

A Cautionary Tale: Be Careful of What You Wish For !!!

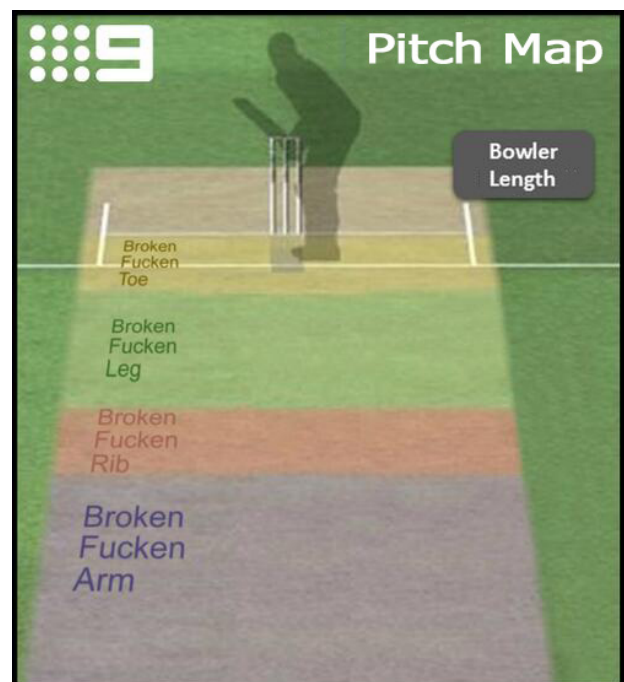
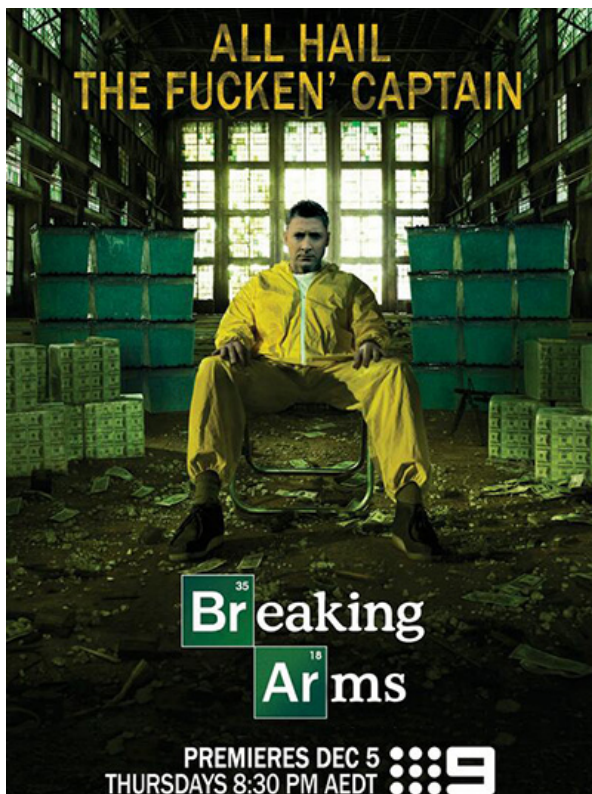
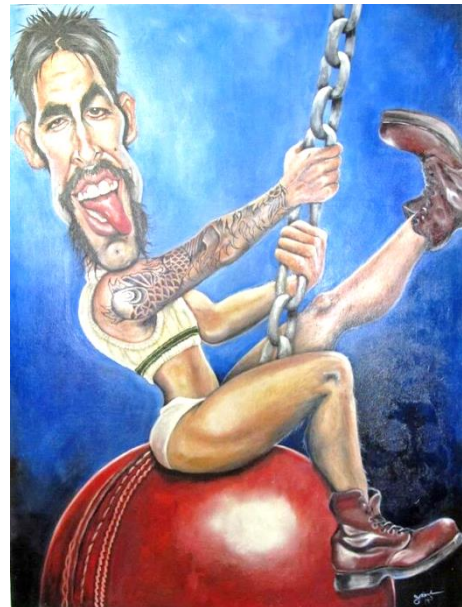
Or THIS... (A Tweet from the Barmy Army)



Could lead to THIS...



