



SUSSEX  
**JOHN BARCLAY**



WORCESTERSHIRE  
**TIM CURTIS**



GLAMORGAN  
**MIKE SELVEY**

1959.  
right-



ESSEX  
**D ACFIELD**

# Lost Cricket Stickers

In Search of 1983's  
World of Cricket  
Sticker Album Heroes

Matthew Appleby  
Foreword by  
Jim Carter OBE



KENT  
**CHRIS COWDREY**



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
**PETER SUCH**



HAMPSHIRE  
**KEVIN EMERY**



RICHARD

# Lost Cricket Stickers

In Search of 1983's World of Cricket  
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## Chapter 1

# Is There Something I Should Know?

‘CAN WE have a word please? We’re police officers.’

I looked up from my scrap of paper.

‘We’ve observed you for the past half hour acting suspiciously. You’ve been looking and wandering around making notes in a manner we regard to be suspicious. You’ll understand how this looks. Can you explain your behaviour? You were observed at the other gate and then at the ticket office and then walking to the tube station and back.’

Standing in the shade opposite the Hobbs Gates at The Oval, while June 2023’s World Test Championship final between India and Australia went on inside, I had to talk fast.

‘Well, I’m waiting to speak to a cricketer, well, a cricket guy. I’ve been emailing him for the past few days. I’ll just check if he’s emailed back.’

‘Do you have any form of ID on you?’ asked the shorter cop.

‘Do you have a criminal record?’ asked the bearded one. ‘It will help us look up your details.’

‘Err, no.’ I passed them my staff card. ‘I can’t afford a ticket. They’re 85 quid! If he’s emailed back, then I’ll buy one. But I’m not gonna if he hasn’t.’

‘Why are you taking notes?’

‘I’m actually writing a book about the 1983 cricket season. I’m making a few notes, for colour, you know – it was sunny, the crowds were pouring in, that sort of stuff.’

‘Why is 1983 important?’

‘Ah, well, India won the World Cup. And that changed the global balance of power from Lord’s to India. I’m waiting to talk to a guy called Roger Binny who was in the team then and is BCCI president now. He’s a real gent. He’s a great guy. He’s been really helpful with the book but I just want to meet him and here’s a good chance if he can get away. He’s in there now.’ I pointed to the back of The Oval pavilion.

‘What do you do?’

‘Well, I’m a gardening journalist.’

‘If you asked us about rugby or football, we’d know what you were talking about. We don’t know much about cricket.’

‘Well, it’s about the Panini cricket sticker album in 1983. You know them? They usually did football. They only did one for cricket. I’m tracking down players from then and Binny’s one of them. I know it sounds so convoluted that I couldn’t be making it up.’

‘You’ll understand we have to check these things.’

‘Why don’t you get a ticket off a tout?’

‘Isn’t that illegal?’

‘Not for you, and we’re not after them.’

‘Are they still around?’

‘They’re here all day.’

‘I’ve only got £15 on me. Can you send one over?’

‘Yeah, we’ll have a word. You can include us in this book of yours. Say you got questioned by two handsome cops. That’ll be a good bit.’

‘I’ll do that. Can you tell your colleagues that I’m writing a book so they don’t think I’m acting suspiciously? It’s out next year. You gonna buy one?’

‘Maybe, if we’re in it. What’s it called? *Cricket Stickers?* Good title. You sound like you should have a pass to be in there.’

‘I did once, but it was a long time ago.’

‘We’re satisfied with who you say you are. Have a good day.’

They walked back to the gates. I stood still next to the Boris Bikes, not daring to look up. Certainly not to make notes. What did they think I was? A terrorist? In 1983, the IRA was active. The Harrods bombing was in 1983, and the Maze Prison escape. The Brighton bomb was in 1984. On 29 June 2023, an Extinction Rebellion Just Stop Oil Ashes protestor was carried off Lord’s by England’s Jonny Bairstow.

I looked up. England player Reece Topley walked by. I made a note. No one else noticed him.

A guy caught my eye.

‘You alright? You want something?’ he demanded.

‘Yeah, just waiting for the day’s play to end.’

I stood stiller and longer and looked down lower.

Eventually, I remembered once seeing the surreal comedian Chris Morris on his bike watching the match

from outside The Oval gate opposite the derelict Cricketer's pub, in front of the gasometer. This was close to where I was lurking.

There were some delivery bike guys looking through the gate. You could see a bit of the pitch as well as the replay screen. There was strength in numbers. I breathed deep. I checked my emails. No reply.

India lost their greatest, Virat Kohli, caught high at slip by Australia's top man, Steve Smith. There was a collective groan. Fans in their Virat shirts and tricolour wedding turbans walked between us looking through the gate's bars and at the game. There were uniforms everywhere: police, traffic wardens, security, stewards, St John Ambulance, chefs, bar staff, the service team, the pitch team.

'Hello, Matthew,' said a friendly voice on a bike passing by. 'Met the Queen today?' I asked. I knew the new (since the coronation a month before) Queen Camilla had opened an exhibition that morning at the museum the cyclist ran in nearby Lambeth Palace Road. 'Yes, she was very nice. Alan was there too.' He meant TV gardener Titchmarsh.

'I just nearly got arrested.'

'What for?'

'Waiting outside the ground making notes.'

'Can you be arrested for that?'

I told my condensed Binny story.

Ravindra Jadeja was caught at slip by Steve Smith for 48. The crowds, drunker Aussies, posher Brits and excited Indians with ice creams went back and forth. I saw a guy in a shirt with Kapil Dev written on the shoulders. Kapil

was captain of his 'devils' in 1983. Most India shirts said 'Virat' or 'Kohli'.

There were two coaches outside the ground. One drove to where the players must be coming out. I followed it. India fans crowded the coach. 'Kohli, Kohli,' they chanted. A voice behind me asked: 'Did you get your interview?' It was a different plainclothes policeman, casually dressed, with a backpack, leaning on a different gate. 'No. Maybe tomorrow.' The crowd engulfed me.

I extricated myself and walked to a different gate. Indian commentators were being surged. Surrounded and loudly lauded by hundreds of fans were the smartly dressed Sourav Ganguly, slim Harbhajan Singh, a smiling Sunil Gavaskar (a 1983 World Cup winner, though he scored just two in the final) and a stern Ravi Shastri (who played five of the eight 1983 World Cup matches, but not the final). There were more stars I couldn't see. Phones were held aloft. The famous men in suits or blazers were led through the throng to cars with blacked-out windows. There was former Australia captain Ricky Ponting too, less adulated by this crowd.

Almost 40 years before, Binny (21 and 4-29) had been man of the match in a 118-run knockout World Cup win against Australia. He took 18 wickets in the finals, more than anyone else, even the superstars Kapil Dev, Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding, Richard Hadlee, Imran Khan and Ian Botham. Of those, one was knighted, one became a Lord and one a prime minister, while Holding is an influential campaigner against racism. For Binny, it was the presidency of the Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI)



## LOST CRICKET STICKERS

in India, the richest cricket governing body in the world, which oversees the national sport of 1.4 billion people.

I asked a guy if he'd seen Binny. 'No, not him.' The man walked off. Thinking he might be another undercover cop, I walked too.