

BASEBALL IN AUSTRALIA. TWO TOURS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF BASEBALL IN AUSTRALIA

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Baseball in Australia began effectively with the tour in 1888-89 of two professional American teams which played exhibition matches in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Ballarat. Regular games were played in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide from this time and in 1897 an Australian team made a tour of the United States. The stories of these two tours reveal the hopes held by enthusiasts for baseball and the realities they encountered in Australia and America. The stories also tell us something about the emergence of 'national sports' in the late nineteenth century, and of Australian baseball's curiously mixed relationship with cricket - co-operation as well as rivalry.

Baseball was not completely unknown in Australia before the Americans arrived in 1888. It was perhaps played by American diggers on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s¹ and Americans living in Sydney in 1882 played in the Domain and had two teams which played on Saturday afternoons in Moore Park. In Melbourne three cricket clubs had played against the touring Georgia Minstrels.² It was, however, not played regularly by Australians until the American tour. It has been played by enthusiasts, but with little public following, ever since.

The 1888 American tour was undertaken soon after the game in the United States had emerged from its formative years and had become the centrally controlled, professional and hugely popular sport-cum-industry which we know today. It was at the end of the 1850s that baseball surpassed cricket in popular appeal to Americans; the Civil War saw the New York rules become the preferred way to play the game; from 1868 professionalism of players was accepted; from 1876 the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs created an autocratically controlled industry, which handled its

players and its product in the big business style of the period. In the 1880s the game's soaring popularity in the booming American cities was aided by the 'flowering' of baseball journalism, especially in Chicago, and careful refinements to the rules to add to the pace and appeal of the game.³

The game which Australians saw in 1888 had evolved rapidly since the 1860s but still had some way to go before the modern game was consolidated. From 1864 a ball hit in fair territory had to be caught on the fly for an out - no longer was the first bounce rule preferred. The foul fly caught on the bounce remained an out until 1884. The overarm pitch became legal in 1884 and the four feet by six feet pitching box at this time was 50 feet from the batter. (The present 60 feet 6 inches was not adopted until 1893 and the pitching slab was introduced in 1894.) In 1887 the batter was no longer allowed to call for a high or a low pitch, and three strikes was again the allowance, after a brief experiment with four. Foul hits and foul tips did not count as strikes. Five balls entitled the batter to take first base. (It became four in 1889). In 1885 catchers began to wear chest protectors but most catchers stood well behind the batter, donning mask and pad and coming up only when a runner was on base. Although the catcher wore a fingerless mitt, most players did not yet wear any type of glove.⁴

The 1888-89 tour was organised, paid for and led by A.G. Spalding who had been an outstanding pitcher as a young man and had organised the first overseas baseball tour; the Boston and Athletic clubs visited England and played the first game there on 27 February 1874 at Lords Cricket Ground.⁵ Spalding with his brother had from 1876 built up a thriving sporting goods business, especially in baseball bats, balls, caps and uniforms. He was also prominent in the administration of the game and was an able and energetic booster of baseball, his business and America.⁶ The tour was designed mainly to advance these three interests. Leading sports writers accompanied the team and the tour had the blessing of the man who largely created the phenomenon of American baseball journalism, Henry Chadwick.

Chadwick wrote that the tour would also show the world that America now shared with England 'the honours in the great athletic games throughout the civilised world.' America with England had produced sports which enabled 'physical recreative exercise' to be combined with 'mental culture' to advance the education of their youth. America's national game of baseball was able to stand alongside England's 'glorious old sport of Cricket' in leading the non Anglo-Saxon world towards what he called 'refinement.'⁷ The tour was, then, the product of American confidence, enterprise and missionary zeal to improve the world. Spalding would have seen only an inevitable harmony of interests as he took to Australia and then to the world the good news about healthy sports and the glories of baseball in particular, about American ingenuity and native ability in producing their own national sport, and about the Spalding sporting goods company.

Spalding organised two teams of professional players for his tour: one based on the Chicago club, of which he was President, and the other drawn from leading players across the country and called 'All-America'. There were 22 players on tour, at least three journalists, a cricket coach, a manager and two others to assist Spalding, and others to make up a social group. Mrs H.I. Spalding, mother of the organiser was there, a woman of stately presence with snow-white hair. There were in addition five men, some of whom were coaches and some who seem to have been wealthy tourists seeing the world, and two special additions: 'Professor' Bartholomew, a balloonist and parachutist, and Clarence Duval, the tour 'mascot'.⁸ The 'Proff' was an experienced if frequently injured performer who added much to the tour's crowd appeal. The 'mascot' was 'a little, slenderly built, impish-faced negro, with a remarkable talent for plantation dancing, "hoe-downs" and "walk-arounds," and the gift of baton twirling.' He entertained the tour party and celebrities in many places. For his regular task he was 'rigged out in a red coat, gold lace, tight-fitting white trousers and high-topped patent leather boots, and

other paraphernalia of a drum-major's make-up, and led the teams upon the field for their games, walking in front of the line and swinging his silver-tipped baton in a style that never failed to excite enthusiastic applause.⁹

