

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

PATRONS: SHAUN UDAL JAMES TOMLINSON KEVAN JAMES

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MEETINGS

Wednesday 1 October 2025 - Meeting

The Society extends a very warm welcome to this afternoon's speaker **ROLAND BUTCHER**. He is making a return visit having originally spoken in February 1997. Many will remember him for his exhilarating stroke making in the middle-order of Middlesex's trophy winning sides of the 1980's. Such was his attraction that the members of the dressing room card school would leave their table to watch him bat when he was on song. At his best there were few more destructive batsmen in county cricket. He was an immensely powerful driver and possessed a punishing array of back foot shots. It was an innings against Hampshire at Lord's in 1980 that established his career. As Middlesex chased 296 in 220 minutes on the last afternoon, they quickly fell to 54 for three. He then played an astonishing innings, laced with nine sixes and eight fours, of 153 in 144 minutes. Middlesex eventually roared home with nearly nine overs to spare. In the next match, he scored 179 against Yorkshire at Scarborough.

Moreover, in the wider context, he was, historically, the first black cricketer to represent England. He played in three tests on the tour to the West Indies in 1980/81, which will be recalled for all the wrong reasons. The second test in Guyana was cancelled because of the "Jackman Affair". Ken Barrington died during the third test on the island of our speaker's birth. The match also marked Roland Butcher's test debut. On the evening of Barrington's passing, he decided to go ahead with a party he was hosting to keep the traumatised minds of his team-mates, as best he could, occupied elsewhere. It was his thoughtfulness that endeared him to his Middlesex captain, Mike Brearley (see below).

ROLAND ORLANDO BUTCHER was born in East Point, St. Philip, Barbados, on 14 October 1953. His parents migrated to England shortly afterwards, leaving our speaker in the care of his grandmother. He eventually joined them in Stevenage and became a UK resident in 1967.

He was originally recommended to Gloucestershire as a leg spin bowler, who could bat a little. They were not sufficiently impressed to offer him a contract but could see enough potential to offer him to the Lord's MCC Young Professional staff. He soon became primarily a batsman and attracted the attention of Middlesex. He joined the staff in 1972 and made his first-class debut in 1974. Capped in 1979, he was an integral part of that County's trophy laden side from 1976 to 1990, incorporating five County Championships and a shared one, as well as six Lord's Cup finals (of which he played in four).

His value to that all-conquering side was acknowledged by his captain, Mike Brearley in his book *The Art of Captaincy: Butcher is a thoughtful cricketer and we helped each other on many matters. He believed that his conversations with me enabled him to channel his aggression. He also made valuable contributions to the morale of the team, on topics such as my own depth of commitment to the team's success, and the impact of being dropped on a player's state of mind.*

He was clearly a man whose value to his team was clearly measured in more than statistics, but it is worth noting that he scored 1000 runs in a season four times (best 1326 in 1984), on his way to 12021 runs (avge. 31.22), 17 centuries and 65 fifties. He also held 290 catches. His highest score was 197 against Yorkshire at Lord's in 1982. He received a deserved benefit in 1989.

He also played for Barbados in the 1974/75 season before joining Middlesex, and also spent one winter in Tasmania (1982/83). He toured Pakistan and the West Indies with International sides, as well as Zimbabwe with Middlesex in the early 1980's.

He has given much service to West Indian cricket, coaching in Bermuda, acting as director of Sports at the Barbados Cave Hill campus of the University of West Indies, and a selector of the West Indian men's and youth teams.

He was given the Freedom of the City of London in October 2022.

Chief Biographical Sources:

The Art of Cricket by Mike Brearley (pub.1985)

Another Bloody Day in Paradise by Frank Keating (pub. 1981)

Playfair Cricket Annual 1991

Wednesday 12 March 2025 - Report

Members enjoyed a most interesting meeting in the company of Lawrence Booth, editor of *Wisden*. He opened by stating that the publication has never been a commercial venture. It was a huge privilege to edit it. It was hard work, containing more pages than the bible. Though many comments were complimentary, he was always ready to receive notice of errors.

