

## MELBOURNE PRESS CLUB

### Press Club Lunch 1 December 2003

#### Speaker: Sunil Gavaskar

**Ian Henderson (IH):** The cricket bible, Wisden, is littered with the name and accomplishments of Sunil Gavaskar. Described by Wisden as one of the greatest opening batsmen of all time, Gavaskar has scored more test hundreds, that's 34, than any other batsmen, including Bradman. He was the first player to score 10,000 runs and he made one of those centuries here in Melbourne: 118 in the 1977-78 season. But as any reasonable student of the game will tell you. it's not just the number of centuries made that qualifies a champion but the circumstances in which they were made. And anyone who watched Mark Philippoussis yesterday would say his win in that match against the odds was one of the great ones because of the circumstances of his injury and the likelihood that everyone probably didn't give him much of a show. Thirteen of Sunil Gavaskar's centuries were made against the West Indies at a time when the Caribbean pace bowling attack was at its most fearful and effective. Indeed, his first Test match in the West Indies was the first time India had beaten that country. I'm told in India they refer to two eras in the nation's cricket history: divided into BG and AG. BG is of course *before Gavaskar*, when India had a sorry record of losing many more matches than it won. AG, *after Gavaskar* the whole psychology changed and India began winning consistently.

Here's how Wisden rates his impact. It says, "...he earned respect for Indian cricket and he taught his team mates the virtue of professionalism. The self-actualisation of Indian cricket began under him."

Australia first saw him in 1971 as a member of the World Eleven that came up against the ferocity of the Dennis Lillee-led attack in full flight. That outing is also down in the record books in a less glamorous light. The World Eleven bundled out for a mere 59. I understand, Sunil, that you have a story from that day that you might like to tell us later on. You might also like to tell us about that moment during your last tour of Australia in 1986 when you were controversially given out LBW and walked off in protest. Believe me, we have certain views about umpires here in Australia as well. Back to Wisden. To complete the picture of a remarkable career: "Sunil Gavaskar was one of the greatest opening batsmen of all times and certainly the most successful," it says. "His game was built around a near-perfect technique and enormous powers of concentration. It is hard to visualise a more perfect defence. Virtually unbreachable, it made his wicket among the hardest to earn."

I should add he has also deployed that stout defence to uphold cricket's finest traditions. And we've noted appreciatively in this country the stand you've taken against sledging, Sunil, displaying the same sort of courage that was the hallmark of your performances on the pitch.

Ladies and gentlemen, Sunil Gavaskar is revered not just in India but around the world by true lovers of cricket and sport in general. It is a great privilege to have him with us here today and my great pleasure to invite him to the podium to address you. Thank you.

**Sunil Gavaskar (SG):** I must say, ladies and gentlemen, that I am pretty flattered that - in spite of the Davis Cup-winning team being felicitated not too far away from here - you have chosen to be here for this lunch. Truly flattered that you have done so but a

trifle disappointed that this happens to be the last luncheon of the year for the Press Club.

Somewhere down the line, Ian, in spite of all the fantastic introduction I think got something wrong Ian, because I was not a tail ender I was an opening batsman and having me as a number 11 was just not quite right. But thank you. Thank you for that great introduction.

Some of you the other day might have heard why the introduction is so important to me and I'd just like to repeat it because truly, since the time I'd started playing cricket, I was never introduced by my own self. My uncle Madhav Mantri played four Test matches for India, went to England with the 1952 team, to Pakistan with the 1955 team. He was a wicket keeper. And when I started my school career, starting to play for schools, every time that I got runs I was referred to as Madhav Mantri's nephew - never by my own self.

We went to the West Indies, my first tour. We did well. We came back having won the series for the first time. I got a few runs in that series. And we had lots of felicitations. I mean, oh, wrong time for the phone to ring. We had plenty of felicitations because it was very rare for India to win at that stage. And at the felicitation functions the master of ceremonies would start by introducing the captain. (The captain)... outwitted Gary Sobers, which wasn't really very difficult but as captain not as player mind you. Outwitted Gary Sobers, did this, got this right, tactics were brilliant etc Then (our) vice captain got wickets at crucial stages. (Someone else) got wickets with consecutive deliveries with the Test that we won: got Clive Lloyd and Gary Sobers off consecutive deliveries. Then (another batsman) got three hundreds in that series. Six hundred and forty runs ....and called the Renaissance man of Indian cricket. He was introduced.....But I was lucky on that tour because Gary Sobers of all people had dropped me three times. The first test match I didn't play. Kenia Jayantilal was a fine player. He was picked to play instead of me. He got a short one from a West Indies quick bowler. Tried to avoid the ball. The ball kissed the bat, went wide of second slip and second slip was Gary Sobers and he dived to his wrong side. He was a left hander. He dived to his wrong side, picked the ball inches from the ground. Jayantilal never played for India after that. I played the next test match. And I was about 12 when I went for a cover drive, regular edge, regulation catch to Gary Sobers. Dropped it. I mean how lucky can one get. The previous test he takes one of the great catches that I've seen and then drops me when I'm 12. I got a half-century, kept my place in the side. Next test short ball outside the off-stump go for the square cut. The ball was flying. Hit Gary Sobers in the chest and he dropped it. And so that became the highlight of the tour so much so that Gary who wasn't in great form for the first three matches of that series started to come to our dressing room and saying let me touch you. And let me get some of that luck. But that was the highlight of the tour in-as-much as papers back home were saying how Gary Sobers had been kind to me.

