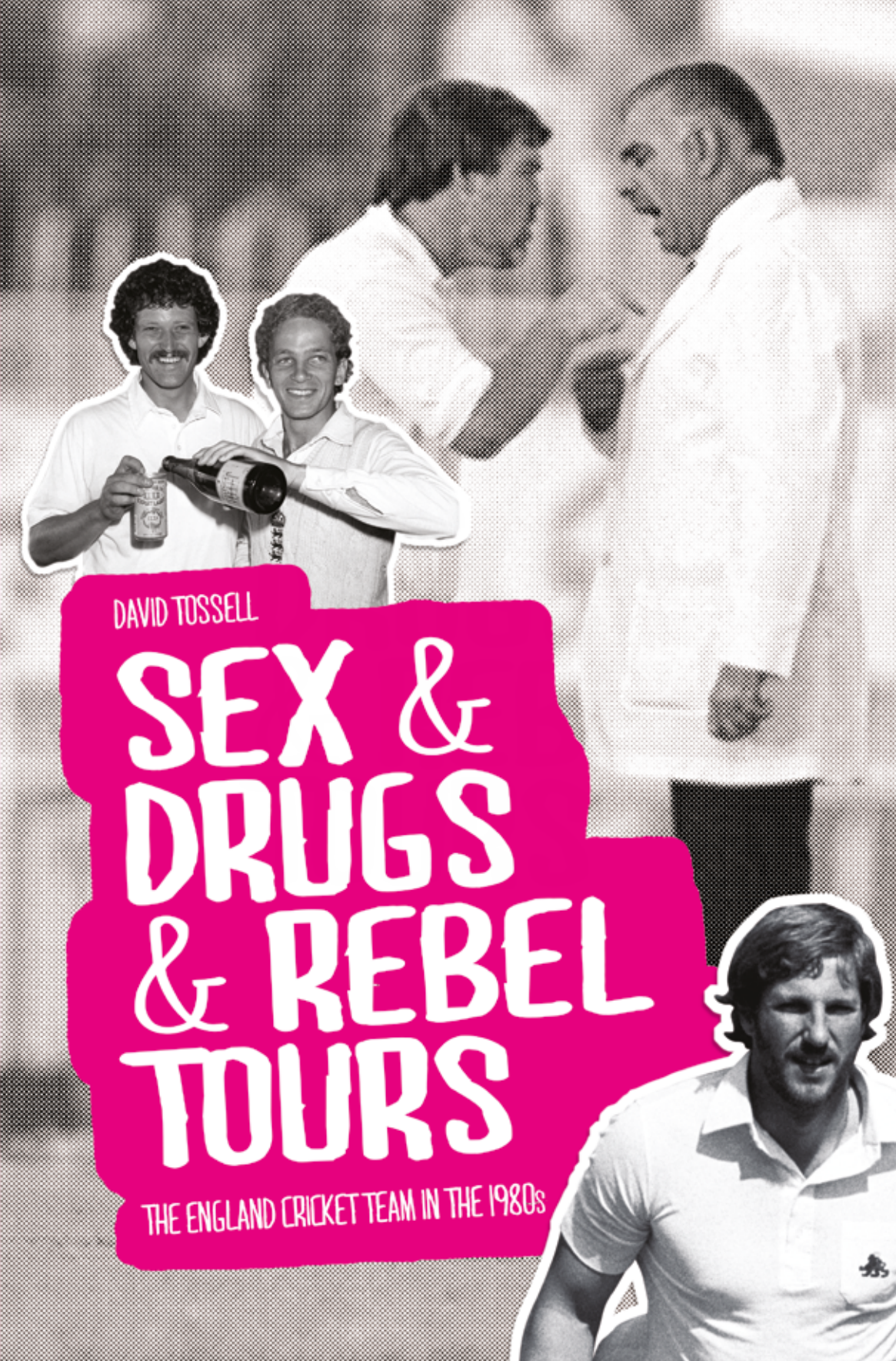

DAVID TOSSELL

SEX & DRUGS & REBEL TOURS

THE ENGLAND CRICKET TEAM IN THE 1980s

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pitch

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INTRODUCTION

'We been broken down
To the lowest turn
And been on the bottom line
Sure ain't no fun'

The Only Way Is Up, written by George Jackson and Johnny Henderson, performed in 1988 by Yazz and the Plastic Population

SUNDAY 7 August 1988 was shaping up as one of the better days among the England cricket team's chaotic narrative of the 1980s. It was, after all, a rest day. No further punishment could be administered by the unforgiving bats of opposing batsmen; no blood spilt or brains scrambled by the assassins who masqueraded as bowlers.

