



# Daily Mail

## The money, men and machines that made England the best cricket team in the world

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Last updated at 11:26 PM on 3rd October 2011

England are setting the standards both on the field, where they are now the best Test team in the world and have been making excellent progress in one-day cricket, and off it where the facilities at the National Performance Centre in Loughborough are the envy of the cricketing world.

So, how did England make the journey from laughing stocks of the world game to the point where they have left Australia et al trailing in their wake?

And how do they plan to stay there and enjoy a sustained period of domination rarely achieved by any England teams through the ages?

As they arrive in India for their latest challenge, *Sportsmail* investigates where it all went right...



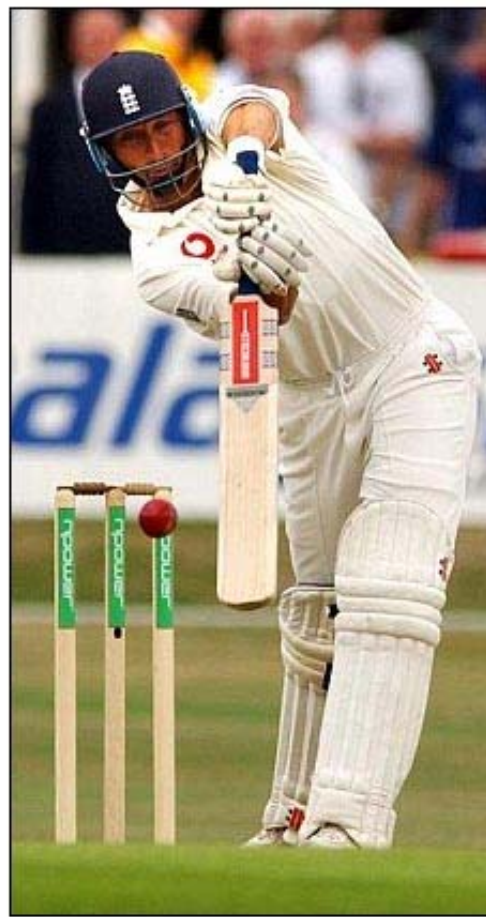
**On top of the world: England have made huge strides in recent years**

## **Jobs for the right boys...**

There is no doubt that England have made some outstanding coaching and administrative appointments to lift them from their position as the worst-ranked team in the world back in 1999 to the best now.

Duncan Fletcher is rightly credited, along with his captains Nasser Hussain and Michael Vaughan, with bringing far more professionalism to the senior England team and putting the wheels in motion, but the role of Peter Moores should not be underestimated either.

Moores' spell as England coach may have ended in tears but his legacy is the recruitment of impressive characters like Dave Parsons, now the ECB performance director, and specialist coaches now thriving with the seniors like Richard Halsall and Mushtaq Ahmed.



**Captain's job: Vaughan and Hussain led England forward in difficult times**

Most crucially of all, it was Moores who wanted Andy Flower involved in the England set-up, initially as a batting coach and then as his No 2. We all know what happened to him.

Behind the coaches, one of the biggest unsung heroes is Hugh Morris, managing director of England cricket at all levels.

A crucial development in England getting to where they are today was the Schofield Report's recommendation to create this new role in 2007 but there were a few eyebrows raised when the former Glamorgan and England opener was appointed.

After all, Morris, then the ECB's deputy chief executive, was on the Schofield committee himself and his elevation smacked as a job for one of the boys. Far from it.



**Credit: Morris has been instrumental in the changes made at the ECB**

Morris has proved an inspired choice, ensuring that every element of Team England is supported with resources and quiet but effective leadership. Everyone sings from the same hymn sheet.

## **We have the technology**

It was Moores who was instrumental in the renaming of the academy in Loughborough - which ECB chairman Giles Clarke describes as English cricket's 'jewel' - to the National Performance Centre, to make it all-inclusive, and it is there in the East Midlands where much of England's best work is done, overseen by Parsons.

Most specifically, Loughborough boasts the best technological devices available in world cricket and is where the specialist coaches and other support staff have been able to leave the rest trailing.

Three 'gadgets' stand out. Principally there is ProBatter, the bowling machine that allows batsmen to 'face' any bowler in world cricket, which has taken 'net' practice to a new level.



**Top dogs: Technology like ProBatter has helped Strauss's side become No 1**

Only two other ProBatter machines exist in the world - one owned by the Australians and one by the ICC at their HQ in Dubai - but both came after England had first used it.

Then there is the more established Merlin, the first bowling machine to actually spin the ball and replicate the deliveries of the leading spinners in the game. The ECB now have 20 Merlins, two at Loughborough, with one of them always accompanying the Performance Squad on tour, and one for each county.

Now there is also TrackMan where national spin coach Peter Such uses missile tracking technology to measure how many revolutions each spinner puts on the ball.

Not only does this allow England to compare Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar with the world's best - Swann, incidentally, gives the ball a real rip, bowling at more than 2,000 revolutions per minute - but an accurate guide to identifying new talent.

'The ECB have been prepared to invest heavily in technology and we've tried to be innovative and be creative,' said Parsons. 'There is an insatiable desire in English cricket to never stop improving and it has become a culture. Australia have shown a determination to hit back at us which means we are even more determined to stay ahead.'



