

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

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MEETINGS

Wednesday 16 November 2011

The Society extends a warm welcome to Patrick Ferriday to this evening's meeting. His self-published book Before the Lights Went Out, an account of the 1912 Triangular Tournament, has earned uniformly positive reviews. Our speaker will also be bringing some memorabilia from the series with him. None of the Society's speakers has ever covered this era before and so it will be a most interesting evening.

Wednesday 19 October 2011 – Report

Alan Oakman began his address by describing his war time experiences whilst a child in Hastings, where he was born. His account lent authenticity to the TV series, Foyle's War, which is of course based in that town. He described the bombs, doodlebugs and people being machine-gunned by German planes. His grandmother was killed whilst collecting her pension.

He was called to the Sussex nets in 1946 where he bowled out Billy Griffith. He reported to Hove on 1 April the following year and was offered a one-year contract at £4 per week. His mother wanted him to join the police but his father thought he should "give cricket a go". He played for the club and ground and second XI before being called up at Northampton as an off-spin bowler. His figures were nought for 99. He strengthened his body by working on a building site on Romney March in the winter of 1947/48. His second match of the 1948 season was against Middlesex at Lord's. He remembers it vividly. Bowling at the pavilion end, he bowled Harry Sharp. He then diddled Denis Compton for 17, bowled through the gate. He was ribbed by both sets of players. The Middlesex team were concerned that many of the crowd would go home at lunchtime. The Sussex players liked to see Compton bat. He then did national service. His original choice was the RAF but Billy Griffith advised him to join The Guards. There were humorous stories of public duties outside Buckingham Palace. Until this time he was a spin bowler but in 1956 his county captain, Robin Marlars, informed him that he would be the main spin bowler and asked him to move up the order to three. His Test debut as a batsman at Headingley followed very shortly. He was not included in the original selection for Old Trafford but was then called up. He went on, of course, to take five catches in Jim Laker's leg trap. He was selected for the MCC tour of South Africa in the following winter but then experienced back trouble. A rehabilitation course by a specialist in Hastings put him on the right road and he has not suffered any further problems since. He played, though, only three matches in 1957. He then described Sussex's success in the early years of the Gillette Cup. Ted Dexter felt that Sussex were well equipped to

win the competition. Before it started, Dexter asked the players if they wanted the winner of the Man of the Match award to keep the £50 prize or share it. He recounted that looking around the dressing room the only two likely winners were either Dexter or Jim Parks, so the collective decision was to share it! He spent many years coaching in South Africa and at the end of his career with Sussex in 1968, thought about moving there to live. He became an umpire in 1969, but then received an approach from Warwickshire to coach in the following season. He remained at Warwickshire in that capacity and as assistant Secretary/Cricket until his retirement in 1995. He described how seriously all the Warwickshire county teams regard their cricket. Even the over-50s team have trials! There were many other stories including his recollection of the Hampshire players of his era, memories of Fred Trueman and Brian Statham and his room-mate for 18 years, Ken Suttle, The little left-hander was hit twice on the nose by Charlie Griffith on successive West Indian tours in 1963 and 1966. He also recounted the circumstances of his umpiring a Test at Edgbaston in 1973 because of a contretemps between Arthur Fagg and Rohan Kanhai. He also umpired in even sadder circumstances when he deputised for Sid Buller after the latter had died during the tea interval.

The evening was a truly evocative one. Alan Oakman held his audience in thrall throughout.

SOCIETY NEWS

Australian Cricket Society

John Young has kindly let the Editor have a copy of the programme for the 44th Annual Dinner of the Australian Cricket Society. It lists all their speakers at the event from 1968 to 2011. Four of the speakers have addressed Hampshire Cricket Society viz: Paul Sheahan, Derek Randall, John Inverarity and Christopher Martin Jenkins. Another of their speakers – Andy Bichel played for Hampshire. Just for the record, the 2011 speaker was Graham McKenzie.

REVIEW OF THE SUMMER

Lancashire were deserved County Champions. They won more matches than any other team. They also possessed, by far, the best bowling attack. Ironically, of course, they carried off the title away from Old Trafford, playing most of their home games at Aigburth, Liverpool. The Editor understands that the weather would have intervened more often had they played in Manchester!

Hampshire endured an annus horribilis. They played excellently in the Twenty20 Competition performing with more certainty than in 2010 when they were title winners. There are those who felt they were deprived of a final place by Duckworth-Lewis. However, the last two overs of their innings when they scored so few runs after Shahid Afridi's departure was the real turning point.

