

No sooner had I pressed 'send to all' on last weeks edition of the VW then I click on the BBC website and see that England will play the West Indies in a Test series in July. There was me thinking that sending out a weekly newsletter would be right in the thick of the action with content so up-to-date that SKY TV will be begging to sponsor the VW - (I can hear sniggering from those of you who will recall my futile hopes of securing a sponsor at the beginning of the VW) - well, unless SKY TV changes its name to something with the initials VW (?) They can take a long run-up off a 2 metre mat (see what I did there, 2 metres, social distancing....)

Back to the important stuff. On one level it is great that we will (hopefully) get some Test cricket, but it wont be live on free-to-air, although the BBC will have a daily highlights show. Let us hope they don't do the same as they used to and put it on at 2.30 in the morning. Although my numerous cricketing sources (BBC website) tell me it will be at the end of each days play at 7pm.

Whilst on the subject of the BBC, why aren't they showing highlights programmes of matches it covered? Not everyone wants to go onto YouTube or has a subscription to BT or SKY - the BBC has decades of matches, what is wrong with putting an hour highlights of a John Player match or a Test match from when they had coverage, or do they fervently believe that a repeat of Bargain Hunt from 2015 or Homes Under The Hammer from 2014 are more worthy. I don't watch either programme but surely showing a house being bought at auction, then being 'done up', then rented or sold is a rather limited idea...

Geoffrey Boycott will no longer be in the TMS box, he has hung up his microphone. I will come back to that later. In a world of recent ex-players who can vividly remember the glorious cover drive across the green grass of Lord's, as the pigeons scattered, and the pavilion rose in admiration, from Joe Root back in 2018 - it makes you wonder whether as with football, if we are being carefully indoctrinated into believing that nothing of interest ever took place pre-SKY.

An idea that is to implemented for the return of Scottish football (which like cricket will be played behind closed doors) is that fans can buy a virtual season ticket for the club they follow and that allows them to watch all home games live. That idea could be made possible for all football clubs outside of the Premier League and also, for all cricket counties. If I was offered the chance to watch all Lancashire matches from August 1st in whatever format for, say £50-£75, it would be tempting. Whereas football can be covered with one camera if pushed, cricket may need two...go back to just one fixed at one end and the other could follow the ball. This could give counties a financial boost and allow people to watch live cricket.

In this edition of VW I am seeing whether readers would like and would like to contribute to the Panel feature that is printed in the quarterly Wisdener newsletter. I will put out a few questions and I would welcome, actually, no, I need your responses. The questions will be on Wisdens nd cricket and if anyone would like to pose a question for readers, please let me know. I hope that this is of interest and I will try and make it topical - hence the Geoff Boycott question, you see, I told you I would come back to GB.

The walking continues, nine miles yesterday on top of my daily 10,000+ steps, surprisingly my weight has stayed the same. Lorraine, known as the 'wise woman' - (two reasons why she is known as this. Firstly, she is 'wise' and secondly, she is a 'woman') - has said that I am building up muscle and muscle weighs more than fat. Abbey took a different view, walking so much and then having a piece of cake is a bit counter-productive. Libby was unavailable for comment because she was napping.

Stay safe and thank you for reading.

Bill and all at Furmedge HQ

Another Quiz:

I have just finished reading 'The Great Romantic' by Duncan Hamilton, on the life of Neville Cardus. I read it carefully so it still feels new, so I am offering it as a prize in this little quiz. One book, one winner.

The question is:

Duncan Hamilton also wrote a book about which one of these three: A): George Best. B) Jim Laker. C) Fred Trueman.

Contact details are opposite. If Libby has finished her nap she will choose the winner.

Contact details

As always your feedback is important and whether it is good, bad or indifferent, it all helps when I am trying to put the VW together. Please feel free to contact me for quiz answers, panel contributions, feedback etc on:

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Wisden produced the 100th edition of the almanack. Owing to

unprecedented demand there were eventually print runs: the first and main run was in April, the second in May of 1,000 each of the hardback and soft back editions and a smaller print run of approximately 500 each in June. The April (first) editions sold by two retail outlets, one of which was W.H. Smith, were supplied with a blue paper band. Finding editions retaining the band is extremely difficult - in fact Wisdenworld has only had two in the past 13 years and in the same period only 4 have been spotted elsewhere.

The quality of the edition carries far more weight than whether it is from the April, May or June print run.

A stunning 9+/10 Hardback is generally in the £75-£90 bracket and a soft back edition, which is prone to spine bowing - indeed 90% of those have some form of spine curvature - without bowing should be found for between £60-£85.

To commemorate the 100th edition Wisden presented 'The Wisden Trophy' to be played for perpetually between England and West Indies.

Writing in the almanack Neville Cardus chose Six Giants of the Wisden Century: W.G. Grace, Sir J.B. Hobbs, Tom Richardson, Victor Trumper, S.F. Barnes and Sir Donald Bradman.

The price of the 1963 Hardback edition was 25 shillings and the soft back 22 shillings, the highest cover price ever.

