

THE CRICKET TOUR

1 THE REBELS

by Peter Davis

THEY came, they played indifferent cricket and they left, personally richer by some R60 000 each, but leaving international cricket the poorer.

The "Dirty Dozen", as the rebel English cricketers became known, defied the Test and Country Cricket Board of Britain and the International Cricket Conference to play in this country which has been barred from international cricket for the past 12 years.

Now, months after the tour when all the fuss has died down, it is worth looking back and discussing whether it was all worth it. The 15 rebel cricketers have had a three-year test match ban slapped on them, which obviously hurts them so much that they are reported to have started a legal battle to get the ban set aside, or at least reduced.

The tour spelt out the deep division between the South African Cricket Union which plays multi-racial cricket and the South African Cricket Board which plays non-racial cricket and subscribes to the Sacos (SA Council on Sport) edict that there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society.

The tour also showed up divisions in international cricket, the pressing problem of professional sportsmen who believe they should be entitled to sell their skills to the highest bidder and the fact that the ICC needs a serious shake-out.

But, worst of all, the tour brought out bitterness that set cricketer against cricketer, sportsman against sportsman, administrator against administrator and country against country because the South African cricket authorities got bored with waiting for the politicians to sort out the problems of this country and decided it was in their selfish interest to buy the tour.

The cricketers themselves appeared to be in it only for the money, or, at least, they did not bother to think through the possible consequences — and they could have been ugly.

If the British cricket authorities had not taken their banning action, the Indian and Pakistani tour would have been called off which would have lost British cricket about R4-million. This was recognised at the time of the tour which is why secretary of the TCCB Donald Carr was quoted as saying he thought the black countries would be "disgusted" by the tour.

In South Africa, SA Cricket Board president Hassan Howa was predictably irritated by the tour. He called the cricketers "over-the-hill sporting mercenaries who have terminated their seats on the benches of international and English test cricket forever".

Howa went on to say that South Africa's hopes of joining international cricket — never very good — were now even worse for entertaining the rebels and he called the sponsoring South African Breweries "one-eyed" and "partisan" for supporting the racial sporting structure in the country.

Equally predictably SA Cricket Union president Joe Pamensky hailed the arrival of the cricketers as a "stand against the

hypocrisy and double standards that have kept South African cricketers from taking their rightful place in the international cricket community".

All the same, there was an element of deception in the whole tour. The players were approached individually with offers they found hard to refuse and the whole thing was inevitably, but suspiciously, secret.

Sponsoring company SAB did not escape the controversy. Labour Party leader Alan Hendrickse called for a boycott of SAB products which caused the company's general manager Peter Savory to say SAB was "flabbergasted and appalled" by the call and that any profits (none in the end) would be ploughed back to the SA Cricket Union for the non-racial development of the game.

The only people to gain in the end were the players; the Boks receiving about R500 a day while the tourists averaged out at R1 500 a day. Also, the tour helped the strong SACU cricketers. They were able to test their skills against some classy players and come out looking good, but the tour also managed to cool tensions that had crept into local SACU cricket, caused mainly through the lack of international release and the knowledge that once they had reached the top of the local league there was no further to go.

But, while the tour continued, pressures were also building in Britain. There was obviously a wide under-current of sympathy for the rebels. The TCCB kept putting off taking a decision on what to do with the players and opted for canvassing the views of the 17 first class English county clubs, hoping the decision would come from them.

But India, Pakistan and Jamaica all demanded that none of the rebel cricketers be chosen to play for England and the TCCB bowed to this pressure and banned the players from test cricket, not because they felt morally bound to keep South Africa in sports isolation, but because this was the only way to prevent an international cricket split.

There were those in Britain who were totally against the tour and the way it was arranged. Former England captain Tony Lewis, writing in the Telegraph, one of Britain's conservative newspapers, said the tour was greedy, selfish and myopic.

Under the headline: "The richest, loneliest men in cricket," he said of Boycott playing in South Africa that this was not "the same Boycott who wrote of his hatred of apartheid in a recent book, the book that India's Indira Gandhi considered decent proof of his and England's attitude towards South Africa before she allowed the last tour of India.