A selection of *Wisden* highlights included the saga about the West Indians running out five Australian batsmen in the inaugural Prudential World Cup Final of 1975 (Viv Richards effecting three of them); Freddie Trueman being described as a spin bowler on his first-class debut - he forgave, but never forgot; the 1930 edition speculated that Bradman needed to tighten his defensive technique; the first edition contained results of The Oaks, and the St. Leger, as well as a history of China and the English Civil War. Fifteen guests had chosen *Wisden* as their Desert Island book. EW Swanton's 1939 edition was cherished by Japanese POWs and is now in the Lord's Museum. As a result of liaison with the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians (ACS), amendments were made to the long standing career records of WG Grace and Sir Jack Hobbs. Philip Bailey's database (of the ACS) and Cricket Archive were integral to the book's publication. Our speaker also mentioned the extensive coverage of the Race Controversy in 2022. Occasionally, there were notable events which occurred between going to press and publication, particularly

the Sandpaper Gate incident at Cape Town. As editor, he always endeavoured to retain a sense of optimism about the game.

HAMPSHIRE'S SEASON IN 2025

Well, thanks to Durham's implosion on the last afternoon at Headingley, Hampshire remain in the First Division of the Championship, despite their own appalling batting display in their final match against Surrey. At 11 o'clock on 27 September, it seemed inevitable that Hampshire would be relegated. By late afternoon, they were reprieved as Duham were bowled for 85. The Hampshire team must have been so deflated after the morning session, it must be wondered how much they felt like celebrating. During the winter, there will undoubtedly be a critical analysis of their underperformance. More next month.

It was a case of third time lucky on the final three Saturdays of the season. First, they lost the t20 Final of the Vitality Blast and then they were defeated in Metro Bank One Day Final. On all three occasions, the toss was crucial but Hampshire's frailties, in both mentality and technique, were cruelly exposed.

Hampshire's Championship cause was not helped by an eight point deduction for a substandard pitch in the match against Sussex at the Utilita Bowl in May. Yet, that match revealed the weakness of their batting. In the Sussex first innings, John Simpson (106 not out) and Fynn Hudson Prentice (74) shared a sixth wicket partnership of 173, a sum that was higher than Hampshire achieved in either of their innings. They were dismissed for 154 and 165.

THE t20 VITALITY BLAST

Hampshire did well to reach Finals Day, having to cope with numerous changes of personnel during the competition. They fielded 21 players in all, five of whom were overseas players. Thankfully, the Australian Chris Lynn, who played a season for Gosport Borough as an 18 year old in Division Three of the Southern Premier League in 2008, was available for the final stages. Having replaced LG Pretorius for the group match at Hove, when the latter was called-up by South Africa, he scored a robust 51 opening with James Vince but was then unable to field in the Sussex innings because of a leg injury. He recovered in time for the quarter final against Durham at Chester-le-Street. There, he reprised his score at Hove, off only 27 balls, as he and Toby Albert (68) effectively won the match with a hectic opening partnership of 112 in 9.2 overs. None of the Durham bowlers were able to contain them. It proved to be an aperitif to an unforgettable innings against Northamptonshire on Finals Day. Chasing an awkward looking total of 155 in 18 overs, he launched a furious attack on the Northants bowlers, as he raced to an indecent 108 not out off just 51 balls. The ground was simply not big enough as he struck the ball high and straight, as well as to the leg side boundary. He didn't run much, hitting 11 sixes, as well as five fours. As he approached his century, and with the victory target in sight, he hit his fellow Australian, Lloyd Pope, for five consecutive sixes. With the crowd willing him on to complete a full set, he was struck on the pad and, in the wake of a furious appealing, was given out leg before. However, the opposition optimism was quashed on review. Hampshire were eventual winners by six wickets. Such was his dominance that only James Vince

(12) of his partners reached double figures. It was the first ever century on Finals Day.

To defeat a Somerset side who had defeated Hampshire with some ease twice in the group matches, and whose batting contained match winners all the way down to number nine in the order, was always going to be difficult. Earlier in the competition, Hampshire had lost Joe Weatherley for the season to injury. They were also without the Australian Hilton Cartwright who was recalled by Western Australia after an increasingly influential spell both in the Blast and The Hundred. At Chester-le-Street, he had struck 61 to maintain Hampshire's scoring rate just as it seemed they had lost momentum.

Crucially, they failed to score boundaries at a vital stage in the final against Somerset. Lynn fell early on, (but not before adding another six to his day's tally). Toby Albert played another fine innings. After James Vince had surprisingly fallen for 56, he confidently and maturely held the remainder of the innings together until, with a century in sight, he was bowled by the canny Lewis Gregory for 85. Hampshire eventually totalled 194 for six.