Because of THIS...



Sir Ian Botham's Ashes Series Preview: Get Ready for a 5-0 Whitewash

By Sir Ian Botham | Wed, 20 Nov 2013 (excerpts from Unibet website article)

I've just touched down in Australia and there's a lot of talk down here about how the upcoming Ashes series will be closer than the last one, which England won convincingly during the summer past. Pundits and protagonists down here are certain that their home side can really take the game to Alastair Cook's tourists, but I can't see the Aussies having enough quality to win even a solitary test match.

This could prove to be a nightmare series for Michael Clarke and his side. They're in a period of transition and have undoubtedly improved under the leadership of Darren Lehmann, but just as they're trying to rebuild they've been hit by a string of injuries. The home crowd are not used to losing down here and they won't be afraid to vent their frustrations should things start to go wrong.

There's been a bit of pre-Ashes banter flying around in the media lately. I saw that Warney had been giving Alastair Cook a bit of stick for being a 'boring and negative captain'. Well, as far as I'm concerned, the Aussies have enough problems of their own right now, so they're probably best advised to focus on their own team.

Meanwhile, on the pitch, England are superior to Australia in almost every department. The quicker pitches in Australia will help the Aussie bowlers but will also serve to facilitate the batting skills of our top order. I still don't believe Australia's bowling attack are capable of taking 20 English wickets in a test match. All the while that is the case, we will not lose a single match.

Earlier this year, at the start of the summer, Unibet asked me for my thoughts on the back to back series schedule ahead. Back then I tipped 5-0 at home and 5-0 away; a double whitewash, no less. Sure, it didn't turn out 5-0 at home, but that's only because bad light and a spot of rain saved the Aussies. With bright sunshine and long days ahead in Australia this time out, there will be no escape, and at odds of \$34.00, backing 5-0 England is too good to ignore.

In conclusion, I am really looking forward to this series kicking off at the Gabba in Brisbane on 21st November. The Aussies never go down without a fight, so it will be a keenly contested series for sure, but it is up to Alastair Cook and co to make the most of the fact that we are facing an inferior team. It hasn't happened often in the history of this great event, so let's push on and rub their noses in it!

Sir Ian Botham: Australia's Whitewash of Spineless England is Depressing

5 Jan 2014 (Sky Sports website article)

Ruthless Australia finished off spineless England with embarrassing ease, says Sir Ian Botham.

Michael Clarke's side completed a 5-0 Ashes whitewash with a thumping 281-run victory inside three days in Sydney as the tourists bettered their disastrous first-innings of 155 by just 11 runs as they were bowled out in 31.4 overs.

Only three batsmen - Michael Carberry (43), Ben Stokes (32) and Stuart Broad (42) - made double figures as man-of-the-match Ryan Harris finished with 5-25 and man-of-the-series Mitchell Johnson bagged 3-40 to finish with 37 scalps at 13.97 overall.

Earlier in the day, Chris Rogers (119) had completed a century to help Australia set a victory target of 448 by scoring 276 in their second innings - a target Botham said England never looked like challenging.

"I'm pretty depressed and embarrassed - I use that word, embarrassed, and I mean it," he said. "I feel sorry for the fans because they haven't had any value. The juggernaut started up in Brisbane where they got bullied and they've been hammered throughout the series and it has been pretty weak, to be honest. I am not allowed to use the words that are flashing through my head at the moment. I just think it was spineless."

"Mitchell Johnson is one bloke bowling at 90mph and he just seemed to ruffle everyone up. All of the other bowlers backed him up - Ryan Harris has been magnificent, Peter Siddle has been a workhorse and Nathan Lyon has picked up wickets. England have been steamrollered. If it had been a boxing match it would have been stopped weeks ago."

"They had their chances in the first innings but Brad Haddin has been such a driving force in that side. He's vice-captain, so he sets an example. Every time they've been in trouble whether it's 132-6 or 97-5 here, he's turned up and he's got tough runs at the right time, which has given the bowlers a margin to work with."

