

## **NEWSLETTER No. 248 – OCTOBER 2004**

### **13 October 2004 - Meeting**

The Society extends a warm welcome to tonight's speaker, **TREVOR CROUCH**, who has acted as Liaison Officer/Baggage man for touring sides to the country since the Millennium. A former graduate of Southampton University he was a secondary schoolteacher in Bristol for 30 years. He has spent a lifetime in cricket, first as a player and then an umpire. He is now Chairman of both the Bristol and District Cricket League and Association, and the Gloucestershire Cricket Board.

### **29 September 2004 – Report**

Neil Rider started off the Society's 2004/5 season in lively and entertaining fashion with a first-hand account of Hampshire's cricket development system. He started, though, with a 3 minute video showing selected highlights of Hampshire's season which was much enjoyed by his attentive audience.

He updated figures given by Jeff Levick earlier in 2003 on the extent of the County's development programme. 7000 children in 130 schools had now received coaching, 400 of whom had joined cricket clubs. The initiative designed to improve participation in Southampton, where there was no cricket club in a recognised league, had started to bear fruit. 85 young cricketers were now participating in the game at both Hoglands Park and Green Park. It was hoped to start an adults, and women's, team next year.

He also mentioned that there were 234 cricket clubs in the County, 96 of which ran junior sections. There were also sides representing 4 districts, covering the whole of Hampshire. This structure had resulted in one cricketer being selected for each of the England U15, U16, U17 and U19 squads in 2004. A young woman cricketer, Kirsty White, had become the first Hampshire player to be selected for the England Academy.

67 coaches had attained a coaching qualification last winter (50 at level 1, 15 at level 2 and 2 at level 3). Hampshire were starting a Junior Academy next year. The aim was to produce 1 first-class cricketer every two years; 11 of the 23 players in the County squad at the start of last season had progressed through the County youth system. Among other invaluable snippets were the fact that the County had appointed a Fitness Trainer. At the end of the evening, Susanne Marlow presented Neil with the Society's cheque for the Howzat Appeal.

## THE SUMMER OF 2004

In a summer which included Euro 2004, the Olympic Games and a spellbinding Ryder Cup, cricket more than held its own. Michael Vaughan's team drew deserved praise for their whitewash 7-0 summer Test series against Zimbabwe and a very talented, young West Indian side. Even work colleagues with only passing interest in cricket commented that England "seemed to be doing well".

For the first time in many years there were recognisable heroes and role models in the England side. Not only did bars empty when Andrew Flintoff was batting but virtually the whole sporting community and many more besides stopped what they were doing to watch his exhilarating strokeplay. Those who were at the Rose Bowl and saw his brilliant century against Sri Lanka in the ICC Trophy were struck not only by his power but by his placement also. He possesses a canny cricket brain. His innings at the Rose Bowl also demonstrated that any cricket ground in the world can seem very small when he is at the crease. The editor was willing him to become the first man to clear the Rose Bowl pavilion but his three towering sixes were struck towards the northern end. Flintoff also took valuable wickets; Lara showed little appetite for his well directed steep bounce and virtually became his rabbit. His wonderful reflexes and immense hands missed nothing at slip within his reach.

Steve Harmison bowled as fast as any Englishman – or anyone else for that matter – has ever done. He showed in his brief spell at the Rose Bowl that he has two speeds – fast and lightning fast. He generally struck the right length and the West Indian batsmen visibly flinched when he was bowling. It was a heartening sight after watching West Indian pace quartets pepper batsmen the world over in the 20 years from 1976.

Harmison was well backed up by that marvellous phlegmatic workhorse Matthew Hoggard and a rejuvenated Ashley Giles. The England management deserve huge credit for persevering with the latter when just about everybody else had all but lost faith. The centuries were shared around the England batting line-up. The revelation was Andrew Strauss. He plays the ball very late, has a fine temperament and took to both Test and international cricket in the born manner. Geraint Jones' glove work was inconsistent at times but his batting was uncomplicated. He scores his runs at pace with proper cricket shots.

Among all these positives was yet another bonus. For the first time, there are men queuing at the door for a Test place. Ian Bell showed the right credentials when given his opportunity.

It is too early to think in terms of an Ashes victory next summer. There are weaknesses, particularly all too fallible catching in the slip cordon predominantly when Flintoff is bowling. Numerous Tests series against Australia in the recent past have turned on too many occasions on the dropping of crucial slip catches and it is an issue that Duncan Fletcher must resolve before next July.

