

## Louise Evans

### • Monte Carlo

IT was a hard sell.

The Australian cricket team cleared the first hurdle in being nominated for the Laureus world sports team of the year award but the challenge remained: how to convince the Laureus academy of 43 retired sporting greats that cricket and the Australians deserved the honour.

Academy member Kapil Dev was the sole cricketer on the jury and the competition was tough. The Australians were up against Bayern Munich

soccer team, the French Davis Cup team, Ferrari's Formula One champions and the Los Angeles Lakers.

"It was hard to explain to all the academy members because they don't follow cricket," Dev said. "Sixty per cent didn't understand.

"Everyone knows car racing. Everyone knows tennis and rugby and football. It took time. I had to explain what the Australians had done had never happened in 200 years.

"Sixteen Test victories in a row. When you put it on the table and explain what they have done and how big it is compared with other teams,

the facts speak for themselves." Yet when Steve Waugh's team walked the red carpet into the Laureus ceremony on Tuesday night in Monte Carlo, international press and TV crews asked each other: "Who's that?"

"Not too many people recognised us here, a bit of a change from back home," said Glenn McGrath. "Cricket is not a world-renowned sport."

Fittingly, the team category award was presented by Ian Botham to Waugh.

Waugh described the award as "a once in a lifetime" experience. "It is nice to win but it is more important to

be remembered the way we played and the standards we set," he said. "We will always be remembered as a side that achieved. It is pleasing if they believe we changed the way Test cricket is played."

Even Warne was humbled: "The Australian team has achieved lots of awards but on a world scale like this, to mix with some of the sportspeople, celebrities and movie stars has been a worthwhile experience."

Ferrari missed out on the team category but was rewarded when Michael Schumacher won sportsman of the year, beating Ian Thorpe to the prize.