So at this introduction ceremony at this felicitation when we had come back after having introduced the captain etc...the captain and the rest of the players and I was the baby of the team so naturally I expected that I would be introduced last. And I was looking forward to it just like I was looking forward to the introduction by Ian. And the master of ceremonies said, " And now ladies and gentleman, here is a man who was dropped by Gary Sobers no less than three times." Not by the name Sunil Gavaskar mind you.

We went to England two months down the road and we won the series again for the first time in England. And in the first test at Lords, John Snow shoved me to the

ground trying to take a run. He veered off course and that's what happens with a lot of quick bowlers. He veered off course, shoulder charged me and poor little me was down on the ground, all fours trying to scramble back to the crease. I did manage. Snow was disciplined. He wasn't picked for the next test. He came back for the final test but he was dropped. But that was again the highlight. So when we won and we had the felicitation again the master of ceremonies go on again with the captain Wadikar winning the toss at the right time, all those things all those back again. But when it came to me it was, "and here is the man shoulder charged by John Snow." Then of course we had a down period. Didn't win anything. And as Mr ... will testify in India when you don't win anything there are no felicitations. There were no felicitations. So no question of being introduced anyway. Not even invited for rotary club functions, I'm terribly sorry. No free lunches. No free dinners.

But just around that time my youngest sister fell in love and decided to get married to who I think is the best Indian batsman of my generation and one of the great batsmen of cricket... Vishwanath. And thereafter wherever I went I was introduced at Vishwanath's brother-in-law. So, Ian, thank you very much. I much appreciate the great introduction.

You guys have had a busy few weeks haven't you? I did say to myself that I would not bring up the Rugby World Cup but Rugby World Cup, Davis Cup, which was fantastic yesterday. Mark Philippoussis doing a fabulous job. With that shoulder injury winning six-zero was something else. Mind you if something like that had happened in cricket they would have talked about ah-hah is there something wrong. Is there some match fixing here. Remember that man had a very serious injury yet he played his heart out for Australia. And I think that's what we as sportsmen try to do when we get that unique privilege and honour of representing our country.

Then of course there was Steve Waugh's retirement which I am sure took all of you by surprise just as it took all of us in India by surprise because we were hoping that Steve would be able to prolong his career 'til India. Because that is something he dearly wanted to do to come down to India and beat India in India. And we were hoping that he would come down there because then we would prove that he could do a lot of things against England but against India he wouldn't be able to do everything that he wanted.

But truly retirement is a very tough decision to take, very tough decision. Simply because you've spent the greater part of your youth practising, trying to perfect your art, your skill. And then suddenly to give it up is a very, very tough decision. Somebody did mention earlier this afternoon that maybe politicians should take a lesson as to when to go and to go out on their terms. But the thing is politicians have really nothing to look forward to after they retire. But for a cricketer, for a sportsman is there something to look forward to? Is there a career that he can look at. Because while he's been playing the game maybe for his country maybe at a slightly lower level, while he's playing the game others have actually gone ahead of him in the corporate world perhaps, in any other field others have gone ahead of him, perhaps. So it's not an easy decision to make. It's a very, very tough decision. And often you tend to think can I play one season more. When you look at the reflection in the mirror it doesn't show you any lines on your face. It doesn't show that you've got less hair than when you started playing the game. You tend to think of yourself as the same young man. But that's not the case.

In my case I remember I decided to play til 1986 and quit. And Imran Khan the Pakistani captain who was in England at that time came and said when he heard that I was going to retire, he said you can't do that. Let's have one last fling against each

other. And I said no, there's nothing planned against Pakistan. He said, no, no there is a tour planned. Pakistan is coming to India early next year. So don't quit. Let's have one last final fling against each other. Obviously he knew something that I didn't because at that stage there was nothing absolutely in the plans. And it was great. It was great because I decided yes, that'll be fantastic. For us in India anything against Pakistan you play with your heart and soul and everything. And I can actually understand the devastation you must have felt when you lost the rugby finals to England because it's absolutely the same feeling that we have when we lose to Pakistan or when we play against Pakistan ..... We just do not want to lose. And it's vice versa. They don't want to lose to India either.

Steve Waugh's retirement also would have given you in the press plenty of opportunity to pen your tributes. There were the conspiracy theories as well. And conspiracy theories only involved the chairman of the selection committee and not the other members of the selection committee. Which is pretty much like in India. We have conspiracy theories by the dozens. For every little act that happens, particularly as far as cricket is concerned, there is some sort of conspiracy that is thought about. He wasn't picked because of this. He wasn't picked because of that. But the captain invariably is the one who gets blamed. The absence of left-hand spinners in the Indian team is blamed on Sourav Ganguly because Sourav Ganguly plays the left-hand spinner so well and therefore doesn't rate the Indian spinners. That's the theory that goes on in India. And that's the reason why left-hand spinners don't normally get a break is what people say. But the captain in India does not actually have a vote in the selection committee. He goes there. He is co-opted along with the coach. He and the coach are co-opted onto the selection committee but they do not have a vote. But conspiracy theories are pretty much part of the game.

