Max Bonnell and Andrew Sproul

BLACK SWAN SUMMER

The Improbable Story of Western Australia's First Sheffield Shield

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Before summer

Western Australia ends its long cricketing isolation, and Keith Carmody gets a new job

AUSTRALIA IN 1947 was a country of around seven and a half million people, almost all of whom had been born within its borders or in the British Isles. Around ten per cent of its population had recently been discharged from the armed forces, the long process of demobilisation from the war having ended in February. Although some basic commodities – food, clothing, petrol – were still subject to rationing, the economy had recovered rapidly from the war, and was essentially healthy. Mining and agriculture produced valuable exports, and Australia still manufactured a surprisingly large proportion of its own cars and other consumer goods. Most workplaces were heavily unionised, and the Labor government aimed to exercise a close degree of control over many aspects of the economy by nationalising businesses it considered essential.

Cricket stood unchallenged as the country's favourite sport. Partly this was because of the fragmented nature of the football codes: Australian Rules commanded the most

devoted following, but only in the south and west of the country; the rugby codes dominated New South Wales and Queensland, while association football remained decidedly a minority practice. In summer, however, cricket was everywhere and unavoidable. The Australian captain, Don Bradman, was the most famous man in the country, recognised by more people than the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley. And the team that had formed in the aftermath of the war was exceptionally strong, with gifted newcomers like Keith Miller, Ray Lindwall, Don Tallon and Arthur Morris helping to defeat England soundly in the Ashes series of 1946/47. Australia won 21 of its first 26 Test matches after the war – against New Zealand, England, India and South Africa – and lost none of them.

Australia achieved this cricketing dominance without even attempting to call on all of its available resources. Only four of the six States played in the country's premier domestic competition, competing for the Sheffield Shield. The game was played extensively and enthusiastically in Western Australia and Tasmania, but cricketers from those states received few opportunities to compete at a high level. That changed abruptly on 3 January 1947 when the Interstate Cricket Conference – the body which administered cricket matches between the Australian states – voted to admit Western Australia to the Sheffield Shield competition in the summer of 1947/48.

That decision ended the state's long cricketing isolation. The first recorded game in the west had been played in 1835, between two teams drawn from workmen who were building Government House. Fifty years later, the Western Australian Cricket Association – the WACA – was formed. A Western Australian representative team played its initial

first-class matches in 1892/93, the same season in which New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia began to compete for the Sheffield Shield. But in the years that followed, the state's leading players subsisted on a drip feed of major matches; in its first 54 seasons of representative cricket, Western Australia played only 66 first-class games.

Geography was the great difficulty. Perth was, and remains today, the most remote city of its size anywhere on the planet. As the American war correspondent, 'Red' Knickerbocker, told the readers of the *Chicago Sun* in 1942, 'Perth is undoubtedly the least fairly advertised city of its kind on Earth. Its modern, streamlined residences, its American-style shops, and its maze of scenic water ways and parks make it one of the loveliest cities – I was about to say in the western hemisphere – in the southern hemisphere. Perth's only trouble is that it is so incredibly far from everywhere else.'

Perth lies almost 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) from Sydney, by train or road, separated from the rest of the country by the vast aridity of the Nullarbor Plain. Before the Second World War, it took four or five days to make the journey from Sydney to Perth by rail. Australian cricket was still almost entirely an amateur game. Most players fitted cricket in around their regular jobs, and not every cricketer had a sympathetic and flexible employer. A player who used his annual leave to play in the Sheffield Shield competition – and, if he was lucky, a few Test matches – simply had no time remaining to travel to Perth and back. Every so often, Western Australia assembled a team to tour the eastern states, and (less frequently) those visits were reciprocated. Usually, the eastern states used these games to try out fringe players, or reward long-serving club stalwarts who had

never quite made it to the Sheffield Shield. International touring teams travelled by ship, and (except for the West Indies in 1930/31, who crossed the Pacific) always arrived in Australia at Fremantle, so a custom developed by which they played their first matches in the west. Similarly, when the Australian teams sailed for England in the years between the wars, they played against Western Australia before venturing out into the Indian Ocean.

