



# HOW I 'SCORED' A CENTURY AT LORD'S

True, I didn't face a single ball — but I did climb the equivalent of more than a third of Table Mountain

**A**s a lifelong cricket fan, there is no more special venue in the world to me than Lord's. The first time I went there was in June 1991, to witness the all-time great West Indies team in a rain-affected drawn match.

The second time was a couple of years later, when Merv Hughes picked up the ball from under my eyes and ran out Mike Atherton on 99. Atherton never got a test match 100 at Lord's, so he never made it onto the honours board in the home dressing room. As an ex-captain of some repute, there is a painting of him in the Long Room, though.

I had to wait more than 10 years for my next visit to the ground. On Friday August 1 2003, South African captain Graeme Smith batted more than a full day to reach 200 at Lord's, and I was there.

When Smith eventually reached his double century, the public announcer informed the crowd that he was only the third batsman in history to reach that mark in the same Test series against England, the others being Sir Donald Bradman and Sir Gordon Greenidge.

Every single spectator stood up and applauded loudly for what felt like five minutes ... I still get goosebumps when I think about it.

Smith went on to make 259 before being dismissed the following day, setting a record which still stands

for the highest score by an international player in a Test at Lord's.

I have now lived in London for most of the past 23 years, and I've been lucky enough to get to Lord's pretty much every summer. I've lost count, but I've probably been to the

I was most excited when I recently got the opportunity to achieve my own "100 at Lord's". At the end of last month, a group of 100 people set out to complete a charity walk to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Society, consisting of 100 laps of the Lord's cricket

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ground 30 or 40 times. My wife and I only met because of cricket; we try to have at least one "date day" per year at a Lord's Test.

When the Proteas beat Australia in the World Test Championship final last year, I witnessed every single ball. The memories will stay with me forever.

Against this background,

ground — a distance of about 45km.

### Ups and downs

As students of the game will know, this is an undulating course: Lord's may look flat to the naked eye, but it has a slope featuring a vertical drop of 2.5m from the highest point to the lowest. Participants therefore climbed

the equivalent of more than a third of Table Mountain (as measured from the cable car station) on the day.

I covered the distance in just over seven hours, but the total time on the clock was about 60 minutes more: this being a cricket ground, we all had to stop for lunch and tea. Nice touch.

In a moment of inspiration, I decided to pack the only cricket bat that I ever owned when I left home that morning: a weathered Gray-Nicolls which I've treasured for the better part of 50 years.

I never put it down that day, so I can now say that I've carried my bat at Lord's (a phrase usually reserved for an opening batter who is not dismissed over the course of an entire innings, while seeing all the other 10 members of the team getting out around them).

After the final lap, I raised my bat as I walked off the field to tremendous applause (all 10 walkers who finished ahead of me clapped) and into the famous Lord's Pavilion, following in the footsteps of every great that has played the game of cricket.

Afterwards, there was a reception in the Long Room, and participants saw their names go up on the honours board that the charity prepared especially for the occasion. The list included Richard Thompson, chair of the England and Wales Cricket Board, and Arsenal legend Martin Keown.

We raised nearly £350,000 — a gratifying amount for a most worthy cause.

Unlike Atherton, I'm therefore pleased to report that I've now reached a hundred at Lord's.

I guess I'll be pretty hard-pressed to get a painting in the Long Room, though. **x**  
*Gouws is chief investment officer at Credo, London*