I'd like to wish Steve who's been a tremendous player for Australia happiness in his retirement and hope that he can continue all the great work that he's been doing. He's been doing some wonderful charity work in India and I hope he can continue with it. I know that Steve at some stage had stated his intention of having the Australian team being so superior that they would force a change in the rules in much the same manner that the West Indians of the 70s and the 80s did force of the authorities too think about curbing the use of the bouncer. I'm not too sure exactly what Steve had in mind. But certainly if left to me I would look at a few changes in world cricket starting with wides for example, wides on the offside. I think that the wides on the offside should pretty much be like the wides that are called in limited overs cricket. It's very important because you tend to sort of overlook the fact that if wides down the leg side can be a negative practice, wides on the off-side also can be negative and can be pretty boring for the spectators.

I'd like to look at the user field restrictions in limited overs matches left to the captains. Today you have mandatory 15 overs of field restrictions at the start of the innings. I'd like to look at that option being given to the captains. The captains can think it'll bring out the captaincy aspect of the game. You can have captains having field restrictions in the 50<sup>th</sup> over. You could actually have a captain have so much confidence in his bowling attack that he thinks that he will have numbers 10 and 11 batting in the last 5 or 10 overs and he can actually opt for those five overs to be the time when there should be field restrictions.

I'd like to have a look at the front foot no-ball rule. It causes a lot of problems simply because the umpires are not in a position always to look at the no-ball rule. Also if you bring the bowler back a little bit this business of being worried about the short

ball will certainly go because if you bring bowlers back a foot and a half then he batsmen will be able to hear the call of the no-ball earlier and take advantage of it. Australia has been in the forefront as far as innovations are concerned. It was Australia, which started off with the 15 over field restrictions. Australia was the one that started cricket under lights. Australia was the one that brought in coloured clothing. And the cricketing world looks to Australia to lead the way in giving world cricket innovations that'll make the game more attractive. There is plenty of competition for cricket not so much in India perhaps but the rest of the world from other sports and therefore it is most important that the game becomes more attractive and we have more and more younger players coming in to play the game. Cricket is a lovely game and in my country it is a great unifying force. In spite of all the diversity that we have, diversity of cultures, the language, the dialects, it's one game that brings the country together. And therefore it is very important for us to have role models. We are fortunate that in our cricketers we have some great role models. Sachin Tendulkar is one. In spite of all that he's achieved his feet are firmly planted on the ground. Rahul Dravid's another one. Very articulate very well read and someone who takes his success very lightly. Sourav Ganguly misunderstood to a great extent. He is another terrific role model I think. And with these role models we are hoping that we will be able to keep up producing good cricketers who teach that in our society the strong have to look after the weak. Batsman can't score a hundred unless he has the number ten or sometimes number ten or eleven batting with him. Bowlers can't take wickets unless they have another bowler putting pressure from the other end and the fielders taking the catches or the fielders cutting off the runs. We are just hoping that with the kind of team that we have: we have Zaheer Khan, Mohammad Kaif who's not there in this team **Ifant Batan** and in the kind of times that India is going through this team is looked up to by millions. And when they see Zaheer Khan bowling or an Ifant Batan if he plays but Zaheer Khan, who has been a regular member of the team. When they see Zaheer Khan bowling nobody in India thinks of what religion he belongs to. They just know that here is one man who is going to go out there and try his very best. And for India that is important: the India that is emerging. The India that has it's problems. This is very important. This tour is going to be very, very crucial, very crucial because once again the faith in Indian cricket at the moment is a bit shaky. If India had won the finals then there would have been lot's of confidence. At the moment the confidence is not quite there. Cricket is more than a passion in my country. This Indian team knows that because of the time difference if they don't do well then the whole workday is going to be gone. By the time the match finishes here in Australia it's going to be about 9 or 10 in the morning over there. Just about the time when everybody goes to work. And while you might turn round and say look we've seen pictures of hundreds of thousands of people just standing on the streets outside and electronics and watching the action over there, there are some who do work in India. And for them it will be a major setback if the Indian team does not do well. May I therefore on behalf of the Indian team make a request to all of you present to use your influence and tell the Aussies don't be over confident, we might just bring a surprise. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

**IH:** That was terrific, Sunil but now we get to put you under the griller so have a drink of your water and I'll invite Tim Lane, Greg Baum and Ron Reed up here to lead the inquisition.

**Tim Lane(TL):** I only work in the electronic media. At least I used to. Sunil, the hitmen are next to me. I'm going to open up with a gentle half volley. The numbers: 34 centuries, Steve Waugh, 32; Tendulkar, 31 will almost certainly surpass you unless he falls under an Ambassador cab in the streets in Bombay...

