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PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LAUNCH OF THE BRADMAN ALBUMS
ADELAIDE - 5 OCTOBER 1987**

Sir Donald Bradman
Lady Bradman
Kevin and Glenda Weldon
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Woody Allen has described a nightmare in which, at the point of death, with his whole life apparently flashing before his eyes in a split second, he suddenly realises that it is not his life at all which he is reviewing, but somebody else's.

Let me place it firmly on the record now, that if I have to relive someone else's life in my last moments, I want it to be Don Bradman's.

For, like Richie Benaud, I belong to that generation of Australians which grew up with the Don as their hero of heroes. As I shall go on to discuss, the Bradman legend is based on much more than mere statistics. But the figures bear some recounting.

In 1929, the year I was born, he set a record for that time of 1690 runs in an Australian season at an average of 94. The following year, he put England to the sword on their home turf to the tune of 974 runs at an average of 139 in five tests. This is still a world record.

As we all know, these prodigious scoring feats by our champion led the old enemy in 1932-33 to resort to bodyline, cricket's equivalent of the poisoned apple. I would have been about three at the time but feel sure that I would have shared the national sense of outrage. Although Bradman's mortality was, temporarily at any rate, re-established by Jardine, Larwood and Co., he nevertheless registered an average of "only" 56 and a half, a performance which most other batsmen would be happy to settle for in any series.

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And with bodyline properly banned, Don continued to carry all before him, finishing with the staggering first class figures of just over 28,000 runs at 95 and just under 7,000 in Tests at the tantalising but tremendous 99.94. When it is remembered that, in 1948 at the age of 40, Don scored 500 runs at 72 in a Test series against England, we can only lament his loss to the first-class game during the years of the Second World War and speculate on what additional records he might have set.

As a general note on his run-scoring ability, I can mention a thoughtful and kind letter which Don wrote to me in response to my greetings on his 75th birthday. He commented that this anniversary had led him to realise that he had never scored 75 in a first class match.

At first, I found this a little surprising. But then I thought, not really - with Don you might look for 175 as a start, 275 if he was trying, and 375 if the circumstances really required it.

It was not merely his extraordinary run-scoring feats but his manner of achieving them which made Bradman a hero in his own country and a household name wherever cricket is played. He was, quite simply, a wonderfully entertaining batsman, who attracted hundreds of thousands of fans to see him around the world.

There was no lamenting any lack of bright cricket in the Bradman era. For the opposition, it tended to be not so much bright as blinding. The Australians won their matches in the 1930's by tremendous batting, led by the great man himself, supported by the likes of Bill Ponsford, Stan McCabe and Bill Woodfull. This gave those superb spinners, Clarrie Grimmett and Bill O'Reilly, the chance to bowl the other side out twice.

In Don's brief post-war career, the same batting recipe applied, this time in the form of players like Arthur Morris, Sid Barnes, Lindsay Hassett, Neil Harvey, with the bowling damage done by the speed and fire of Ray Lindwall, Keith Miller and Bill Johnston.

And it should be remembered that Bradman towered over an era of batting giants. Apart from the great Australian players I have mentioned, English teams he played against included Jack Hobbs, Herbert Sutcliffe, Wally Hammond, Maurice Leyland, Len Hutton and Denis Compton.

If I have talked so far of Bradman the batting legend, it is only right that I should give equal weight to Bradman the captain, and representative of his country. He was a dedicated and, of course, outstandingly successful leader, whose performances placed Australia at the pinnacle of world cricket. His demeanour, and that of the teams which played under him, was unfailingly sportsmanlike and professional - I use the word advisedly because it is worth remembering that remuneration for the players of that time consisted only of limited out of pocket expenses.

In an era when communications were much less developed than they have become since, and in which the old British Empire played a bigger part in Australia's external interests than it now does, the international image of Australia was very much that of Bradman. He unfailingly did his country proud, as a player and a man. Later, as an administrator, he performed outstanding services for Australian and international cricket.

