

**W**asn't the climax to the county season brilliant? Well, if you were a **Warwickshire, Hampshire, Lancashire or Nottinghamshire supporter it certainly was.**

Going into the final round of county matches they each stood a chance of being crowned champions and throughout the four days the only side that at no time occupied top spot was Notts. The battle for bonus points from all the games and then the fabulous final two days when, after a low-scoring game at Aigburth (between Lancs and Hants) and Warwickshires striving to bowl Somerset out for first innings bonus points, it looked as if the smart money was on Hampshire. Only for Lancs to edge home by a wicket after trying their upmost to throw the match away. A Hants win would have meant the title.

As a Lancashire supporter there was a certain inevitability about Warwickshire's game against Somerset on the final day. Watching on the internet they reminded me of some of the great and dominant teams from my cricketing past. The West Indies in their fast-bowling quartet prime or Australia for a decade when you knew that no matter what, they were just going to win.

Warwickshire - the best side — duly won but then we had the rather daft Bob Willis Trophy Final. The 2020 Final was ruined by the weather and needed a contrived finish and the 2021 was decided the moment Warwickshire bowled on day one — there really wasn't any need for the Bob Willis Trophy.

Other events were maybe not as enthralling and some were downright sad. The final Test against India being abandoned and on the same day Yorkshire CCC announced that the Azeem Rafiq enquiry had upheld seven of his allegations. Two months later the ECB have announced their own enquiry — how pathetic! In time they will release a statement, it will be a footnote on a day when no one is watching...it could take months, why?

In 2020 the ECB announced that 62 staff members were to be made redundant and that 'it would take years to recover' from the pandemic,

well it only took 11 months because £2 million plus was paid out to senior executives this summer. I want to use a swear word, but Lorraine tells me I can't.

Then we 'NoTourGate' — sorry Pakistan, but I know we said we would, but we wont, really sorry about that, but you know how it is...again disgusting and disrespectful and I know others have asked this question — but would we have done the same to Australia? Why do I feel that racism, racist attitudes and that good old fashioned 'but we are England, and we are so much better than you' attitude is dominant in our game.

Not only was the tour a punch in the face to Pakistan but also to the women's' game in both countries, as the first games to be played by an English side in that country were also abandoned. Talking of women's' cricket ...

On July 23 2017 Eileen Ash, the oldest international cricket player (then aged 105) rang the bell at Lord's to signal the start of play in the Women's World Cup Final between England and India, and recently, on October 30, she celebrated her 110th birthday. Whether she was referred to in her playing days as a 'batter,' 'bats-woman', or 'batsman,' is completely irrelevant, she was a cricketer, pure and simple.

Just a thought but is anyone aware of any current cricket magazine or indeed Wisden, asking the type of questions that us more traditional fans want answering. Would anyone at the ECB stop spending their bonus and condescend to answer if they were asked?

How sad it has been hearing that some wonderful cricketers are now no longer with us: Australians, Ashley Mallet and Alan Davidson and Sri Lanka's first Test captain, Bandula Warnapura, Ted Dexter and Mike Hendrick too.

Just recently Michael Holding announced that he is retiring as a TV commentator — another voice of reason, intelligence and integrity no longer heard.

Bill

## The Highest Score on Record: A.E.J. Collins

**In June of 1899, A. E. J. Collins scored 628 not out, and by doing so established a world record that has stood ever since: The Highest Innings on Record.**

By coincidence, Collins played his innings in a school match at Clifton College, where an earlier holder of the record, E. F. S. Tylecote, had made his score. However, as it was a junior house match, Collins played on the Junior School field, situated to one side of the college buildings, and not on the College Close, where senior games took place and where Tylecote made his 404 in 1868. The conditions for play were unusual. An Old Cliftonian' described the junior field in The Athletic News Weekly for July 3, 1899:

*It is 60 yards wide and 100 yards long. Then the ground abruptly slopes (down) nearly three feet ... As they "(the wickets) were placed across the narrow section of the ground, there were only 19 yards behind each set of stumps. To the wall, square with them on one side was a distance of 70 yards, while on the other, down the slope ... all hits had to be run out, there being practically no limit to the space in that direction, for the land shelves away to the sanatorium in the far corner.*

Although two sides of the boundary were thus very near to the wicket, all boundary hits — including those to the wall — were worth only two runs.

Collins, 13 years of age, was playing for Clark's House against North Town in a junior house match towards the latter end of the summer term, 1899. The game began on Thursday, June 22 at some time between 3 and 3.30 p.m. Collins won the toss for Clark's and, with Champion, went out to open the innings. He began quietly, not scoring particularly fast at first, but by the drawing of stumps at 6 p.m. he was 200 not out. He was missed three times: a difficult chance in the outfield when about 50: a fairly easy chance to point at 110; and another difficult chance, this time to third man, at 140.

The next day play began at about the same time. Of course, little attention was being paid to the game at this stage. It was, after all, a relatively unimportant school match. Only a short distance away though, a large crowd had assembled to watch the Clifton College v Old Cliftonian match on the Close. (This fixture was a great event in the school's calendar; half-holidays were given on the two days that it took place — which is what enabled there to be play in the house match on Thursday and Friday.) Collins meanwhile was batting in brilliant fashion, and went quickly to his third century. Gradually, as the news got around that a young lad was approaching Tylecote's college record, the big match ceased to be an attraction and everyone began crowding around the enclosure where the juniors played. When Collins passed 350 it was to cheers from the spectators. A man had been sent down by The

Back in 1982 Wisden Cricket Monthly ran the article featured here. Researched and written by Simon Wilde it offers a wonderful glimpse into a single innings that captivated the cricketing world at the time and ever since.

Bristol Evening News to follow the Old Cliftonian game and he was able to clinch something of a scoop for the stop-press, although he listened to too much gossip:

*Collins, a lad under 10, put on runs at an extraordinary rate, and amid considerable enthusiasm he beat the school record of 404 . . .*

In front of his suddenly-acquired audience Collins was not in the least nervous as he continued to collar the bowling. The brilliancy of his strokes and his reserves of energy — he never seemed to tire — were marvelled at.

*There he was driving the ballup against the college buildings, over the wall into Guthrie Road, and sometimes into St Emmanuel churchyard, and not infrequently sending the ball away down towards the sanatorium for five or six.*

(Bristol Evening News. Saturday, June 24).

Every landmark in his innings was being loudly signalled by the crowd. Collins was nearing the world record, but still the enthusiasm of the spectators, and his own natural desire to break A. E. Stoddart's, record of 485, in no way affected his play. At 5.30, to great cheers — though the batsman himself seemed quite unconcerned — the record went. Collins was hitting with as much power as when he commenced and by the close at 6 p.m. he was 509 not out. He had added 309 runs that afternoon in something over 2 and a half hours, and had become the first batsman ever to score a half-thousand. The total was in the region of 680 for 8, after nearly 5 and a half hours.

On Saturday the newspapers were full of the story of the wonderful cricket score made by a Clifton College boy. Rather amusingly, W. G. Grace, who had a regular column with The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, had written an article that appeared that morning specifically about A. E. Stoddart and his world record score of 485! The 13-year-old Collins was now the toast of the nation and the junior house match more talked about than the Test match starting in Leeds that Thursday.

(Owing to a long-standing error in Wisden that states Collins batted on five afternoons it has been supposed that there was play on Saturday. This was not the case. Collins's innings lasted only four afternoons; it was the match that lasted five. If for no other reason, play this day would be out of the question because North Town

were day-boys and they would not be at school on Saturday — even if it was only to play cricket!)

Collins resumed his innings on Monday after a break of two days. Usually one afternoon would have sufficed to see a match like this completed, but it was accepted practice that they were played to a finish, so this game now — with no half-holidays left to assist — had to continue when it could. This meant the hour's leisure that began at 12.30 p.m. Thus on Monday there was some 50 to 55 minutes' play. A large crowd gathered, and Collins batted superbly once more. He added 89 and took his score up to 598, giving one chance in the long-field when 566. A wicket had fallen quickly and the innings looked to be finished, but Redfern was the ideal last man. He gave admirable support and stayed to the close, at which point the tenth wicket had added 106, of which Redfern's share was 12.

