

Steve Smith and David Warner's ball-tampering bans are over — but it's been a bit of an anti-climax

By [Geoff Lemon](#)

Posted April 02, 2019 06:15:46



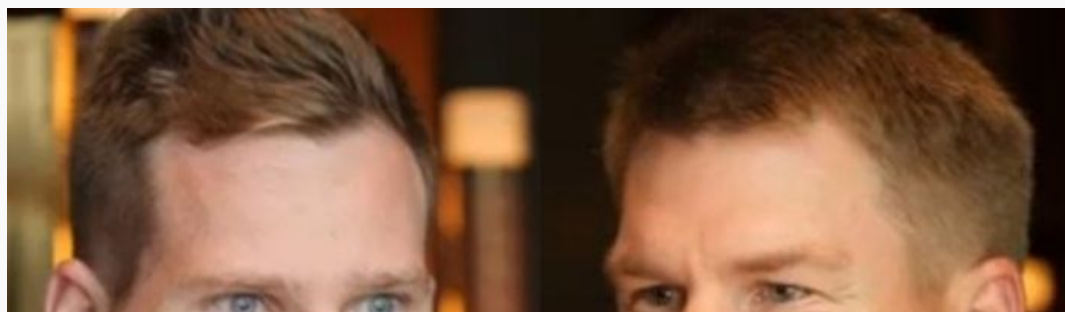
PHOTO: Steve Smith and David Warner are comfortably Australia's best and most accomplished batsmen. (AAP: Dave Hunt)

So the days of banishment are done. Former Australia cricket captain Steve Smith and former deputy David Warner have served their year-long bans after the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town and are eligible to represent the nation once again.

Expiry day was an anti-climax given the pair was off playing in the Indian Premier League — instead of resuming in the green and gold, [Warner has been turning out in the burnt orange of Sunrisers Hyderabad](#) and [Smith in the musk pink of the Rajasthan Royals](#).

Nor was their ban much of a ban, in that they've been playing cricket constantly in other Twenty20 leagues around the world, while Sydney grade cricket got more media in one season than it has or will in a generation either side.

They'll presumably link up with Australia in May ahead of the World Cup in England, but so far [their involvement has been limited to a quick "reintegration" visit to the one-day team in Dubai](#).



UNSUPPORTED BROWSER

The browser you are using to view this page is no longer supported by ABC News. We recommend you update to a more modern browser.

[Find out more](#)

BALL-TAMPERING SCANDAL

[David Warner speaks publicly for the first time in months, but doesn't say much](#)

[Bancroft points finger at Warner, says team-mate pressured him to take sandpaper on to the field](#)

['I don't want to know about it': How Steve Smith failed as a leader in ball-tampering saga](#)

[CA resists calls to amend or lift ball-tampering bans for Smith, Warner, Bancroft](#)

['They've been used as scapegoats': Your take on Cricket Australia's role in ball-tampering scandal](#)

[Recommendation 6 isn't the first, but it's the most urgent for Australian cricket](#)

[Five of the key recommendations from the review into Cricket Australia](#)

[Haddin doesn't think 'arrogant' tag on Australian cricket is fair](#)

[Two questions that Cricket Australia hasn't answered](#)

[Players' union calls for bans for ball-tampering trio to be lifted](#)

[Cricketers Steve Smith, Cameron Bancroft say they will not appeal ban](#)

[Australia's unique cricket team demands unique expectations and penalties](#)

[The rise and fall of](#)



PHOTO: Cricket Australia posted a video about Smith and Warner's return to the team on social media. (Supplied: cricket.com.au)

A stage-managed affair saw one-minute interviews by the team's media manager published through Cricket Australia's website. Officially, harmony reigns, with senior players issuing a statement denying Fairfax reports of tensions with Warner.

More relevant is how the public will welcome them back. While the broadest view seems to be that it's time to move on from the whole saga, it's safe to say the antipathy and antagonism towards Warner burns far more brightly.

Being identified as the instigator in Cape Town has seen a lot of people deem him solely culpable and beyond repair.

Online responses aren't the best guide to anything in life, but posts about Warner still attract a high volume of responses rejecting him as a national player. For Smith and Cameron Bancroft, whose shorter ban already ended in late December, such intensity is less common.

In contrast, Warner has managed his publicity best out of the three. He's kept his mouth shut and his head below the parapet. He hasn't hidden from obligatory media engagements at tournaments, but has said the right things as minimally as possible.