Somerset's Will Smeed has experienced some problems since his astounding entry to the game but he now guided his side to within sight of victory with 98. Gregory administered the coup-de-grace, by plundering Scott Currie for 18 off five balls. Somerset reached their target with an over to spare for the loss of four wickets. They had harried the Hampshire bowlers from the outset and never let them settle. However, Hampshire had given their supporters another Finals Day to remember.

NB Toby Albert was Hampshire's leading scorer in the competition with 633 runs including six fifties, including a best score of 98 not out against Glamorgan. His performances led him being drafted into the Southern Brave squad for The Hundred. He only played in the last match (in which he scored 4). Would his game have benefitted more had he stayed with Hampshire for the Metro Bank Trophy?

James Vince was next leading scorer in the Blast with 527 runs (five fifties). He endured his worst season with the Southern Brave.

The leading bowler was Scott Currie, with 27 wickets. He also enjoyed an eye catching season, with both the ball and in the field, for the Manchester Originals in The Hundred. The latter performances undoubtedly led to his selection for England's t20 squad against Ireland, though he didn't play.

THE METRO BANK ONE-DAY CUP

Through a judicious mixture of fielding young and experienced players, Hampshire enjoyed another successful run in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup. As in the inaugural season, Hampshire were defeated in the Final.

The competition is undoubtedly popular with the public, though because of a dire weather forecast, the Final at Trent Bridge was sparsely attended. The group matches were watched by sizeable crowds. They saw much good and interesting cricket. Hampshire introduced four new players during the tournament:

Ben Angus Mayes, aged 17 and a talented right-handed batsman who received his education at King Edward VI School, Southampton. He scored 74 on debut against Glamorgan at Neath and, later on, took Hampshire to victory with a quite outstandingly mature 62 not out versus Derbyshire at the Utilita Bowl. He played in all 11 matches, scoring 230 runs (avge. 32.85). He kept wicket before Ben Brown came into the side later on, taking 14 catches and making one stumping. These performances took him into both the t20 and Championship sides.

Andrew John Neal, a 25 year old off-spin bowler, who went to school at Haileybury before attending Leeds Metropolitan University. He was on Nottinghamshire's books as a fast-medium bowler at one stage, but after injury, converted to spin and played for Hertfordshire. Tall and a genuine spinner of the ball, he was reliable from the outset and never collared. He took 14 wickets (avge. 30.85).

Manny Lumsden, aged 16 and born in Basingstoke. He attended Radley College and is reputed to be a bowler of genuine pace. He was selected for three matches, against Glamorgan, Surrey and Gloucestershire, taking six wickets (avge. 29.00). He has already played in three under 19 ODIs.

Brandon McMullen, aged 25, born in South Africa and, latterly, has played for Scotland with some success in 37 ODIs and 23 International T20 cricket. His bowling was used sparsely, but he took the eye with his assured and powerful driving off the front foot. Unhappily, he usually started well before being dismissed trying to force the scoring rate. With more experience, he looked as if he could succeed in county cricket.

En route to the Final, Hampshire lost only two of their matches. Prophetically, one of them was against Worcestershire at New Road. The other was against Nottinghamshire at the Utilita Bowl. In the quarter-finals, they were due to play Middlesex at home, but as the day of the game clashed with Southern Brave's last match in The Hundred, the game had to be switched to Radlett. Cricket's managers should hang their heads in shame. Thankfully, the side were not phased by the change and won comfortably by 42 runs.

The semi-final against Yorkshire at Scarborough was arguably the match of the tournament. Chasing 304 for six, Yorkshire were in the hunt as long as Imam-ul-Haq, son of Imzamam, was at the wicket. However, after being run out by a speedy pick up and throw to the bowler's end by Eddie Jack, Hampshire just managed to keep their noses in front and ran out winners by 14 runs.

And so to the final at Trent Bridge. Hampshire, put into bat. Thanks to their two leading run scorers, Alistair Orr and Nick Gubbins, opened assuredly, until rain intervened. Thereafter, the momentum was disrupted. Orr batted responsibly as his partners fell away, but upon his dismissal for 110 (off 130 balls) in the 40th over, the tail floundered. The last five overs only produced 23 runs, and the innings closed at 237 for seven after 45 overs. Of the other batsmen, only Gubbins - 38 at the start of the innings – and Fuller (23 at the end), made any headway.