The party left Chicago on 20 October 1888, soon after the close of the baseball season and after playing a farewell game that afternoon. They travelled west across the States in two magnificently equipped rail carriages adorned with long banners of white linen inscribed 'Spalding's Australian Baseball Tour'. The touring group slept in their carriages, thus avoiding some of the doubtful hotels on the route. It was a triumphal progress; the journalists represented a total of thirty newspapers and good advance publicity was ensured. The teams played in a different city almost every day and twice in San Francisco before their ship sailed. They called at Honolulu and the Sandwich Islands before reaching New Zealand. A game was played in Auckland on 10 December in front of a crowd of 4,500 before they sailed on the *Alameda* to reach Sydney on 14 December."

Sydney had been well prepared. Spalding had sent ahead a manager, Leigh Lynch, who was described by a Melbourne paper as 'the well-experienced manager of innumerable big shows.'¹¹ Lynch had succeeded in rallying the Americans resident in Sydney and rousing much local interest as well. Even the *Bulletin* which reported the visit critically commented that the promoters had advertised 'lavishly and well'.¹² The *Alameda* entered the harbour late on Friday afternoon and was escorted from near Garden Island by hundreds of launches and rowing boats, all carrying red, white and blue bunting and American flags. Several bands added music to the sounds of steam whistles and cheering people. A large crowd at the Woolloomooloo wharf cheered the visitors into four-horse coaches in which they proceeded along Macquarie Street, down Hunter, and back along George Street to King Street where their hotel, the Oxford, had been decorated with the Stars and Stripes. Here they were greeted by the U.S. Consul, G.W. Griffin, who told them that in this

‘enlightened capital of Australia’ they would receive a warm welcome from ‘as charmingly hospitable people as ever lived under the sun.’¹³

There were more speeches that evening. The party changed quickly to attend the Theatre Royal where they saw J.C. Williamson and his wife Maggie Moore in their highly successful and much-revived ‘Struck Oil’. Williamson and Moore were Americans who by the late 1880s were established as Australia’s main theatrical performers and entrepreneurs.¹⁴ The theatre was decorated with American flags and the audience contained many Americans. After the performance the touring players gathered on the stage and were welcomed by Daniel O’Connor, well-known Irish-born politician in Sydney. He was a picturesque and popular figure in Sydney, represented a working-class area and was a keen supporter of sports.¹⁵ In his speech he noted that Australia followed British sports while America had produced its ‘distinctive national pastimes’ of baseball and trotting. He emphasised, however, what Australians and Americans shared: they were members of the Anglo-Saxon race and sprang from the old English stock, and their games were not really very different.¹⁶

Spalding in his reply echoed the theme of common background and similarity. While England preferred cricket and American baseball, there was nothing very dissimilar in the games, ‘both required skill and patience, and, above all, discipline was necessary to success.’ He drew applause when he concluded that whether they were cricketers or baseballers they could not forget ‘the old land’ from which they had sprung. He was also careful to note that baseball was already known in Sydney, a remark that drew ‘hear, hear’ from his audience.¹⁷

These opening speeches, made before a game had been played, set the tone for the visit. Spalding and the publicity machine around him realised that they were on a very difficult mission in trying to launch baseball in a cricketing country and they were careful not to inflame the prejudices or wound the sensitivities of Australians.

There was no doubt in the minds of the Australian press that the Spalding tour presented a challenge to the popularity of cricket. This challenge was not only to the game but also to something less tangible - the special sense in which cricket was a central part of the filial loyalty of Australians to the Mother Country. This loyalty had led the colonies to take up the English game with much enthusiasm and, in the preceding two decades to have made it the focus of the popular Australian sense of identity - a special blend of Australian patriotism within the British nation. Rivalry on the cricket field was a sign of the growing maturity of Australians but also, like the rivalry of a loving child, it was a sign of continuing loyalty to Britain.¹⁸

The Sydney press, well-prepared for the American visit, wrote copiously about it in the first few days. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, took it most seriously and on the morning after the teams' arrival carried a full account of the welcome, a description of the tourists' night at the theatre in its Amusements column and a leading article placed between articles on weighty political matters.¹⁹ The editorial posed the question whether Australians would be interested in the game of baseball, and answered it indirectly: devotion to sports was already widely distributed and there was no reason why being wedded to some sports should exclude others from being added for the pleasure of the people. It offered, however, the caution, 'there is nothing in which a nation is more conservative than in its games', and clearly saw no serious challenge to cricket. It offered several reflections on national characteristics being revealed in sport and stressed the value to Australia of being advertised throughout the world through the feats of its cricketers and oarsmen. The high hopes pinned on sport even at this infant stage of sporting nationalism were revealed in the confident statement: 'England, we doubt not, respects us much more now than she did before we sent our men of humble craft to carry away the championships and the honours.'²⁰ Such a faith in the power of cricket could never allow of any weakening to the challenge of baseball.

