

About the Author



Ken Piesse has had a fifty-year love affair with cricket as a player, watcher, writer and commentator.

Born in 1955, the year the MCG wicket was illegally watered, Ken has played hundreds of game since his first, aged nine, at Parkdale for the Beaumaris Under 14s.

Back then he didn't know the difference between point and square leg but something about the game intrigued him.

He started collecting newspaper cuttings and clippings and compiling statistics books. Forty-nine cricket books on – and sixty-eight overall – he says few are as fortunate as him to be able to work at their hobby each and every day.

His wife Susan has long given up trying to plan anything on a summer Saturday. And for that he's most grateful.

Other cricket books by Ken Piesse
published by The Five Mile Press:
Great Australian Cricket Stories (2010)
*Dynamic Duos: Cricket's Finest Pairs
and Partnerships* (2012)
Great Ashes Moments (2013)

Echo Publishing - Not For Distribution

• FAVOURITE •
**CRICKET
YARNS**

FROM LAUGHS & LEGENDS
TO SLEDGES & STUFF-UPS

KEN PIESSE



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Foreword



I was destined to be a cricketer. I never wanted to be anything else. Mowbray Cricket Club was my home away from home. I was in my element sitting in the rooms among the players and their gear, listening to their banter. When everyone had gone out to field I'd pick up a bat and play some strokes, imagining I was in the middle at Bellerive, or even better, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

My Dad would take me to all sorts of games, from club to Sheffield Shield matches. For a few years I worked the scoreboard at the NTCA Ground in Launceston. I felt like I had the most important job in the world, especially if there was a Shield game on.

Mowbray picked me in their firsts when I was fourteen, a game I still recall fondly for a sharp catch at gully. It was a full throttle cut shot and I just thrust out my hand and miraculously it stuck. Our wicketkeeper Richard Soule dashed across and picked me up in a bear hug and told me it was as good a catch as he'd ever seen. You can imagine how I felt after that. He was keeping regularly for Tasmania back then and the guy I'd caught, Richard Bennett, was a regular in the Tassie top-order. Yes, that was a good day ...

At school, my mates would ask me what I wanted to be. It was a silly question really. I was going to be a cricketer. Full stop. And other than working as a groundsman at Scotch Oakburn

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College for a few months in my mid-teens, that's what I've been ever since.

I was telling the story of my early days to a gathering at the MCG late last year when I was made Patron of the Australian Cricket Society (ACS). Among the crowd, sitting close to me in the front row, dressed in whites and a cricket shirt, was a young boy. He was clutching his bat, just as I used to when I was a similar age. I stopped what I was saying and said to him, 'You know, I was just like you ... exactly like you. Going everywhere in my whites ... hoping one of the older guys wouldn't show up so I could get onto the field ... anything to be involved.'

He was only knee-high, but I could tell how passionate he was about the game. Later I picked up his bat. 'Feels pretty good,' I said. And it did.

One of the things I admire about the ACS is its involvement in the scholarship scheme run by Bryce McGain and his Elite Cricket Academy in Melbourne. The course revolves around the fast-tracking of twelve and thirteen-year-olds, giving them the best possible coaching and experiences. When I turned sixteen, I was fortunate enough to have some time at the Australian Cricket Academy under Rod Marsh. Along with Andy Gower, another junior from Launceston, I spent a fortnight in Adelaide on a scholarship organised by the Century Club in Launceston.

You need skill, passion, commitment and luck to be a cricketer and having that time in Adelaide under one of the greats in Rod was a real eye-opener. I realised a career in cricket was a possibility after all, and I still thank those businessmen in Launceston who were so generous in backing me. It's a story I never get tired of repeating.

Cricket people are good people – and they all have a story to tell, as I found flicking through some of the early manuscript pages for *Favourite Cricket Yarns*, Ken Piesse's latest book. In between being president of the Australian Cricket Society and captain of the Kingston Saints third XI, mentoring and encouraging young players, Ken lives, eats and breathes cricket like few I know.