Due to rain, Duckworth/Lewis then came into play and Worcestershire were left with a target of 188 off 27 overs. It thus became a slightly enhanced 20/20 equation, and the odds were on them winning the match. So it proved. Though the Pears started slowly, they always had wickets in hand. Though the end was frenetic as their batsmen surrendered their wickets to Scott Currie's crafty variations of pace, length and particularly direction, they eased home by three wickets with two balls to spare. Currie finished with five for 43 off six overs. Ethan Brookes, who top scored with 57 off 34 balls was nominated man of the match. Orr could consider himself unfortunate. In the final analysis, it was his runs that made the match competitive.

It was a slightly deflating end to a fine campaign, magnified by the fact that Hampshire, with two largely different sides, fell at the final hurdle on successive Saturdays.

As mentioned above, Hampshire's run scorers were their captain, Nick Gubbins and Ali Orr. The latter was the competition's leading scorer with 707 runs (avge. 88.37). He recorded three centuries: 131 against Leicestershire at home, 108 against Middlesex at Radlett and 110 in the Final. It was Hampshire's second century in a List A final. The other was by Rilee Roussow against Kent at Lord's in 2018. Gubbins scored two centuries: 144 not out at Neath, and 117 against Nottinghamshire at the Utilita Bowl. Joe Weatherley (116 not out) steered Hampshire to victory against Essex at home. Perhaps the innings of the season was Liam Dawson's coruscating 142 (116 balls; 13 fours and seven sixes) at Scarborough. Time with the England squad has seemed to add another dimension to his game.

COMMENTS ON THE KOOKABURRA BALL

The kookaburra ball this season has led to the most negative comments. Bowlers have become cannon fodder. Even Kyle Abbott (at the Utilita Bowl) and James Anderson (at Cheltenham) struggled to get the ball past batters' outside edge in their matches, such was the lack of deviation. Three further inter-related components were the attitude of captains, the bland nature of many pitches and the PCA seeking to reduce the Championship schedules for the benefit of players' wellbeing. Captains sought to create "score board pressure" by batting for five or more sessions. They were aided by the soporific pitches. It is no wonder that the players complain of fatigue. Many pointed to the fact that bowlers of yore bowled more overs in a season than they do now. They undoubtedly did so, but they never had to bowl for five consecutive sessions. The comparison is invalid. Those ancients were assisted by uncovered pitches, and generally bowled for only three continuous sessions as a maximum. Their bodies received more rest. It is highly unlikely that uncovered wickets are going to be reinstated. Counties are still being penalised if they prepare what are regarded as sub-standard pitches. The ECB budget is grossly inflated to meet marketing demands. Savings could be made by reducing the number of pitch inspectors. As an aside, a cost benefit analysis for the marketing purposes is worthy of examination.

The viewing experience for spectators in June and July was as poor as the editor can remember. He has never watched such unadventurous cricket. Scoreboard pressure is a double-edged issue. If sides manage to avoid the follow on, the setting of the ensuing declarations (should they occur) becomes difficult. The best captains

will ask themselves if they have sufficient time to bowl out the opposition. However, with the kookaburra ball, the pressures created by relegation, and easy-paced pitches, it is a matter for the finest of judgements. One felt sorry for Ben Brown at Worcester; he was virtually in a no-win situation. The ball has received almost universal condemnation from the Counties and spectators alike. It is clearly unsuited to English conditions. It thrives best on hard, fast pitches in sunny climes. We saw rather too much of the latter this summer, but it did not result in the former. If the kookaburra ball continues to be used, the death of county cricket stands to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Why invest in a membership/entry fee if the prospect is sheer boredom, and negativity?

