c GS Chappell b Massie	12
R Illingworth*	c Stackpole b Massie	12
JA Snow	c †Marsh b Massie	0
N Gifford	not out	16
JSE Price	c GS Chappell b Massie	19
Extras (w1, nb4)		**5**
Total (all out; 55.2 overs)		**116**

Fall of wickets 1/12 2/16 3/18 4/25 5/31 6/52 7/74 8/74 9/81 10/116

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Lillee	21	6	50	2
RAL Massie	27.2	9	53	8
DJ Colley	7	1	8	0

Australia

KR Stackpole	c Gifford b Price	5
BC Francis	b Snow	0
IM Chappell*	c Smith b Snow	56
GS Chappell	b D'Oliveira	131
KD Walters	c Illingworth b Snow	1
R Edwards	c Smith b Illingworth	28
JW Gleeson	c †Knott b Greig	1
RW Marsh†	c Greig b Snow	50
DJ Colley	c Greig b Price	25
RAL Massie	c †Knott b Snow	0
DK Lillee	not out	2
Extras (lb7, nb2)		**9**
Total (all out; 122.1 overs)		**308**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/7 3/82 4/84 5/190 6/212 7/250 8/290 9/290 10/308

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JA Snow	32	13	57	5
JSE Price	26.1	5	87	2
AW Greig	29	6	74	1
BL D'Oliveira	17	5	48	1
N Gifford	11	4	20	0
R Illingworth	7	2	13	1

KR Stackpole	not out	57
BC Francis	c †Knott b Price	9
IM Chappell*	c Luckhurst b D'Oliveira	6
GS Chappell	b D'Oliveira	7

Did not bat:
KD Walters, R Edwards, JW Gleeson
RW Marsh†, DJ Colley, RAL Massie,
DK Lillee

Extras (lb2)	**2**
Total (2 wickets; 26.5 overs)	**81**

Fall of wickets 1/20 2/51

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
JA Snow	8	2	15	0
JSE Price	7	0	28	1
AW Greig	3	0	17	0
BL D'Oliveira	8	3	14	1
BW Luckhurst	0.5	0	5	0

Curtly Ambrose – 10-1-24-6

West Indies v England, Port of Spain 25-30 March 1994

-Rob Smyth-

Most horror movies start optimistically. The first act often involves the lead characters demonstrating the hope, innocence and playfulness of youth – as well as a thoroughly misplaced sense of security. On 29 March 1994, the England team boarded their coach to the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad knowing that, all things being equal, they would return that evening drunk on victory and Tetley. Alec Stewart was asked by a Sky reporter how the team would get on. "Don't worry", he said, sticking his thumbs up. "We'll be fine today."

Ten hours later, after his off stump was detonated by the final ball of the day, Graham Thorpe's blank face told the story of an horrific trauma. England had been sliced and diced by Sir Curtly Ambrose, reduced to 40 for eight in a manner that would have shattered even Kipling's equilibrium. This wasn't a case of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory; they'd had glory snatched from them in exchange for humiliation. This was a horror movie with a difference – even the audience didn't see it coming. For a young team starting out under a new captain, it was a terrifying insight into just how tough it can be to win a Test match – especially when you are up against perhaps the greatest match winner of all.

England were given little chance when they travelled to the Caribbean in January 1994. West Indies had not been beaten in a Test series since 1979-80, even if their victories were becoming less comfortable, and had lost only three home Tests in 16 years. England lost more than that in 1993 alone: they were walloped 4-1 at home by Australia, a miserable follow-up to a shambolic tour of India and Sri Lanka in which they lost all four Tests.

A stirring dead-rubber win over Australia at The Oval, in their second Test under the captaincy of Mike Atherton, provided an important injection of hope. Atherton, 25, wanted to follow the template of that Australia side by

investing in young players of character and class and sticking with them through thick and thin. For the first time in 17 years, an England touring party included none of Graham Gooch, Sir Ian Botham, David Gower or Mike Gatting. The oldest player was Devon Malcolm, who turned 31 during the first Test.

England lost the first two Tests emphatically, by eight wickets and then an innings. But they knew they would have to go through many hard times first, just like Australia in the mid-to-late 1980s, and there was plenty of hope in the batting of Alec Stewart, Graeme Hick and particularly Atherton, who bravely stood up to a fearsome, calculated barrage from Courtney Walsh in the first Test.

In the third match at Trinidad, there seemed to be clear signs of progress. Chris Lewis, Ian Salisbury and Angus Fraser reduced West Indies from 158 for one to 252 all out on the first day, before Graham Thorpe's 86 and some useful tail-end batting – the last two wickets added 47 – helped England to 328.

When Jimmy Adams fell to Salisbury off the last ball of the third day, West Indies were 143 for five, a lead of 67. With only Shivnarine Chanderpaul remaining among the recognised batsmen. England were 4/11 with the bookies, having started the match at 12/1. 'It's nice to go into the rest day as favourites', said their manager Keith Fletcher. 'I might get some sleep.'

The first sign that the match might not have a happy ending for England came when Chanderpaul, on four, was put down by Hick at slip on the fourth morning. He was reprieved again by Hick on 29, another relatively straightforward chance for such a brilliant slipper.

Chanderpaul, playing only his second Test at the age of 19, frustrated England with a three-hour 50 and added 60 for the seventh wicket with Winston Benjamin. It was during that partnership that the first strains of the Jaws music were heard in England's subconscious.

Their frustration increased as the lead moved past 150. During a rain break, Fraser decided to nick his Middlesex team-mate Mark Ramprakash's seat by telling him there was somebody outside the dressing-room waiting to see him – "a silly prank of the kind you often do to pass the time in these situations", as Fraser put it. Ramprakash returned unamused and threw Fraser's England cap in some water. Fraser booted a bin across the dressing-room and the two squared up to each other.

England eventually dismissed West Indies for 269, with Andy Caddick taking a Test-best six for 65. That included the wicket of Ambrose, bowled for 12 as he failed to connect with an enormous yahoo. Ambrose had been told to play for his partner Chanderpaul but was so affronted by Caddick copying the great Sir Richard Hadlee's action that he wanted to 'beat his bowling'. He received and accepted a rare reprimand from his team-mates for the manner of his dismissal.

Caddick, without trying or realising, had awoken the beast. Pride was one of Ambrose's greatest weapons; pride in himself and also the West Indies. He never liked cricket as a teenager – he wanted to play basketball in the NBA – but once it became a career, the highest standards were non-negotiable for someone of his nature. He had let the team down, and they faced the prospect of a rare defeat at home. There had also been some criticism earlier in the series after a subdued performance in Jamaica; some even suggested that, at 30, Ambrose was past it and considering retirement.

All of this fuelled his ire. 'I was at my best when something was on the line', said Ambrose in his autobiography, Time to Talk, 'whether it was a match, a series or even my reputation.'

If it was more than one, as at Trinidad, woe betide those in his way. In the last hour and a half, he struck down upon England with great vengeance and furious anger.

England's target was a tricky 194, when it should have been nearer 100 or 110. The extra runs also took more time out of the day; this, along with the rain break, meant only 15 overs remained on the fourth day when they started batting. Had it not rained there would have been around 40 overs left and Ambrose would have needed to keep something in the tank for a second spell. Instead he was able to throw everything at the batsmen.

England's top six – Atherton, Stewart, Ramprakash, Robin Smith, Hick and Thorpe – looks a bit stronger now than it did in March 1994. It's easy to forget that careers are always in flux, and that even great batsmen have periods of famine. All four of England's middle order had been dropped or omitted at some stage during the previous summer's Ashes and were trying to establish – or in Smith's case re-establish – themselves at Test level.

Atherton had also been left out during the tour of India a year earlier, but now he was England's captain and most important batsman. He sensed that, if England were one down at the close, they would be in with a great chance

of victory. Instead, they were two down by the end of the first over.

‘Quality bowlers essentially need two of three things: pace, movement and accuracy’, wrote Atherton in *Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack* 2001. ‘Ambrose had all three.’ Even from the first ball of the innings. Ambrose didn’t really believe in the concept of the loosener, and his opening delivery to Atherton was a jaffa. It was full, kept a bit low and seamed back to hit him on the pad in line with off and middle. It seemed to take everyone by surprise – even Ambrose, who had almost completed his follow-through when he suddenly threw his hands up and down in one movement and snapped round to point demandingly at the umpire Steve Bucknor.

As he was doing so, Atherton’s momentum took him outside the line of off stump. He had both arms outstretched, like a suspect surrendering to police, and held the pose as he awaited the decision. He is not sure why he did so but it made for a glorious image as both men stared at Bucknor.

He was a leisurely umpire at the best of times and, although the wait only lasted two or three seconds, it seemed to go on forever – a moment of tension in which, perhaps, both players instinctively realised the game could be decided. Bucknor raised the finger and Ambrose – whose primal celebrations in this spell were almost as memorable as the wickets – punched an imaginary speedbag with both hands.

For a few years, before he was dragged down by his injured back and his team’s lack of spine, Atherton was England’s rock. They developed an alarming tendency to collapse when he was dismissed. That was problematic at the best of times, never mind when he got a golden duck.

The new batsman was Ramprakash, who had started his Test career splendidly against West Indies in 1991, with a series of patient twenty-something innings that were far better than the bare statistics suggested. Yet in the two-and-a-half years since then he had been dropped three times; now he found himself batting at three in the England team for the first time, on the toughest tour of all. In what would become a theme of his career, runs in the final Test of an Ashes summer had got him on the winter tour. When he turned the last ball of Ambrose’s first over towards long-leg, the England fans cheered loudly: one run down, 193 to go.

Ramprakash turned for a second but was paralysed by indecision and started skidding back and forth. By the time Walsh’s throw came to the wicket-keeper Junior Murray, Stewart had run past him at the non-striker’s end. It was a shambolic run-out that would be used in evidence against

Ramprakash, apparent proof of a man who found Test cricket too much to handle mentally. Yet Ramprakash says there was a far simpler explanation for the confusion: he lost sight of Walsh and had no idea whether the ball was in his hand or not, and therefore whether a second run was viable.

It looked like a moment of blind panic, however, and as such had a huge impact on the morale of both sides. Angus Fraser recalls Atherton burying his head in a towel shouting “No, no, no” as Ramprakash was run out. After that Atherton retreated to the shower, with the crowd generously providing a wicket-update service for him.

The arrival of Robin Smith at number four would ordinarily have been comforting for England. He was a magnificent player of quick bowling, arguably the bravest player of his generation. But he was in the middle of the worst period of his Test career and was struggling to forge a working relationship with the coach Keith Fletcher; Smith later described Fletcher and Ray Illingworth as ‘the most appalling man managers, the most appalling coaches and the most appalling people that I’ve met’.

This was by far the worst of his four full series against West Indies, despite a Test-best 175 in the final game. In Trinidad he survived his first ball and willed himself to get forward to his second. “I played a beautiful forward-defensive”, he says. “The only problem was that I was about two minutes too late!” Just as Smith was completing the stroke, he heard the distinctive clink of disturbed furniture. The ball from Ambrose was so fast that it had already gone through the gate to remove his middle stump. Ambrose punched the air wildly – ‘as if whipping a lasso’, to use Will Luke’s great description in The Cricketer – and England were five for three in the third over.

A recurring feature of Ambrose’s great spells was his ability to read both the pitch and the match situation. He was a far more intelligent bowler than some recognised. With Trinidad getting lower and offering a little sideways movement, he bowled fast, full and straight.

Both Atherton and Smith fell to off cutters that were pitched up, and in the whole mini-session he bowled only five short balls in 7.5 overs. ‘It was entirely different in its intent from Walsh’s spell in Jamaica’, wrote Atherton in his autobiography, Opening Up. ‘Walsh’s main aim was to intimidate while Ambrose, sensing a match to win and a wearing pitch to exploit, was only interested in wickets. Of course there was the occasional bouncer…but Ambrose’s general length was full and the effect was dramatic.’

It made for a different type of intimidation. There was less threat to a batsman's safety but far more to his sanity, such was the extent to which Ambrose overwhelmed England. They knew there would be knocks on their journey, they knew Test cricket was bloody hard. But this, this was unimaginable. They had innocently taken a wrong turn and ended up on the meanest streets of Test cricket.

The cacophony of joy at the Queen's Park Oval was such that England suffered a sensory overload. 'There was all the excitement, the sea of faces and the noise', said Fraser. 'The banging as Ambrose ran up to bowl. The sound just got louder and louder as each of our wickets fell…The conditions were good for Ambrose but he just worked everything into a fever pitch. We were trapped in a very intimidating environment with nowhere to go.'

The only person not making any noise was Ambrose. "He didn't say anything", says Hick. "Not many of the great bowlers do." Ambrose had a silent charisma that was irresistible to West Indies fans, England batsmen – even England fans. Geoffrey Boycott, commentating for Sky, said it was "possibly the most exciting period of Test cricket I can remember in all my years of playing and watching". In Antigua, Ambrose's mother Hillie ran into the street to ring a handbell every time he took a wicket; in Trinidad, the unofficial cheerleader, nicknamed Blue Food, a former policeman who had been going to the ground since 1948, blew his conch-shell triumphantly. Banners such as BOYCOTT PAD UP NOW! and TOO MUCH TETLEY OLD CHAP! rubbed it in.

It was a struggle to think straight, never mind play straight. The noise and the sheer speed with which things spiralled out of control meant there was no time to take stock. There was barely time to do anything. Nasser Hussain, the 12th man, sensed the dressing-room tension before the start of the innings and decided to walk around the ground to get a chicken roti. By the time he got there, England were four down. Fraser and Lewis had a similar idea and followed Hussain at the fall of the second wicket. They only made it as far as the KFC, by which time England were five down and Lewis had to run back to pad up.

The dressing-room was a hive of chaos. "I batted at six", says Thorpe. "Normally batting there I wouldn't have put any kit on at all, but here I was padded up within three overs. The dressing-room was basically a load of blokes walking around getting their kit on."

Or off. Wickets fell at such regular intervals that, although he lasted only

17 minutes, Hick's innings was England's fourth longest stay. "It's all happening so fast that you don't really gather yourself and maybe get in the right mental state", says Hick:

"There's not much to say about my innings: I played a little half-hearted shot outside off stump and nicked off. I'd had a reasonable start to the tour, having got 96 in Jamaica, and I was disappointed not to kick on from there for the rest of the trip. It was just a quality spell of bowling. There were a few average shots but that's the pressure he builds. I would put Ambrose and Glenn McGrath in the same bracket. They gave you very little to feed off. Ambrose and Walsh had days when they would alternate – one would be a bit slower, and the next day the other one would do the hard yards. Ambrose was quick. He had enough pace. He wasn't maybe as quick as Waqar Younis or Allan Donald but he wasn't far below."

On that particular day he was even quicker than usual. There was no speedgun back then but the pace – and force – of Ambrose was such that all three batsmen who were bowled had a stump knocked out of the ground. The second of those was Stewart, who lost his off stump to leave England 26 for five. His 18 was comfortably the highest score of the innings. The rest of the top six made double figures – but only between them, with a total of 10 runs. Ambrose gave high-class batsmen an insight into what it's like to be a tailender: intimidated, overwhelmed and with a legitimate fear that every ball might be the last.

The panic in the England dressing-room was such that, with the score 26 for five, they sent in Ian Salisbury at number seven as a nightwatchman for Jack Russell. Salisbury's excellent first-innings 36 was one of the reasons England got into a winning position. Here he lasted three balls before edging Walsh to slip. When Russell fended a rare Ambrose short ball to second slip, England were 37 for seven.

Thorpe was the last of the remaining batsmen. "I was out there for a little bit of time", he says, "but I just did a lot of fending off." He lasted 28 balls, the longest stay of the innings, yet only managed three runs. Thorpe was just starting to change his approach, a move that was inspired by watching Brian Lara, and would became one of the great initiative-seizers of the 1990s. "A few years later I would have tried to counter-attack but my tactics weren't very advanced at that stage. I just tried to stay in the game."

From the penultimate ball of the final over, he was torpedoed by a delivery from Ambrose that kept low and removed his off stump. Without even turning round to look at the stumps, an expressionless Thorpe shuffled off. His gazillion-yard stare is the defining image of England's humiliation. "I've seen it a few times on TV", he laughs. "I think there was a bit of shock. I was probably just thinking, 'Crikey, Test cricket is a pretty brutal game. You play well for three days and you're in the game all the time and then – bang! – game over'." At that stage Thorpe was still waiting for his first Test victory. Ambrose and Walsh had more Test wins than the whole England team combined.

Thorpe, like Stewart and a few of the others, could theoretically have got forward to Ambrose, even on an uneven pitch. But then in theory there's no reason why you can't shoot the devil in the back. It was a case of matter over mind. "I know Boycs said we should try to get forward", says Thorpe, "but it's never that easy. He didn't give too many drive balls anyway. I think I drove him twice in my whole career, once in Barbados and once at The Oval."

The match was wrapped up the following morning. Walsh took the last two wickets and England limped past their lowest-ever total, 45 all out against Australia in 1887, by one run. Ambrose ended with figures of 10-1-24-6. He had done his work the previous night. 'It is unlikely', wrote Matthew Engel in The Guardian, 'that anyone in history has been quite such a certainty to produce a performance of such magnitude when it actually matters.'

In 44 Test victories Ambrose took 229 wickets at 16.86 and was Man of the Match 14 times. Among those who have played in at least five Test wins, only Muttiah Muralitharan has a better percentage of Man of the Match awards. The timing and the manner of Ambrose's work makes him arguably the greatest matchwinner of all.

'People ask me to explain how I can inflict these devastating, match-winning spells and I believe the simple answer is about having the strength of character to overcome adversity as all my best spells came in situations when the team was against it', he said in Time to Talk. 'It is about having sheer determination that we are not going to lose. I thrive on challenges, negative comments or anything where people doubt my ability. More often than not when I have been faced with these challenges I have come out triumphant.'

With many bowlers, control and aggression are almost mutually

exclusive, but Ambrose was able to summon one without compromising the other. He was a raging metronome. Despite his obvious greatness, England were slaughtered in the press. Such shockingly low totals were unusual in those days. They have become a much more regular occurrence since the turn of the century, and we realise that it can happen to anyone – even Australia.

It feels a little harsh that the 46 all out is still used as shorthand for England's struggles in the 1990s as there were far worse performances with bat and ball. They failed, palpably, but only in the most exacting circumstances. 'When a great bowler is in the zone, I don't care how good a player you are, the bowler will win', said Stewart. 'Ambrose was awesome.'

A 5-0 defeat seemed inevitable after that, but no side bounced back from rock bottom as effectively as England in the 1990s. They won astonishingly in the next Test at Barbados, West Indies' first defeat there for 59 years, and a 3-1 series score was probably a slight over-achievement. But the young team did not stick together: Illingworth took over as chairman of selectors later that month and started picking players in their forties, never mind their thirties. Atherton's far-sighted vision did not become reality until Duncan Fletcher became coach in 1999.

Many of the players had fine careers nonetheless and of the team beaten in Trinidad, Atherton, Stewart, Ramprakash, Thorpe, Hick and Caddick took part in 2000 when England finally won a series against West Indies for the first time since 1968. They did so despite exceptional bowling from Ambrose and Walsh, who had a combined age of 73 and essentially spent the summer bowling 78mph off-spin – with a doosra.