The 1962 County Championship featured one of the closest contests in years, with Yorkshire finally securing the title with two and a half hours to spare on the final day of the season.

Throughout the almanack Wisden made special mention of the 100th edition. Including an article by L.E.S. Gutteridge on 'A History of

A Look at the 1963 Wisden - The 100th

Wisden' along with special reminisces on the Public Schools, and the County Championship

The Midlands Knock-Out Cup, featuring Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire, comprising two sixty-over per side semi-finals on May 1962 and the final in which Northamptonshire defeated Leicestershire by 5 wickets with 4 balls to spare, on May 9. The Wisden match synopsis of the Leicestershire v Derbyshire match included 'An excellent match showed that one-day knock-out cricket played in the right spirit and manner could be most interesting.'

Commenting on the recently concluded Australia v England (1962-63) series, in his Notes by The Editor, Norman Preston wrote:

How pleasant it would have been for me, as an Englishman, had I been able in this one hundredth edition of Wisden to congratulate E. R. Dexter's team upon bringing back the Ashes and to praise both sides for giving the Australian public the same exciting type of cricket as was played by F. M. Worrell's West Indies team there in 1960-61. Instead, the situation is entirely different. England have not regained the Ashes and much of the cricket in the Five Tests in the Antipodes fell below expectations. Too much emphasis was put on avoiding defeat in preference to thinking in terms of victory from the very first ball. For this unfortunate state of affairs I doubt whether the entire blame can be attached to Dexter. Whenever possible he went to the crease intent on playing his natural attacking game and he gave some thrilling displays.

An important change was also announced in Mr. Preston's Notes: Most cricketers agree that the batting and bowling averages can be misleading, though they are usually reliable in assessing the

merit of any individual over a span of years.

During the past two years, while the follow-on has been in abeyance in the County Championship, some batsmen have been given runs and some bowlers have taken wickets in a loose sort of way while the rival captains have been jockeying to get the game into a suitable state for a possible finish. Consequently, some "false" names have been getting into the leading places in the averages. To rectify this state of affairs in order that the county averages shall do justice to everyone concerned, I have made changes in the old procedure so that in this edition the deeds of batsmen and bowlers who have taken only a small part in the season's proceeding are given at the end of the averages. It means that the county averages have been brought into line with those of other sections, such as the schools. The general guide to qualification for appearance in the full averages is 100 runs for batsmen and at least 10 wickets for bowlers.

In the County averages for 1962, 98 batsmen scored 1,000+ runs, of which 20 scored 2,000+ and 23 bowlers took 100+ wickets, of which two took 150+. Seven players completed the 'double'.

In the Glamorgan v Gloucestershire match at Margam over August 22-24, in four completed innings the highest score was 92. Gloucs: 88 and 92. Glamorgan 62 and 49.

Notts, Playing against Sussex at Eastbourne, made 406-8 declared in their first innings and still lost after being bowled out for 57 in the second and losing by 8 wickets.

The Mc.C.C. tour to India, Pakistan and Ceylon is the feature of the overseas section - India defeating England for the first time in history.

Wisden reports that in the 1961-62 Australian Sheffield Shield, New South Wales won the trophy for the ninth successive season.

The Bowlers Holding the Batsmans Willey

The later stages of the drawn match between the touring Australian Under-19 side and the National Association of Young Cricketers at Market Harborough were enlivened when the NAYC bowlers, upset at Australian opener Greg Hayne's wager that he could score 50 in 20 balls started bowling underarm to stop him reaching his target. After the match bowler Jason Harrison and NAYC captain Justin Inglis received a stern lecture from manager Graham Wiltshire. Australian manager Brian Taber, the former Test wicket-keeper, said, "It was just a bit of fun, and we didn't mean to insult anyone." Taber added that allegations that his side indulged in excessive "sledging" were "groundless". The tourists wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist scored 200 against England Under-18 XI at Old Hill. *The Cricketer, 1991.*

The first Test match to be played at Multan will be remembered more for a disgraceful event on the second afternoon than the quality of the cricket. The match was held up for twenty minutes when Sylvester Clarke, the West Indies fast bowler who plays for Surrey, became so irritated by being pelted with oranges while fielding in the deep that he dug up a brick marking the boundary and hurled it into the crowd. The brick struck a spectator and knocked him unconscious. He was taken to hospital where he was visited by Jackie Hendriks, the West Indies tour manager. Both Hendriks and Clarke expressed regret at the incident. Alvin Kallicharran also attempted to ease the situation by going to the boundary and, on bended knee, apologising to the crowd for what happened.

Pakistan v West Indies, 4th Test: 1980-81.

The Cricketer, March 1981

Kerry Packer, now reportedly Australia's richest man, suffered a severe heart attack while playing polo in Sydney on October 7th. Mr. Packer, 52...astounded doctors by getting back on his feet within two days of the attack, during which his heart stopped for some fifteen minutes.

The Daily Telegraph, October 1990.