The national Press were lyrical about Collins the next morning. And The Guardian had got hold of his background:

*The hero of the match is an orphan, and was born in India, where his father was engaged in the Civil Service. He went to Clifton College in the winter term two years ago. He had been at school at Cowes and at Bath College previous to going to Clifton, and though he played cricket there, he has, he says, learnt practically all his cricket at Clifton . . . He is remaining there for four years longer, and then intends going to Woolwich. Standing in an easy way, he plays remarkably straight, but watches the ball sharply with his keen blue eyes, and seems as cool as a cucumber. His style suggests that he is a 'born cricketer', and he says he is fond of the game.*

At 12.30 on Tuesday the game resumed once more, before another large attendance of spectators, Collins and Redfern going out to the wicket with the total at 804 for 9. All the players had probably by this time been urged to take a positive approach; world records were all very well but the disruption they caused to a school was considerable, and already one pupil could not call his life his own.

Play was extended beyond 1.30 to help bring about a result. Collins took a two off the first ball he received to give him his 600, and he seemed ready to get a move on — being 'downright reckless', giving chances at 605, to slip, and at 619. Redfern's was the wicket to fall though, caught at point, after 25 minutes' play, in which time Collins had added 30 and Redfern a single. Collins thus carried his bat for 628 through the innings of 836. North Town, shortly after, went in and were all out in 90 minutes for 87. Collins took 7 for 33 in 21 overs. They had their second innings on Wednesday afternoon and were bundled out for 61, Collins this time taking 4 for 30.

Collins, during his huge innings, had been batting about 6 hours 45 minutes, 6 hours 50 minutes at most. He gave six chances — probably more. On Friday everyone was so dazzled by his brilliant play that they failed one and all to remark on its purity. It seems that the fielding could not be criticised for lacking in effort, despite the ferocity of Collins's batting. His scoring strokes were given as: one six, four fives, 31 fours, 33 threes, 146 twos and 87 singles, but the scorebook is near-illegible in parts, crammed with figures, and these totals could well be wrong. It must have been a trying experience for the two scorers, E. W. Pegler and J. W. Hall. Apart from anything else, they were the only means the large crowd — and the Press — had of knowing Collins's rapidly changing score. Hall, many years later, wrote:

*... I was myself (subject, I hope and believe, to checking by a master) the depressed and over-worked scorer for the losers during most, if not all, of that innings . . . The bowling probably deserved all the lordly contempt with which Collins treated it, sending a considerable number of balls full pitch over the fives courts into the swimming bath to the danger of the occupants.*

This was written in a letter to The Times in March 1938, prompted by the recent death of E. F. S. Tylecote. Hall's father, Henry Sinclair Hall, had actually batted with Tylecote during his innings of 404, and was at the wicket with him when he passed William Ward's celebrated score of 278.

The match was over, but the boy Collins found himself in ever-greater demand. He was pestered to death for portraits, photographs and interviews. Meanwhile, congratulations poured into the school for him, including one he must have prized above all: a letter and a bat from A. E. Stoddart. But it was Collins's fate to be constantly reminded of, and associated with, his 628. The score was so immense, its maker so diminutive, that the grotesqueness was, and is, compelling. Collins was, whether he liked it or not, FAMOUS. One contemporary newspaper got it right when it said:

*Collins at the age of 13 has sprung into worldwide fame. Who knew him a week ago except his schoolmates and his aunts? Today all men speak of him; he is a household word; he has a reputation as great as the most advertised soap; he will be immortalised in cricket guides; and his name will shine out conspicuously in the lists of records.*

Junior School Ground, Clifton College  
June 22, 23, 26, 27, 28 1899  
Clark's: 836  
(A.E. J. Collins, 628\*. NI Whitty, 42)  
North Town  
87  
(Barstow, 32)



## One run is Enough

**W**hen Merv Hughes was lbw to Curtly Ambrose — the tall Antiguan's 10th wicket of the match — soon after lunch on the fourth day at Adelaide, Australia were reeling at 74 for 7, their chase for 186 to win the match and the series seemingly forlorn. But determined batting from the tailenders saw Australia — already one-up in the five-match rubber — inch closer to their goal. Tim May, already a hero after taking 5 for 9 on his home ground in his first Test for four years, revealed unsuspected batting talents as he shepherded his side towards a famous victory.

When debutant left-hander Justin Langer was caught behind for 54, made in 253 minutes from 146 balls, the score was 144 for 9 — still 42 needed — but May and last man McDermott stuck at it, taking their side to within one run of Test cricket's third tie. With five wanted, Richardson dived at mid-off and almost caught McDermott, but nonetheless saved precious runs.

With two needed, McDermott toe-ended a pull at Walsh and Haynes stopped the ball at short leg. Then, after 88 minutes of mounting tension, McDermott, who had, by and large, abandoned his policy of stepping away to leg to the quicker bowlers, tried to swivel out of the way of the last ball of Walsh's 19th over. A bouncer, predictably enough, the ball went from glove to helmet-peak and thence through to a jubilant wicketkeeper Murray. West Indies had won by one run, the narrowest margin of victory in Test history.

It had been an engrossing match from the beginning. West Indies made a bright start after winning the toss, raising 100 in 31 overs before lunch for the loss of Simmons and Richardson. Three quick wickets went down after the interval, two of them to off-spinner May, but another impressive innings from Lara and a jaunty knock from Murray took the visitors to 252, Hughes taking 5 for 64.

In indifferent light Australia lost Taylor third ball, and then the debutant Langer, a left-hander who scored over 4,000 runs (22 centuries) in club cricket for Dover in 1992, had his helmet split by a Bishop bouncer. After attention he continued, but little more play was possible in a

Great Test matches are not the sole right of games between England and Australia - indeed the first tied Test was between Australia and the West Indies and throughout Test match history there have close games between all the Test-playing nations. One such match was played at Adelaide in January 1993.

day shortened by 56 minutes by the weather. Australia were 2 for 1 (Boon 1, Langer 0) by the close. Langer was playing only because of a freak injury to his

Western Australia team-mate Damien Martyn, who had been poked in the eye during fielding practice by Australian coach Bob Simpson.

Boon took a nasty blow on the left forearm from Ambrose on the second morning, and had to retire hurt for the first time in his 69-Test career. Mark Waugh replaced him, and escaped a confident leg-before appeal first ball only to give a catch to third slip off the next. After a rain interruption Langer (20 in 98 minutes) was caught off the glove while hooking. More rain and bad

light forced an early close on a day which saw only 140 minutes' play: Steve Waugh, dropped by a diving Murray off Ambrose when 27, had made 35 of Australia's 100 for 3, while Border, needing 70 to supplant Sunil Gavaskar as Test cricket's leading run-scorer, had 18 to his credit.

Border added only one and Waugh added eight on the third morning before both fell to Ambrose, a return of three wickets in nine balls for the angular Antiguan. Healy being the third, for the first half of an eventual 'pair': it was a mixed match for the dapper

Queenslander, who during the game passed Bertie Oldfield's tally of 130 dismissals, to lie third on Australia's wicketkeeping lists with 137, behind Rod Marsh (355) and Wally Grout (187).

Australia were rescued from 112 for 6 by a gutsy stand of 69 between the restored Boon (who ended the innings with 39 not out) and Hughes, whose innings top-score of 43 included a hooked six

off Bishop.



Curtly Ambrose



Merv Hughes



Brian Lara

Hughes and Wame (second ball) fell in the same Hooper over.

May looked unlucky to be given out after the ball appeared to hit him on the arm, and Ambrose wrapped up the innings at 213, finishing with 6 for 74.

West Indies, leading by 29, made an indifferent start. McDermott, sharper than in the first innings but guilty of several no-balls, removed both openers, and then inflicted a 'pair' on Arthurton.

Only Richardson lasted for long, rushing to 50 from 56 balls, whereupon he pulled and swept sixes off Wame. Border bravely persevered with the leg-spinner, and was rewarded when Richardson charged down the pitch, edged, and was both caught and stumped by Healy for 72. When he had made 46 Richardson, who was playing in his 67th match, became the seventh West Indian to score 5,000 runs in Tests (after Richards, Sobers, Greenidge, Lloyd, Haynes and Kanhai).

From 137 for 5, West Indies declined to 146 all out — their lowest against Australia since 1975-76 (128 at Sydney) — in the face of a remarkable spell from May. Spinning the ball significantly, the local man flighted the ball well and extracted some bounce from the pitch as he took 5 for 5 in 32 balls. It was the first five-wicket haul of May's Test career, and came only a year after he had been dropped by South Australia after struggling to regain full fitness after the 12th operation on his injured knee.

