

## NEWSLETTER No. 278 - JANUARY 2008

### 9 January 2008 – Meeting

This evening's speaker was one of the most popular of cricketers during his playing days. He conveyed an infectious sense of enjoyment. His cheerful countenance, unorthodox stance and brilliant fielding close to the wicket made him an instantly recognisable figure on the county scene. He joined a Nottinghamshire side struggling at the foot of the table but ended his career having been a member of the County's team which won their first Championship in 52 years. He also played with three of the greatest all-rounders in the history of the game – those two knights, Garfield Sobers and Richard Hadlee – and Clive Rice.

**SHEIKH BASHARAT HASSAN** was also a pathfinder. Born in Nairobi, Kenya on 24 March 1944, he received his education at City Hall School there. He made his first-class debut for an East African Invitation XI against MCC at Kampala in 1963-64 and also played for a Coast Invitation XI against Pakistan International Airways a few months later. He had also played for Kenya against these and touring sides in non first-class matches and had performed sufficiently well to try his luck in county cricket. It was a courageous decision, given that East African players had generally confined their cricket to the area in which they were born and raised.

He therefore joined Nottinghamshire staff for the 1966 season with very little experience of first-class cricket, as a right-handed batsman, and occasional wicket-keeper and right-arm medium pace bowler. He played in just one match that summer, against Oxford University, because he was serving a residential qualification. He appeared in 17 matches in 1967, when he scored his maiden first-class century – 107 not out against Glamorgan at Trent Bridge. However, the advent of overseas players in 1968, consigned him to another year in second XI cricket.

Upon qualifying by residence in 1969, he became a regular member of the Nottinghamshire side immediately. He remained so for the next sixteen years. During that period, whether opening the innings or batting in the middle order, he was a consistent performer. He scored a thousand runs in a season on five occasions, his best season being 1970 when he stroked 1395 runs. When he retired in 1985 he had played in 332 matches, and amassed 14934 runs (avge. 29.07), including 15 centuries. He always enjoyed himself against the Warwickshire bowling, off whom he plundered four centuries, but his highest score of 182 not out was against Gloucestershire at Trent Bridge in 1977. For good measure, he also made 6842 runs (4 centuries) in limited-overs cricket.

He held 310 catches, as well as effecting a stumping, in his career. He caught 20 or more batsmen in seven seasons, his best being in 1975, when he accounted for 28 dismissals. His standing was such that he was a substitute for England in the Ashes Test at Trent Bridge in 1985. He announced his retirement from the game that same day.

He was an immensely popular figure with the Nottinghamshire faithful, and indeed, was nominated as one of that County's cult heroes in a Wisden Cricketer series in

November 2005. He was on the Umpires' First-Class list from 1989 to 1991, before becoming Nottinghamshire's Marketing Manager in 1992, and then a highly regarded committee member.

The Society is very proud to welcome Basharat Hassan to this evening's meeting.

### **5 December 2007 – Report**

Prior to the Society's Annual Dinner at the Rose Bowl, Peter Baxter entertained a large audience with his celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Test Match Special. The first full day's play on which ball-by-ball commentary was broadcast was in May 1957, for the first day of the England-West Indies Test Match. The match became famous, of course, for the long partnership of 411 between Peter May and Colin Cowdrey, which nullified the mystique of Sonny Ramadhin's spin; the latter had taken 7 for 49 in the first innings. The commentators throughout the match were Rex Alston, who was a fine all-round commentator, who had previously specialised in rugby union and athletics, John Arlott and Ken Abblack, a Trinidadian, who later became a politician in his home island. The summariser at the end of each day's play was E.W. Swanton, and the between-overs expert was Gerry Gomez..

Throughout his hour-long talk he gave informed and affectionate insights on all those well-known personalities who have graced the TMS commentary box over the years, including Robert Hudson, Alan Gibson, Don Mosey, Brian Johnston, Christopher Martin-Jenkins, Tony Cozier, Alan McGilvray, Henry Blofeld, Jonathan Agnew, Norman Yardley, Freddie Brown, Freddie Truman, Trevor Bailey, Vic Marks and Mike Selvey.

He was optimistic about the future of TMS in the hands of Agnew, Simon Mann, Mark Saggars and Simon Hughes.

He reserved particularly warm praise for the early pioneers (Alston, Arlott and Hudson) and also for Brian Johnston. Our speaker felt it was he, who on joining TMS in 1970, did more than anybody to cement its popularity.

## **A FINAL REVIEW OF 2007**

### **(1) THE WEATHER**

Dr. Andrew Hignell, cricket's leading meteorologist, who spoke to the Society on the matter at Portsmouth in February 2004 has now published his findings for last season in the winter edition of The Cricket Statistician (the journal of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians).

As might be expected, Worcestershire suffered most, losing 124.25 hours, 65 of which were at home. The flooded New Road ground was a major talking point during July's floods and, of course, it remained unfit for play for the remainder of the season.

