

# Three Legends

by Paula Boock

New Zealand played its first international cricket test match in 1930. Since then, we have introduced many fine cricketers to the world. Some have been tough, dogged players who could dig in for a long innings to save a test match. Others have been natural athletes – fiery bowlers, acrobatic fielders, wily spinners – winning games single-handedly with their skills.

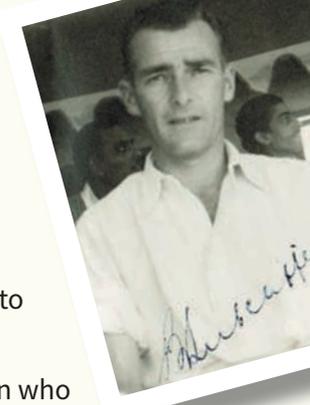
But a few players have done more than excite the current crowd. Their feats have been so great, their ability so spectacular, that they have become lasting champions – legends of the game.

## Bert Sutcliffe: Close to Perfect

Bert Sutcliffe first played cricket for New Zealand in the 1940s. In those days, teams sailed on ships for several weeks to play in another country. And there was no television. Huge crowds flocked to the cricket grounds to watch all the international games they could.

Sutcliffe was a teenage sensation – a stylish left-handed batsman who captained his Takapuna Grammar school team to great success. He left school having made more runs and taken more wickets than any Takapuna Grammar player before him. By the age of eighteen, Sutcliffe was already in the Auckland team. When he moved to Dunedin for university, he was welcomed into the Otago team.

It took only one game for Otago for Sutcliffe to jump to the highest level. Delighting the crowds, he scored 197 and 128 against the touring English side. It was a batting display that Walter Hadlee, the then captain of the New Zealand cricket team, described as “close to perfect”. Hadlee also said that Bert was “so far ahead of anyone else it wasn’t funny”. The young prodigy was selected for the New Zealand team that was to tour England in 1949.



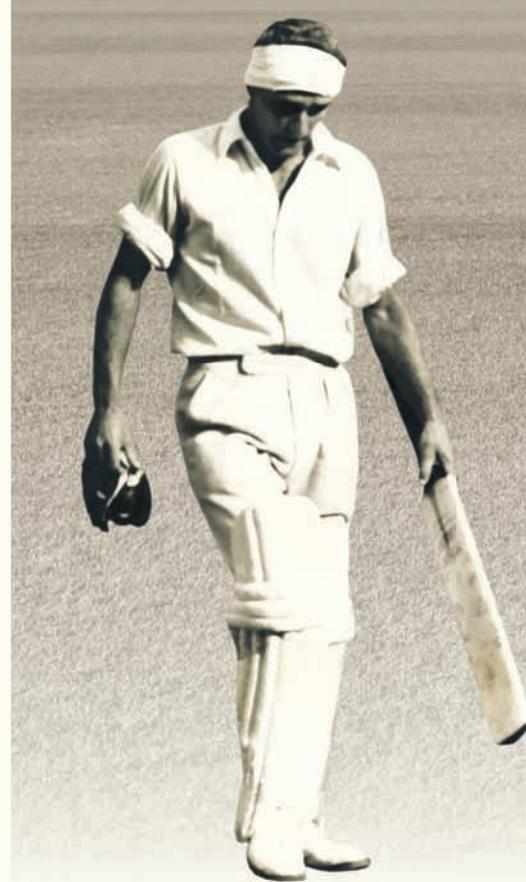
Bert Sutcliffe with a New Zealand XI,  
Basin Reserve, 1944

The tour took the entire summer. In that time, Sutcliffe scored a massive 2627 runs, including seven centuries. Only one man (Don Bradman, who is considered the greatest batsman ever) had scored more runs in a single summer. The English newspapers raved about the young New Zealander. Already, they said, he was “high on the list of the world’s greatest batsmen”.

Bert Sutcliffe was extraordinary, not just because of his great batting displays or his consistent success. He became a legend because once he made a century he didn’t stop. He liked to make huge scores – double and triple centuries. Back in New Zealand,

he made scores of 275, 355 ... and finally 385 for Otago against Canterbury. For almost thirty years, this was the highest score by a left-handed batsman in the world. Bert Sutcliffe became so famous that in local games, some umpires were reluctant to give him out because they wanted to watch him bat.

