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The Packer cricket war

There is no doubt that the dramatic intervention of Australian media magnate Kerry Packer in Australian and world cricket in 1977 represented a great upheaval that appeared cataclysmic and confusing at the time. Supporters of WSC variously labelled it as a 'great cricket hijack' (Christopher Forsyth), a 'staggering coup' (Trevor Kennedy) and even a 'democratic revolution' (Andrew Caro). Others contended that WSC contributed to the 'Americanisation of cricket' (Chris Harte), the 'proletarianisation of cricket' (Adrian McGregor) and the promotion of hyper-masculine values (Bill Bonney).

Because World Series Cricket had been such a well-kept secret for more than six months, the cricket world was stunned after Australian journalists Peter McFarline and Alan Shiell reported the news on 9 May 1977. The cricket establishment reacted with a great sense of outrage and betrayal at what it regarded as an underhand attack on world cricket traditions and authority.

The world cricket media, with relatively few exceptions, condemned and denigrated WSC. The upheaval in world cricket was described variously as a 'circus', 'Packerball' and 'Packer cricket' rather than by its name, World Series Cricket, which had been registered on 16 August 1976. After night cricket and coloured clothing were introduced another pejorative term, pyjama cricket, was added to the list. Players who signed up with Packer were described as 'a bunch of money-hungry mercenaries' (Eric Beecher). Such descriptions questioned the legitimacy of WSC and Kerry Packer was demonised in the press as an ogre with a 'meat-mangler smile'.[1]

Surprisingly, after just two years of a bitterly fought war, a rapprochement was announced on 30 May 1979 and the World Series Cricket war was over. The war had damaged establishment cricket to such an extent that it readily agreed to Packer's terms: exclusive television rights for international cricket in Australia and some additional promotional rights.

Since 1977, assessments of WSC have varied remarkably. During the war and its immediate aftermath some regarded WSC as a revolution, changing the landscape of world cricket. In more recent times researchers have tended to see World Series Cricket as a catalyst rather than a change agent in world cricket. There has also been disagreement as to whether World Series Cricket enhanced the game or whether it was detrimental to its culture and traditions.

The roots of the war

Gideon Haigh believed that 'a volatile combination of factors made the Packer named World Series Cricket almost inevitable'.[2] Cricket had boomed in Australia during the 1970s, when a youthful and marketable Australian team, full of buoyant personalities, swept England aside in 1974–75 and did likewise to West Indies in 1975–76. The crowds at the Ashes series were the largest since 1946–47. The staging of a memorable Centenary Test, played at Melbourne in March 1977, may have lulled cricket officials into a false sense of security (with a number of players signing WSC contracts during this Test).

The boom in Australian cricket was linked to the improved quantity and quality of television coverage. The potential of television to transform the cricket world was evident during the 1970–71 series against England in Australia, when there was a national hook-up for the first time enabling viewers to watch an entire series. While the series drew a respectable 616,196 live spectators (a daily average of 20,279), the television audience by the later Tests was one million a day – approximately fifty times that of the live audience. Cricket was enhanced by the introduction of colour television during the 1974–75 series and the introduction of slow-motion replays, which allowed each stroke, catch and wicket to be analysed and admired.

The increasing popularity of limited-overs (one-day) cricket was another important factor. One-day cricket had been introduced to English domestic cricket in 1963, where it proved successful and helped to revitalise the game. The first international one-day cricket match had been played in Melbourne, when an astonishing 46,006 turned up to a hastily arranged match at the MCG on 5 January 1971 on what would have been the fifth day of a Test between Australia and England. (The Test had been abandoned after three days of rain.) The popularity of this new form of cricket was further demonstrated at the time of the first World Cup, held in England in 1975. A fluctuating and exciting nine-hour final between Australia and West Indies represented the first occasion when an overseas cricket match was broadcast in its entirety in Australia. Although the coverage began at 8 p.m. on

the east coast and did not finish until 5.30 a.m., the ABC broadcast secured an astonishing rating of 21 at midnight (far more than the average time rating of 14 of Packer's Channel 9).[3] The advertising potential of cricket was clearly evident.

The ACB either failed to recognise the commercial potential of one-day cricket or was reluctant to promote this new format of the game. Between 1971 and 1977 Australia participated in fourteen limited-overs internationals but only three were staged in Australia. Following the initial game in 1971, one limited-overs match was scheduled against England during the 1974–75 series and another one was staged against West Indies during the 1975–76 series. When India toured Australia in 1977–78, the first year of the cricket war, no one-day internationals were played between Australia and India. Limited-overs cricket was an untapped market awaiting an entrepreneur to exploit.

