

WORLD XIs

BEST CRICKET TEAMS OF ALL ERAS

1870s – 2020s

RICHARD SMITH

'Richard Smith has provided a great service to all cricket fans with his insightful research into team selections. I'm delighted to be included in the '90s World XI!'

—Ian Healy, AO. Australian Cricket legend

Since Test cricket began in 1877, there have been over three thousand players representing their countries in Test matches. *World XIs* tackles the daunting task of choosing the best of the best and coming up with the greatest team from each era of Test cricket history and exploring these players in more detail.

While the statistics for each decade are closely examined, some of the selection decisions are lineball and some greats of the game have missed selection in their respective XI. Who is the better fast bowler in the 1950s – England's Brian Statham or Australia's Ray Lindwall? Do you go for Abdul Qadir from Pakistan as a spinner, or does India's Kapil Dev's all-round ability secure him a 1980s spot? Is Rahul Dravid good enough to make the 2000s side?

With legends of the game such as W.G Grace in the 1800s; through to Don Bradman in the 1930s; the West Indies' three Ws in the 1950s; Imran Khan in the 1980s; and more recent greats such as Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara, there are a wide variety of players represented through the ages. And to cap things off, there are a number of greatest-ever teams for you to mull over.

World XIs is sure to cause some robust debate amongst cricket lovers the world over.

WORLD XIs

Best Cricket Teams of all eras
1870s – 2020s

- 1 HOBBS (ENG)
- 2 GAVASKAR (IND)
- 3 BRADMAN (AUS) C
- 4 RICHARDS (WI)
- 5 TENDULKAR (IND)
- 6 SOBERS (WI)
- 7 GILCHRIST (AUS) WK
- 8 IMRAN (PAK) VC
- 9 MARSHALL (WI)
- 10 WARNE (AUS)
- 11 BARNES (ENG)

Richard Smith

The Author

Richard Smith grew up in regional Queensland where he developed his love of cricket as an enthusiastic but inconsistent opening batter at school. He grew a deep knowledge of the history of the game and its greats by choosing greatest-ever teams with his cricket-mad grandmother. Richard carved out a career in accounting and finance but has remained a cricket tragic and will happily debate the merits of his selections in *World XIs* with anyone. He lives in Brisbane, is married to Sarah, and they have two daughters; Alexandra and Georgia.

1877 – 1899 XI

1. Joe Darling (AUS) vc
2. WG Grace (ENG) c
3. Andrew Stoddart (ENG)
4. KS Ranjitsinhji (ENG)
5. Arthur Shrewsbury (ENG)
6. George Giffen (AUS)
7. Jack Blackham (AUS) wk
8. Johnny Briggs (ENG)
9. Charles Turner (AUS)
10. Fred Spofforth (AUS)
11. George Lohmann (ENG)

1. Joe Darling (AUS) vc

Test Record

Bat	M	Inn	NO	Runs	HS	Avg	100	50	Ct
	34	60	2	1657	178	28.56	3	8	27

Darling's career is nearly evenly split either side of 1900, but as he played 18 of his 34 Tests pre-1900, he narrowly qualifies for selection in this era. As it turns out, his performances were better in this era too, averaging 35.59 against 19.92 post-1899.

In fact, when I sat down to choose the 1877–99 team, I assumed Darling would be a walk-up starter. He is, after all, spoken of as a 'great' from the turn of last century. However, on closer inspection it turns out his most productive series was when England toured Australia in 1897–98. Australia crushed England 4–1 in the Test series and Darling topped the averages with 67.13 (and a total of 537 runs for the series). He also scored all of his three centuries in this series, making him the first ever to do so in a single series. The balance of his career produced 1120 runs at the much more modest average of 22.40.

Nonetheless, Darling's overall record puts him at or near the top of the pile of his contemporaries with the added bonus of his leadership, ensuring him a place in the 1877–99 XI. He was a schoolboy prodigy at Prince Alfred College, where he once scored 753 not out before his 16-year birthday against Cape Province.

3. Don Bradman (AUS) c

Test Record

Bat	M	Inn	NO	Runs	HS	Avg	100	50	Ct
	52	80	10	6996	334	99.94	29	13	32
Bowl	M	Inn	Wkts	Avg	BBI	BBM	5i	10m	SR
	52	9	2	36.00	1/8	1/15	0	0	80.0

Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack stated, 'Sir Donald George Bradman was, without any question, the greatest phenomenon in the history of cricket, indeed in the history of all ball games.' Maybe that's all that needs to be said, but perhaps it would be interesting to add a little more.

