
THE BEST OF BEVAN

THE BEST OF BEVAN

THE WORLD'S FINEST
ONE-DAY CRICKETER RECALLS
HIS MOST *MEMORABLE* MATCHES

MICHAEL BEVAN

ALLEN&UNWIN

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To my wife Tracy and daughters Olivia and Amelia

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PREFACE

Since New Year's Day, 1996—the day I straight hit a four off the West Indies' Roger Harper to win a one-day international from the game's final delivery—I have been recognised as a guy who goes all right in limited-overs cricket. Eighteen months later, when my perceived weakness against the short ball saw me ushered out of Test cricket, I was tagged a one-day 'specialist'. Today, no matter what I do, how many runs I score, how I make them, where I make them or against whom I make them, I remain, apparently, strictly a one-day player, at least at the highest level.

This is a source of frustration for me, but I have come to accept that there is nothing I can do about it, short of scoring as many runs as I can whenever and wherever I play, in one-day and four-day cricket, and enjoying every minute of my career in cricket. The rewards are still fantastic, the life privileged, the experiences wide-ranging and exciting. Five or six years ago I would have stressed out at my 'misfortune', to my own detriment; now, I go with the flow, and I'm a better person for it.

Why this book? I was never interested in producing my autobiography, nor did I want to write an in-depth analysis about friends and rivals, because that would mean writing about the good and the bad, and while I don't mind being critical about myself, I'm not too keen to put on paper negative thoughts about other players (not that, if I did, I

would put down too many; the pluses would far outweigh the downsides). I also knew that I am not the guy to write a Mike Whitney-style book featuring a collection of witty and downright hilarious anecdotes; that's not my style. Neither could I, Steve Waugh-like, produce a travelogue of experiences from off the beaten track, because it is not me to venture into places unknown or unseen. I'm a shy bloke, who likes to keep to himself away from the dressing room, and while I might take in my share of 'sights' while on tour, I rarely stop to think about what they all mean.

There were two things I was keen to put on paper. One, I wanted to describe how I see the 'mental' side of the game, to explain how I have been thinking when I play the game at the highest level, how my thought processes have evolved, and also how my weakness in this area led to my struggling when I played Test cricket between 1994 and 1998. Too many times I have been asked, 'How come you never succeeded in Test cricket?' The answers, I believe, are in this book. I also wanted to put a few related thoughts on paper as to why I think some of the finest players in the game are so successful.

And two, I wanted to explain how I approach the art of batting, especially in one-day cricket. Because to me there is an art to it, and it is an art that has been downgraded throughout the history of the limited-overs game. The way I see it, cricket is going through something of a transition at the moment. Test cricket is still regarded in the game's highest circles as the only thing that counts. Many commentators and most officials and players grew up on it. But soon the game will be run by a generation raised on the one-day game and only then will cricket's abbreviated format get the respect it deserves. I think the general public can see it and the old fellows can probably see it as well, but at present the older generation prefers to think, when observing a player in full flight but wearing 'coloured' clothing, 'He's only a one-day player', as if the skills are not as important, or their level as high, and the pressures not as tough or relentless. The skills are as high and the pressures just as ruthless, but in a different way.

As you will see, I believe the most important thing for a batsman

in top-class cricket is to take the pressure off yourself. Make the other guy feel the stress. Don't let the pressure build—and have a clear objective of what you intend to do. Believe me, after what I've been through, in Test and one-day international cricket, I know a thing or two about the impact of pressure, what it can do for your mind-set, and how it can ruin your game.

I've chosen as my vehicle for achieving these dual aims a series of what I've called my 'most memorable matches'. They are not all one-day games, though the majority are; nor are they all international matches. It was never my intention to give you a blow-by-blow account of any game; rather, I have recalled some great performances and my own involvement, and then gone off on any one of a number of tangents, perhaps analysing my own approach, or that of a team-mate or an opponent. Perhaps I might have used a game to comment on a major issue or controversy that came out of the game, or to remember an entire one-day tournament or Test series. I haven't been so much concerned with recording history as with provoking some thought and remembering some good times. With each game, I've included the full scorecard, to satisfy those who want to know all the details.

I start with the first match in which I ever earned some significant media reviews, a Prime Minister's XI game against Pakistan at Canberra's Manuka Oval in early 1990, and go through to the VB Series game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in early 2002, when I made a hundred and helped win a game that most people thought was lost. In between, there are stories of good days and bad, and strange days, too, as I take you not just to Manuka and Melbourne, but to all parts of the cricket world, including Sydney and South Africa, Grenada and the Gabba, Kuala Lumpur and Karachi, Dhaka and the desert, Lord's and Lahore, indoor and out. From these combined experiences, you will discover some of what I've been through, and how they have turned me into one of the more high-profile figures in one-day cricket.

