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Bodyline, the British World and the Evolution of an Australian National Identity

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This article contributes to the historiographical debate concerning the nature and evolution of an Australian national identity. It does so through the case study of cricket and, in particular, cricketing relations with Britain. It argues that the movement of cultural traffic – that is the two-way transmission of people, ideas and sports – between metropole and colony was central to the formation, definition and evolution of an Australian cricketing identity. Furthermore, it suggests that this sporting national identity acted as a rehearsal for a broader Australian identity.

Keywords: Australia; national identity; cricket; Bodyline; British World

This article aims to contribute to the long-standing historiographical debate surrounding the formation and evolution of an Australian national identity in the decades before and after Federation. It does this through the medium of sport and, in particular, cricketing relations with Britain. Sport is a particularly apt vehicle for the exploration of such issues. As Richard Cashman has argued, 'sport is central to the business of being Australian, that most (though not all) Australians are passionate about sport and that sport dominates the cultural and physical landscape. Sport, as much as any institution, seems to define the Australian nation'.[1] Even in the nineteenth century, it appears that there were exponents of this view since, in 1882, the journalist Richard Twopenny asserted that Australia was the most sports-obsessed nation in the world.[2] Furthermore (and importantly for the purposes of this article), Graeme Davison contends that sport was the means through which colonial Australia first rehearsed its identity. In other words, sport and sporting relations with Britain were fundamental to the formation, or 'rehearsal', of an early national identity.[3]

The National Identity Debate

The nature and evolution of an Australian national identity have been the topic of considerable debate. The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of a 'radical nationalist' school of thought whose exponents looked at Australia's colonial past in search of signs of latent or nascent expressions of nationalist feeling or sentiment.[4] These scholars sought to identify a number of figures in Australian politics or the arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who could be presented as champions of an embryonic yet self-conscious nationalism. However, all too often these proto-nationalist voices were found to be drowned out by various manifestations of Britishness in early Australian society: the perceived need for British military protection, a conservative and frustratingly prevalent

'Anglo-Australianness' and, associated with this, a nagging inferiority complex or 'cultural cringe'. The ensuing narrative for these radical nationalist historians was often therefore one of a perennially thwarted nationalism; Britishness and Australianness were framed as mutually exclusive, or even conflictive, with the British identity often trumping any distinctively endemic Australian identity.

Historians, since the 1970s, have been increasingly amenable to the central importance of Britishness in Australian society and culture in the period up to, at least, World War II.[5] Rather than thwarted, Australian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constituted a kind of localised Britishness, an identity that was an amalgam of Australian *and* British. As Schreuder and Ward have elaborated in *Australia's Empire*, '[a]t the heart of the evolving Australian sense of nationality was a hybrid ideology, one that drew from both a tenacious race identity of Britishness, together with an increasingly assertive sense of material self-interest, and an environmental sense of place'.[6] We can find evidence of such sentiments in the articulations of a number of contemporaries. For example, in 1884, Henry Parkes suggested that the Australian colonies should be renamed the 'British States of Australia' for '[i]n this designation the British feeling and the Australian feeling would habitually and perpetually blend … [and] the sentiments of British pride and Australian patriotism would commingle in one glow of loyalty'.[7] Similarly, the Australian historian, Keith Hancock, asserted in 1930 that it was 'not impossible for Australians, nourished by a glorious literature and haunted by old memories, to be in love with two soils'. Hancock underscored this duality of identity by dubbing his compatriots as 'independent Australian Britons'.[8] Although there is still some debate about when we should start to date the emergence of an endemic, non-British Australian nationalism – World War II, the 'new nationalism' of the 1960s and 1970s, or as late as 1986 – there seems little disagreement about the inherence of Britishness in Australian society and culture in the era of Federation.[9]

The National Identity Debate as Seen through Australian Sports History

We can find similar interpretive shifts mirrored in Australian sports historiography. The radical nationalist perspective was probably most conspicuously represented in the 1973 W. F. Mandle essay 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century'. This seminal piece argued that the triumph of Australian cricket teams over the 'mother country' in the late nineteenth century coincided with, and indeed, helped foster, a newly emergent and strident nationalism. Mandle maintained that the success of nationally 'federated' Australian cricket teams against the English in the late 1870s and early 1880s inspired a 'cricketing nationalism' that, in turn, paved the way for the political nationalism of Federation. Thus, Australians 'saw in their Australian test match sides symbols of a distinctive, developing sense of national identity that in other areas of society was producing the Federation movement, the trade unions and the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and the *Bulletin*'.[10] Such views can be found reinforced in some of the more nationalist general histories. For example, one of the more prominent radical nationalist histories, Stephen Alomes's *A Nation at Last*, argued that sport aided the cause of Federation and nationalism by fostering 'a sense of shared Australianness'. Bob Birrell has also suggested that sport contributed to a burgeoning nationalism around the time of Federation.[11] These views found contemporary articulation in that particularly nationalistic publication The *Bulletin*. In 1898, it trumpeted that the victory of Harry Trott's Australian cricket team over England 'did more to enhance the cause of Australian nationality than could ever be achieved by miles of erudite essays and impassioned appeal'.[12]

