

OV AL W OR LD

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SURREY CCC SUPPORTERS' CLUB

VOLUME.26 ISSUE NUMBER.1 NEW YEAR 2011 EDITED BY MARCUS HOOK

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE PURELY PERSONAL OPINIONS. ANY CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING 'OVAL WORLD' SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO MARCUS HOOK AT FLAT 1, 67 BIRDHURST RISE, SOUTH CROYDON, SURREY, CR2 7EJ or E-MAIL marcushook@aol.com

FIRST INNINGS – I'D SETTLE FOR STALEMATE by Marcus Hook

Picking up where I left off in the Christmas issue of Oval World, the fixtures for 2011 were eventually released on December 14. Now, this probably shows how old I am, but I can remember a time when the schedule for the following year was available to Surrey members during the last championship game of the season. Even in those days everyone used to moan that surely it was possible for the TCCB's computer to come up with something more sensible than Surrey playing at Leeds, Canterbury and Cardiff in the space of five days, like we did in May 1983.

With all the advances in technology, one would think the job of putting the fixtures together would be much slicker, but the process now takes three months longer. Clearly, two divisions has complicated things, as has the recent review of the domestic programme, but surely it's not asking too much for the fixtures to be out by the end of October.

But it's not just when the fixtures are released that winds people up. Too many playing days in April, the lack of Saturday cricket and clusters of matches in the South East clashing with each other are high on the list of gripes. Whenever the subject of the fixture list came up at the Members' Liaison Group, Bill Snelgrove always seemed to be the first to lambast the ECB. Sadly and unbelievably, Bill is no longer with us, but his crusade lives on.

I can also remember a time when the first round of championship matches started no earlier than April 25. Surrey's first ever April start in the championship came way back in 1930. Since then, over 60% of the championship contests (involving Surrey) that have begun in April have been played at home. Far too many early season matches at the Oval was certainly one of Bill's moans. Perversely, this year, now that Bill isn't around to see it, two of Surrey's three games beginning in April are away.

But as we know, the whole reason for starting earlier is due to the counties' obsession with Twenty20 cricket. They say it's because the players need more time for rest and recuperation, but if they really cared about the players they wouldn't insist on so many T20 matches.

The fact that the biggest gaps in the schedule are during the FpT20 group phase suggests that the counties think it's more important for the players to be at their best for the hit and giggle stuff. Between June 2 and July 15 – a period of 44 days – Surrey are only due to be in action on 24 of them. How on earth would the players of today have coped with 24 three-day matches – in which the minimum number of overs to be bowled in a day was 110 – sixteen 40-over games and two more one-day competitions on top, which was what we had thirty years ago?

My ECB media accreditation means I am not allowed to bet on cricket, but I would have staked a serious amount of money on the reduction in championship games from 16 per county to 14. For all the talk about two divisions of nine teams being sacrosanct, I thought that, when push came to shove, the counties would opt for preserving the T20's prominent place in the schedule.

But it appears that the 16-game championship will be retained, for now. The Daily Telegraph's Paul Bolton recently wrote: "What happens if you put 18 county chairmen, 18 county chief executives and their counterparts from the Professional Cricketers' Association in a room and ask them to decide on a future structure of the county game? You've got it: stalemate." Well, if stalemate means no reduction in the number of championship games and no increase in T20 cricket, I would take it. A final decision regarding the 2012 programme is due to be made on March 22.

One might have thought that a 14-game championship season would mean a later start to the season, but that's not the real reason why some counties want to trim the champo. It has nothing to do with cricket, or the welfare of the players. As always, it has everything with money – a 14-game four-day schedule will make it possible for counties to participate in the Twenty20 Champions League.

Rumour has it that if the Twenty20 reverts to three groups of six, playing ten matches each to determine the quarter-finalists, compensation will be paid to the likes of Essex, Somerset and Sussex, who have complained about the potential loss of income from having three fewer home fixtures. Again, it's all to do with money. The quicker the counties realise we are in the middle of a recession, meaning that revenue from T20 cricket will be the same regardless of whether there are 5, 10 or 15 home fixtures, the better.

But there have been reasons for cheer recently. England's Ashes victory down under was extremely satisfying; especially as it was the first time Australia had been twice beaten by an innings in a home series. The only thing that took the gloss off it, wasn't the drubbing we received in the one-day series, but the fact that for those who haven't got Sky, and were following events on Radio 4 Long Wave, the shipping forecast was on at the moment of each of England's Test victories.

Going into the rubber, Duncan Fletcher said that Australia could be beaten. His comments certainly touched a raw nerve with Tim Nielsen, the coach of Australia, whose words now make him out to look pretty stupid. Nielsen said: "You can quote me on this: we could not care less what Duncan Fletcher thinks about anything or anyone. His opinions on most things in

Test cricket are irrelevant. To be honest, Duncan Fletcher would not know the first thing about playing Test cricket in Australia. Have a look at his record here. His record speaks for itself. He doesn't know what he's talking about, but that's no great surprise."

Ricky Ponting's captaincy came in for a lot of criticism, but, for me, Australia's selection policy did him no favours. The only time vice-captain Michael Clarke looked undroppable was when he was driving the ball to short extra cover, and what was going on with the spinners? Australia's spin threat was expected to come from Steve Smith and Nathan Hauritz, but Smith was played as an all-rounder (I can only assume that's why he invariably came in ahead of Brad Haddin) and Hauritz didn't get a look in until the one-dayers.

Instead, and to everyone's amazement, the Aussies turned to Doherty and Beer. Brad Hodge, the Victoria and former Leicestershire batsman hit the nail on the head when he said: "Xavier Doherty got picked averaging around 48 in Sheffield Shield cricket. Michael Beer is averaging 40. My spin bowling average is 41 and my spin bowling is horrible." When Beer played at Sydney it was the first time he had ever been inside the SCG. It was fitting, perhaps, that Duncan Fletcher had the last word when he summed things up by dryly saying: "In the next few years England will need to beat better teams than Australia."

Having, it would seem, not learned from the Ashes, Australia's selectors then chose to omit Mike Hussey from their squad the World Cup. Now that Hussey has been called up as an injury replacement, I cannot help feeling that Australia have the tools to go on and win the tournament. I wouldn't completely rule out England either. Despite some indifferent performances against the minnows, they have shown they can raise their game when it matters, against the likes of India and South Africa. The loss of Broad and Pietersen to injury is a blow, but there are far worse replacements than Eoin Morgan and Chris Tremlett. If misfortune were also to befall Matt Prior, then England really would have a chance!

