

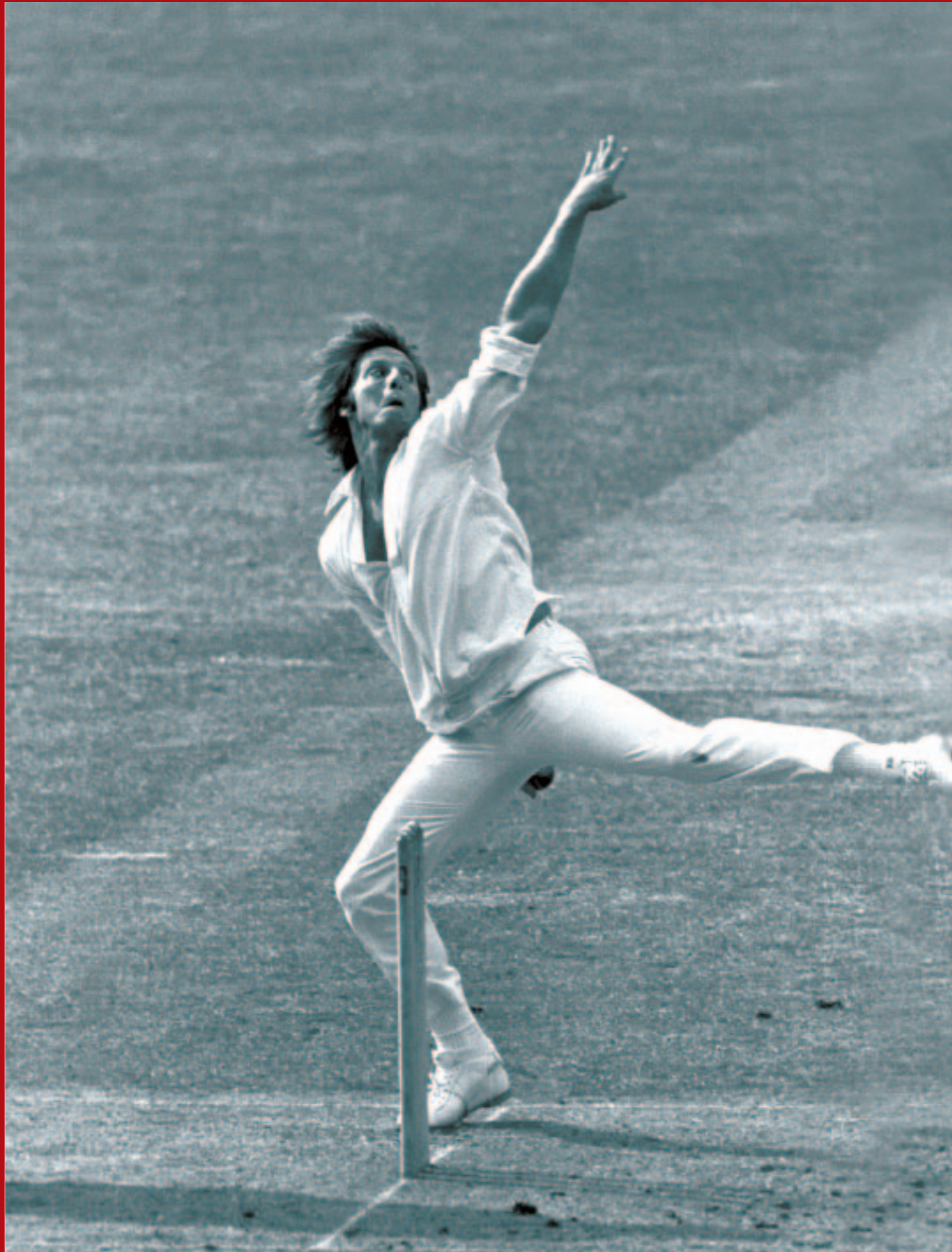
mounting a brave fightback – Trumper was on his way to a century in just 94 minutes – until Hill was run out attempting a fifth run on an overthrow. Three glorious Trumper square cuts, a peerless off-drive and four byes through the keeper had already raised 20 runs from the over so you can imagine the crowd's mood swing, from ecstasy at all the runs to devastation at the fall of wicket ... to anger when they realised that Hill was very unhappy with the decision. Umpire Crockett, a Victorian like Coulthard, was roundly hooted, and bottles and other rubbish were lobbed onto the field, to the point that the England captain, Pelham Warner, was reluctant to continue.

