



**CRICKET  
IN THE  
DOLDRUMS**

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**ASSH STUDIES IN SPORTS HISTORY NO. 8**

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# **CRICKET IN THE DOLDRUMS**

**The Struggle between Private and Public Control of  
Australian Cricket in the 1880s**

**David Montefiore**

**ASSH Studies in Sports History No. 8**

## **Editors Note**

This volume continues the tradition of the Australian Society for Sports History publishing theses which win the society's annual prize. David Montefiore submitted this work for his Bachelor of Arts (Honours) thesis in the School of History at the University of New South Wales in 1989. Subsequently it was awarded the ASSH thesis prize for 1990.

With its prizes and publications programme ASSH has a twofold aim of recognising and rewarding the efforts of young scholars and providing an incentive for them to continue to work in what is still a developing field of research and scholarship. The Society also has as one of its main aims the dissemination of research information. Through the ASSH Studies we are able to make research work in the Sports History field more accessible to members and to the general public.

John O'Hara  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
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Editor

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACC ..... Australasian Cricket Council

ACGC ..... Albert Cricket Ground Company

EMCC ..... East Melbourne Cricket Club

MCC ..... Melbourne Cricket Club

NSWCA ..... New South Wales Cricket Association

SACA ..... South Australian Cricket Association

VCA ..... Victorian Cricketers Association

## PRECIS

This thesis examines the shift from private to public control of Australian cricket during the late nineteenth century. The abiding theme in the literature of Australian sport in the colonial period concerns the adaption to colonial environment and experience of Britain's "games revolution" and the Victorian ideology of sport, its values, precedents, legitimizing assumptions, institutional models and class relationships. Less emphasis, however, has been placed on the ways in which a modern colonial sporting culture was framed by the "cultural hegemony" of indigenous organizational structures.

To that end, an exploration of the political relationships of colonial cricket reveals that regular competition against England, that part of the colonial game conventionally held to represent the epitome of imperial sporting and cultural hegemony, emerged independently of, and by the late 1880s, in opposition to the circuits of middle-class, moralist organizational influence.

This study will trace the "modernization" of Australian cricket during the colonial period - the role of the English legacy, the emergence of club, intercolonial and, from the 1880s, international competition - and will argue that the dramatic rise of colonial cricket as a spectator sport does not mimic a pattern of institutional progress, but in fact follows one of institutional weakness, division and degeneration.

As Australia began its initial forays into regular competition against England, colonial cricket was framed as much by notions of English traditionalism as by the emerging apparatus of a modern sporting culture. From the birth of the "Australian XI" in 1878 until the mid 1880s, two dominant factions tenuously co-existed on Australian fields: one which subscribed to the largely pre-modern value system and economic priorities of the English game, and whose interrelationships were defined by a history of parochialism and internecine power struggles, and one which was spectator oriented, economically pragmatic and which recognised the potential to unite

colonial cricket's fragmented popularity successfully in the international arena.

Their inexorable collision during the second half of the decade was marked by a dramatic collapse in public support for the hitherto novel spectacle of Anglo-Australian competition. The resurrection of Australian cricket from the "doldrums" of the late 1880s demanded a critical reinterpretation by the public administration of its own organizational and ideological function, of its relationship to the game, its players and its audience.

While from the 1890s, the administration of Australian cricket began for the first time to confidently echo the inherited concerns of English moralist and rationalist opinion, cricket's popular appeal had been cemented in that period when the reformist voice was too weak and too divided to assert its civilizing influence.

The rise of cricket in the Australian colonies, so holds the conventional wisdom, was '*un fait accompli*' - the inevitable fit of England's most venerable pastime with uniquely suited environmental and economic circumstances in the colonies. In the minds of contemporaries, however, the future of the Anglo-Australian game was, for a time, anything but certain. Colonial spectators chose to attend the novel spectacle of competition against visiting English teams, but also chose not to when their demands failed to be met.

Visits of English teams to Australia and Australian teams to England became regular events throughout the 1880s. Their frequency, however, belies the extent to which such contests were dependent upon political maneuvering, fragile alliances and only very conditional public support. Grand demonstrations of nationalist and imperialist sporting achievements were always mediated by provincialism, inter and intra-colonial rivalries and a tangle of class tension.

## INTRODUCTION

During the decade of the 1880s, cricket emerged as a major spectator sport in colonial Australia. The 1880s were, however, both the best of times and the worst of times for Australian cricket. After nearly a decade of regular competition against England, increasing spectator support and remarkable on-field successes, the future of Anglo-Australian cricket was, by the later half of the decade, entirely uncertain. Having enthusiastically embraced the novel spectacle of regular 'test' matches against the motherland, Australians deserted the test arena in bewildering numbers.

Amateur histories of the period and the records of contemporary players reveal a typically whiggish reluctance to dwell over the abrupt interruption to the dramatic years of 1877-84 when Australian teams first played and triumphed over England and when the Ashes were first mentioned. "The doldrums", Marlyebone Cricket Club chronicler H.S. Altham labels the years of late 1880s.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Horan, a contemporary Australian cricketer and journalist nominated the late eighties "a period of decadence."<sup>2</sup> The reminiscences of W.G. Grace glibly recall the turmoil as the result of "an unfortunate misunderstanding."<sup>3</sup> While all freely acknowledge a decline in public interest for the colonial game, all share a puzzling inability to offer further explanation for why it occurred.

The efforts of academic historians of the colonial game have been similarly circumspect in confronting what amounted to a near total collapse in support for the emerging institution of Anglo-Australian cricket. Two detailed studies of colonial cricket surfaced during the 1970s as part of the first cautious attempt amongst Australian academics to establish sports history as a "serious" discipline within the wider field of social history. W.F. Mandle<sup>4</sup> and Ken Inglis<sup>5</sup> analysed colonial cricket, and specifically competition against England, in terms of cricket's function in contributing to nationalist and imperialist sentiment respectively and argued that cricket was a potent expression of and contributor to the formation of wider social values adopted in the colonies.

These studies, as part of the first sustained effort to assign a certain legitimacy to sports history, revealed (perhaps inevitably), the

limitations inherent in pioneering a field of inquiry hitherto the domain of “gentlemanly” historians and journalists. The self-conscious determination to develop an appropriate methodology into which the rise of colonial cricket might fit, led both studies to effectively dismiss a deep rupture within the hegemonic function they ascribe to cricket in the colonial period. A dramatic collapse in popular support for Anglo-Australian cricket does not fit comfortably, if at all, within their schema.

Mandle, in particular, is cautious to the point of disingenuity. “Towards the end of the 1880s,” he notes in his otherwise richly detailed study, “there was evidence of a decline in interest for cricket.”<sup>6</sup> With this stroke of a pen, Mandle eliminates what appears to be little more than an irksome irregularity in the otherwise flourishing sporting phenomenon of Anglo-Australian cricket. Inglis, while less dismissive, is nonetheless entirely circumspect in offering any analysis for the dramatic collapse. He correctly identifies that the crisis of the 1880s was played out against the background of a bitter dispute over profits between touring Australian teams that operated independently of the emerging public administration of the game, with their frequent opponents, English professional cricketers whose occupational status rested largely with their economic and organizational ties to the English county system. To that end, Inglis tentatively offers that “what went wrong is difficult to say as contemporaries are so divided about it...”, but suggests that “whatever kept Australian cricket becalmed... [during the late 1870s and early 1880s], it was the collision between English professionals and Australian commercials that brought it to a halt.”<sup>7</sup>

The troubles that subsumed Australian cricket were, to be sure, intensified by the intrusion of outside forces, but cannot finally be explained by them in isolation. For Inglis, the history of colonial cricket is entirely explicable in terms of imperial relationships. The logic that accounts for colonial acceptance of England’s game, must, it seems, also be employed to explain its rejection. Yet, as cricket emerged as a major spectator sport in the colonies, as the phenomena of spectatorship increasingly contributed to the construction of Australian popular cultural identity, a far greater collision took place within the administration of Australian cricket itself, which for a time,

failed to comprehend the contradictions of its own institutional arrangements - a failure that brought play, almost, to a halt. The structural explanations for the turmoil within Australian cricket in the 1880s are finally located within the specifically indigenous conflicts between private and public control over access to colonial playing fields, at that time when the game came to be played internationally.

Inglis and Mandle view the rise of a colonial cricket culture as the inevitable reflex to the institutional demands and values of an adopted Victorian ideology of sport and an industrial society. Historians of the colonial game are yet to fully consider that an effective “modern” institutionalization of England’s game in the colonies lagged years behind the popular acceptance of cricket amongst Australians as a spectator sport. If hegemony was seen to exist on colonial cricket fields, it must be proved, not assumed or inferred.

The struggle for access to the late nineteenth century cricket field in Australia was the fight for institutional recognition by men informed by often competing cultural cues for the organization of their sport. The patterns of resistance and acceptance of conflicting ideologies of professionalism, amateurism and commercialism was a painful and revealing process. An organizational principal of amateurism found formal, national expression in 1907 with the formation of the Board of Control. Yet contemporary concerns about the future of cricket - what form the game should take, who should control it - and the overarching perception that cricket in the 1980s is plagued by a divided authority and conflicting ideas about its conventions, suggest that the cultural contestation that characterised the organization and playing of the game in the 1880s was not exhausted by 1907, nor has the reinterpretation of traditions been completed a century later. Then as now, the role of sport in producing and reproducing social relations of power and maintaining patterns of social domination and resistance, reveal much about Australian attitudes towards class relationships, growth and progress, the work ethic and the pleasure principle and specifically to the very high valuation Australians place on their sporting culture.

## NOTES:

1. H.S. Altham. *A History of Cricket*, Vol. 1, London, 1962, p. 211.
2. Richard Cashman, *'Ave A Go Yer Mug! Australian Cricket Crowds From Larrikin to Ocker*. Sydney, 1984, p. 35, quoting Thomas Horan of the Australasian.
3. W.G. Grace, "W.G." *Cricketing Reminiscences and Personal Recollections*, London, 1899, p. 186.
4. W.F. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of The Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59, Pt. 4. December, 1973, p. 226.
5. K.S. Inglis, "Imperial Cricket Test Matches Between Australia and England, 1877-1900" in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.), *Sport In History: The Making of Modern Sporting History*, Brisbane, 1977, p. 170.
6. Mandle, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
7. Inglis. *op.cit.*, p. 161.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Part One: The English Legacy

During the late nineteenth century, cricket emerged as a major spectator sport in both Victorian England and colonial Australia. Mandle has suggested that cricket in the late nineteenth century, “its framework, organization, ethics, even its quirks and quiddities, were nineteenth century industrial”, and that the questions asked by an industrial society of its games, were those asked of its technology and products. How could it be made to work better and be made more popular?<sup>1</sup>

The organizational framework of English cricket had answered such questions by the mid-1870s with the rapid increase from the 1860s of the number of county clubs, the regular employment of professional cricketers and the expansion of inter-county competition. As the evangelical morality of England’s recreational reformers arrived en masse to the Australian colonies from the 1840s the task of institutionalizing England’s cricket began in earnest. But for those men concerned for the development of the imperial game, the class and cultural distinctions upon which the English system was based, its anomalies and its contradictions and questions of institutional effectiveness became increasingly difficult to answer. By the 1880s the public administration of Australian cricket was characterized by fierce intra and intercolonial rivalries and a distinctly unfederal approach to the organization of the game, but one nonetheless bound, if often insecurely, by a commitment to the paternalist organizational model of the county system, its rhetorical concerns about the status of amateurs and professionals and by the economic priorities of the English system.

Colonial Australians were introduced to international competition by tours of English professional cricketers organized and financed in 1861-2 by a partnership of business entrepreneurs and in 1863-4, by the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) under whose auspices a team of professionals (and one amateur) toured the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. The tours realized enormous profits for their promoters and successfully whet the colonial appetite

for the novel spectacle of international competition, yet no further tours were to take place for over a decade.<sup>2</sup>

In England, by mid-century, over half of England's population lived in urban centres and the expansion of railways during the first half of the century enabled and encouraged travel between touring amateur club sides. The most famous of them, I Zingari, was formed in 1845. William Clarke, a Nottingham publican and professional cricketer, adopted the amateur touring pattern and organized in 1846 the 'All England Eleven', which along with a proliferation of imitators that emerged over the subsequent twenty-five years, formed its own lucrative touring circuit.<sup>3</sup> Sissons' social history of the English professional cricketer calls Clarke "a man of vision and business acumen. He was the first to recognise that in the changed economic and social circumstances of the late 1840s, cricket's local and fragmented popularity could be focused nationally through a professional touring eleven."<sup>4</sup> While promoters hired the players and enjoyed the profits, the potential existed for the professional to fashion his own game, as the success of the peripatetic elevens and the first international tours to Canada in 1859 and to the Australian colonies in the early 1860s seemed to indicate. The development of English cricket was to rest, however, with the lead taken by the professional touring sides and their promoters. The years from the mid-1860s to the end of the 1870s saw structural changes to the English game in which the independent occupational and economic prospects of professional cricketers was arrested by the rise of county-based competition.

The successful creation of county clubs and an extended programme of county fixtures developed alongside the emergence of counties as unified political, economic and social entities - a slow and uneven process of overcoming the intra-county rivalries of town and county and between the power of the local aristocracy and the rising urban bourgeoisie. Financial security for emerging county clubs necessitated their location in urban centres, and the assimilating of traditional local club identification with that of the county. The Surrey Club, for example, traces its origins to the Hambledon club that played in Hampshire. The club's playing field was "quite at the Surrey end of Hants, and the Surrey men were among the finest men

in it. Indeed in the old scores the same men are found indifferently on the side of Surrey and of Hants, perhaps because they had their homes in the one and their cricket ground in the other.”<sup>5</sup>

The intra-county assimilation of the local aristocracy with the urban middle class became typically reflected in the make-up of county club committees, which comprised both prominent members of the urban bourgeoisie - manufacturers, merchants, solicitors or clergymen - and members of the local aristocracy who invariably accepted positions as President or Vice-President of county committees. Such positions assumed actual as well as symbolic importance as still powerful, landed aristocratic patrons financially supported, with varying degrees of generosity, the development of playing facilities for county clubs.<sup>6</sup>

As county cricket sought to establish organizational cohesion, the itineraries of the independent peripatetic elevens were perceived to threaten the development of county competition. The notion that a programme for independent professional touring elevens might co-exist along side a programme of county matches was a prospect firmly rejected by county committees who perceived the county system largely as an exercise in community enterprise and respectability. In an age dominated by the cult of muscular Christianity, the expansion of county cricket and particularly the game's wholesale adoption by English public schools, came to serve as an important instrument of local solidarity and social control.

While explanations for the rapid expansion of English cricket from 1860 are closely tied to the Victorian cult of athleticism, cricket, unlike soccer, was already well developed by the time of Kingsley, Hughes, Arnold and Fraser. It would appear that Victorian reverence for the game was in fact largely because it had been so well established in the century before 1850. The efforts to arrest professional leadership of English cricket was all of a piece with Georgian traditions of amateur-professional relationships, the closed relationship of master and servant - a relationship assumed to be threatened by the entrepreneurial professional teams of William Clarke, George Parr and John Wisden.

The campaign to reassert amateur control over cricket was first expressed by the Reverend James Pycroft, a graduate of Trinity

College, Oxford, who abandoned a legal career in 1840 to take up holy orders. Pycroft was a leading amateur exponent and the author of two influential books, *The Cricket Field* (1868) and *Cricketana* (1865), which became quasi-treatises for the establishment of the county system and the co-opting of an independent status for the professional.

For Pycroft, the efforts of professional teams, particularly the All England Eleven, were considered antithetical to the spiritual and physical benefits of athletic self-expression: “The one side is playing freely and carelessly for its pleasure, the other side is playing fearfully and nervously for a livelihood.”<sup>7</sup> He denigrated the peripatetic elevens as “a travelling circus”,<sup>8</sup> while qualifying his analysis to accommodate those amateur touring sides like I Zingari: “The exigencies of the country... in these railway days [require] some club of ... strength and standing, but movable and ubiquitous withal.”<sup>9</sup> Conversely, Pycroft thought the English touring professional “does not play for the score - he plays for the till”,<sup>10</sup> concluding it “would be a mistake to allow professionals so extensively to take the place of amateurs in the great matches.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, despite Pycroft’s consternations, the clear legacy of the independent professional touring elevens was a substantial and lasting contribution to the national growth and popularity of the game at that time when the language and values of cricket were perceived to pervade all facets of English life and as the game itself was held to embody the noblest features of Anglo-Saxondom. Sandiford suggests “it was the touring professionals who taught the Victorians how to play as well as sell the game. Without the work of the All-England and United Elevens during 1845-70, county cricket might never have evolved as it did.”<sup>12</sup>

The most enduring legacy of the peripatetic elevens, was to be felt beyond England’s playing fields. The call to arrest player control of the game was to be clearly echoed in the Australian colonies where the model of the early English professionals was resurrected and colonial cricket itself was to become popularized by its own independently organized touring elevens.

