

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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KEITH MILLER TRIBUTE

Keith Miller, who died in October, was one of the game's immortals. The obituaries in the broadsheets and on the cricinfo. website paid fulsome tribute to his qualities both as a cricketer and a man, and it is not proposed to go through his career in any detail in this piece.

However, he was indisputably the finest all-rounder in Australian cricket history and only ever bettered by Sir Garfield Sobers, and arguably Imran Khan. The true indicator of an all-rounder's quality is the differential between their batting and bowling averages. Of those who played for any time in Test cricket, Sobers (+23.75), Miller (+ 14) and Imran Khan (+14.88) stand head and shoulders above all others.

Unlike the other two mentioned above, Keith Miller never captained his country in Test matches. He upset Sir Donald Bradman on a number of occasions early on in his career and was never forgiven. And yet no less a judge than Richie Benaud rated Miller as the best captain he ever played under.

As with everywhere else he played, KEITH ROSS MILLER left an indelible mark on the Hampshire cricketing public, perhaps never more so than on his very first appearance on a Hampshire ground. Through the pen of John Arlott and the story telling of that incomparable raconteur, Arthur Holt, that event has passed into the County's folklore. It was during war time, in a charity match at Southampton's Parks. The editor managed to find an account of the match in the archives of "The Echo" in the Southampton library. Their report of the game, which was a 24-overs-a-side match on the evening of Wednesday 26 May 1953 is reproduced below.

"Lord Tennyson, former England and Hampshire Captain, was among the several thousands of spectators who watched the "Wings" cricket match in The Parks last night and when it was over - and The Parks had beaten an RAF side which included five Australian cricketers - he said "I should like to have a go against the Australians again".

It was all good fun and the players and the crowd enjoyed it enormously.

By the way, I should mention there was an innovation in Parks cricket for this match. A loud speaker was used to introduce the personalities engaged, and also to give

some running account of the game, so it was very handy to tell the crowd what was afoot when Lord Tennyson walked to the wicket when the last Parks batsman was out. Lord Tennyson simply stripped off his army tunic, put on a pair of pads and in he went. Flight Lt. Beyer, Captain of the RAAF team in Australia, was bowling and he entered into the spirit of the occasion, trundling the first ball to Lord Tennyson underhand, whilst another member of the team dusted the pitch with his handkerchief

Lord Tennyson had a crack or two and then walked half-way down the pitch to be stumped. It was indeed a very sporting evening. And the match was very keen.

The RAF team captained by Flight Officer Ted Drake, won the toss and batted first and I am sure most of the spectators rubbed their eyes when half the team were out for 33 runs and they were all dismissed for 68.

Certainly, it would not have been a surprise had they made a big total and it was largely because of some grand bowling by L. Watkins of the Police that they were dismissed so cheaply. He took six wickets for 31 runs in nine overs.

The RAF opened their innings with two Australians, Sgt. Keith Miller, one of Victoria's opening batsmen and Pilot Officer Hodge, rated as one of New South Wales' outstanding young cricketers. They both looked good at the start but Watkins took two wickets in his second over with successive balls and the spectators began to sit up.

He bowled both Hodge and A.C. Knell, a member of the All England Civil Service XI, and shattered Miller's wicket later. The first two wickets fell with only 7 runs scored and then Sgt. Williams, all-rounder and one of Victoria's opening bowlers, began to have a go at The Parks bowling and brought off some typical Patsy Hendren leg hooks. Three wickets were down for 26 runs. In fact, this partnership was the highest of the innings and that was only 19 runs.

Watkins continued to bowl with devastating effect whilst Charles Knott at the other end made them work for their runs. Watkins took the first four wickets for 13 runs and then Knott bowled Flt. Sgt. Troke, the Fareham and Hants. Club and ground cricketer. Ted Drake got only two runs and became another Watkins' victim.

Sgt. Bill Whittaker, the Brentford footballer and London club cricketer, came in and hit the only six of the innings off Watkins over the square leg boundary, but although there were some hard won runs from the bat of Beyer, the side could not recover and The Parks' bowler, Charrett of Charondon, came on to take the last two wickets in one over to end the RAF knock.

Watkins' full figures were 9 overs, one maiden, 31 runs for six wickets, Knott took two wickets for 33 runs and Charrett two for 1.

The RAF were put out in 18 overs which left The Parks team with six overs to add to their 24 should they need.

But if people round the ring thought it was going to be easy they were mistaken. J. Andrews, who opened the batting with John Arnold, was out in Miller's first over.

