

Mackay and Kline, and a Match Saved.

Adelaide, Wednesday 1 Feb 1961: a Timeline of the last session.

It was the greatest last-wicket escape in Test cricket. At the Adelaide Oval, Ken Mackay and Lindsay Kline booked a place in cricket history by batting out the last 110 minutes against Frank Worrell's West Indians. Much of the writing and anecdote about that day has focussed on the drama and emotion of the occasion. But more broadly, the details of the partnership are little known, and today no original scorebook of the match can be found.

To flesh out these details, a timeline has been reconstructed from a range of independent newspaper reports from Australia, England and Jamaica, along with other sources such as Jack Fingleton's tour book. These reports sometimes conflict slightly on matters of detail, but in combination they produce a coherent picture.

The reconstruction reveals distinct – and surprising – phases in the partnership. With 95 minutes still to play, Mackay had a lucky escape. For a time, neither team seemed to behave as if a draw was possible. Mackay, normally ultra-cautious, began playing shots off the spinners, scoring at about a run a minute for the next half-hour. If he was confident of playing out a draw, it did not show. Worrell's delay in taking the new ball (available at a score of 200) suggests that the West Indies thought the same. However, the confidence shown by Lindsay Kline must have forced a rethink.

Throughout the partnership, the field was ringed by policemen inside the boundary, anticipating a crowd invasion of the pitch any moment when the final wicket fell.

Fifteen overs into the partnership, the new ball was taken, increasing the intensity but making no inroads. Both Mackay and Kline were well set and picked up runs.

When spin returned only six overs later, the mood changed. The batsmen settled into the total defence that might have been expected earlier. There was almost no scoring, and the batsmen did not change ends. Kline says this was a tactical choice, as he felt more comfortable with Worrell than with the spin of Sobers, Gibbs or Valentine. The bowlers rushed through their overs, perhaps to their detriment.

The reconstruction, while focussing on the nuts and bolts of the partnership, does still convey some of the drama and intensity of the occasion. There were also a couple of records set, previously unrecognised, that are also discussed.

West Indies had declared their second innings on the fourth day at 432/6. Australia were set 460 to win in 400 minutes and were 31/3 at stumps (6.7 overs, 40 minutes). From 116/4 at lunch on the final day, Australia slid to 144/6, but Mackay and Grout, who in the first innings had both been out during Lance Gibbs' hat-trick, held on for 76 minutes.

The timeline begins with the last over before tea.

Over 81, 3:39	Worrell's third over of the innings. Grout (42) LBW to the fifth ball, a contentious decision – Worrell was bowling round the wicket. Tea called immediately. 203/7, Mackay 14 not out in 94 minutes.
4:00	Play re-commences. Worrell completes over, bowling to Des Hoare.
Over 85, 4:13	Hoare (1) c Solomon b Worrell at leg slip, second ball of the over. Misson (0) b Worrell, fifth ball of the over. Kline comes to the crease at 4:18/4:19, with 101 minutes to play. 207/9, Mackay 16.
Over 86	Sobers bowling (wrist) spin. Single to Mackay.
Over 87	Mackay (on 17) given not out to a disputed catch* by Sobers off Worrell. 208/9.
Over 90-100	Mackay and Kline score relatively freely. New ball available but not taken.
Over 95	Mackay hits eight runs off Worrell (4+2+2);
Over 97	Worrell off, Gibbs on; Gibbs hit for four by Kline (in over 99?).
Over 98	Sobers off, Valentine on.
Over 100, 4:55	With 2 fours in an over off Valentine, Mackay reaches 50 in 150 minutes (5 fours).
Over 101, 4:58	New ball taken at 249 by Hall, bowling to Kline. A no ball brings up 250 (340 minutes). Kline then hits Hall to the cover-point boundary (Kline remembers it as going through the gully).
Over 102	Sobers (replacing Valentine), medium pace.
Over 104, 5:10	Kline hits Sobers for three to bring up 50 partnership in 51 minutes. 258/9.
5:19	Partnership 59 in one hour (266/9). Kline half-chance off Sobers at 13 (Gibbs)
Over 107, 5:27(?)	Hall off, Worrell on; maiden.**
Over 108	Sobers switches to spin. Time for each over drops as low as 2 minutes. Scoring almost ceases.
5:40	270/9, Mackay 60 (?), Kline 15. Sobers, off, Gibbs bowls to Mackay.
5:45 or 5:50	(over 114 or 116?) Gibbs off, Valentine on; maiden. Signs of desperation, rushing through overs: "Bowling too fast" (<i>The Times</i>).
5:54	Two runs (?) to Mackay off Valentine***. (Unconfirmed: probably byes.) Worrell 16 th over a maiden.
Over 119, 5:57	Worrell bowls his 17 th and last over, a maiden to Kline, with nine close-in fielders.

Over 120, 5:59 Hall, the last over to Mackay, a maiden taking almost ten minutes. Balls 1 and 4 played by Mackay, the latter almost a boundary but no run taken. Balls 2, 3 and 5 pass down leg side. Balls 6 and 7 bowled round the wicket. The last ball (over the wicket) takes three attempts – an aborted run up, an interruption from a spectator on the ground, then a no ball followed by a crowd invasion of the ground, and finally, excruciating minutes later, a short ball that strikes Mackay a heavy blow on the chest.

6:09 Stumps: Australia 273/9 (408 minutes), Mackay 62 in 223 minutes, Kline 15 in 110 minutes.

Note that while Kline came to the crease with 101 minutes to play, he batted 110 minutes due to the extended last over.

The 905 balls bowled in one day has not been not exceeded in any Test since. It is the highest total in any six-hour Test day, and the highest known by a single team in a day. (England and India together bowled 944 balls in 6.5 hours at Lord's 1946, second day). A modern Test day typically offers about 500 balls in six hours. West Indies bowled 39.3 overs after tea; 315 balls in a session, while not unprecedented, has probably not been exceeded in Tests since.

Mackay and Kline batted together for 283 balls, not including no balls. This is the longest 10th-wicket stand, in balls bowled, for which records have been found, exceeding (albeit by small margins) the 280 balls by Willey and Willis in 1980 and 278 balls for Snow and Higgs in 1966. [In 1901/02 there was a 148-minute 10th-wicket stand of 120, by Armstrong and Duff – both specialist batsmen – that probably lasted longer than 300 balls, but the exact figure is unknown.]

Hall bowled no bouncers to Kline. There are very few mentions in the reports of Mackay attempting to farm the strike. The batsmen did not change ends in the last eleven or more overs.

Kline's achievement, following on from his role in the climax of the Tied Test in Brisbane, has earned him cricketing renown. But the selectors of the time took a pragmatic line. Unimpressed by his bowling form, they dropped Kline from the team. Kline was made twelfth man for the final Test in Melbourne, and never played for Australia again.

Charles Davis, June 2010

*Both Mackay and Kline said, at the time and later, they were convinced the ball bounced; the West Indians thought otherwise (especially when reminiscing years later), but at the time declined to comment, and Worrell did not complain about the umpiring. In the press box, what people saw depended rather on what result they desired. It is interesting that opinions were expressed with great certainty regardless of the distance from the event.

**There is something strange about the time reported here, but it makes sense given Richie Benaud's opinion the ground clock ran fast for the first 30 minutes of every hour, and slow for the next 30 minutes.

***Two sources say that the last 10 overs were maidens (80 balls+). *The Times*, however, says Mackay hit a two off Valentine to fine leg, while *Melbourne Sun* calls it as two byes. Presuming the latter, this is the longest spell without runs off the bat in Australia since 1882 (88-92 balls, Alec Bannerman and Bill Murdoch).

