

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

**Patrons:** John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

## NEWSLETTER No. 309 – SUMMER 2011

### MEETINGS

#### IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE GAME?

Apart from Hampshire's coruscating form in the Twenty20 Competition, the main talking point this summer has surely been the deduction of eight points because of the quality of the pitch against Nottinghamshire at the Rose Bowl. That decision raises two important issues. One is the sort of match that the sports governors wish to provide. The Notts. game went to the very last ball. Spectators were enthralled, indeed the game grabbed their attention almost from the start. It was different – spin bowlers prevailed. However, David Griffiths and, particularly, Chris Wood made inroads into the Notts. top order in both innings. The latter's ability to bowl 'jaffas' is extraordinary. This would appear to indicate that the pitch was not only one for spin bowlers.

Contrast that pitch with the one for the ensuing match against Yorkshire. It was slow and not conducive to quick run-scoring. It produced, of course, an incredible record partnership that is likely to endure for many, many years. Given all his major career threatening health problems, it was marvellous that Michael Carberry should reach a triple century. Neil McKenzie also continued his rich vein of form. Hampshire supporters will take pride in seeing the partnership itemised in Playfair and Wisden in the years ahead.

But, what sort of game would spectators prefer to watch? The Editor has yet to speak to anyone who would prefer the latter.

The other fundamental issue was equity. The Notts. pitch was never dangerous, there is never high uneven balance to threaten the head. The Editor spent a day of the previous week at Hove for Hampshire's match – 13 wickets fell on the first day. Balls reared off a length. The pitch promoted extravagant movement. It was not a good cricket wicket, indeed, only Matt Prior, in the form of his life, made any sense of it and yet the Editor does not recall any discussion on the docking of points.

Hampshire chose not to make an issue of the points deduction. However, the decision of the ECB's pitch inspectors was disquieting and against, rather than for, the interests of the game as a whole.

#### **Wednesday 9 March 2011 – Report**

Geoff Cook majored on coaching and leadership during his entertaining and erudite address. He described how Keith Andrews, the former National Cricket Association (NCA) Director of Cricket and former Northamptonshire and England wicket-keeper wanted the status of cricket to be raised. The four-

stage coaching qualification now culminates in a degree-like course which includes psychology, physiology, nutrition and skills. He felt there was a danger of over-complication. Coaching is fundamentally about basics, whether batting, bowling or fielding. He then touched upon the relationship between captain and coach. The degree of intervention by the coach normally depended on the experience of the captain. With an experienced captain, for example, Dale Blenkanstein, there was little the coach could do once the player took the field. He saw his responsibility as recruiting or motivating players to establish that they were committed to Durham. With a new captain, then the coach had to be more flexible. It was essential that, with a group of players living closely together for six months of the year, a coach possessed excellent man management skills. This did not mean treating all players equally. Each required an individual approach depending on their mental make-up.

Geoff Cook then gave a potted history of the development of Durham's cricket since their entry to the County Championship. Off the field, the budget originally leapt from £26,000 to £1 m. to become a first-class County. Their promotion from a Minor County meant that players from the North East were given the opportunity to stay in the area rather than migrating south. In their first 18 years as a first-class County, over 50 out of 115 players to appear for Durham were from the North East. They had produced four England players, plus Phil Mustard for one-day internationals. The original challenge was to recruit people with the right values and enthusiasm.

He concluded with a few thoughts on county cricket. He felt it was now at a delicate stage. The structure and media needed to promote county cricket. The newspaper coverage was now reduced to such an extent that county cricket's profile had been correspondingly lowered significantly. There was a need to redress the balance.

### **Wednesday 30 March 2011 – Report**

Our Chairman, Susanne Marlow, happily resuming her place at the head of the table wished to place on record her thanks to David Fish, our outgoing Honorary Secretary, for his support and conscientiousness in pursuit of the Society's activities. David would be sorely missed, though he still hopes to attend meetings.

Our speaker, Mike Vockins, took a Ramble through Cricket as his theme. In an autobiographical account of his life in the game, he began by mentioning his early cricket career with Highclere Cricket Club in Hampshire, cricket at University and then how he became the catalyst of the invention of six-a-side indoor cricket, which is now played so widely across the country. He then became secretary of Worcestershire CCC in 1972 after a lengthy interview, prolonged by his examination of the interviewees. In the early stages of his tenure, he mentioned the kindness of Desmond Eagar, Leslie Deakins (Warwickshire), Wilf Wooller (Glamorgan) and Leslie Ames (Kent) in sharing their own experiences with him. John Arlott and, at Worcester Reg Perks, were also supportive. He recalled the great Worcestershire players of his time and recounted the six titles in five years under Phil Neale. His first match as

secretary was against Australia in 1972; his last was the visit of the Australians in June 2001, whereupon he retired.

