

STEVE SMITH'S LAST 18 MONTHS FROM HIS CLUB'S PERSPECTIVE

The events of day 3 of the 3rd Test against South Africa in Cape Town on 24 March 2018 and the week that followed have been well documented. The club received many messages of support for Steve from members and followers, starting as soon as the punishments were handed down by Cricket Australia.

On 31 March 2018, we posted a statement in support of Steve on our website and Facebook page. It finished "Steven is a strong character who we have no doubt will come back from this setback. We will support Steven in any way we can to ensure he returns to international cricket where he belongs."

On Facebook, we had around 3,500 likes for our post – far in excess of anything we had ever posted before. Typical of the comments we received was this very prophetic message from one of our Life Members:

"Whilst I don't agree with and share the astonishment of virtually all about what took place, I just want to say that Steve can bounce back from this. In many respects 12 months will give him time to gather himself, time to reflect on the enjoyment his family and friends will provide for him and allow him to heal. Not many in this world will be challenged by such an occurrence and I am sure that he will rise and provide Australians with a cricketer who we can rightly claim as one of the greatest.

In the end it will be up to him and I'm looking forward to the day when I will see him again playing in the baggy green. If you get a chance, please pass on my support and thoughts to him in this very difficult period of his life."

From the time I met Steve before the first club training session of the season to give him his playing and training gear, he embraced his return to club ranks with great enthusiasm. He wandered down to the nets and introduced himself to lower graders with "Hi, I'm Steve". Round 1 against Mosman at Glenn McGrath Oval attracted a large crowd and Steve gave them what they came to see with 85 runs scored off 92 balls. He spent the entire lunch break signing autographs and posing for photos with the fans who had come to support him.

His scores (and luck) fluctuated after that, but he always batted with the team's interests in mind. I remember thinking on the morning of his last playing day before Christmas (after which he was going to play in the Bangladesh Premier League) that he would be determined to finish his club stint with a ton. St. George were resuming at 3/64 after a rain-affected first day, with 120 overs to play on day two. We dismissed Saints for 178 and had 81 overs to score 179 to win.

Steve went in to bat after 3 balls, with the score on 1/0. He and Chris Williams were making steady progress towards the target about half an hour before tea when Steve asked umpire Darren Goodger, "If we're getting close to a result at the tea break, can we continue play to finish the match?" Goodger replied, "No, tea is taken at the scheduled time. The ladies have worked hard to get tea ready and no-one interrupts my tea break!" Smithy replied, "No worries, we'll get the runs by tea." Goodger asked him, "Have you got somewhere to be?" and Smithy said, "I've never had a white Christmas – I'm on a flight to New York tonight." 48 runs were scored off 5.4 overs and Steve finished on 112 not out off 112 balls, with Chris on 65 not out off 111 balls, and we finished the match at 1/179 off 37.4 overs – 10 minutes before tea!

His BPL stint was short-lived and he returned to Australia for surgery on his right elbow. With our T20 coach Steve Rixon in South Africa as an assistant coach with Sri Lanka, Mat Duff and I thought we'd ask Steve if he'd like to come to Adelaide as coach of our team in the National Premier T20 Championship in early March. I sent him a text asking, "Are you able to come to Adelaide as T20 coach?" Within 5 minutes, he replied, "Yep I'll come".

While we were in Adelaide, Steve spent a couple of hours with Barry "Nugget" Rees, the well-known Adelaide Oval room attendant, during one of our preliminary matches. We lost in the semi-final to the eventual winners Carlton (Vic). During that match, he spent time with a young boy who had been flown over from Perth with his mother and sister as part of a Make A Wish Foundation experience. When Steve was travelling back to Sydney after the match to continue his rehab with his elbow, I texted him, "Thanks for coming over with the squad – been great to have you part of our trip!" He replied, "Pleasure mate. Enjoyed it with the boys".

Steve returned to the Australian side for the World Cup in May & June. In practice matches in Brisbane and England, he made scores of 22, 89*, 91*, 76 & 116. In the preliminary round matches of the World Cup, he scored 18, 73, 69, 10, 73, 1, 38, 5 & 7 and he made 85 in the semi-final loss to England – a total of 379 runs at 37.90.

In the Ashes Test series, he scored 144 & 142 in the 1st Test, 92 in the 2nd Test (withdrawn from match after first innings due to injury), 211 & 82 in the 4th Test and 80 & 23 in the 5th Test – 774 runs at 110.57.

