

NEWSLETTER No. 236 - APRIL 2003

WORLD CUP AND HAMPSHIRE REVIEW

Australia retained the World Cup again with some ease. Despite alarms against England – who ran them closer than any other team – and New Zealand, they remained undefeated during the elongated tournament. It was a considerable achievement given that they were weakened by the absence of Shane Warne throughout, and of Jason Gillespie for all but the opening few matches. There were also signs that Glen McGrath was just past his peak. The cutting edge was provided by Brett Lee. His exuberant approach to the wicket was one of the sights of the tournament. He also re-wrote the one-day manual. Bowlers are not expected to propel a ball accurately at 95 mph, a speed he reached consistently. Australia's batting, apart from the Final, was surprisingly frail. However, whenever sides may have sensed a crucial opening, either Michael Bevan and/or Andy Bichel put the innings back on course. Bevan reminded everyone that he was still the best finisher in limited overs cricket. Though Sachin Tendulkar was adjudged man of the tournament, Lee or Bichel would have received the editor's vote. The latter's all round play was a revelation, none more so than when he destroyed England with his blind length leg-cutters before later joining Bevan in their controlled match winning partnership.

Many players departed the world stage at the end of the tournament. Andy Flower and Aravinda de Silva left on a high note. The latter has perhaps been the one true batting genius of his era. At his peak he would place his feet in the correct position and, using his bat like a magician's wand, select to which part of the field he would stroke the ball. Others have been more prolific, more assertive, more consistent. No man though matched his imagination.

Flower of course, left for different reasons, and with Heath Streak, lifted Zimbabwean cricket. Let us hope that he and the courageous Henry Olonga will be able to return to the country of their birth at a later stage to direct and influence their fortunes.

What of Hampshire's prospects for 2003? The situation regarding their overseas players will clearly have disrupted initial plans. At the time of writing the captain has still to be announced. The problematical opening batsman issue of last year still seems to be unresolved. Paul Terry has much on his plate. On the plus side, Ed

Giddins will strengthen the bowling. Chris Tremlett is a year older, wiser and stronger. John Francis will strengthen the batting when he returns from University. John Crawley will be eager to impress the England selectors and Robin Smith will be looking to enjoy an Indian summer. The season is a long one. It will, as always, have its high and low points. Injuries will inevitably play a part. All Counties have improved their squads. Ultimate success may well hinge on performances later on in the season after the side has “bedded down”.

MEETINGS

9 April 2003 - Meeting

For its final meeting of the season, the Society is pleased to welcome another author. **NORMAN GILLER** has, in his own words, “been the hidden orchestrator of more than 50 sports books”. Those with whom he has collaborated on their autobiographies represents an all-star cast. The list includes footballers George Graham, Kevin Keegan, Tommy Docherty and Gordon Banks, cricketers Denis Compton and Tom Graveney and boxers Sir Henry Cooper, Jim Watt and Frank Bruno. He also assisted football commentator Brian Moore, and the irrepressible Eric Morecambe with their memoirs. His latest work bears his own name. His biography of Billy Wright appeared on the bookshelves this winter to good reviews.

He is “The Judge” of the Sun (Robin Smith clearly has a rival!) and along with his son, Michael, has daily puzzle challenges in the Sun, The Times and the Daily Express.

12 March 2003 - Report

The business of the Society’s Annual General Meeting was conducted swiftly. Some changes to the Society’s Committee were agreed with no comment by members. The composition of the Committee is now as follows:-

Chairman	:	Susanne Marlow
Vice-Chairman	:	Ken Blowe
Secretary	:	Brian Smith
Treasurer	:	Les Needs
Committee	:	Nick Twine, Phil Lockett, Derek Coulson, Andy Ray

Brian Smith thanked Susanne on behalf of all members for her unstinting efforts in charting the Society successfully through difficult waters following Jack Moore’s illness.

All members present were pleased that Phil Lockett was now able to rejoin the Committee. They also gave a warm welcome to Derek Coulson who was the first new member on the Committee for several years.

Roy Cavanagh then entertained his audience with reminiscences of his much loved Manchester United and Lancashire County Cricket Club. He gave informed potted biographies of many of the Lancashire captains and mentioned the immense contributions of the Tyldesley brothers – Johnny and Ernest – to the county’s

fortunes. They played a total of 1080 matches for the County between 1895 and 1936, scoring over 66,000 runs. He also referred to his history of the Bolton Association Cricket League, which is the second oldest in the country. Only the Birmingham League enjoys a greater longevity.