The West Indies, who seemed to have spent most of the decade beating up their current hosts, had gone to bed the previous night knowing they needed only another 156 runs on Monday to wrap up a 4-0 victory, their openers having already put an untroubled 71 on the board. The fact that England had drawn the first match of the series meant they would at least avoid the 5-0 humiliation of their last two encounters with the undisputed champions of Test cricket. Yet this summer, with its desultory weather and even more miserable performance, had in some ways become an even greater debacle. 'The morale and reputation of English cricket has seldom been as severely bruised as it was during 1988,' West Indian observer Tony Cozier would comment in the following year's *Wisden*.

While that morning's news pages triumphed Prince Andrew's return from naval duties in Singapore to be with his wife Sarah as she entered the final stages of her first pregnancy, national pride was in short supply within the sports sections. Killing time and filling column inches between the dissection of the England football team's hapless efforts in the European Championship finals and the start of the Football League's centenary season,

cricket writers strained to find new angles on the shambles unfolding before them. On this particular day their focus was the finger Graham Gooch had injured in the field, forcing him to miss the last rites of the series and leaving Derek Pringle, temporarily, as his country's fifth captain of the season.

It had been bewildering enough that a group of selectors who seemed to believe their performance was judged by the quantity of their nominations had chosen twenty-three players to face the West Indies. The fact that four skippers had been appointed in five games was downright embarrassing. The third of them, Chris Cowdrey, had been such an unexpected choice that he turned up at Headingley for the pinnacle of his career and was refused entry by a gatekeeper who had no idea who he was. The selectors would quickly forget about him too.

It's doubtful that the men picking the England team were big Radio 1 listeners. They'd have been no more likely to locate it on the dial than to chance upon a combination capable of beating the West Indies. The closest they would have got to pop music that day was if they'd tuned in to Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*, where Sue Lawley was interviewing the outspoken Northern Irish politician, the Rev. Ian Paisley. But for much of the younger generation, Sundays were defined by the announcement of the new chart positions. Just before 7pm Bruno Brookes, sitting in his west London studio, told the country that it had a new number one record; a high-tempo dance number performed by Yazz and the Plastic Population. 'The Only Way Is Up' seemed to have been released specifically to mock English cricket; a taunt rather than a statement of optimism. Its singer was even half-West Indian, for heaven's sake.

'We've been broken down,' the song began. Mike Gatting, his nose smashed so thoroughly by Malcolm Marshall in 1986 that a piece of bone was embedded in the ball, could attest to that. So could Andy Lloyd, his one appearance as an England batsman ended by a Marshall bouncer to the head; or Paul Terry, his arm fractured by Winston Davis.

As it turned out, England's fortunes had not quite yet reached 'the lowest turn'. There was a little further to fall in the ensuing twelve months. When they lost 4-0 to Australia in the final summer of the decade, using a staggering twenty-nine players this time, it meant they had lost five consecutive home series – one against each of the five other major Test-playing countries – without winning a single match. England's only success in their final twenty-three Test matches of the '80s had been in a one-off game against Sri Lanka.

Of course, there had been high points earlier in the decade. No one who lived through the remarkable Ashes summer of 1981 will ever forget it. Victory in India, always a rare treat, was achieved under David Gower, while the 2-1 triumph of Mike Gatting's team in Australia is assured of a permanent place in history. There was even a World Cup Final appearance.

As football had sunk further into the backside of public perception with each sickening tale of hooliganism and tragedy at its grounds, English cricket had an opportunity to reach deep into its heart, especially after the imagination-grabbing events of 1981 and another vanquishing of the old enemy four years later, smack in the middle of the anti-football zeitgeist in the wake of the Bradford and Heysel tragedies. Instead, it spent the decade fighting football for space on the tabloid front pages – whether for its best player, Ian Botham, being banned for smoking marijuana; its captain, Gatting, losing his job after the lewd hotel bedroom accusations of a barmaid; or the rebel teams of Gooch and Gatting flying to South Africa in the face of global political opinion.

The severe ups and downs of the England team reflected the extremes of boom-and-bust Britain in the '80s. As well as yuppie city slickers in red braces making fortunes on the money markets and Harry Enfield's 'Loadsamoney' character flaunting his wad of cash, this was the decade that brought the devastation and deprivation of the miners' strike and the bleak landscape of Alan Bleasdale's *Boys from the Blackstuff*, with the pathetic Yosser Hughes every bit as identifiable with the decade as Enfield's cash-rich plasterer.

In the decade's final reckoning English cricket was more Yosser than Loadsamoney. The Test team began by equalling the worst sequence in their history when they went twelve games without a win over 1980 and 1981. Seemingly rudderless at the top and working their way through ten changes of captain, they proceeded to eclipse that streak by managing thirteen games without victory between 1983 and 1984 and topped it all with an eighteen-game winless run from 1987 to 1988. In the fall-out from such futility, everything was blamed: from the state of county wickets and the increase in limited-overs cricket to poor preparation, planning, team management and a basic lack of talent. All played their part to some degree.