**SG:** Not in Bombay. Nobody will run over Tendulkar. No chance. Absolutely no chance. I mean cars will stop the moment Tendulkar gets on the road. No way. No chance of that. It can happen maybe in Sydney but not...

**TL:** I think Steve Waugh is safe for the moment. Will you be barracking for him? Does your generosity towards him extend to hoping he might make three centuries this summer?

**SG:** So long as those three centuries mean that Australia actually are all out for 210 and India go on to win. I don't mind. But yes I think he's a terrific player. I've always believed, and this is not a cliché, that records are meant to be broken simply because they is a sign of human progress and if Steve does go past it, it will be a fantastic way to go out. I mean he's had a fantastic career and it'll be a fantastic way to go out. Also if he scores three 100s I think it'll give him the opportunity to also be the highest run scorer in test cricket. Anything less than 300 and I think he will probably not get to that 520 that he needs to get past Alan Border.

**TL:** Is that where your veiled comment about the rest of the Australian selection panel becomes relevant?

**SG:** No, I was just referring to the fact that you know in India we get only one person playing the captain because he happens to be the public face of the selection committee. And often there have been situations certainly when I have been captain when I have been blamed for a selection or an omission of a player when in fact that that has not been the case at all. When I in fact it's been exactly the opposite. But the selection committee has wanted a player out or has picked a player who shouldn't have been there. So I know it might have been awkward for AB being on the selection panel to say anything but knowing AB if he had to do a pushing job I think he would have done it a year earlier not now.

**Greg Baum (GB):** Sunil, I'd like to take you back to a couple of incidents in the past. They have the same theme: the walk-off at the MCG in 1981. Do you look back upon that now as the actions of a younger and more impetuous man or was there a principle that you were upholding that still applies?

**SG:** Yes, Ian did mention that I should talk about it. It completely slipped my mind. I'm getting old so you know...It's one of the things that I regret the most in my cricketing career. But there is a background to it and I'm not trying to make excuses. But there is a background to it in as much as the previous day the day before the walkout, and once again Alan Border comes into the picture, Alan Border got a 100 on that day. And we thought he'd been out caught bat pad, once caught behind and maybe a couple of shouts of leg before were pretty close but then bowlers and wicket-keepers always feel that you know the batsman is out. And then when Alan finally was out he tried to sweep **Shivelelo** was bowled behind his legs the umpire had not seen so he walked to the square leg umpire to take his view as to whether it was the

wicket-keeper who had done anything or the bowler. And at which point the wicket keeper had turned round to me and said captain, if this is given not out, I'm going to walk off. And I pacified him by saying no in cricket you accept decisions without any problems and you just carry on with it. And he said no, I'm just going to walk off. And again as I said, I'm not trying to make any excuses but obviously that word walk off would have been imprinted in my mind. So the next day when this happened with me and if you have a look at the video Greg, you will find that I was trudging towards the dressing room with no intention of dragging my partner at this stage. I'd gone about maybe ten or fifteen yards away when one of the Australian's said something. Called me by a part of the female anatomy. So it was like the straw that...I got a bad decision. There I was walking away towards the dressing room. And as batsmen who are upset at being dismissed do I would have gone in the dressing room and I would have thrown my glove or my bat or whatever and I would have raved and ranted but that's all that would have happened. But when that abuse came through that's when something snapped. And if you have a look at the video that's when I actually walked towards Chethan Chauhan and then taken Chethan Chauhan away. It should not have happened. Fortunately for me the manager came down and made sure that Chethan did not cross the boundary line that he stayed onto the ground. But it's something that I regret very much. That happened in 1980-81 not 1985-86 but 1985-86 when I was here for another tour there was another bowler who was making his debut then for Australia and I was well past I think 100 test matches. And Australia had scored 500 runs so they had everybody in attacking positions, catching positions. And I cut this bowler over the slips for a boundary and he came and stood right there in front of me and called me you know by the same part of the female anatomy. Which is what has really absolutely baffled me about Australia and Australians because as far as I'm concerned as a man that part of the female anatomy is very useful for us so I'm always baffled as to why Australians get their gender wrong.

**GB:** Further to the same theme in a way, well not your recent comments, but in Sydney in 1992 I think it was actually Shane Warne's first match. There was a moment, which led to a number of Australian journalists being sued successfully by a number of their fellow Australians. There was a dismissal. I can't recall the circumstances but you came thundering down the stairs of the old Sydney Press Box. You were working as a commentator at the time and you said all Australian umpires are cheats. What did you mean?

**SG:** No I didn't say that.

**GB:** You were quoted as saying that by a number of people.

**SG:** I just said at that stage, I think what I said in my report was to the effect that Australia had the benefit of having thirteen men on the field. I didn't actually call the Australian umpires cheats. But I have to say one thing. When I began my cricket career there was so much that had been written about, I'd read about Indian umpires and sub-continent umpires that when I went to West Indies, England and Australia and luckily for me I happened to go to these three major test cricket playing countries in the same year. 1971-February we went to the West Indies. June, 71 we went to England and Nov 71 as part of the rest of the world team I was in Australia. And therefore I thought the umpiring in all these countries would be flawless. And then to find that decisions, mistakes were being made was a real shocker and even more of a

shocker was to find that no references were being made to some of the mistakes the umpires had made; some of the wrong decisions that were given. In fact there came a stage where I remember it was almost as if when umpires in England, Australia, and New Zealand made an error made a mistake it was human error but the same error in the sub-continent was looked upon as cheating. And that you would certainly agree would get anybody's back up. And in 1992 we thought having had my personal experience of tours of 85, 81 and 77 where we felt that we had some rough decisions taken against us. When India were fighting back in the Sydney game when we thought that this had happened yes I did get a bit upset and wrote that piece about the team.

