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Alcohol, illness and inspiration

The white numbers on the Hove scoreboard cut through the grey, damp Sussex morning like an accusation. 34 for 3. Not the most relaxing or reassuring of situations for a nervous young cricketer making his way to the wicket for his first innings in the County Championship. At the Sea End of the ground, umpire Albert ‘Dusty’ Rhodes had just sent England batsman and wicketkeeper Jim Parks back to the pavilion. The impossibly tall, blond batsman now approaching the middle cut a striking figure.

‘Who’s this?’ asked Rhodes, turning to Lancashire bowler Brian Statham, the metronomic former England opener who had been the beneficiary of the umpire’s lbw decision. Statham was none the wiser, but a voice in the field piped up.

‘He’s called Greig. He’s from South Africa.’

Taking his guard and looking down the ground, 20-year-old Tony Greig knew all about the man polishing the ball on the way back to the start of his run-up. Christ, he had ‘been’ Statham enough times in his garden back home in Queenstown. He had acted the role of one of Test cricket’s leading wicket-takers – along with Jim Laker, Ken Barrington, Ted Dexter and the rest of the England team – while taking on his friends’ South African XIs in hard-fought back-yard internationals.

Now it was the real thing. Forget his first competitive innings for the county four days earlier, when he’d made 22 in a low-scoring Gillette

Cup win at Worcester after a tidy spell of bowling. That paled next to his Championship debut against a Test attack of Statham and Ken Higgs with the ball dipping and swinging in the moist coastal air. He'd tried to prepare by reporting to the County Ground for an extra net session on the players' day off, but nothing could replicate this moment. 'I was scared stiff,' he'd admit later.

The first ball was trademark Statham: fast, straight and full. 'Being a tall bloke, I didn't get down quite low enough and it hit my toe just in front of middle stump,' is Greig's recollection. His stomach lurched in panic and regret. He knew he was gone. 'All the Lancastrians were in the air. I couldn't believe it; out lbw first ball, first match.'

'Not out,' Rhodes deadpanned. Greig could have kissed him.

The next delivery was again pitched up, homing in on leg stump. This time Greig managed to drop his bat on the ball, edging it against his boot and scrambling a run. Arriving at the non-striker's end he was amazed to hear Rhodes ask, 'Do you know a Sandy Greig from Queenstown?'

'Yes, he's my Dad,' was Greig's puzzled reply.

'Ah, great decision,' muttered the umpire and turned back to the game.

Later that evening, Greig would hear the full story. Rhodes, a former Derbyshire all-rounder, had been sent to South Africa some years earlier while working for an oil company and often met Greig senior in Queenstown's only pub. He even recalled the barman's name.

Who knows whether Greig would have got a first-baller had Rhodes's travels taken him somewhere different? He celebrated his reprieve, though, by launching into an innings that would in later years be recognised as a typical Greig counter-attack. There was little consideration of the playing conditions, the match position or the coaching manual. As soon as he saw the ball he took aim at it. 'You name the mistake, I made it,' he admitted.

When he next faced Statham he drove him down the ground for four. One over later, he cut him to the boundary and struck him straight a second time. The third member of Lancashire's formidable seam attack was future Test bowler Peter Lever, who recalls, 'Greig certainly came on the county scene with a bang. I can't remember it all but he had a bit of a slog at it and I think you will find that we dropped him several

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times. Greig, being the guy he is, had a bit of a laugh and a grin and got on with it. He didn't give a damn whether we dropped him once or ten times, he just kept smashing it and everybody immediately said, "Who is this guy Greig who has appeared?"