The development of county cricket under aristocratic and middle-class patronage, while co-opting an independent status for

professionals, opened up opportunities in other directions linked specifically to inter-county competition, and, for the leading players, overseas tours and coaching positions. In 1840, fifteen county clubs existed, by 1860 there were twenty-five, by 1870 thirty-four counties were represented in regular competition.<sup>13</sup> With the decline of the professional touring elevens from 1870<sup>14</sup>, the number of professionals employed by county clubs doubled by the end of the century.<sup>15</sup> Professional cricketers, like many other skilled workers, were paid at piece-rates, and compared to that section of the working class were generally better rewarded for their labours. Yet their contribution to the Victorian game - runs scored and particularly overs bowled - and moreover, their status as popular sportingheroes, saw their economic worth both undervalued and underpaid.<sup>16</sup>

In explaining the ties between the occupational prospects of the English professional and the expansion of the county system, Mandle constructs a model of nineteenth-century industrial society and a structural reflection, or a “parody”, in its sports - that displayed “the inventor, the entrepreneur, the employee and the class conflict.”<sup>17</sup> Application of the model to the different functions that professionalism played in cricket in contrast to football, where the “workers” were able to form their own clubs, underscores the significant pre-industrial conceptions of work and leisure that defined the amateur-professional relationship in the county organization of the game. Mandle has identified those counties that supported the fewest professionals as being the more highly industrialized, and that while the cricket professional was demonstrably of the working class, he was also of a “slightly superior section of it.”<sup>18</sup> The English professional before 1890, “came from a town or a village, not from the city and rarely from the factory.”<sup>19</sup> The “ghosted” reminiscences of Alfred Shaw, a prominent figure of the 1880s, supports Mandle’s observations.

Shaw was born in 1842 at Burton Joyce, a small community of framework stocking knitters near Nottingham. After three years of agricultural work, he was attracted by the “freedom” of his three brothers who worked as hand-frame stocking knitters. At fifteen years of age he commenced his apprenticeship as a hand-loom operator, working for piece-rates in a skilled profession alongside co-workers

who “worked when they liked and played when they had a mind to.”<sup>20</sup> The growth of a ‘free’ factory proletariat was slow, uneven and often fiercely resisted, particularly in the textile industry where weaving remained technologically arrested in comparison with advances in spinning, and particularly in the semi-rural villages in West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire where recreation could, and did, interfere with work intensity and procedures, and consequently produced the greater numbers of professional cricketers.<sup>21</sup> Shaw’s experience was similar to that of many players trained in the cricketing nurseries and weaving communities of Lascelles Hall, Yeadon, Sutton-in-Ashfield and Arnold: “at Burton-Joyce we had our daily cricket practices. On no account could they be neglected; no matter what the state of the knitting market might be, an hour or two of cricket was indispensable daily.”<sup>22</sup>

The uneven penetration of industrialization and the persistence of pre-industrial modes of production well into the second half of the nineteenth century throughout the English midlands and north, saw the county professional of the 1870s and 1880s largely drawn from the ranks of skilled artisans, piece-workers, the self-employed or occasionally from a profession. The so called “respectable professional” continued to play alongside the amateur, while simultaneously, the urban-industrial working-class support of English football saw the emergence of professionalism sever the amateur-professional ties permanently. In soccer, the professionals formed their own competition, while in Rugby football the working class fashioned a new game. For professional cricketers the escape was never made.

Keith Sandiford has claimed “that the professionals seemed more conscious of belonging to a particular county and promoting that county’s interests than of representing a particular class.”<sup>23</sup> The analytical limitations of a model of nineteenth century industrial society reflecting its “industrial sports” are underscored in explaining what Sandiford and Vamplew consider to be the “peculiar economics” of English cricket in the late Victorian period. While Sissons correctly indicates the steady rise in club profits and the boom in attendances in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, emphasizing the major contribution that professionals made to the game’s

popularity, particularly from the 1890's,<sup>24</sup> Sandiford and Vamplew conclude that the organizational framework of county cricket "decidedly was not profit oriented."<sup>25</sup>

English cricket administrators' attitudes towards profit maximization was reflected and largely facilitated by the relationship of the professional to the county organization of the game. While commercialized sport and leisure was one of the dominant features of the late Victorian economy, and while gate money cricket had its origins in the eighteenth century, English cricket while profit taking, was not significantly profit maximizing. Administrators refused to alter rules or equipment to make cricket economically competitive as a spectator sport.<sup>26</sup> and conspicuously resisted establishing the game within the burgeoning sporting marketplace. Vamplew has shown how the professional, despite restrictions on his trade in the form of the qualification rule, competition for first-class employment from amateurs and the fear of having his benefit withdrawn, failed to collectively organize in the marketplace.<sup>27</sup> There were instances, to be sure, when the spectre of unionism was raised and professionals withdrew their labour in protest over payments. Of the several, if infrequent, incidents of professional combination for wage demands in English first-class cricket, none is more instructive of the paternalist relations of power upon which the game defined its stability from the 1870s, than the dispute by seven Notts players who in 1880 asked for and obtained £20 (rather than the customary £10), to compete against the crowd-drawing Australian Eleven: the professionals who did not support the demand were rewarded for their deference and paid £21.<sup>28</sup>

Any movements for wage demands amongst professionals operated against an economic model in which profit maximization was at a discount. A central governing body had emerged in the Marylebone Club, whose powers were generally accepted by the counties, but Pycroft's description of the MCC as "the great central power, the very balance-wheel of the world-wide machinery of cricket"<sup>29</sup> belies the reluctance of that club to interfere with the autonomy of county managements. While county committees vigorously defended their local authority, profit maximizing cartelization in first-class cricket remained retarded. Alongside such staunch provincialism was the absence of any need for the MCC to act

against the effective autonomous control that county committees enjoyed over wages and conditions for professionals, and the tacit acceptance of such control by the players. In an age characterized by workers organization, cricket's "workers" demonstrated a marked reluctance to do likewise.

A class analysis of the relations of power in late Victorian cricket must also address the role of the amateur, whose control over county club committees was based on the self-perception of a benevolent party that by paying professionals at all, sought only to foster and encourage the game. Such benevolence often masked a good deal of shoddy treatment of professionals by county committees, yet as Sandiford has noted, "if Victorian amateurs were often haughty and autocratic in their treatment of professionals, they were also humane and benevolent."<sup>30</sup> In making distinctions in the relations of power between ones of class and of control, it is also true that the changed roles that the expanded popularity of the game signified for the professional also heralded changes for amateurs. For many leading gentlemen, the amateur ideal was, at best, only imperfectly realized. In adopting cricket, the Australian colonies also adopted its contradictions and perhaps its most glaring yet enduring contradiction was the 'gentleman-professional.' Leading amateur cricketers, confronted with extended fixture lists, representative games and international tours, could no longer play the game for nothing - "expenses" were paid to compensate for loss of professional income, the services of leading amateurs were secured to county clubs by thinly veiled inducements to club secretarial positions or with offers of winter employment by patrons. The blurred distinctions between professional wages and amateur expenses frequently confounded and sometimes angered contemporary opinion, yet despite the tensions, the strands of paternalism that bound the amateur and professional, while frequently strained, were never broken.

## **Part Two: The Political Structure of Australian Cricket in 1878**

The years following the initial professional tours to the Australian colonies and preceding the visit in 1873 of a combined team of amateurs and professionals captained by W.G. Grace (sponsored by the combined efforts of the Melbourne, South Melbourne and East Melbourne Clubs) saw the engagement of English professionals as players and coaches with the dominant Melbourne and Sydney clubs. William Caffyn and Charles Lawrence, both tourists from the first English touring sides, accepted appointments with the Melbourne and Albert Clubs respectively and their efforts are conventionally viewed as contributing significantly to the advances in colonial cricketing standards.<sup>31</sup> The influx and influence of both skilled English amateurs and professionals was not, however, without its tensions within the developing colonial cricket culture.

The establishment of formally organized clubs and regular club competition was largely initiated during the 1830s as clubs emerged with constitutions, rules, managements and occasionally uniforms, and committed themselves to regular competition.<sup>32</sup> Gambling was central to the organization of 1830s club competition and the inability to raise a stake often hindered the development of regular club play. Playing facilities and equipment were crude, flannels rare, and bare feet common.<sup>33</sup> Regular season by season competition was not formally established until the 1840s and club cricket in the 1830s assumed many forms: intra-club contests, single wicket competitions, “civilian v military” and perhaps most popular of all “Currency (colonial born) v Sterling (English born).”

Gradual acceptance of Saturday as a half-holiday for increasing numbers of the workforce engaged in regular factory and office work brought new and different perceptions to the meaning of sport and leisure amongst different sections of the community. A study of the rise and fall of the Sydney-based Australian Cricket Club formed in 1826, suggests that as the organization of club competition grew in sophistication, so too grew the tensions ‘between what might be defined as an eighteenth century notion of a ‘mixed’ club [in this case

the mix of British and colonial born players] versus an emerging notion of a more exclusive club based on a narrower definition of birth and, to a certain extent, of class.”<sup>34</sup> Daly emphasizes in his study of sport, class and community in colonial South Australia, the very prominent role that the Adelaide gentry provided in the sponsorship and organisation of early sporting institutions based on school, church and local associations.<sup>35</sup> Stoddart’s account of sport and society in Western Australia emphasizes a similar pattern,<sup>36</sup> and while the more urbanized and industrialized colonies of Victoria and New South Wales were often less receptive to the seigniorial influence typical of South and Western Australia, hierarchies of institutional arrangements for cricket competition were created by the visible links between sport and men of wealth, status, power and political will. In the case of cricket, such men supplied the leadership, patronage, financial assistance and the ideological formula for the formation of the colonies’ leading social clubs, of which the Melbourne Cricket Club was the quintessential example.

Membership to the MCC (its authoritative initials were surely no coincidence) was highly prized, carefully offered and strictly limited. Its leadership represented the colonial equivalent of the paternalist Tory-Anglican leadership of the senior English county clubs. The MCC’s enduring, symbolic function within colonial cricket cannot be overestimated, and was never paralleled in New South Wales. During the early 1880s under the leadership of prominent Victorian philanthropist Sir William John Clarke, the MCC’s authority was to be actually consolidated, despite unprecedented political (and legal) challenge from within and without of the power structures of Victorian cricket.

The nineteenth-century gift for organization and the mobilization of resources was not, however, entirely the preserve of the colonial social and sporting elites. The efforts of the crown commissioner, judiciary and finance leaders who formed the MCC in 1839, were matched less than a year later by the Melbourne Union Cricket Club whose membership was exclusively comprised of artisans, retailers and tradesmen. While the MCC’s social pre-eminence remained largely unchallenged by the initial growth of suburban clubs during the 1850s and 1860s, the efforts of middle-class

advocates of manly sports who recognized the financial advantages for a club being closely identified with a locality, were also equalled by the enthusiasm of men for whom club identification remained based on occupational status: teams representing the Brickmakers, the Ironmongers, the Warehousemen, the Civil Service, the Registrar General's Office and the Fire Brigade.<sup>37</sup>

While the energy and the organizational acumen for establishing cricketing contests was widely shared, improvements in communications and transport facilities favoured the popularity of inter (rather than intra) community competition, alongside suburban (as distinct from urban) expansion. Enthusiasm for intercolonial competition between NSW and Victoria found institutional recognition with the formation of colonial club associations, in NSW in 1859, and in Victoria in 1864, organizations that were bound to enter into alliances with those bodies that enjoyed access to the best playing facilities - in Victoria with the Melbourne Cricket Club, and in New South Wales with the Albert Club which was founded in 1853, and whose members owned their own ground as shareholders in the Albert Cricket Ground Company. While the MCC's social position was never equalled in its sister colony, both clubs, by the 1870s, were nominally modern sporting institutions, with enclosed grounds, superior spectator facilities and dependent upon gate money revenue. Both clubs enjoyed a monopoly in hosting their colony's major cricket contests from the 1870s, and were able to employ a small number of professional cricketers as players and groundsmen.

With the emergence of club associations, the political structure of colonial cricket rested uncomfortably upon a defacto coalition of interests between the self-contained and self-legitimizing social club tradition, (the MCC being the peerless example), with the increasing efforts of community-based clubs to broaden the base of the colonial game according to the institutional example of the English county system through intercolonial competition. The colonial association could not, however, transcend the sum total of its constituent parts.

The legitimizing values of the leading clubs and the associations of which they were a part were frequently in conflict. A perceived linear development from inter-club to intercolonial and for that matter, to international cricket competition, distorts the structural

tensions between those clubs whose patrons and committees operated more pragmatically towards the emerging cricket market place, with those that sought to maintain their traditional authority through activating an ideologically serviceable past. A coalition of club and association interests, particularly in Victoria, was highly tenuous, and would be increasingly so as public patronage for the novel spectacle of intercolonial and international competition was to redefine questions of institutional authority with those of access to finance.

The first foray into intercolonial competition between New South Wales and Victoria was tinged with uncertainty over the issue of playing for pay, when in 1856 the Sydney “intercolonial committee” was formed to answer a challenge from the Melbourne Cricket Club that offered a £500 stake. The team was selected amongst players from Sydney’s leading clubs, the Australian, Marylebone and Parramatta, and personally financed by a wealthy businessman with political aspirations, William Tunks, and a young Sydney solicitor, Richard Driver who as a future Minister for Lands would play a pivotal role for the next 25 years in the establishment of NSW cricket. The Sydney team won both the match (by 3 wickets) and the moral victory by refusing the Melbourne Club’s purse with Driver “wishing it to be understood that their object in accepting the challenge is a desire to promote and encourage the game itself, and not from any pecuniary motive whatever.”<sup>38</sup>

While the balance sheet for the game indicated that the Sydney team’s high moral ground was encouraged by an inability to match their rivals stake, (the costs of transport and equipment were high, even for men of such reasonable means), the tradition of intercolonial competition was fittingly initiated in conflict over the precise contribution money was to make at the organizational level of representative competition and the desire to distance the emerging institution of intercolonial contests from the traditional association of playing for a stake.

The uncertain role for English professionals in the colonies as intercolonial competition grew in popularity during the 1860s exacerbated the tensions. Characteristic was Tasmania’s victory with sixteen players against a Victorian Eleven in 1867 at Melbourne, which focused debate over the propriety of English professionals,

employed by the leading clubs, representing colonial teams. Victoria, without former Surrey professional Sam Costick and Irishman Tom Kelly, were defeated by the Tasmanian gentlemen on three successive occasions. The Hobart based Tasmanians lobbied for a return to even contests - a prospect the Victorian Cricketers Association would not entertain unless professional talent could be included, arguing, significantly, that spectators would be reluctant to attend.<sup>39</sup> The “amateurs only” plea was typical of the ambiguities, concerns and resentments that would deepen over the subsequent twenty years as cricket administrators were drawn into conflict with the colonies’ own indigenous professional impulse and the parallel need to cater for a burgeoning spectatorship with a more skilled competition.

While colonial administrations would demonstrate an inconsistent and qualified attitude towards issues of playing for profit, they were also seeking to control a game that could not broadly cater for the professional according to the English economic or cultural example. The county competition offered far more opportunities for professional employment than could the intercolonial or club competition.<sup>40</sup> No tradition emerged of employment for professionals by gentry or with the obviously fewer public schools as groundsmen or ground bowlers. James Pycroft observed how:

Australians did not readily develop a race of professionals to do the hard work for them. Caffyn and Wells [professionals in the 1861-62 tour party] both found in Australia that ‘to play and pay’ was a point in civilization to which the colonials had not yet attained, and there was little encouragement for professionals to attempt a livelihood among them. Circumstances, therefore, tended fortunately to throw the colonials on their own resources.<sup>41</sup>

Questions of colonial resourcefulness lay at the very heart of efforts to fashion an organizational structure for first-class cricket, as the cultural symbolism and function of the game took on a particular piquancy through regular competition with England from 1877.<sup>42</sup>

To that end, the club delegates comprising association committees remained united in isolating player influence from the administration and control of the game. Yet, underlying such an

apparent community of interests at the administrative level, lay distinct and potentially divisive legitimizing ideologies. Association committees were comprised simultaneously by men who adhered to the singularly pre-modern notion of master and servant that defined the English relationship of gentleman and player, with those whose self-imposed role on club and association committees was informed by emerging middle-class notions of industrial labour discipline, notions that rejected the closed-system relationship of gentleman and professional and implicitly separated the demands of work and leisure. The reformist zeal and civilizing weight that such men placed upon their sport made it fundamentally incongruous to redefine recreation as work.

The latent tensions that operated within the emerging public administration of the game were to surface in a highly antagonistic context, as colonial cricket's ideologues were reluctantly compelled to respond to Australia's initial forays into competition with England, organized according to the pattern of the English peripatetic elevens as entrepreneurial ventures operating entirely independently of any public authority.

With the emergence of regular international play in the 1880s, colonial administrations were confronted with a colonial sporting tradition framed as much by English traditionalism as by the emerging apparatus of a modern sporting culture. Many of the institutions of modern sport were still evolving during the late nineteenth century: the rise of a sporting press, increasing communications and transport facilities between the colonies and with England, rapid improvements in equipment and facilities for players and spectators. Most significantly, the rise during the 1880s of a popular spectatorship in the colonies that was "more boisterous, sometimes more violent, less imitative and more indigenous"<sup>43</sup> in inspiration than the less democratic traditions of the English game, formed the background for colonial sports to create popular heroes. Increasingly from the late 1870s, the role of players and, reluctantly, of administrators, was being determined by the demands of spectators.

Sport stood as a very central element in the make-up of Australian popular culture and, to a degree, of an emerging Australian nationalism. Upon their return from the "lions den" in 1879, the

self-titled “Australian Eleven” were comprised largely of sporting heroes who in very quick time became acutely aware of their private and public worth. For the leading colonial players, the “Australian Eleven” became both a commodity in an initially receptive marketplace and the vehicle for acting out a serious national and (as some would emphasize) imperial purpose. As an organizational formula was sought for colonial cricket, those two notions proved incompatible to the public administration of the game that in its years of infancy and division, sought to establish an institutional model for cricket without the support of the cultural and economic relationships that held in place the English county system.

While the first significant collision between private and public control of first-class cricket had by the end of the 1880s left all parties weakened, as colonial cricket lay in the doldrums, many of the differences between Victorian Englishmen, colonial Australians and their games of cricket were revealed.