Unlike the Lord Harris riot, no spectators jumped the fence. Likewise, there was no crowd invasion in the seventh Ashes Test of 1970-71. But this time there was an altercation on the boundary fence between a drunken spectator and a player. The shrewd England captain, Ray Illingworth, had quickly recognised that in his fast bowler, John Snow, he had easily the most lethal strike weapon in either side, and he backed the great but temperamental fast bowler through the series to the point that Snow took 31 wickets. In the seventh Test, when umpire Lou Rowan warned Snow about bowling bouncers, Illingworth very publicly supported his fast man, and then took his team from the field when Snow was grabbed by a fan who had stumbled down to the boundary from the old "Paddo" Hill (the site of the Bradman Stand, opened three years later). Spectators threw bottles onto the field. When the ground was cleared of debris, the Englishmen came back to win the Test and the series, and Illingworth was chaired from the field by his grateful teammates.

Snow's efforts in this series were as magnificent as had been the performances of two previous English fast bowlers – Harold Larwood in the bodyline series and Frank Tyson in 1954-55. In the Test that Stan McCabe made famous with his epic 187 not out, Larwood took ten wickets (5-96 and 5-28) on a pitch that was too benign for an Australian attack that included Bill O'Reilly. In the







fifth Test, also in Sydney, he took another five wickets (making 33 for the series) before breaking down with a foot injury. And he also scored 98 as a nightwatchman. Footage of Larwood bowling during the bodyline series gives a guide to how quick and nasty he was – you can see that the keeper is going back with the ball as he takes it, and that he has little time to adjust as the bouncers fly through.

Astonishingly, though Tyson is still regarded as one of the fastest bowlers of all time, the 1954-55 series is the only one in which he had any impact at all. And ironically, his effort came after the Englishmen were humiliated in the opening Test, when Len Hutton chose an all-pace attack at the Gabba, sent the home side in, and watched Neil Harvey and Arthur Morris score big hundreds as Australia made 8–601 declared on their way to an innings victory. Tyson came back in the second Test to take ten wickets, including 6-85 in the second innings. Only Harvey, who made a heroic unbeaten 92 on the final day, stood up to him. Then in the third Test, in Melbourne, he took another nine wickets, including 7-27 on the final day, as England went 2-1 up (that was the Test where the pitch was secretly and illegally watered by groundstaff on the rest day, to stop it from breaking up). Another victory in Adelaide – Tyson 3-85 and 3-47 – and the Ashes were retained.

The SCG pitch has changed its character in my lifetime. One of my great regrets is that I didn't see "live" Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson terrorising the Englishmen in 1974-75. But the TV coverage was enjoyable enough, as are the photographs of batsmen such as Tony Greig, Keith Fletcher and John Edrich ducking and jumping as they tried to stand up to the fliers. This couldn't have happened at the SCG when I started playing first-class cricket on it, because by then the soil was very crumbly, there was no grass on it, and the pitch was a spinner's paradise. This was not so good for quicks, especially for the great Windies fast bowlers of that decade, who were dominant almost everywhere else in the cricket world but vulnerable in Sydney. The one member of their

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troupe who remained a threat whatever the conditions was Malcolm Marshall, a great professional and a great bloke, too.

In more recent times, the SCG deck has got back to how it was in the mid 1970s, quicker and with more bounce. Yet it remains a haven for the quality spinners, as our leg-spinners Shane Warne and Stuart MacGill have demonstrated in recent years. A study of the records shows that five bowlers have taken 12 wickets in a Test at the SCG.

