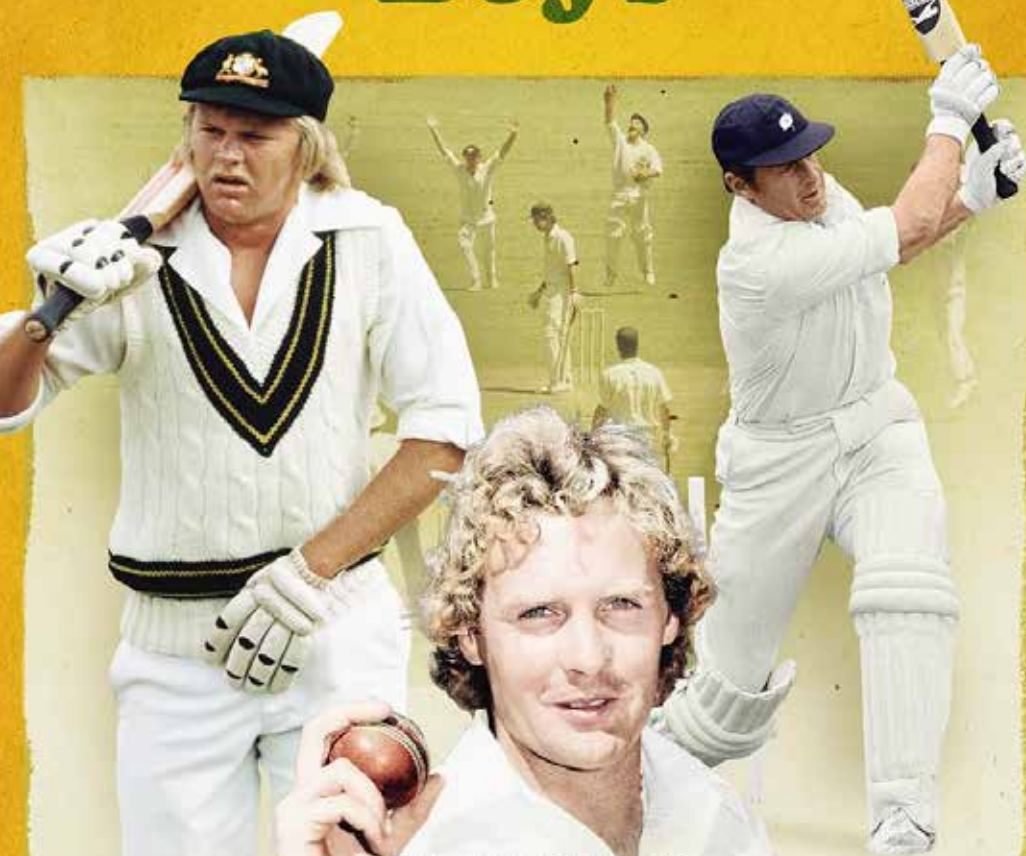


The Establishment Boys



The other Side of

Kerry Packer's Cricket Revolution

Barry Nicholls

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Chapter One

The seeds of revolution

BY THE early 1970s Ian Chappell knew it, and so did his former Australian team-mate Bob Cowper. Players were no longer content simply playing for the honour of representing their country. Honour while worthy wouldn't pay the bills, especially for a young family. Both Chappell and Cowper were acutely aware that change was required for players to survive financially.

Cowper, lean and athletic, was a powerful left-handed batsman and useful off-spin bowler. Just five summers earlier he'd made the first Ashes Test triple century on Australian soil. He retired two seasons later and gave up the chance to captain his country. By the mid-1970s, Cowper's decision had proved the right one. He was by then a successful stockbroker and merchant banker. Still involved in cricket, Cowper continued to point out that players needed to be paid more if Australian cricket wanted to field its best team. Chappell, impressed by Cowper's entrepreneurial flair and progressive approach, nominated him for membership on the Australian Cricket Board (ACB). But like many of Chappell's suggestions it fell on deaf ears.

