

DEREK SHACKLETON

“If a bowler can bowl straight, make the batsman play, he’s doing the job to the best of his ability” Shack on Friday 1 September 1961.

Derek Shackleton was one of those rare cricketers who became a legend during his playing career. Even upon his death, almost forty years since his final game for Hampshire, his name remains synonymous with accurate line and length bowling. “Shackleton like” became a simile for accuracy. His team-mates averred that upon inspection of the pitch after his bowling spell, which was invariably a long one, there was a bare patch about the size of a plate, on a length. He rarely visited the nets but once, at Southampton, he bowled three balls which hit off, middle, and leg stumps consecutively. Just to prove it was not a fluke he bowled a further three balls and hit the stumps in reverse order.

Shackleton, though, was never given to ostentation, except perhaps in his dapper attire. He went about his work quietly and apparently tirelessly. He never seemed to take much out of himself, which is perhaps why he lived to 83, an old age for a pace bowler. However, he took enough. The body action and follow through lifted him off the ground and batsmen testified to the ball hitting further up the bat than they expected.

He was tall – just over six foot – lean and spare in build, with never a hair out of place. By the end of his career he ran to the crease off just six full strides. His wrist was cocked in the delivery stride and his inordinately long sinewy fingers gave him total control of the ball. After delivery there was the habitual two-handed hitch of the trousers.

He bowled a fuller length than contemporary bowlers, giving the ball opportunity to swing. He was able to deviate it late both ways. Colin Cowdrey, and others, found it difficult to detect the direction of his swing whilst the ball was airborne. Both Cowdrey, Ted Dexter and Ken Barrington - three indisputably great batsmen – were in awe of his accuracy. There were no looseners; Shack hit a length from the first ball. He was virtually unhittable. Fred Trueman, the most aggressive of batsmen, enjoyed some success by hitting him “on length”. He always applauded any batsman who hit him for six. Top-order batsmen, though, even those of the highest class, rarely succeeded in unsettling him. His skill and economy became the benchmark against which all of his successors have been judged. Except the two Olympian West Indians, Andy Roberts and Malcolm Marshall, only Bob Cottam, who played with him for some five years, and Tim Tremlett, have been his equal. More recently, Dimitri Mascarenhas has approached him. It has been said that he would not have been so successful on covered pitches. Such was his accuracy, persistence and control he would still have taken a large number of wickets.

Derek Shackleton’s statistics are mind-boggling and, given the reduction in the number of matches, will stand the test of time. Only seven bowlers, including Alec Kennedy, have taken more than his 2857 wickets (avge. 18.65). However, Shack

shades Kennedy in matches for Hampshire (2669/2549). He played 20 full seasons, and took a hundred wickets or more each time – a unique record. Wilfred Rhodes passed the 100 landmark on twenty-three occasions but they were not in consecutive seasons. He also took more wickets than any other bowler since the Second World War. In seven seasons he was the most worked bowler in the country. On four occasions he was the leading wicket-taker and he was twice the first bowler to a hundred wickets.

It is almost incomprehensible that Shackleton played in only seven Tests. The first was at the start of his career when he suffered the misfortune of facing Everton Weekes and Frank Worrell in full cry as they massacred England's bowlers at Trent Bridge in 1950. However, despite his inexperience, he still conceded only 135 runs in 49 overs. He had also already top scored – 42 – in England's first innings. His next Test was on a spin-bowler's paradise at The Oval against South Africa in 1951. He bowled more meanly on this occasion, his twenty-five overs accruing just 39 runs – an extraordinary effort on a pitch totally unsuited to his style of bowling. He was selected for the ensuing tour of India. He played in the first Test at Delhi and came on as second change! Despite taking more wickets on tour than any other bowler – 51 – he was not picked for any of the further Tests. He had taken only three wickets – one in each Test – but had not let England down. In the following years, his contemporaries were all bowlers of high pace (eg. Trueman, Statham and Tyson) and he must have felt that he would never play Test cricket again.

