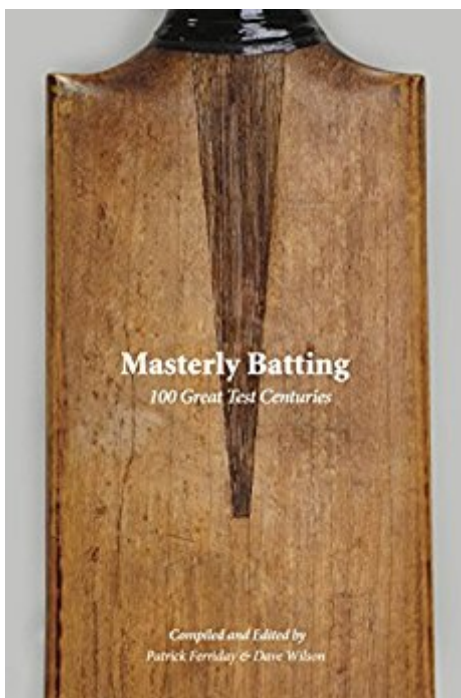


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Masterly Batting: 100 Great Test Centuries



Synopsis

How to assess a great innings? How to measure it in relation to others? How to find, or attempt to find, the 100 greatest Test centuries? These were the questions confronting an intrepid band of researchers, digging into all manner of documents, books, newspapers and websites for information that would help find the answers. Collating the resultant information using statistics, mathematics, deduction and knowledge provided the database. Looking at ten categories – size, speed, bowling attack, chances, pitch conditions, match impact, series impact, percentage, compatibility and intangibles gave a home to this data. These categories provided the numbers and the numbers made the list. The innings on the list were matched with the writers and the resultant essays make this book. The essays are no mere ball-by-ball reconstructions. There is room for the man, the match, the opposition and the age. There is room for context and consequence. David Frith and Ken Piesse write about boyhood heroes, Stephen Chalke, Richard Parry and Ric Sissons describe great achievements of the inter-war years, Daniel Harris analyses a brilliant West Indian, then Rob Smyth, Neil Manthorp and Telford Vice take on three modern masters. Derek Pringle, Mark Butcher and Dennis Amiss recall memorable days and deeds. Great innings across the ages and continents are recognised here, from Lord's in 1884 to Johannesburg in 1935, then Guyana in 1954, Auckland in the 1970s, on to Faisalabad two decades later and finally Mumbai in 2012. Great players too: Don Bradman, of course, Viv Richards, Len Hutton, Saeed Anwar, Kevin Pietersen and Sunil Gavaskar. But not only the accepted greats, some of the lesser names had stellar days too: Bruce Edgar, Darryl Cullinan and Percy Sherwell amongst them. Old favourites and new discoveries abound and these essays paint an enthralling picture of masterly batting in Test cricket over the last 140 years.

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Customer Reviews

An excellent collection of essays on some truly great innings. This book faced a bit of criticism on the criteria and ranking methodology. While I do not think the authors were racist, as some of the comments at cricinfo seemed to suggest, I do not find the criteria objective. Nor were they employed consistently. But then, am genetically disposed to hate all these ridiculous "top 100" compilations. That is, my judgement on their methodology is to be taken with a grain of salt. However, do trust me when I say that it makes a great cricket read. It is a great collection of some dramatic moments in cricket history. The background stories in some cases and some quotes from more mainstream reports of the innings in question. Cricket lovers are going to love this book. I am looking forward to the one on bowling.

I have enjoyed all of Dave's books and this one was fantastic as he provides an unbiased, analytical approach as he weaves his way through the top batsmen of all-time.