When Ian Chappell was first picked for Australia in 1964, the country was conservative and Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies ruled the roost. By the late 1960s,

'Ming's' 27-year hold on power was over and a new wave of social change was about to arrive Down Under. Ian Chappell was vice-captain of Australia and soon to become the defining challenger of cricket authorities. A natural leader, Chappell was well liked and held an increasing influence among players.

Bill Lawry's side was asked to play an extra Test in South Africa at the end of back-to-back tours in 1969/70. The reaction, one of the few times a captain questioned the administrators' decision, was a turning point in player attitudes toward officials. The first tour was to India; the second, a hastily arranged visit to take on the Springboks, the Australians forced to move from the sharp turning pitches of the subcontinent to the seaming surfaces of South Africa. By the time an extra match was requested the visitors were losing the series 4-0 and no longer in the mood for more 'suits'-related pressure. When the Australians asked for extra money the ACB declined. Lawry, furious, wrote a letter of complaint, ignoring Ian Chappell's suggestion that the whole team co-sign the missive. The Board surely wouldn't sack all of them. Within a year Lawry was axed and Chappell installed in his place as skipper. 'The bastards will never get me like that,' Chappell told his then wife Amanda. And they didn't. By the time he took over the captaincy in early 1971, Ian Chappell was spoiling for a fight that could not have been won a decade earlier.

A drawn Ashes series of 1972 and easy wins over Pakistan and New Zealand (at home) as well as against the West Indies away consolidated and then strengthened Ian Chappell's hold on the Australian captaincy. The ever-influential Sir Donald Bradman (still one of the South Australian delegates of the Board of Control) might have initially preferred the more scholarly John Inverarity but it wasn't to be. Chappell's salty-mouthed, aggressive

and increasingly arrogant side were winners on and off the field.

By 1973/74 Ian Chappell was the senior Australian cricketer in more ways than one. Operating under the trading name of Ian Chappell Enterprises, he worked in promotion, journalism and advertising. Chappell also had a nationally syndicated newspaper column and significant contracts with Chrysler and TAA. His name was used to advertise products from 'suits to building societies'. His brother Greg had just had his most successful summer of cricket, scoring 1,288 runs in Australia and nearly winning the Sheffield Shield for his adopted state Queensland. Privately, though, life was challenging. The family's new home in the suburb of Kenmore was hit by floodwaters in January, and then Greg's wife Judy suffered a miscarriage. The strain of constant cricket commitments and a new job with the Friends Provident and Century Life Office were starting to take their toll. Something had to give.

When Frank Packer died on 1 May 1974, he passed his \$100 million media empire to his son Kerry, now the managing director of Channel Nine (having bought his brother Clyde's share of the business). Meanwhile, Ian Chappell's Australians had transitioned from a simmer to a boil on player rights. They were an uncompromising, pragmatic, argumentative group who saw themselves as workers and professionals, not amateurs. Clubbable, they played hard and drank enough to attract the tag of 'ugly Australians'. Commitment to the captain was dominant, while their major conversations came in the hours after stumps, still in whites and often a fag in hand, having a beer and talking about what they had learned from that day's play. As Nathan Hollier observed in his chapter 'Story Time with Uncle Dennis' in the book *Australia: A Story of a Cricket Country*, images of Australians in the dressing

room post-match were like a working-class aesthetic, bringing to mind a tradesman on the building site in his boots, cigarette and singlet after a day on the trowel or house frame. Beyond celebrating a wicket or a century they rarely showed emotion – and never cried. We were on the verge of a more modern Australia but with strong vestiges of the past. In this changing time the Australian cricket culture was consistent for its inconsistencies.

