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THE IMMORTALS (3)

FREDDIE TRUEMAN

The announcement of the death of Freddie Trueman, on 1 July, stunned the English cricketing public, and probably those further afield. Cancer had only been diagnosed weeks before and only a few were aware of its severity.

It was akin to the felling of an ancient, giant English oak. For in his days Freddie Trueman seemed indestructible. He was rarely injured and, even if he was, one would not have known. He never gave less than his whole-hearted best, whether he was playing for England or Yorkshire.

Of medium height (5 foot 10 inches) but blessed with broad shoulders, width at the hips and strong, bow legs, his smooth rhythmical approach to the wicket, with his unkempt black hair and flapping shirt sleeve, culminating in that glorious, classical, sideways-on cartwheel action when he reached the bowling crease are indelibly imprinted on the memory. It was a run up that was easy on the eye, yet loaded with aggressive intent.

And he moved the ball. His late outswing at pace, accounted for many batsmen being caught by the wicket-keeper or in the slip cordon. He bowled the off-cutter by way of variation, sometimes to devastating effect, never more than when he routed Australia on one memorable afternoon at Headingley in 1961.

Like all great fast bowlers, his armoury also included the yorker, bouncer, a slower ball and the straight fast one. Possessor of impeccable control of line and length he really was the complete fast bowler.

Statistically, he will be forever recorded in posterity as the first man to take 300 wickets in Test cricket. But for his “bad boy” image in his earlier days – more a matter of naivety rather than wilful behaviour, particularly on the MCC tour of the West Indies in 1953-54 – he would have played in far more Tests and left an unassailable target for English bowlers at least. However, ignoring S.F. Barnes (just how fast was he?) Trueman’s strike rate of a wicket every 49.4 balls has only ever been bettered by Frank Tyson among English fast bowlers. Tyson played only 17 Tests compared to Trueman’s 67. It is ironic that they only played together in the last two Tests on the ill-fated tour to Australia in 1958-59, when “The Typhoon” had just about blown himself out.

It is often forgotten he was a superb fielder. Ambidextrous, he took some stunning catches and effected some remarkable run-outs in the leg-trap, and could throw long distances with either arm. He was an astonishingly talented and durable athlete.

Freddie Trueman's record against Hampshire is representative of the pattern of his overall career. The matches in which he played against the County also included some of the most notable in Hampshire's history.

Born on 6 February 1931, he made his first-class debut, as did Brian Close, at Fenner's in 1949. Wisden's report of that match famously described him as a "spinner". His first appearance against Hampshire was at Portsmouth at the end of August in the following year. Opening the bowling with Alec Coxon, the pair, assisted by John Wardle (surely the most versatile spin bowler in the history of English cricket), dismissed Hampshire for just 113 in reply to Yorkshire's 369 for four declared (Frank Lowson 104). He took three for 28 in 14 overs; his victims being Alan Rayment, Huddersfield born Cliff Walker and the youthful Jimmy Gray. Hampshire were as usual in the early 50's, thoroughly outplayed as Yorkshire ran out very comfortable winners by an innings and 68 runs. Trueman remained wicketless as the County followed on, as Coxon (6 for 48) and Wardle (3 for 57) asserted their total domination over the Hampshire batting.

Despite his impressive opening burst, Trueman's place in the Yorkshire side was still not secure. He had to resist a litany of potential competitors, particularly Bill Foord and John Whitehead, before establishing his place in the side. Yorkshire cricket was the hardest of schools.

By the time he next played against Hampshire the following year he had just about established a firm foothold. At Bournemouth in early July, he returned figures of 3 for 47 and 3 for 42. Yorkshire again won by an innings. Interestingly, their most dominant spin bowler in the match was not Wardle but leg-spinner Eddie Leadbeater, who enjoyed match figures of 8 for 84. Leg-spin bowlers were a notably rare species in Yorkshire cricket before they became virtually extinct in the English game generally in the ensuing decade.

Freddie Trueman was destined never to play at the County Ground at Northlands Road in Southampton. Invariably Yorkshire requested that their away games in Hampshire be played at the seaside venues of Portsmouth and Bournemouth so that their travelling supporters could enjoy a family holiday whilst taking in the cricket. It had been the custom for many years for Yorkshire to end their season with a southern tour before returning to Scarborough for festival matches.

