



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
BRADMAN TRUST SPRING DINNER
SYDNEY - 13 OCTOBER 1989**

Tonight is a very special and precious occasion.

Don Bradman is the greatest sporting figure to have emerged in this nation of great sportsmen and women. He is the greatest cricketer of all time. You could include him, with the likes of Babe Ruth, Jesse Owens, Muhammad Ali and Pele, among the greatest half dozen sporting legends of the century. And he is a very great Australian.

Just over two years ago, I had the honour to launch the Bradman Albums in Adelaide.

I can honestly say that no duty in my period as Prime Minister has given me more pleasure than that. And it is an equally great honour for Hazel and myself to accept the invitation to be present tonight to help launch the Bradman Trust.

The albums of course are a priceless collection of personal memorabilia, essential historical records of Bradman's astonishing achievements. A continued awareness of that cricketing history - indeed an awe of it - is a very important part of why we are here tonight. And I shall come back to some of that history shortly.

But we are also here to honour Don Bradman, the man, and his vision, represented in the Bradman Trust, of the future.

The tasks of the Trust include the construction and management of the Bradman Museum at Bowral. When this is completed, it will be a Mecca for all cricket lovers, a treasure-house of Bradmania and of cricket. Tomorrow's opening of the Bradman Centennial Pavilion by Nick Greiner promises to be a splendid occasion for all Bradmaniacs.

But very important, and very significant for what it tells you about Sir Donald Bradman, is the principal objective of the Trust, namely "advancing the physical, cultural and intellectual welfare of the Australian community." In accordance with this goal, the Trust will seek to promote the ideals of cricket, in part through matches at Bradman Oval, Bowral, will fund and manage a national coaching scheme for young Australian cricketers between the ages of 11 and 18, and will fund and manage the Bradman Scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge or any Australian University.

In other words, Bradman and the Bradman Trust want to do something to help young Australians of today and tomorrow. And not just to develop sporting prowess, important though that is, but to develop mind and character.

When I consider this aim, I find myself thinking of the young Bradman growing up in the New South Wales bush in the 1920's. His performances as a teenager for Bowral are astonishing even now. You really have to feel sorry for the poor Moss Vale bowlers, subjected twice to Bradman triple centuries, kept in the field for Saturday after Saturday. But this is no more than he was to do in Test cricket within a very few years.

Equally extraordinary is the fact of Bradman's cricketing encounters in the Berrima District Cricket Association at that time with Bill O'Reilly, whose family also came from the area. Here you had the greatest batsman of all time facing up to perhaps the most destructive bowler of all time - for Bowral against Wingello! Truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

The coincidence of these two great careers beginning in the beautiful Southern Highlands of New South Wales serves to remind us of the enormous contribution to Australia made by the bush - to mention a few names, Arthur Morris and Doug Walters, who made Dungog famous, and Geoff Lawson and Mark Taylor, from the current Test team, who have links with Wagga, and the vice-captain, Geoff Marsh, from Wandering in Western Australia.

Within almost no time of playing country cricket, Don was setting records for the New South Wales Sheffield Shield Team. And in 1929, in his second appearance for Australia, following one of his very rare double failures on debut, he became the youngest player (to that time) to score a Test century. He was 20 years and 129 days old.

As a 21-year old, Don Bradman went to England for the first time. If we can say that your normal great batsman occupies the Alps or the Andes, Bradman's natural habitat was the Himalayas. His performances in England in 1930 represent the Everest of Test match batting.

Against an attack which included Larwood and Tate, he scored 974 runs in five Tests at an average of 139. I doubt if any of us here tonight ever expects to see that record broken. Overnight, Bradman became famous throughout the British Empire and at 21 was already the colossus of cricket. And for two decades, he retained that extraordinary stature, despite the invention of the notorious "bodyline" attack, designed to reduce him to mere mortality, ending his playing career with the magnificent 1948 team, in which Neil Harvey, Keith Miller and Arthur Morris, happily here tonight, played such distinguished hands.

But it was not only the peerless performances on the field which set the young Bradman apart. He had - and as is so obvious to all who have the pleasure of talking to him, or of listening to the Bradman Tapes - retains an outstanding mind. It shines out in last weekend's previews of Bill Leak's new portrait, which is to be unveiled later tonight.

One of his greatest qualities, one indeed which continues to make him an inspiration to millions of Australians, is the pride he takes, notwithstanding subsequent fame and success, in his ordinary background. Don Bradman's early life was the very opposite of privilege and affluence.

We know that he was a better than average student at Bowral Intermediate High and got his Intermediate Certificate at an unusually young age. But he left school at 14.