Sad though it may seem, something else that cheered me up recently were the lengthy spot-fixing bans handed to Salman Butt, Mohammed Asif and Mohammed Aamir. Does Butt really expect us to believe his explanation for why so much cash was found in his hotel room last summer? He said: "£2,500 was given to me for the opening of an ice cream parlour in Tooting." Notwithstanding the bans, given the way Pakistan seemed to gift New Zealand 92 runs in four overs the other day, a dark cloud remains over the integrity of their cricket.

As I mentioned earlier, I am not allowed to bet on cricket, but that doesn't stop me having a regular flutter on the horses. Looking at my bank balance, perhaps it's too regular a flutter! Anyway, each year I preview the Grand National for the benefit of my family, friends and work colleagues. But this year I thought I would share two stats with you that could well point to the winning horse on April 9. The last Grand National winner with a "Z" in its name was Zoedone way back in, wait for it, 1883. Another letter that has not been represented for while is "W", which hasn't been attached to a National winner since West Tip came home in front in 1986. As luck would have it, two of my fancies are one of Philip Hobbs's entries Quinz and Alan King's nine-year-old West End Rocker. If one of them triumphs I'll be expecting you to donate 10% of your winnings to a needy cause, starting with me!

Finally, I think we should all acknowledge what a great job Paul Sheldon has done over the last 15 years as Surrey's chief executive. Paul has always been a friend to the Supporters' Club, unlike his predecessor Glyn Woodman. I know it's tenuous, but as sad as I am sad to see

David Stewart and Paul Sheldon standing down within a few months of each other, the last time Surrey went into a season with a new chairman and chief exec they ended a barren run of no silverware.

SUPPORTERS' CLUB NEWS

BILL SNELGROVE

In January, we were all shocked to learn the tragic news that Bill Snelgrove had died from a stroke at the age of 54. Bill, who was a member of the Surrey CCC Supporters' Club and who also served on the Members' Liaison Group, died in Sydney, Australia, just a few days after witnessing England's Ashes win. Bill was a keen runner and cyclist. One year he ran the London Marathon in 2 hours 19 minutes. More recently, he would routinely cycle to the Oval, from his home in Mortlake, when Surrey were playing at home. To make up for disappointments that came from watching Surrey and Charlton Athletic in recent years, Bill followed the England cricket team overseas. He had seen England's last 70 Test matches abroad. However, we will not remember Bill for such exploits, but for being a kind, cheerful and genuinely fine human being. Our love and thoughts go out to his family.



ALSO REMEMBERED

Our deepest condolences also go out to the families of Peter Spiro, who died in November, as well as Stuart Stredwick and Michael Whitcomb, both of whom passed away in December. As some of you may know, Michael was a much valued and highly respected member of the Surrey CCC Statistics Group.

KEEN CRICKETERS WANTED

The Supporters Club's cricket team, Surrey Ovalites, offers the warmest of welcomes to new players for the 2011 season. Young bowlers especially needed, but enthusiasm is the top priority. Ovalites play friendly cricket on Sundays in South London, Surrey and Kent, with home matches at West Wickham. Are you, or is your son, interested? Contact captain Dave Evemy on 07789-927783 or daveevemy@aol.com to find out more.

TEAM, CLUB AND OTHER NEWS

GOULD NAMED AS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

On March 7, Surrey CCC announced that Richard Gould is to succeed Paul Sheldon as the Club's chief executive. Gould arrives from Somerset CCC, where he was chief executive for six years. Before that Gould, who is son of former Wales and Wimbledon football manager Bobby, spent several years as Commercial Director of Bristol City FC. Richard Thompson,

Surrey's chairman, said of Gould: "Richard is a born leader. His term and contribution at Somerset speaks for itself. His commitment to cricket at all levels and strong commercial pedigree highlighted Richard as a standout candidate. I look forward to working with Richard and feel confident his contribution will be significant in all aspects of Surrey cricket in the years to come. I would also like to thank Andy Nash and the Somerset committee for their co-operation in managing Richard's departure in such an amicable and progressive fashion." Gould added: "Surrey CCC offers one of the biggest challenges in UK sport and I am relishing the opportunity of helping to lead the Club going forward. Surrey CCC has enormous levels of support throughout London and the country, and has done a great job over recent years transforming the Kia Oval into one of the most iconic grounds in world cricket. The next six months will be extremely busy, with a very important domestic season ahead of the Club. Surrey members and fans will be hoping the team can progress in all formats of cricket, and we will be providing whatever support is required to help deliver success."

HERNIA PUTS PIETERSEN OUT OF ACTION

The need for surgery on a hernia has forced Surrey's Kevin Pietersen out of the ICC Cricket World Cup and the Indian Premier League. The problem, which was discovered after the recent one-day series in Australia, will require around six weeks of recovery time, ruling Pietersen out of the IPL, in which he was due to play for the Deccan Chargers. Instead, the former Notts and Hampshire batsman will target the first Test of the summer, against Sri Lanka on May 26, for his return to action. Pietersen said: "I'm obviously extremely disappointed to have picked up this hernia injury. Representing England in a World Cup is something I've been looking forward to for the past four years. I'm also bitterly disappointed to be missing the IPL but can take comfort from the fact that I will be fit for the start of a very exciting English summer against Sri Lanka and India."

RAMPRAKASH EXTENDS

On March 4, Surrey CCC announced that Mark Ramprakash had signed a one-year extension to his current contract, keeping him at the Brit Oval until the end of the 2012 season. Ramprakash, who is currently coming back from a knee operation, expects to return to playing by late May. He said: "I am still enjoying my cricket, maintaining my fitness and am still able to score runs for Surrey, so extending my contract was a very simple decision for me." Chris Adams added: "Mark Ramprakash is the finest domestic batsman of his generation and still has a huge amount to offer Surrey County Cricket Club. To have a man with his ability, experience and energy in your dressing room is simply something that cannot be bought and I look forward to continue working with him for the next two seasons."

PAKISTAN SPOT-FIXING TRIO APPEAL BANS

Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir have filed appeals to the Court of Arbitration for Sport against the bans imposed by the International Cricket Council for spot-fixing. Butt was banned for 10 years, with five of them suspended, after being found guilty of corruption by an ICC tribunal. Mohammad Asif was handed a seven-year ban, with two of them suspended, while Amir was banned for five years. All three men have denied wrongdoing in the Fourth Test against England at Lord's last year. They were banned after the News of the World newspaper reported no-balls were bowled at specific points in England's innings after a payment was made to a businessman. The players are due to appear at City of Westminster Magistrates' Court on March 17 to face charges of conspiracy to obtain and accept corrupt payments and conspiracy to cheat.