**GB:** I don't know if you realise that a number of Australian umpires took action after that and succeeded in the courts, which always amused me a little because you didn't name any Australian umpires so they had to recognise themselves in your comments to succeed in their action.

**SG:** I didn't know about that one. But who did they take action against? The newspapers?

**Ron Reed (RR):** Sunil, it sounds as if it wasn't an altogether pleasant experience playing against the Australians 30 or 40 years ago. Is that the case and how do you think their behaviour is perceived these days?

**SG:** I think the Australians have realised that while they're respected as a winning team, they perhaps are not as well liked as, say, the champion West Indies team was of the 1970s and 80s. And I think I sense a real desire to get that way. Look when we play for our countries we get passionate about it. And just like the walk-off where you are so passionate about your country there are things that happen on the field of play, which we regret. But while there has always been this talk about, there being a lot of banter on the field. Banter has always been there but personal abuse has very seldom been part of cricket. In fact it has been to my mind something which has started only in the last 15-odd years. Yes, there have been four-letter words have been used on the field before that but they have been without it being personal like, you know, "what have you f'in eaten for breakfast today. You are so F'in lucky." Those are things, which nobody would really object to. But when a bowler or a fielder goes down and points a finger and is in the face of the opposition with the "F" and all sundry words, I think that is what is a bad example to kids. And I know for a fact that a lot of parents are not encouraging their kids to play cricket only because of this factor, that they would much rather them play tennis or some other sport where there is not this personal abuse that comes through. And I don't feel that there is the need for this personal abuse and I keep giving the example of a Sampras v Agassi Wimbledon finals where Sampras serves on the last day. The grass is not as immaculate at Wimbledon as it is the first day. There is a bad bounce and Agassi misses the forehand completely. The ball goes over the racket. Good luck to Sampras. But does Agassi then swear at Sampras call him all kinds of names? He doesn't. He just walks off to take the next serve. And the next serve, for example, again there is a bad bounce but this time Agassi gets a bit of racket. And the ball lobs above as Sampras rushes to the net and suddenly finds that the ball is going above and lands on Sampras's baseline. Point to Agassi. Sheer luck. Does Sampras then stand at the net and say something to Agassi? He doesn't. And they play for far greater stakes than

cricketers do. So if there is a bit of luck that goes the batsman's way or the bowler's way I don't see why cricketers should resort to abuse. Bit of "oh you're lucky" or something like that, I have no hassles with that. It's the personal abuse and I think that is where a lot of misrepresentation of my views has taken place. I do not have anything against banter. There has been a lot of fantastic humorous banter on the field. Something like when Graeme Hick has been batting and a bowler going up to him and asking him something like "and what does Mr Hick do when you're out here playing cricket?" I mean that kind of banter is fine. There is no problem. And it actually, you know, enhances the game to a great extent. But it's the personal abuse that all of us are concerned about. And I'm really happy to know that there is a concerted effort being made all around the world to curb that.

**RR:** So what was it like then playing through that era when the West Indies had such a good team? All those great class bowlers and you were an opening batsman through that period. You mentioned that first series where you got a few runs you said. I think it was 65, 67 not out, 116, 64 not out, 1, 117, 124, and 220 for 774 for the series. I think that's a little more than a little luck. What did it take to play those guys? Was it attitude, talent? What went into that?

**SG:** I think now those kinds of runs are a piece of cake for Matthew Hayden, isn't it? Well it was difficult because we had never played that kind of base bowling in our lives. What I had tried to do to try and get used to the pace, I came from Bombay I used to have the Bombay bowlers bowl from 18 or 16 yards rather than the regulation 22 yards, so that they would come onto the bat that much quicker. That was the way I tried to practice against the ball that would come quickly at me. Then we went out. We had the (stadium), which is not being used for cricket now. Then we went to the side of the (stadium) where there was a concrete walkway and I had the bowlers then bowl with the cricket ball trying to bounce it so that the ball would skid and come on. It wasn't a great experience in as much as facing those fast bowlers was concerned. There were doubts in your mind all the time but again here I've got to say that you had the West Indian players who hardly ever said a thing. Somebody like Rohan Kanhai - who if I actually played a little short around the off stump as he walked between overs from first slip to the other slip position he would sort of his under his breath concentrate, concentrate. Now that can't happen in today's cricket. You would get something else from the fielder. He would say just concentrate, concentrate. I mean that was for me...I mean I've named my son after Rohan. So you can imagine somebody you know who I admired so much coming in saying that and we were as youngsters only too happy to go to the opposition and pick their brains. Pick their brains about batting. And they were free with their advice. The Gary Sobers, the Rohan Kanhais, the Lance Gibbs, the Clive Lloyds. They were all absolutely happy to come round and sit with you and talk.