Hampshire, not the first time in recent seasons, were also tested by the elements. They were the second most unfortunate County with rain depriving them of 105.75 hours. Their average time lost was 56% more than they experienced in the period 1998-2006. Glamorgan incurred most downtime at home (67.75 hours), followed by Warwickshire (61.5) and then Hampshire (58.25). Hampshire were therefore disadvantaged both home and away. It is doubtful, however, that the rain affected their final position.

Interestingly, Sussex, the County's south coast neighbours, only spent 15 hours in the pavilion at home. Are Hampshire unlucky with their playing schedule or does the Rose Bowl lie on a rain belt? The answer is probably a combination of both.

Almost astonishingly, given the North East's reputation for inclement weather, Durham lost least time overall (53.50 hours), followed by Northamptonshire (61.25 hours) and, equally surprisingly, Derbyshire (66.5 hours). All three Counties lost less time than the average for the past 10 years, the only teams to do so. Is this a sign of things to come? We must wait and see.

## **(2) OTTIS GIBSON**

### **TEN WICKETS IN AN INNINGS v. HAMPSHIRE**

Ottis Gibson thoroughly deserved his nomination as the PCA's Player of the Year. Those two hardy perennials, Mark Ramprakash and Mushtaq Ahmed, may have had their advocates but few would have begrudged the cheerful West Indian his award.

He was certainly the bane of Hampshire. In the Friends Provident Trophy Final he wrecked the County's prospects of seriously challenging Durham's aggressively constructed total with the first two balls of the first innings. Standing in the refreshment area at the Nursery End, the editor originally thought he was watching an action replay as James Adams and Sean Ervine – both left handers – were caught at second slip by Michael De Venuto off balls angled across their hesitant bats.

However, Gibson's Annus Mirabilis was given its crucial momentum when he took 10 for 47 against the County at the Riverside. For good measure, he then took the first two wickets in the second innings. It was the first time any bowler had taken an "all-ten" against Hampshire in the County Championship. Prior to this feat – Gibson had taken 23 Championship wickets at 34; after it, he took 47 at a miserly 18. He finished the season with 80 wickets at 24. His success will have made a good psychological study. Knowing he was in the final stages of his career, he played with more freedom than at any time previously and was suitably rewarded. At the end of the season he accepted the appointment of England's bowling coach.

Mention must be made of Michael Brown's efforts during the match. His was one wicket that eluded Hampshire's nemesis. He remained undefeated on 56 in the first innings and 126 in the second, when he and David Griffiths held on to earn an unlikely draw. It was a very fine performance by the stoic opener. Had Griffiths been dismissed he would have been only the seventh batsman to have carried his bat twice in a match.

Gibson was, however, not the first bowler to take all ten against the County. In Hampshire's first-ever match against Lancashire, at Old Trafford, in 1870, William-Bill-Hickton recorded figures of 36.2 – 19 – 46 – 10 in the second innings. Hickton was a fast right-arm, round-arm, bowler. He had taken 4 for 27 in 30 overs in the first innings. Lancashire romped home by 10 wickets (A.N. Hornby having made 132 in the first innings) and, in a low scoring encounter in the return match at The Antelope Ground, eased to victory by 40 runs. On that occasion, Hickton's figures were 1 for 29 and 3 for 35. These two matches were the only ones accorded first-class status to Hampshire that season. The two Counties did not meet again until Hampshire's admission to the modern County Championship in 1895. Hickton – a professional – later played for Derbyshire and his son turned out for Worcestershire as a slow left-arm bowler in 1905.

## SHAUN UDAL

Players of long-standing became part of a cricket watcher's life. They later remember them in their youth, recall their development, become acquainted with their onfield mannerisms whether batting, bowling or fielding, revel in their triumphs, sympathise with them in their lows and towards the end of their careers, notice the thickening waist and the receding hairline. When they retire, it can seem like the passing of a long-cherished friend. In the ensuing years, however, their feats become part of the nostalgic memory and, if a man has left an enviable record, he becomes part of the benchmark against which his successors are measured.

Shaun Udal played for Hampshire for nineteen years and evoked all those emotions. We shall remember his Championship debut at Arundel when, on a sun-kissed day, he wheeled away with his off-spin bowling for hour after hour. He looked the part immediately and gave great hope for the future. Unlike many of his immediate predecessors, he was tall. His height would facilitate bounce, as well as the spin emanating from his fingers. And it was bounce that often took wickets, as the batsman would be given insufficient time to adjust.

His progress to the highest levels of the game seemed inexorable. Skilfully nursed by Mark Nicholas, his development was rapid. A hernia restricted his appearances to one-day matches only in 1991 but he ended the season with a Benson and Hedges Cup winners medal, memorably bowling Carl Hooper with that wicked faster ball that was such a devastating part of his armoury in those early years.

He returned career best figures at the start of his first full season (1993). Eight Sussex batsmen fell to him, for 50 runs, at Northlands Road. Again, the performance signalled a change from the former regime where his predecessors were more likely to take 5 for 80. Here was a spin bowler who would take wickets, at a decent strike rate, whilst bowling economically.