As he famously noted in his book *Farewell to Cricket*, 'Armed with a cricket stump as a bat, I would throw a golf ball at this [tank] brick stand and try to hit the ball on the rebound. The ball came back at great speed and to hit it was no easy task.' Bradman believed this helped sharpen his eye and reflexes later reflected in his batting.

In 1927, at the age of 19, Bradman was called up to the New South Wales side and made a hundred on debut. He was selected in the Australian team at the age of 20 for the first Test of the 1928–29 Ashes series. It wasn't a memorable beginning, as he made 18 and one and was dropped to twelfth man for the second Test. He returned for the third and began his relentless run making with 79 and a maiden Test hundred of 112, the youngest Test centurion to that point.

England had got a taste of Bradman in the 1928–29 summer but they had no idea of the deluge of runs about to engulf them at home in 1930. Bradman began in the first Test with a warm up 131 and followed them to the second Test with 254 as England he after

first in Test cricket, was achieved by stumps. He ended his innings on the second day at 334. All up he had scored an unbelievable record of 974 runs for the series, averaging 139.

Not a lot needs to be written about the bodyline series. It was instigated to stop Bradman and to a certain extent it did that. Bradman missed the first Test but crafted a not out century in the second innings of the second Test. He made scores between 50 and 100 in the remaining three Tests but didn't go on with it. An average of 56.57 was pretty good in any series but especially in these circumstances.

Bradman's run-scoring spree continued unabated up until and after World War Two until his final ball in Test cricket on the 1948 Ashes tour. Needing only four runs to average 100 in Test cricket, Bradman was bowled second ball by a Hollies goosy for a duck.

Bradman was also captain of Australia in five series and did not lose any of them. He was a shrewd tactician and was prepared to do things a little differently if the occasion demanded it.

He was knighted for his services to cricket, the only Australian cricketer to be acknowledged accordingly. Naturally he was also an inaugural inductee to the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame and ICC Hall of Fame, and is a 'Legend' (the exclusive club of the very top echelon of Australian sporting royalty) in the Australian Sporting Hall of Fame (perhaps a category above this is needed known simply as 'Bradman').

Most Test Runs in Period

Player	Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50
L Hutton (ENG)	66	117	14	5626	206	54.62	14	30
DCS Compton (ENG)	70	119	12	5339	278	49.89	15	26
RN Harvey (AUS)	62	107	10	5107	205	52.64	18	19
ED Weekes (WI)	48	81	5	4455	207	58.61	15	19
PBH May (ENG)	59	93	8	4182	285*	49.20	13	20
CL Walcott (WI)	42	71	7	3714	220	58.03	15	13
AR Morris (AUS)	46	79	3	3533	206	46.48	12	12
KR Miller (AUS)	55	87	7	2958	147	36.97	7	13
AL Hassett (AUS)	39	61	3	2874	198*	49.55	10	10
FMM Worrell (WI)	32	57	5	2691	261	51.75	8	11

*not out

Most Test Wickets in Period

Player	Mat	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	SR	5	10
AV Bedser (ENG)	51	92	236	7/44	14/99	24.89	67.4	15	5
RR Lindwall (AUS)	59	109	222	7/38	9/70	22.65	59.2	12	0
IC Laker (ENG)	46	86	193	10/53	19/90	21.24	62.3	9	3
KR Miller (AUS)	55	95	170	7/60	10/152	22.97	61.5	7	1
R Benaud (AUS)	42	74	165	7/72	11/105	23.95	67.8	11	1
MH Mankad (IND)	44	70	162	8/52	13/131	32.32	90.6	8	2
WA Johnston (AUS)	40	75	160	6/44	9/183	23.91	69.0	7	0
JB Statham (ENG)	47	87	159	7/39	9/88	23.50	62.8	5	0
HJ Tayfield (SA)	32	55	158	9/113	13/165	25.00	78.7	14	2
S Ramadhin (WI)	37	65	138	7/49	11/152	28.62	88.0	10	1

Results

Team	Mat	Won	Lost	Tied	Draw	W/L
England	115	45	31	0	39	1.451
Australia	75	43	12	0	20	3.583
West Indies	57	21	17	0	19	1.235
South Africa	47	12	22	0	13	0.545
Pakistan	29	8	9	0	12	0.888
India	57	6	23	0	28	0.260
New Zealand	38	1	22	0	15	0.045

1940s and 1950s XI

1. Len Hutton (ENG) vc
2. Neil Harvey (AUS)
3. Denis Compton (ENG)
4. Everton Weekes (WI)
5. Clyde Walcott (WI)
6. Keith Miller (AUS)
7. Richie Benaud (AUS) c
8. Godfrey Evans (ENG) wk
9. Ray Lindwall (AUS)
10. Alec Bedser (ENG)
11. Jim Laker (ENG)

sample spreads from *World XI's*