

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

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MEETINGS

Wednesday 23 October 2024 – Meeting

We are delighted to welcome ANGUS FRASER on his return to the Society. He previously spoke at our Annual Dinner in 2009 when he delivered an entertaining and insightful discourse on “the bowler’s lot” and character vignettes on the various characters with whom he played.

The pantheon of English right-arm fast-medium bowlers he was of the same line as Maurice Tate and Alec Bedser – both indisputably great bowlers. Tall and broad-shouldered, he genuinely hit the pitch. In his early days before injury started to take its toll, it was almost impossible for batsmen to play forward to him without risk of injury to their hands.

He spent virtually all his Test career bowling at some of the greatest batsmen the world has ever seen. And, except on occasions in the West Indies, he had to do so on pristine pitches which gave him little assistance. His West Indian opponents included Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Richie Richardson, Viv Richards, Jeffrey Dujon, Carl Hooper and Brian Lara. Allan Border, Mark Taylor, Michael Slater, David Boon and the Waugh twins were present for the Australians. It was also a period when South Africa were readmitted to the Test arena and committed to making a mark, and when the young Sachin Tendulkar embarked on his glittering Test career. His record against each country demonstrates his skill and consistency.

Opponent	Tests	Balls	Mdns	Runs	Wkts	BB	Ave	5wl	10wM
Australia	12	3192	103	1383	46	6-82	30.06	3	0
India	3	955	41	460	16	5-104	28.75	2	0
New Zealand	3	756	37	296	7	2-40	42.28	0	0
South Africa	10	2132	95	924	35	5-42	26.40	3	1
Sri Lanka	1	150	3	114	3	3-95	38.00	0	0
West Indies	17	3691	160	1659	70	8-53	23.70	5	1
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	46	10876	439	4836	177	8-53	27.32	13	2

ANGUS ROBERT CHARLES FRASER was born in Billinge, Lancashire on 8 August 1965. Educated at schools in Middlesex, he made his county debut in 1984. He secured a regular place in 1988, in which year he was awarded his county cap after taking 80 wickets (avge. 19.37). He did better still the following year, dismissing 92 batsmen. After such a sustained spell of success, Test selection became inevitable and he made his debut against Australia in the third Test at Edgbaston that season.

It was a strange baptism in that after winning the toss, Australia batted first but, owing to rain, did not complete their innings until the fourth morning. However, our speaker justifiably earned praise by taking 4 for 63 in 33 overs. He again bowled impressively in dismal England performances in the fifth Test at Trent Bridge. Geoff Marsh and Taylor opened with a stand of 329, but he countered them heroically with 52.3 parsimonious overs. It was evident that he would be an integral part of the England team for some years to come, though he was, perhaps not surprisingly, unfit for the final Test at The Oval. He started the following series, in the West Indies, by taking 5 for 28 in a famous England victory at Sabina Park but broke down with a side strain whilst bowling in the nets prior to the fourth Test in Bridgetown. At that stage of the tour England were leading 1 – 0 and looking the best side. In *Testing Times*, his captain, Graham Gooch commented “None of the West Indies batsmen looked happy when tied down by his nagging accuracy and we had relied on him more than any other bowler”. These words were virtually definitive of his career. After helping Middlesex lift the County Championship in 1990, a hip injury ruined the next two seasons. On his full return to action in 1993, Middlesex repeated their Championship success. He was ignored by the England selectors until the sixth Test at The Oval. He demonstrated his class, and just what England had been missing, by taking 5 for 87 and 3 for 44. With both Devon Malcolm and Steve Watkin capturing six wickets in the match, England romped home by 161 runs.

He returned his career best figures in a typically lion-hearted display at Port of- Spain in February 1998. Recalled after a two year absence from Test cricket, he took 8 for 53 in the first innings - the best figures by an England bowler against the West Indies. However, the latter eventually emerged winners by three wickets. England made sure his spells of 5 for 40 and 4 for 40 were not wasted in the next match at the same venue. This was the series in which the first Test, at Sabina Park, was abandoned after only 10 overs because of a sub-standard pitch.