He proved to be an inspired choice when recalled to the colours at Lord's against the West Indies in 1963 – one almost fit to rank with Cyril Washbrook and Denis Compton against Australia in 1956. The big difference, of course, was that the latter two were experienced Test players. 103 England Tests had elapsed since Shackleton's last appearance.

He was about to participate in one of the greatest of all Tests and a match that he was to regard as the most memorable in which he ever played. On a chilly, grey morning, Frank Worrell won the toss and elected to bat. The match started half an hour late but Conrad Hunte looked as if he intended to make up for last time when he hit Freddie Trueman's first three balls to the boundary. Thereafter, however, he and his opening partner, Easton McMorris, were virtually becalmed. Derek Shackleton exposed their techniques to the most searching of tests. He beat the bat repeatedly. He had Hunte dropped at shortleg, induced the same batsman to edge to slip where it just eluded Cowdrey and Jim Parks, running in front of the wicket, just failed to hold on to a lobbed edge. In a further 31 overs before lunch, the two West Indians had added only a further 34 runs since the dramatic opening salvo. Trueman and Shackleton had delivered bowling Masterclass. After lunch McMorris was dropped in the gully; again Shackleton was the unlucky bowler. Thereafter, Trueman worked his way through the West Indian batsmen and at the end of the first day their score stood at 245 for six. Shack at that stage remained wicketless – 0 for 75 off 38 searching overs, 17 of which were maidens.

He was to obtain some compensation on the second morning when he wrapped up the innings by taking three wickets in four balls. First, he trapped the obdurate Joe Solomon leg before, then induced Charlie Griffith to edge to slip, and finally, had Lance Gibbs caught at backward short leg by Mickey Stewart. In a rare show of

emotion, he slapped his thigh in admonishment when he bowled the intervening hat-trick ball down the leg side. With his sweater held over his shoulder, the England team insisted he lead them off the field – a wonderful tribute in recognition of his peerless bowling. His final figures were 3 for 93 off 50.2 unrelenting overs. It could easily have been a five-for at much less cost.

Derek Shackleton's contribution to a pulsating contest was only just beginning. He then doggedly contributed with the bat on the following Saturday morning. Whilst he scored only 8, he and Fred Titmus added 23 for the last wicket to bring England within four runs of the West Indies total (301 – 297).

He did not have to wait so long for his first wicket in the second innings as he dismissed Hunte early on, caught at slip, and then took the wicket of Rohan Kanhai in similar fashion, during the afternoon. Basil Butcher (133) then played a very fine innings, adding 110 with the elegant Worrell (33). At the start of play on the fourth innings the West Indies appeared to be in the ascendancy but on the Monday morning, Trueman and Shackleton snaffled the last five wickets in less than half an hour.

The latter's victims were Butcher and Griffith. Shackleton had again been a model of economy, as well as penetration, as he took 4 for 72 off 34 overs.

The match ended, of course, after the bravest of innings by Brian Close, and a Herculean bowling spell by Wesley Hall, with Colin Cowdrey walking to the wicket with his arm in plaster. His appearance was prompted by Shackleton being run out by Worrell as David Allen attempted to steal a run to the wicket-keeper Deryck Murray. The sight of the two veterans racing the length of the pitch will always remain in the memory. The bulkier Worrell had a head start and Shackleton only just failed to reach the sanctuary of the crease.

Fred Trueman (11 for 153 Match) and Shackleton had taken 18 of the wickets to fall. Trueman was to enjoy his most productive series, with 34 wickets. However, he owed much to his opening partner's metronomic accuracy at the other end. In the third Test at Edgbaston when England levelled the series, Trueman (7 for 44) destroyed the West Indian batting in the second innings as they were rolled over for just 91. Shackleton's match contribution was 3 for 97 off 38 overs. His wickets were all top-order batsmen – Kanhai, Joey Carew and the incomparable Garfield Sobers. He regarded the great West Indian, along with Peter May and Cowdrey as the best batsmen he faced. He again took top-order wickets – McMorris, Kanhai, Butcher and Solomon - in England's defeat at Headingley.