CTB Turner, 12-87 v England, 1887-88

Turner was nicknamed "The Terror", but today he would be described as a medium pacer at best, bowling as he did off-cutters and off-spinners that would zip through and sometimes cut back severely on the pitches of the day. During his final Test, the fourth Test of the 1894-95 Ashes series, in Sydney, Turner became the first Australian to take 100 Test wickets. He finished with 101 at 16.53. Earlier in that same Test, England's Johnny Briggs had become the first bowler to reach the 100 Test wickets milestone. Three years earlier, Briggs had taken a Test hat-trick on the SCG.

HV Hordern, 12-175 v England, 1911-12

Hordern was Australia's first great leg-spinner. He only played seven Tests, but took 46 wickets in those matches, including 28 in three Tests at the SCG, before withdrawing from big-time cricket to concentrate on his profession as a dentist. Like Warne, one of Hordern's great strengths was his superb control – from a long run, he rarely bowled a loose ball. "A master of his craft," the great cricket commentator AG "Johnnie" Moyes wrote in 1959. "Many who saw him and Mailey and Grimmer reckoned that he was the best."

Imran Khan, 12-165 for Pakistan, 1976-77

Eight years after this Test, Imran was a teammate of mine in the Sheffield Shield final we won by one wicket over Queensland. A great all-rounder, and an excellent captain, back in January 1977 Imran stunned Greg Chappell's Australian team with a dynamic spell of fast bowling, six wickets in each innings, in a performance that marked a change in the world cricket order. I don't think we in Australia really rated Pakistani cricket as being top class until this Test. Sure, they had outstanding cricketers, but they couldn't match us as a team. But when Imran spearheaded Pakistan to a decisive eight-wicket win, we knew we could no longer underrate teams and cricketers from the



sub-continent any longer.

SK Warne, 12-128 v South Africa, 1993-94

By the time South Africa arrived in Australia for their first post-apartheid tour, everyone knew Warne was the next big thing. The previous winter he had been fantastic in England, starting the series with the famous delivery that knocked Mike Gatting over at Old Trafford. At times against South Africa in Sydney, both in 1993-94 and four years later – when he took 11-109, including his 300th Test wicket – he was almost unplayable. He hardly bowled a bad ball, while putting massive amount of spin on the ball and offering plenty of variations through leggies, flippers and top-spinners. His control was such that we were able to constantly put the batsmen under pressure with attacking fields. I remember thinking during the Test he reached 300 (my 100th Test) that he couldn't bowl any better; Warne at his top must be close to the greatest bowler, slow or fast, to ever play the game. Unfortunately our batting let us down and Warne ended up on the losing side.

SCG MacGill, 12-107 v England, 1998-99

How must England have felt before the start of this series when they learnt that Warne, one of their chief bogeymen for the previous three Ashes series, was out for the first few Tests because of shoulder surgery? It must have given them a boost but we were able to bring in as his replacement a leggie who wasn't far behind Shane at all. Stuey didn't play in the second Test in Perth, but he still had 15 wickets after four games, before dominating the final match of the series. Warne was back for this match, but even he had to take a backseat as Magilla took 5-57 in the first innings, 7-50 in the second.

Also among the bowlers to take ten wickets in a Test at the SCG are such famous names as the "Demon" Fred Spofforth, George Lohmann, George Giffen, Maurice Tate, Clarrie Grimmett and Glenn McGrath. And let's not forget the South African workhorse, Fanie De Villiers, who in spite of Warne's magnificent bowling, led his team to a famous six-run victory in the second Test of 1993-94. That Test was a thriller, but probably not quite as dramatic as the Ashes Test played a mere 99 years earlier. What a spectacle that game must have been. It ended in an England victory, after Australia had led on the first innings by 261 runs

and enforced the follow-on. Syd Gregory (201) had made the first Test double century in Australia and Giffen hit 161 after Aussie captain Jack Blackham won the toss, but England's fightback on days four and five left Blackham's men needing 177 to win. At stumps on day five they were 2-113, Giffen and Joe Darling at the crease, and some of the Poms went out on the grog that night, sure that the game was lost. But a fierce rainstorm overnight saturated the pitch, and after his captain sobered him up under a cold shower in the morning, Yorkshire's Bobby Peel came out and took five wickets as Australia lost its last eight wickets on a sticky for just 36.

