

## Bat versus ball, head-to head: some Test records

Although it is a team sport, cricket matches are recorded as a series of one-on-one contests, batsman versus bowler. How do batsmen fare against individual bowlers? It is an interesting subject; fortunately there is enough detail in Tests, stretching back more than 100 years, to tease out records and make some comparisons. For some decades there was little movement in the records, but recently there has been some interesting movement at the top of the table.

Steve Smith has faced Stuart Broad's bowling in a remarkable 32 Tests, a number boosted by an extra flurry of Tests in the mid-2010s as the Ashes were realigned with World Cups. In 2023, in Broad's last Test at The Oval, Smith took his total runs off Broad to 577, to finally take #1 position. It looked like that mark would not stand for long, as Virat Kohli went into last year's series in Australia needing only 49 runs off Nathan Lyon in five Tests to top Smith/Broad. But Kohli was in indifferent form in most of the Tests – leading to his retirement a few months later – and even though he did not fall to Lyon in the series his 46 runs ended just short.

Although they had survived a challenge, Smith/Broad did not hold top spot much longer. Joe Root's splendid series against India included 102 runs off Ravi Jadeja, and Root has become the first batsman to score more than 600 runs off a single bowler.

### Most Runs by one batsmen off one bowler, all Tests

Bat	Bowl	M	Runs	Wkts	Av
JE Root	RA Jadeja	26	<b>602</b>	9	66.9
SPD Smith	SCJ Broad	32	<b>577</b>	11	52.5
V Kohli	NM Lyon	25	<b>573</b>	7	81.9
CA Pujara	NM Lyon	21	<b>571</b>	13	43.9
KC Sangakkara	Saeed Ajmal	13	<b>531</b>	4	132.8
GA Gooch	N Kapil Dev	19	<b>517</b>	11	47.0
H Sutcliffe	CV Grimmett	17	<b>515</b>	7	73.6
AR Border	IT Botham	28	<b>506</b>	12	42.2
AR Border	JE Emburey	23	<b>504</b>	5	100.8
JB Hobbs	AA Mailey	12	<b>501</b>	9	55.7
BC Lara	SK Warne	20	<b>501</b>	7	71.6
L Hutton	RR Lindwall	22	<b>499</b>	9	55.4
DPMD Jayawardene	Harbhajan Singh	15	<b>494</b>	4	123.5
DG Bradman	WR Hammond	23	<b>493</b>	3	164.3

[Note that while data is missing for quite a number of Tests, there are no potential pairings in the missing data that would likely make it onto this list.]

Even though the leaders are modern pairings, the broader table is notable for its historical depth, spanning more than a century. This might seem surprising given that modern players play far more Tests, but the players of old played against a narrower range of opponents. Apart from Wartime interruption and occasional anomalies like the 2010s, Ashes Tests have been roughly constant in frequency for more than 125 years, so we see pairings like Hobbs/Mailey and Sutcliffe/Grimmett placed quite highly in the table.

Half of these pairings are from Ashes Tests; these have been the most numerous Tests going back many decades. Nevertheless, for a time Kumar Sangakkara (Sri Lanka), off Saeed Ajmal (Pakistan), held the top position.

Sutcliffe/Grimmett hold one record that is unlikely to be challenged in the modern game. Grimmett bowled 1748 balls to Sutcliffe, far ahead of any other pairing. The English master defender averaged only 1.8 runs per over off Grimmett's bowling. The Sutcliffe/Grimmett pairing is almost 400 balls ahead of the next highest, Alec Bedser bowling to Arthur Morris (1386 balls, 466 runs, 18 dismissals). Morris became notorious as "Bedser's Bunny", but in his defence he had to face far more bowling from that great bowler than anyone else. Their Test careers overlapped almost totally. In the modern game, Root has faced 1309 balls from Jadeja.

A few incidental records:

- The most runs scored by a batsman off a bowler without ever being dismissed is 278 by Viv Richards off John Emburey.
- John Edrich scored 271 runs off Johnny Gleeson in Ashes Tests without losing his wicket.
- The highest known average is David Warner off Yasir Shah: 305 runs for once out.
- Bradman scored 243 runs off Vinoo Mankad in a single series without being dismissed.
- Greg Matthews bowled Marvan Atapattu with the only two balls he ever bowled to him.
- Steve Smith dismissed Sachin Tendulkar with the only ball he bowled to him in a cricket match.
- Grimmett dismissed Xenophon Balaskas of South Africa five times in Tests while conceding two runs.
- Ravi Ashwin has dismissed Nuwan Pradeep four times in 15 balls and conceded no runs.
- Ashwell Prince faced only 19 balls from Bryce McGain, but scored 48 runs.

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