World Series Cricket was built on significant player disenchantment even though there was a sharp increase in payments to players in the immediate seasons preceding WSC.[4] However, Braham Dabscheck identified several continuing player grievances. The first was a lack of adequate financial support given that an expanding cricket programme required players to devote as much as eight to nine months of the year to the game. This made it difficult for cricketers to maintain regular employment or to prepare for alternative careers. Players lacked the certainty of an annual salary based on a contract and were paid in a piecemeal fashion after each Test and tour. A second grievance was that officials did not sufficiently consider player needs and interests in making decisions about travel arrangements, hotel accommodation, food and rest days. During the 1969 tour of India, players had to put up with substandard accommodation and arduous travel conditions. Tacking on a tough South Africa tour immediately afterwards 'was arranged with little thought for the welfare of players'.[5]

When Kerry Packer provided cricketers with a more attractive salary package, including a fixed annual contract, the leading cricketers deserted the Board en masse. Jack Pollard noted that 'the fact that so many signed at a point when match fees were rising and no organisation existed to stage WSC games, demonstrated how unanimous was the players' discontent and how badly key ACB officials misjudged the players' mood'.[6]

The trigger for the war

Kerry Packer, the owner of Channel 9, recognised by the mid-1970s that television sport was an attractive, high-rating and cheap option to counter the problems of dwindling audiences and to meet local content requirements.

An added advantage of cricket was that it was a 'sure way of attracting advertising revenue' during the slack Christmas–New Year period.[7] Packer actively pursued the television rights for major golf and tennis tournaments as well as cricket. However, his quest for Australian cricket television rights was rebuffed by the ACB, which had a longstanding relationship with the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which had traditionally acquired non-exclusive rights for radio and television broadcasting. The ACB awarded non-exclusive broadcast rights to the ABC for three years until 1979 for $210,000, even though Kerry Packer was prepared to pay $1.5 million, seven times the amount for the three years from 1979.

When Packer met Board members Bob Parish and Ray Steele on 22 June 1977, they were astonished by the amount he offered and his quest for exclusive rights, an option that the Board had never previously considered. Conservative Board officials were nonplussed by the blunt and even crude stance of this media tycoon.

While Packer was outraged by the Board's non-acceptance of his offer, he did not immediately proceed to set up World Series Cricket. The idea took form after a chance conversation with associate John Cornell, who suggested that Packer enlist the world's best players and organise his own competition.

However, World Series cricket was not a fait accompli until June 1977. When Packer arrived in England in early May he stated that he was prepared to co-operate with cricket authorities and added that 'there is no reason why Test cricket as it is now will be affected'.[8] However, the response of English cricket officialdom was hardly encouraging. The Cricket Council issued a statement on 13 May that Tony Greig, who had been a recruiting agent for Packer, would not captain England in the forthcoming series because 'his action has inevitably impaired the trust which existed between cricket authorities and the Captain of the England side'.[9] When Packer met the ICC on 23 June 1977, he explained that 'he did not see himself as being a permanent fixture in cricket. He did not want to replace Boards of Control. He wanted to work with them but this had not been possible in Australia and that was why he had taken the action that he had.'[10] However, negotiations collapsed when Packer's demand for exclusive rights to international cricket was flatly rejected. With compromise out of the question Packer issued his famous defiant comment: 'It's now every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.'

After the ICC banned WSC-contracted players from Test cricket, Kerry Packer instituted action against the English TCCB and the ICC in the High Court. The hearing began on 26 September and lasted thirty-one days.

Justice Slade ruled in favour of the three WSC-contracted litigants, Tony Greig, Mike Proctor and John Snow, stating that the ICC ban from Test cricket amounted to an unreasonable restraint of trade.[11]

WSC was less successful in Sydney's Federal Court in September 1977, when the ACB contended that the WSC use of phrases such as 'Super Tests' and references to 'The Australian Team', 'Australia', 'the West Indies' and 'the World' flouted section 52 of the Trade Practices Act. While the Federal Court ruled in favour of the ACB, it permitted the word 'Supertest' and the phrase 'WSC Australians'.[12]

By the time that the news of WSC became public in May 1977, thirty-five of the leading international players had signed contracts. Australia had the largest contingent with eighteen players, including thirteen out of the seventeen that toured England in 1977. WSC recruits included four prominent West Indians (captain Clive Lloyd, Viv Richards, Andy Roberts and Michael Holding) as well as four of the leading Pakistanis (captain Mushtaq Mohammad, Majid Khan, Asif Iqbal and Imran Khan). While a majority of the English team remained loyal to establishment cricket, four signed with WSC: Tony Greig, Derek Underwood, Alan Knott and John Snow.