However, it is always the Championship season on which a team is judged. Hampshire were effectively relegated by the end of May. The reasons were many and varied. A litany of Injuries, particularly to bowlers, Michael Carberry's career threatening illness, Imran Tahir's early season disposition, IPL absences (Michael Lumb), under-performance and the Rose Bowl wicket all contributed. It was not until the final two matches that Hampshire fielded an unchanged team. 21 players were used during the season. Carberry's return in mid-July strengthened the batting immediately. James Tomlinson's return made the world of difference to the new ball attack in late August. However, by then, it was far too late.

There were shafts of sunlight. Liam Dawson took a definite step forward as an opening batsman. His two grand innings against Somerset and Warwickshire at the Rose Bowl demonstrated the extent of his development. James Vince made two big centuries against Sussex at the Rose Bowl and Warwickshire at Edgbaston. He just needs to find more consistency but that task is surely not beyond him. On his return, Michael Carberry showed his Test credentials. Danny Briggs was asked to bowl before mid-day on the first day of the season, surely some sort of record for a spin bowler. He then seemed to be bowling all summer. Chris Wood looks as he could develop into a genuine all-rounder. Benny Howell demonstrated his versatility with a coruscating Sunday century against Surrey at Whitgift School and then a fine 71 against champions elect Lancashire on his county debut. If newspapers are to be believed, however, he now seems to be looking for another county. David Balcombe was sent on loan to Kent. His strike rate there was the best in the country and he was second, behind the Indian Ojha at Surrey in the Championship averages. Whilst he may have been assisted by the Tiflex ball at the start of the innings, he also took many wickets when the shine was off. It has recently been announced that the Second Division will use the Dukes ball, as in Division One, next season.

The Editor saw two matches in the second division last year. The gulf in standard compared with the first division is enormous. However, for the county to make an immediate return, Hampshire must find a way of winning matches at the Rose Bowl and hope that one of their bowlers produces the X-factor in terms of dismissing sides. Imran Tahir will certainly be missed.

England defeated a surprisingly poor Indian side. The techniques of their latter's young batsmen were found wanting. Twenty20 cricket is not a good preparation for the Test game. It seems their place as the leading Test nation may be short-lived.

It was no surprise that an inexperienced England side were rolled over so easily in the recent one-day series in India. It was yet another largely unmemorable one-day event, watched by very few people. Are we now reaching saturation point and the law of diminishing returns relating to limited-overs tournaments or is the Indian public, now only interested in Twenty20 cricket? Given the economic clout of India that is a sobering thought.

The major talking point in the last few weeks has been the match-fixing trial in London. On one level, it seems to be a major step forward to be able to prove guilt. On the other hand, however, the betting industry is of such a large scale on the sub-continent and managed by ruthless criminal syndicates, that it would be fanciful to hope that the sentences handed down will stamp out the practice. ICC comment that they do not have the resources to undertake an investigation on the same lines as the News of the World. The most chilling statement, though, was the one in which one observer living in Pakistan commented that the three defendants were unlucky enough to be found out in a country which is fond of applying its laws! Betting scandals seem certain to be a way of life in cricket in the foreseeable future, and probably beyond.

GREG LAMB

Greg Lamb, who played for Hampshire from 2004 to 2008, made his Test debut for Zimbabwe against Pakistan at Bulawayo in September. He had previously played in fourteen limited-overs internationals and five Twenty20 matches since Zimbabwe resumed their participation in international cricket in March 2010.

IMRAN TAHIR

Imran Tahir made his Test debut for South Africa against Australia at Newlands, Cape Town, last Wednesday (9th). Just prior to the event, in an interview on the cricinfo website, he indicated he would not be playing any more county cricket. He signed For Hampshire as a virtual unknown in 2008, but took five for 132 and seven for 66 against Lancashire at Old Trafford on debut. These figures remained his best for Hampshire. The match was drawn but such was his impact that the County won four of their last five matches and were transformed from relegation candidates to title contenders. They eventually finished third. In just seven matches, Tahir claimed 44 wickets (avge. 16.68). His googly that year was particularly lethal. In the following season, injuries meant that he was overbowled and was used as both "shock" and "stock". Though he took 52 wickets, he was much less effective. After a fine season with Warwickshire in 2010, he returned to Hampshire last season. He took time to find a rhythm, perhaps because of problems of following through on the pitch, but still headed the bowling averages with 28 wickets @ 24.46. In 27 matches for the County, he took 124 wickets (avge. 24.46). No bowler in the County's history has ever celebrated a wicket more joyously. His batting was always diverting. He clearly believed the ball was there to be hit. And his fielding improved dramatically. He always gave the impression that he was enjoying the game. He left the County having gained a Lord's winners medal in the Friends Provident Trophy in 2009. Imran's time with Hampshire also saw a change in his appearance. The long dark mane of 2008 was transformed into a fashionable, blond-streaked haircut! At the age of 32, it will be interesting to see how his international career develops.