

Mike Gatting

Former English Cricket Captain

For two decades, it was a sight as characteristic of Lord's as Father Time himself: Mike Gatting, with jutting beard and strutting gait, biffing the ball past extra cover for Middlesex or England. If a spinner was bowling, he probably wouldn't be on for long: 'Gatt' murdered spinners.

Squat and tubby, Mike Gatting never looked a sportsman from a distance, though at close quarters his oak-tree forearms gave a clue. He was a natural, a point recognised by the England Cricket selectors when they sent him on tour as a 20-year-old, in 1977-78.

But it would take seven more years and 54 Test innings before he made a hundred. In the meantime, Mike Gatting batted every position except first violin. Finally, Mike Gatting reached maturity with 136 in adversity at Bombay, an innings of such guts that the British press broke its rule and applauded. Then there was no stopping him.

As English captain, Mike Gatting had a bristling quality, like his batting. But the triumph of the surprise Ashes win in 1986-87 was followed later that year by his argument with the Pakistani umpire Shakoor Rana - routine in most sports, shocking in cricket - which reverberated round the world. Mike Gatting's bristling had got the better of him.

Mike Gatting was later sacked. The selectors wanted him back in 1989 but their choice was vetoed; Gatting, in pique and sadness, took a rebel team to South Africa instead and the captaincy never came back to him.

Mike Gatting had a sense of fair play and not much subtlety; he suffered for being a straightforward man in a game run by dissemblers.



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