



Firebrand: Doug Bollinger at The Rocks during the week
Picture: Anthony Reginato

Aussies go Bolly

Hair-raising adventure for the new Merv

By JAMES HOOPER

CALL Doug Bollinger the modern-day Merv Hughes and the larrikin fast-bowler lights up like he's ready to start growing a moustache and working on his beer gut.

A self-confessed "westie", born and raised in Seven Hills, Bollinger is a shoot-from-the-hip character who has sent the Cricket Australia spin doctors into a muck lather.

As he prepares to play his second Test in front of his home crowd at the SCG, Bollinger happily opened up about on-field sledging, being branded "Doug the Rug" and becoming cricket's new cult figure.

"I didn't really get to see much of Merv because he was a little bit before my time, but I love watching footage of him," Bollinger said.

"He was just a knockabout bowler, he ran in all day. That's what I like to do and that's what I'm there for. Merv's a good bloke and that's a pretty good compliment. He was a bloke that everyone liked and everyone talked to.

"I might be a bit more annoying than Merv. I'm very loud and a bit too honest at times. But that's who I am and I like it like that."

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proach, it's easy to see why the average fan can relate to Bollinger.

A little over 18 months ago, Bollinger went through a very public Advanced Hair treatment as a solution to his chrome dome.

True to his laidback nature, the bowler nicknamed "Loose" by his Australian team-mates happily talks about how it has changed his life and laughs off being heckled by fans.

"I just did it for a personal thing to change my life. It's been something new and Advanced Hair have been fantastic," Bollinger said. "Some fans yell out, 'hey, Doug show us your hair'. But otherwise there's not much to it. I just did it for a change of scenery."

Bollinger has been dubbed "loose" or "cannon" by his team-mates because of his outgoing nature.

"I just walked in one day on tour in Dubai and everyone started calling me 'Loose'. I don't think it's going anywhere," he said.

"As a kid I loved getting out and about and getting into a bit of trouble. All in good fun, of course."

What about sledging in international cricket and some of the confrontations we've seen this summer?

"It's good for the game. We're not all robots," he said.

"There's always going to be a bit of fire and carry on when it's hot and heavy and not everything's going everyone's way all the time.

"It's what people want to see. Sometimes it can get a bit heated, but people know the line where you can go and you can't."

Bollinger's other passion is rugby league — and the Roosters.

A cardinal sin for a boy raised in Seven Hills, Bollinger explains how he was a huge Brad Fittler fan, so when "Freddy" moved from Penrith to Bondi Junction, he switched allegiances, too.

Before taking up cricket at age 15, he describes himself as a "going backwards wiry centre or fullback" who played for the Toongabbie Tigers.

So will fame or the rigid types at Cricket Australia change this knock-about character?

"I still put my foot in it sometimes and I'm still loud and annoying," Bollinger said.

"It's hard to change and I don't want to change.

"I haven't bought a flash car yet,



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Hidden treasure is under the Rug

Doug's good hair day took a huge effort

Ben Dorries
 IN SYDNEY

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While many of his Test teammates grew up being mollycoddled at the Australian Cricket Academy or in youth representative teams, Bollinger took a very different route.

There was park cricket in Sydney's west, where he played on artificial pitches for Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL in the Parramatta district competition.

Then there were the jobs. Real jobs.

The man who used to sell Australian cricket shirts for a living at a Parramatta sports store, owned by former rugby league star Peter Wynn, doesn't come with an orthodox cricketing pedigree.

