

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 315 - FEBRUARY 2012

MEETINGS

Wednesday 8 February 2012 – Meeting

The Society welcomes Amol Rajan to this evening's meeting. In a change to the normal format, he will be interviewed by David Allen, Hampshire Cricket's Honorary Archivist.

AMOL RAJAN grew up in Tooting. He studied English at Downing College, Cambridge, where he joined a distinguished list of editors of *Varsity*, the student newspaper. He joined *The Independent* as a news reporter in 2007, and was subsequently Sports News Correspondent, before eventually progressing to Deputy Comment Editor.

He now works as an adviser to Evgeny Lebedev, owner of *The Independent* titles and the *London Evening Standard*. His week includes writing on cricket, politics and restaurants. He is a trustee of Prospex, a charity for young people in Islington.

He is probably best known in the cricket world as the author of *Twirlymen – The Unlikely History of Cricket's Greatest Spin Bowlers*.

Wednesday 11 January 2012 – Report

The good-sized audience who attended the January meeting enjoyed an informative and enlightening discourse on the life of a Premier League referee and first-class umpire in the company of Martin Bodenham. He started with his football career at the top level, which extended over twenty years and 800 matches. He is still involved in the sport. A level 3 coach, he looks after a group of referees who officiate semi-professional matches. He is also a member of the Key Match Incident (KMI) panel (KMIs being 2nd yellow cards and penalties or not) for all matches from the Conference to the Premier League. There are three assessors, who acting independently of each other and without consulting, submit their reports to the Football/Premier League on KMIs. Their incidence is increasing. He was asked to assess on 130 KMIs during the whole of the 2010/11 season. In the current season he has already reported on 110 KMIs.

He then gave an account of his own cricket career. He played club cricket in Sussex and Cornwall, and appeared in three 2nd XI matches for the former. Once, when fielding for Sussex's county team, he fielded as a substitute against the West Indies, and caught David Holford. He umpired in league and 2nd XI cricket. Peter Moores, then Sussex coach, suggested he apply for a place on the First-Class Umpires' Reserve List. He was seconded by Alec Stewart. After an interview at Lord's his first application was unsuccessful. It

was a year in which no new umpires were registered as 2nd XI cricket was undergoing a restructuring. He applied in the following year and was accepted. He was on the Reserve List for three years and has been on the First-Class Umpires' List for the past three years. He is one of four umpires not to have played first-class cricket. However, he felt he had been accepted by players because he was identifiable with another sport.

He then gave a resume of the umpire's year. He is contracted for 12 months to officiate 92 days of cricket at all levels (ie including 2nd XI cricket and women's internationals). He has to organise his own accommodation. There is a three day pre-season meeting to be briefed on the regulations, which differ between competitions. He was also subject to a fitness test. There are workshops, three boundary assessments a season (from which he will receive verbal and written feedback) and self-assessment after each match. He has an appointed mentor, who is David Byas, the former Yorkshire captain. There is an end of season meeting with other umpires. He is also subject to an end-of-year appraisal. He regarded the entire process as being very professional. He thought the discipline of players at first-class level was very good. He also made interesting and perceptive comments on preparation, technology and pitch inspection. Martin Bodenham's address was also laced with stories and incidents which ensured his audience remained attentive throughout. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

NEXT MEETINGS

Members are reminded that the last two meetings of the Society's season are as follows:-

Wednesday 7 March 2010 – Test Valley Golf Club.

The speaker is Anthony Collis, author of *Inns and Outs – Cricket's Pub Signs*. This is a unique subject which is certain to produce an entertaining evening. The book has received very positive reviews.

The meeting is preceded by the Society's AGM and will therefore start at 7pm.

Wednesday 28 March 2012 – The Richards Room at The Rose Bowl, starting at 8pm

The speaker is David Allen, Hampshire Cricket's Honorary Archivist, who will be talking about some of the treasures in the County's collection.

HAMPSHIRE AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

On 6 June, the day after the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations, Hampshire will return to the Nevill Ground, Tunbridge Wells, to play Kent for only the eighth occasion there. The previous seven matches have produced a scoreline of Kent one, Hampshire one, with five draws.

Kent recorded their only victory in the first encounter in 1902, by an innings and 195 runs in two days. Hampshire were very weak in that year and finished at the foot of the table. The match reflected their fortunes. After winning the toss and batting, they were bowled out for just 138 and 108. The enchanting slow left-arm spin bowler, Colin Blythe, virtually took Hampshire wickets for fun throughout his career, and finished with match figures of eight for 98. Kent's total of 441, a record for either side on the ground, was founded on an opening partnership of 243 between C J Burnup (102) and Edward Dillon (137). Notwithstanding Blythe's efforts, he was upstaged by Hampshire's fast bowler, Hesketh Vernon Hesketh-Prichard, who toiled manfully for 33 overs, taking seven for 139. These remain a ground record by a Hampshire bowler.

