

Jonathan Agnew



While I love nothing more than commentating on an exciting live event, I gain almost as much satisfaction from recalling the vivid memories that will remain with me forever. Martin Peters scoring a goal with an overhead bicycle kick for Spurs against Manchester

City, for example. I cannot remember the year – it does not really matter; it was the first football match I ever saw.

Geoffrey Boycott on-driving Greg Chappell for four to reach his 100th hundred sparked a wonderful celebration at Headingley in 1977, while listening to Ian Robertson describe with such passion Johnny Wilkinson's drop goal to win the 2003 Rugby World Cup always makes my hair stand on end.

More sedate, but no less gripping was the final of the 1985 World Snooker Championships when Dennis Taylor defeated the world number one Steve Davis. More than 18 million of us watched Taylor pot the deciding black well after midnight.

For a while, the sport dined out on that incredible night but like many others, interest in snooker dwindled due to competition, the ban on tobacco advertising, possibly, and a lack of the instantly recognisable characters from its 1980s heyday. Alex Higgins, Jimmy White, 16-pints-a-day Bill Werbeniuk, Cliff Thorburn, Terry Griffiths. Even Steve 'Interesting' Davis was a personality almost entirely through not having one.

So how grateful the organisers

must be that the defending world champion, Ronnie O'Sullivan, has overturned his latest threat to give up the sport and will be lining up in the first round at the Crucible, for this man is a genius as well as a true entertainer. O'Sullivan is one of those sportsmen who on their day cannot be beaten. More than that, they make their sport look ridiculously easy – and that is the most frustrating aspect for their opponents. 'Win by all means, but please give the impression, at least, that I am making you break sweat.'

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I played cricket for many years with David Gower, a batsman who definitely fell into that category. I once watched him from the non-striker's end face Malcolm Marshall, the greatest

fast bowler there has ever been. The ball travelled the 20 yards in a split second, but every time it hit the middle of Gower's bat. Worse still, Gower smiled and nodded his head in acknowledgement. We might have been teammates, playing in the same game, Gower and me. But it certainly did not feel like it.

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