

“Bazball” – The resurgence of English test cricket



It feels like just yesterday English Cricket was licking its wounds after an Ashes thumping down under but sitting here in just a year, many things have changed. Here are the *three* main takeaways from a staggering year of test cricket:

1) Ben Stokes was the correct choice as captain.

When it was announced that Ben Stokes was the new England captain in April 2022, some doubted the appointment. Less than a year on from his extended break from all forms of the game due to a mental health break, many were sceptical if he would be able to live up to the job. But he proved them wrong very quickly. The aggressive, eye-catching batting and bowling proved to be just what the team needed. Winning nine out of a possible ten since his first game in June; a dream beginning for any captain. His next challenge is the Ashes next year, he has the hopes and dreams of all English fans to bring it home.



2) Players new and old thrive due to the new philosophy.

During the '21/22 ashes, the England squad looked like it needed a wholesale makeover. Whilst this partly happened in certain aspects, a new mindset is all it took for others. Fresh players such as Matt Potts, Jamie Overton, Rehan Ahmed, and the returning Ben Foakes were given opportunities in the summer and took them in their stride. Matt Potts and his dream first session, dismissing Kane Williamson, was the signal to many that a new era had begun. But for many, the first challenge was their first overseas tour in Pakistan. Returning for the first time since 2005, many wondered if anything would change.

Spoiler: It did not. England still played the same rock and roll style they had previously, allowing their youngest-ever debutant to thrive. Rehan Ahmed's second innings fiver will go down in history, and it's partly credited to Stokes and McCullum for giving him the reigns to play the way he knows best.



3) Bowlers thriving old like fine wine.

The thought of 40-year-old James Anderson and 36-year-old Stuart Broad opening the bowling for England in 2022 was a distant dream. But now they are back...and better than ever. Before Stokes' takeover in April, England attempted one last "red-ball reset" under previous captain Joe Root. They brought in fringe players like Saqib Mahmood and dropped seasoned veterans Broad and Anderson. This experiment failed. Drastically. One of the first things Stokes did was to bring back the bowlers and give them a free road to bowl aggressive, wicket-taking balls, no matter the situation. This will be key in the years to come also, with the "changing of the guard" expected soon, the experience these two can give to the new breed is unquestionably vital to the team.

So, in summary, it is now a wonderful time to be a part of English test cricket. The new expansive way to play the beautiful game is here to stay, and we are all here for it.

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