He knows he's carrying the can, and at least for now has resolved to do that work in silence.



PHOTO: A new-look David Warner is scoring runs for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL. (AP: Bikas Das)

He also grew a beard that looks like a St Patrick's Day party has attached itself to his face. Beards in either direction signal a shift: Dr Richard Kimble shaved his to become a new man in *The Fugitive*, while many a man has grown one as the marker of time away. It's an easy visual marker to suggest that outward change reflects its interior.

[Australian cricket captain Steve Smith](#)

['Cheat': Steve Smith jeered as he leaves South Africa amid police escort](#)

[They're good young men': Lehmann fears for players amid cheating furore](#)

[David Warner, ostracised by teammates, may never play for Australia again, says Jim Maxwell](#)

[Analysis: Cricket lovers deserve better than CA's response to ball tampering](#)

[How the ball-tampering incident unfolded](#)

[Australia facing accusations of hypocrisy amid ball-tampering furore](#)

[Cricket greats react to ball tampering](#)

[History of ball tampering](#)



TOP SPORT STORIES >

[Smith and Warner's ball-tampering bans are over — but it's been a bit of an anti-climax](#)

[Erin Phillips crowned AFLW MVP for second time](#)

['He's an animal': Heavyweight boxing clash turns ugly after biting incident](#)

TOP STORIES

- Handouts, roads and a surplus: What to expect in this year's Federal Budget
- People on incomes between \$37,000 and \$126,000 to receive tax relief in Budget
- 'Commander in cheat': New book takes club to Trump's golf game
- Naked protesters turn Brexit debate on head, turning other cheek over climate change
- 'Wow, what a discovery': Researchers uncover fossils from the day the dinosaurs died 
- Analysis: This formula can work out how hard you should go during exercise
- Inquest into 1975 brothel madam murder told police chief confessed in bed
- 'We're going to die': Snack food promo staff fear for their lives in Sydney ferris wheel mishap
- 'Hi, it's Ron Howard here': NT filmmaker answers Hollywood's call 

Smith, Bancroft add PR mess to ban disgrace

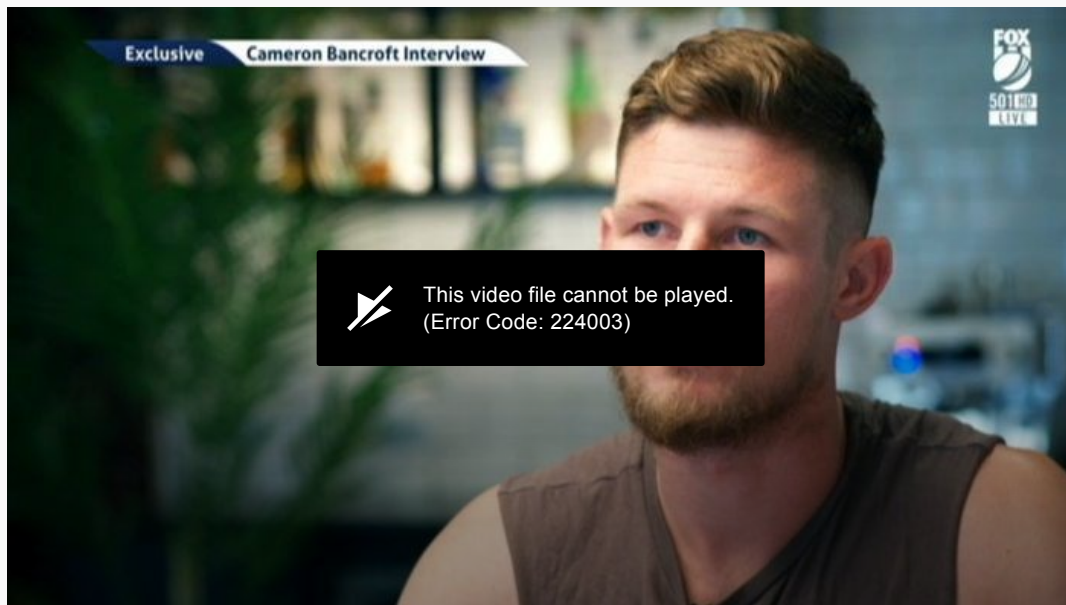
Smith and Bancroft have utterly botched their PR. Bancroft framed his suspension as a journey of self-discovery, but rather than a beard he used [an emotive self-addressed 'letter' illustrated by yoga poses that was published uncritically by The West Australian](#).