Clear of the threat of early failure, Greig began eyeing the prospect of a maiden first-class fifty, an achievement he believed would justify his aggressive approach. When he got to that landmark he recalled being 'so overjoyed I couldn't have cared if I'd been bowled next ball'. He was too inexperienced and excited to set his sights on a century and a big team score. Instead, he blasted away with the abandon of someone released from all pressure. It was only when he reached the 90s that nerves hit him. Peter Graves, enjoying the first of many partnerships he'd share with Greig over the next ten years, recalls, 'Greig was a typical South African and had this inner confidence. He talked a lot, perhaps initially to hide his nerves, and he had a good mental approach. I told him, "I'll talk you through to your hundred," but then I got out when he was on 99.'

Greig crept into three figures and, free once more, resumed his assault. He was eventually lbw after swinging once too often at off-spinner John Savage. By then he'd charged to 156, including 22 boundaries. The next day's *Brighton Evening Argus* would devote the best part of a page to his innings. Veteran comedian Tommy Trinder was opening that week at the Palace Pier Theatre, but it was thanks to Greig that 'the crowds will roll up again', the paper predicted. Sussex captain Parks confirmed, 'He plays attractive cricket; the type spectators want to see.'

Greig, who would soon be pictured on the cover of *The Cricketer* magazine, loved his first taste of being centre of the reporters' attention that evening, beginning a productive relationship with the media that would endure for the next decade. It had been an agreeable end to a memorable day; one that had introduced the name of Tony Greig to English first-class cricket and already gone some way towards helping him meet the challenge laid down by his father.

Like the rest of his generation, Sandy Greig had been forced to put his sporting ambitions on hold at the outbreak of the Second World War in the autumn of 1939. Born in Bathgate, West Lothian, he had been an accomplished rugby player at Watson's College in Edinburgh,

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a decent cricketer and big fan of football's Rangers. Yet, at 17, he left all that behind when he joined the Royal Air Force. A squadron leader by the age of 21, his service to Bomber Command earned him the Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Flying Cross. In 1943, with a remarkable 54 missions over Germany behind him, he was posted to become chief instructor at an air training school in Queenstown, a small community in the farming region of South Africa's Eastern Cape.

Meeting and marrying Joyce – a 45-year union that would last until his death in 1990 – Sandy remained in South Africa at the end of the war. He advanced quickly in the insurance business, later took up the post of editor of the local newspaper, the *Daily Representative*, and became a well-known coach and administrator in local rugby and cricket. His inclusive, multi-racial approach to sport prompted broadcaster Alan Jones, speaking after Sandy died, to say, 'He was loved by blacks and whites alike because he was honest and straight.'

Tony was the eldest of four Greig children – born on 6 October 1946 – with Molly Joy, Sally Ann and Ian following three, seven and nine years later. Sandy wasn't the only relative able to bequeath sporting genes. Joyce was a good player of hockey, tennis, squash and golf and an uncle, Daniel 'Dummy' Taylor, played Currie Cup cricket for Border, as would cousin Roy. Joyce would even volunteer for bowling stints at young Tony in the garden of their well-appointed home away from the centre of Queenstown.

Having moved to such spacious surroundings when he was seven, Tony was able to enjoy the idyllic existence of a sport-mad youngster in a white family in post-war South Africa. Brother Ian explains, 'It is a fairly small place and there was not much to do other than ride a bicycle around the place or go to the movies. There was one small cinema and that was not on our agenda, so sport and play was very much a part of our upbringing.' Joyce remembers, 'Tony would make a pole vault, obstacle races, all kinds of things. All the children came to our house to play because he made it all so interesting.'

There were three live-in servants to cater for the family's needs, plenty of room for Test matches against friends, and the availability of younger siblings to do the fielding chores. Molly Joy recalls, 'We used to play endless games of cricket that went on until it was dark and we had to be called inside. We played rugby as well but once I was going

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through adolescence my father said Tony shouldn't tackle me.'

Even the gardener, Teki Manzi, spent more time playing cricket than he ever did tending to the weeds. Tackies, as he was nicknamed after the local term for the plimsoll-type shoes he wore, loved to bowl and did so at a fast pace, with a chucker's action. 'He was fast, he was tireless and he could bowl straight,' Greig explains. 'He used to come at me from one end of our back lawn with a variety of cricket balls, tennis balls and hard rubber balls.' His role in the development of the future England captain would eventually be acknowledged by a trip to London to appear on ITV's *This Is Your Life* when Greig was chosen as its subject in 1977.