On Saturday morning, before their first game, the players were accorded a civic reception at the Town Hall by John Harris, the Mayor of Sydney, clad in robes of purple and ermine. There were more speeches and drinks before the players were allowed to inspect the Association Cricket Ground. Here they were surprised at the quality of the playing surface and the facilities for spectators and players; 'the boys were compelled to admit that, in whatever respects the Colonies might be inferior to the United States, they certainly possessed athletic grounds so far superior ... to anything we had in the United States at that time, that there was no room whatever for comparison. The players would have appreciated 'the playing field, as level as a floor, velvety with its thick covering of green turf.'²¹

The coverage in the *Herald* of the first game was no less serious and fair-minded than of the welcome. It reported a crowd of 6,000 and a grandstand filled 'chiefly by ladies, whose light and brilliant toilettes gave liveliness and colour to the scene.' The Governor was also present - there was no doubt that this sporting occasion was thoroughly respectable. There was a detailed description of each innings and a full statistical analysis of the game for which the journalist must have been indebted to an American colleague. The major interest was, however, in a comparison of the game with cricket and here the emphasis was placed, as it was to be throughout the tour on the brilliance of the fielding: 'the many cricketers present ... were loud in their encomiums upon the accuracy of calculation, the successful acceptance of difficult chances, and the long swift throwing ... the brilliance of the throwing from long distances - the ball travelling with almost no perceptible curve, and so rapidly that the eye could hardly follow its course - was particularly applauded.' The game had an exciting finish which may have been stage-managed, although no one suggested this at the time. The scores were 4 each when starting the ninth innings; one man hit safely, stole both second and third, and scored the winning run on a wild pitch.²²

At the end of the sixth innings the teams went into the clubhouse where they were welcomed by the Governor, Lord Carrington, and on behalf of the Cricket Association by Angus Cameron, the Presbyterian carpenter-turned-politician. The choice of people to make welcoming speeches in the first twenty four hours of the tour was possibly intended to cover both the social and the religious extremes of the colony, but it is more likely that O'Connor, Harris, Cameron and Lord Carrington, in spite of their differences in wealth, shared a genuine sympathy for the humbler citizens of Sydney and supported the movement towards sports for the masses. Such attitudes would have made them more understanding of American baseballers than many others in Australia.²³

The weekly *Town and Country Journal* made a considered comment after Sydney had seen three games. It reported that cricketers had varied reactions to baseball - some were contemptuous, some were still undecided, while some were enthusiastic about its good points, especially the fielding. Several advantages of baseball over cricket from a spectator's point of view were noted: 'no time is wasted in changing from one side of the field to the other ... stonewalling, of five or six hours' duration for as many runs, is a thing unknown in baseball. The game is fast and quickly decided ... cricket is often spun out over several days until people feel a relief when it is all over.' The conclusion was, however, clear; 'no one can ever say that baseball is a superior game to cricket.' The advice to cricketers was also firm: 'our cricketers should take to the game as a winter pastime at least... it would keep them in form for the cricketing season.'²⁴

Such tolerant seriousness was not, however, the only press response. The *Sydney Morning Herald* carried a long semi-comical account of the first game which included the comment that baseball was, after all, merely a revised version of 'rounders' and concluded with the writer's wish that he had learned baseball from our American cousins 'in place of euchre, Yankee grab, and poker.'²⁵ The most

sustained criticism came from the Sydney *Bulletin*. It greeted the visitors' arrival with the ironic comment: 'Millionaire Spalding, a lover of the game, has organised the present descent on the colonies with the object, it is alleged, more of introducing it here than as a mere money-making speculation.' It also noted the large accompanying press corps.²⁶

A week later the *Bulletin* found even more journalists: 'for as in English sweldom every man has a waiter behind his chair, so, in America, every basebatter has a scribe to record his doings.' It continued to sneer at Millionaire Spalding and described the game as an ineffective compromise between cricket and football. The report went on to predict the failure of the baseball experiment in Australia because 'it is merely the apotheosis of rounders, a game considered good enough for the small boys at a primary school, but discarded along with knickerbockers, humming tops, and other accessories of the nursery.' The reference to knickerbockers was included to remind the readers that the standard baseball uniform included knickerbocker-style trousers. The journal went on to pour scorn on silly people who had the idea that baseball would 'catch on' in the manner of some infection, like measles - 'that once you've got the mania, you've got to desert your sister, your mother and your mother-in-law and your ox and your ass and everything that you have and go play the game.'"

For whatever reason - good publicity, interest and curiosity - quite large crowds turned out in Sydney to see the three games played there, but significantly the numbers declined: 6,000 then 3,000 and finally 2,500.²⁸ There were to be bigger crowds in Melbourne where the press was advised more emphatically about the purpose of the tour and about the supposed rivalry with cricket. On the morning of the first game in Melbourne the *Age* carried a long article on the rules of the game, accompanied by a diagram of the fielding positions. More significant were the introductory paragraphs which read like the result of a heavy briefing from Spalding or one of his party. They

were obviously anxious to avoid the type of negative comment they had attracted in Sydney.

