

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 283 – SEPTEMBER 2008 MEETINGS

Wednesday 17 September 2008 – Meeting

The Society extends a very warm welcome to this evening's speaker, **BRIAN SCOVELL**. He is one of the game's most experienced writers who has established a respected reputation as a ghost writer for some of the greatest names in the sport as well as a fine author in his own right. During his long career he was the man who wrote columns for such luminaries as Jim Laker, Sir Learie Constantine, Barry Richards and Ken Barrington. He has also written biographies in association with, or on, Laker, Trevor Brooking, Sir Garfield Sobers, Sir Bobby Robson and Brian Lara. Our speaker is also the only author to be nominated for two British Sports Writers' awards in the same year; the books concerned were Jim Laker 19 – 90 and England Managers, both published by Tempus.

Brian Scovell was born on the Isle of Wight. He left school at the age of fifteen with the ambition of becoming a sports writer. Like many journalists, he struggled early on. He served his apprenticeship with the now defunct Isle of Wight Guardian, before making his way via the Wolverhampton Express and Star, Norwich Evening News, Press Association to the Daily Sketch. He became their cricket correspondent in 1960 and remained in that post until that newspaper's merger with the Daily Mail. He has since watched a vast number of Test matches and travelled extensively.

This is our speaker's second visit to the Society. He previously spoke before a large audience at Northlands Road in January 1993. That occasion was a thoroughly enjoyable evening laced with humour, interesting stories, nostalgia and contemporary issues in the press box. Members are therefore sure to be entertained similarly this evening.

Wednesday 2 April 2008 - Report

Alan Rayment gave full rein to his all-round talents before an attentive audience at the Rose Bowl. His eloquent and descriptive address, accompanied by a slideshow, was an evocation of county cricket – and of Lord's and Hampshire in particular.

He was born opposite the famous Finchley Cricket Ground in North London. He watched his early cricket there, and played for the club for a number of years. He fell in love with Lord's at the age of 9, when he watched Patsy Hendren's final first-class appearance in 1937. He also recalled seeing Learie Constantine and Denis Compton in opposition on the West Indies tour of 1939, as well as a number of matches during the War.

He was a fine and hugely talented all-round sportsman. Besides excelling at cricket, he won fishing competitions whilst on family holidays at Ryde on the

Isle of Wight and played football for Tottenham Hotspur's juniors. He admitted to being an amateur at heart and in spirit.

In his formative years he played against Colin Cowdrey who was then representing the Young Amateurs of Surrey. During his National Service in the Navy he played with George Dawks, later a fine long-standing wicket-keeper with Derbyshire; his captain was Alan Shireff (Kent and Hampshire).

Hampshire pursued his registration after seeing him make 48 on a slow turner in a 2nd XI match. He was in and out of the side for a few seasons and had he not been awarded his county cap in 1952, he would have emigrated to Australia.

With the eye of a dancing master he appreciated Derek Shackleton's approach to the wicket. He described it as "balletic", as he was so light on his feet. He also recalled Neil Harvey's amazing century for the Australians at Northlands Road in 1953 on a wicket that was hard and crusty on top. Other stories included Harold Gimblett's century in each innings at Taunton in 1949. The great strokemaker hit our speaker's rarely used leg-spin bowling into the River Tone to reach his century in the second innings. He retrieved the ball some 60 years later (this year's Hampshire Handbook has the full story). He also mentioned the challenge of avoiding run outs when batting with his two Hampshire captains, Desmond Eagar and Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie.

It was a marvellous evening in the company of a unique man.

SOCIETY NEWS

During the April meeting, Susanne Marlow mentioned that the Society's representative, **ROBBIE WILTON**, was the winner of the Council of Cricket Society's Quiz at the Spring meeting at Edgbaston. The Society is very fortunate that Robbie is able to bring his encyclopaedic knowledge to bear for the occasion, and extends both its thanks and congratulations to him.

