



WOOLDRIDGE

Clean the Slate plan perfect for cricket's men at war



Enemies: former England star Ian Botham (right) and Australia's Ian Chappell

I HAVE two friends, both wonderful cricketers, who detest one another with poisonous intensity. One is Ian Botham, the other Ian Chappell, the ex-Australian captain.

The circumstances that generated this implacable antipathy occurred many years ago and I don't propose to reconstruct them here. Since they are mutually heroic trenchermen I have offered them a lunch — say a few dry Martinis, a bottle or four of excellent claret followed by as much Cognac as it needs to find a tax — to get the hatchet buried.

No deal.

This is rather sad. Botham, a royalist who believes and played for everything this country until recently stood for, is some man. Note that yet again he is painfully tramping the north of Britain to raise yet more money for the victims of leukaemia.

Equally Chappell, a republican who fought to the limit and beyond for the honour of Australia. You could have no stauncher or more generous friend, unless it happened to be



Botham. So there it is then. Impasse. Or is it?

This week there arrived through my letter box a document which looked suspiciously like a religious tract. These, along with free-offer pamphlets, normally head straight for the dustbin along with copies of *The Watchtower*, the doom-laden official magazine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose persistent door-stepping evangelists retreat in horror when you explain that your

life was probably prolonged by the generosity of blood donors.

As a distraction from the hysterical build-up to some football match or other being played in Glasgow today, I gave it a quick glance. Five names leapt off the page.

They were those of Bobby (now Sir) Charlton, Colin (now Lord) Cowdrey, Gary Lineker and two great men of English and British Lions rugby, Roger Uttley and Tony Horton. So what was it that united five prominent sportsmen to endorse this venture called Clean the Slate Campaign?

God forbid you should ever confuse this column with some moralistic repent-ye-sinners billboard. Its perpetrator has too many skeletons in too many cupboards for that. But this sounded like a reasonable idea.

To mark the millennium, instead of

wasting all that cash on that ridiculous hamster wheel and the perishable wigwam further down the Thames, you simply list the ghastliest things you have done in your life and write to or ring up the other party to effect a reconciliation.

In my case, this would fully occupy me between now and New Year's Eve. The conversations with Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, and Tony Banks, our late and totally unlamented Sports Minister, would almost certainly be interminable and inconclusive.

I would definitely apologise to Graham Kelly, former Football Association chief executive, about whom I once wrote a hurtful article without knowing all the facts. Never would I give in to Clive Lloyd, a brilliant West Indies cricket captain, who once sued me for libel and squeezed £10,000 off the *Daily Mail* for an article that was incontestably true.

Will Colin Cowdrey ring Ray Illingworth, I wonder, to discuss the bad blood there was between them over the England cricket captaincy in the Sixties? Will Will Carling ring Gary Lineker about matters of a domestic nature?

Who knows? But at least many of these worthy citizens will be turning up at London's Reform Club on December 1 to propagate what seems a thoroughly decent idea.

Ian Botham and Ian Chappell? I'm still working on it. If there is any progress, you will be the first to know of it in this space.

Just criminal what a football match can do

MEMO to all burglars, muggers, conmen and thieves. It would appear that this afternoon and next Wednesday evening you will have unprecedented access to advance your careers. Seemingly, two-thirds of our police forces will be deployed keeping the peace between English

and Scottish football fans. Having expatiated at some length on this subject in these pages yesterday, I don't intend to labour it, but what a reflection it is on a nation whose passions can only be stirred by the result of a football match. May the better team win, a view I know will be

ridiculed by millions until their homes have been ransacked and their cars are on a cross-Channel ferry for sale overseas.

HERE'S your chance, ladies. It is as near as you will ever get to scrutinising the contents of Linford Christie's lunchbox. My near neighbour, artist Kevin

Whitney, has painted a nude portrait of the Olympic sprinter. Christie is portrayed, arms spread in a crucified pose, because Kevin reckons he has been falsely accused of using anabolic steroids, a matter to be reviewed shortly by the International Amateur Athletic Federation.