What Bobby Peel might have made of one-day cricket and night cricket we can only imagine. Being a pragmatic Yorkshireman, he would definitely have adapted to it; being a great bowler he would almost certainly have been successful in it. The thing for me about the shorter form of the game is that it has opened the game up to a lot of people who otherwise might not have become interested in the sport. Now, many more women follow the sport. Night cricket is a different game, more of a social event, there for the spectators and the treasurers who have to balance the books. The lights add to the theatre. Even now, 25 years on from the first night game at the SCG, a World Series Cricket one-dayer between the Australians and the West Indians which was played out in front of a full house, there is still a novelty value. And you are guaranteed a result.

For the players, day/night games are terrific value. You start at a different time, stop at a different time. It is exciting as a player to walk out under the lights at night. In my first season of one-day international cricket, 1985-86, the SCG lights were rated as good as any ground in Australia. Nowadays, they are just adequate, because you get a bit of a shadow whereas at other venues the lights are as bright as sunshine. Melbourne, for one, is superior. In what we call the twilight time in Sydney, until around 8pm when the lights take full effect, it can be difficult to bat.

I remember seeing Bruce Laird, the opening bat from Western Australia, make a sensational hundred in a day-nighter at the SCG against the West Indies in 1981-82. This was a time when we all thought the Windies quicks were nigh on invincible; a now almost forgotten innings (such







can be the way with the multitude of one-day internationals on the cricket calendar), but a great one. Watching Bruce Laird, I couldn't help thinking: I'd like to be out there, batting out under those lights. The SCG that night felt like a different ground to the one I had been at for the Shield games and Test matches.

The crowds were different too; after dark The Hill wasn't a pleasant place to be. Sitting there one night during a one-day international in the early 1980s I was struck on the back of the head by a pie. Night cricket – and night football – hastened the demise of The Hill. The extra hours gave too many people too much time to get on the drink and the recurring headlines about the drunks behaving badly forced the authorities to concrete the landmark, and put the plastic seats in. It's a shame The Hill is gone, and there is no doubt some of the character of the ground departed with its demise, but I understand why it had to go.

There have been many highlights in the one-dayers that have been played at the SCG over the years, but here are three that stand out for me. One was a catch by England's Derek Randall in a game against the West Indies in 1979-80. This was the game made notorious by the decision of the

English captain Mike Brearley to put all ten of his fieldsmen, even the keeper David Bairstow, on the fence for the final ball when the Windies needed three to win. Randall's catch of Andy Roberts – running backwards at full pace from mid-wicket, he jumped, dived and grabbed the ball one-handed – left the Windies at 7-177 in the 44th over, chasing 199 in 47. To that point, it seemed the experienced Roberts would get the Windies home.

Seven seasons later, during a season in which we were too often on the receiving end against Mike Gatting's Englishmen, it seemed we had their measure in a game at the SCG. With Bruce Reid (1-26 from nine overs) preparing to bowl the final over, England needed 18 to win. Allan Lamb was on strike, and the first ball went for two, the second for four and the third for six, pulled up into where the Hill had been. Six needed in three became four in two, and then it was over when Lamb hit a pitched-up ball on leg stump to the vacant square-leg fence.

That was the worst of times. One of the best of times came on New Year's Day 1996, when Michael Bevan won Australia a one-dayer against the West Indies we had no right to win. I missed

this game through injury, but afterwards – probably because of the day on which it was played – it seemed as if everyone in the country had seen it. At one stage the Aussies were 7-74 chasing 173, but Bevo won the night, ending the game in amazing fashion by hitting the last possible delivery, bowled by Roger Harper, absolutely straight for four.