Throughout, remember that I'm still working on myself, as a person and a player. This won't stop until I achieve all I want to achieve. I still think, for example, that I can further improve my mental approach.

There are still times when I find myself worrying about technique, not being positive enough, putting too much pressure on myself. As you'll read in the pages that follow, I certainly used to go up and down too much. It was frustration. Now I can recognise the signs and settle myself down. I'm much more at ease with myself and consequently I'm hitting the ball pretty well.

I can only do so much. Try to score as many runs as possible. In pressure situations, you have to play sensibly, take advantage of your preparation, keep your nerve, and back your skills. And be clever. Cricket, especially one-day cricket, is becoming very scientific and very different to how it once was. We are discovering new ways to play the game, improving with time and setting new standards. I still hope to make it back into the Australian Test team, though because the side is so powerful I know that will be difficult. There are still goals to be achieved in one-day cricket, starting with the 2003 World Cup.

I truly believe my best is yet to come.

Michael Bevan

August 2002

GAME 1

PRIME MINISTER'S XI V THE PAKISTANIS MANUKA OVAL, CANBERRA 31 JANUARY 1990

I was looking at a photograph recently, one that Mum had rediscovered. There I was—all of 19 years old, with precious little top-level cricket or big-time life experience—standing between two of the highest profile people in Australia: the Prime Minister and the Cricket Captain. I had just been named player of the match for the Prime Minister's XI against Pakistan, and there I was with Bob Hawke and Allan Border, with my head down, as if I was very embarrassed to be there. In many ways I was; certainly nothing had prepared me for mixing with such celebrities. This was my first real experience of dealing with the 'big boys'.

The main reason I was picked for the game was that I was a local. Sure, it was my first Shield season, and I was going OK with South Australia (SA) and at the Australian Cricket Academy, but I doubt that I would have been selected if I hadn't been born in Canberra. I had made my Shield debut six weeks before, and made something of an impact with a first-up hundred for South Australia at the WACA, but even so, I'd hardly done enough to be out there mixing it with the likes of Border, Mark Waugh and a fiery young quick named Waqar Younis.

This was the only time I ever played under Allan Border's captaincy, and I had the chance to bat with him, during a fifth-wicket partnership of 23, of which he scored 14. When I came into the Australian Test team in 1994, I actually took his spot in the batting order, he having retired after the tour to South Africa earlier in that year. Back in January 1990 at Manuka, 'AB' was in a pretty light-hearted mood. The PM's XI game was something that he was required to do; not a chore, but not a Test match either, and he was asked to sign a lot of autographs—he even made an appearance at a local shopping centre the day before—and then voiced his displeasure when the Pakistanis decided to use the afternoon for batting practice rather than try to win the day. For most of the rest of us, the match was a rare chance to shine against an international side, but I can't recall putting any undue pressure on myself to impress people. I was more concerned with not missing anything, with taking it all in.

One bloke I strongly remember playing in that game was my South Australian team-mate Darren Lehmann, who at the time was being touted as the next big thing in Australian cricket. 'Boof' is only three months older than me, but when I came into the SA team I saw him as being miles ahead of me in terms of status in the game. He was having an unbelievable season with the bat, scoring plenty of runs at a run-rate previously unheard of in Sheffield Shield cricket, and he ended up being 12th man for that season's Test in Sydney. But seeing Darren up close, in the nets with the SA squad and then out in the middle, I began to realise that maybe I wasn't *too* far behind him; that perhaps I might be able to succeed at the highest level. Scoring some runs—for the PM and in the Shield—didn't necessarily give me that feeling, but comparing my ability to those around me did. This said, today—now that I'm older and wiser—I don't think comparing yourself to others is healthy for your self-esteem.

My memories of the PM's XI game are somewhat hazy, but a study of the newspaper cuttings reveals that, for the Canberra crowd, the big frustration of the day was that the 'Lion of Pakistan', the great Imran Khan, did not play. The disappointment, the *Canberra Times* reported,

was alleviated to some degree by the fact that ‘the ACT representative [as in me] was named man of the match’. I received that award after scoring 74 from 84 deliveries, including six fours, in our innings of 8–266.

‘Mr Hawke was quick to praise the performance of Bevan with the bat,’ wrote Geoff Thomson, the *Canberra Times* correspondent, ‘but was not so forthcoming about his one over with the ball.

“Both Allan Border and myself agree that you played very well and deserved the award,” Mr Hawke said to Bevan. “But it would have been a very different story if we had to take your bowling into account.”

