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SUMMER 2019

THE
Nightwatchman
THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

WISDEN



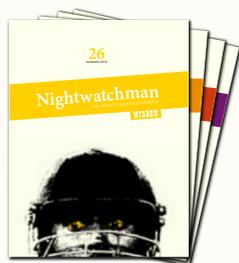
THE Nightwatchman

THE WISDEN CRICKET QUARTERLY

Cricket's past has been enriched by great writing and Wisden is making sure its future will be too. *The Nightwatchman* is a quarterly collection of essays and long-form articles and is available in print and e-book formats.

Co-edited by Anjali Doshi and Tanya Aldred, with Matt Thacker as managing editor, *The Nightwatchman* features an array of authors from around the world, writing beautifully and at length about the game and its myriad offshoots. Contributors are given free rein over subject matter and length, escaping the pressures of next-day deadlines and the despair of cramming heart and soul into a few paragraphs.

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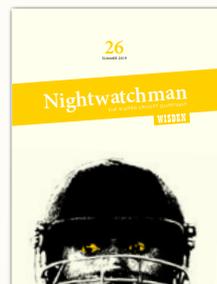
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ISSUE 26 – SUMMER 2019

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A BRUSH WITH GLORY

Derek Pringle on the last time England reached a World Cup final

It is just over 27 years since England last contested a cricket World Cup final. I know; I was there.

Melbourne was the city, MCG the stadium, and Pakistan the other team - one that proved our nemesis on the day to consign us, or at least some of the team like captain Graham Gooch, to a third runners-up place in World Cups in 13 years.

They say it is the injustices that stay with you and to a certain degree they are right. In that final Pakistan made 249 batting first but it might have been a lot fewer if Javed Miandad had been given out lbw, not once but twice, before he'd reached double figures (he went on to make 58).

On both occasions I was the bowler. That World Cup saw a different new, white Kookaburra ball used at each end and not only that: a Kookaburra ball that swung, at least for conventional swingers like me.

That final, despite me needing to pass a late fitness test on an injured side, was no different. The hot, still air in the stadium, made denser but not turbulent by 90,000 spectators (most were Aussies and fairly neutral when confronted with whom to support between England and Pakistan), was perfect for my outswingers, which quickly brought me the wickets of Aamer Sohail and Ramiz Raja.

Ramiz was given out lbw by umpire Steve Bucknor, though whether this prejudiced the later case against Javed I have no idea. Whatever the reason, he dismissed both my appeals after Javed twice played around balls heading for the stumps, the general consensus being that at least one of them was striking middle about two-thirds of the way up.

Certainly Javed felt that one of the shouts was out, something he made plain to me after the match when I went



to congratulate him and Imran Khan on Pakistan's triumph. "Allah smile on me today," he said, tapping his left leg.

Did I feel terribly wronged by Bucknor's intransigence?

No, not really.

Was I upset?

At the time, yes (I queried Bucknor's judgment in terms that would have brought me a big fine today).

Yet any sense of inequity had passed by the time the trophy was lifted by Imran and we did a lap of honour to thank our loyal supporters for travelling with us the length and breadth of Australia, albeit without the concluding satisfaction of capturing the Cup.

Let's face it. Injustices have been perpetrated in sport for centuries if not millennia. There is little you can do about them except to neutralise the grievance, reboot, and get on with life. Of course, in this age of history by videotape, you can revisit such moments in times like these, in slow motion if necessary, and play to the gallery.

It helps that England's poor showing in World Cups since means there is a compliant audience to sing the '92 chorus that "we was robbed" whenever we watch Bucknor's boo-boo. But all that victimhood can be put to bed for good this summer should Eoin Morgan's England team, the tournament favourites, win the trophy for the first time.

The disappointment of losing to Pakistan, a defeat that was possibly felt more keenly by Gooch and

Ian "Beefy" Botham, who'd both contested their first World Cup final in 1979, was crushing. There was more than the odd tear shed in the dressing-room afterwards.

For two great players like them, as well as Allan Lamb, the sense that this last chance for glory had been missed must have cut deep, especially when it was snatched away by a team we'd dismissed for a paltry 74 in the group stage only for rain to save them. But for a freakish day's precipitation in drought-stricken Adelaide, Pakistan would not have reached the knock-out stage.