Ambrose had already announced he would retire after the series and received a guard of honour from the England players in the final Test at The Oval. There is a famous picture of him walking off the field for the final time with Walsh. 'It was one of the most touching moments I have seen on a field, when The Oval crowd rose to Ambrose and his great mate, Courtney Walsh, to applaud them off the field for an assumed last time,' wrote Atherton in *Wisden*. 'They left, arm-in-arm, one sensed close to tears, and halfway up the pavilion steps Ambrose symbolically removed his famous white armbands, safe in the knowledge that his legs would have to do no more pounding.'

For the players and supporters of opposing teams, Ambrose was a kind of anti-villain: the more terror he inflicted the more loved he was. There was a mood of rare goodwill during his final Test. For a generation of outstanding

England players who did not win the Ashes, regaining the Wisden Trophy was a career highlight. That’s the thing with horror films: despite everything, they usually have a happy ending.

West Indies

DL Haynes	b Salisbury	38
RB Richardson*	lbw b Salisbury	63
BC Lara	lbw b Lewis	43
KLT Arthurton	lbw b Lewis	1
JC Adams	c Smith b Lewis	2
S Chanderpaul	b Fraser	19
JR Murray†	not out	27
WKM Benjamin	b Fraser	10
CEL Ambrose	c Thorpe b Fraser	13
KCG Benjamin	b Fraser	9
CA Walsh	lbw b Lewis	0
Extras (b1, lb13, w1, nb12)		**27**
Total (all out; 95.2 overs)		**252**

Fall of wickets 1/66 2/158 3/158 4/163 5/164 6/201 7/212 8/241 9/251 10/252

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
ARC Fraser	24	9	49	4
AR Caddick	19	5	43	0
CC Lewis	25.2	3	61	4
IDK Salisbury	22	4	72	2
MR Ramprakash	2	1	8	0
GA Hick	3	1	5	0

DL Haynes	b Lewis	19
RB Richardson*	c & b Caddick	3
BC Lara	c Salisbury b Caddick	12
KLT Arthurton	c Stewart b Caddick	42
JC Adams	c †Russell b Salisbury	43
S Chanderpaul	c Fraser b Caddick	50
JR Murray†	c †Russell b Caddick	14
WKM Benjamin	c Fraser b Lewis	35
CEL Ambrose	b Caddick	12
KCG Benjamin	not out	5
CA Walsh	lbw b Lewis	1
Extras (b8, 1b13, nb12)		**33**
Total (all out; 87.5 overs)		**269**

Fall of wickets 1/15 2/37 3/51 4/131 5/143 6/167 7/227 8/247 9/267 10/269

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
ARC Fraser	25	6	71	0
AR Caddick	26	5	65	6
CC Lewis	27.5	6	71	3
IDK Salisbury	9	1	41	1

England

MA Atherton*	c †Murray b W Benjamin	48
AJ Stewart	b Ambrose	6
MR Ramprakash	c & b WKM Benjamin	23
RA Smith	lbw b Ambrose	12
GA Hick	lbw b Walsh	40
GP Thorpe	c Lara b Ambrose	86
RC Russell†	b Ambrose	23
CC Lewis	b Ambrose	9
IDK Salisbury	c Lara b Walsh	36
AR Caddick	c Lara b WKM Benjamin	6
ARC Fraser	not out	8
Extras (b10, lb9, w1, nb11)		**31**
Total (all out; 112.2 overs)		**328**

Fall of wickets 1/16 2/82 3/87 4/115 5/167 6/249 7/273 8/281 9/294 10/328

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CEL Ambrose	29	6	60	5
CA Walsh	27.2	3	77	2
KCG Benjamin	20	5	70	0
WKM Benjamin	24	3	66	3
JC Adams	4	0	18	0
S Chanderpaul	5	0	13	0
KLT Arthurton	3	0	5	0

MA Atherton*	lbw b Ambrose	0
AJ Stewart	b Ambrose	18
MR Ramprakash	run out	1
RA Smith	b Ambrose	0
GA Hick	c †Murray b Ambrose	6
GP Thorpe	b Ambrose	3
IDK Salisbury	c Lara b Walsh	0
RC Russell†	c sub b Ambrose	4
CC Lewis	c W Benjamin b Walsh	6
AR Caddick	c Lara b Walsh	1
ARC Fraser	not out	0
Extras (lb6, nb1)		**7**
Total (all out; 19.1 overs)		**46**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/1 3/5 4/21 5/26 6/27 7/37 8/40 9/45 10/46

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
CEL Ambrose	10	1	24	6
CA Walsh	9.1	1	16	3

Michael Holding – 33-9-92-8

England v West Indies, The Oval, 12-17 August 1976

-David Tossell-

Now just look at this action again. It's a beautiful thing to watch. There are some bowlers who are ugly, some who are beautiful. This fellow I think is magnificent'
– Richie Benaud, commentating for BBC at The Oval in 1976

It had taken Michael Holding little time to make his mark on his first tour of England. A couple of overs at Lord's in the first significant game of the summer had been more than enough. The rumours had been true. The West Indies had found something special.

There had been glimpses during their winter visit to Australia, but the home team had been 5-1 victors and Holding, for all his raw promise and lithe athleticism, had gained more attention by sitting on the ground in tearful frustration for several minutes at Sydney after the umpire's refusal to give Ian Chappell out caught behind. The subsequent tour of the Caribbean by India, however, had produced the first real reports of a phenomenon; someone who had, literally, left the touring batsmen cowering in the pavilion.

At Lord's, with the MCC facing the West Indies in the traditional rehearsal for the first Test of the summer, the 22-year-old who had first turned up as a medium pacer in a warm-up game during England's Caribbean tour two years earlier proved he was about to come of age. Holding was unaware of the extent of the media interest, protected by manager Clyde Walcott, who controlled and managed the interviews. "He knew there was a lot of press wanting to speak to me and write about me", Holding explained, "but he wouldn't let it happen. My job was to play and I didn't read too much about what was being said in the press."

There was a buzz around the ground as MCC opening batsman Dennis Amiss, charged with surviving the final few minutes at the end of a tiring day in the field, waited for Holding to dawdle back 40 yards. When Holding

turned, anticipation turned to awe as the bowler approached with a soft-footed grace rarely seen before or since in international cricket. An accomplished sprinter in his homeland of Jamaica, his running action mixed long, measured strides with a balanced, poised torso. As he approached full speed he gave quick glance down at feet that caressed the ground so tenderly that he would soon be christened 'Whispering Death'. And as he reached his delivery stride there was no flailing of arms, arching of back or dropping of head; no lunge to reach the crease. His point of release was as graceful as the yards that had preceded it.

All of which cut no ice with opposition batsmen intent on protecting their wicket or, in these pre-helmet days, their heads. On this occasion, Amiss made the mistake of thinking that Holding had pitched short enough to be able to duck under his delivery. Instinctively, he took evasive action but compounded his misjudgement of length by taking his eye off the ball. The ball thudded into his skull just behind his left ear, spattering his whites with blood from a cut that would require four stitches. Already shell-shocked from his encounters with Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson in Australia more than a year earlier, the Warwickshire opener could forget about an early recall to the England team.

Holding, meanwhile, had put down his marker, announcing his readiness to play his part in captain Clive Lloyd's plan to launch an all-out pace assault against England, a strategy that had crystallised in the wake of defeat against India in Trinidad. Having relied on the traditional Port of Spain tactic of picking a spin-dominated attack, Lloyd had watched horrified as India scored 406 for 4 in the fourth innings to win the match.

"We tried out several spinners against India", says Lloyd.

"We gave them 400 and we lost. We were in a situation where we didn't have a spinner who was going to win us a game, so I decided from then on to play the extra fast bowler I would only play a spinner who was going to win a Test match. I wasn't going to just play a spinner because people said it was the thing to do. You play to your strength."

For the next Test, on Holding's home ground in Kingston, Jamaica, Lloyd had four fast bowlers at his disposal and by the end of the match the great Indian batsman Sunil Gavaskar was accusing the West Indies of 'barbarism'. A succession of batsmen disappeared either to the pavilion, often caught

fending off short balls with their gloves, or to hospital – as in the case of Gundappa Viswanath, Brijesh Patel and the bespectacled Anshuman Gaekwad – after blows on fingers or face. Holding picked up four wickets, bowling round the wicket and aiming at the body. At 306 for 6 and with two injured batsmen out of the game, Indian skipper Bishen Bedi declared in order to protect the spinning fingers of his tail-enders, including his own. After the West Indies' reply, India had reached 97 for 2 in their second innings, a lead of 12, before three wickets fell without any further runs, at which point Bedi waved the white flag, announcing that his remaining players should all be listed 'absent hurt' and therefore his team were officially all out.

And now, upon the tourists' arrival in England, Holding had hit Amiss, Tony Greig had threatened to make the West Indies 'grovel' and all hell had broken loose. It was going to be an interesting summer.

In the end, Holding was a late starter, missing the drawn first Test with symptoms that turned out to be a mild case of mumps. Playing in the Lord's Test he had made more impact with his raw speed than with his results – three wickets across two innings – and had also been accused of bowling a beamer at Greig.

Aware that he was not yet fully fit, Holding had been hoping that the West Indies would bat first so that he could remain resting in the pavilion. He recalls:

"I wasn't fully fit and I could have done with another day's rest. I'd tried to bowl fast that morning to prove my fitness but afterwards I was very tired. Unfortunately we lost the toss and were in the field. I perhaps shouldn't have played. I just ran up and bowled as fast as I could and I was shattered at the end of it."

At Old Trafford in the third Test, he took five wickets to help dismiss the home side for a paltry 71 in the first innings before playing a key role in one of the most infamous episodes in Test cricket in England. Faced with 80 minutes' batting on the Saturday evening, England's opening pair of 39-year-old John Edrich and 45-year-old Brian Close were subjected to a bombardment from Holding and the young, wild Wayne Daniel. On a cracked and unpredictable wicket, Holding sent balls whistling past the jaw of Close or thumping into his torso, at one point staggering him like a boxer

on the receiving end of a left hook. Only after the short balls had started coming at about four an over did the umpires eventually step in and warn the West Indies bowlers to cool things down. The biggest surprise was not so much that England reached stumps without losing a wicket – with Close not out on a single run – but that no one was seriously hurt.

Holding remains defensive of the bowlers' approach, arguing, "We bowled too short, but we didn't bowl bouncers. The batsmen got hit because it was a bad pitch. If we were bowling bouncers they would have been able to get out of the way." However, Bob Willis was hardly alone in calling it "the most sustained barrage of intimidation" he had seen.

England were eventually rolled by an innings and would lose again at Headingley, where Holding contributed another four wickets. Even before arriving at The Oval for the fift h Test, he had shown enough to justify the excitement that had accompanied his arrival in England and borne out the foresight of the sports master in his hometown of St Andrew who had persuaded him to concentrate on cricket instead of running.

He was still far from being a finished article, however, and was still waiting for that breakthrough moment when optimism becomes outcome. He was even considering returning home to a career in computer programming.

"You don't realise it at the time, but when I look back I can see that at that time I knew nothing about fast bowling. I was just young, I could bowl fast and that was about it. I had reasonable control but as time went on I learnt a lot more. Speed is very, very important and the quicker you are, the more the trepidation there is for the batsman. But it's also important to have very good control; you have to put the ball in the right spot more often than not."

By this stage of his career he had yet to run through a line-up, although ability to bowl an effective bouncer was the one area of his bowling that could not be questioned.

"When I was bowling a bouncer I was trying to get the ball to the most uncomfortable area for a batsman, which is somewhere around shoulder height, directly in line with his body and, if possible, pitching somewhere just outside off stump and coming back at him. That gave him less room to manoeuvre. That was my objective. He then had to deal with it in the best way he could. If he was a good hooker he might hook, otherwise he might

fend it to short leg or he would get hit. It was up to him to deal with it."

And so to The Oval, where Holding would produce not one, but two of the greatest performances in Test history. His six-wicket return in the second innings, dealt with earlier in this book, was magnificent. But his eight wickets in the first was the truly remarkable effort, the achievement – along with his famous over at Geoff Boycott in Barbados in 1981 – for which he is instantly remembered. For a start, it was achieved without the help of a single fielder; every wicket either bowled or lbw. Then, look at the nature of the pitch. A surface good enough to produce well over 1100 runs in the two teams' first innings combined. And his feat was performed while, at the same time, one of the greatest Test innings was being compiled by a member of the opposition.

Amiss had finally won a recall for the fifth Test in what was the final throw of the dice by England after their dismal summer. It was also the last chance at salvation for a man who had once dominated his country's batting order and whose nine Test centuries had included an unbeaten 262 to save a Test in Jamaica two-and-a-half-years earlier. After the West Indies declared on 687, Amiss's partner, Bob Woolmer, played out three successive maidens from Holding before England closed day two without the loss of a wicket, but it was the new technique unveiled by Amiss that was the talking point overnight.

Amiss had been forced into a major decision after his experience against Holding at Lord's in the MCC game. As far as his Test career was concerned it amounted to: adapt or die. "Being hit at Lord's knocked me back a long way", he admits. "I said, 'I have got to find a better way of playing fast bowling.' I tried to devise a technique that I had seen used by Ken Barrington and Ian Chappell."

As Holding and his colleagues had gone into their delivery stride that evening, Amiss had taken a big step across his crease, his right foot dropping deep into the crease. "Going back like that gives you more time in which to take your action", he explains.

"Whether you are going to try to hit it or get out the way, it just gives you more time against fast bowling. If they bowl short stuff at you, it gives you an extra fraction of a second. You are right across your stumps, so instead of bowling down the channel where you might get an edge, they are bowling

straight at you and it is much easier to play. I decided that, in international cricket, it was the technique I was going to adopt."

The next day, Saturday, brought temperatures of 28°C, moderate by the standards of earlier weeks, but a continuation of a drought that now had the Queen ordering her gardeners to stop watering the Royal grounds and industry bosses and politicians calling on the public to cut water consumption. Amiss clipped the first runs of the day off Daniel, an all-run four through mid-on, but Holding wasted little time in dismissing Woolmer. Bowling from the Pavilion end, he beat the batsman's tentative shuffle with pure pace. "The pain was so incredible that I thought I had been shot", Woolmer would recall of the blow he received on the boot. Dickie Bird delivered additional agony with his lbw decision.

Amiss drove well and played confidently off his legs, but Holding, fearfully fast on the most placid of pitches, found him groping unsteadily outside off stump before he reached his fifty with another leg-side steer. David Steele felt like he was still playing himself in when he strolled down the wicket for a chat with his partner between overs.

"How am I doing?" asked an anxious Amiss.
"What do you mean, how are you doing?" Steele shot back. "You have got 70 on the board."
"[Dennis] had no confidence in himself", Steele explains. "He was a man of theory, a man of doubt, but a wonderful player. With that big step to the off side, he just flicked everything."

England lunched at 137 for 1; Amiss on 80, his crab-like back-foot technique serving him well. Steele, meanwhile, had built his career on thrusting a front leg well down the pitch and did so again on 44. This time, though, Holding, now operating from the Vauxhall end and racing in towards the television cameras, beat his forward defensive with a ball that cut back in a touch and Bill Alley upheld another lbw appeal. Holding then handled new batsman Chris Balderstone with the dispassion of an executioner: a couple of balls that struck his pads, another that saw an ugly flash of the bat, and eventually a yorker that wrecked the stumps via the inside edge.

On 96, Amiss jabbed a Holding half-volley back past the bowler to reach his century, one of the few highlights of England's summer. Even Holding

and his team-mates joined in the applause. “It was a good feeling”, says Amiss. “I have always thought that the 262 at Sabina Park was the better innings, but there was more pressure on me at The Oval.”

Amiss moved relentlessly past 150 and Peter Willey was an unlikely victim of the medium pace of Collis King to bring England captain Tony Greig to the crease just in time for the new ball to be taken. “They had been bowling at about 85 miles an hour, with one bouncer an over”, Amiss explains. “That was fine and we were picking up ones and twos.”

Greig had more ambitious plans. “Come on, let’s get this fired up. We are going to smash these buggers out of sight”, he told an incredulous Amiss.

“Look, it’s nice out here, don’t upset them”, Amiss pleaded.

With Greig at the crease, the pace increased – along with the frequency of the bouncers. But after a couple of cover-driven fours by his skipper, Amiss could relax again as Holding pitched on a full length and Greig, playing slightly across the line, was bowled middle and leg. Celebrating West Indies fans spilled on to the field, causing a nine-minute delay, and England closed the day on 304 for 5.

A draw appeared the most likely result, even when Holding took out the off stump of nightwatchman Derek Underwood in his third over of Monday morning. Amiss went breezily along, clipping Holding through square-leg to reach 203. “I can’t recall a greater comeback innings throughout my career”, says Underwood. “If anyone gave a V-sign to the selectors, Dennis did it on that occasion.” It was perhaps inevitable that his new technique should eventually bring his downfall, moving too far across and allowing Holding to take out his leg stump.

Alan Knott and Geoff Miller reached 411 for 7 but one ball after reaching his fift y Knott tried to force Holding off the back foot and, because of the speed of the delivery, could only inside-edge into his own wicket. Mike Selvey was out next ball in identical fashion. Holding’s hopes of a hat-trick were undermined by an untidy leg-side delivery and Vanburn Holder wrapped up the innings. Figures of 8 for 92 would do, though, and Holding happily posed for photographers holding up the four fingers of each hand.

Accuracy was key to Holding’s eight-wicket haul, with the first two lbw and the next six all bowled. “He always bowled straight, even when he was at school”, said his father Ralph, who was watching his son play in England for the first time.

And then his six wickets in the second innings completed a 3-0 series

victory, propelling the West Indies into two decades of world domination.

For Holding, who puts his success down to simply “running in and bowling fast”, it was this match that confirmed his arrival in the very top bracket of fast bowlers, alongside the likes of Roberts, Lillee and Thomson. The journey to the Pantheon had been brief and spectacular, the rate at which it had gained momentum after a stuttering start astonishing.

The West Indies selectors had been rewarded for sticking with him after his performance in Australia had not matched his potential. “If I had been English that would have been it for me”, he said, acknowledging the somewhat erratic nature of those picking the England team at that time. That would have been England’s loss, just as it would have been to world cricket’s detriment if Clive Lloyd and his selectors had not had the foresight to stick with him.

Then again, who could not have fallen in love with that bowling action? Even when the wisdom – and aches – of age persuaded him to halve his run-up, he was still a vision to behold and a demon to face. A total of 249 wickets in 60 Tests do little justice to the memory of the man. And when people think of Michael Holding, they usually go back first to August 1976.