Ray Illingworth, then a television pundit, had often expressed his admiration for Shaun Udal's bowling, and when he became Chairman of Selectors, it was unsurprising that the Hampshire bowler was promoted to the international side for the

Texaco Trophy match against New Zealand at Edgbaston a year later. It was only his second full season. He justified Illingworth's faith and retained his place for the ensuing one-day series against South Africa later that summer.

He was duly selected for the tour to Australia the following winter. Robin Smith was also picked. They became the only Hampshire players, apart from Philip Mead, to be given that honour. (Kevin Pietersen – at least nominally a Hampshire player – has since joined them). Unfortunately, he broke a finger in the first match of the tour at Lilac Hill and, thereafter, his tour never gained any form of momentum. He was selected for three matches in the Benson and Hedges World Series Cup, but his tour was ended with another injury – a pulled rib muscle, which was to recur and plague him for several years afterwards.

Nevertheless, on his return he enjoyed another good summer and was chosen for a further three internationals against the West Indies. However, he missed out on the winter tour to South Africa but gained some compensation by selection for the A tour to Pakistan. It proved, though, a frustrating experience as he found himself last in the pecking order behind Ian Salisbury and Richard Stemp.

Thereafter his career threatened to go into terminal decline. Though his batting improved—he recorded a much-cherished century (117 not out against Warwickshire at Northlands Road) in 1997—his bowling fell away. His honest and frank autobiography, written in association with Patrick Symes, reveals a man with a troubled mindset during that period as a succession of rival spin bowlers were given international precedence.

His appointment as vice-captain halted the slide. With the move to the Rose Bowl, the luxury of bowling into Alan Mullally's footmarks, and the captaincy and shrewd field placings of Shane Warne, enabled him to become a force once more. One performance will always stand out above all others. With Mullally and Dimi Mascarenhas injured, Shaun Udal's performance in that famous victory over the 2001 Australians, when he single-handedly carried Hampshire's bowling attack, for virtually four sessions, in boiling heat with the temperatures above 90 degrees, spoke volumes for his character. It was a lion-hearted display, fit to rank with any in Hampshire's history for its courage and bravery.

And so his career moved to its unlikely climax. He captained the County in the C & G Trophy win against Warwickshire at Lord's in 2005, and his form at the end of the season earned him a recall to full England side for the winter tours of Pakistan and India. He made his England debut in the first Test against Pakistan at Multan, and retained his place for the rest of the series. He took only three wickets, but it was significant that neither Harbajan Singh or Anil Kumble were more successful when India played Pakistan shortly afterwards. They helped put his performance into proper context.

Illness ruled him out of the early part of the ensuing tour to India but he gained his place in the sun when he bowled England to an unlikely victory at Mumbai. The iconic moment was, of course, the dismissal of Sachin Tendulkar – the classic spinner's wicket – a bat/pad catch to short leg.

The advent of Monty Panasaar meant the end of his short-lived Test career. With more sympathetic management, he should surely have been an England regular for a decade.

And so his baffling departure from Hampshire. He started the season by bowling supremely well at The Oval. But for dropped catches, it is conceivable that he would have bowled Hampshire to victory by lunch on the final day. He was certainly far more threatening than his captain. However, as Hampshire were then made to sweat, as Surrey almost chased down over 500 - without a major contribution from Mark Ramprakash- Udal broke an ankle. He then remained on the sidelines, at least in Championship cricket, for much of the season. However, as the sun at last shone, in late August and with Warne injured, he brought all his experience to bear as the County were trounced in the return with Surrey at The Rose Bowl. It was a performance which demonstrated that he still had much to offer.

He was then inexplicably omitted for the final home match of the season. As the inexperienced James Treadwell bowled to Kent to victory with his off-spin, Shaun Udal looked a forlorn figure perambulating slowly around the boundary. As Hampshire struggled to bowl out their visitors, the lunacy of the decision was demonstrated when Warne had no alternative but to throw the ball to Michael Carberry for him to purvey his rarely-used spin bowling.

The announcement of his retirement was therefore not entirely surprising. Nor, in the final analysis, was the news that he had accepted a two-year contract with Middlesex, for whom his grandfather played. He still has some cricket left in him and we must wish him well.

### **MICHAEL CARBERRY AND CHRIS TREMLETT**

Michael Carberry and Chris Tremlett were in India with the England Performance Programme (EPP) Squad prior to Christmas. The former was particularly successful. In the 4-day match in mid-December, when the EPP played an MRF XI (a combined team comprising Indian and Sri Lankan first-class cricketers) at Chennai, Carberry, showing great application and patience, made 134 (324 minutes; 265 balls and 15 fours) in the first innings. The EPP XI eventually secured victory by 111 runs.

In the previous 3-day match against the same opposition, Tremlett took two early wickets which effectively meant that the home side was destined to finish behind the EPP XI in the first innings, and thus, under the terms which the match was played, lose the game.

As far as the Editor is able to ascertain from the Cricket Archive website, neither of these matches has been accorded first-class status.

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