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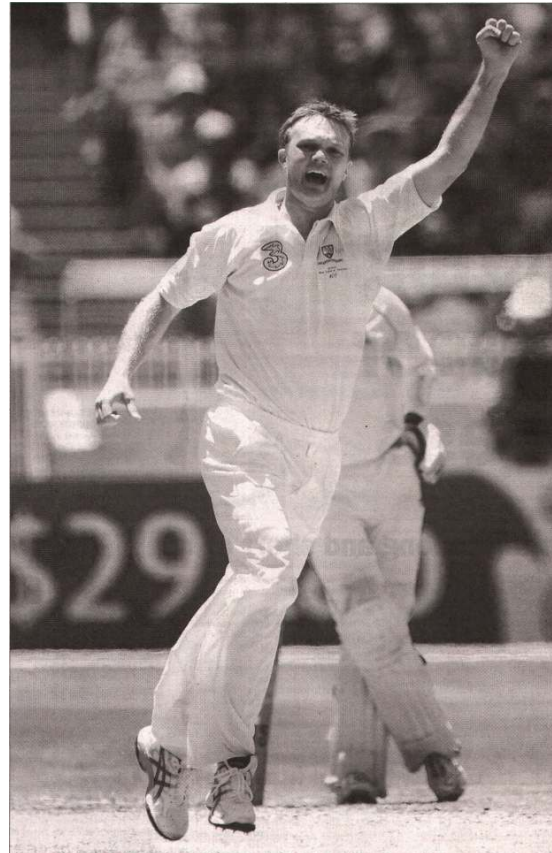
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The new look – completed using "non-surgical skin grafts" – saw him follow in the footsteps of Shane Warne, Graham Gooch and Greg Matthews by signing with Advanced Hair Studios.



KEEPING IT SIMPLE: Doug Bollinger relaxes at The Rocks in Sydney ahead of the second Test against Pakistan, starting tomorrow. Picture: Bob Barker



ON TARGET: Doug Bollinger celebrates Kamran Akmal's wicket in the MCG Boxing Day Test. Picture: Colleen Petch

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"It's just funny because some people just bring it up because they've got nothing to talk about.

"It's one of those things I look back on now and wonder why I didn't do it earlier. I'm so happy with it.

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But the lovable rogue with the competitive attitude has also delivered a new freshness to the side.

He generally doesn't worry about the right thing to do or say. Or when to do it. That attitude makes Bollinger who he is.

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to beat around the bush. What you see is what you get," Bollinger says.

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The Bolly file

Douglas Erwin Bollinger
Born: July 24, 1981,
Baulkham Hills, Sydney
Age: 28

Major teams: Australia,
Australia A, New South
Wales, Worcestershire
Nickname: Eagle
Bats: Left-hand **Bowls:**
Left-arm fast-medium
Height: 1.92m

Test bowling record

Matches: 4
Wickets: 20 **Runs:** 481
Best innings: 5-70
Best match: 8-141
Average: 24.05



Champagne name, VB background

Ben Dorries

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Bad place for boring decks

with **JON ANDERSON & RODNEY HOGG**

JA: If I hear another Australian cricketer or their coach Tim Neilsen talk about what a "good place they are in", I'll vomit.

RH: I'm still trying to find this place they keep talking about. What does it mean?

I think it means you are happy with your form, so Nathan Hauritz, Mitchell Johnson and Shane Watson are in good places and Peter Siddle is in a bad place.

Siddle should sue Adelaide curator Les Burdett for wicket-slaughter. Burdett is the one who started this trend of producing a third-day wicket for the opening ball in Test cricket in this country.

It's funny you say that because just yesterday one of my boys asked me what was the best type of bowling to watch. I answered when the ball is flying around on the opening morning of a Test match and batsmen are genuinely concerned for their safety. But those days seem long gone.

I'm going to a florist today to buy flowers for Siddle's grave. He bowled really well in the Melbourne Test, but the wicket gave him absolutely nothing.

It's a world trend in Tests. Curators are scared to see a match end in four days. There are financial pressures, so you see it in bowling averages.

Mitchell Johnson is the best in the world with more than 60 wickets last year, but his average of 27 — while very good — is far from great. And that's because of the cemetery-style pitches.

Where do you rank Johnson?

My only disappointment is he can't take wickets with the new ball. But coming around the wicket and reverse swinging it, he's right up there. Pace bowling these days is all about reverse.

