

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

**Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal**

**NEWSLETTER No 365 – OCTOBER 2017 (2)**

## **REMAINING MEETINGS IN 2017**

### **CHANGE OF DATE - NOVEMBER MEETING**

**The November meeting has been changed to Wednesday 22 November. The meeting will still be held at Test Valley Golf Club, starting at 2 pm. The speaker remains Alan Butcher.** Any members wishing to partake of a meal beforehand should contact Susanne Marlow.

### **ANNUAL DINNER**

The speaker at the **Annual Dinner on Wednesday 6 December at the Ageas Bowl** will be another Surrey stalwart, and one of the most engaging men to play the game, **Pat Pocock**. **Application forms to attend the dinner will be circulated shortly after this evening's meeting.**

### **Wednesday 18 October 2017- Meeting**

This evening's speaker is **SIMON YOUNG**. He is a Sports Chaplain, and someone who has always had sport at the centre of his life. Simon played club cricket in the New Forest for Bramshaw, but claims his greatest achievement was whilst at school with Julian Wood, formerly of Hampshire and Berkshire. Seeking 170 odd to win the game, Simon opened the innings only to lose his partner with the score on 1. Cue Julian to the crease, where the pair took the school to victory, with Simon scoring just 9!

Simon's role now is to use sport, and in particular cricket, to engage people with new opportunities, especially those who are marginalised, excluded or isolated and where mental health concerns (dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's notably) often restrict people to feeling able to participate.

During the 2017 season, 1864 – The Hampshire Cricket Community of which Simon is chair, was instrumental in impacting the lives of over 650 people through the engagement in sports projects.

The Society is enormously grateful to Simon for stepping in at such short notice for this evening's meeting and extends to him the warmest of welcomes.

### **Wednesday 4 October 2017 – Report**

Members enjoyed a thoroughly entertaining evening in the company of Kevin Emery. He began by recalling his early days in cricket. He didn't play the game until he was 13. On his debut for Hampshire 2<sup>nd</sup> XI, he took six for 38 against Sussex 2<sup>nd</sup> XI at Horsham in 1981. He then incurred a stress fracture of the lower back. He sought treatment from a doctor at Bristol University and thanks to strict adherence to a rehabilitation programme he was fit to start his only, but notable, season in 1982. After recounting that season, he recalled the characters of his era. He recounted the

banter between Clive Lloyd and Colin Croft (both of Guyana) and Gordon Greenidge and Malcolm Marshall (both from Barbados) during Hampshire's match against Lancashire at Southampton. The Guyanese pair were very confident of victory at the outset but Hampshire romped home as they chased down 112 in 18 overs to record a ten wicket victory. (Editor's Note: Lloyd scored 11 and 60; Croft took 2-102 and 0-62 in 8.4 overs. Greenidge made 9 and 62 not out; Marshall claimed 5-48 and 3-108, as well as making his maiden first-class century - 116 not out). He recalled that Hampshire captain Nick Pocock (164) drove Croft to distraction, literally, as, between the occasional authentic cover drive, he unerringly found the gap down to the third man boundary between the slips and gully. The West Indian contingent in county cricket clearly enjoyed playing against each other, as well as revelling in each others' company off the field. Hartley Alleyne of Worcestershire told Marshall that he knew how to counter him. Marshall cleaned him up in short order and then ran to the boundary to open the pavilion gate for him! Our speaker shared a house with Marshall in Chandlers Ford and recalled a party attended by Sylvester Clarke, Desmond Haynes and others. He acted as drinks waiter and had to leave the party to top up the drinks supply, particularly brandy, which was Clarke's favourite tippie. On the morning after the party, Kevin Emery had to bat against Clarke, who greeted him with a fusillade of short-pitched deliveries! He compared the two men, who were the most feared bowlers in county cricket at the time. Macko was a lovely man and a magnificent bowler who could operate in all conditions. He sombrely mentioned that the pair died within a month of each other; Clarke's death was due to cirrhosis of the liver. He also recounted a famous match at The Oval, which is now part of Hampshire folklore. On a newly laid, fast, pitch of very uneven bounce, at least two Surrey batsmen gave themselves out caught behind, walking after not touching a ball from Marshall. Hampshire won a low scoring match by two runs.