Seventeen wickets fell on the third day, but the pitch was not to blame for the batsmen's struggles.

And so the fourth day — Australia Day — dawned. The home side needed 186 to win the new Frank Worrell Trophy, a replica of the lost original having just been completed by Melbourne silversmith John Atherton.

Victory would have given Allan Border, captaining Australia for the 74th time to equal Clive Lloyd's overall Test record, a series win over West Indies for the first time in seven attempts (four as captain). As the tension mounted the crowd grew to 14,113, giving a match total of 57,573 after daily attendances of 17,485, 16,020 and 9,955.

Australia suffered an early blow when the solid Boon went for a duck, lbw to one from the inevitable Ambrose which kept rather low. Taylor's disappointing series continued when he fell for 7: his double failure



Tim May

cost him his place for the final Test at Perth.

Newcomer Langer and Mark Waugh took the score to 54, but then all seemed lost as five wickets went down for 20. Soon after completing 1,000 runs in his 18th Test, Mark Waugh was caught at second slip, then, first ball after lunch, his twin departed when Arthurton juggled but held onto a catch at cover. Border, protecting his face, gloved a wicked bouncer to Haynes, then Healy played on (Walsh's 1,000th first-class wicket). And when Hughes was lbw Australia stood at 74 for 7, their victory target seemingly impossibly distant.



Richie Richardson

Langer, May (on his 31st birthday) and McDermott then defied the pacemen, who became increasingly frustrated: Ambrose was warned for intimidation by umpire Hair, whose colleague King later dished out a similar warning to Bishop.

The crowd cheered every run and applauded defensive shots: the strains of Waltzing Matilda could be heard at times. In the end it all boiled down to just one run. One edge through the slips, one no-ball, one lucky nudge off the hip . . . but one run was enough for West Indies.

Australia v West Indies  
Fourth Test match

Adelaide, January 23 - 26 1993.

Toss: West Indies

Test Debut: J.L. Langer (Australia)

Umpires: DB Hair & LJ King.

West Indies: 252

(Lara, 52. Simmons, 46. Haynes, 45. Hughes 21.3-3, 6-64.)

Australia 213

(Hughes, 43. SR Waugh, 42.

Ambrose 28.2-6, 6-74).

West Indies 146

(Richardson, 72. May 6.5-3, 5-9.

McDermott 11-0, 3-66)

Australia 184.

(Langer, 54. May, 42\*.

Ambrose 26-5, 4-46.

Walsh 19-4, 3-44.)



Justin Langer

West Indies won by One Run to square the five-match series at 1-1.



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## Announcement

I will be sending out another notice in a few days time...so apologies in advance for sending it, but with Christmas just around the corner - 54 shopping days if you include a panic-guy or two on Christmas Eve, then my next little email might be of interest



## The Tea Interval

**Husband:** "I want you to have this bracelet. It belonged to my grandmother.

Wife: "Why? Does it say Do Not Resuscitate?"

**Not sure how true this is but from what I can gather**

Liverpool Football Club are looking for a new manager. Apparently him and his family are moving home to Germany. Not heard much detail but overhead a lad who drinks in our pub say the Klopp's go back this weekend.....

**"Chris Lewis** didn't bowl, then came in and scored thirty. A top all-round effort."

(Alec Stewart).

**"Now this** question has absolutely nothing to do with politics, music or sport...at which ground did Geoffrey Boycott hit his hundredth 100?"  
Classic FM.

**"I don't think** I've ever seen anything quite like that before - it's the second time it's happened today."

Brian Johnston

**"34-year-old Alan** Cork is about to step up and take the penalty that will give his team the lead. Cork, thin on top but thick in mind and body."

Alan Parry.

**Interviewer:** The top school in Britain is in the Scilly Isles. What does that tell us?

Spokesman: The top school in Britain is in the Scilly Isles. Radio 1, Newsbeat.

**Jeremy Isaacs:** You called your autobiography 'The Ragman's Son.' Who was The ragman?

Kirk Douglas: My father.  
BBC Radio 2.

**"Bloody** medieval most of them."  
Ian Botham on the English Cricket administration.

**'The modern cricketer** is not an ogre, nor is he deliberately obstructive. Although in most cases it would be unfair to dismiss him as a spoiled brat, he is too often lazy, ill-disciplined and reluctant to put in the effort and dedication commensurate with the wages he is earning. He has a very low boredom threshold with a constant need to be told what to do with his time.'

Bob Willis - Lasting the Pace.

**'Cricket has** been played pretty solidly in this country, and indeed throughout the Empire ever since the Norman Conquest, except perhaps during the Dark Ages, when bad light stopped play.'

Ralph Wotherspoon.

'I see them in fold dug-outs, gnawed by rats, and lying in the ruined temples, lashed by rain, Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats.'

Siegfried Sassoon - The Dreamers.

*Letters seen in the 'acquired taste' magazine/comic, VIZ.*

**...Cyclists can practise on an exercise bike,** rowers can practise on a rowing machine, batsman can practise against a bowling machine and even tennis players can use a swing-ball. But there's nothing for us darts players. We have to practise on an actual darts board.

**...I caught a glimpse of** myself in the mirror the other day and was satisfied to see that I had lost some of the weight I had put on during lockdown. It was only then I realised that it wasn't a mirror, but a TV and that I was looking at a documentary about Giant Haystacks.

**...I was quite fancying a holiday to** Tokyo after watching the Olympics. But after hearing some of the athletes going on about their 'long, hard, painful journey just to get there, I am having second thoughts. Some of them were in tears. It must have really crap flight.

**"I've just** been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I'll tell you what, never again"  
Tim Vine.

**A woman gets** on a bus with her baby. The driver says:

'Ugh, that's the ugliest baby I've ever seen!'  
The woman walks to the rear of the bus and sits down, fuming. She says to the man next to her: "The driver just insulted me!"  
The man says: "You go up there and tell him off. Go on, I'll hold your monkey for you."

**A young Essex man** fears his wife is having an affair, so he goes to a shop and buys a handgun. The next day he comes home to find his wife in bed with a handsome man. He grabs the gun and holds it to his head. The wife jumps out of bed, begging and pleading with him not to shoot himself. The hysterical man tells his wife "Shut up ... you're next!"

And finally

'Two aerals get married, the ceremony was great, but the reception was awful.'





TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES - 25th August 1934.

What is Cricket?  
New Developments.  
Consideration for the Authorities.



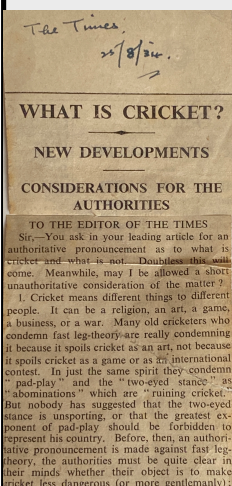
Sir,—You ask in your leading article for an authoritative pronouncement as to what is cricket and what is not. Doubtless this will come. Meanwhile, may I be allowed a short' unauthoritative consideration of the matter?

1. Cricket means different things to different people. It can be a religion, an art, a game, a business, or a war. Many old cricketers who condemn fast leg-theory are really condemning it because it spoils cricket as 'an art, not because it spoils cricket as a game or as ks international contest. In just the same spirit they condemn pad-play " and the " two-eyed stance" as "abominations" which are " ruining cricket." But nobody has suggested that the two-eyed stance is unsporting, or that the greatest exponent of pad-play should be forbidden to represent his country. Before, then, an authoritative pronouncement is made against fast leg-theory, the authorities must be quite clear in their minds whether their object is to make cricket less dangerous (or more gentlemanly); to increase the excitement of Test Matches; or simply to encourage the off-drive.
2. In the old days, when every good cricketer could cut, when the hook and the pull were "not cricket," and before the leg-glance had been invented, it was both possible and necessary for a fast bowler to pack the off-side field and leave the leg-side bare. The modern fast bowler, who had to have three men on the leg-side, even when bowling off-theory, was therefore at a disadvantage. It is entirely natural that he should adapt himself to modern conditions (under which everybody is able to play an off-ball to leg) by bowling to a complete leg-field, and leaving batsmanship to discover how to play a leg-ball to the off. It is easy to see that this sort of bowling may be dangerous ; may make cricket more dull or less beautiful but it is difficult to make any sort of case against it as unsporting or out of keeping with modern developments of cricket.
3. It is impossible to legislate against fast leg-theory. No law can make the apparently necessary distinction between Clark and Voce as cricketers, sportsmen, and gentlemen; no law can discriminate between Hirst bowling naturally to a leg-side field and Bowes bowling deliberately to one, without giving an unfair advantage to left-handed cricket; no law can define the exact point at which an Armstrong becomes a Larwood. What the authorities can do is to express an authoritative opinion that fast leg-theory is " not in accordance with the spirit of the game," leaving it to sportsmen and gentlemen to decide when slow leg-theory becomes fast leg-theory, and when fast leg-theory ceases to be super-excellent, super-fast, get-the-batsman-out theory.