After impressing with the baseball bat during the England XI's brief unofficial tour of North America, Robin Smith has been offered a trial by the New York Mets.

WCM, November 1990.

The only fellow that I have met who fell in love with himself at an early age and has remained faithful ever since

Dennis Lillee on Geoff Boycott

We sometimes argue about the cricketer we would choose to bat for one's life (consensus answer: Don Bradman for your life, Geoff Boycott for his own).

Matthew Engel

The death of Tertius Bosch, the former South African pace bowler, has become shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Bosch died on February 13th last year (2000) at the age of 33, supposedly from a rare nerve-wasting disease called Guillain-Barre syndrome, septicaemia and pneumonia.

But investigations in August hinted at a possible case of poisoning and the Durban dentist's body was exhumed for examination by pathologists.

The suspicion of Bosch's sister, Rita Van Wetten, were aroused when his widow Karen-Anne took in a lover five months after his death.

After nine months in hospital, Bosch was said to have been showing marked improvement during the last month of his life, so Van Wetten hired a private detective to dig deeper.

Former policeman Hennie Els found that millions of rand had gone missing from Bosch's dental practice and there had been an unusual break-in. Then a will and letters written by Bosch two and a half years before his death and subsequently thought to have been hidden by his widow, were handed to Els by an unnamed source.

They indicated that Bosch had discovered his wife had been having several affairs and that he wished to disinherit her, placing all his funds in trust for his son, who is now six.

Bosch is said to have given the will and three letters to a friend, with the instruction to open them upon his death. But the friend reportedly gave them to Karen-Anne, who did not reveal their contents.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that her subsequent lover, Henry Selzer, had signed over a two million rand (£190,000) insurance policy and then began to display symptoms similar to Bosch prior to the latter's death. Selzer is now consulting the same pathologist who is examining Bosch's corpse.

While Selzer doesn't believe Karen-Anne is poisoning him, but he is noticeable unnerved with the similarities to Bosch's case, saying "I hope to goodness that the tests prove negative."

From an English cricket point of view there was no more fitting event in the Queen's Silver Jubilee year than the recovery of The Ashes in England for only the third time this century, and always on Royal occasions: in 1926, the year The Queen was born; 1953, the Coronation year and 1977, the Silver Jubilee. Moreover, England beat Australia at home in three consecutive Test Matches for the first time since 1886. I felt optimistic about England's chances after their successful tour of India a few months earlier but in the event the overthrow of Greg Chappell's Australia by such a convincing margin was almost too good to be true.

Wisden, Notes From The editor, 1978.

The First County Championship Match Completed In A Day

Robbed by incessant rain of a decisive victory over the Australians the Surrey eleven moved to Manchester where at Old Trafford they made history by becoming the first one-day victors in a county championship match.

Surrey proved great champions in this summer having defeated every one of the other six first-class counties, there being only eight at this time. Now it was Lancashire's turn and as the northern county had won at The Oval the previous summer this was a long awaited clash which engendered a national interest we would find difficult to understand today. The match got away to a punctual noon start as was the custom then and it was finished at half past six.

Hornby, having won the toss, started the innings with Barlow, a partnership made immortal by a poet's famous lines 'Oh my Hornby and my Barlow . . .' For 35 minutes these two kept out the Surrey attack while scoring only 10 runs.

Lohmann and Bowley

Lohmann and Bowley were bowling well and getting better, moving the ball considerably in the air and off the slow, difficult wicket. At 10 Hornby was bowled playing forward to Lohmann. His replacement was leg before to Lohmann's next ball and at 15 Briggs was out to a fine catch at point by Read off Bowley.

At 21 Lohmann ripped the heart out of the home innings. With the second ball of one over he bowled Barlow and with the next hit Baker's stumps, and then with the first two deliveries of his next over he dismissed Whittaker and Ward. Says the Wisden report in the style of the day 'Even the Manchester folk, whose sympathies were naturally with the batting side, appreciated the greatness of this performance and awarded the Surrey professional a hearty round of cheering'.

Pilling reaches double figures

The remainder of the innings was only noteworthy for the fact that, after nine wickets had fallen, Bowley, under the impression he had caught and bowled Pilling, dashed away, followed by several other members of the Surrey eleven. The umpire, however, gave it 'no catch' and Pilling continued his innings to achieve the distinction of being the only Lancashire batsman to reach double figures. He was then promptly trapped l.b.w. by Lohmann and Lancashire were all out for 35.

The innings was over at twenty-five to two, the ten wickets having actually fallen within the hour while 25 runs were scored. Lohmann had eight for 13 and Bowley two for 20. Lohmann's figures represented one of the finest bowling performances of the season even in a summer so favourable to bowlers as 1888 undoubtedly was.

Surrey scored ten runs in as many minutes before lunch but after the interval Shuter, Maurice Read and Bobby Abel were all out with the total unchanged at 22.

The chances of Surrey gaining a good lead depended mainly on two amateurs W. W. Read and K. J. Key. These two had just equalled the Lancashire total when Whittaker dropped a dolly put up by Key at mid-on. This mistake was the only blemish in the fielding of either side and not unexpectedly it had a great influence on the remainder of the match.