"Australia have been brilliant and they've never let England back in once they've got England down. There was no letting them back up off the floor. They put the foot down on the throat and they held it there until they win. They are ruthless."

Botham said things have unravelled so quickly for England - who won the previous Ashes series 3-0 last summer - because the senior players had not stood up, while the lower-middle order had not been able to cope with Johnson's pace.

In 2010-11 Alastair Cook scored 766 runs but this time around he, Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell have only managed a combined nine runs more and haven't scored a century between them, while the tail has frequently failed to dig the side out of trouble.

"It's the fear-factor of Mitchell Johnson," said Botham. "From five wickets down you expect to see the late middle-order and the tail contributing with the bat. It wasn't happening and it hasn't happened throughout the series. They've been blown away, they've been startled rabbits, they've been hopping about, fending it off."

"They've had a wake-up call. They probably haven't faced someone bowling at 90mph for quite some time - that's the way it appeared, anyway. That's the scary part for me. As a professional sportsman at this level playing on the surfaces they play on, which have been good pitches, there is no excuse."

"I think England have got to grasp this now and say 'ok, we've got some really hard thinking to do'. I'm not talking about a mass cull but they've got to start looking at some of these younger players. Ben Stokes came into the side and was a breath of fresh air. There has got to be a few more of those out there. You can't keep turning out the same team if it doesn't fire. You expect a response from the senior players and it hasn't come in this series."

England Thrashing Spells Death of a Team

By Tom Fordyce, Chief Sports Writer, BBC Sport | 29 Dec 2013

This is no longer just a losing Ashes series. It is the death of a team: staked out in the unrelenting Australian sun, guts ripped open, dingoes feasting.

In losing the first three Tests by a combined margin of 749 runs, England had suffered the most complete of sporting defeats.

In being thrashed in the fourth by eight wickets, less than a day after being 116 runs ahead with all 10 second innings wickets in hand, they have reached the end.

When once-great teams fall, they fall far and fast, in ways that scarcely seemed possible in their lofty days of easy superiority.

So it was on the bright MCG outfield on Sunday. It wasn't just the dropped catches, spilled in an incomprehensible manner, or the wanton mis-fields, or the tactics born not just of desperation but disorientation and delusion.

It was the body language - the lowered eyes, the slumped shoulders, the sense not of a single unit but of 11 individuals, lost and alone in the wide green spaces, all of who seemed to be saying, I want to escape, but I can't.

No other sport extends the torture like Test cricket. If a big-name tennis player had blown his Australian Open chances so comprehensively at the adjacent Rod Laver Arena he would have been gone in half a day. If a top-ranked golfer falls apart at a major, he is spared further humiliation by the quick mercy of the cut.

England's agony has gone on, day after day, like that same golfer being forced to play round after failing round, an Open every week, duffing drives and missing putts, swing in pieces, galleries guffawing. For a Test team in a death-dive, only the scenery changes. The story remains the same.

It is a cruel, gratuitous process for those sucked in. You could see it on Sunday in the loneliness of Alastair Cook, stripped on this tour both of his old form and three of his senior players, impotent at first slip as Australia cantered to the 201 runs they needed for victory, so haunted by what was happening that he dropped a catch that would have stuck to a wall.

You could see it in the anger of the Englishmen watching, in the blame that gets cast at even the innocent when a team capitulates so totally, at the way talk moves beyond a mere criticism of sporting skill and into the denunciation of a man's character.

It matters little some may be without fault. England's team psychologist Mark Bawden, to offer one example, has been indispensable to several England players, a factor not only in their highs but in alleviating myriad unseen lows. But there will be those who demand his dismissal, just as others will the similarly excellent batting coach Graham Gooch, because people want explanations, and they want scapegoats.

For those on the pitch it can be more brutal still. Players - experienced men, successful men - are pulled apart and opened up. Michael Carberry's technical flaws are no longer just his own or those of a few canny county bowlers; they have become public property, his humiliations discussed by people he will never meet. It can be an unedifying sight. But it is happening, just as it will happen again to other sporting sides ambushed by advancing years and younger, hungrier opponents.