Kerry Packer also recruited five South Africans to his WSC troupe, but such inclusions were controversial because an apartheid sports boycott had operated since 1971 and continued until the early 1990s. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was a passionate supporter of the apartheid sports boycott.

Packer's specific problem was that the WSC West Indians were unlikely to agree to play against South Africans. Packer gave influential Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley an assurance that the South Africans recruited to WSC would not come directly from South Africa but via English county cricket. This was the case with Barry Richards, Mike Proctor and Eddie Barlow.

Packer attempted to stretch the rules further when he enlisted Denys Hobson and Graeme Pollock, who were South African-based cricketers. The Australian Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs received two visa applications for these players and granted the visas when Packer informed the Minister that he had another agreement with Manley that the two players, if granted visas, would not play in Supertests and only appear in country and one-day matches. When the Australian High Commissioner conveyed this situation to Manley, he dismissed Packer's second assurance as a 'breach of their original undertaking'.[13]

Hobson and his wife arrived in Australia on 24 November, and Pollock a week later, and were VIP guests at the first Supertest. After the two South

African-based players were blacklisted by the West Indians, they were excused from their WSC contracts and returned to South Africa.

India and New Zealand were the only countries with no defections to WSC cricket in its first season. Mihir Bose commented that 'Indians did not see [this non-recruitment to WSC] as a snub but as a chance to reaffirm the values of traditional cricket'. He added that the Indian Board was keen to show that its cricketers were 'untainted by Packer'. As a result a full-strength Indian team toured Australia in 1977–78, as a rival attraction to WSC.[14]

By the time WSC began in December 1977, over fifty players had been recruited, with sufficient numbers and reserves to form three teams: the WSC Australian, the WSC West Indian and the World XI. Twenty-two Australians and seventeen West Indians had joined WSC by that time and the World XI was made up primarily of Englishmen, Pakistanis and South Africans.

Recruiting WSC players

In December 1976 Packer authorised John Cornell and Austin Robertson, Dennis Lillee's agents, to recruit a troupe of internationals. Australia's leading fast bowler, Lillee was the first to sign up for $105,000 over three seasons. In addition to current Australian players, three retired Australian players, Ian Chappell, Ian Redpath and Ross Edwards, were enlisted. Most of the player contracts covered a period of three years and ranged from $16,500 to $35,000 per season (the average being $25,000) plus incentive payments.[15]

After Packer contracted South African-born English captain Tony Greig, he volunteered to recruit additional international players. Greig and Robertson travelled to Trinidad in January 1978, when West Indies were playing Pakistan, and signed up some of the leading West Indian and Pakistani players.

Given that the legitimacy of WSC was widely challenged, the appointment of well-respected ambassadors and consultants added to its credibility. Former players such as Richie Benaud, Bill Lawry, Keith Stackpole, Fred Trueman, Gary Sobers, Bob Cowper and John Gleeson 'were used extensively as consultants, commentators and ambassadors'. Other sportsmen, such as legendary Australian footballer Ron Barassi and tennis great John Newcombe, 'were sought out to express solidarity for the cricketers in their push for better conditions'.[16] The recruitment of respected commentator and former Australian cricket captain Richie Benaud was pivotal, as his wholehearted support of WSC added gravitas to television broadcasts and modified perceptions that WSC was a 'bread and circus' event.

The battle for the spectator in 1977–1978

Although WSC staged matches in the West Indies and New Zealand, the primary battlefield was in Australia, because this was the market that Packer most wanted to win. From May 1977 the battle was waged for players, grounds and, above all, for spectators, the ultimate arbiters of who would control cricket.

World Series Cricket was handicapped by a failure to gain access to major cricket grounds in 1977–78, having been rebuffed by cricket authorities in their applications to use them. WSC staged its major matches at two football grounds (in Melbourne and Adelaide), an agricultural showground in Sydney and a trotting ground in Perth. No matches were staged in Brisbane in the first season. Matches were only possible at these venues because Gabba groundsman John Maley performed the miracle of creating hot-house pitches, which were dropped in when necessary, thereby creating a tradition of drop-in pitches.