The Surrey fourth-wicket pair took the score to 80 with fine bold stroke play before Briggs was recalled to get Key leg before with his first ball. Read, who had been going through a lean spell carried on batting splendidly and Lohmann 'tonked' 14 off three deliveries but the Surrey tail could offer little resistance to Briggs (five for 49) and Watson (four for 20). The innings ended at twenty-to-five with Surrey all out 123 and Read, undefeated but out of partners, just one run short of his 50.

Surrey tactics

When Lancashire went in a second time facing arrears of 88, Surrey changed their tactics. This time they gave Lohmann the support of Beaumont in place of Bowley and with only seven scored the new bowler had Hornby caught at the wicket. Barlow and Sugg briefly suggested they might make a fight of it but Beaumont bowled Barlow and Lohmann got through the defences of Sugg and three wickets were down for 36.

One more run was scored and then the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Lancashire wickets all crashed with the total unchanged. Beaumont bowled Crosfield with the first ball of an over, Baker with the second and Whittaker with the fourth.

Then Lohmann clean bowled Briggs and Yates with successive balls. One more run was grudgingly conceded by the rampaging Surrey bowlers and then Ward had his stumps scattered by Lohmann—38 for nine. Out to join Pilling came last man Watson and he hit about him to some purpose scoring 18 in a last wicket stand of 25 which ended when Lohmann bowled Pilling.

Lancashire were all out 63 and Surrey, the winners by an innings and 25 runs had hit the stumps nine times in the second innings and 14 times in the day. Lohmann took five for 38 which gave him match figures of 13 for 31 and Beaumont had five for 19 in 19 overs. A crowd of 10,000 saw a new line of cricket history added to the almanacks the first county championship match completed in a single day.

The First County Championship match completed in a Day, by Basil Easterbrook, London Cricket Correspondent, Thomson Newspapers (first produced in Playfair Cricket Monthly, 1968)

Ashdown Forest's 1986 nightmare

by John Dodd

It could have been taken as an omen for England and the rest of

the 1986 season. On a rainy Saturday early in the summer Ashdown Forest Cricket Club, of Sussex, were all out for nought. The ultimate humiliation for any side was perpetrated by their neighbours, Keymer and Hassocks, in 8.5 overs in 29 minutes.

It is probably the first time for several years that a proper village cricket team has been so dismissed, but it won't go into the record books because Ashdown Forest only had 10 men.

A team made up of a family was once out for nought, and so was a scratch police team. But Ashdown Forest is a proper cricket team with a president (then the late Lord Stockton), proper club captain, secretary, and groundsman, secretary, and groundsman.

The game with Hassocks was not in their fixture list, but was arranged between the two fixture secretaries when they both found they had a spare date on the same day. Ashdown thought Keymer might beat them because Keymer play in the Sussex Invitation League and therefore were a class above them. But they still hoped they might peg them to a draw and certainly salvage something out of the match only to prepare them for the rest of their season of friendlies.

It had rained through a large part of the morning, and when Ashdown turned up at the Keymer ground there were a lot of grimaced stares at the weather and sighs as to whether it had been worth turning out. Play started 20 minutes late, at 2.50 pm, after Ashdown's skipper of the day, Barry Allan, had won the toss.

He says: 'I put them in because I knew they were looking for some batting practice before their league season and we wanted to have a go at them. I didn't expect to win, but I thought we might hold out for a draw'.

Keymer and Hassocks made 182 for six by tea when, in true cricket tradition, they declared and put Ashdown in. The Ashdown players thought the wicket was drying out a bit when the openers, Trevor Jobson, aged 30, a grounds superintendent, and David Green, 22, a computer operator, went to the wicket. It was 5.40 pm.

Jobson faced the first over of the day from Keymer's John Grimley. He played the first three balls with the usual opener's care. The fourth was different. Jobson 'fished' outside off stump for it, it brushed his bat, and he was caught behind.

5.42 pm—Nought for one.

'I didn't think I'd touched it', said Jobson when he got back to the pavilion. 'But it went straight through me.'

Martin Taylor, 21, a chef, survived the next two balls of the over. At the other end, David Green successfully fended off the second over. Ashdown thought they were beginning

to settle into it. Then Grimley bowled Taylor with the first ball of his

second over. 'I thought it was pitched up a bit too far, so I tried to drive it', says Taylor. 'I must have played outside and over it. It took my middle and off.'

5.45 — Nought for two.

Barry Allan, 35, a milkman, took left-hander's leg-stump guard, scratched his crease with his boot, jutted out his jaw and determined to set an example as captain, the second ball bowled him off stump. 'I played down what I thought was the line, but it must have cut in on me. It hit off stump.'

5.49 Nought for three.

David Shankland, a solicitor, aged 40, was next in. He survived the first ball, but the second, and last of the over, bowled him middle stump, removing the leg bail. 'I just played down the wrong line,' he said back in the pavilion.