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY WEBSITE

A reminder that the Society has its own website, which can be accessed via www.hcs.cricket.org. The site is managed by Vic Isaacs. It includes previous editions of the Newsletter as well as information on speakers who have played first-class cricket. A grand colour photograph of Shaun Udal receiving his HCS Player of the Year Award from our Chairman is also featured.

OBITUARIES

Two of the Society's former speakers have died recently. Charles Knott passed away in February and was remembered in the March Newsletter. He addressed the Society with Hampshire stalwarts Jimmy Gray and Mike Barnard in September 1982. Major Ronald Ferguson came to the Society only last April and delivered a frank, honest and entertaining speech which delighted all those who attended. At the end of the evening he dwelt on prostate cancer, against which he had battled for a considerable period, and devoted his whole-hearted support to increasing the awareness of the disease and the need for early diagnosis and treatment.

SIMON KATICH (3)

At the end of a testing first season following his transfer from his native Western Australia to New South Wales, Simon Katich fulfilled Steve Waugh's faith in him (see previous Newsletter) with a fine all-round performance in the Pura Cup Final at Brisbane. He was nominated man of the match for his 82 and 36, and 3 for 43 in the final innings as his team galloped to a three day victory over Queensland by 246 runs. It was his first innings second wicket partnership of 191 with a renascent Michael Slater (100) that set the foundations for the Blues' win. The pair's association was the dominant feature in a low scoring encounter (NSW 282 and 263; Q 84 and 215). The slim left-handed Katich battled for 277 minutes and made his runs off 165 balls.

He finished the season with 619 runs (avge. 36.41), a career best 19 wickets (avge. 21.00) and held 13 catches.

The national selectors rewarded him for his determination by naming him as vice-captain for Australia 'A' s forthcoming home series against South Africa. He will thus miss Hampshire's first two championship fixtures at Worcester and Cardiff.

CENTURIES IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

113	Western Australia v. Queensland	Brisbane	1998-99
106	Western Australia v. England	Perth	1998-99
120*	Western Australia v. Victoria	Perth	1998-99
154*	Western Australia v. Tasmania	Hobart	1998-99
115	Western Australia v. Queensland (Sheffield Shield Final)	Brisbane	1998-99
137*	Durham v. Leicestershire	Chester-le-Street	2000
114	Durham v. Derbyshire	Darlington	2000
129	Durham v. Lancashire	Old Trafford	2000
105*	Western Australia v. Queensland	Perth	2000-01
152	Western Australia v. Tasmania	Hobart	2000-01
117	Western Australia v. New South Wales	North Sydney	2000-01
101	Western Australia v. Queensland	Brisbane	2000-01
228*	Western Australia v. South Australia	Perth	2000-01
102	Western Australia v. Victoria	Melbourne	2000-01
168*	Australians v. MCC	Arundel	2001
131	Western Australia v. New South Wales	Sydney	2001-02

Katich captained Western Australia in some matches in 2000-01 and 2001-02 when Adam Gilchrist and Justin Langer were on Test duty.

He played in one limited overs international for Australia against Zimbabwe at Melbourne in 2000-01, when he was not required to bat.

Patience

Soothed by the heat-hazed summer day
my eyelids close, I hear the play –
not now the ‘tock’ of ball and bag,
or frantic shouting of ‘Howzat?’
but the click of dice rolled on the board
as cricket patience runs are scored
Past players I have never seen
battle it out and inbetween
Derby and Crewe the game takes place
Spofforth to Bradman, Larwood to Grace
in the summer heat a quiet refrain
to my drowsy travelling on the train.
The sums add up and the journey’s done,
cricket’s still magic, cricket’s still fun.

Imogen Grosberg

WASIM AKRAM

Shortly before this Newsletter was due to be sent to the printers it was announced that Hampshire have signed Wasim Akram as their second overseas player for next summer.