## NOTES

1. W.F. Mandle, “Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century”, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 60, April, 1973, p. 512.
2. The 1861-2 tour was financed by two Melbourne restaurant proprietors, Spiers and Pond, who enjoyed £11,000 Profit and paid the players £150 each plus passage and expenses.
3. Ric Sissons, *The Players: A Social History of the Professional Cricketer*, Sydney, 1987, p. 62, provides a genealogical history of the professional touring elevens.
4. *ibid.*, p. 20.
5. James Pycroft, *The Cricket Field*, London. 1868, p. 126.
6. Mandle, “Games People Played...”, p. 514. Sissons, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-6. A.W. Pullin. *Alfred Shaw Cricketer: His Career and Reminiscences*, London. 1902, p. 112.
7. James Pycroft, *Cricketana*, London, 1865, p. 127.
8. *ibid.*, p. 53.
9. James Pycroft, *The Cricket Field*, London, 1868. p. 137.
10. Pycroft, *Cricketana*. p. 53.
11. *ibid.*, p. 129.

12. Keith A.P. Sandiford. "Amateurs and Professionals in Victorian County Cricket", *Albion*, Vol. 15, No. 1. Spring, 1983. p. 32.
13. W.F. Mandle, "The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century", *Labour History*, No. 23. November 1972, p. 2, from statistics in R. Bowen, *Cricket: A History of Its Growth and Development Throughout the World*, London, 1971, pp. 50-56.
14. Sissons, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-86, cites 1873 as a significant year for the English professional with the imposition by county committees of qualification restrictions over professionals according to place of birth or residence and the parallel extension of county fixture lists that provided regular county based employment for a growing number of players.
15. Mandle, "The Professional Cricketer...", p. 3, Table II. Mandle lists six categories of professional employment from 1840: county club ground bowling engagements; coaching positions at Universities; private school coaching; employment by individual patrons; overseas coaching positions; and overseas tours. While match fees, win bonuses. talent money, end of season bonuses and ground collections account for a wide variation in wages, by the 1870s counties accepted a tacit wage maximum for professionals: basic match rate of £5; for 'great matches' (North v South) the rate was £6, for 'Gentlemen v Players' or matches against Australia the rate was £10; *ibid.*, pp. 6-9.
16. Wray Vamplew, "Playing for Pay" in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, (eds.), *Sport: Money Morality and The Media*, Sydney, 1981, p. 113, notes that from the mid-1880s to 1896, the Lancashire summer wage remained (in real terms) the same. Sissons, *op. cit.*, p. 120, equating the professional as a skilled worker ("possessed of a degree of skill... a combination of manual dexterity and acquired knowledge") calculates that the average weekly professional earnings exceeded those of skilled workers before 1890. Mandle, "Games People Played..", pp. 6-7, estimates the "ordinary" professional could expect to earn £80 for a five month season, while the average unskilled labourer earned an average of £85 per annum.
17. Mandle, "Games People Played...", p. 512.
18. Mandle, "The Professional Cricketer...", p. 4.
19. *ibid.*, p. 6.
20. Pullin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
21. Lancashire, exemplifying above all for contemporaries the new system of industrial production, singularly failed to generate professional cricketing talent from amongst its working men, whom by comparison worked longer hours and lacked recreational space. Lancashire professionals were generally recruited from Notts and Yorkshire.
22. *ibid.*
23. Sandiford, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

24. Sissons, *op. cit.*, p. 122-125.
25. Keith Sandiford and Wray Vamplew, 'The Peculiar Economics of English Cricket Before 1914', *The British Journal of Sports History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, December, 1986, p. 311.
26. For example, the common practice of the peripatetic elevens playing teams of eighteen or twenty-two to make the outcome of matches less predictable was never considered at the county level.
27. Vamplew, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
28. Peter Wynne-Thomas, "*Give Me Arthur*", London, 1985, p. 20, notes that the 'amateur' Australians recouped an average of £34 each for the same match.
29. Pycroft, *The Cricket Field*, p. 137.
30. Sandiford *op. cit.*, p. 51.
31. William Caffyn, *Seventy One Not Out*, London, 1899. p. 226, describes the improvement during the decade since the first English tour as "phenomenal".
32. Richard Cashman, "The Rise and Fall of the Australian Cricket Club 1822-68", *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 5. No. 1. November, 1988, p. 118. J.W.C. Cumes, *Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid: Leisure Times In Early Australia*, Melbourne, 1979. pp. 138-147.
33. F.R. Spofforth, "Australian Cricket and Cricketers: A Retrospect", *New Review*, Vol. 10, 1893, p. 513.
34. Cashman, "The Rise and Fall . . . 1822-68", p. 121.
35. John A. Daly, *Elysian Fields: Sport, Class and Community in Colonial South Australia 1836-1890*, Adelaide, 1982, pp. 67-71.
36. Brian Stoddart "Sport and Society 1890-1940: A Foray", in C.T. Stannage (ed.). *A New History of Western Australia*, Nedlands, 1981, pp. 562-576.
37. Cashman, "The Rise and Fall...", p. 127.
38. Quoted in Philip Derriman, *True To The Blue: A History of the New South Wales Cricket Association*, Sydney, 1985, p. 3.
39. Jack Pollard, *The Formative Years of Australian Cricket 1803-93*, Sydney, 1987, p. 26.
40. C.P. Moody, *Australian Cricket and Cricketers 1856-1893/4*, Melbourne, 1894, p. 23, guessed that professionalism might enable the five colonies to play a full season of cricket.
41. James Pycroft, "The Australian Team", *James Lillywhite's Cricketers Annual 1881*, London, p. 2.
42. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism...", suggests that after the humility and deference characteristic of the colonial response to the English tours of the 1860's, "there is a case for arguing that Australian nationalism and self confidence was first and most clearly manifested in

the late 1870s because of the feats of its sportsmen and particularly of its cricketers”, . p. 237.

43. Cashman, '*Ave A Go Yer Mug!*' p. 21.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Part One: The Birth of The “Australian Eleven” and Divisions within the Public Administration**

According to Julian Thomas, the idea of a touring party of Australian cricketers began from an overheard conversation in 1877 between Thomas and the cricket professional and promoter of the fourth English tour to Australia, James Lillywhite. Thomas' suggestion that “there'd be plenty of money in it,” apparently attracted the unnoticed attention of John Conway, an entrepreneurially-minded Melbourne cricketer, who initiated moves to recruit some of the colony's finest available cricketing talent for a tour that would incorporate the Australian colonies, New Zealand, England, Scotland, Canada and the United States.<sup>1</sup> Conway had established his organizational credentials as the colonial liaison for James Lillywhite's professional tourists in the Australian summer of 1876-7. He assembled eleven players in Sydney on November 3, 1877, to begin the colonial leg of a fifteen month tour.

Unlike English tours to Australia, for which promoters hired the players and pocketed the profits, the first Australian tourists each contributed £50 to the scheme and agreed, with the exception of Charles Bannerman who was a professional cricketer playing for wages, and his brother Alick, who was employed with the New South Wales Government Printing Office, but was accepting a fixed sum for the duration of the tour, to share whatever profits or losses might be made from their play.

The average age of the team was 24. Eight of the eleven were colonial born: Francis Allen and James Blackham were born in Victoria, Frederick Spofforth, Alick Bannerman, Harold Boyle, Thomas Garrett, William Murdoch and the team's captain, David Gregory, were New South Welshmen. Charles Bannerman was born in England before his parents emigrated. George Bailey was born in Ceylon and Thomas Horan was Irish. With the exception of Charles Bannerman and Francis Allen, a land surveyor, the team was comprised of white collar workers and urban professionals: three were bank workers, five were lower to middle ranking civil servants

and one was a solicitor. In England they were joined by William Midwinter, a Gloucestershire professional of colonial experience who represented “the Australian Eleven” when allowed to do so by his county captain, W.G. Grace.

For the duration of the tour, Conway, who was the sole selector of the team, its tour manager and occasional player, had organized the team as a joint-stock company. No formal balance sheet of the team’s finances was published but press reports widely quoted that Conway, who took seven and a half per cent of the gross in addition to his share, received £1200, and that the non-professional players received between £700 and £800 for their efforts and risk. The financial rewards for young men of such relatively modest means were enormous - some earning four times their annual salary - and for a venture that attracted such skepticism from Australia’s cricketing officialdom, quite unexpected.<sup>2</sup>

The tour commenced with a series of sixteen fund-raising matches through the colonies and New Zealand. During the previous summer, the cricketing associations in New South Wales and Victoria had deferred to the interests of the touring English professionals by suspending the popular intercolonial matches in competition with the English team’s itinerary. At the 1877 Annual General meeting of the NSWCA, a letter from Conway was tabled requesting that a similar postponement be made for the coming summer to favour the fund-raising fixtures of the Australian Eleven:

“I think,” noted Conway, “that the Association might, with good grace, give way and lend every assistance to promote what is in reality a national undertaking and what will, in fact, do more to advance the game in the Australian colonies than the visit of a dozen All-England Elevens.”<sup>3</sup>

Conway’s plea that the importance of the undertaking be regarded “in a thoroughly *Australian* spirit” was met with little enthusiasm from a public administration that had no part in the selection or financial arrangements of the tour. The NSWCA had publicly dissociated itself that month from a match organized by Conway between Eleven of Australia and Lillywhite’s Englishmen,

the first ever “test”, played at the Melbourne Cricket Club’s ground under the auspices of the Victorian Cricketers Association (VCA).<sup>4</sup> Conway now urged that the dates reserved for the inaugural intercolonial match at the Association’s recently acquired ground at Moore Park, and the Melbourne intercolonial to be played on Boxing Day, be turned over instead for matches between the Australian Eleven and colonial representative teams.

In a singularly rare instance of intercolonial cricketing co-operation, both associations agreed to decline Conway’s request, offering instead in a spirit of reconciliation, to patronize “benefit” matches for the team against Combined XV’s of the two colonies to be played in the weeks following the intercolonial matches in Melbourne and Sydney. The NSWCA offered further that ten per cent of the gross from the Sydney intercolonial would be donated to the Australian Eleven coffers, if the New South Wales contingent of the team would play in the match.

Conway was disappointed by the decision of the associations. He declined the NSWCA offer and informed both associations that:

the members of the Australian team are resolved not to disunite and play against each other until their return, as they consider such a step would be most injurious to their prospects.

He considered that the Australian eleven matches “ought to entirely overshadow any intercolonial match” and that the associations “ought to be proud to lend their assistance.”<sup>5</sup> There was clearly a fear shared by Conway with the associations, that competing fixtures would divide public patronage. Public support however was found to dramatically favour the Australian Eleven games.<sup>6</sup>

While the associations distanced themselves from Conway’s “truly national” undertaking, a shared ambivalence towards the privately funded venture was as close as the associations had ever come to demonstrating a spirit of unified purpose in their organization of the colonial game.

The coolness of the NSWCA towards the tour was supported by a parochial Sydney press that demonstrated considerable circumspection towards the readiness or advisability of competition against the leading English clubs and counties, arguing that such a

presumption did not represent the best interests of New South Wales or its cricketers.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the VCA, the administrators of New South Wales cricket enjoyed, by and large, the support of the association's constituent clubs in its self-appointed role as representative cricket authority of the colony.

The VCA enjoyed only a tenuous control over first-class Victorian cricket. In supporting the NSWCA by rejecting Conway's proposal, the VCA incurred heated press criticism that underscored the relative impotence of the association in its relations to the dominant MCC and moreover, the lack of consensus in Victoria that intercolonial contests - the *raison d'être* of the association - should assume the automatic support of the Melbourne Cricket Club. After over a decade of regular intercolonial competition, the legitimacy of such contests and of the association itself, remained largely conditional on the support of the MCC.

The sporting editorials of the *Australasian*, the weekly supplement to Melbourne's *Argus*, were regular and vociferous in supporting the MCC in its frequent administrative conflicts with the VCA. With the Australian Eleven players absent from the intercolonial matches of 1877, the *Australasian* noted, typically, that:

interesting and useful in promoting the game as they have proved, they, nonetheless, have not that special attraction here which the University and Eton and Harrow matches have in the old country, and we hardly expect they would continue to draw when more important matches were before the public . . . [The MCC] has a duty to the cricketing public of Victoria and hence... it might be advisable to allow the Victorian Cricketers Association to perform the happy dispatch on itself and become a thing of the past . . . it is now allowed to be a cumbersome, unwieldy body, actuated more by parish-vestry instincts than a desire to promote the good of cricket generally.<sup>8</sup>

If the Australian Eleven adventure had won a degree of backhanded press support at the expense of the "parish vestry instincts" of the VCA, such favour was less forthcoming when Conway rejected the rental terms demanded by the MCC for a

planned farewell match against a Victorian XVIII at the MCC ground, opting instead for more favourable terms eagerly extended by the MCC's traditional rivals, the East Melbourne Cricket Club (EMCC).<sup>9</sup>

Conway's perceived profiteering and manipulation of divisions within the colony's cricketing authority met with condemnation from the *Australasian's* cricket columnist, "A Bohemian". He thought the increased terms fair, given the "ample funds" accrued to the Eleven from the preliminary tour of the colonies, noting tersely that: "we have had too much said about the self denial and patriotism of these eleven or twelve gentlemen . . . It cannot be denied that [the tour] is nothing more nor less than a speculation which the promoters hope to carry through without a loss and possibly with a fair margin of profit."<sup>10</sup>

A benevolent role as "trustees for the public."<sup>11</sup> that the MCC alone was perceived to uphold, failed to reassure the MCC's club rivals. The large and established East and South Melbourne Clubs, whose committees were dominated by representatives of Melbourne's financial and legal community, saw the pre-eminence of the MCC as a direct threat to their financial security as intercolonial and international cricket became the primary focus of public attention.

In 1876-7, the East Melbourne and Melbourne Clubs had clashed over plans to sponsor an English tour of the colonies.<sup>12</sup> They had also failed to meet in club competition due to a dispute concerning ground allocation and gate money. Relations between the clubs deteriorated further with the apparent celebration in the Victorian press by East Melbourne committeemen at breaking the MCC's monopoly over major contests. The MCC withdrew its players in protest from the Victorian team to meet the Australian Eleven at the East Melbourne ground.

The East Melbourne committee, for their part, attributed their club's "precarious pecuniary position" to the disruption of regular club fixtures that accompanied Lillywhite's tour in 1876-7 and the further loss of their two leading players in 1877 to the Australian Eleven.<sup>13</sup> The EMCC believed that while the Melbourne Club enjoyed the monopoly over hosting Victoria's major cricket contests, other clubs were increasingly peripheralized through declining club subscriptions,

the loss of leading players through representative commitments and the consequent loss of public support for inter-club competition.

Financial compensation from the VCA to its constituent clubs from representative cricket was little more than a piecemeal proportion of the surplus accrued from each year's intercolonial. With the intercolonial programme under threat, either from postponement altogether or by the absence of the leading, crowd-drawing players, and with an endemic lack of public confidence in the make-up of the VCA, (a perception championed in Victoria's press by journalists sympathetic to the MCC), the financial rewards from increasingly frequent international competition remained weighted heavily in favour of the MCC to the material detriment of the other established clubs.

The intrusion of the subordinate clubs into the arena of major cricket contests was fiercely attacked in the Victorian press: "If there is room for competition, . . . let it be the generous rivalry of the merchant, and not the miserable underselling policy of the petty trader."<sup>14</sup> The "generous merchant", in the form of the MCC, initiated moves to diffuse competition from its rivals in announcing its intention to sponsor a tour of English amateurs for the 1878-9 season. The MCC promised to donate a share of the profits from any representative fixtures involving the touring English team with the VCA and any Victorian clubs whose players were selected to play.<sup>15</sup> In the light of the MCC's benevolent peace offering, "A Bohemian" took the opportunity to "earnestly impress upon all the clubs the importance of taking a broad view of the matter and not looking at altogether in the light of £.s.d."<sup>16</sup>

The jealousies between Melbourne clubs which appeared to threaten the cohesion of cricketing administration in Victoria were not, as it would transpire, to be so easily extinguished. In New South Wales, a crucial battle had recently been fought between the NSWCA and that colony's leading club, from which the organizational authority for New South Wales cricket rested largely, if somewhat uncomfortably, with the association and not a dominant club. In both colonies, notions of institutional authority were being fundamentally challenged as a new commercial logic threatened to dictate access to the colonies' major cricket arenas.

During the 1860s the NSWCA had played its intercolonial fixtures on Sydney's Domain amidst on-going dispute with the colonial government as to the association's right to enclose the area, erect grandstands and charge gate money. In 1871, the association abandoned the Domain, a ground considered unsatisfactory by the colony's leading players due to its poor and often cattle-fouled playing surface, and staged the annual match against Victoria at the Albert Club's ground in Redfern, a ground owned collectively by the club members as shareholders in the Albert Cricket Ground Company (ACGC). The association was charged thirty per cent of the ground takings for the use of the club's facilities and recouped a regular income of approximately £1,000 from each year's match.<sup>17</sup>

From the early 1860s, the NSWCA had organized practice for its team before each year's Melbourne intercolonial on the Garrison Ground, a field built by British soldiers behind the Victoria Barracks in the early 1850s. By the mid-1860s it became known as the Military and Civil Ground and was occupied variously by the East Sydney Club, granted its use by club patron and commander of NSW troops at the barracks, Lt. Col. John Richardson; by the Civil Service Club that inherited the ground for one highly unsuccessful season, before coming under the immediate control of trustees jointly representing the colonial government and the NSWCA in 1875, in the face of numerous applications by Sydney clubs for its use.