West Indies

RC Fredericks	c Balderstone b Miller	71
CG Greenidge	lbw b Willis	0
IVA Richards	b Greig	291
LG Rowe	st †Knott b Underwood	70
CH Lloyd*	c †Knott b Greig	84
CL King	c Selvey b Balderstone	63
DL Murray†	c & b Underwood	36
VA Holder	not out	13
MA Holding	b Underwood	32

Did not bat: AME Roberts, WW Daniel

Extras (b1, lb17, nb9)	**27**
Total (8 wickets dec; 182.5 overs)	**687**

Fall of wickets 1/5 2/159 3/350 4/524 5/547 6/640 7/642 8/687

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RGD Willis	15	3	73	1
MWW Selvey	15	0	67	0
DL Underwood	60.5	15	165	3
RA Woolmer	9	0	44	0
G Miller	27	4	106	1
JC Balderstone	16	0	80	1
AW Greig	34	5	96	2
P Willey	3	0	11	0
DS Steele	3	0	18	0

RC Fredericks	not out	86
CG Greenidge	not out	85

Did not bat:
IVA Richards, LG Rowe, CH Lloyd*,
CL King, DL Murray†, VA Holder,
MA Holding, AME Roberts, WW Daniel

Extras (b4, 1b1, w1, nb5)	**11**
Total (0 wickets dec; 32 overs)	**182**

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
RGD Willis	7	0	48	0
MWW Selvey	9	1	44	0
DL Underwood	9	2	38	0
RA Woolmer	5	0	30	0
AW Greig	2	0	11	0

England

RA Woolmer	lbw b Holding	8
DL Amiss	b Holding	203
DS Steele	lbw b Holding	44
JC Balderstone	b Holding	0
P Willey	c Fredericks b King	33
AW Greig*	b Holding	12
DL Underwood	b Holding	4
APE Knott†	b Holding	50
G Miller	c sub b Holder	36
MWW Selvey	b Holding	0
RGD Willis	not out	5
Extras (b8, lb11, nb21)		**40**
Total (all out; 129.5 overs)		**435**

Fall of wickets 1/47 2/147 3/151 4/279 5/303 6/323 7/342 8/411 9/411 10/435

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
AME Roberts	27	4	102	0
MA Holding	33	9	92	8
VA Holder	27.5	7	75	1
WW Daniel	10	1	30	0
RC Fredericks	11	2	36	0
IVA Richards	14	4	30	0
CL King	7	3	30	1

RA Woolmer	c †Murray b Holding	30
DL Amiss	c Greenidge b Holding	16
DS Steele	c †Murray b Holder	42
JC Balderstone	b Holding	0
P Willey	c Greenidge b Holder	1
AW Greig*	b Holding	1
APE Knott†	b Holding	57
G Miller	b Richards	24
DL Underwood	c Lloyd b Roberts	2
MWW Selvey	not out	4
RGD Willis	lbw b Holding	0
Extras (b15, lb3, w8)		**26**
Total (all out; 78.4 overs)		**203**

Fall of wickets 1/49 2/54 3/64 4/77 5/78 6/148 7/196 8/196 9/202 10/203

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
AME Roberts	13	4	37	1
MA Holding	20.4	6	57	6
VA Holder	14	5	29	2
RC Fredericks	12	5	33	0
IVA Richards	11	6	11	1
CL King	6	2	9	0
CH Lloyd	2	1	1	0

Devon Malcolm – 16.3-2-57-9

England v South Africa, The Oval 18-21 August 1994

-Benj Moorehead-

It is a source of frustration that one cannot travel through time when confronted with an American who is unswervingly of the opinion that Test cricket is essentially 'genteel'. If only they could be beamed to England against South Africa at The Oval in August 1994, one of the fastest, prickliest and most exciting Test matches of modern times. Runs and wickets flowed as lavishly as the Foster's. Fortunes veered back and forth. Players traded waspish insults in the middle, where batsmen were cast as sitting ducks for a hissing 5.5oz leather ball. One was almost knocked out by a blow to the head. And as the pace quickened on a famous sunny Saturday in British sport, a sweating, bloodthirsty crowd urged on a man who was hurling the ball at the throats of his opponents with surgical precision to produce one of the most destructive displays of fast bowling ever seen. The Ancient Romans rarely had it as good as this at the Coliseum. But try telling an American.

In 1994 English cricket was wallowing in mediocrity, as it had been for most of the previous decade, but this only fired the imagination of its supporters. They had great expectations for their cricketers. Ian Salisbury would morph into Shane Warne. Graeme Hick and Mark Ramprakash would bully Test bowlers like they did county trundlers. Chris Lewis would become, well, Chris Lewis. But most of all, perhaps, they hoped the day would come when Devon Malcolm would scatter opposition batsmen to the four winds.

England had been starved of a truly fast bowler for more than a decade. The post-war era had thrown up Trueman, Statham and Tyson, succeeded in turn by John Snow and then Bob Willis. Yet the mantel of genuine England fast bowler had hung limp on its peg ever since Willis fell into a 'cocoon of concentration' at Headingley in 1981. Hope now rested on the enormous shoulders of Derbyshire's Devon Malcolm.

Malcolm had grown up in the land of fast bowlers, Jamaica, where as a boy

his head was turned when he listened to the feats of the great West Indian fast bowlers on the radio. He was not a well-oiled side-on bowler who generated pace with his approach to the crease; instead he jogged in from 30 yards and opened up his mighty chest as he hit the wicket to propel the ball with a last great force of effort. Whichever path it took, it did so at high velocity. “It was just a matter of picking up the ball and bowling it as fast as I could”, Malcolm said of his teenage years.

Michael Holding had been his boyhood idol in Jamaica and now turned mentor when they became team-mates at Derbyshire. Don’t tinker with technique, he suggested. Concentrate on bowling fast.

There was one other important piece of advice: “Follow through straight after delivering the ball. Follow the ball.” Yet herein lay a problem. For as Malcolm’s bowling arm came swinging round – rather than over his shoulder – he would be pulled drastically to the off side. It was if the fielder at cover had mischievously tugged at an invisible rope just as ball left his hand. The effect on his trajectory was spectacular. Byes could tot up rather quicker than wickets.

The public warmed to a man whose weaknesses were as apparent as his strengths. Born with terrible eyesight, he initially wore spectacles – contact lenses came later – and became a cult hero. His fumblings in the field were the stuff of legend. His batting at No.11 was uncoordinated in the extreme but he would hit the occasional six for the sheer absurdity of someone so inept doing such a thing. The fact that he was potentially English cricket’s most powerful weapon added to his appeal.

Malcolm was instantly likeable: friendly by instinct, contagiously good-humoured and unobtrusive. “There was no side to him, no hidden agenda”, says Darren Gough. In the dressing room he would invariably have some headphones on, musing in his own world. At Derbyshire they called him ‘The Dude’.

It was Malcolm’s misfortune that his England career overlapped with an era when players were picked and dumped at the drop of a hat; great fun for those who liked to scribble down their Test squads on the back of an envelope, less so for the players themselves.

After making his Test debut in 1989, Malcolm played 17 Tests before he was dropped for the first time, after which he became a wild card to play only when the pitch, the opposition, or the situation demanded it. “He was always a gamble”, said Raymond Illingworth, chairman of selectors between 1994

and 1997. Malcolm had played three of the previous 16 Tests, spread across three series, going into the match at The Oval in 1994.

Allan Donald, the South African fast bowler and a great admirer of Malcolm, felt that England failed him. “No batsman was ever sure how to play him”, he said.

“I wish we’d had him in our side. He’d never have been in and out of our side if he’d been born a South African. The English hierarchy didn’t appear to understand the mentality of the fast bowler, his need to be supported and tolerated when things aren’t going well.”

The South Africa squad – the first to tour England since 1965 – had built a reputation as a steely, abrasive side, cast in the image of their inscrutable captain, Kepler Wessels, with

a game plan built around a gritty top-order and a fiery pace attack led by Donald. Brian McMillan, a great trunk of an allrounder they called Big Mac, was the rock at the centre. In Hansie Cronje, Daryll Cullinan and Jonty Rhodes, there was a dash of youthful virtuosity too. South Africa had drawn home and away against Australia over the previous year, and were marginal favourites for the series against England, who had scraped a 1-0 win against New Zealand earlier in the summer.

Sure enough, England were thrashed in the first Test at Lord’s, dismissed for 99 in their second innings to lose by 356 runs, the sixth-biggest defeat in their history to that point. To compound the misery, camera footage had caught Michael Atherton picking dirt out of his pocket and rubbing it on the ball in a blatant act of either tampering or foolishness.

Things were different at Headingley. England declared twice after a defiant 99 from their beleaguered captain and the South African top-order was roughed up by a hostile spell from a 23-year-old Darren Gough before the game ended in a draw.

Four days before the squad for the final Test was announced, 31-year-old Devon Malcolm took his England kit with him to Eastbourne, where Derbyshire were playing Sussex in the County Championship. He had a hunch he’d be going straight to The Oval after the four-day match which Derbyshire won by one wicket after Malcolm helped add 28 runs in the deciding last-wicket partnership. He had been a member of the squad at

Lord's, only to be crudely jettisoned a full day before the match began. But his form for Derbyshire was good, and this was a win-or-bust situation. More significant than anything else, it was being played at The Oval.

These were the years of the true, hard, fast Oval pitches which favoured bold strokeplay but also attacking fast bowlers. Malcolm had bowled a frightening spell to the Australians the previous summer. He also loved The Oval for its lively atmosphere. "It's uninhibited, the crowd tends to get behind you more spontaneously. It's too genteel at Lord's for me."

Malcolm's name came out of the hat on Sunday morning but would he make the final XI? Darren Gough and Phil DeFreitas were certainties, and the selectors were keen to give a debut to in-form 33-year-old seamer Joey Benjamin on his home ground. It boiled down to Malcolm or Philip Tufnell. England were loathe to go into a Test without a spinner but after inspecting the pitch the choice was obvious. Even by The Oval's standards, this was a quick track: firm, grassless, pristine. It even rejected Geoffrey Boycott's key.

South Africa chose to bat first but none of their top six reached 50 and it needed a typically pugnacious stand of 124 between McMillan and Dave Richardson to push the total towards 300. England's seamers had the South Africans hopping in the morning but grew tired later on. Benjamin was England's star turn, taking four of the eight wickets to fall on the first day.

Malcolm had bowled Peter Kirsten during a fiery opening spell and would have had more success but for some drops. Later he struck McMillan over the heart, but the most worrying moment had come when Rhodes ducked into a ball from Malcolm that cracked the side of his helmet and knocked the batsman to the floor. Rhodes suffered from a form of epilepsy, so there was concern among the players huddled around him. Eventually he came to, and retired hurt to be checked over at a hospital. Once he knew the player was alright, Malcolm didn't give the incident a second thought. Later he attracted the ire of his skipper with a reluctance to bowl short at the tail. Atherton was so furious he whipped off his fast bowler.

The England captain was an increasingly bedraggled figure that summer. The dirt in the pocket, a struggling team, and now a bowler who, as Graham Gooch had promised, appeared to do the opposite of what you asked for. The next morning, after South Africa were bowled out for 332, Atherton was lbw first ball when it appeared to hit the inside edge of his bat. He shook his head in protest – and was handed a £1250 fine for dissent.

Following the captain's dismissal England hobbled to 222-7, with half-

centuries from Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe, at which point an audacious counter-attack was launched by DeFreitas and Gough. It lasted only half an hour, bringing 59 runs, but it came right at the end of the second day, stoking the crowd and taking England to striking distance of South Africa's first-innings total. "It reminded me of Botham at Headingley in 1981", said Illingworth. Certainly England's cricket began to take on a unifying ferocity seldom seen in the 1990s. Was it a siege mentality brought about by the sight of their drowning captain and harnessed by Gooch the next morning when he took the players aside and issued a rallying call in support of Atherton?

The stakes were raised further when Devon Malcolm was smacked between the eyes by a Fanie de Villiers bouncer on the third morning. It knocked off a piece of protective fibre glass from Malcolm's helmet. Gary Kirsten picked it up at short-leg and grinned. The slip cordon which, with Cullinan and McMillan in its ranks, could hardly be described as bashful, roared their approval. This was an implemented plan of revenge. South Africa had not forgotten the Jonty Rhodes incident. "Let him have it first ball – smack on the head", Wessels demanded as Malcolm took guard. And de Villiers obliged. An eye for an eye, a clonk for a clonk.

Malcolm stood his ground. As he waited for a new helmet, South African fielders squawking their delight around him, he turned to face the slip cordon. "You guys are history", he informed them. That, at least, is how the words have gone down in cricket folklore. What he actually said is likely to be unprintable. No matter; the point was that Malcolm was not very pleased. Allan Donald made a genuine inquiry about his wellbeing at the end of the over but his old friend looked straight through him. He was caught slogging soon after with England just 28 runs behind on first innings.

During the innings break Illingworth found his strike bowler in the corner of the dressing room with his headphones on. 'The time had come to remind him that he was playing in a Test match', recalled Illingworth, 'that he was representing his country…that he had been picked as a nasty, big fast bowler and it was time he focused on that.' Illingworth's northern brand of Churchillian rhetoric seems to have had little impact on his bowler – it was "hardly stirring, motivational talk", said Malcolm. But the chairman of selectors need not have bothered; the rattling blow to Malcolm's forehead, from where a Tom and Jerry lump was now emerging, had done the trick. The Dude had woken. "After a couple of tablets, a glass of water and a lump of ice on the spot, I was ready to roll."

Little was said in the South Africa dressing room about the match or the de Villiers bouncer. They were 1-0 up and had a lead going into the third innings of the match. Things were under control.

Malcolm bowled the second over from the Pavilion end, over the wicket to the left hander, Gary Kirsten. In he came with that gentle jog, head dipping briefly before rising as he moved into his action, so that he was looking down past his nose almost contemptuously at the batsman at the last moment. Out puffed his enormous chest and round came his sledgehammer right arm.

“The most significant of the 99 balls I sent down that day was the first. It was exactly where I wanted it, and it came out of my hand at exactly the right time.”

Kirsten shaped to play but the new ball cannoned off a shortish length and he only avoided decapitation by a last-ditch turn of his head. Malcolm was staring at him from a few yards away when Kirsten turned round. The bowler’s follow-through had taken him straight down the wicket. The crowd smelt blood and crowed their approval. There was a stir in the South African dressing room.

Kirsten ducked the next delivery, but the third was not quite so short and rose at pace towards his throat. He was not even looking at the ball when it arrived. His whole body was turned away from the incoming missile, braced for impact. The ball wrapped a glove on the handle of the bat – now serving purely as protection – and spooned to the right of John Crawley at short-leg. Malcolm, steaming down the wicket in his follow-through, swooped to take the catch for himself, Crawley wisely swerving out the way as he did so. Malcolm was not known for swooping on catches.

Hansie Cronje, South Africa’s dapper vice-captain, survived three balls fired at his body from around the wicket as Malcolm finished his first over with a wicket maiden.

Peter Kirsten, Gary’s older brother and now aged 39, was next in the firing line. He hooked the inevitable short ball, but it was a clumsy, panicky shot, played far away from his body, which was instinctively pulling itself to square-leg. The ball flew off the top edge in an arc to fine-leg, where DeFreitas slid on his knees to take the catch. The fielder sprung up in celebration, then checked himself, tucked the ball under his arm, and clapped

his team-mate. That DeFreitas was more interested in the effort of his fellow bowler than of his own brilliant catch was a measure of England's inspired sense of shared purpose.

The batsmen had crossed to bring on strike Cronje, who was short of form. Having peppered his ribs in his first over, Malcolm came back over the wicket and pitched full and straight. Cronje persuaded himself courageously into a forward defence. But it was a hesitant, small stride, no more than a gesture of good intention. By the time his bat was down, a statue of defence, the bails were flying. The ball had zipped back off the seam and through the gate. Malcolm thrust his arm towards the dressing room, pointing Cronje on his way. South Africa were 1-3 in the fourth over.

The Oval was turning into a gladiatorial ring, with batsmen served up one by one to the Dark Destroyer – as Malcolm was anointed by Nelson Mandela a year later – and the thirsty crowd exhorting their approval. It was a hot, sunny Saturday in mid-August, and spectators were in ravenous mood. Devon was their man, and his time had come. They cheered his arrival at fine-leg between overs and galvanised him for another assault upon the South African batsmen.

Malcolm was preserved after an opening spell of 5-2-4-3, and Wessels and Cullinan steered South Africa to lunch at 40-3. The recovery continued after the break until Malcolm decided to come round the wicket to the left-handed Wessels. Immediately the batsman fenced at a ball which flew past his chest. The next one was a tempter – wider and fuller. Wessels slashed and was caught behind. It was an oddly indiscriminate shot by South Africa's stoic captain, as indeed had been the hit-and-hope dismissal of Peter Kirsten earlier, and more wickets would fall in a similar vein. It appeared that speed had unhinged the minds of South Africa's resolute top-order.

It was true that South Africa had not faced this kind of pace since their return to the international fold. Only Wessels, who played Test cricket for Australia in the previous decade, had experienced something similar. He later said that facing Malcolm had reminded him of his tussles with the West Indies in the 1980s. But Richardson dismissed the idea that South Africa were particularly vulnerable to fast bowling. "Any team in the world would have struggled against him on that day, on that pitch", he said. "His pace was something out of the ordinary."

Yet there was more to Malcolm's method than speed. For one thing, he was bowling straight, conceding not a single wide or no-ball in the innings.

At last he was able to do what Holding had preached some years earlier: “Follow through straight after the

delivery. Follow the ball.” His short deliveries were rarely bouncers but rather balls aimed at the batsman’s jugular: throat balls. To duck was to risk ending up like Jonty Rhodes. But how did you play something rearing up at your ribcage at nearly 100mph? And when you were almost standing on your stumps, braced for another bomb, Malcolm slipped in the full ball that might swing through the air or seam off the pitch. If things weren’t working from over the wicket, he’d get at you from round the wicket. This was fast bowling, yes; but it was also immaculately conceived.

The match still hung in the balance. Brian McMillan, the scourge of England bowlers that summer, joined Cullinan in the middle. Cullinan, talented and cocksure in equal measure, had stamped his bat on the floor when his turn came at 1-3. “You fucking watch me!” he told his team-mates. As tea approached they stretched South Africa’s lead to 165 with six wickets still in the bank. Malcolm was seen off with a powerful display of pulling and hooking.

Back he came to bowl the penultimate over before tea, this time from the Vauxhall end, and got a ball to fly off the edge of McMillan’s wafting bat to Graham Thorpe at first slip. “We were stood a long way back and it nearly knocked me over”, Thorpe recalled. “It was fearsome. Frightening.” This with a ball that was nearly 40 overs old.

Two more wickets fell to Malcolm in the first over after tea. Richardson was lbw to a ball arrowed at his legs but which swung late to curve around the outside edge and hit the back pad in front of middle. Then Craig Matthews was cut in half by the biggest brute of the day, a short-pitched jack-knife which jagged back into his ribs and took the glove. Steve Rhodes flew to his left to snatch the ball when it had already passed him.

The crowd was in raptures. They had willed on Malcolm all day. “From the first ball, they were taking me to the crease with their roars and clapping”, he said.

“I could hear the din as I ran in, but not a sound when I was about to deliver the ball. It was uncanny, I was getting the adrenalin surge at precisely the right moment. Why isn’t fast bowling always as easy as this? I never felt the slightest bit tired. I was just above it all.”

Nothing now seemed more inevitable than that Malcolm would take the last three wickets to repeat what only Jim Laker had managed: a ten-wicket bag. Then Darren Gough had Cullinan caught in the slips; “I got the best batsman out”, Gough quipped. Given the circumstances, Cullinan’s counter-attacking 94 from 134 balls must rank among the best innings of that decade.

