

HAMPSHIRE SENIORS CRICKET TEAM DIARY

Thursday 17th March

The Hampshire Seniors Cricket Team assembled at various points on the way to Heathrow for the delayed Sri Lanka tour.

The original date for the tour had been postponed due to the Tsunami disaster and we were taking with us a sum of three thousand pounds collected from donations and some cricket gear kindly donated by Lords International Ltd, Holt & Haskell and Hampshire County Cricket player Billy Taylor. Unfortunately John Harris (Paultons CC) one of the main batsman had to stay behind because his mother had died the Sunday before and a few others had to drop out because of the changed dates,

The flight on Sri Lankan Airways was uneventful apart from a champagne 25th wedding anniversary for Chris Woods (Petersfield CC) and his wife Jean.

Friday 18th March

After a short stopover in the Maldives the squad arrived in Colombo Sri Lanka at 4.30pm local time (10.30am UK time). They were met at the airport by the local TV cameras to record our arrival (it was shown on TV that evening in the news programme). Also arriving were a cricket team from Durham University some of their players having played against the Southampton Institute in the National University's Final indoor 6-a-side the previous Saturday at Lords won by Southampton by 1 wicket. We arrived at the Taj Hotel and were met by Errol Seneviratne of Sri Lanka Cricket who had co-ordinated with the Seniors from the Sri Lanka end. Again there were cameras there to record the arrival and the traditional local welcome of lighting the candles. England A and Sri Lanka A and Pakistan A were also staying at the hotel playing in a triangular tournament.

Saturday 19th March

Waking up to a glorious sunny hot morning and after eating a hearty breakfast the tourists departed to the Colombo Colts Cricket Club for a session of nets. Marvin Attapattu the Sri Lankan Test captain was at the ground playing in a club match but still found time to talk to the Seniors officials and players having scored a useful 50.

The rest of the day was spent acclimatising by the hotel pool and starting on the tanning process.

Sunday 20th March

Another hot sultry day and the team prepared for its first match against Lanka Cavaliers at the Moretuwa Ground south of Colombo scene of the first one day Test match in Sri Lanka. The scoreboard showed the team for the last ODI played a few months ago between Sri Lanka and South Africa Graham Smith, Jacques Kallis, Herschell Gibbs etc. The Lanka Cavaliers included a number of former National and Test players.

Against this backdrop the Seniors lost the toss and opposition elected to bat in the hot humid conditions. Their openers put on 85 although a couple of catches were not held due to the sticky hands of the tourists but Andy Yorke (Bentworth CC) made the breakthrough. Jim Smallbone (Petersfield CC) then took 2 wickets and Andy Yorke picked up another 2 victims. At 151 for 6 the Seniors were on top but an onslaught in the final few overs took them to 195 for 6 after the stipulated 35 overs.

In reply the Seniors put on a useful opening stand of 62 by captain Alan Wright (Liphook & Ripsley CC) 24 and Martin Hall (Easton & Martyr Worthy CC) 32 in 12 overs before both were out, the former run out and the latter caught in the deep. Against the tight bowling of the Lanka Cavaliers the Seniors lost wickets in the chase for runs and finished on 107 for 8. After the match the hosts laid on drinks and food accompanied by

a Sri Lankan band who provided the entourage with a good old sing song and the respective National Anthems were sung with gusto. A great end to a beautiful day.

Monday 21st March

Yet another glorious hot humid day and the choice today was golf, England A v Sri Lanka A or shopping. The golfers joined up for lunch with those watching cricket to experience the England side winning the match in the last over. Watching the stars of the future Ian Bell, Vikram Solanki, Matt Prior, Owais Shah and others beating the host country ended a wonderful day.

Tuesday 22nd March

Today was even hotter than the previous days and the team arrived at the Air Force Cricket Ground in Colombo for the match versus the Seylan Bank CC. In the sultry conditions the opposition won the toss and elected to bat and the Seniors wilted in the heat conceding 258 for 7 in the allotted 35 overs. After an opening stand of 92 by former Test Player Gunawardane and Wisserathna the relatively young side dispatched the ball to all parts of the ground and effectively put the result out of reach of the Seniors. Jim Smallbone (Petersfield CC) took wickets taking 4 for 56 in 7 overs. Jan Bridle (Bournemouth Sports CC) had 4 dismissals behind the stumps.

In reply the Seniors struggled against some tight seam bowling and only Dave Elliott (Liphook & Ripsley CC) with 24 and the team sponsor Leon Whitfield 16 in the latter stages were able to bat with authority. As the temperature rose and the conditions became even more humid the Seniors finished on 124 for 7 in the 35 overs.

The evening was spent by the whole party at the local Cricket Club Bar and Café an enjoyable way to forget the trials and tribulations of playing cricket in Sri Lanka.

