



GRIZZLY

MY LIFE AND TIMES IN CRICKET

CHRIS ADAMS

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Foreword by Peter Moores

IT'S a pleasure to write a few words by way of introduction to Grizzly's story – and what a tale it has been. I've been fortunate to share some wonderful times with him when we worked together at Sussex.

Before we linked up in 1997, I'd come across him a few times during his time at Derbyshire. I remember quite early in his career when they came down to Eastbourne in 1992 and Chris stationed himself at short extra cover during a one-day game, bravely diving around like a goalkeeper with those big hands and stopping everything. I thought then that he had something about him.

As a batsman I always felt he was at his best when he played aggressively. When he was in form he had a front-foot pull shot that he would play to respectable, good-length balls. And when bowlers were forced to adjust their length, he would drive them down the ground.

Chris is at his best when he is instinctive, allowing his intuition to guide his decision-making. We saw that during

his time as captain of Sussex but also as a batsman. He always seemed to be able to spot the danger ball and when it was in his area he found a way of scoring runs. He had the ability to hit the ball hard, though more importantly a competitive instinct that more often than not found a way of winning the situation. It was a proud moment for everyone at Sussex when he got his opportunity with England in 1999. We were all willing him to do well and although it didn't work out at Test level he perhaps deserved more opportunities in one-day international cricket.

That, of course, worked to our advantage as he grew into the captain's role at Sussex. At Hove it was a classic combination of a new captain and a new coach finding things out together and, though occasionally we made mistakes, we saw the game from the same perspective and realised to be successful we needed to be a united front. We decided early on that we wanted to play aggressive cricket and create an environment where we enjoyed ourselves, while working hard to keep improving every day. Chris was fiercely ambitious right from the start and though he started as an inexperienced captain he always had presence as a player and led from the front. The goal to win trophies was always strong, though we both realised that to achieve this we needed a culture and an environment that would allow this to be sustainable. In many ways winning would be a by-product of how we went about our business.

We had some great times together at Sussex, most memorably of course the County Championship win in 2003. It was fitting that when Murray Goodwin hit the winning runs, Chris was at the other end. He led us magnificently that year, most notably for me after a tough

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loss at Old Trafford in the penultimate game. This was a time for certainty, to have no doubts and to believe in yourself and the team. These traits came naturally to Chris and he duly led from the front as good leaders do. It had actually been a tough summer for him with the bat and I remember countless hours in the nets as he searched for the form that was eluding him. In the end, like all good players, he worked out a way. In his case, he freed himself up, trusted his ability and allowed his talent to shine through. This sounds easy, though in the pressurised environment of a title challenge it is far from it. He wasn't afraid to make tough decisions and often trusted his instinct which served him well in many pressure situations. This was a time when many players emerged together and we all felt excited about what was happening and what we might achieve. Chris finished on 11 seasons as captain which will be a tough record to match for anyone in the future. To lead for that length of time requires a strength of character and a resilience that is rare, along with a desire to build a legacy of sustainable success. Chris had these qualities and an ability to let the non-important stuff go and focus on the things that really mattered.

Coaching is no different though the challenge now is to create opportunities for others to lead and believe in their ability as a player. This brings its own challenges with coaches often watching for many hours waiting for the window to help a player clarify the way forward. My advice to young coaches is normally the same, 'You watch a lot to say a little.' He could not have had a much harder first challenge than at a big club like Surrey with its tradition and expectation. He will have learned a lot through the experience and, like playing, will be better for it.

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It's been a pleasure to play some part in Grizzly's life in cricket and remember some wonderful days at Sussex. Anyone who loves the English game will surely enjoy this book and like you I'm looking forward to reading his story.

Peter Moores

The Pinnacle

Fast. Full. Straight.

Fast. Full. Straight.

Fast. Full. Straight.

As I made my way down the long tunnel on to the outfield at the Wanderers to play my first Test innings my senses were somewhat scrambled. Number six in the England order and already going out to face the world's best two bowlers with the match just 17 balls old. I knew where I was and I knew what I was going to be up against but that was about it.