4. But such an authoritative opinion will raise another awkward question. Are Test Matches played " in accordance with the spirit of the game," or are they also " abominations " which are " ruining cricket?" Whatever answer is made to the second part of the question, the answer to the first part is an emphatic " No." When we speak of this or that " not being cricket," we are thinking of the traditional, easy-going, good sportsmanship of country-house and village matches. Test Matches are not played in this spirit. They are played : strictly according to the letter of the law; and an authoritative pronouncement that this is a good thing for cricket, as long as super-fast, right-handed bowlers don't do it too, seems to , be all that is left for the authorities to pronounce.

Yours, &c.,  
A.A. Milne -  
Hartfield  
Sussex.

The newspaper cutting of this letter was found in a 1934 Wisden that I recently acquired and it offers a wonderful insight into not just the cricketing debate of the time, but a also the thoughts of one of the world's greatest authors.



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## The Wisdener Panel

### Do you think that the format for the 2021 County Championship was a success or not?

**Simon Platt:** I really enjoyed it. Dividing the counties after the first round of fixtures was brilliant. It also meant that each county found its proper level. But I do think the Bob Willis trophy was a mistake. One more game that was totally unnecessary.

**Martin Barlow:** Like a lot of my cricket-loving friends the dis-jointed nature of the championship was the issue. Breaking it up to accommodate the limited over competitions was awful and there must be a solution, but there seems not to be any commitment from within the game to find one. The one day game is at saturation point and this was apparent as the attendances for the last rounds of fixtures for Twenty20 were quite poor.

**Jim Waterson:** It didn't work for me - the initial three leagues and then three divisions with a ludicrous match-off at the end, it just smacked in the face of trying to appease everyone.

**Sylvia Nana:** loved it and I was glued to my computer on the last two days - Lancashire almost throwing everything away against Hampshire and then Warwickshire completely dominating and powering their way to victory over Somerset - it was enthralling, even the other matches kept my attention because in their own way, they meant something. The one negative was the Bob Willis trophy - pointless and a reminder as to why cricket shouldn't start before 11am for any match.

**Richard Reardon:** Yes, the format has given every one of the 18 counties a chance to win the Championship and resulted in a very exciting final round of fixtures with everything going down to the wire on the final day. No doubt Essex and others will moan about the way things worked out but teams had to perform to make the top two in the initial groups. There are shortcomings in all the recent formats, including the two division system. Counties only play 14 games so do not play everyone twice which creates anomalies. For example one county could play the best four counties twice and another the weakest four counties twice, thus affecting issues such as eventual winners or relegation/promotion.

**Mark Bullman:** For the first time in my lifetime it seemed like a proper competition.

**Michael Baws:** It was confusing to have both the Championship and the Bob Willis Trophy in the same season. Scheduling the finals of the Willis Trophy to finish in October shows how red ball cricket is being set aside in favour of the 'kiss-me-quick' white ball competitions.

The Willis Trophy was a wise introduction in 2020 to replace the Championship. It provided a welcome

Once again a massive thank you to all of you who sent in your views to the questions I posed. Your contributions are valued.

For those of you reading for the first time and for those who may raise an eye-brow at some of the comments, allow me a moment: Some of the views expressed here by individual contributors would not be allowed in many places, but my view is that the reader is intelligent enough to agree or disagree with them and was it Voltaire who said "I may not agree with your views, but I will die for your right to express them."

I am NOT going to die for your right to express your views, but please do not take offence - the world has become a place we're so so many people are seemingly offended at so so many things.

respite during the grimness of a season badly affected by Covid. With luck, we will not need two red ball competitions in 2022.

However, the Willis Trophy should be used in another way as a continuing memorial to a much-admired cricketer. Perhaps it could go to the bowler who achieves the best innings analysis of the season. If a similar award is wanted for the batsman with the highest score, why not name it after Ted Dexter?

**Frank Chambers:** I thought it was a resounding success and I do not understand why it cannot continue. Every county starts the same and the second part is based on how they did...if prize money was allocated according to final positions it would be a proper competition.

**Graeme Hughes:** Yes I personally believe the format for the championship was a major step forward, and I therefore believe it has been a success. I am not a great fan of the ECB but on this occasion I think they have got something right.

**Christopher Rowsell:** I think the format was alright for our current times. Certainly the first ten games, where teams were jockeying for a place in Division One, were interesting. The last four games were excellent for Division One, but much less so for the other two divisions who were in effect not playing for anything. It might have been an idea for the teams at the top of Division Two and Three to play for the Bob Willis Trophy. I prefer two divisions, preferably of equal teams, although it was good for some of the lesser counties to play against the stronger counties, which a number haven't done for quite a few seasons. Overall I think the format was a qualified success, but I think we need to go back to two divisions next season.

**Bob Randall:** Cracking success! Loved it. Enough said.

**David Ackland:** The format (almost) worked for me as the County I support made it to Division One, which was closely competed. But had I been a supporter of one of the 12 teams in Divisions Two and Three, then there would have been only meaningless, exhibition matches in September. I wasn't keen on the points carry forward, and would prefer to scrap the Bob Willis Trophy and ensure that Division One teams play one another in September. The fact that only two of the teams in Division One had played the defending Champions, who were way ahead in Division Two, was a serious flaw. When Two Divisions were introduced, I must confess I was anti, but I have been converted. In recent 'normal' seasons with a few matches to go, numerous teams were in with a chance of the Championship and many stood a chance of relegation - some were in both camps. And in 2019, six teams stood a chance of promotion with a couple of games to go. As a result there were few meaningless games. In 2019 again, Northamptonshire and Gloucestershire were promoted showing that counties derided by some as less fashionable could make it to Division One. The conference system was a good makeweight in 2020 when covid interrupted things, but let's get back to two divisions.

**James Grant:** Was the 2021 County Championship a success? It was not.

**Neil Nelson:** I went to matches when I could, starting at the end of May. On the 14 July 4 Day cricket went away again, not returning for another 47 days, by which time all sense of continuity had been lost. It felt like reading part of a good book or watching part of a good film and then not completing either. The format felt highly contrived when the matches were played.

**Abdul Yasser:** It was a small start. County cricket has needed to come out of its self obsession with the past for a long time. It is no good insisting that Leicestershire should play Warwickshire, Hampshire or Lancashire if they are at the level of Derbyshire. The longer game in India is dying, spectators don't go and there is no TV coverage. English cricket needs to wake up and smell the coffee, the longer game is dying and it needs looking at to make it a worthwhile competition.

**Pauline Warrens:** It was a success, primarily because every match could be watched a s alive stream on the internet and I must admit that the commentary was generally so nice, so non-confrontational and very gentle that I found myself relaxing into it. Unlike the absolute dross that pouts out of the mouths of the SKY (and sadly, BBC) buffoons.

**David Bown:** I think that yes, broadly the format was a success, at least the first round of ten match group games was. Particularly as it gave the opportunity for

counties to play other counties that they hadn't played for some time, e.g. Leicestershire v Somerset, and for local derbies, e.g. Middlesex v Surrey.

The next stage worked for the top division but divisions two and three will only be seen to have been successful if counties' finishing positions in those divisions are taken in to account if there is a revision to the two-division format in 2022. Something, which is I believe supposed to happen but who knows?!

I think, on balance, that the novelty of this season's format will wear off and that we should revert to the two-division format with nine counties in each division playing each other home and away with two counties relegated and two counties promoted each season. As for the Bob Willis Trophy, I think that this should continue but be played for at the start of the season between the two counties that finished first and second in the previous year's County Championship. As regards the County Championship itself, this should be spread evenly over the British Summer; Each county plays a total of five matches in April and May, six in June and July and five in August and September, totalling 16 matches.