Ian recalls playing the important role of stooge when the competition between his brother and his friends reached its fiercest. 'My earliest memories of Tony are in the back garden when I was about six,' he explains. 'These games used to go on, serious matches, and his mates used to say, "You are bowling too fast." His response would be, "I bowl the same at my brother. He can face this. I'll show you." Tony would strap the pads on me and whisper, "You know the story. The first one is a half-volley outside off stump, so play forward. The second one is a long hop outside off stump, so cut it, and the third is short outside the leg stump, so pull it." I trusted him completely. I played straight to the first and would hit it because I knew what was coming, and sometimes I hit the second and third and sometimes I missed. Tony would say, "See, he can do it." Absolutely everything we did had a competitive element to it. If you were skimming stones at the dam you saw who could make it bounce most often. If you were on a family walk, you'd see who could pick up a stone and hit a tree.'

Joyce continues, 'There was always competition, even with cards. When my mother came the boys would say, "Let's get the table out," and we used to play canasta or some gambling game.' Molly Joy recalls that even games of tennis against the garage door were fought out as though a Wimbledon title was at stake, while Tony recognises that such an environment helped to develop the defining element of his cricketing career. 'As a youngster, we played games to win,' he states. 'That might have been a contributing factor. Then there was the fact that I was tall even as a kid so, for example, when I was forced to do boxing at school it was against guys who were older than me. I had to force myself to

protect myself.'

Greig might have appeared privileged to outsiders, but his childhood was far from being free of suffering and trauma. Throughout it there was the constant presence of his father's alcoholism. 'I learned about the impact that alcohol could have on a family,' he says. 'My mother was the absolute rock in our family when my dad went through his bad times.'

Ian recalls, 'Mum was such a special person and shielded us from much of it. Obviously there are things that I clearly remember and they are not wonderful memories; like wondering where the next meal was going to come from. But Mum always found a way. It should have been a very comfortable life for us. Dad was a very clever man and was doing so well after the war. He had the world at his feet in the insurance game and kept on climbing the ladder and we should have been a very well-off family. But, regrettably, that wasn't to be and one has to say that Dad's drinking habits were a cause of that.'

Alcohol had become a way of dealing with the stress and losses that one had to endure every single day in the wartime RAF. Only 50 per cent of crews survived 30 bombing missions, yet Sandy, a navigator, had volunteered to put his life on the line many more times than that. 'If you did a tour and survived you were a freak, and you were without doubt mentally scarred,' says Ian. 'He saw a lot of psychiatrists and he very seldom spoke about what happened. My sister reminded me recently of when we were watching a film called *Mrs Miniver* on television. During this movie Dad just got up and ran out the room and Mum followed him. He came back half an hour later and Mum said, "That footage that you see of a raid on Hamburg was taken from Dad's plane." We were desperate for Dad to put his memories down on paper but there were so many horrific things he saw and did, bombing towns and what have you. My mother went to a very big reunion in the UK, the 40th anniversary of some particular event related to 101 Squadron, and she asked someone why she was sitting on a high table. This guy just looked at her and said, "You have no idea, do you? You have no idea what this man means to these people and what he achieved in the war."

Sandy was a functioning alcoholic rather than a helpless drunk, as Ian explains. 'You never saw him rolling all over the place. Later in life, when he was sober, we used to talk about it. He used to say, "If you have had too many, you must walk with your legs wide apart so you don't have

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that central balance problem." He said that most drunks stagger because they put one foot in front of another. He would just drink continuously and never get drunk. Over the years he tried to give up numerous times, but Mum could read him like a book and knew exactly when he had broken. He carried out significant jobs where he would sip away, sip away. He used to hide a bottle of vodka in the toilet cistern and would get up every 20 minutes to have a sip. My mum knew and she said, "Sandy, I think you need to go to the doctor because you are going to the toilet very often." He had to find a new little system.