In 1913, the suffragettes had burned down the original pavilion. A new one, identical to the original, was constructed within weeks of the incident. Hampshire returned in 1919, when all Championship fixtures were two-day affairs. Perhaps not surprisingly, the match was drawn. Blyth had perished at Passchendale in November 1917. However, his long-term slow left-arm ally, Frank Woolley, who was a genuine all-rounder prior to the First World War, took five for 70 as Hampshire were dismissed for 237 (Phil Mead 62). "Tich" Freeman, Blythe's de facto replacement, also snared three batsmen for 52. Kent then ran up 307 (James Seymour 115), with the South African all-rounder Basil Melle taking five for 70. 449 runs had been scored on the first day. Melle (77) then put on his pads to dominate a first wicket partnership of 105 with George Brown (29). Hampshire were still in danger of defeat as they slipped to 141 for four. Lionel Tennyson then walked to the wicket. Through measured strokeplay, he monopolised the scoring for the remainder of the innings. He reached 102 in only 80 minutes (16 fours), to secure an honourable draw. When Hampshire were dismissed for 296 there was insufficient time for Kent to bat again. Though Tennyson was derided later in his career for his inability to cope with spin bowling because of his increased girth and immobility, the Woolley/Freeman axis held no terrors for him on this occasion.

Johnnie Arnold enjoyed a fine match, with 61 and 68, when Hampshire returned in 1931. He shared an opening stand of 102 with Jim Bailey (46) in the first innings and 123 in 105 minutes with George Brown (54) for the second wicket in the second. The young opening batsman was in only his second full season of Championship cricket. He had played in his only Test, against New Zealand at Lord's, only a week earlier. Rain interrupted the first day as Hampshire collapsed from 250 for four to 274 all out. Kent totalled 244, with fast bowler Giles Baring taking five for 63. Kent's captain, Bryan

Valentine, hit an explosive 85 to rescue his side from a precarious 112 for five. After twenty minutes on the final day, Hampshire were 141 for three, 171 runs ahead. Thereafter, rain washed out the rest of the day's play to spoil the prospect of an intriguing finish.

Hampshire did not play again at Tunbridge Wells for 42 years. They returned in their championship summer of 1973. Unfortunately, rain spoiled the encounter, washing out the entire first day. Kent, who batted first on the only occasion in all the matches at the ground, found it difficult to make headway against the Hampshire bowlers. They eventually declared at 225 for six after 85 overs. The cultured opening batsman, Graham Johnson, made 97. Mike Taylor, opening the bowling with Bob Herman in the absence of the injured Tom Mottram, took four for 59. With only eight hours remaining, Hampshire went for quick runs and declared upon obtaining the second batting bonus point at 150 for four. Gordon Greenidge (55) and Richard Gilliat (67not out) put on 92 for the third wicket. Kent then collapsed against Taylor as he took all of their five wickets to fall by the time the total had reached 49. Colin Cowdrey (58 not out) and John Shepherd (57not out) then added exactly 100 before Kent declared, leaving Hampshire to score 225 in 150 minutes. Hampshire then struggled – a rarity in 1973 – and were hanging on at 84 for six at the close. One interesting feature towards the end of the match was a wicket for Cowdrey, that of Peter Sainsbury, with his leg-breaks.

Hampshire returned in the following year to record their only victory, by seven wickets. Gordon Greenidge was at his most omnipotent as he raced to 82 out of 132, adding 105 for the second wicket with David Turner. The diminutive left-hander then went on to 152 (16 fours and two sixes), the County's highest individual score at the ground, guiding his side to 332 in the process – Hampshire's highest innings total at the ground. After falling to a devastating Andy Roberts at Basingstoke just over a month earlier, the apprehensive Kent batsmen made only 141 (Brian Luckhurst 50). The Antiguan fast bowler took three for 50. He was well supported by Bob Herman (three for 39) and, again showing his liking for the ground, Mike Taylor (three for 29). Following on, Kent fared much better in reaching 265 (Johnson 63). Roberts and Herman again took three wickets apiece, as did Peter Sainsbury (30-18-50-3). Hampshire romped home in scoring 76 for three. Skipper Richard Gilliat stroked an exhilarating 30 not out in only ten minutes, sealing victory with a six and a four off his opposite number, Cowdrey. It was the latter's first appearance since being famously felled by Roberts at Basingstoke. He made 5, before being dismissed by the fast bowler, and 15.

The next encounter, in 1980, was a damp squib. Rain severely curtailed play on the first two days and, apart from one over, washed away the entire third. In the time available, Hampshire scored 179, and Kent made 67 for four. By one of the game's twists of fate, the match marked the last Championship appearance of Mike Taylor, who had been so successful in his two matches for Hampshire there.