The season starts in mid-April with the BWT and ends around 20th September. This will, of course, never happen as the people charged with running the English game will still expect our cricketers to play baseball in gaudy clothing during high Summer.

**Colin Morris:** It was OK but I reckon if Hampshire had not been in Division 1, the second part of the season would have been pretty meaningless for me. The bringing forward of points was rather serendipitous although I could understand the reasoning behind it.

**Sam Prescott:** I really enjoyed it. Every county was rewarded for its level of skill and the way the three groups came together in the second phase was brilliant.

**Joe Finlay:** One of the downsides of the CC, which I am sure will be addressed here but I know has been mentioned in other (Wisden) Panels is the lack of the Test players in the majority of matches and I am sure the comparison has been made with the winter sport of football. If cricket still regards itself as 'the summer sport' then its best players should be available for as many people to see as wish to. If Chelsea or Manchester City didn't play any of their squad who played international football there would be an outcry, but we put up with it in the CC. Or rather we are given the propaganda and the garbage that it is the correct thing.

**Hilary Richardson:** I think that the County Championship was given a reasonable amount of respect bar the ridiculous early/late season scheduling.

I enjoyed the BBC local radio coverage as always. What's the point of the final match at Lord's when it's already won, however?

**Ray Kiely:** No it was arbitrary to divide the counties into 3

To be positive, it was good to see the men's and women's squads of The Hundred being treated as a unit and working with each other.

Hilary Richardson

two-tier structure gives a chance to see eight other counties, with other counties coming in (through promotion or demotion) in subsequent seasons.

The ECB seems intent on pushing the Championship into the margins. Why can't it realise that four-day red ball cricket is a vital preparation for Tests? There is no way that a promising cricketer can reach a higher standard if he or she is stuck in a third division.

**Jonathan Cousens:** No the format was a total disgrace. What was the point of division one, two and three? Makes no difference if you finished 1st or 6th. Bill, you say it is wrong Kent getting a trophy (when they didn't!), but at least it would of given a purpose to their last 5 games. But as per usual, the ECB haven't got a clue. They managed to totally devalue the 50 over cup and the four-day game was played at stupid times. How can there not be a single game in the school holidays? i

I am still not sure what the point of the Bob Willis Trophy was. I sort of got it in its first year, but the CC didn't need it in 2021.

By the looks of the Lancashire players, they didn't need its either.

Frank Chambers

remember my weeks away with my parents at Folkestone, Dover, Canterbury as a kid. I chose to go every day with my dad rather than the seaside/ amusements. The ECB falsely say families aren't going to cricket, but they are making it very difficult for parents to get their children to games with the most inept fixture list. Is the rumour true that the 50 over cup is going to be called the Mickey Mouse Cup from next season? Also, not having any four-day games into the month leading up to the Test series with India was stupid. Very Very Frustrating.

In any case, cricket is a very unpredictable game. Just look at Lancashire's ghastly first innings in the recent Bob Willis final.

**Graeme Hughes:** I do believe that the format, both the Championship and Bob Willis Trophy, should continue; it does make for a more interesting

**Howard Clayton:** Yes, I think on the whole it was a success although having the Bob Willis Trophy Final so late will probably mean a lot of lost time over the five days.

Are the ECB in the first stages of introducing the Champions League of Cricket? Start of with a Bob Willis Trophy involving the top two sides in England and before you know it, there will a 32 team international tournament played during the season between the top teams from all over the world - not quite sure how it will fit into the cricket schedule, I know, ditch the CC, problem solved.

Geff Bridgewater

competition.

Unfortunately, what was not good was the standard of some of the cricket played or some of the players who played in it.

**Christopher Rowsell:** I don't think this is true, because how will the weaker counties ever improve if they are only

ever playing teams of the same strength. Surely you can only improve if you play against stronger teams. You wouldn't necessarily call Essex, Middlesex and Surrey weaker counties, but none were in Division One under the three division format.

**Thomas Anderson:** Whilst I believe every team deserves a chance there has to be a structure that stimulates interest and the 202 structure stimulated my interest. Whilst I appreciate that football is not a good comparison, each season's end has Promotion Play-Off matches and they are an enormous success. Taking the same ethos into a three division system would mean counties in Division One and Two would always have something to play for.

**David Ackland:** Disagree. Let's get back to two divisions - with three you may cut out of contention teams who deserve a chance at the Championship

**Do you agree or disagree with the following and please explain your answer - 'The County Championship should continue to have three divisions because some counties are not good enough and need to play counties of the same level.'**

**Michael Baws:** Having three divisions is a kick in the teeth for the six counties in the bottom tier. This applies to both players and spectators, and has wide financial implications. It also means that county supporters will see none of the 12 teams from the other divisions. At least, the



(e.g. Essex and Gloucestershire this year). The promotion of Northamptonshire and Gloucestershire in 2019 shows that less fancied teams can make it.

**Roger Cantor:** Sadly I believe that the CC is drifting towards failure. The two division model is boring, 18 different counties and many with a membership akin to a non-league football team or championship rugby side and yet they are given millions by the ECB because they are a county, because they have been a county for 100+ years. The championship is not sustainable with the current number of counties,

whether on one or two divisions. Ideally 12 counties in one division, home and away 22 per season. The other counties either Minor Counties set-up or go.

**James Grant:** I disagree. The County Championship should revert to its old format, with each county playing all of the others twice. The weaker counties might learn and improve by playing against the strong ones, while for the latter it would do no harm to have games in which it is possible to relax while still playing. Match practice, against any type of opposition, is always better than nets or gym.

**Neil Nelson:** No - If there are to be three divisions what would be the basis of selection for each division? Who will decide which are the counties that are not good enough? Would there be any method of becoming good enough to play at a higher level or would there be no promotion or relegation? Personally I would like to go back to one division in which everybody plays everyone else but I can't see that being acceptable to the powers that be - I'd settle for two divisions with the season played as a congruent entity.

**David Bown:** This is not a reason, in itself, to have three divisions. Although I might be open to a league format where there was promotion and relegation between three divisions. As an aside, Middlesex and Sussex (both relatively recent County Champions) could well be considered as not currently good enough. Enforced 'relegation' will only make the gulf wider.

**Allan Dawking:** Go back to one division - the original idea of two was to give the best players, the Test players and hopefuls - a higher standard of cricket. Well, the Test players don't play county cricket anyway and nothing whatsoever has changed in the twenty odd years since the introduction, basically a waste of time.

**John Timpson:** When I watched Lancashire v Hampshire online (YouTube) on the penultimate afternoon of the CC season, with Lancashire losing wickets fast and seemingly throwing away victory, the

number of other people watching (as shown on my screen) was 6,180. YouTube is *free*, out of a worldwide population of nearly eight billion and with 45% of that figure having daily access to the internet... So whilst folk bang on about bringing cricket back to normal TV and boringly harp the on about giving the kids a chance to watch it on the BBC or commercial channels, I think the CC is something that has had its day and that day was probably the early post-WW2 years.

**Samantha Connolly:** Throughout the 158 editions of Wisden there are constant editorial notes on the

The end of September is no time to stage a match of any significance - better to start the season with it.  
Colin Morris.

ship - whether bemoaning slow play, or admonishing and demanding faster, but there is one constant theme, assured. But is it now?

ed on and whether we have one or ten divisions, it is completely unrealistic to expect people (of any age) to go to an event lasting four days, maybe with a chance of rain, and having no idea as to when the game will finish and whether or not anyone will win. I live north of York, if Yorkshire play at Headingley it is at least an hours drive each way. Can I do that for four successive days, yes, but it's a chore. Yes, I could get the train but then there is parking at both ends.

If I went to a music festival it would probably be over three days and have exactly the type of music that I like and there would be different stages for me to see different musicians - I am given 25 days annual leave and I work either one Saturday or Sunday in a three week period (there is a point to this) and even if the CC match included a weekend I would still need to take days out of my annual leave to go to see Yorkshire. My world and my life does not allow me to take the chance of a full days play and that days play being interesting.

I apologise for my long-winded reply but we work harder nowadays than we ever have had to, the demands on people are far greater and sadly, county championship cricket is a sport that is simply not a good fit for most people, so irrespective of the number of divisions there are, I am afraid that this format is too archaic.

