



QUESTION

# THE MO REWARDS

AUSTRALIAN CRICKET'S GREAT ECCENTRIC AND GROOVIER CAT, GREG MATTHEWS, WAS LOVED BY THE FANS AND UNLOVED BY AUTHORITIES

STEVE WAUGH RECALLED RECENTLY HOW UNINVITING THE AUSTRALIAN DRESSING-ROOM WAS FOR A TEST DEBUTANT. HOW DID YOU FIND IT?

I was fortunate enough to play with three of the greats in Lillee, Greg Chappell and Marsh — and I will forever be indebted to the great one, DK, for being OK to me. I can dig it big time that these dudes, icons of the game, were in their last couple of games, and that their train of thought towards a young punk like me would have been different had it been earlier in their careers.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE FIRST MOMENTS OF YOUR FIRST TEST?

My first Test was a Boxing Day Test at the MCG. You had to be at the park at a certain time and if you weren't, you were fined 50 bucks. So I get down there and I can't find the way to get in. I start running around the ground looking for the players' entrance. Finally, I find my way in and there's this young punk in his green coat who says, "You can't come in." I say, "What are you talking about mate, I'm playing in a Test match here!" He asks me for my player's pass — this is a true story, brother. I say, "Mate, Greg Matthews — debut, but nervous, forgot it." "Sorry, you can't come." I jump the turnstiles, he grabs my lucky jumper and he tears it. I say, "Mate, if you don't let go, I'm going to break your glasses."

AND THEN YOU TOOK YOUR FRUSTRATIONS OUT ON THE PAKISTANS. DID YOU REGARD IT AS A PRETTY SUCCESSFUL DEBUT?

Yeah, but on the third day of the Test match, I got a phone call at 7:30am from Bob Mevianan, who had just stepped down as a board member (and is now a director of the ACB). He reads out this eight-page dossier and tells me the last bloke who did what I did was Sid Barnes, and that he never played another Test!

So he tells me he's going to fine me, get this, \$500. That's the same amount of money that Dennis Lillee was fined for kicking Javed Miandad on national TV. I was rocked. Then, when we were getting our cheques at the end of the game, Greg Chappell stands up, puts his arm around me — which is highly unusual for Greg — and says, "Greg, I read in the paper the other day that you'd only play Test cricket for nothing," and he rigs up the cheque in front of my eyes. Then Bob Mevianan comes over, says words I don't understand and that Chappell was only joking. "I'll write you out another cheque, and because it's Christmas I'm only going to fine you \$500," he says. So I got fined \$500 in my first Test for jumping the turnstiles!

THAT'S A PRETTY UNSAVOURY START.

Not nearly as unsavoury as some things that went down. Which, of course, we don't talk about.

YOU SURE? Totally man.



Mo and Mev: (above) why did (below) have to celebrate a wicket



'I MEAN, HEY, I RAN IN FOR THAT LAST BALL THINKING, "THIS IS HISTORY, BROTHER"

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SECURITY PEOPLE DIDN'T IMPROVE. WHAT REALLY WENT DOWN AT THAT NIGHTCLUB IN PERTH? I'm at this venue with a mate, Ian Stevens, from Nuiworks, and some iXKS, and a lot of other brothers are there. As the night's progressing, this big Greek chick comes up a couple of times and I say 'g'day. Then she comes up a third time, a bit more under the influence now. By this stage she's getting a bit out of hand. She comes up the fourth time and I'm like, "Look, I've had enough, please don't hassle me any more." She's just being a silly little drunken girl. And mate, I've played the white man big time. She comes up a fifth time and starts calling me a big head, blah, blah, blah. I haven't said jack to her when she starts fingering my chest. So I move her finger off my chest and within two seconds, I'm swamped [by bouncers]. I just remember the fear. I felt an arm the size of a leg wrap itself around my throat. I remember thinking, "Don't panic, just get outside and sort this out." Then I had a forearm put on the back of my head and that was it. The stuff they did to me when I was unconscious was even more unattractive. I've seen the videotape and whoa, Jon Stevens literally saved my life. The doctor told me that without Jon, I would have choked on my own blood and died.