FOREWORD



Ricky Ponting with Ken Piesse at the launch of Ricky's autobiography in Melbourne late in 2013

Most of you are likely to have at least one of Ken's books in your libraries. This is his forty-ninth cricket book and his sixty-eighth overall on cricket and football. That's a fair innings.

There's a great blend of characters in this one, from the current crop to the oldies-but-goodies. I especially like David Lloyd's pun at Lord's when he was worried about the press-box lift stopping again (see 'Handsome but not handsome enough' in chapter 4).

Ken helps give everyone the best seat in the house, bringing us all closer to the action, with the emphasis on his amusing anecdotes. Like me, he thinks cricket is the best game ever invented and I wish him well with his latest creation.

Ricky Ponting
Melbourne

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Author's Introduction



The great game of cricket charms us in so many ways, from matches and events to the mates we make. I revel in the backroom stories, like Tony Greig failing to recognise the Don at Adelaide Airport at the start of the Rest of the World tour and shrinking in embarrassment when Garry Sobers arrived and said, 'Sir Donald ... what an honour.'

And Greigy, on his UK debut at Hove, being caught plumb in front, first or second ball, only inexplicably to be given not out. It just so happened that the umpire and Greig's Dad had been drinking buddies in Queenstown ...

Terry Jenner told me about a prison cricket match at Waikerie, during his stint in jail. TJ said, 'Our team had the best record of all: a murderer, a drug pusher, two embezzlers, a couple of bank robbers and a few blokes who'd tried to diddle social security!'

So upset was rookie captain Ian Craig by his poor form in South Africa that he went to fellow selectors Neil Harvey and Peter Burge in mid-tour and said he was stepping down. 'No way will I be a part of that,' said Harvey. 'No touring captain has ever dropped himself. Forget it, you're playing.'

An eighteen-year-old Ian Chappell, motoring to his first ever 'A' grade ton in Adelaide club cricket, had just entered the 80s when the second new ball was taken. Immediately pulling Sheffield Shield paceman Alan Hitchcox for 4, he said with typical Chappell scorn, 'Fancy *you* playing for South Australia.'

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Hitchcox extended his run and tried to knock Chappell's block off only to watch his next three balls clatter into the fence at backward square. The shorter he bowled, the harder Chappell hooked. In four balls, Chappell's score advanced from 84 to 100. Within a week he'd been chosen by his state.

Years ago, fighting one of my loopy leg breaks at the MCG, I had David Hookes caught on the boundary from a steeping hit which would have surely gone over the old Southern Stand had it still been standing, a strong southerly bringing the ball back into the arena for cricket administrator David Richards to take a lovely outfield catch just metres from Bay 13. Hookes and I were in at a radio studio years later and he signed a copy of his autobiography for me:

To Ken ...

Remember when: Hookes, c. Richards, b. Piesse.

Best wishes,

David Hookes

Having a Test player sign one of his books for me has always been a thrill. At the Centenary Test match, armed with four newly acquired Percy Fender tour books, I approached Percy, then eighty-four and in a wheelchair, and asked if he would mind signing them. He was all but blind and had brought his teenage grandson with him to be his eyes. 'I'd be glad to,' he said. And in tiny writing he wrote his name on each one.

Keith Miller was the most vibrant of souls. We lived in adjoining suburbs. One morning I dropped in for a cuppa and he was in tears. 'You know I should have captained Australia,' he said. 'Don Bradman ruined my life ... and you can quote me, Ken.'

'Of course you should have captained, Nugget,' I said, 'but so should've Shane Warne. You two had a bit extra happening in your lives ... and didn't you bowl a bouncer which almost poleaxed the Don in his testimonial match?'

Within minutes Nugget was laughing again. He respected

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Bradman's talents but they were poles apart personality-wise. Keith liked to win, but not at all costs like the Don.

Another morning Nugget rang. He'd just been watching Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope*. His mate Michael Parkinson had been the interviewee, rather than the interviewer.

'And guess what, Ken,' he said, 'guess what Parky said last night?'

'I've got no idea Nugget, what did he say?'

'Out of all the actors, the actresses, the heads of state, the really important people ... guess who Parky said was his all-time hero?'

