

Barry Norman's Book of Cricket

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CHAPTER 13 THE GREAT TEAMS

THE FIVE GREATEST TEAMS IN CRICKET HISTORY:
FROM WARWICK'S WONDERS OF 1920-1 TO
PONTING'S PARTY-POOPERS OF 2006-7

What is a great team? One that includes a generous complement of great players certainly – but more than that it must achieve great things; it must not simply defeat the opposition, it must slaughter them, grind them mercilessly beneath the heel and then spit on the corpse. Simply to win a series is not enough for a great team; it must dominate to such an extent that virtually from day one the other side doesn't have a chance. Some teams – not many – have done that. These five, for instance.

WARWICK'S WONDERS, 1920-1

When England toured Australia in 1920-1 much had changed since the Triangular Tournament of 1912 (see page 18). More than 60 first-class cricketers had died during the Great War, and men like Archie MacLaren, Ranji and C.B. Fry were in their late forties. Even so Fry, who was 48, was invited to captain the touring team but he withdrew because of injury and J.W.H.T. Douglas, 10 years Fry's junior, got the job.

Age didn't seem to matter so much in those days; it was regarded as a sign of maturity rather than decrepitude. Besides, in 1920-1, with so little cricket having been played in recent years and so many players having retired, a sprinkling of veterans was essential to lend experience to both sides. In that respect England might have seemed to have the stronger team, being able to call upon Douglas, Hobbs, the all-rounders Jack Hearne, Frank Woolley and Wilfred Rhodes and the Surrey fast bowler J.W. (Bill) Hitch.

What's more, in the run-up to the series the auspices looked pretty good, England – playing as the MCC, as they did then in non-Tests – had beaten South Australia, Victoria and Queensland and lost only to New South Wales. But, as they were to be reminded, there's an enormous gap between the first-class game and cricket at Test level.

CLASH OF THE DEBUTANTS

For the opening Test Australia, captained by Warwick Armstrong, who was then 41, had fewer men of experience to call upon – Armstrong himself and the batsmen Charlie Macartney, Warren Bardsley and Charles Kelleway. As the teams took the field at Sydney half the players – four English, seven



LEFT *Baggy green togetherness: Michael Clarke (partly hidden), Andrew Symonds, Justin Langer, Glenn McGrath, Matthew Hayden, Ricky Ponting, Shane Warne and Michael Hussey celebrate as Australia prepare to regain the Ashes in Perth in 2006.*

PRECEDING PAGE

Warwick Armstrong, the first of only two Australian captains to subject England to the humiliation of an Ashes whitewash, photographed in 1921. 'Armstrong is portentous,' wrote an English journalist that same year. 'He reminds one ... of a character out of Conrad; there is an air of suppressed force about him.'

**First Test, Sydney,
17–22 December 1920**

Australia: 267 (Collins 70; Hearne 3–77) and 581 (Armstrong 158, Collins 104; Parkin 3–102).

England: 190 (Woolley 52; Gregory 3–56, Mailey 3–95) and 281 (Hobbs 59, Hearne 57, Hendren 56; Kelleway 3–45).

Australia won by 377 runs

**Second Test, Melbourne,
31 December 1920–4 January 1921**

Australia: 499 (Pellew 116, Gregory 100, Taylor 68, Collins 64, Bardsley 51).

England: 251 (Hobbs 122, Hendren 67; Gregory 7–69) and 157 (Woolley 50; Armstrong 4–26).

Australia won by an innings and 91 runs

Australian – were making their Test debuts. And pretty quickly it became clear that the home side had the more gifted newcomers. True, England's included 'Patsy' Hendren, who was to become a stalwart of the side, but among the Aussie freshmen were the opener Herbie Collins, who scored 70 and 104 on debut, Arthur Mailey, the leg-spinner, Jack Ryder, who was to average 51.62 in his 20 Tests, Bert Oldfield, the wicketkeeper who was capped 54 times, and most significantly for this and the next series, the new demon fast bowler Jack Gregory.