But while England were either very bad or remarkably good out in the middle, they could be relied upon to provide endless intrigue off the field. Barely a tour went by without some kind of drama: banishment from Guyana and the tragedy of Ken Barrington in the West Indies; the political threat to the 1981-82 Indian tour, which ended with Geoff Boycott's banishment and the team ripped apart by the first South African recruits; accusations of drugs and orgies in New Zealand in 1983-84; political assassinations in India in 1984-85; Gatting almost coming to blows with umpire Shakoor Rana in Pakistan in 1987-88.

Win or lose, England's cricket team in the 1980s was never less than the most compelling of soap operas. The first episode was set in Australia in the opening days of the new decade.

1
GAMES WITHOUT FRONTIERS

'Where there is discord, may we create harmony'
– Margaret Thatcher quoting St Francis of Assisi
outside Downing Street in May 1979

GEOFF Boycott, a man who appeared to live purely for the purpose of scoring runs, didn't want to play. No matter that the past few weeks in Australia had seen him in some of the best form of his sixteen-year international career, taking runs off the West Indian pacemen and the formidable home duo of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson. He had a bad neck and England's first Test match of a new decade was, he'd decided, no place to be taking chances with any kind of disability.

Boycott had celebrated the arrival of 1980 by spending New Year's Day doing what he loved most: batting in the nets. His main concern had been discovering whether he was burdened by the little finger he had dislocated when slipping in a golf course bunker in Sydney. He'd also been suffering from what he thought was merely a stiff neck, but which team physiotherapist Bernard Thomas would later diagnose as a form of whiplash suffered in the same incident.

By the morning of the Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground – the second of three against the old enemy in this uniquely-constructed triangular season – Boycott had taken to wearing a scarf to keep his neck warm. His team-mates responded by tying napkins around their necks when he appeared at breakfast. Boycott confided in Thomas his doubts that he was fit enough to play. Knowing that rain might allow a delay in team selection, Thomas advised him to say nothing to captain Mike Brearley for now. Instead, Boycott headed to the indoor nets, where reserve bowlers Graham Stevenson and John Lever gave him and his neck a thorough examination.

'I told Brearley that I was not fit to play,' said Boycott. Yet the England captain was not about to accept the loss of the man who had single-handedly defied the Australian bowlers in their defeat in the opening match of the series.

This was far from being the two men's first conflict of the tour. Even though his form had been light years from his struggles in the same country a year earlier, when he'd been affected by the death of his mother and rows over his future at Yorkshire, Boycott was not exactly a carefree tourist. He felt practice sessions had been too light-hearted; that Brearley had failed to impose the necessary level of discipline; and that his own experience was being undervalued. Players not caring whether they held their catches during slip practice, or Ian Botham bowling to Derek Randall off twenty-one yards and bouncing the ball clear out of the nets led him to speak of an 'unforgivably lackadaisical approach' by the England team. Later in the tour he would recall reporting to nets at 9.50am before a day's play at Melbourne and finding no one ready to bowl at him. 'Of all the tours I have been on I have never known so much skylarking,' he would write.

When Brearley had asked him to take a look at the wicket in Perth prior to the first Test a few weeks earlier, his initial response had been that his advice had not been wanted before so why should he give it now? Bob Willis, who had been touring with Boycott for nine years, suggested, 'Our experience of him as captain in Pakistan in 1977-78 burnt a lot of bridges. I don't think people respected him as a leader; his individual batting always got in the way. Some of the younger Yorkshire lads like Graham Stevenson and David Bairstow had empathy with him, but after that experience I don't recall many of the others going to Geoffrey for advice.'

According to Graham Gooch, Boycott also felt piqued at Brearley's reluctance to ask him to assist with his own technique at the crease. So when Brearley sought an opinion about the playing surface, Boycott had told him, 'Bugger it' before later apologising for the spur-of-the-moment expression of his frustration and agreeing to share his thoughts. But now England's premier batsman and the team captain were at loggerheads again. Gooch described Brearley 'going spare' at Boycott's insistence that he was unfit. 'Heated words were exchanged and I was practically forced to play,' Boycott remembered.

The tone for English cricket's chaotic and controversy-ridden decade had been set before a single ball had been bowled. Welcome to the 1980s.

For Brearley, who'd enjoyed an unbroken sequence of success since inheriting the England captaincy in the wake of the sport's Kerry Packer-led revolution in 1977, Boycott's reluctance to play was the latest annoyance on a tour that had begun amid political discord and had continued along a path of constant acrimony.

The schedule had been fashioned from the peace that had broken out after two years of World Series Cricket, the tournament set up by Australian media owner Packer in response to the Australian Cricket Board's refusal to consider his bid to purchase their television rights. Packer had hitched his own ambitions to the vulnerability and dissatisfaction of underpaid

cricketers around the world and taken on the authorities with his own series of 'Supertests' and one-day contests.