'I've got no idea, Nug. Who did he say?'

'Me,' he said. 'Me ... little old Nugget!'



I've been fortunate to see cricket from Bridgetown to Bellerive, Johannesburg to Cardiff and St John's to Sydney. My fiftieth birthday in 2005 coincided with Day 4 of the fabulous Edgbaston Test, where Australia edged within a boundary of a Boys' Own annual victory in the most dramatic Ashes Test of them all.

Each time our Australian Cricket Society tours for the Ashes, we fixture at least one game in England – just to say we've played there. From historic Bath to tiny Meopham and its triangular-shaped village green with pubs on two of the corners, it has been a wonderful journey.

While never more than a club-standard cricketer, I've also played at some of the major Australian capital city venues from the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the Gabba and the Adelaide Oval through to Arundel and one particularly memorable afternoon at Royal Ascot, where we opposed the Thames Valley Gents, including their Aussie ring-ins Steve Waugh, Dave Gilbert and Brad McNamara. The spread at lunch was so enormous and quality wines so abundant that the main interval went for an hour and a half.

I was bowling in tandem with Paul Jackson, who was

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Victoria's spinner before Shane Warne. 'Jacko' ribbed me before lunch for not shining the ball. He bowled the first over after the break, another maiden and tossing it to me said, 'Try and keep it nice.'

Waugh was on strike and struck my six balls, all same-paced leggies, for 646466 ... 32 for the over. The first only just cleared mid-on's head. The rest were straight out of the screws. Halfway through the over, Nigel Murch at short cover started laughing, 'I've never seen anything like this before.' You can imagine the state of the ball after that.

Just a few days earlier at his host club Amersham, Jacko and I had shared a 30-run last-wicket stand which had taken us across the line. Their No. 4 was a girl who played beautifully. She drove my very first ball straight back at me so hard that my fingers were still tingling two overs later. While she made only a dozen or so, it was all with classical, copybook stroke play. After the game, still on a high, I approached her and said, 'You know, you are very good. You should really try and make something of yourself.' Our wicketkeeper Mark Foster was within earshot. 'Piessey, you bloody idiot,' he said. 'That's Jan Brittin. She opens for England!'

Despite the Waugh mauling and being hit just below the breastbone by a Merv Hughes bouncer in the MCG indoor one day after Dean Jones called, 'Six to win!', it wasn't until I passed fifty years of age that I seriously discounted my chances of wearing the baggy green. Until then I lived Bert Ironmonger's dream. First selected at forty-six, he played through until he was fifty.

My best cricket had been played in the subbies at Port Melbourne, famous for its wide, white wicket and scones, jam and cream at tea breaks. An extra plateful would always be saved for our opening bowler, VFA footy legend Vic 'Stretch' Aanensen, who despite his intimidating physique bowled slowish, into-the-wind outies off a dainty nine-pace run-up. Whenever he conceded his first 4, I'd start warming-up. I was always on from his end.

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HARD NUTS: Port Melbourne CC, 1986–87 subbie premiers. Back row, left to right: Gary Phillips, Peter Vesty (scorer), Lew Coyle, myself, Vic Aanensen, Robert Bevilacqua, Sheik Bogdanovic, Jimmy Earle (secretary/barman); sitting: Shane Davidson, Robert Tinsley, Graeme Anderson (vice-captain), Bob Allen (president), Phil O'Meara (captain), Paul Crocker, Darren Duscher, Teddy Wale (12th man)

Trying to bowl competitive leggies while juggling a career as a sportswriter and commentator wasn't easy. One Sunday, still with my make-up on, I dashed straight to Williamstown from the Channel 7 television studios in Dorcas Street where I'd been presenting the cricket segment on *World of Sport*. 'You bloody poofta sportswriting prick,' was the general consensus.

Our wicketkeeper Ken Spicer was the only one who didn't drink. Once on tour, our bus was stopped by the boys-in-blue and 'Spice', who always drove, was asked when he'd last had a drink. 'Twenty-two ... maybe twenty-three years ago,' he said.

