



FROM CHARLES BANNERMAN TO BRIAN CHARLES LARA THE PROGRESSION OF A PRESTIGIOUS WORLD RECORD BY KEITH A. SANDIFORD

Achieving the highest aggregate in Test cricket is one of the most prestigious distinctions that the sport has to offer. So far, 16 cricketers have worn this crown. The latest to ascend to the throne is Brian Charles Lara of Trinidad & Tobago. He did so on 26 November 2005 when he eclipsed the record of 11,174 runs that Australia's Allan Border had held since his retirement in 1994. Lara has thus become the second West Indian, following the immortal Garry Sobers, to join this illustrious group. By the end of the series against Australia, Lara had also become the first batsman to hold simultaneously the three most coveted records in cricket: the highest Test aggregate (11,204), the highest individual score in Test cricket (400 not out) and the highest score in first-class cricket (501 not out). It is the purpose of this article to trace the progression of the most recent world record.

1. Charles Bannerman, Australia (239)

It all began in March 1877 when the Grand Combined Melbourne and Sydney XI opposed James Lillywhite's touring professionals at Melbourne in a match that was subsequently branded as the first international Test. Australia's Charles Bannerman enjoyed the distinction of scoring the first run, the first fifty and the first century in Test cricket. He made a chanceless 165 before having to retire hurt when struck a painful blow on one of his fingers. In this innings, the second highest contribution was 18 not out by Tom Garrett, batting at number eight. Bannerman thus scored 69.62% of the runs (237) that came from the bat. This has remained the record in Test cricket. Bannerman's 165 was not surpassed as the highest individual Test score until William Murdoch registered 211 at The Oval in August 1884. Bannerman played only in three Tests altogether during 1877-79, recording 239 runs (av: 59.75). His aggregate stood unapproached until 1882. A polished right-handed batsman with a variety of aggressive strokes, he would obviously have done even better had it not been for his unfortunate propensity for beer and gambling. Bannerman outscored all others until Test # 5 at Melbourne in January 1882.

2. George Ulyett, England (676)

One of the finest all-rounders of the Victorian era, George Ulyett played in 25 of the first 33 Test matches during 1877-90. He was therefore able to surpass Bannerman's aggregate without too much difficulty. He did so in his fourth Test, against Australia at Melbourne, in January 1882. By the end of that series, he had lifted his total to 601 (av: 42.92), thanks to a swashbuckling 149 at Melbourne in March. He finished with 949 runs (av: 24.33), 50 wickets (av: 20.40) and 18 catches. A fast round-arm bowler, it was he who had forced Bannerman to retire on that memorable occasion in 1877. Ulyett had the unique distinction of playing against both Australia and South Africa in their inaugural Tests. He remained the leading scorer in Test cricket until surpassed by Billy Murdoch in Test #16 in August 1884.

3. William Lloyd Murdoch, Australia (860)

Billy Murdoch was one of the best batsmen produced by Australia during the 19th century. He created a huge sensation when he struck 321 for Victoria against New South Wales at Sydney in February 1882. This was then the highest score ever made in an Australian first-class match. He broke Bannerman's

record in August 1884 when he became the first batsman to achieve a double-century in Test cricket. It was during that innings that he surpassed Ulyett's record aggregate, ending the series with 848 runs. His 211 was destined to remain the record until Reginald Foster made 287 for England at Sydney in December 1903. He took the new mark to 860 before being eclipsed by Arthur Shrewsbury later the same year in Test #24. Murdoch represented Australia in 18 Tests before emigrating to Sussex and playing one more Test for England (against South Africa in March 1892). He finished with 908 runs (av: 31.31). A useful wicket-keeper, he also registered 14 dismissals, including two stumpings.

4. Arthur Shrewsbury, England (1,277)

Murdoch did not long remain the highest scorer in Test cricket. He was replaced in August 1886 by Arthur Shrewsbury, commonly regarded as the second best batsman in the Empire while Dr William Gilbert Grace was in his pomp. A stubborn right-handed batsman, Shrewsbury played 23 matches for England during 1881-93. He moved into the lead with a fine innings of 44 at The Oval and held it until January 1902 – almost nine years after he had played his last Test match. His final tally was 1277 runs (av: 35.47). He struck three centuries, including a masterful 164 against Australia at Lord's in July 1886. This was then the highest score ever made on England's behalf. In the very next Test, while Shrewsbury was moving beyond Murdoch's aggregate, W.G. broke it with a dominant 170. In the days when pitches were not as batsman-friendly as they later became, he recorded no fewer than ten double-centuries, including seven for Nottinghamshire.

5. Joseph Darling, Australia (1,293)

Joe Darling held the record for the briefest of periods. He surpassed Shrewsbury's 1,277 in Test #67 against England at Adelaide in January 1902, only to be supplanted by Syd Gregory one month later. In 34 Tests during 1894-1905, he finished with 1,657 runs (av: 28.56). The highest of his three centuries was 178 against England at Adelaide in January 1898. One of the finest left-handed batsmen of his generation, Darling is best remembered as a very popular and successful Australian captain. His highest score in first-class cricket was 210 for South Australia against Queensland at Brisbane in 1898/99.

