# A Short History of Run Outs

The crediting of run outs to fieldsmen, a familiar feature of modern scorecards, does not have an especially long history. Even in official scorebooks, the naming of fieldsmen involved in run outs was quite unusual until recent times. They can be found, for example, in Bill Ferguson's scores for the 1934 Ashes series, but this is exceptional even among Ferguson's wonderfully detailed scores.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Australian newspapers occasionally described dismissals in full as part of the scorecards. Bill Frindall, in his *Frindall's Score Book* series in the 1970s, named the fieldsmen in facsimiles of his hand-written scores. The now-accepted style of naming did not consistently appear in print until *The Cricketer International* magazine (R.J. Hayter, ed.) began using it in August 1979, followed by *Wisden Cricket Monthly* in 1980. Credits to fieldsmen first appeared in Australian annuals in 1981, including some in *Cricket Year 1981* (Ken Piesse, ed.). The idea was still novel when Tony Lewis discussed the pros and cons in *The Cricketer International* in July 1980. Lewis wondered "How many run outs did Hobbs get? Or Colin Bland?". Read on.

The system came into wider use rather slowly; it is now generally but not universally applied. *Wisden* itself, never an engine of innovation, still does not name fieldsmen in run outs for Test matches.

The question of career statistics of run out credits is an interesting one, especially as measures of fielding achievement are in short supply. The inconsistent history of the statistic makes research non-routine, especially prior to 1990. Some researchers, notably Ray Webster in the First-Class Cricket in Australia volumes, have recorded and published data for earlier matches. I have taken the trouble, over the years, to note and catalogue fielding credits in run outs wherever I find them in Test match scores, reports and descriptions.

As it stands, fielding credits have been identified for over 91 per cent of Test matches run outs (about 93 per cent since 1945). Data is complete since 1995. The missing data tends to cluster in the subcontinent and the Caribbean – where reporting styles have been variable – and in the 19th century. However, there is now sufficient coverage to offer some tentative career statistics.

The most run out credits to non-wicketkeepers in Test matches are

| | Run Out Credits | Primary | Tests | per 10 Tests | Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JB Hobbs | 19 | 18 | 61 | 3.11 | 1 |
| DL Vettori | 14 | 7 | 111 | 1.26 | 0 |
| CL Hooper | 13 | 9 | 102 | 1.27 | 2 |
| SR Waugh | 13 | 12 | 168 | 0.77 | 0 |
| M Muralitharan | 12 | 7 | 133 | 0.90 | 0 |
| RT Ponting | 12 | 12 | 165 | 0.73 | 0 |
| CZ Harris | 11 | 9 | 23 | 4.78 | 0 |
| Harbhajan Singh | 11 | 6 | 98 | 1.12 | 0 |
| JB Statham | 11 | 7 | 70 | 1.57 | 5 |
| RB Kanhai | 11 | 10 | 79 | 1.39 | 6 |
| RN Harvey | 11 | 11 | 79 | 1.39 | 2 |
| S Chanderpaul | 11 | 11 | 142 | 0.77 | 0 |
| SR Tendulkar | 11 | 9 | 188 | 0.59 | 0 |
| TM Dilshan | 11 | 10 | 79 | 1.39 | 0 |
| CH Lloyd | 10 | 9 | 110 | 0.91 | 9 |
| DI Gower | 10 | 10 | 117 | 0.85 | 2 |
| G Boycott | 10 | 9 | 108 | 0.93 | 2 |
| ST Jayasuriya | 10 | 10 | 110 | 0.91 | 0 |
| WPUJC Vaas | 10 | 7 | 111 | 0.90 | 1 |

*Some definitions: "Primary" credits are those where the fieldsman is the first named. "Missing" refers to run outs where the player was present but the fieldsman involved has not been identified. Statistically, players would be expected to be involved in only a small proportion of the "missing" data. Run outs as substitutes not included.*

Other players with impressive primary credits are Damien Martyn , Herschelle Gibbs, and Martin Vaughan with nine, and Don Bradman, Mushtaq Ahmed, Hansie Cronje, Jonty Rhodes, Marvan Atapattu, and Rahul Dravid with eight each. Of these, Bradman and Mushtaq Ahmed achieved 1.73 run outs per ten Tests.