Australia batted first and England did well in dismissing them for 267. But despite 52 from Woolley and 49 from Hobbs the visitors were all out for 190, Gregory with 3 for 56 and Mailey (of whom it was said that he bowled like a millionaire while his fellow Australian leggie Clarrie Grimmett bowled like a miser) with 3 for 95 immediately making their presence felt. Thereafter Australia took the game – and, as it turned out, the series – by the scruff of the neck.

In the second innings, with Armstrong and Collins scoring centuries and fifties from Kelleway, Macartney, Bardsley and Taylor, the hosts totalled 581. Despite half-centuries from Hobbs, Hearne and Hendren England only managed 281, Kelleway, Gregory and Mailey each taking three wickets, and Australia won by 377 runs.

So to the second Test at Melbourne and more debutants – for England the Warwickshire fast bowler Henry Howell and the Lancashire batsman Harry Makepeace, and for Australia the right-handed batsman Roy Park. Again Australia batted first and this time they notched up 499. The best England bowler was Howell with 3 for 142.

In reply the visitors made 251 (Hobbs top-scored with a century but Gregory took seven wickets) and, following on, managed a total of just 157. Result: a win for Australia by an innings and 91 runs.

GREGORY THE GREAT

Gregory had been spotted as a great prospect – some say by Pelham Warner, in which case Englishmen might feel Warner should have kept his opinions to himself – while playing for the Imperial Forces XI in England at the end of the War. He was 6' 3", 14 stone, immensely strong and reckoned to be the fastest bowler of his day. What's more, as he proved with his century at Melbourne and another scored in 70 minutes in South Africa a year later, he could bat a bit, too.

For the third game at Adelaide he was joined by Australia's latest newcomer, Ted McDonald, thought by some to be even faster than Gregory. McDonald didn't achieve much in this or the last two Tests, taking only six

wickets at 65.33; his real impact came in England in the summer of 1921. But his presence alongside Gregory established a principle that all Test nations, circumstances and personnel permitting, have followed ever since – that you open the bowling with fast men. Hitherto it had been not uncommon for the opening attack to consist of a quick at one end and a spinner at the other – a practice that was still seen in English county cricket after the Second World War. But the partnership of Gregory and McDonald emphasized the value of including genuinely fast bowlers and throwing them the ball as soon as possible.

Australia, again batting first, scored 354. And now, for maybe the only time in the series, England, whose latest debutant was the Surrey batsman P.G.H. ('Percy') Fender, batted themselves into a position from which victory might have seemed possible.

Their reply was a sizeable 447 with a century by C.A.G. Russell and good support from Woolley, Makepeace and Douglas. Had these been five-day Tests a draw, at least, would have been guaranteed. But they were not – they were timeless, and the Adelaide match went into a sixth day. So in their second innings, knowing that time didn't matter, Australia hung around for 186 overs, bar one ball. It was too much for England, gallant though their reply of 370 was (Hobbs making another century). By 119 runs, Australia had won again and regained the Ashes.

Back at Melbourne for the fourth Test, England replaced the wicketkeeper Herbie Strudwick with Yorkshire's Arthur Dolphin. It was to be Dolphin's only Test, memorable for him because of that but hardly memorable for England. For once they batted first but failed to make the most of it, their total of 284 being barely adequate.

Australia's reply of 389 put them in the driving seat. England responded with a second-innings 315. Rhodes top-scored with 73 but Mailey, turning, teasing, flighting as expansively as ever, bamboozled all the Englishmen, to take every wicket but Hendren's. The Aussies won by eight wickets.

WARWICK'S WHITEWASH

So all that remained to be seen was whether the whitewash – the first ever between these two countries – was on, and of course it was. For the final match E.R. ('Rockley') Wilson of Yorkshire, a slow-medium right-arm bowler, made his first and only Test appearance, bringing the number of Test debutants in the series to 19, 10 of them Australians, and pointing up how many established players had been lost to the game one way or another because of the War.

**Third Test, Adelaide,
14–20 January 1921**

Australia: 354 (Collins 162, Oldfield 50; Parkin 5–60) and 582 (Kelleway 147, Armstrong 121, Pellew 104, Gregory 78*; Howell 4–115, Rhodes 3–61).