HAMPSHIRE V DURHAM - Basingstoke 26, 27, 28 August 2008

When the 2008 fixtures were published, most ardent Hampshire supporters with a love of tradition and place will have noted the dates on which the County were playing at Arundel, Cheltenham and Lord's. However, it is likely that the return to Basingstoke will have taken precedence over the former venues. Little could they have imagined that they were to witness one of the most unlikely victories in the County's history.

FIRST DAY

The Basingstoke skyline had changed since the last game at May's Bounty in 2000, though not intrusively so. There were fewer tents than in the past, but the ground still retained its rural impression. The staff of Basingstoke and North-Hants Cricket Club and the organising Committee had performed splendidly in making the ground ready. Dave Allen had contributed to an informative commemorative programme, accompanying the scorecard. The sky was overcast with little promise of a break in the clouds. A chill wind was also prevalent. Instinctively, one remembered Malcolm Nash and Wasim

Akram bending the ball round corners in the past, and wondered how the pitch would play after the Durham captain, Dale Benkenstein, won the toss and elected to bat.

The question was answered quickly as James Tomlinson and Dimi Mascarenhas took three early wickets, all to catches in the slips. The Hampshire captain, who had looked increasingly and worryingly distracted for some weeks obviously decided that the conditions were in his favour. He flowed in with all his old verve and was rewarded by the dismissals of Mark Stoneman and Shivnarine Chanderpaul. The second catch, by Chris Benham at third slip, was a wonderful effort as he dived horizontally to his left to clutch a fast travelling ball at full stretch a centimetre or so from the ground. Tomlinson, who has carried the County's bowling attack with so much heart and maturity for virtually the whole season, had accounted for Michael Di Venuto in the opening over. David Balcombe then got in on the act, inducing the assured Durham captain, Dale Benkenstein, to edge to Nic Pothas. Mascarenhas followed by trapping the dangerous Phil Mustard, enduring a torrid season after last summer's successes, leg before without scoring. By lunch, five wickets had fallen. Pitch inspector Tony Pigott pored over the strip but thankfully decided, as the bounce had been consistent, not to take any action.

After the interval Mascarenhas quickly accounted for former Winchester KS favourite Paul Wiseman and then Liam Plunkett. With the score now standing at 96 for 7, Hampshire must have hoped to wrap up the innings fairly quickly. However, Mascarenhas, who eventually bowled 23 consecutive overs from the Town End, had understandably lost his zip. Moreover, Will Smith, who came to the wicket upon the dismissal of Di Venuto, had weathered the storm, and was steering his side's innings quite masterfully. Right-handed and stockily built, he watched the ball carefully and scarcely played a false shot. In company with Callum Thorp, who always seems to enjoy himself against the County, 43 runs were added for the eighth wicket. Thorp (28) with aggressive strokeplay scored the majority of them. His innings was cut short by Iman Tahir, to whom the Hampshire captain had belatedly turned, in a bowling masterclass. The leg-spinner had given the two previous balls some air but then bowled Thorp with a wicked faster delivery. Graham Onions was dismissed in similar fashion shortly afterwards. With last batsman Mark Davies for company, Smith determined that more aggressive methods were necessary but almost immediately miscued a pull, again off Tahir's quicker ball. He had made a valiant 70 out of 156. The Hampshire bowlers received a standing ovation.

Tea was now taken. Hampshire's openers, Jimmy Adams and Michael Carberry, played and missed early on, but batted with increasing assurance. Carberry, in particular, looked as if he might take wing as he majestically creamed the ball through the covers. The pair had taken the score to a healthy looking 48 before Benkenstein threw the ball to Davies. The wiry, ginger-haired fast-medium bowler transformed the match. Firstly, he dismissed Carberry, padding up, leg before, and then persuaded Adams to steer the ball to Plunkett in the gulley one run later. Benham edged to

Mustard thereafter. The light was now distinctly gloomy and it was no surprise when the umpires intervened. With heavy cloud all around, and the score standing at 65 for 3, most of the crowd left the ground. Perceived judgement was that it had been an interesting day's cricket and that Hampshire's depth in batting (Mascarenhas was down at 8 in the order) should enable them to achieve a first innings lead on the second day.