‘Given the ball for the last over, Bevan conceded nine runs . . .’

I’d forgotten about that over. In fact, everyone bar our wicketkeeper Tim Zoehrer had a bowl. I was the last, called on to send down the final six balls of the match. I just made it.

I guess there would have been a few people at Manuka that day who would have predicted that I’d go on to play Test cricket. After nervously struggling through that last over of the match, not many, I reckon, would have suggested I’d be picked in some Test matches as a bowler.

I’d been sports crazy since day one. It had been my life and I wanted it to remain so. It was the reason I did just about everything. I saw school as a place to play sport; I wasn’t the world’s worst student, but my focus was on sport. I lived for lunchtimes and after school, working through all the under-age teams in cricket, soccer, and track and field. I never had any inclination to choose anything other than sport for a living—it was just working out how I was going to do it. Then, at age 16, I had to make a choice as to which sport I wanted to concentrate on.

And I chose cricket. Not even a major injury that turned my cricket around soon after could put me off the game. In my youth I was a quick bowler, but a back ailment that reared up not long after I decided to dedicate myself to the game put a stop to that, made me concentrate on my batting. Today, I’m most definitely a spinner, to the point that I think my body would snap if I tried to bowl quick. I have bowled seam-up in first-class cricket, but only very, very rarely, not for a long

time and never with any great result. Once I bowled first change for NSW after a frontline quick was injured, and my first Test wicket—Salim Malik, very cleanly bowled, for 143—was from a medium-paced delivery (four overs, 21 runs, one wicket). Back then, though, when the docs told me I couldn't bowl for a year, maybe more, I was shattered. But determined.

My back malady had nothing to do with stress fractures, or an inappropriate run-up or delivery; it was simply bad posture. It reached the stage where my back was arched up, so that every time I bowled, I put pressure on too many wrong places. The pain was considerable at times, to the point where I had to stop bowling until my back was successfully realigned. But when I finally received the green light to bowl again, I couldn't rediscover my rhythm. Two years earlier, that would have been a catastrophe, but in the meantime I'd learnt that I was actually a much better batsman than I was a bowler, so I was able to accept what fate had dealt me, no trouble at all. It's not always been that easy.

I first played senior cricket in 1985–86, when I was 15 years old, but it wasn't until the following year that I started scoring meaningful runs: 171 runs in second grade at 57.00, and a further 118 for once out when I was promoted into the firsts (including an 83 in a semi-final). That season, 1986–87, I was named in the Australian Under-17 squad and was the ACT Under-17 Player of the Year. Two seasons later I scored centuries against the New South Wales Second XI and the Colts team from the Western Australian Institute of Sport, and a fifty against the Victorian Second XI. That was the year I established a new aggregate run record at the Australian Under-19 Championships, making 449 runs. The Championships were held in Canberra, and I hit hundreds against NSW and Western Australia.

Being based in Canberra, I had little idea of just how good I might or might not be until I started scoring runs against those Second XIs and in the Under-19 Championships, and then was chosen, following that carnival, for the Australian Under-19 team. The ACT had never produced

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a Test cricketer, and the local competitions—though they seemed ultra-competitive to me—were hardly littered with household names. I had a vision that I could make it big in cricket, but while there were other young players who seemed to me to be as good as I was, these cricketers didn't share my dream. While no one stood up and told me that I couldn't make it to the top, I can't remember anyone encouraging my ambition or driving me to get as much out of my game as I could. That was the mentality I faced as a cricketer growing up in Canberra.

The officials responsible for nominating the players to go to the Australian Cricket Academy in Adelaide were also the selectors of the Under-19 team, which must have helped when they were deciding who should receive an invitation to go to Adelaide. From the Australian Cricket Academy, I was selected in the SA team, largely on the back of some good scores in Adelaide grade cricket and for the Academy, and also—most significantly as far as my career went—for Mr Hawke's XI. The runs I scored for the PM's team definitely helped me. I was on my way.