6. Sydney Edward Gregory, Australia (1,366)

When Darling missed the fourth Test of the 1901/02 series against England, Syd Gregory took the opportunity to slip past him, albeit with scores of 5 & 12 not out in Test #68. These took him to 1,299 runs (av: 27.63). He added 25 & 41 in the following Test at Melbourne. But his failure at Edgbaston with scores of 0 & 1 not out in May 1902 allowed Archie MacLaren to dethrone him at Lord's in June that year. Gregory represented Australia in 58 Tests between 1890 and 1912. He ended with 2,282 runs (av: 24.53) but could never regain the lead. His finest effort was 201 against England at Sydney in December 1894 which was then the first double-century ever scored in a Test match on Australian soil.

7. Archibald Campbell MacLaren, England (1,531)

Archie MacLaren was one of the greatest batsmen of his generation. He is perhaps best remembered for his 424 on behalf of Lancashire against Somerset at Taunton in 1895. This remained the highest score in first-class cricket on English soil until Brian Lara struck his fabulous 501 not out for Warwickshire against Durham in 1994. MacLaren represented England in 35 Tests during 1894-1909, recording 1,931 runs (av: 33.87). Surpassing Syd Gregory's aggregate on 14 June 1902 in Test #71, he was destined to hold the record only until 13 August that year.

8. Clement Hill, Australia (3,412)

After Syd Gregory and Archie MacLaren had jostled briefly for the top position early in the 20th century, Clem Hill emerged to dwarf them both. This excellent left-handed batsman became the first to exceed 2,000 runs and proceeded to register 3,412 (av: 39.21) in 48 Tests during 1896-1912. This more than doubled the previous record which he first broke in 1902 in Test #74. It was destined to endure until December 1924. He struck seven Test centuries, of

which the best perhaps was his 188 against England at Melbourne in January 1898 when only 21 years old. Hill also had the dubious distinction of scoring more 90s in Test cricket than anybody else (6) until Guyana's Alvin Kallicharran registered eight for the West Indies during 1972-82.

9. John Berry Hobbs, England (5,410)

Just as Clem Hill had dwarfed all previous aggregates in Test cricket, Jack Hobbs made a mockery of Hill's record which he first surpassed at Sydney in December 1924 in Test #158 with scores of 114 & 57. Still regarded by many as perhaps the finest of all opening batsmen, Hobbs finished his exceptional career with 5,410 runs (av: 56.94) in 61 Tests during 1907-30. Amazingly consistent, he exceeded 1,000 runs in 24 English seasons, including 17 summers in which he scored more than 2000 runs. At the Test match level he registered 15 centuries and was the first player to do so. His first-class records of 61,237 runs (av: 50.65) and 197 centuries during 1905-34 seem unlikely ever to be eclipsed.

10. Walter Reginald Hammond, England (7,249)

With the steady expansion of Test cricket after 1925, Wally Hammond had greater opportunities than any of his predecessors. He thus participated in 85 Tests during 1927-47. From these he manufactured 7,249 majestic runs at an average of 58.45 per innings. It was his brilliant 140 against New Zealand at Lord's in June 1937 in Test #260 that propelled him beyond the mark that Hobbs had established seven years before. He finished with 22 Test centuries, including an innings of 336 not out against New Zealand at Auckland in March/April 1933. This reigned as the highest individual score in Test cricket until Len Hutton accumulated 364 for England against Australia at The Oval in August 1938. An accomplished all-rounder and brilliant slip-fieldsman, Hammond recorded 83 wickets (av: 37.67) and 110 catches (which long prevailed as a world record in Test cricket).

11. Michael Colin Cowdrey, England (7,459)

It took 23 years for anyone to surpass Wally Hammond's Test aggregate. Len Hutton (6,971) had come quite close in the 1950s but retired still short by almost 300 runs. Colin Cowdrey, profiting from Test cricket's continuing expansion, finally broke Hammond's record on 29 November 1970 during an innings of 28 against Australia at Brisbane in Test #674. He proceeded to register 7,624 runs (av: 44.06) in 114 Tests. After retiring in 1971, he returned to play against Australia in 1974/75 without much success. He was a most attractive right-handed batsman and a brilliant slip-fielder whose 120 catches broke the record of 110 that Hammond had set. His record aggregate score was surpassed by Garry Sobers during the period of his first retirement.

12. Garfield St Aubrun Sobers, West Indies (8,032)

Garry Sobers became the first player outside of England and Australia to hold the record for the highest aggregate in Test cricket. He surpassed Cowdrey's 7,459 during a magnificent innings of 142 at Bridgetown in March 1972 in Test #695. On this occasion he shared with Charlie Davis (183) a West Indian record partnership of 254 runs for the sixth wicket against New Zealand. Universally considered the greatest all-rounder of the 20th century, Sobers ended his stellar career with 8,032 runs (av: 57.78), 235 wickets (av: 34.03) and 109 catches in 93 Tests during 1954-74. He also held the world record score of 365 not out which he made against Pakistan at Kingston in March 1958 – a mark which was destined to survive for more than 36 years.