During the Test series, he reached remarkable heights and accumulated a number of milestones and records. These statistics (current as at 26.9.19) have been gathered from statistics that I keep, plus tweets from statisticians including @AWSSStats (Andrew Samson, BBC Radio scorer) and @sirswampthing (sports statistician):

- Best batting average in Tests (min 2000 runs): Don Bradman 6996 runs at 99.94, **Steve Smith** 6973 runs at 64.56, Graeme Pollock 2256 runs at 60.97.
- Best batting average in innings no.1 of Tests (min 20 inns): Don Bradman 113.66 in 22 inns, **Steve Smith** 93.65 in 39 inns, Lindsay Hassett 78.80 in 22 inns.
- Best batting average in team's first innings of Tests (min 20 inns): Don Bradman 97.85 in 50 inns, **Steve Smith** 81.52 in 67 inns, Everton Weekes 71.43 in 48 inns.
- Best batting average on first day's play in Tests (incl day 2 where no play on day 1): Don Bradman 154.40 in 24 inns, **Steve Smith** 123.00 in 44 inns.
- Players who have scored 750 or more in a Test series more than once: Don Bradman 4, Brian Lara 2, **Steve Smith** 2.
- Highest percentage of Test centuries per innings batted: Don Bradman 29 in 80 inns (1 every 2.76 inns), **Steve Smith** 26 in 124 inns (4.77), Virat Kohli 25 in 135 inns (5.40).
- Highest percentage of Test centuries in innings no.1 of Tests: **Steve Smith** 16 in 39 inns (1 every 2.437 inns), Don Bradman 9 in 22 inns (2.444), Lindsay Hassett 7 in 22 inns (3.14).
- Highest percentage of Test centuries in team's first innings of Tests: Don Bradman 19 in 50 inns (1 every 2.63 inns), **Steve Smith** 22 in 67 inns (3.04), Everton Weekes 14 in 48 inns (3.43).

- He has now scored 6973 in 124 inns at 64.56. This is the highest aggregate and average by any player after 124 innings.
- He now holds the records for the most runs after 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123 & 124 Test innings and he has already scored more runs than the records for 125, 126, 127 & 128 innings.
- He scored 50+ in 10 consecutive innings against England (from 3rd Test 2017-18 to 5th Test 2019), the most consecutive scores of 50 or more against one opponent (next best 9 by Inzamam-ul-Haq).
- All 10 scores were above 75 – 239, 76, 102*, 83, 144, 142, 92, 211, 82, 80. The next best sequence of consecutive scores of 75 or more against one opponent is 5.
- He scored 80+ in 6 consecutive innings – equal with Everton Weekes (v Eng & Ind 1948-49) for the most consecutive scores of 80+.
- His highest lowest score in his 10-innings span vs England was 76 – the next best highest lowest score in a 10-innings span against a single opponent is 39 by Clive Lloyd vs Eng.
- The total runs scored in his 10-innings span vs England was 1251 – this is the most runs scored in a 10-innings span against a single opponent. Next best is Don Bradman with 1236 vs England (1937-46) and 1192 vs England (1929-30). The highest by a player apart from Smith & Bradman is 1102 by Brian Lara vs Sri Lanka (1997-03).
- He top-scored in 6 consecutive innings – the record for being top-scorer in most consecutive Test innings is 7 by Shivnarine Chanderpaul (2006-07). Steve is equal on 6 with George Headley (1935-39).
- Players with a century & a half-century in most Tests: **Steve Smith** 11 in 68 Tests, Jacques Kallis 11 in 166 Tests, Ricky Ponting 11 in 168 Tests.
- Best batting average in Ashes Tests: Don Bradman 5028 runs at 89.78, Herbert Sutcliffe 2741 runs at 66.85, **Steve Smith** 2800 runs at 65.12.
- Highest aggregates in an Ashes series: Don Bradman 974 in 1930 (139.14 ave), Wally Hammond 905 in 1928-29 (113.13 ave), Mark Taylor 839 in 1989 (83.90 ave), Don Bradman 810 in 1936-37 (90.00 ave), **Steve Smith** 774 in 2019 (110.57 ave).
- Players who have scored 500 or more runs in 3 or more Ashes series: Don Bradman 5 (974 in 1930, 758 in 1934, 810 in 1936-37, 680 in 1946-47 & 508 in 1948), Jack Hobbs 3 (662 in 1911-12, 505 in 1920-21 & 573 in 1924-25), **Steve Smith** 3 (508 in 2015, 687 in 2017-18 & 774 in 2019).
- He is the only player to have averaged more than 100 in successive Ashes series: 687 at 137.40 in 2017-18 & 774 at 110.57 in 2019
- Most centuries in Ashes Tests: Don Bradman 19 in 63 innings (1 every 3.31 inns), Jack Hobbs 12 in 71 innings (5.92), **Steve Smith** 11 in 48 innings (4.36).
- Highest averages over a 52-Test span (best span for each player): Don Bradman 99.94 (6996 runs in Tests 1-52), **Steve Smith** 75.04 (6003 runs in Tests 17-68), Ricky Ponting 74.52 (5813 runs in Tests 55-106).
- Best first class batting averages (min 10,000 runs): Don Bradman 95.14 (28067 runs 1927-49), Vijay Merchant 71.64 (13470 runs 1929-51), Ajay Sharma 67.46 (10120 runs 1984-01), Bill Ponsford 65.18 (13819 runs 1920-34), Bill Woodfull 64.99 (13388 runs 1921-34), **Steve Smith** 59.06 (11221 runs 2008-19).

