

## Why England's Women's Team Never Stood a Chance in the 2025 Ashes

By the time that you read this the Women's Ashes will be over and it is likely that England will have been well beaten by Australia. The first ODI at the North Sydney Oval displayed the fundamental differences between the two sides. Superstar all-rounders for Australia, Tahlia McGrath and Elyse Perry, were not required to bowl and contributed 16 runs between them. Had they been playing for England they would have bowled their full allocation of overs and batted in the Top 5 (Perry bats No3 for Australia and McGrath at No7), but as it was they were able to take it easy when England batted and concentrate on their brilliant fielding. The Australian fielding was of the highest calibre and Perry took two difficult catches with effortless ease (Alex Hartley, former England spinner said on commentary that they were 'easy' catches. I am not so sure) whilst their attack without McGrath and Perry featured six fine purveyors of seam and spin, only one of who bowled out the maximum ten overs.

England, put in on what looked a very good wicket, were undone by some fine swing bowling by Megan Schutt and Kim Garth. Maia Bouchier was quickly dispensed with once Garth got her line right and Tammy Beaumont, star turn that she has been for so many years, was reduced to reckless charges down the wicket scoring 13 in 31 balls before she went for glory but merely reached the hands of mid-on. The old firm of Heather Knight, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Danni Wyatt-Hodge and Amy Jones remediated things, all playing well before being dismissed all too easily when well set. Alice Capsey is finding life as an international cricketer tough at the moment, whilst Charlie Dean is a talented bat who is also unable to impose herself against the best attacks.

In the field Lauren Bell and Lauren Filer bowled well but when the call goes out that England severely missed the veteran Kate Cross, it says something about the lack of resources available to England – the constant theme of this column. As for the fielding there doesn't appear to be much improvement from the T20I World Cup when six catches were dropped in the crucial game against the West Indies. Alice Capsey dropped a sitter at long-leg and just when England might have snatched a win, Sophie Ecclestone moved slowly to her right and missed the catch offered by Ash Gardner at mid-off. Professional sports people simply should not be dropping these sort of opportunities.

Heather Knight understandably defended her team blaming the loss of the toss but even though the wicket was good, it has rained for four days prior to the match so early on the ball moved around a

bit, albeit mainly in the air than off the seam. England's challenge is that they need their best players to deliver in every game, whilst Australia can let two of their best players not even turn their arm over, whilst keeping talented players on the side-lines. England have no one waiting in the wings and have regularly failed to take the initiative in key games whatever the format. The basic question facing the women's game in England is where are the talented players coming through and why are none of them challenging for a place in the starting line-ups. For all the money being pumped into the game by the ECB and all the good work being done about giving it proper structure and professionalism it has yet to produce the results of producing even competent international players who can deliver. There is a big problem coming down the road with Knight, Sciver-Brunt, Wyatt-Hodge and Jones all in their final phases as international cricketers.

By Peter Hardy