



D R JARDINE: A GREAT CAPTAIN BY ARTHUR GIBSON

The word 'great' has often been too freely used to describe a man or woman, a performance on stage or screen, an athletic achievement or some other aspect of human endeavour. It is one of those words cheapened by wrong or too-frequent use.

We can all name some 'great' cricketers, though we might have to give reasons why we use the word. Mead scored nearly 20,000 more runs than George Gunn. Was he a greater batsman? If we judge by runs scored Mead is our man, but 'greatness' in batting must consist of something more than run-collecting. It is when we see how the runs are made that we recognise greatness.

When we consider captaincy we can think of a few who, as it were, captained by divine right. Grace was the outstanding example. His enormous self-confidence and his ability with bat and ball were allied to shrewdness and tactical ability; all these gifts enabled him to dominate any game in which he was captain. F.S. Jackson was called a 'lucky' captain, but confidence, a fine cricket brain and his gifts as an all-rounder meant that he made his own luck and was a most successful captain of England in spite of his comparative lack of leadership on the cricket field. 'Some are born great.'

How shall we assess Douglas Jardine? The controversy that surrounded him during and after the 1932-3 tour of Australia has tended to shadow his career as a cricketer, which is a pity, for he was a considerable figure in the game for some - too few - years.

He was born on October 23rd, 1900, son of M.R. Jardine, who is remembered for his fine innings of 140 for Oxford v Cambridge in 1892. His son's preparatory school was Horns Hill, the Head of which, another Oxford blue, A.H. Evans, gave the young Jardine his early coaching. At Winchester he came under the influence of that great character and coach Rockley Wilson. Even then, the schoolboy Jardine liked to go his own way and Wilson found him somewhat difficult to handle, eventually, I am told, giving up the struggle! However, Jardine always spoke highly of Wilson and respected his knowledge and judgment. Sir Hubert Ashton, who awarded Jardine and his own brother Claude their 'white flannels' on the same day in 1916, said in his memorial address for Jardine at St. Michael's, Cornhill on 3rd July 1958 that when he captained Winchester in 1919, "he showed then that he was a highly competent and determined captain." In the year of his school captaincy Jardine scored 997 runs with a highest score of 140 and an average of 66.46. Eton were beaten in what Wisden described as 'a great game', Jardine scoring 35 and 89. Against Harrow he made 135 not out, for The Rest against Lord's Schools 44 and 91, and for Public School against P.F. Warner's XI 57 and 55.

I have dwelt on Jardine's school career because, even then, he was a mature, determined batsman, with a style already formed. In fact, he could probably have gone straight into a County side and not disgraced himself, for he needed only experience to consolidate those qualities of patience, judgment and sound stroke play which he had shown at Winchester.

It was inevitable that he should be given his blue at Oxford in 1920, but he was not as successful as had been hoped. The next year he showed his true form, though failing against Cambridge. The Australians were impressed by his batting when he scored 35 and 96 not out against Gregory, Armstrong and Mailey. Playing for Surrey later in the season his best score was 60 v Yorkshire but he had the reasonable average of 26.9 for 10 innings. In 1922 he suffered an injury to his knee and did not play against Cambridge. Towards Oxford's overwhelming, if lucky, victory in 1923 he contributed 39 out of a total of 422 and his highest score for the University was 95. It was for Surrey that he showed what he could do, scoring 127 v Hampshire and 104 v West Indies. In the latter game he made a brave but unsuccessful effort to save the game in an innings which Wisden described as 'a masterpiece of defence.'

There is no need to catalogue his deeds with the bat in more detail. He continued to play for Surrey, though he was quite often absent from the side and in 1929 did not play at all. He became Surrey captain in 1932, succeeding P.G.H. Fender, but he was not in charge for long, as he played very little first-class cricket after 1933 and E.R.T. Holmes took over the Surrey captaincy.

In 1928-9 Jardine toured Australia under Chapman and was very successful. Six times he reached the century and only missed a Test hundred by two runs at Adelaide. He did not play against South Africa in 1929.

It was the tour of 1932-3 that made the name of Jardine ring round the cricket world. The facts of the so-called 'body-line' controversy are well-known and the arguments still continue as to whether the captain was justified in using the leg-side attack that was so successful, largely because it had Larwood as its exponent. What ever one's opinion as to the wisdom of Jardine's methods, there can be no doubt about the man's courage or about his captaincy. Wisden says that he "captained the side superbly"; he "rang the changes in most astute fashion, placed his field very judiciously and generally, despite the rancour he aroused by the manner in which he exploited leg-theory bowling, earned unlimited praise for his able management of the team in the field."

