

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 303 – NOVEMBER 2010

MEETINGS

Wednesday 17 November 2010 – Meeting

Tonight's speaker is **KEITH BOOTH** who was originally due to speak at the January meeting which was cancelled due to the heavy snowfalls that engulfed Hampshire at that time.

Our speaker was born in Barnsley and educated at Guisborough Grammar School. He worked for the first part of his life in retailing and university administration. He took early retirement in 1992 whereupon he embarked on a successful career in his pursuance of his love of cricket. He first scored for Middlesex and MCC, and for Test Match Special in the West Indies in 1993-94, before becoming Surrey's scorer in 1995. He has also since scored Test Matches and international Limited Overs Matches (including Twenty20). He has also been a leading advocate on improving the status of scorers.

Keith Booth has also written a history of cricket scoring, biographies of Michael Atherton and former Surrey stalwarts, Ted Pooley, George Lohmann and Ernie Hayes, as well as a biography of the pioneering cricket and football administrator, C.W. Alcock. The latter was a man well ahead of his time. His book on Lohmann won the Cricket Society's Book of the Year award for 2008. This is his second visit to the Society, the first being in February 2001 when he spoke on the errant Pooley.

The Society extends a very warm welcome to Keith Booth to this evening's meeting.

Wednesday 20 October 2010 – Report

Geoff Cope's address was a most memorable one. Like Trevor Jesty before him, he began by describing the debt he owed to his schoolmasters. Ernest Smelth and Ken Fletcher, both took him under their wings at primary school. The first was his junior school headmaster, who knew all the children by their Christian names. His father was also an inspirational figure; his mother ensured he was turned out immaculately. Mr. Smelth introduced him to men's cricket for Leeds Zingari, who did not have a home ground, at the age of 12. It was from him and Mr. Fletcher that he learnt the game's values. He gifted his former headmaster with his England cap shortly before his death.

Upon leaving school he worked in of all places, Basingstoke for Wiggins Teape. A host of Counties sought his signature but Yorkshire decided to sign him. His initial pay was £30 pw for the playing season and £20 pw in the winter.

Both his mother and father died suddenly in his twenties. In his early career he met John Arlott, who befriended him and gave him much needed support. Their friendship endured until the great broadcaster's death.

He told a host of stories about his contemporaries, particularly Geoff Boycott, Fred Trueman and Brian Close. He described the last two, together with Ray Illingworth and Jimmy Binks, as the "mafia", as they plotted victory after victory in his early years for his County. There were also stories about Brian Sellers, who notwithstanding his hard, autocratic persona, gave Geoff Cope unstinting support with the authorities when his action was called into question. Derek Randall and his antics also received a mention, as did the idiosyncrasies of Dickie Bird.

Throughout his long address, which those present could have listened to for several more hours, he spoke with great humility. He also made light of the fact that he was registered blind and told an extraordinary story about the navigational qualities of his dog, Kemp, a beautiful black Labrador who accompanied him to the meeting. Besides being Yorkshire's Director of Cricket he was also involved in fundraising for Guide Dogs for the Blind; he had now attracted funding approaching £200,000.

It was a quite wonderful evening which will be long remembered by the small audience fortunate enough to have been present.

SOCIETY NEWS - JANUARY MEETING

The Society is pleased to announce that the replacement speaker for the meeting on **Wednesday 12 January 2011** at the Rose Bowl, will be the former Middlesex and England batsman **PETER PARFITT** who captivated crowds with his attractive strokeplay during the 1960's. He has since enjoyed a formidable reputation as an excellent after dinner speaker and so it is an occasion not to be missed.

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Members have voted **DOMINIC CORK** as the HCS Player of the Year for 2010. An Appreciation is to be included in the Hampshire Handbook for 2011 which, it is hoped, will be on sale at the Society's Annual Dinner at the Rose Bowl on 1 December. Our Chairman, Susanne Marlow, will be contacting Dominic Cork to arrange a date regarding receipt of the cut-glass bowl which is given to the Player of the Year.