He mentioned that the Derbyshire team of that time, captained by Barry Wood, were full of characters and never short of a word. He had fond memories of Robin Smith, who always found time to talk to others. There were also memories of Mark Nicholas, Oxbridge cricketers, Steve Malone and an encounter with John Arlott in Alderney. He ended his address by recalling his only appearance at Lord's, when he played for the winning Bristol-based Optimists side in the National Club Championship in 1992. Earlier he mentioned that his nickname was "Billy Boots" or "Boots", after turning up for pre-season training in a pair of old boots liberally laced with tape to hold them together.

Throughout his talk, Kevin Emery showed a great gift for mimicry. It was an insightful, informed and perceptive address on all aspects of the game. With his experience as a player, treatment of sports injuries, nurturing of young players and his career in financial services, his audience were left with the firm impression that cricket management would benefit tremendously from taking him on board.

## **HAMPSHIRE IN 2017 (3)**

### **THE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP**

Apart from Essex (more of whom later) and Warwickshire, Division One was so tight in 2017 that only 30 points separated second placed Lancashire and seventh placed Middlesex, who were relegated. There were only four points between fourth place Yorkshire and Middlesex. Had Hampshire won that topsy turvy penultimate match of the season against Essex at the Ageas Bowl, they would have leapfrogged into second place. By losing it, they were involved in a nail-biting scrap at Edgbaston to stay in the Division.

At the start of the season, in early April, they began with a rare win against Yorkshire at Headingley, and then recorded two more, against Somerset at Taunton and Warwickshire at home in matches five and six respectively. There were thoughts of the Championship. The situation may have been even more healthy. Fidel Edwards was able to bowl only 5.1 overs at the beginning of the second match against Middlesex at home, and Brad Wheal, who had started the season well, dropped out through injury during the second innings of the next match against Yorkshire, who were following on. Had they been fit to carry on, the County may arguably have won both matches.

It was hereabouts, in early June, that the Hampshire line-up began to experience some disruption, which undoubtedly affected their momentum. They never won another championship match in the remaining four months, losing two and drawing six. Edwards was already missing from the equation after the debacle at Chelmsford in match four and missed the next three matches. Wheal did not play again after that Middlesex match and Liam Dawson was selected for both test and one day international squads. The crass scheduling, with only one match in both July and August, did not help matters. When the Championship resumed in earnest for the final four matches in September, Hampshire seemed to be suffering a reaction to their exit at the semi-final stages of the t20 Blast.

By the end of the season, their fifth place should have been satisfying and yet there was a considerable sense of anti-climax and disappointment. The campaign had initially promised so much more.

The reason for Hampshire's decline in September was not difficult to identify. In the four matches, they accumulated only four batting bonus. The batting had, in fact, been a problem all season. There were five matches from which no batting bonus points were obtained, all away from home – at Headingley, Chelmsford, Taunton, Uxbridge and Edgbaston. The County were able to turn around two of those matches, at Headingley and Somerset. Chasing down 320 to win by four wickets in the former match was arguably the best batting performance of the summer. All too often in the season, however, they were kept afloat, with both bat and ball, by Kyle Abbott and Gareth Berg. Berg finished the season with 568 runs, an aggregate exceeded only by James Vince (626), George Bailey (610) and Sean Ervine (572). Vince's aggregate was the joint lowest in a season for the leading batsman in the County's entire history in the Championship.

The biggest disappointment was Rilee Rossouw. Given his career record, his travails could never have been anticipated. He began well enough with 23 and 47 at Headingley and then 99 (run out), batting with a broken finger, against Middlesex at home. On his return from injury, he hammered 156 off only 113 balls in the Royal London Cup at Taunton. It seemed as if Hampshire had struck gold. However, thereafter in the Championship, he scored only 70 runs in 10 innings. It was difficult to remember any batsman enduring such a wretched run of form and keeping their place. A tendency to play across the line and trying to force the pace too early continually proved his undoing. The case for replacing him with Tom Alsop, who had done well in his absence, or Will Smith, who was scoring hundreds in 2nd XI cricket, was unassailable. It must be hoped that he learns from the experience. He is one of the few batsman on the staff able to score runs quickly and, at his best, he will take the game away from the opposition very quickly.