Miller, whose approach run to the wicket is very smooth and easy, found his length straightaway and always had the batsman thinking. The other opening bowler was Williams who was curiously inaccurate at times and at other times almost impossible to score from.

At one period he delivered 25 balls without a run coming from the bat, yet in the innings he caused 16 runs to be chalked off against his side by byes - four 4's, and that not through faulty wicket-keeping, for the RAF wicket-keeper was Sgt. Colin Brenner, Victoria's State wicket keeper who won the State wicket-keeping championship before he left Australia (sic).

And also Williams, though obviously a fine all-rounder, had one disastrous over at a critical time in the match when it was touch and go whether The Parks would get the runs they needed. He then delivered an over in which 15 runs were scored - a six by Watkins and 4 byes included - and had a very confident appeal for a catch at the wicket refused.

The Parks batting had just previously threatened to break down. They had reached half the required total with only three wickets down but then had six wickets down for 37.

It was at this stage that Watkins, who had a grand match, came to the rescue with the top score of the match, 23. He and Knott were in together at the death; Watkins making the winning hit with two Parks' wickets in hand. The Parks eventually totalled 87. Miller's bowling gave him six wickets for 28 runs and he deserved every one of them. Williams took three for 35 and Beyer one for 8.

RAF

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----|
| Sgt. K. Miller | bowled Watkins | 7 |
| Pilot Officer K.Hodge | bowled Watkins | 3 |
| A.C.Knell | bowled Watkins | 0 |
| Sgt. Williams | bowled Watkins | 15 |
| Ft.Sgt.Troke | bowled Knott | 4 |
| Ft. Officer E.Drake | lbw bowled Watkins | 2 |
| Ft. Lieut. Beyer | Not out | 12 |
| Sgt. W.Whittaker | Bowled Knott | 11 |
| Pilot Officer P.Warner | Bowled Watkins | 7 |
| Sgt.C.Brenner | Bowled Charrett | 4 |
| A.C.Clarke | lbw bowled Charrett | 0 |
| Extras byes 2, leg byes 1 | | 3 |
| | Total | 68 |

The Parks XI

| | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------|
| J.Arnold | lbw bowled Williams | 13 |
| C.J.Andrews | C& b Miller | 1 |
| A.Holt | Bowled Miller | 9 |
| L. Budd | C Whittaker b. Williams | 3 |
| W.Simms | Stumped Brenner bowled Williams | 2 |
| A. Roles | Bowled Miller | 0 |
| G. Messom | Bowled Miller | 3 |
| N. Stride | Bowled Miller | 2 |
| L. Watkins | Bowled Miller | 23 |
| C. Knott | Stumped Brenner bowled Beyer | 14 |
| G. Charrett | Not out | 1 |
| Extras byes | 16 | 16 |
| | Total | 87 “ |

(It is intriguing to note that throughout the article his name is spelt Millar).

It will be noted that six Hampshire players - Drake, Arnold, Andrews, Holt, Lloyd Budd and Knott appeared in the match.

Keith Miller remembered the game. He wrote to Society member Don Crossley some years later with recollections that whilst stationed with the RAAF at Bournemouth he played "in some lovely park in Southampton". He also recalled meeting Ted Drake and John Arlott there. It fell to the footballers, Drake and Arthur Holt, to organise the two sides.

John Arlott in his evocative essay on Miller in "**The Great All-Rounders**" recounted:-

"The first batsman for the local team was Jack Andrews, a capable wicket-keeper-batsman who played a dozen or so matches for Hampshire between 1938 and 1948, won a Club Cricket Conference cap and scored his hundreds for the British Empire XI in the best of war-time cricket. Though vulnerable to the flight of top-class spinners, he was a resolute player of pace and a fine hooker. The Australians had not come to Europe to play cricket and not all of them had flannels. some wore drill shorts and some service boots, and their attitude was so relaxed that, when their opening bowler, without measuring a run, sauntered back, turned and ran in, no one was surprised for a moment. Perhaps, as substitute fielder, my view was better than the batsman's: at least it was less subjective. The ball pitched short and Jack moved into a back defensive stroke: but not quickly enough or high enough. The ball lifted almost vertically, flicked his lifted left elbow and cleared the long-leg boundary, a short one, but still a long carry off the funny bone. It was not until the bowler - who was Keith Miller - had established a world reputation as a fast bowler that his victim could recall that delivery with any pleasure.

Cricket at that time engaged no large part of Keith Miller's attention. A sergeant pilot of the Royal Australian Air Force, flying Mosquitoes, he was busy living life in case he ran out of it. Soon after the match at Southampton, I encountered him in his favourite establishment in Brighton - The Seven Bells - and, in the course of several convivial evenings, cricket was hardly mentioned. Certainly, I had no idea that he had already played the first-class game."