WSC launched an ambitious programme to challenge the official ACB international programming by organising a concurrent rival series of six Supertests, staged between Australia, West Indies and a World XI. A second strategy was to stage fifteen one-day matches between the same three teams. A travelling troupe of cricketers took part in the Country Cup, playing thirty days of cricket in various regional centres.

WSC made an inauspicious start in the battle for the spectator. Although the first Supertest between Australia and West Indies featured some of the leading cricketers in the world, its first day drew only 2,847 spectators (far less than Packer's prediction of 15,000) on 2 December 1977 in the 80,000-capacity VFL Park. The ground was located at Glen Waverley, a relatively inaccessible venue in an outer suburb, twenty-five kilometres from the city. The match began at 11 a.m. and at twelve noon television viewers could switch to the broadcast of the rival establishment Test between Australia and India at the Gabba, with a crowd of 6,015 patrons. Although the establishment Australian team included six debutants, the recall of the experienced forty-one-year-old Bob Simpson, who had retired from Test cricket almost a decade ago, proved fortuitous. Simpson scored 539 runs, including two centuries, during the series, at an average of 53.90, and proved an able leader of a young side. The team also had the benefit of world-class bowler Jeff Thomson, who had signed a WSC contract initially but withdrew because it jeopardised his ten-year contract with a Queensland radio station.

It was only in Sydney that the Supertests gained greater spectator traction, possibly because the Showground was more conveniently located, adjacent

to the Sydney Cricket Ground, than VFL Park. Sydney cricket fans may possibly have been more open to cricket innovation than their Melbourne counterparts: 23,762 watched the second Supertest and 36,424 attended the fourth Supertest. The Sydney total of 60,186 spectators represented almost half the aggregate of six Supertests (124,532). By contrast, the closely fought five-Test series between Australia and India, which was decided only in the final Test with Australia winning 3–2, attracted 256,954.

WSC achieved much greater success in the one-day International Cup. The potential of night cricket, played with a white ball, was evident when Australia met the World XI in a hurriedly arranged day–night practice match at VFL Park on 14 December, when 6,449 spectators attended.[17] It proved the harbinger of a brighter future for WSC, and three back-to-back night matches at VFL Park from 23 to 25 January 1978 attracted 52,831 patrons, including 24,636 who watched Australia play West Indies – the second largest crowd of the summer. (The first day of the establishment third Test at Melbourne on 30 December attracted 26,110.) One-day cricket subsequently attracted good crowds at Perth, Adelaide and Sydney.[18]

Summing up the achievements of WSC in its first year, *Cricket Close-up* stated that the total WSC attendance at all levels of cricket of 354,933 was 'well below expectations' and was 'far from a great success but not a failure', with the numbers at one-day matches providing some hope for the future.[19] Packer himself admitted that the first season of WSC was a 'disappointment', but he believed that it had occurred because 'people had been so heavily indoctrinated against the idea [of WSC]'.[20]

Tony Cozier, West Indian and WSC commentator, contended that WSC had realised many of its aims: player salaries had increased, cricket had been promoted more aggressively, there was the innovation of night cricket and the white ball, and television coverage, with ingenious camera-work, had captured 'every stroke, every wicket, every catch and every emotional reaction with such precision'. However, he admitted that a lack of public response to the Supertests was disappointing and it may have been a blunder to stage the Supertests in opposition to the establishment Tests. He added that WSC was seen too much as 'Packer cricket', as it appeared that many people did not like the idea of one man controlling cricket simply because he was wealthy.[21]

The financial losses incurred by both sets of protagonists were substantial by the end of the 1977–78 season. Estimates of WSC losses varied from $3 to 4.5 million. The ACB didn't fare much better: its tour profits were slashed by more than half ($400,000 for five Tests in 1977–78 compared to $1.13 million for six Tests in 1975–76). The ACB, like other Boards, was also expected to contribute to the ICC's unsuccessful High Court case.[22]

A matter of even greater concern was the level of damage done to the sport by a surfeit of televised cricket. During the 1977–78 season, Channel 9 broadcast 306 hours of cricket and ABC 234 hours, 540 hours in total. This was three times the 170 hours broadcast during the 1975–76 series.

