

One of England cricket's hottest emerging young talents, Cook scored 1,000 Test runs in his maiden year, and made three Test centuries before his twenty-second birthday

MR NICEGUY

It's tough at the top. Tougher still when you've the nation's hopes on your shoulders. Of course, for some people that just makes things more interesting. GQ talks to Alastair Cook, one of cricket's hottest new talents, and finds him refreshingly free of spin. Story by **Jack Dyson**



We're upstairs in the BOSS building, and Alastair Cook looks distinctly unruffled. Deep among the paraphernalia of the shoot, the England batsman is surrounded by women, more than one of whom are blushing a little. There's a temporary shortage of changing rooms, but rather than complain he just murmurs "I don't mind just getting changed here". It's an exquisitely timed comment, unleashed to devastating effect. Cue a sudden rise in room temperature, at least two of the girls later heard describing him as "just dreamy", and others discussing his potential as a model (for the record, a changing room was found, much to their disappointment). Then it's on to be groomed – just a dab of BOSS Skin moisturiser – and photographed. BOSS Skin and fragrances sponsor the England Cricket Team, and as a rising star of the

game, Cook is in demand. After he's done he wanders over, beaming. It's clear that this is one side of his burgeoning cricket career that he really enjoys. You can see why. Of course, consider why he's there in the first place and you wouldn't begrudge him a moment of fun. He's only twenty-two, but before his last birthday he had already scored three Test centuries (count 'em) – Denis Compton and David Gower only managed two apiece at that age; he managed to make a century on his very first outing for the England squad, getting 104 not out against India in Nagpur; and on December 28 last year in Melbourne, he scored his one thousandth Test run, joining Mark Taylor as the only player in Test history to hit over a thousand in his maiden year. You've heard talk of emerging talent? Well Alastair Cook has it in spades.

He found his way into the England Test squad when others dropped out due to injury, but since then has more than earned his keep, playing almost every Test since. Look at his stats, and they aren't those of a typical twenty two-year-old. Watch him on the pitch and he plays with much more maturity, poise and calmness than you might expect from his peers. "I'd never have dreamed last year could have happened. It might seem like a cliché but I've always wanted to play for England, and to continue to do that I need to play a natural game. In a way I just need to appreciate my luck and try to stay level-headed and roll with it. Get too into it and too focused and it doesn't necessarily work out for you." So is it tough, being the team's youngster?

"Well, when I first got called up it was when we were playing Pakistan, and I was only twenty. I didn't get to play, but I was there for four weeks and I got to know the system and find out how things worked. Then when I got the call for India it was much easier, as by then I knew a few of the lads and we had a bit of a rapport." So they all get on? "Well, stick twelve guys in a room and you're always gonna end up with chaos. The banter in that sort of group is amazing. And it doesn't stop from the second you arrive to the second you leave. The only pressure you feel is what you put on yourself, so the trick is to ignore the hype and build-up."

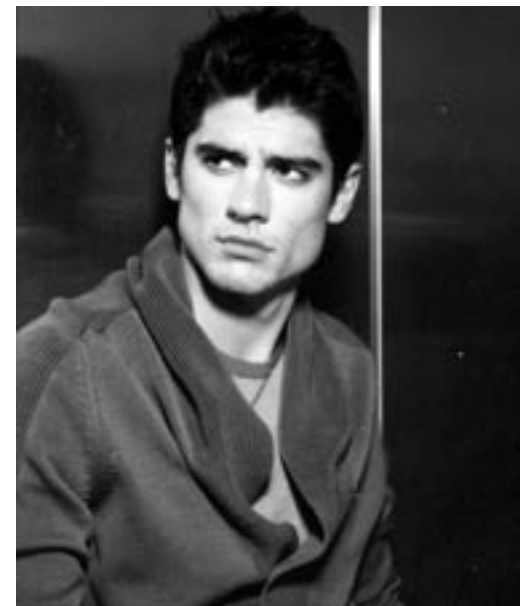
It's clear as we talk that though young, this is a sportsman with serious ambition. He doesn't want to come across as big-headed, but at the same time, he doesn't want to belittle the scope of his ambition, either on behalf of himself or the team, and he wants to get to the top. "Look, I want to retire knowing I've given it my all and that I've succeeded. Of course I want to be the best – who doesn't? But I'd swap being the world's top batsman if I could be part of an Ashes-winning squad."

The fact that England didn't bring home the Ashes weighs on Cook's mind somewhat, but he's optimistic, not least because we have youth on our side. "We're all young and if we all stick together and develop together, we should be the same core in 2009."

He is a fan of the fact that they are backed by stylish brands and gestures at the BOSS Skincare and fragrance range. "I'm not the type to moisturise three times a day, though I'll use BOSS Skin Moisturiser, and if I'm going out, yeah I'll definitely put on smells and stuff. My favourite is BOSS in Motion, although to be honest I like all of the BOSS fragrances."

So how did he enjoy the shoot? "You see far more cricketers doing this sort of thing these days." He grins. "It's great fun." Cricket is changing its image, it seems, and Cook is in the vanguard.

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Original line up



Alastair Cook might be their latest rising star, but English cricket has a tradition of nurturing talent and investing in the future, with the likes of Andrew Flintoff and Ian Bell. BOSS SKIN shares the same philosophy. In time, a promising young player learns how to deal with Ricky Pointing's hard hitters and gruelling sessions in the nets. With so much to achieve, the last thing any England cricketer wants to be worrying about is their skin. "Alastair is blessed with good skin; his challenge is to keep it in great shape not only now but in the future," says BOSS skincare expert

Tim Brown. BOSS Revitalising Moisture Cream which combines moisturisers, vitamins and SPF15, should help and is something all men should wear daily to keep their skin in top condition". The new BOSS SKIN emerging talent, ensures that skin is fresh and revitalised, ready for whatever fast delivery Brett Lee might throw at you. BOSS SKIN is available nationwide. Skincare starts at £11 RRP. For more information visit www.bossfragrances.com/cricket

"ALASTAIR IS CLEARLY A YOUNG MAN WITH PRESENCE ... BOTH ON AND OFF THE FIELD"



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