Recruiting the entire Australian and West Indies teams and hiring England captain Tony Greig to sign up a significant English, Pakistani and South African contingent, Packer had been more successful in damaging the established game than he had in attracting people to his own brand of hard-fought, highly-commercialised cricket. However, once he had secured the rights to real grounds such as the SCG in his second season and hit upon the winning formula of one-day internationals under floodlights, the balance of power had shifted in his favour.

By the end of world cricket's second year of division, during which the official Australian team surrendered an Ashes series 5-1 at home to Brearley's England, it was clear that a truce was not far away. The ACB had lost £400,000 (more than A$800,000) over that period and, although WSC could afford to sustain its own losses, estimated at up to £3m, Packer readily shut down operations in exchange for the slice of official cricket that he coveted. In the end, the peace settlement offered him a considerable helping.

The ACB had already been planning a joint-tour summer, featuring India, untouched by WSC, and England, whose fortunes had improved during the Packer era after losing mostly players nearing the end of Test careers. Those plans changed at the end of April 1979 when the ACB granted its broadcasting rights to Packer's Channel 9.

ACB treasurer Ray Steele might not have stood and given the unification speech that Margaret Thatcher would attempt outside 10 Downing Street after being voted in as prime minister a couple of weeks later – the event that would do most to define Britain's coming decade – but the Australian board did appear to be bending over backwards to ensure that harmony prevailed in the sport.

Along with the TV deal, another of Packer's companies, PBL Ltd, was awarded ten-year promotional rights to the sport, for which the ACB received $1.7m per year. Packer settled up with the sixty-eight players he had under contract and one of the most extraordinary episodes in cricket's history was over.

Its legacy remained, however, in the proposed format of the forthcoming Australian summer. India were paid off in return for delaying their visit for twelve months, allowing the West Indies to take their place in a schedule that owed much to WSC. Australia would play three Tests against each of their visitors, with the opponents alternating, and the three teams would participate in a series of fifty-over internationals, spread throughout the course of the season and played under WSC branding. It was Packer cricket under an official banner.

The Test and County Cricket Board, English cricket's ruling body and forerunner of the ECB, saw as ironic the ACB's energetic endorsement of new

one-day innovations like white balls and coloured clothing, having been such reluctant adopters of limited-overs cricket in the first place. Since staging the first one-day international in 1971 as a way of recouping money from a washed-out Melbourne Test, Australia had played only two more home ODIs until staging a five-game series against England in 1978-79 – a direct response to the amount of one-day cricket offered by Packer.

In a long and somewhat inappropriate eve-of-season speech in front of players and officials from all three teams, Steele went to great pains to point out that there had been no giving in to Packer. At one point he noted, 'The concessions we have made have been very minor.' The view of many was that if the issue of television rights had been 'minor', what had everyone been fighting for during the past two years?

England, committed to visiting Australia even before a truce was declared, had been torn between whole-heartedly supporting cricket's peace process and maintaining what they felt was the integrity of the sport. Opposed to coloured clothing, their compromise was to use coloured pads and gloves, although they insisted on pure white kit as opposed to the outfits trimmed with stripes that were adopted by Australia and the West Indies. They also refused to play with a white ball except in day-night games and rejected the use of a new white ball at each end, even though they subsequently complained in warm-up games about how quickly the ball became dirty.

With much of the negotiation on playing conditions having been unresolved before the team's arrival, it was left to the soft-spoken Cambridge graduate Brearley – already seen by Aussie fans as an over-educated, stuck-up Pom – to become the face of the TCCB's opposition to some of the new proposals. 'I was seen by the man in the Sydney street as the embodiment of all that's bad in the British,' he said.

Brearley announced a refusal to adopt the circle that restricted field placings, reasoning that his players had not experienced it in the manner of those who had played in Packer cricket. 'Australia and West Indies can play with green balls and hockey sticks if they like,' he stated. 'Our agreement was to play under existing laws if there was any disagreement.' Almost as if to underline his point, Brearley would subsequently station all his fielders, including wicketkeeper David Bairstow, on the boundary for the final ball of a match in which the West Indies needed three runs to win.

Ironically, he would also create more antipathy with the Australian public when, on the eve of the second Test of the tour, he said he was unable to place fielders on the boundary because of fear of missiles thrown by the fans. 'Someone is going to get killed one day in front of an Australian crowd,' he stated. 'There is so much hostility towards us that my players are at greater risk than anyone else.' Claiming that Bairstow had been hit by a piece of metal when he made his infamous journey, Brearley added, 'There is enough

evidence of heavy objects being thrown on to the field to prove a serious threat.'

Australian fans had been angered when the TCCB announced two weeks before the tour that the Ashes, won twice under Brearley's leadership, would not be at stake in a three-match series. Australia cited their willingness to play for the urn in a four-Test series after the inaugural World Cup in England in 1975, but it was pointed out that in all respects other than the length, that particular series had been played under normal touring conditions with plenty of opportunity for first-class practice matches and no one-day games disrupting preparation. Also established was the principle that future England tours, beginning with the 1982-83 visit, would revert to the traditional format.