However, almost from the moment it was published the Mandle thesis had its critics, particularly for what some saw as these overstated connections to Australian nationalism. K.S. Inglis claimed, rather, that Australia's wholehearted adoption of, and competence at, this most English of sports was actually 'a sign of how spontaneously and profoundly Australians embraced the culture of the motherland'.[13] Since the 1970s – as with the historical debate surrounding Australian nationalism more broadly – we have seen a growing appreciation of the importance of Britishness in Australian sports and sporting culture. As Wray Vamplew has put it, 'Sport was part of the cultural baggage brought out to Australia ... [and thereby] Britain's sporting heritage was transferred to the new Antipodean colonies'. Moreover, 'the continued flow of migrants to Australia from Britain throughout the nineteenth century reinforced [this] early cultural continuity in terms of sporting activities'.[14] The sports that were played in nineteenth-century Australia were thus a 'British inheritance' and, admittedly, it is difficult *not* to recognise the Britishness of sports like cricket and rugby.

Some have developed this point further to say that sport and the 'games ethic' generally played a key role in the imperialising mission itself. British sports not only offered comfort for homesick British imperialists and migrants, but also exemplified and communicated what it meant to be British. To this end, it has been argued that British sports and sporting culture functioned as essential vehicles for the dissemination and inculcation of British values, customs and ideologies throughout the various colonies, amongst both coloniser and colonised. According to J.A. Mangan, cricket, again, was 'the symbol *par excellence* of imperial solidarity and superiority epitomising a set of consolidatory moral imperatives that both exemplified and explained imperial ambition'.[15] Moreover, there is evidence of contemporaries making similar claims for sports as vehicles of imperial didacticism and harmony. For example, Lord Harris, the aristocratic patron and captain of the English team who toured Australia in 1878–1879, averred that 'cricket had done more to draw the Mother Country and the Colonies together than years of beneficial legislation'.[16] Such a belief in the imperial efficacy of cricket was again expressed just prior to World War I in Lord Hawke's introduction to P.F. Warner's *Imperial Cricket*:

> The greatest game in the world is played wherever the Union Jack is unfurled, and it has no small place in cementing the ties that bond together every part of the Empire ... the future of cricket and of the Empire ... is so inseparably connected.[17]

We can chart such variations in interpretive emphasis through different accounts of that pivotal moment in Anglo-Australian sporting relations, the Bodyline cricket series of 1932–1933.[18] This was a series when the English side toured Australia after having been defeated in the previous Test series in England in 1930. Their defeat in 1930 was largely due to the prowess of the young Australian batter, Donald Bradman, who in seven Test innings had scored 974 runs at an average of nearly 140. To counter this, the English, under the direction of their captain, Douglas Jardine, had devised a method called 'fast leg theory' that sought to nullify the Bradman effect. This involved stacking the leg side of the field with players and instructing the fast bowlers to aim at the body of the batter. This method was deployed against not only Bradman but also many other Australian batters. A number of batters suffered injuries, including the wicketkeeper, Bert Oldfield, who suffered a fractured skull, and the captain, Bob Woodfull, who was struck in the chest.[19] Although there was nothing in the rules to proscribe fast leg theory, it was widely considered by the Australians to contravene the spirit of cricket.

The impact of the controversy reached beyond the realm of sport and was one of the few times that sport intruded into the upper echelons of political and diplomatic discourse,

a fact which has led to it being described as 'cricket's imperial crisis'.[20] However, there have been contrasting readings of the significance of this 'imperial crisis' that reflect the differing historiographical schools of thought discussed above. Mandle positions the events within a narrative of a budding, burgeoning then emboldened nationalism that began with the first cricket victories of Australian teams in the late nineteenth century and culminated in the brash, self-confident sides of the 1970s.[21] In this rendition, Bodyline operates as a sort of synecdoche of the frequently conflictive relationship between colony and metropole, Britishness and Australianness, and it is this interpretation that most often gets recycled in popular accounts of the series.[22] Moreover, Bodyline is seen as not only mirroring in sport various tensions which were evident in other spheres, such as economic and political relations, but also presaging the longer-term diminishment of Anglo-Australian relations that would occur post-World War II. Thus, Sissons and Stoddart conclude that the Bodyline series 'remains a major benchmark in the evolution of Anglo-Australian imperial relations and social attitudes'.[23]