- Highest percentage of first class centuries per innings batted: Don Bradman 117 in 338 inns (1 every 2.89 inns), Bill Woodfull 49 in 245 inns (5.00), Bill Ponsford 47 in 235 inns (5.00), Vijay Merchant 45 in 232 inns (5.16), **Steve Smith** 40 in 216 inns (5.40).
- Fastest players to 100 Test catches: Bob Simpson 54 Tests, Ross Taylor 60, **Steve Smith** 67, Stephen Fleming 68, Greg Chappell 69, Ian Chappell 69, Mark Taylor 71.
- Best catching rate by fieldsmen in Tests (min 100 catches): Bob Simpson 110 in 62 Tests (1.774 catches per Test), **Steve Smith** 108 in 68 Tests (1.588), Stephen Fleming 171 in 111 Tests (1.540), Mark Taylor 157 in 104 Tests (1.510).
- Fieldsmen who have taken 6 or more catches in a Test three times: Stephen Fleming, **Steve Smith**.
- His Player of the Match awards in the 1st & 4th Tests took his career total of POTM awards to 11 in 68 Tests (16.17%). The only player with a higher percentage of players with at least 5 POTM awards is Wasim Akram with 17 in 104 Tests (16.41%).

While he hasn't captained since March 2018, he still has the following statistics as a captain:

- Best batting average as a captain in Tests (min 15 Tests): Don Bradman 101.51 in 24 Tests, **Steve Smith** 70.36 in 34 Tests, Kumar Sangakkara 69.60 in 15 Tests.
- Best batting average as a captain in innings no.1 of Tests (min 10 inns): Don Bradman 120.77 in 10 inns, **Steve Smith** 95.61 in 16 inns, Sachin Tendulkar 77.08 in 12 inns.
- Best batting average as a captain in team's first innings of Tests (min 20 inns): **Steve Smith** 91.35 in 33 inns, Don Bradman 78.81 in 23 inns, Virat Kohli 72.80 in 47 inns.
- Most centuries as captain in Tests: Graeme Smith 25 in 109 Tests (22.94%), Ricky Ponting 19 in 77 Tests (24.68%), Virat Kohli 18 in 48 Tests (37.50%), **Steve Smith** 15 in 34 Tests (44.12%), Steve Waugh 15 in 57 Tests (26.32%), Allan Border 15 in 93 Tests (16.13%), Don Bradman 14 in 24 Tests (58.33%).

From all the above statistics, it is clear that Steve's Test batting record is now second only to Don Bradman. Several names appear, but there are two constants – Bradman and Smith. This is confirmed by the highest historical ICC Test batting rankings:

Don Bradman 961 (10.2.1948), **Steve Smith** 947 (30.12.2017), Len Hutton 945 (3.4.1954).

The manner in which Steve returned to the Australian team over the last five months has been quite outstanding. From his club's perspective, we are extremely proud of Steve's achievements and gratified that we have played a small part in helping him to return to international cricket fully ready to make an immediate impact. In the words of one of our Life Members noted earlier in this article, he has become "a cricketer who we can rightly claim as one of the greatest". We look forward to seeing how Steve continues his progression as a Test cricketer in the forthcoming Australian summer. He represents Sutherland DCC with great distinction on the world stage and he will always be welcomed back to our club at any time.

Tom Icton

29 September 2019