DAVIES REVEALS HE IS GAY

On February 28, the England and Surrey wicketkeeper Steven Davies revealed he is gay, becoming the first playing professional cricketer to do so. Davies, who was part of England's successful Ashes tour, went public with the news in an interview with the Daily Telegraph. He said: "I'm comfortable with who I am - and happy to say who I am in public," Davies said. "To speak out is a massive relief for me, but if I can just help one person to deal with their sexuality then that's all I care about." Davies came out to his friends and family five years ago and confided in England coach Andy Flower ahead of the Ashes tour, with Flower and captain Andrew Strauss then letting the rest of the squad know. Davies said: "It was a fantastic thing to do, telling the lads. The difference is huge. I am so much happier. I told Andy Flower first. It was a tough thing for me to do, to tell him face-to-face, but I had to do it. He supported me 100%, him and Andrew Strauss. It was the right thing to do as I felt I couldn't live like this anymore. I didn't enjoy going on tour too much because of the secret, and the Ashes was going to be a 3½-month tour. That's a long time and I would have really struggled to finish it. My sexuality is an essential part of who I am, so I wanted the boys to know." Strauss agreed that he would tell half the squad, with Flower telling the others. Two days later, Davies met his team-mates at Lord's, where their reaction could not have been more supportive. Matt Prior, who was his rival for the wicketkeeping position and is playing that role in the World Cup, came over to give Davies a hug. Davies said: "He couldn't believe I had kept it to myself for this long. He said I should have told him. That was special." Vikram Solanki, chairman of the Professional Cricketers' Association, and Davies's former team-mate at Worcestershire said: "Steve has the full support of all his colleagues in cricket. Many of those Steve plays with and against have known about this for some time and none of them regard it as anything other than an entirely personal matter." Surrey's press release revealed that Davies's current county colleagues were already fully aware of his sexuality.

SURREY HOPEFUL OF RETAINING WATERS DESPITE EPC DECISION

On February 28, Surrey CCC announced that after consultation with the Professional Cricketers Association, the Club will not be issuing any Emerging Players Contracts for the 2011 season. The scheme was originally introduced in 2010 to give Surrey the ability to enter into short-term contracts with young players who were on the fringe of the first team and regularly involved at Second XI level, but EPCs have been discontinued after objections were received from the PCA. One player who was on an EPC last summer is opening batsman Seren Waters, who is currently representing Kenya in the ICC World Cup. He was not offered a professional contract at the end of the season but, subject to agreement with the player, it is still the Surrey's intention to register him for the 2011 domestic season.

PAUL SHELDON TO STAND DOWN

Paul Sheldon announced that he will be standing down as the Chief Executive Officer of Surrey CCC. He will leave the Club at the end of March 2011. Commenting on the decision, On February 25, Sheldon issued a statement in which he said: "I have stood down because I believe I have taken the Club as far as I can, and that now is the right time to hand over the reins. I am very proud of what we have achieved at the Club over the last fifteen years. Most especially, I remember the winning era of the great Adam Hollioake side; the building of the iconic OCS Stand and the historic Ashes winning years of 2005 and 2009. It has been a privilege to have served as Chief Executive of one of the greatest cricket clubs in the world and to have worked with so many talented people both inside and outside the Club. Many of them have become good friends along the way. I have been deeply fortunate to have been guided by Michael Soper and David Stewart as chairmen – both of whom were a phenomenal

force for good in the Club's development. When I formally leave at the end of March, I will be wishing Richard Thompson and everyone connected with the Club – particularly the players – the very best of fortune in the years to come.” Richard Thompson, Surrey's chairman said: “Paul's service to the Club, from running our 150th celebrations in 1995, to then becoming our Chief Executive shortly afterwards has been outstanding. Both on and off the field, Paul leaves a tremendous legacy and many enduring friendships. Paul will always be part of the Surrey family.”

DERNBACH HOT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Surrey's Jade Dernbach has put in some eye-catching performances on the England Lions tour of the West Indies, taking 17 wickets at an average of 15.94 in the tourists' first three outings in the WICB's regional four-day competition. The 24-year-old seamer claimed 2-87 and 5-16 in the victory by an innings over the Leeward Islands at Warner Park in St.Kitts, 5-84 in the draw with Barbados in Bridgetown and 4-44 and 1-40 against Trinidad & Tobago at Queens Park in Trinidad, which also ended with honours even. The Lions are due to complete their tour of the Caribbean on March 27.

PIETERSEN REFUTES REPORTS OF ODI RETIREMENT

Surrey's Kevin Pietersen denied a report in the Daily Mail (February 11) that he is set to retire from one-day international cricket after the ICC Cricket World Cup. He wrote on his Twitter account: “Just to set the record straight... I have NO intention of retiring from ODIs after the World Cup!”

LINLEY SIGNS TWO-YEAR EXTENSION

On February 8, Surrey CCC announced that 28-year-old seam bowler. Tim Linley had signed a new two-year deal. Linley, who suffered a freak foot injury at Chesterfield which sidelined him for a large part of last season, immediately after he had recorded figures of 4-13 against Derbyshire, said: “Signing on for two years at Surrey is the culmination of a huge amount of hard work and is a very rewarding feeling. Surrey is a massive club moving in the right direction and I am very excited to be a part of it for the next two seasons.” Professional Cricket Manager, Chris Adams added: “I can't think of many that have worked harder to get a deal and make a professional career than Tim Linley. He absolutely deserves everything. Often the part you don't see as a supporter or a member is what a player brings into a dressing room. Tim is a fantastic team man, is good to have around and brings a great deal to the squad.”

CONWAY APPOINTED HEAD PHYSIO

The former England physio, Dean Conway has been appointed Surrey's new Head of Physiotherapy. Conway, who formed part of the England set-up between 1998 and 2007, will lead the physiotherapy and medical operation at Surrey for the next three years, offering support to Team Physio Alex Tysoe and Strength and Conditioning Coach Ashley Wright, who will continue in their current roles. On February 1, Surrey's professional cricket manager Chris Adams was quoted as saying: “When I first arrived at Surrey one of main priorities was to improve the medical and physiotherapy operation at the Club. Although we had already made fantastic progress, the addition of Dean Conway to that team will complete the process brilliantly. As his experience shows, Dean is one of the top operators in his field and will add another element to our work in this area. I would also like to pay tribute to Judith Pitt-Brooke, who led the department excellently throughout 2010.”

DUNN IMPRESSES FOR ENGLAND U19

Surrey fast bowler Matthew Dunn, 18, signed off England U19's recent tour of Sri Lanka in some style. Having not been overlooked for the two four-day Test matches, Dunn was second to Somerset's Lewis Gregory, in terms of the leading wicket-taker in the four-match one-day series, with 8 ODI victims at an average of 20.75 runs apiece. Unfortunately, the tourists lost the series 2-1.

