

'Bails and Boardrooms is a considered reflection of the phenomenon that is David Nash; a whirlwind of actions, reactions, emotions, empathy and ideas. It is an easy and enjoyable read containing sage advice at a pace which makes you understand why time spent with Nashy is never dull or unforgettable.'

**Angus Fraser, former Middlesex player
and England Test selector**

'Nashy is a character, which comes out in the book; and he's a great bloke, which you learn while turning the pages. Cricket doesn't allow for many bad 'uns and Nashy represents all the good ones – sense of humour, self-deprecation and honesty to the fore. That he has made such a successful 'second' life for himself is a tremendous achievement ... and now the whole story, told from his heart. Is there no end to the man's ambition and achievement? Go Nashy ...'

Mark Nicholas, broadcaster, writer and former cricketer

'An engaging story with real lessons from a life well-lived. Everyone can pick up a tip or two and reflect with the same honesty about what it takes to taste success, to get through the harder moments in life and ultimately be happy in your own skin. Both Bails and Boardrooms would benefit from a few more like Nashy!'

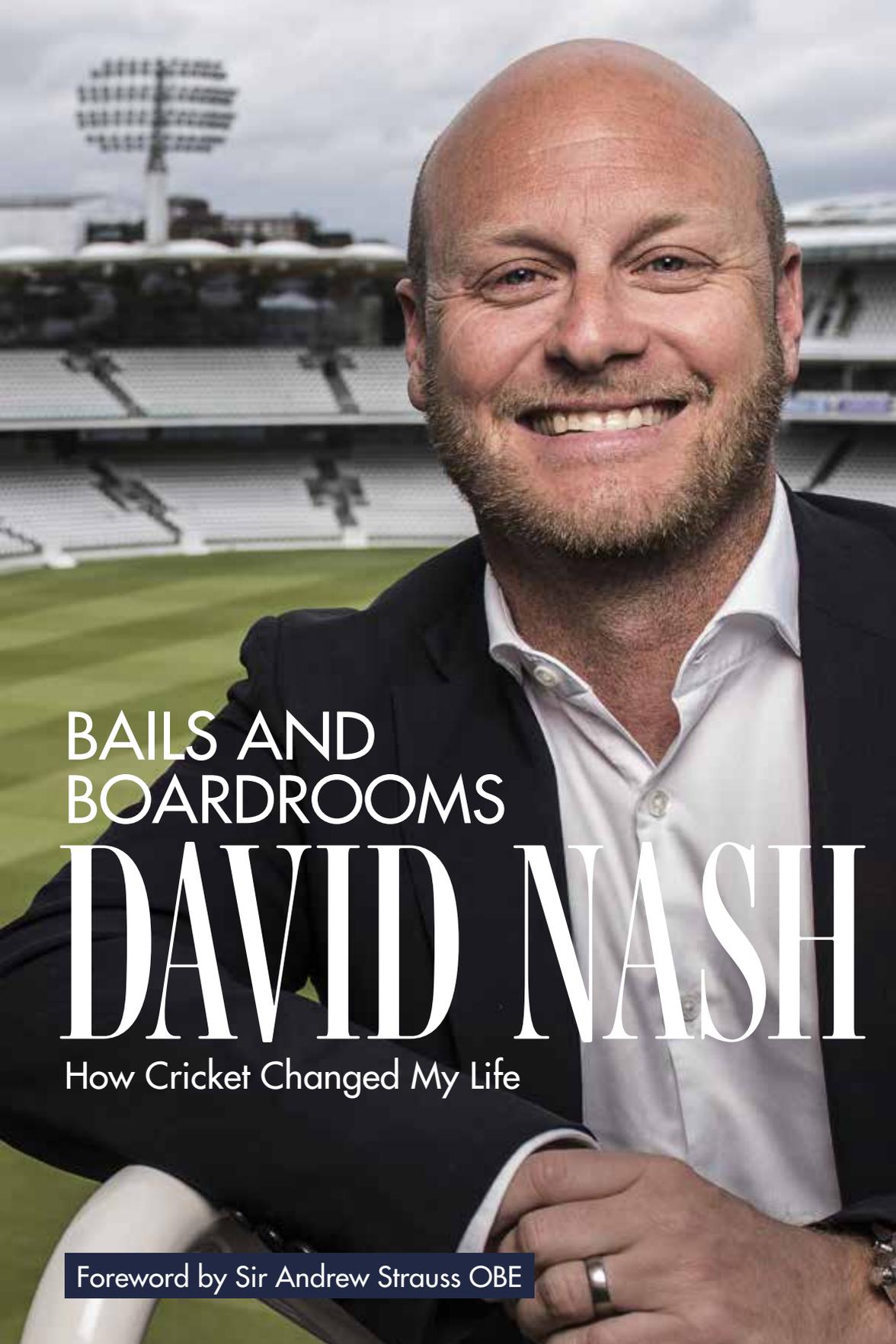
Penny Hughes, CBE, Business Leader

'A rare combination of humour, honesty and great nuggets of wisdom as Nashy uses these pages to take us on his personal journey through fame, fear and ultimately fortune.'

