

NEWSLETTER No. 259 - DECEMBER 2005

7 December 2005 – Meeting

The Society is very privileged to welcome **DAVID MORGAN**, Chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, to this evening's Annual Buffet Supper meeting.

Mr. Morgan succeeded Lord McLaurin as Chairman of the ECB in January 2003. He was previously vice-Chairman of the ECB and Chairman of the First-Class Counties Forum, and was instrumental in managing the conversion of the TCCB into the new body at the end of 1996.

He is a former Chairman of Glamorgan and retired as Commercial Director of European Electrical Steels in 2001.

When coming into his current office he outlined a 9 – point Manifesto which included continuing the England team concept, streamlining management of the ECB, making the Counties more efficient, reviewing domestic competitions and popularising the game.

As with his predecessors he has also had to manage a number of events, eg. the Zimbabwe tour and a number of other developments, such as Kolpak registrations and the growth in the number of overseas players. He also courted controversy with the long-term Sky TV deal, though given the circumstances with the other bidders, allied to the financial equation, the decision must be regarded as a logical one.

Members are sure to extend a very warm welcome to our distinguished guest this evening.

9 November 2005 – Report

The winter's largest gathering made their way to Test Valley Golf Club set deep in the Hampshire countryside, yet only 10 minutes from Basingstoke. It was an excellent attendance at the Society's new north Hampshire venue, where the Golf Club staff made members very welcome. The meeting room was warm and furnished with evocative prints of the Chateau at Chantilly and Venice lining its walls.

Our speaker, Neil Mallender, who had driven down from Yorkshire for the meeting, revealed himself to be shrewd and wise in the ways of cricket as he answered a stream of questions on the whole range of current cricket issues including the use of technology, throwing, match referees, the third umpire and sledging. He touched on his own playing and umpiring career, before giving affectionate cameo portraits of the retiring umpires at the end of last season – Mervyn Kitchen, David Shepherd, Alan Whitehead and John Hampshire.

Of particular interest to Hampshire supporters were his comments on Gordon Greenidge, who he felt could make good bowlers very ordinary, and the amazing atmosphere generated by the County faithful when Andy Bichel was bowling at the Nursery End towards the end of last season's C & G Final.

Like John Crawley, who spoke at the October meeting, the people who exercised the most influence in his early years were his family. His parents were keenly supportive and he was always playing sport with his brother. He also had the good fortune to attend a school where the headmaster was a cricket fanatic.

Other biographical snippets from his playing days were that he wanted to play for England Under-19s in the West Indies before signing for a County. He subsequently entered into a 2 – year contract with Northamptonshire. He enjoyed his career in New Zealand and was especially proud to have been a member of the Otago side to have won the league and cup double. The best captain he ever played under was Otago's Warren Lees. Besides Greenidge, he considered the best batsman of his generation to be Viv Richards (though he dismissed him in each innings on their first meeting at Weston-Super-mare) and Martin Crowe.

His views on umpiring issues were very perceptive. When asked about extending the use of technology he felt it would not solve all the problems. Consistency of referral was always likely to be an issue. He was also concerned about the public perception of Hawkeye. It did not remove the benefit of the doubt as there have been several instances where the ball may have hit leg stump. But would it or would it not?

When on the International Panel, he loved working with Clive Lloyd and also held Mike Proctor in high regard. He eventually left the Panel for family reasons as he wanted to spend more time with his young sons.

The 75 minutes for which Neil Mallender spoke just flew by – always an indication of a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2005

Members have voted **NIC POTHAS** as their Cricketer of the Year. An Appreciation will appear in a future Newsletter.

2006 Meetings

Kevan James –Middlesex & Hampshire, now Radio Solent Presenter
Wednesday 11 January 2006 8pm at Test Valley Golf Club, Basingstoke

Stephen Green – former Curator of Lord's Museum
Wednesday 8 February 2006 8pm at Portsmouth Rugby Club

Shaun Udal in conversation with David Allen

Wednesday 8 March 2006 7.30pm at Test Valley Golf Club, Nr. Basingstoke
(preceded by the Annual General Meeting)

Mike Taylor – Nottinghamshire and Hampshire

Wednesday 5 April 2006 8pm at The Hampshire Rose Bowl

HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS IN PAKISTAN (2)

Derek Shackleton, “Butch” White and Bob Cottam were surely the most penetrative trio of pace bowlers ever to play in the same side for Hampshire. Cottam’s record for the County was outstanding. Only Andy Roberts, Shackleton and Malcolm Marshall finished their Hampshire careers with a better average.

BOB COTTAM became the last of the County’s triumvirate to play in Pakistan on the MCC tour of Pakistan in 1968-69. If the Begh Incident was adjudged controversial the tumultuous events of Cottam’s tour were to cast it firmly into the shadows.