**TL:** The comments in the Cowdrey Lecture did allude to Australia being the worst offender and of course it's in a very influential position in world cricket at the moment. Captains are ultimately responsible according to the laws of the game for the manner of its conduct. You indicated to me in an interview we did soon after the lecture that you didn't regard Mark Taylor's teams as being so culpable. Do you feel that it's been under its recent leadership that Australia's standards have declined?

**SG:** Yeah, there has been.....that had come through when Mark Taylor was the captain. Ian Chappell for example is perhaps one of the most misrepresented. People talking about this practice starting when he was the captain. I played just one series, the rest of the World Series against Australia and never heard a peep out of any of the Australian fielders. In fact the time that I played apart from that one bad word in 1980-81 when I was given out I mean we have hardly had anything out of the Australian fielders or bowlers apart from of course the usual thing you've been lucky or whatever but nothing personal has been the case. Neither was it the case in 1985-86, which was my last series here. And from what I understand about 1991-92 when Mark Taylor was the captain there was very little of that. Now that could possibly be because India lost 4-0 and so there really wasn't anything the fielders were worried about that they knew it was just a matter of time before the batsmen got out. But certainly I think there have been more instances reported after Mark Taylor finished than ever before.

**GB:** Sunil, Sachin Tendulkar spoke the other day about "being Sachin" about how the only place in the world where he can be himself is inside his own home, about how he hasn't been in a taxi in Bombay for ten years. And about how the only way he can get some relaxation is to get in one of four or five cars at three o'clock in the morning and go for a drive. Just wondering if you could tell us about what it's like to be the paramount hero to such a big and enthusiastic cricket country?

**SG:** I think it is very tough. Sachin of course comes though a time when satellite television has boomed in India. And so therefore Sachin's been perhaps more in the media than anybody else before that. And so it's very difficult for him to be able to lead the normal, everyday life that others would look to. Yes, he loves his cars so he goes up at 5am in the morning along with I think Ajit Agarkar is another buddy of his. So he and Ajit Agarkar get into a car and drive around the new "Superway" that we have built ..... And he goes for a spin on that. But it is difficult for him to be able to step out of the house without - In Mumbai perhaps it would be a little bit easier because he's from Mumbai. But certainly anywhere out of Mumbai if he gets out he will be surrounded by people wanting photographs, autographs and that is not easy. Not easy simply because the enthusiasm factor is so much that much as you try and tell your supporters, admirers, fans to stand in a line, to not stand in a line. If you tell them right stand in a line for the autograph, we'll give you the autograph. They just don't seem to understand that. They just tend to think that if they do not get in first that they will not get in. And I can understand to an extent Sachin's problems with that because we are both the same height although he likes to think he is about an inch taller than me. We are both about the same height and when you have people surrounding you with pens asking for autographs accidentally somebody from behind has pushed the guy next to you while you're looking asking you for an autograph and the pen has in my time hit me somewhere here. And that's frightening because it could go in your eye and end your career. Now if it was somebody who was 6ft 3 or something it would only be a tickle in the ribs but for Sachin who is about the same height I think that's one of the worries he has as well. That's one of the reasons why one of the two things he does when he steps out into the crowd is one he's always wearing his glasses, partly not to be recognised and partly if somebody does and gets no pen pokes and he's always wearing his earphones. Whether he's listening to any music or not, I'm not too sure but he's wearing those earphones.

**GB:** Were your experiences similar and what did you do as an antidote?

**SG:** I tried to ask them as much as possible to try and get in a line but it was very difficult. But I think pretty much similar but Sachin's is far more intense because of the television we have which has reached out to far more people and Sachin's is a much bigger situation than mine ever was.

**RR:** Sunil, Indian teams have always had a lot of trouble doing well in Australia. Why is that? And is there any little chance of causing that little surprise that you mentioned earlier?

**SG:** I think our best chance really is in the First Test when Australia is without its top bowlers. If our batsmen can settle down and give the bowlers something to defend then yes. I'm not too sure how our bowlers will do but Harbhajan is going to be the kingpin because he uses flight and the loop. That's been our strength and I think that's what we should have looked to have brought to this country. We should have looked to have maybe got another spinner who gives the ground a bit of air because these grounds are big grounds. Australians are naturally aggressive batsmen. They will give the charge to the spinners. There is always a chance for a miss-hit to be caught in the deep. But they have come in with a different line of attack. And they think that they can meet fire with fire, which is probably not going to be the case. But it all depends on the batting and India's best chance really is in the first couple of test matches when Australia is without McGrath, Lee and of course Shane Warne who is not available for all four matches.

**TL:** Just before we go to the floor, I read an analysis the other day of Australia's current domination and the question being raised as to how long will it last. And amidst the article I was reading was the suggestion that some feel India might not be far away from becoming cricket's next juggernaut. You have a population what 50 times Australia's but you're a very complex country. Can you see India becoming cricket's next juggernaut?