The association's acquisition by trust of the Military Ground was engineered by the close ties between the association executive and the colonial government, a link personified by Richard Driver, an MP of 15 years, then Minister for Lands, the Sydney City Council solicitor, the senior member of the NSWCA and one of the first two association members to be appointed trustees for the ground. The NSWCA regarded the ground as its own property. The association however, unlike the ACGC, was not incorporated, could not legally own the land and was thus fated to balance its desire to control access and profits from the ground with its legal status as occupants of Crown land dedicated "firstly as a cricket ground and secondly for any other public amusement."<sup>18</sup>

New South Wales Cricket Association historian, Philip Derriman, suggests it "went against the association's grain"<sup>19</sup> to

advance the interests of the privately owned Albert Cricket Ground Company. Certainly, the association's single-minded quest for its own home was the end result of often bitter dispute between the Alberts and the association. The Albert Club, like the MCC, demonstrated an independence of spirit based largely on a perception of its own preeminence, that collided with the growing public organization of the colonial game. In the early 1860s, the Alberts had withdrawn altogether for a time from the association which was still bound to request from the club the use of its leading players for intercolonial matches.

By abandoning the Alberts in 1878, the NSWCA demonstrated its discomfort with organizational ties to a perceived private, self-serving and commercial interest in cricket, in favour of an apparently amicable relationship between association executive and colonial government. Such an agreement was always conditional upon the allegiance of the trustees to the association. Having drafted the deeds of the grant personally, Richard Driver, as Minister for Lands, anticipated a long and harmonious future between the parties. He died less than three years later. A century of acrimony between the ground trustees and the association ensued over access to the New South Wales' leading sporting venue.

The association's formal inauguration of its new ground in February 1878 with the staging of the return intercolonial match against Victoria was tinged with controversy. Alongside the noticeable absence of the leading colonial players were the efforts of the ACGC executive to legally challenge the association's rights to charge admission fees to a ground they claimed to be public property. Such "ill-natured efforts"<sup>20</sup> proved unsuccessful, and the association's transfer to its new ground sealed the ACGC's fate. In a published letter to association secretary, J.M. Gibson, the secretary of the Albert Cricket Ground Company correctly predicted that "the action of your committee in resolving to play the [intercolonial and international] matches elsewhere will... in all probability, prevent our retaining it as a cricket ground and cause its loss to the public as a place of recreation."<sup>21</sup>

It was a signal victory for the association but one that met with mixed reactions from cricket supporters who did not necessarily

equate the association's passion for unfettered organizational control with the general welfare of NSW cricket. Efforts from above to impose an effective administrative authority over the widening popular base of colonial cricket were, in both colonies, undermined to varying degrees by divided loyalties within the administration itself. To equate institutional authority with emerging notions of economic "rationalism" was, in the minds of many, loaded with perilous consequences.<sup>22</sup>

The distance between public and private interests within domestic cricket was visibly widening at that time when Australian cricket began its first incursion into international competition. The response of public administrators toward a private, speculative and clearly popular experiment at an international level, operated against the background of its own divided institutional arrangements and factional alliances.

Such factionalism was not restricted to the internecine relationships of the colonial associations to their leading clubs. Disputes over protocol had affected intercolonial cricketing relations since the late 1850s and when two Victorian players refused to play after an umpiring dispute in the Sydney intercolonial of 1863, matches were suspended altogether for two seasons, during which time the Melbourne Club and the Alberts met twice.

The arrival of English touring sides from the early 1860s signaled further opportunities for airing intercolonial jealousies. Mandle cites the "humiliation" felt in Sydney in accepting Victoria's right to stage the first game against English tourists and the "gratification" of New South Welshmen when its representative team offered sterner resistance to the English opposition than had the Victorians.<sup>23</sup> James Lillywhite, the captain and promoter of the 1876-7 tour to the colonies observed that intercolonial rivalries weakened the on-field performances of combined teams of NSW and Victoria.<sup>24</sup> Conway's plea that his team of 1878 might provide a unifying force that could erode the barriers of intercolonial rivalry, operated against his own written concerns that to disunite as a touring party to take part in intercolonials would serve to ignite the long standing acrimony between players of different colonies, a move that

would be “hazardous in the extreme” for the success of the 1878 tour.<sup>25</sup> The selection of combined teams of the colonies to meet visiting English or touring Australian sides, was perhaps the clearest demonstration of the inability of the associations to think in terms other than those defined by colonial pride and competition. Each association jealously guarded its right to approve teams for matches in their respective colonies, a process of colonial one-upmanship that reached ludicrous proportions when in February 1884, the NSWCA selection committee chose ten New South Welshmen and one Victorian in a “Combination” match against the touring Australian Eleven.<sup>26</sup>

The 1878 tourists, operating independently of the colonial authorities, hoped to escape the blinkered view of the associations and the colonial press in their attempt to return “home” as an ostensibly representative eleven. One of those tourists, Fred Spofforth, reflecting on the nature of intercolonial rivalry, wrote in 1894 that he doubted “if Englishmen will ever understand the spirit of rivalry that runs high between the colonies of Victoria and New South Wales. The spirit is not limited to the field, it extends to politics, to society, to every side of life, indeed, in which the two are brought into contact with one another.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Part Two: 1878-1884: The Co-existence of the Public and Private Sector**

The editorial to *James Lillywhite’s Cricketer’s Annual* for 1879, suggested that the first Australian touring Eleven introduced “a new era into the history of the game which the author of ‘Tom Brown’s School Days’ had not inaptly described as the prerogative of Englishmen.”<sup>28</sup> The colonial tourists were undoubtedly inspired by the notion of sharing in a cultural pilgrimage to the home of cricket. While the tourists enjoyed unexpected financial and playing success, buoyed largely by the extraordinary defeat in less than a day of the Marylebone Club amateurs and professionals, captained by W.G. Grace, the tour’s harmony was tempered by disputes over finances.

In the weeks preceding the important match against the Players Eleven, a team of England’s leading professionals, negotiations broke

down when Conway refused a united demand by the Players for £20 per man, rather than the customary £10 payment. The Players justified their demand by claiming that the VCA had charged the professional English touring party of 1876-7 £20 per man as expenses for the Australian players who comprised the first ‘test’ side in Melbourne in 1877.<sup>29</sup> Conway, who had organized that game, denied their claim. Both parties refused to yield, the Players withdrew their services, and at the conclusion of a match against an unofficial Players Eleven, Conway, who wished to demonstrate that he was “not actuated by a mercenary spirit ... but from a disinclination to be imposed on” agreed to “pay each professional £20 instead of £10, the umpires £10 instead of £3 and doubled the wages of every man employed on the ground during the match.”<sup>30</sup>

For the English professionals and press, the dispute was not easily forgotten. That the professionals felt inclined to justify their wage demands at all, scarcely veiled their contempt at the profits made by the colonial “amateur” players. The dispute seemed to underscore an emerging and fundamental contradiction between the organizational models of English and Australian cricket.

While professionalism and profit maximization played no substantial economic role in the colonial game, administrators were free to zealously pursue an amateur model as Australian cricket’s ideological motif. In anticipation of the visit of a team of amateurs (and two professional bowlers) under the auspices of the Melbourne Club for the 1878-9 Australian season, Daniel Wilkie, one of three MCC delegates to the VCA, was able to successfully propose that no Victorian professionals be included in any of the representative games against the touring English amateurs,<sup>31</sup> a sentiment repeated at the 1880 Annual General Meeting of the Melbourne Club where Wilkie successfully moved that in all club matches the MCC should play without the assistance of its ground bowlers, adding that he “would rather see the club lose than win with professional assistance.”<sup>32</sup>

While less strident, the NSWCA were similarly reluctant to incorporate professionals at the representative level of the game. With the N.S.W. side weakened in 1878 by the absence of its Australian Eleven players, the NSWCA secretary J.F. Gibson reluctantly conceded to the wishes of the selection committee by including

professional players. Gibson “would not throw away a chance of winning,” but instructed the selectors to engage “only as many professionals as absolutely necessary.”<sup>33</sup>

Financial considerations and the lack of a significant market for professionals in a limited intercolonial programme allowed the associations to unambiguously demonstrate their amateur bone-fides. The public administration of colonial cricket however lacked any effective response to the significant niche that the first Australian tourists initiated for themselves in international competition. While on tour, the Australians enjoyed the privileges reserved for England’s finest amateur players, but cast against the background of the economic and cultural relationships that defined the English relationship of gentlemen and players, the Australian tourists occupied a status on tour that was entirely on their own construction.

At the level of intercolonial competition, the Associations observed a tacit wage maximum for professionals,<sup>34</sup> but the frequent haggling over costs and occasional refusal of professionals to accept the amounts offered, particularly for away matches, suggests that professional involvement in the intercolonial programme was almost as low a priority for the few professional players concerned as it was for administrators.<sup>35</sup> Geographical limitations, lack of funds and the general discomfort at an administrative level with professionalism - a desire and the ability to be more “amateur” than the English - contributed to the ambivalence of colonial cricket administrators towards the novel organization of the first Australian tourists. Despite the tensions of the tour’s initial colonial leg, the *Australasian* thought criticism of the players as speculators was unfair: “If the Australians pay their expenses they will be satisfied, and if they get something to the good, and we hope they will, they will be agreeably surprised. They are actuated by higher motives...”<sup>36</sup>

The playing success of the Australian Eleven demanded a more positive, if divided, response from the associations upon their return. A civic reception greeted the Australians in Sydney<sup>37</sup> and in Melbourne, while it was agreed that the tourists “had conferred immense benefit on these colonies... our welcome should be a purely Victorian one. Let New South Wales do her part to show her appreciation of colonial pluck and skill and Victoria hers.”<sup>38</sup>

Press reports in England, however, indicated a degree of resentment against the Australians in the aftermath of their dispute with the Players Eleven.<sup>39</sup> English criticism of the Australian's profiteering placed the financial terms of the return colonial leg of the tour under considerable scrutiny. The quarreling over finances during the initial colonial leg was best forgotten, thought the *Australasian*, but warned that if the return leg was treated in a commercial spirit, "the prestige of the noble game will suffer, and any future Australian Eleven will deserve to be treated as a professional team and nothing more." As if to affirm the clarity of the players' amateur status, "a banquet in the Town Hall and a grand match at the MCC is the form which our colonial welcome should take."<sup>40</sup>

Such optimism evaporated when the Australians announced their intention to play the first of their Victorian matches against a Victorian XV, again at the East Melbourne ground. Conway had negotiated for the match with the East Melbourne committee before the team had left for England, and was intent to fulfill his agreement despite a subsequent offer by the Melbourne Club for the use of its facilities free of charge.

It had been hoped that Melbourne's two major clubs would enjoy better relations for the 1878-9 season. They had successfully negotiated the disputes over division of gate money that accounted for their failure to meet in the field the previous year. The MCC's attempt to undercut the East Melbourne agreement with the Australians, rekindled the old rivalries. East Melbourne committeemen, VCA delegate and prominent Melbourne stockbroker, Alfred E. Clarke, launched a vitriolic attack in the Victorian press, accusing the MCC of attempting to undermine the "free-market principles" of the East Melbourne agreement.<sup>41</sup>

Against general dismay that the much anticipated match would be denied the MCC's superior spectator facilities, was the broader concern that the general interests of cricket were being subordinated by apparently self-interested club committeemen who recognized opportunities for personal aggrandizement by challenging the traditional balance of economic power in Victorian cricket.

The *Australasian's* cricket editorial under the leader "The £.s.d. View of Cricket" addressed the question with considerable urgency:

It is not, however, so much what view the Australian Eleven take of this subject that concerns us as the club view . . . the cloven foot has made its way too much into cricket concerns and it is time some stand should be made. Cricket, unfortunately, is becoming now-a-days too profitable an investment of skill and muscle to be carried out in the same friendly spirit that characterized it fifteen or twenty years ago. Then the play was the thing, now it is £.s.d. also; and when the two come into collision the £.s.d. spirit is bound to carry the day.<sup>42</sup>

The tensions of the “£.s.d. spirit” were perceived to be threatening the idea of the club as the primary unit of loyalty and identification, challenging at the institutional level the traditional function of the game. Over zealous club concern towards the game’s economic priorities were treated with suspicion: “We have seen such men in every club ...” observed ‘A Bohemian’, “they are, like their political brother, the Loyal Liberal, uncommonly active and have to be carefully watched.”<sup>43</sup> The institutional effectiveness of an association of clubs that might regulate competing notions of cricket’s marketability with that of a manly game based on a spirit of mutual co-operation were seen to be perverted by:

men who are no cricketers in the true sense of the word. So much diplomacy of an underhand character is now resorted to, that each club in self defense, sends as a delegate, not one of its leading cricketers, but one of its cutest men, who if he be a lawyer is all the more eligible, as likely to be up to every dodge.<sup>44</sup>

The first uncertain experiment in speculative organization amongst colonial players had served to undermine the authority and widen the latent divisions within the public administration of Australian cricket. In Victoria, where the symbolic power of the MCC appeared unimpeachable, grew a growing suspicion towards the organizational priorities of sporting bureaucrats: “Men who never made ten runs in anything like good form,” thought “Paul Jones” in the *Australasian*, “should never presume to manage cricket and lay

down the law to their betters.”<sup>45</sup> For colonial cricket’s public, the legitimacy of the Australian Eleven had been dramatically forged on colonial and English fields. From the turmoil of Melbourne and Sydney boardrooms and members’ enclosures, such acknowledgement was less forthcoming.

The return of the Australian Eleven coincided with the visit of Lord Harris’ “Gentlemen of England (with Emmett and Eylett)”, the first tour to the colonies under the auspices and financial risk of one club, the Melbourne Cricket Club, and not as a speculation by the tourists. While ‘A Bohemian’ assumed “there is little doubt that the inclination of the public is towards the amateur than the professional”,<sup>46</sup> such an assumption was based on little more than wishful thinking. Australian colonial spectators had never demonstrated a disinclination towards previous tours by English professionals and beyond the partisan opinions of the MCC, Harris’ team was never considered representative of the full cricketing strength of England. A clear inclination of MCC delegates to the VCA towards an amateur-only status for the tour however, saw no Victorian professionals selected to play in either of the two scheduled matches: “The Gentlemen of Victoria” versus “The Gentlemen of England.”

As an exercise in cricketing public relations, Lord Harris’ tour was, at best, a disappointment for the MCC. Lukewarm public interest for the thirteen match tour, the exception being one match against the returned 1878 Australian team, resulted in a financial loss for the club, which despite the assertions of club officials to the contrary, were finally attributed to the “enormous and unexpected incidental expenses” incurred in accommodating the team’s “amateur” contingent.<sup>47</sup>

Harris’ visit, however, had far graver consequences for the NSWCA. The 1879 tour is most remarkable for the ‘riot’ that occurred during the second day’s play of a match between Harris’ team and the New South Wales Eleven at the association ground. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported “the impunity with which betting was transacted in the pavilion” during the first day’s play.<sup>48</sup> The NSW team had defeated the tourists in a previous match and were strong favourites to carry their second meeting. By the second day’s

play, however, a New South Wales victory looked uncertain and when a young Melbourne Cricket Club ground bowler who was acting as umpire for Harris' matches, gave the New South Wales batting hope William Murdoch, run-out in a disputed decision, the crowd invaded the field, initiating a tremor felt throughout the Anglo/Australian cricketing world.

Despite swift official condemnation of the 'larrikin element', for New South Wales cricket the riot was a colonial disgrace, one that "would remain a blot upon the colony for some years to come."<sup>49</sup>

Relations between Lord Harris and the NSWCA deteriorated sharply after the publication in the London *Dairy Telegraph* of a letter from Harris to I.D. Walker of the Marylebone Club who had represented the Melbourne Club in negotiations for the tour. Harris' public criticism of the NSWCA was a staggering blow to the prestige of the association.

"The riot," Harris claimed, "was started by professional betting men in the pavilion, members of the association.... The disgraceful part of the business is that other members of the association - one a member of the legislative assembly - aided and abetted the bookmakers in raising the cry . . . We can never expect to see such a scene of disorder again - we can never forget this one."<sup>50</sup>

The Sydney riot cast doubt over the prospects for a further Australian tour planned for the English 1880 season. Such plans were already complicated by competing parties wishing to organize separate tours. Richard Driver had initiated negotiations for a tour by a team representing New South Wales, and conscious of the criticism over the speculative basis of the 1878 tour had offered to act as personal guarantor for the scheme on behalf of the NSWCA. John Conway was simultaneously negotiating a second joint-stock enterprise amongst the 1878 tourists. The possibility that Conway might succeed and again withdraw the players from intercolonials encouraged the NSWCA and VCA to offer their joint "blessings" for a combined team of New South Wales and Victoria.

Each association nominated a player to jointly select the tourists. William Murdoch from New South Wales and Harold Boyle

from Victoria selected a thirteen player touring party and chose Victorian cricketer George Alexander as its tour manager.

Having isolated Conway, the association's sole concern was to secure the commitment of the players to appear in the intercolonials upon their return. Association involvement was only nominal and largely symbolic. The players retained full control over negotiation of financial arrangements, sharing profits and determining the length of the tour.

