

NEWSLETTER No. 281 – APRIL 2008

PIVOTAL WINTER

This last winter may become one of those pivotal moments in cricket history. The formation of the two Indian Twenty20 Leagues will almost certainly have an impact on county cricket and the international schedule. The latter has become far too congested and, in those terms, the new tournaments could well prove to be a positive development. The implications for the county game will continue to unravel in the months ahead. The ECB will do well to consider the employment precedents established by the “Packer Affair” over thirty years ago. Any attempt to ban players from county cricket will certainly raise restraint of trade issues.

The speed at which the Indian Leagues were formed has left the county game in some disarray. With only a few weeks to go to the start of the season, it remains unclear who will be appearing for their Counties. At the time of writing, Hampshire are in a particularly difficult position. Any prospects of a Championship title seem fanciful, such is the dearth of bowling. It is difficult to foresee the County bowling out sides twice, even when (or if) Shane Warne returns for the second half of the season. The onus will be on Hampshire's batting, so strong on paper yet so brittle in reality, to deliver.

It was also a winter when Australia's dominance was seriously challenged by a determined Indian team. The former's bowling attack, notwithstanding the maturity of Brett Lee, were unable to dismiss batsmen with the same frequency, and the batting was more frail than in recent years. It is clear that the successors to the great players of the past decade are not of the same quality.

Much of England's winter is best forgotten. There is smugness about the side that is beginning to grate. The batsmen are failing and yet they claim “the big score is just around the corner”. It duly arrived in the second innings at Napier against inexperienced opponents, but it must now be sustained. Hopefully, those England Lions who batted well in India, including Michael Carberry, will score runs in sufficient weight to oust the current complacent occupants of England's top order. On the credit side, Ryan Sidebottom has emerged a truly world-class performer. At Napier, Stuart Broad gave indications that he will soon become an indispensable member of the side. The wicket-keeping position still remains problematical. Matthew Prior is a far more solid batsman than Tim Ambrose; the latter is much the better wicket-keeper. It will be interesting to see how their duel develops.

It is difficult to imagine New Zealand scoring sufficient runs to worry England in the early part of the summer. South Africa will be a far different proposition and in Dale Steyn, they possess possibly the most penetrative genuinely quick bowler in the world.

The most lasting memories of the winter will be those of India's cricketers. Sourav Ganguly, Wasim Jaffer, Yuvraj Singh and V.V.S. Laxman enchanted

in the series against Pakistan with their wondrous touch and timing. Sachin Tendulkar's performances against Australia were fit for the Gods. Seldom has a renaissance been so emphatic. In Ishant Sharma they appear to have a very fine – perhaps even more – fast bowler for the future. Is it any wonder that the sponsors of the Indian Leagues moved in so quickly to profit from such unique, crowd pleasing talent?

MEETING

Wednesday 2 April 2008 – Meeting

Tonight's speaker, Alan Rayment, will evoke nostalgic memories for those members who watched Hampshire cricket during the 1950s. They will recall his attractive, stylish batting and the brilliance of his fielding, particularly in the covers. Unlike many cricketers, upon his retirement in 1958, the most interesting part of his life still lay before him.

ALAN WILLIAM HARRINGTON RAYMENT was born in Finchley on 29 May 1928. He played for Finchley before making his debut in first-class cricket in one match for the Combined Services in 1947. He played for Middlesex 2nd XI the following year, before joining Hampshire on special registration in 1949.

He went on to play 198 matches for the County. He often produced his best form on difficult wickets, never more so than at Weston-Super-Mare in 1955. On the broken pitch on which Derek Shackleton famously took 8 for 4, Alan Rayment scored a dazzling century (104). Only two other batsmen – Henry Horton (59) and Harold Stephenson (52) reached fifty. Moving lightly on his dancer's feet, he repeatedly moved down the pitch to hit the Somerset slow left-arm spin bowler, Australian John McMahon, down the ground. It was an extraordinary innings. Earlier in the season, he made a priceless and fluent top score of 30 on another bowler's wicket in the tied match against Sussex at The Saffron's Ground at Eastbourne.

Right-handed, and of medium height, he scored 6333 runs for the County in a manner than always demanded attention. He reached the thousand run landmark on two occasions (1952 and 1956), as well as scoring four centuries, his best score being 126 against Gloucestershire at Bristol in 1953. The innings bore a lop-sided look on that occasion. With Cliff Walker (150 not out), he added 246 for the fourth wicket in four and a quarter hours, out of a total of 375. Play was extended on the first two days to allow a 2pm start on the third, Coronation Day. Another highlight was his membership of the 1955 team which finished in third position in the Championship, the highest position the County had attained at the time.

Roy Webber, writing in the Hampshire Handbook of 1953, recalled a startling fielding feat at Finchley, his home ground, in 1950 during a Minor Counties match.