Where the TCCB had been more willing to compromise was in the matter of money. Fearful of being asked to pay too much in return to future Australian touring sides, they settled for a £30,000 fee. That amounted to less than £2,000 per team when passed on to the counties, who at that time paid around three times that per season to a single capped professional.

While only a few of their players had taken the $30,000-per-year contracts offered by Packer,[1] England's Test team had enjoyed much greater wealth since Greig had sacrificed the captaincy and defected to WSC with the promise that all players at all levels would soon benefit from this revolution. Paid only £210 per home Test before Packer came along, England's players were now receiving more than £1,000 per game thanks to the TCCB's sponsorship deal with Cornhill Insurance.

For this tour they would receive a basic amount of £6,500, plus a bonus of £200 for each previous tour and the £2,500 they had been promised under the shadow of the Packer threat for keeping themselves available for the winter programme. Although it made them England's highest-paid tourists, it was still barely two-thirds of what was being paid to most of their opponents – and their own Derek Underwood – who would receive the value of their final-year Packer contracts after, in effect, being leased back to their national teams.

According to Boycott, the authorities' attitude to rewarding its players reverted to its previous parsimonious state once their alternative employer had disappeared from the scene. 'Suddenly there was no money after all,' he said. 'Suddenly we had to fight tooth and nail for a realistic wage for the most hectic winter tour an England side had ever undertaken.'

The potential inclusion of Packer players had created much speculation about the make-up of the England touring party. In the end, the only returnee was Underwood, whose 100-wicket domestic season in 1979 saw

1 Greig, who skippered WSC's World XI, was joined by John Snow and Dennis Amiss, whose Test careers appeared to be over anyway, veterans Alan Knott and Derek Underwood and batsman Bob Woolmer.

him chosen for the slow left-armer's role ahead of Phil Edmonds, even though the Middlesex man was being mentioned as a possible successor to Brearley. Edmonds himself said he was not so surprised; others believed that he should have at least been on the plane alongside Underwood, the veteran of more than seventy Tests.

Edmonds's disappointing tour twelve months earlier – and reported fall-out with Brearley – had counted against him, while Underwood's lack of batting ability appeared to weigh against another Middlesex spinner, John Emburey, who was left out even after sixteen wickets at 19.13 in the 1978-79 series. Instead, Northamptonshire's Peter Willey and Derbyshire's Geoff Miller were chosen as off-spinners, apparently because Underwood's presence meant that a second spinner would need to hold down a place in the middle order.

The wild card among an experienced group of seamers was Graham Dilley, a twenty-year-old from Kent with a shock of blond hair and a square-chested action that, with its extravagant wind-up, could generate impressive pace. The promise of Australia's bouncy wickets persuaded the selectors to give him a place.

Yet by the time of the first Test in Perth, in which Dilley would become the youngest England player for three decades, it was Boycott who was grabbing the Australian cricket public's attention. The man they had written off as a spent force a year earlier had rediscovered, at thirty-nine, his appetite and ability. After first-class centuries in back-to-back warm-up games, he had rammed the decision to omit him from the first one-day international against the West Indies back down the tour selectors' throats. Angered by the obvious implication that he was not adaptable enough for limited-overs games – which rankled even more when he saw Brearley opening[2] – he scored 68 and 105 when called up for games against Australia. In particular, the century at Sydney, where he married invention and imagination to his usual technical correctness, put observers in mind of the young Boycott's scintillating hundred in the 1965 Gillette Cup Final. 'It felt as though a lot of years had slipped off my shoulders,' he confessed.

It was a blow to England, then, when he fell for a duck in his first innings of the Test series after Brearley had won the toss and seen Ian Botham's six wickets restrict Australia to 244. It was Brearley's own gutsy 64 that did most to lift England to within sixteen of that total, but after Allan Border dominated the latter half of Australia's second innings to score 115, the tourists faced a deficit of 353 with more than a day remaining. Only Boycott offered resistance as left-armer Geoff Dymock, the least illustrious of the many seamers at Australia's disposal, chipped away with accuracy and

2 'I would back myself against [Brearley] as an opener in any competition known to cricket,' Boycott wrote in his 1980 book *Opening Up*.

intelligence. He was left agonisingly unbeaten on 99 when Willis became Dymock's sixth victim and the match was lost by 138 runs.

'The plan was that he would face Lillee and I would face Geoff Dymock,' Willis recalled, 'but he hit a ball through mid-wicket off Lillee, which would have given him an easy three and his hundred. But I turned down the third run and when I faced Dymock I got out first ball. Geoffrey was left not out 99, which he was not very happy about. It took him about ten minutes to walk off the ground.'