13. Geoffrey Boycott, England (8,114)

Sobers's aggregate record was broken by Geoff Boycott on 23 December 1981 during an innings of 105 against India at Delhi in Test #914. Boycott took the mark to 8,114 before retiring from the Test arena. Altogether, in 108 Tests during 1964-82, he averaged 47.72 and struck 22 centuries, including 246 not out against India at Leeds in June 1967. His record was broken after only one year and ten months.

14. Sunil Manohar Gavaskar, India (10,122)

Sunil Gavaskar became the first batsman to scale the 10,000 runs barrier in Test cricket. He did so while scoring 63 against Pakistan at Ahmedabad in his 124th Test and 212th innings on 7 March 1987. On 13 November 1983 he had surpassed Geoff Boycott while scoring 90 against the West Indies at Ahmedabad in Test #966. By far the most consistent opening batsman of his generation, Gavaskar compiled 10,122 runs (av: 51.12) in 125 Tests during 1971-87. His 34 centuries at this level also constituted another world record, smashing the 29 that Australia's Don Bradman had set during 1928-48. It has thus far been equalled only by Sachin Tendulkar.

15. Allan Robert Border, Australia (11,174)

After his retirement, Gavaskar's record remained unscathed for almost six years. It was eventually topped by Allan Border on 26 February 1993 during an innings of 88 against New Zealand at Christchurch in Test #1,215. It had taken the Australian 139 Tests and 240 innings to accomplish this feat. Border added more than 1,000 runs to the record by soldiering on until 29 March 1994. He then retired after having amassed 11,174 runs (av: 50.56) in 156 matches and 265 innings which were then world records also. One of Australia's most reliable batsmen, he finished with 27 Test centuries and an additional 63 innings in which he exceeded 50 runs. Border's world record of 90 Test scores in excess of 50 is likely to endure for many years yet.

16. Brian Charles Lara, West Indies (11,204)

It took Brian Lara fewer Tests and fewer innings to overhaul the great Australian in November 2005. He broke Border's record in his 121st Test and 213th innings. The record came towards the end of a magnificent 226 which ended with the score at 381/8 in Test #1,773. Entering at 19/2, Lara scored 62.43% of all the runs added while he was at the crease. It was his eighth double century in Test cricket, second only to the twelve accumulated by the incomparable Don Bradman. It was also his 31st Test century, five more than the West Indian record of 26 that Garry Sobers had set more than 30 years before. Lara now sits at 11,204 runs (av: 53.86) and seems fit and vigorous enough to become the first to surmount the 12,000 runs barrier.

Final Analysis

As the vast bulk of Test matches during 1877-1939 involved Australia and England, it is not surprising that the record aggregate has most often been held by batsmen from these two countries. Of the 16 cricketers who have shared the record, seven have represented England, six Australia, two the West Indies and one India. Among them, five (Bannerman, Murdoch, Hammond, Sobers and Lara) also held the world record for the highest individual innings. Lara (with monumental scores of 400 not out and 375) was the only one to do so more than once.

The monarch who reigned the longest was Wally Hammond who headed the list for 33 years and 156 days, breaking the record of 22 years and 147 days that Clem Hill had established. Others who held the record for more than ten years were Allan Border, Jack Hobbs and Arthur Shrewsbury. From the point of view of matches played, however, it took the world—in these days of non-stop Test cricket—558 Tests to challenge Border successfully, while Hammond's record had survived for only 414.

As is usual in studies of this kind, there are some oddities. One would have expected W.G.Grace, by far the greatest batsman of the 19th century, to have dominated the earlier Tests. He was among the first to exceed 1,000 runs in these matches but always remained behind Shrewsbury. In 22 Tests during 1880-99, he mustered only 1,098 runs (av: 32.29), despite his 152 in his debut at The Oval in September 1880 and 170 at the same venue in August 1886.

Other surprises involve the absence of Don Bradman and Victor Trumper from the list. Bradman, of course, had to compete with Hammond who played far more often than he did. The Don participated in only 52 Tests to manufacture his 6,996 runs at the fabulous average of 99.94. Hammond played in 85.

For all of his fantastic reputation, Trumper with 3,163 runs (av: 39.04) in 48 Tests during 1899-1912 could never surpass Clem Hill who played in exactly the same number of matches. To this day, older pundits still consider Trumper second only to Bradman among all Australian batsmen.

Another missing name is that of Leonard Hutton, who was everywhere regarded as the world's best batsman after the departure of Bradman and Hammond. He might well have reached the top had he played in one or two more series after the triumphant tour to Australia in 1954/55. He chose to settle for 6,971 runs (av: 56.67) in 79 Tests.

Looking ahead, Lara's aggregate, as a West Indian record, seems safe for the foreseeable future. But, as a world record, it is most likely to be challenged shortly by Sachin Tendulkar of India. Others with a chance to surpass him include India's Raoul Dravid, Pakistan's Inzamam ul-Haq and South Africa's Jacques Kallis.