

"EYE-WITNESS" CRICKET

How Test Matches Were Broadcast

ON the opposite page we print an interview with C. J. A. Moses, General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, in which we refer to the Test match broadcasts he used to do. The story of how those broadcasts were arranged, and how the fake was made so convincing that thousands of people lost thousands of hours of sleep for it will no doubt interest many of our readers, especially those who used to see it out to the bitter end at 5.30 in the morning. Test cricket will be in the news and on the air again before long, and there will be something to take the place of exciting war news.

Mr. Moses told us that he was at the microphone himself for the greater part of the first Test match that was broadcast, and was always on the job up to the luncheon adjournment.

That was back in 1934. The game was being played on the Oval in England and thousands of Australians were hearing what sounded like an actual eye-witness account, ball by ball. In fact, they were hearing it only five minutes or so later than they would have heard a genuine relayed broadcast.

Mr. Moses told us he used to take risks by keeping as close on the heels of the actual game as he could. He could, if he chose, take it easy and have something in hand in case there was a hitch. But Mr. Moses preferred to take the risk.

Over the Eight

"I'd have to invent all sorts of fiction if there was a hitch," he said. "But I could use my knowledge of cricket and actual conditions to think up delays—a batsman calling for a new bat, a bowler wanting to change his boots, a

dog running across the ground, or the players calling for drinks. I'm afraid drinks were taken with much greater frequency in my account than was ever really the case!"

"You must have needed a pretty extensive knowledge of the game."

"Well, I've always had a good memory for the facts of cricket. I always love doing cricket. Actually I've broadcast 17 different kinds of sport at different times."

For a detailed account of how the Test broadcasts were done we had no need to make Mr. Moses go over it all again. The *ABC Annual* of 1939 contained an article by C. J. A. Moses and D. G. Leggett entitled "How Test Cricket Is Broadcast," and with Mr. Moses' knowledge we now reproduce parts of it.

Every Test broadcast in 1934 had its vast audience of cricketers, near-cricketers and "those interested." By 1938 that audience had increased greatly. And in 1938, for the first time, these thousands of listeners were able to hear eye-witness descriptions of the play that actually came from the Test grounds on the other side of the world. But uncertain reception conditions still made it necessary that for the greater part of each match realistic ball by ball descriptions, similar to those of previous years, should be broadcast from the Commission's Sydney studios. Of this type of broadcast listeners have constantly asked "How is it done?" "Is it coming from England?" No attempt had been made to hide the fact that such broadcasts had their origin in the Sydney studio, but the descriptions were so true to life that many people believed them to be coming direct from the ground.

How it is Done

(continued from previous page)

other escapees, so the three of us got on to that. The launch began to run out of gas, but that was lucky for us, because we had been heading for Palembang, and the Japs had already got there. Instead we made for a place called Djambi, and from there we went across to Padang on the west coast. From there we went by Catalina to Batavia. In Batavia a taxi driven by a drunken native got me, and I should have been killed that time—I was very lucky to get out of it. General Bennett flew on to Australia and we got away on a little 900-ton Dutch boat crowded with other refugees. I nearly died on board that vessel with a tropical disease, but somehow I got by, and in nine days we reached Australia.

"Then I got fit again and went to New Guinea, and was in command of a unit there. I had the pleasure to see the Japs running the other way for a change. Then when I'd had three years' fighting altogether I was recalled by Mr. Curtin; he thought I had had enough. However this year I saw some more fighting. When I went to England for the Empire Broadcasting Conference I managed to get to Germany for three weeks, masquerading as a war correspondent! I crossed the Rhine with commandos, and I'm told I was the first war correspondent to cross the Rhine. Anyway, I was the first correspondent in Wesel."

In fact, these descriptions were constructed from cables sent from the ground every few minutes—through reserved telegraphic and telephonic channels—to the Sydney offices of the Commission. Here the commentary was built up and broadcast by a team of cricket experts.