In those early years, his brilliant cricketing talent and his ambition shone brightly. Equally important, I believe, was his determination to develop his mind. Without in any sense turning his back on his origins, Bradman refused to be limited by them. We can see this in his seeking out at an early age the great cricket writer and music critic, Neville Cardus, to obtain a list of books to enlarge his horizons. According to Irving Rosenwater's biography, Bradman read every book on Cardus' rigorous list. We can see it in the diary he began to keep after gaining selection for the 1930 tour, in which he recorded his keen observations of a world which for an Australian between the wars was bigger and more distant than ours today. We can see it in his love of the piano.

It is no wonder that Bradman, the young batting phenomenon, was to show remarkable skills as a conversationalist, public speaker, writer, administrator, businessman. He had the mind for these skills and he had made sure he developed it.

The other great quality about Sir Donald Bradman, which showed itself early and never faltered during his years as world-beating batsman and Australian captain, was his sportsmanship. He was always an outstanding representative of his country, respected everywhere in the cricketing

world. 1989 will go down as one of the great years in Australian cricket, alongside, to name a few, 1930, 1934 and 1948. But, to my mind, as pleasing as the performances of Allan Border's splendid side was their unfailingly sportsmanlike and professional demeanour. I can pay them no higher compliment than to say that they behaved like one of Bradman's teams.

It is therefore wholly appropriate that the Bradman Trust is to emphasise intellect and character as well as sporting skill in its goal of assisting young Australians. Bradman's ideals will live on through the Trust's efforts and there is no doubt that he will inspire future generations of Australians. The title of Bradman Scholar will surely be a cherished one. How nice it would be to see some confident but modest youngster from the bush as an early recipient.

My very large team of researchers - otherwise known as Jack Pollard - tell me, Don, that you generally let the Oxbridge students off lightly with the bat. He notes, however, that in 1930, in the match at Fenner's against Cambridge, you took six of your total of 36 first-class wickets and achieved your best first class bowling figures in the first innings - 3 for 35.

I would like to suggest that you consider adding the University of Leeds to the list of those English institutions of higher learning where the Bradman Scholarships can be enjoyed. I make this suggestion, ladies and gentlemen, on the basis of Don's four Test appearances at Headingley.

He certainly enjoyed himself at Leeds. In 1930 he made 334, in 1934 304, in 1938 he failed with a miserable 103, and in 1948, at the age of forty, scored 173 not out in what remains Australia's most remarkable victory - in all, four matches, six innings, once not out, 963 runs, average 192.6.

I congratulate Bruce Collins and his fellow Trust members for their inspiration and dedication over the past three years in establishing the Trust and doing a magnificent job in raising funds for the Trust's objectives. I know and appreciate the enthusiasm of sponsors such as Sir Ron Brierley and Basil Sellers. I am pleased that the Commonwealth Government, through the Bicentennial Authority, is a participant and that QANTAS, whose operations began in 1920, on the eve of the Bradman era, is also contributing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the sadnesses of the sporting life is that it is relatively brief. We know of all too many examples where the flame of athletic skill, on burning itself out, consumes much of the richness of personality and joy of life which accompanies it.

Happily, this rarely happens with cricketers, least of all with Bradman. Don, with your physical and mental fitness you are at the same time an inspiration and a reproach to us all. I gnash my teeth to read, as I did in Philip Derriman's piece last Saturday, that you have beaten your age four times on the golf course this year and that you are playing off twelve at Kooyonga. And, in a moment, we will be privileged to experience once again your articulate and elegant thoughts and the precision of your memory. If I have made any factual errors tonight I fully expect to be dispatched to the mid-wicket fence.

Sir Donald, it is an indescribable pleasure for your friends and admirers to have you and Lady Bradman with us tonight. I have said before that no words of mine can adequately capture the uniqueness of your achievements or the special place you have won in the history of this country and in the hearts of its people. So I will use your own words.

In the introduction to the Bradman Albums, you wrote:

"In retrospect, and surveying the broad canvas, I suppose more than anything else I look back and say I am grateful that as the son of simple country parents, and without the benefit of wealth, power or influence, but with only the talents bestowed upon me by nature, I was able to occupy the highest posts the Australian cricket world had to offer. As a result I was given the opportunity for much of that period to impart my interpretation of the character of this wonderful game which has meant so much to cricket lovers everywhere. In so doing, I am happy in the knowledge that I did not betray the responsibility entrusted to me and I was enabled, I hope, to enhance the best traditions of the sport."

Don, with the establishment of the Bradman Trust, you can take satisfaction that that responsibility has been further honoured and those traditions further enhanced.
