

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 367 - DECEMBER 2017

## Wednesday 6 December 2017 – Meeting

Our speaker at the Society's Annual Dinner this evening, Pat Pocock, was one of those cricketers who conveyed a rare sense of enjoyment whilst he was on the field of play. There was a jauntiness in his walk. He always looked cheerful. He clearly loved the game. He was, of course, an off-spin bowler of rare talent. Tall, with a high action, he spun the ball prodigiously, made it bounce, and varied his flight. He was incapable of being boring.

With leg-spin bowler, Intikhab Alam, he formed one of the most endearing of all bowling partnerships. The game was fascinating and never dull whilst they were operating in tandem. The Editor remembers a wonderful day during Portsmouth Festival Week in 1979. Our speaker wheeled away for hours: 37.3-16-61-8. They were his second best career figures. Intikhab bowled 21 overs. In the second innings, Pat Pocock took five for 61 in 33.2 overs. On that occasion, his main support came from his great friend, Robin Jackman, who took four for 45. Surrey won the match by ten wickets.

The spin duo had also bowled a total of 91.2 overs and claimed 14 wickets in the match at Portsmouth a year earlier. They were upstaged, though, by Hampshire's great openers, Barry Richards and Gordon Greenidge, who put on 154 in the first innings, and paved the way for an eventual nail-biting three wicket victory.

**PATRICK IAN POCOCK**, always known on the county circuit as Percy, was born in Bangor, North Wales on 24 September 1946. He went to school in South London and made his debut for Surrey in 1964. He took 81 wickets in 1966 and enhanced his reputation on the MCC Under-25 tour of Pakistan in the ensuing winter. He was capped, by Surrey in 1967, when he claimed 112 wickets (avge 18.22).

Following Fred Titmus losing four toes in an accident with a motor boat in Barbados, he made his England debut against the West Indies at Bridgetown in February 1968. He took the wicket of Clive Lloyd in the first innings but the tall, flamboyant left-hander then set about him in the second. He missed the next test at Port-of-Spain, being left out in favour of Tony Lock who had been flown out from Western Australia as a replacement for Titmus. He was then selected, with Lock, in the final test on the spinners' wicket at Georgetown, taking three wickets. He demonstrated that he could bowl long spells and plug away whilst absorbing punishment. He retained his place for the first test against Australia at Old Trafford in 1968. He took six for 79 in the second innings. Four were front line batsmen – Cowper, Walters, Sheahan and Ian Chappell. Quixotically, he was then left out for the rest of the series. Also omitted from the next test was Basil D'Oliveira who had made 87 not out in England's second innings – their highest individual score of the match.

D'Oliveira was famously recalled for the final test at The Oval, scored 158 and thereby set in train the events which led to the cancellation of the winter tour of South Africa in 1968/69 and the country's subsequent isolation from test cricket for the next two decades. Our speaker was selected for the cancelled tour and subsequently played in one test in Pakistan, who stepped into the breach. It was a double-edged sword as the tour was accompanied by significant political turmoil as Pakistan sought independence as a separate country. Bangladesh came into being in 1971.

Our speaker then had to wait nearly four years before he played another test. Indeed after that test at Old Trafford referred to above, he was only selected for home tests at eight year intervals thereafter. He eventually played in 25 tests over a period of 17 years, taking 67 wickets (avg 44.41).

He was always a force in county cricket, none more so than on one unforgettable late afternoon at Eastbourne in 1972. Requiring 205 runs to win after a declaration, Sussex looked home and dry as they reached 187 for one with three overs remaining. At that stage, he had taken nought for 58 in 14 overs. He now embarked, however, on one of the most extraordinary spells ever seen. In his next over, he took wickets with his first, third and sixth balls, conceding two runs. Eleven runs were then scored off the next over, bowled by Jackman. Five runs were therefore required off the last over. Our speaker, undaunted, then took wickets with his first three balls. He had now four wickets in four balls, five off six, and six off nine; the latter was a world record. He still wasn't finished. After a single off his fourth ball, he then took another wicket with his fifth to claim another world record: seven wickets off 11 balls. Sussex needed four to win off the last ball. They scored one and lost their ninth wicket as the batsman (Joshi) was run out attempting a second.

He was Surrey captain in 1986, his last season, and earned much praise for his imagination and his willingness to keep matches alive. Those facets were totally in keeping with his approach to the game. He was rewarded by his county finishing second in the Championship, the highest position they had attained since winning the competition in 1971.

He was a brave batsman, who was often deployed as a night-watchman, and a sound fielder. In all first-class cricket, he claimed 1607 wickets (BB 9-57 v Glamorgan at Cardiff in 1979), scored 4867 runs (HS 75 not out v. Notts at The Oval in 1968) and held 186 catches.

After his playing days were over, he remained a familiar face at The Oval. He has just completed his term as Surrey President. He wrote an entertaining autobiography, the title of which had most readers reaching for their dictionaries: *Percy: The Pespicious Memoirs of a Cricketing Man, Bowling*.

The Society extends the warmest of welcomes to such a highly regarded and popular cricketer, and man.

NB Pespicious - acutely perceptive or discerning.

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