'We talked about it later in life and Dad used to talk about all the ways he thought he was conning us. I dived on his bed one day like I was scoring a try and I heard this half-empty bottle sloshing around. In frustration I ran out the back door and threw it in the bushland behind us. Mum saw me doing it and asked why. I said, "If I throw it away he won't do it." She said, "No, he'll just go and buy another one." I probably didn't realise how much of a problem there was until I was about 12 or 13, when it was decided it was in my best interests that I went to boarding school. That was a problem in itself. Not the fees because they were so low; the problem was the clothing. If you go to boarding school you can't have one of everything like I had at home – one shirt that was washed every afternoon. You had to have enough to last for a week. Tony helped out and my mum's brothers and sisters also helped.'

Tony would carry an 'apprehension of alcohol which amounts to fear' into adult life, becoming a heavy smoker instead. Sandy finally subjected himself to two years of rehabilitation treatment in 1970, only to fall off the wagon when away from his protective and supportive environment. It needed a serious health scare several years later, a twisted bowel, to set him down the path of combating alcoholism once and for all. 'When he cracked it I was very proud of him,' Tony says. 'The fact my dad got through it was incredible and eventually he was able to talk openly about his problems. When you have to live with adversity, to get through it to the other side is just the most wonderful thing. It brought our family really close together.'

Ian continues, 'I suppose the respect I lost for him early in my teenage years I regained when I was about 16 to 18 because he gave up and became a dry alcoholic. I realised he wasn't just a piss pot; this was a sickness and a disease. It was really special to have those years after

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he gave up drinking and it was great to see Mum and Dad happy. Our mother absolutely adored him. Her family said, "Leave him and we will look after you and the children." She said, "You don't understand how difficult it is to leave somebody you love. I will give him every chance." Mum was very special and protected us enormously.'

Joyce had already made a brave stand to be with Sandy, divorcing her first husband, Charles, at a time when such action was still widely condemned by society. And she had very nearly not been around to offer support to her children after tragedy almost struck during a family Christmas vacation to a coastland area called Kei Mouth, where the whole Greig clan, including servants, ventured each year.

Ten-year-old Tony had been swimming in the sea with his mother and two aunts, along with other families, when, from nowhere, a shark attacked. As sharks go it was small, but Tony recalled, 'All I saw was a sudden flash of fin through the water, before a dreadful scream announced that the shark had struck.' It had placed its jaws around Joyce's right leg, below the knee, and was trying to pull her under. As she swung out with her fist she caught the shark in the eye. The shark relaxed its grip, bit her on the hand and disappeared. Doctors saved her leg over the course of two months spent largely at hospital but young Tony was, initially at least, left deeply disturbed by the sight of his mother's leg wrapped in a red-soaked towel on the beach and her hand distorted and bloody. The resilience of childhood soon had him back in the water, however, and winning a fancy dress prize at a party after going as the victim of a shark attack.

Yet, at 14, came the incident that was to stay with him for the rest of his life. He suffered his first epileptic fit.

It was a sunny summer afternoon and Greig was playing tennis against a frequent adversary, Charles Pope from Dale College, the arch-rival of his own school, Queen's College. 'I played against Tony at all kinds of sport for many years,' says Pope. 'When we played rugby at Under-11 in 1957 we each played fly-half for our schools. As he started getting taller he started playing lock.' Greig's life at this stage was dominated by sport. Beginning lessons at 7.30am and finishing at 2.30pm, he had time to fit in two hours of tennis practice and another two of rugby or cricket before, as Sandy demanded, ensuring that all his homework was done.