BUT YOU MADE THE BOUNCERS PAY? Absolutely. Took it to court and won a big pay for GYM.

IN THE TIED TEST AT MADRAS IN 1986, YOU BOWLED UNCHANGED FOR 16 OVERS ON THE LAST DAY. DID YOU FEEL THE ODDS OBTAINED DEPENDED ON YOU, AND WAS THAT PRESSURE ENJOYABLE?

Big time. The tougher it was, the more I enjoyed it. The great thing about touring India was that whenever other times when I represented Australia, I knew I was going to play and I knew I had an important role to play. And that was groovy. All you wanted to take me off once or twice and I said, "No you're not." Communication lines were pretty good that day.

WITH THE SCORES TIED AND INDIA HAVING ONE WICKET IN HAND, WHAT SORT OF BALL DID YOU PLAN TO BOWL?

Man, I was stupid. I punched that one through a bit more when I had been bowling a lot slower. But I pushed it through, it turned a bit and hit me dead in front. Whoooo! At the risk of being a legend, I was thinking, "Shit, I've done it!" It was unexpected. I felt incredibly proud that I'd stepped up. I hadn't taken the game and I was just stoked. And man, to give Kapil Dev a joint share of the man-of-the-match award [Matthews took 30 wickets and scored 44 and 27 no.] I thought was a bit of a joke.

The thing that always spins me out about the tied Test was how few of our team knew the result. I mean, hey, I ran in for that last ball thinking, "This is history, brother."

DO CRICKET ADMINISTRATORS SUFFOCATE PERSONALITIES? That's a dangerous question, isn't it brother? Firstly, the reason there was so much focus on me was twofold: one, we were so weak — so rough we weren't weak, we were



unsuccessful — and two, I just had a bit of a go. Nothing more, nothing less. Sometimes I get a bit disappointed that dudes could wear a baggy green cap and not die for it every ball. That spun me out.

YOU WERE FINED A HEFTY \$1000 IN SHARJAH IN 1987, BUT THE REASON FOR THE FINE WAS NEVER DISCLOSED. WHAT HAPPENED?

I'm at a BBQ at an ex-pat joint in Sharjah. We're lined up for the BBQ and I tell the Indian cook I'd like a particular steak. I'm talking to David Boon and I turn around and the steak's not there. I lean over and flick the chef's shoulder. We have a laugh about it and within 30 seconds, we're embracing and we've kissed each other's cheek about four times. Four hours later, after I've left the joint, some ex-pat comes over to our liaison manager and says, "A woman's just told me one of your boys punched our cook." The liaison officer goes over to the woman, asks her what it's all about and she says, "Oh no, I didn't say that." So the liaison officer says, "There you go mate, it's bullshit." Three days later, Tim Zbeher walks up to me at a function and says, "Ma, they're going to nail you." Sure enough, next day I front up at a committee of captain, vice-captain and coach. This 50-page document comes out. They fine me \$1000... a grand! I can't believe it.

So, I go back to management and tell them I'm going to appeal the fine when I get home, because I've got the liaison officer as my eyewitness.

I'm then told by a leading official that if I don't appeal the fine, he'll give me his word that it won't impact my chances of being selected for the World Cup. I'm thinking, "A World Cup in India. I love India, I do well in India." So I took the fine.

I was back from my honeymoon for about 15 minutes when I was told that the World Cup was going to be held in Australia. I knew I was going to play and I knew I had an important role to play. And that was groovy. All you wanted to take me off once or twice and I said, "No you're not." Communication lines were pretty good that day.

YOU WERE DROPPED HALF A DOZEN TIMES, BECAUSE SELECTORS WEREN'T CONVINCED ABOUT YOUR BOWLING, YET YOU WERE OFTEN TOP PICK IN THE BATTERS' AVERAGES. HAVE BEEN GIVEN MORE TIME TO LEARN ABOUT BOWLING IN TESTS?