**SG:** Financially, yes but I would say cricket wise there are not too many young players coming who excite you. There are a couple yes but you feel the excitement, you feel the way that India will be a juggernaut is only when you have more than two players or three players who excite you. When you know that there are about ten or fifteen players. When you know that there are fast bowlers who are going to come in and bowl at more than 145 km an hour. We had a contest recently, a speed contest and the young man who won the contest bowled at 135 km per hour. It's just nippy, not fast but I mean there was a big noise made about that. So unless we get a balanced team I don't think we're going to be quite the juggernaut that many people think we will. No.

**TL:** To the floor.

**Question:** Would that be because of the administration of the game or because there is no talent in the country?

**SG:** No I think the administration is doing its bit. The administration has got a talent scout scheme, which has been fantastic and it's for junior cricket and the idea is to

make sure that nobody slips through the net. The talent scouts are going into the interiors of the country to make sure that they can spot talent over there. Sometimes the villages can bring out somebody. So the administration is doing its bit. It's just like when you saw Sachin Tendulkar. You were excited. You were absolutely I mean I remember seeing Sachin Tendulkar bat in the nets and he was batting against Kapil Dev .... who came to Australia in 1985. I remember going back home and telling my wife today I have seen somebody really special. If nothing happens to him I think he's going to be truly outstanding. And this was when he was about fourteen years old. I'm not too sure that kind of excitement has been felt by some of my former colleagues who travel around and watch. They know that there are crickets there who are good, who are going to be professional cricketers. But in terms of the excitement factor which makes the team a little bit special. That is perhaps not quite there.

**Question:** You said cricket in India is more than a passion. I wonder if you could give your feelings on the importance of the resumption of cricketing between Pakistan and India?

**SG:** It has been announced that India will tour Pakistan in February-March. But there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. There's still a couple of months to go and presumably if nothing happens yes India will go to Pakistan. India will not find it easy in Pakistan because though the countries are basically the same the cultures are a bit different. In my previous experience of touring Pakistan the first time we toured Pakistan it was after about 17-18 years and it was absolutely fantastic. We had a welcome in Karachi when we landed in Karachi and our hotel was just about 20 minutes away. It took us three hours to get to the hotel because we were received by youngsters on motorbikes and they were riding their motorbikes at 5 km per hour just in front of our coach in the excitement. Subsequent tours 1982 and 1989 were not as warmly received as that 70<sup>th</sup> tour. And much has changed after those tours. Much has changed politically I think from 1989. Much has changed. And I think those will be the factors that the players will have to look at. 1978 we could pretty much walk the streets without worrying about anything. 1984 also we could do that but I'm not too sure whether the team if it goes there now in 2004 will be able to walk the streets freely in Pakistan. Because if they do they will always, I think, which is the unfortunate part of the modern world, they will have to carry some security officers with them.

**Question:** My question is about umpiring. In the early days of course there was no electronic umpiring or anything like that. What's your opinion about - and at the moment there are three ways you could go. We've got the field umpires and of course the electronic television replay type of things in which the third umpire can give a decision. Do you think eventually with modern technology as it goes the field umpires can be completely done away with? I'm going up to ten years now or do you think it's a good idea to get rid of modern technology go back to the two umpires on the field where each team ....OK the umpire does make a mistake. They're only human and each team accepts the fact that a mistake is made and you get on with the game or do you think you go completely electronic where in the future every decision probably could be made by the third umpire or have it as it is at the moment?

**SG:** I think with modern cricket there is plenty at stake. Careers are at stake and we need to make sure that as much as possible the best umpires officiate and as much as

possible correct decisions are taken. And if that means that we have to resort to technology to look at third umpires I think that should be the case. Because we don't want a player's career to suffer because of an error made by an umpire - a human error all right it will be accepted but it could be at a pretty heavy price so if the technology is there and the technology has to be full-proof mind you. If the technology is not full-proof then it can not be applied which is one of the many reasons there have been so many innovations on television which have not quite been accepted in cricket like for example the "hawkeye" which tells you whether the ball would have hit the stumps or whether the ball would have gone over the stumps...

**TL:** Claims to Sunil...

**SG:** Claims to. You're absolutely right and that's one of the reasons why that has not been accepted. But I think umpires are human. They are going to make mistakes. They might be tired at 5 o'clock in the evening after being on the field for four hours. Why should a professional player, a player whose career depends on the umpire suffer because an error made by an umpire when he is tired? Therefore, I think there if you have to resort to technology use technology I think we should do that.

**Question:** Should that be a higher principle than the principle that this is a game between teams of humans, adjudicated by humans, watched by hundreds of thousands of humans many of them young who can learn life lessons from watching champions accept disappointment even when it's unjustly imposed upon them?

**SG:** Yes, I think perhaps that's a good way to express it. But champions want to do well. Ordinary players want to do well because they have chosen this as their profession. There is no such thing as an amateur sportsperson, amateur cricketer. And I think therefore that if he gets a bad decision he is going to feel upset about it. He might not show it on the field but it could actually have an effect on his career. And so much as we would want our sportspersons to accept a decision, and they should I think wherever we can if we could go to the third umpire or to technology I think we should look at that.