**Michael Tobin, OBE,
Technology Entrepreneur and Philanthropist**

'Bails and Boardrooms was a very easy and really enjoyable read. It provided a powerful mix of humour, wise words and tales from a top professional sportsman. Most importantly, it highlighted the need to talk and understand more about mental health and an awareness of how it can affect even an outward-going "Top Dog" like Nashy.'

Nigel Oddy, Business Leader



BAILS AND
BOARDROOMS

DAVID NASH

How Cricket Changed My Life

Foreword by Sir Andrew Strauss OBE

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Chapter One

Opening Up

STANDING BEHIND the stumps that day, I knew I was in trouble. Not the usual type of scrape I'd find myself in after a night out with the lads. This was trouble of a very different kind. A kind of whirring in your brain that means it's hard to separate the senses. A sense that the world is about to implode around you. I forgot that I was in the middle of a game. Frightened, alone and unbelievably anxious, I heard the ball off the edge of the bat. The next thing I saw was the ball on the ground. I'd dropped Martin Love, Durham's Aussie overseas number 3, at a crucial stage of the game which was more crucially live on Sky. There was nowhere to hide.

Did I care that I'd dropped the catch? Not really. I cared about something much bigger in that moment. What

everyone else thought about me. My parents, my mates, my brother, my missus, my kids and everyone involved in cricket, inside and outside of Middlesex. I was mentally shot to pieces and the game that I had loved for years had done that. So much so that, in the next over, I feigned injury so that I didn't have to put myself through the torture of another ball in front of the TV cameras.

The shame I felt walking off the pitch that day has never left me. It was also the day I finally had to admit that my cricketing days were numbered and that I was lying to myself and others. More importantly, it was the day that I was able to be honest with myself about the struggle that was to prove the biggest of my life – my mental health. Cricket had destroyed it and my journey since then is the story of battling those demons.

I was very average as a professional cricketer.

A funny thing to say given my 16-year career, but it's true. As luck (and hard work) would have it, I turned out to be a much better businessman. That's why I wanted to write this book. Why is it that sport and business have so much in common? What was it about my career in cricket that gave me the skill and the will to create my successful business ventures? These are some of the questions I've asked myself

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during the last decade. By the end of this book, I hope that you and I will have a few answers.

People and businesses make the world go round: sport, politics, our company (of which much more later). Almost everything else that I've come across in my 40-plus years on Earth revolves around these two things. Business people have always fascinated me. So have people who have achieved real success in businesses large and small. I like hearing the stories, making the contacts, and seeing the varied perspectives on life as an employer or employee. I love learning about new companies and new ways that people find to make pie and mash. That's cash to the non-private schoolers reading this. I enjoy discovering ways to develop new ideas, and I love seeing them come to fruition. I'm pretty good at seeing things through from start to finish. Even in my cricketing days, with the bat, I was good at seeing us over the line to win matches and I loved it best of all when I had to dig us out of the shit. It's no different now in my business life.

Over the years, advice from leaders I know has often steered me through choppy and dangerous waters, and these leaders have come from the worlds of both business and sport. The list of names of those I admire is too long for this part of the book, but their names will crop up on many

of the pages that follow. Though I started my professional life batting, bowling and fielding, I was probably more born to business than I was to cricket. Still, our house backed on to Sunbury Cricket Club rather than the London Business School, so I guess the early writing was always on the wall for me. It was cricket first.

Lots of people told me that you have to start these kinds of books with a mix of funny stories from your childhood. Early pointers as to how things were always going to pan out and a forensic examination of events in your teenage years to explain why you turned out to be the person you are. If that's what you were hoping for in this chapter and indeed this book generally, I apologise now. Firstly, I'm not sure my life was ever that interesting when I was younger. Of course, Mum and Dad and my brother Glen were terrific. I had (and still have) a fantastic group of friends and family, but life-changing moments were few and far between when I was growing up in Sunbury. Secondly, I'm not a big fan of talking about myself, so I'm going to find it equally hard to write about myself. However, this book does mean that you'll have to suffer that occasionally.