England: 447 (Russell 135*, Woolley 79, Makepeace 60, Douglas 60; Mailey 5–160) and 370 (Hobbs 123, Russell 59, Hendren 51; Mailey 5–142, Gregory 3–50).

Australia won by 119 runs

**Fourth Test, Melbourne,
11–16 February 1921**

England: 284 (Makepeace 117, Douglas 50; Mailey 4–115, Kelleway 3–37) and 315 (Rhodes 73, Douglas 60, Fender 59, Makepeace 54; Mailey 9–121).

Australia: 389 (Armstrong 123*, Gregory 77, Collins 59, Bardsley 56, Fender 5–122; Woolley 3–56) and 211–2 (Gregory 76*, Ryder 52*).

Australia won by 8 wickets

HOWZAT! Roy Park, of Victoria, who made his debut in the second Test of the 1920–1 series at Melbourne, came in first wicket down and was bowled first ball by Howell. It was the only ball he ever faced in Test cricket. Drop your scorecard and you'd have missed his entire Test career as a batsman.

No matter how much pride was at stake, and there was a lot, England, alas, hardly made a fight of it. They batted first but only managed 204. Australia replied with 392, with Macartney, after a quiet series, finally coming good, aided (inevitably it must have seemed to England) by Gregory. Fender took his second five-for in consecutive Tests. England did better the second time around, but still left Australia needing only 93, which they reached for the loss of one wicket.

Warwick Armstrong, with 464 runs at 77.33 and 9 wickets at 22.66 apiece, had enjoyed a highly successful series, but the true star, the new star of international cricket, was Jack Gregory, who had come from nowhere to make 442 runs at 73.66 and take 23 wickets at 24.17.

So England, tails between their legs, shuffled off home, destroyed and humiliated, but vowing to do better when, next summer, Australia would be the visitors. Unfortunately any such vow failed to take into account the lethal fast-bowling partnership of Gregory and McDonald...

**Fifth Test, Sydney,
25 February–1 March 1921**
England: 204 (Woolley 53; Kelleway 4-27,
Gregory 3-42) and 280 (Douglas 68;
Mailey 5-119).
Australia: 392 (Macartney 170, Gregory 93;
Fender 5-90) and 93-1 (Bardsley 50*).
Australia won by 9 wickets

FAST MEN ON THE RAMPAGE

The 1921 series in England was the first in which ferociously quick opening bowlers on one side, and the absence of same on the other, made the vital difference. Australia had Gregory (19 wickets at 29.05) and McDonald (27 at 24.74) and England had, well, they had all sorts of people but none as menacing as the Aussie pair.

The influence of these two ensured that Armstrong extended his winning run against England to eight matches in a row. The last two games were drawn because of bad weather and the fact that these were three-day affairs rather than timeless Tests.

For the first game at Trent Bridge England gave first caps to five players – the batsmen Percy Holmes (Yorkshire), Ernest Tyldesley (Lancashire) and Donald Knight (Surrey), the all-rounder Vallance Jupp (Northants) and the Notts leg-spinner Tom Richmond. (In the course of the series England called up 30 different players, not that it made a lot of difference, though it might have done had they been allowed to use all of them in one game.)

In a low-scoring match England, batting first, were skittled for 112 by Gregory and McDonald. Australia replied with 232 but with England

managing only 147 at their second attempt the visitors were left needing just 30 to win, which they did without losing a wicket.

During the first Test Tyldesley was hit on the head by a ball from Gregory, which then rebounded onto his wicket, so with one ball he had been pretty well knocked out and also bowled out. Nor was Tyldesley the only casualty of the Aussie fast men. In game after game batsmen were hit in the stomach, on the hands and thumbs, on the head and over the heart. Not until Larwood and Voce knocked the Aussie batsmen around in 1932–3 (see Bodyline, pages 265–269) was so much mayhem inflicted again by two fast bowlers.

The second Test was at Lord's and again the England selectors made wholesale changes, introducing another four new caps – the Gloucestershire batsman Alf Dipper, the all-rounders Alfred Evans (Kent) and Nigel Haigh (Middlesex) and the Middlesex fast bowler Jack Durston. All but Haigh, who played in five Tests, were one-cap wonders. Again the game was completely one-sided – an Aussie win by eight wickets.

