

Glory Gardens 8

The Glory Ashes

Bob Cattell

Random House Children's Books

About the Book

When Ohbert creates a GLORY GARDENS website, unknown to everyone else, his mission is to make them the most famous junior club in the world! His claims for the club get bigger and bigger until one day he puts out a challenge for anyone to come and beat the 'reigning world champions' - and the top young club in Australia approach them to do just that. A tournament is arranged, but when the press pick up on the story, there is much more at stake than just their reputation ...

Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Sixteen

Cricket Commentary

About the Author

Also by Bob Cattell

Copyright

The
Glory
ASHES

BOB CATTELL
.....

Illustrations by
David Kearney

RED FOX

*The author is grateful to Frank Duckworth and Tony Lewis
for checking out the facts of the application of the
Duckworth-Lewis method in chapters eight and nine*

Chapter One

TWO WEEKS AGO no one at Glory Gardens had even heard of Woolagong Cricket Club; now everyone was talking about it. Woolagong is somewhere in New South Wales, Australia. It can't be a very important place because it isn't in any of the atlases at school, but its cricket club is famous all over Australia: *This season Woolagong were NSW champions and voted best junior team of the year by the Australian sports writers* - that's what they tell us anyway, and even allowing for a bit of exaggeration it sounds as if they have some top players.

Of course, we'd have never known about Woolagong if it hadn't been for Ohbert. Paul "Ohbert" Bennett is Glory Gardens' number 11 bat, and he can't bowl or field either. People often ask why we bother with him in the team. There's no answer to that except Ohbert makes life interesting. His latest contribution to the club is The Glory Gardens Official Website. It contains some of the weirdest things about cricket you've ever seen, such as Ohbert's own strange theories on fielding positions and tactics and his reports of our latest games - all of which proves that Ohbert lives on another planet where they've never heard of cricket.

Although the site is called The Glory Gardens Official Website, none of us - apart from Frankie and Woofy - knew a thing about it until well after the damage had been done. That happened nearly six weeks ago when Ohbert sent out his challenge - an invitation to any club anywhere to play

us for the title of “Undisputed Champions of the World”. In Ohbert’s dreamland Glory Gardens are the reigning World Champions and the top junior club in the Universe. Before we knew it Woolagong had accepted the challenge and, at this very moment, they are on their way to England.

Over the next fortnight Glory Gardens will play Woolagong four times: three one-day games, followed by a two-innings match over three days. They arrive tomorrow and the first game is on Sunday at Glory Gardens rec, the ground which gave the club its name when we started up two years ago.

Things have changed a lot since then; this is the team today:



*Back row: Marty Lear, Jacky Gunn,
Bogdan Woof, Frankie Allen, Ohbert Bennett,
Matthew Rose, Kris Johansen
Front row: Cal Sebastien, Tylan Vellacott,
Mack McCurdy, Hooker Knight (captain),
Azzie Nazar, Erica Davies, Clive da Costa
Kneeling in front: Jo Allen*

I'm Hooker Knight, captain of Glory Gardens C. C. Ohbert is in the back row, three from the right with the baseball cap and the Walkman headset. And Jo, our non-playing secretary, is kneeling in front. She's the one who plans and organises everything and she's been extra busy lately arranging all the details for the Woolagong tour.

Glory Gardens is more than a cricket team; it's a family. We've been very successful over the past two years and last season we won the under-13s League of Champions at the Edgbaston test match ground, so there is some excuse for Ohbert describing us as "the top team in the country". As Woolagong will find out, Glory Gardens has some stars of its own: Azzie and Clive, our best batters, and the opening fast bowling duo, Marty and Jacky. Another secret of our success is that we're packed with all-rounders; Cal opens the batting and bowls off-breaks; Erica is a great one-day bowler and solid middle-order bat; and I bowl left-arm seamers and usually bat at number five or six.

When Jo arrived at the rec that morning the rest of us were practising in the nets. Kiddo Johnstone, our trainer, was putting us through some fitness routines, so everyone was happy to stop for a moment to inspect Jo's final programme for the Woolagong games:

The Whitmart Tournament
GLORY GARDENS v WOOLAGONG
40-overs Competition

- Match 1 2 pm Sunday, July 23
Glory Gardens Recreation Ground
- Match 2 2 pm Wednesday, July 26
The Whitmart Priory Ground
- Match 3 2 pm Saturday, July 29
Glory Gardens Recreation Ground

Three-day Match
GLORY GARDENS v WOOLAGONG

Friday, August 4 – Sunday, August 6
The Whitmart Priory Ground

“Why’s it called the Whitmart Tournament?” asked Azzie. “Are they sponsoring it?”