**Colin Morris:** I disagree with the statement. I don't think the counties are as far apart in standard to justify a three division structure. Players get better by taking on higher standard players not by winning against moderate opponents.

**Kate Reynolds:** I Completely agree. I am a Derbyshire supporter and we know our level. Playing against the so-called big counties has not helped our players in recent seasons, playing at a level at which we can develop our squad makes perfect sense.

**Hilary Richardson:** In theory, all the counties can end up as champion under this format. There is the opportunity for a weak team to 'jump out of the pack' and surprise us. I think it works.

**Ray Kiely:** No have 2 divisions again and promotion and relegation based on a whole season.

**Tim Mahoney:** I would do nine divisions of two counties, play each other 9 times a season, all six-day matches, then all the ones who come out on top go into an International Cup with the top 3 teams from India, Pakistan, Australia, South Africa, West Indies New Zealand, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Canada, USA, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka and they play each other three times over six months in all the countries - think of the carbon footprint!!!

**Howard Clayton:** I agree and think that the idea of playing against teams of a similar level is a good one.

**Sylvia Reagan:** It pains me to agree but I do. Tradition and history dictate that we have to have all the counties and they have to play each season, but that doesn't mean that there doesn't need to be a structure allowing the strongest to play each other and the others the opportunity to progress up the system. So long as all counties get the same slice of revenue then three divisions with relegation and promotion seems sensible.

**Phil Birch:** Three divisions of six with promotion and relegation and prize Money befitting the highest in each division, none of this spread it evenly garbage. Only two overseas players per county per season and if one gets injured, tough. No end of season Mickey-mouse, Community Shield-type fixture and to give the counties the fixtures, everyone plays each team in the division four times - yes four times.

### What is your view on the cancellation of the short tour to Pakistan?

**Richard Reardon:** Pakistan has been treated abominably. It is an utter disgrace. Their two England tours in 2020 - one day and Test series- - saved the ECB millions of pounds and yet we couldn't even play two one day matches there.

Safety concerns were given a clean bill of health by an independent report. The ECB made over 60 employees redundant during the Covid crisis yet still awarded the top executives £1.8 million in bonuses.

Yes, Mr Harrison (Pictured, bottom right, looking worried about his ability to now make ends meet) did take a pay cut down to a mere £535,000 per annum. Poor fellow, how will he manage? His, and the ECBs cynical attitude remind me of Oscar Wilde's definition of a cynic - 'someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

**Michael Baws:** It was a disgraceful insult and impossible to defend. By visiting us in 2020, Pakistan gave us all a psychological and economic boost. We have a duty to foster good relations with the other Test-playing nations.

**Graeme Hughes:** A money based decision, I believe the ECB are only interested in playing the two money making countries Australia and India.

**Christopher Rowsell:** I think that the cancellation was appalling and sent a bad message to World cricket. The Pakistanis were good enough to leave their country last year to come over here, to a country riven with the Covid virus, and we agreed to reciprocate with a short 'in and out trip', which I understand would be all over in a week. Yet for no real apparent excuse we called it off. The Government and the Embassy in Pakistan saw no security issue, but we still pulled out. I think it was down to 'player power'. I suspect they didn't want to go and once the New Zealanders pulled out, they used this as an excuse.

**David Ackland:** Disgraceful. Pakistan bent over backwards in 2020 to help us, and their participation in the English season contributed to the TV revenues which kept English cricket afloat. And we cancelled for no good reason. The UK High Commissioner to Pakistan has said there were no security reasons. Due to the cancellation of the India Test, the players were out of their bubble (indeed some were playing county cricket), the proposed men's and women's 'tours' were each a week long, and the players were not even asked for their views.

**Samantha Connolly:** Imagine a board of directors of a UK company cancelling a business trip to a customer in the USA, that 45 of its staff was about to embark on, to view some new products and shake some hands and this cancellation came just twelve months after the company in the USA had signed a multi-million pound contract — the board was worried about Covid-19 and they were worried that in the state they were going to there had been a well-publicised police incident.

What happened to the 'tiny,' symbolic even, Pakistan detour was exactly that, a business decision made out of concern - get real everyone, it is the world we live in. Maybe the cricket die-hards should have asked for the tour to have been replaced with a little trip to Afghanistan.



**James Grant:** The short tour to Pakistan should have been cancelled and replaced by a long tour.

**Neil Nelson:** Unfortunate that it was cancelled from a cricket viewpoint but unfortunately from a security angle, completely understandable. reasons under a blanket of mental health concerns.' Wonderfully put.

**David Bown:** This is a sad development and a slap in the face to Pakistani cricket lovers and those that are trying so hard to re-establish international sport in that country. It is though perhaps an understandable consequence of a) the continuing fall out from Covid restrictions and b) self-inflicted pressures put on the games players and organisers by having a too crowded fixture calendar. A proper tour of Pakistan, to include at least three Test Matches, should be planned for the next available 'window'. Wouldn't it be lovely to return to a time when the England cricket team toured just one cricket playing region each winter?

**Colin Morris:** A poor decision given the Pakistani's willingness to play us here in 2020.

**Hilary Richardson:** The Pakistanis have been given short shrift considering the efforts they made last year to come here. I'm sure there are a lot of fringe and young English players who would have jumped at the chance to go.

**Ray Kiely:** Ridiculous and frankly arrogant on the part of the ECB.

**Mohammed Khan:** Peter Osborne is a man I had not really read or listened to - to be blunt I found his politics abhorrent, but I watched his 'rant' when asked on TV about the cancelled tour and I respected him for his comments. In the latest Wisden Cricket Monthly he wrote further and my respect has grown (still not for his politically views). Here is a man writing with respect and passion for the game, writing with purpose and authority. I have since found his book, *White on Green* and I have started reading it.

**Jonathan Cousens:** I feel it is unfair to comment when I don't know the full facts. A great shame for the Pakistan players, the board and the fans, but we all sadly know the dangers that have occurred before.

**Martin Morgan:** I think Michael Holding (Pictured, Right) spoke for the vast majority of cricket fans. Personally, it was a first world decision once again at the expense of a third world nation (and I mean no direct to Pakistan for referring to it as such)

**Matthew Bowden:** I disagreed with the matches being cancelled. It was a brief excursion into Pakistan, a

detour on the way to the Twenty20 World Cup, but it was more than that. It was just a small 'thank you' to Pakistan for touring England at the height of the pandemic - let us not forget that they had to isolate, leave families behind and embark on a tour of uncertainty to a foreign country and they did so with dignity and courage.

The England players, it is written, were not willing to tour Australia without their families - what a two-faced approach. I would not select any player who kicked up a fuss and if the B-team was sent and lost 5-0 I could not care less.

The ECB and the England set-up should be ashamed of themselves. Some players buggered off to the IPL - but wouldn't go to Pakistan and argued about having certain guarantees to tour Australia - again, a total disgrace. When Bill first wrote in one of his introductions to *The Wisden* that he was no longer interested in England or supporting a system that he felt was broken and dis-respectful, I did not agree with him, now I do. I have bought tickets for myself and my two sons to the first three days of every England home Test for sixteen years, we have also toured and supported England in Australia, the West Indies and India - no more. I refuse to follow such selfish individuals and a body that represents sponsors and TV more than me.

**Howard Clayton:** Utter cowardice on the part of the totally inept ECB. Pakistan accepted an invitation to come to England to help ECB after lockdowns and were prepared to put up with life in a bubble for the duration of the tour and England have shamed themselves around the whole cricket world.

**Todd Manchester:** I thought Michael Holding summed it up when he said it was 'Western arrogance.' He went on to say that if it had been India, then there was no way at all that the ECB would have sanctioned cancelling the matches. Apparently the players were not consulted on the decision.

**Abdul Yasser:** It was a shame, it would have been a new beginning, allowing cricket supporters in Pakistan the chance to see an overseas side, the first for many years. Politics and the world we live in dictated this would not happen.

**Donald Morton:** This decision has been blown out of all proportion. Last year Pakistan came to the UK to play cricket. Pakistan came to a safe environment and an even safer one given that travel restrictions existed. It is absolutely right to thank them and applaud them for doing that.



Twelve months or so on a small degree of normality is returning to the world and sadly, very very sadly, Pakistan was not deemed a safe place to go prior to Covid-19 and it is still that belief now. I believe it is fear and fear alone that has resulted in the short tour's cancellation. But that is what it was, a symbolic short tour.