It is interesting that John Arlott mentioned he was a substitute fielder., he and Miller must have formed a rapport immediately. Arlott's account also suggests that Miller was responsible for one of the boundaries from leg byes rather than Williams. In the match at Hove referred to by Arlott, Miller was praying for the United Services against Sussex. First he scored 134 not out and then took 7 for 36. In between these two matches he made his first appearance at Lord's scoring 45 for the RAAF against Sir Pelham Wamer's XI. It was clear a new star was in the making.

When Keith Miller returned to Southampton with Bradman's "Invincibles" in 1948 he was the finished article. He was by now an aggressive, yet thoughtful, fast bowler, a dashing batsman and a magnificent fielder in any position. Hampshire's match with the Australians that season is strangely neglected in books of that tour. They were the only County to lead the tourists on first innings but the latter were largely indebted to Miller for their eventual victory.

He lit up a truncated second day with a glorious cameo. Batting at four, and not out overnight, he blitzed a quickfire 38, at one stage hitting Charles Knott for three successive sixes. It was a typical response to a challenging situation, for the wicket was drying and tailor-made for the County's experienced and artful spin twins, Knott and Jim Bailey.

When Hampshire batted a second time with a lead of 78 he and left-armed Bill Johnson bowled them out for only 103, Miller taking 5 for 25 in 12.5 overs. Only one of his dismissals required the assistance of a fielder.

He captained the Australians on his only other first-class appearance in the County in 1956. The match developed into a low-key draw, quite unrepresentative of his approach to the game. It had been 13 years since that auspicious appearance in Southampton's Parks and the memory of that earlier occasion never dimmed for those who were privileged to witness it.

N.B. The Echo's reporter, probably through no fault of his own, did not quite have all his facts correct. Hodge and Brenner never played first-class cricket for their respective states. The Sergeant Williams referred to was possibly Eddie Williams. He was a schoolboy prodigy at Melbourne's Wesley College who made one first-class appearance for Victoria in 1935-36. David Frith in his excellent book "The Ross Gregory Story" mentions he joined the RAAF at the outbreak of war and sailed to England where he served for three years as a training pilot at the Central Flying School in Upavon, Wiltshire. He later played for the Australian Services team in India but these matches, together with his sole appearance for Victoria, marked the extent of his first-class career.

10 November 2004 - Meeting

The Society is very pleased to welcome **PETER ANDERSON**, Chief Executive of Somerset County Cricket Club, to this evening's meeting. Before being appointed to his post in 1988 he was a former policeman who played for Devon and later captained Hong Kong in the ICC Trophy in 1982 and 1986.

He has presided over a roller-coaster period for Somerset cricket. In 2001 the County attained their highest ever position (2nd) in the County Championship and also won the C & G Trophy Final. However, they have endured a disappointing time since. Last season, he took the unprecedented step of issuing written warnings to some of the Somerset players about their performance standards. His talk is therefore bound to be an interesting one.

As far as the editor is able to recall, Mr. Anderson is the sixth man associated with Somerset cricket to address the Society in its 29 - year history. His predecessors are Maurice Tremlett, Ken Biddulph, Denis Silk, Graham Burgess and Jimmy Cook.

13 October 2004 - Report

Trevor Crouch gave members a very privileged insight into the work of a tour baggage man. He mentioned he was originally offered his job through the aegis of Barry Dudleston, the former Leicestershire opening batsman whose firm were awarded the contract following tender. His tasks range from making a number of airport runs to pick up and set down families, injured players and replacements, besides trips to pharmacists to pick up prescriptions. The team doctors are very cognisant of the need to avoid banned substances. He also apprised members of the techniques employed by the respective psychologists. Players were very aware of the work of the anti-corruption units who had affected dressing-rooms in that, for example, mobile phones were not permitted to be used in that area. He had never met a "bad man" during his work and felt that, in fact, the bigger the cricketer the nicer they seemed to be. He was fulsome in his praise of Adam Gilchrist, Rahul Dravid and Anil Kumble and was also struck by the genuine humility of Sachin Tendulkar.

He felt very honoured in his work which he much enjoyed, and throughout the evening was the soul of discretion.

It was a most informative and engrossing evening.

NEW HAMPSHIRE SIGNINGS

Biographies of the three new Hampshire signings, Sean Ervine, Richard Logan and Kevin Pietersen will appear in future editions of the Newsletter in the New Year.