1978–1979

Some believed that an Australia–England (Ashes) series might pose a sterner test for WSC in its second season of 1978–79, but it proved to be a triumph for Kerry Packer. Bob Simpson had retired again and Jeff Thomson was forced to sit on the sidelines for most of the season. The Sydney Equity Court ruled on 3 November 1978 that Thomson was bound by his ACB contract and could not play for WSC until April 1979.[23] Inexperienced Australian captain Graham Yallop proved no match for the shrewd English captain Mike Brearley, whose side had suffered relatively few WSC defections. Despite some good individual performances, notably Rodney Hogg's 41 wickets in six Ashes Tests, it soon became apparent that the series was a mismatch: England comfortably won by five Tests to one.

While the crowds for the six Ashes Tests (370,574) were larger than for the five Tests against India in 1977–78 (256,594) and more than double the five Supertests in 1978–79 (156,859), they were much smaller than the numbers attracted to the two previous Ashes series: 616,196 (in 1970–71) and 777,333 (in 1974–75).

The disastrous Ashes series was only one reason why the balance swung in favour of WSC in the second season of the war. While cricket officials had denied WSC access to the major cricket grounds of the country, a number of prominent politicians were more sympathetic to the WSC cause. Packer gained the ear in particular of Neville Wran, Labor Premier of New South Wales, who intervened to allow WSC games at the SCG in 1978–79. Wran decided that a good turn for Packer served his and the public's interests and he may also have relished dismissing the establishment-minded SCG Trustees. Packer returned the favour: his media was fulsome in its support for Wran during the 1978 state elections.[24] The support of the New South Wales government not only enabled WSC to gain access to the ground during the 1978–79 season but also facilitated the erection of six giant light towers.

When the newly installed floodlights were turned on for the first time at the SCG on 28 November 1978, during the one-day match between Australia and West Indies, there was a bumper crowd of over 50,000. The gates were thrown open after 44,377 patrons had passed through the turnstiles because there were still long queues outside. Tony Adams commented

Table 7.1. Attendances at World Series Cricket matches in 1977–78 and 1978–79

	1977–78	1978–79
Supertests	124,532 (6 matches)	156,859 (5 matches)
International Cup	136,954 (15 games)	360,912 (21 games)
Country matches (Country Cup, 1977; Cavaliers, 1978)	60,983 (30 days)	58,575 (31 days)
TOTAL	322,469	576,346

NOTE: This table is reproduced from Cashman, *''Ave a Go, Yer Mug!'*, p. 164. WSC crowd figures have to be treated with some caution as there was considerable variation from source to source. WSC critics also claimed that many tickets were given away free. However, a surge in one-day figures in the second season seems undeniable.

that there was a 'buzz of excitement' around the ground when the lights came on and the arrival of night cricket 'had swept Sydney off its feet'.[25] Bill O'Reilly, no admirer of WSC, admitted that night cricket was an 'incredible performance' and that the enthusiastic crowd was similar to those at football finals. He added that Kerry Packer had won this first Sydney round of the 1978–79 season 'by the proverbial mile'.[26]

That night was a triumph for WSC and a turning-point in the cricket war. WSC had successfully stormed one of the citadels of cricket power (the SCG being second only to the MCG as the most important cricket site in the country) and proved that one of its core products was popular and marketable. One-day matches and night cricket were primarily responsible for the expansion of WSC audiences in its second season.

Towards the end of the disastrous second year of the war, the ACB had no option but to capitulate and sought a compromise with Kerry Packer. The tour profits from the 1978–79 Ashes series of $126,634 were approximately one-quarter the return of $501,652 from the previous 1974–75 Ashes series.[27] It has been estimated that two years of WSC resulted in a loss of $6 million for the Packer organisation. However, Packer did secure a significant return for his cricket investment, as he was able to meet much of the government-required quota of Australian content at a cheap price.

An agreement was signed between the Australian Cricket Board and PBL Sports Pty Ltd by 30 May 1979 and lodged with the Trade Practices Commissioner. Under the agreement PBL Sports was given 'the exclusive right, for a period of ten years, to promote the programme of cricket

organised by the Board and to arrange the televising and merchandising in respect of that programme'.[28] Packer thus secured his core objective of securing exclusive Australian television rights. Although the agreement represented an abject surrender by the ACB, it enabled the Board to claw back a monopoly of Australian cricket.