In 1953, while on tour in South Africa, Bert Sutcliffe – along with another New Zealand cricketer, Bob Blair – created one of our most famous cricketing moments. Sutcliffe was hit in the head by a bouncer from a South African fast bowler. Back at the ground after a trip to the hospital, Sutcliffe found his team in deep trouble.



### Bert Sutcliffe: Career statistics

	Tests	First-class
Matches	42	233
Runs scored	2727	17 447
Batting average	40.10	47.41
100s/50s	5/15	44/83
Top score	230*	385
Wickets	4	86
Bowling average	86.00	38.05
Best bowling	2/38	5/19

\* not out



The New Zealand cricket team on tour in England, 1949

## Some New Zealand Cricket Firsts:

So, head bandaged, he went out to bat. Sutcliffe attacked the bowling, hitting glorious shots all around the ground. He did this until the second-last wicket fell.

New Zealand’s number eleven was Bob Blair. His fiancée had died in the Tangiwai disaster two days earlier, and everyone thought he wouldn’t be batting. But as the players began to leave the field, they were stunned to see Blair coming out to bat. In front of 23 000 silent spectators, Sutcliffe and Blair took to the

South African bowlers. They hit a quick-fire thirty-three runs before Blair was out. The courage of the two men was an inspiration. Many consider it to be Sutcliffe’s finest hour.

Yet despite all these exploits, Bert Sutcliffe played at a time when the New Zealand team wasn’t strong. In his forty-two tests against five different nations, Sutcliffe never experienced a single New Zealand win. Perhaps this was part of what made him such a legend.

**1930:** The first men’s test match is played (against England at Lancaster Park, Christchurch).

**1935:** The first women’s test match is played (against England at Lancaster Park, Christchurch).



## Debbie Hockley: Teenage Star

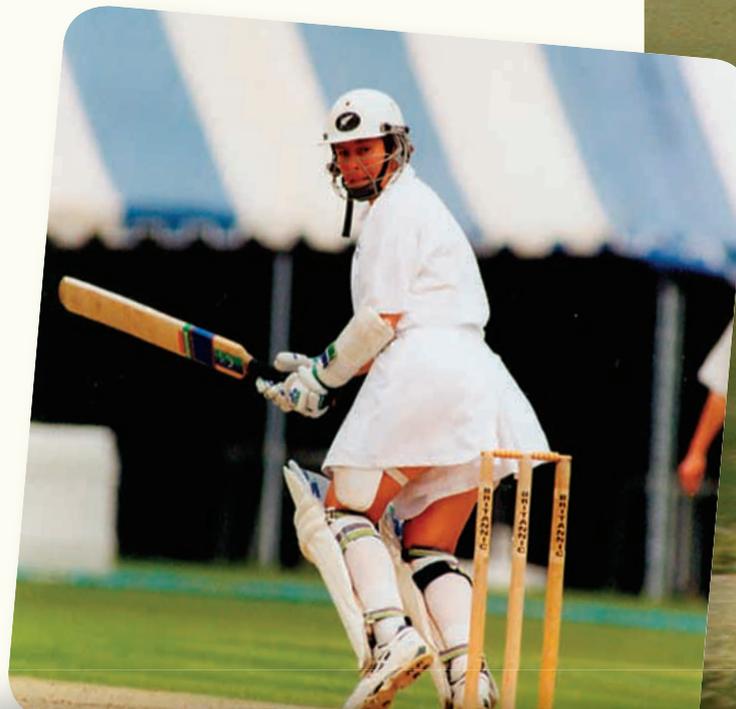
Fast forward to 1979, and a different kind of sensation was on the rise. Like Bert Sutcliffe, Debbie Hockley was a teenage cricket star. At fifteen, she was representing Canterbury. Just after her sixteenth birthday, she was named in the New Zealand women's team. This made Hockley the youngest-ever New Zealand test cricketer.

By the 1980s, the men's cricket team had started winning international tests and was a popular side. But the women's team had few opportunities to play internationals. This meant that many people didn't take them seriously. Hockley set about changing this attitude. She stood out on the international stage with her high standards and powerful batting. Journalist Margot Butcher described how Hockley would practise long after others had left the nets. "She dedicated an incredible amount of her spare time to being good at batting."

In 1982, Hockley played in the second women's Cricket World Cup. At the time, the game was changing: a new, shortened version was being introduced alongside the test-match format. These shorter games were limited to fifty overs,

which meant a definite winner at the end of one day's play. Coloured clothing, a white ball, and games at night under stadium lights were also part of the new look.

