

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

NEWSLETTER No. 431 – OCTOBER 2024 (1)

Wednesday 2 October 2024 – Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting will open our Winter Season for 2024/25.

Our speaker will be **SIMON LISTER**, who has established an authoritative specialism for books on recent West Indian test cricket history. He will be talking about Sir Frank Worrell, the first official West Indian black captain. His book *Worrell: The Brief but Brilliant Life of a Caribbean Cricket Pioneer* was published in early June. He will be bringing copies of the book to the meeting.

Simon Lister is a radio producer and award winning cricket writer who has contributed to *Wisden* publications. He was the author of *Supercat – the authorised biography of Clive Lloyd* (published Fairfield Books, 2007), which was shortlisted for the British Sports Book Awards. His book *Fire in Babylon* (published 2015), which was about the successful West Indian Cricket teams from the 1970s to the 1990s, won The Cricket Society/MCC Book of the Year in 2016.

Frank Worrell's career was perhaps the most important chapter in the history of West Indies' cricket and is therefore sure to make a most interesting afternoon's listening.

HAMPSHIRE'S SEASON 2024 (continued)

As members will be aware, Hampshire's victory over Somerset at Taunton took them to second place in the County Championship. It was only the fifth time in their history they have finished as runners-up; the previous years in which they did so were in 1958, 1974, 1985, and 2005.

In the last four years, the County have thus finished 4th in 2021, 3rd in the next two years and now 2nd. It is the most sustained period of success in their history; the only comparable period was between 1973, 1974 and 1975 when they finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. It should also be remembered that in 2021, they were only one ball and one wicket away of being Champions.

There are those who will feel disappointed at not winning the ultimate crown, but James Vince and his team have given their followers immense enjoyment over such an extended period. They have been overshadowed by a very strong Surrey side, who have now won the title three years in succession, an achievement last attained by Yorkshire over 50 years ago under the captaincy of Brian Close between 1966 - 1968.

Surrey's record over the last three seasons is therefore an historic one. In 2024, they won eight of their 13 matches. Hampshire won six. However, Surrey's two defeats

were instructive. The first was at the hands of Hampshire in a record breaking epic at the Utilita Bowl at the end of May. Hampshire's match winners with the ball were Liam Dawson and Felix Organ, both spin bowlers. Surrey also lost to Somerset; they were spun to defeat by Archie Vaughan, son of former England captain, Michael, playing in only his second first-class match and was selected mainly as a batsman, and Jack Leach. Surrey themselves did not possess any front-line spin bowlers, until they brought in the Bangladeshi, Shakib-al-Hasan, in the match in which they won the title against Durham at The Oval. The move was generally the subject of adverse comment, given their seemingly endless financial resources. They were often referred to as cricket's equivalent of Manchester City.

As if to highlight the crass flaw in the structure of the Championship, as the final round of matches commenced, second placed Hampshire and third-placed Somerset met at Taunton without having played each other in the competition at all during the summer.

Hampshire finished the season strongly and, but for the weather, may have won the title. When Hampshire and Essex met at the end of August, rain washed out the entire first day and all but an hour of the third. The match on the final day therefore became a battle for bonus points. Given the two sides were so close in the table, and had designs on the Championship, there was no prospect of an old-fashioned declaration game. There was just too much at stake. At that stage, both sides were within a point of each other. Those that attended the last day were rewarded with some absorbing cricket, including what could be a glimpse of the County's future. Toby Albert (124) and Tom Prest (156) added an inventive 177 for the third wicket; the latter then put on 122 with Ben Brown (54). The key issue was Hampshire seeking a fifth batting bonus to claim one more point from the match than Essex. Earlier, Essex had declared after 109.4 overs to prevent Hampshire claiming a third bowling point. James Vince closed the Hampshire innings to do exactly that. Apparently, the teams were reported for unsportsmanlike conduct; the official missed the point entirely. The post-tea cut and thrust of that final day was the subject of animated conversation. It is unlikely that any of those present felt deprived; certainly that was the case where the editor was sitting. Both teams finished the match with 14 points. The batting of Albert and Prest will live long in the memory, such was its quality. The day also illustrated that a fight for bonus points can be interesting. That final day was a fine advert for the Championship.

The season was one of records. The following match against Lancashire added to the tally as Hampshire recorded an innings victory at Old Trafford. It was their first win on that ground since 1992. In that match Tony Middleton scored 138 not out; his son, Fletcha, emulated him by making 109. It was the first occasion that a Hampshire father and son have achieved that feat against the same county. Compared with other Counties, Hampshire's filial pedigree is fairly slim (think a host of Sussex families, the Cowdreys of Kent, and the fact that Quaife father and son once scored a hundred in the *same innings* for Warwickshire), so the achievement by the Middletons is worth savouring.

