

AUSTRALIA V ENGLAND BOXING DAY TEST



DECEMBER 26, 2017
FACT SHEET - DAY 1

Beginning with the inaugural Test match in March 1877, 109 Tests have been staged at the MCG, 55 of which have involved England. Australia has won 28 of these contests, England 20, with the other seven being drawn. One Test, in 1970/71, was abandoned without a ball bowled and is not counted in the records. The other sides to play Tests at the MCG are the West Indies (15), South Africa (12), India (12), Pakistan (10), New Zealand (3) and Sri Lanka (2).

Only Lord's Cricket Ground (135) has hosted more Test matches than the MCG. As Lord's currently has two Test matches per summer (it hosted three in 2010), it will extend its lead as the MCG has not hosted two Test matches in the same season since 1981/82. Of the 344 Test matches between Australia and England to date, Australia has won 143 and England 108, with the remaining 93 being drawn. In the early years of Test cricket England held a slight ascendancy, and by the time of the First World War had won 40 Tests to Australia's 35. Australia drew level following its 5-nil whitewash of England in 1920/21 and took the lead for the first time since 1886 when it won the first three Tests of the 1921 series in England. By the end of the 1932/33 'Bodyline' series England had again drawn level, on 51 wins apiece, and the countries were still deadlocked coming into the Fifth Test at The Oval in 1934, where Australia's massive 562-run victory put it one win ahead. Since then England has never headed Australia's tally of wins. Australia's biggest lead to date was 34 (131 to 97) after its 5-nil victory in 2006/07 and equalled again in this series, then surpassed by their most recent victory at the WACA Ground in Perth which moved them 35 ahead (143 to 108).

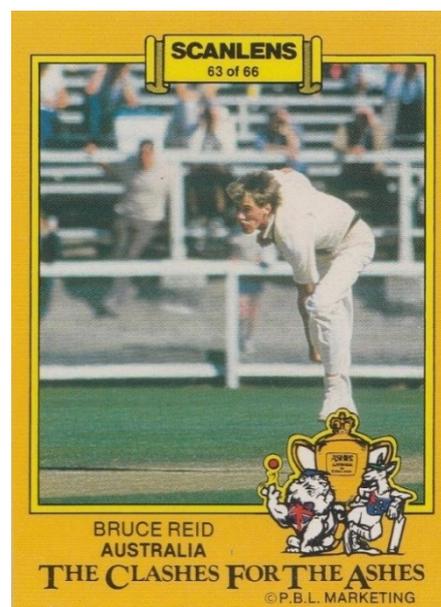
The current Test match is Australia's 807th and England's 994th. Of its 806 Tests to date, Australia has won 381 (47.27 per cent), lost 216 (26.79 per cent) and tied two. The remaining 207 have been drawn.

The MCC library fact sheets for this summer's Boxing Day Test look back at outstanding individual performances in matches at the MCG between Australia and England, in the context of both that contest and its impact on the series. In addition, each will include a snapshot of the respective individual's career both before and after the match in question. Today's sheet centers on Bruce Reid's match-winning performance in the Second Test of the 1990/91 series.

It became obvious from his Test debut in December 1985, against India at the Adelaide Oval, that Australia had introduced a potential match-winning pace bowler. Despite an ultra-thin build, Reid generated deceptive pace and movement from a short, almost leisurely approach, while his great height (203cm) enabled him to obtain awkward bounce. Another feature of his bowling was its relentless accuracy. Brought in as a last-minute replacement for the injured Dave Gilbert, Reid claimed 4/113 from 53 overs on an unresponsive pitch in India's only innings of the drawn match. A fortnight later, he confirmed the merit of his debut with figures of 4/100 (38.2 overs) and 2/28 (8 overs) at the MCG.

Now considered an indispensable member of the side, Reid toured both New Zealand and India over the next two seasons, as well as appearing in home series against both England and New Zealand within that time. The workload, however, placed a great strain on his slender frame, producing back problems which not only caused him to miss the latter part of the 1986/87 season but also most of the next. An extensive program of physiotherapy enabled him to return for the three Tests in Pakistan during September-October 1989, only for the problem to recur in the last of these. To that point, Reid had played 18 Tests for a return of 62 wickets at an average of 29.61, even though he was yet to claim more than four wickets in any one innings.