Hampshire enjoyed their best summer in years. The County did wonderfully well to retain their First Division status in a very competitive Totesport League. Their promotion from the Second Division of the Frizzell County Championship was

founded on their bowlers, with four – Dimitri Mascarenhas, Chris Tremlett, Shaun Udal and Shane Warne – featuring in the top 8 of the Division’s averages. Billy Taylor, back with his native County, also lent steady support. The batting was, though, much less convincing and will need strengthening next year. It has been clear for years now that Hampshire’s priority is at least one quality opening batsman. It is a tradition which the County patented from 1946 to the mid –90’s. The Rose Bowl wicket, particularly on the western side, continues to demand the tightest of techniques and far too many of the youngsters have been found lacking and not pushed on as they should. Indeed, none of the batsmen who came through Hampshire’s colts system have been able to claim a regular place. It must be a matter for concern.

The issue of the Rose Bowl as an international venue emerged starkly during the ICC Trophy. It is quite clear that its location and the volume of rush hour traffic - both in the morning and afternoon – on the M27 are both factors beyond the County’s control which mitigate against staging sell-out events from Monday to Friday. The continued development of the Segensworth complex has placed an intolerable burden on the road system in South-East Hampshire. The camel’s back was already broken before 16,000 people attempted to make their way to the Rose Bowl. It is a situation that simply will not be solved by additional park and rides, or even more roads onto the ground. However, staging sell-out events at weekends or day/night cricket, assuming a mid-afternoon start, should be a different and more soluble proposition.

The other issue is the on-site facilities. The ICC’s “big brother” attitude on ticket conditions was somewhat farcical, and left a sour taste, as did their retailing policy. It must be hoped that crowds will not be subjected to similar limitations for ECB – sponsored matches.

However, the eternal memory of the season will be the captaincy of Shane Warne. He brought energy and vitality to the county’s cricket where all things became possible. His imaginative field placings, and sheer force of personality, not forgetting his still artful and masterful leg-spin bowling turned match after match. He was a tired man at the end of the season and thoroughly deserved his short rest prior to Australia’s tour to India. His contribution to Hampshire during the summer was inestimable.

## **CLUB CRICKET IN 2004**

Club cricket in Hampshire suffered greatly at the hands of the weather in 2004 with most teams having at least 4 matches washed out completely and some even 5 – the latter representing almost a third of their scheduled programme.

South Wilts romped away with the Southern League Premier League, wrapping up the title with a match remaining, a most unusual occurrence. They owed much of their success to former Hampshire opening batsman Jason Laney and South African pace bowler Alan Kruger who was genuinely fast in his first few overs. Laney was the league’s run scorer with 784 runs (avge. 56.00), Kruger, who plays first-class cricket for Griqualand West, was second in the bowling averages (35 wickets @ 19.43). The two men also claimed 20 catches between them.

South Wilts completed the Southern League double by inflicting a comprehensive 129 run defeat on Havant in the Premiership Shield Super 4s (play-off competition).

Havant were the season's "nearly team". They finished runners-up in the Premier League, reached the quarter-finals of the ECB Cocks spur Cup and the semi-final of the Southern Electric Knock-out Cup. Unfortunately, however, they had no silverware to show for their valiant efforts.

A name to look out for in the future is Shawn Gillies who spent the season with Bashley. The man from Perth impressed club cricket sages to such an extent that they felt he was a better prospect than his Bashley predecessor, Luke Ronchi, who is now beginning to forge a reputation in Western Australia's Pura Cup side. Gillies was top of the league's batting averages having scored 775 runs (avge. 70.45).

The following is a complete list of the winners in all the County's senior leagues:-

### **Southern Electric Premier League**

Division 1	South Wilts
Division 2	Ventnor
Division 3	Rowledge

### **Hampshire League**

Division 1	Fair Oak	NE2	Tichborne Park II
Division 2	Petersfield	NE3	Hursley Park III
Division 3	New Milton II	NE4	Rowledge III
Division 4	Mudford	NW2	Stockton
North 1	Farley	NW3	Langford Park
South 1	Emsworth	NW4	Littleton&WH III
SE2	Bursledon	4 New Forest North	Bournemouth III
SE3	Fair Oak III	4 New Forest South	Beaulieu
SE4	Fareham&CroftonIV	4 Central	Fair Oak IV

The club of the year was undoubtedly Fair Oak. Three of their four teams won league titles and their second team finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in Division South 1. A few years ago they were struggling to field one side. Former Hampshire fast bowler, Steve Malone then came to the club to provide a catalyst and inspiration for their startling expansion and success. "Piggy" is now a member of the South Coast Panel of Umpires and is often seen on Southern League grounds on Saturdays. He has become a great example of a former first-class cricketer making a genuine contribution to the lower levels of the game upon his retirement.