“Yeah. Wally’s getting very excited about it. He says England v Australia is what cricket’s all about,” said Frankie. Frankie, our regular wicket-keeper and team jester, is Jo’s older brother. Walter Whitman, known to Frankie as “Wally”, is the owner of Whitmart, the giant supermarket group. He’s one of our keenest supporters and by far the richest. Whitmart have already paid for a new all-weather pitch at Glory Gardens rec and footed most of the bill for our brilliant new pavilion. Even Jo would admit that Frankie’s unlikely friendship with the billionaire businessman has been worth his weight in gold to Glory Gardens.

“He’s kitting us out with some new tracksuits and some Glory Gardens caps,” continued Frankie. “He says we’ve got to wear the caps when we go out to field against Woolagong, because we’ll be representing England and we’ve got to look good.”

“It’ll take more than a cap to make you look good,” scoffed Cal.

“Very funny,” said Frankie.

“If the one-dayers are called the Whitmart Tournament, what about the big game?” asked Tylan, our leg-spinner. “We can’t keep calling it the ‘three-day match’.”

“It could be the Ohbert Challenge Trophy,” suggested Erica.

“Catchy,” said Frankie.

“What about Ohbert’s Ashes?” said Mack.

“Yeah,” said Tylan enthusiastically. “It’s got to be the Ashes if we’re playing Australia.”

Frankie agreed and went into into one of his weird little war dances, chanting under his breath, “We’re going to win the Ashes. We’re going to win the Ashes.”

“It’ll make a change if you do,” said Mack. “Even my dad can’t remember when the poms last beat us.” Mack is

Australian. He and his family have been living over here for two years, since when he has been a regular in the Glory Gardens team. He's staying with me for the next two weeks because his parents are away on holiday; he didn't want to go with them and miss the Woolagong games.

"I bet England beat Australia next time," Matthew said defiantly.

"Only if we send over our beach volleyball team by mistake," scoffed Mack.

"Glory Gardens *are* going to win Ohbert's Ashes though," said Jo in a steely voice.

"Too right," said Jacky. "You'd better decide which side you're on, Mack. Is it England or Australia?"

"You don't need to worry about me, mate," said Mack. "I'm a Glory Gardens player okay; even being an Aussie comes second to that."

"If we call it Ohbert's Ashes, does that mean he has to play?" Marty asked.

Ohbert continued to nod his head to the tinny rhythm coming from his headset. As usual he was in a world of his own and didn't have a clue that we were all talking about him.

"Perhaps we could make Ohbert the trophy instead," said Tylan. "Then if Woolagong win, at least we'll have the consolation that they'll take him back to Australia."

"Good idea," said Jacky, with a laugh.

"That's just silly. Of course Ohbert has to play - he's part of the team, isn't he?" said Jo.

"Yeah, worse luck," Marty mumbled.

"Tylan's right, though," said Frankie. "We've got to have a proper trophy for Ohbert's Ashes too. I bet Wally comes up with a really flash one for the one-day games."

I looked over at Ohbert again and he gave me a blank grin as his head continued to bob from side to side to the Walkman's beat. I thought back to his astonishing last ball run out which had won us the League title a couple of

weeks ago. Ohbert has the knack of being in the wrong place at the wrong time and doing the wrong thing, but for all his hopelessness, somehow it works out all right. I've seen him turn the course of a whole game in one mad moment. What, I wondered, would Woolagong make of our number 11 batsman who had brought them halfway round the world to play us?

Chapter Two

IN THE EVENT, Ohbert wasn't selected for the first one-dayer. With the full squad of 14 all available, the selection committee of three - Jo, Erica, our vice captain, and me - opted for our best line-up for the opening game. That meant a six-strong bowling attack: Marty, Jacky, Tylan, Cal, Erica and me, and it left no room either for our other two seam bowlers, Kris or Woofy. Jo insisted, however, that all three of them should play at least one game in the Whitmart Tournament and that Ohbert should be an automatic selection in the next game. Neither Erica nor I was prepared to argue with her about that.