England were originally scheduled to tour South Africa, but it was of course cancelled because of the “D’Oliveira Affair”. It was then proposed that the MCC should make a tour of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, but the visit to India had to be cancelled on financial grounds. Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, refused to release the £20,000 foreign exchange that the tour required.

1968 was the year of the student riots. The student uprisings in Paris in May of that year spread to Cities as far apart as Milan and Tokyo. By the time the MCC tour party landed in Pakistan in February of the following year the country was in turmoil, fuelled by student revolt against alleged corruption in President Ayub Khan’s government and the movement towards East Pakistan gaining independence. Strikes and riots were prevalent anywhere. The mood became uglier when some of the protesters were killed during demonstrations in Dacca, the scheduled venue for the first Test.

The touring party acclimatised to the Indian continent with a successful four-match canter through Ceylon. However, towards the end of their stay reports were reaching them of the violence in East Pakistan. The Pakistan government imposed a curfew and the East Pakistan leg of the tour was originally cancelled.

The Pakistan Board of Control suggested substitute fixtures in Bahawalpur and Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) instead. The MCC tour manager, Leslie Ames, preferred the team to stay in Karachi to give them time to appraise the fast-moving and volatile events throughout the country. Ames and his Kent colleague and captain, Colin Cowdrey, then spent virtually a whole day in consultation with the Deputy High Commissioner, the Commissioner of Karachi and over the telephone with Fida Hassan, the President of the Board who was, at this time of political tension, adviser to Ayub Khan. It seemed likely the tour would be abandoned, but eventually it was agreed to play the two rescheduled games.

The cricket correspondent, Lyn Wellings, who wrote later so willingly for the Society's Newsletter, recalled that the two Cities "were peaceful but the living conditions were bad, but not as deplorable as those at Sahiwal, where fortunately play was abandoned on the second day through torrential rain, and the side could travel to Lahore (the venue for the rearranged First Test), which was far from peaceful."

The Test was originally scheduled for five days but reduced to four at the insistence of the President as an exercise in damage limitation. Pakistan included opening batsman Aftab Gul, a member of the student action committee in Lahore whose presence was intended to prevent wholesale rioting during the match. Gul, a student at Punjab University, was actually on bail at the time for alleged political activities. The ploy was successful to an extent but despite army marksmen parading the ground, the students were firmly in control. The match was played out to a cacophony of noise, and crowd riots which spilled over on to the pitch.

Bob Cottam had bowled with accuracy and penetration since the tour opened in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). A fortnight before the Test he took 5 for 35 against Central Zone at Lyallpur and so, when John Snow was omitted for disciplinary reasons (for allegedly treating net sessions too lightly), he was picked for his first Test. After England made 306, with Cowdrey, experienced in batting in intimidating conditions after West Indian crowd disturbances in Kingston a year earlier, making a very fine 100. After his dismissal immediately upon reaching his century, chairs were thrown onto the outfield. Cowdrey waved his partner, Basil D'Oliveira, to follow him off but thanks to the intervention of Gul, the incident ended as quickly as it began.

Opening the bowling with David Brown, the tall Hampshire fast-medium bowler took 4 for 50 in 22.2 overs, plucking out Mushtaq Mohammed and Asif Iqbal and Shafqat Rana in the middle order before removing Asif Masood at the end. Building on a first innings lead of 97, England left Pakistan with a victory target of 323 in five hours. Cottam gave England hope when he dismissed Saeed Ahmed and Asif in the same over; Underwood then snared Gul immediately afterwards. Pakistan were now 71 for 4, but Mustaq and Majid Khan then took them into calmer waters. Upon Majid's dismissal, the obdurate Hanif Mohammed shut the door firmly in England's face. With an hour to go there was yet another riot; the crowds threw chairs at the police – who then threw them back! Acting captain Tom Graveney lead England quietly from the field for the last time at the ensuing drinks break. Cottam had again bowled with control, with figures of 2 for 35 in 13 overs.

Pressure was then exerted on MCC to go to Dacca. Ames was most reluctant to do so on cricketing grounds as it would involve travelling some 1000 miles across the Continent. However, he was then asked to issue a statement explaining that the MCC would, after all, be going to Dacca. There had been much resentment in East Pakistan at the previously abandoned fixture, much of it from the East-West rivalry, and directed at government officials in West Pakistan rather than the MCC. After taking a flight to Rawalpindi to meet Fida Hassan to discuss all the political shenanigans surrounding their visit, Ames agreed to play the next Test in Dacca.

Lyn Wellings related that the Test was "played on an unworthy pitch, in a town in a rebellious mood". Even so, Ames had been assured by the High Commissioner that

Dacca was peaceful and that the army and the police were in full control. The complete opposite was the case. The army and police had effectively deserted the city and the party, according to Wellings were “virtual prisoners” of a students’ committee that had assumed control of the city. It was a very dangerous environment. Some of the European population were even airlifted out of the city for their own safety *after* the MCC team had arrived there.