PRIME MINISTER'S XI V THE PAKISTANIS, 1989-90
MANUKA OVAL, CANBERRA
31 JANUARY 1990 (50-OVERS MATCH)
TOSS: PRIME MINISTER'S XI

Prime Minister's XI innings

J Cox lbw Nadeem Ghauri	66
MRJ Veletta c Saeed Anwar b Nadeem Ghauri	50
ME Waugh c Saeed Anwar b Tauseef Ahmed	4
DS Lehmann run out	4
MG Bevan c Tauseef Ahmed b Aaqib Javed	74
*AR Border c Ijaz Ahmed b Mushtaq Ahmed	14
+TJ Zoehrer c Tauseef Ahmed b Mushtaq Ahmed	6
SC Storey b Shoaib Mohammad	19
JC Scuderi not out	8
DW Fleming not out	1
Extras (b 1, lb 8, w 9, nb 2)	20
Total (8 wickets, 50 overs)	266

DNB: WJ Holdsworth

Fall: 1-88 (Veletta), 2-104 (Waugh), 3-113 (Lehmann), 4-156 (Cox), 5-178 (Border), 6-187 (Zoehrer), 7-244 (Storey), 8-256 (Bevan)

Bowling: Waqar Younis 10-0-57-0, Aaqib Javed 9-0-45-1, Nadeem Ghauri 10-0-56-2, Tauseef Ahmed 10-0-47-1, Mushtaq Ahmed 10-0-46-2, Shoaib Mohammad 1-0-6-1

Pakistanis innings

Aamer Malik lbw Holdsworth	4
Shoaib Mohammad c Border b Waugh	33
*Ramiz Raja c Waugh b Scuderi	20
Ijaz Ahmed c Fleming b Waugh	15
Saeed Anwar run out	16
+Salim Yousuf not out	54
Mushtaq Ahmed c sub (M Wade) b Border	8
Tauseef Ahmed c Waugh b Storey	0
Waqar Younis not out	28
Extras (lb 2, w 4, nb 1)	7
Total (7 wickets, 50 overs)	185

DNB: Aaqib Javed, Nadeem Ghauri

Fall: 1-4 (Aamer Malik), 2-54 (Ramiz Raja), 3-78 (Ijaz Ahmed), 4-89 (Shoaib Mohammad), 5-97 (Saeed Anwar), 6-119 (Mushtaq Ahmed), 7-120 (Tauseef Ahmed)

Bowling: Holdsworth 5-0-28-1, Fleming 6-1-21-0, Scuderi 7-0-26-1, Waugh 5-0-13-2, Storey 10-1-25-1, Border 8-2-18-1, Veletta 3-0-12-0, Lehmann 3-0-19-0, Cox 2-0-12-0, Bevan 1-0-9-0

RESULT: PRIME MINISTER'S XI WON BY 81 RUNS

UMPIRES: G DAVIDSON AND LJ KING

MAN OF THE MATCH: MG BEVAN

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GAME 2

SOUTH AUSTRALIA V WESTERN AUSTRALIA WACA GROUND, PERTH 15-18 DECEMBER 1989

Throughout this book, the games I am focusing on are covered in chronological order. In this way, you will get a feel for the way my approach to the game has evolved, and how my mental thinking as I go out to bat—in one-day, and four- and five-day matches—has developed. The one exception to this rule in regards to order is here, as I now go back to a few weeks before the PM's XI game, to my Sheffield Shield debut for South Australia.

As I'd grown up in Canberra, not for one second did I think of myself as a New South Welshman. My dreams were about playing cricket for Australia, and I never stopped to imagine the experience of playing in the Sheffield Shield. Maybe if I had, I would have seen myself in a blue cap, but there was nothing about cricket in the ACT that said 'New South Wales'. I don't think the NSW selectors made regular visits to Canberra to check out the best we had to offer, and the NSW Second XI rarely featured anyone from the ACT.

Thus, when I went to play cricket in Adelaide at the Cricket Academy, I didn't have any compunction about representing South Australia in

the Sheffield Shield. If anything, the most peculiar thing was having to sign a contract that forced me to return to my home state when my time at the Academy was over—because that clause said I had to return to NSW, not the ACT. I was too overawed to question anything—and a trifling thing like that wasn't going to stop me autographing the contract anyway—but I did think it was strange. As far as most cricket officials—within and beyond NSW—were concerned, Canberra was a country town. I was from the bush, just like, for example, Michael Slater (from Wagga Wagga) and Adam Gilchrist (from Lismore).

As it turned out, a number of guys in my year at the Academy went on to significant careers in big-time cricket, though not all for Australia. Within four years, Michael Slater and Brendon Julian were part of a full-scale Ashes tour, in which they faced Martin McCague, a fellow Academy graduate. Later, Craig White followed McCague into the England Test team. Others in our year who went on to first-class careers included Phil Alley, Dene Hills and Chris Mack.

I remember a match the Academy team played against the South Australian side, a one-day game that represented the first time I'd played against first-class cricketers. Naturally, as young blokes who'd spent a fair bit of time impressing each other in the nets and against various junior teams, we thought we were pretty good. And for a while that facade continued intact, especially when Dene Hills, who went on to score plenty of runs for Tasmania, successfully charged SA's then No. 1 paceman, Peter Gladigau, and put him over the fence. But Gladigau followed up with three very sharp, very accurate bouncers to remind us all that *he* was the first-class cricketer. When they batted, Paul Nobes smashed Martin McCague onto the road outside the Adelaide Oval No. 2, an awesome shot. These snippets gave me a glimpse of how good these top-class blokes were.