It seemed that every negotiation Ian Chappell tried with the ACB about improving player pay reached an impasse. Whenever the question of money was raised, Bradman, as an administrator, had stopped it. Just before the third Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) – a match that drew more than 77,000 to the first day and a total of 250,750 for the match – Australian Cricket Board secretary Alan Barnes gave an interview to *The Australian*. ‘There are 500,000 cricketers who would love to play for Australia for nothing,’ he said.

The comments were like a spark to a tinder-dry paddock. When Barnes dropped by the Australian dressing room the normally reserved Ian Redpath grabbed the cricket official by the shirt and tie and pinned him against the wall, saying, ‘You bloody idiot, of course 500,000 people would play for nothing, but how bloody good would they be?’

Pay had improved for Test players; but so poorly were they remunerated for domestic Gillette Cup one-day games that the promotional girls were paid more – \$75 a day as opposed to \$25 for players. Jeff Thomson discovered this on his first date with future wife Cheryl, following a domestic one-day match. Cricketers were part-time and struggled to hold down jobs. Redpath was an antique dealer who missed the 1975 England tour to look after his business. Geoff Dymock was a schoolteacher, Terry Jenner a sports store manager, Ashley Mallett a journalist, Greg Chappell, for a

time, a Coca Cola salesman. Dymock's overriding emotion after playing for Australia in the final Ashes Test of the 1974/75 season was a sense of relief that a bonus of \$200 was provided. 'I'd had to take seven school days off to play in the Test and go without pay. If I hadn't received the bonus I would have been financially behind, all because I played the sixth Test match for Australia.'

The ACB had convened a players' committee of state captains. Administrators Tim Caldwell, Bob Parish and Ray Steele also agreed to a providential fund and sought sponsorship more aggressively. One example was the campaign for Brut 33, set up by Bob Simpson as part of his sports marketing business. Australian and West Indian players advertised the popular aftershave on radio and TV. The Caribbean tourists were filmed walking on the Adelaide Oval jiggling and singing as they sang, 'Sweat all day in burning sun/Aussie pacemen not much fun/Batsmen wear Brut 33/He get hundred runs by tea.'

Benson & Hedges became the Australian Cricket team's official sponsor. Phil Wilkins broke the story in *The Australian* under the headline 'Cigarette company offers \$350,000 to sponsor our Test cricketers'. Commercialism had been a dirty word in cricket for 100 years. Only now was the barrier being broken down.

Some former players reacted angrily, including Jack Fingleton and Bill O'Reilly, who declined to act as judges for Benson & Hedges match awards, the latter stating, 'Sponsored money for the team winning the series is the root of all evil . . . the Australian [team] has its collective eyes set on it.'

By the mid-1970s, Australian cricket had rarely known richer times. A crowd of 85,661 packed the MCG for the first day's play of the third Test against the West Indies in December of 1975. Match gate takings were \$310,230.

Players' fees, however, remained a paltry \$400 plus \$75 for incidentals. That summer, while Australia won most of the \$46,000 in prize money, the players earned an extra \$400 a Test. Australian cricketers' frustration about the lack of financial reward was now intersecting with Kerry Packer's need for content for his television network. Cricket provided cheap, local sporting product with the bonus of convenient advertising breaks. Historically, the commercial networks were able to bid for rights, but few did as the winning network had to share the rights with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The networks knew that viewers would choose to watch Test cricket uninterrupted on the ABC over the advert-soaked commercial coverage and therefore rarely took up the offer. Packer, however, could also see the potential for shorter, 'lively' cricket tournaments as a TV sporting spectacle.

Despite a gradual shift toward a more commercial model, messages from the Board were mixed. In February of 1976 the Perth-based DJ Foynes organisation proposed five days of cricket at the MCG: Australia versus the Rest of the World with \$100,000 prize money and a 10 per cent net gate receipt to the Board. Foynes also offered Greg Chappell (along with England captain Tony Greig) a 12.5 per cent interest in the promotion company after Richie Benaud agreed to act as consultant. Chappell directed Foynes to cricket officials but nothing more was heard. Packer tried to buy the exclusive rights to televise Test cricket in Australia on his Channel Nine stations and affiliates. He offered half-a-million dollars per year for the rights once the ABC contract expired – ten times what the national broadcaster was forking out. When that failed Packer considered signing up the best players in the world, in part to use as a bargaining tool.