Coinciding with the colonial hopes to secure a full programme of first-class fixtures for the tour, were strenuous efforts within English county cricket to formally define the amateur-professional distinction. There was a mounting crisis over the issue of payments to amateurs, in response to the dramatic resignation of the Gloucestershire Club committee after a dispute with the Grace family over the payment of amateur expenses, after a match against Surrey in August 1878.<sup>51</sup> The Marylebone Club at Lords subsequently passed into the laws of cricket the formal standard that no amateur was to profit from the game. County secretaries were officially engaged with the responsibility to abolish the ambiguities between professional and amateur playing status and to "relieve the English language of that anomalous term 'gentlemen-professional'."<sup>52</sup>

The non-speculative basis of Lord Harris' colonial tour was thought to represent a clear demonstration of the importance in maintaining the distinction. At the MCC's farewell banquet for the English amateurs, Harris noted in his closing address, "that sections of the English press went so far beyond the bounds of truth and courtesy as to say the trip would degenerate into a 'gate money' affair. I need hardly say that that was contradicted at the earliest opportunity. (Applause)."<sup>53</sup>

Harris' logic was lost on some sections of colonial cricket's opinion that saw the MCC's "chronic state of impecuniosity [sic] . . . a mystery that would puzzle anyone to unravel." The same commentary reacted more strongly with the announcement that the English county secretaries had decided that the 1880 Australian tourists would 'go home' as professionals and receive 75 per cent of the gate money for the twenty-seven fixtures that its manager, George Alexander, had been able to confirm. It struck an unusually forthright "Member of

the MCC” as “anomalous that £6,000 were spent as ‘expenses’ on Harris’ gentlemen-amateurs and no questions asked . . . it savours rather of impertinence on the part of the ‘Gentlemen of England’ to pry into the financial question of the matches played by Australians.”<sup>54</sup>

While the first Australian tourists had been criticized for being overzealous in their pursuit of profits, the prospect of a second team being received in England as touring professionals met with immediate reaction in the colonies. The colonial analysis of English attitudes towards its own indigenous “professional” impulse became expressed frequently, if tentatively, in class terms:

Ever since cricket has been played in Australia there has never been such a person as a “professional” as it is understood by the term at home. Nor, in a democratic country like this was it either possible or desirable there should be. It may be necessary at Lords to define a “professional” and to prohibit his presence in the “pavilion”, but we have not come to that here yet.<sup>55</sup>

The team led by Murdoch to England in 1880 was confronted with a programme consisting entirely of contests against the odds, all against club teams from the north and midlands. No fixtures could be negotiated against representative teams and no matches were scheduled at the Oval or at Lords. The *Australasian’s* correspondent “Robin Hood” observed that it was “difficult to get anyone to say a word about the team - good, bad or indifferent. A desire to ignore it exists, especially in London.”<sup>56</sup> The Marylebone committee had informed Alexander that the official notification for the tour proposal had arrived too late for the county secretaries to arrange representative fixtures, but certainly the Sydney riot and the political campaign against amateur payments dictated English cricketing officialdom’s response to the tour.

The antipathy towards the Australians was palpable. “Robin Hood” remarked how members of the team felt the English coolness “more or less acutely,” but “do not feel inclined to do any cringing to play about a first rate match, however much they desire to play

one.”<sup>57</sup> Alexander was forced to place press advertising to arrange matches and encourage spectators.<sup>58</sup>

The apparent shut-out encouraged the colonial associations to politely petition the MCC to schedule a representative London fixture. Letters published in the New South Wales and Victorian press however, were less courteous towards the English treatment of the colonials: “To first ignore them and then to be beaten by them would be a bitter pill and we can imagine if the match was played on a lively wicket how Messrs. Hornby, Hadow and Lord Harris would fare at the hands of the invincible Spofforth and how the crowd would roar when the Kentish peer’s middle stump was sent flying to the pavilion amongst the aristocratic crowd there assembled.”<sup>59</sup>

Amidst patronizing sympathy in the English press, the beleaguered colonials secured a representative match in the final month of the tour against an Eleven of England captained by Lord Harris at the Oval. The honour of being granted the much desired London fixture signaled an abrupt end to the shut-out and that the disgrace of Sydney had been forgiven. The reversal in attitude towards the Australians was dramatic. The team were suddenly “acknowledged in the true spirit of English generosity and kindness of heart” with a grand banquet at the Mansion House at the invitation of the Lord Mayor of London, “a mark of distinction which usually falls only to the lot of the noblest in the land.”<sup>60</sup> *The Times* felt assured that the record of the Australians indicated “the features of the parent preserved in the child”, and that the visits by the cricketers of the two countries “have done more to knit the Australian colonies with home than years of beneficial legislation... had the Australians adopted the American baseball instead of cricket, the change of games would have created almost as much divergence as a change of dialect.”<sup>61</sup>

The perception that official coolness had thwarted public enthusiasm for the tour was confirmed by the presence of 65,000 spectators at the Oval match, estimated to be the largest crowd to have gathered for a cricket match to date.<sup>62</sup> England won the contest by five wickets, but the Australian’s concerns for irreparably damaged Anglo-Australian cricketing relations were healed by the Oval defeat. So too were the Australian concerns for a financially poor tour. Alexander had negotiated fifty per cent of the gate money from the

match and the Australians receipts of £2,600 brought the tour balance into the black.<sup>63</sup>

The Australian Eleven, it was hoped, had been taught a valuable lesson in observing the distinctions between amateurs and professionals. “An Old Cricketer”, in *John Lillywhite’s Cricketers Companion* for 1881, observed that:

if the Australians did not make cricket their profession in their native land, they most decidedly did when they came to this country: for all who had anything to do with them here soon found out how keen they were about £.s.d.. I do not blame them for that: but by doing so they lost all claim to be considered amateurs. Our professionals when they visited the colonies, were well paid, but they went out *as* professionals.<sup>64</sup>

The shut-out of the Australian team was an impressive indication of the strength of the English organization to isolate what its ideologues perceived to be a dangerously acquisitive element in the game. The Australian players, who each finally recouped a profit of between £700 and £800 for the tour, were, however, increasingly able to make cricket a paying concern in their native land.

The 1880 tour had been organized with the blessings of the Associations whose only consideration was to ensure the availability of the tourists for intercolonial games upon their return. As in 1878, the associations, secure in the belief that the intercolonials would be fully representative of the cricketing strength of the two colonies, had agreed to benefit matches for the Australian Eleven against combined Elevens of New South Wales and Victoria in the weeks following the intercolonial fixtures, The VCA committee, however, chose to levy the Australian team seven and a half per cent of the gross for the combination match, the same terms that had applied for Harris’ tour.

The Australian team had not been charged at all by the VCA for the corresponding match in 1878, and the added levy by the VCA provoked the Australian Eleven players to withdraw from the intercolonials. Alexander justified his decision on the basis of the “grasping policy” of the VCA, but his decision assured a better share

of public support for the combination fixtures in the face of competition from the intercolonials.

The decision to favour their “own” matches, by renegeing on the verbal agreements to participate in intercolonials staggered the associations. NSWCA association secretary Phillip Sheridan claimed: “There was no doubt . . . that the Australian team had been guilty of a breach of faith which could not be too strongly condemned by the association.”<sup>65</sup>

The authority of the public administration and of the manly game itself appeared to be threatened. “A Bohemian” speculated that “it is difficult to say what base uses grounds like the MCC and EMCC may not ultimately come when the main question is, will it pay? That we shall have female Murdochs and Blackhams and Tommy Horans before many years we feel certain.”<sup>66</sup> The fragile alliances that comprised the administration of colonial cricket necessitated that the public debate over an organizational formula for first class cricket acknowledge the very substantial role of the Australian “commercial” player. “How is the professional amateur to be put down?” asked “Paul Jones” in a lengthy debate in the pages of the *Australasian* of the “filthy lucre” question: “There is a demand for Graces, Bannermans, Blackhams and Spofforths. The public will flock to see them play, and pay handsomely too. So this filthy lucre question becomes a very difficult one, Mr Bohemian.” Blurred distinctions between wages for professionals and expenses for amateurs were not lost on an Australian cricket culture that itself was instrumental in forging the amateur-professional: “As long as cricket remains as popular and paying a game as it is, so long will the ‘professional-amateur’ element continue to increase and wax fat on the gate monies so liberally supplied by a cricket loving public.”<sup>67</sup>

Spectator preference for the Australian Eleven matches was understandably resented by the colonial associations and lamented in the press. The aggressively negotiated conditions over the terms of pay by the Australian team were perceived to be reflected in their aggressive playing performance, in “‘big hitting’, or as the current phrase has it ‘playing for the crowd’.” Declining attendances at intercolonial and most dramatically, at club level, were explained by the passing of public enthusiasm for the “pretty style of Caffyn or

Coates” in favour of the aggression of “a Bonnor, a Murdoch and a Massie.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1880, all Victorian clubs (with the exception of Carlton) recorded a financial deficit. The traditional East Melbourne v Melbourne or Alberts v Warwick club fixtures no longer commanded the paying spectator’s undivided attentions. The Melbourne clubs were reduced to “band contests, moonlight concerts, spooning - anything for a draw.”<sup>69</sup> “Square Leg”, cricket writer for the *Sydney Mail*, blamed the Australian Eleven for “the serious injury to the local competition . . . our leading clubs have not excited the slightest interest for several seasons.”<sup>70</sup>

A tour of English professionals, the sixth English side to visit the colonies, was promoted during the 1881-2 season, by three leading English players, James Lillywhite, Alfred Shaw and Arthur Shrewsbury. The tour promoters engaged John Conway to arrange their colonial schedule, and two fixtures were negotiated with the associations against combined teams representing New South Wales and Victoria. Conway had settled on terms of twelve and a half per cent of the gross as rent with both the MCC and the NSWCA.

Predictably, the divided authority of Victorian cricket threw negotiations into disarray. Conscious that the Melbourne test would compete unfairly with the intercolonial and under pressure from club delegates who were adamant that the MCC and the English side compensate the association clubs for the predicted disruption to club attendances, the VCA chose to levy a ten per cent of the gross charge to any representative games played by the English side in Victoria. The additional VCA terms were flatly rejected by Conway, and it seemed that the competing interests of Victorian cricket might bring international cricket in the colony to a halt.

The VCA decision to impose the ten per cent levy was championed by its two vice-presidents, Clarke and Runting, members of the East Melbourne and South Melbourne clubs respectively. The Melbourne club delegates argued that a reduced levy of five per cent would be adequate compensation for any shortfall that the association might incur from competition with the intercolonial. The intransigence of the VCA was compounded by rumors that the MCC

committee was seeking to unofficially solicit eleven Victorian players for a match against the English team outside of the auspices of the association, in reaction to a passionate and controversial address to the association by vice-president Runting, who argued that the decision to impose a levy was “just and equitable from a business point of view” and (in what was seen to be a direct affront to the MCC’s authority) that the VCA “was so powerful a body that no Victorian cricketer would dare to play in any of the contemplated matches without its consent.”<sup>71</sup> Conway and the VCA stood fast to their positions and it appeared that Victorian cricket would split in two when East Melbourne and South Melbourne players, the so called “ten percenters”, rallied to the support of their beleaguered delegates by refusing to play against the English tourists in any representative matches unless the ten per cent levy applied.

The crisis was resolved when Conway threatened to play both scheduled internationals at Sydney under the auspices of the NSWCA. Intercolonial jealousy broke the VCA’s resolve. The five-percent terms were accepted by the VCA and Conway. In return, the VCA negotiated better terms from the Melbourne Club for the intercolonial, taking one hundred per cent of the ground and twenty-five per cent of the stand.

The “ten percenters” issue was a sobering experience for Victorian cricket and indicated the general inability of the colonial administration to successfully comprehend the dawning complexities of the phenomena of mass paying spectatorship. As the public’s attention was being drawn to the possibility of a third Australian touring party to England, the cricket editorial of the *Australasian* noted somberly and accurately that the administration of colonial cricket was “split up into a number of petty organizations, all more or less impecunious and all jealous of each other... It may be a difficult matter to separate financial affairs from sport, and it may require an effort and organization that does not exist here.”<sup>72</sup>

Shaw’s team played two matches against All Australia and two further tests against the third Australian Eleven formed to tour England during 1882 season.<sup>73</sup> Murdoch and Boyle again selected the team and the players retained full control over the length of the tour and shared in its profits. Its non-playing manager was Charles Beal,

recruited in a non-official capacity from the NSWCA. Beal initiated negotiations with the Marylebone Cricket Club for a full programme of first class matches for fifty per cent of the ground takings, including for the first time, a fully representative fixture against England at the Oval. It was hoped that a similar fixture might be arranged at Lords, however the Marylebone Club committee refused speculative terms for use of their ground, offering instead a £210 flat fee to the Australians - an offer that was politely rejected by the team management.

The 1882 tour arguably represented the highpoint of Anglo-Australian cricketing relations to date. The colonial leg of the tour, restricted to just two matches late in the season against Shaw's professionals (for which the Australians received thirty per cent of the gate), had not interfered with the intercolonial programme, guaranteeing the association's "blessings" for the tour. Agreements had been secured in advance with the English county secretaries for all first class fixtures and the financial terms had met with agreement from both parties. The great prize was Australia's momentous encounter with England, the so-called "Ashes" test, won by the colonials in thrilling fashion by just seven runs. The victorious Australians returned to the colonies one month later than the seventh touring English side, a team of combined amateurs and professionals under the captaincy of Hon. Ivo Bligh, who were touring the colonies under the auspices of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

The 1882 Australians had played a total of 47 matches (including two in the United States on the return leg), considerably fewer matches than previous tours, and while the fifty per cent terms were never challenged, they nonetheless were considerably less than the eighty per cent to ninety per cent negotiated by Conway in 1878 or the seventy-five per cent offered in 1880.

Beal, on behalf of the Australian team, secured three fixtures against the 7th English tourists, guaranteed them half of the gross, and agreed to pay the ground rental from the Australian's share of the gate for one match in Sydney and two in Melbourne. While no balance sheet from the England leg of the tour was published, the Australian Eleven took over £2,500 from the three Australian tests, which "A

Member of the Team” claimed to represent “as much as they had [earned] during the whole tour of England.”

The earnings of Australian teams had become since 1878 a topical, and in some quarters, a moot point of discussion. The *Sydney Mail* reported that the 1882 tourists each took £600-700 from their matches, a speculation denied by “A Member of the Team” who declared that each member took “less than £270, out of which had to come expenses for wines, etc.”<sup>74</sup>

Clearly the Australians had taken less in 1882 than from the previous two tours and also clearly recognised that international fixtures in the colonies represented a potential boon to their tour balances, if they could secure approximately the same terms that they enjoyed in England.<sup>75</sup>

English professional sides, however, conventionally enjoyed eighty per cent to ninety per cent of the gross from colonial matches, terms justified by the substantial costs incurred in travel between the colonies, the smaller crowds in provincial centres, the obviously fewer matches able to be played and the substantial concern that only Sydney and Melbourne representative fixtures could promise the returns that would make the tour financially viable. Of the available date for such games, “the great milking day of the year”, Boxing Day, was reserved for the Melbourne Intercolonial.

That the third Australian team had negotiated matches against Bligh’s team at all, and particularly at even terms, rankled some officials of the Melbourne Club, who saw the intrusion of the Australian team as undermining the MCC’s rationale for sponsoring the tour. MCC secretary Ben Wardill, had stated typically that the decision to invite the Englishmen was “not only for the sake of cricket, but because it tended to unite Australia more closely with the mother country.”<sup>76</sup> The high public profile of the Australian Eleven, at least in the opinion of the MCC, had little to contribute towards imperial solidarity.<sup>77</sup>

The fourth Australian touring side of 1884 was again a joint stock enterprise with all members entering into legal agreement to fund the tour and share in its profits. George Alexander, the 1880 tour manager, was recruited to begin negotiations with Charles Alcock of the Surrey Club. The growing popularity of the private Australian

tours encouraged Alexander to negotiate higher terms of fifty per cent of the stand receipts in addition to half the ground takings from all first class matches. The county secretaries rejected Alexander's bid, but suggested that by way of compromise, a major London match, possibly at Lords, might be scheduled for which the Australians would receive the entire gate.<sup>78</sup>

The Australians' increased gate money demand was roundly condemned by the English press. *The Field* was "surprised, if not disgusted" at the Australians' terms. Such blatant profiteering was considered "an evil omen" for the tour's success.<sup>79</sup> *The Sporting and Dramatic News* suggested that the Australians "have undertaken their enterprise less for honour than the filthy lucre... we most heartily and earnestly deprecate another infliction upon us next year."<sup>80</sup> Lord Harris, writing on "The Development of Cricket" in *The National Review*, renewed the call to discourage:

any too anxious inclination among amateurs towards turning cricket into a lucrative profession... If professional cricketers prove to be necessary in Australia, as I say they are in England, encourage their appearance by all means; but do not do anything to encourage the formation of a class of semi-professionals.<sup>81</sup>

The 1884 tour coincided, and was frequently compared with a tour by the "Gentlemen of Philadelphia", a short two month tour organized on a grand scale by "three prominent gentlemen" who forwarded £2,000 "without the slightest trouble" to cover tour expenses. The Americans refused to play for gate money and any profits from their matches were donated to the Cricketers Association of the United States, "who will devote the money in such ways to increase the welfare of the game in America." The Americans had insisted that "in all county matches, professionals will be barred."<sup>82</sup>

Murdoch, the Australian captain, was reported in the English press to have quipped that the refusal of the American team to play for gate money indicated that "the Gentlemen of Philadelphia apparently know how much it is worth to see them play."<sup>83</sup> The Australian captain's remark revealed more than a lack of diplomacy. It underlined the degree to which, by 1884, the Australian players

arrogantly, yet legitimately perceived their status as sporting stars - quasi-theatricals for whom thousands paid for pleasure of spectatorship. While the players were sympathetic to the imperial overtones that accompanied their tours, they were increasingly seen to flout the conventions of the economic and cultural organization of the game, both in England, but more dramatically in the colonies where a divided public administration, bound only by its inability and reluctance to aggressively engage the changing market realities of the colonial game, could not answer the brazen economic pragmatism of the colonies' leading players.

No longer the timid experiment of 1878, "the Australian Eleven" by 1884 was unambiguously the mechanism for enacting a serious national purpose, but was also a commodity, skillfully offered and controlled, in a complex, changing and occasionally hostile market place. Such apparently irreconcilable positions were able to co-exist, however tenuously, with a colonial administration that was both unable and unwilling to acknowledge the primacy afforded by colonial spectators to the phenomenon of international competition. The players, not the administrators of the colonial game, successfully recognized the potential to unite the fragmented organization and popularity of colonial cricket in the international arena.