Having achieved his major objective from the war, Packer shrewdly recognised that it was to his advantage not to further impoverish official cricket. Shayne Quick noted that 'Packer's foray into cricket, and televised sport, could only grow and prosper with a healthy and solvent ACB … The downfall of the ACB would result in the demise of WSC and Australian cricket in general.'[29]

Interpretations of the cricket war

Interpretations of the Packer cricket war have changed markedly over time. Initially, academics sided with the cricket establishment, the majority of the world media and the public in condemning Packer and World Series Cricket. At the first conference of the Australian Society for Sports History, for example, held in June 1977, there was not a good word said in favour of Packer and his new cricket troupe. Packer was regarded as a selfish corporate raider who had little interest in the culture and traditions of cricket.

During the next decade a number of academics were critical of the WSC-inspired changes in cricket. Sociologists Geoffrey Lawrence and David Rowe described the Packer involvement in cricket as a striking example of a 'corporate pitch': commercial cricket telecasts helped to 'socialise viewers to accept the values of capitalism'. Lawrence and Rowe contended that the public were the 'losers' since they were 'exposed to an increasingly aggressive spectacle, manipulated by commercial television for the benefit of advertisers'.[30]

Ian Harriss extended this criticism of WSC when he argued that it had reduced cricket to a form of soap-opera entertainment. Packer cricket offered 'the consumer instant gratification which is so much a part of the consumer culture of late capitalism'. Harriss explained the shift to limited overs as:

> The emergence of an era in which the game is no longer based on the rational, calculating bourgeois individual. Indeed, the essence or 'depth' of Test cricket has given way to the glittering surface and spectacle of the highly commercialised commodity that is One-Day cricket … The one-day spectacle is packaged in much the same way as a one-hour television melodrama. There is some variation in each individual episode, but the conclusion is inevitably a hectic chase sequence.[31]

Brian Stoddart challenged this view, contending that 'far from degrading cricket, Packer gave it new dimensions by challenging outmoded visions of the game's social position'. Stoddart believed that Packer needed the game 'to establish his channel as the leading sportscaster' in the country, to meet his 'legislatively required Australian content levels at an economically viable level' and to attract more high-level sponsorship. The game, however, also needed the media tycoon to 'deliver it a new audience share, boost its fragile economic base, and stimulate a new social popularity'.[32] In Stoddart's view, the Packer upheaval in cricket occurred in part because the ACB was unable to deal adequately with structural changes in the world of cricket during the increasingly televisual years of the 1970s. The payment for elite players was inadequate and there was no recognition of the commercial potential of the limited-overs game.

More recent researchers have regarded Packer as the catalyst rather than the instigator of change that became evident in cricket from the 1960s. Shayne Quick concluded that 'it is clear that the era [of WSC] was one of progression rather than a radical revolution with television the vehicle for change rather than its cause'.[33] Bob Stewart considered that World Series Cricket was a product of the hyper-commercialisation of leisure, recreation and sport because of changes that had occurred in the economic structure and cultural mood of advanced capitalist societies, which he referred to as postmodernism during the 1960s and 1970s.[34] Gideon Haigh concluded that 'WSC was less an initiator of change – reliance on fast bowling, one-day cricket, and even frequency of international competition – than an expediter'. WSC's changes were 'stylistic rather than substantive'. Haigh added that Packer 'proved less a cricket revolutionary than a remarkable resurfacer'.[35]

WSC did lead to an increase in player payments and improved conditions of employment. The WSC practice of placing the leading players on an annual contract was continued by the ACB after 1979. The emergence of a Professional Cricketers Association in September 1977, which was supported by Kerry Packer (who provided the association with a loan of $10,000), contributed to greater player representation. While the Association was sustained only for a few years beyond WSC, it encouraged the ACB to take greater notice of player issues. Dabscheck concluded that during the 1970s cricket 'was transformed from a semi-amateur sport where Test and leading players were paid relatively small amounts of money, to a fully-fledged professional operation with leading players employed on well-remunerated contracts'.[36] However, Haigh questioned the degree to which cricket had been professionalised. He noted that, while there were radical short-term improvements in cricket salaries, Australian

players after 1979 still largely depended on the generosity of an unchanged administration.[37]