Wednesday 23rd March

Again another lovely hot and humid morning greeted the tourists as they made their way by team coach to the Test Ground at the Sinhalese Sports club. The Hampshire seniors were honoured to be playing here and at the break between innings the cricket gear that had kindly been given by Lords International of Wales, Holt & Haskell in Southampton, Billy Taylor of Hampshire CCC and others was handed over to the Sri Lankan Cricket and a cheque for 750,000 rupees (4000 pounds sterling) was handed to Cricket Aid for the Tsunami relief. 2 boys from schools in the Galle area accepted the gear on behalf of their schools.

The match itself against a young SSC side was played in stifling heat and the opposition rattled up 216 for 8 with Jim Smallbone (Petersfield CC) taking 4 for 25 in 6.2 overs.

The Seniors opened strongly putting on 61 in 10 overs before Martin Hall (41) fell to a tumbling catch in the deep by one of the young fielders. Andrew Yorke (21) did well as a makeshift opener but the Seniors were up against it for the required run rate and finally finished on 141 for 3 with Alan Wright not out 32 and Dave Elliott 25 not out.

Thursday 24th March

Today is a traveling day as we go by coach in land to Kandy the town with the Buddha's tooth in its temple. A long tortuous journey and we arrived at the 5 star Mahaweli Reach Hotel in late afternoon with nothing to report apart from a few near misses with "Tuk-Tuks" the local form of 3 wheeler travel. The weather in Kandy is a little cooler than goodness!!! Not so humid.

Friday 25th March

A free day for relaxing with some keen golfers going to the beautiful Victoria Golf and Country Club. The course was rather hilly and John Rickard (Trojans CC) at a par five achieved a net eagle much to his enjoyment which was similar to the celebrations at winning a Ryder Cup. The players finished as darkness descended thanks to the caddies and ball spotters not many balls were lost in the jungle rough.

Saturday 26th March

An early start was made to visit the Elephant Orphanage about one and half hours journey from Kandy. The Elephants from old to little babies were being fed and then they walked down to wash themselves in the river – a spectacular sight with 50 of them splashing in the river. After this we visited a local herbal garden for a tour of the garden where the group experienced local herbals for face, head and shoulder massages. After the journey back a few of the party suffering with the heat were conspicuous by their absence – the toll of traveling, the heat and spicy food was taking affect. In the evening we watch England beat Northern Ireland 4-0 at football in a World Cup qualifier and hear that England A lose to Sri Lanka A in the triangular tournament which they needed to win to definitely qualify for the final. An unlikely win against a very strong Pakistan A side tomorrow is essential for them to reach the final on Tuesday.

Sunday 27th March

Yet another hot humid day in the tropics and our 4th match of the tour against the Old Trinitians CC at the Campus Ground although we were due to play on their normal ground the Trinity College Asgiriya Test Ground but due to the Tsunami a school match had been rearranged there. This is the only Test match ground in the world that is owned and run by a school. The ground we are playing on is somewhat less splendid but still a bowl (ie Rose Bowl) with a marvelous hilly backdrop on which previously a full England team had played on.

The opposition are old boys of Trinity College and on winning the toss they surprisingly elect to bat on a pitch dampened by overnight rain. The opening bowlers for the Seniors the ageless Stan Rudder (Waterlooville CC) finishing with 2 for 20 off his 7 overs and the younger Trevor Foreman (Hursley Park CC) making the new ball swing and seam off the pitch with the latter picking up his first wicket of the tour having had a few catches dropped off his bowling previously. “President of the Seniors” (as termed in local press) John Rickard had a catch dropped off his first ball which proved costly but again Jim Smallbone proved to be the best bowler with his slow left arm deliveries taking 3 for 29 off 6 overs. The opposition ended with 141 for 8 off their 35 overs.

The Seniors however were unable to match the run rate with only 23 runs off the first 10 overs and then required to make 73 off the final 10 overs bur despite a late flourish by the evergreen Stan Rudder (17) the Seniors innings disappointingly closed on 103 all out

We then adjourned to the Test Stadium for the after match presentations and were able to see the splendor of the ground imagining it full to capacity for a ODI International.

Monday 28th March

A rest day which some of the party chose to take the Tea Plantation trip up country and a few others to play golf but most of the players wanted to recharge their batteries by the pool side or recover from the “funny tummies” affecting a number of the party.

That night we heard of the Asian earthquake off the Sumatra coast which happened at 11pm local time but thankfully the expected Tsunami never materialized.