It is fair to say that Beefy, who knew the trip would be his swansong, warmed to his task slowly that winter. While the rest of the squad prepared for the World Cup by playing a three-match Test series and three one-day internationals against New Zealand, he trod the panto boards in Bournemouth, playing opposite Max Boyce in *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

When he did turn up about two-thirds of the way through that tour, he was rusty and overweight, though that did not prevent him from persuading Gooch to let him open the batting in the final one-day match against New Zealand – a role he'd not performed since the 1986-87 Ashes tour. True to his bullish nature, he blasted 79 in 73 balls or, as one tabloid headline had it: "Bish, Bash, Bosh – Beefy."

It's funny the things that stay with you from nearly 30 years ago, but I remember Beefy arriving with a sack of Oakley sunglasses, at least two pairs each for those who wanted them. That largesse sparked the "sunglasses wars"

with Robin Smith, who was sponsored by Bolle, their response being to provide him with a boxful of shades to dispense among the lads.

I accepted product from both men but wore neither during matches as I'd always believed that sunglasses reduce visual acuity. I mean, if batsmen don't wear them for batting (and most don't), why do they wear them in the field? I was something of an evangelist about it and remember having a go at Smith after he'd taken possession of Bolle's swankiest model just before our group match against South Africa.

"If you haven't practised fielding in them, you shouldn't wear them," I chided. "You'd better not drop a catch off my bowling with them on or there will be hell to pay." I think Smith left them in his bag and opted for a pair he'd worn before.

The other "issue" I recall was that the ICC, who were bankrolling the tournament, had instructed teams that they must do their own laundry. Although we were staying in decent hotels, the ICC would not pick up the Extras bill, of which laundry, at least in rooms not occupied by Beefy, was always the biggest part.

I don't recall us being on the verge of striking but the injustice and meanness of it rankled with Goochie, who called a team meeting where he informed our team manager, Bob Bennett, that "Joe Montana wouldn't have to do his own laundry, so nor will we". After a few days wrangling, and with smelly clothes piling up fast, the Test and County Cricket Board agreed to pay for it to be done by the hotel.

If allowed to, little things like that can niggle away at team harmony, but we remained steadfast in our clean clothes. Obviously it helps if everyone rubs along well together but it is not essential. Providing each player knows his role and fulfils it consistently well, the team project usually trundles along nicely. And most did.

England had a good mix of attitudes for that World Cup, especially in their approach to risk. At one end of the scale you had Beefy Botham and his sanguine, blood-and-thunder approach, a bit like the "play without fear" philosophy trotted out by Morgan and his team now. For all that, Beefy had only one game where he really fired, against the old foe Australia, where he got runs and wickets in an easy win at the SCG.

Beefy's boisterous view was tempered by the more thoughtful, nuanced approach of Gooch. Although he'd opt mostly for the aggressive option, Goochie would also counsel caution over gung-ho optimism. Confidence in one's ability was fine, blind optimism wasn't.

At the other end of the scale, you'd have the spinners Richard Illingworth and Phil Tufnell who, typical of their ilk, would always expect the worst. In a playing squad of 14, eight born outside the UK, the remaining outlooks fell somewhere between that of the spinners and Beefy.

Although keen on a plan, Goochie acknowledged that players had to be prepared to reassess and improvise on their feet, something England sides have rarely been good at. And so it proved that tournament. When teams allowed us to implement Plan

A without reappraisal, we'd beat them. But as soon as a side forced us to consider Plan B, such as New Zealand in Wellington and Pakistan in the final, we'd dither and it would cost us.

That aside, most onlookers felt us to be the best side at the '92 tournament. Yet many thought we were probably fortunate to win the semi-final against South Africa by dint of a bizarre rain rule that punished excellence with the ball.

I was injured for that game at the SCG, so didn't play. But what I saw – and the apologists for South Africa never mention – was their cynical slowing down of the over rate, which saw them bowl just 45 of the 50 scheduled. Had they been forced to bowl those overs, and with our middle order going well at the time, they'd have been chasing something around the 300 mark. A total that high back then would have been beyond them, though not as beyond them as the 22 runs off one ball they needed after the rain rule brought the game to a messy conclusion.

Even so, there was the slight feeling that we'd peaked as a team. The ideas to open the batting with Beefy and the bowling with me, both hatched during our preamble in New Zealand, had freshened our approach. But now, for the final, it was more a question of putting in one good, professional performance against a side which,

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while vulnerable, had begun to bubble with confidence.

