

2014's Biggest Cricket Moments: The 10 biggest stories from a cracking cricket year

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Michael Clarke's men celebrate their Ashes whitewash after beating England at the SCG. Picture: Phil Hillyard. Source: Philip Hillyard / News Limited

THE 2014 cricket year began and ended with a bang for Australia, and in between it was one of the most dramatic and eventful years in the history of world cricket.

From Australia's Ashes whitewash to Sri Lanka's World T20 victory, through to Kevin Pietersen's controversial autobiography and the tragic death of Phillip Hughes, the past 12 months has seen cricket fans riding an emotional rollercoaster.

As our Christmas present to you, here we reveal the biggest ten cricket moments of the year.

10) India wins at Lord's

Although England had now gone 10 Test matches without a win, this was a story about India.

It was possibly India's greatest ever Test win. It had everything.

A captain who is renowned for being a poor tactician decided to morph into Stephen Fleming. A bowler who averages nearly 40 guided the team to victory. The young kids making centuries.

The new ball was never taken in the fourth innings despite a quick operating from one of the ends.

A team being bounced out.

Jadeja running out Anderson to complete the match.

Irony? Justice?

India won at Lord's.

It was only their second win there in 84 years.



India's players celebrate their victory over England at Lord's. *Source: Getty Images*

9) The Ashes

This one sneakily slots in given the fifth Test was played in 2014.

However, a 5-0 whitewash after a 3-0 loss is quite some turnaround.

The story of the series was clearly the return of Mitchell Johnson. However, that was flavoured with Cook's failures, Ryan Harris, Bailey's world record for the most runs in an over, Rogers topping the batting aggregates, The retirement of Swann, Peter Siddle versus KP, England's panic in selecting Borthwick, etc, etc.

For Australia, it helped launch a stellar Test year.

For England, it signalled the beginning of a complete meltdown.

8) Srinivasan is sworn in as ICC Chairman

June 26 2014 will go down in history as one of the saddest of days in the history of cricket administration.

A man barred from running his own country's cricket board by the Supreme Court, who also referred to him as "nauseating", was now the ICC Chairman.

I could go on about his conflicts of interest, his links to gambling, his bullying and threats ... but this piece would then turn into a novel.

It was also the day that the 'Big Three' in India, England and Australia rewrote the ICC Constitution to centralise power back into their hands at the expense of all others.

The ICC was no longer about the good of cricket worldwide. It was about making money for three Boards.

Someone needs to remind the ICC and Srinivasan that they are custodians of a game that they do not own.



(L-R) N.i Srinivasan, ICC Chairman, David Richardson, ICC Chief Executive and Mustafa Kamal, ICC

President. *Source: Getty Images*

7) Saeed Ajmal gets banned for throwing

2014 will go down as the year that the ICC laid the smackdown on illegal bowling actions.

It all started rather innocuously enough with chronic mankader Sachithra Senanayake of Sri Lanka banned in July. This was followed by Kane Williamson of New Zealand a few days later.

However, when the game's number one ranked ODI and T20 bowler was banned in September, the world was on notice.

The ban proved to be the right thing, as Ajmal was found to bend his elbow at 40 or more degrees on every delivery he bowled during testing. The legal limit is 15 degrees.

The irony is that earlier in the year in May, England's Stuart Broad had called Ajmal a chucker and was forced to apologise.



Pakistani spinner Saeed Ajmal recently returned to action in a tour match against Kenya. *Source: AFP*

6) The West Indies quit their tour of India

The West Indies travelled to India to play five ODI's and three Tests. After the fourth ODI, they packed their bags and came home.

The issue stemmed at a high level from the fact that the West Indies Players Association (WIPA), led by Wavell Hinds, had signed an MoU on behalf of the players with the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB).

The MoU agreed to better share available funds down to lower levels to ensure that there were more professional cricketers in the region. Although the concept was agreed to in principle, most didn't realise that up to 70 per cent of their income would be taken from them.

The players struck.

India were left to find a replacement team to tour. Sri Lanka filled the void and played five ODI's, losing them all.

A letter of demand for US\$42m was sent to the WICB for compensation. The WICB turns over less than USD\$25m per annum.