Suffice to say – and only because I have to include some highlights – I was born on 19 January 1978 in Sunbury. It's a

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place I love and where I still live within a mile of Mum and Dad, my brother Glen and his family. My early years took in the sights and sounds of the local state schools. I went to Beauclerc, Chennestone, and then Sunbury Manor although in those days most people called it Scumbury Manor! Sport quickly became the centre of my and my brother's universe. In truth, Glen was a much better sportsman than me. Like me, he played cricket through the Sunbury and Middlesex age groups and with a bit more will on top of his skill, I may have been able to realise my dream of playing at Lord's with my brother. Despite his ability though, he just didn't want it enough as a youngster. At least that's what I thought until chatting to him as part of the research for this book. Glen admitted in that conversation that he never really wanted to follow in my footsteps or invite any comparisons with to me in that way.

My first significant memory of Middlesex was seeing them lose to Warwickshire in the dark in the 1989 NatWest Trophy Final. I was gutted but went on to the outfield for the presentation. I remember feeling the grass and thinking how amazing it was. I just couldn't stop touching it. I'd never have guessed that one day, I'd call that grass my home. By the age of ten, I was in the Millwall youth squad playing on

the right of midfield and coached by the legend that was Les Briley. I always had great vision with the ball but no speed. Never helpful for the engine room of any team. Les himself played in midfield professionally, so I suspect he spotted quite quickly that my football career wasn't going anywhere.

I grew up developing a lifelong love of four sporting clubs; my beloved Sunbury CC would have to be top of that list of course. A club that was to be the catalyst for my career and some amazing lifelong friendships. When I wasn't at Sunbury, I used to go and watch Brentford with the First Sunbury Tuesday cub pack, with my best mates from school, Gareth Rees and Simon Pavitt. I still take my kids to Brentford now. Terry Evans was my Brentford footballing hero back then. He was so hard that even the scaffolding at the ground was scared of him. Kerry Dixon became my hero at Chelsea. What a striker that man was. My old man would take us to almost every home game, so it was hard not to fall in love with the Mighty Blues. Standing in the Shed End as a boy with Dad and his pals definitely taught me about the real world from a young age. It also gave me a good swearing vocabulary which I still like to use to this day. Last but by no means least in my list of clubs I love are the Middle Saxons as Mike Selvey (Middlesex president) would

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say. Middlesex County Cricket Club, a club that was to be such a massive part of my life, started with days off school sanctioned by the old man whenever there was a big game. Watching my heroes clutching one of my Mum's fabulous packed lunches and my autograph book are memories I'll never forget. Perhaps my dreadful GCSE results and lack of academic progress were something to do with the fact that I was never at school unless Middlesex were on a poor run.

My cricketing career started young. Guided by my Dad's passion for the game and the proximity of Sunbury CC to our house, I was in the nets most days after school. By the age of nine, my shaggy perm meant that I looked like a young Ryan Sidebottom. This didn't put off the legendary Frank Sharman from recommending me for Middlesex trials and I soon found myself in their junior set up. I once took six wickets in six balls for Sunbury Under-11s, the final wicket of which was a majestic caught and bowled. Well, at least that's how the old man described it from his position as umpire. It's tough to get six in six with your dad in the chair. I remember the first ball was plumb lbw, and he didn't want to give it, but he had no choice. It was going on to hit all three stumps. From then on, I made it easy for him. I rattled the stumps with the next four deliveries and then came that

last magnificent catch I've just mentioned. Looking back now, it was probably my most significant achievement as a cricketer! Well, that and my hundred for Middlesex against the great spinner Murali's box of tricks some years later. My great mate, John Maunders, and I still talk about that game today given he got a ton for Leicestershire against Murali just a few weeks later.

When we get together, our party story is our batting exploits against one of the world's great spinners. We always manage to clear the room more quickly than usual with that one! The six from six though is certainly up there for me. Not least because a great chap called Hugh Goldie, chairman of Richmond CC and our opponents that day, arranged to have the ball mounted and inscribed for me some weeks later. It's those gestures that you never forget. One of my lasting memories of that day was that my Mum and Dad were over the moon. They loved their sport and still do. I owe them an enormous amount. In fact, I owe them everything, as does Glen. It's not possible in words to explain how much Mum, Dad and Glen have done for me. Blood is thicker than water, and I know there's nothing we wouldn't do for each other.

