England in Australia 1974-75 Six Tests. *Australia Won 4 - 1.*

Balls per over: 8 Playing Hours: 5 days x 6 hr Captains: IM Chappell (Aus), MH Denness (Eng)

This was a watershed season in Australian cricket. Ian Chappell's hard-edged and dynamic team introduced one of Test cricket's most powerful fast bowling combinations when Jeff Thomson joined a Dennis Lillee "resurrected" from back injury, and led to a dominating series over a reasonably well-credentialled (though Boycott was true to his name) England side. With crowds and public interest resurgent, and sponsorship money beginning to flow, the idea of a fully professional Australian cricket team gained strength, which would within a couple of seasons lead to the World Series schism. But for now Australian cricket and its officials, a little complacent, basked in the success.

Thomson, with his brute force javelin-thrower delivery, led the charge with 33 wickets, perfectly counterfoiled by the wily Lillee, now a little short of his early-career pace but fully recovered from debilitating back surgery. It was sheer pace, coupled with rather incomplete player protection (by later standards), which unravelled England in Brisbane and Perth, Thomson gathering 16 wickets. A pity that they didn't have a radar gun on the yorker that bowled Grieg in Brisbane – it might have been a record-setter. Thomson spearheaded the regaining of the Ashes in front of record crowds in Sydney, but there was also excellent support from all the bowlers. In Adelaide, even 11 wickets from English spinner Derek Underwood could not slow the juggernaut; almost every Australian made a significant contribution at some stage of the match.

The Australian batting was consistent and occasionally brilliant. Greg Chappell's class shone through repeatedly, especially with 84 and 144* at Sydney, and Doug Walters provided the Ashes with one of its all-time classic moments by hitting a six off the last ball of the second day at Perth to bring up his century, and 100 off 115 balls, in a session of play. Not all was excitement: the drawn third Test produced, on a flatter wicket, very close scoring and a finish that was theoretically a nail-biter, yet it managed to bore and infuriate the crowd, with neither team appearing to be interested in victory when it came to the crunch. Australia's uninterest in chasing a target of 246 in an easy 6½ hours showed that that Ashes conservatism could still be found.

Honourable mention must go to the Australian fielding. The slips cordon, the Chappell brothers, Walters and Mallett in the gully, like Marsh behind the stumps, was unfazed by the extreme pace, and set new standards for Test cricket. Edwards in the covers was as brilliant as his predecessor Sheahan, and the Australians were generally much fitter than their rivals.

For England only Grieg weathered the storm both physically and psychologically, and even the indomitable Edrich had to endure broken fingers and ribs courtesy of Thomson. Captain Mike Denness went to the extreme of dropping himself for the fourth Test, while their potentially great opener Amiss suffered at the hands of Lillee, a career setback which he never completely recovered from. The power of the Australian pace barrage was never better illustrated than by its absence: in the last Test, England, thanks to injuries to Thomson and Lillee, forced an innings victory in spite of a career-best 8 for 143 from Max Walker. The well-balanced England bowling showed itself to be quite capable (with 9 wickets to Lever), and big centuries from Denness and Fletcher demonstrated their abilities in a more benign environment. Willis finished with the best bowling figures for England, 17 at an average of 30.