### **The word batsman can no longer be used, what are your thoughts on using the term 'batter'?**

**Richard Reardon:** The term batter goes back as far as the 19th century according to old newspapers reports and I've no problem with the term. However should we redefine maiden overs ( any suggestions? ) and should Third Man become Third Person?

**Michael Baws:** Batter is for cod and chips. Just because 'batter' is used in the women's game, there is no reason why batsmen should not survive in the men's game.

This may be a passing phase. There is no shortage nowadays of women being described as chairmen of companies or committees. The use of 'chair' is an anachronism.

Taking things further in this woke era, might not a fielder at silly mid-on resent the implication that he or she is stupid? Is anyone allowed to bowl a Chinaman anymore? However, it's reassuring to see Mike Atherton use batsman in The Times. That's good enough for me.

**Christopher Rowsell:** This is a change for change's sake. I have no problem whether they are called batsmen or batters, but to go as far as changing the rules, it is political correctness gone mad yet again. Is anyone really offended by the term 'batsmen', if so they need to get out more.

**Anthony Traynor:** I guess I have to be very very careful how I write this, so here goes - It seems that a Yorkshire cricketer (Azeem Rafiq) had to wait three years for an apology for being bullied and for being a victim of racial abuse and it is now apparent that a number of other cricketers have also come forward to complain that they were the victims of similar whilst playing at county level: Historically the ECB and cricket have been slow to condemn racism, abuse, bullying, sexism...shall I go on. An England cricketer was banned earlier this season for an historical social media post that was downright racist...so before the ECB start being all holier-than-thou by appealing to which ever section of society they feel that 'batters' is a more appropriate term than 'batsmen', they should get their own attitudes in order. If England had scheduled a two-

match warm up in Australia, would the powers-that-be have abandoned that so easily? The ECB started to support women's cricket when it became apparent that the mood was changing that encouraged more females to take up the sport - given the history and privileged attitudes that both the ECB and the MCC have been fostering for decades, any support for anything other than the male game must be taken with a large pinch of salt and a large dose of 'how much more money can we make by seemingly doing the right thing?'

**David Ackland:** Batter is an inclusive term. I don't see the problem. The Laws should reflect all players, not just male ones. Language always evolves with changing circumstances. There are more important issues to argue about.

**James Grant:** "Batter" is an Americanism and should not be used. What's wrong with "Bat", a term already in use in some regions, as in: "He's a good bat."

**Neil Nelson:** I shall continue to call them batsmen – batter is made from flour, milk, eggs and a pinch of salt.

**David Bown:** 'Batter' is what my fish and chips come in. What is wrong with batsmen and batswomen and batsman and batswoman? I'm assuming though that many women who play and follow the game are not happy with the previous terminology so, that being the case, I'll support the change if it helps female players to feel more equal and encourages more girls to play the game. It could have been worse. Batsperson?!

**Colin Morris:** I am generally sceptical of mucking about with the language to suit the latest fad but batter is a word already sometimes used to describe a male batsman and I don't object to the term being formally instituted.

**Hilary Richardson:** Men are 'batsmen'. Women can be 'bats women', 'batters' or plain 'bats'. I could actually put up with Bradman being described as a great 'bat', but never 'batter'!

Ray Kiely: Fine with me – language evolves as does cricket and this evolution is more inclusive in a proper sense, and not a corporate marketing sense.

**Jonathan Cousens:** Why not have batsman and batswoman? So stupid the people making these decisions.

**Eric Lambert:** When I talk to people about cricket, many are not that interested, so whether I refer to someone by saying 'he bowled well' or 'she batted well' - it really is of little consequence. In future when I refer to 'a batsman' - that is the term I use and if anyone corrects me I will tell them to 'P—s Off.!'

**Howard Clayton:** Utterly stupid and another surrender to the idiotic times we live in where Political Correctness supersedes good manners.



## Who was your stand-out player during the English cricket season and why?

(I will be honest here. This question received the lowest number of responses to any question I have ever posed - maybe it is a sign of the times, *Bill*)

**Richard Reardon:** Chris Woakes, with comebacks in both Test and County cricket.

**Michael Baws:** Joe Root. His skill and leadership were exemplary. It's a shame that many of his England colleagues were unable to match him.

**Graeme Hughes:** Not a name others would select, Chris Wright of Leicestershire, reason I picked him, he was a former youth player at one of my former clubs, Liphook and Ripsley. He took 49 championship wickets at a good average.

**Christopher Rowsell:** I don't know if it is cheating, but I am going to select two. As a batsman I select Tom Haines of Sussex. Not only did he score the most runs, in what was a very young and weak team, he also took over the captaincy half way through the season, at the age of 22, and seemed to thrive on the responsibility. The other player is Luke Fletcher of Nottinghamshire. An honest journeyman, who had never really pulled up any trees previously. He topped the wicket taking charts by some distance, at a low average and an excellent economy rate. It may be his only season in the sun, but he deserves recognition for his efforts.

**David Ackland:** It could be almost any member of the Hampshire squad - Not that I am biased.

**Tim Lawrence:** I would pick Dom Sibley. He flattered to deceive for England, but he was a consistent run-machine in the CC.

Ben Atherton: Sam Northeast - Mr Consistent for Hampshire.

**James Grant:** Jasprit Bumrah? Rohit Sharma? Devon Conway? The failures of the England team in 2021 make all English players - even Joe Root - ineligible.

**Neil Nelson:** I've seen some young players who will hopefully go on to be good cricketers, but my outstanding player has to be Darren Stevens – still making centuries, still taking wickets at the age of 45.

**David Bown:** On the international front, my choice is Jasprit Bumrah, a very special and unique talent, the like of which only comes along every decade or so. A great personality to boot. Mention should also be made of Ollie Robinson for his whole hearted efforts and for the apparent grace with which he accepted his 'punishment'. On the domestic front, I'm going for Will Rhodes. His figures might not be outstanding but he has a great knack of scoring runs and taking wickets when it really matters, as well as displaying outstanding captaincy skills.

**Colin Morris:** I only comment on Hampshire players;

the stand out for me was James Vince who aside from scoring his first international one day hundred, captained Hampshire to our best championship performance in years and was often the only decent batter on the side.

**Frank Hicks:** I think Liam Livingstone came to the England party this summer.

**Hilary Richardson:** Hard to look beyond a player with an average over 40 with the bat and around 20 with the ball for the standout player - Darren Stevens. Honourable mention to Hashim Amla for his influence over the young Surrey players and extraordinary innings when he batted all day to save a game.

**Ray Kiely:** Joe Root – for basically saving England from massive embarrassment.

**Ellen Maxwell:** Dawid Malan for me, once again proving that given time he is the one for the top order spot.

**Simon King:** Alastair Cook If nothing else for the pride and commitment he shoed, yet again, to Essex.

**Sean Bradley:** Dominic Sibley - Yes he had a terrible time for England, but he scored over 1300 first-class runs, when did that last happen?

**Jonathan Cousens:** For me, (being biased), the stand out player was Darren Stevens. Three years ago, Kent left Stevens out of their T20 squad, and he even went to Derbyshire on loan for one year for the competition. At the age of 45, he won his place back in the T20 team, and played a major part in the best day of the county season. (for Kent fans anyway!). Hopefully, they will get Stevens, Trego and Trescothick on the ECB board in future years, people who understand the county game, and understand what the fans want.

**Howard Clayton:** Being a Yorkshire supporter, I would go for Jordan Thompson as having the most significant break-through season. I first met JT when he was just three years old an, even then, he looked the part.

**Keith Porter:** Josh Bohannon of Lancashire. He had a marvellous season in the championship and there were times when we didn't even miss Liam Livingstone.

From the responses a little unofficial poll of the top 10 Joe Root was mentioned 81 times

Dominic Sibley	30
Chris Woakes	22
Jasprit Bumrah	15
Darren Stevens	13
Alastair Cook	11
Liam Livingstone	9
The Hampshire Team	9
Josh Bohannon	6
Sam Northeast	4

## If the Ashes series was due to start now, who would win it?

*(This question received 249 responses, only one - a little sarcastically forecast an England Ashes triumph, Bill )*

**Richard Reardon:** We (England) will lose 5-0. I fully expect the Ashes tour to go ahead. Or 4-0 if they don't make it to Perth. But there should be no special exemptions for England players and their families. Why should they be treated any differently to anyone else? Lives have been devastated in so many ways throughout the Covid crisis. Why should they be treated differently? The Ashes is a huge cash cow for both sides and if players decide to opt out, which I fully understand, I expect the series will still go ahead. I am available if needed.