HAMPSHIRE'S FIRST-CLASS SEASON IN 2010

When looking at the results of Hampshire's season, historians may well conclude that it was a standstill summer. The results in the County Championship were identical to those in 2009. Three matches were won, two of those victories coming at the expense of a side (Kent) who were eventually relegated. The other victory was a meritorious fourth innings skilfully marshalled by Neil McKenzie, against eventual County Champions,

Nottinghamshire, at Trent Bridge. Too many matches were lost early on, perhaps as a result of over-confidence, with the result that continuation of Division 1 status was not secured until the nail biting last minute victory at Canterbury. Overall, therefore, in terms of results, the first-class season was disappointing.

And yet, the season may well prove to have been a watershed. Given the long-term injuries to Dimitri Mascarenhas, and later, Nic Pothas, the dramatic loss of early season form of Michael Lumb after his winter exertions in T20 cricket, the no-show of overseas signing Asantha Mendis and the ineffectual contributions of his temporary replacements, Rangana Herath and Phil Hughes, Hampshire were forced to invest the youngsters from their Academy. The two principal newcomers, James Vince and Danny Briggs responded quite splendidly. The latter was rewarded with selection for the England Performance Squad to Australia. Vince, after some classy performances in 2009 has surely cemented his place for the future.

Once McKenzie found his touch at Trent Bridge, Hampshire's batting was usually consistent. There were the occasional blips but generally one of the top order was able to guarantee a workable total. The only major failures were in the first innings at Liverpool, and in the last match against Warwickshire at the Rose Bowl but after all the emotion of the preceding game at Canterbury, Hampshire were running on empty.

Jimmy Adams and Michael Carberry were marvellously reliable, both watchful early on before unfurling their shots. Their powers of concentration and stamina were formidable. Both were justifiably rewarded with places in the England Performance Squad for Australia. Many felt that either should have replaced the out of form Alistair Cook in the last Test against Pakistan. Though he made a century, he enjoyed an inordinate amount of good fortune and still left many question marks over his technique.

Neil McKenzie was serenity personified. In the past, he has been somewhat one-paced but this was not the case in 2010. He left the season a better batsman than when he started. He paced his innings according to the needs of his side. Sean Ervine is always arresting to watch. Like McKenzie and Vince he finished just shy of 1000 runs for the season. He also made his highest score for the County when he plundered 237 not out against Somerset at the Rose Bowl. Vince bats with a simplicity and elegance that is easy on the eye. He scored that important first century, against Yorkshire at Scarborough. And a big one it was – 180 in only four and a half hours. With the imperturbable, immovable Adams, he shared a Hampshire fourth wicket record partnership of 278.

The highest partnership of the season, however, was the second wicket epic of 314 between Carberry and Michael Lumb against Durham at May's Bounty. The former batted like a left-handed Viv Richards. Lumb, clearly in the zone, made his way calmly and authoritatively to 158. He followed with 64 in the second innings. However, his staccato season was cruelly terminated

through injury in the following match at Taunton when he was struck on the foot fielding at silly point.

At the end of the season, Liam Dawson, so often a fringe figure in all forms of the game, and coming in as a replacement for McKenzie who had returned to South Africa, put down a marker with two half centuries. He is too good a player to be playing 2nd XI cricket, or often not playing at all.

Hampshire's main problems still stem from a lack of penetration with the ball. Dominic Cork bowled inspirationally, particularly after assuming the captaincy in mid-season. James Tomlinson toiled manfully. His accuracy is now a byword; he passed the bat time and again without finding the edge. He eventually received his just reward with yet another fine performance at Taunton – usually a batsman's paradise – where he took 7 for 85.