5.53 Nought for four.

In the pavilion, the first really awful possibilities were beginning to enter the minds of Ashdown. Skipper Barry was phoning club secretary Martin Emmerson in a vain hope he might turn up to bat. And there was confusion out on the field, too, because Ashdown's next batsmen in were out in the field wearing the umpires' coats. They both came in to change as Keymer took off Grimley and replaced him with John Price.

'Don't laugh', said Barry Allan to Martin Emmerson, 'but we're in the mire! We're nought for four. Can you play?' Emmerson, still nursing a broken arm from a rugby game, began to chuckle. 'Honestly, Barry, I'd like to, but I can't take the risk and, anyway, I'd be no good with this plaster on.'

David Green successfully played out the game's fourth over. But before the telephone call ended someone shouted down the phone to Martin Emmerson: 'It's nought for five, now.' Barry Baxter, aged 19, a butcher, the side's number seven, had struggled from the umpire's coat into cricket pads, grabbed a bat, and gone out to face the new bowler, Price. He was bowled first ball. 'I went down the wicket at it. I thought it was over pitched. I think I got an inside edge.'

5.55 — Nought for five.

At the other end, David Green was shaking his head. 'I think I was crying,' he says. 'I kept thinking "what the hell's going on here".' Graham Baxter, 22, cousin of Barry and a painter, came to the wicket resolved that, with the right watchful application, a certain amount of honour could be saved. He says: 'I was going to play defensive, no matter what.' He lasted the over out, and then watched David Green face Keith Williams again. The fourth ball of the over was short, pitched outside the off stump and stood up at him. David Green slashed it towards gully. He and Graham Baxter began their run, then saw a diving save from a fielder, and scrambled back to gain their creases. It had been the nearest thing to a run so far. (cont'd)

David Green survived the rest of the over. Graham Baxter again faced up to John Price. Again there looked to be an Ashdown recovery. By the fifth ball of Price's over, Ashdown had actually survived 15 balls without losing a wicket. Says Graham Baxter: 'The fifth ball was pitched well up to me on middle stump. I played half back to it, but it kept low, hit the bottom of the bat, and bowled me.'

6.01 — Nought for six.

Says Keymer and Hassocks skipper David Hewison 'It was only then that we began to glimpse that there was any possibility of getting them out for nothing. 'Our field was all slips, gulleys and short-legs. It hadn't entered our minds what the result might be, except that we were obviously better than them and we were going to win. I'd tried to make it more of a match by taking John Grimley off, but instead, I'd made it worse.'

The next batsman, Brian Elliot, 42, an insurance broker, says that when he was taking guard he could hear the Ashdown hearts pounding in the pavilion. He survived the last ball of the over. Dogged David Green again faced Williams for the eighth over of the innings. Again there was a near run, but again a good stop in the field pinned Ashdown back. Elliot was out to the second ball of the next over from John Price.

6.05 — Nought for seven.

'It pitched on a length and jumped at me', says Elliot. 'I tried to smother it, but it caught my glove and I was caught at forward short-leg.

John Tissington, 39, a company director, came in. 'I don't know how you'd describe the mood, but I think we were in

a state of genuine shame. I wanted to salvage something from it', he says.

He hammered his first ball into the gully area. He and David Green both wanted to run, but again a Keymer fieldsman fell on the ball and made them turn back. The next ball, the fourth of the over, bowled him middle-and-leg stump.

'I didn't even see it,' says Tissington.

6.07 — Nought for eight.

Last man Lewis Williams, 19, an electronics engineer, trailed a bat to the wicket. David Green commented: 'By that time I didn't think it mattered how many players we had to come in. I knew they'd all get ducks.'

It was the fifth ball of the ninth over of the innings. 'I decided to go for a good belt,' says Lewis Williams. 'I didn't even bother to take guard. The ball hit my stumps while I was still swinging the bat.'

6.09 — Nought for nine, the last wicket conceded, so Ashdown all out for Nought.

Says David Hewison: 'It wasn't humiliating. Getting them out for 10 might have been, but we realised this was something else. It was an entertainment. We'd taken part in a curiosity that we'll never see again.'

Each player has his tale to tell of getting home that night; and telling his wife or his parents about the game. The incredulity lasted all week and beyond.

Says John Tissington: 'There was a lot of tension in our next match. I mean, could it happen again? When we scored our first run, you'd have thought we'd scored in the cup final.

The Argus, June 1986. The Cricketer, 1986.

Isolation Quiz 2

Sincere apologies for the delay in printing the results of Isolation Quiz No 2. We had 202 participants and my apologies to three of our overseas members who I could not get to. My fault entirely for not being organised enough.

Whilst I thought this quiz was a little easier than the first, upon reflection (and a look at the scores, maybe I was wrong). There were 56 points at stake, so a very hearty congratulations to the winner, Ellen Harper, a Sussex CCC member and a collector only 27 short of a full-set.