The *Age* report said: 'our visitors are not so simple as to suppose that in a British community baseball, or any other game, will supersede cricket.' It quoted Harry Palmer, the leading journalist with the touring party, as stressing that the Spalding tour in bringing baseball to Australia was not claiming any superiority for it over any other game. The national game of any people had 'the full right to claim first place in the hearts of its countrymen' and all that the Americans wanted was that the sport-loving people of Australia would judge baseball fairly after understanding the theory of the game. The *Age* commented that the tourists showed more common sense than 'some of our local so-called supporters of cricket, who are already prepared to bow down and acknowledge baseball as the destroyer and successor of our own national game.' The balanced tone of this report was rather marred by a comment which the Americans might have found annoying: baseball, it was claimed, 'was a compromise between rounders and cricket.'²⁹

For whatever reason - perhaps Melbourne even at this time produced bigger crowds than Sydney - the two games played in Melbourne before Christmas drew very good attendances: 10,000 to the first and 6,000 to the second. The two teams then went to Adelaide, playing three games which each attracted about 2,000 spectators. One game was played at Ballarat before 4,500 people - a remarkably large crowd - and then there were two further games in Melbourne, the first with 2,500 and the final game with 11,000.³⁰ The size of the final attendance was not merely the result of a growing interest in baseball because there were other attractions on that day. The first event was a three innings game of baseball between the Chicago team and a team called the Melbourne Baseball Club, formed in 1888 by Americans resident in Melbourne. The *Age* commented that the local Americans were no more skilful than those

Melbourne cricketers who had been playing scratch matches against them in recent weeks.

This very uneven match was followed by a short game of football, between Carlton and Port Melbourne, intended to give the American visitors further insight into this Australian game. They had watched a rain-spoiled exhibition between Carlton and St. Kilda a few days earlier, but on the second occasion the weather was perfect, although the players were not really in peak condition. There was then the normal baseball match between the visiting teams, and the afternoon finished with a long-distance throwing competition with the cricket ball. One of the Americans set what was believed to be a new Australian record with a throw of 128 yards and 10½ inches. The crowd was, however, disappointed in spite of all this entertainment for they had hoped to see 'Professor' Bartholomew perform.³¹

The 'Proff' had first ascended in his balloon and descended by parachute while performing acrobatics on 24 December. It was a sensational act, the like of which had apparently not been seen before in Melbourne. He performed in a similar way at Ballarat but in the lighter atmosphere of a higher altitude he fell too rapidly from over 1200 feet had landed on the roof of the Buck's Head Hotel, badly damaging his leg on an iron spike which was part of the roof decoration. He was still on crutches but wanted to go aloft on the final day, until he was dissuaded by his friends.³² The *Sydney Bulletin* had no doubts about the significance of 'Professor' Bartholomew for the tour: 'he, and he alone, drew 7000 people to the M.C.C. Ground... A temporary disablement of the parachutist (caused by his having gracefully descended on the sharp end of a six roomed villa) accounted for the absence of, say, 6900 spectators from the next Chicago v. All American match.'³³

The *Bulletin's* assessment was that the whole tour had been a failure. They blamed the 'preliminary puffing' and the work of 'those 12 travelling Yankee reporters' who raised exaggerated expectations which were followed by a hasty revulsion of feeling when they saw that

‘the first principle of baseball is a blind swipe which seldom comes off.’ The local press had attempted ‘to push baseball down the public throat’ and ‘the great Baseball Boom exploded with awful suddenness’. The teams had made, according to this view, a ‘dejected departure.’³⁴

It is rather more likely that Spalding was moderately pleased with the Australian tour: he would have been unlikely to have imagined that cricket lovers would suddenly desert their game, the press had been generous of its space and reasonably tolerant, and there was a warm welcome from the official levels of cricket and from civic dignitaries. In Melbourne there was a formal welcome from the Melbourne Cricket Club and much private entertainment. Adelaide reproduced the Sydney welcome with a mayoral reception and introductions to the Governor during a game. Spalding was encouraged sufficiently by Melbourne’s reactions to leave behind one of his entourage, Harry H. Simpson, who was to teach the game there.³⁵ It was also in Melbourne that Spalding decided that the party, instead of returning directly to America, as had been planned, would return via the Indian Ocean, the Continent and Britain. After leaving Australia on 7 January the teams played in Columbo, Naples, Rome, Florence, Paris and at several places in Britain including, London, Bristol, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool, Belfast and Dublin. Their last game of the tour was played back in Chicago on 20 April 1889.³⁶

Spalding’s assessment of the future prospects for baseball in the world was given in a speech at a welcome-home banquet in Philadelphia on 12 April. He saw no future for the game in Ceylon, Arabia, Egypt, and Italy. There was a possibility of the French becoming interested, and although an ‘Englishman is a very conservative individual and does not readily take to a new idea, Spalding believed that the game could take root in England. He reserved his greatest optimism for Australia where there were ‘the most hospitable people ‘in the world.’ Australians, he claimed, were