## HAMPSHIRE DEPARTURES

**WILL KENDALL** announced his retirement at the end of the season. The fair-haired right-handed batsman was a great favourite with Hampshire members. He was one of the most unselfish of cricketers who ran other batsmen's runs so well. The scoreboard was always ticking over whilst he was at the crease. He was also an outstanding fielder at point and cover.

After making his debut for Oxford University in 1994, he joined the Hampshire staff a year later, and first played for the County at Taunton in August 1996. He topped 1000 runs that year and went on to repeat the feat in 1999 and 2000. He remains the last English-born player to achieve that feat for Hampshire, and was elected the Society's Player of the Year for his achievements in the latter season.

He received his county cap on the same day as he made his career best score of 201 to save the game against Sussex at Northlands Road in 1999. It was an extraordinary match. Hampshire followed on after being bowled out for 76 in reply to their opponents 375. The County went on to make a monumental 570 for six declared. It was the largest disparity in innings total since their famous victory at Edgbaston in 1922. Kendall (404 balls; 32 4's) shared century partnerships with Robin Smith, Giles White and Adi Aymes (111 not out). He made his only one-day century – a fluent 110 not out against Middlesex at the Rose Bowl in 2002.

He proved a most popular and supportive vice-captain to Robin Smith, often being seen to give on field advice and assistance, standing in for a few matches in 2001 and 2002. Only this season he led the County to an outstanding victory over Yorkshire at Headingley, in Shane Warne's absence, making 50 in Hampshire's first innings in bowler-friendly conditions in the process. It proved to be his final half-century.

He was one of the many batsmen on the Hampshire staff who never really came to terms with the Rose Bowl wickets. He endured a torrid time in 2001 when he seemed to be on the receiving end of more than his fair share of unplayable shooters and lifters. Nevertheless, he saw the County to an important victory in the first match against Durham this summer with a gritty 31 not out, and remained committed to Hampshire's cause to the end.

He leaves first-class cricket having played in 140 matches and scored 6822 runs (avge. 33.27) including 10 centuries, and a further 2113 runs in limited overs matches.

He wrote an articulate and insightful weekly piece for the Hampshire Chronicle during the season for the past six years, which was reproduced in the Hampshire Handbook. Will Kendall has still to decide the future direction of his working life but Society members are sure to extend their best wishes to him and his family.

**JAMES HAMBLIN** has also left the staff. He gained a reputation as Hampshire's pinch hitter in one-day competitions but was never able to acquire a regular place in the side. Ironically his best figures were in his final first-class match for the County at Derby in 2003, when he returned for 6 for 93, before scoring 96. In 11 first-class matches he scored 440 runs (avge. 27.50) and took 14 wickets (avge. 51.64).

## MICHAEL DIGHTON

In the years to come, historians will note that Michael Dighton played two one-day matches for Hampshire, both against Gloucestershire at Bristol, made the highest score on debut in such cricket for the County, and yet never played in the County Championship. He was, of course, filling in for Michael Clarke whilst the latter was in Zimbabwe with the Australians. Shane Watson, the Hampshire Captain's temporary replacement was relatively well known but Michael Dighton rose, at least to English eyes, from almost complete obscurity. So, who is he?

**MICHAEL GRAY DIGHTON** was born in the fruit growing area of Toowoomba, west of Brisbane, on 24 April 1976. He appeared on the other side of the continent to play for Western Australia under 17's before being an inductee to the Australian Cricket Academy in 1996. He made his debut for Western Australia in 1997/98 but was never able to hold down a regular place, despite excellent performances in grade cricket for Scarborough. He transferred to Tasmania for the 2001/02 season. After initial difficulties with steep bouncing balls outside the off-stump, he resurrected his career when he was an integral member of the island side that won the ING Cup in 2002/03. He also played outstandingly last winter when he at last fulfilled all the expectations placed on him.

A tall and well built elegant right-handed batsman he has always been regarded as an extremely talented cricketer. He possesses a full range of strokes, being at home on both the front and back foot. He is able to drive down the ground and cut, hook and pull with equal facility. The Times commented during the course of his record-breaking innings at Bristol that "he struck the ball with great purpose from the moment he came to the wicket .....(he) drove straight and through the covers to marked effect". He was eventually dismissed, caught at long-on, having struck 74 off only 64 balls.

After playing the following weekend in the C & G Trophy, when he made 12, he returned to club cricket in Scotland, having created a little piece of Hampshire cricket history.

The 1999 edition of Wisden Australia remarked that he was a "student of environmental science and a nifty mover on the dance floor"!

He has also played club cricket for Excelsior in Holland and represented the Dutch in the Nat. West Trophy in 2001.