Stuart Broad can swing it conventionally, and so can Jimmy Anderson. Dale Steyn has gone from the best in the business to a struggler, Makhaya Ntini is about gone, Morne Morkel is disappointing and then you have those funny-looking New Zealanders who get a few wickets.

The big disappointment is Ishant Sharma and for some reason Sri Lanka won't pick Lasith Malinga. But if you can bowl like Mitchell Johnson, then you are a \$1 million man in today's cricket.

Along with M.S. Dhoni, Virender Sehwag and Tillakaratne Dilshan.

Don't leave out Chris Gayle and Shahid Afridi. Even

Kumar Sangakkara and Shane Watson.

There is a common theme — all can hit the ball high and long. And that's what Twenty20 is all about. Hopefully our next national Twenty20 side will be nothing like our Test team.

Ricky Ponting has retired, captain Michael Clarke shouldn't be in it, nor Mike Hussey. Here's my team: David Warner, Tim Paine, Mitch Marsh, David Hussey, Cameron White, Adam Voges, Steve Smith, Jon Hastings, Johnson, Siddle and Dirk Nannes.

I'm taking a group of kids to the MCG tonight to watch the Vics play New South Wales. I don't think they would care who wins if it meant Warner blazing 70. There are going to be some unbelievable records set this season for batting.

Once those blokes get their eye in, nobody is safe. Just glad I don't have to bowl in it. Confidence is everything in cricket.

Which is what Hauritz has now.

Congratulations to the selectors on sticking with him. Just one thing — he has to get to Advanced Hair before it's too late. Look what that extra hair has done for "Doug the Rug".

Hauritz has his name on the honour board at the MCG for his five-for.

Yeah, in 20 years people will walk past, see his name and ask what he bowled?

To tomorrow at the SCG. We will probably go in with the same eleven.

I would have made one change. In fact it's my new year's wish, to get a young player into the Australian team.

Let me guess, Steve Smith at six?

Yep, pick him as an all-rounder, not a spinner and drop Marcus North who has become a protected species and one who can't make a run in the second innings.

He averages 41 in Tests and has six wickets at 60, so the idea of him being an all-rounder hasn't worked.

Get him out straight away. Changing the subject, you know how there is a Miss World, which Miss Venezuela always wins. Why isn't there a Mr World?

Excellent point and something I have spent a lot of time worrying about. Where are you coming from?

If there was one, the winner would always come from Pakistan. They are a good-looking race — Imran, Waqar, Shoaib and now that left-arm quick Mohammad Aamer.

He clearly appeals to you.

As a bowler he does, but a word of warning to the cougars out there who want to have their evil way with him — Aamer is just 17 and that's a crime.