**First Test, Trent Bridge,
28–30 May 1921**
England: 112 (Gregory 6-58, McDonald
3-42) and 147 (McDonald 5-32).
Australia: 232 (Bardsley 66; Woolley 3-46)
and 30-0.
Australia won by 10 wickets

**Second Test, Lord's,
11–14 June 1921**
England: 187 (Woolley 95; Mailey 4-55,
McDonald 4-58) and 283 (Woolley 93,
Tennyson 74*; Gregory 4-76, McDonald 4-89).
Australia: 342 (Bardsley 88, Gregory 52;
Durston 4-102) and 131-2 (Bardsley 63*).
Australia won by 8 wickets



FAR RIGHT Warwick Armstrong (middle row, centre) with his all-conquering Australians, England, May 1921. Jack Gregory and E.A. (Ted) McDonald, Test cricket's first great fast-bowling double-act, stand, respectively, third from left and second from right in the back row. Between them they took 46 English wickets in Australia's 3-0 Ashes-retaining series victory.

TENNYSON TAKES CHARGE

For the Lord's Test England had also brought in the Hon. Lionel Tennyson, Old Etonian, captain of Hampshire and grandson of Lord Alfred of that ilk, the former poet laureate, and after his battling second-innings knock he replaced Douglas, whose losing streak had extended to seven, as captain for the third Test at Leeds. But this was not the only change, for more debutants appeared – the 34-year-old Hampshire wicketkeeper-batsman George Brown, the 35-year-old batsmen Andy Ducat (Surrey) and Harold ('Wally') Hardinge of Kent (another pair of one-cap wonders) and the Somerset left-arm spinner J.C. ('Farmer') White.

Hobbs, who had missed the first two Tests because of ill health, was also brought back. But by the time Australia had made 407 (with a century by Macartney), Hobbs had succumbed to appendicitis and did not bat in either innings. For a bit it looked as if Tennyson might not either, because while fielding he had split the webbing of his left hand.

But these poets – or anyway their descendants – are made of sterner stuff and Tennyson, damaged hand protected by a wire basket, went in seventh wicket down and added 88 with Douglas. What difference a healthy Hobbs might have made, who knows, but without him England were dismissed for 259.

Test teams didn't hang about in those days. By the close of the second day Australia were already 143 for 2 in their second innings and on day three declared on 273 for 7, leaving England little chance of making 422 to win. They didn't come close – all out (okay, nine out) for 202.

NINTH TIME LUCKY

So within a few months England had been beaten eight times in a row by Armstrong's men, but now came the good news: they didn't lose the ninth game. This was partly because rain washed out the first day's play at Old Trafford, but also because England, batting first this time, scored 362 for 4 on the second day before declaring the next morning.

In fact, Tennyson had declared twice – the first time at 341 for 4 just before six o'clock on day two or, and here it becomes complicated, on day one of what had now become a two-day match because a whole day had been lost to rain. Unfortunately, what neither Tennyson nor the umpires knew but Armstrong did – and brought it firmly to everyone else's attention – was that, according to the Laws, you weren't allowed to declare after a certain point on day one of a two-day match. It was therefore decided that the England innings must continue until the next day and, to confuse matters even further, Armstrong,

who had bowled the last over before the false declaration, bowled the next one as well – and nobody noticed, although for somebody to bowl two overs in succession is also a contravention of the Laws. But, what the heck, none of it really mattered because there wasn't enough time left for either side to win. If, however, this had been a timeless game England might have been in with a shout. Australia, batting on a rain-affected, uncovered wicket, were dismissed for 175, but soon afterwards everyone agreed it was time to go home.

And so to the Oval, where England introduced their 30th player of the series in the Surrey batsman Andy Sandham. Batting first, they reached 403 for 8 declared, with Mead notching up a hefty 182 not out. Australia's reply was 389 and, rain having caused the odd delay, the game was pretty well over. England went in again to make 244 for 2 but long before the close Armstrong, who believed all Tests should be timeless, had lost interest. At one point he picked up a newspaper that had blown onto the field and read the sports pages while lounging about on the boundary. His cutting explanation for this was 'I wanted to see who we were playing.'