Imagine the surprise, therefore, when discovering, upon checking other match scores on Cricinfo or TV Text, that Hampshire had finished on 65 for 6. Surely it was an error. But no, the umpires, or rather their light meters, had adjudged the light to have improved and the sides had taken the field again. Sean Ervine and Pothas were both dismissed leg-before by the rampant Davies and Michael Lumb had edged Wiseman to slip. Durham now held a manifest advantage. What could Hampshire's tailenders contribute the next morning?

SECOND DAY

The answer was very little. Liam Dawson fell in the first over, again lbw, to Thorp. Remarkably, Hampshire had lost five wickets with the score on 65. Mascarenhas, understandably, decided to go on the offensive and made a rapid 26 before being cleaned up by Davies. He was last man out. Hampshire's nemesis had also earlier bowled both Balcombe and Tahir, and finished with the season's best figures of 8 for 24. Hampshire's innings closed on 96, 60 runs in arrears. Only eight men, four on each side, had reached double-figures. Hitherto Smith's 70 was the highest score by far; the next highest individual innings was Thorp's 28. Six of Hampshire's last seven batsmen had made only one run between them – a staggering statistic.

The odds continued to favour Durham. Hampshire's only chance appeared to be to bowl out their opponents for a similarly low score. If anything, the weather favoured swing bowling even more than on the first day, as it was considerably warmer and more sultry, though less windy. Tomlinson again accounted for Di Venuto for a first ball duck, thus inflicting a "pair" on the prolific Tasmanian. By the time the score had reached 40, two more batsmen – Smith and Stoneman – had returned to the pavilion. However, the dogged Chanderpaul and Blenkenstein looked ominously secure as they steered their side to the lunch interval. The early part of the afternoon belonged to Hampshire, or rather Tomlinson. After Tahir had made the initial breakthrough, holding a return catch as Blenkenstein disbelievably drove a full toss straight back to him, Tomlinson then saw off Chanderpaul (top score with 38), Mustard and Thorp in short order. In the meantime, Tahir had dismissed Plunkett. Durham were now 116 for 8. Five wickets had fallen for 35 runs in the hour after lunch. Given the conditions – the clouds had stubbornly refused to part – Hampshire seemed to be back in the game, though only just. Onions was dropped at slip off Tomlinson almost immediately after his arrival at the crease. Given his perceived batting credentials it did not seem an expensive mistake. But it was. Wiseman and Onions went on the offensive and both treated the tiring Tomlinson in cavalier fashion. It suddenly seemed a different pitch as they added 47 in only 38 minutes. Mascarenhas wisely persevered with Tahir and he eventually

accounted for Onions as Benham held a skier running to his right at mid-on. It had been a calculating innings by the Durham pace bowler which appeared to put his team out of reach. As if to emphasise the pitch was losing its demons, last batsman Davies also batted with assurance, every ball seemingly hitting the middle of his bat. He and Wiseman added a further 16 before the latter was finally snared leg before by Tahir. The last two wickets had realised 63 priceless runs. The two T's had shared nine wickets and showed, as they had done against Yorkshire, some three weeks earlier, that they were giving the Hampshire bowling attack a real cutting edge. If only Tahir had been signed at the start of the season.

As on the previous day, tea was taken between innings. Hampshire required 240 to win, by far the highest total of the match. Given events in the five previous sessions most talk in the crowd was about whether the match would go into a third day. A Hampshire victory seemed highly improbable. The pessimist's view was given credence as the first four wickets realised only 53 runs, three of them to the tall, fair-haired Thorp. Nic Pothas was in need of a score. Since his undefeated century at Canterbury he had made only 8 runs in three innings. He had failed to get off the mark in his last two. He batted with his old calm assurance until he attempted to loft Wiseman to the long-on boundary, only for Plunkett to pluck the ball out of the air away to his right. It was one of those Kevin Pietersen type shots that would have looked fine if it had succeeded, but looked irresponsible in the event of failure.