As the year closes, so does an era on this England team. Three years ago indomitable, unbeaten in 13 Tests just six weeks ago, they are now not just decaying but perished. It has become the classic case-study. There is the frantic selection and rapid reappraisal: call in Jonny Bairstow, watch him fail with the bat and miss two chances with the gloves, immediately decide he is not up to the task.

There are the wild gambles in tactics: needing to bowl a side out, on a fourth-day pitch, and turning not to your specialist spinner Monty Panesar (167 Test wickets) but a part-timer, Joe Root, with 14 first-class wickets in his entire career.

There are the calls for heads to roll: questions about captain Cook's future, without any thought to who might come next; an attack on coach's Andy Flower's methods, even though they took the team to number one in the world, even though they beat India away and this same Australia side at home.

There is the style of dismissals - death not by a thousand cuts, but by a hundred slogs, by countless desperate edges; the crisis calls for fresh sacrificial victims, even though Gary Ballance and Scott Borthwick have never played at this level and could be scarred for good by being steamrollered in Sydney.

And there is the raising of the opposition raised to supernatural levels. You can understand it with Midas Mitch, the man whose golden arm has lit up this series, but this Australia side is not the vintage of 2006-7. Nathan Lyon is no longer a groundsman, just as Chris Rogers is exactly the sort of short sighted, colour-blind 36-year-old that England would love to have opening their innings. But in their failings Cook's men have turned them into superheroes.

As Shane Watson clouded the winning runs at the MCG on Sunday afternoon, England's resigned travelling support were bellowing their own version of Sloop John B. It ends with a lyrical tweak: "...in a glass cabinet, the urn stays at home." Only the barmiest of armies could have resisted the urge to stick with the original. Is this the worst trip they've ever been on? Barring a miracle at the SCG, it would be hard to argue.

When England's rugby union team were similarly thrashed on their visit to Australia 15 years ago, the humiliation was so total that it became known as the Tour of Hell. Choose your own epitaph this time around. Tour of Torment? The Disaster Down Under? If they weren't so stricken by what has gone on, England's players might find a fitting way to say it themselves: this has been the winter of our dismemberment.

Australia Crush England to Seal 5-0 Whitewash

By Tom Fordyce, Chief sports writer, BBC Sport | 5 Jan 2014

England folded in dismal fashion to lose the fifth Test within three days and with it the Ashes series 5-0 to end their miserable winter in entirely appropriate style. Alastair Cook's men were bowled out for a feeble 166 inside 32 overs to be thrashed by 281 runs in Sydney, at one stage losing four wickets in 11 balls.

It was the story of the past six weeks compressed into one final chastening day as Mitchell Johnson took three more pivotal wickets with ferocious pace to end with 37 in the series at an average of 13.9. Ryan Harris mopped up the tail to claim 5-25. All of England's senior batsmen once again failed on a tour when not a single one has totalled 300 runs, and when six Australians have well in excess.

It is only the third whitewash in Ashes history, and is arguably the worst tour England have ever undertaken, after they came into this series as favourites and against a side beaten in seven of their previous nine Tests.

England won the toss here at the SCG but ended up humiliated once again, a team unrecognisable in personnel from the one that began the series in Brisbane but suffering an identical hiding.

Not in a single Test have they got close, losing by 381 runs, 218 runs, 150 runs, eight wickets and now this. They were set a distant 448 to win but could not even last three hours as Michael Clarke's rampant side capped their remarkable renaissance by taking all 10 wickets in under two sessions.

Australia had been branded the worst team ever to tour England en route to losing last summer's corresponding series 3-0. But they fully deserved every thumping victory on their own soil, their tactics, aggression and desire dismantling opposition that had travelled with such confidence and expectation.