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Going into the deciding fifth set on this particular Saturday, Greig became giddy, yet conscious enough for his mother's warning about playing too much sport to come to his confused mind. 'All I remember is walking back to serve, throwing up the ball... then darkness,' he would explain. Pope recalls, 'It was terrible. He just keeled over backwards with his eyes wide open. Luckily the master in charge made sure he got to a doctor straight away. The other thing I remember is that I had hung my watch on the net and in all the confusion someone stole it.'

Greig's doubles partner, Bob McKenzie, who was watching the game, had been among the first to attend to him and it was McKenzie's parents who drove him home. Younger brother Ian says, 'I don't recall whether it was his first attack, but I remember Tony being brought in, being carried by some teachers and put in his bedroom. That was the only thing I knew.'

His mother admits, 'I took it very badly. I just let go and cried. When I got over that I said, "Right, we want the best specialist in South Africa." Family doctor Sandy Voortman suggested Tony be sent to Cape Town for tests at the Groote Schur Hospital, by which time even the happy-go-lucky teenager could sense the importance those results held over the rest of his life. Joyce continues, 'We got the appointment a couple of weeks later and my family took the children while we drove through the night to keep this appointment.'

The diagnosis was a mild form of epilepsy, which doctors said might cure itself. It didn't. Greig would have to control the onset of attacks through personal discipline, taking his medication and sleeping at the prescribed hours. For an active and free spirit it took some time for his parents' reminders to become redundant and not greeted with resentment. 'He didn't take it kindly,' says Joyce. 'He hated it. I used to make the mistake of asking him in front of other people whether he'd taken his tablets.'

Initially, the drugs could induce drowsiness, to the extent that a maths teacher, unaware of the illness, reported him on the assumption that he had been smoking. When he did have an attack, the injection from the doctor could lay him low for days on end. Activities like riding a bike and swimming were sidelined for a while, yet Greig refused such long-term compromise. The only time he was ever injured during an attack was when he fell from a kitchen stool trying to reach some

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biscuits, causing a black eye and chipped teeth. ‘Maybe I was foolhardy, a stubborn martyr. But I was lucky. I came to no harm by carrying on just the way I always had done.’

Ian comments, ‘There is an unbelievable bond between Tony and my mother. Mum talks about how, when your first-born goes through the problems he did, you become very close. I still think to this day she worries about Tony and his health and all the medication he takes on a daily basis.’

As Greig became more adept at recognising danger signs and more willing to adhere to instructions, so his sporting career was able to continue. In adult life there would be times when he had to walk out of meetings and parties abruptly and his condition contributed to his famous habit of grabbing naps in the dressing-room while waiting to bat. Greig offered an explanation to only a few people. It was only after the publication of his autobiography at the end of his playing career that his illness became common knowledge and a topic of discussion, since when he has become a frequent spokesman, ambassador and fund-raiser for epilepsy organisations around the world.

‘I’d seen my dad become able to talk openly about his problems and I had similar experience with my epilepsy,’ he says. ‘Being able to talk about it later in life led me to greater involvement to help epileptics in Australia. I was very close to my doctor and he said I had to find a way to control and recognise the signs of danger. I get a warning, an aura, and as a result of that I am able to keep myself out of trouble. There were a few things that backfired, though. I used to take a tiny portion of a sleeping tablet before the start of a Test match because sleep was so important as an epileptic. If I lacked sleep I was vulnerable. That grew over the years and I ended up taking a whole tablet. When I came to Australia I was far too dependent on them, so I went to see a lady who was a world authority on sleep disorders. I now tell all epileptics to be careful of sleeping tablets because it is an easy way out. I’m very grateful that I didn’t become completely dependent.’

The young Greig might not have felt able to discuss his illness, but perhaps it helped to drive him. Having experienced the helplessness of being at the mercy of a medical outcome beyond his influence, Greig developed into the kind of sportsman who strove to seize each opportunity. He stood up to every challenge and took matters into his

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own hands – whether it was counter-attacking against fast bowlers, bringing himself on to bowl when a partnership needed breaking or placing himself in the most vital catching position. He was certainly not the first sporting figure to be driven by personal misfortune. Two men who would vie with Greig for the title of the biggest, brashest figure in British sport in the 1970s, Brian Clough and Malcolm Allison, had become consumed by the passion to succeed as coaches after their playing careers had been ended by, respectively, a horrific knee injury and the loss of a lung to tuberculosis.