PATTERSON TAKES OVER FROM GORDON

Surrey have announced that Scott Patterson will succeed Bill Gordon as Head Groundsman at the Kia Oval. Patterson, 31, has been with the Club since 2007 after gaining previous experience at Shenley CC, Horsham CC, Arsenal FC and Merchant Taylor's School. In his new position he will run the team of groundsmen at the Kia Oval and continue to work alongside his predecessor, Bill Gordon, who will remain at the Club to offer him specialist support in all areas. Patterson said: "It is a great honour to become Head Groundsman at such an incredible ground as the Kia Oval and I am very much looking forward to continuing to prepare for the new season. "I would also like to take this chance to thank Bill Gordon for teaching me so well over the last four seasons. He is one of the top groundsmen in the world today and learning from him has been an amazing experience."

SURREY SIGN ARAFAT AS OVERSEAS FOR 2011

On January 26, Surrey CCC announced the signing of Pakistan all-rounder Yasir Arafat as an overseas player. Arafat, 28, will join up with the Oval outfit in early April and be available for all three competitions for the entirety of the 2011 campaign, complementing Australia's Shaun Tait in the FpT20. It will be Arafat's eighth season in county cricket having previously represented Scotland, Sussex and Kent. In Twenty20, he is the third leading wicket-taker of all time with 108 victims from 89 appearances. In the first-class arena he averages 23.58 with the ball and 26.74 with the bat. Yasir Arafat said: "I am delighted to have the chance to play for Surrey next season and look forward to working with Chris Adams again." Adams added: "Signing a player like Yasir Arafat will give us the stability that we have searched for in our overseas signing. I have spent much of the winter searching for that elusive spin option to complement the squad but have been unable to find a suitable option. Having also factored in Chris Tremlett's emergence as a quality Test bowler I have opted for a different approach. We have not got the overseas position right now for some years at Surrey, but in Yasir I believe we have a very solid performer and very rounded individual who will add quality to the squad in all forms of the game."

TOM MAYNARD QUILTS GLAMORGAN TO WIN THINGS AT SURREY

Tom Maynard has joined Surrey from Glamorgan on a three-year contract. Maynard, 21, who is regarded as one of the most promising batsmen in the country, has already made 93 appearances in county cricket, hitting one-day hundreds against Northants in 2009 and Lancashire last term. Speaking to the South Wales Argus (January 20), Maynard said: "It was a massive decision to leave Glamorgan and something that I have taken a lot of time over. I had to really make sure in my mind that it was the right move. It was unfortunate that I had to leave in bad circumstances, but I couldn't have picked a better place to further my career and take my game to the next level. I've come to win things, that's what I want to do. I want to play in a team full of winners and a team that can win trophies." Surrey's professional cricket manager, Chris Adams added: "Once we received permission from Glamorgan to speak to Tom, it became clear that Surrey was his preferred destination. He has been attracted here by a number of factors including the wicket at the Kia Oval and the fantastic history of the Club."

But most of all he had a sense of wanting to be at Surrey through what will be a very exciting time here. We were on the receiving end of what he is capable of last season and although this was not a signing we had planned for, it was an opportunity that was too good not to take and I am delighted that Tom is adding further depth to what is looking like a very strong squad.”

TAIT ON BOARD FOR THE T20

On January 13, Surrey CCC announced the signing of Australia’s Shaun Tait as an overseas player for this summer’s FPt20 competition. Tait, 27, who is widely regarded as the fastest bowler in the world, will join up with the Surrey Lions shortly before their first FPt20 match, against Gloucestershire Gladiators at the Kia Oval, at the beginning of June and he will be available for the duration of the competition, including the quarter-finals and Finals Day should Rory Hamilton-Brown’s side progress to the knockout phase. With 81 wickets at an average of 19.81 in 58 appearances, Tait is amongst the leading wicket takers in Twenty20 history. He said: “This is a pretty exciting move for me. I’ve a bit of unfinished business in county cricket and I’ll be giving it my all for Surrey this year. I always strive to take wickets and love being part of a close-knit team. Some good reports about how Surrey are shaping up for 2011 have been filtering through so I’m confident that the team can go a few steps further this year in the FPt20. Finals Day is something I really want to be involved in.”

ADAMS SALUTES TREMLETT

Surrey’s manager, Chris Adams hailed the dedication of a “streamlined” Chris Tremlett after the paceman played a major role in England retaining the Ashes for the first time in 24 years. Tremlett was selected for the trip down under on the back of an outstanding first season at the Oval that saw him take 48 first-class wickets. Adams said: “When we first got him (at Surrey) we felt he had the quality and was ready to get back into the England set-up. We sat down with Chris and we looked at making some minor changes to his make-up and preparations as a bowler. Now he can bowl one or two long spells and he is able to back that up.” Tremlett, who won his previous Test caps in 2007, had been regarded by some as being too soft to succeed in the intense atmosphere of the game’s highest level, with Shane Warne revealing his frustration at the bowler’s lack of aggression when the two of them played for Hampshire. But Adams has praised the way Tremlett has accepted the responsibility of leading the Surrey attack and the leading role he has played in team meetings. Adams said: “We sat him down and we told him we wanted him take responsibility. We got him to play a lead role in our planning sessions. We talked about how we, not just himself, were going to bowl out our opponents. We felt that maybe previously he would have been happy to sit in the background and let other guys do the talking, but we wanted to tap into what is a great cricket brain and he has been excellent since we have had him and we are delighted to see him prove it at the highest level.” While Adams and Surrey have received praise for the work they have done with Tremlett, his county chief is keen to point out that the player is the man who had produced the performances. Adams said: “You never know how guys will play as there is so much pressure involved in playing Test cricket, but he has really stepped up and performed and he really looks like a Test bowler now. He has made a great move forward and hopefully he can now become a regular in this England side. There are very few spaces for bowlers in Test cricket and you need to stand tall to stand out, and Chris has done that.”

ANSARI AND JEWELL HANDED PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTS

On December 17, academy players Zafar Ansari and Tom Jewell were handed professional contracts with Surrey. Jewell signed a two-year deal while left-handed-batsman Ansari has been given a two-year summer contract, while he continues his studies at Cambridge

University. Both players have been involved in age-group cricket at Surrey and are the latest products of the academy to achieve professional status after Rory Burns, Matthew Dunn, Tom Lancefield and Jason Roy all signed deals recently. Ansari, who is also an accomplished musician, was delighted at the chance of furthering his career and thinks the deal works perfectly with his university life. He said: "I've been with Surrey since I was nine, so get a contract with the club you've played at all your life is fantastic. The summer contract is brilliant because it gives me the opportunity to work during term time but combine with playing up there and then for Surrey when I get back down here." Tom Jewell added: "I'm absolutely delighted, finally all the hard work at the academy has paid off. I've had a taste of first team action and it's let me know where I need to be to be able to get in the four-day side and stay there."

