

# JONATHAN AGNEW



I had quite a surprise when I settled down to read *The Daily Telegraph* on the long journey home from Sydney. Instinctively I turned to the excellent Henry Winter's latest report: 'This was an atrocious, lifeless performance', he wrote. 'Where was the fight? Where was the old swagger? Where was the refusal to accept defeat?'

Had Henry been in Australia,

I wondered, to watch England in their final Test? In which case I had missed him. Turned out he was commenting on Manchester United's ongoing crisis, which although offered a moment of relief following their victory over Swansea on Saturday, still has their manager David Moyes and the England cricket coach, Andy Flower charting similar pressurised courses.

What is interesting about these two high profile individuals is that they assumed their roles in very different circumstances. The England cricket team was in turmoil (again) when Flower took over in 2009. Bowled out for 51 by the West Indies in the first Test under

his control, England were rock bottom. However, within six months, they had regained the Ashes. Meanwhile, Moyes inherited the Premier League Champions from Sir Alex Ferguson and recently saw them lose three fixtures in a week. Who was dealt the more difficult hand, I wonder? The only way for Flower's England was up, but his team was woefully devoid of confidence, while Moyes could only fall short of the massive expectation; his was

the original poisoned chalice.

The cricket world tends to be much more patient than that of football where managers are shown the door without the blink of an eye when the Board feels that the team is on the slide. Were cricket similarly ruthless, Flower would have been sacked before the third, Ashes-deciding Test in Perth in the hope that a new voice might have made a dramatic impact and de-

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layed the inevitable. By their very high standards, United will clearly have a disappointing season regardless of any turn-around, but with Ferguson having hand-chosen his successor, it looks as if Moyes will be given more breathing

space than most. He, at least, appears to have the more clear-cut challenge ahead of him in that he needs to restore a winning mentality at Old Trafford, while Flower faces a comprehensive overhaul of his team, which includes deciding the future of the man who divides opinion like no other current cricketer, Kevin Pietersen.

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