Trueman was called for National Service in 1952 and 1953. He therefore did not play against Hampshire in either of those years though he was able to play in a few matches for his County and, famously, made his England debut at Headingley in the first of these years. Roaring down the hill at the Kirkstall Lane end on the Saturday of the Test – the most important day in Yorkshire's cricketing calendar – he demolished the Indian top-order. At one stage they were a scarcely credible 0 for 4. They were eventually dismissed for just 58 in an hour and twenty minutes, Trueman taking 8 for 31. He went on to take 24 wickets in the three Tests in which he played.

Hampshire's batsmen undoubtedly followed these events with more than passing interest and must have been grateful that England's new, and long-awaited, fast bowling sensation was otherwise engaged. This did not mean though, that they were able to avoid the force of the formidable Yorkshire bowling attack. Whilst the threat

to cranium may not have been a factor, the young Ray Illingworth skittled the County's batsmen with his wily off-spin bowling at Bournemouth in 1953. He took 7 for 27 out of a total of just 88 as Yorkshire again won by an innings.

By the time Trueman returned to the Yorkshire ranks on a full-time basis in 1954, the remarkable Bob Appleyard was restored to health. After an extraordinary season in 1951 (after having played in only three matches in 1950), when he took 200 wickets, he missed virtually the whole of the next two seasons after advanced tuberculosis had been diagnosed. He spent eleven months in hospital, had the upper half of his left lung removed and had to learn to walk again. His story, beautifully recounted by Stephen Chalke and Derek Hodgson in "No Coward Soul" is truly inspirational. In an early season encounter at Bradford, the pair duly saw off Hampshire almost single-handedly for 72 and 89. Trueman returned figures of 4 for 29 and 3 for 6 (in 9 overs). Appleyard was even more destructive with 3 for 19 and 7 for 35, with his flighted off-breaks.

In the return match at Bournemouth, which was played on a difficult wicket, Trueman was quickly put out to grass in both innings to let Appleyard, Wardle and, eventually, Close rent their destruction. Hampshire subsided for just 51 and 162. Neville Rogers played a magnificent lone hand in the second innings. Opening the innings he revealed his class with a splendid 86, by far the highest score of the match. The quality of the innings was reinforced by the fact that the only batsman to make a half century was Len Hutton who scored exactly 50 in Yorkshire's second innings.

Hampshire's defeat in that match by 116 runs marked the nadir of their fortunes against Yorkshire. Hampshire had lost all seven matches since Trueman's debut in 1950, six by large margins. The only game in which they achieved near parity was in 1952 when Leo Harrison, with two wonderful knocks of 101 and 58, took Hampshire to within seventeen runs of a rare victory against the mighty northern County.

Hampshire's victory against Yorkshire by an innings and 43 runs at Bradford in 1955 must rank as one of the greatest in their history. It was their first against Yorkshire since 1946 and the first in that County since Lionel Tennyson's two pyrotechnical batting displays in 1932. Winning the toss, Roy Marshall and Jimmy Gray saw Hampshire off to a flying start. By the time Marshall was dismissed for 52 the pair had added 85 in only 78 minutes. A collapse ensued before Mike Barnard, Peter Sainsbury, in the first of three match-winning contributions, and then Vic Cannings helped Hampshire to 224. Trueman took 3 wickets, spread throughout the innings, for 59 in 20 overs. Significantly, however, Illingworth (4 for 34) had been the most successful bowler. Hampshire went on to dismiss Billy Sutcliffe and Lawson before the close. It then rained over the weekend. Vic Wilson (26) and Hutton (17) batted well early on, but as the wicket dried out the spin pairing of Peter Sainsbury (5 for 19 in 18.3 overs) and Roy Marshall (3 for 6 in 12 overs) took full advantage of the deteriorating conditions. Yorkshire collapsed from 45 for 2 to 61 all out. Hampshire understandably invited their opponents to follow on. Derek Shackleton and Vic Cannings saw the shine off the ball, Mervyn Burden came and went, before Sainsbury (4 for 43) and Marshall (6 for 44) weaved their magic again. Yorkshire were dismissed for 119 by 4.30pm. Like the Tennyson inspired victory twenty-three years earlier, Hampshire had surprisingly overcome their illustrious rival in two days. It

was Sainsbury's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and he had indelibly marked the event by dismissing Hutton – bowled and leg before - twice in a day.