‘the greatest sport-loving people’, their climate enabled them to play all the year round, and baseball had an appeal over cricket: ‘Cricket does not seem to reach the masses. It is a game more for the aristocracy, who have the time, means and inclination to enjoy it. Baseball is for the masses. The requirements for the game are simple, and the grounds necessary are not so elaborate and do not require the same expense of keeping up.’³⁷

Spalding’s comments on the upkeep of grounds echoed the admiration the touring party had for the lush and level turf of the best Sydney and Melbourne cricket grounds. While cricket authorities in Australia in the following decades were to continue to keep the grass in good condition, the facilities for spectators became increasingly primitive in comparison with those provided at American baseball grounds. Spalding had not foreseen that his industry was to spend generously on the grounds and spectator comfort. His comments about the aristocracy and the masses in relationship to cricket and baseball revealed that he understood very little of cricket’s position in Australia. He may have observed some sharp class distinctions in English cricket, but it is more likely that his remarks were tailored to suit the prejudices of his American audience. There was still an active cricket world in America and while not meriting the term ‘aristocratic’ it did draw its players and supporters from higher and narrower social grades than did baseball, which enjoyed a mass following.³⁸

While there were no Australian masses yearning to be freed by baseball, the consequences of the Spalding tour were seen in the immediate appearance of enthusiastic baseball players and teams, followed soon after by clubs and regular competitions. On 18 January 1889 a match was played on the East Melbourne ground between the ‘Thespians’ organised by J.C. Williamson and a team organised by Spalding’s man, Simpson, who relied largely on locally based Americans. The score of 24-17 would suggest that the play was not of a high standard.³⁹ Only a few months later the first inter-colonial contest was played: three games in Melbourne, between a team from

South Australia and a team from Victoria; the main players in both sides being leading cricketers.⁴⁰ Although Sydney was not involved in this top level competition, it had its first competition in the winter months of the year, the final game of the season being played on 24 August between the Sydney Baseball Club and a team from the Union Club.⁴¹

It was, then, immediately apparent that baseball in Australia was to start within very clear constraints. Some sections of the press saw baseball as being in direct competition with cricket and as challenging through its American quality something precious about Australian dignity. Only a few weeks after the touring party left, a Sydney sporting newspaper delivered an angry attack on the tour, provoked by an attempt at humour about Australians published months before in Boston. The attack delivered a general anti-American blast: 'The fact is that Americans think baseball the only game worth playing, abuse and revile football, and ridicule cricket. They think the players the only people on earth, and that all the world should bow down and worship them.' It claimed that the players who had recently toured were 'big, strapping, rough professionals with a few exceptions and with extraordinarily large feet without exception.' It went on to sneer at the game by comparing it, in the now-established convention, to 'the old English game of rounders.'⁴²

Perhaps a more serious constraint on baseball in Australia than some press antagonism and anti-American feeling was the way in which the game was launched through appealing to its similarities with cricket. It was, in fact, seen by players and commentators as a complement to cricket. Those cricketers who were interested saw baseball not as a threat to the established position of the English game but as a convenient but minor adjunct to it. The unsympathetic *Bulletin* made an important point when it advised Spalding that to introduce baseball thoroughly in Australia he should 'seek to popularise it amongst the rising generation. This could best be

effected by offering prizes for competition amongst the schools of the colonies.⁴³ This advice was not taken and we may speculate about whether it would have made any difference if it had been. Baseball appealed from these 1888 beginnings to cricketers, including leading players, with the consequence ever since that it has usually been constrained to operate as a winter sport and as a subsidiary shadow to cricket. From time to time some baseball competitions have switched to the more appropriate summer season, but this has never enjoyed unanimous support, being divisive within the ranks of the baseballers, many of whom wanted to play both games.

Baseball was played by small bands of enthusiasts from the time of the 1888-89 tour and by 1896 the thought of mounting an Australian tour of America was in the air.⁴⁴ The players joining in a summer competition in Sydney which began in December 1896 may have had some hopes of this⁴⁵, but from the time the planning of such a tour was mentioned in the press in January 1897 the focus of attention was Melbourne and Adelaide. It was in Melbourne that the manager of the team was presented with a 'handsome travelling bag with silver mounted fittings' shortly before he left for the United States to make arrangements for the tour. The manager was Harry Musgrove, who had only recently returned from an English tour as manager of the Australian cricket team, and the presentation was made by Hugh Trumble, one of the cricketers, on behalf of the returned team.⁴⁶ The cricketers had visited America on their tour and Musgrove's experiences must have seemed to equip him for the task of managing the baseball tour.