For the duration of the Test the Students Action Committee had called for a pause in their political struggles for freedom. They almost succeeded in curbing the crowd’s excesses until the last afternoon when Pakistan’s crawl prompted other activities to divert them, such as the habitual throwing of chairs and more threateningly, lighting fires on the vast concrete terracing near the pavilion, for which there were no safety measures.

For this Test, again over 4 days, England dropped a spinner, Pocock, for the reinstated Snow. Bob Cottam therefore bowled first-change. Despite the atmosphere in the City, it proved to be, for the first part of the Test, an interesting, closely fought, if attritional, game of cricket. Pakistan batted first and made 246; Cottam took 2 for 52 in 27.1 overs. All four of England’s main bowlers, Brown, Snow, Cottam and Underwood imposed such a stranglehold that the innings occupied 110 overs. England’s reply was no faster. Their total of 274 was built around a magnificent fighting 114 not out by Basil D’Oliveira. It was the finest innings of his career. The wicket started to crumble at the end of the first day. D’Oliveira later stated that “the wicket was a complete shambles, there was nothing underneath the top soil, the whole of the crust had gone and it was a mud heap”. Leg-spinner Intikhab Alam opened the bowling but it was the off-spinners Saeed Ahmed and Pervez Sajjad who held sway, taking 7 wickets between them. D’Oliveira played a lone hand; the next highest score was Tom Graveney’s 46. Cottam batted valuably at the end. When he came to the wicket England were 236 for 9, still 10 runs behind. However, he held on pluckily to assist D’Oliveira to his century and a first innings lead. The pair added 38 before Cottam was dismissed, for 4. The difficulty of the wicket was exemplified by England having to bat 131 overs to reach their total. D’Oliveira’s innings was therefore a monumental triumph of concentration, technique and application. Given the conditions, England must have rued leaving out Pocock. However, the versatile Cottam responded by bowling off-cutters in a very long spell in tandem with Derek Underwood. However, the pair were thwarted by Saeed Ahmed, who decided to take on Cottam, and Mushtaq, who looked after Underwood. Pakistan made a token declaration at 195 for 6. Cottam’s figures were 30 – 17 – 43 – 1, a wonderfully steady performance in conditions that did not suit him. His wicket was that of opener Mohammed Ilyas.

It was his versatility that made Bob Cottam such a force in county cricket. He was omitted from the next Test at Karachi, when England opted to play leg-spinner Robin Hobbs instead. After a blistering century by Colin Milburn (139) – in what proved to be his last Test – and a more elegant one by Tom Graveney, the rioters finally brought the tour to a conclusion. There was an ugly mass pitch invasion with England’s total standing at a massive 502 for 7. The unfortunate Alan Knott was left stranded 4 runs short of a maiden Test century.

It is doubtful if any Test party has had to endure such a dangerous political situation. That England reached the Karachi Test was due almost entirely to the diplomatic skills of manager Leslie Ames. Soon after the end of the tour, the civil disorder continued and after more violent opposition, Auyb Khan relinquished power and martial law was imposed. The state of Bangladesh was created two years later, in 1971.

Bob Cottam returned to County cricket in 1969. Despite being the country's leading wicket taker he was overlooked for the Tests against the West Indies and New Zealand. Ray Illingworth, England's new Captain, preferred Essex all-rounder Barry Knight as the third seamer. It was not until four years later, in the 1972-73 tour of India, that he was picked for England again. He had to wait until the end of his career before his bowling skills were finally fully recognised when he became a highly respected coach, culminating in him looking after England's Test bowlers.

(to be continued)

ANDREW FLINTOFF

During his talk at the October meeting, John Crawley graphically described Andrew Flintoff's debut in first-class cricket. It was against Hampshire at the United Services Ground Portsmouth, on 24 August 1995. Our speaker recalled how, after catching everything in the warm-up he so impressed coach David Lloyd that Mike Atherton, much to his chagrin, was deposited to the covers and Flintoff took the former's normal position at second slip. He proceeded to drop two catches in the first 3 overs and another two later on. He remarked to Lloyd at the end of the innings that he would have to work harder on his slip catching! How well he succeeded!!

The future England all-rounder's debut was a somewhat sobering experience. He only made 7 and 0 with the bat – a victim of Heath Streak in both innings - and failed to take a wicket.

Whilst not mentioned by John Crawley, the Hampshire first innings was memorable for probably one of the finest exhibitions of swing bowling ever seen at Portsmouth. Wasim Akram took 7 for 52 on a pitch which gave all bowlers assistance. He swung the balls both ways. A number of deliveries were simply too good to induce and edge. Batsmen played and missed repeatedly and very few of the runs he conceded were in front of the wicket. Wasim had produced a masterclass.

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