Greig, to whom it was suggested that his illness might be connected with the dizzying blow to the head he took a year earlier when the truck in which he was a passenger slid into a ditch, now admits, ‘In a roundabout way I think epilepsy probably did help me. It was my challenge. I got over a hurdle.’

If the drive to balance his affliction with his sporting ambition helped make Greig the raging competitor he was to become, he also credited the influence of one of his earliest heroes, cousin Rodney King, who was 15 years his senior. Greig would spend holidays at his farm, helping with the sheep, learning to ride, shoot and, at the age of 12, drive. He believed the action-adventure life he enjoyed with King helped to shape the personality he took on to the cricket field.

The other thing that accompanied him in his early years was the critical eye of his father. Sandy was hard to please, dissecting every innings, however successful. ‘He would sit there and observe the whole day’s play and I remember one instance when I had made a hundred against Selborne, which was one of the big schools we played against. We got into the car to drive home and he said something like, “When you were on 25, you played a shot which I didn’t understand.” He was more inclined to pick out little instances where I might not have been thinking right. He was a bit of a critic. I wondered why he didn’t just say “well played” but he played the role of keeping me level-headed. I was getting plenty of accolades so he gave me exactly what I needed – and I could always go to my mother for a pat on the back.’

Ian describes Greig senior as ‘very analytical’. He recalls, ‘I can remember having 8 for 19 in a game against Dale College when Dad arrived. I just couldn’t get the last two out and someone else got them. I will never forget Dad shouting out, “Bowl on the bloody wicket.” When

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I spoke to him it wasn't, "Gee, mate, well bowled," it was, "You don't often get the chance to get ten wickets; you should have got the last two." He was quick to point out if we played a bad shot or missed a tackle and he never favoured us in his newspaper reports. It drove us to perfection.'

Sandy was similarly strict when it came to education, forcing Tony to take additional lessons in Afrikaans and encouraging his maths teacher to administer the cane as a learning aid. Even though such harsh judgement might have been hard to understand when he was young, Greig came to acknowledge its importance later on and grew up as a strong disciplinarian.

It did not, however, prevent him getting into the usual teenage scrapes, several of which are recalled by sister Molly Joy. 'We set the local golf course alight once. It was virtually next door to our home and when we used to walk there by the stream we would swing in the trees and slide down the mud banks. This time Tony decided we should just make a fire. It ended up burning a couple of holes and we seriously got into trouble. I also recall that when we went to the youth club our father said Tony could go on his bicycle but was not allowed to go in anyone's car. There was one older guy whose father had loaned him his Jaguar so Tony hid his bike in the hedge and was picked up. When father went for a walk, the dog sniffed out the bike so he took it back and put it in the garage. We were never allowed to lie – we were always told "one lie leads to another" – so when Tony made up some story about his bike being stolen he was in big trouble for that.'

Molly Joy also remembers Tony's own escapade at the wheel. 'He was allowed to drive my mother's car – a real old thing – into the garden at night but before that he used to screech around the cul-de-sac with me in it. One night he hit a garden tap and the next day there was water up over the wheels. He was told to go straight to school before his father woke up. It took two vans with cranes to move the car and the garden ended up a right mess. But Tony was a great big brother, very family orientated. When I was at boarding school I was very homesick and he used to visit me every Sunday and arranged to have cakes delivered to me, which always made me cry.'

