

SPORTING LEGENDS: SIR DON BRADMAN

SPORT: CRICKET

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1928 - 1948

Sir Donald 'Don' George Bradman, KBE, AC (August 27, 1908 - February 25, 2001) was an Australian cricket player who is universally regarded as the greatest batsman of all time, and one of Australia's greatest popular heroes. He has the highest Test match batting average of all time, at 99.94.



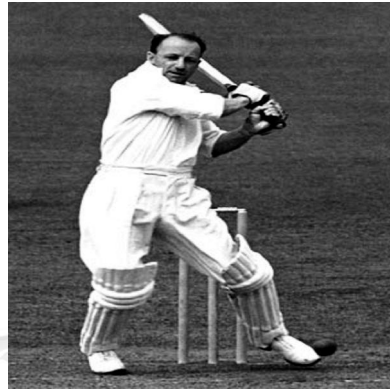
Receiving some criticism in his first Ashes series in 1928-1929 he worked constantly to remove the few weaknesses in his game, and by the time of the Bodyline series - he was without peer as a batsman.

Despite occasional battles with illness, he continued to dominate world cricket throughout the 1930s and is credited with raising the spirit of a nation suffering under the vagaries of the Great Depression, until war intervened.

Over an international career spanning 20 years from 1928 to 1948, Bradman's statistical achievements were unparalleled. He broke scoring records for both first-class and Test cricket; his highest international score (334) stood for decades as the highest ever Test score by an Australian.

It was then equalled by Mark Taylor, who declared with his score at 334 not out in what many regard as a deliberate tribute to Bradman. In 2003 it was once more equalled, then surpassed by another fellow Australian, Matthew Hayden, who fittingly went on to gain the highest score in Test cricket (380) up to that time.

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Bradman was so talented he would sometimes even hit left-handed!

For decades, Bradman was the only player with two Test triple centuries in a career. He was joined by West Indian Brian Lara in 2004; Lara broke Bradman's record, and recorded the first Test quadruple century in history, in the process of joining Bradman in this exclusive club.

Approaching forty years of age (most players today are retired by their mid-thirties), he returned to play cricket after World War II, leading one of the most talented teams in Australia's history. In his farewell 1948 tour of England the team he led, dubbed "The Invincibles", went undefeated throughout the tour, a feat unmatched before or since.

On the occasion of his last international innings, Bradman needed four runs to be able to retire with a batting average of 100, but was dismissed for nought (in cricketing parlance, "a duck") by spin bowler Eric Hollies. Applauded onto the pitch by both teams, it was sometimes claimed that he was unable to see the ball due to the tears welling in his eyes, a claim Bradman always dismissed as sentimental nonsense.

Regardless, he was given a guard of honour by players and spectators alike as he left the ground with a batting average of 99.94 from his 52 Tests, nearly double the average of any other player before or since.

Some indication of his superlative skill was that his average for the 1932-33 series, 56.57, is above the career averages of all but a handful of international players in the 125-odd years of international cricket matches. Statistical analyses give some credence to the claim that Bradman dominated his sport more than Pelé, Wayne Gretzky, Ty Cobb, Tiger Woods or Michael Jordan, amongst other champions of their disciplines.

He became heavily involved in cricket administration, serving as a selector for the national team for nearly 30 years. He was selector (and acknowledged as a force urging the players of both teams to play entertaining, attacking cricket) for the famous Australia - West Indies Test series of 1960-61.

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Bradman could hit from every angle, and loved hitting down the leg-side.

He was also famous for answering innumerable letters from cricket fans across the world, which he continued to do until well into his eighties. He also spoke out against smoking in sport, which was very unusual for the time.

Bradman is immortalised in two popular songs of very different styles and eras, "Our Don Bradman", a jaunty 1930s ditty by Jack O'Hagan, and Bradman by Paul Kelly in the 1980s. The story of the Bodyline series was also told in a television series.

He also wrote several books on cricket technique and tactics, which are regarded as classics. Bradman was selected as one of the five *Wisden* Cricketers of the Year in 1931. He was awarded a knighthood in 1949, and a Companion of the Order of Australia (Australia's highest civil honour) in 1979.

In 1996, he was inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame as one of the ten inaugural members. In 2000, Bradman was named by all 100 members of a panel of experts as the leading one of the five *Wisden Cricketers of the Century*.

The other four places were taken by Sir Garfield Sobers (90 votes), Sir Jack Hobbs (30 votes), Shane Warne (27 votes) and Sir Vivian Richards (25 votes). Many members of the panel complained that two of the five votes cast by each member would be wasted, as they would almost certainly be cast for Bradman and Sobers.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

It has to be said that Don Bradman is one of the finest cricketers of all-time.

He was also a gentleman of the sport, and set a fine example to future Australian cricket stars.

Blessed with an extreme armoury of potential shot-making, Bradman transcended his peers with absolute brilliance.

Possessing a great stillness whilst awaiting the delivery, his shotmaking was based on a combination of excellent vision, speed of both thought and footwork and a decisive, powerful bat motion with a pronounced follow-through.

Technically his play was almost flawless, strong on both sides of the wicket with only his sternest critics noting a tendency for his backlift to be slightly angled toward the slip cordon.

Further evidence of his supreme athletic skills was revealed when Bradman missed the 1935-36 tour to South Africa due to illness. During his absence from cricket, Bradman took up squash to keep himself fit. He subsequently won the South Australian Open Squash Championship. Now that's what I call an all-round athlete!



Bradman's dedication to training and preparation served him well throughout his career.