This match was Roy Marshall's first encounter with Trueman . In his autobiography "Test Outcast", Marshall made some perceptive comments on Trueman's pace:-

"Freddie was one of the fastest bowlers I have come across, in his day, but to be at his best everything had to be right for him. He had to feel on top of the world himself and he had to be sure that the wicket suited him."

The great West Indian also then compared Trueman to his great Lancastrian opening partner Brian Statham:-

"I've always been more proud of the runs I scored against Brian Statham than those I took off Freddie Trueman.

Freddie was faster but he was more erratic and with my policy of trying to combat force with force, I found it easier to get runs against Fred. A few of them were what bowlers called 'unearned runs' because they came off the edge, but each one counted in the scorebook. You seldom had this kind of opportunity against Statham. He bowled straight at the wicket. You could not afford to take a chance because you knew that if you missed, it was the end for you".

Trueman's next appearance against Hampshire at Hull the following season was an evenly contested, low scoring and exciting affair. Hampshire's last pair, Cannings and Burden, held out for the last ten minutes to ensure an honourable draw. Trueman had arrested Hampshire's bid for victory with three middle-order wickets for 32. Interestingly, Marshall was again well to the fore with his bowling, taking six for 44 (the same figures as at Bradford) in Yorkshire's first innings. He bowled only occasionally in the ensuing years and it was to be the last occasion he was to take five wickets in an innings.

Freddie Trueman enjoyed a fine all-round match when the two Counties met at Bradford in 1958. He had been on Test duty in the previous year's fixture. It was Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie's first match as Hampshire's full-time captain – he had shared the duties with Desmond Eagar a year earlier – and it set the tone of his approach for his tenure. Rain completely washed out the first two days and play did not begin until 12 o'clock on the third. Hampshire struggled to make any headway against Trueman in particular who took the first four wickets to fall. At 40 for 4 it seemed as if Yorkshire might easily gain first innings points if they were able to dismiss Hampshire quickly. However, Barnard and his captain held up the bowlers until the declaration at 105 for seven, leaving Yorkshire only 55 minutes to get the runs.

In "Many a Slip" Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie wrote:-

"This seemed to me to be an impossible task, and the main object of my decision ..... was to give our players a bit of a runaround and some bowling and fielding practice".

Brian Stott and Ken Taylor ensured a reasonably quick start before Trueman's vivid intervention, at four, made bonus points a formality. He was always a dangerous hitter and, on this occasion, he embarked on a rare and devastating assault on Shackleton's bowling. He conceded an amazing (for him) 64 runs off only seven overs. Trueman raced to a half century in only 25 minutes. When Yorkshire passed Hampshire's total there were still four minutes to spare. Trueman finished on 58 not out, having hit 3 sixes and 6 fours mainly off the startled, and perhaps, shell-shocked Shackleton. In "Test Outcast" Marshall wrote:-

"Few batsmen ever really got hold of him although there were two for whom Shack held no terrors whatsoever. Time and again Fred Trueman tucked into Shack and pasted him around the park with his bold cross batted swipes. The other is ..... Brian Taylor whose left-handed bat hitting ..... had the knack of picking Shack up beautifully and carting him over mid-wicket or long-on."

The return match at Bournemouth in late August was another draw – a more tame one – with Trueman again excelling with both bat and ball. Yorkshire won the toss and chose to bat on a saturated wicket. They were dismissed for only 126 in 57 overs soon after lunch, with Mervyn Burden taking 7 for 27 and Peter Sainsbury 3 for 26. Marshall and Gray went serenely about their business and put on 82 in reply. Don Wilson then dismissed both; Marshall departing for 54 with the score at 97. Trueman had already intervened with the wicket of Henry Horton and Ray Pitman. He (5 for 23 in 16.4 overs) and Wilson (5 for 45) then dismissed the last six batsmen for the addition of only 21; the last five wickets actually fell for as many runs. Yorkshire struggled early on the Monday but captain Ronnie Burnett (54) and Trueman (53) enabled the former to declare at 263. Rain then washed out the third day.

By 1959, Freddie Trueman was in his pomp. With Hampshire struggling to regain their exciting form of the previous year, his bowling (5 for 77 and 4 for 84), and the batting of Stott (94 and 130 not out), were the major contributory factors to Yorkshire's four wicket victory at Hull. Yorkshire went on to gain the County Championship with an improbable run chase against the clock in the last match of the season at Hove, with Stott again prominent. Hampshire, though, gained the satisfaction of a 28 – run victory, with Trueman absent, at Bournemouth at the beginning of July.