HAMPSHIRE'S OVERSEAS PLAYERS IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP

Hampshire's experiences in recruiting overseas players this summer, is indicative of the issues associated with making such selections in the modern era. The County had originally signed the Australian all-rounder Jack Edwards as their second overseas player (the omnipresent Kyle Abbott, of course, being the first). But he was injured prior to the start of the season and the New Zealander, Brett Hampton, another all-rounder and a tall right-arm fast-medium bowler was registered in his place. He made only three undistinguished appearances, before being injured. Hampshire soldiered on without a replacement until they were gifted with the precocious left-handed Indian, Tilak Varma, starting with the second phase of the Championship season on 22 June. Left-handed and slimly built, he became the 10th Hampshire batsman to mark his debut with a century -100 against Essex at Chelmsford. He then followed up with 56 and 47 against Worcestershire at home, 112 against Nottinghamshire at home, and then bowed out quietly with 5 and 38 in the return at Worcester. The Indian all-rounder Washington Sundar was drafted in for the final two matches. He batted well in two of his four innings, though his decision to attempt a six when Hampshire were two runs short of a batting bonus point in the first innings against Surrey was, at best, perplexing. On the other hand, he top-scored with 46 on a broken pitch in the second innings at Taunton. Apart from capturing the last three Surrey first innings wickets for only five runs, his contribution with the ball was negligible. He had damaged a finger trying to stop a bullet-like drive from Ralphy Albert in the second innings. Had Sundar been able to bowl at the end of the Surrey innings, Hampshire may conceivably have been required to chase a lower match winning total. Surrey's Albert, grandson of the snooker player Jimmy White, revealed himself to be a potential match-winning all-rounder. He claimed two wickets at the end of the Hampshire innings by bowling slow left arm medium. He bowled spin in the second, but without taking a wicket. Dismissed for nought in the first innings, he was unphased in the second, despite being hit on the helmet early on. He rode his luck, playing and missing a number of times, but he continued to bat aggressively, comfortably outscoring the normally dominant Dan Lawrence. His 63 was the highest individual score of the match. He appears to be one for the future.

Tilak stayed for the first three Metro Bank matches before returning home. Hampshire then signed the South African Bjorn Fortuin (who had previously played in five matches in the Blast) for the Championship match at Hove and, finally, Indian all-rounder Washington Sundar for the last two Championship matches. At Taunton, he demonstrated that runs could be made against Jack Leach and Archie Vaughan on a broken pitch in the second innings. He batted serenely until unexpectedly falling

for a top score of 46. The Indian ownership of Hampshire is clearly having a beneficial effect to date, though recruitment is inextricably linked with that country's first-class programme.

ENGLAND SELECTION AND THE IMPACT ON COUNTY CRICKET

It was often claimed that county cricket would survive as it was a recruiting ground for the test team. This is clearly no longer the case. Where Hampshire are concerned there have been three instances where that hypothesis is being tested. Sonny Baker made his Hampshire debut in the season's opener against Yorkshire. He bowled usefully, taking three wickets. He had previously played in a first-class match for the England Lions in Australia. He was retained for the following match when he took five late order wickets for 80 against Surrey at The Oval. He was then withdrawn by England. He was wicketless when brought back to the side against Durham three weeks later. He then took two wickets against Notts, after which he was injured. He looked the part when brought into the t20 squad at the end of the group phase, but failed to take a wicket in the second Championship match against Notts. However, in the County's return match at Worcester, he captured five wickets in the first innings. He was called into the England ranks because of his pace; whether he becomes a genuinely fast bowler remains to be seen. He is, though, certainly not lacking in confidence and relished bowling bouncers to Jonny Bairstow, having him dropped on the square leg boundary. However, after eye catching performances for the Manchester Originals in The Hundred (his victims included James Vince, Bairstow, Dawid Malan, and Joe Root) he was selected for England in the first ODI against South Africa at Headingley. It was a character building experience as he received some very rough treatment by former Hampshire player, Aidan Markram (86) in particular, conceding 76 runs in seven overs. It was the first setback in his career. He is undoubtedly a positive individual, and one hopes the mental scars will be short lived. If there was one lesson, it must be that his selection demonstrated vividly the artificiality of The Hundred. He was, though, chosen for England's Ashes squad. We must wish him well.

John Turner is another whose career has perhaps been disrupted by call-ups to the England squad. After a startling entry into the game, his career has been variable to date. He has been loaned to Lancashire on four occasions, three of which were during this season. Hampshire then brought him back into the side for the matches against Warwickshire and Sussex, in which he took seven wickets. In the Vitality Blast, he has seemed to share the opening berth with Baker, but never together.

Another youngster to play in his inaugural first-class matches this season via the England set-up is Eddie Jack. Still only 19 years old, he made his bow in two matches for England Lions against India A, and then appeared in the Championship games at Chelmsford, Worcester, Hove, and Taunton, and versus Notts at the Utilita Bowl.