More than Boycott's near miss or Botham's eleven wickets, the match would be remembered for the antics of Lillee, who held up play while he argued to be allowed to use an aluminium bat. Having, he said, warned the authorities of his intent and received no objection, he had not banked on Brearley's rapid intervention to point out the damage the bat was doing to the ball. After returning to the pavilion he reappeared with the offending bat and it took the arrival on-field of Greg Chappell to persuade him to relinquish it – which he did by hurling it across the grass. That he survived with little more than a rap on the knuckles was thought by many to be a sign of Lillee's importance both to the new promoters of the sport and to the recently-united Australian team.

Thus did England's new decade begin with the prospect of a Test match in which defeat would mean a first series loss since the West Indies beat them 3-0 in the scorching summer of 1976. The last thing they needed was a morning-of-the-match row between captain and premier batsman, especially on top of the simmering tension between the two.

While Boycott had continued to fume over 'bad time-keeping, lack of attention to detail, sloppy attitudes [and] lack of professionalism', Brearley, forced to walk the finest of lines between politician and team leader, had never felt such pressure on any tour. Even his decision to grow a dark, bushy beard to give him a more aggressive, assertive appearance had backfired when revolution in Iran saw a new religious leader come to power just as the tour was getting under way. Brearley would now be saddled throughout with the nickname 'Ayatollah'.

Wisden described the treatment of Brearley as 'a disgraceful campaign', which included homemade banners in the stands – one of which awarded him 'The Gold Medallion Award for Greatest Winger *(sic)*'. In Melbourne, so much abuse was directed at the England captain that Australian team manager John Edwards said those responsible made him ashamed. 'It must be hoped that no future captain is ever landed with such a burden,' *Wisden* concluded.

Of course, the opposition were not making life any easier. The Australian team Brearley now faced was by far the strongest foe of a captaincy reign that had begun in 1977 with the 3-0 Ashes win over a team distracted by its involvement with Packer and had peaked with the previous winter's retention

of the urn. According to Willis, 'The Australian full-strength side was a very different kettle of fish to the third eleven we had beaten a year earlier.'

The home team could choose from a pool of forty players with Test experience, while uncapped talents like Geoff Lawson and Terry Alderman were unable to force their way in. And, of course, the West Indies' devastating batsmen and fearsome fast bowlers were waiting for England in the one-day shadows.

Brearley would come to accept that much of Boycott's criticism of his 'casual sort of captaincy' was justified. Even as someone whose preferred method was to encourage self-discipline among his players, Brearley recognised that he should have taken a more 'dictatorial' approach but said that other pressures left him without the energy to do so.

Having found the resolve to persuade Boycott into playing at Sydney, Brearley was insistent once more when it came to the matter of when the Test started. The ground staff's time off over a rainy New Year had left the pitch damp and grassy by the morning of the match. Australian captain Greg Chappell, aware that the toss under such circumstances could more or less decide the game, was opposed to beginning on the first day. Brearley, prepared to gamble on which way the coin fell, insisted on playing. He called incorrectly and forty-three overs later the series was as good as lost. England were all out for 123 and would be defeated with a day to spare. Brearley shut the dressing-room door at the close of the first day and ripped into his players one by one, even though Australia – who had just suffered the first of two heavy defeats in their series against the West Indies – would quite possibly have lost this match had luck been against them. 'The Test was virtually reduced to the toss of a coin,' admitted Chappell.

England's collapse, precipitated by some lazy shots, was even more of a disappointment given that the line-up around Boycott appeared superior to the ill-conceived selection at Perth. There, Nottinghamshire's Derek Randall, a notoriously fidgety, stroke-making middle-order man, had opened; Willey had batted number three, a couple of places higher than he did for Northants; and number five had been occupied by Miller, who had never scored a first-class century. What upset the balance was the self-acknowledged deficiencies at Test level of Brearley, a career opener who felt compelled to bat at seven. 'A travesty and an admission of his shortcomings,' Boycott grumbled. The Sydney recall of Graham Gooch for Miller, who had returned home with a back injury, allowed Randall and Willey to occupy more natural places in the order.

Trailing by only 22, England's greater resolve in the second innings was evidenced by Underwood lasting until lunch on day three after being sent in as nightwatchman. David Gower missed as often as he connected in reaching 50, after which his innings blossomed into a bouquet of colourful off-side drives off either foot and thrilling pulls and hooks. As with Boycott in the

previous Test, Gower's hopes of a century, which would have been his fourth since his 1978 debut, depended on the survival of last man Willis. Those hopes disappeared with Greg Chappell's low catch in the slips, leaving the Leicestershire man on 98, the highlight of his tour.

'You realise that at any stage if you don't perform you can be vulnerable, which I proved within a year or two of that,' Gower explained. 'But it was not something I got on the plane to Australia thinking about. Having had a good tour there the year before, I was looking forward to playing against a better Australian team and anticipating doing well. Personally, the tour didn't go as well as I wanted it to go, bar that one innings. It was an early education in the ups and downs of Test cricket.'