It's been one of the great privileges of my life to build a business with my brother. One of the reasons we've done well

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is that we've never had to worry about trusting each other to do the right thing. We've just had to worry about building a business and not losing our hair along the way. I guess that last bit didn't go so well. In all of our time working together, we've only had one major blow-up, and it's something I regret to this day. Not because of the disagreement we had but because of what I said to Glen at the time. I told him that he was nothing without me. Words in anger that weren't true then, and they are not true now. Glen is a great foil for me, in life and business. As Mum and Dad know already, I will never forget the things that they've done for us and the sacrifices they've made. We're a big family, they are both at the head of it, and we're so lucky to have them there. I hope they are proud of the people that Glen and I have become.

Although I hated school, my party trick growing up was anything to do with numbers. I was a teenage Carol Vorderman. Years later, this ability with numbers didn't help me when I was batting with Owais Shah. I think he must have missed a few maths lessons at school because he could never quite work out that an over was six deliveries. It's not easy to farm the strike with someone who can't count. Needless to say, we suffered the odd run-out or two when batting together, which never went down well.

I was picked for England aged 15 to tour South Africa. That squad contained the likes of Freddie Flintoff, Gareth Batty, Alex Tudor and David Sales. In my opinion, Salesy was the best batsman never to have played for England. Sadly, he never looked the part in a skin-tight shirt but he'd have been the first name on my England team sheet in that era. He was box office.

I loved everything about that first England tour. Freddie and I put on a partnership of well over 100 to win the Test at Newlands. Apart from Lord's, Newlands is still my favourite ground in the world. That tour also allowed me to experience a medical first. My room-mate, Gareth Batty, who was way more experienced and streetwise than me, woke up in the middle of the night in agony. It turned out that he had a twisted testicle and was in more pain than I've ever seen anyone in my life. Needless to say, the next day, the lads couldn't help wondering what we'd been up to. We certainly hadn't persuaded anyone to join us in our room despite our best efforts so goodness only knows what Bats was doing with himself that night. The mind boggles.

That tour finished on a real high for me – South Africa needing one to win in a day/night one-day game at Centurion Park in Pretoria. The batsman missed and I managed to

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throw down the stumps with both keeping gloves on to win the game and the series. I still have the orange stump to this day. Great memories were made and lifelong friendships formed. I was living the dream.

Having said that, things weren't always plain sailing. During the early years at Middlesex, I nearly got sacked by the county for streaking at Lord's while executing an almost perfect Jürgen Klinsmann dive on the sodden outfield. The £250 on offer to do it was never forthcoming, which taught me one of my most valuable life lessons: always try to get the money up front! I knew I was in real trouble that day when Tuffers (Phil Tufnell) put his arm around me after it happened and said, 'Don't worry, if they sack you dog, I'll back you.' Luckily, they backed me.

Years later, I was fortunate enough to be able to repay Tuffers the favour and back him in the jungle. Tuffers sat myself and Middlesex bowler Tim Bloomfield (a good pal of Tuffers at the time) down in the changing room to ask our advice about the ITV programme, *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here*. He was worried about doing the show and looking stupid. 'What if I get slung out first? I'll be a laughing stock.' My reply was clear and succinct. 'Tuffers, we've been training at Merchant Taylor's School in the freezing cold for

the last two days whilst you've been making your own cheese and ham sandwiches and moaning like a good 'un. Go and do it. You'll win it.' The rest is history. Great advice from the Nash Dog for a change! Tuffers is one of the funniest blokes I know and was a bloody good bowler in his day too. I miss those days with him.

I lost most of my hair at 18 down various plug holes at Malvern College. I joined that school aged 16 on a sports scholarship and was lucky enough to play with some great blokes who were also very talented cricketers. Dan Walker, Gavin Franklin, Mark Hardinges and Simon Morgan all went on to play the game at some level, and I'd like to think I played my part in helping them get there. They are all still great mates, and we are lucky enough to have won five Cricketer Cups together as Old Boys. Tragically, Dan Walker lost his son, Theo, to a heart defect some years ago. So, through the work we do at D&G now, it's been an honour and a real privilege to have been able to support the Theo Walker Fund in recent times.

I had Don Bennett, the remarkable Middlesex coach, to thank for my Malvern scholarship. What a legend that man was. I also had him to thank for my debut given he turned out to be my lift to that game. Saturday, 16 September

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1995 saw me playing football for Malvern against the mighty Millfield School at their ground in Somerset. Don came to watch that game specifically so that he could then give me a lift to Taunton to the team hotel for the final game of the AXA Equity & Law league season against Somerset the following day. I bagged my first three dismissals that game including stumping Mushtaq Ahmed and a catch off big Gus Fraser. Sunday, 17 September 1995 is a date that will be indelibly etched into my memory forever. Walking down the steps to make my debut at a packed Taunton ground with my hero, Mike Gatting, as captain really was the stuff of boyhood dreams.