The distance between the colonial authorities and international competition widened with a crucial development in the organization of NSW cricket in 1883. From 1877, when the New South Wales government placed the control of the Moore Park ground in the hands of trustees representing the association and the government, the NSWCA considered that the role of the trust's single government appointee to be little more than a statutory formality, and that the association's two representatives on the ground committee, Richard Driver and Philip Sheridan, assured the association's control over the ground's use. After Driver's death in 1880, steady applications for access to the ground for other "public amusements", signalled a weakening of the bonds of loyalty between the association and its own representatives on the trust.

The NSWCA treasurer and secretary were considered by the association to be automatic selections to the ground committee. In 1883, the sitting trustees rejected the association officers as nominees.

From 1878 to 1883, the association and the trust had operated as a single entity, pooling resources and operating a single balance sheet. At an association meeting on January 28, 1884, a motion was carried “that the action of the trustees of the Association Ground in not recognising the Hon. secretary and Hon. treasurer of this association upon the ground committee meets with this committee’s disapproval ... Ever since the Association Ground had been formed, the trustees had acknowledged the Hon. secretary and Hon. treasurer as members of the ground committee.” As “proof” of the ties between the parties over financial decision making, minutes from an association meeting of October, 1877, were recalled:

that the Hon. secretary inform Mr Conway that this association is prepared to allow 10 per cent on the gross receipts of the return intercolonial cricket match to be played in Sydney early next year, provided the players about to proceed to England take part in the match.

It was ironic that the first major challenge to the authority of the association, that of the first Australian Eleven, be resurrected in a bid to retain the continuity that the association had enjoyed over its control of finances and authority - a continuity that Victorian cricket has never achieved.

Traditional sentiments held no sway over changing and competing loyalties. Sheridan, the association secretary, and Richard Teece, its treasurer, declared their responsibilities and loyalties to the ground, not the association. Teece argued that when the trust had accepted his nomination, it was:

not because of his connection with the association, but simply on account of his general qualifications; in fact, the trustees could not as a body admit the association to share in their deliberations and responsibilities.<sup>84</sup>

As the VCA was essentially a client of the Melbourne Club, whose control over the MCG was guaranteed by crown grant, so too became the relationship of the NSWCA to the Ground Trust. As the privately organized Australian Eleven grew in popularity and confidence, the public administration of Australian cricket was devoid

of funds, denied unconditional access to playing fields and remained largely impotent in determining the terms or conditions of the preeminent attracting of international cricket.

The distance between the Australian Eleven and the English organizational model widened further when during the 1884 tour, three Notts professionals demanded £15, rather than the usual £10, to compete against the Australian team. Their demands were rejected by the Yorkshire Committee and the three players, Barnes, Flowers and Shrewsbury, were censured by the Lords committee. The dispute proved to have repercussions for the harmony of the 1884-5 Australian season when all three players were included in the eighth English touring team to the colonies organized again by the now established firm of Shaw, Lillywhite and Shrewsbury.

The 1884 Australian Eleven had played in the intercolonials before leaving for England and would do so on their return, however, their greatest competition for the public's purse was the presence of the English team. The Australians resolved not to disunite to play in colonial representative games against them - a stance that in part reflected the ill-feeling from the Notts dispute - but more broadly was consistent with a keen perception that their private worth was considerably enhanced by limiting and regulating their exposure to a paying public increasingly inundated by first class cricket.

The returning Australian team immediately began to market their talents with an unseemly aggression, approaching the NSWCA, VCA and EMCC with propositions for matches all in competition with the English team's itinerary. "Felix", in the *Australasian* thought the Australians' campaign was "undoubtedly the meanest thing ever done in the history of Australian cricket" *The Sydney Mail* declared that the requests were "... to put it mildly, in extremely bad taste, and will in all likelihood, be the means of causing much unpleasantness between Australian and English cricketers."<sup>85</sup> Clearly, the Australians were intent on securing their market share with their English rivals with scant regard for Anglo-Australian cricketing diplomacy.

Before disbanding as a touring party, the Australian Eleven hoped to negotiate a match against Shaw's team in Adelaide, in what would be the South Australian Cricket Association's (SACA) first

test. The Australians had played Shaw's professional tourists of 1881-2 for thirty per cent - terms the English promoters expected to be repeated. The Australians, however, demanded fifty per cent of the gate and were rejected outright by the English professionals. When John Conway, who was liaising for the English side, made the Australian's the impolitic offer of £20 per man, negotiations abruptly closed. The SACA, desperate to stage the match, resolved the impasse by offering both sides £450 to play. The SACA terms effectively represented what the Australians would have recouped had they won their fifty per cent demand.<sup>86</sup>

Having disbanded as a touring party after the Adelaide test, the team hoped to reunite for further matches in Sydney and Melbourne against the English side. The English team, indignant over the final terms of the first test, rejected a renewed offer of fifty per cent for a match in Melbourne on New Years Day. Shaw's team offered thirty per cent of the gate to Australians and, when rejected, appealed to the VCA to arrange a substitute match against a Combination Eleven of New South Wales and Victoria under the association's auspices. Having lost the bargaining initiative, Alexander offered to take forty per cent of the gate and after deducting his team's definition of "expenses", to gracefully donate the remainder to charity. In a published response to Alexander's renewed bid, Lillywhite ended the prospect of a meeting between the teams:

You are quite aware that we have only two places in Australia where we are likely to make a considerable sum of money and we consider 40 per cent of this to men at home is a ridiculous proposal... For myself, I think thirty per cent far too much when taking into consideration the pay these men had when playing against you in England in so many of those large money-making matches.<sup>87</sup>

The VCA accepted the English team's proposal of a combination match and requested the individual members of the disbanded Australian Eleven to declare their availability for selection. None of the 1884 tourists were available. The strike by the colonies' leading cricketers unleashed the dams of criticism from all sections of the Australian press. "Felix", in the *Australasian*, thought:

our association should show some backbone in this matter and take notice of these refusals. If every member of the recent Australian team disappeared from the country tomorrow, cricket would still flourish in the land. Indeed, according to their action since they came back, it would be a good thing for Australian cricket if they never played here again.<sup>88</sup>

An embittered VCA sought official explanations from the six Victorian members of the 1884 Australian team. Four of them, Boyle, Blackham, Palmer and Scott, responded jointly to the VCA with an extraordinary list of accusations against John Conway, the colonial liaison for the English team, who the players claimed had pursued a vendetta against the Australian Eleven since he was passed over as team manager for the 1880 touring side. The final indignity of being offered £20 per man by Conway to play the Adelaide test, and the publication of the details by Conway in the *Sydney Evening News*, confirmed for the players “the spirit that could have suggested this offer.”<sup>89</sup> One other Victorian, George Bonner, claimed “private reasons alone” prevented his availability, and one, Percy McDonnell, captured with refreshing honesty, precisely the limits of deference that defined the relations of Australian players to their colonial authority: “I deny the right which the association assumes to ask my reasons for not taking part in the match referred to, and therefore I decline to give any.”<sup>90</sup>

The VCA, unmoved by the explanations, resolved to ban the six Victorians from any future representative fixtures that came under its auspices. The Melbourne Test match went ahead without any of the 1884 tourists. Of the eleven new players chosen to represent Australia, five never again played test cricket. Predictably, the match was a one-sided encounter, won by England by ten wickets.

As the Victorian administration confronted its leading colonial players, it turned towards the NSWCA seeking its endorsement and support. It received none. The Combination match was a combination of players only, not one of organization or authority. The NSWCA was singularly unprepared to censure its own players and while not endorsing the action of NSW players who refused to play in

Melbourne, were also unwilling to jeopardize the success of the planned Sydney test. While Alick Bannerman, Murdoch and Bonner (who had made himself available to play for the New South Wales intercolonial team) refused to play for NSW against the English side, the decision of the NSWCA to effectively ignore the VCA action, enabled the suspended Victorians to return to the Australian team chosen by the NSWCA for the third and fourth tests in Sydney. The returning “rebels” did so as “amateurs” playing for expenses only. A fifth test was played in Melbourne, but without the recalcitrant Victorian players, who remained under suspension despite the offer from the VCA to reverse their boycott if the players agreed to meet the English team for expenses only.

In its *Annual Report* for 1884-5, the VCA president, Justice Hartley Williams, the “athlete judge”, noted that the decision to ban the Victorian players had been “equally painful to the one side as to the other.” It was also financially painful to the English tourists, whose share of the gate receipts from the final Melbourne test was a paltry £19.6s.9d., ending a financially disastrous tour that yielded for its three promoters a final profit of just £150 each.<sup>91</sup>

This first dramatic collision between private and public control over the terms of international play signaled the start of a precipitous decline in public patronage of test cricket. The 1882-3 season had seen an average of 42,432 people attend the four tests; in 1884-5 an average of just 18,826 attended the five tests on offer.<sup>92</sup> While the players “strike” of 1885 was short lived, it underlined for the authorities of the colonial game precisely how fragile and tenuous was their control over the colonies’ leading players, how divided were its own organizational relationships, and how potentially uncertain was the popularity of Anglo-Australian cricket.

If, as Mandle suggests, the success of the Australian Elevens indicated to colonial Australians the benefits that federation might achieve, the years of the late 1880s were to suggest that such optimism was perhaps illusory.<sup>93</sup> The success of Australian cricketers against England was not enough in itself to erode the barriers of conflict that existed within the public administration of the game. The determination of colonial cricket’s ideologues to insert an organizational wedge between the game and its players found little

vocal support either from those middle-class advocates of manly sports for whom the construction of an institutional framework for colonial cricket saw their own interests increasingly marginalized, or significantly, from the growing plebeian spectatorship for international cricket, for whom the Victorian ideology of sport offered little other than to bring play to a halt.

Even the *Bulletin*, while consistently critical of what it saw as slavish enthusiasm for “Anglo-Colonial” cricketing encounters thought enough of the “independent a position as that occupied by Murdoch, or Bonnor, or Scott” to defend the colonies’ leading players, who:

whether amateur or professional, will never consent to be spat upon... We don’t object to our men being regarded as professionals; but we do most strongly object... that the Australian, merely because he gets paid for an accomplishment he happens to possess, must grovel and lose his self respect, and abuse and prostrate himself before every creature who puts an eye glass in his head to magnify his brains and wears white ‘spats’ to make his feet look small.<sup>94</sup>

The lack of consensus over issues of commercialism and control had also, by the middle of the decade, extended beyond the factions within the public administration. The political splits within colonial cricket were apparent amongst the players themselves. Thomas Horan, an 1878 tourist, a future Australian Eleven player and journalist for the *Australasian*, and most significantly Australia’s “Demon”, Fred Spofforth, arguably the colonies’ preeminent sporting hero, were both fiercely critical of the 1885 strike. Both perceived the intensification of player demands as inflammatory and potentially self defeating. Moreover, splits amongst players themselves suggested that though a divided public authority had allowed the leading players to remain beyond the circuits of any attempted indigenous institutional control, direct confrontation with English cricketers and threats to the game itself were, for some, a more sensitive issue. In 1885, cultural allegiance to England and questions of economic independence ceased to be the exclusive concern of administrators.

## NOTES

1. *Argus*, November 19, 1877.
2. For example, the government salaries of Alick Bannerman, David Gregory and Thomas Garrett were £70, £620 and £140 respectively. Fred Spofforth's salary with the Bank of NSW was £170.
3. NSWCA Minutes. March 1, 1877.
4. With the intercolonial match suspended, the NSWCA were outraged at the apparent 'poaching' by Conway of its players for a match under the auspices of the VCA. At a committee meeting 15th March 1877, the NSWCA resolved: 'This association desires to place it on record that the [match] has been arranged without the intervention of or any reference to the association or in any way under its auspices: and that the same cannot be regarded as a match in which representatives of New South Wales take part.'
5. Letter published in the *Australasian*, September 29, 1877.
6. At Melbourne. for example, 16,000 attended the two days of a tied match between the Australian Eleven and the Combined XV: 4,000 attended the previous week's intercolonial also over two days. The pattern was repeated in Sydney.
7. "Longstop", *Town and Country Journal*, October 6, 1877. argued typically that the colony would be better served sending a NSW team to engage county teams in England and that "this colony could take her own in county matches, without any assistance."
8. *Australasian*, September 6, 1877.
9. Melbourne Cricket Club, *Annual Report*, 1887-88. The MCC's rejected terms of 20 per cent of the gate and one-third of the stand were approximately double the "liberal" fee charged as rent for the Combination match earlier in the season. The Australians demonstrated their gratitude at the five per cent terms offered by the EMCC by agreeing to wear the club's blazer on tour in England, much to the chagrin of the MCC.
10. *Australasian*, March 16, 1878. "A Bohemian" was almost certainly Daniel Wilkie, a Melbourne-born barrister and solicitor. The son of David Elliot Wilkie, prominent Scottish surgeon, Victorian MLA and philanthropist, he was also an active member of the MCC committee, a position he occupied while playing for the Bohemians - a travelling team of Victorian gentlemen modelled on the English example of I Zingari. Ironically he was also a founding member of the East Melbourne Club. In his weekly columns for the *Australasian*, during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Wilkie was a staunch advocate of the MCC's authority within the VCA, when visiting English teams and the profits from Australian Eleven fixtures brought the two bodies into frequent conflict.

11. *Australasian*, March 30, 1878.
12. James Lillywhite had originally negotiated the 1876-7 tour with the EMCC, in competition with negotiations between the MCC and GF Grace of the Gloucestershire Club for an all-amateur tour. When Grace's tour was abandoned, Lillywhite reneged on his prior agreement and played all Victorian matches at the Melbourne ground, from which "threats of legal proceedings, heated newspaper controversies and general unpleasantness resulted". The crisis was resolved when Lillywhite paid the EMCC £230 compensation and the MCC offered free admission to EMCC members. See A.W. Pullin. *op. cit.*, p. 46.
13. EMCC Annual General Meeting, minutes, published in *Australasian*, September 7, 1878.
14. *Australasian*, March 30, 1879.
15. The MCC offered seven and a half per cent of the gross to the VCA for all Victorian matches involving the touring English team and a further five per cent of the gross to be divided pro rata amongst those Melbourne Clubs whose players were selected in representative games.
16. *Australasian*, August 24, 1878.
17. *Town and Country Journal*, January 12, 1878.
18. Derriman, *op. cit.*, p. 36, quoting from the deeds of the grant issued by Driver as Minister for Lands. See also, Philip Derriman, *The Grand Old Ground: A History of the Sydney Cricket Ground*, Sydney, 1981, pp. 6-10.
19. Derriman, *True To The Blue*, p. 33.
20. *Australasian*, February 23, 1878, Derriman, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
21. *Town and Country Journal*, January 12, 1878.
22. The cricket editorial to the *Town and Country Journal*, October 6, 1878, complained that "the very people who prate about the Albert Company not being liberal in the cause of cricket are themselves the first to strike a blow at the game, by endeavouring to shut up the ground on which our good cricket has been brought out and our prosperous finances arrived at . . . I thought the principal Melbourne clubs were going to let us see from a distance what faction fights will do for cricket . . . but our fingers seem itching to join in too..."
23. Mandle, "Cricket And Australian Nationalism ..." p. 240.
24. [Julian Thomas], *The Vagabound Papers*, Melbourne, 1878, pp. 81-2.
25. *Town and Country Journal*, October 6, 1878.
26. *Australasian*, February 16, 1884.
27. Spofforth, "Australian Cricket and Cricketers..." p. 515.
28. *James Lillywhite's Cricketer's Annual*, London, 1878, p. 2.
29. Much to Conway's chagrin a letter from Lillywhite to the *Sporting Life* (England) detailed the dispute, in which Lillywhite wished to "inform the

- public that we only asked for what we paid the Australians in our benefit match in the antipodes”, quoted in Peter Wynn Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
30. *Conway's Cricketers Annual*, Melbourne, 1878, p. 276.
  31. VCA, committee meeting minutes, February 15, 1879, quoted in the *Australasian*. February 22, 1879.
  32. Quoted in the *Australasian*, September 11, 1880.
  33. Quoted in *Town and Country Journal*, December 18, 1877.
  34. For matches at home, the NSWCA payed professionals £7.10s. per match, for away matches £15 per match. The VCA paid £5 per match plus traveling allowances for away fixtures.
  35. Two Victorian professionals, for example, rejected Conway’s offer of £15 to play in the Sydney Combination, “placing”. according to the *Australasian*, March 2, 1878, “a higher value on their services than the managers of the Australian Eleven were disposed to give.”
  36. *Australasian*, December 29, 1877.
  37. See Phillip Derriman. *op. cit.*, p. 43.
  38. *Australasian*, October 5, 1878.
  39. *Australasian*, October 19, 1878; quotes the *London Sporting Gazette*, that suggested the conflicting claims between Conway and Lillywhite over the alleged payment of expenses to the Australian “test” players of 1877, constituted “a long-distance lying championship” and that had Conway chosen to accede to the Players wage demands “their payment on a liberal scale in one match would have been quoted as covering a multitude of sins.”
  40. *Australasian*, October 5, 1878.
  41. *Australasian*, December 20, 1878.
  42. *Australasian*, October 26, 1878.
  43. *Australasian*, September 21, 1878.
  44. *Australasian*, March 22, 1879. “A Bohemian” specifically refers to Harold Hale Budd, East Melbourne delegate to the VCA. solicitor and notorious East Melbourne partisan. “As a cricket politician in the Club’s interests, he was a hard and determined fighter and his optimistic championing of ‘East’ made him some bitter enemies in other Clubs.” See Alfred E. Clarke, *East Melbourne Club: History 1860-1910*. Melbourne, 1910. pp. 126-7.
  45. *Australasian*, February 22, 1879.
  46. *Australasian*, May 10, 1879.
  47. *Melbourne Cricket Club Annual Report*, Season 1878-9. Despite gross receipts from the tour of over £6,500, the MCC lost £153.19s.7d. after expenses. The shortfall was attributed to “the very large amount [£443.7s.4d.] demanded by and paid to the gentlemen and professionals comprising the Australian team.” The MCC Annual Report for that year. however, reveals that despite the 50 per cent terms demanded by the

- Australians, the MCC receipts for that single two day march, far exceeded the combined receipts from the two subsequent “Gentlemen of Victoria” fixtures. The dubious amateur status of the English players received considerable public comment. While the two professionals in Harris’ tour party were paid £200 plus expenses for the tour, “the expenses of each amateur . . . were more than double those of any one of the professions.” See Wynne-Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 118.
48. *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 2, 1879.
  49. *ibid.*
  50. Quoted in the *Australasian*, April 1, 1879.
  51. *The Sporting Gazette* (England) January 18, 1879, revealed that a claim for expenses of £102.10s. was sought by the Gloucestershire committee, which was dominated by the Grace family. The Surrey Committee rejected the claim for a team that included only one professional. A divided Gloucestershire committee voted to compensate the players out of club funds: E.M. Grace received £20. W.G. Grace £10. G. Grace £11. and Mr Gilbert, cousin of Grace’s received £8. The perceived manipulation of the club’s finances by apparently self-interested amateurs saw the committee resign in protest.
  52. *The Field* (England), January 18, 1879.
  53. Quoted in the *Sydney Mail*, March 15, 1879.
  54. *Australasian*, March 6, 1880.
  55. *ibid.*
  56. *Australasian*, July 31, 1880.
  57. *ibid.*
  58. As reported in the *Australasian*. August 28, 1880, Alexander had negotiated a match against the Crystal Palace Club in London advertising the event as “the only chance Londoners would have of seeing the team that has beaten all comers!”
  59. *Australasian*, August 7, 1880.
  60. *Australasian*, October 9, 1880.
  61. *The Times*, October 5. 1880.
  62. *Australasian*, October 23, 1880.
  63. W.G. Grace *op.cit.*, p. 170, *Australasian*, October 23, 1880.
  64. *John Lillywhite’s Cricketers Companion*, London, 1881, p. 39.
  65. NSWCA minutes, December 6, 1880.
  66. *Australasian*, November 27, 1880.
  67. *Australasian*, April 5, 1879.
  68. *Australasian*, January 8, 1881.
  69. *Australasian*. January 29, 1881.
  70. *Sydney Mail*, October 8, 1881.
  71. VCA minutes, October 25, 1881, reported in the *Australasian* October 29, 1881.