“Making a good save at cover, he trod on his finger and sent a spike through the nail – it remains to add that he returned the ball to the

wicket and ran out the Middlesex batsman very smartly”

During his county career, our speaker established his own dancing school which proved to be lucrative. His CV has since encompassed a summer at Lord's, where he turned down the job of head coach, estate agency, property developer, social worker, mature student and psychotherapist.

Few cricketers have enjoyed such a rich vein of life experiences. Alan Rayment has kindly stepped into the breach at short notice due to Tony Lewis' illness. The Society extends him a very warm welcome.

Wednesday 5 March 2008 – Report

Chris Lowe thoroughly entertained his attentive audience at Test Valley Golf Club. He began by describing his cricketing heritage which notably comprised an Australian who made a sole undistinguished Test appearance at The Oval in 1886 (Editor's note: it would appear to be the Victorian John McIlwraith, who scored 2 and 7 and who died in Camberwell in 1938) and a cousin who played for Scotland. He attended the same school as our Patron, John Woodcock, and met Fred Titmus and John Murray in the Headmaster's study! His first cricket memories were television ones of Tony Lock bowling against the West Indies at The Oval in 1957. He recalled his relaxed days in The Parks. The University side included David Green, Alan – A.C. – Smith, Abbas Ali Baig, Javed Burki, the Nawab of Pataudi, and two men who played occasionally for Hampshire, C.A. Fry and Dan Piachaud. In those days, such was the strength of Varsity sides, Counties invariably played full strength teams, whose members, he remarked, would willingly sign autograph books whilst walking around the ground. He retained fond and lasting memories of Hampshire's 1961 side, the members of which he quoted verbatim. He touched briefly on his assignments in Northern Ireland during The Troubles; Lord's offered a welcome and much sought after blissful refuge on his spells of leave.

He then dwelt on his tenure of various Middlesex Committees. The County has some 8500 members. He was conscious that Middlesex do not own anything at Lord's and events are organised to give members a sense of belonging. Three Members' Forums are held each year, which are attended by the Captain, Director of Cricket and Chief Executive. No prior questions are sought and they last for an hour. They also hold a mid-summer party, after play, in The Mound Stand, as well as parties at outgrounds to which opposition members are invited. After his nomination to the Members Committee of MCC he pressed for spectators to be allowed to walk on the grass around the ground. They can now do so, subject to the groundsman's approval.

He ended his talk with thoughtful views on TMS, which he hoped would survive the departure of Peter Baxter, the reported MCC/Middlesex merger, the Indian Franchises and the professionalism (or lack of it) of the England team.

Chris Lowe's address was preceded by the Society's AGM. All Officers were returned unopposed though Susanne Marlow again reinforced the need for Society members to come forward and volunteer their services in future years. The Editor of the Newsletter was also presented with book tokens to the value of £50 in recognition of 25 years in that role, for which he thanks the Committee and all Society members. Every word (some 1 million) has been written in his spare time, and typed by his wife Jennie, at home and without charge.

THE NEW ZEALANDERS IN HAMPSHIRE

One of the highlights at The Rose Bowl this summer will be the match between England Lions and New Zealand between 8 – 11 May.

The Kiwis first visited this country in 1927. It was, in effect, a development tour. Though there were matches against the Counties, there were no Tests and the fixture list included such esoteric teams as the East of England, West of England and the Civil Service. Whilst Hampshire were excluded from their tour, they did play a first-class match at the United Services Ground against the Royal Navy, which was drawn.

Their next tour in 1931 incorporated two matches against the County and another against the Combined Services. Cricket followers were therefore able to see them play on all three of the County's major grounds, the only such occurrence in a season. All three matches were drawn. Stuart Dempster – prolific during the season – scored 106 not out in the first match at Southampton; Philip Mead was dismissed for 99 – one of the rare occasions he fell shy with a hundred beckoning. It was possibly a day when his nerve failed him; had he reached three figures he would have equalled W.G. Grace's century tally. Alec Kennedy took 7 for 29 on a rain affected wicket at Bournemouth. It was a low scoring encounter with Hampshire totalling 104 and 57 for 9 declared and New Zealand 79 – their lowest innings in matches between the two teams – and 51 for 3. Twenty-six wickets fell on the third day, rain having washed out the second and much of the first.

In 1937 the match was again drawn. Sam Potheary (130) and Giff Vivian (112) starred with the bat for their respective teams. Len Creese enjoyed a fine all-round match scoring 61 and taking 6 for 81 in the first two innings

The New Zealanders' previous fixture was against the Combined Services at Portsmouth, which they won comfortably by nine wickets.