'A TEAM THAT IS PRETTY SURE OF ITSELF'

In these two series Australia undoubtedly had the stronger team but one can't help wondering whether England would have suffered an eight-nil thumping if the selectors had shown a bit more nous. As *Wisden* pointed out, they seemed to be guided in their chopping and changing by current form rather than proven class. They had, for instance, ignored Sydney Barnes for both series. True, he was 47 in 1920 but still a year younger than Fry, who had been offered the captaincy; true, too, that he had returned to Minor Counties cricket but he was apparently bowling as well as ever and, besides, had often been the scourge of Australia in the past. Wilfred Rhodes who, at the Oval in 1926, aged 48, played a large part in regaining the Ashes, was never called upon in 1921.

What's more, though faced with the two fastest bowlers in the world, the selectors ignored George Gunn of Nottinghamshire, who, along with Hobbs and the emerging Herbert Sutcliffe, was probably the best player of quick stuff in the land.

Not that this should detract from the splendour of Australia's performance. Theirs was indeed a great team with strong batting, lavish spin and, of course, Gregory and McDonald. In the first series the all-round brilliance of Gregory made the difference, in the second the combination of him and McDonald. England's batsmen had never encountered their like before. Add to them the enormous weight, both literal and metaphorical, of Warwick Armstrong and you had a side that could confidently have taken on any other from any era.



Third Test, Headingley, 2-5 July 1921

Australia: 407 (Macartney 115, Armstrong 77, Pellew 52, Taylor 50; Parkin 4-106) and 273 for 7 (Andrews 92; White 3-37).

England: 259 (Douglas 75, Tennyson 63, Brown 57; McDonald 4-105) and 202 (Mailey 3-71).

Australia won by 219 runs

Fourth Test, Old Trafford, 23-26 July 1921

England: 362-4 dec. (Russell 101, Tyllesley 78*) and 44-1.

Australia: 175 (Parkin 5-38).
Match drawn

Fifth Test, the Oval, 13-16 August 1921

England: 403-8 dec. (Mead 182*, Tennyson 51; McDonald 5-143) and 244-2 (Russell 102*, Brown 84, Hitch 51*)

Australia: 389 (Andrews 94, Taylor 75, Macartney 61; Parkin 3-82, Douglas 3-117)
Match drawn

ABOVE Old Etonian, Great War veteran and grandson of the more famous Alfred. Lionel Tennyson shows bulldog spirit by batting through the pain of an injury to his left hand in the third Test at Leeds, July 1921.

Armstrong was gifted, arrogant, supremely self-confident and perhaps the first modern cricketer in that he had no truck with the romantic idea that just playing the game was what counted. His attitude was: 'Stuff that – we're here to win,' and he instilled the same belief in his players. As the *Melbourne Herald* said of them: 'Here is a team that is pretty sure of itself.'

In its obituary of Armstrong *Wisden* said that he 'bore himself in a way likely to cause offence, but he invariably carried his desires over all opposition'. Not hard to think of later Australian skippers of whom much the same thing could be said, nor of whom their role model might have been.

Armstrong and his fast bowlers had changed cricket. Gone was the more gentle elegance of the Golden Age and in its place was a harder, tougher mentality for which 'play up, play up and play the game' didn't mean a damn thing if you were on the losing side.

BRADMAN'S INVINCIBLES, 1948

That philosophy was particularly evident in the Australian squad that toured England in 1948. This lot, captained by Don Bradman and forever immortalized in their homeland as 'the Invincibles', had – according to the batsman Bill Brown – only one aim in mind: never to be beaten by anybody. Actually, he said, that was Bradman's aim, but none of the others was likely to gainsay it – except maybe the buccaneering all-rounder Keith Miller, who always seemed to play the game for the sheer love of it and was not overly concerned by who won or lost.

However, the 1948 tour was to be Bradman's swansong, his last hurrah; at 39 he would retire from Test cricket after the final game at the Oval and was determined to go out a winner. And God, who for some reason known only to Himself seemed to have a soft spot for Bradman, made sure this happened.