Major spinal surgery was required to repair discs and enable the insertion of a metal rod, together with associated bone grafts. He missed the entire 1989/90 home season but was cleared



to return from the beginning of 1990/91. To ease the strain on his back, Reid modified his action to deliver the ball from a more chest-on position.

An 11-wicket haul for Western Australia against South Australia early in the season convinced the Australian selectors of Reid's fitness and they included him in their side for the First Test, at Brisbane. Terry Alderman played the leading role with the ball for the home side there but, more importantly in the light of what was to follow, Bruce Reid not only proved that he had completely recovered from his surgery, but also bowled most impressively in his comeback to international cricket.

SECOND TEST at the MCG, December 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 1990

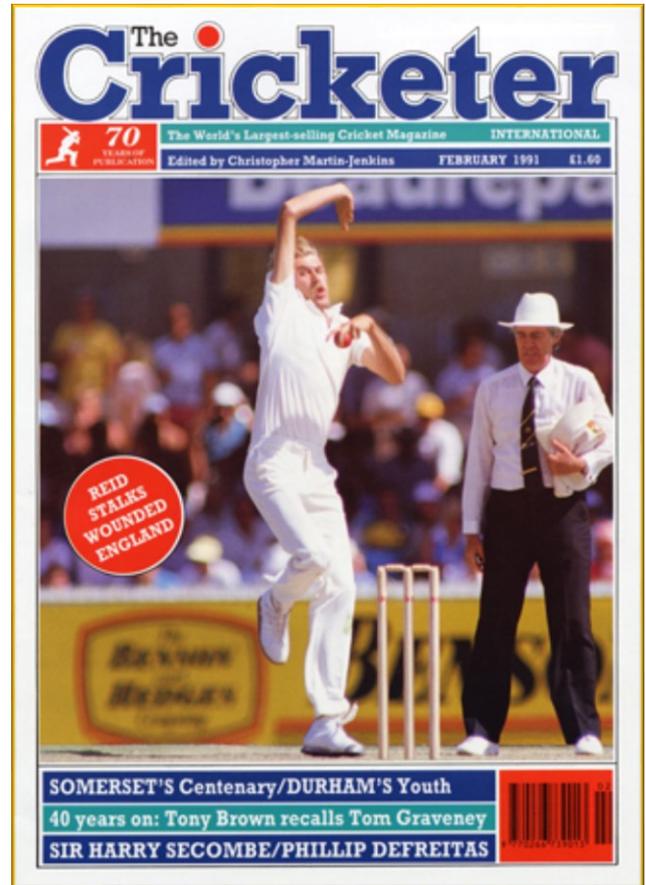
One-up in the series following an eventually comfortable 10-wicket victory at Brisbane, the Australian selectors predictably opted not to tinker with a winning combination. England made three changes, bringing in captain Graham Gooch (kept out of the First Test by a hand injury), Phillip DeFreitas (just arrived from England) and Phil Tufnell (on debut) in place of Allan Lamb, Chris Lewis and Gladstone Small, all three of whom were suffering from a range of muscle strains.

On winning the toss, England lost the wickets of both Michael Atherton (0) and Gooch (20) in the opening 40 minutes, the latter falling lbw to his 1989 series nemesis, Terry Alderman. From that point, however, the England batting at first steadied and then recovered, Wayne Larkins (64 in 218 minutes, 5 fours) and Robin Smith (30 in 121 minutes, 3 fours) adding 79 for the third wicket, before Merv Hughes had Smith caught at the wicket. Larkins fell at 152, but David Gower (73), although restricted by a wrist injury incurred in an earlier match against Victoria, and Alec Stewart (42) guided their side to a respectable 4/239 at stumps.

They continued their association next morning, increasing the score to 274 before Gower (100 in 254 minutes, 170 balls, eight fours) fell to a magnificent one-handed reflex catch by Reid from his own bowling. Stewart and 'keeper Jack Russell raised the total to 300, but the latter's departure sparked a collapse. Stewart's stoic resistance (79 in 279 minutes, four fours) was ended by Reid, per medium of 'keeper Ian Healy's fifth catch of the innings and the final total was boosted by some late hitting from Angus Fraser. Reid finished up with 6/97 from 39 overs.

In reply, Geoff Marsh (36 in 85 minutes, five fours) assisted Mark Taylor in an opening stand of 63 before edging DeFreitas to Russell behind the stumps. Taylor (42) and David Boon (18) the saw Australia safely through to 1/109 at stumps.