Malcolm cleaned up the rest. Rhodes, still shaken and batting down the order, pushed away from his body and was caught behind. Then Donald, no doubt wondering whether Malcolm still recognised him, was bowled off his pads. The irony was that de Villiers, the original offender, was spared a bombardment. England needed 204 runs to level the series.

Upon castling Donald, Malcolm spun on his heels with the same stern expression he had worn all day. He collected his sweater from the umpire, straightened the collar of his shirt and twisted on his cap as he led the players off the field to a standing ovation. At last a small, sheepish smile crept across his face, and he waved his cap modestly to the crowd as he went up the stairs. The deed had been done and Malcolm had emerged from his own cocoon of concentration. He was no longer hunting South Africans. He was back to the real Devon: unassuming, friendly, gentle.

A final spell of five wickets in 33 balls gave him bowling figures of 9 for 57 – the eighth best in Test cricket, but the best by any genuine fast bowler. “We were swept away by the most destructive piece of fast bowling I have ever seen”, said Donald.

Was it revenge for the de Villiers bouncer, or a retort to the England selectors who doubted him? Had the crowd lifted him? Or was it simply likely that the day would come when the world’s fastest bowler would find his line and length on a bouncy pitch? In the end none of these things mattered. Everything fell away as Malcolm slipped into a consciousness that was immune from stimuli. All he had to do was bowl.

No sensible England supporter of that era could be confident of chasing anything over 180 but it was soon apparent that Malcolm’s heroism had infected the batsmen. Atherton and Gooch took 48 from the first 24 balls, and England closed on 107-1 from 16 overs, with just 97 to win. A run-a-ball 81 from Hick took England to a rollicking eight-wicket victory the next morning, bringing an end to a breathless Test match which had produced 1016 runs and 31 wickets in just over three days.

After the presentations, the spectators sat down for Sunday picnics on the

outfield. Where such frenzy had taken place there was now peaceful chatter. It was almost genteel.

South Africa

G Kirsten	c †Rhodes b DeFreitas	2
PN Kirsten	b Malcolm	16
WJ Cronje	lbw b Benjamin	38
KC Wessels*	lbw b Benjamin	45
DJ Cullinan	c †Rhodes b DeFreitas	7
JN Rhodes	retired hurt	8
BM McMillan	c Hick b DeFreitas	93
DJ Richardson†	c †Rhodes b Benjamin	58
CR Matthews	c Hick b Benjamin	0
PS de Villiers	c Stewart b DeFreitas	14
AA Donald	not out	14
Extras (b8, lb10, w1, nb18)		**37**
Total (all out; 92.2 overs)		**332**

Fall of wickets 1/2 2/43 3/73 4/85 4/106* 5/136 6/260 7/266 8/301 9/332

Bowling	O	M	R	W
PAJ DeFreitas	26.2	5	93	4
DE Malcolm	25	5	81	1
D Gough	19	1	85	0
JE Benjamin	17	2	42	4
GA Hick	5	1	13	0

PN Kirsten	c DeFreitas b Malcolm	1
G Kirsten	c & b Malcolm	0
WJ Cronje	b Malcolm	0
KC Wessels*	c †Rhodes b Malcolm	28
DJ Cullinan	c Thorpe b Gough	94
BM McMillan	c Thorpe b Malcolm	25
DJ Richardson†	lbw b Malcolm	3
CR Matthews	c †Rhodes b Malcolm	0
JN Rhodes	c †Rhodes b Malcolm	10
PS de Villiers	not out	0
AA Donald	b Malcolm	0
Extras (lb5, nb9)		**14**
Total (all out; 50.3 overs)		**175**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/1 3/1 4/73 5/137 6/143 7/143 8/175 9/175 10/175

Bowling	O	M	R	W
PAJ DeFreitas	12	3	25	0
DE Malcolm	16.3	2	57	9
D Gough	9	1	39	1
JE Benjamin	11	1	38	0
GA Hick	2	0	11	0

England

GA Gooch	c †Richardson b Donald	8
MA Atherton*	lbw b de Villiers	0
GA Hick	b Donald	39
GP Thorpe	b Matthews	79
AJ Stewart	b de Villiers	62
JP Crawley	c †Richardson b Donald	5
SJ Rhodes†	lbw b de Villiers	11
PAJ DeFreitas	run out	37
D Gough	not out	42
JE Benjamin	lbw b de Villiers	0
DE Malcolm	c sub b Matthews	4
Extras (b1, w1, nb15)		**17**
Total (all out; 77 overs)		**304**

Fall of wickets 1/1 2/33 3/93 4/145 5/165 6/219 7/222 8/292 9/293 10/304

Bowling	O	M	R	W
AA Donald	17	2	76	3
PS de Villiers	19	3	62	4
CR Matthews	21	4	82	2
BM McMillan	12	1	67	0
WJ Cronje	8	3	16	0

GA Gooch	b Matthews	33
MA Atherton*	c †Richardson b Donald	63
GA Hick	not out	81
GP Thorpe	not out	15
Extras (lb6, nb7)		**13**
Total (2 wickets; 35.3 overs)		**205**

Did not bat:
AJ Stewart, JP Crawley, SJ Rhodes, PAJ DeFreitas, D Gough, JE Benjamin, DE Malcolm

Fall of wickets 1/56 2/180

Bowling	O	M	R	W
AA Donald	12	1	96	1
PS de Villiers	12	0	66	0
CR Matthews	11.3	4	37	1

Bob Willis – 15.1-3-43-8

England v Australia, Leeds 16-21 July 1981

-James Mettyear-

Desolation Row

Things were bad in 1981, the western world forced out of joint as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher hit their stride in the dismantling of post-war social democratic collectivism so as to allow a new age of unfettered individualism to produce the 'trickle down' riches that most are still waiting for today. In Britain, Thatcher's slashing of public spending when she had come to power in 1979 had curbed inflation but by the beginning of the year, company profits had fallen by 20 per cent, manufacturing output had fallen by 15 per cent and unemployment had almost doubled, the biggest leap since the Great Depression. Two-and-a-half million were without work with a further 6000 joining the dole queue every day. I was one of them and so had plenty of time to shake my head in bemusement at the nation's obsession with the impending wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana (we should have been 'painting their passports brown'); to be nervously heartened by the Brixton rioters; to struggle to come to terms with Bob Dylan's apparent conversion to born again evangelism, and to watch the cricket.

It's All Over Now, Baby Blue

For the cricket lover of the time there was exhilaration to be had from the brutal brilliance of the West Indians, their rise expertly conceived and planned by Clive Lloyd (the one who helped advertise *The Guardian* newspaper, not the one who would later stand on a platform with the Iron Lady). For the England follower – particularly one laid low by what, as Fred Trueman would say, was "going off out there" in the wider world – there was little solace to be drawn from the home team in early July 1981. Having lost the previous summer's home series to West Indies and then more emphatically the away leg over the winter that followed, England began the

Ashes summer by losing at Trent Bridge. The second drawn game at Lord's saw the members' enclosure, 'in their coats and their ties', greet Botham's dismissal for his second duck of the game (first ball, bowled round his legs sweeping at Ray Bright) with a silence as callous as that shown by the architects of the new conservatism toward the jobless, or William Zanzinger to the lonesome death of Hattie Carroll. 'As I came back towards the pavilion gate not a soul among the Lord's members mumbled "bad luck" and not a single MCC member looked me in the eye', he later wrote.

'I'd already made up my mind to quit the captaincy if the selectors were going to prolong my match-by-match examination. If my mind hadn't been made up, I'm sure the attitude of the MCC members that day would have made it up for me'.

'Botham Out' had read The Evening Standard headline before the game and by the end of it, he was; jumping before pushed as Alec Bedser, chairman of selectors confirmed with indecent haste. And as mass rioting spread from Toxteth to Moss Side, the carpet of press opinion was moving under the young allrounder to the point where even his place in the side appeared in jeopardy.

And then there were Bob Willis's knees.

Mixed-up Confusion

The first I heard of Bob Willis was when the gangling 21-year-old was rushed out to Australia to join the MCC touring team for the 1970-71 Ashes following Alan Ward's injury. I was a little conflicted by the news as I had heard he was lightening quick and was concerned that he might be quicker than my hero, John Snow. While he might have been as fast, I was soon reassured that he wasn't, at least then, as good and when he was the sole England player to run to Snow's aid when the latter was grabbed by a spectator and pelted with beer cans at Sydney (as Bill O'Reilly wrote in The Sydney Herald the next day: 'What did Willis think he could do to help – he looks like a two-iron with ears!'), I decided that I liked him.

I liked the fact that his chest on action culminated, less like Dylan's Frankie Lee, 'in a soulful, bounding leap' but in a flailing whir at the end of a ludicrously long, curving run-up, knees pumping as his right arm thrashed away like a jockey flogging a wounded camel (the moniker later given to him by his mate Botham) or as Graham Gooch described it 'like a gander trying

to get airborne off a runway'.

I liked the fact that he'd played endless mini-Tests in the garden with his brother as a young boy and kept tally in a proper scorebook. I liked the fact that he was fast and that his hair made him look, if not necessarily a rebel, then at least someone who knew his own mind and had the courage to follow it; this impression given substance when, at the end of the 1971 season and having failed to be given a cap at The Oval, he left Surrey without a job to go to and signed on the dole. And a little later, I discovered that the 'D' in 'RGD Willis' stood for Dylan and that he'd added it, aged 14. Then I liked him even more.

Temporary Like Achilles

And over the coming years, my approbation grew (I didn't find out about how close he'd got to joining Boycott's 1982 rebel tour until much later).

By the late 1970s, Bob Willis had become England's leading fast bowler. His action may not have pleased the aesthete but he was mighty effective. At a pace only a little below that of Lillee, Thomson and Holding, his prodigious height and the venom with which he whipped his bowling arm down diagonally across his body at the end of his action, gave him both steep bounce and sharp movement into the batsman. Rick McCosker, his jaw broken at Melbourne, and Iqbal Qasim, hit in the mouth at Edgbaston six months later, would doubtless agree.

Between 1976 and 1979 Willis proved to be a force on all wickets. Even during this peak period though, he repeatedly found himself battling through injury or illness. Tony Greig and Ken Barrington had persuaded him to abandon his somewhat circuitous route to the wicket and adopt a more direct approach and Graham Gooch's mimicry led him to try and still the flapping arm, but still bowling never looked easy for 'Goose'. There was a fragility about him. Six feet four inches at age 16 and nearer 6'6" by maturity, the strain on his knees in particular was often crippling. On the 1974-75 Ashes series down under, the drugs and the 10 injections he'd relied on to get him onto the pitch were no longer enough and he was forced to return home to undergo major surgery on both knees. While in hospital he suffered a blood clot and until the middle of that season he was on crutches. The fragility was not physical alone. He'd suffered from debilitating insomnia since his debut Test tour and while the strength to keep coming back from one set back or

another denoted great mental toughness, it appeared to be a toughness whose well-spring was moral fibre, rather than the innate self-confidence of the likes of Botham. As Mike Brearley wrote in *The Art of Captaincy*: 'Willis is more easily deflated than I for one had appreciated. I was slow to realise that the ribbing he received in 1979-80…was getting him down and even hindering his performance'.

The hollowed cheeks, the catatonic gaze; the way in which, as Brearley described it: 'Willis always shut himself up into a cocoon of concentration and fury' were the means not just to keep him 'singing through these tears' but perhaps to suspend disbelief. As he wrote in his 1985 autobiography, *Lasting the Pace*: 'I cannot say I ever actually enjoyed Test cricket. I was never able to relax'.

Whatever the doubts though, whatever the pain, the man Ian Botham called "a tremendous trier, a great team-man and an inspiration" simply never gave up. Willpower and courage underpinned him, together with a self-disciplined regime of long-distance slow running suggested by an Australian physician. And the openness to explore hypnotherapy to help the insomnia. As Mike Brearley said: 'The two men whose careers have been most miraculously revived and extended by dedication to hard work are Lillee and Willis'.

Despite the hard work though, the injuries kept coming and on the 1980-81 winter tour to West Indies, he broke down again and was forced to return home before the first Test to have frayed cartilage scraped out of his left knee; the press not for the first time consigning him to the knacker's yard. Even John Woodcock in *The Times* castigated the selectors who had taken him to the Caribbean in the first place: 'The selectors can never have seriously thought that Willis was still up to it as a bowler or that his fitness was worth the risk'.

Stuck Inside of Mobile with those Memphis Blues Again

And it was indeed very nearly the end for Willis as the third Test at Headingley approached. Mike Brearley, him with the "degree in people", was rung by Alec Bedser from the pub (he reversed the charges) on the evening after the Lord's game and coaxed out of retirement to take on the captaincy. His first pronouncement was to confirm he wanted Botham in the side. He was much less sure about Willis. Bob had returned for the first two Tests of

the summer, bowling well enough in taking 4 for 75 from 43 overs in the match at Trent Bridge and 4 for 85 from 39.4 at Lords where he also sent down 28 no-balls. He then contracted a chest infection, sat out Warwickshire's next county match at The Oval and according to Bernard Thomas, the England physiotherapist would not be fit to resume training until 48 hours before the Leeds Test. The decision was made to leave him out of the 12-man squad in the hope he would be fit for the fourth Test at Edgbaston. Bedser was given the unenviable task of breaking the news. 'Not dark yet, but it's gettin' there'.

Let Me Die in my Footsteps

As Willis tells it:

'The selectors had apparently assumed, without consulting me, that I was unlikely to make a complete recovery by Thursday…. Although it took me some time to convince Alec that I had little doubt about my fitness for the game, I effectively talked my way back into the team. Alec phoned the other selectors, Mike Hendrick's invitation to play was intercepted before it could reach him and the name of Willis was among those read out to the waiting world on the midday news the following day'.

He still almost missed out. On the eve of the match, Brearley leant towards playing a spinner, John Emburey, at the expense of one of the seamers. If he had gone with this thought, while his vice-captain may not have known it, it would have been Willis himself rather than Old, Dilley, or Botham who would have been dropped.

Too Much of Nothing

Lowering skies and rain (the first in three weeks in Leeds) met the first morning of the third Test. Kim Hughes won the toss on what looked like a bowling day and there followed a 10-minute hiatus while the young Australia captain summoned Rod Marsh and Dennis Lillee for a last look at the pitch. Boycott and Gooch began to pad up with little enthusiasm, but when Hughes at last delivered his verdict he surprised them by deciding to bat. Australia finished a rain-interrupted day described as 'thoroughly mundane' by Christopher Martin-Jenkins, on 203 for 3 off 82 overs with Dyson, dropped

earlier by Botham on 57, yorked by Dilley for 102 just before the close.

On day two, the weather continued in similarly gloomy vein as the tourists reached 401-9 before declaring. The England bowling was inconsistent. Dilley, urged by the crowd to “bowl at t’fuckin’ stumps” very rarely did so and Willis and Old were similarly too wide of off to consistently threaten. Three catches went down, two of them by Botham. One glimmer though, the tarnished golden boy appeared to have recaptured some of his bowling lustre, taking his first five-wicket haul for more than a year. Willis bowled tidily enough but finished with a blank in the wickets column: 30-8-72-0, figures commensurate with his new role as spear-carrier. As Brearley wrote later: ‘His role in the attack had gradually, and without explicit recognition changed from that of the front-line strike bowler to being – partially at least – a stock bowler’.

Tombstone Blues

And after the third day’s play on the Saturday it really did look as if England’s grave had been dug. All the batsmen but Botham, who hit 50 off 54 balls, were at the very least ‘lookin’ for a hole to get sick in’ while Kim Hughes was already claiming the Ashes.

Boycott and Gooch had just about survived an over apiece from Lillee and Alderman the previous evening but Gooch was soon to fall in the morning, lbw to Alderman for two. By the evening, with England having been bowled out for 174 and asked to bat again, he was out for a second time in the day, caught Alderman this time, bowled Lillee, for a duck. Play was stopped early due to bad light with England 6-1 second time round, and still 221 runs behind.

With the crowd waiting for a resumption that never came, the scoreboard flashed up Ladbrokes’ odds for the result: 1/4 Australia; 5/2 draw; 500/1 England. After failing to persuade his team-mates to put £50 of the players’ pool on England, Lillee went ahead with a £10 punt placed by the tourists’ coach driver and Marsh staked a fiver. Small wonder then, that at Botham’s traditional pre-rest day barbecue, there was little cheer to be found.

As Willis wrote later in *Lasting the Pace*:

‘The Test was hardly discussed although when the subject did arise we were unanimous in thinking it would all be over by the end of Monday’s play. So

the following morning we packed our bags, handed in our room keys and prepared to drive back down the motorway later in the day'.

The Mighty Quinn

Bob Taylor, caught off the glove at short-leg shortly before tea to make England 135 for seven and still 92 runs behind, proved to be the point at which the dying embers of the innings were remarkably reignited. 'That was the moment when Dilley strode out and we decided together that a "bit of humpty" was the only solution' writes Botham in *The Incredible Tests*. What followed has gone into the annals of great hitting. There were 19 fours in Botham's 87-ball century and one six, when he advanced three paces down the pitch to drive the fast-medium Alderman straight over his head, "Don't even bother looking for that. Let alone chasing it. It's gone into the confectionery stall and out again", observed Richie Benaud on commentary.

That evening, though buoyed by the fireworks of Botham, Old and Dilley, the England camp were not quite kids in a sweet shop – though the now iconic photo of Botham in the dressing-room, still padded up after his knock and about to fire up a panatella suggested a team-mate had nipped behind the counter for him as he made his way back to the pavilion – but at least now there was a chance. The forecast for Monday was dodgy – rain in the offing – and they might even get away with a draw.

This Wheel's on Fire

Bright sunshine and a sparse crowd marked the start of the final day. A cover drive for four from Botham and a single to Willis the only additions to England's lead before Willis edged Alderman low to second slip. Australia 130 to win in the best part of a day.

The previous evening, when the team had talked in the bar it was, according to Brearley, 'Willis himself who made the crucial suggestion that in the first innings we had been too concerned to bowl a good length and let the pitch "do" the rest. Shouldn't we, and he in particular, bowl faster and straighter? I agreed.'

Before taking the field, Brearley gave a brief exhortatory speech to the team: 'More aggression, more liveliness…They're the ones who are nervous now'. And indeed, after play on the Saturday, England's wicket-keeper Bob Taylor had made his way to the Australian dressing room with his arms full

of bats to be autographed only to be dismissed irritably with: “Fuck off you with your fucking bats”. Not panicking exactly but ‘something was happening here’ and they knew not what it was.

Little sign of nerves at the start of the Australian innings though. Botham’s first ball was a long-hop; his second a half-volley and Graham Wood hit both for four. Dilley’s first two overs went for 11. But then in golden arm’s second over, Wood attempted an off-drive at another long-hop and Taylor completed a simple catch behind. Australia, 13 for one with their innings less than 10 minutes old. Nothing much then happened for the next hour; Willis bowling first change up the hill and into the wind from the Football Stand end in tandem with Chris Old. ‘After he had bowled five overs, Willis said to me, “Give me a go at the other end” tells Brearley.