The history of limited-overs cricket was enough to convince soon-to-be Packer consultant Richie Benaud it

was the way of the future. Introduced in England in 1962 to bolster the coffers of ailing county clubs, the one-day game quickly morphed into the Gillette Cup, a 65-over championship including all 17 first-class English counties. International one-day cricket, however, occurred by stealth. When the third Ashes Test of the 1970/71 summer was cancelled because of rain, a 60-over match was scheduled to recoup lost revenue. With more than 46,000 through the turnstiles it was a window to the future for Australian administrators – who failed to notice. Occasional one-day fixtures were programmed, including a pointless three-match series at the end of the 1972 Ashes series. One-day cricket was seen as a minor distraction. Belief was strengthened after a riveting World Cup Final between Australia and the West Indies at Lord's in June of 1975. The match in front of a full house ended at twilight on a summer's eve, heralding the arrival of a competition with mass appeal. Ever the progressive when it came to cricket, Benaud devised a blueprint to bring in larger crowds, which included shorter tours with a combination of Test matches and one-day knockout games.

Change was in the air, and it was coming from a much broader base than sport. Mark Juddery in *1975 – Australia's Greatest Year* noted that Australia was becoming a more questioning society, aware of its rights. Change had been the key word in the early 1970s as the new Labour government foisted numerous amendments on the parliament in a rush, including a lowering of the voting age, introduction of maternity leave, an increase in the minimum wage and the abolishment of university fees. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam had ridden into government on the 'It's Time' slogan, although there was barely enough time for the new government to institute all its changes before it lost power in 1975.

Numerous social movements were underway, against the Vietnam War, for women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, environmental protection and Aboriginal land rights. Australia was becoming more multicultural and fundamental ideas about marriage were being challenged.

Eighteen months before the 1977 Centenary Test, David Richards was secretary at Victorian sub-district cricket club Ringwood. Within weeks he found himself fast-tracked to the role of Victorian Cricket Association secretary and heavily involved in the historic match's organisation. The encounter was a celebration of 100 years since Dave Gregory's Australians defeated James Lillywhite's Englishmen. Richards' main role was to gather the details of the 229 ex-players and officials in England and Australia, as well as organising their flights and accommodation. Sensing a need to explore how modern sport was marketed beyond Australia, Richards and former marketing manager at Nabisco Tom Worrell had already met with counterparts in Major League Baseball and the Football League to see how international sport was marketed in the US and England. They were particularly impressed with the bright uniforms and spectacle of American sporting events. As the pair celebrated Worrell's birthday at the New York Athletic Club, the birthday boy pronounced after a couple of dry martinis: 'I think I'm going home to recommend we play cricket under lights in coloured clothing with a white ball.' Richards almost fell off his chair laughing. It was a joke, but one that presaged things to come.

The marketing campaign of the Centenary Test was at a level never before seen in Australia. To celebrate her Silver Jubilee, the Queen's visit to Melbourne coincided with the match. Special postage stamps were designed. Jeweller and former Test player Ernie McCormick was asked to prepare sketches of a commemorative presentation piece for players

and major cricketing bodies. Ten thousand visitors came from overseas and interstate, creating the greatest influx of tourists into Melbourne since the 1956 Olympic Games. It was to be the high point of the cricket world. Even *Time* magazine featured the event as its cover story.

Despite the sense of celebration, there was a contemptuous mockery of cricket authorities who had for 70 years held the balance of power. By the time the first ball of the Centenary Test was delivered, recruitment of Australia's best cricketers had been going on for weeks, and what better symbol of defiance. Packer's men, John Cornell (Strop from *The Paul Hogan Show*) and former Western Australian football star turned sports manager Austin Robertson, found they had a willing audience. Many disgruntled and prominent players were ready to break ranks. By the end of the match most of the Australian side had signed with Packer or were considering it, despite not knowing the full implications.