In January 2003, I had my own moment of last-ball excitement on the ground when I scored a century in the fifth Ashes Test. The runs came after a spell where my place in the side came under fierce scrutiny, with many writers and commentators and even some ex-players suggesting that it was time for me to retire. I found that at a time like this some people like to put the boot it, but many more – family, friends and fans – offer strong support, so it was that on the second afternoon I walked out to applause and adulation. Three hours later, I hit a four from the final ball of the day to reach my hundred and 40,000 people went crazy, clapping and cheering, roaring out my name. I never imagined that this would happen and when it did it was very emotional for me. In terms of personal performance, can it get better than this? A ton off

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the last ball of the day in front of my home crowd, after all the stress and media debate about my future in the days and weeks that preceded it. This was one of those occasions as a sportsman when you are in that special place called "the zone", something that happens only once or twice in a career.

A few weeks later, in a Pura Cup (formerly Sheffield Shield) match in Sydney, I was fielding in the covers on the eastern side of the ground, in front of the Bill O'Reilly Stand, the grandstand that grew out of where the old Bob Stand once stood. From my vantage point, I could look past the batsman over to the Members Stand and the Ladies Stand. And I was thinking, "Geez, how lucky am I? There's a lot of people who'd give a great deal to be where I am right now, playing cricket on this ground." There may even have been one or two boys in the crowd preparing to write the next chapter in this great ground's history.







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THE SECOND TEST OF 1911-12, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, featured a stirring battle between two of the true champions of the game. In the English corner was the great bowler, SF (Sydney) Barnes, whom the famous batsman Jack Hobbs believed to be “undoubtedly the greatest bowler of my time”. Batting for Australia was Victor Trumper, a batsman rated by Herbert Collins, an Australian captain of the 1920s, as even more gifted than Bradman.

Throughout this series, Trumper was the key batsman, Barnes the bowler most likely to dismiss him. Barnes was a tall, wiry, often moody Englishman, who brought the ball down from his full height and could spin or cut it from leg or off. During his 27-match Test career, he took 189 wickets at an average of just 16.43. His most dangerous delivery was the leg-cutter, bowled at genuine medium pace, even quicker at times; his greatest asset was his relentless accuracy. Because he could move the ball away off the pitch, most observers put Barnes in front of the greatest bowler of the 19th century, the Demon Spofforth.

Trumper had scored a magnificent 113 in Sydney in the first Test of 1911-12. It was his eighth Test century, and sixth against England, both records. Tall, thin and immaculate at the crease, he was always ready to hit the first ball for four, never prepared simply to defend. Australian critics contend that he changed cricket with his aggressive outlook.

Here at the MCG, Barnes produced one of Test cricket's most famous bowling spells. After Clem Hill, the Aussie captain, decided to bat, Barnes bowled five overs for one run and the wickets of Bardsley, Hill, Kelleway and Armstrong. Trumper, in at 3-8, led a brief fightback, but relaxing against the considerable left-arm skills of Frank Foster, he was bowled. Barnes came back to get Minnett, at which point he had taken five wickets for six runs from 11 overs. The home team never recovered, and England won the final four Tests, with Barnes dismissing Trumper four times in the series.

The history of the Melbourne Cricket Ground is full of such famous confrontations. One of the first involved WG Grace, the world's greatest batsman, who had to face 18 Victorians when he made his debut at the ground, in 1873-74. He responded in style, taking 10-58 in the Victorian



XVIII's only innings and scoring 51 not out. WG's visit seriously boosted interest in the game and also revealed to the local cricketers that they were not bad at all. Indeed, so much was the Australians' confidence boosted that within three years of Grace's departure, they were taking on and beating an All-England team on level terms, 11 men per side, at the MCG. This was to become recognised as the first Test match.