ECB NAME NEW FIRST-CLASS UMPIRES

On December 13, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced the appointments of Steve Gale and Steve O'Shaughnessy to the first-class umpires' list for 2011; following the retirements of Barry Dudleston and Vanburn Holder last season. Steve O'Shaughnessy, who played for Lancashire and Worcestershire between 1980 and 1989, and has been umpiring since 2007, said: "I am thrilled to be given this promotion and am looking forward to having the chance to further my career as an ECB official." Steve Gale, who has spent three seasons on the reserve list, represented Shropshire in Minor Counties cricket between 1975 and 1987. In addition, three new umpires have been added to the first-class reserve list for 2011 – Alex Wharf, Billy Taylor and Russell Evans. Wharf and Taylor retired from first-class cricket at the end of the 2009 season. Evans, who was formerly on Nottinghamshire's books, made seven first-class appearances as a player between 1987 and 1994.

HOTEL DEVELOPMENT SUFFERS FURTHER DELAY

The Surrey Advertiser (December 10) has revealed that the £35m development at the Kia Oval has been put back yet again. Surrey had hoped demolition work would start early in the New Year, with the Lock and Laker Stands making way for four-star hotel – built and paid for by Arora International – plus an additional 2,000 extra seats. If the project is to be completed in time for the Ashes Test at the Oval in 2013 work would need to begin this autumn.

SURREY PART COMPANY WITH STEWART WALTERS

The very same Surrey Advertiser article was the first to reveal that Stewart Walters and Surrey CCC had settled the final year of the 27-year-old's contract by mutual agreement. Walters, who spent six seasons with the Oval outfit, first came to prominence in 2005 after arriving from Australia to play for Malden Wanderers. Armed with an English passport, he quickly made an impression for Surrey's second eleven. Four years later, Walters appeared to have made the jump to first-class cricket when, having been made acting captain by manager Chris Adams following the mid-season retirement of Mark Butcher through injury, he hit hit championship hundreds in as many matches. Walters made a total of 34 first-class appearances for Surrey. In 45 List A outings for the Lions he notched up exactly 1,000 runs, including six half-centuries, at a creditable average of 28.57.

LIONS CAPTURE DE BRUYN

On December 3, Surrey announced the signing of Zander de Bruyn on a one-year deal. The 35-year-old South African, who qualifies as a Kolpak player, but who is just a year away from obtaining a British passport, joins the Lions from Somerset. De Bruyn said: "I'm obviously excited and looking forward to the new challenge, especially getting a chance to play regularly

at a Test ground with the quality players that they have in the squad. I'll work hard to help get Surrey up into the first division where they belong. I get the feeling that 2011 will be a great year." His new skipper, Rory Hamilton-Brown added: "We have a really exciting and very young squad at the moment, so adding someone of the quality and experience of Zander de Bruyn was an absolute must. It's really exciting to have someone like him coming into the club and being with us all season. His presence will also play a huge part in helping our younger players learn, just by watching someone of his class going about his day to day business." Surrey's professional cricket manager Chris Adams welcomed the arrival of de Bruyn in the light of the knee injury that could see Mark Ramprakash miss the start of next season. Adams said: "With the recent injury to Mark Ramprakash, making his situation relatively unclear for the start of next season, it was vital we had an experienced batsman to turn to and provide a steady hand and this gives us exactly that." De Bruyn scored 2,497 first-class runs at an average of 38.41 in three seasons at Taunton. But in List A cricket he was even more impressive, scoring 1,656 runs, including three hundreds, at an average of 53.41 for the Sabres.

KIA SPONSORS SURREY

Surrey CCC announced international car manufacturer, Kia as the lead team sponsor. The firm, which has signed a five-year deal – worth over £3.5m – will have full and exclusive naming rights to the historic Oval cricket ground. The tie-up is Kia's first entrance into the cricket market; the company currently has worldwide commercial partnerships with the FIFA World Cup and Australian Tennis Open. On December 2, Paul Sheldon, Surrey's chief executive, was quoted as saying: "To sign a deal with a leading International brand such as Kia is a fantastic boost to the Club. It is also hugely beneficial as this allows us to plan for the future – both financially and on the field – with certainty. I have great confidence that our partnership has a long and strong future ahead of it. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Brit Insurance, which had been our lead sponsor since 2004. Throughout this time they have been a great support and I am delighted they are still a major supporter of our sport." Kia's UK managing director, Michael Cole said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to put our brand right at the heart of England's favourite summer sport and in front of an enthusiastic and extremely knowledgeable audience. We are delighted to be linked with such an iconic location as The Oval - it is rightly famous around the world - and as our UK headquarters are in Weybridge it is a privilege to be so closely linked with Surrey County Cricket Club."

BANSTEAD DUO PEN PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTS

On December 1, Surrey CCC announced that Pemberton Greenish Academy graduates Tom Lancefield and Rory Burns, both of whom are 20 and play their club cricket for Banstead, had signed their first professional contracts with the Club. Lancefield, who has been handed a one-year deal after impressing at the top of the Lions' batting order in 2010, said: "I feel really privileged to have signed a professional contract with Surrey. I had a great year in 2010 and am looking forward to carrying on improving and establishing myself in all forms of the game." Burns has penned a two-year contract, which means the former MCC Universities' stumper – who attracted interest from a number of first-class counties after being awarded the 2010 Walter Lawrence Trophy, in honour of the 230 he scored for against Oxford MCCU last April – will have to defer his degree course at the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff. Burns said: "It feels like I've earned this contract and I am keen to prove myself at Surrey, which is where I want to play my cricket. I am now looking forward to knuckling down and getting myself in the first team. I would also like to thank the MCC Universities scheme,

which offered me great exposure to some high class cricket last year and really aided my development to this level.” Surrey’s professional cricket manager, Chris Adams added: “I am confident that both Tom and Rory will prove to be excellent additions to our squad. Both have been involved with Surrey for over a decade in different youth teams, so for them to simultaneously graduate into our professional squad says a great deal about the strength of coaching ability we have throughout our set-up.”

COUNTY-BY-COUNTY GUIDE TO THE 2011 SEASON by Marcus Hook

DERBYSHIRE

Derbyshire have finished nine out of the last ten seasons in the bottom half of Division Two in the County Championship. Furthermore, since the re-introduction of 40-over cricket in 2006, no county has won fewer 40-over matches than the Falcons. Luke Sutton returns to Nottingham Road as wicketkeeper and, now, captain, but he will have his work cut out turning Derbyshire into a competitive unit given the departures of Chris Rogers and Robin Peterson, their leading run-maker and wicket-taker in the championship in 2010. To make matters worse Graham Wagg, who was out of action for much of last summer, after having led the attack the year before, has also moved on. But there is some cause for optimism in the batting department. 20-year-old left-hander Chesney Hughes made an impact in his first full season, scoring 784 championship runs at an average of 41.26, plus Wayne Madsen and Greg Smith are more than capable of rediscovering the form they displayed in 2009.