He carried his West Indies form in the next series at home to South Africa. Match figures of 10 for 122 (5 for 60 and 5 for 62), coupled with Mike Atherton’s famous duel with Allan Donald ensured an England 8 wicket victory in the Fourth Test to square the series. He then took 5 for 42 and 3 for 50 in the next (Final) Test as England won an exciting match by 23 runs to clinch the rubber. Prior to the heroics with the ball, he made one of the most famous 0 not outs in the Third Test at Old Trafford. South Africa looked sure-fire victors for almost the whole match before battling efforts by Alec Stewart (164), Robert Croft (37 not out) and Darren Gough (12) eked out time on the last day. Upon Gough’s dismissal, however, England, having followed on, were still 2 runs short of their opponents’ first innings total. However, South Africa were unable to separate the last pair in an atmosphere of quite unbearable tension. Our speaker’s display on that day exemplified his approach to the game, and demonstrated why he was so popular with the cricketing public, and demanded such respect from his opponents. 1998 was a stellar year, capped by his being awarded the MBE.

After a spell in the press box he has spent the rest of his professional career in a number of management posts with Middlesex.

Wednesday 2 October 2024 – Report

Simon Lister gave an absorbing and informed account of the life and times of Sir Frank Worrell. He began by displaying a large and rather grand photograph of his subject, wearing the blazer which was manufactured for the Commonwealth tourists to India, Pakistan and Ceylon in 1950/51. Worrell was vice-captain to Les Ames; however, he stepped up when the great Kent batsman suffered a recurrence of the back injury which led to his eventual retirement. The Commonwealth side comprised three Australians, Sonny Ramadhin, fresh from his resounding success in England, and 13 county cricketers. (Editor's note: including Derek Shackleton). Worrell went on to prove that a black man could captain the West Indies and, indeed, shut the door on white men fulfilling the role forever.

Simon Lister's talk was set against the social and economic backdrop of Worrell's life. He was born in Barbados in 1924. The Great Crash of 1929 had a profound effect on the economy of the West Indies. From the age of six, he was left in the care of his grandmother. First, his father and then his mother emigrated to New York. The West Indian diaspora in the States was already extensive and continues until this day. White men still owned vast tracts of Barbados, a century after the abolition of slavery. Disaffection among the black population led to riots; some of the protesters were shot on the streets of Bridgetown. Cricket was stratified, reflecting society as a whole. The various clubs were formed according to the colour of a man's skin. There was no crossing of the racial divide. Pickwick – the club for whites – enjoyed sole use of the Bridgetown Oval. Schools cricket was segregated similarly.

Despite these disadvantages, by the age of 14, Worrell was playing against men in club cricket and by 18, he was in the Barbados side playing first-class cricket. Within a year, he scored 188 and 308 not out against Trinidad.

He made his test debut in 1947/48, in the West Indies' first tests since the end of WW2. The England side was one of the weakest ever due to injuries, retirements and players opting to remain at home after an arduous tour to Australia in the previous winter. Worrell, Everton Weekes and Clyde Walcott dominated the West Indies batting and did so for the next decade. Worrell possessed an exquisite late cut and was generally regarded as creating a new perception of batting.

More than the other players, Worrell knew his worth. He endured a long running battle against the West Indies Board, who wanted his runs but were not willing to pay his dues. He missed at least three tours during his career. By 1959, he was thinking of retirement but the death of "Collie" Smith in a car accident resulted in a change of mind. Worrell had twice been offered the captaincy but it was not his priority, as he had embarked on a degree at Manchester University.