Even the idea that a Western Australian player might be given a place on that ship to England seemed impossible. Perhaps Ernie Parker had come closest: he scored the state's first century in first-class cricket, and built such a strong reputation in Perth that he was invited to Sydney to play in two trial matches for The Rest against Australia before the team for the 1909 tour to England was finalised. Parker's stylish 65 in the second game made a strong impression, though it wasn't enough to win him a place on the tour. He concentrated on tennis after that, and won three titles at the Australasian tennis championships (the tournament now known as the Australian Open). Parker had a full life – somehow, he also found time to qualify and practise as a lawyer – though not a long one; he was killed by a German artillery shell in France in 1918.

The Western Australian players who followed Parker received even fewer opportunities. Frank Bryant was one of the better batsmen produced by the state. In 1927/28, he hit a century against a Victorian attack that included three future Test bowlers in Bert Ironmonger, Ted a'Beckett and Lisle Nagel. He scored another hundred against Victoria six years later. Plainly he had ability, but although he represented Western Australia for 11 seasons, he played only 19 matches, six of which were crammed into the summer of 1933/34.

His representative cricket was confined to a tour of India in 1935/36, in an unofficial Australian team assembled by Frank Tarrant on behalf of the Maharajah of Patiala. The Australian Board of Control allowed that tour to proceed on the proviso that the team must not include any players who were likely to be selected to play in the Sheffield Shield – by no coincidence, the side included a Western Australian and a Tasmanian.

There was only one way for a Western Australian player to advance in the game, and that was to leave home. 'If a batsman or bowler does develop,' grumbled Perth's *Sunday Times*, 'he has to go to Melbourne or Sydney at his own expense and smoodge to the ruling powers before he has a chance of getting on.' Ernie Bromley was a gifted, attacking left-handed batsman, who, like Frank Bryant, was identified as an exceptional talent while he was a student at Aquinas College in Perth. In 1929, at the age of 17, he made his first-class debut against Victoria, scoring 56 and taking 4-64 with his tidy left-arm spin. And then his development stalled, because over the next three seasons he played only six first-class games. In 1932/33, he moved to Melbourne, whacked 84 against New South Wales in his first Sheffield Shield match, and made his debut for Australia in the fourth Test of the Bodyline series. The next time Bromley visited Perth was as a member of the Australian team, on its way to England in 1934. Bromley didn't have a very successful tour, and his career at the highest level of the game remained unfulfilled. But at least he got there, which would never have happened if he had remained in Perth.

And nothing had changed in over ten years. After the war, the best bowler in Western Australia was Charlie Puckett, an accurate, tireless operator who could move the ball around at a respectable pace. In October 1946, at the

age of 35, he surprised the touring MCC team by taking five wickets in their only innings, including the distinctly good ones of Wally Hammond, Paul Gibb, Norman Yardley and Godfrey Evans. Puckett was rewarded with selection in an Australian XI to play the tourists in Sydney, a match that was staged to provide fringe candidates for the Test team with an opportunity to impress the selectors. He bowled well enough, in a contest ruined by rain, for good judges of the game to suggest that he was the kind of player who might do well on a tour of England. So, he packed his bags and moved to South Australia where at least he might have a chance to play regular first-class cricket.

The executive of the WACA had understood for years that its players needed more opportunities to play representative games. But they hadn't dared to dream of joining the Sheffield Shield. In the decade before the war, Alf Randell, the long-serving chairman of the WACA executive, had vigorously promoted the concept of a second XI competition. Randell (who had played five times for Western Australia as a batsman in a first-class career spanning nine years) and Harold Rowe (who played for the State 29 times over 25 years) made a number of submissions on this idea to the Board of Control from 1930 until the outbreak of war.

These took various forms; in one, the mooted competition was to consist of two conferences, east and west, with the winners playing each other; in another, the teams would all gather at one location – Adelaide was suggested – and play a tournament there. In each of its iterations, the proposed competition was to involve teams from Western Australia and Tasmania and the second XIs of the Sheffield Shield states (which had included, since 1926/27, Queensland). The concept was never actually rejected by the Board of

Control – instead, it died a kind of death by committee, being referred repeatedly by one sub-committee to another, its feasibility endlessly debated until the outbreak of war rendered it moot.