Kabir Ali took an early flurry of wickets before succumbing to injury, which has been a feature of his career to date. He had displayed an aptitude for demolishing the tail in particular. He was effectively replaced by David Balcomb, who bowled as usual with great heart without quite making a breakthrough. However, neither he or Tomlinson were helped by the schedule. Regarded as four day, rather than one day players, their season suffered more than most from the schizophrenic county calendar.

Chris Wood took six wickets on his debut at Liverpool but was then sparingly used at Canterbury. He was replaced by Simon Jones in the final match. Though bowling at pace off a much reduced run up, he fielded gingerly.

Danny Briggs carried Hampshire's spin attack virtually single-handedly. He embarked on the steepest of learning curves. The experience can only stand him in good stead for the future. He appears to possess an excellent temperament. There were inevitably occasions when he had to absorb punishment but it did not appear to unnerve him. He was, of course, very successful in T20. Towards the end of the season he also batted extremely usefully.

On the wicket-keeping front, Nic Pothas was clearly distracted by the captaincy. It most showed in his batting as he was dismissed, uncharacteristically at times. If it is the case that he can no longer keep wicket then it will mark the end of an era. He has been virtually omnipresent since 2002, Hampshire's second season at the Rose Bowl. He is beyond doubt the County's best ever wicket-keeper/batsman. Michael Bates could hardly be a better wicket-keeper; his precocity with the gloves is stunning. His challenge, and it is a very considerable one, is now to match the sheer weight of runs of his predecessor.

JIMMY ADAMS

Though HCS members selected Dominic Cork as their Player of the Year for 2010, fitting tribute should be accorded to Jimmy Adams for his stellar performances last summer. He made a total of 2515 runs; in doing so he was the only batsman in the country to figure in the top ten averages for all three

domestic competitions. The Hampshire players appreciated his performances with the bat, as well as his off-field support and sagacity by voting him as their Player of the Year. His contribution was also recognised by his fellow professionals up and down the country as he made the final shortlist of three for the PCA Player of the Year (eventually won by Warwickshire's Neil Carter). His consistency was acknowledged by the England selectors, with his selection for the England Performance Squad's tour of Australia which runs broadly parallel to that of the Test team.

It was Jimmy Adams' versatility, adaptability and consistency that stood out from the very beginning of the summer. In the first Championship match, played indecently early in April, he held the Hampshire first innings together with what proved to be the first of three marathon visits to the crease. He defied the Essex bowlers for eight hours at Chelmsford as he made 169 out of 331 whilst he was at the wicket. Apart from extras (49), the next highest score was Neil McKenzie's 39. Hampshire obtained a slender first innings lead and eventually required 248 runs to win. His second innings was of a totally different tempo. He made 45 in 61 minutes but after his dismissal, shortly after tea, the County astonishingly lost all their remaining wickets before the close and fell short by 62 runs. The 29 year old left-hander had set out his stall for the remainder of the summer.

In the Championship, his application and concentration were taken as read. Applying a similar approach to his opening partner Michael Carberry he genuinely built his innings. Early on he assessed the bowling, pitch and conditions and played cautiously. As he settled, he unfurled his shots. If the bowler over pitched he was driven imperiously through the covers. When they dropped short they were savaged by a square cut, or pulled or hooked mercilessly. He played his attacking strokes with certainty, power being generated by his high back lift. He displayed his character by making as many as 1012 of his 1351 championship runs away from his home turf – a most unusual occurrence for any batsman. He still finished the season as Hampshire's leading run-scorer in the County Championship.

He reached the summit in the away matches against Yorkshire and Lancashire towards the end of August. Historically, Hampshire centuries against the two Roses Counties have been difficult to come by, especially within their borders. However in 2006, the fair-haired opening batsman piloted his side to a famous five wicket victory at Headingley. With Hampshire chasing 404, an unbeaten innings of 168 made in 445 minutes rewrote the record books. Yorkshire had never conceded over 400 to lose a match in the final innings in their entire history. The Yorkshire supporters were, therefore, aware of his capabilities as the County travelled to Scarborough. This time, Adams batted for 428 minutes in making 196. In company with the awesomely talented James Vince, who eased his way to a maiden century, he added 278 – a Hampshire record fourth wicket partnership. Though the pair took their side to a position of total dominance, the loss of the first day to rain effectively consigned the match, played on a benign wicket, to a draw.