Australia had been left needing 216 to win. With the scores level and Chappell on 94, Botham generously offered up a long-hop, but Chappell couldn't quite clear the ropes. He greeted victory by claiming, 'As far as we're concerned the Ashes were up for grabs, and we've won them.'

The final Test of the series came after England had reached, and lost, the final of the one-day tournament. Expected to be no more than fodder in this format for their WSC-hardened opponents, England had surprised with some enterprising performances, relegating the Aussies to third place in the standings by winning all four games against them and putting up a decent fight against the West Indies before going down 2-0 in the final series. As well as the rejuvenated Boycott, who averaged 85 and passed 50 in five of his six matches, Yorkshire contributed some spirited match-winning performances down the order from Bairstow and Stevenson.

Surprisingly overshadowed by his opening partner in the shorter game, Gooch found his best form in the third Test in Melbourne, falling an agonising single short of a first Test century. Having added 116 with Boycott, Gooch watched another middle-order surrender before attempting a foolish single in the last over before tea. His innings, full of lusty drives, had deserved that extra run, but his attempt to steal it against the arm of Kim Hughes at mid-off made him the seventh man in Test cricket to be run out for 99. Gooch described Ian Chappell looking at him as he departed 'as though I had a screw loose'. The milestone he missed would have been fine reward for the progress he had made on tour. Boycott, in particular, took delight in the fact that his partner was working on his game just as hard at the end of the tour as at the beginning and continued to be amazed at his omission from the first Test.

While Lillee cleaned up the lower order on his way to a six-wicket haul, Brearley, batting on this troubled tour better than he ever had as England captain, defied the bowlers for a four-hour unbeaten 60. England's 306 was their highest score of the series, but was eclipsed by an Australian reply that produced two century partnerships and a sixteenth Test century for Greg Chappell after he'd spent the rest day on 99 not out.

Trailing by 171, England slumped to 88 for 5 on a wicket still offering some nip for the seamers. Yet in a foretaste of what would occur at Headingley eighteen months later, Botham took the game into his own hands to give the scorecard a respectable air. He attacked the boundary with thumps and pulls off the back foot and slogs and sweeps against the slow bowlers. Most impressive was his powerful straight driving, bringing up his 50 and 100 (after exactly 200 minutes) with such shots before finishing unbeaten on 119.

The nerves that would inflict Australia in small run chases in 1981 showed no sign of materialising here as they knocked off the 103 for victory with the loss of only two wickets, Greg Chappell forcing them across the line with a flurry of shots that enabled him to catch an early flight back to his family in Brisbane.

Brass in Pocket

The winter of 1979-80 had officially consigned Kerry Packer's unsanctioned cricket to the footnotes of the sport's history. Yet the act of waving his cheque book under the noses of the world's leading players would continue to have a ripple effect on cricket throughout the 1980s and beyond. Its professionals would never again be quite such poor relations to their counterparts in football. England's Test players were already earning six times as much per Test as in pre-Packer days and even county cricketers would soon find their lot improved.

Ian Greig, who followed brother Tony into the England team for a brief spell in 1982 but was more county pro than international star, recalled, 'There was a time, it was around 1980-81, when I was playing in Queensland and a new offer had been made to me by Sussex. I'd had a reasonable county season and I was down at Tony's for Christmas. I said, "What do you think, mate? Should I accept this?" He just shook his head and walked away for a while. When he came back he said, "I cannot believe this, Ian. People said I did this for myself. People said I was a selfish bastard and this wasn't going to help anyone. I said that this was going to help every cricketer around the world and here you are three years after the event being offered more than I was on when I was captain of Sussex and captain of England."'

Yet to suggest that English cricketers would go through the '80s in a blur of gleaming technological gadgetry, new Audi Quattros and Duran Duran-style yachts would be a gross exaggeration. For the established England players who played upwards of ten Tests per year, who went on tour and earned the game's fatter county contracts, life was comfortable – especially if one could pick up a few commercial endorsements along the way. By 1984, *Wisden* estimated Ian Botham was raking in £40,000 per year. But no one was ever going to be set for life.

Outlining his ability to earn somewhere in the region of £12,000, including bonuses, for England duty in the winter of 1984-85, Vic Marks

noted that it was 'far less than my non-cricketing friends imagine' and could be quickly eaten into if a tourist wanted his wife to accompany him for any length of time. 'Constant separation both at home in the summer and during the winter inevitably takes its toll and it surprises me that the TCCB does not help finance our wives' travelling expenses as any other overseas employer would,' he wrote in *Marks Out of XI*.

For those denied a ticket on England's winter excursions there loomed the county professional's annual search for winter employment and long hours staring at a diminishing bank balance. 'Financially it was still fantastic for us to play for England,' said batsman Tim Robinson. 'I don't recall exactly what percentage of your county salary it was but it wasn't far off doubling it. So the financial incentive of playing for England at that time was enormous. But if you weren't in the team you did have to find another job – simple as that. I had a contract with Gunn and Moore, so most winters I used to do promotional work for them.'