My bowling was a problem for a number of reasons... okay, maybe I wasn't good enough, but there were three others — Sri Lanka, India and New Zealand, and for every one of those teams I knew I was going to play and knew I was an important cog in the team, and I think you'd be surprised if you had a look at the stats. OK, against great teams I might have had a tendency to struggle but so did everyone, man.

YOU TOURED SRI LANKA WITH A YOUNG SHANE WARNE. HOW DID YOU GET ALONG?

Man, we spent a lot of time together. You had to feed for the cat. [There was a time when Warne's Test bowling average was 544. Day four, end of play, first Test against Sri Lanka — I knew it was going to be Shane and me. He was pretty nervous — he got like a wip in the first innings — and wasn't sure of himself, and I was like, "You're kidding me, what have you got to lose?" We were on the verge of the greatest comeback



HOW MATTHEWS HELPED SHANE WARNE IN SRI LANKA, SEPTEMBER 1992

"Carrying a Test average of 544 at the time and sensibly doubting whether he would ever be able to make a go of Test cricket, Warne was losing confidence rapidly. The ever-optimistic Matthews spotted this, and, sensing he and Warne would have important work to do the next day, encouraged his young rear-end to believe in himself. So, down lightning," Matthews told Warne. "If it bounces back, who cares? If you're spinning it hard, you're a chance." It was typical, positive thinking from Matthews and, the next day, Border must have sensed the change in Warne's attitude. With Sri Lanka needing 26 to win with four wickets in hand and Matthews tying them in knots at one end, Fuller called across to Warne. "Warm up. You're on next over!" Border's confidence and Matthews' advice paid off. Warne's thick fingers ripped the ball and he ended the match by taking 3-67 off his final 11 deliveries. Australia had won under immense pressure and Warne had taken a long stride forward.

FROM BORDER A BEYOND, BY MARK RAY, ABC BOOKS

LEFT TO RIGHT: A landmark moment — celebration, a wicket. (above) Matthews and Warne

In Australia's cricket history [after a first innings deficit of 21] and the game got tight. And it's the truth man, I just kept saying to AB, "You've got to bowl Shane, you've got to bowl Shane." But AB kept the seamers on. Then it got really tight. Shane was on the fence and I'm on the other side of the field screaming at him: "C'mon, Suicide!" [Matthews called him Suicide after the iXKS long Suicide Blow]. And this kid Shane stepped up and he stepped up big time. I just felt so happy for him and really proud.

DID YOU HAVE MUCH OTHER INVOLVEMENT IN WARNE'S CAREER? Oh man, with all of the Brotherhood. With all the pups that came into the side. I remember my time and how difficult I found it and I didn't want that to happen to anyone.

ARE YOU STILL MATES WITH BRIAN LARA? Yeah, I ran into Prince occasionally. Man, we had a fantastic time together in the West Indies in 1993. Mike Whitney and I didn't play a lot of cricket and Prince was 12th man every single Test, so we used to go out and party together. He's a great dancer, man.

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO THESE DAYS? I've got a radio show, Deadend Engagements, with Triple M. I'm secretary of the Australian Cricket Association. I'm still playing first grade. And I've had tremendous fun with Advance Music.

HOW ARE THE LOCKS THESE DAYS? Natural, man. Natural.



## GREG MATTHEWS THE RECORD

TESTS										
M	I	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50			
33	53	8	1849	130	41.08	4	12			
O	M	R	W	Ave	Best	50s	100s			
1045.1	257	2942	61	48.22	5-103	2	1			

ODI										
M	I	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50			
59	50	13	619	54	16.72	—	1			
O	M	R	W	Ave	Best	SR				
468	21	3004	57	55.18	3-21	45.26				

For Greg Matthews' full record go to [www.brightgreen.com.au](http://www.brightgreen.com.au)

'I GOT A BIT DISAPPOINTED THAT DUDES COULD WEAR A BAGGY GREEN CAP AND NOT DIE FOR IT EVERY BALL'