72. *Australasian*, December 17, 1881.
73. The two matches involving the third Australian Eleven were played in March, at the end of the cricket season and in competition with the first club football fixtures. Attendances at the matches were dramatically less than the two All Australian fixtures played earlier in the season. While the teams were virtually the same, the differences in attendances suggests that the attraction of international competition was already finding its limits, particularly when in competition with club football, and particularly in Melbourne. Crowd figures are quoted from Richard Cashman, *'Ave A Go, Yer Mug!*, p. 24.  
 First Test (MCG) 45,000-52,500 (December 31, January 1,2,3,4)  
 Second Test (SCG) 32,775 (February 17,18,20)  
 Third Test (SCG) 15,018 (March 3,4,6)  
 Fourth Test (MCG) 11,500-13,000 (Mrch 10, 11, 13. 14).
74. *Australasian*, September 15, 1883.
75. *Cricket* (England), October 25, 1883, quoted that profits for the 1882 tour in England were £3563, or £254.10s. for each of the fourteen participants over thirty-eight matches. The home leg of six matches, including three against Bligh's team, took a profit for the Australians of £2972 or £495 per match. The colonial games were worth then 500 per cent more to the Australians than their English fixtures.
76. *Australasian*, January 14, 1882.
77. Under the pseudonym "XYZ", MCC Committeeman A.F. Robinson criticised the 50 per cent terms demanded by the Australian Eleven for the matches against the Englishmen in a series of letters contributed to the Melbourne and Sydney press. He advocated restricting Australian Eleven fixtures entirely to England, conceding to "let the Australian Elevens make as much money as they can, but not come whining to the public about their not making enough." *Australasian*, September 15, 1883.
78. Beyond the rhetoric of disapproval of the speculative nature of the tours, English county clubs profited well from Australian Eleven fixtures. "Mid-On" of the Melbourne *Argus*, quoted in *Cricket*, October 25, 1883, was "forced to the opinion that in stipulating for a fair half all round, the Australians are acting in perfect fairness, to say the least of it. The fact that they have on previous occasions forgone any participation in the stand returns can, I think, only come into the subject as proving that. all things considered, the English clubs have had them very cheap and know too much of them in business, if not in cricket."
79. *The Field* (England), December 15, 1883.
80. *The Sporting and Dramatic News* (England), October 11, 1884.
81. Quoted in *Australasian*, December 15, 1883.

82. *Australasian*, November 24, 1883.
83. Quoted in Jack Pollard, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
84. Richard Teece was General Manager and Actuary of the Australian Mutual Provident Society, President of the Insurance Institute of NSW, the Australian Economic Society and a prominent advocate of manly sports.
85. *Australasian*, January 10, 1885; *Sydney Mail*, November 15, 1884.
86. To cover costs, the SACA were compelled to double their entry charges for the first day's play. The association took £900 from the rain affected match and recorded a loss of £271 after expenses. See Bernard Whimpress and Nigel Hart, *Adelaide Oval Test Cricket 1884 - 1884*, Adelaide, 1984, p. 4.
87. *Australasian*, December 27, 1884.
88. *Australasian*, January 3, 1885, "Felix" was Thomas Horan, former Australian Eleven member, Victorian and East Melbourne player and regular cricket writer for the *Australasian* from 1880.
89. *Sydney Evening News*, November 24, 1884.
90. VCA minutes for January 13, 1885, published in *Australasian*, January 17, 1885.
91. *Australasian*, January 17, 1885, Pullin, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
92. Richard Cashman, *Australian Cricket Crowds: The Attendance Cycle, Daily Figures, 1877-1984*. Kensington, 1988. p. 27.
93. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism ...". p. 240.
94. *Bulletin*, November 22, 1884.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Part One: 1885-1890: “Cricket in the Doldrums”

The 1885 strike and its aftermath represents a significant turning point in the colonial administrators’ perception of the game and its players. Prior to 1885, concepts of “labour discipline” with regard to the colonies’ leading players had been determined by the task rather than the industrial time. The speculative adventures of Australian Elevens had been begrudgingly accommodated as administrators’ concerns remained predominantly with facilitating the development of intercolonial and club competition and perhaps more significantly, with attempting to settle the divided relations of power within its own ranks. The “blessings” accorded to overseas tours were informed by the desire to limit the haphazard scheduling of matches beyond their authority. In the still largely pre-modern value system of the colonial elite it was desirable that overseas tours be legitimised by a degree of patronage. The strike by the leading players and the subsequent retaliatory action of the VCA raised the stakes and signalled an end to the period of detente.

From the turmoil of the 1884-5 season came the first formal dialogue between the associations to assume a higher profile over the terms of international competition. In April, 1885, the SACA proposed a compromise arrangement by which the players might retain a percentage of the profits of overseas tours but for which team selection and “the financial responsibility be undertaken by each association in proportion to the number of men chosen from each colony.”<sup>1</sup>

The SACA enjoyed full control over access to and profits from the Adelaide Oval and was more amenable to negotiating player authority over the terms of international competition. While the NSWCA detailed in its 1884-5 *Annual Report* its concern that the domestic competition remained threatened by “a small and select body of leading players,” the association nonetheless retreated from the possibility of sponsoring the international schedule. Locked into bitter dispute with the Sydney ground trust, the NSWCA declined the South Australian proposal, and informed its sister associations that

“owing to financial considerations we are not in a position to take part in the undertaking.”<sup>2</sup> Nor however did the authorities in New South Wales and Victoria recognise international cricket to be their preserve while player authority remained legitimised. From an economically subordinate position in relation to the MCC, the trust, and the players, the remaining seasons of the decade were to see a concerted attempt by the associations in NSW and Victoria to entirely isolate the Australian Eleven from colonial fields.

The players’ cause in attempting to organize a speculative tour for 1886 diminished in the aftermath of the 1885 strike, when the MCC at Lords threatened to bar any of the 1884-5 tourists from Lords or the Oval if they toured England. To the dismay of the Associations, the Melbourne Club entered the void and selected a touring side. *Lillywhite’s Cricketers Annual* for 1887 approved of the new arrangements noting:

that the visit was invested with additional importance and it certainly appealed more forcibly to the sympathy of English cricketers, from the fact that it was made under the auspices and management of a body which had identified itself actively and closely with the cricket of the Old Country... It was felt... that the best interests of the game were not consulted when the trip was merely speculative undertaking on co-operative lines run by the players themselves, as a show.<sup>3</sup>

“The MCC Australian Eleven” was not so sympathetically received in the colonies. The tour was an all-amateur enterprise for which the players were paid for their touring expenses only, not an equal share of the profits. It lacked the prowess of Alick Bannerman, who as a professional coach, was not eligible for selection, in addition to core members of previous touring parties - Murdoch, McDonnell, Massie, Horan and Boyle - who opted for business and personal matters in preference to touring. The absence of skilled, crowd drawing players, personal divisions within the team, and weak captaincy, rendered the tour, according to *Wisden’s Cricketers Almanac* in 1887, “an emphatic failure. whether we regard it as an event of itself, or compare it with previous visits to this country of the

picked teams of the Australian colonies.” The tour results of nine victories, eight defeats and the unusually high number of twenty-two draws, “did nothing,” said *Wisden*, “to place the tourists on any higher standard than would have been attained by any good county team that went playing about the country taking its chance of weather, wickets and opponents.”<sup>4</sup>

The NSWCA were openly hostile towards the tour. The association refused to patronize a proposed preliminary match between the MCC team and a combination side of New South Wales and Victorian players in Sydney. The ground trust indicated its attitude by raising the ground terms to twenty-five per cent of the gross, rather than the usual twenty per cent. The colonial leg of the tour was thus restricted to one game against a Victorian Eleven and one against a Combined Fifteen of Victoria and South Australia, both played in Melbourne. No matches under association auspices could be negotiated for the team upon its return from England. The return leg was restricted to three matches against the ninth English touring side, promoted again by Shaw, Lillywhite and Shrewsbury. The MCC Australian Eleven lost all three colonial internationals, having lost the three tests played in England.

The limits of the public’s enthusiasm for one-sided Anglo-Australian encounters was tested when the NSWCA arranged two subsequent international matches for the English tourists (which, unlike the MCC team fixtures, are conventionally regarded as ‘test’ matches) against a NSW dominated “Australian Eleven”, chosen by the NSWCA, and played in Sydney after the MCC team had disbanded. The two Sydney tests, both lost by the home side, were attended by an average of 8,764 spectators, less than half the meagre test attendance of the turmoil ridden 1884-5 season.<sup>5</sup> The Ninth English tour’s promoters each recorded a £250 loss for their efforts.<sup>6</sup>

The Melbourne Club, which had received fifty per cent of the gross from its English fixtures, took the risk with a substandard team and subsequently took a loss of £1,083.12s.<sup>7</sup>

“We have had stormy times in cricket” led the Australasian’s cricket editorial in December, 1886, ‘but stormier times are in store for us.’<sup>8</sup> In the summer of 1887-8, the organizational conflicts within Australian cricket reached their nadir. In co-operation with the

NSWCA, the Sydney ground trustees invited Shaw, Lillywhite and Shrewsbury to organize a tour for the 1887-8 season, boldly guaranteeing the promoters against loss. Ben Wardill, the secretary of the MCC had hoped to organize an English amateur tour of the colonies the previous season but had deferred to the promoters of the English professionals. Despite the English promoters' poor returns in 1884-5 and 1886-7. Wardill and the MCC refused to be thwarted for similar plans in 1887-8, insisting that they "should not consent that the club stand aside a second time in succession for the benefit of those who make these visits purely as a monetary speculation."<sup>9</sup> Amidst considerable, heated and ultimately fruitless debate over who had "entered the field" first, both tours proceeded in competition with each other.<sup>10</sup> Predictably, both were financial failures.

The MCC lost a massive £3,582.15s.3d.<sup>11</sup> Shaw, Lillywhite and Shrewsbury shared a loss of £2,400 on the venture, ending the era of speculative tours to the colonies. The Sydney ground trustees guarantee against loss to the English promoters was never met. "The cricket rivalries of Melbourne and Sydney were our undoing," recalled Shaw, lamenting, "the least that can be said of the blunder is that it was such a stupendous folly that a similar mistake is never likely to occur again."<sup>12</sup>

In 1887-8 no less than six versions of an Australian Eleven met four English touring combinations:<sup>13</sup>

Jan 1-5, 1887:	the MCC Australian XI v 9th England XI (Melbourne)
Jan 7-11, 1887:	the MCC Australian XI v 9th English XI (Sydney)
Jan 28-31, 1887:	the Australian XI (chosen by NSWCA) v 9th English XI (Sydney)
Feb 25-28, 1887:	the Australian XI (chosen by NSWCA) v 9th English XI (Sydney)
Dec 31, Jan 2-3, 1888:	an Australian XI (chosen by MCC) v 10th English XI (Melbourne)
Feb 3-7, 1888:	an Australian XI (chosen by NSWCA) v 11th English XI (Sydney)
Feb 10-15, 1888:	the Australian XI (chosen by associations) v Combined 10th and 11th English XI

	(Sydney)
Feb 24-25, 1888:	6th Australian XI (chosen by players) v 11th English XI (Sydney)
Mar 2-5, 1888:	6th Australian XI (chosen by players) v 10th English XI (Melbourne)
Mar 9-13, 1888:	6th Australian XI (chosen by players) v 11th English XI (Sydney)

Of the 1888 encounters, only one, that against the Combined Eleven chosen from the tenth and eleventh English sides, is recalled as a test match. Organized ostensibly to celebrate one hundred years of British settlement, the ‘centenary test’ was the least patronized of any Anglo-Australian encounter then, or since, attracting just 1,971 spectators over three rain affected days.<sup>14</sup>

The home side lost the single test of the 1887-8 season by 126 runs. Australia had not won a series since the single test victory in England in 1882. The established promoters of England tours were financially destitute. The cricket rivalries of Melbourne and Sydney were inflamed over the debacle of the twin tours of 1887-8. The players who had taken colonial cricket to dizzying heights had retired, were entirely out of form, or, indignant over official interference with their control over finances, had retreated sulking, from the test arena. Bewildered by a glut of substandard competition, organized by competing groups with no attention paid to logical scheduling, Australian crowds deserted test cricket. The future of Anglo-Australian cricket seemed entirely uncertain.

The players again took the initiative in 1888 and appointed the 1882 tour manager, Charles Beal, to control finances. *James Lillywhite’s Cricketers Annual* for 1889 suggested that “never assuredly did a party of cricketers set out on an extensive tour under circumstances so thoroughly calculated to discourage as the sixth Australian team which has visited England.”<sup>15</sup> The antipathy of the colonial associations towards the tour saw no matches under association auspices scheduled for the tour’s initial colonial leg, either for games against NSW or Victorian teams, or Combination Elevens. Weakened by the sudden withdrawal of its three leading players - Giffen, Horan and Moses - the tourists, having lost the two matches

played against the tenth and eleventh English sides in the colonies, lost two of the three tests played in England.

In denying official recognition or support to Australian touring sides, the associations hoped to encourage the growth and popularity of intercolonial and club cricket. The tenuous authority of the VCA and the lack of inter-association co-operation saw the future of intercolonial competition thrown into disarray during the 1889-90 season. The financial burden of sponsoring yearly contests against South Australia since 1880 alongside the traditional two match programme against New South Wales encouraged the VCA to propose a reduced competition between the three colonies in which each team would meet the other for one match only. The NSWCA could neither afford the transport costs for the nine day journey to Adelaide, nor negotiate suitable playing dates with the SACA and wished to maintain the status quo. The MCC exploited the impasse and entered into negotiations with the NSWCA to host the Melbourne intercolonial under the club's auspices. An outraged VCA subsequently expelled the Melbourne Club from its ranks and from Cup competition. In its *Annual Report* for 1889-90, the MCC defended its "hostile action" claiming: "that they are acted purely in the interests of the game that they are appointed to foster, and so long as they can point to this as their sole rule of action, they are amply sustained under any... accusation."

No English team toured the colonies in 1889-90, the first time in a decade that an English side had not played on Australian fields. William Murdoch returned to captain the 1890 tour to England, again organized as a private enterprise of the players. For the first time, an Australian touring side lost more matches than it won. The 1890 tour began with the lines of division between cricket's public and private sectors firmly in place. No colonial fixtures, before or after the English tour could be negotiated. The Australian team had been effectively isolated from Australian fields as the national Eleven for the first time, played for English spectators only.

## Part Two: The Revival of the Public Sector in the 1890s

The inexorable division of authority during the 1880s between the New South Wales and Victorian associations with the Melbourne Club, the Sydney ground trust, the South Australian Cricket Association and the players, revealed the broad alliances that would compete for control of Australian cricket through the 1890s and beyond the first decade of federation. The successful transformation of colonial cricket into its “modern” institutional form was dependent upon the assimilation of the cultural values of those parties that subscribed to the moral approbation and economic priorities of the English system with those groups that enjoyed access to the means of generating cricket’s economic survival - grounds, spectators and players. The processes of inter and intra institutional assimilation was begun during the 1890s and cricket returned from the doldrums. In order for cricket to emerge as a mass institution, cricket’s administrators were compelled to reassess their notions of the game’s function and to re-evaluate their own organizational priorities.