The first sign that an Australian baseball tour of America was not quite as easy to arrange as a cricket tour of England came after Musgrove had been in America for a few weeks. He cabled his advice that the tour be cancelled because it would be a failure. This advice upset the players, especially as no explanation was given. They obtained reassurances from their financial guarantor, Adelaide sportsman A.J. Roberts, that all risks would be covered and cabled

Musgrove with their intention to go ahead with the tour. He responded, not with explanations about his advice, but with the comment that prospects for success had much improved and that he would be there to welcome them when they arrived at San Francisco.⁴⁷ The thirteen players, most of whom were Victorians and the balance from South Australia, left Sydney on the *Monowai* on 15 March 1897. They played a match in Melbourne against a Victorian team, and enjoyed a farewell dinner as guests of the East Melbourne Cricket Club, four of whose members were in the touring party. The mood of the evening was optimistic, although several references were made to Musgrove's cable and predictions of disaster. Everyone hoped the team would acquit itself well - winging the American eagle, if not knocking him off his perch - and expected to be warmly welcomed by the Americans. The team was farewelled from Melbourne at the railway station and from Sydney at the wharf by a crowd of enthusiasts.⁴⁸ The return was not to be so joyous.

The Australian baseballers, known in America as the 'Kangaroos', were in the United States from mid-April to mid-July 1897. They played a total of 26 matches, winning 7, losing 12, with the results of 7 games not known, although they were mostly losses. These bare results would warrant the description of the tour as 'unsuccessful' as the *Age* termed it⁴⁹ but a closer examination is needed to understand why a team member, doubtlessly speaking for all, wrote of it in the press as a 'disastrous tour.'⁵⁰ From the first game played in San Francisco a week after they arrived it was apparent that the tour was ill-conceived and poorly planned, badly managed and ineffectively 'sold'. All these weaknesses need not have mattered if the team had played well enough, but it was inexperienced and completely outclassed.

At this first game there were 4,000 spectators, a crowd large enough to suggest that there was an initial curiosity which could have been built on, if the team had played well or won the game. But according to one of the team the fielding was 'simply wretched, almost

every man making several errors, and the batting was very bad.' They made no excuses but were dismayed by the rough field - one man fell in a hole while running for a catch and bruised his shoulder. The continuous yelling and screaming of the crowd, which was not like the sound of a Melbourne football crowd, and the frequent war cries rattled the Australians. The local team was determined to win and, breaking an earlier agreement to play the usual side, brought in four professionals from other clubs. The defeat by 20 to 9 was bad enough but the local press was critical of the Australians' technique - they played like cricketers: they were leisurely in their fielding and throwing instead of seizing the ball and in a single movement throwing it hard and straight; and in batting did not wait for the right ball to hit but slowed the game down by slicing and cutting the pitches as foul hits.⁵¹

Two days later the team travelled 80 miles to play on an even worse ground where they were again beaten. Further travel two days later brought them to their third game which they won - but there was little joy. This ground was the worst of the three so far seen; it had not been used for four seasons, the surface was very rough and in the outfield the dock weeds were up to the players knees. A new problem arose at this game - the umpire was grossly unfair to the Australians. This was the Australian opinion but it is confirmed by the report that the very partisan, that is anti-Australian, spectators eventually hooted and hissed the umpire; so much so that the Australians feared for the man's safety. Two more games were played in the next three days - a total of five games in the first eight days - and the strain was obvious: five of the thirteen players were bruised and suffering strains which made them unfit. Unfair umpiring had spoiled three of the five games and all had been played on terrible grounds. At this stage the players were considering whether they should immediately leave for the east or play some more on the west coast before returning home. They decided to play for two more weeks on the west coast and then return;

unless their form improved, in which case they would continue to Chicago.⁵²

In the next three weeks six games were played in the San Francisco and Santa Cruz area. They found fairly smooth grounds and played quite well, and decided to proceed eastward. They broke the train trip at several places and played five games before reaching Chicago.⁵³ Here the tour organisation seemed to break down and in ten days only one game was played before they went on to Boston. The final nine games of the tour were played in the Boston, Atlantic City, New York and Philadelphia area, over seventeen days. The established pattern was repeated: they were mostly outclassed and beaten, the crowds did not come, the press was unsympathetic or ignored them, and even the host clubs often failed to meet them at rail stations or to entertain them. The final promised games did not eventuate and it was a miserable group which boarded the ship for London on 14 July. One of their number had preceded them by two weeks - he was on crutches.⁵⁴ Two weeks later they played and won a match in London against a combined side.⁵⁵

The management of the tour by Musgrove was plainly very poor. There seems to have been little advance planning of matches, no knowledge of the local conditions and no liaison with the press. Advance planning not only of the games but the receptions and entertainment, and using the press, were demonstrated by the Americans when they toured Australia, but the lessons were not learned. There were clearly better ways for the Australian tour to have been conducted and we may wonder why Spalding was not asked to use his influence, if not his money, to help. Spalding's sympathy was strong: the first game at Boston was against a team of former star players, including Spalding, and in the evening the visitors were entertained at dinner - a rare occurrence on the tour.⁵⁶