Reflections

Undoubtedly WSC helped to transform Australian and world cricket; it helped strip away many of the Anglicist, clubby, gentlemanly vestiges of the game. Cricket was promoted to a wider market than before and WSC attracted new audiences to the game: youth, women and Australians from non-British backgrounds. While Packer helped to market the game more effectively than the ACB, Haigh and Frith contended that it was a myth that 'Kerry Packer made cricket popular; on the contrary, Packer coveted cricket because it *was* popular, and had seldom been more so'.[38] However, Packer did add value to Australian cricket, as before him 'the idea of Australian cricket having a "market value" would have been unthinkable'.[39]

The promotion of World Series Cricket combined American rhetoric and Australian populism. The phrases World Series Cricket and Supertests drew on American sports hyperbole. World Series Cricket at the same time was also more unashamedly and chauvinistically Australian. While the ABC commentators attempted to be measured, fair and objective in their commentary, some Channel 9 commentators were far more excitable and stridently Australian. Bill Bonney contended that WSC also promoted a patriarchal and 'ocker' (an archetypal unconventional Australian) masculine ideology with the camera focusing on 'Lillee's vigorous rubbing of the ball on his crutch' as he walked back to bowl or 'on Chappell and Lillee in their most loutish and convention-flouting acts'.[40]

Gordon Ross referred to the WSC brand as 'jet-age cricket'.[41] The innovations were numerous: night cricket, a white ball, coloured clothing, fielding restrictions, hot-house pitches, as well as a host of other giveaways and gimmicks. The popular WSC anthem, 'C'mon Aussie, c'mon', which had been written by the advertising company Mojo and was introduced in the second season of WSC, became a hit in its own right, and was symptomatic of the changed culture of cricket, which embraced pop music and youth culture.

However, the greatest contribution of WSC was the enhancement of cricket television broadcasts. In traditional sports coverage the idea was to locate the viewer like a spectator at the ground with the camera swivelling, like the head, to capture the action at various parts of the ground. The viewer was no longer 'anchored to one spot like the ground spectator' in WSC coverage but was provided with a range of angles and perspectives. With eight cameras rather than four, every ball was filmed from behind the bowler's arm. Interviews, computerised statistics, the grunts and expletives

of players via stumpcam, all provided viewers with privileged access to play and removed that reverential distance between players and spectators that had been part of traditional cricket coverage.[42]

WSC also contributed to a rash of head injuries, as there were no limits on short-pitched bowling. The worst occasion was when a bare-headed David Hookes received a sickening blow on the head from an Andy Roberts bumper on the first day of the second Supertest at the Sydney Showground, resulting in a double fracture of the jaw and the cheekbone. The event had two consequences. It demonstrated, first of all, that WSC was not a sham and mere exhibition cricket. It also encouraged cricketers to don protective headgear and stimulated the development of appropriate cricket helmets.

Postscript

Wisden, the official Bible of establishment cricket, virtually ignored World Series Cricket. It included just five pages in the 1978 annual and slightly longer articles in the 1979 and 1980 annuals. Written by Gordon Ross under the heading 'The Packer Case', the articles covered court action, financial issues and negotiations, with only limited discussion of the cricket played. Gideon Haigh noted that *Wisden* provided little more than a skeleton of WSC scores in the 1979 and 1980 annuals, occupying less space than what was devoted to county second XI averages.[43] The runs scored, wickets taken and catches caught by many of the leading international players between 1977 and 1979 are still not counted because WSC matches are still not considered first-class cricket.

The cricket war poisoned relationships between players before and after WSC, particularly in Australia. The Australian team which toured England in 1977 was split between the WSC-aligned majority of thirteen and four who remained loyal to establishment cricket. Enmities generated by the cricket lasted for years after the rapprochement of 1979. Kim Hughes had the problem of captaining (during occasional Greg Chappell absences) WSC players, which included Lillee and Marsh, who never forgave Hughes for his loyalty to the Board during the cricket war.

When interviewed about World Series Cricket by Alan Lee in February 1979, Packer stated that 'I spent a disproportionate amount of time on cricket at first – it's only three to five per cent of my business'. Packer's personal attention to cricket was 'staggering' given his wide business interests.[44] When asked by Lee whether he would 'do it all over again', Packer stated that his answer was probably 'No'.[45]

Gideon Haigh has reflected on whether the establishment 'should have seen Packer coming' and whether the Packer cricket war was inevitable. Minutes

of the ACB's annual meeting of 6–7 September 1977 suggest that members of the Board were not 'steadfastly resistant to an exclusive agreement with a commercial broadcaster' beyond 1979. However, the dispute proved intractable because of clashes of personalities and philosophies: 'Packer's idea of compromise was the other side giving up.'[46] The longstanding custodians of the game in Australia and England misread the intentions of Kerry Packer (who did not want to run cricket) and consequently overreacted to the threat posed by Packer. 'The reaction was strongest in Britain, where it was coloured by sentimentality, indignation, anti-colonial arrogance and a not unjustified feeling that the team had been betrayed by the South African-born Greig.'[47] (Conservative middle-class men also had an inadequate understanding of a rapidly changing society and the appetite of many fans for new forms of the game.)