However, the same events have also been accommodated within an 'imperial solidarity' perspective. This line of thinking basically argues that although the 1932–1933 series clearly contained an unprecedented level of animosity between the two teams, this did not necessarily affect the more profound bonds of imperial unity. Indeed, the controversy could actually be portrayed as a disagreement over the importance of the traditions of the game: traditions that were embedded within the 'games ethic' of the imperialising mission. Essentially, the Australians accused the English tactics of being unsporting and therefore breaching the spirit and (imperial) codes of the game. Thus, it was an argument about the importance of upholding the imperial traditions and values of cricket and in this example of Bodyline it was actually the Australians who can be seen to be championing this, not only in words but also in the way they were playing the game. A number of contemporary views stressed this aspect. For example, a piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* written before the infamous third match at Adelaide when Oldfield and Woodfull sustained their injuries expressed the hope that the game would be 'played in the tradition and the spirit that have made it what it is – the true embodiment of British sport and fair play'.[24] Various moves were made after the 1932–1933 tour to reinforce imperial ties and the tactic of Bodyline was effectively banned by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) governing body in 1934. Thus, those in the imperial solidarity camp see the Bodyline series as an anomaly, an exception that only served to highlight the importance of imperial unity. In fact, Dave Russell has argued that if one looks at the broad sweep of Test cricket played between Australia and England in the period 1880–1939, the Bodyline series is completely *untypical*. Rather, cricketing contests between these two nations were largely characterised by imperial amity and goodwill.[25]

But I would argue that the seeming choice between Mandle's emergent nationalism and Mangan's imperial solidarity is a false one. Indeed, while sporting relations could certainly serve an imperial purpose, they could also convey, and in fact be a source of, tension – a situation amply attested to by the 'Bodyline' series. It appears, then, that the 'nationalism/imperial loyalty' dialectic was much more complicated than a simplistic binary choice, particularly for Dominions like Australia. As Richard Holt has argued, '[a]ll Dominion sport mediated the desire for national self-determination and identity with a sense of imperial purpose'. Holt went on to state that '[n]owhere was the sense of shared [imperial] culture and of Dominion independence more finely balanced than in Australia'.[26] This notion of a mediated national identity seems to capture a more accurate representation of the complex, ambivalent and, at times, contradictory nature of Anglo-Australian relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The British World

A relatively recent theoretical approach that offers a useful framework within which to explore such issues is that of the British World. The 'British World' approach to British imperial history was conceived and developed over the course of a series of conferences, held between 1998 and 2007, and the edited collections that proceeded from these.[27] This approach took its cue from J.G.A. Pocock's 1973 call for a 'new British history' that would bring into closer propinquity the hitherto largely separate histories of the British Dominions and the wider British Empire. Thus, the British World's chief remit was to 'bring the old Dominions back into the mainstream of imperial history and to examine their connections to the United Kingdom and with each other'.[28] By bringing Britain and the Dominions within the same frame of reference in this way, British World studies have deliberately sought to transcend the kind of insularly nationalist histories described above. To this end, the British World framework is more concerned with exploring the movement and flow of people, goods and ideas through and between various settler colonial spaces and the metropole.

The adoption of such an explicitly transnational perspective fulfils a couple of functions. First, it sets the terms of reference beyond the strictures of the nation-state. As such, a settler colony like Australia is viewed not in terms of a nation-state-in-waiting, as has frequently been depicted in radical nationalist historiography, but rather as one of many 'nodes' dotted around a British World web. These nodes could operate as regional centres to their immediate hinterland or periphery while simultaneously occupying a peripheral status to other centres, the most obvious and dominant one being Britain.[29] It is perhaps not surprising then that such a decentred, 'multi-nodal' approach has led to an emphasis on networks as a mode of analysis. As Alan Lester has put it, a networked conception of empire allows for colonial relations to be 'stretched in contingent and non-deterministic ways, across space'. In other words, a networks-based approach seeks to privilege *neither* metropolitan nor colonial spaces but, rather, to reconfigure both spaces through the act of connecting them.[30] We can see then how the British World framework offers a means for re-examining imperial–colonial relations that deliberately moves away from a nationalism/imperial unity binary. In particular, the emphasis on the functioning of networks and the connection and reconfiguration of metropole and colony therewith resonates with Holt's idea of a mediated Dominion identity.