Administrators in the eastern states could be forgiven for their ambivalence about the west, because for some time it was far from clear that Western Australia was going to remain a state at all. In April 1933, while Harold Rowe was earnestly petitioning for a closer engagement with Australian cricket, Western Australians voted in a referendum to secede from the Commonwealth. The margin – 66% to 34% – wasn't even close, although at exactly the same time, and rather confusingly, the voters elected a Labor state government which opposed secession. Nonetheless, the new government honoured the result and requested the British Parliament to give effect to it by amending the Australian Constitution. That request was refused because it had not been approved by the Commonwealth government, whereupon the state government breathed a sigh of relief and decided to carry on as though nothing had happened.

The war years had the unanticipated effect of connecting Western Australia more closely with the eastern states. The conflict itself generated a sense of national purpose that had been lacking in peacetime. Besides, thousands of servicemen visited the State for the first time, either passing through on their way to or from overseas postings or actually deployed there – Perth was home to a large RAAF base, and the navy was very active at Fremantle. Many Australians who had regarded Western Australia as a quaint and distant outpost now became more familiar, and comfortable, with it.

Crucially, during the war years, unprecedented investments were made into the development of aviation

technology. It's no exaggeration to say that Western Australia's entry into the Sheffield Shield was made possible by the United States Army's need to move large numbers of soldiers, quickly, over long distances. In 1941, anticipating its entry into the war, the War Department took control of the production of a four-engine passenger aircraft known as the Douglas DC-4 and began to adapt it for military use. It took time to get the design right and to increase the plane's range – extra fuel tanks were fitted – but they reduced the seating capacity so much that only 26 passengers could be carried. Two models later, fuel tanks were fitted in the wings, and the passenger capacity doubled. By then the plane was known as the C-54 Skymaster, and by the end of the war most of the Allied forces were using it.

When the conflict ended, those forces owned hundreds of Skymasters they no longer needed and, fortunately, it proved to be relatively straightforward to recondition them for use by commercial airlines. For the first time, the aviation market was flooded with large numbers of proven – and surprisingly inexpensive – passenger aircraft. Before long, more than one hundred airlines around the world were using the Skymaster, and commercial flights suddenly became more accessible than ever before. Trans Australia Airlines was established in 1946 as a competitor to Qantas' domestic operation (which was known as Australian National Airways) and soon both airlines were offering Skymaster flights to and from Perth every day. ANA flight 216 left Melbourne at 11am, stopped for half an hour in Adelaide, and arrived in Perth at 8pm. Flight 216 departed from Perth at 9.45am and reached Melbourne at 9.15pm. Besides which, if its advertisements were to be believed, it provided 'palate

tempting meals' and a hostess who 'regards your slightest wish as a command'. TAA flights 512 and 513 ran slightly later each day.

Now that Perth had become more easily accessible than ever, as soon as the war ended the secretary of the WACA, Harry Guy, insisted that his priority was to secure a place in the Sheffield Shield. Guy had been managing the WACA's affairs since he had been chosen (from 56 applicants) to become its secretary in January 1929. He had been an enthusiastic opening batsman for both East Perth and West Perth, although he was never an outstanding player; his first century, for West Perth, came in his 17th season in the Pennant competition. During the war, the WACA lacked the means to continue employing its secretary, so Guy carried on in an honorary capacity while he worked for the Forestry Department. But as soon as the war ended, Guy was re-employed by the WACA and he immediately announced that 'the most important business the association has on hand is to make representations to the Interstate and International Cricket Committee that Western Australia be allowed to compete in the Shield matches. It means everything to the game in this state.'

Alf Randell attended a meeting of the Interstate Cricket Conference in October 1945 and asked what his state needed to do to be granted a place in the competition. He was sent away to prepare a detailed proposal. 'Prepare a sound case' said Keith Johnson (a Board of Control delegate from New South Wales), 'and I feel sure it will receive sympathetic consideration.' Money was a serious question, he added, but 'If Western Australia is prepared to guarantee its ability to bear the financial strain of Shield cricket, it should, I think, have representation in the series.'

