



Gentlemen & Players

Charles Williams

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The inaugural Gentlemen v. Players first-class cricket match was played in 1806, subsequently becoming an annual fixture at Lord's between teams consisting of amateurs (the Gentlemen) and professionals (the Players). The key difference between the amateur and the professional, however, was much more than the obvious one of remuneration. The division was shaped by English class structure, the amateur, who received expenses, being perceived as occupying a higher station in life than the wage-earning professional. The great Yorkshire player Len Hutton, for example, was told he would have to go amateur if he wanted to captain England. *Gentlemen & Players* focuses on the final ten years of amateurism and the Gentlemen v. Players fixture, starting with Charles Williams' own presence in the (amateur) Oxbridge teams that included future England captains such as Peter May, Colin Cowdrey, and M.J.K. Smith, and concluding with the abolition of amateurism in 1962 when all first-class players became professional. The amateur innings was duly declared closed. Charles Williams, the author of a richly acclaimed biography of Donald Bradman, has penned a vivid social-history-cum-memoir that reveals an attempt to recreate a Golden Age in post-war Britain, one whose expiry exactly coincided with the beginnings of top-class one-day cricket and a cricket revolution.

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