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Thread:
Cricket loving PM Robert Menzies kept a photograph of a perfect Miller square drive on his office desk. Ian Wooldridge called Miller “the golden boy” of cricket, leading to the nickname “Nugget”. Cardus referred to him as Australian in excelsis.

born #onthisday 1919



Miller ended with 2958 runs at 36.97 and 170 wickets at 22.97 from 55 Tests. The figures put him at the top of the list of all-rounders when he retired, and has been matched by only the likes of Garry Sobers, Imran Khan and Jacques Kallis since then.

With Ray Lindwall, he formed one of the scariest new ball partnerships. And he is one of the very few in history to bat high in the order while also bowling with the new ball.
West Indian captain John Goddard exclaimed, “Give us Keith Miller and we’ll beat the world.”

And all that was done with charisma and a sense of devilry, his stylish hair casually flicked back as he started to run in to bowl.



“Outstanding as he was at cricket, the game was for him only a part of living life as a man might do,” wrote John Arlott. During Ashes Tests, Denis Compton and he used to paint the town red.

This led to several run-ins with captain and later selector Don Bradman. But, the same attitude won him legions of fans.

And his comment about “Pressure is a Messerschmitt up your arse, playing cricket is not” lent him cult status with the image of a dashing debonair cricketer living live as it should be lived because he had looked death in the eye.

However, there are pinches of salt that become necessary at this juncture.
Miller was a great, great cricketer and one of the greatest self-mythologists.
In truth, Miller’s combat experience was rather insipid. Most of the War was spent in training for action.

He went on just two missions, one of them a ‘spoof patrol’ organised for a beginner, more of a decoy for the enemy, logged as ‘uneventful’.
The second was shorter, but slightly more eventful, and Miller had to bring his aircraft back to the base with the tanks liable to drop.

Two missions, that too when the German air-force were on its last legs. The War injury that he carried were not sustained in action, but in a wrestling match with a fellow soldier

He was also sentenced to three weeks of hard labour for threatening to punch his superior officer

He did not really reveal that his War had been action-free, but, as evidence suggests, was rather prone to tell stories to give the impression of a long and eventful career in the conflicts. He never had a Messerschmitt up his arse.

When Len Hutton, with one arm shortened by a training injury sustained during the War, faced him in Australia, Miller was not shy of sending bumpers directed at his head. The Messerschmitt quote had by then disappeared where Miller's original Messerschmitt had supposedly headed.

The story that he allowed himself to be bowled for a duck when Australia was piling up 721 in a day against Essex is apocryphal by all accounts except the most hagiographic ones. None of the newspapers of the day reported anything unusual about the dismissal.

The claims of getting out deliberately were made by Miller in the books he wrote later.

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Similarly fictitious is probably the anecdote of Bradman answering a knock on the door late one night to see Miller dressed in a dinner suit, informing that he had been in bed at curfew as demanded and was going out now that the rules had been met.

Later as a journalist, he wrote match reports on tours after spending the day at the races. When Ted Dexter led his side to Australia, Miller took uncharitable potshots at the England captain and his beauty queen wife who had joined him.

But he did turn up late for his date with Princess Margaret during the 1948 tour. And he won hearts by remembering the names of the minor staff at Lord's when he visited the ground late in his life.

A man of many lovable and some rather questionable traits, a great self-aggrandiser and one of the greatest all-rounders ever.
Keith Miller was born on 28 Nov 1919
#onthisday #cricket