Tuesday 29th March

An early rise for the two hour coach ride to the venue for the 5th match of the tour – the Dambulla International Stadium another Test venue England lost heavily here in the 2003 ODI so pride was at stake for Queen and country. We were playing a 30 over match against a North Central Provincial Schools XI who had hammered the touring Durham University the day before. However we were confident that experience would tell in the end by the vast difference in the average age. Skipper Alan Wright won the toss and for the first time on tour elected to bat. After an early loss Martin Hall (30) batted aggressively and after 20 overs the score was 92 for 4 with 10 overs remaining. Alan Wright (42) and Dave Elliott (16) and with Stan Rudder (21 not out) hitting a big six the final score was 162 for 6. Would it be enough the Seniors thought and although the schoolboys started quickly they lost wickets against Stan Rudder and Trevor Foreman. At 102 for 4 they looked in control but the introduction of Jim Smallbone 3 for 34 in 5 overs

pegged them back and included a stunning diving one handed caught and bowled. Confusion arose with our scorer Dick Batchelor when one of the batsmen had a runner and also changed his cap from red to a blue one as it was not easy to identify the different batters due to the distance of the scorers from the pitch. All was resolved when he was quickly out. Andrew Yorke took 3 for 29 off 3.2 overs with Jan Bridle taking another 3 dismissals and the Schools XI were all out for 144 18 runs short. The Seniors were jubilant and celebrated well into the night back at the hotel.

Wednesday 30th March

We arose early and left the hotel in Kandy for the last leg of the tour to Negombo just north of Colombo and arrived at the Browns Beach Hotel right on the beach (not as salubrious as the other 2 hotels we had stayed in). The rest of the day was spent settling in on improving the tans or shopping. In the evening a large thunderstorm with monsoon like rain put the final match of the tour the following day in jeopardy but knowing how quickly it dries here we were ever hopeful of continuing our winning streak!. The highlight of the evening was the fines meeting superbly orchestrated by Trevor Foreman ably supported by Anne-Marie Bridle and Margaret Collins. Everyone was fined and accounted for with umpire Tony Wharton being top of the fines (apparently miscounting balls in an over - his umpiring colleague Geoff Prouton missing out on the fine)

Thursday 31st March

Once again we arose to a hot sunny humid day ready for the match although our fit players were reduced to the bare minimum. We unfortunately lost the toss and the young Leos Sports CC captain elected to bat however we recruited one of the local players to play for us and he persuaded the opposition captain that it would be most hospitable if the Seniors were invited to bat much to the relief of the already exhausted players. The young opening bowlers who could very well be playing for Sri Lanka in a few years swung and moved the ball about and although Martin Hall went early Andrew Yorke and our guest player Christian Susantha resisted the storm until the former was out at 33. Colin Handley (Wimborne CC) batted positively but a thunderstorm delayed proceedings and the ground staff did a great job in protecting the square and mopping up the outfield so that the Seniors were able to go back out and continue batting but at 111 for 6 off 31 overs the rains came again and although it sopped the local knowledge of the grounds man said that more was on the way so the match was abandoned.

After the match the hosts laid on some more beers and food and after a few speeches the end of tour presentation ceremony was made. Martin Hall was top run scorer, Jim Smallbone was top wicket taker, Allan Wright best fielder and Stan Rudder best allrounder. The end of an exhausting tour.

In the evening the Seniors hosted a party at the Boat Club to thank our hosts especially Errol Seneveratne and his son Rohan and friend George. The President elect of Sri Lanka Cricket was expected to attend but was unable to make it due to the heavy rains.

Friday 1st April

Now the "chilling down" period for the tourists prior to flying home, with the effervescent Lt. Commander Ronnie Broome playing a few April fools jokes.

In the evening retiring Seniors Manager John Rickard and Tour organiser Geoff Prouton held a cocktail party in their plush suite. Golfing prizes were presented by golf organizer Trevor Foreman to the various golf winners including John Rickard who has earned the nickname "El Bandido" and in a strange twist the latter presented the former with Tourist of the Tour 2005 trophy. The "Michael Palin Trophy" went to team sponsor Leon Whitfield who actually flew back to the UK for the Easter weekend and flew back to rejoin the tour. Our thoughts were with those who could not make the tour due to the Tsunami date change and to Chris and Jean woods who had to fly home just in time to see her mother before she died. Thanks were also made to Jan Bridle for preparing the tour brochure and to Mike Swain who was responsible for collecting 800,000 rupees and cricket clothing toward Cricket-Aid in Sri Lanka. A special thanks to our erstwhile scorer Dick Batchelor who was involved in what is now termed the "Dambulla cap-

gate” scandal according to local reports and apparently in the UK. The UK Friends of the Dambulla Under 15’s are planning a demonstration on the teams arrival at Heathrow. This is not the last we will hear of this. Again copious amounts of beer, gin and tonic and nibbles were consumed by the party as they continued to cool down.

Saturday 2nd April

The final day of the tour as everyone continued the tanning process, late shopping or packing getting ready for the night flight to the UK.