Indeed, this British World framework/approach also resonates with discussions concerning the nature and function of Dominion status and the ensuing de-dominionisation that occurred in British World nodes like Australia and Canada. First, dominionisation was a transnational, British World phenomenon. As Jim Davidson has shown, the invention and establishment of the term 'Dominion' (and its attendant political and constitutional status) were defensive moves designed to, at once, grant these emerging settler colonies a degree of autonomy as well as to underscore their position in the wider British imperial project.[31] As Davidson has put it:

> By 1907 dominion status was recognised by Whitehall; but did this imply a progression towards full nationality, or did it indicate that these self-governing units were cornerstones of the imperial design? Perhaps they were both: one day the emphasis might shift from one to the other.[32]

Therefore, the term (and status) was freighted with ambivalence and itself suggested the inappropriateness of a nationalism/imperial unity binary. In this way, the dominionisation of settler colonies like Australia and Canada also speaks to Holt's construal of a mediated Dominion identity.

Furthermore, in a specifically Australian context, the significance placed on networks and the passage of people, goods and ideas between metropole and colony for the formation and evolution of a Dominion identity has much in common with the concept of 'cultural traffic' as elaborated by Australian art historian and cultural theorist, Bernard Smith. Smith argued that Australian art history needed to be understood via a British artistic sensibility but, furthermore and somewhat more provocatively, to truly understand British art and, indeed, the British Enlightenment, one needed to appreciate the cultural impact of the discovery of the Antipodes in the eighteenth century. That is to say, the exotic images and artefacts (and ideas) brought back from Cook's voyages around Australia and the South Pacific exerted an indelible influence on the metropolitan British artistic sensibility and cultural consciousness more broadly. As Smith's foremost scholarly interpreter, the Australian sociologist Peter Beilharz, put it: 'the reflux from below … returned to haunt the metropolitan consciousness'.[33] Thus, antecedent to Edward Said, Smith was already attentive to the centre-periphery dynamic and the cultural traffic conveyed by people, artefacts and beliefs passing between the two.[34]

Beilharz has further developed these ideas to expound a conception of the Antipodean condition. For Beilharz, in contrast to the strict classical sense of the Antipodes having the feet distant from civilisation, 'the issue is not that Antipodeans have both feet elsewhere, but that we have one foot each in centre and periphery'. Hence, the Antipodean condition

> suggests that identity results from the relationship between places and cultures rather than emerging from place, or ground. We, in the Antipodes, do have practical as well as romantic connection to or affection for our place; *but we are placed in it by the movements of empire and world system, migration and cultural traffic*.[35]

While Beilharz was describing contemporary Australia c.2005, these statements seem to be just as applicable, if not more so, to British World Australia. In particular, Beilharz's acknowledgement of the importance of transnational 'movements of empire and world system, migration and cultural traffic' is cognate to the British World networks-based approach. Likewise, his contention that 'identity results from relationship between places and cultures' is also reminiscent of Holt's mediated Dominion identity.

Cultural Traffic and the Development of an Australian Cricketing Identity

So is there any evidence of the ways in which the transmission of such cultural traffic between colony and metropole can be seen to have influenced the formation and evolution of an early Australian sporting identity (and, by extension, national identity)? In answering this question, the following account will focus on cricket. Perhaps, the most obvious vehicle for the movement of people and ideas – and hence cultural traffic – around the British World in a cricketing sense was the various tours by cricket teams. On the one hand, these tours possessed an imperial utility since, according to Cashman, 'international tours were powerful expressions of empire, performing many cultural and educative roles in addition to advancing cricket-playing'.[36] Such a view was also propounded by contemporaries – in 1926, Eric P. Barbour argued that 'the regular arrangement of Test matches promotes, not only a healthy feeling of rivalry, but what is more important, a healthy feeling of friendship and unity between the Dominions and the Mother Country'.[37] However, tours could just as much be a means for highlighting subtle differences in the cricketing cultures and modes of play of various British World 'nodes' as for cementing imperial concord. Indeed, Barbour noted as much about the Bodyline series in a book he wrote in 1933 in conjunction with Australian batsman, Alan Kippax.[38]

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, cricket in Australia was largely shaped by British precedent and standards. Rule books were copied word for word from British models and equipment was imported from the metropole. In the 1830s, visiting British regiments would often stage cricket matches with local colonial teams, thereby facilitating a regular reinforcement of this flow of cultural traffic from the centre. The first two organised tours of English teams took place in 1861–1862 and 1863–1864. These tours were privately funded and proved very popular with the Australian public, and, in the wake of these tours, a number of British cricketers stayed on in Australia to assist with the coaching of the colonial teams.[39] So although we can see the British World network in operation in these early years, the flow of cultural traffic is all one way – metropole to colony. This meant that cricket in the young colony was deeply imitative of the British archetype. Indeed, one of the British coaches whose services were employed by the colonial teams, William Caffyn, observed that the Australians would mimic his style of batting so meticulously as to even copy his flaws.[40]