Isolation Quiz 3 is on the way and all the questions will be on post 1970's cricket...that is a response to the oft-heard response to a question of '...a bit before my time.'

To all of you who took part, a very big thank you and if you would to take part in IQ 3, please let me know by email or telephone.

Congratulations to Ellen Harper. Ellen is thirty two almanacks short of a complete set and she receives a £50 Wisdenworld Gift voucher for winning IQ 2, which she says will go 'towards the little matter of an 1864'

1st	Ellen Harper	49
2nd	Chris Quirk	48
3rd	Sean Gray	46
4th	Les Talbot	43
5th	David Bown	41
6th	Mark Pennington	39
7th	Vanessa Darby	37
8th	Trevor Bedells	36
9th	Hilary Richardson	35
10th	Ian Carter	34

Thank to all of you who sent in your 'Ideal Touring Squad' - In the next issue I will be publishing a selection from those received. If you would still like to take part - Please choose a Touring Squad of 17, any players (but not from the country being toured), any era - All players must have played one Test. Include two wicket-keepers and nominate a captain. Your team can be a mixture of players from any Test-playing country and you choose the country to tour - so for example, if you tour England, no England players can be chosen. Please Email me your 'Squad', contact details on the front and back covers

The Virtual Wisdener Panel

In each printed edition of the The Wisdener newsletter I ask collectors for their thoughts on a number of *Wisden* or Cricket related questions. This gives people the opportunity to give their thoughts and opinions on issues that normally they would not have an opportunity to comment on. Over the years the Wisdener Panel has received some forthright, honest and radical contributions.

In the current situation I want to offer readers the chance to contribute to regular panels, but before I opened it up to everyone I wanted to test the water and so I invited a few people to give their thoughts on some relevant topics. I apologise for initially not opening this out to everyone.

The next set of questions are listed within the next couple of pages and could I ask that all responses are with me by Friday June 19th (my birthday).

Wax lyrical.

All responses will be treated with respect and courtesy.

The opinions given are those of the individual.

Do you believe that cricket is becoming more like football in the sense that the counties/states are losing their connection to the region they represent? If so, is this a bad thing?

Trevor Bedells: If cricket became more like football, I for one would (perish the thought) would be likely to lose interest in cricket. I well recall the late Brian Close saying that one day cricket would be the ruination of the Test team. Unfortunately, in my eyes, the one day game has become the be all and end all, and it is not proper cricket.

Patrick Layton: No. Certainly, money 'talks' all the time and there is no doubt that commercialism is a central plank. However I still believe there is something to be said for all the counties having their individual characteristics rather than the 100 franchise set-up.

Giles Falconer: Well, I think this has been becoming more the case for the whole of my life (and I've been a county remember for 50 years!). At the beginning of my cricket watching, county squads (with the exception of Yorkshire, of course), were very far from all home born. Having written this, I thought it might be worth actually checking the facts - using my earliest 'Playfair Cricket Annual' - 1971 edition - I have had a quick look at the make up of the county squads for the upcoming season. Accepting that this is not a totally accurate source (Playfair is occasionally wrong, relying on the players for the details they publish, and anything printed obviously can be overtaken by events such as late signings etc). Anyway for the 1971 season counties varied from Yorkshire (100%, though some of what they regard as Yorkshire: Hull or Middlesborough for example, might not be by everybody) to Northamptonshire (10% - just two players on the staff were home born; Peter Lee, who achieved far more success after leaving and moving to Lancashire, and the lesser known batsman Roy Wills).

Only 5 counties had squads with more than half home born - after Yorkshire came Glamorgan (74%), Lancashire (65%), Essex (63%) and Derbyshire (53%). So even half a century ago, few counties produced their own playing staff.

Of course there is a difference between 'home born' and 'home grown' - apart from Yorkshire most, or even all, the counties, could claim some players born elsewhere were really theirs - by education, length of residence as a child etc. To take Kent, the county I know best, only 39% (7 out of 18) on the staff were born in the county; but no-one thought of Colin Cowdrey or Bob Woolmer as anything other than 'Kentish Men'. Add them into the figures, and Kent's percentage of home produced players moves up to 61%. Then there were other players who came to Kent from elsewhere and played almost or all of their cricket for Kent (Mike Denness, Norman Graham, Dave Nicholls & Alan Brown) so when we won the County Championship in 1970 we really though we had a county mostly home produced! Other counties can, I'm sure say the same thing.

So, do I think Cricket is becoming more like Football? Yes, to some extent. But there are more homegrown (born and/or developed) players in most county squads than there are home grown footballers at many Premiership club.

David Hutchinson: I think it is yes to this one. Counties these days are more interested in making money than being connected to the region they represent. I think it was inevitable that we would end up with that ever since the Championship was split into 2 Divisions. A quick count up from this years *Wisden* and I got 101 players played for the county of their birth in last years Championship (about 25%). I also believe supporters still want to see their local lads playing for their team.