Hampshire were now really on the ropes at 77 for five, with still 10 overs remaining. However, latterly, the sun had broken through. Sean Ervine was batting in untroubled fashion and in partnership with Liam Dawson he took Hampshire to 108 for five by the close. The former had profited from boundaries off his legs and through the covers. Dawson, as he always does, was on the lookout singles. His cricketing wisdom is far beyond his years and some of his more senior colleagues would profit from studying his methods.

The County therefore needed 132 to pull off an unlikely victory on the final day. The pitch seemed to have quietened, perhaps aided by the elusive sunshine. With Ervine and Dawson looking relatively secure and with Mascarenhas to follow, and provided the sun shone, there was still hope. The final day promised to be one of those occasions when play could be over in an hour or provide a close finish over a more protracted timescale. The odds still favoured Durham but Hampshire supporters went to their beds in the hope that their County could produce something special. But surely, having lost five front line batsmen for less than half the required target, it was too much to ask for.

THIRD DAY

Ervine and Dawson continued from where they had left off on the previous day. Though the pitch had lost its initial devil, the Durham pace attack demonstrated their quality with swing and movement off the pitch. Both batsmen were watchful, looked for singles, and took toll of the ball pitched on their legs. Whilst Ervine repeatedly played and missed, he soldiered on and batted with great maturity and responsibility. Dawson demonstrated his class

by getting well forward to the quicker bowler to negate any movement of the ball, and by his driving off the back foot through extra cover. He enjoyed some luck when he survived a chance to Chanderpaul at slip when on 19. He carried on to 28 – his highest first-class score to date – before he lost his wicket, going down the wicket to Wiseman but edging to Benkenstein at leg slip. It had been a wonderful effort by the young Hampshire batsman. The pair had added 94, far exceeding any partnership in the match. The total now stood at 171. Sixty-nine runs were required with four wickets remaining. Ervine, in company with his new partner, Mascarenhas, saw Hampshire through to the lunch interval.

Thereafter the Hampshire captain, always eager to push the score along, survived a chance when on 10, Thorp failing to hold a difficult chance at deep, wide mid-on, and reached 26 before being castled by Davies. Thirty-one runs were now needed. Hampshire's first innings destroyer then accounted for Balcombe who was superbly caught by the diving Di Venuto at slip. Hampshire were still 21 runs short. The tension was becoming unbearable. A hush descended on the ground. Ervine then took control. He swept Wiseman to the boundary and then on-drove Davies for four. With eight runs required, Tahir edged Onions through the slips and then cover drove the same bowler.

Hampshire had completed a remarkable victory. Sean Ervine rightly received a standing ovation as he returned to the pavilion, undefeated on 94 – a noble effort encompassing 252 minutes, off 169 balls, including 14 boundaries. He had given indications that he was returning to his 2005 form with a fluent innings against Somerset in the previous Championship match. He had now played his finest innings for the County, and given the Basingstoke faithful a lifelong memory of a wonderful cricket match. If not quite in the realms of Edgbaston 1922 or the Glamorgan encounter at the Rose Bowl in 2003, it was certainly a famous Hampshire win.

Given they had played more games than any other County, Hampshire were still engaged in a relegation battle. Durham, having lost an opportunity to head the table, had games in hand and still retained a chance of winning the Championship for the first time.

Scores:

Durham 156 (Smith 70; Mascarenhas 5-46; Tahir 3-5) and
179 (Chanderpaul 38; Tomlinson 5-62; Tahir 4-53).

Hampshire 96 (Davies 8-24) and
240- 8 (Ervine 94 not out; Thorp 3-35; Davies 3-51).

Hampshire won by 2 wickets

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