Johnson had Cook caught behind for seven before pace partner Ryan Harris took care of Ian Bell for 16 and Kevin Pietersen for six as England gave up with barely a whisper. The carnage accelerated after tea when top scorer Michael Carberry top-edged Johnson behind for 43 and Gary Ballance was trapped in front for seven. Nathan Lyon saw off Jonny Bairstow without scoring and Scott Borthwick to reduce England to 95-7. Although Ben Stokes (32) and Stuart Broad (42) slogged with resigned abandon, Harris took the final three wickets to trigger giddy celebrations among a sold-out crowd.

Australia had earlier piled on the runs at pace as they added 136 runs to their overnight 140-4, Chris Rogers compiling his second century in two Tests to become the top run-scorer across these back-to-back Ashes series. Rogers made 119 before being caught and bowled by debutant Scott Borthwick, one of three wickets for the leg-spinner as the lower order slogged merrily. Borthwick also picked up the wicket of Brad Haddin for 28, but not before Haddin had set a record for the most runs scored in a Test series by a man batting at seven or lower. His 493 runs at an average of 61 take him past his predecessor Adam Gilchrist and, as much as Johnson's wickets have decided this series, so too have Haddin's runs.

It is just one in a litany of statistics that underline Australia's total dominance. They scored 10 centuries to England's one, had the top six batsmen by average and three of the best four bowlers by average. Man of the series Johnson's 37 wickets came at just 13.9 apiece, while Harris ended with 22 at 19, Lyon 19 at 29 and Peter Siddle 16 at 24.

The magnitude of the latest defeat will bring with it much soul-searching in the England camp, with questions over the unresolved future of coach Andy Flower and several of the players. No-one saw this whitewash coming, but that does not make its impact any less damning.

Ashes 2013-14 Results Summary

1st Test, Brisbane - Nov 21-24, 2013.

Australia 295 and 401/7d; **England** 136 and 179 (81.1 ov, target: 561)

Australia won by 381 runs

2nd Test, Adelaide - Dec 5-9, 2013.

Australia 570/9d and 132/3d; **England** 172 and 312 (101.4 ov, target: 531)

Australia won by 218 runs

3rd Test, Perth - Dec 13-17, 2013.

Australia 385 and 369/6d; **England** 251 and 353 (103.2 ov, target: 504)

Australia won by 150 runs

4th Test, Melbourne - Dec 26-29, 2013.

England 255 and 179; **Australia** 204 and 231/2 (51.5 ov, target: 231)

Australia won by 8 wickets

5th Test, Sydney - Jan 3-5, 2014.

Australia 326 and 276; **England** 155 and 166 (31.4 ov, target: 448)

Australia won by 281 runs

Catalogue of collapses

Brisbane:	England lost 6-9 in their first innings and 4-9 in their second.
Adelaide:	England lost 6-24 in their first innings of 172 all out.
Perth:	England lost 5-43 in first innings 251.
Melbourne:	England lost 6-53 in first innings and 5-6 in second innings.
Sydney:	England lost 5-23 in first innings and 4-8 in second innings



England Should Be Ashamed and Embarrassed to Lose so Abjectly to Australia

By Geoffrey Boycott, The Telegraph | 05 Jan 2014

There is a real danger England will sweep this 5-0 defeat under the carpet, pretend it never happened and it was nobody's fault. They will carry on with the same captain, coach, players and planning.

Well that is not good enough. The players have been mentally dissected and broken. There was no fight or spirit left in them and they were totally humiliated by an Australian team that is good, but not great. The last whitewash was achieved by a team containing Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Adam Gilchrist. They had three once-in-a-lifetime players and there was no shame in losing 5-0 to them. But we should be ashamed and embarrassed to lose so abjectly to this lot.

Only one bowler has been out of the ordinary: Mitchell Johnson. We have beaten ourselves and that is why this has been the tour from hell. Only Stuart Broad can say he has performed up to standard. Eight top class players came out here with excellent Test records: Alastair Cook, Ian Bell, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Matt Prior, Graeme Swann, James Anderson and Broad. Only one, Broad, has lived up to it and enhanced his reputation. The rest, seven out of eight, have been rubbish.