This was the team:

Matthew Rose	Mack McCurdy
Cal Sebastien	Frankie Allen (wkt)
Azzie Nazar	Tylan Vellacott
Clive da Costa	Jackie Gunn
Erica Davies	Marty Lear
Hooker Knight (capt)	

We expected Woolagong to arrive on Friday morning but their plane was delayed for several hours and they had to stay overnight in a hotel near the airport. They finally turned up around Saturday lunch time with less than a day to spare before the first game. Jo went with Kiddo to arrange their accommodation, so she got to meet them first. Later, when we saw her at the rec, she had to face a barrage of questions. How many were there in the team? Who did she meet? What were they like?

“They looked pretty normal to me,” said Jo. “Noisy and silly – like boys usually are.”

“Do they all say things like ‘G’day, sport’ and ‘That’s bonzer, mate’ – you know, like Mack does?” Woofy asked.

“Listen, mate, we speak bloomin’ English in Aus,” said Mack. “None of your posh pommy talk.”

“Did you meet their captain?” I asked Jo.

“Yes. He’s called Robbie Gonzales. He’s got spiky bleached hair.”

“Typical Aussie poseur,” said Cal, giving Mack a playful shove.

“And their wicket-keeper? What’s he like?” asked Frankie.

“His name’s Slim Squirrell. They call him Slim because he’s a bit overweight,” said Jo, eyeing her brother.

Cal laughed. “The tale of two tubby keepers. And I bet he’s nuts like Frankie, too. All wicket-keepers are.”

“Squirrell’s a good name for a nutter,” said Tylan.

“Are Dai and Si still bragging about a 4-0 whitewash?” asked Woofy. Dai Holdright and Si Bannerjee were the two Woolagong players who had sent the first e-mail, taking up Ohbert’s challenge.

“They sound confident enough,” said Jo. “Dai says they haven’t been beaten all season and they’re not going to lose the winning habit now they’re in England.”

“I can’t wait to see the look on their faces tomorrow after we’ve handed them out a giant-sized thrashing,” said Frankie.

“They’re arriving at the ground at ten o’clock tomorrow for a warm-up practice before the game,” said Jo.

“And Wally’s coming to welcome them,” said Frankie. “He says he’s not going to miss a ball bowled all fortnight. I think he’s forgotten that he’s supposed to be a multi-billionaire making loads of money.”

“Did you know that Woolagong’s sponsored by a supermarket group, too?” said Jo. “They put up most of the

money for their trip.”

“I wonder if Wally knows that?” said Cal.

“You bet he does.” Frankie said with a grin. “Wally knows fat cats all over the world and I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that he’s been pulling the strings behind this tour all along. Only he’ll never let on – he’s too cagey for that.”

“Is there going to be any food?” asked Woofy.

“Loads of it,” said Frankie, grinning with pleasure at the thought.

“My aunt’s helping out with lunch and tea,” said Clive.

“Brilliant. Heaps of chocolate brownies,” said Frankie, licking his lips and rubbing his stomach at the same time.

“If only it was an eating competition instead of cricket,” said Cal. “Friar Tuck here would see them off single-handed.”

“Then it would be called the Noshes instead of the Ashes,” said Tylan.

“Why do they call it the Ashes anyway?” asked Woofy. “It’s a weird name for a cricket competition.”

“It goes back years and years, to the first test match. The poms lost to us,” said Mack. “After the game someone burnt a set of bails and put the ashes in an urn. They said it was to mark the death of English cricket – and it’s been dead ever since.”

“And what about when Ian Botham beat you single-handed?” Matthew said defiantly.

“Okay, so we let you win every twenty years or so, just to keep it interesting. But Australia has won loads more times than England.”

“Australia has won 117 test matches and England 93, with 86 drawn,” said Jo.

“Like I said, loads more.”

“Oh, but where are they now?” Ohbert asked, looking as if he’d suddenly woken up with a start.

“Where are what?”

“The Ashes?”

“They’re still in the urn. They keep it at Lord’s cricket ground,” said Mack.

“Oh, I see,” said Ohbert. I could tell he was thinking of something, but who knew what?

I didn’t meet Woolagong’s captain, Robbie Gonzales, until we went out to toss just before the game started. If there’s one word that describes Robbie, it’s “confident”. He’s got his mind made up about most things and he never holds back from giving you his opinion. Robbie was on the attack from the moment we shook hands in front of the pavilion and walked out to the middle to inspect the pitch. Something about his appearance reminded me of Shane Warne – maybe it was the bleached blond hair and the white lip protector. I soon learnt that it wasn’t a coincidence.