The Port boys played hard on and off the field. They were great family men, but Saturdays were 'play' days – rain, hail or shine. All-day card schools were the norm once play was abandoned, a common occurrence most October Saturdays in the late '80s. On Thursday nights, the wharfies would come in for a drink with all sorts of contraband straight off the docks.

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For years I did my Christmas shopping at Port, from below-cost wrist watches and perfume to remote-control cars. A bloke named Barry would come in, remove his jacket to reveal six or seven watches all strapped to his wrist and forearm. 'Which one do you like, Guru?' he'd ask.

Because I hailed from blue-blood Beaumaris, a Liberal-loving affluent area half an hour south, the boys reckoned I had money to burn and for larks would throw lit fifty-dollar bills out the car window on the way down to our Thursday night pizza stop, Topolinos in Fitzroy Street.

They loved it whenever I happened to be bowling and a tailender walked in with one of those big Stuart Surridge Jumbo bats. Once a leftie hit me over the small scoreboard at Port and I snarled down the wicket, 'That's just a slog pal!'

'Hang on a minute, Guru,' said Stretch from slip. 'Have a look how far it's gone!'

Our opening bat 'Macca' was camped under a skier right on the pickets at square leg one day. He had the safest pair of hands and I'd put it down as a wicket when somehow not only did he manage to miss it, but it also donged him on the shoulder and bounced over the fence for 6.

There were twenty-eight teams in Subbies, the championship being decided between the two top-ranked teams from East Group and West Group. We beat Preston and Sunshine on consecutive weekends to enter the championship final. Sunshine lasted only until 2 p.m. on the Sunday, and the boys went troppo, as if we'd just won the premiership. 'One more to go boys,' I said, cautioning them. 'Let's hold the celebrations for next week.'

'No, Guru,' they said, 'it's the Grand Final! We've won it!'

That afternoon I made the mistake of trying to go pot-for-pot with Stretch and pulled out after ten. Stretch was downing them like they were waters, while I was seeing double.

Having reluctantly switched clubs, closer to home, I played against my old mates at Port. I batted three and was bounced first, second and third ball and run out at the other end having failed to score. 'Serves you right you poofta %#*&ing

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sportswriter,' said Stretch, walking back with me almost all the way to the dugout.

I've always been in the company of cricketers, ever since I started scoring for the Beaumaris first XI at the age of nine. The captain John Chambers lived up the road and would pick me up. So keen was I that once I decided to have four different colours for the 1s, 2s, 3s and 4s. Our book that day looked like a colour-in and Mr Chambers politely asked me to just stick to the lead pencil.

If I wasn't good enough to play cricket with the best, I wanted to still be there around them. Writing and commentating provided that opportunity. A young Shane Warne was making heads turn in Melbourne and I bowled down to a second XI game at the Albert to do a story. It was right on lunchtime and Shane obligingly agreed to bowl a few leg breaks in the centre for my newspaper the *Sunday Press*. I acted as the wicketkeeper at the other end and the ball hummed at me, veering in mid-course and spinning violently sideways like it had hit a redback. I took it over the stumps in my bare hands and can still recall the stinging sensation in my fingers.

One year I was assisting Shane's coach Terry Jenner with his autobiography, *TJ Over the Top: Prison, Cricket & Warnie*. At midnight on the first night, talking about his shame of going to jail, TJ broke down and started blubbing like a baby. His partner Ann said, 'Terry, just tell Ken like you told me ... don't leave anything out.' The three chapters we did on Terry's experiences in the Big House were truly compelling and helped to make the book a bestseller. Shane, Terry's star pupil, kindly provided the foreword.

Around that time my own leg break had so lost its fizz, I was struggling to even dismiss the ageing practice captain at Frankston. Out of desperation, I emailed TJ. Within twenty-four hours came the reply: 'Master,' he wrote, 'have you considered retiring?'