Is this the end of West Indies cricket as we know it?

It is yet to play out, but has the potential to bankrupt them.



Dwayne Bravo (L) led the West Indies player revolt. *Source: Getty Images*

5) Sri Lanka beats England in England

This was big. Huge.

Sri Lanka won its first ever Test series in England.

Both Tests were full of drama.

It was so intense that Stuart Broad even took a hat-trick and didn't realise.

The first Test ended in a draw, but could have so easily ended with a win to England. With eight wickets down and only six balls remaining, Broad bowled short to Herath who gloved to Prior.

Herath walked.

However, replays showed his hand was off the bat when it made contact with the ball. Not Out was the correct decision. Herath had handed England a free wicket.

Pradeep saw off the next three balls.

With two balls left, Broad trapped him in front and umpire Paul Reiffel immediately gave it out.

England erupted in celebration ... but hold on. Pradeep reviewed it. He had hit it! The decision was overturned.

One ball left.

Edged to second slip!

Ohh ... just landed in front of Jordan.

A draw!

Onto the second Test. England is nine down with 20 overs to go. Moeen Ali and James Anderson are at the crease. They block and block and block until only two balls remain.

Anderson is on strike to Eranga. Jimmy had just broken the record for the most balls faced in a Test without scoring.

54 balls.

His 55th and what should have been the penultimate ball of the match had him caught at short backward square. A bouncer that he didn't need to play at but did.

SRI LANKA WIN ON THE SECOND LAST BALL OF THE DAY!

At the press conference, Anderson broke into tears as he received his Player of the Series Award.

He had just achieved a batting world record but had lost England the series.



James Anderson of England hangs his head over his bat as Sri Lanka celebrates victory. *Source: Getty Images*

4) Australia beats South Africa in South Africa

This was the main Test event of the year. The big dog.

The battle to be viewed as the world's number one Test team.

Australia, ranked No.3, travelled to South Africa, the team ranked No.1.

For South Africa, this was its first Test series without Jacques Kallis since the Ice Age. It was also to be Graeme Smith's last.

However, they started with the world's two highest ranked bowlers in Steyn and Philander in the team, with Morne Morkel providing more than handy backup.

They also boasted a top order that included AB de Villiers, Hashim Amla and Faf du Plessis, who would go on to label the Australians a 'pack of wild dogs'.

They were at home. They were the kings.

Australia had just mauled England like a killer whale does a baby seal.

But Australia's weapons were not as numerous or reliable. Could Mitch Johnson continue his form? Could Michael Clarke return to form? What to make of Warner? Did either team really have a spinner?

The first Test answered many of these.

It was Johnson who set the scene, terrifying the local batsman. Dare I say 'scared eyes'? Australia leads 1-0.

Port Elizabeth followed and so did a flat, lifeless track that sucked the jam from the Australian doughnut.

South Africa levelled the series 1-1, had the momentum and was favoured to win the final Test at Newlands.

But it didn't work out that way. A famous Michael Clarke hundred while batting with a broken shoulder set the tone.

This was as tough as Test cricket gets.

The ghosts of Adelaide appeared as Faf and AB saw off 337 balls between them in the fourth innings. Philander lasted 105.

With less than an hour left to play, Australia needed two wickets otherwise the series would end tied 1-1.

The Aussies thought they had Philander caught off the glove, but Richard Illingworth in the umpire's viewing room narrowly overturned the decision. The glove was deemed not to be on the bat when the ball hit it.

Philander made it to 51 not out.

With less than 30 balls remaining, it was Ryan Harris who decided to do what Ryan Harris does.

Steyn b. Harris 1 (44).

Two balls later Morkel suffered the same fate. Australia won the series with only 27 balls to spare.



Ryan Harris celebrates after taking the series-clinching wicket in Cape Town. *Source: Getty Images*

3) Kevin Pietersen releases his autobiography

Never before has a cricketer's autobiography created so much noise.

Kevin Pietersen had played over 100 Tests for England, was an ex-captain and had just finished the Australian Ashes tour as his team's leading run scorer.

The ECB fired him.