DURHAM

Having begun last season looking more than capable of retaining the County Championship, Durham’s challenge soon faded and Will Smith was relieved of the captaincy before the end of May. The limited-overs competitions did not provide much cheer, either. But the overwhelming positive was the emergence of Ben Stokes, who topped Durham’s four-day batting averages with 740 runs at an average of 46.25. With Paul Collingwood likely to be available for much of the coming season and Michael Di Venuto seemingly as hungry as ever for runs the batting looks in very good shape. Were it not for a number of seamers coming back from injuries, the same could be said of the bowling. A back injury sidelined Graham Onions for the whole of 2010, while an ankle problem resulted in Stephen Harmison sitting out half the campaign. It is already looking as though Mark Davies (sciatic nerve), Liam Plunkett (thigh strain) and Callum Thorp (knee) are struggling to be fit for the start of the season.

ESSEX

One of the big stories over the winter was Owais Shah’s move from Middlesex to Essex. But it does not explain why, despite managing the fewest number of wins in last summer’s County Championship, having key players involved in the IPL and before their overseas player for 2011 has been unveiled, Essex are the bookies’ favourites to win Division Two. What comes as no surprise, however, is that the Eagles are fancied to do well in the one-day arena. Essex have reached three of the last five Twenty20 finals days, only to leave early on all three occasions. But with all-rounders of the calibre of New Zealand’s Scott Styris, Ravi Bopara and Ryan ten Doeschate, there is no reason why they shouldn’t be at Edgbaston on August 27. A calf injury to ten Doeschate limited his involvement in last summer’s competition to six outings, but that did not stop him racking up 296 runs at an average of 59.20.

GLAMORGAN

One would have thought that third spot in Division Two of the County Championship represented progress, but the Dragons' dismal showing in each of the limited-overs competitions last season led to criticism of Jamie Dalrymple's captaincy and Matthew Maynard's management style. Both found themselves in an untenable position in November, when, without their knowledge, Glamorgan unveiled Alviro Petersen as their new captain and overseas player. The fallout included the departure of Tom Maynard, who swaps places in the middle order with Surrey's Stewart Walters. But the biggest loss to the batting has to be Mark Cosgrove, who scored 2,146 runs in all competitions in 2010 as Glamorgan's primary overseas representative. That just seems to leave Jim Allenby, who has passed fifty on 18 occasions in first-class cricket the last two seasons, but converted only two into hundreds, as a proven bat. However, the acquisition of Graham Wagg gives Glamorgan hope that what was already a decent bowling attack will help them stay competitive.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

In the last two seasons only five of Gloucestershire's matches in the County Championship have ended in a draw, but having to weather the departure of so many key personnel – most notably New Zealand's James Franklin – they will do well to win more matches this year than they lose; something the Bristolians haven't managed in four-day cricket since 2003. The only grounds for optimism are that Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan is inked in for the FPt20 campaign, 21-year-old seamer Ian Saxleby is fit again after missing the 2010 season with a shoulder injury and the Gladiators did acquit themselves well in last summer's 40League. Despite the presence of the evergreen Jon Lewis and the improving left-arm spinner Vikram Banerjee, Gloucestershire's bowling stocks look more depleted than the batting. Having said that, the batting needs to undergo a major transformation. Aside from Ian Cockbain, Chris Dent and Ed Young, all of whom need to be given time, the rest of Gloucestershire's top order should be at their peak.

HAMPSHIRE

One could argue that the reigning Twenty20 champions have fallen below expectations in the County Championship in recent years. But, providing they are not plagued with the mountain of injuries they had to endure in 2010, Dominic Cork's men should be challenging on all three fronts in 2011. With the ball, leg-spinner Imran Tahir returns as the main overseas signing, South African fast bowler Friedel de Wet has been recruited as a Kolpak player and don't be surprised if youngsters like slow left-arter Danny Briggs and left-arm seamer Chris Wood continue to come through. With the bat, nobody has scored more first-class half-centuries in the last two seasons than Jimmy Adams, who was the leading run-maker in T20 cricket last year. Michael Carberry's performances continue to warrant greater attention from the England selectors, while Ervine, Lumb and McKenzie make up a formidable supporting cast. Throw Shahid Afridi into the mix come the T20 and a third successive year with silverware to show for it looks a distinct possibility.

KENT

Kent have said they are unlikely to sign an overseas player this season. The lack of a world-class bowler explains why the bookies do not expect the hop county to repeat what they did in 2009 and make an immediate return to Division One in the County Championship. James Tredwell remains one of the best spinners in the country, but the seam attack has not been helped by injuries to Azhar Mahmood and Robbie Joseph, who has been limited to just five championship appearances in the last two seasons. The hope must be that Dewald Nel picks up

where he left off at the end of last summer, when he took 6-62 and 3-57 against Yorkshire at Headingley. That match was also notable for Alex Blake's maiden first-class century, but the Spitfires are not short of batting muscle. Geraint Jones, Rob Key, Darren Stevens and Martin van Jaarsveld should all prosper against the weaker bowling attacks in Division Two, while Denly and Northeast remain future stars in the making.

LANCASHIRE

2011 may not have started well for the red rose county, with the re-development of Old Trafford mired by a judicial review of the planning permission granted to the Club last year. But now the green light has been given, attention can turn to capturing a first piece of silverware since 1999. For that to happen, more enterprise will need to be shown with the bat – the last Lancashire players to hit over one thousand runs in a championship summer were Paul Horton and Stuart Law in 2007. The evergreen Glen Chapple has hinted that he might only play in a handful of one-day games this term. It will well worth it if it means he can bag 52 championship wickets at 19.75 again. Gary Keedy and Simon Kerrigan, who is certainly one for the future, offer a real spin threat. If they do forge a productive alliance it will also bring on Gareth Cross, who replaces Luke Sutton behind the stumps. Capable of challenging in all three competitions.

LEICESTERSHIRE

At times in 2010, turmoil off the field at Grace Road seemed to take precedence over how Leicestershire were performing on the pitch. Admittedly, most of the Foxes' one-day performances were best forgotten, but it should not be overlooked that overseas signing, Andrew McDonald, who returns for a second stint, only made three appearances in FPt20, but left his mark on all of them. In the County Championship, Leicestershire enjoyed their best finish since 2006, but that did not prevent their coach, Tim Boon jumping ship before he was pushed. Durham University opener Greg Smith made a real impact in the closing weeks of the 2010 campaign. The diminutive James Taylor remains the best batsman in his age group, as does Nathan Buck with the ball. Last summer Buck was outshone by slow left-armed Claude Henderson and skipper Matthew Hoggard, who at 38 and 34 respectively, proved they still have much to offer. Leicestershire have even reason to be heading into the new season feeling optimistic.