It is amazing that given the size of the cricket gathering in Melbourne, there were no leaks of the plans. Signs something was happening behind the scenes filtered through. As early as September 1976, Melbourne Cricket Club president Ian Johnson received a letter from local television station GTV9 (part of Packer's television empire) making an application for the use of the ground for a series of cricket matches from December 1977 to February 1978. Johnson responded but had no further communication from the Packer group, nor any formal application to play on the MCG. Cricket administrators believed their authority was so unquestionable that any overtures from outsiders about a private competition could only do so with the full approval of – and be of financial benefit to – the Australian Cricket Board.

Alan Turner resembled a choirboy with his jet-black wavy hair and sideburns, olive skin and cherubic face with impish grin. On an adventurous day he might leave two shirt

buttons open, and sleeves rolled up past the elbow. He had always looked a little out of place among the macho cricket culture of the 1970s. When he batted his happy expression turned solemn, his backside pushed out like he was stopping someone from squeezing by him in a corridor. Compact and efficient as an opener, he began as a stopgap before convincing the selectors he could offer more.

Turner had come to Test cricket almost as an afterthought just as he was about to retire from Shield cricket in 1975. He batted unassumingly, just a nudger and pusher, never a stylist. Turner toured South Africa as an Australian schoolboy, and New Zealand with a national XI. By the time he was 24, Turner thought he'd reached the peak of his career playing for New South Wales (NSW). By the end of 1974, retirement from first-class cricket loomed but within a few months he was on the Australian tour to England. Debuting in the first Test at Edgbaston, one month short of his 25th birthday, he scored 37. Turner managed only 68 runs in five innings but was picked for the first Test against the West Indies the following home summer. His Test highlight arrived when he cut and hooked Andy Roberts, Michael Holding and Vanburn Holder, scoring 136 in the second innings of the Adelaide Test in 1975/76. Turner hadn't had a great tour of New Zealand, but he wasn't alone, and was looking forward to playing in the Centenary Test before his second tour of England.

'We just want to give the selectors a chance to see what this young bloke David Hookes looks like, that's all,' selector Sam Loxton told Turner. Fair enough, Turner thought, I'll still be on the plane to England in a month or so. The early months of 1977 were pivotal in the life of the left-hander Hookes, who had been voted a Bradman medallist (by the South Australia district cricket umpires as the best and fairest player) when 19. A double failure in Perth against Western

Australia initially placed him under pressure during what had been a modest and interrupted season. Then came the starburst of five centuries in six innings in 17 days, beginning with 163 against Victoria. His maiden ton included four sixes in one over. *The Advertiser's* front page showed Hookes down on one knee, striking the ball over midwicket. It represented more than a cricketer in full flight. It was a statement of arrival. A week later he hammered 185 in 191 minutes, then 105 in a little over 90 minutes against Queensland. In the next few days, scores of 135 and 156 against New South Wales saw the left-hander become the first to score centuries in each innings of consecutive games since Surrey's Tom Hayward in 1906. By the time Hookes had made 156 in the final knock of this golden run, the Australian selectors had penned his name in for the Centenary Test.

Having witnessed Hookes' batting pyrotechnics, Sir Donald Bradman, who watched on from the South Australia Cricket Association (SACA) committee room, wrote to his mate Sam Loxton, urging him to select Hookes for the Centenary Test: 'He's just the sort of batsman cricket needs.' Hookes was on his way to play in what was being described as the biggest cricket match in the 100-year history of the game.