We were 2/4 with four England captains – Mike Atherton, current incumbent Nasser Hussain, Mark Butcher and Alec Stewart – all out to a combination of Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock, two fiercely competitive athletes at the top of their game and harnessing conditions that could not have been any better for fast bowling, or seam bowling of any sort to be honest.

Fast. Full. Straight. Fast. Full. Straight. Fast. Full. Straight.

As I reached the edge of the outfield and adjusted my eyes to the Johannesburg light that's what I kept repeating to myself, again and again and again. Fortunately, there had been a drinks break when the fourth wicket fell so I had a few extra moments to compose myself and try and block out the sledging that had already begun, led by Mark Boucher – the archetypal chirpy wicketkeeper. Oddly, though, the verbals were all in Afrikaans which none of us understood. Only Donald sledged in English.

My fellow debutant Michael Vaughan was already out there, prodding the pitch and eyeing the skies suspiciously. Like me, he was probably hoping that it would get a bit darker and the umpires might offer us the light.

Me, 'What's happening then Vaughany?'

Him, 'I don't really know. I haven't faced a ball yet!'

What else could we do but laugh at the absurdity of the situation. Two England Test debutants together facing one of the best pair of fast bowlers the game has ever seen. It actually helped relax us a little.

The sight of us trying to take the heat out of things seemed to rile Donald. Now he was in my face. I'd faced him before, of course, in county cricket. I'd even had a beer with him after play when Derbyshire played Warwickshire but at that moment I don't think he remembered the social niceties of our previous encounter at all. It was probably the last thing on his mind.

I knew exactly what he would bowl – or at least I hoped I did. So as I took guard I settled just a touch deeper in the crease than I normally would. Grizzly the aggressive front-foot batsman always looking to take on the opposition

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bowlers would not be coming out to play, for a while anyway.

Donald in his pomp was one of the most fearsome and impressive sights in the game. There was the blond hair, the slash of white zinc cream across his nose and the aggressive intent, even as he walked back to his mark. Then he turned. There weren't many people in the vast Wanderers stadium that day – no more than 5,000 – but they made the noise of ten times as many as he charged in on a hat-trick, sniffing the blood of another hapless English batsman. No wonder they called this place the Bullring. I wasn't scared but I knew the next few minutes would not be a pleasant experience. I was about to find out just how big the step was from the cosy confines of county cricket to the Test arena.

Up to the wicket, into his delivery stride and down came the ball.

Full. Fast. Straight.

An in-swinging yorker hurled down at around 92mph, aiming for my toes. Just what I expected and, fortunately, I had a response. The bat jammed down in time and the ball dribbled off the toe-end and trickled down the pitch. I'd survived. For now.

* * * * *

South Africa 1999 was supposed to be another fresh start for English cricket, and there had been a few of those in that decade. Earlier in the year we'd lost a home series to New Zealand for the first time and were officially the worst Test team in the ICC rankings. Bowled out for under 200 in both innings of the decisive Test at The Oval. Lower even than Zimbabwe in the standings. In came a new coach –

the former Zimbabwe all-rounder Duncan Fletcher, who had been a success in our domestic game with Glamorgan – and a new skipper in Nasser Hussain, who replaced Alec Stewart.

Stewart had led England to an unlikely 2-1 series win against South Africa in 1998, a few months after I had made my debut for my country in the one-day series which preceded the Tests. There was a fresh look to the squad. As well as myself and Vaughan, Graeme Swann and Gavin Hamilton were also chosen. Darren Maddy, who'd made 14 and five on debut in our last Test against New Zealand, got another opportunity.

The squad had been announced on August Bank Holiday Monday. When my name came up on Teletext I was elated, of course, but also pleasantly surprised. I scored more than 1,000 one-day runs in 1999 and had performed consistently in limited-overs cricket for a few years. I had duly got my chance in the series against South Africa the previous year, but played just twice.

