

SPORTING LEGENDS: SIR IAN BOTHAM

SPORT: CRICKET

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1974 - 1993

Sir Ian Terence Botham OBE, (born November 24, 1955 in Heswall, Cheshire) (nicknamed "Beefy") was one of England's best-ever cricketers and one of the best all-round cricketers of all time.

In a Test career spanning 15 years from 1977, he scored 5,200 runs at 33.54, and took 383 wickets at an average of 28.40. Similarly successful at one-day cricket, he was a Wisden cricketer of the year in 1978.



Botham started his first-class career with Somerset in 1974. He left Somerset in 1985 as a protest against the sacking of his friends Viv Richards and Joel Garner, and played for Worcestershire between 1986 and 1991. In 1992, he joined County Championship newcomers Durham before retiring midway through the 1993 season, poignantly after Durham's match against the touring Australians.

He made his Test debut for England on 28 July 1977 in the Third Test against Australia.

He played 102 Tests, and was England captain for 12 Tests in 1980 and 1981.

However, he was unsuccessful in that role, with 8 draws and 4 losses - although in his defence, 9 of his matches as captain were against the best team of the time, the West Indies.

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Although not naturally athletic, Botham's power and technique were great attributes.

His career coincided with the careers of several other great all-rounders, including Richard Hadlee, Imran Khan, and Kapil Dev. As a result, the 1980s is considered to be a golden era for the all-rounder. Botham's best world rankings were first and third in bowling and batting respectively.

When he retired, he held the world record for the greatest number of Test wickets, although his tally has subsequently been passed by several players.

During the 1981 Ashes (see below), Ian set a record of six sixes in a single Ashes Test Match at Old Trafford. That record remained unbroken until 7 August 2005 when Andrew Flintoff scored five in the first innings and four in the second innings of the second Test at Edgbaston against Australia.

In 1980, Botham was the pre-eminent all-rounder in world cricket and was appointed captain of the England team. There was also an incident in the 1980 centenary test against Australia at Lord's where several frustrated Lord's pavilion members threw punches at him, after what they saw as his alliance with the umpires to unnecessarily delay play on a dry, sunny, Saturday (it had rained heavily the previous night).

He resigned the captaincy after a loss and a draw in the first two Tests of the 1981 Ashes series; he was dismissed for a "pair" in the Second Test at Lord's. He returned to an embarrassed silence in the pavilion and after the previous year's events at the centenary test, this possibly was the final straw.

For the rest of his cricketing career, Botham always refused to acknowledge the pavilion members when he played at Lord's. The Australian team was rated as second only to the great West Indies team of the time containing a formidable pace attack in the form of Dennis Lillee, Geoff Lawson and Terry Alderman.

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With his all-round game, Botham was arguably England's best cricketer of the 1980s.

The 1981 Ashes Series was Botham's finest hour. Unsurprisingly, Botham was named man of the series, scoring 399 runs and taking 34 wickets.

He was made BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 1981. He is one of only three cricketers to receive the honour, the others being Jim Laker in 1956 and David Steele in 1975.

After retiring as a player, he became an authoritative television commentator and has participated in a number of long-distance fund-raising walks for charities.

He has raised more than five million pounds, with leukaemia research amongst the causes which have benefited.

Botham was appointed an OBE in 1992 for services to cricket and for his charity work.

He helped England reach the final of the 1992 Cricket World Cup, and played consistently well throughout the tournament.

He was knighted in the Queen's New Year's Honours List of 2007.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

Sir Ian Botham became synonymous with beating the odds after his incredible performances in the 1981 Ashes Series.

He had a magnificent career, although many critics stated that he could have achieved more success if he had paid more attention to regular, physical conditioning.

But that's why the public loved Beefy; he looked like a regular guy on the street, and was a controversial character to boot.

Whilst his averages suggest he was an average batsman and bowler, they belie his reputation as one of the greatest match winners of the game. He tended to play to extremes, so if Botham played well, he often seemed to win the match on his own.

He was renowned as a big-hitting batsman but with a surprisingly classical technique, and as a fast-medium paced swing bowler. In his later career after a back injury, his pace diminished to no more than a gentle medium, but he seemed to retain the knack of taking wickets regardless.

Ian Botham holds a number of Test records as an all-rounder, including being the fastest (in terms of matches) to achieve the "doubles" of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets, 2,000 runs and 200 wickets, and 3,000 runs and 300 wickets.

He was the first player to score 5,000 runs and take 300 Test wickets, and the first to score a century and take 10 wickets in the same Test match. He scored a century and took 5 wickets in an innings in the same Test match on 5 occasions; no-one else has managed this feat more than twice.



Botham was an integral member of England's successful 1992 World Cup campaign.