Andy Flower says he is up for the challenge of turning this around and the England and Wales Cricket Board will give him a chance because it likes nice people who do not cause it any problems.

But has he really got the fight for it? Is he really strong enough to make difficult decisions? His recent calls do not bode well. They have been a joke: Picking Simon Kerrigan and Chris Woakes at the Oval last summer, three fast bowlers for this tour (Steve Finn, Boyd Rankin and Chris Tremlett) who disappeared without trace, and Scott Borthwick, a club standard leg-spinner, for this Test. If he was a manager in the Premier League he would have had the sack long ago. Loads of the backroom staff would be out of a job as well.

The England and Wales Cricket Board says it does not want to make knee-jerk reactions but we also do not want complacency and comfort. That is not going to win back the Ashes.

Over recent years England have employed more backroom staff believing it makes them more professional. In fact, they have overcomplicated professionalism. We have coaches for everything. Psychologists, team analysts and an 82 page diet book that made us a laughing stock. It is time they got into the real world and stopped wasting money on frivolous luxuries that do not make any difference when Mitchell Johnson is whistling it around your earhole. The players have stopped thinking for themselves.

In my day when we had a problem, either with batting or bowling, we used to talk it over with our colleagues in the team and worked things out together. It built team morale. It engaged everyone in the dressing room. Now we have robots waiting for a coach and an analyst with a laptop to tell them what they are doing wrong.

Well, I can tell our batsmen what they did wrong. They forgot the principles of Test match batting. They batted like one-day

clowns. The batting was as bad as anything I have seen from an England side. We have stopped playing Test match innings. Somehow we have to get our batsmen to remember how to bat for long periods of time. At the moment if they do not hit a four for three balls they play an outrageous one-day shot. All our players play so much Test, one-day and Twenty20 cricket that they find it impossible to adapt to each format. We have to find a way to reduce the workload on the major players – Cook, Bell and Pietersen – so they are fresh enough to drive our bid to regain the Ashes in 2015.

I would like to see it start with our major players only appearing in Test cricket this summer to try and get them into the habit of playing long innings in five day cricket, not terrible crash, bang, wallop shots that get them out.

Our two main seam bowlers in 2015 will be Broad and Steven Finn. They should play only in Tests too next summer. I think it is possible for Jimmy Anderson to still be a major bowler in 2015 because the series will be played in English conditions. But only if his workload is reduced. He has played a lot of international cricket over the past few years and as you get older you cannot keep up the level of performance. He has given the impression in Australia that he is tired and if I was in charge I would not play him in any of the one-dayers in England next summer. We have to protect him and play him only in the seven Tests against Sri Lanka and India.

I know we have a World Cup to win in 2015 but the players go to Sri Lanka for a one-day series in October and then play a series of matches in Australia before the tournament starts. That is plenty of time to get back into one-day mode.

Before this tour Finn was our best bowling prospect for years taking four wickets per Test, bowling quick from his 6ft 7in height. But he has finished this tour as a wreck. People are saying the ball is not coming out of his hand properly, his wrist action is wrong and everything is negative.

Somebody on the coaching staff has to put their hand up and say we have messed him up. I do not care about the fact he knocks the stumps down occasionally. It is about how many wickets you take. I would stop concentrating on the technical tinkering and filling his head with rubbish, and tell him to go out and bowl quick. Send him to Sri Lanka with the Lions next month and just bowl without any coaches getting in his ear.

Somehow we have to get him back to where he was before the coaches started meddling.

There has to be some really clear thinking and the planning for 2015 has to start now. I know we have other cricket before we play Australia in 2015.

But if you ask the English public what they want more than anything they will say to beat Australia. That will do more for English cricket than anything else and is even more important after this drubbing.

We cannot just say this was a one off and shrug our shoulders as if everything will be fine in 2015, because unless there are changes, Australia will give us another good hiding.

Alistair Cook in Adelaide - bowled Mitchell Johnson 3.



Alistair Cook in Perth -

bowled Ryan Harris 0.



Alistair Cook back in England – bowled by the Queen 0.