A separate one-day squad for the series against South Africa and Zimbabwe, which would take place after the Tests, was also unveiled, featuring the likes of Nick Knight, Mark Alleyne, Mark Ealham and Ashley Giles. In the days leading up to the announcement I thought it more likely I would be included among the one-day specialists. That summer I averaged a modest 33 for Sussex in four-day cricket, against Second Division attacks, and didn't even get to 1,000 runs. There seemed to be players with stronger claims to be part of Fletcher and Hussain's new world.

The day after the squad was announced Sussex played Essex at Eastbourne. The TV cameras were there and a few journalists were keen to talk to me about my selection.

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I was happy to oblige, Nasser less so. When asked for a comment he told the media he was playing for Essex and wouldn't talk about England. Fair enough, I thought. It showed his professionalism.

I don't think Nasser felt my technique was good enough for Test cricket. At the time I thought my selection owed more to Fletcher, who'd seen me play a couple of good innings when he was coaching Glamorgan, and nothing since has made me change my mind. But I really enjoyed playing under Nasser. During the warm-up games we had a few chats and some of the things he said definitely helped build my confidence. I had my own doubts as well. Players embarking on the start of what they hope will be a long Test career have. I cannot remember now much of what Nasser said at the time. It was all probably pretty standard stuff about playing my natural game and going out there trusting my technique and being mentally strong to deal with Donald, Pollock and a pretty strong supporting cast as well. I felt as if I was playing for him *and* England and as a captain myself I knew that was a pretty strong position for Nasser to be in. It took him a while to really put his own stamp on the team but he went on to become an outstanding England captain. I wish I'd had the opportunity to play under him more.

In many ways, though, you were on your own. We had a lot of experience in our batting line-up but Atherton, Butcher, Hussain and Stewart all had their own personal battles with form to overcome. I sat next to Atherton on the flight out to South Africa (we were placed in alphabetical order on the plane) and we barely talked about cricket. It was only after the series had finished with England winning the controversial Test at Centurion, for which South

Africa captain Hansie Cronje had received £5,000 from a bookmaker to ensure a positive result, that Atherton and I had a proper chat. He pointed out things that he felt I had to work on and where I needed to adapt my game. Who knows if having that conversation before the series would have made any difference, but I wish we'd spoken a few months earlier. Perhaps I should have approached him but there was a definite hierarchy in the dressing room and, as a new boy – even one who'd been in the game for more than a decade – I guess I knew my place.

These days players can turn to any manner of support staff for advice and help, physical, mental or on the nuts and bolts of their own game. Fletcher eventually instigated something of a revolution in the way England prepared but back in 1999 it was still a bit basic. The back-up staff consisted of Fletcher, bowling coach Bob Cottam, physio Dean Conway, fitness expert Nigel Stockhill – who didn't do the whole tour – scorer Malcolm Ashton, a couple of lads handling the media and Phil Neale, the tour manager. Four people with cricket-specific skills to handle a Test squad of 16, which was later augmented by Chris Silverwood and Mark Ramprakash, who came in as cover for injuries.

Duncan brought along videotapes of South Africa's recent one-off home Test against Zimbabwe. Analysis like this is easily available now but back then we thought it quite innovative. He had noted that Donald seemed to be falling out of his action, that his wrist position was wrong and he couldn't get his out-swinging going. Few bowlers in world cricket at the time used the crease as well as he did, but the footage Duncan showed us did suggest that he might be struggling. In 33 overs he'd taken just one wicket. It was encouraging to see but I think we all knew

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that Donald could easily get his mojo back very quickly. All the best bowlers could.

I did well in the warm-up games. Against Western Province at Cape Town I scored 89 and then made 84 a few days later against Free State in Bloemfontein. On both occasions I batted at six, the position I thought, heading into the tour, the selectors had earmarked for Maddy, who clearly wasn't going to be opening as he'd done on his Test debut a few months earlier. Right up until a few days before the Test I still regarded myself as the spare batsman in the squad.