At one stage that approach looked very wise with Pakistan, who'd won the toss and batted first, seeming as if they would struggle to reach 200, so slow was the recovery performed by Imran and Javed as they put on 139 for the third wicket. But a flurry of runs by Inzamam-ul-Haq and Wasim Akram left us needing 250 to win, a total that suddenly looked impossibly distant once Wasim knocked over Lamb and Chris Lewis in successive balls with 109 runs still needed.

To say that we were complacent is too simplistic. We probably assumed Pakistan would implode with the early pressure exerted by our bowling but they did not. Once they'd regrouped and posted a good score we needed to bat really well against an attack that could ask different questions of different batsmen – few of which, on the day, were answered.

Shamefully, given the amount of money lavished on England teams of all stripes, we've not sniffed a final since, though I feel that is about to change. World Cups were never previously kind to the home side but that has changed with the last two being won by the tournament hosts. A third, now, would be dandy and demote England's other near misses to the minor footnotes they deserve to be.



EXTRACTS

As we sat there in synagogue listening to the late, great Rabbi Hugo Gryn talk about the latest Middle East imbroglio with his inimitable combination of reason and tolerance, we knew the match had already passed its infancy, but that didn't dissuade us. Even taking into account the traffic, it wouldn't take more than 45 minutes to get home, changed and into our seats. By the time we occupied them, we had long since missed Roy Fredericks' back foot sliding through the dew and nudging his stumps even as he hooked Lillee for six, but no matter. There were still nearly 100 more overs scheduled to come, and hell, we both wanted to see the Aussies hanged, drawn and, preferably, eighthed.

ROB STEEN

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In 1975 the Sri Lankan cricket team had never toured outside Asia. But those who'd been paying attention would have known that their inclusion as one of the eight teams competing in the World Cup that year was well earned. In the past 18 months they'd dismissed West Indies for 119, fallen 17 runs short of victory in Pakistan and had the better of a drawn unofficial Test against India. The one-day game posed a new set of challenges – Sri Lanka had only played nine limited-overs matches in their history – but the squad was blessed with a cast of players naturally suited to short-form cricket. What's more, the World Cup offered a rare opportunity for them to show what they could do. Perform well and it might prove a stepping stone towards Test status. A seat at cricket's top table beckoned.

NICHOLAS BROOKES

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Back in the days before YouTube and satellite television, foreign sportspeople were glimpsed only very occasionally by the British. The football World Cup, for example, would suddenly allow us to see for the first time in living motion players – Paul Van Himst (Belgium), Sandro Mazzola (Italy), Helmut Haller (West Germany) – we had previously viewed only in grainy black-and-white stills in a brief chapter on “the continental game” at the back of Charles Buchan’s football annual. What these men got up to between international tournaments was as much an enigma to the 1970s teenage British sports fan as UFOs, the Bermuda Triangle and personal hygiene.

Cricket was different. By the 1970s most of the world’s greatest stars were playing in England – either in the County Championship, university teams, or in the northern leagues. True, a few Australians refused to travel, giving a patina of mysterious glamour to Doug Walters, Ross Edwards and the like that a confrontation with gum-chewing reality would have coshed round the chops, but by and large we had seen them all. Unlike its football counterpart, therefore, the first Prudential World Cup did not promise much that was unfamiliar. For a teenage fan seeking novelty, that made the appearance of the two non-Test playing nations, Sri Lanka and East Africa, a subject of itchy fascination.

HARRY PEARSON

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When it came to raising funds for the 1983 World Cup, Zimbabwe’s cricketers and their wives showed the enterprise of shopkeepers. There were cake sales, beer-tasting events and private gambling evenings (where some of the country’s finest cricketers were employed as bouncers) but by far the best wheeze involved the “great tobacco caper”.

LUKE ALFRED & TRISTAN HOLME

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One of the greatest innings of modern times began 18 minutes past 11 o’clock with no television camera to record its brilliance. A bareheaded Kapil Dev, in a full-sleeve sweater and droopy moustache, “squinted up at the sun”, wrote R Mohan in Sportstar, as he walked in to bat.

In his hands a Slazenger V12. On his mind thoughts of survival. A few minutes on, Yashpal Sharma’s dismissal left India at 17 for 5.