Trueman was even more destructive at Portsmouth the following year. After Yorkshire had posted 399 for six (Brian Bolus 146 not out, Close 102), Marshall and Gray again saw off Trueman's initial burst by putting on 118 in 138 minutes. As at Hull a year earlier, their dismissals induced a collapse. On a bland wicket, Trueman ran through the rest of the batting, taking 6 for 34. He had now his tail up, and stepped up his pace yet another gear when Hampshire followed on. By the time the score had reached 20, he had dismissed both openers and Dennis Baldry. Thereafter, only Horton (68) resisted what the Hampshire Handbook termed "a further ferocious onslaught". He eventually finished 6 for 28 to give match figures of 12 for 62. Those fortunate to have been present at Burnaby Road had been privileged to have witnessed a master bowler at the very peak of his powers.

1961 was, of course, Hampshire's Championship year. However, it was Yorkshire who made the early running. By the time Hampshire arrived at Headingley towards

the end of May, their opponents possessed a 100% record, whilst Hampshire had conceded a reverse against Kent in the previous match and drawn against Northamptonshire earlier. After Stott had scored yet another century, Trueman did all he could to maintain the status quo. First he hit Peter Sainsbury for five consecutive boundaries in an over. The umpire, in fact, miscounted and called over after the fifth ball. He dismissed nightwatchman Leo Harrison on the first evening, defeated Gray and Marshall early next day, before bowling Malcolm Heath at the end of the innings. His 4 for 47 (off 27.2 overs) had ensured Yorkshire of a lead of 93. But for Denis Baldry's defiant 84 not out the margin would have been much wider.

Hampshire were eventually set a victory target of 290 in four hours. Marshall and Gray set off in hot pursuit with a stand of 53 but Hampshire batted down the hatches when the fourth wicket fell at 98, and eventually finished at 203 for 5. Trueman took 1 for 65, his only victim being Horton, whom he bowled.

Hampshire had secured the Championship when Yorkshire came to Bournemouth at the end of August. Trueman 2 for 43 and 1 for 34 – played his part with the ball as his team were intent on making a point, but it was his contribution with the bat and in the field that were crucial in Yorkshire's ultimate 59 – run win. His rapid 51 not out in Yorkshire's second innings – both Shackleton and "Butch" White felt the weight of his blade – facilitated a Hampshire run chase of 245 in 200 minutes. Roy Marshall then proceeded to dominate proceedings with a controlled and calculating knock. He had reached 108 before a fine piece of anticipation from Trueman ran him out and thus brought one of the finest innings of his career to a conclusion. Trueman was, to use racing parlance, lightly-raced in the ensuing Champion County v. Runners Up end of season encounter at Scarborough and did not add to his season's tally.

The next encounter between the two Counties at Bradford was a low scoring encounter dominated by Shackleton (7 for 78 and 5 for 67) and Trueman (5 for 34 and 2 for 49). Hampshire were without Marshall who was suffering from German Measles. Yorkshire eventually eased home by 5 runs. Little could the pair have imagined that they would be opening England's bowling attack against Frank Worrell's great West Indian side just over a year later. In the final innings Hampshire, needing 165 to win, stood at 156 for five. However, Trueman then had Jimmy Gray, top scorer with 68, caught behind and with Illingworth, completed the demolition for the addition of only one more run.

The end of season return at Bournemouth was played on a spinner's wicket and Trueman remained wicketless in a Championship match against Hampshire for the first time in his lengthening career. Trueman, though, continued to torment Shackleton and Sainsbury by hitting both for leg side sixes. However, on this occasion, Shack knocked back Trueman's middle stump, when he was on 44, shortly after suffering his indignity. The match was dominated by Illingworth who scored 115 in Yorkshire's first innings before taking seven wickets in the match, and Don Wilson (9 for 136).