The first post-war tour in 1949 contained one of the most unlikely run chases in cricket history. After being dismissed for 129, Hampshire, in the face of a heady 430 for 5 declared (Verdun Scott 129, and the elegant Martin Donnelly 100 not out and the emerging John Reid 50), looked to have saved the game when they edged their way to 409 (John Arnold 110) with only 45 minutes of play remaining. Hampshire were 108 runs ahead. Most of the crowd were making their way home feeling the remaining time was largely academic. The

tourists had other ideas. They knocked off the runs in just 35 minutes! The brilliant Bert Sutcliffe caressed 46 runs (three 6's and four 4's) in only 13 minutes. Remarkably, Hampshire bowled 11.5 overs in that time.

The next match in 1958 was a much more sedate affair. A draw ensued in cold, damp weather though not before Reid had stroked an enterprising 50 and Alex Moir (5 – 27) had given the County's batting a searching test with his leg-spin bowling. At the other end of the entertainment scale, John D'Arcy took nearly four hours over his 60.

1965 was the first year of twin tours. Hampshire played South Africa at the end of that summer and it was not, therefore, until 1969 that the teams played each other again. However, rain was again the victor. The crowd at Northlands Road had, however, benefited from a glorious 132 from Barry Richards, who added 137 in 104 minutes with his captain Richard Gilliat (99). New Zealand were 119 for 2 in reply to Hampshire's 330 for 4 declared when the rains came shortly after lunch on the second day.

The next encounter, on the following tour in 1973, was almost an action replay. Over nine hours, including the whole of the second day, were lost to the weather. Hampshire were bowled out for 223 just after tea on the first day. On this occasion, the County's current President made 87. New Zealand finished on 182 for 4. Glen Turner made 85, which contributed to his passing 1000 runs before the end of May.

Only a masterful innings from the cultured Martin Crowe (70) enlightened the next fixture, in 1993. In a match of low scores he was the only player to overcome the difficult wicket and unseasonal cold and blustery conditions at Dean Park as the New Zealanders ran out winners by 9 wickets. For good measure, he also enjoyed match figures of 5 for 30 with his medium pace swing bowling.

The next visit by a New Zealand side to a Hampshire ground was not until 1999, when they twice played at Northlands Road. The first match was one in the World Cup against the West Indies. Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh imposed an early stranglehold and ex-Trojan Mervyn Dillon (4 for 46) mopped up the middle order and tail. Only Craig McMillan (38), later to play briefly for the County, played with any freedom. The West Indies passed their target for the loss of only 3 wickets, courtesy of a feisty innings from opener Ridley Jacobs (80 not out) and a Brian Lara (36) cameo.

The final game between Hampshire and New Zealand was played out, unlike virtually all of its predecessors, in glorious weather later in the summer. Apart, possibly, from 1949 it was undoubtedly the best match between the two sides. The young second string Hampshire opening pace attack of Simon Renshaw and Steve Lugsden quickly reduced the tourists to 56 for 5. Captain Dion Nash, aided by Chris Harris (38), Daniel Vettori (50) and Simon Doull (49), then launched a vivid counter. Nash was simply impressible as he struck 135 not out and declared at 370 for 9. He then took 7 for 39 on the

following day. However, Giles White (121) and John Stephenson (54) provided staunch resistance, adding 165 for the fifth wicket, and took the County to 297. Nash was still not finished. He then scored 62 and set the County 321 on the final (fourth) day. Vettori then came into his own. He worked his way through the middle order but rearguard actions by Matthew Keech (50) and Mark Garaway (55) enabled Hampshire to achieve a draw with the last pair, Stephenson and Lugsden at the wicket. Vettori finished with 5 for 92 off 37 overs. Significantly, perhaps, Nash was only able to bowl seven overs after suffering an injury, a precursor of future ailments which cruelly curtailed a promising career.

In nine matches between the sides, therefore, the New Zealanders won two and the remainder were drawn. Many matches were ruined by rain.

A New Zealand A side toured this country in 2000 and played Hampshire in the County's penultimate match at Portsmouth. As they had done a year earlier, the County rested many of their leading players and, in doing so, handed debuts to Chris Tremlett and Iain Brunschweiler. After Hampshire were dismissed for 204, the former started his first-class career in sensational fashion, dismissing Mark Richardson with his first ball. Only Jon Ayling had previously performed this feat. He went on to take 4 for 16 (in 13 overs), enabling the County to gain a first innings lead of 51. After substantive contributions from Will Kendall (92) and skipper Shaun Udal (85) the young A side were set 337 for victory. An opening stand of 141 by Hamish Marshall (69), who has since played with such great distinction for Gloucestershire, and Richardson (85), enabled the tourists to attain their goal with 2 wickets to spare. The match had contained much fine cricket.

Unfortunately, rain completely washed out New Zealand's first scheduled appearance at The Rose Bowl in 2004. Their Nat West Services game against the West Indies was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

It must be hoped that May's match will be blessed with better weather.

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