

Podcast 48 - Sir Donald Bradman - An Australian Cricket Legend

by Rob McCormack - Saturday, October 18, 2014

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Podcast Number 48 – Sir Donald Bradman – An Australian Cricket Legend

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Hi,

Australians have many sporting heroes, but our greatest and best known comes from the sport of cricket (see Podcast 40). That person is Sir Donald Bradman. Sir Donald, or ‘The Don’ as he was known, is, without doubt, the best cricketer which Australia has ever produced. Indeed, he is arguably the best cricketer ever, from any country. He played test cricket from 1928 to 1948. He was just so much better than anyone else of his time. His test batting average score was 99.94 runs per innings. This is an amazing average. The very best test batsmen of the last 100 years have a test batting average score of around 50 to 60 runs per innings. This includes such great batsmen as South Africa’s Graeme Pollock (60.97), England’s Ken Barrington (58.67), the West Indies’ Gary Sobers (57.78) and India’s Satchin Tendulkar (53.78). These were all fantastic players, but the Don, with an average of 99.94, stands head and shoulders above them all. He was simply the best test cricket batsman ever.

Don Bradman started playing test cricket at the age of 20, when Australia, and indeed the rest of the world, was struggling to overcome the great depression which lasted from 1929 to the late 1930s. Many people were out of work and many people were finding their day to day life very tough and very difficult. I wasn’t yet born at that time but I can imagine that Don Bradman’s wonderful performances when playing for Australia would have made every Australian smile and forget their troubles for a while. He became a hero to all Australians. In just his second five test series playing against England in 1930, at the young age of just 20 years, the Don scored 974 runs with an average score of 139. This included one century, two double centuries and his best ever test cricket score, a triple century of 334. This innings, in July 1930 at Headingley Stadium in Leeds, England, was amazing because he scored 309 of those runs in just one day. No other test cricket batsman has been able to achieve more than 300 runs in one day. The Don was truly a run making machine.



In his test career, he played 52 tests and made 29 centuries. Remarkably, he scored 26% of all the runs made by the Australian Cricket team in those 52 tests. That is remarkable when you think that every cricket team has 11 batsmen. He was a very difficult batsman to get out and he knew how to score runs quickly. Sir Donald went on to become Australia's Test Cricket captain, finishing with a record of 11 wins, 3 losses and 5 draws and as captain he never lost a test series.



The Don's batting was so extraordinary that the English cricket team tried a special type of bowling in the 1932/33 Ashes series in Australia. This was called bodyline and involved bowling the ball at the batsman, rather than at the wickets. Not even this was entirely successful, and Bradman still scored a century and scored an average of 56 runs per innings in that Ashes series. The use of bodyline bowling was very controversial, causing a dispute between the cricket administrators of England and Australia, which in turn almost caused bad relations between the governments of Great Britain and Australia. The laws of cricket were later changed so that bodyline bowling could not be used again.

Sir Donald's last test innings was in the fifth Ashes test against England at the Oval, in London, England, in 1948. As captain, he had lead the team in that series to a 4 matches to nil win, scoring another 2 test centuries himself. In his very last innings as a test cricketer he walked to the wicket to a standing ovation from the English crowd. This must have been a wonderful moment for the Don at 40 years of age. When he reached the wicket, the English team lifted their hats and gave him three cheers. When play finally

started, the Don needed just 4 runs to achieve a test batting average of 100 runs. Incredibly, the great man was out, bowled, with just the second ball he faced, for 0. The radio commentator, John Arlott, was stunned and almost unable to speak.