It helped that Western Australia put up a strong showing against the Australian Services team in December 1945, having slightly the better of a drawn game against a capable side that had returned from a lengthy tour of England and India. There had been a lingering question over the standard of the game in the west. Of the first 66 first-class matches they played, Western Australia won just three, the most recent victory coming in Ernie Parker's time, against a weak Victorian team in 1909/10. But the performance against the Services team came just in time to bolster Western Australia's formal application for admission to the Sheffield Shield, which was sent to the Board of Control on 28 January 1946. It was submitted that 'our performance against the Services team recently is evidence that we have emerged from the recess with a side sufficiently strong to warrant this application'. Alf Randell then made a presentation to a Board of Control meeting in March, where he was told that the application could not possibly be entertained until after the 1946/47 season. The Board of Control had made arrangements with Marylebone Cricket Club for a tour by England, and the programme was already too crowded to add more games to the Sheffield Shield. The question was deferred again when the Interstate Cricket Conference met in September 1946, but Western Australia was promised that it would receive a definitive answer the following January. Alf Randell was asked whether Western Australia would agree to be admitted to the competition on a limited basis. His reply – that this would be acceptable as long as his state had the opportunity to win the Shield – raised a few eyebrows and rather more chuckles. The notion that Western Australia should be allowed the chance to win the Shield was certainly fair, but it also seemed ridiculous.

The state's case was then bolstered by another strong performance on the field, this time against MCC. The match was another draw, but Western Australia reached 377 in their first innings and, even though the touring captain, Wally Hammond, cracked 208, the bowling was presentable. Before the next meeting of the Interstate Cricket Conference, the Victorian delegation gave notice of a motion: that Western Australia be admitted to the Sheffield Shield in 1947/48. The proposal was that they would play each other state once only, two games at home and two away (the other states all played each other twice) and the arrangement would be reviewed after two years. As the motion was promptly seconded by the New South Wales delegates, it was no surprise that it passed.

And so Western Australia joined the Sheffield Shield competition, although exactly what that meant, no one quite knew. Harry Guy told a reporter, 'Presumably, in the case of a state playing less matches in the season than other states, additional points are allotted for those matches. Thus, if a state played only half the number of games, each of those games would carry double points.' Although it wasn't quite so simple, because Western Australia wouldn't play half the matches of the other states – they would play four, the others seven.

Alf Randell, when he returned to Perth, said that he thought that competition placings would be decided 'on a percentage basis' and, as it turned out, he was correct. In May, it was announced that the points each State scored would be converted into a percentage of the maximum possible points its team could have achieved. It was what Randell had asked for: a system that made it possible for Western Australia to win.

* * *

Most historians agree that by 1947 the Cold War had begun, although no one used that expression at the time. In March 1947, the American President, Harry Truman, had delivered an address to Congress setting out what became known as the Truman Doctrine – the goal of which was to contain the aggressive expansion of communism. Fear of communism became a potent political weapon, which Australia's conservative politicians were not slow to use in their campaigns against an avowedly socialist Labor government.

An Australian Communist Party still existed, although it was difficult to reconcile its activities with the aggression of Stalin's Soviet Union. It fielded candidates in elections, rather than advocating revolution, and many of its other activities were surprisingly benign. The Women's Committee of the Hunter Valley District Communist Party conducted a cake stall and chocolate wheel to raise £15/11/3 for the Food for Britain Appeal and proposed a scheme to 'adopt a British family', under which members would send regular food parcels to the United Kingdom. This was not exactly how a Red Menace was expected to behave.

* * *

The WACA decided to recruit.

'We hope to secure the services of a good all-round player to act as coach to the team,' announced Len Bolton MLC, the deputy chairman of the WACA. The WACA wanted to find a man who could strengthen their team, guide their players through their first season of Shield cricket, and help to develop new, young players. At a time when cricket in Australia was still almost entirely an amateur game, there were remarkably few players with these credentials.

When he greeted the touring English team in Perth in October 1946, George Miles (a politician who served as president of the WACA) made it known that the association was considering hiring an English coach for the following season. That idea appealed to at least one of the English players; Peter Smith, an all-rounder who bowled leg breaks, promptly sent Miles a letter expressing his interest. Smith, who was 38, had only just broken into the England team, and was by no means a first-choice Test player. He had been promised a benefit season by Essex in 1947, but after that he could look forward only to the meagre wage his impoverished county offered. The idea of coaching in the sun, for more money than he received from playing, was very attractive. Nothing came of his approach; perhaps the WACA decided that his bowling was unsuited to Australian conditions after he toiled through a partnership of 405 between Don Bradman and Sid Barnes in the Sydney Test. Curiously, Smith's otherwise disappointing tour included one genuine highlight: his first-innings return of 9-121 against New South Wales remains the best first-class analysis ever returned by an English bowler in Australia. It wasn't enough to persuade the WACA, however, and the search went on.