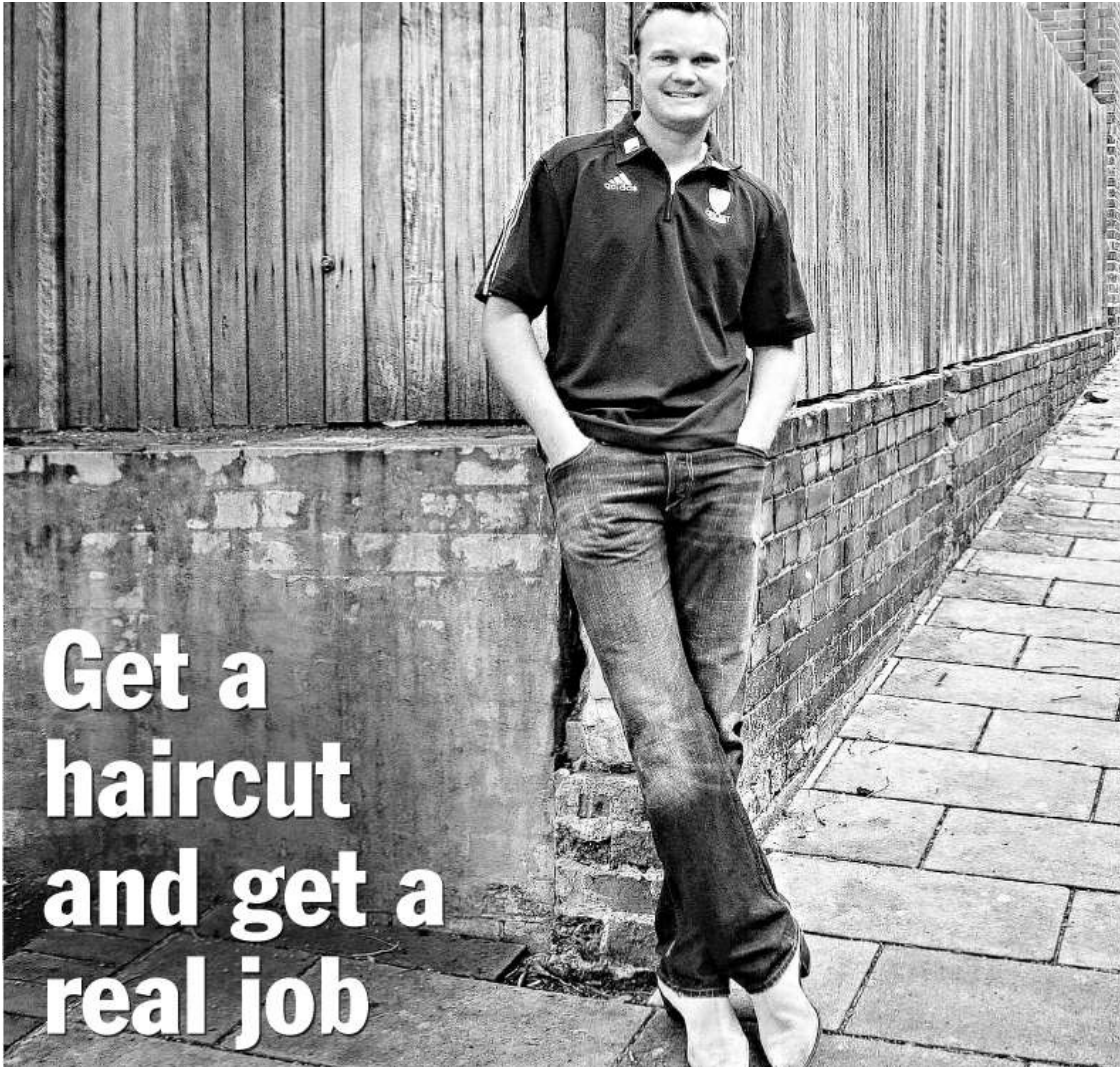
Good to see you are becoming a moral arbiter.

Happy new year to you, Colonel.