No one else was in great form though. We didn't score a century in the three first-class matches prior to the opening Test but I'd knuckled down although I didn't feel my technique was being tested. The attacks we faced were county standard at best. None of the South African Test bowlers played. They kept their powder dry.

Duncan and Nasser pulled Vaughan, Hamilton and I aside two days before the Test to tell us we were playing. What a moment that was. I knew I'd be nervous but I was now able to prepare in the knowledge that I was going to make my debut. There would be no disappointment on the morning of the game or the day before when you discovered you'd been left out. It was an excellent decision by the management to let us know early, one we all appreciated.

We practised in glorious sunshine and I felt good. So did Vaughan. Gavin, though, went into his shell a bit. In fact, from the moment he knew he was playing until the evening of the third day when he knew he'd made his contribution to the Test (a pair and 0-63) it was difficult to get a word out of him, he was that badly affected by nerves.

Then when it was all over it was as if a pressure valve had been released and amiable, likeable Gavin was back. I'm sure the moment that happened, on the bus going back to the hotel, Duncan and Nasser noticed this transformation. His Test career was already over.

I slept well the night before but when I peeled back the curtains on the first morning I looked out to skies that could easily have been Derby in early season or Hove when the sea fret rolls in and you can hardly see your hand in front of your face. The clouds were as dark as they could be without it actually raining, although it clearly had rained heavily during the night.

When we got to the Wanderers there seemed little prospect that we'd start on time. I prepared as if we would but the experienced guys were convinced there would be a delay. Did that contribute to what subsequently happened? Possibly. Even when the umpires, Sri Venkataraghavan and Dave Orchard, called out Nasser to toss-up with Cronje some of the guys still weren't convinced we were going to play. But they were happy with the light and the outfield was dry enough. Nasser called incorrectly and Cronje not surprisingly stuck us in. We'd have done the same. The overheads and a slightly damp, underprepared pitch were perfect for bowling. I put my whites on and cleared out of the dressing room so the guys at the top of the order could get ready. I felt good. I was nervous, but I was ready.

The next 20 minutes was a surreal experience and even now, all these years later, I occasionally find myself asking, 'Did that really happen?' I remember getting a cup of tea and sitting in one of the big, comfy armchairs they have in the viewing gallery. Of the senior batsmen, Atherton was the only one with any semblance of form going into

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the game with a couple of 80s and, of course, it was on this ground that he had batted for nearly 11 hours four years earlier to save the Test with one of the most courageous innings by any English batsman.

Third ball of the match, Donald bowled a perfect in-swinging and as Atherton groped forward, the ball cannoned into his off stump. Hmmm, 1/1. This could be testing for a while. Next over Pollock bowled one just short of a length that reared up off the top of Nasser's glove and into Lance Klusener's hands at third slip, 2/2. Time to head back to the dressing room.

Donald could hardly wait to get back to his mark at the start of the third over. His personal duel with Atherton was seen by many as key to the outcome of the series and, having landed the first blow, he sniffed more English blood. Sure enough Butcher was next, caught behind off the fourth ball of the over for a single. At that stage it looked like a wicket might fall with every ball.

I was changing next to Stewart and, amid the pandemonium, he seemed to be the calmest man in Johannesburg. A check of the pads, a tug of the shirt sleeves and a twirl of the bat. Everything had to be just so before Alec went out to bat. He was in his own little world while, next to him, I was trying to gather together as much of my kit as I could find. In the corner of the TV screen the match was on. I remember glancing up at Alec as he prepared to face his first ball. Next thing I knew there was a huge guttural roar. I looked up at the screen, which was a split-second behind the live action of course, in response and Alec was a goner, plumb lbw for a golden duck. We were 2/4 after 17 balls and had made the worst start by an England team in Test history.

When Stewart began walking back I still hadn't got my pads on. While I was strapping on the right, Darren Gough, while trying to suppress his giggles, was putting the other one on. Hardly ideal preparation but despite the turmoil I still had clarity about one thing. I knew what Donald would bowl at me first-up.