It should be noted that run outs were a little more frequent in earlier times, at four or five per cent of dismissals, against about three per cent since 2001. It would appear that the frequency of run outs in Tests dropped after One-Day cricket spread its wings in the 1970s.

It is nevertheless remarkable, in the face of modern careers that run to double or triple the number of Tests, to see Jack Hobbs firmly entrenched at the top. Hobbs was still running out batsmen from cover well into his forties; you would think that batsmen would learn. At a critical stage of the Adelaide Test of 1928/29, Hobbs became the only player to run Don Bradman out in Test match. He was returning a favour: Bradman was the only fieldsman to run Hobbs out; in Brisbane earlier in the series, and later at Headingley in 1930. Contemporary reports suggest that

Hobbs was expert at foxing batsmen, running at the ball at just the speed that would tempt the batsmen into attempting a run, then swooping.

In the table, Hobbs' only peer in frequency of run outs is New Zealand's Chris Harris. Harris spent a good part of his career on the bench: he was New Zealand's most decorated twelfth man in Tests, on eighteen occasions (and made one run out as a sub that is not in the above table). When in the first XI, his fielding could make a difference. He ran out three batsmen in one innings at Galle in 1998, an unparalleled occurrence.

A notable name not in the table is South Africa's Colin Bland. Bland recorded seven run outs including six primaries in a truncated career of just 21 Tests (plus one run out as a substitute); at a rate of 3.33 per ten Tests, a rival for Hobbs.

No fieldsman's arm has contributed more to a match outcome than Neil Harvey's at the MCG in 1951/52. He is credited (in Webster) with a record four run outs, in a match that Australia won by one wicket. [It should be noted, however, that the Sydney Morning Herald credits one of the run outs to Jack Moroney.]

The ability to gather a return and complete a run out is possibly an undervalued skill. Daniel Vettori appears to be a master at this, and leads non-wicketkeepers. The leading wicketkeepers identified in run outs are

|  |  | Primary | Tests | per 10 Tests | Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moin Khan | 17 | 4 | 69 | 2.46 | 0 |
| MV Boucher | 17 | 2 | 147 | 1.16 | 0 |
| RW Marsh | 17 | 1 | 96 | 1.77 | 4 |
| AC Gilchrist | 16 | 2 | 96 | 1.67 | 0 |
| KC Sangakkara | 15 | 3 | 108 | 1.39 | 0 |
| ATW Grout | 15 | 2 | 51 | 2.94 | 1 |
| IA Healy | 14 | 1 | 119 | 1.18 | 0 |
| TG Evans | 13 | 0 | 91 | 1.43 | 5 |
| WAS Oldfield | 13 | 1 | 54 | 2.41 | 1 |
| FM Engineer | 12 | 0 | 46 | 2.61 | 4 |
| AFA Lilley | 11 | 1 | 35 | 3.14 | 2 |
| JJ Kelly | 11 | 2 | 36 | 3.06 | 3 |
| SMH Kirmani | 11 | 4 | 88 | 1.25 | 10 |
| RD Jacobs | 11 | 2 | 65 | 1.69 | 0 |

One limitation of descriptive data is that it is not always clear as to whether the keeper was involved, or the dismissal was a direct hit. In compiling the stats, I have generally assumed if a throw is described as a "return", it involved the keeper.

Of course, not all run outs are equal. At Lord's in 1984, Eldine Baptiste ran Geoff Miller out with a power throw from deep fine leg that took out the middle stump at the bowler's end. One might argue, by contrast, that flicking off the bails with both batsmen stranded at the other end is not quite the same thing. Still, these things tend to even out: a catch is a catch, a wicket a wicket, and career stats do not distinguish the easy from the hard in any category. I hope that this study can contribute a little to our appreciation of the great fieldsmen.

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