And that’s when it all changed. He ‘of the big heart and vicious bounce’ in Martin-Jenkins’ words, came hurtling down the hill in one of the most remarkable bowling performances in Test history. As Mike Gatting in *Leading from the Front* describes it:

‘We started off badly in their 2nd innings. Willis had been bowling from the football stand end and was visibly worn out. “Let me have a go down the wind” he told the skipper. “I’m an old man now!” And from the Kirkstall Lane end, ‘Goose’ started roaring in. Sending down an assortment of no balls and snorters…bowling short and quite fearsomely. I remember thinking, standing at square-leg, thank goodness we’re not facing this.’

In 11 balls, ‘eyes fixed in a glare which must have been frightening in itself’ wrote Botham, Willis cut the head off the Australian innings. Trevor Chappell was the first to fall, deflecting a sharp bouncer with his glove in front of his head, Hughes edging another lifter low down to third slip where Botham took the catch, then Yallop fending off another bouncer to short-leg. Three wickets for no runs. Australia 58 for 4 at lunch, the obdurate Dyson 29 not out.

Stock bowler no more. Restored to his role as leader of the attack, Willis found ‘hidden reserves of energy we thought he no longer possessed. Every time those long and delicate legs of his seemed about to buckle under the strain of giving everything he had, he came up with a wicket to send fresh life surging through his body’ Botham observed.

Allan Border fell shortly after lunch for 0, bowled by a nip-backer from

Old and then Dyson, hooking at Willis, got the faintest of edges to Taylor behind the stumps. Australia 68 for six. Still time for an unnerving twist or two in the tail as Brearley recalled. Marsh always a danger. Not this time. Rapped twice in succession on the upper thigh by Willis, he top-edged a hook to the next ball. It looked for a moment as if it was going for six before Dilley, steadying himself, took a fine catch in front of his face just inside the boundary.

Lawson soon followed, caught Taylor bowled Willis, but then Lillee joined Bright and went some way to restoring Australia's hopes. Bright batting 'neatly' in Willis's words (neatly

enough to take 10 off an over from Old) and 'Lillee flapping the rising ball over the slip cordon' before he mishit a chipped drive to a rare full ball from Willis and Gatting sprang forward in an unlikely swan-dive to grasp the catch just above the turf. Australia 110 for 9. Twenty to win. Botham took over from Old and from his second ball, last man Alderman edged straight to Old at slip… and he dropped it. And then did so again to the fifth ball of the over. Had the wheels come off?

They hadn't. Two balls later, it was all over, Willis emphatically yorking Bright before thrusting both arms upwards and running in a circle of celebration through cover, back to the umpire and from there straight through the exultant crowd to the pavilion.

The miracle of Headingly, only the second team to pull off a win after following on and the first since a hung-over Bobby Peel had bowled the Australians out on a Sydney gluepot in 1894.

Idiot Wind

In the immediate aftermath, Willis, son of a BBC news correspondent and himself the future hanging judge in Sky's studio, rather than revel in the moment, took the opportunity, in that death-stare monotone of his, to paint the fourth estate kettle black.

The Headingley crowd didn't care though and nor did a rapt nation watching and listening at home and if they still had a job, at work. And while it was Botham who lit the touch-paper, it was Willis who fuelled the conflagration that reduced Australia to ashes. Remarkable to think that, as John Woodcock reflected that evening 'When play started yesterday the chances seemed to be that Willis was playing in his last Test match'.

During the five days at Headingley, by Labour's count, another 30,000 lost their livelihoods. On July 27, a second wave of rioting broke out in Toxteth. On July 29, the Union Jacks came out for the Royal couple. Mixed up confusion still reigned, 'everything a little upside down' as the man from Minnesota would have it. But just for a moment the glum man from Sunderland by way of Surrey managed, in all his 'raging glory', to send 'a light come shining' through the gloom.

Australia

J Dyson	b Dilley	102
GM Wood	lbw b Botham	34
TM Chappell	c †Taylor b Willey	27
KJ Hughes*	c & b Botham	89
RJ Bright	b Dilley	7
GN Yallop	c †Taylor b Botham	58
AR Border	lbw b Botham	8
RW Marsh†	b Botham	28
GF Lawson	c †Taylor b Botham	13
DK Lillee	not out	3
TM Alderman	not out	0
Extras (b4, lb13, w3, nb12)		**32**
Total (9 wickets dec; 155.2 overs)		**401**

Fall of wickets 1/55 2/149 3/196 4/220 5/332 6/354 7/357 8/396 9/401

Bowling	O	M	R	W
RGD Willis	30	8	72	0
CM Old	43	14	91	0
GR Dilley	27	4	78	2
IT Botham	39.2	11	95	6
P Willey	13	2	31	1
G Boycott	3	1	2	0

J Dyson	c †Taylor b Willis	34
GM Wood	c †Taylor b Botham	10
TM Chappell	c †Taylor b Willis	8
KJ Hughes*	c Botham b Willis	0
GN Yallop	c Gatting b Willis	0
AR Border	b Old	0
RW Marsh†	c Dilley b Willis	4
RJ Bright	b Willlis	19
GF Lawson	c †Taylor b Willis	1
DK Lillee	c Gatting b Willis	17
TM Alderman	not out	0
Extras (lb3, w1, nb14))		**18**
Total (all out; 36.1 overs)		**111**

Fall of wickets 1/13 2/56 3/58 4/48 5/65 6/68 7/74 8/75 9/110 10/111

Bowling	O	M	R	W
IT Botham	7	3	14	1
GR Dilley	2	0	11	0
RGD Willis	15.1	3	43	8
CM Old	9	1	21	1
P Willey	3	1	4	0

England

(followed on)

GA Gooch	lbw b Alderman	2
G Boycott	b Lawson	12
JM Brearley*	c †Marsh b Alderman	10
DI Gower	c †Marsh b Lawson	24
MW Gatting	lbw b Lillee	15
P Willey	b Lawson	8
IT Botham	c †Marsh b Lillee	50
RW Taylor†	c †Marsh b Lillee	5
GR Dilley	c & b Lillee	13
CM Old	c Border b Alderman	0
RGD Willis	not out	1
Extras (b6, lb11, w6, nb11)		**34**
Total (all out; 50.5 overs)		**174**

Fall of wickets 1/12 2/40 3/42 4/84 5/87 6/112 7/148 8/166 9/167 10/174

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Lillee	18.5	7	49	4
TM Alderman	19	4	59	3
GF Lawson	13	3	32	3

GA Gooch	c Alderman b Lillee	0
G Boycott	lbw b Alderman	46
JM Brearley*	c Alderman b Lillee	14
DI Gower	c Border b Alderman	9
MW Gatting	lbw b Alderman	1
P Willey	c Dyson b Lillee	33
IT Botham	not out	149
RW Taylor†	c Bright b Alderman	1
GR Dilley	b Alderman	56
CM Old	b Lawson	29
RGD Willis	c Border b Alderman	2
Extras (b5, lb3, w3, nb5)		**16**
Total (all out; 87.3 overs)		**356**

Fall of wickets 1/0 2/18 3/37 4/41 5/105 6/133 7/135 8/252 9/319 10/356

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
DK Lillee	25	6	94	3
TM Alderman	35.3	6	135	6
GF Lawson	23	4	96	1
RJ Bright	4	0	15	0

Stuart Broad – 9.3-5-15-8

England v Australia, Nottingham 6-8 August 2015

-Sean Riley-

Jimmy Anderson looked down from the Trent Bridge home dressing room on to the playing field below, a sullen expression on his face. The Sky Sports cameras had just cut to him after yet another wicket – how many was that now? – for his good friend and England new-ball partner Stuart Broad and it was impossible not to wonder what was going through Anderson's mind. Of course he was happy for his team, and of course he was happy for his mate – the cameras would cut to him at other times that same morning to show a man as happy as any member of the team, indeed as happy as any England cricket supporter full stop. But that was the moment which particularly resonated, because that was the moment I imagined the hungry wicket-taker beneath Anderson the team-mate. The supremely competitive athlete beneath the supporter. The man who loved bowling, loved getting batsmen out, and saw a whole raft of them there to be dismissed while he watched impotently from the stands as others claimed the glory. It resonated with me for reasons going back more than two decades, to cricket of a slightly less rarefied level.

His name was Ken Grant. We were mates, opening bowling partners, and competitive rivals for the Yaralla Under-16s in the central Queensland town of Gladstone in the early 1990s. In terms both of our wicket-taking dominance of the attack and our friendly but competitive rivalry for intra-team supremacy we had a bit of a 'Wasim and Waqar' vibe going on (or at least we liked to think we did), though as both of us were left-armers 'Wasim and Wasim' would have been the more accurate reference. That we were several galaxies short of Wasim Akram's class, and playing at a level at least a dozen rungs below Test cricket, was purely incidental. On this typically hot Australian summer's day I took the field – unlike Jimmy at Trent Bridge – but as I was recovering from a back strain I was there to field and bat only, leaving the bowling to my partner and our regular supporting cast.

We were up against our biggest rivals at the time, a club called The Glen, the British name of their club contrasting nicely with the indigenous Australian name of ours. We were expecting a tight contest, particularly as I was merely watching on and unable to support or influence proceedings with the ball. As Kenny took the shiny red Kookaburra to bowl the first over of the match against a strong batting line-up which had been in good form, I feared that he and the boys might have a tough day ahead of them.

To say that Stuart Broad had plenty on his mind as he stood on his mark before the first ball of the fourth Test at Trent Bridge would be to put it mildly. England were 2-1 up in the series, the Ashes there to be claimed with victory in Nottingham. Such was the desire of the England team to close out the rubber with a Test to spare, they travelled to Nottingham a day earlier than planned – Broad sharing a car with Anderson, as usual – to ready themselves for the contest. Jimmy's injury was serious enough that it was clear he wouldn't be able to play and so Broad knew that the honour, and pressure, of leading England's attack in a potentially Ashes-deciding Test on his home ground would be his. As an added incentive, prior to the match the fast bowler's Test-wicket tally stood at 299. Broad was well aware of what was at stake, as he later acknowledged:

"I was feeling far more anxious than I usually would be the day before a Test match. All the papers were talking about how much we were going to miss Jimmy and how it was time for me to step up. I was the local boy on the verge of 300 Test wickets and no-one was shy of reminding me how much responsibility was on my shoulders."

The pitch had a tinge of green, freshened up by some early morning showers, but Broad was still of the opinion that England should bat first and told his captain Alastair Cook exactly that. Cook subsequently won the toss and proceeded to ignore his strike bowler's advice completely by electing to bowl. As if to drive home the point, Cook's team talk made clear that this first session was key, that the whole match would be shaped by the next two hours. Just a little more pressure for the young man about to bowl the first over of a Test match for the first time in his career. Meanwhile, I was settling in for the day in front of my TV, ready to watch the Aussies redeem themselves after Edgbaston. I'd been lucky (and I use the word loosely) enough to be in Birmingham a week earlier, watching from the stands in

dismay as Australia had capitulated for 130-odd in two sessions en route to a chastening three-day defeat. As Stuart Broad ran in from the Pavilion end to get play underway, I told myself that today would be better. It had to be, surely.

My optimism lasted all of three balls. I'm not a great fan of using the adjective 'unplayable' to describe a delivery as I'm not sure it's ever unequivocally true, but the one Broad bowled to dismiss Chris Rogers with the third ball of the day was as close as I've seen for some time. The man himself agreed:

"If I was to draw the perfect delivery to bowl to the left-handed Rogers from around the wicket, this was it. The ball was full, but not full enough to drive, and the Australian batsman was caught in two minds as the angle from around the wicket saw the ball arrow toward middle and off stumps before ripping away off the pitch."

The delivery would have been nightmare enough even for a well-set batsman, but to get one like that third ball up was simply too much for the veteran Aussie left hander. Rogers, helpless, edged to first slip where skipper Cook did the rest and Broad had collected his 300th Test wicket in the finest possible style. Number 301 followed before the end of that first over – Steve Smith took six runs off his first two balls, before Broad squared him up with a monster which leapt off the pitch, caught the edge and flew to Joe Root at third slip. Mark Wood – in for Anderson – dismissed David Warner just two balls into his own spell, and such was my shell-shocked state of mind after that first over that my immediate thought was that at least Broad wasn't going to get all 10.

He was still on track for nine an over-and-a-half later though. The ball Broad bowled to Shaun Marsh, replacing his brother Mitchell in the Australian side, wasn't quite the work of art that had done for Rogers, but it did enough to tease the Australian number four outside off stump and have him edging to Ian Bell at second slip. Australia were 15-4. After 16 balls.

Today probably wasn't going to be better than Edgbaston.

It's fair to say Kenny made a reasonable start – after one over his figures read: 1-1-0-2. He'd cleaned up one of the openers with a yorker, then a few balls later caught the outside edge of their number three. It flew to me at slip

and I managed to hold it. I wasn't able to support him today from the other end, so it was nice to contribute in the field. Had I known how the rest of the innings would pan out I might almost have been tempted to grass it. Almost.

Double-wicket maidens to start the day have a tendency to put a spring in one's step and this was no different, as Kenny worked up a real head of steam. The early wickets had clearly shaken the opposition because, rather than weather the storm and rebuild, they decided to slog their way out of trouble. Rarely successful even at the pinnacle of the game, this approach is in orders of magnitude less so at the level we were playing at. Subsequently, Ken soon had several more to his name simply by putting the ball in the right place at the right speed and letting a panicked batting line-up do the rest. The psychology of sport and the power of momentum is as prevalent in junior cricket as the international game, and otherwise-competent batsmen were going to pieces before a bowler who felt like he could take a wicket every ball. I was thinking that I'd rather like to have a bowl myself. It seemed wrong to let Kenny have all the fun, and my back didn't feel that bad…

Adam Voges had scored just 73 runs in the first three Tests of the series, and was clearly struggling for form. What the talented batsman needed – the same thing that any batsman down on form and confidence needs – was a bit of luck. What he absolutely didn't need was to find himself the victim of one of the greatest catches ever seen. Voges' drive – to another Broad teaser which nipped away – was loose and messy, for sure, but it shot off the bat and was rocketing toward the third-man boundary when Ben Stokes at fifth slip flung himself full-length backwards and to his right to take the most remarkable catch of this or just about any other Ashes series. Broad's expression, eyes wide with shock and both hands raised to his mouth in pure disbelief, was one of the images of the summer.

The Nottingham crowd was already by this point little short of delirious and Stokes' catch merely accentuated the frenzy which was erupting from the stands and through my television. Just across the road from Trent Bridge is The City Ground, home of Nottingham Forest FC, a club that despite recent troubles has a history – particularly in European competition – which can stand proudly alongside most in the country. I'd wager that even on their most glorious nights, when the inimitable Brian Clough was leading them to English and European titles, the crowds at The City Ground could barely have matched the atmosphere at Trent Bridge before lunch on 6 August 2015.

It seemed as though every ball was beating the bat. It seemed as though every ball might take a wicket. Christ, for most of the morning it seemed as though every ball was taking a wicket. For a short, confused moment I was struck by a ridiculous (and yet, at the time, somehow plausible) thought and was seriously tempted to consult the TV guide, just to confirm that I was in fact watching the match live. Had I missed something? Had the day's play at Trent Bridge actually been rained out and I was instead watching the highlights' package from another match, a match I somehow had been unaware of until now? That's genuinely how the morning's events appeared – like an extended highlights' package, wicket after wicket after wicket – and at the centre of it all was Stuart Broad.

He had previous against Australia, of course. His 5-37 at The Oval in 2009, and 6-50 at Chester-le-Street in 2013 had both been superb, man-of-the-match displays. But this, today, was something else entirely.

Unlike those previous match-turning spells, in which Broad had collected a significant proportion of his wickets by attacking the stumps, here he was focusing exclusively on the outside edge. His line and length – both conventionally over the wicket and, importantly, around the wicket to the left handers – were both metronomic in their consistency, angling the ball in from wide on the crease to probe on or just outside off stump – the infamous 'corridor of uncertainty' – pitching just full enough to maximise the swing allowed by the new ball but not so full as to be driven with any confidence, and then moving the ball sharply away from the batsmen off the pitch. And all of that at a considerable pace. It was an object lesson in the art of new-ball bowling – one day coaches will be showing the DVD of this spell in coaching clinics all over the world to young quicks as an exemplar of what fast bowling's very finest practitioners are capable of. Maybe they are already. To call Broad's bowling Glenn McGrathesque would have been flattering. To Glenn McGrath.

One of the few members of the Australian team to have played during the McGrath era was skipper Michael Clarke and he was next to go, with what Broad himself admits was the worst ball he bowled all morning. The tragic death of Phil Hughes in November of the previous year had shaken the cricketing world to its core, and it had hit Clarke harder than most as he struggled to deal with the loss of the young man he considered to be his 'little brother'. The century he scored subsequently against India at Adelaide was arguably the bravest, and certainly the most emotional, of his stellar career

but that match turned out to be the only Test he played all summer as the back problems which had plagued him for years were finally beginning to take their toll.

By the time he arrived in England it was clear that Clarke's movement was ponderous and heavily restricted, and as the series progressed it became sadly apparent that the wonderful batsman he had been for so much of his career was nowhere to be seen. His decline was encapsulated when Broad pushed one very wide outside off stump and Clarke – feet planted and rooted to the spot – inexplicably slashed wildly at it, the ball flying hard off the edge to first slip where Cook took an excellent catch above his head. The Australian captain was gone, dismissed by Stuart Broad for the 13th time in Test cricket, and England's new spearhead was saluting the crowd for his five-wicket haul within one hour of the start of play on the first morning of an Ashes Test.

This was getting a bit silly now. God knows what Jimmy Anderson must have thought of it all by then.

One ball did it. One ball confirmed that Ken could have gotten away with anything that day. Their top order had capitulated to him, our change bowlers had joined in and there had even been the kind of comical run-out which sees two batsmen disputing blame at one end while bails are removed at the other. There remained, however, a talented batsman named Greg Rasmussen who would surely offer enough resistance to prevent total humiliation.

Then Ken dropped one short. It wasn't quick, it wasn't vicious. It wasn't even deliberate – he'd slipped during delivery stride and what manifested was a half-paced long hop. Greg could put it literally anywhere, the only question being whether it would go for four or six.

He hit it to square-leg. And I mean straight to square-leg. The fieldsman stood dead still, hands to his chest, and took the catch. On the surface I celebrated – the day was going better than we could possibly have imagined at the start of play.

Inwardly I made a mental note that if the next time I bowled to Greg Rasmussen he didn't give his wicket away as easily to me as he did to Ken Grant that day, I was going to lamp him with his own bat. Bitter, moi?

Steven Finn came into the attack and was an abject failure, taking until his

second over to get amongst the wickets, producing a beauty which clean bowled Australian ’keeper Peter

Nevill. This preceded a wicket drought for England – 20 whole deliveries – as Mitchell Johnson, temporarily at least, adopted the strategy that you couldn’t get caught in the slips if you didn’t try to hit the ball and shouldered arms at every opportunity. It couldn’t last of course, and Broad got his man eventually (it almost goes without saying that ‘eventually’ is very much a relative term in this instance) with yet another fullish delivery which nipped away outside off stump, Joe Root at third slip getting the catching practice this time. Johnson, to be fair to his efforts, had made 13 – outscored only by extras in Australia’s innings.

