

MR. STAGG

M.C.C. Has Never Sent Out A Fitter Touring Team Than This

By E. M. WELLINGS

ENGLAND'S most thoroughly trained cricket team sets off for the West Indies by air next Monday. Later the same day they arrive in Bermuda, and two days later start a two-day practice match there.

At their head will be Len Hutton, the first professional to take an M.C.C. team abroad on a Test tour; and a most important tour it is. It follows two post-war defeats at the hands of the West Indies and is sandwiched between two series against Australia.

Hutton recognised its importance and long ago wrote to all his players urging them to get themselves thoroughly fit for the trip and also to get some indoor practice. They have done so.

INDOOR PRACTICE

Several players have been playing football or training on the grounds of professional football clubs. Alan Moss has been training with the Arsenal players and Tom Graveney with Bristol Rovers.

Until recently Ken Suttle was playing football. He has continued to train as a footballer, but has exchanged actual play for cricket practice under cover at Hove.

Indoor practice has been general among the team. The Yorkshiremen, including Fred Trueman, have been in the Yorkshire under-cover nets; Lock has been coaching indoors; and

of a deputy on tour used to be an appointment made by the captain himself. The M.C.C. changed that in 1950 by naming Compton as vice-captain in Australia, and the new policy is confirmed by the official appointment of Bailey for this trip.

Important though the tour is in its own right, it is also a preparation for the Australian adventure. For that purpose the team has not perhaps been as well chosen as it could have been.

There are four or five in the side whom I cannot see as likely to be wanted in Australia, nor is it quite the best for its immediate



Alan Moss

purpose. In addition to Alec Bedser, who was asked to take part, Bill Edrich is missing and Tattersall and Cowdrey.

Yet, we can hope that the team will prove good enough. It should certainly have our qualified confidence for the West Indies do not appear as powerful as when last we met them.

3 FAST BOWLERS

There are 16 players in our team, including Palmer who is primarily going out as manager. Two only, Moss and Suttle are without previous experience either of touring or of Test cricket at home.

Moss is one of three fast bowlers, the others being Trueman and Statham.

The other young newcomer, Suttle, is a left-handed batsman capable of brilliance. If he has so far been an uneven performer for Sussex, there is no doubt about his batting promise and his splendid fielding. This tour could establish Suttle.

At the other end of the scale this tour could be the last for one or two distinguished players. A new lot, May, Trueman, Lock, Graveney and company are preparing to take over from them, which is a most healthy sign.



Trevor Bailey

Peter May, Jim Laker and Moss have been going together for practice to the Sandham and Gover school.

May has also been frequently to Lord's to play squash and from Birmingham have come reports of reserve stumper Spooner being seen running round and round the Edgbaston ground.

Hutton has begun his job well by ensuring a fit and keen set of players. If he also does his work as captain on the tour as well as we expect he will make certain of being captain in Australia the following winter. That is true also of the vice-captain, Trevor Bailey. The choice

Cooler.
(Flash)

I UNDERSTAND the MCC are now to play three matches in Bermuda before Christmas.

These additions to the West Indies tour schedule mean that the MCC players, who leave by air from London on December 14, will have to go almost straight from their plane to the middle.

There will be little time for them to become acclimatised to the very different conditions, which in sunny Bermuda include matting wickets.

While I firmly believe match practice is better than net practice, I hope the rushed inclusion of these three extra games will not lead to our starting the tour badly.

One Enough

AS the MCC are to leave Bermuda for Jamaica on December 26 and will not be returning, I suppose the island's plea for one two-day and two three-day matches could not be entirely refused. But I think one game would have been sufficient, thus giving our men time to get their eyes in before meeting All-Bermuda twice.

And I hope the MCC will insist that the easier two-day affair comes first—even at this late hour details are still not fully settled.

The West Indies' tour is of great importance for English cricket prestige out there. After losing every match on our last visit, and being beaten in the Test series when the West Indies toured this country in 1950, MCC have sent out a strong sixteen to gain revenge.

What a pity if the rushed start leads to an early reverse.

Wives Waiting?

BECAUSE nearly all the players' baggage is going by sea to Jamaica, each of the party have been asked to take an item of cricket equipment with him on the plane.

One will take pads and gloves, another a bat and so on. This means some of the cricketers will have to play in Bermuda without their own equipment.

Incidentally, when the MCC arrive in Jamaica on Boxing Day I shall be surprised if they

"STAR" SPORTS GOSSIP

do not find three wives holidaying there—Mrs Hutton, Mrs Compton and possibly Mrs Evans. This would not break the MCC's embargo on wives travelling with the players, and no official approach has, I believe, been thought necessary.

Rarker Knows

Star

1/12/53.