All the top-order batsmen struggled. Sean Ervine scored 203 against Warwickshire at home, and Vince, Bailey and Jimmy Adams each scored two centuries. There was, though, little else. Apart from 99 against Middlesex at home, Michael Carberry found runs hard to come by, as did Alsop late on, Liam Dawson, and Lewis McManus. It must be said that the quality of the pitches was generally quite poor. When Hampshire were greeted with a firm, true pitch against Surrey at The Oval in early July, Adams (144), Vince (104), Bailey (161) and Ervine (83) demonstrated they were capable of scoring big runs as Hampshire ran up a season's best of 648-7 declared. The performances and total were a notable exception to the norm. It should also be said that only three batsmen in Division One, Kumar Sangakarra, Mark Stoneman and Rory Burns, all from Surrey, reached the one thousand run landmark. Surrey finished third in the table, largely by virtue of their batting bonus point tally. They won only two matches, two fewer than Yorkshire and Somerset and one fewer than Hampshire and Middlesex. There would seem to be a case for reviewing the points system for the County Championship.

It was fitting that Kyle Abbott faced the final ball of the season as Hampshire drew at Edgbaston. For he did more than any other player to keep Hampshire in the Division. When they sign overseas players, Counties obviously look to them to make a difference and win matches. Unfortunately, such instances are rare in the modern era, when, by and large only "second division" overseas players are available due to the IPL, Spring/Summer tests elsewhere in the world and a plethora of other t20 tournaments. Though signed as a Kolpak, Kyle Abbott was an honourable exception in 2017. He began by taking seven for 41 in the first Championship match at Headingley and carried on in that vein for much of the season. His front leg became more and more bent on landing, and his arm lower, as the season progressed. He was clearly a tired man by the end of the season. He remained, though, a constant menace and finished the season with 60 wickets (avge. 18.20). Only the Essex pair of Jamie Porter (75) and Simon Harmer (72), took more wickets in the Division. Of regular bowlers, he was second to Porter in the Divisional averages. He turned the first match of the season against Yorkshire by taking seven for 41 in the second innings. He also claimed five wickets in an innings on three other occasions.

It wasn't only the wickets he took. He scored vital runs also. He batted consistently scoring 418 runs (avge. 29.85) – the sixth highest aggregate and average for the County - and acquired a career best 97 not out at Old Trafford, against an attack

which included James Anderson, Ryan McLaren (so effective for Hampshire last summer) and the Zimbabwean Kyle Jarvis. His batting figures have clearly taken him into the all-rounder category.

Berg has also enjoyed a splendid all-round season. His batting aggregate has already been mentioned; he was desparately unlucky to have been left stranded on 99 against Yorkshire at home, and thus miss out on his maiden first-class century for Hampshire. He took 37 wickets (avge. 26.67). His bowling epitomised the benefits of bowling line and length; he was especially effective with the new ball. It was noticeable that he batted and bowled well in tandem with Abbott. He has deservedly been awarded a one-year contract for 2018.

Fidel Edwards, as he did in 2015, came into his own at the end of the season. He claimed 20 wickets (avge. 20.20), bowling with pace and verve, in the final four matches in September. It reinforced conjecture that had he not been injured earlier in the season, the nail-biting finish may have been avoided.

Liam Dawson enjoyed a productive season with the ball, both his number of wickets (31) and average (26.09) being the best of his career. He has matured noticeably in the last 18 months or so, no doubt because of his inclusion in England squads. He bowls very straight and gives little away.

On paper, Mason Crane's figures (16 wkts – avge. 44.25) look unimpressive. However, they are distorted by the number of catches – as well as stumpings – missed off his bowling. He is an exceptional talent, a fact recognised by the England selectors. He is a young man who will turn, and win, matches. He has looked at home at whatever level, or format of the game, in which he plays; he has developed into a very fine fielder and his batting continues to improve. His future prospects are one of the most intriguing aspects of the modern game. It must have been fun to have been present at Taunton in early June when Dawson (4-66) and Crane (5-40) spun out Somerset in the fourth innings as Hampshire won by 90 runs. It is some years since two Hampshire spin bowlers have operated so effectively in tandem.

