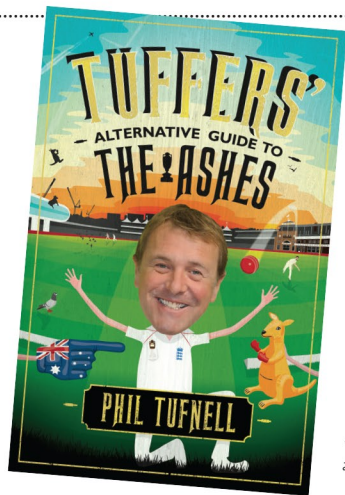


# COMING...



## **Tuffers' Alternative Guide to the Ashes**

Phil Tufnell  
Headline,  
£16.99

A DIFFERENT SORT OF ASHES GUIDE. LAST year's *Tuffers' Cricket Tales*, featuring the former twirler's thoughts and reminiscences on the game, was a bestseller. And those who enjoyed that can expect more of the same – only

this time, it's strictly England-Australia.

So *Tuffers' Alternative Guide to the Ashes* is once again a breezy ride through Tuffers' selection of anecdotes and theories on the game's oldest rivalry. With each chapter broken into subheadings; only loosely themed, constantly jumping between eras and moving freely from Tufnell's own personal experience as a player and commentator to more general Ashes folklore and observation.

His own account of his debut tour – to Australia in 1990/91 – is particularly instructive of just how much the game has changed in recent times. After being selected as a 24-year-old for that first tour (after his Middlesex captain Mike Gatting had made him cut off his ponytail) Tufnell was delighted at the glamour and status associated with Ashes cricket. And he was starstruck, preparing to head Down Under alongside Botham, Lamb and Gower. As he says: "I felt like I was about to go on the best holiday ever, and my cricket heroes were coming with me." That said, even on the eve of their trip, some of those heroes weren't even sure who he was. In the bar the night before heading off, Tufnell saw Beefy and Lamby having a drink, and quietly said hello. They looked blankly at him until they

spotted the brand new England blazer: Botham: "Oh, are you coming with us?" "Yeah, 'fraid so. I'm Phil Tufnell'. "Ah, pull up a chair and have a drink, then" Then, 10 minutes in, Lamby asks: "So, what exactly do you do, Phil?" "I'm a left-arm spinner." "That's handy," Lamby replies, "we could do with one of them. Another beer?"

Apart from Tufnell's own recollections, there's also some history: an attempt to weave in the heritage of the rivalry – and some thoughts on the state of the game and the Ashes today. There are also Tuffers' Ashes 'XI's: his ultimate team of twirlers (guess which formerly chubby blond comes out top...), the greatest blockers (a well-earned mention for Chris Tavaré) and all-time 'warriors'. He doesn't pick himself..

Light but engaging, this is another profoundly entertaining read – perfect for a summer holiday – with just a pinch of genuine cricket insight thrown in. After a life as a supposedly 'bad-boy' player, retirement as jungle dweller and commentator, who'd have thought Tuffers would also make a bestselling writer?

● **EK**

**IN THREE:** Cat milking it