Fraser Simm: Yes, I think cricket is inexorably following football - but at a much slower rate. I definitely think this is a bad thing - county cricket is all about affiliation; it may a little archaic but counties mean a lot to their supporters. I support Gloucestershire and feel a link to the historic county when the team plays.

Peter Ackerman: I think this needs to be looked at from 2 perspectives. Firstly, in my view, first class cricket still retains the local connection, many county players are from that county or the locality, they have come through the various academies etc. and have a longer term connection. While increasing, there are still relatively few "transfers" between counties and many of the "transfers" that do occur relate to players seeking the opportunity to play rather than counties seeking to buy up the best players. If you look at the birthplaces of players at the "big" counties the majority are still born reasonably locally. Against this we need to look at the situation which exists in the shortest form of the game, ultimately with the major rewards to teams arising from this form of the game teams are seeking to maximise their opportunities to succeed.

In this form of the game it is clear that the counties are becoming more akin to football teams with stars being jetted in and out for short periods and these stars having no link or allegiance to the teams they represent except for a cheque. The Hundred simply amplifies this impact to a huge degree. A good or a bad thing, I am not too concerned, as in all aspects of life things move on and things usually move on for the better.

Howard Clayton: No I do not. Yorks CCC represents all of Yorkie-land and nowhere else.

To what extent do you believe that SKY TV has influence when it comes to cricket re-starting?

Giles Falconer: 'He who pays the Piper calls the tune', and, to be honest, I don't have much of a problem with that. The game needs their money.

David Hutchinson: I think Sky are more interested in the Football getting started again than the cricket. I cannot understand how the Premier League can restart on June 17th and yet the County Championship cannot start till August 1st

Peter Ackerman: Not much. I think more pressure was exerted by the broadcasters to ensure football restarts. Lets face it as a competitor playing football must place you at more risk that playing cricket. Surely if football can start again in just over a week there is no reason why cricket cannot start at the same time.

I have a view that it is the county clubs that are seeking to delay the start of the season as there will be little revenue to be generated by playing county games behind closed doors.

Anne King: As with Football I believe that SKY is in control. The threat of football teams in the Premier League having to pay back millions to Sky has been a major factor in their re-start thinking. Cricket must be in the same boat. But, let's be realistic, every business in the world is thinking about how it can re-start, how it can start selling its product, how it can protect its customers, its workers...so should we not see cricket as a business trying to do the same?

Trevor Bedells: Money talks doesn't it, if it didn't, cricket would have been shown on terrestrial TV continuously since 2005.

Fraser Simm: I don't think it will have a great effect - the situation is so desperate that circumstances will dictate.

Patrick Layton: It has an important part to play but I think generally Sky has been good for cricket's

The next Panel Questions

*What are your thoughts on Geoffrey Boycott leaving Test Match Special.

*Given the financial impact of Covid-19 on the county game, is now a time to consider merging some counties, and who would you suggest should merge?

*No matter what squad the West Indies send over, are they just a team to beat or a team that can challenge and compete?

*In the 2020 Wisden what were the three things you enjoyed the most?

*It is fairly certain that Wisden 2021 will be reduced in size, given that the core content of the almanack (articles, records etc) is around 700 pages, do you feel the price should be reduced if for example it is 250-300 pages less than the 2020, and explain your reasoning?

Please feel free to answer all or however many of the questions you wish to.

development. The coverage is excellent and the commentary team are all genuine enthusiasts who want cricket to succeed long-term.

Does the current structure of the English Cricket season and its reliance of Twenty20 make a shortened season a rather ridiculous compromise?

Giles Falconer: Given the way the UK has failed to deal with Covid to the extent that, as our nearest neighbours start to open up, we are lagging well behind, any cricket this season will be a bonus. Ideally that will include some 'red

ball' games (and they'll be easier to play with 'socially distanced' crowds) but the needs to fulfil TV contracts suggests that T20 games will be the most important type to be played.

Fraser Simm: I think that some cricket - any cricket - will be a shot in the arm. It was during 1939-45. **Patrick Layton:** Not in the least. These are unprecedented times and funding must be paramount. Some sort of cricket season is better than none at all. However, money talks and cricket must take advantage of the cash cow of 2020 in the current circumstances.

Trevor Bedells: If cricket is not allowed to restart until August, I think we should write off this domestic season (would make the 2021 Wisden surely one of the shortest editions since 1946 ?)

David Hutchinson: There is no doubt we rely on 20/20 (answer 1- making money) but I guess at the moment I am happy to see any form of cricket except the Hundred which is a total non-starter for me.

Peter Ackerman: Maybe, but I suspect many people will welcome the return of live sport irrespective of any compromise, context or competitive integrity.

Ian Mason: No spectators, no free-to-air, no sensible competition, no full-strength tourists...No point!

How can Test matches re-start in July when there has been no county game?

Giles Falconer: They will (if they do) because they need to, not because there has been a good build up. In recent years many international tours have started with very few warm up games; I suppose this just takes that a step or two further.

David Hutchinson: I agree with you on this one Bill. I cant work out how its safe to play Test Match but not Championship games. You would think they are not that bothered about the Championship - Oh I forgot they are not really, are they.