Liam Dawson also claimed five wickets in each innings (5 – 47 and 5 – 52) as well as hitting 104 not out. Very few Hampshire men have recorded a century and taken ten wickets in a Championship match; Dawson has now done so twice. In 2023 he

registered 141 and took 12 wickets against Middlesex at the then named Ageas Bowl, a Hampshire record. Liam Dawson has claims to be one of best all-rounders, if not the finest, in Hampshire's history. He went on to emphasise that claim by the end of the later home match against Worcestershire.

(NB In the match at Old Trafford in 1992 referred to above, Hampshire owed their win by 172 runs to one of the most vivid spells of fast bowling in the County's history. Though the incomparable Malcolm Marshall was playing, his opening bowler partner, Kevin Shine, was the man of the moment. In a post-tea spell in the Lancashire second innings he took eight wickets for 3 runs in only six overs, including a hat-trick. His final figures were eight for 47; he had taken five for 58 and therefore finished with thirteen wickets (for 105) in the match. In the Hampshire first innings, our patron Kevan James, opened the innings with Tony Middleton and scored 98. The pair put on 164 for the first wicket.

It seems that exceptional spells of bowling are a pre-requisite for defeating Lancashire at Old Trafford. Hampshire have won only five matches there since 1870 (in 1946, 1965, 1981, 1992 and 2024). They won by 13 runs in 1965, when Bob Cottam recorded the best bowling figures in an innings for Hampshire, taking nine for 25. Lancashire fell from 100 for one to 136 in their first innings with Cottam dismissing the last nine batsmen for 15 runs in 55 balls. Lancashire's collapse second time around was no less spectacular as they lost all ten wickets for 35 runs. On that occasion, it was Derek Shackleton (4 for 15 in 12 overs) and "Butch" White (6 for 48 in 22.3 overs) who claimed the spoils. Cottam bowled 13 overs without taking a wicket. These three men probably formed the most potent new ball attack in the County's history. Perhaps their only rivals since have been the current trio of Kyle Abbott, Mohammed Abbas and Keith Barker. The latter trio of course have bowled in a very different era in which matches are played on covered wickets).

In many ways, Hampshire's next fixture against Kent at Canterbury was a reprise of the previous encounter between the two sides earlier in the season. Except, on this occasion, Hampshire did not quite have enough time to run down their victory target. They lost runs at frequent intervals on the first day; the only man to prosper was James Vince with an omnipotent 88. At the close, their score stood at 213 for seven. However, on the next morning, Tom Prest attacked the Kent bowling to such effect that Hampshire reached 403 just before the lunch interval. In a resplendent and typically inventive exhibition of strokeplay he made 102 off 107 balls, striking five sixes along the way. He was ably supported by Brad Wheal who made a career best 61. Prest scores his runs so quickly with shots all around the wicket – his stroke range is considerable – and bats with such assurance, that one wonders why he's not been mentioned as an England candidate. Kent were dismissed for 207 (Abbot five for 46), 196 runs behind, and Vince enforced the follow on. At one stage, the home side were 138 for five, but as he has done so often, Jack Leaning held up Hampshire with yet another hundred against them (he made 118 at the Utility Bowl at the beginning of July). Rain ensured a draw.

In their penultimate match, Hampshire defeated Worcestershire comprehensively by 235 runs. Nick Gubbins, who once again batted consistently all season, made his career best score of 201 not out. He shared a fifth wicket stand of 220 with Dawson

(109). With both bat and ball, Dawson is now a looming presence on the cricket field. He is indisputably the premier all-rounder in County Cricket.

In reply to Hampshire's 462, Worcestershire responded with 273; their innings would have been ruinous without the veteran Gareth Roderick (94), and 23 year old Ethan Brookes (132), playing in only his ninth match. Abbas claimed four for 27 in the first half of the innings, before Dawson (five for 88) swept away the tail. Dawson made 51 as Hampshire decided to bat again. Worcestershire then limped to 158. Abbott was again the most dominant bowler with five for 36. During the course of that second innings, Dawson claimed his 50th wicket of the season, a career best tally.

The final match at Taunton was in many ways a microcosm of the season. Abbas and Abbott made inroads into the Somerset batting in each innings (the latter went on to take nine wickets in the match, and claimed five wickets in an innings for the third game in succession) before Dawson (four for 28) wreaked havoc later on in the first innings. When chasing the tricky target of 121, Vince (54) and Dawson (44 not out) ensured there were no slip-ups, after an early collapse. Albert flew the flag for the youngsters with 77 in the first innings to take Hampshire out of trouble and into a healthy first innings lead. In the Somerset second innings, it was Felix Organ (two for 13) who brought the Somerset innings to an abrupt end. Kyle Abbott took his 50th wicket of the season in the Somerset first innings).

Scores:

Somerset 136 (Kohler-Cadmore 63; Dawson 4-28; Abbott 4-37; Abbas 2-44) and 180 (Gregory 59; Leach 33 not out; Abbas 3-54, Abbott 5-37, Organ 2-13).

Hampshire 190 (Albert 77, Brown 35, Leach 5-52) and 121-5 (Vince 54, Dawson 44*).

Hampshire won by 5 wickets.

Editorial: The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the editor, and do not represent the official view of the Society.

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