My year at the Academy was one of the best of my life. I shared my time with 15 guys who really enjoyed each other's company. It was as if I was living with 15 brothers; we lived out of each other's pockets, shared ambitions and learnt a heap about cricket. And I think we all matured as people as well. There was an excellent support network in

place, but we were still living away from home—which I for one had never done for an extended period—so we had to learn to fend for ourselves.

A number of Academy players appeared in the Sheffield Shield during the season, and I was one of them. My debut came at the WACA, when I was a late call-up into the South Australian team after Peter Sleep was picked for Australia as a leg spinner. ‘Sounda’ was a top-six batsman for South Australia, which is why I was chosen as his replacement. It all happened very, very quickly; one moment I was playing for the Academy at Melvista Oval in Perth against a Western Australian Colts team (and watching Michael Slater and Brendon Julian make big hundreds), the next I was rushing across town to link up with the Shield guys. My new skipper, David Hookes, had never met me—we didn’t meet until after I’d settled in at the Burswood Casino.

One of my strongest memories is of walking into the foyer at the Casino, a flash five-star hotel, looking around and thinking, ‘Yeah, this looks all right, this first-class cricket’. After checking in, I proceeded down to the pool where I saw two of my new team-mates—one of them, I remember, was Darren Lehmann—enjoying lunch by the pool bar and again I’m thinking, ‘Wow, this is fantastic’.

Early on, however, the cricket wasn’t fantastic, at least not for SA. WA kept batting until tea on the second day, to 3–565, after Geoff Marsh (who finished 355 not out) and Mike Veletta (150) put on a mere 431 runs for the first wicket, 283 of them on the first day. A number of people had told me all about the WACA, about the bouncy pitch and the breeze, the ‘Fremantle Doctor’, that blew in every afternoon, but I must admit it didn’t look too bouncy to me. Then we went in and crashed to 5–63, losing five wickets in 13 overs for 17 runs in a spell that ran from late on day two to early on day three. Hookes and Lehmann made nought between them, as two outstanding left-arm swing bowlers, Peter Capes and Chris Matthews, were superb. I’ll never forget Capes bowling to our captain, who kept playing and missing, playing and missing, and I kept asking, ‘Is he (Hooksey) doing that deliberately?’ I was next in and it struck me that if Darren Lehmann

and David Hookes were getting beaten left, right and centre, then I was definitely going to struggle. Hookes later described the spell he faced from Capes as being 'one of the finest short spells of fast bowling I've faced for years'.

First up, though, I was facing Chris Matthews. Now Matthews is a bowler remembered most for being so nervous on the three occasions he played for Australia that he lost his way completely, but he was an excellent operator who took a mountain of Shield wickets for WA and Tasmania. My first impression was that he was way too big to be able to bowl. He was more a man-mountain than a swing bowler, charging in from out near the sight-screen, and he was a bowler with a windmill kind of action who would send down a series of 'jaffas' intermixed with some inaccurate, even wild, stuff. For the first half hour, I was embarrassing, playing and missing repeatedly, and I distinctly remember Paul Nobes, now a team-mate, coming down the pitch more than once to say, 'Hang in there, it'll get easier'.

As it turned out, Nobes went on to his maiden first-class ton, and we added 221 for the sixth wicket. After Boof Lehmann was dismissed at 11.35am on that day three, we lost only one more wicket before stumps, and ended the day at 6-327, with Joe Scuderi on 26 and me on 106. I'd reached my hundred in 254 minutes, but then scored only six more runs—one four and two singles—in the final 73 minutes of the day. Having made a century, I was pretty obsessed with continuing to bat for absolutely as long as I could.

I had initially gone out there wanting to succeed, but realistically hoping for little more than to discover how I could go at first-class cricket. I ended up going all right, but it was a bit of an eye-opener. It was a huge jump in class, from playing in Adelaide district cricket on flat wickets to confronting a quality pace attack at the WACA.

I was dismissed fairly early the following morning, for 114, and South Australia did have to follow on, but we ended up drawing the match reasonably comfortably, with Darren Lehmann adding a dynamic postscript on the final afternoon by smashing 48 from 31 balls in a situation where most blokes would have been desperately defending

sample content of The Best of Bevan: The World's Finest One-Day Cricketer Recalls His Most Memorable Matches

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