For someone such as all-rounder Phil DeFreitas, elevated to the England team to tour Australia in 1986-87 after only one full season in the Leicestershire side, the comparative riches offered by international cricket were startling. After being told of his selection by a Grace Road gateman who had heard it on the radio, DeFreitas recalled, 'At some point it registered with me that I would be paid £10,000 for the tour – five times what I had earned for a full season with my county.'

Yet the tale of spinner Nick Cook's call-up for the 1987-88 Pakistan tour is equally illuminating. 'I heard about it on the radio,' he explained. 'I had just lined up a six-month trip to Perth to play club cricket for Wanneroo and I was showing this couple around the house. They were going to rent it. Going to Pakistan on that tour cost me about £3,000, but you would have looked an idiot if you had turned down England. So I went on tour, was worse off, and was then left high and dry for the rest of the winter – no money, no job – until I went back to Northants in April. That cannot be right. But we had no power to do anything about it.'

Eddie Hemmings was another who lost money because of playing for England that winter. Involvement in a World Cup and Test matches cost the Nottinghamshire off-spinner 'three lucrative months of fundraising' as part of his benefit programme.

The benefit season, which could be a combination of innovative entrepreneurship and undignified begging, continued to be an important financial landmark for most county players, including those with international opportunities. During the summer of 1980 John Lever had set an Essex record by pocketing a reported £66,410, and by the end of the decade successful campaigns were reaping six-figure sums. The system helped out the counties as much as the players. Essex, one of the more successful teams on-field but without an international ground to boost revenue, finished that

1980 season with a profit of £10,840, a fraction of Lever's bonus. Hampshire, meanwhile, reported a £5,717 loss after membership fell by around fifteen per cent to 5,800.

Yet Hemmings continued, 'I had always found the benefit system demeaning. Many players before and since have virtually ignored their game for twelve months and gone round holding the begging bowl to secure a future for themselves and their families. The decision not to spend all my waking hours on fundraising probably cost the Hemmings household a small fortune. I ended the year with only £22,750 when other Test players were passing the £100,000 mark.'

In many circles, the feeling persisted throughout the 1980s that cricketers – because they were undoubtedly better off than a decade earlier – should be completely content with their lot and grateful for whatever they got. By the mid-'80s county wages were roughly three times what they had been in 1979. England regulars were earning upwards of £30,000, more like four times the amount in the final pre-Packer days.

Examining the game's finances in 1986, *Wisden* noted cricketers' long winter not as a period of potentially stressful unemployment, but said instead that 'the seven-month close-season affords other earning opportunities'. For many, however, such income would still be lifeblood rather than gravy.

Counties had grudgingly agreed to trial a minimum wage in 1979, set at £4,500. Arguments against such a scheme included the clubs' different levels and structures of pay – with players at some teams relying more heavily on bonuses and appearance money – and the counties' claim that they couldn't afford the resulting increased wage bill. It was pointed out to the traditionally lower-paying clubs that at least this better protected them from losing their top players to wealthier teams. By mid-decade that minimum mark for capped players had risen to £7,665 and approximately a third of counties were thought to be paying average salaries comfortably in excess of that figure. County cricket's total wage bill would be estimated to have risen from £700,000 in 1978 to more than £2m in 1985.

To the credit of the England players, they supported the general notion that the gap between international and county wages at the beginning of the decade was too high and accepted only small increases over the next few years. For the counties' part, their ability to generate more income from off-season use of facilities went only so far towards meeting their salary commitments, leaving them increasingly reliant on the TCCB channelling its income in their direction. By 1985, the ruling body, according to *Wisden*, was earning £2,321,000 from marketing and sponsorship contracts, almost five times the amount of 1977, the final summer before Packer entered the sport.

Yet England's leading Test cricketers were still only taking home the kind of money journeymen First Division footballers had been making more than a decade earlier. It partly explains why, when sponsors came calling

with the offer of lucrative trips to South Africa on unofficial England tours – as they would in 1982 and 1989 – there was no shortage of men willing to risk international careers for the kind of money impossible to earn within establishment cricket.

Even DeFreitas, who increased his county salary to £10,000 in a move to Lancashire before the 1989 season, came close to accepting a contract to tour South Africa later that year, despite the obvious political minefield he would have been stepping into as a Caribbean-born visitor. 'I felt like I was being paid peanuts by England so when I looked down and saw the figure of £75,000 I was blown away,' he admitted. Wayne Larkins, part of the first party to go to South Africa, stated, 'It was either that or the dole.'

Emburey, the only player to go on both rebel tours, added, 'We were paid peanuts by England. It was those rebel tours that led to central contracts. Everyone said, "The game is going to be ruined," but what a load of bullshit that is. It was all a lot of gas by people who thought it was wrong for us to go. They thought we were mercenary, but as a professional cricketer you are bloody mercenary. That is what we got paid to do.'