Next day, the Australian innings followed a similar pattern to that of England in regard to runs added for wickets lost. After the departure of Taylor (61 in 256 minutes, four fours) and Boon (28) within the space of 16 runs, skipper Allan Border (62 in 239 minutes, five fours) and Dean Jones (44 in 88 minutes, six fours) added 75 for the fourth wicket. Their dismissals, together with that of Steve Waugh, reduced Australia to 6/281 but, unlike their opponents, the later batting offered little resistance and the innings ended in the shadow of stumps, 46 runs short of the England total. Fraser's steady medium-fast bowling claimed 6/82 from 39 overs, to almost exactly replicate Reid's figures, while Russell's six catches increased those by a 'keeper in the match to 11.



POSTSCRIPT

Hopes engendered by Reid's successful return to the international arena, however, proved illusory. Pronounced fit for the tour of the West Indies which followed straight after the Ashes series, he struggled with both fitness and form throughout and only appeared in two of the five Tests without having any impact. A side strain caused him to miss the first match of the 1991/92 three-Test series against India but he returned for the second, at the MCG, to almost replicate his success of 12 months before.

On the first morning, he claimed wickets with the last two balls of his sixth over, followed by another two soon after, to have figures of 4/11 midway through his 10th. The Indian batsmen were faced with the same dilemma as their England predecessors and also failed to come up with an effective counter. Australia won by eight wickets and Reid finished with match figures of 12/126 (6/66 and 6/60) from 55.2 overs. The effort, however, took its toll and he was only able to send down four overs in the Sydney Test a few days later before breaking down.

Sadly, Reid made only one further Test appearance, taking 5/112 against West Indies at Brisbane next season. He

had earlier been advised that he risked a complete physical breakdown in later years if he continued playing and, having suffered another series of strains, shoulder and thigh injuries, bowed to the inevitable and finally retired early in 1996. The inescapable fact was that his slender physique ultimately proved incapable of coping with the sustained rigors of pace bowling.

Reid's 27-Test career produced 113 wickets at an average of 24.63, demonstrating his affinity for the MCG by taking 35 of those at 13.57 in his four Boxing Day appearances. Australian coach Bob Simpson commented: "If he had stayed fit, there is no doubt at all that Australia would have been world champions two or three years earlier and he would've taken 300 wickets. He was a great bowler, one of the finest bowlers I've seen. He bowled without any effort at all. Bruce Reid was pure silk."

Boxing Day Tests at the MCG

Traditionally, the Victoria versus New South Wales Sheffield Shield clash was played at the MCG over Christmas and, prior to the 1968/69 season, only two MCG Tests had included play on Boxing Day, the Second Test against England in 1950/51, which began on Friday 22 December (Boxing Day, a Tuesday, being the third day of the match) and the Second Test against South Africa in 1952/53, which commenced on Christmas Eve, a Wednesday.

The first Test to begin on Boxing Day at the MCG was the Second Test against the West Indies in 1968/69, the 56th at the ground, when bleak conditions restricted the attendance to just 18,786. During the following decade only two Tests at the MCG featured play on Boxing Day, the Second Test against England in 1974/75 and the Second Test against the West Indies in the following season, both of which began on December 26.

From 1980/81, however, only one season has not featured Test cricket at the MCG on Boxing Day. This was in 1989/90 when, owing to the late arrival of the Pakistan team, a One-Day International against Sri Lanka was played on Boxing Day instead, the MCG Test involving Pakistan being played in mid-January. MCG Tests have begun on Boxing Day in each of the other seasons during this period, apart from 1984/85, when the Fourth Test against the West Indies started on December 22, and in 1988/89 and 1994/95, when matches against the West Indies and England both commenced on Christmas Eve.



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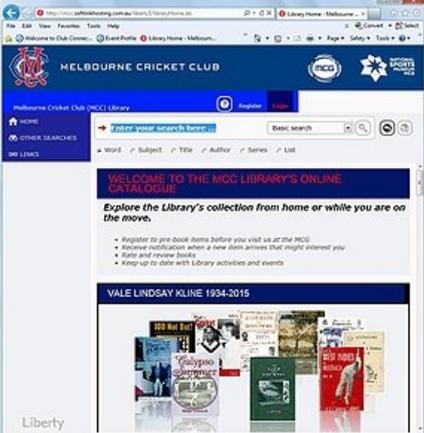
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