



**GEOFF LEMON'S STEVE SMITH'S MEN: BEHIND AUSTRALIAN CRICKET'S FALL WINS  
THE CRICKET SOCIETY AND MCC BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD 2019**

Date: Wednesday 17th April 2019      Release time: Immediate

- Australian writer Geoff Lemon named the winner of The Cricket Society and MCC Book of the Year Award for his book, *Steve Smith's Men: Behind Australian Cricket's Fall*.
- Geoff beat off strong competition from five other books, including contrasting forms of biography about Moeen Ali, iconic commentators John Arlott and Jim Swanton and the England cricket team itself. Geoff received a winner's certificate and a £3,000 award.
- The competition originally begun in 1970 and has been run in partnership between The Cricket Society and MCC since 2009. Another Australian – David Frith - won the first award in 1970.

Australian writer Geoff Lemon was last night named the winner of The Cricket Society and MCC Book of the Year Award, presented in a packed Long Room at Lord's, for his book, *Steve Smith's Men: Behind Australian Cricket's Fall*. Chair of Judges Robert Winder praised the book's combination of immediacy and depth and its breathless but authoritative style.

Geoff accepted his shortlisting and winner's certificates, and the prize of £3,000, after an Oscars-style countdown in the Long Room at Lord's. The event was attended by MCC and Cricket Society Members and officers, authors, their publishers and guest cricketing journalists and writers. Each of the shortlisted authors spoke about their work.

A delighted Geoff spoke about writing the book over a three-month period of sixteen hour days after having gone to South Africa "in case something happens". Picking up his second award in the space of a week, he remarked that he had never felt so welcomed as he had been at Lord's in the past seven days.

Robert Winder surveyed the books considered by the judges, spoke about this year's challenging discussions before first the shortlist and then the winner were chosen, and commented in detail on each of the six finalists. He noted that many of the year's books dwelt on the subject of sportsmanship and fair play, which made Geoff Lemon's book a worthy and significant winner - proof that even today cricket can be something more than just a game. He praised the winning book as a "witty page turner that showed how a dramatic cricket scandal triggered a bout of national soul-searching in Australia". In a keynote address, writer Simon Lister paid tribute to the legendary sports journalist Frank Keating for his generosity and encouragement.

The award is highly regarded by writers and publishers. A previous winner, former *Wisden* editor Scyld Berry, hailed his award as “cricket’s seal of literary approval.” This year, Mihir Bose was “honoured to be shortlisted for the award which I think is the greatest of all cricket awards”.

**Notes for editors:**

The six books on the shortlist (alphabetically by author) were:

- Moeen, Moeen Ali with Mihir Bose, Allen and Unwin
- On Cricket, Mike Brearley, Constable
- Arlott, Swanton and the Soul of English Cricket, Stephen Fay and David Kynaston, Bloomsbury
- Steve Smith’s Men, Behind Australian Cricket’s Fall, Geoff Lemon, Hardie Grant
- Ambassadors of Goodwill: MCC Tours 1946/47 – 1970/71, Mark Peel, Pitch Publishing
- England, The Biography: The Story of English Cricket, Simon Wilde, Simon and Schuster

A longlist of eighteen books from those nominated by either Cricket Society or MCC Members, and not publishers, were whittled down to six by a panel of judges chaired by writer Robert Winder. The other judges are Mike Selvey, John Symons and Chris Lowe. Nigel Hancock is the competition’s administrator.

**About the Cricket Society**

The Cricket Society – [www.cricketsociety.com](http://www.cricketsociety.com) and Twitter @CricketSociety – encourages a love of cricket through playing, watching, reading and listening. It supports young cricketers, makes annual awards, holds regular meetings, publishes an acclaimed Journal and Bulletin and has its own cricket team.

It is a national organisation with 1,700 members across the UK and beyond. It also has branches based in Bath, Birmingham and Durham. This year's key events include the annual Spring Lunch at The Oval, member 'days at the cricket' at two Specsavers County Championship matches and, in August, a film night and social with the Australian Cricket Society hosted by David Frith. Future plans include a developing focus on women's membership and cricket.

**About Marylebone Cricket Club**

MCC is the world’s most active cricket club, the owner of Lord’s Ground and the guardian of the Laws and Spirit of the game. There are 18,000 Full and 5,000 Associate Members of MCC. The Club plays more matches than any other – around 480 each year, against schools, universities and clubs in the UK, and between 20 and 30 as part of its overseas touring programme which aims to develop cricket abroad.

**For more information please contact:**

**Adam Matthews**

MCC Media and Communications Officer

Lord's Ground

Direct Line: 020 7616 8699

Mobile: 07929 348074

Email: [adam.matthews@mcc.org.uk](mailto:adam.matthews@mcc.org.uk)

**Robert Winder**

Chair of Judges, The Cricket Society and MCC Book of the Year Award

Mobile: 07775 892067

Email : [robertwinder1@hotmail.com](mailto:robertwinder1@hotmail.com)

**Nigel Hancock OBE**

Chair of The Cricket Society

Mobile: 07885 733320

Email: [nigelhancock@cricketsociety.com](mailto:nigelhancock@cricketsociety.com)