The more I washed my hair at Malvern, the more it just kept falling out. As a result, I've looked like a bloke in my forties for the last 20 years of my life, but this didn't prevent me from meeting my amazing wife, Jules, at McCluskey's nightclub in Kingston. I loved a good cheesy 80s night as much as the next man and my average in that club was much better than at Lord's at the time! Jules has been by my side through thick and thin since then, and without her, there's no doubt that I'd be half the person I am today. She is an amazing woman. Grounded, straightforward, down to earth and for some reason best known to herself, she seems to love

having me around. She's smarter than me, more organised and is the one with the looks in our partnership. She has believed in me more than almost anyone, and that alone has kept me going over the years. I'm a lucky man.

By the age of 25, I had developed significant mental health issues as a result of playing cricket, which have been with me ever since. The game messed with my head daily and caused massive levels of anxiety for me.

It's hard to imagine this now, but I used to get so anxious that I feigned injury to come off the field many times. I was at my happiest when it was raining and I was in the sanctuary of the dressing room playing cards with the lads. Or better still, looking at the weather forecast and seeing 100 per cent chance of rain the following day. That always meant that we could press the 'G' button as we called it. In other words, gambling on the forecast being right, us all getting lashed with a late night and a curry knowing that we didn't need to play the next day. Manchester was always good 'G' button fodder because it never stops raining there. We spent more time in Rectory Nightclub in Wilmslow than we did at Old Trafford. I was always more nervous opening my hotel room curtains than I was batting against Shoaib Akhtar, Courtney Walsh or Allan Donald!

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I have already mentioned that game against Durham in front of the TV cameras. I dropped a catch early and just couldn't face another over. So, I pulled up while running to the stumps for an incoming throw and pretended to be injured (hamstrings were always good because the physios can't really detect what's what) so that I could come off. I'm not proud of it, but it does demonstrate how big a part anxiety played in my career.

The anxiety meant that I was also living a lie that eventually found me out. My biggest fear was realised when Ed Joyce (Joycey), the then Middlesex vice-captain under Ed Smith, outed me. He had realised that my feigning injury was total bollocks and pulled me up on it face to face. Initially, I told him he had lost the plot but he knew I was lying. This definitely affected our relationship and I'll never forget the day when, having been passed fit by the physio after one of my feigned hamstring injuries, I was then dropped.

I turned up at Lord's having been picked to play and in one of my better mental states. Ed Smith, our captain, was already in the nets as was his usual routine. I said my usual hello to Joycey in the changing room only to be questioned by him as to why I was there, which I thought very strange. However, I continued my usual pre-match routine and found

myself practising next to Ed Smith in the adjoining net. Ed caught my eye and said, 'Dog, has no one mentioned that you're not playing today and that we're going with Ben Scott?' They obviously hadn't and I was furious. Not because I wasn't playing because Ed may have had good reason at the time, but I was livid with Joycey who had made me walk over to the nets and embarrass myself despite knowing the situation.

Having screamed at Joycey and told him what a backstabbing c**t I thought he was, I went immediately to the CEO's office at the time with my pads still on and demanded a meeting with the chairman, Ian Lovett. When he eventually emerged, I didn't hold back on how poorly I'd been treated and what a shambles the club was. The least I had expected was to be told by the coach, John Emburey (one of life's great blokes), why I wasn't playing despite averaging over 50. It was perhaps the angriest I'd ever felt as a cricketer and Joycey and I never really recovered from it. Ironically, Ben Scott made a hundred that game which was the beginning of the end for me.

My mental health issues have been the hardest legacy of my playing days to overcome. I had talent as a sportsman but never really made the most of it. I loved the lads, the

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banter, and the beers. I still do. But, as my career drew to an end, I grew to hate playing the game most of the time. The mental well-being impact of a career in cricket could be the subject of an entire book in itself. Suffice to say that it will be a recurring theme in this one.

So, that's what you're going to get of David Nash through the ages for now. Other than Jules and my mum, no one ever calls me David. I've always been Nashy, whether in the changing room or the boardroom. Knocker's my other nickname, but the background to that isn't for these pages. This book is a family one, after all. I'll come back to some of these stories and share some others. Still, the real point of this book is to write about what drives me now and what has most influenced me over the years in helping me build my business. You could call it Nashy's manifesto for business (and life) if you like, based on what I've learned on and off the pitch. It won't be up there with Sir Alan Sugar or Warren Buffett, but it's the best I've got.