England recalled Statham for the final Test and Shackleton was required to bowl first change. England's opening bowlers each took three wickets and Shack had to be content with the wicket of Hunte. However, he had provided mean support, conceding 37 runs off 21 overs, on a good batting wicket. He was only truly mastered by Kanhai on the final afternoon when the latter played the most mercurial and enchanting of cameos, striking 77 luminescent runs. Derek Shackleton had taken 15 wickets (avge.34.53) – all but three top-order batsmen against the strongest side of the world. What might he have achieved had he been selected earlier?

Derek Shackleton's time in the limelight had come after fifteen years in the County game. He was born in Todmorden, Yorkshire on 12 August 1924. He showed an early aptitude for the game. By the age of 16, he was playing for Todmorden's first XI in the Lancashire League, but principally as a batsman. However, in 1942 he enjoyed a successful season as a seam bowler before joining the Army. During a period of leave, he ran into Sam Staples, the Hampshire coach, who was scouring the north country for talent. The latter invited him to Southampton for a trial; he spent half-an-hour in the middle but did not hear anything for a while. The County then sent for him again. After another half hour session he was offered a contract for the 1947 season at £5 per week, but did not actually join the staff, as a batsman who bowled occasional leg-spin, until July.

After the War, Hampshire's pace bowling resources were in the ageing hands of George Heath and "Lofty" Herman and the County were desperately seeking new blood. The County spotted his seam bowling potential in early season nets in 1948, being particularly impressed by what they regarded as his perfect action, and encouraged him to develop this facet of his game. He only ever received two formal coaching sessions in his life, at Alf Gover's Indoor School, in the following winter.

He made his debut against Cambridge University at Aldershot in June of that year and played his first Championship match at Bath a week later. He ended the season with 21 wickets. Playfair commented on his "lively" bowling.

Thereafter, progress was swift. He claimed a hundred wickets for the first time in 1949, when he also scored over 900 runs and was awarded his county cap, made his Test debut the following year and was selected for a Commonwealth tour of India in 1950-51, in which he played in three "unofficial" Tests. In his two tours of India, which then included Pakistan, he took 100 wickets at an average of 24 – exceptional figures which are firm evidence that he was a bowler who was able to prosper in any conditions against high-quality batsmen.

It was in 1950 that he formed his famed partnership with Vic Cannings. They were the ideal pair; Shack's stock ball at that stage was the in-swing, though he had perfected the leg-cutter. Cannings bowled natural away swing. The pair were so reliable, and Hampshire's spin resources almost non-existent until the advent of Peter Sainsbury, that in the early 1950's they were inevitably overworked, echoing the fortunes of Alec Kennedy and Jack Newman some thirty years earlier. In 1952, the two bowlers delivered over 2000 overs between them and bowled unchanged against Kent at Southampton.

Shackleton had also started to return some eye-catching bowling figures. He took 9 for 77 against Glamorgan at Newport in 1953 and then in the following season claimed an astonishing 11.1-7-4-8 against Somerset at Weston-Super-Mare. It was a very poor wicket but equally remarkably Cannings failed to take a wicket and the enigmatic Alan Rayment scored a scintillating century. He took 9-59 and 9-81 at Bristol in 1958 and 1959 respectively, before claiming his best bowling figures against Warwickshire at Portsmouth in the following year. The circumstances were again dramatic. Warwickshire were playing for a draw with only 45 minutes remaining. Their score stood at 196 for four. Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie recalled Shack and instructed him to concede a boundary so that he could take the new ball.

Such a request was almost purgatory but the phlegmatic bowler did as he was told, and then proceeded to mop up the Warwickshire innings by taking the remaining six wickets in twenty-six balls without conceding a run.

