



CURTAIN UP AT BRISBANE ON NOVEMBER 26

"NOW is the time for all good men" to prepare to listen to the slow-sliding stream of Test cricket, "crowned with vocal reeds" (though Milton did not foresee broadcasting); for wives to fortify their patience against endless cricket talk at meals; for employers to await with resignation (provided they are not listening themselves) the absence or absentmindedness of typists and clerks. The Test matches between England and Australia begin on November 26 at Brisbane, Queensland.

For two reasons we were curious about Brisbane. Why begin there, and had there not been some talk of the high expectation of rain, and its effect on the wicket? With memories of that kind of trouble, the M.C.C. proposed to the Board of Control, that Brisbane should be eliminated. In the first Test match of the 1946-47 series, played in Brisbane, Australia batted first on "a splendid wicket" (Bradman's phrase) and scored 645, and then a thunderstorm made the wicket sticky for England. A second "stupendous downpour"

(Bradman again) flooded the ground; "One could have sailed a boat across the oval," and the stumps floated away. And a first Test match, anywhere, is a very serious thing.

Commenting on that game, a well-known Australian journalist and broadcaster referred to the "hidden treachery of a real Brisbane gluepot." New Zealand has had an experience of it. The 1913-14 team, captained by Dan Reese played Queensland on a bowlers' wicket and won a most exciting match by twelve runs, with the highest total 161. However, the Board of Control would not agree to the M.C.C. suggestion and Brisbane stands. But, for the first time, the wicket will be covered.

Wishing to know more about the Brisbane ground and climate, we were fortunate enough to find a Queenslander who had played a lot of big cricket at home, in Brisbane and away, and had captained Queensland in Sheffield Shield matches. He was a very knowledgeable person, but preferred to remain anonymous.

First, why Brisbane for the opening of the series? It used to be Sydney. In England and Australia there is a regular itinerary for Test matches. In England it is Nottingham, Lord's, Manchester, Leeds and the Oval. Of Manchester, the home of the Old Trafford ground, you might add, "If it doesn't rain," for Old Trafford's propensity to rain is so marked that cutting Manchester out of the Tests has been seriously discussed in England of late. If you saw the film *The Lady Vanishes*, you will never forget the two English cricket fiends who crossed Europe to see a Test at Old Trafford, fighting a gun battle on the way, and were greeted at Victoria station with a newspaper poster: "Test Match Washed Out."

Brisbane, it was explained to us, is farthest north in the itinerary of a cricket team from overseas, and it is thought best to play there early and then go south to shuttle the other Tests between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. There is a vast geographical difference between the compactness of England and the great arc sweep of distance from Brisbane to Adelaide. So the regular programme is for visitors to play Queensland one weekend and start the first Test match the next.

There were half a million people in Brisbane and Queensland was "the coming State." Queensland came into

Shield cricket in 1926, and then struck the slump which delayed ground improvement. Besides, the southern States denied Queensland the use of important holidays for home matches, which affected gates. Our Queenslander didn't know what had been done lately, but he thought accommodation would be pretty good. We turned up Bradman (1950) and found he considered the arrangement for players in Brisbane "ideal for such a hot and humid climate." Size of crowds? He couldn't say definitely, but people would come from a long distance. There was 1100 miles of railway up to Cairns.

On the matter of the wicket, this ex-Queensland skipper was most emphatic. "Best wicket in Australia and probably in the world"—that was, in fine weather. Hobbs and other great players had said so. The curator had been a Queensland captain. We consulted Bradman again. "At the moment it (the Brisbane ground, shown at the top of the page) possesses a pitch of even height and pace which batsmen would probably say is the best in Australia." Yes, it was different if rain came, said our friend, but this time the wicket would be covered.

The weather trouble, he explained, was that thunderstorms had a regular way of coming in November and December. In the winter you couldn't wish for a more pleasant climate; outdoor sports, including surfing, through the year. There was winter cricket. But the November and December thunderstorms! "Rain will come out of a blue sky, and when I say rain, I mean it!" Then in a little while there was blue sky again. We murmured that such a thing was not unknown here. We recalled a day in Auckland when, by the time the *Star* was selling, with the statement on its front page that it was a "lovely day," Queen Street was awash.

He had seen many, many runs scored on the Brisbane ground. When Alan Kippax captained New South Wales, if he found the Brisbane wicket hard, he made his fast bowler twelfth man. Why? Because the wicket was too easy paced; the ball wouldn't "lift!"

Hot? Yes, certainly hot in Brisbane, and an Englishman might be pretty limp at the end of a day's play. So might an Australian for that matter, but it was new to the Englishman. However, Brisbane wasn't the only hot place. He had played in the dry heat of Adelaide and Melbourne with the thermometer

TEST BROADCASTS

ANOTHER story about the coming cricket Tests between the M.C.C. and Australia will appear in next week's issue of "The Listener." This will include information about commentators who will be heard in the broadcasts. Here, however, for those who have been waiting for news of what the NZBS will do is a summary of broadcasting arrangements:

Hours of play for the first Test at Brisbane will be 1.30 to 3.0 p.m., 3.40 to 5.30 p.m., and 5.50 to 7.30 p.m., N.Z. time. On the six days of play—November 26 to December 2 inclusive—YA and YZ stations will link to take the last 15 minutes of commentary of each period of play and the five-minute summary which follows each period. These broadcasts will be from 2.45 to 3.5 p.m., 5.15 to 5.35 p.m., and 7.15 to 7.35 p.m. The day's scoreboard will be given in full also from YA and YZ stations—after the 9.0 p.m. News, and will be repeated from the same stations next morning at 7.18 a.m. In addition, the YA and YZ stations will broadcast frequent progress scores throughout the day, and progress scores will also be heard from the ZB stations and 2ZA.

over the hundred. One Queensland player was sunburnt on the Melbourne ground. And then a savouring reminiscence of cricket in the sun. "Melbourne! What a ground!" A pause. "It's a long way back to the stand when you've made a duck." We sympathised silently. We had made a clutch of "ducks," though never in the class of cricket graced by grandstands.

Then a general discussion on points that keep cropping up when enthusiasts meet. We looked back on personal obscurity, but we had seen Ernest Jones and Harry Trott and Trumper, and interviewed Noble. Differences in climate and light between the countries; atmosphere and swerve; would the young players of the last Australian team in England do better on their own grounds; how would the fast bowlers of the present English side fare? Pace alone didn't suffice in Australia; there had to be accuracy. The great Australian batsmen had lived on loose fast bowling.

So in Brisbane the curtain shimmers in the theatre lights, and the orchestra begins to tune up. We don't know how the play will end, who will "get the girl." Perhaps it is as difficult to predict as an election.



SIR DONALD BRADMAN
No complaints about the Brisbane ground