Poor administration was compounded by financial problems. The money advanced for costs was exhausted before the team reached Boston and the players began to use their own funds and to cable

home for help. Musgrove confessed to having taken £110 of the team funds for his own and his wife's expenses, and he later borrowed a further £30, all of which he promised to repay before the group broke up. The victory in the final match in London brought no comfort for it was also the occasion of the last act of betrayal by the manager. He had not publicised the game - the players believed he was trying to conceal his presence in England from the many contacts he had there - and the result was a small crowd, and the net takings from the game were a mere £12.6. The manager then, in the words of one of the players, 'completely killed any sympathy' which they might have had left for him when he took this money and disappeared, leaving them to pay the hotel bill.⁵⁷ Two of the players did not sail home with the others; they pretended to be staying on for a holiday but, unbeknown to friends or family they took jobs as stokers and worked their passages back to Melbourne. For these men personal shame was added to the disaster of the tour.⁵⁸

The Melbourne press reported all of the financial and sporting details of the tour and, at about the time the players returned, the *Age* carried an assessment by an American observer. This comment explained the failure in terms of two factors: the Australians' lack of ability and their playing like cricketers; and the American attitudes to baseball and life in general. Baseball was not for them merely a pastime; players and spectators had to live for the game. Players made big salaries and worked hard; while the spectators wanted their game to be a tonic - 'short and sweet, hot and strong, while it lasts.' The fact that the Australians had taken up the American game perhaps should have ensured the team a warm welcome, but the American public 'don't want seekers after fame; they desire only the famous.' The Australians lacking fame and ability, had 'arrived unhonoured, toured the country unsung, and they departed unwept.' They were not given the banquets and receptions which the Americans had received in Australia, and this lack of courtesy discouraged the team from the start. They did not understand the

American game or the American people; they 'should never have come.'⁵⁹

To this perceptive assessment I would add that the Australian tour was conceived from a great innocence of the world beyond Australia. The open hearted generosity with which the Australians had greeted the American baseballers had been taken by the Australians as a confirmation that a simple and open approach to life would suffice - a friendly smile and a loud 'G'day' would ensure that friendship and hospitality would be returned. This innocence is still the mark of the stereotypical Australian - and, I suspect, many real Australians. Barry Mackenzie in the 1960s and *Crocodile Dundee* in the 1980s are but the more recent portrayals of a deeply ingrained approach to life.

The first ten years of serious baseball in Australia (1888-1897) raised the problems which have dominated the sport ever since. Baseball came to Australia when it was well established as America's 'national game' and when cricket gave meaning to Australians trying to find a place for their country in an increasingly nationalistic world. For baseball to have attempted to rival or supplant cricket would have meant to attack not only what was accepted as the 'national game' but to challenge the special sense of identity expressed in cricket: an admiring emulation of Britain combined with an intense rivalry with the Mother Country. This rivalry was comfortably focussed on the rituals of the game of cricket and not encouraged to spread into possibly dangerous areas of commerce or politics. A challenge to cricket was, then, virtually impossible to contemplate; and was certainly quite out of the question from an American game.

Baseball in Australia has always had to live, for better and for worse, with the fact that the game called on skills with bat and ball similar to those demanded by cricket. This fact made the game immediately attractive to cricketers and gave it a 'flying start' in Australia. This advantage for a new game was also its worst handicap, for most baseball players in Australia have usually been cricketers-as

well. Baseball began as, and has largely remained, a supplement to cricket. Attempts to break this link by playing baseball in the summer cricket season have always been difficult to sustain. Perhaps because of its subordinate and associated quality, Australian baseball has never been able to attract extensive press coverage or popular following. The Americans have occasionally sent teams to play in Australia but never again has there been anything like the effort made in 1888 to sell the product. In spite of Spalding's enthusiasm in 1889, the business and money of American baseball seems to have accepted that Australia was a lost cause.

NOTES

1. There are several published assertions about baseball on the goldfields. Personal communications in 1990 with Geoffrey Serle, Weston Bate and E. Daniel Potts confirm that there seems to be no documented account. It would be interesting to know what rules were followed if baseball were played in the 1850s because at that time Philadelphia, Boston and New York played games with different rules and there were several regional variations as well; George B. Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports, Baseball and Cricket 1838-72* (University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 53-57.
2. *Sydney Mail*, 29 July 1882, p. 181. There are further details in an unsigned but authentic-sounding, 'Brief History of Baseball in Australia,' published in *Baseball Weekly*, 3 August 1928. A copy of this and other rare items are held by the N.S.W. Baseball League, Sydney. I am indebted to Vince Scura, State Executive Director, for allowing me access to this material. The Melbourne games are mentioned in the *Age*, 22 December 1888, p. 14.
3. Gunther Barth, *City People. The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 164. The chapter, 'Ball Park' in this book is an excellent study of the development of baseball. Other useful sources are, George B. Kirsch, *op.cit.*; Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics* (University of Illinois Press, 1986); Ian Tyrrell, 'The Emergence of Modern American Baseball, c. 1850-80' in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds., *Sport in History* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1979); and the standard work by Harold Seymour, *Baseball The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).
4. Hy Turkin and S.C. Thompson, 'Evolution of Playing Rules,' *The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball* (7th ed., 1974), p. 693. Descriptions of play confirmed that these rules were followed, see especially, *Age*, 22 December 1888, p. 14.
5. Harry Clay Palmer, *et al*, *Athletics Sports in America, England and Australia.* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1889), p. 47.
6. Seymour, *op.cit.*, pp. 352-3.
7. Henry Chadwick, 'Introduction' to Palmer, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-7. On Chadwick, see, for example, Barth, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-4, and Adelman, *op.cit.*, pp. 136-7.