Derek Shackleton's respect for his flamboyant Hampshire captain was – and always remained – total and the fusion of their respective gifts, and those of the other members of the team, brought Hampshire's first Championship title in 1961. Shackleton's contribution was 158 wickets (avge. 19.09), and he saved his best for the run-in. Nursing an injured ankle, he took 26 matches in the last crucial five matches. Most importantly, on a slow wicket, he imposed his will on the Derbyshire batsmen on that famous afternoon at Bournemouth when Hampshire attained their ultimate goal. Ingleby-Mackenzie set Derbyshire a target of 252 in 192 minutes. Shackleton left their innings in ruin as in his first eight overs, he took 4 wickets for 8. He eventually ended with 6 for 39. When interviewed by John Arlott in the post-match celebrations he modestly commented:-

“.....it's one of those things peculiar to the day. The skipper put me on that end and I felt that if I could keep going, bowl at the wickets, make the batsmen play, that was my job done.”

The statement of the ultimate professional.

Remarkably, Shack achieved some of his best performances in the remaining years of his career. He was the first bowler to 100 wickets in 1962 and 1964 (at the age of 40) and the leading wicket-taker in 1963, despite playing in four Tests, and 1965. In 1968, his final full season, he claimed five for 58 (in 27 overs) against the Australians.

He was still not quite finished. In the following season he returned to the Championship side for one match against Sussex at Portsmouth. In a memorable swansong, he retained his hold over Hampshire's south coast rivals – he took more wickets against that County than any other – with figures of 23-10-37-2 and 24.5-11-58-5, as he engineered a victory in his final first-class match. For good measure, he also headed Hampshire's averages in the fledgling Sunday League.

Upon his retirement, he revealed he had sight in only one eye, which made his achievements even more extraordinary. He retained his cricket connections through Minor Counties cricket with Dorset, where he held sway over batsmen when aged 50, umpiring, coaching and maintaining the ground at Canford School, following his son's – Julian – fortunes with Gloucestershire and attending the Annual Hampshire Players' reunion. He also made a memorable appearance, with his biographer, David Matthews, before a packed and attentive audience at the Society's Annual Buffet Supper at the Indoor School at his beloved County Ground in December 1997.

Wednesday 17 October 2007 – Meeting

Those who were present when John Barclay addressed the Society at Portsmouth Rugby Club in November 1988 – how time flies – still maintain he was one of the very best speakers to have graced the top table. In his trademark positive, enthusiastic and erudite style he captivated his audience with a treatise on leadership. He was well

qualified to speak on the subject having captained Sussex for six years and taken his County to a then record second place in the County Championship in 1981 – his first season in charge. Sussex were deprived of the title by Nottinghamshire by just two points. The summer spawned his critically acclaimed “The Appeal of the Championship”.

His County gained some compensation when they skated to the John Player League title in the following season. Prior to his being appointed captain, and before the advent of Chris Adams, Sussex were renowned for internal strife and constant changes of leadership. However, his tenure was always totally secure.

JOHN ROBERT TROUTBECK BARCLAY was born in Bonn, West Germany, where his father was a diplomat on 22 January 1954. He was an outstanding schoolboy cricketer at Eton College. He made his Sussex debut in 1970 when he was aged only 16 years 205 days. He became a diligent batsman, whether opening or in the middle order, a persevering off-spin bowler who added much needed variety to a traditional seam bowling attack, and a brilliant slip fielder. He was capped in 1976 and captained Sussex from 1981 until a hand injury enforced his sadly early retirement in 1986.

He scored 9677 runs (avge.24.81), took 324 wickets (avge.30.66) and held 214 catches. The highest of his nine centuries was 119 against Leicestershire at Hove in 1980. The previous season was his most productive with the bat when he stroked 1093 runs (avge.32.14). He passed one thousand runs in a season on four occasions. His best bowling performance was 6 for 61 against Sri Lanka at Hove in 1979.

Our speaker played one season in South Africa for Orange Free State in 1978/79 and he also made minor tours to Barbados, West Africa and Bangladesh.

Since his retirement from the game he has managed various England sides abroad and has performed a truly magnificent job as Director of Cricket and Coaching for the Arundel Castle Cricket Foundation. Over 150,000 youngsters from less advantaged backgrounds have benefited from the scheme.

The Society is delighted to welcome back John Barclay.

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