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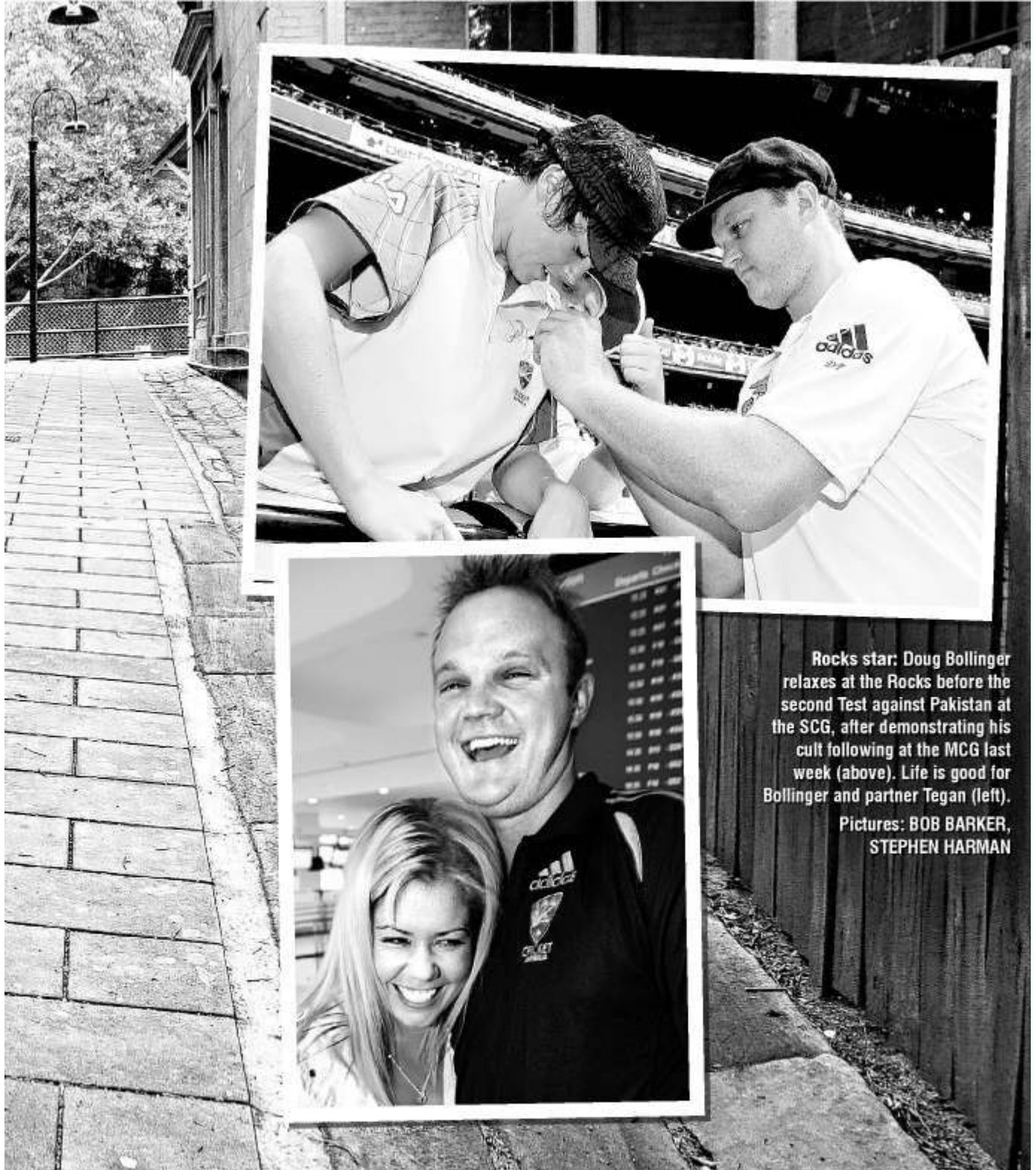
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Rocks star: Doug Bollinger relaxes at the Rocks before the second Test against Pakistan at the SCG, after demonstrating his cult following at the MCG last week (above). Life is good for Bollinger and partner Tegan (left).

Pictures: BOB BARKER,
STEPHEN HARMAN



From nobody to idol

Doug Bollinger has followed an odd path to cricket stardom but he wouldn't have it any other way, writes **BEN DORRIES**

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Thank goodness for Tegan. It could have been so different.

"I met Tegan on a cricket trip away to the Gold Coast and we exchanged phone numbers. Then I lost her number," Bollinger laughs.

"A couple of months later she rang and said she was moving down to Wollongong with her father, and we just caught up and went from there.

"My daughter is so beautiful and she's been such a massive change in my life. You are not only looking after yourself but ... two other people.

"With all the cricket these days, I just love hanging around at home when I get the chance. I keep it pretty simple. If I do too much I get into too much trouble."



LOVABLE ROGUE: Doug Bollinger, who is becoming a hugely promising fast bowler, has brought something else to the Aussie Test team – a new freshness and an attitude of what you see is what you get. Picture: BOB BARKER



SUCCESS: Bollinger celebrates a wicket with Mike Hussey during Boxing Day Test match. Picture: GETTY IMAGES