However, from the 1880s there begins to be discerned a number of areas of divergence about the way cricket was evolving in the Antipodean colony. First, cricket in Australia was, in general, more egalitarian in terms of participation. In this regard, colonial teams were often composed of a mix of players from diverse backgrounds – professionals (such as solicitors and politicians), tradesmen (such as carpenters or mechanics) and labourers (such as bricklayers). Second, formal metropolitan leagues and competitions were established in the later nineteenth century in Australia, while in Britain at the same time competition was still mostly organised via less formal invitations between clubs.[41] And third, there even developed variations on the rules of the game, much to the consternation of metropolitan figures like Warner. In his 1903 publication, *Cricket Across the Seas*, Warner remonstrated about a different follow-on rule that had developed in Australia:

> I was very much surprised to learn that this practice had been adopted in all recent Test Matches in Australia, for I had previously imagined that the laws of the Marylebone Cricket Club extended everywhere, and that in whatever part of the world the game was played those laws were religiously observed.[42]

This quote testifies not only to contemporary colonial difference but also to the metropolitanism of Warner.

Although these rather prosaic differences are interesting as markers of divergence from the metropolitan archetype, what is more important for our purposes is whether contemporaries recognised an 'Australian' way of playing cricket and the significance this might have had for the creation of an Australian sporting identity. As mentioned above, the early years of cricket in Australia mainly saw cultural traffic flow from metropole to colony. As a consequence, this period also bore witness to an emphasis on the similarities between English and Australian cricket and cricketers. But from the time of the first tour of an Australian (white[43]) cricket team to England in 1878 – and hence the beginnings of a more two-way stream of cultural traffic – differences concerning Australian cricket and cricketers gradually began to be noted.

A simmering cause of contention in the early 1880s (and after) was the ambiguity surrounding the relative status of amateur and professional players. The simplistic rhetoric emanating from the metropole was that professionals were paid to play the game, whereas amateur players were not. The reality, however, was less clear-cut with a number of examples of English amateurs receiving remuneration through more circuitous means, such as the payment of tour 'expenses' and the receiving of fees to play exhibition matches.[44] The 1880 tour of England was especially marred by confusion concerning

amateur and professional status. As with all the Australian tours of this period, the 1880 tour was funded as a joint-stock venture with players buying a share in the team and then earning a portion of any profits accrued. Despite this, the Australians still classified themselves as amateurs, while the English cricketing establishment categorised them as professionals. Thus, the MCC initially refused to recognise the touring party and only agreed in the last month of the tour for the team to play a match against a representative England team. The huge popularity of this match enabled the tourists to recoup expenses but the imbroglio brought into sharp relief the definitional and cultural differences that existed between colony and metropole regarding professional/amateur status.[45]

The same differences would flare up again in 1884 when, perhaps emboldened by the famous 'Ashes' victory against an English representative team on the 1882 tour, the Australians pushed for a larger cut of the gate money. This prompted the aristocratic Lord Harris to opine:

> Having offered a word of advice to cricketing enthusiasts in England, I shall venture to offer one to Australians … It is that they should discourage any too anxious inclination amongst amateurs towards turning cricket into a lucrative profession. If professional cricketers prove to be necessary in Australia, as I say that they are in England, encourage their appearing by all means; but do not do anything to encourage the formation of a class of semi-professionals.[46]

Clearly, the status of Australian cricketers was a contentious issue and had led to this classification of 'semi-professionals', inhabiting, in the metropolitan gaze, an ambivalent standing between professional and amateur. Thus, we can see how a more complex, bidirectional flow of cultural traffic threw into relief a colonial cricketer with both similarities and differences to the metropolitan version.

According to this metropolitan gaze, this 'semi-professional' condition was apparently also manifested in the way Australians played cricket. From the time of these first Australian victories, Australian cricketers began to gain a reputation for a sort of single-minded, mercenary style of playing and an attitude of 'win at all costs'. Their 'industrial efficiency' was contrasted with the English amateur's 'languid and free-flowing pastoral style'.[47] In 1896, Arthur Budd described Australian cricketers in the following terms:

> They are slow and studiously correct in their cricket, sometimes wearisomely so. They hit at nothing but loose balls, but the fact remains that they are terribly difficult to get rid of, and that you never know when you have done with them.[48]

That famous interwar writer on cricket, Neville Cardus, described Australian cricketers in similar (albeit more florid) terms:

> The Australians brought to our Victorian pastime a terrible realism and cunning … these Australians were cricketers who had come quickly to rare skill in a country with no cant at all in sport, no 'traditions' or what not. They were not hampered by old custom … There has always been a certain dourness about Australian cricket, an unashamed will-to-power, with no 'may the best side win' nonsense … From the public schools and the universities, English acquire characteristics of assurance, privilege and indifference to the crowd and the results, characteristics *not* to be found in the play of Australians.[49]

We can see in this description how Cardus affirms certain tropes regarding the Australian way of playing cricket. Australians are dour and have a 'terrible realism' and even though he recognises their 'rare skill' they have no cognisance of the 'traditions' or 'customs' of the game. In other words, they are defined by their un-Englishness. Due to their public schools and universities – repositories and inculcators of English cultural mores – the English understand the traditions and values of the game, whereas the Australians play only to win, with an 'unashamed will to power'.