"Boycott, at the same time was raising troops for the SA tour; hates apartheid, loves Kruger Rands. Tell that to the Indians!

"The game, which was a team game, played for team ends, is now obviously a black pool of private graft and individual subterfuge.

"South Africa, now suitably encouraged, will launch annual tournaments. The 'Dirty Dozen' may never see an England sweater again, but they could be committed for years ahead to play in South Africa — the richest, loneliest men in cricket."

But the problem is also one of professionalism in sport, It has some similarity to the row over marathon-man Johnny Halberstad who has now been barred from amateur running because he was paid to run. It is a matter of sportsmen selling their talents to the highest bidder because they have made their talents into a business and all the old tenets of playing for the sake of the game are fast becoming obsolete.

Of this matter in cricket Lewis says: "The ICC lies flabby on top of world cricket like a toothless, clawless lion . . . What international cricket needs is a board of directors.

"Today, cricket is a highly entertaining business run on archaic, unbusinesslike lines. Perhaps that is why the game has not kept pace with the hardnosed element which has turned itself into a mercenary army to everyone's embarrassment.

"And then, when everyone has counted the cost of the tour, the one figure which should remain in all minds is the 387 racial laws in South Africa where a black skin is synonymous with racial crime."

All heavy stuff for a newspaper which has said more for South Africa than against it.

When, after a month of indecision, the TCCB finally banned the rebels from playing test cricket for three years and ruled that players playing in South Africa in future would not be eligible for England selection, it was promptly criticised for "savage reaction" and for bowing in the face of external pressure.

Of course, the South African cricket authorities reacted too, in the way they knew best. They promptly offered leading members of the rebel team contracts for next season to offset their financial losses through the ban, estimated at R40 000 a year.

This means that Gooch will probably play for Western Province next season, while South Africa's Allan Lamb, who honoured his contract in England and did not play the rebels, will probably play for England.

But, in the end, the prediction of the convenor of the Springbok cricket selectors, Dr Ali Bacher, probably came closest to the truth.

He warned against over-reaction to official British attitudes, saying it was politic for the English cricket authorities to make anti-tour statements to save the Indian and Pakistani tours.

"I tell you, the row will die down in months . . ."

Will that indeed prove to be so?

2 JUST CRICKET OR JUST NOT CRICKET

by Malcolm McKenzie

Graham Gooch's team of English cricketers has recently completed a whirlwind tour of South Africa, during which they provided the Springboks with a fair semblance of international competition for the first time in a decade. They have been hailed by many whites here as brave men who have risked their international careers in order to fight what these people see as the immoral interference of politics with sport.

Immediately after the TCCB had imposed a three year ban upon Gooch and his team, the Springbok captain Mike Procter wrote a vigorous defence, in his weekly Sunday Tribune column, "of the feelings of many who have been shocked by the hypocrisy and double standards that have been displayed by those responsible for the well-being and future of the game." In addition, the tour was seen by its supporters as something of a victory for the so-called 'normalisation', not only of cricket, but of sport generally in this country. Mr Joe Pamensky, president of the South African Cricket Union, has been reported as saying that the tour "has resulted in an awareness outside South Africa of the very real changes that have taken place on the sporting scene in the Republic."

There is however, another way of looking at the tour. And it is particularly important, in view of the total strategy mounted by the South African white-controlled media in favour of the tour, to be aware of this other side. Keith Fletcher, the present captain of English cricket, has said of the banning of the 'rebel' team: "They got what they deserved." Much closer to home, similar sentiments have been voiced. Dr Errol Vawda, chairman of the non-racial Natal Council on Sport and a member of the executive of SACOS, has written that "the present touring party deserve the contempt that we all have for mercenaries of any kind." As if this is not explicit enough, he has gone on to suggest that "Mr Gooch and his friends must be treated as scabs in the world sporting situation." What, we may well wonder, are the reasons for such animus?

It is for a number of reasons pertinent to consider the views of a man of Dr Vawda's position. SACOS, the South African Council on Sport, is an organisation which actively furthers the cause of non-racial sport in this country. And it does so both by serving as the umbrella body which promotes the playing of non-racial sport within South Africa and by encouraging the international boycott of South African sport