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Queen's College was the perfect environment for a budding sportsman, with its four cricket fields, seven rugby pitches and the importance it attached to playing games. Having started at its prep school, Greig was into his third year when he had his first contact with Sussex County Cricket Club, when former all-rounder Jack Oakes arrived as a coach. Shortly thereafter he scored his first century in a game for the junior school against Cathcart, an achievement for which the local department store kept a promise by giving him a new bat. Once he had progressed to the senior school and was playing for the first team, games became serious business, often involving journeys in excess of 100 miles and overnight stays. The mileage was worthwhile as Greig began to make a name for himself in the schools cricket community.

'He always hit the ball very hard and was a good all-rounder,' says Pope. 'He and a guy called Bruce Groves were the real king-pins. Tony was one of the most competitive people I have ever played against. He didn't stop halfway and the words would fly. He was controversial even then.'

Groves has vivid memories of sharing various playing fields with Greig. 'With me being a boarder and him being a "day boy" who lived at home, our friendship grew very much around sporting activities. He was gangly and tall with long arms and big feet and we likened him to a washline. Hence the nickname Washies. We were very good mates and there was a lot of teasing and laughter. In his early rugby days, he played full-back and could kick a ball forever with those huge feet. Then, as he grew past 6ft, he became a very competitive lock forward. He was well-liked by nearly everyone. He was always friendly and smiling, never aloof, and some of his closest friends were not sportsmen.' Whether through personality or sheer physical presence, Greig was a natural leader. Captaining school teams at cricket, rugby and tennis earned him certain privileges, such as having three 'fags' to call upon in the traditional system of personal service employed by boarding schools all over the British Empire. Greig himself had gone through the apprenticeship of cleaning shoes and washing sports kit for older boys and claims that 'it did me no harm at all'.

At that stage, rugby gave him the greatest buzz, due to the crowds of 2,000 that frequently watched the school's matches. But it was clearly cricket where Greig possessed his greatest ability. A batsman and seamer,

his experimentation with a slower bowling style began early, catching the eye of the South African Schools selectors when he ran through the opposition on a wet, turning pitch by bowling off-spinners. Groves continues, 'He was a sound middle-order batsman, a classic both-ways swing bowler and a great close fielder. But he was a little bit slow and cumbersome with the pigeon toes and big feet.'

The Nuffield Cricket Week was the highlight of the calendar, pitting the provinces' representative teams against each other under the watchful eyes of the national coaches. In the summer of 1964–65, in what was scheduled to be his final year of playing for Border Schools at the festival, he earned a place in the South African Schools team to play host side Griqualand West and scored 23. His selection occurred after Natal's Mike Procter, considered the outstanding all-rounder in the age group, was withdrawn for what Greig was only ever to discern was an 'alleged misdemeanour'. Unexpectedly, though, Greig would be back at the event one final time.

His intended career path at that stage was to enrol at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and study to be a history teacher. That university place depended on his final-year exams, but when he went down with flu he was unable to sit the last two papers. Initially, he was told that he simply needed to return after the summer break to sit the exams he had missed, but was subsequently ordered to retake the lot – at which point he promptly failed the Afrikaans exam that he had passed first time around. It meant spending another year at school in order to take a new course of finals, the upside of which was a fourth appearance at Nuffield week, this time in Cape Town, and another national selection.

He had also found himself playing under Groves, who was a year younger, in the school's rugby team. 'At the end of each year, the captain is selected for the next year and in this case it was me for 1965,' Groves recalls. 'Funnily enough, it worked well and Tony accepted the situation like a sportsman.'

Early in 1966, Greig was selected for his debut in first-class cricket, scoring 37 and five and taking a wicket in each innings for Border in a Currie Cup B section game against Transvaal B at East London. Having finally left Queen's at the end of 1965, his revised plan was to complete a year of national service and then take his place at Rhodes. The army had

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other ideas, however, turning him down for reasons which, although unspecified, were assumed to be connected to his epilepsy. Suddenly the rest of 1966 was stretching ahead of him, with nothing marked in his calendar. ‘Only then,’ Greig recalled, ‘did the thought of playing cricket in England enter my mind.’