Australia won the series four-nil and deservedly so, though not without some good fortune. Admittedly Norman Yardley, the England captain, won the toss four times out of five but, against that, the weather had quite obviously put its money on Australia. England had to bat in bad light at Trent Bridge, Lord's and, for a while, the Oval. It never happened to the Aussies. And at Old Trafford, England might even have been in a potentially winning position until the rain came.




A TEAM OF ALL THE TALENTS?

Still, no point in brooding over what might have been. The fact is that Bradman's team played 36 matches on tour, won 27 and drew nine. And what a team he had – the classically smooth Ray Lindwall and the more unorthodox but equally quick Miller to open the bowling, backed up by Bill Johnston's left-arm fast-medium and the nagging accuracy of Ernie Toshack's left-arm medium. In the Tests Lindwall and Johnston took 27 wickets each, Miller 13 and Toshack 11. A handful of supporting bowlers were only required to take another 11 between them. Since one of these supports was the off-spinner Ian Johnson, whose seven wickets cost 61.00 apiece, those critics who challenge the Invincibles' claim to be the greatest team ever say that the side lacked an effective spin bowler. As to that, I daresay Bradman would have insisted, as did captains of West Indian teams in years to come, that he didn't need a spin bowler. Anyway, had he felt the need he could have called upon two good leg-spinners in Doug Ring, who played in one Test, and Colin McCool, who didn't play in any.

For the batting, there were Arthur Morris and Sid Barnes to open the innings, followed by the Don himself, Lindsay Hassett, Bill Brown (who later

ABOVE *The 1948 Australian tourists before the first Test at Trent Bridge, 10 June 1948. Although Bradman's team did not quite manage to equal Armstrong's Ashes whitewash of 1920–1, they achieved something even more extraordinary, remaining undefeated in all 34 first-class matches of their tour of England. 'Invincibles' indeed.*

 **HOWZAT!** Talking about the so-called pressures of Test cricket, the Australian all-rounder Keith Miller, a wartime fighter pilot, said: 'Pressure? I'll tell you what pressure is – it's being in a Spitfire with a Messerschmitt up your arse. Now that's pressure. Playing cricket is not.'

gave way to the 19-year-old prodigy Neil Harvey) and Miller. When required the all-rounder Sam Loxton and the wicketkeeper Don Tallon also contributed valuable runs.

It became ominously apparent on day one of the first Test at Trent Bridge that the series, which followed hard on England's three-nil defeat Down Under in 1946–7, was likely to be one-way traffic. England, batting first, were reduced to 74 for 8. They eventually reached 165, thanks to Laker's 65 in a partnership of 89 with Alec Bedser. Johnston (5 for 36) and Miller (3 for 38) did the damage.

The Aussies eased past this feeble total with only three wickets down, finally reaching 509 – Bradman's top score of 138 almost matched by Hassett's 137. England did much better second time around, scoring 441, based in large part on Compton's 184. But that left Australia needing only 98 to win. With Barnes notching up 64 not out, they achieved it with eight wickets to spare. Bedser dismissed Bradman for a comparatively rare duck in Australia's second innings.

Now for England the chopping and changing began. Australia called up 15 players in the series; England used 21. But Tom Dollery for Joe Hardstaff, Alec Coxon for Charlie Barnett, Doug Wright for Jack Young – none of it made any difference. In the Lord's match England were thrashed again, this time by 409 runs.

COMPTON THE HERO

And so to Manchester, the scene of England's best chance of a win, Compton's heroics and a nasty injury to Barnes. But before anything else happened England's selectors caused a sensation by dropping Hutton and replacing him with George Emmett of Gloucestershire. Hutton's scores in the series to date had been 3, 74, 20 and 13. His opening partner Cyril Washbrook had fared even worse, with 6, 1, 8 and 37, so it must have been a toss-up which of them to discard. England won the toss again and batted first with Emmett contributing 10 and Washbrook 11, a disappointment for him, since he had been averaging 13 until then.