**Michael Baws:** No question, Australia. But one of the glories of cricket is its uncertainty – so it's anybody's guess.

Graeme Hughes: Australia, I think we are weak in too many areas to beat them, which gives me no pleasure in stating this.

**Christopher Rowsell:** As we don't know who will tour for England, although I suspect the majority will, it doesn't come along every day, it is a little difficult to answer. Either way I think the Australians will win 5-0. Their batting, whilst not perfect, is stronger than ours and their bowling is definitely stronger than ours, so unless the weather intervenes, I fear a whitewash.

**David Ackland:** Probably either England or Australia.

**James Grant:** An Ashes series starting now may well end in a draw. Both sides are weak in batting, weak in bowling, and indifferent as fielders.

**Neil Nelson:** Australia – England's batting is too dependent on Root.

**David Bown:** Probably the easiest question and the answer isn't England! I hope that I'm proved wrong but I fear that the Ashes could be embarrassingly one sided if it goes ahead. Australia will be highly motivated to defend the urn and put their loss to India last season behind them. We can't continue relying on Joe Root. He's due a drop in form at some point and who's going to bowl Australia out?

**Colin Morris:** Australia by a mile.

**Hilary Richardson:** Unless we can clone Joe Root, can't see us getting beyond 250 runs in any Ashes test innings, which limits our chances somewhat!

**Ray Kiely:** Australia. Can't say I am a McGrath fan, but I agree with him and would predict 5-0.

**Jonathan Cousens:** Sadly Australia would win it, quite easily I fear. Our batting is so weak, and most of the time, we don't have fast bowlers who are fit. We need the pace, as Anderson and Broad will not get

enough wickets out there. I hope the tour goes ahead, but I fear 3 or 4-1 to the oz.

**Howard Clayton:** Australia either 4-0 or 3-1.

According to the marketing folk, The Hundred was a resounding success, apart from the obvious (number of balls bowled) do you think it was so different to Twenty20 and did your opinion on it change once it started?

**Richard Reardon:** In the main it is no different to T20, apart from the huge amounts of money ploughed into it to ensure its success ( included unjustifiable bonus to the chosen few at the ECB).

**Michael Baws:** Do we really need The Hundred and all those T20 contests in the same season? They are another example of how the authorities want to downgrade the importance of red-ball cricket.

I was sceptical about The Hundred before it started, but I enjoyed watching the closing stages of the first women's game.

To its great credit, The Hundred widened interest in women's cricket. Let's hope it continues, especially in the year that Clare Connor has become President of MCC. She has rightly described The Hundred as a 'game changer' for women's cricket.

Meanwhile, let's dump T20. There is no room for both in an over-crowded schedule.

**Graeme Hughes:** I enjoyed the 100, however I did find it got to an overload state. It was going to be a success as the Media and ECB were going to make it so.

**Christopher Rowsell:** The Hundred was a poorer version of Twenty20. There was nothing used that couldn't have been used in the 20 over game. They could spent the money on 'jazzing' up the 20 over tournament and we wouldn't have had a fixture pile up, which will no doubt continue over the next few years. I didn't like the idea of the Hundred before the tournament and like it even less now. It wasn't as great a success as the authorities have made out, apart from the womens game, although I have my doubts about that, if they play stand alone games. I don't see the tournament lasting for a long period and don't think there will be take up from any other countries.

**David Ackland:** Like others, I worry about the effect that shoe-horning this competition into the schedule has on the other competitions, particularly the Championship. I have been lucky enough to be able to see virtually every day of every Championship game, home and away, that my county has played in the last five or six years, except where covid regulations have prevented it, and that's the competition I love and value most. But I have read with surprise statements

from the antis about lack of enthusiasm which don't tally with what I have seen in the grounds (I went to three games at my county's ground and followed other games on TV, albeit to follow players from my county!). Lots of support for the team, lots of people in the kit, lots of children, lots of women. For Southern Brave it was great to have both sides of el Clasicoast playing in one team (plus Danny Briggs who had played for both), and I was bowled over to be sitting next to two middle-aged women at one match, both in team shirts and hats, who were talking knowledgeably about the players - especially the women players. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but opposing it by false arguments isn't helpful or likely to succeed.

**James Grant:** I thought the Hundred would be boring, repetitive and worthless. After it started, I thought it was worse than that.

**Neil Nelson:** I've heard it described as 20/20 lite. I wasn't interested in it before it started and I'm still not. It is an artificial construct designed to put bums on seats – cricket for people who don't really like or understand cricket.

**David Bown:** I find it very difficult to be objective about The Hundred or Twenty20. They are, to me, both unwelcome violations of our great game. What does 'success' mean in the context of traditional cricket? Our best players no longer play proper cricket during July and August. I thought that it was our national summer sport? Is having it replaced by something as vulgar as The Hundred a 'success'? What's next? Perhaps the cast of a certain television programme could be persuaded to take part. We could then have 'One Hundred Island Undressing'. Rant over. I did watch a little of The Hundred and it wasn't quite as vile as I had imagined but it isn't that different to Twenty20. We definitely don't need both. I think the kindest thing would be to let these events be seen as a separate 'sport' to cricket rather than to try and run both in parallel.

**Ivor West:** Apparently £100,000 was allocated per game in The Hundred for marketing it, so maybe the cynic in me isn't at all surprised that the folk who did the marketing saw the 'thing' as a success - Turkeys voting for Christmas?

**Colin Morris:** To the extent that I could give a damn, yes it differed from 20/20 because the franchise teams were not the counties and no, my view about it has not changed.

**Hilary Richardson:** I found The Hundred facile, puerile, one dimensional and patronising at the start. My opinion of it went downhill after that.

**Ray Kiely:** Of course it wasn't. My opinion of it changed as it went on – I never supported it, but owing to the hideous graphics, the infantile hype, and the worse commentating in the history of sport (Kevin

Pietersen), it was actually worse than my already low expectations. Did someone in marketing really think that someone watching, having seen someone hit a six, followed by the words 'oh yeah' flashing up on the screen, would suddenly think that 'yes, cricket is indeed the greatest sport around.'? How much was someone paid in marketing for that 'idea'?

**Jonathan Cousens:** The Hundred is something that is a disgrace. If the ECB put as much effort into our great T20 competition by having the women fixtures on the same day and ground as the mens game, had it on the BBC - the results would have been just the same. I watched some of it, and just thought if this is supposed to get people into cricket, and it is made simpler so they understand cricket, how do you explain, why there are 6 balls in an over, not 5. A bowler can bowl 2 overs in a row. Yes, the batsman can cross whilst a catch is taken and so on. I just got cross as I watched it, as it seemed to me the ECB are trying to bankrupt the counties, and make franchise cricket in The Hundred a major financial success for themselves, as the idiots in the ECB didnt get the rights to T20 when it started believing it wouldn't take off.

**Howard Clayton:** No different to the T20 at all. It simply goes to show that ECB is only interested in generating cash and not in any way (other than by lip-service) interested in ensuring a strong Test XI.

**Kelvin Riddick:** Back in August I took my son to Cardiff to watch the double header (mens and womens' matches) between the Welsh fire and London Spirit. He absolutely loved it. He is 12 years old.

We saw over 330 runs off 200 balls in the mens' game, a batsman hit 80 off 35 balls and the Fire recovered from 20 odd for 3, to reach 160 odd to win. It was at times exhilarating.

I am going to be honest - the womens' match was dull. During it, we went to get something to eat and I had a pint with someone I hadn't seen for ages as our sons, who go to school together stood 'bored' at our side. My son knew his school friend would be at the game because apparently it had been a topic of conversation on some social media groups they were both in and it transpired that half a dozen boys from the group were at the game.

The next day my son showed me some of the photographs and comments put on the various groups by his friends, on every single one the boys were smiling, and every comment was positive. Next year my son has asked if I would allow him and his mates to go together, without adults - absolutely YES, it was safe, it was brilliantly stewarded and for him and his friends it was a fantastic night.

And because he wont be drinking, a cheap one too!

*(I wanted to leave this question and the latest panel with a positive, thank you Kelvin, Bill)*