Which brings me to the superb Bradman Albums, whose publication we are celebrating today. The highs - and the very few lows - of Don's career are well-known to many of us. But those facts are vividly brought to life by this priceless collection of personal memorabilia - cuttings, letters, diary extracts, photographs. These two volumes can only add lustre to the brilliant Bradman legend.

Among the very first entries is a newspaper account of one of my favourite Bradman stories. In his autobiography, My Cricketing Life, Don refers to the fact that he first began to keep a scrap-book of newspaper cuttings when he started to play for Bowral as a seventeen year old.

He writes:

"The next cuttings relate the extraordinary tale of a match between Bowral and Moss Vale. The match lasted six Saturdays. Our captain was my uncle, George Whatman, and when he won the toss he sent me in first wicket. At 'stumps', as we call close of play in Australia, - (Don must have put that in for Godfrey Evans' benefit) - I was 80, not out.

Next Saturday came and I went on batting. At the finish that day the Bowral score was 475 for one wicket. I was 279, still in, and Uncle George was about a hundred. To cut a long story short, I was caught when I was exactly 300; my uncle made 220, and we won by an innings."

And there, on page 13 of the Albums, is the scoreboard of Bowral's epic innings of 9 for 672 declared, which includes as its highlights:

Don Bradman	c.	Prigg by Ryder	300
G. Whatman	b.	S. Tickner	227

The only relief for the Moss Vale bowlers comes with

V. Bradman	b.	Aynsléy	1
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and, "Dick Whatman did not bat owing to a broken toe."

Among other 300's recorded in these pages are those he scored in successive Test series in England in 1930 and 1934. It is no wonder that a copy of a poster of the London 'Star' of 20 August 1930 reproduced here, reads simply, and with an enormous sense of relief, "He's Out" (the Don had just scored 232 in the Fifth Test).

At the other end of the scale are the few but famous ducks - bowled first ball in the Melbourne bodyline test by Bill Bowes, who sadly died the other day (Don got 103 not out in the second innings); bowled second ball by Eric Hollies in his final innings at the Oval in 1948, a delivery which ensured immortality for Hollies and at the same time averted the divine wrath that would have undoubtedly accompanied a Test average of 100.

As one who has always been alive to the parallels of cricket and politics, I was fascinated by the press cuttings from the period December 1936 - January 1937 alleging divisions in the Australian team and lack of loyalty to Bradman as captain. We all know where that sort of thing can lead.

In this case, history records that Don spiritedly denied the allegations, stuck resolutely by his players and led Australia from a desperate position 2-nil down to a brilliant 3-2 victory. That is the stuff heroes are made of.

And there is no more heroic story than that of the Leeds Test in 1948, when Australia was set 400 to win in under six hours on the last day on a worn pitch and got them with seven wickets and fifteen minutes to spare, thanks to a stand of 300 between Arthur Morris and Don. How many teams already 2-nil up and determined to go through a tour unbeaten would have gone for the runs, let alone have got them at 70 an hour?

It is no wonder that, in the "Bradman Album", Don describes that tour as the pinnacle of his cricketing life and comments that Australia's victory at Leeds and his own part in it surpass all other moments of sporting satisfaction.

And may I also say what a thrill it is to see so many great cricketers from 1948 here tonight and to take this opportunity to offer a personal salute to them.

Kevin Weldon and the team at Rigby Publishers deserve our heartiest congratulations on realising this splendid project. And it is particularly pleasing that the proceeds from tonight's occasion will go to the Crippled Children's Society.

I would like to end my remarks by referring once more to the character of Bradman the man and Bradman the cricketer - the man they want to build statues of in India, the man whose interviews with Norman May are eagerly awaited 40 years after he finished playing, the man who so generously and graciously led Australia's cricketing fraternity in a tribute to Les Favell earlier this year.

And I can do no better than use Don's own words from the Introduction to the Bradman Albums:

"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, and I am sure I speak for all of us here when I say this, you most certainly did.