MIDDLESEX

Although Middlesex will need to adjust to life without Owais Shah and Shaun Udal, they would appear to have recruited well; prizing Chris Rogers, currently the most consistent overseas batsmen in county cricket, away from Derbyshire and Corey Collymore, Sussex's player of the year in 2010, away from Hove. But whether Rogers and Collymore can turn their new employers into promotion contenders is open to debate. Tom Smith, Middlesex's likely spin threat, has promised so much for so long, without coming of age. The North Londoners must look beyond their skipper Neil Dexter, the immensely talented left-hander Dawid Malan and Rogers for runs. Furthermore, the jury remains out on keeper-batsman John Simpson. Having said that, any team that boasts Ben Scott as their reserve wicketkeeper can't have many problems in that area. If they get behind Dexter, Middlesex are capable of winning promotion in the championship, but a third straight finish in the bottom half of Division Two would be no less of a surprise.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

It has been a quiet winter at Wantage Road in terms of personnel changes. The only significant departure was that of Nicky Boje, who stood down as captain last May, only to struggle with his slow left-arm spin, which produced a meagre 16 wickets at 53.06 runs apiece in four-day cricket. There has been just one arrival, if you can call it that, with 23-year-old Durham seamer, Luke Evans making his loan move permanent. In the championship, after finishing the 2008 and 2009 seasons in the top half of Division Two, Northants dropped to sixth place last summer; garnering the fewest bowling points of any county. Sri Lankan seamer Chaminda Vaas has been drafted as overseas player to perk up a less than exacting attack, which continues to be short of a decent spinner. With the bat, much will depend, once again, on opener Stephen Peters. Looking for a positive, Northants have reached the last eight in the Twenty20 Cup in five out of the last six seasons.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Other than the blip they suffered in 2006, Nottinghamshire have been the most consistent side in the County Championship in recent times. Last year they clinched the title, after finishing second two summers on the trot, thanks to a superb start. But, with Somerset snapping at their heels, the Trent Bridge outfit very nearly tripped up in the closing weeks of the campaign. One suspects that Notts will need to be quick out of the traps again if they are hold on to their crown. Even without Ryan Sidebottom, who returns to Yorkshire, the bowling attack looks as potent as any around. But the batting is a worry. Last year it depended heavily on the overseas player and Chris Read contributing some vital knocks at number six. Western Australian, Adam Voges is inked in as the main overseas signing for 2011. With Australia's David Hussey, who had a phenomenal FpT20 campaign in 2010, lined up as the second foreign registration, a first T20 title cannot be ruled out.

SOMERSET

Runners-up in all three competitions last summer, including missing out in the championship, despite finishing level on points with Notts, Somerset will no doubt be looking to go one better. For the first time since winning promotion in 2007, Marcus Trescothick's men replicated their consistency in the limited-overs arena over four days. With the acquisition of two quality seamers in Geemal Hussain and Steve Kirby, from neighbours Gloucestershire, the cidemen appear to be even stronger. Nobody has scored more first-class runs and hundreds in the last two seasons than Trescothick. James Hildreth is, at last, fulfilling the promise he has exuded with the bat. Big-hitting Craig Kieswetter and Peter Trego are also weapons, while Arul Suppiah continues to chip in on a consistent basis. With the ball, slow left-armer Murali Kartik returns as overseas player. If he, along with seamers Alfonso Thomas and Charl Willoughby come close to repeating what they achieved in 2010, then 2011 should be a highly memorable year for the Taunton faithful.

SURREY

Seventh place in Division Two of the County Championship, which is where Surrey have finished the last two campaigns, does not appear to suggest that a return to past glories is just around the corner for the Oval outfit. With Mark Ramprakash and Kevin Pietersen likely to miss the opening weeks of the season, Surrey will need Rory Hamilton-Brown, Jason Roy, plus new signings Zander de Bruyn and Tom Maynard to deliver with the bat if promotion in the championship is to feature on their radar for the duration of the 2011 campaign. The arrival of Yasir Arafat means that the seam attack is likely to be as good as any around. Jade Dernbach and Chris Tremlett both enjoyed successful winters with the England Lions and

England respectively. However, Surrey's front-line spinners, Gareth Batty and Chris Schofield, appear to be more suited to the limited-overs arena, where a tilt at the 40League and the FPt20 offer a more realistic route to success for the South Londoners.

SUSSEX

The cream of Division Two in 2010, Sussex secured an immediate return to the championship's top flight, winning half their games. With the bat, Chris Nash finished the season in dazzling four-day form. Murray Goodwin was consistent throughout, while Ed Joyce's performances suggested his move down from Middlesex was just what was required. But, due to England one-day calls, skipper Michael Yardy never really got going. On the bowling front, Corey Collymore was ultra-dependable and is sure to be missed even with the arrival of Amjad Khan, from Kent, and Rana Naved-ul-Hasan and Wayne Parnell sharing the overseas berth. Another hole that needs filling is created by Robin Martin-Jenkins's decision to go into teaching. That said, with Luke Wright seemingly fading from the England selectors' thoughts, he could well prove to be a key player for the Martlets in 2011. To underline their strength in the shorter form of the game, the Sharks have lost just six of their last 25 matches in 40-over cricket.

WARWICKSHIRE

The Bears have been one of the stand-out sides in 40-over cricket in recent times, but falling at the quarter-final stage of the Twenty20 Cup seems to have become a recurring theme. After scoring the fewest batting points of any county in last year's championship, Warwickshire have strengthened in that area, especially as Ian Bell and Jonathan Trott are likely to be away on England duty for much of the season. Pakistan's Younis Khan has been pencilled in as overseas player, Ireland's captain and opener, Will Porterfield moves up the M5 from Gloucestershire, while Laurie Evans joins from Surrey. But, without Imran Tahir's leg-spin to call upon, new skipper Jim Troughton is unlikely to have an attack at his disposal as potent as the one Ian Westwood enjoyed last term. If Warwickshire are to preserve their top-flight status in the four-day arena, much could hinge on up and coming seamers Andy Miller and Steffan Piolet forging an alliance with spearhead Chris Woakes.

