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Smells like team spirit

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David Lloyd (left) and Michael Atherton have both contributed to a new book about 'teamship' in cricket. CREDIT: ALLSPORT

The book begins with a quote from the late [John Arlott](#): "Cricket is a game of the most terrifying stresses with more luck about it than any other game. They call it a team game but in fact it is the loneliest game of all."

Terrifying and lonely are certainly two adjectives with which most of us who have had the pleasure, or not, as the case may be, of facing some of the fastest bowlers in the world can identify.

And, yes, cricket is, as [Mike Atherton](#) points out in the first essay of the tome, "essentially an individual pursuit carried out within the framework of a team", but that is not to say that the matter of teamship can be ignored.



Mark 'Sweetheart' Wagh nominates Mark Ealham. CREDIT: THE TELEGRAPH

It was this that publisher and writer Stephen Chalke began contemplating in the aftermath of the great recent [Kevin Pietersen](#) debate.

"He was arguably England's best player, yet it was decided that the team would do better without his talent," writes Chalke in the introduction. "How could that be in a game where so much of success depends on individual contributions? What was the nature of his disruption that it took more away from the team than were added by the runs he scored? It struck me that such questions only get asked when there are problems.

"Why not come at this from the other end? Why not ask some cricketers to write about team-mates with whom they enjoyed playing, and to reflect on what those team-mates gave to their cricketers that was positive?"

What's more Chalke, in conjunction with John Barclay, the former Sussex captain who is now director of cricket and coaching at the Arundel Castle Cricket Foundation, decided to do this for charity, so that all those asked to contribute did so for nothing.

The result is a wonderful collection of 27 essays, entitled simply *Team Mates*, with contributions from the likes of Atherton, Mike Selvey, Chris Cowdrey, David Gower, David Lloyd, Geoff Miller, Alastair Hignell, Vic Marks, Angus Fraser, Derek Pringle and many more.

There is even a bit of a scribble from yours truly, on my former Glamorgan team-mate Adrian Dale, who, to me, epitomised everything good about a team-mate; a loyal friend and the sort of player whose true qualities nobody fully recognised until he retired.



Adrian Dale epitomised this author's ideal of the perfect team-mate. CREDIT: ALLSPORT

The choices made by each author are fascinating. Some chose great players, some even chose two (Selvey chose Wayne Daniel and Vintcent van der Bijl, Simon Hughes chose Graham Gooch and John Emburey), while others selected lesser names, but, though there is well-placed seriousness and some excellent development of the general subject, the underlying themes throughout are warmth and humour.

I found myself laughing uproariously at times, especially when Hignell was describing his running between the wickets with Zaheer Abbas and Lloyd talking of Jack Simmons' penchant for fish and chips.

You have to chuckle when Mark Wagh begins his piece on Mark Ealham with "What do you do when a man calls you sweetheart the first time you meet him?"



John Emburey crops up in Simon Hughes' essay and in a wonderful Keith Brown quip. CREDIT: ACTION IMAGES

But the one tale that left me giggling for days afterwards was recounted by Fraser about Middlesex team-mate Keith Brown, a gritty batsman/wicketkeeper and genuinely genial character of the county circuit.

It concerned a pre-season tour to Portugal on which one convivial evening Emburey partook of some free port, to which he is allergic. He suffered a nasty reaction.

The following day Brown enquired about Emburey's absence from practice. The Middlesex physiotherapist replied: "He's not well, he has an allergy to fortified wines."

Brown misheard the response and said: "Forty-five wines? No bloody wonder the p-sshead's not well. That's bloody disgraceful."

There is plenty more where that came from in this delightful book.

Team Mates is published by Fairfield Books, £15