

NEWSLETTER No. 244 - MARCH 2004

10 MARCH 2004 - Meeting

The Society extends a warm welcome to this evening's speaker **JEFF LEVICK**. Jeff is Chairman of the Hampshire Cricket Board and Co-ordinator of Cricket for People with a Disability.

Jeff played club cricket in Kent and Hampshire before devoting a large proportion of his waking hours to coaching the game. He is one of those band of men, who out of the public eye, travel miles up and down the County, usually at unsocial hours, spotting and nurturing young talent, and making all young cricketers feel valued. He cut his coaching teeth at his local club before extending his range managing Winchester and District Schools sides and then coaching Hampshire County schools sides in a number of age groups. Perhaps his greatest asset has been to teach youngsters "match craft" and how to win matches. A whole generation of young cricketers have emerged through Hampshire's colts system with self belief and confidence. It was not always so. He has had a hand in the development of many of the current Hampshire side either through his management / coaching skills or via his one-to-one coaching in their formative years.

When the ECB started to extend seriously their commitment to encouraging people with disabilities to take up the game he seemed a natural choice to assume responsibility for this challenging, but rewarding, task in the County.

Jeff is also on the South Coast Panel of Umpires and, during the season, spends his Saturdays officiating in the Southern Premier League.

11 FEBRUARY 2004 – Report

Dr. Andrew Hignell , spoke on a subject masochistically dear to the hearts of all cricket followers – rain. It was a unique, interesting and thought-provoking address. A Geography Master at Wells Cathedral School (not Blundell's as mentioned in the previous Newsletter) he had studied meteorology for over thirty years and had kept statistics on the weather's impact for some time.

He began by stating that the weather prevented Hampshire from taking the field more than any other County in 2003. They lost 87.5 hours, followed by Gloucestershire (85), Leicestershire (84.5), Middlesex (79.5), Lancashire (76.5), Yorkshire (73.75) and Worcestershire (72).

Interestingly, County Champions Sussex lost only 40 hours – less than any other County and just 4.5 hours playing time was lost at Hove. Grace Road (54.75 hours) saw the most "downtime". Hampshire lost time home and away in roughly equal measures.

In the period 1998 – 2003 Leicestershire had suffered most from the weather which precluded play for a total of 527.75 hours. Hampshire were sixth (480 hours).

Not surprisingly, his researches showed that historically there was a clear east-west split in the weather's influence on county cricket. Those Counties in the west of the country were far more likely to lose play than those on the east.

Andrew Hignell drew a number of conclusions from the welter of statistics he presented. He thought it was inevitable that those Counties in the south and on the eastern side of the country would become increasingly successful as they would benefit from more playing time (though he admitted Glamorgan won their first Championship in 1948 in a wet summer). He therefore felt that in order to "even up the playing field", cricket's managers should consider a number of measures including extending the playing time for up to an hour and starting play earlier on days subsequent to those affected by rain, earmarking a reserve day for each Championship match, "replaying" those matches heavily affected by rain, imposing pitch covering and playing more games in August and September when it is drier.

He also relevantly touched upon the potential impact of the weather on a reduced Championship programme as proposed by the reformers. Computer models showed that temperatures and rainfall would increase in the years up to 2050, and that even more time would therefore be sacrificed. Statistics showed that many counties already lose the equivalent of at least two home matches each year. Members would therefore only see four full home matches a season. The equation and impact clearly spoke for itself. The very continued existence of first-class cricket would be at considerable risk.

MICHAEL BROWN

Hampshire have signed **MICHAEL JAMES BROWN**, who was previously with Middlesex.