After being dismissed for only 160 (Adams 5), when the wicket was at its most playful, Hampshire were always facing a daunting struggle against Lancashire at Liverpool. However, Jimmy Adams fought them every inch of the way when Hampshire started their second innings 238 runs in arrears with just over two days remaining. He defied the Lancashire attack for 10 hours 35 minutes before being last out for 196 at tea. It was the longest innings ever played by a Hampshire batsman, as well as the longest by any man this summer. Though McKenzie, Sean Ervine and, more memorably at the end, Danny Briggs – the pair added 88 for the last wicket – helped him chisel time away, Lancashire, amid great excitement, chased down the eventual victory target of 168 in 33 overs. It was though a titanic effort by Adams that deserved a more positive reward.

It was his catch at short-leg at Canterbury as the clock approached zero hour that secured Hampshire's Division 1 status. Naturally reserved, he really deserved to be the man at the centre of attention.

If his Championship season was notable for long, time consuming innings, he demonstrated that his technique and mental strength were equal to the demands of the shorter form of the game. In the T20 he was, of course, the country's leading run scorer as he played with unsuspecting élan and panache. After a first over sighter he brought out his bat like a latter day King Arthur wielding Excalibur. He scored two centuries at the Rose Bowl – against Surrey and Glamorgan – but his best innings was undoubtedly a quite remarkable 61 against Somerset on a Rose Bowl wicket that was even more roguish than those first encountered on transfer there from Northlands Road. No other batsman was remotely interested in attempting to counter the conditions – or so it seemed – but Adams brought his innate nous and intelligence to bear and proved strokemaking was still possible in unfriendly conditions. He stayed leg-side of the side ball and cut, pulled or drove on length and direction. No other batsman made double figures. Perhaps his club cricket, for St. Cross in Winchester, where he still plays when not required by Hampshire, and which possesses one of the more difficult Southern League wickets, helped him to think his way around the conditions. Food for thought.

In the CB40, he demonstrated the extent of his form and development as he comfortably outpaced Phil Hughes, who is renowned in Australia for his hectic scoring rate, when they batted together against Kent at the Rose Bowl.

Jimmy Adams signed a new 3-year contract at the end of the season. In the last two years, he has personified the classic late developer. Before then, he looked destined to become a marginal figure for his County. He is now indispensable to Hampshire, and being a local man, born and bred in the County and loyal to St. Cross, all those who have watched him during and since his schooldays have revelled in his latent success.

CHRIS TREMLETT

One of the most heartening occurrences of the summer was undoubtedly Chris Tremlett's resurgence at Surrey culminating in his selection for the tour

of Australia. He bowled 361.5 overs – his highest aggregate in any season during his career to date – taking 48 wickets at the most impressive average of 20.18. Newspapers were full of comments that, given their heights, Stuart Broad, Steve Finn and Tremlett would subject the Australian batting to an ‘air raid’ this winter. Broad, at 6 ft 5 ins, is the shortest of the trio.

ON BETTING

Pakistan tours have been enmeshed in controversy for some time now. 2010 exceeded them all for drama. It was a great pity that the much gifted Mohammed Amir was enveloped; only 18 years old he already looked the best new ball bowler in the world. It is clear, however, that the whole betting scenario is a murky and indeed dangerous world controlled by ruthless gangsters. A Times article by a Pakistan journalist suggested that some of the proceeds were filtered off to Al-Queda and the Taliban. The cricket authorities possibly do not have the expertise or resources to tackle the issue effectively.