Trevor Bedells: If the government says no cricket restart until August, how can they plan for Test matches in July?

Fraser Simm: Extraordinary times - neither country will have had any chance to practice, and it could be a bit unreal. We shall see.

Anne King: Because it has to. Everyone needs normality, no matter how little or how restrictive, just a sense that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Peter Ackerman: Test cricket is now so divorced from county cricket that I am not sure that it is an issue. Under normal circumstances centrally contracted players may play a small number of county games prior to the international season commencing but I do not see this as key to the Tests being a

success. The selection of a 55 player "squad" suggests that may be some practice matches will be held before the international summer begins.

Howard Clayton: It should not be considered. Write off this season and start again in 2021.

Peter Layton: Facilities/money and safety. I think it is a good thing that things are starting to happen. Alright it would have been good if the County game could also have started at the same time but there is simply not the funding available compared to football.

Do you think that Greg Chappell was right to instruct Trevor Chappell to do what he did? To bowl underarm.

Giles Falconer: Right, no (as he'd admit today). But it was legal at the time. About 9 years earlier I'd been the Captain in a school cricket match (a 'house game') and the other side needed 4 (I think) from the last over with the last batsman in. So I told the bowler to bowl 6 balls underarm - the batsman blocked a couple then took a swing at one and was bowled so we won. However my enjoyment didn't last long, as when the Housemaster heard of it, he demanded the result was reversed and the other team went through to the final, and he sacked me as Captain! My excuse is that I was only about 15 at the time!

Fraser Simm: No. wrong then - wrong now.

Peter Fennell: It seemed to be a long time in coming. I am very surprised it had not happened sooner. Do I think it was wrong? No, not at all. No more than a right-handed batsman switching to being left-handed mid-way through the bowler's run-up, or a bowler running out a batsman who has wandered down to seek an advantage.

David Hutchinson: No! As Richie Benaud said, "That was one of the worst things I have ever seen done on a cricket field, Goodnight."

I don't think I ever disagreed with anything Richie Benaud ever said. God knows what he would have said

Whilst I agree to some extent with your assessment that a 1st August start, at the earliest, makes it unrealistic to have any meaningful county championship competition, I think that something could nevertheless be achieved. Let me explain:

Let's assume that the season runs from 1 August to 25 September equalling 56 days. Each county plays 14 three day county championship matches = 42 days. These would consist of a minimum of 110 overs per day. The 50 over tournament could revert to being a straight knock out competition with the bottom four counties in last season's regional groups starting things off to get us down to 16 sides. This takes up five days, leaving nine days for some 'twenty twenty' thrash events. Whilst I realise that the prospect of playing 56 consecutive days cricket will be considered impossible for most players, it isn't a lot different from what happened in the early 1970's. In any event, squad rotation will mean that many second X1 and fringe players will gain valuable experience. Who knows what talent might emerge from such opportunities?

David Bown

about Steve Smith and the ball tampering issue in SA.

Peter Ackerman: At any level of sport but particularly at the professional level where careers and livelihoods are at stake teams and individuals are permitted to seek the maximum opportunity to succeed within the laws or rules of the particular sport. The Chappells did not break the laws of cricket but did highlight an omission in the laws which the authorities resolved. One of the finest sporting teams at exploiting the rules of their sport are Team Ineos (ex Sky) in cycling. They seek every opportunity to stretch the framework of the rules and have been extremely successful

by doing so. From time to time the UCI change the rules to outlaw something Ineos have done. This is professional sport.*In a recent VW the Australia v New Zealand 'Underarm' incident was featured.

Howard Clayton: No utterly wrong and cheating. I wonder where Steve Smith & Co got their idea from?

Trevor Bedells: Of course he wasn't right. If not (then) against the Laws, it was against the spirit of the game.

Peter Layton: Not at all! It is not in the spirit of cricket under any circumstances! Play hard but play fairly within the spirit of cricket at all times.

If it was safe to do so (whether with or without spectators) and if it was your decision alone, would you still want the West Indies to play a Test series this summer? (This was posed prior to the announcement)

Giles Falconer: Yes, indeed. If Horse racing and Football can be played behind closed doors, why not cricket?

Trevor Bedells: Yes we would love to see the WI in action this summer, but only after the (hopefully) August restart is approved by our Government

David Hutchinson: Yes I would want West Indies Tests to be played. As I stated earlier I am would be happy to see any cricket I can this summer. Though as I write this email to you news is coming through that 3 West Indies players have pulled out of squad because of Coronavirus fears.

Peter Ackerman: Yes.

Peter Layton: Yes we must play-the show has to go on. I am sure the benefits of playing will help lift the nation from the events of the last few months-cricket has to start somewhere and this way forward seems as good as anything else put forward.

Fraser Simm: Cricket has to start sometime - so possibly yes. Rugby may well have a greater challenge in starting up again.



Thank you to Bob Bond for allowing us to use the above. We will be using more in future issues of The VW.

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