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I'm still in the subbies, but these days exclusively playing thirds beside my old captain from Port, Phil O'Meara. He comes in at No. 4 and despite being in his sixties, is still our champion bat. One recent late summer's Saturday at Oakleigh, we elected to bat on what I thought was a hard, flat wicket but turned out to be a bouncy, spiteful thing. Phil and I had worked out that we'd see out their opening bowler, a leftie who swung it in at pace and we did. But their first change, another leftie, turned out to be faster again and as challenging as anything either of us had faced in twenty years. Phil got a first-baller and I never even saw the hat-trick ball, which whizzed past the off stump at high speed. Apparently the kid was coming back from injury and just testing himself in the lower grades. It was like a dodgem alley there for a while and at each change of overs, grateful to have survived, I met my partner, smiled and said, 'I'm still alive.'

One final yarn from me before we start with a whole array of my particular favourites, old and new. We were playing Essendon thirds at Adrian Butler Oval one year and one kid, their opener, scratched and edged his way to a most unsatisfactory 50. As his mates were applauding, I walked past and told him he had nothing to be proud of – 'it's probably the worst 50 in the history of the game!' When he reached three figures, to more rapturous cheering, he acknowledged me at mid-on, saying without my help, he could never have done it. He went straight into the seconds, made another ton and was playing firsts by the season-end. Amazing – and true!

Ken Piesse
Mt Eliza

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Amazing & Mostly True



Enter the Babe

Perth Scorchers Craig Simmons was the 'Babe Ruth' of Big Bash III in Australia in 2013–14 with some extraordinary smiting, including the fastest century in Big Bash League (BBL) history, from just thirty-nine balls. The generously proportioned opener was unstoppable, like Victor Trumper, Viv Richards and Chris Gayle rolled into one.

However, during the sudden-death semifinal back in his original hometown Sydney, Simmons, 5 from fourteen balls, was struggling to hit anything in the middle.

So out of sorts was he that Sydney Sixers wicketkeeper Daniel Smith strolled past and quipped he was heading for 'the double': the slowest 50 to go with the fastest 100 in BBL history!

Reviving remarkably, thirty-nine balls and a record-equalling eleven 6s later, Simmons was 102 not out.

As a teenager, the Sydney-born-and-bred left-hander was a member of Australian's Under 19 World Cup winning team in New Zealand (2001–02), alongside the likes of Cameron White, George Bailey, Xavier Doherty and Shaun Marsh, before his career meandered.



BIG-HITTER:
Craig Simmons



A second chance

Saturday, 28 May 2011, central London: Cricket journeyman Chris Rogers was stunned. He'd just been told his contract was being discontinued. It wasn't about his runs. It was purely an age thing. Victoria was desperate to develop a new batch of Test cricketers. Rising thirty-four, his best was behind him. Life membership of Australia's One-Test Club seemed a gilt-edged guarantee.

He wheeled from a Saturday brunch meeting with Victoria's selection chairman John MacWhirter in an absolute daze. It felt like he'd been on an all-night bender.

'It's not a nice feeling being told you're not wanted anymore,' Rogers said. 'I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I was gob-smacked actually. I was told someone had to go. I was the oldest so I was the first one out the back door.'

The future, MacWhirter had told him, was all about youngsters like Peter Handscomb, Glenn Maxwell and project player Alex Keath, the lofty teenager from the Goulburn Valley who'd chosen cricket ahead of AFL. There was considerable heat from the national selectors to go with the young ones. A rookie kid from the southern suburbs by the name of Agar was also considered particularly promising.

Despite the credits Rogers had built in Victoria's enviable run of silverware, he was told negotiation was pointless. An arthroscopy operation had cut his appearances by more than half in the season just gone. The decision had been made. He wasn't part of the first tranche of major contracts. And in all likelihood, he was warned, he may not be part of the squad at all.

As he waited for a tube connection at Paddington, Rogers rehashed the painful conversation word for word, shaking his head in disbelief. Rogers didn't blame MacWhirter or coach Greg Shipperd who'd been so welcoming and supportive since his move from the West in 2008. It was the system. 'I couldn't understand why they were wanting to get rid of the senior

AMAZING & MOSTLY TRUE

players who were creating the standard in the competition,' he said. 'Young guys who hadn't achieved anything in grade yet alone state cricket were on a better retainer than I was. In England if you are the best player, you get paid the best. Age is irrelevant. It was very disheartening. I still felt I was one of the better players in the state competition. There were good young players around but I was in the XI and still doing a good job.'