“Who’s the top world cricketer today?” he asked me suddenly.

I thought for a bit and said, “Sachin Tendulkar or Brian Lara?”

“No chance, mate,” said Robbie. “Shane’s in a class of one. He’s got everything; skill, controlled aggression, brain. And there’s never been a better tactician in the game. While Warnie’s still playing, you poms don’t have a chance of winning the Ashes. Did you see that ball he bowled at Lord’s against Mike Gatting? I’ve got the video but I wish I’d been there to see it. And that beaut in the World Cup? Jeez, he turned the match against South Africa when we were on our way home.” On and on he went.

Finally, to shut him up, I tossed the 50p and he called tails. It was heads.

“You can bat,” I said.

“Okay, yeah, that’s fine. I’d have batted anyway,” said Robbie. “We like to get the runs up on the board. What d’you reckon would be a fair total on this mat?”

We were playing on the all-weather pitch, which is a good batting surface but a bit on the slow side. In a 40-overs game I thought anything over 150 would be a tough ask. "200. Maybe 220," I said, without blinking.

"No probs," he said, shaking hands again. "May the best team win - as long as it's Australian."

On the way back to the pavilion we told the umpires that Glory Gardens were in the field. Jim Davy, who normally umpires for Croyland Crusaders, was standing in today for our regular official, old Sid Burns, who is on holiday. Jim's a strange bloke, a bit like a jolly old pirate. He slapped me on the back and said in his big, booming voice, "Good luck, matey. Don't forget you're playing for the honour of England and the Empire."

The Woolagong umpire was a thin man with a long, miserable face and a little black moustache. Jim introduced him to me as Mr Dryer. The first words I heard him speak were, "Will someone get that bloomin' dog off the pitch."

"Oh, don't worry about him," I said. "It's only Gatting, our trainer's dog. He's our team mascot."

"Gatting? Shane Warne would see him off then," commented Robbie, with a chuckle.

"You shouldn't allow dogs on the pitch. It's disgusting," umpire Dryer murmured crossly. I called Gatting and was a bit surprised that he waddled over obediently towards me. Together we made for the home changing room where I told Frankie to pad up. He nodded at me and went on with the story he was telling.

"... and Si Bannerjee wanted to know why Ohbert wasn't playing. You won't believe this but they seriously think he's our star batter."

"Did you tell Si he was hopeless?" asked Jacky.

Frankie grinned mischievously. "No fear. I said we were resting him today, because of an old problem of his - a pain in the neck. But I told him Ohbert would be up for the next game and they'd be in for the shock of their lives."

“They’ve got two deadly fast bowlers,” Tylan said, a little nervously.

“Yeah. Jack Grylls and Dean Caroota,” said Marty.

“Dean’s the one who hasn’t got any clothes,” said Cal.

“I didn’t know they’d brought a streaker,” said Frankie.

“He’s lost his luggage, fathead. It didn’t turn up at the airport – probably went on to New York or somewhere. So he’s having to borrow all his clothes, and he’s a lot taller than any of the others.”

“So that’s why he’s walking funny,” said Tylan.

“He was going to bowl in shorts, but I’ve lent him my spare cricket trousers,” said Cal, who is the tallest player in our squad after Woofy.

“It’ll be a bit of turn-up for your trousers to bowl with some zip,” said Tylan, in a Tylanish sort of way.

Robbie gave Jo a list of the Woolagong players in batting order for the scorebook. There are 14 players in their squad – the same as ours – and I suspected Robbie had picked his strongest 11 for the first game, too. They were:

Dai Holdright	Cameron Armstrong
Ivan Susz	Mark Squirrell (wkt)
Robbie Gonzales (capt)	Si Bannerjee
David Larrington	Dean Caroota
Tom Stachiewicz	Jack Grylls
George Kynaston	

We took to the field for some warm-up exercises and catching practice. Marty marked his run-up carefully from the top end and bowled a couple of looseners at Tylan. Then the Woolagong openers walked out with the umpires and a trumpeter appeared from behind the pavilion and played “Waltzing Matilda”. The Australians were delighted and cheered loudly.

“I bet that was Wally’s idea,” said Frankie, waving at Walter Whitman, in his trademark white suit and white sunhat, who had taken up his regular position under an