Despite the title of *The Greatest Test Centuries*, this book is obviously on what the authors consider to be THE greatest test centuries ever. Actually when I say author's opinion, in actual fact there is a rating system which they go into great detail to explain. They used ten categories on which each innings is graded. The actual method isn't given, neither is the points each innings received, which I feel detracts somewhat from the enjoyment of the book. I would have liked to have seen maybe the top 200 listed with the points allocated, to see why each one did or didn't make the grade; maybe they thought the readers wouldn't be interested, in which case I think they're wrong. There are also details of how each category was weighted to give the final rating, the heaviest weighing going towards the impact on the match, the strength of the bowling attack and the condition of the pitch. The book only covers centuries, which is too bad as e.g. Viswanath's magical

97 misses out, but I suppose you have to cut off somewhere. Most of the book is taken up with the descriptions of the 100 performances and, despite the fact that there are a lot of different contributors, this isn't obvious and the writing is on the whole of a high standard. It's probably difficult for a writer to generate the excitement of a match in one page (the bottom 50 is one page, the next 25 two pages, and the top 25 six or seven with a scorecard), but mostly they do a good job. More than half of the book covers the top 25 innings, which features some of the best of today's cricket writers, such as Rob Smyth and Ric Sissons, plus contributions from some players, including Derek Pringle and Dennis Amiss. My favourite pieces were David Frith's and Stephen Chalke's, though the pieces by some of the lesser-known writers, like those on Clem Hill and Colin Cowdrey, are also highly enjoyable..Very highly recommended!

I've read this book and I'm very surprised by this review. There are many innings by non-white players featured, in fact considering that at least 15 were from the era when only England, Australia and South Africa were playing Test cricket, I'd say it must be about half, which is more than a fair representation. Additionally, the description of the very complex rating system used surely refutes any claim of bias - there's pages and pages of it! I actually wonder if the reviewer has really read the book - everything commented on here could have been gleaned from the web review over at [cricinfo](#) and the Guardian's online extract of Graeme Smith's innings by Rob Smyth. There's no new information specific to this review. Finally, how does the reviewer know the authors are white? There aren't even any photos of them in the book!

When I was gifted this book, I thought I was in for a treat. But it proved to be a waste of time and even money (albeit not mine). This book has been promoted as the ultimate list of the 100 greatest centuries of all time, and the authors have gone to some pain detailing the 10 parameters that went into measuring the worth of each and every century ever recorded. But then, they don't tell us how those parameters were measured, or weighted. And the end result leads me to believe the worst: that they never wanted it to be a book covering all centuries, but just those by (or against) the white teams, specifically England and Australia. The final selection seems arbitrary at best, and biased at worst, baffling me to the point that I stopped reading the complete description of each century, but just skimming it to quickly get to the next (arranged in reverse order of 'importance'). For example, there's this match between South Africa and India which ended in a draw, with a century each in both innings by Kallis, and a century in opposition by Tendulkar. And BOTH of Kallis' centuries are

included! Of course, Tendulkar's is not - so what's the point, that the match was not consequential for India but was for SA? Or Kallis faced much better bowling than Tendulkar did? True aficionados of cricket would laugh at both suggestions, as the reverse would be much truer. And there are more of such examples in the book. To do it further, the style of writing is erratic, to put it kindly. The authors have chosen to invite prominent cricket writers to describe each century, and while most of it is typically (and expectedly) hagiographic, a bunch of it is rather boring. Many of the pieces seem to forget that they were to describe (praise) that particular effort to score that century, and go about praising the batsman's entire career, which completely takes away the focus. Case in point, the piece on Graeme Smith's 154 against England in 2008 starts with the final stroke that won SA the game and left Smith at 154 not out, and informs us that this was an epic effort, repeats that opinion, and then quickly gives us a run down of Smith's career, complete with all sorts of statistics, SA's journey, and ends up with their post-match activities including a fire-alarm in the hotel at night. What it does not give us, is how the match was played overall, what sort of challenge Smith faced when he came in to bat, who else played a part worth mentioning, how good the opposition bowling was - none of that! Maybe they should have allowed some Asian writers to submit some of these essays - but that might have muddled their pool. So you end up with a book that ranks cricketing feats, whose rankings are suspect and whose writing is sub-par. Epic Fail.

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