In the match at Leeds in 1963 Hampshire recorded their first victory in Yorkshire since that memorable duel eight years earlier. Runs were never easy to come by as Trueman's first innings figures of 1 for 33 in 25 overs testify. The County patiently compiled 260 in 118 overs. Yorkshire did not find matters any easier. Indeed without

50 from John Hampshire and 70 from Phil Sharpe, they would have been somewhat embarrassed. Upon their dismissals, Sainsbury took the last five wickets in 20 balls for 14 runs to finish with 7 for 77. Hampshire built on a first innings lead to set Yorkshire 275 in 225 minutes. Only Trueman (3 for 34) held up the batsmen who played more confidently second time round. After early setbacks Yorkshire defended grimly. Trueman played his part with a responsible 37, despite Sainsbury's tempting high tossed deliveries severely testing his self control, before being brilliantly thrown out by White, who also took four wickets. Hampshire eventually wrapped up victory by 130 runs with thirty-five minutes to spare.

Trueman's next appearance against the County at Middlesbrough two years later, in 1965, coincided with perhaps the most sensational match ever played between the two teams. Yorkshire batted first on a wicket described as "lively but not dangerous". They quickly collapsed to 47 for seven with Shack having taken four wickets and Bob Cottam three. Trueman swiped at his first few deliveries without making contact but then decided to attack Shackleton. He smote him for 26 in an over before lifting Cottam for a straight six. His 55, the highest score of the match, occupied just 22 deliveries. That over was almost certainly the most expensive in Shackleton's career. Only Roy Marshall, demonstrating his enormous gifts and class, was able to make any sense of the conditions. He made 51, but even so Hampshire only gained a first innings lead of four (125 – 121). Trueman (2 for 15) was given just 9.2 overs in the innings. The lion's share of the bowling was undertaken by Tony Nicholson and Richard Hutton. "Butch" White then roared in to claim six of the first eight wickets to fall, including Geoffrey Boycott (lbw): Shack took the other two but, on Trueman's arrival at the wicket, Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie handed the ball to Cottam. He trapped Shackleton's nemesis leg-before soon afterwards before bringing the Yorkshire innings to a close. Yorkshire had been dismissed for only 23 – the lowest score in their history and the lowest ever against Hampshire. Hampshire completed an historic 10 wicket victory by one o'clock on the second day.

Though he played in his last Test that summer, Freddie Trueman was still able to give County batsmen a reminder that he was a force to be reckoned with. It took an inspirational innings of 94 not out by Ingleby-Mackenzie, who had only recently announced his intention to retire at the end of the season, to deprive Yorkshire of a Trueman – inspired victory at Portsmouth a few weeks later. Captain for the match, his 5 for 49 and 3 for 20 was a fine single-handed effort but, handicapped by a crucial rain break on the last day, it was not enough to bring victory for his side.

The 65 over limitation on first innings and rain ruined the match at Bradford in 1966, though Hampshire were handily placed before rain washed out the entire third day.

Rain also ruined the return at Portsmouth, but on this occasion, it was Yorkshire who were ascendant. Trueman (3 for 22) and Nicholson (4 for 16) shot out Hampshire for just 64 on the second afternoon.

Trueman's career had just two more years to run. He was again captain in Derek Shackleton's second benefit match at Bournemouth in 1967. In a match of contrived declarations, prompted by the loss of almost two full days, Trueman eventually handed Hampshire a victory target of 129 at 71 runs an hour. Intelligent batting brought them home by six wickets with four minutes to spare. This match

demonstrated Trueman's innate generosity as he was determined, as a tribute to a valued and esteemed friend and foe of many years standing, to make a match of what was a very special occasion.

His final match against the County was in his last season with Yorkshire in 1968. Rain again completely spoiled the match, played at Harrogate. Only six hours were possible throughout but he rolled back the years as he dismissed Roy Marshall for a duck and Barry Reed for 3, both caught behind by Jimmy Binks who kept wicket for Yorkshire's glorious Championship winning sequence between 1959 and 1968 when they won the title seven times. Much of their success was due to Freddie Trueman's unique prowess. Trueman signed off with 2 for 18 in 9 overs.

In 23 matches against Hampshire his bowling aggregate was:-

Overs	Maidens	Runs	Wkts.	Avge.	5WI	10WI
622.5	176	1361	88	15.46	6	1

Remarkable figures indeed.

No essay on Freddie Trueman and Hampshire would be complete without mention of John Arlott. The pair were, of course, fellow commentators on Test Match Special for over a decade until 1980. Moreover, they collaborated in a memorable television series on cricket and its history and players. The friendship also spawned John Arlott's finest book and one of the best of all cricket biographies "Fred:Portrait of a Fast Bowler", published in 1971.

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