English tours to the colonies during the 1890s were sponsored by the united efforts of the MCC and the Sydney ground trustees. Having competed with disastrous results in 1887-8, co-operation between those bodies that enjoyed unqualified access to the colonies’ major grounds proved to be a financial success. Restricting tours to three yearly intervals, the trust and the MCC each enjoyed between £2,000 and £4,000 profit from the three tours co-operatively sponsored during the decade.<sup>16</sup>

The resurgence of cricket in the 1890s is conventionally seen to be remedied with the visit in 1891-2 of an English team financed by the Earl of Sheffield, and led by an overweight forty-three year old W.G. Grace, who had not visited the colonies for eighteen years, but was persuaded to do so for £3,000 plus expenses. Sheffield was a skilled and experienced imperial diplomat whose aim in financing the tour was to invigorate Australian cricket. Cricket historian, Chris Harte, argues that Sheffield’s visit came at the urging of friends in the diplomatic corps who were concerned at both the delays in achieving federation and the alarming decline in Australian interest for cricket, twin concerns that might be assuaged by the visit of Grace and an

English team.<sup>17</sup> Australia won the series, Sheffield donated £150 to purchase a trophy to be contested between the cricket teams of the colonies and Australians began to return to the cricket arena. Alfred Shaw, a member of the team, saw Sheffield's object "to re-solder, as it were, the links of affection and interest that bound cricketers in the Old Country and the colonies together."<sup>18</sup>

Imperialist sentiment and middle-class moralist and organizational zeal were effectively united during the rest of the decade as colonial administrators began the task of rationalizing their divided institutional arrangements and transforming colonial cricket into a cohesive sporting industry. The swelling plebeian spectatorship for cricket was formally recognised in the 1890s with the rapid construction of stadiums, suburban facilities, covered seating, graded mounds, encyclopedic scoreboards and reduced entry prices. The press also contributed to the democratisation process as the crowd in the outer, rather than the members in the pavilion increasingly became the focus of newspaper attention.

Daly has shown how in South Australia, as the association began to vigorously promote the game in both town and country, the game's endorsement by influential members of the Adelaide elite became limited to special or social occasions; as the game became more 'democratic', the upper classes became more reluctant to support it.<sup>19</sup> Nor, however, was such endorsement by the elite considered to be necessary or desirable. The traditional involvement by the more prominent members of the community in the game's organization had become by the end of the 1880s the cause of bemusement and frustration. Commenting on the Sydney ground trustees' patronage of English tours to the colonies, "Round Arm", a Sydney journalist, "a New South Wales man, a cricketer and a member of the NSWCA committee", thought it worth asking "the people of New South Wales if they think it redounds to the credit of the colony to have one of their Supreme Court Judges and their Under Secretary for Lands figuring before them as runners of a professional cricketing team?"<sup>20</sup>

The drop in popularity for club cricket had been conventionally blamed on the frequency of test matches, however club attendances escalated alongside the increase in test match crowds during the

1890s, with the introduction of district based club competition by the associations in NSW, Victoria and South Australia, linking Club competition with the growth of new suburbs, tram and rail lines. As early as 1860, the more pragmatic advocates of manly sports had recognised the economic advantages of district based competition,<sup>21</sup> yet the reorganisation of club contests in the 1890s was fiercely resisted by the senior social clubs. For a time in Sydney, two competitions co-existed.<sup>22</sup> Public support for electorate cricket, however, overwhelmed the traditions which the social clubs sought to preserve. The *Referee* (notable for its recognition of the popular yearning for indigenous sporting culture)<sup>23</sup> thought “the senior clubs have done nothing for cricket, save what would have been done if they had never existed.”<sup>24</sup> What was seen to be the excesses of the social club tradition - its association with the gambling practices of the elite, the perilous concerns over the development of a closed player market and “semi-professionalism” and the perpetuation of exclusive and often one-sided competition - became the targets for the association’s reformist zeal. The gospel of civic pride informed the associations’ model for a restructured domestic competition.

C.T.B. Turner, a prominent New South Wales and Australian player of the 1890s observed that:

there seemed danger a while ago that what may be termed the ‘club craze’ would militate against good and popular cricket by encouraging ‘grasping’ professionalism and stultifying worthy and stimulating local pride. The association, a high court of management and control in all that concerns cricket, set itself to oppose that peril by encouraging electoral and borough, and true country cricket in matches where the sides are chosen from country districts whose boundaries are clearly defined. Local pride and patriotism are fostered; people flock to see who really are their “ain” folk uphold the local honour and glory and do not grudge to contribute a trifle when it is absolutely sum there is no chance of it going to fill a gambler’s pot.<sup>25</sup>

The success of cricket's organizational populism, however, had its limits. The 1890s saw the first combined attempt by the associations to assert their organizational authority over the economic prospects of the players comprising the Australian Eleven. While less reactionary in their perception of the Australian Eleven than during the years following the 1885 strike, their efforts to establish a compromise with the players during the 1890s were largely unsuccessful.

The Australasian Cricket Council (ACC), formed in 1892 with the co-operation of the NSWCA, VCA and SACA, sought to legitimise, at least to its own satisfaction, the institution of Australian touring sides by approving team selection, regulating the length of the tours and arbitrating disputes that might arise between the associations with regard to the international itinerary. It also stipulated that it "did not desire to reap any pecuniary benefit" from its involvement with international cricket.<sup>26</sup> The timidity of its constituted powers finally forced the ACC to accommodate those elements of the Australian cricket culture that had the economic power to generate its existence, principally the Melbourne Cricket Club and the players themselves.

Throughout the period of the Council's existence, the players rights to share touring profits remained sacred. Despite conciliatory efforts, the ACC never enjoyed unchallenged authority in determining team selection or the duration of tours. The ACC's authority was fatally undermined when, under pressure from SACA, it was forced to accede to player representation on the Council and to request funding from the Melbourne Club to initiate the 1899 tour to England. The economic power of the MCC, the lack of organizational consensus between the associations and the institutionalization of player authority rendered the Council's constitutional powers ineffectual. The NSWCA withdrew its support for the ACC and its remaining members voted the Council out of existence. George Giffen, a prominent South Australian and Australian player of the 1890s remarked in 1898, that:

I, in common with many other cricketers, cannot see what the Council has to do with the matter [of overseas tours]. If it financed the tour, the position would be entirely different, but it did not take upon its shoulders one iota of

financial responsibility; as in former years, the players had to bear the whole of what risk there was.<sup>27</sup>

From the ashes of the ACC rose the Australian Board of Control, that in 1907 with the co-operation of South Australia and Tasmania, found the national consensus required to insert an effective organizational wedge between the game and its players. From that date, player authority over the terms of international play steadily weakened. Yet, the assimilation of the two dominant traditions that had emerged within Australian cricket from its first foray into organized representative competition, that which was entrepreneurial, spectator oriented and economically pragmatic and that which subscribed to the economic priorities of the games amateur advocates, was, painfully, tenuously and as the events of the late 1970s were to indicate, only partly achieved. After six years of the Board's existence, Monty Noble, the captain of the 1912 Australian team, while describing himself as "a supporter... of Board control", nonetheless thought that "in these six years [the Board] have not been credited with one single act of forbearance, they have held the pistol of coercion at the heads of the players the whole time, and gradually taken from them all their privileges."<sup>28</sup>

### **Part Three: Conclusion**

Australian historians (along with sociologists, psychologists, physical educationalists, journalists, novelists, playwrights) are yet to definitively describe what was, or is, the precise function of Australia's sporting culture.

Beverly Kingston, for example, has offered that "organized sport... soaked up economic and emotional resources which might have produced different outcomes if directed elsewhere."<sup>29</sup> Kingston evokes a tradition of Australian cultural analysis that suggests that the Australian "obsession" with sport acted to the detriment of other cultural options and that "optimistic" interpretations of the growth of nineteenth century sporting culture that stress egalitarianism, national maturity, cohesiveness and pride (Mandle's, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism..."), being the seminal example), discount the very real

function of Sport in fostering conformity, strengthening imperial ties, reinforcing sexual stereotyping and discouraging intellectual effort. While academic considerations of colonial sport remain too thin on the ground to either prove or disprove pessimistic or optimistic interpretations, and while the evidence to date remains more suggestive than exhaustive, both emerging orthodoxies are informed by the notion of an unbreakable connection between modern sport and its industrial, urban audience.

Explanations for the troughs as well as the peaks in the acceptance by colonial Australians of their organized sporting culture suggest that more caution should be exercised in examining how or why nineteenth century Australians “soaked up” their low cultural leisure alternatives. Australians made the choice to patronize cricket contests against England, but also chose not to when their demands failed to be met.

Social historians have been apt to point to the qualitative evidence of the contemporary opinion of visitors to the Australian colonies - usually Trollope, Twopeny and Thomas - whose observations have provided fertile ground for establishing the sweeping cultural generalisation of Australian’s apparently unique obsession for sport, and for no sport more than England’s cricket, because all ages and all classes are interested in it and not to be interested in it amounts almost to a social crime.”<sup>30</sup> The complex relationships between cricket, class and community in colonial Australia suggest, however, that the game signaled different meanings for different social groups. The explanations for why Australians accepted or rejected the game are located in the social and material conditions of the particular classes that played, organized, and watched it. Prevailing ideas about cricket’s function co-existed, competed and frequently overlapped.

The scramble by cricket’s middle-class administrators to assert their organizational authority during the 1890s is as attributable to the Victorian passion for organization and efficiency, or to the attendant concerns for restoring damaged imperial ties, as it was a response to the clear signals that the game would not survive unless it was administrated with greater sensitivity to a popular colonial spectatorship that demonstrated a degree of discrimination and

selectivity in choosing from its albeit limited cultural options. It is significant that while attendances at test matches fell away during the late 1880s, intercolonial contests were still considered worth attending, with the 1888 Sydney intercolonial attracting 16,690 spectators two weeks before the lowest ever test match attendance.<sup>31</sup> While the associations congratulated themselves on initiating structural changes to domestic competition whereby “the spectators could be counted in their thousands, whereas in former years barely hundreds watched the play”,<sup>32</sup> cricket’s administrators were left to contemplate the reasons why club football crowds began to be counted in their tens of thousands.

The function of cricket in the transportation of imperial and bourgeois values to the colonies has preoccupied the attentions of the game’s historians. Certainly, the single greatest disruption to cohesive middle-class hegemony on the late nineteenth century cricket field, the co-operation of the players comprising the national team, was contained within a bourgeois social form - the joint stock company. The two greatest popular cricket heroes of the 1880s. Murdoch and Spofforth, both settled to live and play in England at the end of their careers. If playing and watching cricket was the most immediate form of popular recreation for colonial Australians, it was also, to be sure, saturated by a popular imperialism.

“Imperial Cricket”, Inglis titles his study of test matches between 1877 and 1900. “So intense a devotion to the most English of games”, says Inglis, “was a sign of how spontaneously and profoundly Australians embraced the culture of the motherland.”<sup>33</sup> While more optimistic in his conclusions, Mandle also acknowledges that Anglo-Australian bonds by the end of the 1890s were close, “but the nature of the relationship had altered.”<sup>34</sup> In “the unfilial yearning of young Australia to triumphantly thrash the mother country,” Mandle locates an Australian cricketing nationalism, freed of fears of physical degeneration under the Australian sun, freed of doubts surrounding its convict origins, a nationalism “that was self confident, balanced and truly national.”<sup>35</sup> Both historians closely relate the development of colonial attitudes towards their sporting inheritance in terms of the nineteenth century habit of drawing wider parallels from the examples of manly sports to indicate moral, national and racial

superiority through sporting achievement. Both also perceive sporting competition with England as that part of the colonial cricket culture “that did most for the game at large amongst Australians.”<sup>36</sup>

Whatever was the precise satisfaction colonial Australians derived from watching and reading about their representatives doing battle against English cricketers (hero worship, catharsis, group and regional identification, peer-group prestige), the alarming slump in cricket interest during the 1880s suggests that the inclination of Australians to “spontaneously embrace” the English game had definite limits and was always conditional.

Mandle claims that “the old bugbear of intercolonial rivalry vanished in the surge of victories [of the early 1880s],”<sup>37</sup> The evidence, however, suggests the reverse to be true. The slump of the 1880s demonstrated that particular developments of nationalist or imperialist achievement in the sporting arena remained prey to parochialism, intercolonial rivalries and class tension.

The successful translation of Darwinian and Arnoldian ideas into institutional form for competition against England lagged far behind the popular acceptance of the game amongst Australians. Evaluations of sport and physical activity in Victorian Australia in terms of the potent social issues that influenced middle and upper class thought and their perspectives on society - the notion of muscular Christianity, deliberations on the general laws of health and physical exercise and the Darwinian debate on the superior nature of the country’s Anglo-Saxon stock must at some point acknowledge the contradiction that the advocates of the Victorian ideology of sport were, for a time, the least willing or able to embrace at an institutional level the sporting phenomena that gave rise to those issues. In examining the colonial adoption of Britain’s “games revolution”, explanations of institutional success and failure should not escape evaluation in terms of the rise of comparable forms of nineteenth century mass entertainment, such as the music hall, where the incidence of heroes (and heroines), joy, spectacle, mystique, wonder and class tension were at least as evident as in organized sport - and certainly, for cricket during the late 1880s, far more evident.

While cricket’s organization as a mass spectator sport is closely related to the rise of an urban/industrial order, to urban, middle-class

reformist desires for promoting cricket's apparent class-conciliatory function and to the physical consequences of rapid urbanisation, the game's popular appeal is perhaps more closely related to many of the reconstituted values of the colonies' pre-industrial heritage, values consolidated during that period in which the reformist voice was too weak and too divided to transform the colonial cricket culture as effectively as had been achieved in Britain.

To examine the rise of sporting institutions in the period 1880-1914 is to engage many of the difficulties confronted in examining popular culture in a period which closely resembles our own, which poses the same kind of interpretive problems and which is informed by our own sense of contemporary questions. The crisis that beset cricket in the 1880s suggests that the rise of cricket as a modern sporting institution was not inevitable. In order to survive, cricket as a "bourgeois" cultural form was (and is) forced to acknowledge that mass audiences can and do vote with their feet - that 'mass' culture has to draw on 'popular' culture and attitudes. That cricket survives today as a mass cultural institution, indicates that the necessarily uneven and unequal struggle over its cultural function continues.

## NOTES

1. NSWCA Minutes, April, 29, 1885.
2. NSWCA Minutes, October 26, 1885. The NSWCA was destitute. At the above meeting they informed the trust that they could not at that time afford to pay the trustees the ground rental for the upcoming Sydney intercolonial. Nor was the association able to provide the necessary funds to send its team to Melbourne for the Boxing Day fixture. The trust agreed to postpone payment of the rental costs for the association ground but refused to forward the money for transport to Melbourne. The association were forced to take out a £250 overdraft from the Commercial Bank before guaranteeing its team's availability for the match.
3. *Lillywhite's Cricketers Annual*, 1887, p. 18.
4. *Wisden's Cricketers Almanac*, 1887, p. 89.
5. Cashman, *Australian Cricket Crowds: The Attendance Cycle*, p. 28.

6. Pullin, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
7. Melbourne Cricket Club Annual Report, Season 1885-6.
8. *Australasian*, December 18, 1886.
9. Melbourne Cricket Club Annual Report, Season 1886-7.
10. The MCC's perceived lack of sympathy for the English promoters became the target of criticism in England and colonies. Cricket (England), September 23, 1886. "could come to no other conclusion that the Melbourne Club cannot with any degree of dignity pursue this matter further, and should they persist in doing so, a far graver charge lies at the door of the 'Marylebone of Australia' than was ever maintainable against the much maligned fourth Australian Eleven."
11. Melbourne Cricket Club Annual Report, Season 1887-8. Included in the MCC's tour expenses was the payment to W.W. Read, the Surrey amateur of £1,137.10s. for "retaining fee and expenses, self and wife."
12. Pullin, *op. cit.* p. 101.
13. The first two matches of 1888, while billed as "Australian Eleven" matches, were so in name only. In the match v 10th English Eleven, the Melbourne Club chose just two New South Wales players. In the match v 11th English team, the NSWCA returned the gesture, selecting just two Victorians.
14. Cashman, *'Ave A Go, Yer Mug!*, p. 35.
15. *James Lillywhite's Cricketers Annual*, 1889, p. 20.
16. Jas Scott, "Cricket Matches: English and Australian Teams", unpublished ms. 1938, pp. 241-291.
17. Chris Harte, *A History of the Sheffield Shield*, Sydney, 1987, pp. 13-15.
18. A.W. Pullin, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
19. Daly, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
20. *Cricket*, September 15, 1887.
21. See Alfred E. Clarke, *The East Melbourne Cricket Club: History 1860-1910*, Melbourne, 1910, p. 1.
22. See Derriman, *True To The Blue*. pp. 66-8.
23. See Chris Cunneen, "Elevating and Recording the Peoples Pastimes: Sydney Sporting Journalism 1886-1939", in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.). *Sport: Money, Morality and the Media*, Sydney, 1981, pp. 162-76.
24. September 20, 1893.
25. "New South Wales Cricket" *Review of Reviews*, October 20, 1894.
26. *Sydney Mail*, September 13, 1892, quoted in Radcliffe Grace, "The Rise and Fall of the Australasian Cricket Council, 1892-1900", *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 2. No. 1, November, 1985. p. 44.
27. George Giffen, *With Bat and Ball*, London, 1898, p. 62.
28. *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 29, 1912, quoted in Sissons, *op. cit.* p. 120.

29. Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia*, Vol. 3, 1860-1900. Oxford, 1988, p. 198..
30. R.E.N. Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, (Sydney, 1973 edition), p. 204.
31. Cashman 'Ave A Go, Yer Mug!', p. 37.
32. NSWCA Annual Report, 1893-4.
33. Inglis, *op.cit.*, p. 170.
34. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism...", p. 242.
35. *ibid*, p. 239.
36. Inglis. *op.cit.* p. 167.
37. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism...", p. 239.

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