In May 1947, the cricketer Alex Barras reported in the *Western Mail* that 'a WACA representative' had approached 'many young Eastern states players' to gauge their interest in the coaching position, including Ray Lindwall and Keith Miller, but those 'negotiations were not successful'. Instead, 'The strongest possibility is that Keith Carmody, the New South Wales opening batsman, will be appointed.' Carmody, Barras thought, was 'a dashing batsman with a full range of strokes, whose method is to attack the bowling from the outset of the innings'. He also had 'a good cricket brain', but

Barras worried that Carmody's appointment, should it occur, would 'be received with mixed feelings', since he 'has had practically no experience as a cricket coach' and 'whether he will be successful as a coach will have to be proved'.

* * *

In June, the WACA made an offer to Keith Carmody, and in July he signed a contract to act as state coach for three years. The WACA first sought the consent of the New South Wales Cricket Association, which was courteous but quite unnecessary since no player in Australia was then under contract to any state association. Carmody wasn't the all-rounder the WACA had hoped for, but an attacking opening batsman. He was an unusually deep thinker on the game, however, and he proved to be an inspired choice.

Carmody came from the affluent Sydney suburb of Mosman but his parents, who operated a shoe shop, were far from wealthy – especially as they had six children to support. The Great Depression was harsh on the family, and Carmody's father became a heavy, occasionally violent drinker. Keith Carmody's talent as a cricketer was apparent from an early age. When he was 14 he played in a New South Wales Schoolboys team against Queensland and he was two weeks short of his 16th birthday when he first played in Mosman's First Grade team (as replacement for an unavailable Stan McCabe). In his first two matches, he didn't get to bat and in his third, against St George, Bill O'Reilly was too much for him. But he kept his place, and improved so rapidly that by the time he was 20 he was playing for New South Wales alongside McCabe and O'Reilly.

His cricket, and what appears to have been some kind of accountancy training, were interrupted by the war. Carmody

enlisted in the RAAF in October 1941. At first he trained in western New South Wales, and then he was assigned to the Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada. Once his training was complete, he was transferred to England, where he joined 461 Squadron as a pilot officer. 461 Squadron flew Sunderland flying boats on reconnaissance patrols, usually hunting for German submarines.

Between missions, Carmody amused himself by travelling around England, and by playing cricket. The RAAF was able to assemble a strong cricket team in England, including a nucleus of Sheffield Shield players. Victoria's Keith Miller was the most prominent, along with the New South Wales wicketkeeper Stan Sismey. Alex Barras, who had played first-class cricket for Western Australia, also made several appearances. The side was in high demand for charity matches, and Carmody was named captain. At Lord's in June 1943, around 10,000 people watched the RAAF play a team styled as Sir PF Warner's XI, which contained half a dozen past and future Test players. In July, Carmody cracked 137 in only 90 minutes as the RAAF overwhelmed a strong South of England combination. And in August, he was back at Lord's, captaining a Dominions team against England. Although the England side contained nine men who had appeared, or soon would, in Test cricket, the Dominions went down by only eight runs. It was during his time as captain of the RAAF team that Carmody devised, and experimented with, the umbrella field placing that later bore his name. His leadership made a profound impression on Keith Miller, who called his fellow airman 'one of Australia's finest captains, if not the best'. That judgement appears to have been the product of genuine admiration for Carmody's

leadership, plus friendship, multiplied by an opportunity to take an oblique shot at Don Bradman. Miller didn't believe that a man who had not been to war could lead men who had; it was impossible, he argued, to understand your men if you hadn't been through all that they'd been through.

And those RAAF cricketers never forgot how precarious their lives had been. 'We were supposed to fly for five days and have two days off,' Stan Sismey remembered, 'but instead we'd all fly for 20 days straight so we could have a week off and meet up at a hotel in London. At the end of a week in London, we'd all say, "See you next month", but of course you never knew whether you would.'