SIDDHARTHA VAIDYANATHAN

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The explanation was simple. The Indians are unsurpassed in their frenzied adoration of cricket, biased certainly (but name a cricket nation not prone to tunnel vision). And in 1983 India was not yet part of cricket’s global power set-up that has since brought a mountainous financial clout, not always managed with magnanimity. Ah, the power-brokers of the Indian Board might say, but why would it need to be magnanimous? Well, if they start to take a more charitable view of world cricket, I promise to sink another glass of red in the wake of these written words.

DAVID FRITH

• • •

The year that India won the world. And also, of course, the World Cup.

It didn’t feel like the end of the world as we knew it; I know, I was there. It felt like one of sport’s cosmic jokes: when sport turns the world upside down just because it can – but only for a second. England losing to United States at the World Cup of 1950; Mike Tyson losing to Buster Douglas in 1990; New Zealand losing to France in the Rugby Union World Cup semi-finals of 1999.

These were all glorious occasions but not to be taken entirely seriously. They were freakish results, each a one-off rather than a shifting of sport’s tectonic plates. I thought that India’s victory on that outrageous day at Lord’s was part of the same pattern: Bob Stokoe, the Sunderland manager, running onto the Wembley pitch to embrace his goalkeeper Jim Montgomery after they had – impossibly – beaten the great Leeds United in the FA Cup final of 1973.

I remember Hugh McIlvanney, the late sportswriter, telling me in a mood of some self-satisfaction: “That’s the difference between you and me. You like giant-killers. I like giants.”

SIMON BARNES

• • •

Chris Balderstone looks back at me from 1983. His face is locked in an expression somewhere between smile and grimace, his eyes are narrowed, teeth exposed. He is ready. He may be a Leicestershire cricketer already past 40 years of age but, even during a pre-season photo shoot, he's a symbol of strength. If I peeled away his outer layer I would find his back still coated in mild adhesive.

Balderstone, a truly outstanding sportsman, played over 500 games as a professional footballer. So, we might assume, in 1983 he had some experience as a collectable image. But for cricket this was radical. This was a sensation. Looking back in recent times I've found myself wondering if it really did happen. But the evidence is right in front of me in a tiny, plastic-coated rectangle; in 1983, Panini issued a sticker book dedicated entirely to cricket. Balderstone, for the collecting record, was No.105.

JOE WILSON

• • •

Such is the atavistic grandiosity in certain quarters of the English body politic – the patrician imperial nostalgists, the pride-and-passion Poundshop flag brigade; those that carry it in their bearing, those that display it in their upstairs windows – that sporting “failure” habitually gets overblown in direct proportion to the wild and somewhat delusional pre-tournament expectations. Land of Hope for Glory. Thereafter, the shivering piss-smell of post-defeat “shame”, the hangover, the comedown, the “never-say-never” that has become a “never-again”, the GOATS turned into scapegoats, words such as “ignominy” and “humiliation” bandied about, and not as a detached assessment of the events that unfolded but rather as an index of the singular lack of sobriety and realism – the (at best) half-full cup that runneth over – that had pumped steroids into middling prospects and got carried away with fantasies of glory and gloating.

SCOTT OLIVER

• • •

If you've got some news you don't want anybody to see, put it an ICC press release. When the International Cricket Council delivered a summary of its deliberations in Dubai on 12-13 October 2010, most of the consequent headlines centred on its reaction to the recent Pakistan spot-fixing controversy. A few others noted the intention to stage a quadrennial World Test Championship, culminating – rather optimistically, as it turned out – with a final in 2013. Virtually nobody, however, spotted the pipe bomb buried towards the end of page three.

“3. The FTP should also consist of a One-Day International league, the first to run from April 2011 until April 2014, culminating in the crowning of an ODI league champion. This would run separate to the ICC Cricket World Cup

4. The ICC Cricket World Cup should consist of a 10-team format from 2015

5. The ICC World Twenty20 should consist of a 16-team format from 2012, with the women's event continuing to run alongside

6. The introduction of Twenty20 International rankings table as soon as this is justifiable”

Did you spot it? Yep, point four: just tossed out there as nonchalantly and as casually as if it were a list of rules on the wall of your local swimming baths. No smoking. No running along the side of the pool. The most seismic change in the modern history of the Cricket World Cup. No chewing gum. No peeing in the showers.

JONATHAN LIEW

• • •

Mark Waugh, half running, half falling his way round the back of the non-striker's end from mid off, gathers the ball and flips it gracelessly but effectively to Fleming, who seems shocked to have to catch the thing as he stands mid-pitch, apparently dazed and confused by the traffic. A primordial yawp escapes Adam Gilchrist's throat: “FLEM!!!!!!!!!!!!” Fleming gets a childlike underarm lob to Gilchrist, who accepts it on the bounce and does the needful. Tied. Australia are going to the final. South Africa are going home.