The tunnel at the Wanderers is like nothing else I'd ever experienced in cricket, before or since. There's a slight incline on to the outfield but the Perspex cover makes it feel like you're walking through a greenhouse. And then there are the kids who appeared from nowhere to bang out their welcome to the new batsmen with their fists like hundreds of drummers at a convention of heavy metal bands thumping away simultaneously to the same beat. I felt slightly intimidated before I had even stepped on to the outfield.

Once I'd negotiated the hat-trick ball I felt marginally better. I didn't face Pollock in the next over and when Donald came back I collected my first Test runs. He bowled just short of a length outside off stump and I carved it over gully for a one-bounce four. Perhaps not the stylish cover drive or clip off the toes with which I'd necessarily have liked to have launched my England Test career but at least it doubled the score. Cronje immediately took one of his four slips out and posted a third man, thus revealing the plan he and their coach, Bob Woolmer, had worked out for me which remained in place throughout the series. He was going to cut off my runs in the area behind square on the off side with three slips and a third man. Jonty Rhodes was at cover which was like having three fielders in one so anything in front of square on the off would invariably go to him. There was an extra cover as well and if I wanted to

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take on any short stuff Gary Kirsten was waiting for any mistake under the lid at short leg.

My first Test innings lasted 50 minutes and 31 balls. My 16 runs meant I was our third-top scorer but I never felt in any way fluent or settled. This was the most intense cricket I had ever experienced. Of course I'd faced quick bowling before many times in county cricket and I relished the challenge. Back then, nearly all the counties had a world-class quick but if you were facing Donald for Warwickshire there would generally be relief at the other end in the form of someone like Tim Munton, a fine English-style seam bowler but not someone looking to knock your block off or bowl consistently upwards of 90mph. You could normally get runs and keep the strike ticking over.

But this was something else. Pollock was not much slower than Donald but just as challenging. He was accurate, had great seam variation and always bowled that nagging length that made him very difficult to score off, a bit like Glenn McGrath but slightly quicker. And when he did bowl something I could attack outside off stump the chances were that Rhodes would stop it.

I hit a couple more boundaries as Vaughan and I put on 30 runs in ten overs. Donald worked me over a bit and I got hit a couple of times but that didn't worry me. It was almost like a badge of honour. He knew my record in England was decent and may well have seen me as a threat. The wicket was underprepared, but nothing worse than some of the surfaces I'd played on in county cricket. But the quality of the bowling was something I'd certainly never experienced in England. The ironic thing is that when I did get out to Donald in the 13th over I didn't do myself any favours.

He got the ball to jag back off the seam and I got myself in the wrong position to defend it. My hands were in front of my body and the ball took the glove and deflected off the top of my bat handle on its way to Boucher. He was up celebrating straight away but Venkat wasn't sure and Donald only belatedly joined in the celebrations. During my career I had always walked and took a couple of steps towards the dressing room, which seemed to make the umpire's mind up for him. If I'd had a longer Test career perhaps my attitude might have hardened and I would have waited for the umpire to make the decision in marginal cases. I'm not sure Hussain or Atherton were impressed with my honesty.

Andrew Flintoff hit 38 and Vaughan looked a bit more assured than I for his 33 but 122 was still under-par and when the sun came out on the second day South Africa batted themselves into a strong position. We went in again 281 behind and although Stewart counter-attacked well for 89 we were dismissed for 260 and lost by an innings. My contribution in the second innings was a single before the Donald–Boucher combination did for me again. Between them Donald and Pollock took 19 of the wickets to fall and South Africa had won their tenth successive home Test.

My first experience of Test cricket had been a real eye-opener. I thought that with more experience I would be able to adapt and eventually play my natural game. Fletcher had told the press that he wanted to give myself and Vaughan a run in the side to see if we could make it. If I thought Test cricket would be tough, little did I realise just how tough.