When the summer of 1943 ended, Carmody was reassigned to 455 Squadron, flying Bristol Beaufighters – powerful but relatively heavy fighters that carried only the pilot and a navigator. He played a little more cricket the following year; his last wartime innings was a brilliant 86 at Lord's, which helped the RAAF to defeat a team (inexplicably named 'The Rest') packed with Test players like Len Hutton and Walter Hammond. Just over two weeks later, on 13 June 1944, he was flying a Beaufighter off the Dutch coast when it was hit by flak in both engines. He tried to steer the shattered plane back towards England but, as he later put it, 'even a Beau will not remain airborne under such conditions'. It crashed into the sea. His navigator, Gil Docking, thought that the landing was a tribute to Carmody's skill as a pilot – night landings at sea were incredibly difficult, since it was almost impossible to judge how close the waves were, besides which Beaufighters were known to enter the water nose-first and plunge. Both men had minor injuries, and they floated in the plane's dinghy for 21 hours until they were pulled from the rough sea by a German boat.

Some years later, Carmody told the Western Australian batsman Arthur Lodge that 'after we crashed there was a race between the British and the Germans to get to us, and the Germans won. They took us in for interrogation, and asked all sorts of questions, but I just kept giving my name, rank and serial number. In the end, they realised that they wouldn't get anything out of me, and then one of them said to me, "Well, Mr Carmody, you won't be playing at Lord's next week."' It came as a sharp shock to Carmody that his German captors knew exactly who he was.

After a period of solitary confinement at Eindhoven, the two Australians were sent to Stalag Luft III. They remained there until February 1945, when Carmody was among a group of prisoners transferred to the Luckenwalde camp, near Berlin. At noon on 21 April 1945, the camp was abandoned by its guards, who knew that the arrival of the Russian forces was imminent. The Russians reached Luckenwalde the following day, although it wasn't until 20 May that Carmody was handed over to the Americans for repatriation to England.

From Luckenwalde, Carmody had followed the progress of the first 'Victory Test' between England and the Australian Services by radio. Remarkably, he not only appeared in the second match, at Sheffield in June, but top-scored in the Services' first innings with 42. He also kept wicket for most of England's first innings, after a ball slipped through Stan Sismey's gloves and cut open his chin. It was a tribute to Carmody's resilience that he was able to return so quickly (and successfully) to the cricket field. It was also profoundly unhelpful. The last two years of his life had been intensely traumatic, and as soon as he emerged from captivity, Carmody was praised for acting as though it had

never happened. The emotional and psychological injuries Carmody suffered during the war were never treated, and the scars never fully healed. He was expected to walk tall and carry on, so he did. When he admitted frankly that during his time in the prison camps, he 'went round the bend', his team-mates dealt with that information in the only way they knew, which was to turn it into a nickname – 'Bendy'. Carmody remained with the Services side for the rest of its long progress through England, India and Australia. He registered his first century in first-class cricket at Bombay's Brabourne Stadium, where he hit 113 against a full-strength Indian representative team and shared a large partnership with fellow airman Jack Pettiford. He didn't return home until February 1946. The first match he played when the team returned to Australia was against Western Australia in Perth: he scored 22 in his only innings, and later bowled two harmless overs as the game drifted towards a draw. That was his sole experience of Western Australian cricket before his appointment as the state's coach.

In 1946/47, Carmody had enjoyed a full season as a regular member of the New South Wales team, and he justified his selection without doing anything very remarkable. In eight matches, he scored 506 runs at an average of 33, passing fifty five times without reaching a century. On paper, he was not much more than a decent Sheffield Shield batsman, but in person, he was positive, creative, innovative, dynamic and troubled. Neil Harvey recalls that in his first couple of seasons of first-class cricket, 'a lot of blokes were in recovery from the war', and Carmody was certainly among them.

Cricket was always more than a game to Carmody: it became a refuge. When he was a boy, the local oval was where he went to escape from a troubled home. During

his service with the RAAF, cricket offered a distraction from the grim reality of the war. Even in Stalag Luft III, Carmody helped to stage games between groups of prisoners, and filled his diary with doodles of field placings he might try out when it was all over. Returning to civilian life was difficult, so it was unsurprising that Carmody filled his life with as much cricket as possible. It was where he felt safe. It was where his role was understood and his stature was acknowledged. The job as coach of Western Australia offered him an opportunity to immerse himself completely in the game, to put all his ideas and theories into practice – and to be paid for it, too. The success of Western Australia's first Sheffield Shield season would depend, to a large extent, upon this one, complex, man.