CLR James created a parallel connection between the case for self-determination in the islands, and the captaincy of the test team. It was now that Worrell accepted the captaincy when it was offered to him. Whilst he was captain, he drew up career plans for each member of the 1963 tourists. He became Warden of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, another unifying element in a fractious and divided region. He refused the post of the Governor of the West Indies. After a talking tour of

students in India, he returned home but was almost immediately diagnosed with Leukaemia and died on 13 March 1967, aged 42.

Simon Lister brought his book ***Worrell: The brief but brilliant life of a Caribbean cricket pioneer*** to the meeting. For those interested in West Indies cricket history and the historical, social, economic and racial issues in the islands, it is an informative and, at times, emotional read, which is highly recommended.

LIAM DAWSON

After scoring 956 runs (avge. 59.75), including three centuries, and taking 54 wickets (avge. 25.14), Liam Dawson was garlanded with a host of awards: the PCA Men's Player of the Year for the second consecutive year, the Men's Domestic Most Valuable Player and the Championship Player of the Year. The landmark "double" these days, is regarded as scoring over 500 runs and taking more than 50 wickets. The accepted quality is the difference between batting and bowling average. Of those who performed the double in a season, Dawson's difference of 34.61 is without parallel in Hampshire's history. Whilst some of his all-rounder predecessors scored more runs and took more wickets when performing the old-fashioned "double" in days gone by, when men played many more matches in a season than nowadays, none remotely approaches the latter figure. In fact, the nearest is Dawson himself, in 2023 when his batting/bowling differential was 20.

Liam Dawson's career difference now stands at 3.88. Peter Sainsbury's career differential was 2.72. Comparison with "Sains" are inevitable. He, of course, was also a right-handed batsman and slow left-arm bowler.

England have clearly indicated that Dawson is no longer in the frame to play test cricket, looking to youth rather than experience. The view seemed to be that he did not spin the ball enough. It will also be in the mind of Ben Stokes that he (Stokes) once hit him for five successive sixes in an over. However, that was a long time ago. Now aged 34, Dawson is living proof that spin bowlers mature with age. Sainsbury, some fifty years ago, was another in the same category. In the last two seasons he has shown that when the pitch is receptive to spin, he is a genuine force. He has claimed five wickets in an innings on nine occasions, and ten wickets in a match twice. In 2002, he took a career best (in the Championship) seven for 68 (ten for 139 match) on a wicket clearly prepared for Simon Harmer at Chelmsford.

Moreover, his batting has improved immeasurably. His talent has always been obvious and he has probably underperformed for much of his career. He gave occasional notice of his capabilities, none more so than in the first innings of the match on a difficult pitch against Somerset at the Ageas Bowl in 2019, when he scored 103. He seemed to be batting on a different wicket than his team-mates. Now, however, he has added both consistency and aggression to his game and has become, indisputably, one of the best batsmen in the Championship. Whether batting or bowling, he is now a match-winner. Currently, there is no other player in the Championship with that capability.

KYLE ABBOTT

Kyle Abbott finished the season with 55 wickets, one more than Liam Dawson. Stephen Porter of Essex took 56. Abbott has now claimed more than 50 wickets in a season on five occasions. He has twice taken 40. His consistency is a byword, as his heart. Time and again, when his late inswing comes into effect, he is virtually unplayable. And, woe betides any man or team that upsets him. When Somerset won the Royal London Cup at Lord's in 2019, they celebrated with a little too much zest. The team that Hampshire fielded was not the one which took them to the final. Vince and Dawson were on England duty.

Kyle Abbott filed it away in his memory. The outcome was that, towards the end of the season, when Somerset were seemingly on the cusp of winning the Championship for the first time in their history, he returned record Hampshire match figures of 17 for 86 (nine for 40 and eight for 46). In the second innings, the Somerset openers Steve Davies (51) and experienced Indian test campaigner, Murali Vijay (29) put on 86 for the first wicket and looked as if they may be plotting a Somerset victory. However, when he returned for his second spell, Abbott dismissed both and, assisted by Dawson (who took two wickets), swept through the rest of the batting. Only Lewis Gregory (34 not out) offered any resistance. Dawson in the first innings, and Vince in the second, both scored high-class centuries, arguably the best they have ever batted given the difficulty of the pitch. Somerset lost by 144 runs and still await their inaugural Championship title.