**TL:** Guy from Australian Idol?

**Guy:** I won't sing, but Sunil can you tell us who the best fast bowler you've played against is? And also describe what it was like having to face him?

**SG:** Facing who?

**Guy:** The best fast bowler you've ever played against?

**SG:** The best fast bowler I've played against was Andy Roberts of the West Indies. Andy, because with Andy you could never relax even when you were past 150. With the others, you sort of felt that once you had been at the crease for about an hour or so then he had to produce something special or you had to lose your concentration or you have to get over-ambitious to get out. But with Andy even when you were past 100-150 he had that ability with the old ball to produce the unplayable delivery. So Andy was the best that I've faced.

**TL:** Sunny, thanks for that. Thanks to my co-panellists Greg Baum and Ron Reed. Unfortunately we are out of time. We do want to propose a vote of thanks and who better to do that than from Deakin University.... I'm told despite the wines that are on the table a man well known to us as a four-time premierships coach of a couple of footy clubs here in Melbourne. I had dinner on Friday night with David Parkin among others. He was telling me he was a little daunted by this task that faces him this afternoon which is no doubt a statement of the stature that Sunny holds in David's eyes and I suppose, too, of the internationalism of cricket relative to our indigenous game of football. The vote of thanks to be proposed by David Parkin.

**David Parkin:** Thanks very much Tim. Sunil, first of all it is a privilege to be asked on behalf of everybody here and not only Deakin University but all other people - and I, in talking to Tim on Friday night, did ask about Sunil in terms of the presentation he made to the Melbourne Cricket Club during the week. And he said it was an outstanding presentation and I'm pleased Sunil that we have been able to receive a similar one today.

I've been fascinated. I've made a few comments along the way. Balanced lifestyle and how difficult it is on retirement particularly for sports people of all ilks. It's something that we're trying to deal with here in our indigenous game but so are there all sports attempting to find a way of preparing people before so they can make the transition from sports people to retirement or something else. And we're working extremely hard.

The rule changes and innovations. We claim here that we're the best sporting nation in the world. Per head of population I think we do it pretty well. And I think a lot of our sports have integrated their effort across not only the indigenous sports that I happen to play - we're also world champions in our sport, Sunil because nobody else plays it - but the innovation that we've tried and how each of the sports have infiltrated the ideas and got outside the square in a sense to help everybody in sport. Role models is one of the great interests that many of us have here. And I notice the applause for the stance that you have been taking and will continue to take because I am a firm believer that while some Australian sports people don't believe as sports people that they have an influence over the population particularly the growing young population and how their attitudes and values might be for not only sport but for other things in life. And I think the Australian cricket team has adopted after some strong argument from within finally a code of behaviour that I think will maybe start to change people's ideas about us but certainly about young people and the Australian cricket team.

Cricket you say in India is more than a passion. Well, Sunil it is in Australia too. I think I'll go off to the Boxing Day test with my son as I did with my father and he did with his father. I think I've missed one. I was in England for that one. So this will be my 50<sup>th</sup> year minus one. We're all lunatics and cricket quite frankly is the game that everybody if you're rugby person well you'd be rugby if not Australian and if you're hockey you may not be but everybody loves their cricket and can carry on a conversation about it. And to have someone of your ilk here and career just provoking us in a very humorous and quite sensitive way was tremendous for all of us to be a part of it.

I must say that at Deakin we now have a large number of international students who have come from India. We like to think you might promote that in your radio broadcast and I see John Catford down here. He's very likely to give you an honorary doctorate from our university if you do that.

So with that Sunil, thank you very much indeed for a very enlightening hour that we've been able to spend with you including the journalists on my right. To think I'm actually in the media and journalistic view. I can't believe I've actually reached that stage in my life, but on behalf of everybody here thank you once again for a lovely address. Thank you.

**Ian Henderson:** I don't know that if you all caught that. David has presented Sunil with what looks like an under-sized cricket ball. In fact it's a red stress ball. He's just assured us he won't use it if India gets some bad decisions. On that subject, Sunil if I could just ask you to come back up to the stage just for a second for another little presentation. Should you cop any of those critical decisions that you might be called to adjudicate on when you're a commentating for ESPN (and) you want to keep the harsh Australian light out of your eyes so you get the best possible look at it. With our thanks and with our gratitude. Thanks you very, very much for today's presentation.

**SG:** Thank you very much. This is very welcome against the Australian sun because somehow the sun over here seems a lot harsher than in India and I think the only reason for that could very well be the fact that the sun in India is less harsher simply because the pollution we have over there. So it doesn't come down as strongly as it does over here. But Ian, somewhere down the line I think you probably think I am a little too big-headed because this is very, very loose.

**IH:** And I can assure you that's just a guess we had to make but it's interchangeable and it will be changed to suit Sunil. Thank you once again. To our panel here, guys you've been terrific. We all of us look to you fellows to keep us informed and up to the minute with everything that's happening in sport over summer. All the best and thanks for doing a great job. We've got something here that will probably help you refine your judgements at times. And in times of stress you won't need the stress ball. Just open a bottle of this.