PHOTO: Bancroft (centre) was caught on camera and then he and Smith (right) had to front the press. (AP: Halden Krog)

He then jumped on Foxtel for the squishiest of softball interviews with another Perth cricketer, Adam Gilchrist.

Filed at an outdoor furniture setting while wearing a singlet, like he'd just rolled off the beach, Bancroft [dropped his interview on Boxing Day](#), hoovering up attention from the Test team on Australian cricket's biggest day of the year.



VIDEO: Bancroft's letter to himself and his TV interview with Adam Gilchrist received mixed reviews. (ABC News)

It's a bit much to expect an inexperienced player to anticipate every media nuance, but as a collection of fails it made an unimpressive whole. If he was getting advice then it was poorly conceived.

But Smith set a new standard. Last December, suddenly he was all over TV screens during cricket matches in an ad for a telco. With emotive music and a 'don't give up' message, the tone was how he'd endured dark days and was working towards redemption. But his ban still had months to run.

The timing was tone deaf. Smith confirmed he was being paid, then vaguely spoke about diverting some profits. A mental health charity was tenuously linked to the campaign but never featured in the ad.

What did feature was the massive company logo that flamed across the screen, and the enduring impression of a player using his ongoing suspension as Instagram inspo to flog phones.

- [Six questions for a space archaeologist, who has a dire warning for Earth](#)
- ['I didn't know little kids could be trans': How Lottie's family accepted her as a girl](#)
- [Game of Thrones is nearly back. To celebrate we revisited all our predictions](#)
- [SPORT Analysis: Smith and Warner's ball-tampering bans are over — but it's been a bit of an anti-climax](#)
- [Superannuation policies of both major parties explained](#)
- [Can you really see more rainbows in Tasmania than any other state or territory?](#)
- [Curiosity was right! European spacecraft confirms methane spike on Mars](#)
- [Will climate change be devastating for Kakadu National Park?](#)
- ['Trying to save dollars': Secretive spy base at centre of redundancy payout dispute](#)
- [Why Britain's Brexit woes might hold bad news for Trump](#)
- [Shock resignations have dominated the 45th Parliament. Here's who's leaving](#)
- [18yo apprentice dies in scaffolding collapse on Sydney building site](#)
- [Nicola Gobbo's police handler had intimate relationship with her, took her to police ball](#)
- ['Husband, I'm buying it now': Tom Hiddleston's 'creepy' Centrum ad goes viral in China](#)

Get the headlines to your mobile. NEWS on Messenger

CONNECT WITH ABC NEWS

News Podcasts Catch up with ABC News programs.

GOT A NEWS TIP? > If you have inside knowledge of a topic in the news, [contact the ABC](#).

NEWS IN YOUR INBOX Top headlines, analysis, breaking alerts

ABC BACKSTORY > ABC teams share the story behind the story and insights into the making of digital, TV and radio content.

EDITORIAL POLICIES > Read about our editorial guiding principles and the enforceable standard our journalists follow.



PHOTO: Steve Smith played a straight bat to questions about his return to cricket when he spoke at the SCG last December. (AAP: Paul Braven)

The ad also drew Smith out for a press conference, his first since his tearful appearance at Sydney Airport on being suspended nine months earlier. At the SCG nets he was twitchy, head bobbing, smiling uncomfortably, licking his lips, eyes jerking from question to question. He was asked how the world might welcome him back.

"Yeah, I haven't thought too much about that, to be honest," he said.

There's a thing Smith does with his voice when confronted by a heavy topic: his tone creaks in that phenomenon known as vocal fry, and he throws in a long introductory beachside vowel in an attempt to sound casual and breezy.

It's like he's suggesting this is the first time an obvious thing has occurred to him, like the way you say "Oh, have I?" when your boss mentions that you've taken a lot of sick days around grand final time for the last three years.

"I'm just moving forward day to day and moving forward to do what I need to do to prepare and hopefully get another opportunity to play for Australia," he said.

Redemption is an easy fix in sport — media, fans, everyone loves a redemption story. All it takes is a goal, a medal, a record, a stirring victory, a stirring defeat.