**Test drive: Sportsmail's Nasser Hussain tries out the technology in Loughborough**



'There are always challenges and a lot of my work will be looking very closely at one-day cricket with a view to getting a pool of talent together by 2013 good enough to win us the 2015 World Cup.'

Overseas conditions can also be recreated at Loughborough but there is no substitute for the real thing and England will continue providing extensive overseas experience for both their Performance Squad and Lions team in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka this winter.

Another group of young promising players will also be sent to play first-class cricket in Sri Lanka after Christmas.

## It's a numbers game

It was also Moores who gave Flower a copy of the book Moneyball to read when they worked together and that simple move has led to a huge culture shift at the top of our game.

The book by Michael Lewis is the study of how an unfashionable and underfunded baseball team called the Oakland A's were turned into winners by coach Billy Beane's attention to statistical detail.

It colours much of what Flower, an avid student of the methods of American sports, now believes in and, incidentally, is about to be turned into a Hollywood film starring Brad Pitt.

A big step forward in statistical terms was Flower's appointment of Cambridge maths graduate Nathan Leamon as the team's main analyst.

The former Eton teacher now uses Hawk-Eye technology to log and analyse every ball delivered in Test cricket over the last five years. From that information Leamon runs simulations of each of England's upcoming Tests taking into account venue, conditions, selections and the pitch which he believes, when checked against the actual matches, are 'accurate to within four or five per cent.'



It was Leamon who sat England's players down ahead of their tour of South Africa in 2009 and told them what they had to do to get to No 1. His other work includes breaking down pitches in areas for bowlers to aim at.

England's success against Sachin Tendulkar this summer, for instance, was due in part to statistical analysis that showed the Little Master made the bulk of his runs on the leg side until he had reached 50.

Then all that was needed was the skill of the bowlers to implement the plans. 'It's about asking the right questions which can be the start to six months of work,' said Leamon.

'A lot of the old ways of looking at the technique of opponents led to guesswork. 'Hawk-Eye enables you to come up with more accurate analysis.'

And to think that when David Lloyd, then England coach, went on a scouting mission to Pakistan at the end of 1997 to watch the West Indies ahead of England's tour of the Caribbean he did so armed with a Sharp Viewcam to lug around and take footage himself.



**Leamon-aid: The former Eton teacher (second left) breaks down the analysis to help the England bowlers**

'Man United used them through a sponsorship and I jumped on the back of that,' remembers Lloyd, who had to battle the domination of counties and lack of central contracts during his time, and even archaic English regulations like letting the opposition have a choice of ball.

'It gave us instant replays but it was a bit cumbersome. Finance was always a problem then and we were forever being told we couldn't afford the things we wanted.'

## **All about the money**

The England team, with its highly paid centrally-contracted players, not to mention huge support staff, is an expensive business with almost £25million spent each year.

There is no question that the last two broadcasting deals masterminded by chairman Clarke have done an enormous amount to get them to the top.

There are many who still bemoan the lack of international cricket on terrestrial television, and it is undoubtedly a problem that many people now cannot see the England team live on TV for free.

But the two deals with Sky since late 2004 have brought £520m into English cricket and the ECB will want to negotiate a similar if not better deal when it is up for renewal next year.



**Sky's the limit: The satellite channel has revolutionised the way we watch cricket**

That deal that could define the success of the modern ECB. The financial climate may be harsh but commercial director John Perera is about to announce an 'enhanced' sponsorship deal for Test cricket to replace npower, believed to be with Investec, and is optimistic that all of England's existing sponsors will soon renew their deals.

'We are punching above our weight,' said Perera. Staying power It is one thing getting to the top but quite another staying there. That is England's challenge now.

The senior players talk of creating a 'legacy' of sustained achievement while Flower remains driven to the point where he is unhappy at the positive publicity being given to his management team.

'It is the players who have to go out there and take responsibility for winning matches,' he says.



**Different era: Money was tight for then England manager David Lloyd**



Another important figure in the long-term is Simon Timson, now head of the England Development Programme. Timson put Amy Williams on the path to Olympic gold, when he was the performance director of skeleton bob, and now it is his job to unearth the best practice in identification, selection, confirmation and development of young talent from 16 years up.

Now elite teenagers have a clear route towards the England team but, significantly, none of the perks until they get there. Development programme cricketers practise in their county kits and only wear the England badge when they are picked for the Under 19s.

Timson's role has also taken him to the US where he has studied the NFL's methods. 'An NFL team will hand a five-year, \$75m contract to a 21-year-old who hasn't played at the top level, so they have to be serious in identifying talent,' he said.

## Quest for perfection

The next challenge for England is to keep players from the clutches of the Indian Premier League and to sort out an overcrowded fixture list, particularly at domestic level.

But, again, the figures are encouraging. Steve Elworthy, the ECB's director of marketing and communications, says just under 900,000 watched international cricket this summer - a record - and he is even bullish despite a Test against South Africa, in Leeds next year, clashing with the London Olympics.



**Time to build: England are No 1 in the world, but can now build a legacy**

'Tickets have already gone on sale at Headingley and sales are very strong,' insisted Elworthy. 'It's an indication to us that, with so much sport on offer to the public, all we can do is believe in our product and react positively if ever we clash with something else.'

Cricket has never really set an example to other English sports but with the national football and rugby teams facing huge matches of their own this weekend that will define their immediate tournament futures it is cricket that is setting the pace on and off the field.

Maybe Fabio Capello and Martin Johnson should give Andy Flower a call