



Richard Gwynn was a club cricketer who helped England read the extraordinary Bob Massie in the 1972 Ashes



The fan who tamed Massie

***The Cricketer* reader Richard Gwynn knew what swing sensation Bob Massie was doing in the 1972 Ashes when the England batsmen could not read him for toffee. Here is his story, as relayed to Huw Turbervill**

It is every England fan's dream. Australia have unearthed a deadly new bowler, wreaking havoc with prodigious amounts of swing.

No batsman can pick him. But you, a humble club cricketer – watching from the pavilion with your binoculars – can. You are conscripted for national service. The code is broken. The demon is vanquished.

This happened to Richard Gwynn, a long-time subscriber to *The Cricketer*. The bowler in question was Bob Massie. Like the Magnavox Odyssey home video game console, he was big in 1972, but not much was seen of him again.

Going in to the second Test of that year's Ashes series at Lord's, Ray Illingworth's England were feeling confident. Their triumph in Australia in 1970/71 was one of England's greatest, and then they won the opening Test at

Old Trafford by 89 runs. The tourists were being written off as one of the worst Australia sides ever, something that you could imagine went down as well as warm beer with them. They decided it was time to give Massie, a 25-year-old from Western Australian, his debut.

Illingworth won the toss and batted, and Massie, his mutton chops looking resplendent, revelled in the overhead conditions, swinging it both ways. He took 8 for 84 (including a 20-over spell) as England were dismissed for 272. He asked to take a blow, but captain Ian Chappell said: "Come on mate, you're not going to get conditions like this too often." Greg Chappell's 131 helped Australia to 308, then Massie was even more lethal, taking 8 for 53 (England this time folding for 116). Australia won by eight wickets. His figures of 16 for 137 were the best by a