For these cricketers, all the heartfelt letters and voiceovers won't mean much versus the currency of runs. Imagine if the Ashes front pages get to carry a close-up of Smith in grubbied whites, raising the bat sternly, the stands of Edgbaston or Headingley blurred in the background.

How Australian cricket turned toxic



After Don Bradman said playing cricket was a moral lesson, and Allan Border demanded toughness but also integrity, when did things turn toxic?





PHOTO: Steve Smith was putting up historically great Test figures before the ban. (AAP: Dave Hunt)

But even if those papers get the chance to trumpet vindication, there will still be one thing missing from this story.

Nobody has told the truth yet. Nobody has told the full story.

Remember, no player got a year's ban for ball-tampering. They were banned for bringing the game into disrepute, and a significant part of that involved lying.

[Lying to the media in a press conference, lying to the public by that means, and lying to umpires and match officials investigating what went on.](#)

Lying to cover up Warner's involvement, and lying about using sandpaper on the ball by claiming it was bat tape rubbed in the dirt.

So far, the public has never been told the details of Cape Town. We've seen the CA charge sheet that lists the broad offences, but none of the players has sat down and given an actual sequence of events.

Even if no-one in the team had ever ball-tampered before and only those three players knew, there are questions aplenty.



PHOTO: Will runs be enough to get Smith and Warner back in the public's good graces? (AAP: Dave Hunt)

On the afternoon they were caught, who else found out the truth and when? The trio went into a meeting with management at the tea break and again at stumps.

So how and when did those three players get the chance to coordinate their lies to the press conference and the match officials?

Did the players decide that together? Were others aware of the plan? And above all, why bother? What was the intent of the deceit?

The answers aren't about salacious curiosity. They're about accountability for a matter of record involving a team that represents the Australian public. The same public that has been kept in the dark for the past year.

Bancroft still focused on 'I' rather than 'team'





PHOTO: Cameron Bancroft has become a household name in the last 12 months, but for all the wrong reasons.
(ABC News: Michael Black)

In his TV interview Bancroft described it as "really interesting" that people wanted to know what he'd used on the ball, saying that the nature of the substance didn't affect the ethics, which is true, but of course leads to the question: If it didn't matter what the substance was, why say something else?

After criticism of his response, [he doubled down on ABC Grandstand](#): "if other people were triggered by that then I guess that's their battle to face".

It was a bizarre deflection based on new-age nonsense, shifting the onus onto others for his refusal to clarify.

Finally, there was Bancroft's frankly delusional take of why he showed up to that press conference.

"I think in hindsight the thing that I was actually proud of in that moment was the fact that Steve and I wanted to be accountable and I guess, really honest about our actions ... Certainly in myself that was something I felt really strongly about, something I know Steve felt really strongly about as captain."

Five key recommendations for CA



The Ethics Centre made 41 recommendations in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal. Here are five of the key recommendations and how Cricket Australia responded.

There's a body of evidence suggesting that even now, Bancroft doesn't get it. He's shown a self-focus, a preoccupation about whether Cameron Bancroft had a tough time or forgave himself, with a mess of backpacker platitudes smoothed over the top, but there isn't much grappling with why his actions were deemed shameful enough to make his life difficult in the first place.

It's telling, when you look back, that his most memorable line in the South Africa aftermath was about his grief at giving up his spot in the team, rather than grief at showing that someone else was more worthy of it.

As for Smith, he's already shown how he'll deflect questions over the World Cup and Ashes to come.

"I think it's been documented pretty heavily, what went on," he said when asked for the rundown at his phone company press conference.

More info the only way of resolving the issue

Except it hasn't been documented — not by the players, and not in regard to the massive holes that remain in the story. Not in the CA investigation that only interviewed five people and refused to look at any previous Tests.

Not when there has been zero information on what happened in between the tampering footage flashing up in the afternoon and the misleading story told by Smith and Bancroft that evening.

The core question is: How do you talk about redemption when you still can't be straight about what happened?

None of these subjects are life or death. The people rolling their eyes and saying we should get over it have a point.

The snag is, this story can only be resolved after it gets told in full. Even with no new lies, withholding

information is still dishonesty.

In his TV ad, Smith's voiceover tells us gravely that "it's about being upfront and honest and taking responsibility".

It's exactly that, Steve.

Genuine redemption can start with nothing less than the fullest truth. Vaguely gesturing at an outline counts for nothing. But that's all you can do when the room is still full of ghosts.

