

It had been 18 years since England had last won the Ashes. Since then, Australia, their fiercest rivals and the worlds best test team throughout this time, had prevailed. But this time England were on a roll. They had been unbeaten for two years and had a crop of young, talented players. It was widely expected that the series would be closer and more competitive than usual, but no one could have predicted that it would end so dramatically. At the end of the first test at Lords, English optimism had nosedived. Australia were supposed to be an ageing team, but Glenn McGrath destroyed Englands batsmen, except for Kevin Pietersen. Yet in the second test, England took command, batting with carefree abandon, then setting a target that looked beyond Australias capability when, with just two wickets left, they still needed 120 runs. On the last day, England won by just two runs. During this test match, a new hero was born. Andrew Freddie Flintoff scored two fifties and would star again with the ball in the third test at Old Trafford. This time, England needed just one more wicket to win. McGrath and Brett Lee survived the final 24 balls as a watching nation sat gripped. Unperturbed, England made no mistake at Trent Bridge, this time winning in four days, but even here there was more high drama. When Australia were bowled out in their second innings, England needed only 129 runs to win. They got there, but lost seven wickets in doing so. Now it was official. This really was the greatest Ashes series of all time. England went to the Oval knowing that a draw would be enough to take home the Ashes after nine consecutive defeats. The eyes of the sporting world fell on a corner of south-east London to watch the drama unfold. Ashes Fever relives the incredible story of how England brought the best cricket team in the world to their knees during this unforgettable series. It explains the creation of new English sporting heroes and how cricket became the media focal point. Illustrated by 200 photographs, it relates how over three months the England cricket team created history in a manner that is unlikely ever to be repeated.

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