8. Palmer, op.cit., pp. 157-160, describes the whole party but the list given in Sydney varied slightly: *Sydney Morning Herald (S.M.H.)*, 15 December 1888, p. 15.
9. Palmer, op.cit., p. 160.
10. Palmer, op.cit., has a complete account of the tour and the results of every game played.
11. *Age*, 24 December 1888, p. 6.
12. *Bulletin*, 22 December 1888, p.7.
13. *S.M.H.*, 15 December 1888, p. 15.
14. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6 for Williamson and vol. 5 for Moore.
15. *ibid*, vol. 5 for O'Connor.
16. *S.M.H.*, 15 December 1888, p. 11.
17. *ibid*.
18. For a discussion of this, see, Ken Inglis, 'Imperial Cricket: Test Matches between Australia and England, 1877-1900,' in Cashman and McKernan, op.cit. For a different approach, see, W.F. Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59,4, (1973). For the concepts, see, Douglas Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies,' *Journal of British Studies*, 10,2, (May 1971).
19. *S.M.H.*, 15 December 1888, p. 15, p.11, and p.13, respectively.
20. *ibid*, p.13.
21. Clay, op.cit., pp. 244-6.
22. *SMH.*, 17 December 1888, p. 4.
23. See *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 5 for O'Connor, vol. 4 for Harris, and vol. 3 for Cameron and Carrington.
24. *Town and Country Journal*, 29 December 1888, p. 1304.
25. *S.M.H.*, 17 December 1888, p.3.
26. *Bulletin*, 15 December 1888, p.6.
27. *Bulletin*, 22 December 1888, p.7.
28. Clay, op.cit., p. 709, although he has 5,500 for the first game.
29. *Age*, 22 December 1888, p. 14.
30. Clay, op.cit., pp. 709-710.
31. *Age*, 1 January 1889, p. 6, for the rain-spoiled day; for the final day see *Age* 7 January 1889, p.4 and p.6 and Clay, op.cit., pp. 278-80.
32. *Age*, 31 December 1888, p. 7, and Clay, op.cit., pp. 264-5 and 271. He was not the first to perform such feats in Australia; *Town and Country Journal* 15 December 1888, p. 1183, has a detailed account of the ascent and jump in Sydney of Mr J. T. Williams of Castlereagh Street.
33. *Bulletin*, 12 January 1889, p. 18.
34. *ibid*.
35. *Age*, 18 January 1889, p.6.
36. Clay, op.cit., pp. 262 and 710-711.
37. *ibid*, p.451.
38. See, Tyrell, Adelman and Kirsch, all op.cit.
39. *Age*, 18 January 1889, p. 6, and *Referee*, 23 January 1889, p. 8.

40. *Age*, 20 April 1889, p.11, 22 April 1889, p.7, and 23 April 1889, p. 3; *Referee*, 24 April 1889, p.8.
41. *Referee*, 28 August 1889, p. 8.
42. *Referee*, 27 January 1889, p.3.
43. *Bulletin*, 22 December 1888, p.7.
44. *Referee*, 11 November 1896, p. 8.
45. *Referee*, 7 December 1896, p.8.
46. *Age*, 15 January 1897, p.7; *Referee*, 13 January 1897, p.8.
47. *Age*, 3 March 1897, p. 6; *Referee*, 3 March 1897, p. 3,
48. *Age*, 4 March 1897 p. 7, 11 March 1897, p. 7,13 March 1897, p. 10.
49. *Age*, 27 July 1897, p.5
50. *Age*, 1 September, 1897, p. 6. This team member described the tour in detailed reports published in the *Age*: 26 May, p. 5, 26 June p.14,3 August, p. 7, 17 August, p.6, and 1 September, p.6.
51. *Age* 26 May 1897, p. 5. Playing 'like cricketers' was fully described in a post-tour assessment by a New York correspondent: *Age*, 11 September 1897, p. 14.
52. *Age*, 26 May 1897, p. 5.
53. *Age*, 26 June 1897, p. 14.
54. *Age*, 3 August 1897, p. 7, 17 August 1897, p. 6.
55. *Age*, 30 July 1897, p. 5; *Referee*, 8 September 1897, 7.
56. *Age*; 3 August 1897, p. 7.
57. *Age*, 1 September 1897, p.6.
58. Personal communication from a descendant, Hugh Stuckey, 12 February 1990.
59. *Age*, 11 September 1897, p. 14.