Geoff Lemon is a sports writer and broadcaster who has written a recent book Steve Smith's Men: Behind Australian Cricket's Fall.

Topics: [sport](#), [cricket](#), [australia](#), [india](#), [south-africa](#)

FEATURES



Can a DNA test clear up where you come? It's complicated

It's a core human desire to understand where we come from but an ancestry DNA test might be less helpful than you think.



Opinion: Ever wondered why your zippers have 'YKK' printed on them?

Japanese zippers have dominated the industry for decades. But there's a growing threat from China.



2030: Will we make it?

The Government insists Australia is on track to meet its Paris target by 2030, but the Government's own data tells a different story.



The Invisible Man

He won Australia's richest prize for literature, but Behrouz Boochani wasn't there to accept it. He was on Manus Island, more than 2,000 days after he arrived on the foreign land.

TOP STORIES

- Handouts, roads and a surplus: What to expect in this year's Federal Budget
- People on incomes between \$37,000 and \$126,000 to receive tax relief in Budget
- 'Commander in cheat': New book takes club to Trump's golf game
- Naked protesters turn Brexit debate on head, turning other cheek over climate change
- 'Wow, what a discovery': Researchers uncover fossils from the day the dinosaurs died
- Analysis: This formula can work out how hard you should go during exercise
- Inquest into 1975 brothel madam murder told police chief confessed in bed
- 'We're going to die': Snack food promo staff fear for their lives in Sydney ferris wheel mishap
- 'Hi, it's Ron Howard here': NT filmmaker answers Hollywood's call
- Six questions for a space archaeologist, who has a dire warning for Earth

JUST IN

- Can you really see more rainbows in Tasmania than any other state or territory?
- 'I didn't know little kids could be trans': How Lottie's family accepted her as a girl
- 'We're going to die': Snack food promo staff fear for their lives in Sydney ferris wheel mishap
- Almost 1,000 still homeless after Townsville floods
- Live: NSW Now: Sydney Inner West shooting leaves one critical, ring found in cold case
- Six questions for a space archaeologist, who has a dire warning for Earth
- Will climate change be devastating for Kakadu National Park?
- 'Trying to save dollars': Secretive spy base at centre of redundancy payout dispute
- 'Hi, it's Ron Howard here': NT filmmaker answers Hollywood's call
- Curiosity was right! European spacecraft confirms methane spike on Mars

MOST POPULAR

- Are you pronouncing these words incorrectly?
- Woolworths to shut 30 of its Big W stores amid retail gloom 📉
- 18yo apprentice dies in scaffolding collapse on Sydney building site
- Erin's dream came true, but then she was struck by the cruellest blow possible
- Scott Morrison might call the election this week. This is when it could be
- Property downturn spreads as most capital cities record falling values
- Look down: which side of the zipper wars do your jeans belong to? 📺
- Shock resignations have dominated the 45th Parliament. Here's who's leaving
- If a ute at a burnout event has a swastika and German WWI helmets, does anyone notice?
- Christchurch shooter was Bulgarian guesthouse's first-ever Australian guest

ANALYSIS & OPINION

- Smith and Warner's ball-tampering bans are over — but it's been a bit of an anti-climax
- This formula can work out how hard you should go during exercise
- As a geneticist, this is what I think about ancestry DNA tests
- Look down: which side of the zipper wars do your jeans belong to?
- The good, the bad and the ugly of AFL round two
- Erin's dream came true, but then she was struck by the cruellest blow possible
- Is the predicted budget surplus a one-hit wonder?
- Eddie McGuire's criticism of coin-tosser reveals rapid degeneration of sports commentary and analysis
- Pre-election 'bidding war' for WA sees billions roll across the Nullarbor as leaders splash the cash
- I'm a Christian doctor and I help women have abortions. Here's how I reconcile that

SITE MAP

Sections	Local Weather	Local News	Media	Subscribe	Connect
ABC News	Sydney Weather	Sydney News	Video	Podcasts	Upload
Just In	Melbourne Weather	Melbourne News	Audio	NewsMail	Contact Us
World	Adelaide Weather	Adelaide News	Photos		
Business	Brisbane Weather	Brisbane News			
Health	Perth Weather	Perth News			
Entertainment	Hobart Weather	Hobart News			
Sport	Darwin Weather	Darwin News			
Analysis & Opinion	Darwin Weather	Canberra News			
Weather	Canberra Weather				
Topics					