Johnson’s dismissal had been an almost exact replica of the one two deliveries before, even down to the names involved. Another Mitchell – Starc, rather than Johnson – also c Root b Broad. At nine wickets down, Australia produced one final piece of mini-resistance in the form of a last-wicket partnership of 13 between Josh Hazelwood and Nathan Lyon, and such had been the unrelenting procession of wickets to that point of the morning that when Lyon edged Broad over gully for four early in his 10th over, the bowler claims never to have been more annoyed at a boundary being scored off his bowling. Just to put that statement into some kind of perspective, those four streaky runs took Broad’s figures at that moment in time from 7-11 to 7-15. Is there a cricketing equivalent of #firstworldproblems?

As it happened, Broad got his man the very next ball, caught by Stokes to ensure that all of his eight wickets were caught in the slips and that the list of Englishmen with better bowling figures in an Ashes innings starts and ends with Jim Laker at Old Trafford in 1956. Australia were all out for 60, fewer than 20 overs had been bowled, and it wasn’t yet lunch on day one. I’m not going to lie – as an Aussie, it made for difficult viewing. Still, rather than dwell on the negatives – and there were plenty of them – I just had to take a deep breath, look at the big picture and remember the good times I’d had as an Australian cricket supporter.

Edgbaston, for instance. We’d lasted two whole sessions there.

I don’t really remember the last few wickets. Certainly not vividly – once The Glen were seven or eight down it all became a bit of a blur. Ken finished with seven-for-bugger-all and they were all out for 40-odd in a match we went on

to win easily. We gave Kenny the guard of honour he deserved, and I bore him no ill will. He'd bowled beautifully and made the most of his opportunity. Most importantly, the team had benefited. But like any sportsman I had my competitive streak, and if there were wickets to be taken I wanted to be a part of it. If someone was going to produce the performance of the season to destroy our arch-rivals, then I wanted it to be me. It wasn't though, so I had to content myself with being happy for my mate.

After such an extraordinary first session, the remainder of the Test was almost an afterthought, though it didn't really deserve to be. A superb century from Joe Root underpinned England's reply and subsequent huge first-innings lead, while Ben Stokes followed on from his fielding heroics by providing the second-innings bowling fireworks with six wickets. England won comfortably of course, again within three days, and with it wrapped up the series – their fifth Ashes win in seven, and fourth in a row at home. It wasn't long ago that even one Ashes win for England seemed almost an impossibly distant dream, let alone a decade of relative dominance such as the one they have experienced since that most epic of drought-breakers in 2005. Inevitably, Broad was named Man of the Match, the third time he had won such an award in a Test which decided the Ashes. No other Englishman – not even career Aussie-nemesis Ian Botham – can boast such a record.

In the lead-up to the Test former England captain Nasser Hussain had penned an article for *The Daily Mail* in which he said:

'Stuart Broad stands just one wicket away from 300 in Test cricket and will lead the attack for his country today on his home ground – but for some reason he is not as popular as he should be and remains an under-appreciated cricketer. He has lived in Jimmy Anderson's shadow but it is time for Broad to emerge in his own right.'

Challenge accepted and mission accomplished. Eight for 15 including your 300th Test wicket, on your own home ground, in a match which decides the Ashes. Stuart Broad might have better days in Test cricket, but if I were a betting man I'd wager my life-savings against it and feel pretty confident making that call. Unsurprisingly, Broad agrees:

"That's the best spell I've bowled. Our bowling coach, Ottis Gibson, said to me 'those spells come once in a lifetime'. Sometimes you do it for your

school, sometimes you do it for your club. But to do it for England against Australia, I couldn't have dreamt it. Our catching was spectacular that morning. It summed up all the hard work we've been putting in, that hour and a half. It was a reward. I'm sure I'll never better that eight for 15 as a bowler. It was a special morning."

A special morning indeed. As Stuart Broad walked off the field that morning in Nottingham, the Trent Bridge crowd – English and Australian alike – rose to applaud the kind of performance seen once in a generation, maybe once in a lifetime. James Anderson applauded too, delighted for his friend and for his team. But I'll never forget that image from earlier in the session, when the look on Jimmy's face betrayed the competitive spirit inside him, seeing wickets there for the taking and wishing he could have been a part of it all as well. I knew how he felt. Sort of.

Australia

CJL Rogers	c Cook b Broad	0
DA Warner	c †Buttler b Wood	0
SPD Smith	c Root b Broad	6
SE Marsh	c Bell b Broad	0
MJ Clarke*	c Cook b Broad	10
AC Voges	c Stokes b Broad	1
PM Nevill†	b Finn	2
MG Johnson	c Root b Broad	13
MA Starc	c Root b Broad	1
JR Hazlewood	not out	4
NM Lyon	c Stokes b Broad	9
Extras (lb11, nb3)		**14**
Total (all out; 18.3 overs)		**60**

Fall of wickets 1/4 2/10 3/10 4/15 5/21 6/29 7/33 8/46 9/47 10/60

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
SCJ Broad	9.3	5	15	8
MA Wood	3	0	13	1
ST Finn	6	0	21	1

CJL Rogers	c Root b Stokes	52
DA Warner	c Broad b Stokes	64
SPD Smith	c Stokes b Broad	5
SE Marsh	c Root b Stokes	2
J Clarke*	c Bell b Wood	13
AC Voges	not out	51
PM Nevill†	lbw b Stokes	17
G Johnson	c Cook b Stokes	5
MA Starc	c Bell b Stokes	0
JR Hazlewood	b Wood	0
NM Lyon	b Wood	4
Extras (b20, lb16, w1, nb3)		**40**
Total (all out; 72.4 overs)		**253**

Fall of wickets 1/113 2/130 3/136 4/136 5/174 6/224 7/236 8/242 9/243 10/253

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
SCJ Broad	16	5	36	1
MA Wood	17.4	3	69	3
ST Finn	12	4	42	0
BA Stokes	21	8	36	6
MM Ali	6	0	34	0

England

A Lyth	c †Nevill b Starc	14
AN Cook*	lbw b Starc	43
IR Bell	lbw b Starc	1
JE Root	c †Nevill b Starc	130
JM Bairstow	c Rogers b Hazlewood	74
MA Wood	b Starc	28
BA Stokes	c †Nevill b Hazlewood	5
JC Buttler†	b Starc	12
MM Ali	c Smith b Johnson	38
SCJ Broad	not out	24
ST Finn	not out	0
Extras (b14, lb2,w2, nb4)		**22**
Total (9 wickets dec; 85.2 overs)		**391**

Fall of wickets 1/32 2/34 3/96 4/269 5/297 6/306 7/320 8/332 9/390

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
MA Starc	27	2	111	6
JR Hazlewood	24	4	97	2
MG Johnson	21.2	2	102	1
NM Lyon	10	1	47	0
DA Warner	3	0	18	0

Harbhajan Singh – 41.5-20-84-8

India v Australia, Chennai 18-22 March 2001

-Dileep Premachandran-

The players that landed at Chennai airport on March 16, 2001, a sweltering early-summer day, didn't just look exhausted. Some of them walked out as though in a daze. It had been that kind of series. After eight days of cricket, six of which had been dominated by Australia, India somehow found themselves on level terms. What was already being referred to in the India media as the Miracle of Eden had ended Australia's unprecedented 16-Test winning streak, and taken attention away from the furore over Sourav Ganguly's Test captaincy.

Ganguly had taken over at a tumultuous time in Indian cricket. The 1990s had been an odd sort of decade for the side. Often imperious at home, they travelled terribly, with one-sided defeats in Australia – 4-0 (1991-92) and 3-0 (1999-2000) bookending that period. But since January 1999, when they had lost an epic Test match to Pakistan in Chennai, even the home form had begun to dip. The loss to Waugh's Australians in Mumbai had been a fifth home defeat in 11 Tests. There had only been three victories.

Two of those losses had come against South Africa in early 2000, after which Sachin Tendulkar relinquished the captaincy. That series defeat was overshadowed, however, by the cataclysmic events that followed. A routine Delhi Police investigation stumbled across a phone conversation involving Hansie Cronje, the South African captain, and the world of cricket opened its eyes to the most damaging of scandals.

One of those eventually implicated and banned was Mohammad Azharuddin, who had played his 99th Test against the Proteas – he had led India in 47 of them. With no experienced hands to turn to, the cricket board plumped for Ganguly as captain. The freshman year hadn't been an easy one, and there was further angst in store before the Mumbai Test was played out to the backdrop of Sir Donald Bradman's death.

In the days leading up to the series, a Press Trust of India (PTI) journalist based in Chennai had broken a story about Ganguly's visit to the Srikalahasti temple in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh. He hadn't gone alone. The woman who accompanied him wasn't Dona, his wife, but Nagma, a popular movie actress.

Once that commotion had died down – and the Australians tapped into the subject a fair bit while sledging him in Mumbai, where India lost in three days – the attention switched to Ganguly's home Test and leadership credentials. Writing in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata's highest-selling English newspaper, Ian Chappell, the former Australian captain who was part of the commentary team, openly questioned his suitability for the role.

'Sourav Ganguly has made a number of poor decisions lately (not all of them on the field), however, it is his arrogance towards his fellow players that is the biggest threat to his tenuous hold on captaincy. That and his inability to make big scores in Test matches against teams with a strong attack... If Ganguly can't change that trend in this series (the signs were not promising in Mumbai) and in the process treat his players with more respect, not only is the Gavaskar-Border trophy lost but his leadership is in peril.'

A piqued Ganguly responded with a front-page rejoinder of his own.

'While I respect Chappell's right to be critical of my batting and captaincy, he has no business talking about things he doesn't know of first hand. Specifically, I object to his observation that I am arrogant towards fellow players and that I don't treat them with enough respect. These comments are not only unwarranted but terribly misplaced. How does Chappell know what goes on in our dressing room? Also what does he know of my relationship with teammates? Frankly, either Chappell is himself ignorant or has made the observations at the behest of someone else. This isn't cricket.'

After three days, India were staring at another heavy defeat, and Ganguly at a pink slip from the cricket board. Then, VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid happened, and Harbhajan Singh added to his first-day hat-trick and seven wickets with six in the second as the loudest crowd in the game's history bellowed the hosts home on the final afternoon.

Some of the most gnarled hands in the game were visibly shaken by the noise emanating from the stands, many of the makeshift bamboo variety.

‘Regardless of the score at tea, the climate outside the changing room was electric’, wrote Justin Langer in his column. ‘The crowd had swelled with every wicket, as the patriotic Indian supporters, all 100,000 of them, started shouting and screaming with the intensity of a raging inferno. Never have I heard a roar like this.’

Australia lost seven wickets in the final session, as Harbhajan and Tendulkar, who had failed to contribute with the bat, spun a black-widow web on a wearing surface. Instead of heading to Chennai with the series won, or even 1-0 up, Australia left Eden Gardens with their cloak of invincibility badly torn.

Almost overnight, a country that had become disillusioned and cynical about the game, in the wake of years of fixing stories, fell in love with it again. Cricket was back on the front page for all the right reasons, and people could speak of little other than Eden in the build-up to the third and decisive Test.

Harbhajan, who few would even have recognised before the series began, was the new slow-bowling hope, even though the optimism was laced with worry that he might go the way of talents like Laxman Sivaramakrishnan and Maninder Singh. It was a remarkable turnaround for a 20-year-old who had initially been given little hope of playing in the series. But coach John Wright and Ganguly took a shine to him, and in Anil Kumble’s absence – he had been operated on for a troublesome shoulder – the young Punjabi became his team’s talisman.

He had made his debut against Mark Taylor’s Australia three years earlier, but had been dropped after eight Tests and 21 wickets. It had never been an easy path for Harbhajan. Dogged by suspicions over his action and sacked from the national academy for ‘indiscipline’, coupled with his father’s premature death and pessimism about his cricketing prospects, Harbhajan had considered emigrating to North America and driving long-haul trucks for a living. The perceived problems with his action were rectified in the indoor school at Lord’s by Fred Titmus with further assistance coming from Erapalli Prasanna. Then, thanks largely to the Wright-Ganguly combination, cricket rather than truck driving became the day job.

Such was the anticipation around the Chennai Test that even the eminences of the press box came to watch the net sessions closely. On the eve of the game, this writer stood behind one, watching Tendulkar drive and cut with impunity. One of the others in attendance was the late Peter

Roebuck. A man of few words, especially in the company of strangers, he needed just a couple of minutes to say: “He’s making a hundred here.”

Only once in nearly 70 years of Tests at Chepauk had a team bowled first on winning the toss, and Steve Waugh certainly wasn’t about to break the trend on a muggy day when the temperature soared. The players had enjoyed just 48 hours of downtime after Kolkata, and some of the Indians looked decidedly weary as they took to the field on the opening morning.

Zaheer Khan gave them the early breakthrough, but with Langer producing a stroke-filled cameo and Mark Waugh batting with the elegance that had fetched him a World Cup hundred in Chennai six years earlier, the imperious Matthew Hayden had plenty of support. At the start of the tour, Hayden had been the player with the impressive Sheffield Shield stats and a massive question mark over his international credentials. He finished it with 549 runs, and Chennai would see his magnum opus.

His exploits were also a reminder of the virtues of proper groundwork. Three years earlier, he had come to India with an Australian Cricket Academy tour. “I had also had this stint in 1998 when we talked with [Bishan] Bedi and Venkat [Srinivas Venkataraghavan] on how to play spin, so the preparation helped a lot”, he told reporters. One of the strokes he had fine-tuned was the sweep, which he played with the muscularity of a blacksmith taking to his anvil. In four previous innings in the series, he had made 119, 28 not out, 97 and 67. In Chennai, on a docile first-day pitch, neither Harbhajan nor his team-mates could make the slightest impression on him. Mark Waugh fell for 70, but he just carried on, putting the loose deliveries away with clinical disdain.

“I found Hayden a tough nut to crack because his reach at the crease is immense”, said Harbhajan. “He reaches the balls going outside the off stump and even drives them with ease. He was in great form.”

Steve Waugh couldn’t summon up the fluency of his Kolkata hundred, but it didn’t matter as the two batted more than a session to see Australia to stumps at an imposing 326 for 3. India, who had been under the cosh in both Mumbai and Kolkata, looked bereft of ideas, with Tendulkar the most threatening bowler.

But the match, and cricket history itself, changed in bizarre fashion on the second morning. Ganguly had brought Harbhajan on early, and Waugh went for a sweep. He missed, and the close-in fielders went up for the leg-before

appeal, as did Harbhajan. But even as they looked to the umpire, the ball bounced towards the stumps. Suddenly aware of that, Waugh palmed it away.

Even as a stunned fielding side recalibrated their appeal, the finger went up. Waugh gone for 47, and Australia 340 for 4. “There were a few defining moments in the series, but my handling the ball was certainly not one of them”, a defiant Waugh would say later. “A freak dismissal is just one moment, it happened to Sachin Tendulkar in Mumbai too, and cannot change the course of a Test too much.”

The facts suggested otherwise. After Waugh’s exit, it was a procession, though Hayden showcased both defiance and anger at one end with one purposeful stroke after another. Ricky Ponting was stumped first ball, off a doosra, and Adam Gilchrist lasted just six before missing a sweep to be trapped in front.

By the time Hayden holed out to Ganguly at long-off, he had made 56 of the 65 Australia added that morning. As for Harbhajan, he had a third consecutive five-wicket haul against the world’s best side.

Even as Harbhajan and his fellow bowlers put their feet up in the Chepauk pavilion, the Indian batsmen set about consolidating their new-found hold on the game. Only Tendulkar made a century, a brilliant 126, but four others – Shiv Sunder Das, Sadagoppan Ramesh, Laxman and Dravid – crossed 50. Sairaj Bahutule’s unbeaten 21 ensured that the lead would be over 100 with the best part of two days still to play.

The conditions were still vastly in the batsmen’s favour. Colin Miller and Shane Warne, Australia’s spinners, toiled 88 overs for combined figures of 5 for 300. Three years earlier, a wondrous second-innings 155 from Tendulkar had stymied Warne and Australia in the first Test of the series. He didn’t make as many in 2001, but the deft upper cuts over the slips when Warne targeted the leg-side rough left the bowler in no doubt as to who had won their contest.

There seemed to be few demons in the pitch when Michael Slater and Hayden came out to try and knock off the deficit, and there was clear intent from the outset, with both men sashaying down the crease to hit Harbhajan over the top. Lunch was taken with both openers sitting pretty, unbeaten on 34. When the breakthrough finally came, it was from an unlikely source. Nilesh Kulkarni, the lanky left-arm spinner from Mumbai, took only two wickets in his three Tests – Chennai would be his final appearance – but one of them transformed a series.

It was Hayden, the danger man, who lofted him over mid-wicket, only to see Zaheer run in and take a splendid catch. With Australia still 28 in arrears, Steve Waugh opted for one attacking left hander to replace another, promoting Gilchrist to No.3. Gilchrist had started the series with a blazing hundred, but barely put bat to ball after that. This time, he lasted 11 balls before Harbhajan, from round the wicket, defeated a tentative forward push. Almost as soon as the ball rapped the flap of the pad, the Indians were celebrating.

That delivery had gone on with the arm, and Harbhajan then showed off the top spinner to end Slater's fighting knock of 48. Slater played away from his body, and the edge was superbly taken inches from the ground by Laxman at slip. Bahutule, who would add only one more cap to his debut one, then got Langer in similar fashion, leaving the Waugh twins with the task of setting India a challenging target.

They added 52 in watchful fashion before Harbhajan returned to pick up his tenth of the match. Mark Waugh glanced him off the pads and looked back to see Dravid flinging himself to the right at backward short-leg. His 57 would turn out to be the highest score of the innings. "He bowled beautifully", Steve Waugh would say later. "Good line, kept it on a length and he was able to get more bounce than our spinners because he has a different type of action."

Next in Harbhajan's sights was Ponting, whose travails against him during the series made for grisly reading – 18 balls, four runs, four times out. He edged his first ball behind, and stood his ground. As did the umpire, much to Sameer Dighe's understandable disgust that subsequent replays would fully justify. Bahutule then dropped a return catch, and Ponting might have hoped he had turned a corner when he came down the pitch and lofted Harbhajan over long-on for six.

The 11 he made was his highest score of the series. When the end came, it was the classic off-spinner's dismissal. Undone by bounce and turn, Ponting could only pop

one off the glove behind square. Dravid did the rest. With his captain watching from the other end, Warne then offered no shot to the last ball of the day. It hit the back leg, giving the umpire the simplest of decisions. Australia were 241 for 7, just 131 in front. At day's end, an exhausted Peter Roebuck retreated from the 'bedlam and ear splitting-roars' to record that Harbhajan 'baffled batsmen with changes of pace and direction and surprised

them with bounce'. And this on a pitch that had neutered Warne.

Few dared to write Australia off though, such was the aura around the side. Many of the Chepauk faithful had also yet to recover from the pain of two years earlier, when Tendulkar's glorious 136 was unable to prevent a 12-run loss to Pakistan. Given the constant talk of India being the 'final frontier' – they hadn't won there since 1969 – few expected Australia to play for a draw, and only a handful of Indian newspapers were confident enough to predict a famous Indian victory.