Hampshire last played first-class cricket at Tunbridge Wells in 1989. That match was also curtailed by the weather. Rain and bad light prevented play

on half of the first day and allowed only three overs on the last. Hampshire won the toss and batted, but in conditions which favoured bowlers, were dismissed for 213 before lunch on the second day. Malcolm Marshall (61) and Tim Tremlett (32 not out) provided the backbone of the innings with an eighth wicket partnership of 73. In more benign conditions, Kent then passed Hampshire's total for the loss of only one wicket. Mark Benson (114) and Neil Taylor (104 not out) added 195 for the second wicket. When the rain made its final intervention Kent were 276 for three.

Let us hope that the weather does not spoil this year's match. The Nevill Ground, with its rhododendrons in bloom, is one of county cricket's most attractive venues and well worth a visit.

THE MORGAN REVIEW

The Morgan Review has received widespread criticism. And rightly so. Players and umpires may regard it favourably as they will work on fewer days.

However, the cornerstone of the report, the reduction in the number of championship matches from 16 to 14 has, at a stroke, undermined the credibility of the report. Since the introduction of two divisions in 2000, the county championship has more than proved its worth. The game will have returned to the pre-1993 position when counties may have won the championship by avoiding playing the stronger teams twice. One compromise suggested is that the first division should remain at 16 games and the second division be reduced to 14 matches. This is also a nonsense. Any team gaining promotion must be able to compete in the first division, which is becoming more difficult. The promoted team must therefore possess worthy credentials. It will not do so if it has played, say, the bottom team twice and the second team in the division once.

One of the original purposes of the report was to shorten the season so that English teams will have the opportunity of playing in the Champions League, a Twenty20 competition. It is doubtful if many supporters will care over much as they will be unable to plan sufficiently to attend the competition. It is also a tournament skewed in favour of teams from India, Australia and South Africa. ESPN's contract also means that the television coverage is received by very few people in the UK.

A survey of The Cricketer's readers in the summer is revealing. Seventy-five per cent of those who responded thought that too much Twenty20 cricket was played. Fifty-six percent were not interested in the Indian Premier League. One suspects that the interest in the Champions League will be much lower.

Cricket's followers are continually being reminded that the game has to change in an increasingly commercial world. Yet, in the last fifty years, cricket has changed more than any other sport and, in the commercial world, many of the best organisations are led by the views of their consumers. Mr. Morgan's review is sadly lacking in that respect.

THOUGHTS ON TWO RECENT TEST SERIES

Predictably, after last summer's Test series in England, Australia overwhelmed India 4 – 0. It is difficult to assess just how much Australia have improved. The top three of their batting remains problematical and they were over-reliant on Ricky Ponting, enjoying a renaissance, and Michael Clarke. Australia's bowlers were largely the same as those plundered by England in 2010/11. The only difference was James Pattinson, brother of Darren who played one test for England in 2008. He missed the end of the Indian series because of injury. However, in the rubbers against New Zealand at the end of last year, and at Sydney against India, he gave notice that he was an emerging force. Injury then intervened. However, scarily, he bowled with Glen McGrath economy and penetration. It is evident that the 2013 Ashes Series is likely to be a close one. In India's case, the time when their trio of great batsmen retire from the test scene may be close at hand.

As for England, their stay as the World's No. 1 side looks as if it will be a short one. Their batsmen were all at sea against the Pakistani spin bowlers. In the first Test in Dubai it was clear that they were under cooked. Whilst England clearly have concerns about their schedule over the next twelve months, not to play any tests between September and December of last year was clearly an error. Also, their diet of countering largely fast medium bowlers in the past twelve months made them totally unprepared to face Pakistan's canny spin bowlers. There were comments about Saeed Ajmal's action. He does bowl with a bent elbow but his action is cleared by the ICC. He also played county cricket for Worcestershire last summer. It felt like sour grapes that complaints were raised about his actions after he started to bamboozle England's batsmen. It is clear that England still have a problem with the number six berth, and Kevin Pietersen's place may come under scrutiny if he continues to be dismissed through playing irresponsible shots. It was marvellous, though, to see two England spinners in operation and the return of Monty Panesar was most welcome. He out-bowled Graeme Swann in both the warm up matches and in Abu Dhabi.

Pakistan proved that they have some of the most naturally gifted cricketers in the world. Despite their comparative lack of cricket in the last few years, and the absence of their two high quality opening bowlers, languishing in jail because of the spot-fixing scandal, they really completely outplayed England. It was fun to watch Ajmal and Abdur Rehman purvey their variations of flight and spin (and even more entertaining if one was listening to Geoffrey Boycott on TMS). It is a pity that Pakistan are unable to play at home. It is likely to be some years before teams will feel secure enough to play in that country though negotiations are being held with a view to Bangladesh playing there. However, given the target that England, and indeed Australia, will present to Islamic extremists it must be highly unlikely that these countries will tour Pakistan in the foreseeable future. Given the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Pakistan Government's inability to quell their own terrorist threat within, any team from England and Australia will surely prove too tempting a target for the extremists. Unless, perhaps, Imran Khan becomes Prime Minister in the forthcoming elections.

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