At the outset of the cricket war, Kerry Packer was regarded as the devil incarnate by cricket authorities and many cricket supporters. After he died on 26 December 2005, during the Melbourne Test there was a minute's silence, and black armbands were worn.[48]

NOTES

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2 Gideon Haigh, 'World Series Cricket' in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Cricket* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 605.
3 Bill Bonney, *Packer and Televised Cricket* (Sydney: NSW Institute of Technology, Media Papers, 1980), p. 4.
4 Gideon Haigh and David Frith, *Inside Story: Unlocking Australian Cricket's Archives* (Australia: News Custom Publishing, 2007), p. 183.
5 Braham Dabscheck, 'The Professional Cricketers Association', *Sporting Traditions*, 8 (1991), pp. 10–11.
6 Jack Pollard, *Australian Cricket: The Game and the Players* (Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), p. 1138.
7 Bonney, *Packer and Televised Cricket*, p. 5.
8 Gideon Haigh, *The Cricket War: The Inside Story of Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket* (Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 1993), p. 64.
9 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1978* (London: John Wisden, 1978), p. 123.
10 Haigh and Frith, *Inside Story*, p. 187.
11 John Scott, *Caught in Court: A Selection of Cases with Cricketing Connections* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), pp. 101–111.
12 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 100, 115.
13 Richard Cashman, *Australia's Role in the Apartheid Sports Boycott* (Canberra: NAA and DFAT, 2008), pp. 25–28.
14 Mihir Bose, *A History of Indian Cricket* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980), pp. 291, 301.
15 Dabscheck, 'The Professional Cricketers Association', p. 10.

16 Haigh, 'World Series Cricket', p. 607.
17 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 126–27.
18 Ibid., pp. 153–54; Cashman, *''Ave a Go, Yer Mug!'*, p. 159.
19 Cashman, *''Ave a Go, Yer Mug!'*, p. 161.
20 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1980* (London: John Wisden, 1980), p. 123.
21 *Sun-Herald*, 5 February 1978.
22 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 17, 174, 175.
23 Scott, *Caught in Court*, pp. 110–11.
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25 *World of Cricket*, quoted in Cashman, *''Ave a Go, Yer Mug!'*, p. 163.
26 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 1978.
27 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 279.
28 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1980*, p. 127.
29 Shayne Quick, 'World Series Cricket, Television and Australian Culture', unpublished PhD thesis, Ohio State University (1990), quoted in Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 280.
30 Geoffrey Lawrence and David Rowe, *Power Play: The Commercialisation of Australian Sport* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1986), pp. 164, 177.
31 Ian Harriss, 'Packer, Cricket and Post Modernism' in D. Rowe and G. Lawrence (eds.), *Sport and Leisure: Trends in Australian Popular Culture* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), pp. 117–18.
32 Brian Stoddart, 'Sport and Television: Reflections upon a Cultural Phenomenon' (unpublished paper), pp. 13–14.
33 Quick, 'World Series Cricket', p. 196.
34 R. K. Stewart, 'A Theoretical Framework for Analysing the Commercial Development of Australian First Class Cricket', unpublished ASSH Conference paper, Launceston, 1993.
35 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 316, 322.
36 Dabscheck, 'The Professional Cricketers Association', pp. 2, 22–23.
37 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, pp. 317, 318.
38 Haigh and Frith, *Inside Story*, p. 182.
39 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 328.
40 Bonney, *Packer and Televised Cricket*, p. 27.
41 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1980*, p. 121.
42 Bonney, *Packer and Televised Cricket*, p. 17.
43 Haigh, *The Cricket War*, p. 326.
44 Ibid., p. 323.
45 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1980*, p. 123.
46 Haigh, *The Cricket War* (Melbourne University Press, 2007), p. x; Haigh and Frith, *Inside Story*, p. 188.
47 *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2006* (London: John Wisden, 2006), p. 1517.
48 Ibid., p. 1519.