Australia still had Steve Waugh, whose partnership with Jason Gillespie had so nearly transformed the Kolkata Test. But on the final day in Chennai, there were no such feats of escapology. Waugh added just four to his overnight 43 before being caught at bat-pad. Gillespie and Miller tried to play out some time, but Harbhajan was relentless. Gillespie fended one down leg for Dravid to take another, and Miller missed a sweep in front of the stumps.

From the last 17.1 overs that he bowled, Harbhajan had taken 6 for 15. His innings figures were 8 for 84, giving him 15 for 217 for the match. Only Narendra Hirwani, with 16 for 136 on debut against Viv Richards's West Indies in 1988, had better figures for India. He too had performed wonders at Chepauk, albeit on a far more underprepared surface. "We knew he would play a role, but we certainly didn't expect him to have such an impact and finish with 32 wickets", said Waugh, a touch ruefully.

India needed just 155 to win, but with Gillespie, McGrath and Miller bowling magnificently, they collapsed from 101 for 2 to 151 for 8. VVS Laxman's 66 had taken his side within sight of victory but it was the more down-to-earth resistance of Sameer Dighe that progressed it to the cusp. At this stage the atmosphere in the ground, described by Anand Vasu, had risen to a hysterical level:

'The last session was so fraught with tension, the air at the ground could have been cut with a bread knife. The religious prayed, the nervous smoked, scribes typed furiously as the players slugged it out in the middle.'

The first ball Harbhajan faced, from Gillespie, was flat-batted to mid-off. He scampered through for a run that left India needing just two more.

With three slips and a gully waiting for the edge, Harbhajan might have expected a back-of-length delivery from McGrath. Instead, it was a yorker that tailed in towards off stump. Harbhajan's bat came down just in time and

the ball squirted through point. He sprinted the first run, and started pumping his fists and raising the bat as he completed the second.

In those days, the press box at Chepauk was bang in the middle of the stands, exposed to the same heat and dust that the players and fans had to cope with. As India neared the target, the noise from the stands was comparable to Kolkata, though Chennai accommodated less than half the number of fans. For the final few overs, it was so loud that you couldn't hear your neighbour speak. And why not? This had been one of the great Test matches, and it had gone down to the wire.

Harbhajan, the patka-wearing Sikh who might have ended up in Vancouver or Toronto had fate dealt him another hand, had put together the most astonishing two-Test sequence in the game's history. Back in 1981, Ian Botham had won England back-to-back Tests at Headingley (with the bat) and Edgbaston (ball), but Harbhajan's haul of 28, including four five-wicket hauls, put even that in the shade.

In the years that followed, he often struggled to live up to the impossible expectations created by those two displays. But at that moment, when the winning runs were struck and India's most celebrated series win clinched, all that mattered was that a fringe player who had contemplated pastures new just months earlier had sealed the most memorable of series wins, with 32 wickets and the three most important runs he would ever score. Who said fairytales are a figment of the imagination?

Australia

MJ Slater	c Laxman b Khan	4
ML Hayden	c Ganguly b Harbh'jan Singh	203
JL Langer	c Dravid b Harbh'jan Singh	35
ME Waugh	c sub (HK Badani) b Bahutule	70
SR Waugh	handled the ball	47
RT Ponting*	st †Dighe b Harbh'jan Singh	0
AC Gilchrist†	lbw b Harbh'jan Singh	1
SK Warne	c Das b Harbh'jan Singh	0
JN Gillespie	c Ganguly b Harbh'jan Singh	0
CR Miller	c Bahutule b Harbh'jan Singh	0
GD McGrath	not out	3
Extras (b8, lb10, nb10)		**28**
Total (all out; 115.2 overs)		**391**

Fall of wickets 1/4 2/67 3/217 4/340 5/340 6/344 7/374 8/376 9/385 10/391

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Z Khan	15	5	57	1
SC Ganguly	2	1	11	0
Harbh'jan Singh	38.2	6	133	7
NM Kulkarni	23	5	67	0
SV Bahutule	21	3	70	1
SR Tendulkar	16	1	35	0

ML Hayden	c Khan b Kulkarni	35
MJ Slater	c Laxman b Harbh'jan Singh	48
AC Gilchrist†	lbw b Harbh'jan Singh	1
JL Langer	c Laxman b Bahutule	21
ME Waugh	c Dravid b Harbh'jan Singh	57
SR Waugh*	c Das b Harbh'jan Singh	47
RT Ponting	c Dravid b Harbh'jan Singh	11
SK Warne	lbw b Harbh'jan Singh	11
JN Gillespie	c Dravid b Harbh'jan Singh	2
CR Miller	lbw b Harbh'jan Singh	2
GD McGrath	not out	11
Extras (b8, lb6, nb4)		**18**
Total (all out; 97.5 overs)		**264**

Fall of wickets 1/82 2/84 3/93 4/141 5/193 6/211 7/241 8/246 9/251 10/264

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Z Khan	4	0	13	0
SC Ganguly	1	0	8	0
Harbh'jan Singh	41.5	20	84	8
NM Kulkarni	30	11	70	1
SR Tendulkar	12	0	43	0
SV Bahutule	9	0	32	1

India

SS Das	lbw b McGrath	84
S Ramesh	c Ponting b Warne	61
VVS Laxman	c ME Waugh b McGrath	65
SR Tendulkar	c †Gilchrist b Gillespie	126
SC Ganguly*	c †Gilchrist b McGrath	22
R Dravid	c †Gilchrist b Gillespie	81
SS Dighe†	lbw b Warne	4
SV Bahutule	not out	21
Z Khan	c & b Miller	4
Harbh'jan Singh	c ME Waugh b Miller	2
NM Kulkarni	lbw b Miller	4
Extras (b19, lb2, nb5, w1)		**27**
Total (all out; 165 overs)		**501**

Fall of wickets 1/123 2/211 3/237 4/284 5/453 6/468 7/470 8/475 9/477 10/501

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
GD McGrath	36	15	75	3
JN Gillespie	35	11	88	2
CR Miller	46	6	160	3
SK Warne	42	7	140	2
RT Ponting	2	1	2	0
ME Waugh	3	0	8	0
ML Hayden	1	0	7	0

SS Das	c & b McGrath	**9**
S Ramesh	run out (Ponting/†Gilchrist)	**25**
VVS Laxman	c ME Waugh b Miller	**66**
SR Tendulkar	c ME Waugh b Gillespie	**17**
SC Ganguly*	c ME Waugh b Gillespie	**4**
R Dravid	c SR Waugh b Miller	**4**
SS Dighe†	not out	**22**
SV Bahutule	c Warne b Miller	**0**
Z Khan	c ME Waugh b McGrath	**0**
Harbh'jan Singh	not out	**3**
Extras (lb3, nb2)		**5**
Total (8 wickets; 41.1 overs)		**155**

Fall of wickets 1/18 2/76 3/101 4/117 5/122 6/135 7/135 8/151

Bowling	**O**	**M**	**R**	**W**
GD McGrath	11.1	3	21	2
JN Gillespie	15	2	49	2
CR Miller	9	1	41	3
SK Warne	6	0	41	0

Hugh Tayfield – 37-11-113-9

South Africa v England, Johannesburg 15-20 February 1957

-Michael Burns-

South Africa, after overwhelming defeats in Johannesburg and Cape Town, were two down in the 1956-7 series against England when the teams arrived back in Johannesburg for the fourth Test, starting on 15 February. But, thanks to the Springboks finally finding their form in the drawn third Test in Durban, the five-match series was still alive. The Springboks, smarting from perceived injustices on their 1955 tour of England (home umpiring decisions they were convinced had cost them the deciding Test at The Oval), were determined to prove themselves against the unofficial world champions. So a win at the New Wanderers for the home side was a must.

The South African team facing England was made up of a group of young players that had emerged after the war, all white of course, who, after the National Party's 1948 election victory, were living in a country totally dominated by the stifling apartheid system. 'We were given a lecture on the way out about apartheid and the political situation in South Africa' recalled *The Times* cricket correspondent, John Woodcock in the 2009 MCC documentary *Cape Summer*, 'and I'm afraid that for the next few months, I've got a nasty feeling, and it's greatly to our shame, that perhaps we took apartheid even for granted in the way that we shouldn't have done.' On the other hand, Doug Insole, the Essex amateur batsman who was vice captain on the tour, recalls even 60 years later feeling embarrassed by some of the things he saw: "It used to worry me that when I was walking along a pavement and a coloured woman was coming the other way, she would step into the road, and I used to think, that's just not right."

During the first three Tests, some animosity had been building between the two sides: in the first match Hugh Tayfield had claimed a caught and bowled from a bumped ball; the sadistic fast bowler Peter Heine was taking excessive pleasure in hitting batsmen – he broke Trevor Bailey's finger in the third Test – and in this same game, 'some of the old white coats weren't too

good when it mattered, in fact they were pretty poor,' was Peter Richardson's verdict in Cape Summer: 'There was some friction in that match all the way through it…there was going to be no three-nil up.' Despite this bad on-the-field feeling, the time between matches to go deep-sea fishing, take a trip to the Victoria Falls, hack round a golf course, laze on a beach, and above all enjoy the overwhelming hospitality of the South African people, made this the favourite tour for the England players. In turn the MCC team were very popular with their hosts, particularly Denis Compton (who had hidden a disintegrating knee in order to make sure he was on the trip). Doug Insole recalls, 'Denis loved South Africa and South Africa loved Denis.' And none more so than one particular glamorous married Cape Town lady who, Clive van Ryneveld remembered, was so infatuated by the handsome Middlesex man that she relentlessly pursued the equally married Compton all round the Union. Reflecting this off-the-field bonhomie, after the Durban Test the England players clubbed together to give acting Springbok skipper van Ryneveld a wedding present before his marriage to Verity, daughter of the Anglican Bishop of George. Because of his enforced captaincy duties (Jackie McGlew had pulled out of the series due to injury), his honeymoon at Plettenberg Bay had to be cut short so he could travel north to be ready for the start of the fourth Test. Meanwhile, Verity was flown up to Johannesburg at the expense of the South African Cricket Association but frustratingly, they would not allow the new bride to stay with her husband at the team hotel.

On a hot, windless day before an array of press photographers and a newsreel cameraman, Oxford blue van Ryneveld, wearing his green blazer with gold stripes, shook hands with Cambridge graduate Peter May, sporting the distinctive MCC navy blue touring blazer edged with the bacon-and-egg braiding. The coin was spun, captain May, as he always did, called tails but it come down heads. The acting South African captain had won his first toss as a married man, and chose to bat on a shaven, colourless-looking pitch. A mere 800 spectators were dotted amongst the rows of backless wooden benches that circled the New Wanderers Stadium, a vast bowl that had replaced the old ground – flattened in 1946 to make way for the city's new railway station. There were a number of reasons for the sparse crowd – the home side were two down and losing support, on top of which the batting by both sides in the series had been desperately laboured: England openers,

Peter Richardson and Trevor Bailey had, on separate occasions, batted all day for 69 and 71 respectively. South Africa were equally lacking in dash – having been too timid to chase 190 in 58 eight-ball overs in the drawn Durban Test. Apart from some lifeless pitches, and defensive fields, particularly set by May (who in John Woodcock's view was 'a dour captain, he lacked imagination'), the slow scoring was mainly due to both sides having a wonderful array of bowlers. England could call on the pace of Brian Statham, Frank Tyson, Trevor Bailey and Peter Loader (picked ahead of Fred Trueman); and spinners Jim Laker, Tony Lock and Johnny Wardle. Equally mean was the Springbok four-man attack (plus occasional leg-spin from van Ryneveld), made up of fast men Peter Heine and Neil Adcock, left arm medium-pacer Trevor Goddard, and off-spinner Hugh Tayfield.

At the end of the first day of this do-or-die fourth Test for the home side, the South African top order had made reasonably good use of the benign pitch, finishing on 234-4.

There were half-centuries from John Waite and Goddard and, as the England bowlers tired in the evening session, there was an attractive, undefeated but chancy innings of 53 from Roy McLean. On the second day, a Saturday, an optimistic 30,000 crowd paid to see the Springbok post a match-winning total, and for McLean to score a century. But they were disappointed on both counts: South Africa made only a respectable 340, and McLean, after being sent back by his hesitating skipper, was run out for 93. England must have started their first innings with some confidence, as a week earlier MCC had racked up a colossal 594-8 (Compton 131, Insole 192) against Transvaal – a team that contained six of the South African Test side, two of whom took a caning: Heine 2-97 and Tayfield 1-102. No such plunder took place when England batted in the Test, although May (batting without a cap for the first time in this series) made 61, his only decent score in a series in which he averaged just 15.3. His team finished 89 runs behind the South African first innings score, having made a below-par 251. The man in form, Doug Insole, scored an untroubled 47 before being run out by yards after setting off for a run unaware that the ball was safely in the hands of Goddard at first slip. This bizarre dismissal matched that of Russell Endean, who had been given out handled the ball in the second Test at Newlands. England's disappointing reply was down to the return to form of Heine (2-54), but particularly to Tayfield, who mesmerised the England line up (as he had done in the previous Test). In a marathon spell of 37 overs, 15 of which were maidens, he

took 4-79. This dark-haired, handsome and imposing twenty-eight-year-old six-footer had, in South African journalist Charles Fortune's words, 'bowled with inexhaustible stamina and pinpoint accuracy'.

Durban-born Hugh Tayfield came from a cricket-loving family: his uncle, S.H. Martin, had played for Worcestershire and Natal in the 1930s, and his two younger brothers Arthur and Cyril were also first-class cricketers. Hugh made his debut for Natal soon after his 17th birthday, and first played for South Africa as a twenty-year-old in the 1949-50 home series against Australia, taking 7-23 in the third Test in Durban. He was the leading bowler with 30 wickets in the unfancied Springboks' thrilling 1952-3 drawn series in Australia. And in England in 1955, he took 26 wickets in the Tests, and 143 in the season, performances for which he was voted a *Wisden* 'Cricketer of the Year'. These successes had not come effortlessly: in an interview in Trevor Quirk's absorbing 1990 film series Springbok Cricket Saga, Tayfield, while complaining that "modern spinners don't practise enough", said that "for ten months of the year I used to practise seven days a week."

Tayfield's method, grooved by his hours of practice, had one or two idiosyncrasies that developed over time and made him stand out from the crowd: before each over he kissed the badge on his dark green Springbok cap before handing it to the umpire – a habit which is said to have started after a chance action in Australia that resulted in an immediate caught-and-bowled dismissal of left-handed opener Arthur Morris. Another mannerism, which earned him the nickname 'Toey", referred to the part of the routine he went through before bowling each ball as – like a cat paws the ground before pouncing on its prey – he gently tapped the toes of his boots several times into the ground before he set himself to bowl. Tayfield started his straight run-up with feet together facing the batsman, there then followed three quick sideways paces before the delivery stride. This part of his action has been described on many occasions. 'He genuinely bowled middle-wicket to middle-wicket, he got so close to the umpire when he was bowling that he actually bowled in front of the umpire.' was Brian Statham's astute description. 'This is why he had to have such a tremendous pivot to get him out of line, otherwise he would never have got an lbw decision in his career.' Trevor Bailey's amateur colour 16mm film footage, featured in Cape Summer, clearly shows Tayfield's position at the point of delivery: he is very side-on, the leading left arm high, and his left foot landing between the

middle and leg stumps. The right arm comes through very high, almost brushing his right ear, and as Statham says, the pivot is very pronounced, allowing him to complete his action with one more step, finishing face-on to the batsman, and well clear of the umpire's line of sight. Because his right arm did come so close to the stumps, Tayfield always had the umpire standing a good three to four feet back from the bowling crease. In contrast, when occasionally he bowled round the wicket (usually to left handers) he went extremely wide on the crease. The high arm and pivot meant that his over-the-wicket stock ball to the right hander curved, or drifted away. And to tempt the batsmen, he left an inviting gap between mid-off and square cover-point; a tactic that produced many catches to the 'keeper and slips. His other field placings that were particularly innovative were the two, not so close, silly mid-ons, the straighter of whom had his left foot almost on the pitch. Superb fielders such as Russell Endean and Clive van Ryneveld, who brought off outstanding catches from full-blooded hits, took up these intimidating positions. As well as his special away-drift, the Springbok bowler combined relentless accuracy, subtle variations in flight and speed, and, when the wicket was conducive, sharp enough spin to keep a backward short-leg interested.

South Africa were in a strong position at the half-way stage in the fourth Test. They started their second innings slowly on day four with Tony Pithey and Goddard managing only 51 in the two hours before lunch. In another tediously slow session after lunch, the Springboks subsided to 98-5. Their strong position was being frittered away. In just over an hour after tea, South Africa upped the scoring rate but lost wickets steadily, and were dismissed for 142 (three wickets for Statham, two each for Bailey and Wardle). With over seven hours left in the match, England's target to win the game and the series was 232. In the 25 minutes left before close of play, Heine and Adcock, true to form, seemed more intent on hitting the

England openers than the stumps. Peter Richardson, who had been on the receiving end of a lot of this short stuff, did not take to the two pace men – recalling the series over 50 years later, he said that although it was the best tour he ever went on, "I wasn't so keen on some of their team." Skipper van Ryneveld, not impressed by the ineffective opening spell, replaced Heine with Tayfield who, with the players' long Giacometti-like evening shadows stretching across the ground, bowled to Trevor Bailey. The Essex allrounder,

surrounded by three short-legs (two in front, one behind) plus a slip, confidently employed his well-grooved forward-defensive push to the slightly quicker second ball of the over, only for it to spin past the middle of the bat, find the edge, and dolly up to the squarer of the two forward short-legs, who took two paces forward and swallowed the most comfortable of catches. The batsman stood (not for the first time) and waited for the decision, but up went the finger and Bailey had to go, caught Endean bowled Tayfield for 1 (England 10-1). With 10 minutes before stumps, Doug Insole, England's leading run scorer on the tour, came in at number three, capless as always, and saw things through to close of play, with the score at 19-1 (Richardson 11*, Insole 6*).

For the fifth and final day's play, the New Wanderers Stadium was less than half-full, the crowd made up of day-off-from-work men, almost exclusively in white shirts, together with fashionable women in flowered print dresses, and broad-brimmed hats to shade them from the fierce morning sun. After Tayfield's late wicket the previous evening, skipper van Ryneveld started with his off spinner, whom he saw very much as his trump card. For England, their approach in the morning session was uncharacteristically aggressive – Richardson, despite early on being hit on his capped head by a Heine bouncer, played as freely as he had done all tour. Scoring almost exclusively in boundaries, he swept, cut and drove Tayfield for three fours. Insole was also laying into the bowling, 46 runs coming in the first hour, with Tayfield having conceded 33 runs in his first six overs. But as noon struck, the off spinner, bowling round the wicket to the left-handed Richardson, flighted a full-length ball (almost a full toss) that got through the opener's attempted sweep, bowling him for 39 (England 65-2). May sent in Colin Cowdrey instead of himself, and at first the Kent man played Tayfield almost exclusively with his pads, but encouraged by Insole, who had swept the off spinner for four, Cowdrey came out of his shell and lofted Tayfield effortlessly to long-on for six. Over a lunch of ham rolls and beer, under the giant blue gum trees, England looked to be sitting pretty – they had scored 86 runs in two hours, taking their score to 105-2, only 127 more needed.