At 28 for 2 Compton joined Bill Edrich and now Lindwall embarked on a series of bouncers, one of them – a no-ball – flying off the edge of Compton's bat as he tried to hook and hitting him on the forehead. This, remember, was in the days before batsmen wore helmets; Compton didn't even wear a cap. He staggered around, bleeding profusely, before being led off to have stitches inserted in the wound.

But when England had fallen to 119 for 5, the hero returned, head swathed in bandages, to score 145 not out before the innings closed on 363. This total

included a stand of 15 for the eighth wicket between Compton and the Lancashire fast-medium bowler Dick Pollard. It's only worth mentioning because, in the course of it, Pollard hit the ball an almighty swipe straight into the midriff of Sid Barnes, fielding as usual about five yards from the bat at silly mid-on. The stricken Barnes collapsed and was carried off by four policemen, thus upstaging Compton who had needed no such constabulary assistance, before being taken on a stretcher to hospital.

Like Compo, Barnes pluckily returned to the ground and batted at number six, but collapsed at the wicket when he had scored only one and went back to hospital, there to spend ten days under observation. Not surprisingly, in his absence, Australia's first innings total was modest by their standards, 221.

With a lead of 142 England sniffed victory, but now the weather intervened. No play was possible for a day and a half, and though Yardley declared when the game restarted with England 174 for 3, there was no time left for anything but a draw. Australia batted out the final day to close on 92 for 1.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

After these alarms and excursions the series resumed its inevitable course at Headingley. Well, actually, no, for this was a quite remarkable game. For England Hutton was restored in place of Emmett, and Jack Young, the Middlesex left-arm spinner, was dropped. In the event there were many who thought this a mistake, arguing that if Young had been there on a wicket encouraging spin the result might have been different. If nothing else, his presence would have spared Yardley and Compton from having to send down 48 overs between them and Hutton from being required to contribute four overs of so-called leg-spin that cost 30 runs.

The game started well for England, the home side scoring 496, following an opening stand of 168 by Hutton and Washbrook. Bedser's 79, his highest score in Test cricket, was made as nightwatchman. He had come in at 268 for 2 when Washbrook was out and stuck around the next morning to add 161 with Edrich.

At one point England were looking at a potentially enormous score, but 423 for 2 rapidly became 496 all out, good but not that great because in reply Australia made 458, with Neil Harvey making 112 on his Ashes debut. Even so England, who began their second innings with another century opening stand, seemed a good bet if not for a win then at least a draw when they declared at 365 for 8. This left Australia needing 404 to win, a higher score than had ever been made before in a fourth innings to win a Test match.

**First Test, Trent Bridge,
10–15 June 1948**
England: 165 (Laker 65; Johnston 5–36, Miller 3–38) and 441 (Compton 184, Hutton 74, Evans 50; Miller 4–125, Johnston 4–147).
Australia: 509 (Bradman 138, Hassett 137, Barnes 63; Laker 4–138) and 98–2 (Barnes 64*).
Australia won by 8 wickets

**Second Test, Lord's,
24–29 June 1948**
Australia: 350 (Morris 105, Tallon 53; Bedser 4–100) and 460–7 dec. (Barnes 141, Bradman 89, Miller 74, Morris 62).
England: 215 (Compton 53; Lindwall 5–70, Johnson 3–72) and 186 (Toshack 5–40, Lindwall 3–61).
Australia won by 409 runs

**Third Test, Old Trafford,
8–13 July 1948**
England: 363 (Compton 145*; Lindwall 4–99, Johnston 3–67) and 174–3 dec. (Washbrook 85*, Edrich 53).
Australia: 221 (Morris 51; Bedser 4–81, Pollard 3–53) and 92–1 (Morris 54*).
Match drawn

**Fourth Test, Headingley,
22–27 July 1948**
England: 496 (Washbrook 143, Edrich 111, Hutton 81, Bedser 79; Loxton 3–55) and 365–8 dec. (Compton 66, Washbrook 65, Hutton 57, Edrich 54; Johnston 4–95).
Australia: 458 (Harvey 112, Loxton 93, Lindwall 77, Miller 58; Bedser 3–92, Laker 3–113) and 404–3 (Morris 182, Bradman 173*).
Australia won by 7 wickets