The English team that played in this clash was on a privately-backed tour, the fourth such venture to come out from the Mother Country, 15 years after the first. It was not truly representative of the best of English cricket –WG for one was missing – but it was still a good team. The Melbourne Cricket Club built a new grandstand at the MCG especially for the tour, but only 1,000 people were at the ground at the start of play on day one, March 15, a Thursday, apparently because most Melburnians believed their team would be outclassed. They would be proved very wrong, thanks mainly to the efforts of one man. By later in the day, as word spread of Charlie Bannerman's grand performance, the attendance grew to more than 4,000. On day two, 12,000 people came to cheer.

The first ball in England-Australia international cricket was bowled by England's Alfred Shaw to Bannerman. By late on this inaugural day of Test cricket, Bannerman had scored the game's first Test century; at stumps he was 126 not out, and on the following day he would go all the way to 165. At that score he was struck a painful blow on the finger and had to retire hurt. But for his injury he might have gone on to 200. No other Australian batsman in the match scored more than 20 and Australia's first innings ended at 245

"We should not grudge him a jot of the honours won, even if he did come from Sydney," wrote the Melbourne Argus' correspondent of Bannerman. Still, by early on day four the visitors needed only 154 to win, and few thought they would not get them. That they didn't was due largely to the efforts of left-hander Tom Kendall,

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who took 7-55 to set up a stunning 45 run victory.

In the seasons since 1877, the MCG has established itself as one of the important venues in international cricket. It has been host to a World Cup Final, the first-ever one-day international and the Centenary Test. I remember parts of the Centenary Test so vividly ... I was 11, watching on TV, hooked by the way the history of the game was so celebrated and amazed that the winning margin was 45 runs, exactly the same as the first ever Test. For me, the memories of this game are snapshots, such as the moment when Derek Randall was struck on the head by a Dennis Lillee bouncer but jumped back up to make 174. Most clearly of all, I recall Rick McCosker, his head seemingly held together by bandages, coming out to bat with a broken jaw, to help Rod Marsh to his century, a moment in time that has become a famous image of Australian cricket. I remember thinking how brave and gutsy that was. I sensed then and know now that this is what Test cricket is all about – testing out your courage.

The MCG has seen Test cricket's first hat-trick by Spofforth in 1879-80 and Don Bradman's first Test century - against England in the third Test of

1928-29. It also witnessed Trevor Chappell's Underarm – that infamous delivery that had prime ministers commenting on one-day cricket, an unprecedented development that gave the abbreviated game a credibility it previously did not have. The MCG was the venue for the first instance of an umpire no-balling a bowler for throwing in a Test - Australia's Ernie Jones called by Jim Phillips in the second Ashes Test of 1897-98 - an incident mirrored 98 years later when umpire Darrell Hair called the Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan. In 1907-08, the MCG would have seen Test cricket's first tie, if only Australia's Gerry Hazlitt's throw from cover had been accurate instead of wild. It was the venue for one-day international cricket's first tie – a World Series Cup finals match between Australia and the West Indies in February 1984, after Carl Rackemann was run out off the final ball, going for a desperate bye.

In 1960-61, when two captains – Australia's Richie Benaud and the West Indies' Frank Worrell – and two marvellous teams combined to produce one of the great Test series, the ground might have seen the second tied Test of that summer,



had the umpires given Australian keeper Wally Grout out bowled instead of awarding two crucial byes near the end of the pulsating fifth Test. A bail had been dislodged as the ball spun through Grout, but the umps couldn't explain how that happened and gave the batsman the benefit of the doubt. That game, which drew an amazing 90,800 people on the opening day, ended in a two-wicket win to the Aussies.

I have been fortunate to play in Melbourne in front of a huge crowd, and also when the big stands have been all but empty. Without a crowd, I feel that the stadium comes over as a little unfriendly, even soulless, but when there is more than 50,000 or 60,000 people in, the experience is quite unforgettable. In such circumstances, it becomes like the Coliseum, and Australian players take on the roles of gladiators. I can imagine that some opposition cricketers in their time have felt as if they are being fed to the lions.

There have been many instances in the MCG's history when this gladiatorial element has come to the fore. Imagine how Don Bradman must have felt when he walked out to face the bodyline attack in the second Ashes Test of 1932-33. He had



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