Although it is interesting to witness the appearance and evolution of these English characterisations of Australian cricket and cricketers, what is more important for our purposes is the response of the Australians. That is, did Australians accept and begin to 'own' this 'Australian way'? In 1880, when the colonial cricketers were beginning to enjoy some success against their metropolitan counterparts – and thus some of these characterisations began to emerge – the *Australasian* published the following defence of the supposed 'semi-professional' Australian cricketer:

> Ever since cricket has been played in Australia there has never been such a person as a 'professional' as it is understood by the term at home. Nor, in a democratic country like this was it either possible or desirable there should be. It may be necessary at Lords to define a 'professional' and to prohibit his presence in the 'pavilion', but we have not come to that here yet.[50]

In 1899, the manager of the Australian team, J.H. Phillips, went so far as to say that this more egalitarian attitude amongst the Australians was central to their recent success:

> In generalship the Australians are easily first. They play more in unison, they exchange views in the dressing-room, and their captain is thereby assisted materially in many of his plans … Off the field an Australian captain receives the benefit of the opinions of his comrades as if he were chairman of a board of directors. The average English captain is more of an autocrat. He rarely seeks advice from his men. If a consultation be held it is invariably confined to the amateurs and the batsmen, not the professionals and the bowlers … Another mistake is … the system of isolating professionals off the field. Surely, if a man is good enough to play on the same side he is good enough to dress in the same dressing-room. It is there most useful hints and ideas are exchanged when a game is in progress.[51]

The players themselves echoed such views. In 1905, Frank Laver commented that 'the English custom of amateur cricketers entering the field from one gate, and professional cricketers from another seems, to all Australians, priggish and out of place'.[52] These quotes invoke a more egalitarian or democratic character of Australian cricket as a marker of colonial difference *vis-à-vis* the metropole. There is also, importantly, a noticeable element of defensiveness of this 'Australian way'.

The more workmanlike and ruthless style of Australian cricket received the ultimate vindication when, in the 1920–1921 English tour of Australia, the visitors were comprehensively beaten with an unprecedented margin of 5–0. The Australians followed this up with a 3–0 series win in England in 1921. The Australian dramatist, Louis Esson, was in England during this latter series and wrote home saying:

> England is really scared of Armstrong and the fast bowlers. It is strange to see the Britisher in difficulties; he makes a poor show. There is such energy in the [deletion] cricketers who are infinitely superior in character and temperament to our writers … They really do represent Australia. They are not pleasant players. A good English journalist described them as 'hard-bitten', 'grim' and 'pitiless'. We shouldn't be a soft, mushy, maudlin race … In politics we're a shingle-short, a nation of grinning village idiots. The cricketers fill me with great enthusiasm.[53]

This comment is significant for a couple of reasons. First, the Australian way of playing is described in contradistinction to the English way. Second, and most importantly, this Australianness is 'owned' as really representing Australia. Thus, we can see revealed in this quote the sketchy delineations of a self-conscious and self-confident Australian sporting identity that is avowedly un-British, indeed, are defined in opposition to the British metropolitan model.

This duelling cultural traffic came to a head in the Bodyline series. The previous 1930 series in England had brought about another defeat at the hands of the Australians. In particular, the Australians' performance was highlighted by the brilliance of the young

Australian batter, Donald Bradman. As noted above, this 21-year-old prodigy compiled 974 runs over the course of the series at an average of nearly 140. At Lord's, he scored 254 out of a massive Australian total of 729 for 6 declared. This was backed up by 334 at Leeds – the highest individual Test score in history – and then 232 at the Oval. Cardus described Bradman's 'industrial efficiency' in this series in the following manner:

> His skill had become infallible, a routine and mechanical habit not at the beck and call of anything so volatile as human will or impulse ... He has all the qualities of batsmanship ... What, then, is the matter with him that we hesitate to call him a master of style, an artist who delights us, and not only a craftsman we are bound to admire without reserve? Is it that he is too mechanically faultless for sport's sake?[54]