He was to be the scapegoat. The fall guy.

Kevin wasn't exactly a clean skin, having been forced to 'reintegrate' into the team after sending text messages to his South African opponents in the middle of a previous series.

He also spoke his mind. Some see this as leadership and strength. Others see it as arrogant and a threat the status quo.

Rumours of secret dossiers that highlighted 50 misdemeanours were leaked to justify the decision. There were false claims that he sent his gift from the ECB for playing 100 Tests back to them.



Kevin Pietersen was often painted as a man apart in the English dressing room. *Source: News Limited*

A confidentiality agreement that ECB Managing Director Paul Downton chose to break.

A new era.

KP released his book in October. The cricketing world exploded.

He took down former England coach Andy Flower. He beat Matt Prior into a cheesy pulp. He defended the IPL. He walked us through his sacking. He felt sorry for meek little Alastair Cook.

The ECB establishment were made to look like clowns.

And they still do.

There has been no official statement rebutting any of KP's accusations, which included illegal workplace bullying.

Many players supported the claims in the book. Others, like James Anderson, Swann and Broad denied them. This was to be expected given they were the ones accused of the bullying.

The fall out?

People still love or hate KP.

However, everyone thinks the ECB are a bunch of amateurs.



Kevin Pietersen continues to attract headlines. Picture: Wayne Ludbey. Source: News Corp Australia

2) Mudgal

The poorest state in India is Bihar. They don't even have enough money to buy cricket bats for their players. However, this didn't stop them starting the biggest shake-up in Indian cricket administration history.

They petitioned the Supreme Court of India to ban BCCI President N. Srinivasan from holding his position due to conflicts of interest and corruption.

He owns the Chennai Super Kings. His son-in-law was their manager, and has been accused of gambling. Srinivasan took no action. MS Dhoni captains the Chennai Super Kings. He is also the captain of the Indian team and a Vice President at India Cements. Srinivasan is the Managing Director of India Cements.

It is very messy.

The poorest cricketing state in the world took on cricket's richest and most powerful man.

The Supreme Court of India asked the BCCI to sort out its issues and propose a list of names of those who would run an investigation.

Amazingly, these were rejected by the Supreme Court. Not amazingly, all three names put forward by the BCCI had conflicts.

The Supreme Court then asked retired Justice Mudgal to head a committee into the workings and alleged conflicts and corrupt activity of the BCCI.

This he has done.

Firstly, a sealed envelope with 13 names of people that require additional investigation was submitted. Also, a 600 page report was later produced.

The Supreme Court described the fact that Srinivasan had not stepped aside as 'nauseating'. They then ordered he do so until the investigation was concluded.

Twice, he has argued to the Supreme Court that he should be reinstated. Twice this was rejected.

In the meantime, Srinivasan was elected unopposed as Chairman of the ICC despite there being clear breaches of the ICC's own Ethics Charter.

Incredible!

Where will it all end?



Narayanaswami Srinivasan - probably the most powerful man in cricket. *Source: Getty Images*

1) The Death of Phillip Hughes

It was possibly the greatest cricketing tragedy ever. Still supremely fresh in our minds.

No parent should ever bury their child. No child should ever be concerned that playing cricket could take their life.

Phillip Hughes is gone. That cannot be undone.

The events that caused it are well covered elsewhere.

However, the global reaction to the event is the thing that may just change cricket forever. Make it human again.

#PutOutYourBats – The act of placing your bat outside as a memorial. If not your bat on a cricket ground, do what Hugh Jackman did and place it on the stage. If not a bat, what about a hockey stick like the Indian hockey team did. If not a hockey stick, how about a guitar or anything else that defines your link to the game.



The #putoutyourbats campaign swept across social media. *Source: Supplied*

63 Not Out – Kids retiring on 63 to pay homage. One kid retiring on 37 and stating that he had just completed Hughes' century.

64 – Hughes' ODI number. Forever retired.

408 – Phillip's Test cap number. Painted over grounds all over the world.

Thousands – The amount of people who trekked up to Macksville NSW to pay their final respects.

Billions – The amount of people who shed a tear for Phillip Hughes.