TELFORD VICE

• • •

“I went to an on-field interview then came straight back and was into the ice bath. I had dinner while I was in the ice bath, then taped my fingers up and got ready to do some fielding. Everything happened quite quickly. We had 393 on the board and we were thinking we should win quite easily but with the West Indies you just never know.

“When Chris Gayle is at the wicket anything is possible. They had hitters all the way down the order and were never really out of the game until they were six or seven down.”

DYLAN CLEAVER

• • •

It's a modest but knowledgeable crowd at the Wanderers ground in Windhoek, where local boys Namibia are on their way to a two-run defeat by USA. It's around the mid-way point of World Cricket League Division 2 – the swansong of the ICC's 12-year-old World Cup qualification ladder, which will be making way for a new three-league structure next year – and at the outdoor bar two old hands are grilling tournament referee Gerrie Pienaar on qualification pathways. Pienaar happily holds forth on the distinction between a Challenge League and a Challenge Play-Off, but "ten teams TBC" is as much as the ICC has made public regarding the format of the 2023 World Cup.

BERTUS DE JONG

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After the 2007 debacle, the decision was taken to go back in time to 1996 and include quarter-finals for the 2011 tournament, a formula used in 2015 as well. On both occasions, the only life given to group stages came courtesy of games featuring Associate nations scrapping to find a way through – typically Ireland, who have the World Cup's expansion to thank for their rapid graduation to the ICC's top table. And England's failure.

Now the Associates are all but banished from the 2019 ten-team event – indeed, full members Zimbabwe and Ireland are missing out altogether. It sharpens the focus to an era when the approach was very different. "The ICC invested all that money, time and effort encouraging the development of the lesser nations and then slammed the door in their face when it came to the World Cup," argues Lamb, who served on the ICC's development committee when he was ECB boss. "It is a terrible shame. This was the whole point."

ADAM COLLINS

• • •

Squash, hockey and cricket were delivering pride and happiness. Pakistan was asserting itself among other nations through sport. Success, however, was taken for granted. There was little thought to infrastructure or long-term planning. The world was welcome to its modern facilities and advanced techniques for training and nutrition. The genius of its people was enough for Pakistan, God willing.

It wasn't, of course. Indeed it was ludicrous to think it might have been, but nothing deludes like success. All three sports were harmed by chronic underfunding and under-development. Hockey and squash fell off a cliff but cricket survived.

KAMRAN ABBASI

• • •

When I was playing, the hapless boundary boot from a clod-hopping paceman was standard protocol if the ball went wide of someone enjoying a six-ball break from the toils of the day. There was some diving in the infield and a little slithering on the boundary if the outfield facilitated it. But, aside from the absence of a certain amount of athleticism, boundaries tended to go right up to fences or boundary walls or concrete guttering, so Tripathi's gymnastics would not have been possible. There are times when we bemoan the short boundaries often used today that make six-hitting almost a nondescript event. But think of the excitement of these spectacular catches. The boundary catch is probably the most common form of dismissal in T20, where once it was a relative rarity.

MIKE SELVEY

• • •

The ability of teams to defend low targets when their batsmen have failed has also declined. Since the 2015 World Cup, taking the lowest 25 per cent of first-innings totals (226 and below), teams defending bottom-quartile scores have won only eight per cent of matches. In 2011-15, teams defending a lowest-25-per-cent score (217 and below) still managed to emerge victorious in 18 per cent of matches, and the figure for 1987 to 2011 was 16 per cent.

This might suggest that it has become increasingly rare for both teams' bowling attacks to thrive in the same match; or that the more aggressive approach to batting is less likely to lead to a team tentatively poking its way to defeat when chasing a low target; or that the death of Nobel-Prize-winning German writer Günter Grass in April 2015 had such a devastating impact on the world's white-ball bowlers that they ceased to truly believe that defending 200 was possible; or all of the above.

The development of cricket as a global sport into the fractious, sprawling, multifaceted, simultaneously-expanding-and-contracting, money-laden-but-cash-strapped, all-action behemoth it is today was catalysed by the introduction of World Cup cricket. Its tournaments have produced and entrenched technical and tactical developments.

ANDY ZALTZMAN

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