As stated earlier, it was chiefly to negate this threat from Bradman that the tactic of Bodyline bowling was conceived. As we have also seen, the Australians believed that this tactic contravened the spirit or ethics of the game. When the Australian captain, Bob Woodfull, said during the Adelaide test, 'there are two teams out there on the oval. One is playing cricket, the other is not' (or words to that effect), he did not necessarily mean that the English were breaking any official rules but, instead, that they were not playing in the spirit or traditions of the game.[55] As George Orwell would later put it:

> [Cricket] is a game full of forlorn hopes and sudden dramatic changes of fortune, and its rules are so ill-defined that their interpretation is partly an ethical business. When Larwood, for example, practised body-line bowling in Australia he was not actually breaking any rule; he was merely doing something that was 'not cricket'.[56]

So what can we draw from this in relation to the significance of cultural traffic and the formation of an Australian sporting identity? First, one can clearly see the reciprocal nature of the cultural traffic that passed between colony and metropole. The flow of cultural traffic was initially outward from metropole to colony with the exporting and reception of cricket in Australia. However, the game then underwent subtle adaptation in this colonial context and was re-exported back to the metropole as an Australian way of playing cricket. This Australian way was personified by Bradman and, indeed, the figure of Bradman can be seen to embody Beilharz's 'reflux from below ... [that] returned to haunt the metropolitan consciousness'. Cardus essentially acknowledged this process shortly after the Bodyline tour:

> Until recently the English teams which have visited Australia have tended to overdo the gesture of gentlemanly compliance ... The Australian plays cricket to win ... One summer we decided in this simple old land to put an end to all that. We decided to have for our captain a man who had a rare capacity for unsentimental leadership. Jardine will go down in the history of the game as one of the strongest and sternest and most realistic of all English captains ... his influence on modern cricket has been sanitary; he has cleared away the cant. To the Australians he has returned tit for tat.[57]

In fact, the mutual impaction of this cultural traffic found its most extreme rendition in the Bodyline series during which an inversion of the usual cultural tropes can be witnessed. As Cardus recognises, the English chose to adopt the ruthless, 'play-to-win' approach, while the Australians were positioned as the defenders of the spirit and ethics of the game.

Conclusion

To conclude, the above account has argued that this reciprocal impact of cultural traffic was central to the formation of an Australian sporting identity. What was this identity? It does appear to be something along the lines of Beilharz's Antipodean condition, or Holt's mediated identity. As noted above, Beilharz's Antipodean condition submits that

Antipodeans 'have one foot each in centre and periphery'. Australians enthusiastically embraced the metropolitan cultural institution that was cricket, initially mimicking the metropolitan model. However, over time, an Australian way of playing cricket became discernible, a fact that was regularly mentioned by metropolitan observers. This Australian way consisted of a more egalitarian ethos as well as a more hard-nosed, pragmatic style of play. Most importantly, there is evidence to suggest that in the early twentieth century, and certainly by the time of Bodyline, Australians had begun to own and defend this 'Australian way'. In many ways, Bradman was thought to embody this Australian way – the methodical and ruthless run accumulator – and thus the tactics employed by Jardine's team in the Bodyline series can be seen as the apogee of the clash of this cultural traffic. Strangely enough, the series also seemed to bear witness to an inversion of the customary cultural tropes with the England team adopting a win-at-all-costs, hard-nosed style and the Australians positioned as the defenders of the spirit of the game.

While the 'imperial crisis' of Bodyline may not have severed ties between metropole and colony, it certainly put great strain on them. An indication that something had changed in the Anglo-Australian relationship is suggested by the fact that, in 1935, the Australian cricket governing body disregarded the MCC's authority and appealed directly to the Imperial Cricket Conference to suggest a new law to combat Bodyline bowling attacks in the future. As was noted in the *Australian Cricketer* at the time, 'Australia, by practically claiming the right to make laws, automatically ranked herself as equal first in cricketing nations'.[58] Arguably, this act also presages later moves towards greater political and constitutional independence, such as the adoption of the Statute of Westminster Act in 1942 which permitted Dominion parliaments and governments to act independently of the British parliament and government. As such, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries cricketing cultural traffic described above, Bodyline, and this 1935 postscript offer support for Davison's contention that sport was the means through which Australia first rehearsed its identity.