After the interval, Insole and Cowdrey continued on their merry way, as the Essex man reached his fifty by sweeping Tayfield to the mid-wicket fence for yet another boundary. In an attempt to curb Insole's prolific on-side shots, van Ryneveld asked Goddard to change his normal method of bowling over the wicket, aiming at leg and middle, and instead go round the wicket, aiming

outside off stump, with six men packing the offside.

When bowling his over-the-wicket, leg-stump line, Goddard had proved in many Tests to be an ideal partner for Tayfield. The medium pacer helped the off spinner both by roughing up the pitch outside the right-handers' off stump, and also by drying up the flow of runs. This forced batsmen into playing rash and often fatal shots against 'Toey'. The great England batsman Wally Hammond, by the 1950s living in Durban, was asked by Richardson while he was watching the third Test at Kingsmead how he would have played Goddard, to which he simply replied, "I don't know where I would have scored against him."

In the first hour of the afternoon session, despite van Ryneveld's manoeuvres, things were still not going to plan for the South Africans – Tayfield and Goddard were unable to contain Cowdrey and Insole. Only wholehearted and athletic fielding, saving countless runs, kept the young Springbok team in the game – Ken Funston's and Roy McLean's pickups and bullet throws from the outfield being particularly eye-catching. Insole, showing strokes to please the purists, was creaming Goddard through the off side with powerful drives and cuts. But eventually his very accomplished three-hour innings came to an end; he laid into a wide, short ball from the left armer once too often, and edged the ball to first slip where it was neatly caught by Tayfield. The Essex amateur had made 68 (England 147-3). Next in was Peter May, fresh from his hard-fought 61 in the first innings. He knew that with only 85 to win, another decent score from him, and the game and the series was England's. The tall, still gawky, Surrey right hander played out the remaining seven balls of Goddard's over, taking a leg-bye off the last delivery. This left him facing the next over from Tayfield, still wheeling away on a pitch that was beginning to take increasing amounts of fifth-day spin although Alan Ross still saw it as 'overwhelmingly a batting wicket'. The England skipper, without waiting to have a look, followed those that had gone before, and leapt into an expansive straight drive to a ball pitched just outside off stump. But, deceived by the delivery hanging in the thin air, the spinning ball caught the edge of May's Stuart Surridge bat and cannoned into his front pad, before looping gently towards the on side. Endean, at straight short mid-on, expecting a hard hit, was back on his heels, but his lightningly-quick reactions meant he still had time to dive full-length to his right and, rolling over, take a comfortable two-handed catch. May was out for a duck, England 148-4. Next man in was Denis Compton, who had, like May, shown

some form in the first innings; but this time, against Tayfield, he was reduced to nervous forward defensives and occasional attempts to dab the ball past slip. This shot yielded only a single before, stumbling forward unconvincingly to a floated delivery from Tayfield that ran away from him, he tamely edged it to Goddard at slip. With a drum-major twirl of the bat, Compton limped off with the resigned look of a man who knew his great career was nearing its end.

With the lower order now exposed and still needing 76 to win, England at 156-5 were now firmly on the back foot; and, sensing that the Springboks' tails were up, the burgeoning crowd was becoming almost hysterical. Tayfield had taken some punishment during his long spell, but his self-confidence never wavered, and with the ball turning more and more, he was a formidable proposition for the last five batsmen. Cowdrey was still there, but after a bright opening to his innings the big ship had become becalmed. Johnny Wardle, sent in ahead of Evans, immediately went on the attack. The left hander, sweeping balls bowled from round the wicket and pitching outside off stump, took 12 off one Tayfield over. With Cowdrey, who was keeping Wardle away from Heine, the pair put on 30, of which the Yorkshireman made 22. In response, Tayfield reverted to bowling over the wicket. The tactic worked, as Wardle stepped back to attempt a full-blooded back-foot drive to a short, wide ball which turned and kept a little low. There was a flurry of dust, wicketkeeper Waite threw the ball in the air, and Wardle (who had waited) was given out. Waite afterwards said that Wardle 'was very unhappy with the decision. He went on a big drive and hit a lot of ground as well.'

The demoted Godfrey Evans now came into face the increasingly rampant Tayfield and, rather than adopt his usual gung-ho style, the England 'keeper tried some Comptonesque dabs to third-man. This method brought him eight runs in a 21-minute stay before, attempting another late cut, he edged Tayfield's sharply turning off-break into his stumps (England 196-7). With 36 needed and 90 minutes left in the day, Cowdrey, who had done a good job of protecting Wardle and Evans from the pace and intimidation of Adcock and Heine, now felt that, paired with the rabbits (Jim Laker had come in at number nine), his only option was to attack the bowling. The next time he faced Tayfield, he shimmied down the wicket and hit a bullet of a drive straight back at the persevering off spinner. The bowler, only 12 or so yards away, sprang jack-in-box-like into the air and, with both hands, hugged a

sensational catch into his midriff. Unable to believe what he had just seen, Cowdrey remained motionless for a moment before tucking his bat under his arm and heading back to the pavilion. Watching film of this catch reminds me of advice I was once given by Russell Endean, who would, to get away from the dark clouds of apartheid, bring his wife and two children to live in England in 1961. For the next 25 years he turned out regularly for the London club, Malden Wanderers, always wearing his green South African cap; and although he rarely spoke of his glory days, on one occasion talking about spin bowling he highlighted how Tayfield, once he had delivered the ball, immediately made himself the 11th fielder.

Which is exactly what 'Toey' had done when he took the stunning and match-turning caught-and-bowled to dismiss Cowdrey at Johannesburg. The Kent batsman had scored 55 in 200 minutes at the crease, but only 18 had come in the last 140 minutes. England were 199-8 when Peter Loader walked to the middle to try somehow, with his Surrey team-mate Laker, to score the 33 runs still needed for an unlikely victory. The tailenders did not fancy grinding it out, preferring instead some old-fashioned slogging. Tayfield's brain, even after five hours of bowling, was still razor-sharp – he knew exactly where to post the on-side boundary fielders for his coup de grace. The off spinner, still concentrating on a middle-and-off line, lured Laker into attempting another front-foot mow, but not quite finding the middle; and as the ball arced towards Chris Duckworth, wider of the two long-ons, the debutant, coolly back peddling, took a chest-high catch two yards from the boundary. Laker out for 5 and England 208-9.

Last man in to join Loader was Brian Statham, or George to his friends. With a Test batting average in double figures, there was just a remote chance that the last pair might cobble together the 24 needed for the win, but after six more scrambled runs, Loader could resist no longer, swinging at the last ball of Tayfield's 37th over. It was another teasing away-floater that he top-edged to mid-wicket, where waiting was Hugh's younger brother Arthur, on for the injured Funston. The twelfth man judged the swirling ball perfectly, taking a fine catch over his left shoulder as he ran towards the boundary. Skipping away in celebration, he tossed the ball to the sky; and by the time he and the ball had come back down to earth, the crowd, hats and parasols flung heedlessly into the air, were swarming on to the pitch. Their target was of course their hero Hugh Tayfield: he had bowled South Africa to a stunning 17-run victory in a quite remarkable spell of sustained spin bowling which,

under the relentless Transvaal sun, had lasted the entire day. His final figures of 37-11-113-9 are still a South African Test record. The ecstatic, cheering crowd carried the smiling, and apparently still composed 'Toey', along with the stand-in captain Clive van Ryneveld, shoulder-high to the pavilion. Tayfield was quoted afterwards as saying that he had felt sick throughout the last hour of the match, and so absorbed was he in the moment, that it was only some time later that he realised he himself had taken nine wickets.

This was the first home victory over England for 27 years, and first ever on a non-matting pitch. It had been, recorded *The Times*', John Woodcock, 'a great performance by a great bowler and for all present a memorable day.' Or as Alan Ross, a more poetic cricket writer, reflected soon after the match: 'It has unquestionably been Tayfield's week, he has been photographed sitting up in bed reading telegrams, at parties spinning a cricket ball, and at Ciro's the band played Tenderly for him. He has become a national hero, at a moment when a thrilling Test match has miraculously squeezed some of the poison out of South African life.'

South Africa won the final Test to level the series 2-2, Tayfield taking 7-86 in England's second innings. In the five Tests he bowled 285 eight-ball overs, of which 105 were maidens, and took 37 wickets at 17.18 – a South African record for most wickets in a series that still stands today. Hugh Tayfield was married and divorced five times, had a number of failed businesses, suffered poor health in his last years, and died at Hillcrest, Natal on 25 February 1994, aged 65.

South Africa

AJ Pithey	c Wardle b Bailey	10
TL Goddard	b Bailey	67
JHB Waite†	c †Evans b Statham	61
KJ Funston	c †Evans b Bailey	20
RA McLean	run out	93
CAR Duckworth	c Wardle b Loader	13
WR Endean	b Statham	13
CB van Ryneveld*	c Cowdrey b Laker	36
HJ Tayfield	c Bailey b Wardle	10
PS Heine	not out	1
NAT Adcock	lbw b Wardle	6
Extras (lb8, w1, nb1)		**10**
Total (all out; 101.6 overs)		**304**

Fall of wickets 1/22 2/134 3/151 4/172 5/238 6/251 7/309 8/328 9/333 10/340

Bowling	O	M	R	W
JB Statham	23	5	81	2
PJ Loader	23	3	78	1
TE Bailey	21	3	54	3
JH Wardle	19.6	4	68	2
JC Laker	15	3	49	1

AJ Pithey	b Laker	18
TL Goddard	c †Evans b Bailey	49
KJ Funston	run out	23
RA McLean	c Cowdrey b Statham	0
WR Endean	c Insole b Bailey	2
CAR Duckworth	b Wardle	3
JHB Waite†	c Cowdrey b Statham	17
CB van Ryneveld*	c & b Statham	12
HJ Tayfield	not out	12
PS Heine	c Insole b Wardle	0
NAT Adcock	run out	1
Extras (b4, lb1)		**5**
Total (all out; 60 overs)		**142**

Fall of wickets 1/62 2/91 3/94 4/95 5/97 6/104 7/129 8/130 9/131 10/142

Bowling	O	M	R	W
JB Statham	13	1	37	3
PJ Loader	13	3	33	0
TE Bailey	13	4	12	2
JH Wardle	14	4	29	2
JC Laker	7	1	26	1

England

PE Richardson	c Tayfield b Heine	11
TE Bailey	c †Waite b Adcock	13
DJ Insole	run out	47
PBH May*	b Adcock	61
DCS Compton	c Pithey b Heine	42
MC Cowdrey	c Goddard b Tayfield	8
TG Evans†	c Endean b Tayfield	7
JH Wardle	c Goddard b Tayfield	16
JC Laker	lbw b Tayfield	17
PJ Loader	c Endean b Goddard	13
JB Statham	not out	12
Extras (lb1, nb3)		**4**
Total (all out; 114.2 overs)		**251**

Fall of wickets 1/25 2/40 3/131 4/135 5/152 6/160 7/176 8/213 9/227 10/251

Bowling	O	M	R	W
NAT Adcock	21	5	52	2
PS Heine	23	6	54	2
TL Goddard	25.2	15	22	1
HJ Tayfield	37	15	79	4
CB van Ryneveld	8	0	40	0

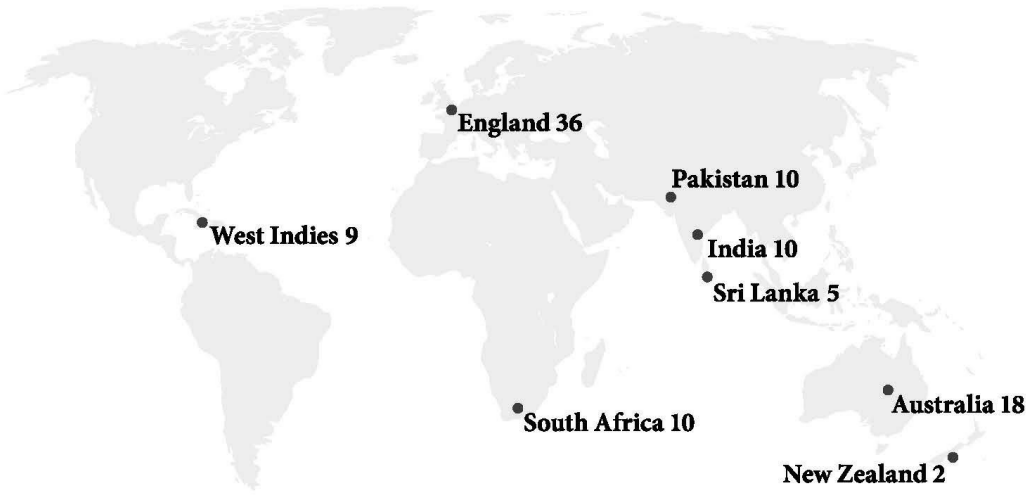
PE Richardson	b Tayfield	39
TE Bailey	c Endean b Tayfield	1
DJ Insole	c Tayfield b Goddard	68
MC Cowdrey	c & b Tayfield	55
PBH May*	c Endean b Tayfield	0
DCS Compton	c Goddard b Tayfield	1
JH Wardle	c †Waite b Tayfield	22
TG Evans†	b Tayfield	8
JC Laker	c Duckworth b Tayfield	5
PJ Loader	c sub b Tayfield	7
JB Statham	not out	4
Extras (b1, lb3)		**4**
Total (all out; 78 overs)		**214**

Fall of wickets 1/10 2/65 3/147 4/148 5/156 6/186 7/196 8/199 9/208 10/214

Bowling	O	M	R	W
NAT Adcock	8	1	22	0
PS Heine	8	1	21	0
TL Goddard	25	5	54	1
HJ Tayfield	37	11	113	9

Statistical Summary

Performances by Country



Innings

1st 15 3rd 30
2nd 23 4th 32

Two in a Match

Laker 50 & 21
Greig 100 & 75
Holding 23 & 6

Eras of Equal Test Matches Played

1877-1952	–1971-1985	–1997-2005	–
14	17	13	
1952-1971	–1985-1997	–2005-2015	–
20	17	19	

Players With More Than One Performance

Muralitharan 4	Botham 2	Richardson 2
Broad 3	Greig 2	Trueman 2
Dev 3	Harbhajan 2	Tyson 2
M Johnson 3	Holding 2	
Tayfield 3	Kumble 2	
Ambrose 2	Laker 2	
Bailey 2	McGrath 2	

Top/Bottom in Categories

Relative Value – Laker 50/Greig 100, Tyson 29
Economy-Rate, Strike-Rate – Taylor 60/White 79
Opposition – Broad 47/White 79
Conditions – Waqar 68/Laker 50
Match Impact – Tayfield 1/Trott 77
Series Impact – Broad 47/Southee 73
Intangibles – Hughes 18, Benaud 10, Davidson 54, Massie 8/Richardson 84

Grounds

Melbourne 10	Nottingham 3	Centurion 1
The Oval 9	Ahmedabad 2	Christchurch 1
Lord's 7	Colombo, SSC 2	Colombo, PS 1
Brisbane, 'Gabba 5	Durban 2	Dubai 1
Perth 5	Lahore 2	Georgetown 1
Sydney 5	Leeds 2	Kandy 1
Adelaide 4	Wellington 2	Karachi 1
Manchester 4	Abu Dhabi 1	Nagpur 1
Port of Spain 4	Bangalore 1	Napier 1
Kolkata/Calcutta 3	Birmingham 1	Port Elizabeth1
Chennai/Madras 3	Mumbai/Bombay 1	
Delhi 3	Bridgetown 1	
Johannesburg 3	Brisbane EG 1	

Kingston 3	Cape Town 1

Authors – Performances 100-26

100. Tony Grieg – Martin Chandler
99. Shaun Pollock – Rodney Ulyate
98. Tom Richardson – Dave Wilson
97. Phil Tufnell – Sean Ehlers
96. Bill Voce – Sean Ehlers
95. Harold Larwood – Martin Chandler
94. Lindsay Kline – Sean Ehlers
93. Mitchell Johnson – Russell Jackson
92. Fred Trueman – Dave Wilson
91. Bill Whitty – Martin Chandler
90. Shaun Pollock – Rodney Ulyate
89. Vernon Philander – Rodney Ulyate
88. Glenn McGrath – Sean Ehlers
87. Trevor Bailey – Patrick Ferriday
86. Matthew Hoggard – James Mettyear
85. Kapil Dev – Patrick Ferriday
84. Tom Richardson – Dave Wilson
83. Wes Hall – Sean Ehlers
82. Anil Kumble – Justin Parkinson
81. Fanie de Villiers – Sean Riley
80. Harbhajan Singh – Kshitij Srivastava
79. Jack White – Martin Chandler
78. Ian Johnson – Sean Ehlers
77. Albert Trott – Sean Ehlers
76. Hedley Verity – Patrick Ferriday
75. Tony Greig – Martin Chandler
74. Hugh Tayfield – Sean Ehlers
73. Tim Southee – Patrick Ferriday
72. Ian Botham – Martin Chandler
71. Allan Donald – Rodney Ulyate
70. Ryan Sidebottom – Sean Ehlers
69. Dean Headley – Andy Baynton-Power
68. Waqar Younis – Sean Riley
67. Saeed Ajmal – Patrick Ferriday

66. Andrew Caddick – Sean Ehlers
65. Ian Botham – James Mettyear
64. John Snow – James Mettyear
63. Billy Bates – Rodney Ulyate
62. M Muralitharan – Benj Moorehead
61. SF Barnes – Dave Wilson
60. Jerome Taylor – Patrick Ferriday
59. Andy Roberts – Patrick Ferriday
58. Glenn McGrath – Andy Baynton-Power
57. Alec Bedser – Sean Ehlers
56. Mike Whitney – Sean Riley
55. Abdur Rehman – Patrick Ferriday
54. Alan Davidson – Sean Riley
53. Billy Barnes – Rodney Ulyate
52. Lance Klusener – Patrick Ferriday
51. Fred Trueman – Dave Wilson
50. Jim Laker – Martin Chandler
49. Brian Statham – Martin Chandler
48. Mushtaq Ahmed – Justin Parkinson
47. Stuart Broad – Sean Riley
46. Angus Fraser – Dave Wilson
45. M Muralitharan – Benj Moorehead
44. Hugh Tayfield – Michael Burns
43. Wilfred Rhodes – Sean Ehlers
42. Sikander Bakht – Patrick Ferriday
41. Shane Warne – Jonathan Harwood
40. Imran Khan – Andy Baynton-Power
39. Azeem Hafiz – Sean Riley
38. M Muralitharan – Benj Moorehead
37. Javagal Srinath – Dave Wilson
36. Kapil Dev – Patrick Ferriday
35. Mitchell Johnson – Russell Jackson
34. Rangana Herath – Andy Baynton-Power
33. Anil Kumble – Jonathan Harwood
32. Dale Steyn – Rodney Ulyate
31. M Muralitharan – Benj Moorehead
30. Shoaib Akhtar – Rodney Ulyate

29. Frank Tyson – Patrick Ferriday
28. Bruce Reid – Sean Riley
27. Hugh Trumble – Sean Ehlers
26. Colin Croft – Dave Wilson