Finishing the 2011 English county season at Middlesex with another 1000-run haul, Rogers toyed with the prospect of spending the southern summer in either South Africa or New Zealand. 'But neither were particularly great options,' he said. 'I was even thinking of getting into management. I'd done a negotiation course. I was seriously thinking about life after cricket.'

Then, totally out of the blue, came a phone call. Ashton Agar had been lured to Western Australia. Suddenly there was a place open. Agar's place. Did he want it?

'It was the last spot in the squad and I was on the minimum contract,' Rogers said.

'Once I got that contract I think I was still one of the first players picked. Nothing changed there. It was another season playing cricket. And that's still the ultimate for me. I was still extremely grateful to have got that last-minute opportunity. I treated it as a bonus. I tried to maintain my standards, keep fighting and do better than everybody else. That's what drives most sportsmen to out-perform other guys. That's what I wanted to do, show them that I deserved that contract.'

Twelve months later, Chris Rogers joined Victoria's stand-in captain Andrew McDonald and his Bushranger teammates at the luggage carousel at Perth airport – the Sheffield Shield schedule having started a fortnight early to accommodate the Big Bash. He was thinking only of the match ahead ... and hopefully inflicting a little more pain on his old state. Since shifting, he'd averaged 70 against the West with three of his four centuries coming at the WACA Ground.

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While some around him may have pigeonholed him as purely a state-level player, he'd never conceded, even when he missed selection for Australia 'A', one of the few opportunities for fringe players to oppose the visiting internationals. His rock-solid technique and focus were rivalled by few, but he simply wasn't on the national radar and knew it.

He started the domestic season modestly before finding some of his renowned touch in mid-summer, scoring three centuries in four games, all in first innings. But the Vics lost four of their last five games to fall out of the Sheffield Shield final that had seemed theirs until the crucial final fortnight. Having played most of the Ryobi Cup one-dayers, Rogers missed a place in the final against Queensland. The consummate tradesman, he'd again aggregated nearly 1000 runs, including 700-plus in the Shield.

At national level, after a mixed home season, the Australians were tumbling to an embarrassing 4-0 defeat in India on cratered, brown pitches that looked like moonscapes. Off-field tensions were high, especially after coach Mickey Arthur insisted on the suspension of four leading players in mid-series.

With their own inner communication crumbling, the Australians were fast becoming a laughing stock. Rogers was preparing for another UK stint, his tenth, when he fielded another life-changing phone call. It was Australia's selection chairman John Inverarity. He'd been chosen in Australia's Ashes XVI, alongside fellow openers David Warner and Ed Cowan, who'd averaged 45 in the extended summer. Phil Hughes and Shane Watson, who'd started the season late with injury, were also being named.

Far from looking upon the selection of a veteran as much-deserved superannuation for services rendered, Inverarity considered Rogers' experience and ability to bat time against Jimmy Anderson and co. an invaluable asset, especially in conditions so familiar to him. After all, he'd been spending his off-seasons in England since 2004. Australia had been humbled 3-1 in the Ashes battle last time around. He had a key role to play.

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Rogers couldn't help but grin. Six or so months earlier he'd been told he was not to be re-contracted at domestic level. It had taken a national calamity in India and at home for the selectors to look past the younger ones. Rogers unpacked his one-and-only baggy green and prepared for the totally unexpected new chapter of his cricketing life.

Three days into the tour, in late June, Arthur was sacked, having just told Rogers he was going to open in the first Test. 'I thought, here we go,' Rogers said. 'Here's another opportunity to miss out.'

Australia had named an immediate replacement in Darren Lehmann. Other than being left-handers, Rogers couldn't see any other similarities between himself and Australia's new leader. Rogers was compact, gritty and workmanlike. Lehmann had been a gifted shotmaker with more skill than just about anybody Rogers had ever opposed. He wasn't sure if Lehmann truly rated him ... or more importantly, even wanted him.