The messages were received in Australia by officers of the Postmaster-General's Department and were at once relayed to the studios by private line. During a trial cable service before the Tests began the lapse of time between the lodging of the message in England and its delivery in Australia was approximately one minute. During the Tests even faster service was given.

The "Received Telegram" form shown on this page was received after the 34th over of the second day's play in the Fifth Test match. It was telephoned to the studio at 10.26½ p.m.

The Translations

"Brightening" is a comment on the weather. Earlier messages had progressively described the weather as follows . . . veiled sun . . . overcast . . . clouds high . . . shower commencing . . . subdued sun . . . occasional raindrops, and so on. Thus the commentator was able to amplify his description by telling listeners of every fluctuation in the weather.

RECEIVED TELEGRAM
URGENT RATE 4/10/38
THE FIRST LINE OF THIS MESSAGE APPEARS IN THE FOLLOWING MESSAGES OF THE SAME PRIORITY

46/46 Words Time Lodged

ATEST, SYDNEY

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION
SYDNEY

BRIGHTENING FLEETWOOD HAMMOND FIRSTLY FULL 2 HASSETT SECONDLY FULL
4 STRAIGHT UNCHANCE BOWLER THIRDLY NOBALL FULL 2 OFFDRIVEN RUNAPPEAL
HUTTON FOURTHLY 4 SWEEP BOWLER KEEPER OFFPUSHED

10-26 PM AB

46 34 Fleetwood Smith

Ball	batsman	Where Hit	Fielded	Score	Comments
1	Hammond	full toss off drive	Hammett	2	Chasing fields brilliantly
2	"	full toss off drive straight drive	"	4	Wicket a catch to bowler
3	"	full toss off drive	Hassett	2	appeal for run out against Hutton at bowler's mark
4	"	Swept past Barnes on fence	"	4	at deep square leg
5	"	back to bowler	"	-	
6	"	keeper	"	-	
7	"	played slowly to cover	Hassett	-	

REMARKS: Hutton's Runappeal

This shows the style of the messages received, and how they were amplified for the benefit of the commentator

"Fleetwood-Hammond" means that the bowler was Fleetwood-Smith and that Hammond was the batsman to face him.

"Firstly Full 2 Hassett" tells us that the first ball was a full toss, that two runs were scored from it and that Hassett's fielding was very good. Hassett's field position, as shown by the field diagram, is at deep extra cover. Obviously the ball got through the normal offside field, but Hassett, fielding deep near the boundary, saved the four brilliantly.

"Secondly Full 4 Straight" means that the second ball was also a full toss and that Hammond straight drove it past the bowler to the boundary. "Unchance Bowler" tells us that he lifted the ball but it was either too high or too wide of the bowler for him to make a "chance" of it.

"Thirdly No Ball Full 2 Offdriven Runappeal Hutton" means that Fleetwood-Smith's third ball to Hammond, a full toss, was "no-balled" by the umpire, that Hammond offdrove it for two and that in completing his second run his partner, Hutton, narrowly avoided being run out at the bowler's end.

"Fourthly 4 Swept" easily becomes a sweeping shot to the square leg boundary wide of Barnes, who, according to

the field placings chart, is stationed at deep square leg. This ball would be somewhat overpitched outside the leg stump and Hammond would almost get down on his right knee to execute the shot.

"Bowler Keeper Offpushed" means that the last three balls of the over were patted back to the bowler, allowed to pass to the wicketkeeper and pushed slowly out to the offside of the wicket respectively.

Aids to Illusion

In addition to the amplified cable messages, diagrams of the field are used, showing the placings of the fielding team for each bowler to both right and left-handed batsmen.

While the commentator does his description, the effects operator, following a carbon copy of the amplified message, supplies the correct atmosphere by fading in crowd noises, applause and so on as required. The broadcaster makes the sound of bat meeting ball and of ball striking pad by tapping a wooden cup, or the heavy rubber round it, with the pencil in his right hand. Panoramic views of the ground are also a great help, and the broadcaster's illusion is aided by one other important device, a large scoreboard, in the care of the expert who operates the one at the Sydney cricket ground.