Many good judges deplored Jardine's methods on this unhappy tour, but no-one ever questioned his firmness of purpose in face of the sometimes hysterical criticism he aroused. He had come to Australia with a plan that he thought would enable him to win the Tests; he stuck to that plan in the face of hostility that no one man, surely, has ever encountered in the game. If he was mistaken, as even some of his own team thought, he himself never acknowledged that what he did was in any way against the best interests of cricket. Another factor that no doubt alienated him from the Australian cricket-watching public was the man's own personality. Austere, aloof, immune to criticism or barracking, the tall figure in the Harlequin cap seemed to the Australians to be the epitome of the 'stuffed-shirt' establishment figure. Jardine cared not a jot and showed no reaction to the crowd's hostile attitude - which made them even more resentful.

I have been in touch with three of the men who were at the heart of the matter.

R.E.S. Wyatt, vice-captain on the tour, told me that he had had reservations about the bowling of Larwood and Voce. This was not because of the type of bowling. In fact, he himself had used a modified form of leg-theory when captaining the side against an Australian Eleven before the first Test. Larwood dismissed Bradman for 36 and 13 and this led the Selection Committee to discuss the use of this type of bowling to defeat Bradman, the greatest threat to England. What Wyatt regretted was the ill-feeling caused, for he felt that such ill-feeling was bad for the game and that the good name of cricket should be paramount. But he supported Jardine loyally, as did all the members of the team. He admired Jardine as a man and was glad to call him friend.

Before he left England last year, Larwood was kind enough to write to me about his old leader. He wrote: "Jardine's captaincy. He was, in my opinion, the

best I had had the pleasure of playing under. He made a study of each batsman to find the way of getting him out. He played the game the hard way, but that is Test cricket. I admired him very much. He stuck to his guns. I always gave him my best and I always would, and, as you say, he was never given his due. He was a gentleman in every way - pity there is no-one like him to captain England today. As I think back to 1932-3 I am still full of admiration for him."

Jack Fingleton was, perhaps naturally, rather more non-committal. This excellent writer and sound critic, who intersperses his prose with a refreshing wit, wrote to me to say that "Jardine as a cricketer was mighty different from Jardine the man whom we knew afterwards in Australia. I then knew him as a charming and very friendly person, but you have to remember that when he was in Australia as skipper in 1932-3 Douglas made no great pretension to liking us. The best innings I played against his side was going through the innings for New South Wales for 119 not out when we in Sydney had our first taste of bodyline from Bill Voce and didn't relish it."

Mr. Fingleton also wrote about the tour in his *Cricket Crisis*, and Jardine himself in his *In Quest of the Ashes* ably set out the facts as he saw them: he made it clear that he had no regrets about the way the Ashes were won. The only postscript I would wish to add to this much-publicised affair is to draw attention to the Test at Old Trafford in 1933. Fast leg-theory was bowled for the West Indies by Martindale and Constantine. Both these bowlers, according to Wisden "directed it at him (Jardine) with unflagging zeal." Jardine, it will be remembered, played with great skill and courage and, avoiding injury, scored 127, his only Test hundred. He had answered his critics in the best possible way.

In an excellent volume, *Cricket*, in the Lonsdale Library, Jardine has a couple of chapters on 'Batsmanship'. He writes lucidly, concentrating on essentials and giving sound advice on equipment, practice, footwork, the basic strokes - the important things a young batsman needs to know and practise. At the beginning of the first chapter he says: "The author is the first to admit that he is no artist; but he would ask the reader to remember that batting is an art and as such is infinite in its variety and worthy of the best that is in him." He ends his contribution by saying, "Cricket is a jealous goddess, but when she gives, she gives good measure in great days enchanted. Once given, her gifts cannot be taken away; it only behoves us to acknowledge our indebtedness."*

As a batsman, Jardine himself rarely showed the full range of his strokes in first-class matches. He had all the strokes and could play them with power and fluency, as his friend R.C. Robertson-Glasgow has testified in his essay in *Cricket Print*** . But there was something in his make-up, an obstinacy, a stubborn determination to defend, which prevented him in the big matches from dominating the bowling as he might have done. His defence was magnificent - as good as that of any player, amateur or professional, of his time, and the concentration and finished technique he brought to his batting made him a most difficult problem for even the finest bowlers. He did not think of himself as an artist, but in the art of defensive play he was supreme.

After captaining a team to India in the winter of 1933-4 Jardine indicated that he had no wish to play against Australia again, and his appearances in first-class cricket became fewer until he dropped out of the game in 1937. Cricket was the poorer for his absence, for this man of courage, wit and character whose batting was so valuable in the England middle order had still much to offer the game. He gave up cricket too soon and he died too young.

Back to the question I asked at the beginning of this article. How shall we assess Douglas Jardine? I come down on the side of greatness for he had a natural authority, an ability to attract and hold the loyalty of those who played under him, a tactical mastery of the game and a thoroughness in preparation that left little room for error.

I end by quoting again from Sir Hubert Ashton's Memorial Address: "Two things emerge quite clearly - his immense moral and physical courage and the

tremendous loyalty he inspired in his whole team. Here indeed was a man and a leader and surely history confirms that in every sphere of life such people cannot but offend in some quarters He was a man both proud and sensitive and with a single-mindedness that must surely be an example to us all."

Yes: I give my vote for greatness.

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