He spoke warmly about Basil D'Oliveira and John Arlott. It was the latter who gave particular support to the great Worcestershire all-rounder in his quest to play county cricket. People possessed a great affection for D'Oliveira. John Arlott spoke movingly at his retirement dinner, so much so in fact that Basil was just unable to respond. As a vicar, he mentioned John Arlott's three hymns.

He worked with Peter May, Ted Dexter and Colin Cowdrey in administration at Lord's. Those connections and his work at Worcestershire led to him managing overseas tours. The first was to Zimbabwe, with Mark Nicholas as captain. He thoroughly enjoyed working with the Hampshire captain. The tour, though, very nearly did not take place. Nicholas was on a UN blacklist (with Chris Broad and Graham Monkhouse, who were also on the touring party) because he had cricket connections with South Africa. The Zimbabwe Cricket Union originally refused entry but after our speaker made it very clear that the tour would not go ahead without his captain. Their hosts flinched and rescinded their decision.

Mike Vockins had toured Australia where thanks to Colin Cowdrey he met Ray Lindwall, Keith Miller and Sir Donald Bradman. He also went to Pakistan where armed guards were required everywhere the team played.

He then mentioned his career in the church. Since his Ordination in 1988, which Worcestershire supported immensely, he had conducted baptisms, weddings and funerals. He gave an Address at David Shepherd's funeral at Instow, helped with the players' tribute to Ben Hollioake when he died in Australia in 2002 and led the worship at Hereford Racecourse to remember the victims of 9/11. He remarked that even the horses stopped!

He is now Secretary of the Hornsby Group Trust who provide support to ex-County cricketers and their dependents. He is also on the ECB Committee for organising the Major Match Programme. In the Q and A session he insightfully and sympathetically commented on Michael Yardy who had recently returned from England's tour.

In his biographical account of Mike Vockin's life in the March Newsletter, the Editor recalled his memorable visit to the Society in November 1983. This address was just as distinguished.

## **A G M**

Apart from David Fish standing down as Hon. Secretary (see above) there were two other noteworthy items. One was to thank Derek Coulson for his supportive work as a Committee member for many years. Derek had resigned because of his numerous other commitments. Derek's replacement will be Richard Mallinson who was welcomed to the Committee.

Since the AGM our Vice-Chairman Ken Blowe has agreed to take on the role of Hon. Secretary on a temporary basis.

## **THE HORNSBY TRUST**

Terry Crump included a piece on the Hornsby Trust in Issue 24 of the Rose Bowl Round-Up. For those who may not have seen it, Terry has given kind permission for his editorial to be reproduced.

The Hornsby Trust's role and purpose is to help former County cricketers (or their dependants) and, even today, there are calls on this support. Many of the Trust's beneficiaries are from that era when players' wages were not great and when not all players were awarded a County Benefit, so there was little or no opportunity to put money away for the proverbial 'rainy day'. The support the Trust offers them is greatly valued, as is very evident from the warm thanks they regularly receive from the beneficiaries. As well as supporting players from earlier generations the Trust also helps others who were playing County cricket far more recently. Here the help offered is, often, one-off, meeting the cost or provision of medical treatment or other support. Such treatment and support is frequently needed as a result of sporting injuries sustained in their earlier cricket career. The original investment provided by the founder, John Hornsby, and subsequent wise stewardship of those funds, means that the Trust is able to help regular beneficiaries largely through the income arising from investments. Additional support, for one-off cases and other support that's needed, has to be funded from donations. The Trust welcome donations, from all sources, donations modest and donations generous. Not only will they help present work. But also others who need our support too. Might you be able to help the Trust, please, by sending a donation? This will be greatly appreciated. Please send your donation (made out to The Hornsby Trust) to The Revd Prebendary Michael Vockins OBE, Birchwood Lodge, Birchwood, Storrige, MALVERN, Worcs. WR13 5EZ. If you would like to do this in the form of a bequest please do write to Mike for further details. Recently, at a number of funerals, the family has generously agreed that the collection, or donations in memory of the deceased, should come to the Trust and this is something greatly valued. If you find that you are involved in planning funeral arrangements is this something you might consider?

In all of this, those who support the Hornsby Trust – in all manner of ways – are showing, in a very real way, their appreciation of those who have played the game in the past and who have given them great enjoyment, often life-long enjoyment. Supporting the Hornsby Trust in supporting players of earlier generations (and more recent ones, too) is a way of expressing thanks.

© Copyright Alan Edwards 2011 (alan.edwards60@ntlworld.com)