Of the newcomers who played during the summer, the best was undoubtedly Ian Holland. Born in Wisconsin USA, and raised in Australia, he came to this country to play Southern League cricket. Aged 26, he is qualified to play county cricket as his father is English. He made his debut in the Royal London Cup against Kent at Canterbury, and looked at home almost from the outset. Nevertheless, he improved markedly as the season wore on. He is an adaptable late middle-order right-hand batsman, able to score runs quickly or defend as the occasion demands. He made his maiden half century (58 not out) in the run fest at The Oval and then registered 51 in the return against Surrey at home on a more difficult pitch. He batted invariably determinedly throughout the various batting collapses in September. Mainly used as a change bowler, he also took 19 wickets at an average of only 18.47 with his accurate right arm medium pace bowling. Those figures indicate his bowling could develop into something more. He demonstrated he has a good temperament. If he continues to improve, he is going to be a real asset in the years ahead.

## IN PRAISE OF ESSEX

No praise can be too high for Essex for their County Championship title in 2017. They won 10 of their 14 matches. Their percentage success rate of 71% is a record in Division One since the County Championship was split into two Divisions in 2000. The only teams to have won more matches in the top tier were Yorkshire in 2015 and Lancashire in 2015. Both won eleven games. However, in both of those seasons, of course, 16 matches were played. Durham (2013), Sussex (2003) and Surrey (2002) all won 10 matches. The last County to win over 70% of their matches were Surrey in 1999, when the Championship was a unified whole. They won 12 of their 17 games that year.

Essex's success was applauded as they regularly played eight, sometimes nine, men who had progressed via their Academy. Towards the end of 2016, Arun Chopra (from Warwickshire) and Adam Wheater (Hampshire) had rejoined the County that had nurtured them. The team that played in 2017 was therefore different from that which won promotion from Division Two in 2016. Besides the two players above, they recruited the South African off-spin bowler, Simon Harmer and alternated with Mohammad Amir from Pakistan, and the New Zealander Neil Wagner – both test players – as overseas signings. These three men added considerable potency to their bowling attack which was spearheaded by Leytonstone-born Jamie Porter. As mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter, Porter and Harmer enjoyed marvellous seasons. Wagner and Amir chipped in with 45 wickets between them. In the last two matches, Chelmsford-born Sam Cook routed both Hampshire and Yorkshire. (Cook, no relation to Alastair, is currently at Loughborough University; his presence will add extra spice to their matches against the Counties next season). Also, significantly, Alastair Cook was available for the first part of the season. He scored prolifically and gave confidence to the rest of the batting. Interestingly, when he became available after the two test series, Essex chose not to select him. Of the batsmen, Nick Browne (952 runs), Dan Lawrence (761) – both local products – and the Dutchman, Ryan ten Doeschate, all averaged over 40. In the run-in when Wheater was omitted from the side, James Foster was a crucial influence, as Hampshire found to their cost, not for the first time.

If there was a match that exemplified Essex's prowess, it was in the penultimate fixture of their campaign against Hampshire at the Ageas Bowl. They were bowled out for 76 in their first innings and asked to follow on. At one stage, they were only 94 runs ahead, with two wickets left. One of those, however, was Foster. He batted intelligently whilst Wagner (44) thrashed at the other end. They added 82 runs, which, in the final analysis, swung the match decisively in his side's favour. Hampshire were then famously dismissed for 76 – the same total as Essex's first innings – and lost by 90 runs. Many pilloried Hampshire's batsmen, but Porter, Cook, Wagner and then Harmer provided an object lesson in how to bowl as a unit. They bowled very straight, on a length, and seamed, swung and spun the ball in masterful fashion. Both Cook and Porter moved the ball very late indeed. It was an exceptional collective exhibition of high-class bowling. In the last match of the season, Hampshire's second innings was put into further perspective when Yorkshire were bowled out for 74 in the fourth innings, with Cook again to the fore.