He is a rare cricketer who has spent his entire career playing at the highest level. He made his debut as an eighteen year old for the Pakistan Cricket Board President's XI against the touring New Zealanders at Rawalpindi and took 7 for 50 in the first innings. He had not then even appeared in any Pakistan domestic competition and has rarely done so since. Only two months later he was playing for Pakistan in the reverse series in New Zealand, and enjoyed his first ten wicket haul (5 – 56 and 5 – 72) in his second Test at Dunedin. It was a sensational start to a glittering career. That glitter has sometimes been tarnished with allegations of ball tampering, match fixing and recreational drug use. Nevertheless, he has remained one of the most towering figures in the world game for almost twenty years and only recently has there been a diminution of his awesome powers.

With Waqar Younis he formed one of the most feared of all fast bowling partnerships. They were a formidable duo with the new ball. Then as the shine wore off, they were perhaps even more dangerous. They both perfected the art of “reverse swing”. It was a term not often heard previously but due to their prowess it became common parlance in a very short space of time. Waqar left a trail of injured batsmen's feet or wrecked stumps in his wake as batsmen failed to counter his deadly accurate, and fast, in-swinging yorkers. He could produce the delivery at will. Wasim took his wickets by more subtle means as he mastered cut and swing. He could be virtually unplayable when he was in the groove as the ball darted, veered and swung to utterly defeat poor perplexed and bemused batsmen. When he was in these moods it was an achievement for a batsman to lay bat on ball.

No one who was there will ever forget his performance at Portsmouth United Services Ground when he played for Lancashire in 1995. “Making the ball talk” certainly had a meaning on that occasion.

As a batsman he is a most dangerous and destructive hitter especially off the front foot. He is capable of hitting the ball vast distances. He has not made as many runs as his talent suggests. However, he has a Test century in Australia to his credit and his strokeplay has always made compelling viewing.

His all-round abilities earned him the man-of-the-match award in the World Cup Final of 1992.

A Pakistan cricketer is always subject to the vagaries of internal politics. The constant changes of captains, coaches and personnel, particularly quick bowlers, is taken for granted. Wasim has proved remarkably resilient as he has withstood the sling and arrows over the years. Only four men with pure bowling actions – Walsh, Kapil Dev, Hadlee and Warne (we must exclude Muralitharan) have exceeded his tally of Test wickets. Nobody is within touching distance of his haul of wickets in limited overs internationals. Only Javed Miandad has played in more Tests for Pakistan.

Wasim's previous experience in county cricket was with Lancashire. It was not always a harmonious association, but he helped that County to four Lord's Final successes, one – the 1998 Nat. West Final – as captain. The last occasion a Pakistani player appeared for Hampshire was Aaqib Javid in 1991, the County's second Lord's success ensued. Dare we hope for a repetition?

Whatever the outcome, Hampshire supporters will be privileged to watch one of the game's truly great players this summer.

BRUCE REID

Bruce Reid, the tall former Australian left-arm pace bowler, will be spending a month with Hampshire as bowling coach. Members may recall that the County once signed him as their overseas player, in 1988. Unfortunately, a back injury prevented him from coming and he was replaced by Steve Jefferies. Reid was 12th man for the Rest of the World team in the MCC Bicentenary match in 1987. He substituted for a while and so some Hampshire supporters will have seen him on the field of play. He never, though, toured this country with the Australians.

ED GIDDINS

With all the events of this winter, Hampshire's signing of Ed Giddins has gone unrecorded in the pages of the Newsletter. Hampshire have recruited another experienced player. Like Wasim, his career has not been without incident. He was, of course, suspended from the game for a year in 1997 when he failed a drugs test. Many felt the suspension to be harsh. He could not have been the only cricketer to have allegedly taken illicit drugs.

The ban led to his departure from his native Sussex to Warwickshire. He was anxious to make up for lost time and he bowled splendidly on his return. His 84 wickets in 1998 were only exceeded by Andrew Caddick and Courtney Walsh. He spent three seasons with the midland County before moving to Surrey for whom he made six appearances in their Championship success of last season. Hampshire will therefore be his fourth County.

He enjoyed fleeting success as a Test cricketer in 2000 when a very fine spell of right-arm swing bowling earned him figures of 5 for 15 against New Zealand at Lord's. In 4 Tests his 12 wickets were taken at a cost of just 20 runs each – a creditable average indeed.

His career stats are 465 wickets (avge. 28.44) with a best bowling performance of 6 for 47 for Sussex against Yorkshire in his home town of Eastbourne in 1996.

He is such a natural number eleven batsman that, if they play together, Alan Mullally may well be promoted in the order!