Marching bands and a grand final roar greeted the Australia and England sides as they walked on to the MCG turf. Former captains of both countries, including Ian Chappell in a flowered open-neck shirt, paraded by. Tony Greig did not hesitate to put the home side in, marking the first time the England captain had done so in 15 Tests. Under overcast skies and a south-west breeze John Lever opened the match from a 22-pace run. After a nervous 28 minutes Davis played across the line of a Lever inswinger and was lbw for 5.

Cricketing life couldn't have been any better for Gary Cosier as he bounded on to the Melbourne Cricket Ground,

a place he considered his own. He had, after all, scored two Test centuries in two outings there. Cosier had travelled a circuitous cricket journey to get to this point. His radio work in Adelaide now allowed him to fit in his state and Australia commitments, an increasingly rare option for players. However, he had worries. A few days earlier Cosier had arrived home from the New Zealand tour to find all his personal belongings on his home's front lawn. His wife was starting divorce proceedings. As Cosier walked on to the MCG he tried to put that out of his mind, casting a glance at the Members' Stand and the vast crowd of more than 60,000. Not that he could see them, but he knew where his mum and dad were sitting; the same place they were when he scored a century on debut against the West Indies two summers before.

Cosier's Centenary Test began well as he struck Bob Willis for consecutive boundaries through third man. Excitement turned to concern when opener Rick McCosker played on after being hit by a Willis bouncer. The sight of Cosier rushing to help a crumpling McCosker provided an arresting image. Having seen off a slower Lever bouncer that ambled over his left shoulder as he ducked, Cosier tried to hook the next one. The sliding bouncer was on him before he knew it. Cosier followed through with the stroke and the ball spooned to leg gully. Head bowed, Cosier walked off the MCG, thinking, *I'll never do that again.*

Australia soon found themselves 51/5 before scrambling to 138, playing on a pitch conducive to seam and spin from day one, and being affected by the sense of occasion (which would later impact the visitors when batting). Greg Chappell's uncharacteristically unassertive 40 in 237 minutes delivered some respectability. 'One of my most difficult innings,' he admitted.

A combination of Dennis Lillee's brutal pace and Max Walker's canny late swing helped bowl England out the next day for 95. Authorities considered scheduling a one-day match to coincide with the Queen's visit on the fifth day of the Test.

Batting at number four in Australia's second innings, Cosier hovered for 35 minutes remaining circumspect, avoiding the temptation to hook. Then he did. Same bowler, same shot, the only difference was that wicketkeeper Alan Knott caught the mistimed hook that ballooned into the air. Gone for 4, no longer the king of the MCG. It looked like two soft dismissals from the man given the task of holding down the number three spot. The commentators tut-tutted, wondering what had gotten into young Cosier's head. 'It was the most embarrassing thing I've ever been through. I thought I owned the MCG. Lever nailed me twice in two days. It was terrible.'

Calmer nerves and a flatter wicket saw both sides settle in the second innings. Australia, courtesy of half-centuries from Ian Davis, Doug Walters and Hookey, as well as a hundred from Rod Marsh, set England a world record 463 to win. Amazingly McCosker batted again, this time with a broken jaw. Going in at the fall of the ninth wicket he nudged and deflected his way to 25, putting on 54 runs for the last wicket and batting long enough for Rod Marsh to move from 82 to 110. England almost chased the target down with the help of Derek Randall's 174. Randall's knock was a revelation for his batting skills and eccentricity. The Englishman's clicking of his heels and doffing his cap Charlie Chaplin style won over many Australian fans. The home side triumphed by 45 runs, the same result as 100 years earlier.

As the Australian side walked off the MCG in a blaze of glory, Marsh as vice-captain turned to his skipper Greg

Chappell and said, 'I guess this'll be the last time we play here for a while.' Chappell, concerned his mate might let the cat out of the bag, returned a blank expression. 'You know what I bloody well mean,' said Marsh, who had signed up with Packer at tea on the final day.