The new one-day internationals (ODIs) were especially good news for women cricketers because they allowed more opportunities for the women's teams to play each other. Debbie Hockley's record is one of the finest in the women's game. Yet she only played nineteen test matches compared with 118 one-day internationals.



**1956:** The men's team has its first test match win (beating the West Indies at Eden Park, Auckland).



**1972:** The women's team has its first test match win (beating Australia in Melbourne).

**1973:** Both the New Zealand men's and women's cricket teams play their first one-day international matches.

Hockley went on to captain the New Zealand White Ferns to several wins, and in 1998, she scored two firsts for women cricketers. She was named the New Zealand Cricketer of the Year, the first time a woman had won a national cricket award ahead of a man; and she became the first professional woman cricketer in the world. This was when New Zealand Cricket decided to pay her to play the game, just like it did the men. The move paid off. Two years later, playing in front of a home crowd, Hockley was part of the White Ferns team that beat Australia in a thrilling final to win the 2000 ICC Women's World Cup. But it would be fifteen years before New Zealand Cricket offered professional contracts to other White Ferns.

Hockley retired after the World Cup win – the highest scoring woman cricketer in the world. But the accolades didn't stop. In 2014, she became the second New Zealand cricketer (after Sir Richard Hadlee) to join the ranks of the great in the ICC International Hall of Fame. Women's cricket was certainly being taken seriously.

Debbie Hockley: Career statistics		
	Tests	ODIs
Matches	19	118
Runs scored	1301	4064
Batting average	52.04	41.89
100s/50s	4/7	4/34
Top score	126*	117
Wickets	5	20
Bowling average	29.20	42.65
Best bowling	2/9	3/49



\* not out

**1973:** The first women's Cricket World Cup is played in England.

## Tim Southee: Legend in the Making

Is there a current player who's a legend in the making? Only time will tell – although some people have pointed to Tim Southee as a possible champion. One coach, Allan Donald, believes that Southee has the potential to become “the best swing bowler in the world”. Former New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond agrees. “He's got that potential, and he's only twenty-five. I've got no doubt he'll get there.”

World cricket has changed again in recent years with the introduction of Twenty20. This is an even shorter form of the game, giving teams only twenty overs each to score their runs. A game is usually finished in three hours. Modern players often specialise in either Twenty20, one-day internationals, or five-day test matches. But Southee is one cricketer who has excelled in all forms of the game. He was just nineteen when he was picked for the New Zealand Twenty20 team. A few months later, he made the test side to play against England. In that match, he was sensational. He took five wickets and then hit seventy-seven runs, including New Zealand's fastest-ever fifty (off twenty-nine balls).



**1975:** The first men's Cricket World Cup is played in England.

**1998:** The New Zealand men's team is named the Blackcaps and the New Zealand women's team the White Ferns.

At the 2010 World Cup, Southee was the third-highest wicket-taker. He was quickly snapped up for a season with the Indian Premier League. This is an annual Twenty20 tournament, played in India, in which the best short-form players from around the world are paid big money to take part. The tournament is regarded to be the “richest” in the world. Some players receive over a million dollars to play in the six-week tournament.

Cricket has changed a lot over the years. Bert Sutcliffe and Debbie Hockley played for the love of a game that offered friendship, travel, and excitement – but little money. For Tim Southee, cricket is a lucrative and high-powered career. But he began just like Sutcliffe and Hockley, playing cricket enthusiastically when he was young. His earliest cricketing memory is “getting up early on a Saturday morning, playing Kiwi Cricket with a yellow bat and yellow stumps”. His advice to young players with big dreams? “Train hard – and make the most of every opportunity you get.”



Tim Southee: Career statistics (as at July 2014)				
	Tests	ODIs	Twenty20s	First-class
Matches	34	78	94	64
Runs scored	917	313	358	1533
Batting average	18.34	10.79	10.22	18.92
100s/50s	0/2	0/0	0/1	1/4
Top score	77*	32	74	156
Wickets	123	105	112	241
Bowling average	29.83	31.52	24.41	26.72
Best bowling	7/64	5/33	6/16	8/27

\* not out

**2000:** The White Ferns win the women’s Cricket World Cup, beating Australia by four runs.

**2004:** The first Twenty20 International is played (the White Ferns vs. England).

**2008:** The Indian Premier League (IPL) is introduced.



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