Born in Burnley on 9 February 1980 he was educated at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Blackburn and Collingwood College, Durham University. His father played for Lancashire 2nd XI in the early 1970s and he had trials with both his native County (1997) and Leicestershire (1998) before being taken on to the Middlesex staff. He has continued to play for Burnley in the Lancashire League for much of his career. He made his Middlesex debut in 1999, but then had to wait until 2001 for his next taste of first-class cricket, this time with Durham UCCE and British Universities. He made solid contributions in both that year and 2002, scoring three fifties including 60 not out for Durham UCCE at Worcester. However, after completing his University education he found his opportunities were limited by the plethora of talented young batsmen on the Middlesex staff. Despite a career best 98 against the Zimbabweans at Shenley, he was not selected for any other County match last summer.

Six feet tall and a right-handed batsman, who can also keep wicket, he has been spending the winter in Western Australia, under the watchful gaze of Paul Terry.

Raj Maru and Kevan James both made the move from Middlesex to Hampshire in pursuit of a regular first-team place. If Michael Brown enjoys similar success then Hampshire's faith in him will have been repaid in spades.

MICHAEL BROWN IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	M.	I.	NO	Runs	H.S.	A vge.	50	Ct.
1999	2	3	2	48	24*	48.00	-	2
2001	5	9	1	197	60*	24.62	2	2
2002	4	6	0	145	57	24.16	1	6
2003	1	1	0	98	98	98.00	1	2
	12	19	3	488	98	30.50	4	12

MICHAEL CLARKE (2)

Apart from Damien Martyn, Michael Clarke was the only player to appear in all Australia's matches in the recent VB international series against India and Zimbabwe. Though not reflected in his figures – 248 runs (avge. 31.00) he earned praise for his intelligent batting, particularly towards the end of an innings. His strike rate of 89.85 runs per 100 balls clearly demonstrated an ability to find the gaps and pick up the tempo.

He scored one fifty – 63 in the first match of the series, which was a day/night affair against India at Melbourne. He and the explosive Andrew Symonds (88) added 143 off only 23.2 overs for the fifth wicket on that occasion, paving the way for an eventual narrow Australian victory by 18 runs. They came together with their team in some trouble having lost four wickets in the opening fifteen overs but, through a combination of good running and powerful strokeplay they took their side to 288. Clarke then held 4 catches and took the crucial wicket of Rahul Dravid in the Indian reply.

He fielded brilliantly and also continued to take wickets with his slow left-arm spin bowling, though he was more expensive than hitherto in his (4 wickets @ 46.50) international career.

He has now played in 20 international matches, scoring 575 runs (avge. 44.23) at an excellent strike rate of 89.14, just below a run a ball. He has taken 12 wickets (avge. 32.00) and held 8 catches.

Garden Games

Childhood arena, grassed for sport
sometimes became a tennis court,
home-made net in holes from paws
of playful cats (shut them indoors!).
We threw the javelin, discus, shot,
all things sporting – we did the lot!
Sandpit for jumping, long or high;
swing on the apple tree, up to the sky,
another tree held a netball goal – oh,
we also played at bicycle polo,
bike as a horse and I the jockey!
Winter time we played soccer, hockey.
Gymnastics too, with cartwheels, handstands,
backbends, handsprings, walked on our hands.

A cricket net, guy ropes and pegs;
too large pads for girl's slim legs,
bat quite heavy, ball too hard
for a six year old with feeble guard
and scything swipe – though often told
“Hold your bat straight or you'll be bowled!
Keep your head still, left elbow up,
bat and pad together, keep the 'gate' shut!”
Trying to bowl with a ball too large
for little hands to be in charge.
Already writing words and lines,
juvenile verses with simple rhymes.
Growing older and realising
this garden game was a bigger thing,
played by counties, played in a Test –
1949 – Trevor Bailey the best!
Hearing the soothing Arlott voice
adding magic to the season's joys.
Wanting to do so much in cricket –
batting, bowling, keeping wicket;
helping to found a ladies' team,
county trials, achieving a dream.
Finding Hampshire, knowing from the start
this was the team that would hold my heart.
It all began at our garden wicket,
this life-long love of verse and cricket.

Imogen Grosberg