Notes on Contributor

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Notes

1. Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination*, 4. See also Cashman, "The Australian Sporting Obsession"; Dunstan, *Sports*; and Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*.
2. Dunstan, *Sports*, 12; Trollope, *Australia*, 233.
3. Davison, "The Imaginary Grandstand," 5–6.
4. For examples, see Alomes, *A Nation at Last?*; Clark, *A History of Australia*, vols. 4–6; Day, *The Great Betrayal*; Day, *The Reluctant Nation*; and Ward, *A Nation for a Continent*.
5. For examples, see Cole, "'The Crimson Thread of Kinship'"; Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism'"; Meaney, "Britishness and Australian Identity"; Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*; and Tsokhas, *Making a Nation State*.
6. Schreuder and Ward, "Introduction," 10–11.
7. Parkes, "Our Growing Australian Empire," 147.
8. Hancock, *Australia*, 47, 58.
9. Hudson and Sharp, *Australian Independence*; Gare, "Dating Australia's Independence"; and Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*. See also the March issue of the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* for a number of articles discussing 'post-imperial' Australia.
10. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism." The role of sport in the Federation story has been explored in more detail in Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination*.

11. Alomes, *A Nation at Last?* 16; Birrell, *Federation*, 282.
12. *Bulletin*, March 19, 1898.
13. Inglis, "Imperial Cricket."
14. Vamplew, "Australians and Sport," 1, 7.
15. Mangan, "Britain's Chief Spiritual Export." See also the other essays in Mangan, "Britain's Chief Spiritual Export" as well as in Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*; O'Hara, "An Approach to Colonial Sports History"; Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism and Colonial Response"; Sandiford and Stoddart, *The Imperial Game*; and Allen, "England's 'Golden Age'."
16. Inglis, "Imperial Cricket," 166.
17. Sissons and Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire*, 34.
18. Bodyline has been the subject of many books, articles and even a TV series in Australia. Some examples include Frith, *Bodyline Autopsy*; Mason, *Ashes in the Mouth*; Le Quesne, *The Bodyline Controversy*; and Docker, *Bradman and the Bodyline Series.*
19. It should probably be noted that the Bodyline field was not in place when these two players were injured; however, as soon as Woodfull was struck, Jardine responded by rearranging his field into the Bodyline configuration.
20. Stoddart, "Cricket's Imperial Crisis."
21. Mandle, "Sport," 146–52.
22. See, for example, the 1984 television series *Bodyline* (Kennedy Miller Productions, 1984).
23. Sissons and Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire*, 143.
24. Ibid., 16.
25. Russell, "'Ashes that Leave No Regrets'."
26. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 229.
27. See Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*; Buckner and Francis, *Canada and the British World*; Buckner and Francis, *Rediscovering the British World*; Darian-Smith et al., *Exploring the British World*; and Darian-Smith, Grimshaw, and Macintyre, *Britishness Abroad.*
28. Buckner and Francis, *Rediscovering the British World*, 18.
29. Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks," 133.
30. Ibid., 131. See also Ballantyne, "Rereading the Archive."
31. Davidson, "De-Dominionisation Revisited." See also his original article, Davidson, "The De-Dominionisation of Australia"; Alomes, *A Nation at Last?* chap. 3.
32. Davidson, "De-Dominionisation Revisited," 109.
33. Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes*, 78.
34. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*; Smith, *Imagining the Pacific.*
35. Beilharz, "Introduction," 3; Beilharz, "Australia: The Unhappy Country," 74 (emphasis added). See also Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes*, 97–126.
36. Cashman, "Australia," 39.
37. Sissons and Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire*, 37.
38. Kippax and Barbour, *Anti-Bodyline.*
39. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism," 228–9.
40. Caffyn, *Seventy-One Not Out*, 219.
41. Cashman, *Sport in the National Imagination*, 28.
42. Warner, *Cricket Across the Seas*, 149–52.
43. The first tour of a white Australian cricket team was preceded by an Aboriginal team in 1868. However, this tour was chiefly viewed as a novelty – more as an exotic exhibition of Australian Aborigines than for any sporting aspect *per se*. For more on this tour, see Whimpress, *Passport to Nowhere*. See also Bateman, *Cricket, Literature and Culture*, 140–1.
44. Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game*, 199–201. See also Sandiford, "Amateurs and Professionals."
45. Montefiore, *Cricket in the Doldrums*, 44–9.
46. *Australasian*, December 15, 1883.
47. Macintyre, "Prologue," 6–7.
48. *Athletic News and Cyclist's Journal*, August 3, 1896, 3.
49. Cardus, *English Cricket*, 32–6.
50. *Australasian*, March 6, 1880.
51. *Cricket – A Weekly Record of the Game*, November 30, 1899.
52. Laver, *An Australian Cricketer on Tour*, 274.

53.   Quoted in Mandle, *Going it Alone*, 32.
54.   Cardus, *Good Days*, 29.
55.   Derriman, *Bodyline*, 21.
56.   Orwell, *The Collected Essays*, 248.
57.   Cardus, *Good Days*, 26–7.
58.   Quoted in McDevitt, "Bodyline, Jardine and Masculinity," 75.

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