With his easy-going manner, Gary Cosier was used to being part of the in crowd – normally one of the first invited to a party. He had, after all, with Rod Marsh hoisted Dennis Lillee on to his shoulders and carried him off the ground in triumph at the end of the Centenary Test. As the Australians were knocking off the tops of longneck beers with a great sense of relief, Austin Robertson handed out envelopes containing sign-on cheques. 'Here are your theatre tickets, fellas!' No such tickets for Cosier, but he did notice that several of his team-mates had suddenly taken an interest in higher culture. 'I remember seeing the tickets being handed out and waiting for them to come my way. I was normally included in things like that although I did wonder why it was theatre tickets and maybe not beer tickets.' Cosier was the only player in the Australian side not signed up for World Series Cricket.

Cosier's mind sometimes wanders back to the vote taken under his state captain Ian Chappell, led by Terry Jenner, as to whether the side should boycott the 'eastern states' tour in 1975. Chappell had threatened strike action with the SACA over the selection of Bob Blewett to replace the popular Rick Drewer. Chappell felt slighted by the selectors for not consulting him when they chose the squad to play in Sydney and Brisbane. All but two, Cosier and Rodney Hogg, agreed to the strike action. Under duress, Chappell caved in to the SACA over the strike, and rang the players to tell them it was his problem, not theirs. Cosier wonders whether he had been placed on Chappell's blacklist for opposing the strike.

When Chappell was asked why Cosier missed out on a Packer offer, he replied, 'By the time I was involved in selection, I recall Coze was already aligned with the ACB.' It's at odds with the generally accepted view that Chappell hand-picked the players. At the time of the signings, Cosier had been part of the Australian line-up for two full seasons with a Test average of 46.

Cosier's story of exclusion from the WSC is central to the saga of those who became known as the Establishment Boys. How Cosier arrived at this juncture in his cricket life is a story of rejection, perseverance, and success. Joining the Northcote fourths at the age of 11, still in short trousers, he gradually worked his way through the grades. Future Test team-mate Rodney Hogg joined the club a year later. Between the ages of 15 and 20, Cosier opened the batting for Northcote with former Australian captain Bill Lawry. In the winter, he substituted cricket whites for Aussie Rules football boots, playing for Fitzroy reserves in the Victoria Football League. As an 18-year-old, he'd played twice for Victoria, opening with Lawry in four innings. Starts were easy to come by for Cosier but his highest score was 34.

By the time he turned 21, with a couple of average grade seasons behind him, the door to Victorian selection (with Keith Stackpole, Ian Redpath and Paul Sheahan in the side) appeared closed. An invitation from the Prospect District Club president Reg Craig was enough to lure him to South Australia (SA). Cosier didn't take long to make an impression and debuted for South Australia, batting at number three against Western Australia; Dennis Lillee's comeback match after his crippling back injury. Cosier scored 24 and 47, looking well enough at ease. Ian Chappell's guidance added nuance to Cosier's batting. 'I was basically an off-side player but after a few months of watching Ian play on the on side I understood there were two sides to the

wicket. Also, the chats we had after play over a beer really helped me understand my own game and the vagaries of cricket overall.'

If Cosier's non-inclusion in WSC tells a tale, so too does the story of WSC's poster boy, David Hookes.

Just after England's Derek Randall was named man of the match, receiving his gold medal and \$1,500 in prize money, an announcement boomed out of the loudspeakers at the MCG. The match had attracted almost a quarter-of-a-million spectators and a television audience in the millions. The 248,260 spectators paid \$418,019 at the gate, representing a huge financial success. Despite his youth and naivety, Hookes understood that the Australians' match fee of \$475 with a \$250 bonus paled into insignificance compared to what the Board had earned. The standard WSC contract of \$25,000 a season must have seemed like a goldmine. Despite the financial boon, Hookes knew the potential for pitfall when it came to his development as a cricketer. He could play fast bowling well, which he proved when facing the West Indians in 1975/76, and later during WSC. Only time would tell, but his lack of footwork against top-line spinners made him vulnerable.