



PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP,
RECEPTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S ELEVEN - WELCOME TO
THE TEAMS, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, 11 NOVEMBER 1992

Ladies and gentlemen.

Let me begin by saying that on behalf of the Government I am delighted to welcome the West Indies and Australian cricket teams to this reception in their honour.

In particular I am sure everyone here will want to join me in welcoming the West Indies cricket team to Australia.

No doubt it is easier for me to say this than it is for someone who has to play against them.

But Australian cricketers, being of the traditional mould that enjoys a challenge, no doubt are looking forward to the summer.

Because, little as I know about the game, I know it has to be said that playing the West Indies represents the biggest challenge in modern cricket.

For sixty years they have produced legendary players.

In the last fifteen they have produced legendary teams - they have been consistently the world champions.

You might ask how someone who is not a renowned cricket lover gets to know such things.

But how does a non-cricket person like myself get to know about the West Indies?

I know because the West Indies are legendary - you can't help but know about them.

And you can't help but admire them. You can't be at the top for so long without having something special about you.

You can't come from behind like they did in Barbados to beat South Africa without there being something special about them.

All comparisons with the trend in national opinion polls are, of course, totally invidious and out of order.

The thing about great sportsmen and women is that they have something which goes beyond excellence and commitment and belief in themselves - they have spirit.

They lift the game to the realms of art. Ultimately that's why everyone knows about the West Indies.

Great sportsmen and women can also lift a game to the level of the contests involved in life itself.

Contests between Australian and West Indies sides have long been fierce and uncompromising.

I don't have any problem with that - I have much the same attitude to the Parliament.

It's where the game is won and lost, and if you're serious about your profession and the country you're playing for, you play seriously.

But you'll play better if you love the game.

If you take pleasure in it.

If you've got a sense of humour about it.

And I hope that we see these things this summer - dead serious but uplifting and inspiriting.

Now I haven't said anything about my side yet.

A lot of you probably don't think I had much to do with the selection of it.

Not true. I insisted that Allan Border was in it.

I can tell you now that I said to the member of my staff responsible for cricket - is Allan Border in it, mate?

And he said - of course he's in it.

And I said - just as bloody well.

There's no need to thank me now, Allan. I wasn't going to let them leave you out

I said, if Allan's in it we're in with a show - aren't we?

I said before that to stay at the top for a long time is the mark of someone special.

There is really nothing more to be said about Allan Border.

I mean, like the West Indies, even I not only know who Allan Border is, but I feel like I know something about him.

He is the definitive Australian cricketer of his era, which is to say that he's more than the best over the period - he's the cricketer who has done more than any other to describe us to the world and to ourselves.

You can say about Allan that when he's in it - we're all in it.

We're all out there with him, and the best thing about it is, we're only speaking metaphorically.

Now I won't hold you up any longer.

I welcome both sides - and wish them luck tomorrow and in the coming series.

To the West Indies team I say I hope you enjoy your stay in Australia. You know you are always very welcome.

To the Australian team I say good luck, you know you have the nation behind you.

To both sides - I hope it's a great contest played in great spirit, and that tomorrow's match sets the pattern for the whole series.

I'll be out there tomorrow to toss the coin and check the weather and put the key in the pitch and all those other things you have to do before a cricket match.

Good luck to all of you.

Thank you.