'We got down to Somerset and Darren came up to me room and told me I wasn't playing in that game, but I was going to open in the Test [alongside Shane Watson],' said Rogers. 'It was an amazing feeling. The Test was still two weeks away. I was so nervous and a bit scared about what was going to happen. But I was so happy to know that I was going to be given the opportunity I'd wanted for so long.'

A change at the top had been necessary; David Warner was not in immediate contention, having partied too long after the first of three ill-fated one-dayers several weeks earlier. Lehmann needed batsmen to bat time. After Rogers and Watson, Ed Cowan was to go in at No. 3. They wanted to wear down Anderson, Stuart Broad and co. and make it easier for the strokemakers coming in mid-list.

Rogers had the opportunity and it was up to him how many more Tests he played: one, two or all five.

Not only did he play all five, he broke through for his first Test century – and in all made four Test 100s in the extended summer of his life. It was a magnificent bonus for someone who

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just eighteen months earlier had been told he was no longer wanted ...

See also: A long time coming, page 271



Sorry, what was that ...

Batsmen didn't need reminding they were in a high-stakes cricket match when opposed to the one-Test Australian off spinner Dan 'Fiery' Cullen.

In Malaysia during an International Cricket Council (ICC) Champions Trophy game against the West Indies, Brian Lara was on strike and after a flashy shot and just-as-flashy smile back down the wicket, Cullen exploded, 'You cocky prick!'

The rest of his over went for 64444 – 22 in all.



Pleasant interlude

Mike Hussey loved batting with Ricky Ponting. Invariably he'd make it look so easy.

In Adelaide during the Test in which England made 6-551, declared and lost, the pair were batting when, at a drink's break, Ponting motioned to Hussey to look back to the scoreboard end where a well-endowed young lady was on the shoulders of a man, with the crowd all around her urging her to whip her top off. She did, revealing another top and then another top and another. Everyone was laughing, particularly Mike and Ricky.



Not-so-super Sachin

Australia had just beaten India in a one-dayer at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) and as the players shook hands at the end, Michael Clarke noticed that Sachin Tendulkar was absent ... and not for the first time.

AMAZING & MOSTLY TRUE

Racing up the steps to the Indian dressing-room, he found Tendulkar packing his kit at the back of the room and asked if he was going to shake hands with the Australians. Tendulkar said sorry, he'd forgotten ... Clarke had made his point.



You choose, Symo ...

Few were more credulous – or as good company – as Queensland and Australian all-rounder Andrew ‘Roy’ Symonds.

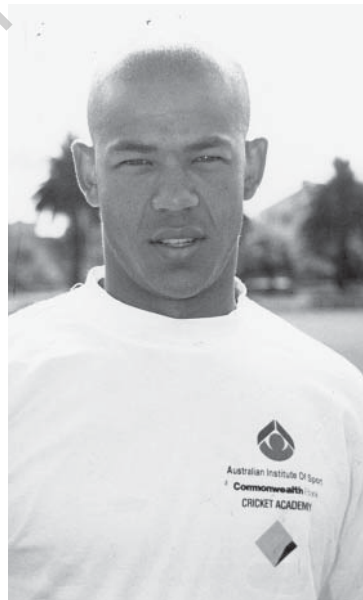
‘Symo’ believed just about everything ever said to him. Teammates loved spinning him the tallest of stories and watching him react.

The Queenslanders were in Adelaide and after training, Symonds and his roomie, Scott Prestwidge, opted to put their feet up and watch one of their hotel’s in-house movies.

Symonds was entrusted with the task of selection while Prestwidge cleaned up. But upon hearing a number of groans and carry-on from Symo, Prestwidge re-emerged.

‘What’s up?’ he asked.

‘Oh mate,’ said Symonds. ‘There are some sick people out there. You press ten and get comedies. Press twenty and get action movies. Press thirty and get thrillers. Forty is family movies, but then listen to this – you press fifty and you get “disabled” adult movies ... who the hell watches that sort of stuff?!’



HEART OF GOLD: Andrew Symonds