The Economist magazine, stated that corruption was virtually unknown in the major American sports as players were so well paid they would not be so tempted. The authorities also adopted a zero tolerance approach by banning players for life if they strayed. However, a few weeks later, that great Olympic athlete and now respected broadcaster, Michael Johnson, mentioned in The Times, that the major American sports teams, all franchises, do not make large profits. Cricket clearly has to strike a balance; it cannot pay exorbitant salaries and will always operate on the cusp of viability.

Whilst there is much talk about zero tolerance in terms of life bans for any player involved, surely another option is to reduce the number of one-day matches. Monitoring would then become, albeit relatively, easier. A reduction would also assist the players who now are having to cope with an unfair workload. The IPL obviously doesn’t help. That competition seems to have been mired in corruption also.

Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, cricket has changed more than any sport in the last 30 years. Bringing order to the increasing chaos is going to be extremely difficult. Indeed it may be unachievable. It is likely that the game will continue to change organically. The test will be to continue to attract the paying public. They need to be reassured that what they are watching is genuine. Indians will always watch cricket, no matter the circumstances.

ON MONEYBALL

Moneyball is one of the most important and influential sports books published this century to date. The book’s author is Michael Lewis, an American business writer, who tells the story of how a Major Baseball League team, Oakland A’s regularly over-achieves despite having one of the lowest budgets. It features the recruitment strategies adopted by the franchise’s General Manager, Billy Beane.

What has this to do with cricket ? The book has an increasing relevance. For Beane really analyses a player’s stats before bidding for him in the Draft – the

process by which players are recruited from Colleges and High Schools in all the major American sports. He looks beyond the headline stats. e.g. home runs, and examines a plethora of computer generated subsidiary stats, tables and charts to establish a likely recruit's consistency in all types of the game situation and their potential to contribute to a winning formula. Beane's analysis invariably means that he eschews star names whose personality and glamour attract the headlines but whose performance stats, below the top line, are usually flaky.

When reading the book (initially sometime ago but re-read recently), the Editor's mind turned instinctively to a day's play at Portsmouth in 1991. The visitors were Worcestershire who included Graeme Hick, in poor form in Tests against the touring West Indies. When Kevin Shine clicked, he was fast as any bowler in the land and on this occasion he gave Hick a torrid time as Worcestershire followed on. However, in the wake of his long penetrative first innings spell, Mark Nicholas was eventually compelled to rest him. Whilst Shine grazed in the outfield, Hick went on to complete an imperious century. When Shine returned towards the end of the day, Hick indeterminately edged him to slip in the first over. Mickey Stewart, then England's Manager, had left the ground earlier as Hick was just beginning to prosper and selected him for the following Test. And yet, the prolific Worcestershire batsman had demonstrated conclusively, despite his century, that he was incapable of handling fast bowling. Hick made 19 and 1 in the Test and was dropped for the last – he made 75 runs in four Tests in that series at an average of 10.71. He would certainly have not met Beane's selection criteria.

Given the no show and under performance of overseas players in 2010 – not only in Hampshire but also elsewhere – cricket's managers would do well to look at Beane's methods. They also apply to the ever-increasing de facto transfer market. Counties, though they might claim otherwise, are not obtaining value for money.

Jim Smith, the former sage Football Manager of Portsmouth, once remarked that players are not always the best judges of the abilities of their fellow professionals. Jockeys are reportedly poor judges of horses when giving tips. Many of the current signings seem to be subjective- a recurring theme in Lewis' book – and prompted mainly by commercial considerations. People will watch a winning team. The belief that spectators would come to view personalities is flawed. They appear too many times on television to be a novelty.

Billy Beane's approaches are gaining more recognition and the world's coaches in all sports are now beginning to beat a path to his door. Note the name.

As for Moneyball it is a rattling, fast pace read and highly recommended. It is a book that transcends business and sport. A film on Beane's story, with Brad Pitt in the lead role, is currently scheduled to be released in September of next year.