An indication of Kyle Abbott's quality is his bowling average, which for Hampshire stands at 19.90. Of those bowlers who have taken more than Abbott's 422 wickets with a lower average are Derek Shackleton (18.23), who played all his cricket on uncovered pitches, and Malcolm Marshall (18.64).

In an era in which overseas players appear in county cricket temporarily, Hampshire are fortunate indeed that he has played for them in eight of the last eleven seasons. He remained in South Africa in 2015, and the Covid year of 2020, and was contracted to Worcestershire in 2016. In those years that he played for Hampshire, the side gained promotion from Division Two in 2014, and have never finished outside of the top five since 2017. Their positions in the top flight have been 5th (twice), 4th (twice), 3rd (twice) and second.

Kyle Abbott's achievements must always demand consideration for inclusion on any short list of Hampshire Greats. At the age of 37, he was still a force in 2024. He is a phenomenon. He usually starts the season slowly, but once into a rhythm, batsmen can never feel wholly confident when facing him. His command of swing, at pace, means he is always capable of magic spells, and making telling breakthroughs. His opening partnership with Mohammed Abbas, whose nagging accuracy always demands respect, has been one of the finest of all bowling pairings. Unfortunately, Keith Barker was injured for much of last season but when the three were in harness in the two previous seasons, they formed one of the two best triumvirates in the County's history. The other was that of Derek Shackleton, "Butch" White and Bob Cottam in the 1960's.

HAMPSHIRE'S SEASON (3)

THE STING IN THE TAIL

THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY

The day after the season's end, Hampshire announced they had signed a "landmark partnership" with the GMR Group, one of the co-owners of the ILPL franchise, Delhi Capitals. According to ESPN Cricinfo "GMR have acquired a majority stake – understood to be around 53% - in Hampshire Sport and Leisure Holdings Ltd and will complete a full acquisition over the next two years. Rod Bransgrove (chair) and David Mann (chief executive) will retain their respective roles during that transition period." Hampshire have therefore become the first English county cricket club to be owned by an overseas investor.

So what does this mean in practice? Is it an opportunity, as portrayed by Simon Hughes in his recent cricverse statement which we circulated to members by email recently? Or is it a threat as indicated, by Huw Turbervill, Editor, of the Cricketer magazine who has concerns, which will be shared not only by many Hampshire members, but those of other County Clubs.

We must await developments over the next two years, and probably beyond. Circumstances often change after the cessation of so-called "transition arrangements" so that completely new business models emerge which affect assets, both physical and staffing. And, any current relationships between India and the UK have a significant geopolitical dimension. The article in the 2024 *Wisden* on how India hijacked the last World Cup is chilling.

It is now generally recognised that cricket per se can only survive with private investment. But at what cost? Will those people whose main motivation is money be prepared to sustain a loss-making County Championship? The demise of county cricket has been predicted since the 1890's. And yet, somehow it survived, mainly because of its local identity. Will its demise now become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

It already seems that selection of the England test side is beginning to stem from performances in The Hundred, rather than county cricket.

Shortly after the above announcement, it was reported that Hampshire "have been invited as one of the five teams worldwide to contest the new \$1m Global Super League in Guyana in November". Hampshire's provisional competitors are Guyana Amazon Warriors, The Titans (South Africa) and Rangpur Riders from Bangladesh. The other team has yet to be determined because of clashes of T10 and T20 tournaments elsewhere. The supreme irony. From Hampshire's viewpoint, it will be very surprising if the progression of that venture, and the aftermath, does not provide a glimpse of the future. It must be hoped that it is a positive one.

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