https://youtu.be/EMudzAqE_M8

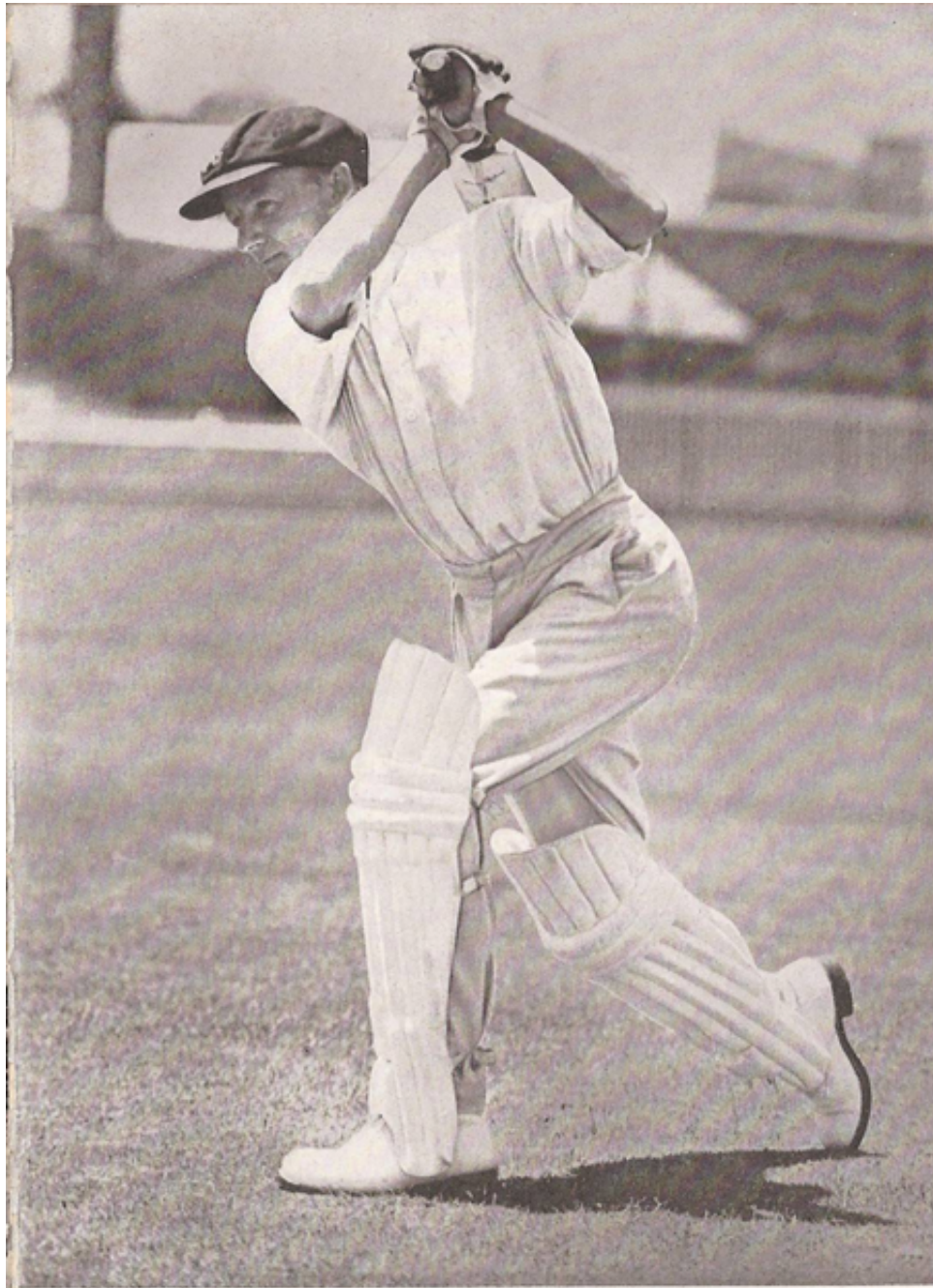
As the Don walked off the ground to still more loud applause from the crowd, the commentator suggested that perhaps the emotion of the moment must have affected him. Whatever the truth, this last innings brought to an end the greatest cricket career in history. Sir Donald went on to become an administrator for Australian cricket, working for the Australian Cricket Board until 1980.



In 2000 he was voted the greatest cricketer of the 20th century by the Wisden Cricket Almanack, the world famous cricket reference book. There were 100 judges who were asked to nominate their five best cricketers, and every one of the 100 judges selected Don Bradman. Sir Donald died at the age of 92, in February 2001. His funeral service was watched by 1.45 million people on television.



The Don's career was so remarkable that songs have been recorded about him, many books written about his life and career and even a film made about the bodyline controversy in 1932. He became the first living Australian to have his picture put on a postage stamp. I never saw him play cricket, yet I know that he is an Australian sporting hero who was, and continues to be, an inspiration for all sports men and women in Australia.



Song - <https://youtu.be/PczQqJi3tlQ>

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 33]

Vocabulary

administrators = people who manage things

amazing = when something is very, very good, so good that it is hard to believe

applause = when the crowd clap

arguably = many people think this is true

average score = the middle score of all the scores. To calculate an average, add all the scores and then divide the total by how many scores you have.

bad relations = when there is a problem between people or countries

bowling = when the ball is bowled from one end of the cricket pitch towards the batsman at the other end

career = the time from when you start your job to when you finish your job

causing = to make something happen

centuries = scores in cricket which are 100 or above

commentator = the person who is describing the game, usually on TV or radio

controversial = when many people disagree about something

difficult = when it is hard to do something

dispute = when people disagree about something

draws = when the two teams in a game do not lose, but do not win

emotion = your feelings. For example, happiness, sadness, joy

entirely successful = when something works really well

extraordinary = very, very good

fantastic = very, very good

funeral service = when a person's body is put to rest after they have died

hero = someone who does wonderful things

includes = things or people that are in the same group

incredibly = when it is almost hard to believe

innings = when a team bats

inspiration = when you influence someone else to be a better person

judges = people who decide what is good or bad

losses = when you lose a game

moment = a particular time

nil = 0, zero

nominate = to suggest people, to put their names forward

performances = when you do something which needs a high level of skill

produced = made, came from

remarkably = when something is very special

run making machine = when someone is very, very good at making runs

series = several games or matches

standing ovation = when the crowd all stand up and they clap and cheer

struggling = trying hard to do something that is very hard to do

stunned = when you are surprised by something and are not able to talk

the great depression = a period of 10 years from 1929 to 1939 when all the countries of the world became poorer, with many people losing their jobs

three cheers = to tell someone they have done well, you say three times 'hip hip hooray'

tough = very hard

troubles = the things which are going wrong in your life

voted = to chose someone

wickets = 3 wooden sticks put into the ground at each end of the cricket pitch

without doubt = is true, everyone agrees

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