WORCESTERSHIRE

The odds being offered on Worcestershire, who have never managed to stay in Division One of the County Championship, suggest they are in store for a long hard summer. With just two centuries to show for his last 64 visits to the crease in four-day cricket, Vikram Solanki owes the Pears big time. On the plus side, Moeen Ali, Alex Kervezee and skipper Daryl Mitchell are all coming off their best seasons to date with the bat. Furthermore, 20-year-old right-hander Neil Pinner was the leading run-scorer in last year's Second XI Championship. But the bowling lacks consistency, especially when seamers Matt Mason and Alan Richardson are crocked, which they seem to be all too frequently these days. Little surprise, then, that the overseas berth will be occupied by a proven bowler. Australia's Damien Wright, who had profitable spell with Somerset last summer, will start the campaign, while Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal has been lined up for the second half of the season.

YORKSHIRE

One suspects Yorkshire would settle now for mirroring their exploits in 2010, which culminated in them finishing third in Division One of the County Championship and qualifying for the semi-finals of the 40League. Having come to depend on the runs scored by Jacques Rudolph – who leaves after four seasons by mutual consent – it will be interesting to

see whether Joe Sayers is capable of rediscovering the form he displayed at the top of the order in 2009. The Tykes will also need Adam Lyth, who, almost overnight, went from being a fringe player to batting lynchpin in 2010, to continue putting forward his case for England call-up. Despite averaging 43.10 with the bat, somehow a maiden first-class hundred still eludes Johnny Bairstow, who, at 21, has a very bright future ahead of him as a keeper-batsman. The majority of Yorkshire's bowling attack also have time on their side, and will certainly benefit from the experience of the returning Ryan Sidebottom.

PRE-SEASON ODDS

LV County Championship Div One: 7-2 fav Somerset, 4-1 Durham and Nottinghamshire, 6-1 Yorkshire, 15-2 Lancashire and Sussex, 8-1 Hampshire, 12-1 Warwickshire, 33-1 Worcestershire.

LV County Championship Div Two: 3-1 fav Essex, 7-2 Surrey, 9-2 Kent, 7-1 Glamorgan, 8-1 Middlesex, 9-1 Northamptonshire, 14-1 Gloucestershire, 16-1 Leicestershire, 20-1 Derbyshire.

Clydesdale Bank 40League: 7-1 fav Somerset, 15-2 Essex, 8-1 Hampshire and Sussex, 10-1 Nottinghamshire, Surrey and Yorkshire, 11-1 Warwickshire, 12-1 Durham, 14-1 Kent and Lancashire, 20-1 Middlesex, 25-1 Northamptonshire, 33-1 Glamorgan, Leicestershire and Worcestershire, 40-1 Derbyshire and Gloucestershire.

Odds for the Friends Provident Twenty20 were not available at the time of going to press.

OVAL WORLD FANTASY CRICKET LEAGUE 2011

Yet again, the Oval World Fantasy Cricket League (OWFCL) is back by popular demand. As always county cricket's crème de la crème have been given monetary values. These are expressed in terms of fictitious weekly earnings, based mainly on how each player fared in first-class cricket in England in 2009 and 2010. Your job is to pick a squad of 13 by deploying a maximum weekly wage bill of £20,000. Player points will be based on all of the runs, wickets and catches each player registers in first-class cricket this summer. In other words, performances in Test matches and England Lions' matches will count. Every player will be awarded points on the following bases, except overseas players who will only be awarded points on the basis of their county performances:

BATTING

1 point for every 30 runs scored in first-class cricket.

BOWLING

1 point for each first-class wicket taken.

FIELDING

0.2 points for every catch or stumping made in first-class cricket.

YOUR SQUAD

Each entrant will need to select a 13-man squad with one of the slots being filled by one county's overseas player(s). An application form is enclosed for your completion. The squad must consist of:

- At least 5 batsmen
- At least 5 bowlers
- One wicketkeeper, and
- One county, whose overseas player(s) will score you points.

(You must therefore pick one spare player in addition to the twelve above).

Players can only be selected from the 270 batsmen, bowlers and keepers listed and valued; plus we have indicated who, at the time of going to press, has been confirmed as each county's overseas player(s) for 2011. At the end of the competition, your team's total score will be calculated on the basis of your 4 best batsmen, the 4 highest points-scoring bowlers, the points scored by the overseas player(s) who played for your chosen county, the wicketkeeper and your next best player (in terms of points accrued).

YOUR BUDGET

You have got a weekly budget of £20,000 with which to pay a squad of thirteen. Naturally, overseas cricketers are the most expensive at £2,100 per week. So, as a safeguard, if an overseas player is replaced by another (for instance we already know that, for Derbyshire, Usman Khawaja will start the summer as their overseas player with Martin Gupthill taking over halfway through the season), his replacement will automatically fill the vacancy created in your squad. Every effort has been made to ensure that the selection grid also takes account of recent Kolpak signings and player retirements.

WHAT COULD I WIN?

For the second year running there are attractive prizes on offer for the top three:

- The winner will receive a free Surrey CCC county membership or the cash equivalent
- The runner-up will get £100 worth of theatre tokens
- Third prize: A cricket book of your choice, as listed on amazon.co.uk, up to a face value of £20.00.

In the event of tied scores, the final placings will be decided by a tie-break – how many matches will Surrey win in total in all three of the major domestic competitions this summer?

AND FINALLY... THE SMALLPRINT

Each entrant is only allowed to submit one entry. Each selector must be a member of the Surrey CCC Supporters' Club. The entry fee is £5.00 (make the cheque payable to the SCCCSC). Selectors can choose a name for their team, provided it does not exceed 25 letters and will not be considered offensive. All entries must be received before the first ball of the LV County Championship season is bowled on 8th April 2011. Even though five first-class fixtures will have concluded prior to April 8, including the curtain-raiser between MCC and Nottinghamshire in Abu Dhabi, points scored in these matches will still count. If necessary, selections can be amended before April 8 either in writing or by e-mail. All correspondence relating to the competition should be sent to Marcus Hook, Flat 1, 67 Birdhurst Rise, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 7EJ or to marcushook@aol.com

KEENOSE KOMMENTS

1. I thought Chris Tremlett was somewhat unlucky not to make the World Cup, but the decision to drop Steven Davies was just plain stupid. He had done nothing wrong, apart from not being in the Ashes winning XI. You would have thought that after Prior's first two noughts, they would have reversed it, if at all possible. There is now a lack of a pinch-hitting batsman in the opening pair and balance in the line-up.
2. As readers may possibly remember (I know you all read my column first, so you would forget it first!) I am based in Dublin at present. I must admit I was full of it after England scored 300+ and had to take a lot of stick after Kevin O'Brien's heroics. Though everyone here has become interested in the results, I'm afraid a lot don't want to understand the complexity of cricket. Only a few realised the brilliance of England's win against South Africa! That result highlighted how Anderson and Broad seem to swing (in every sense) from great highs to lows in their bowling. Both Broad and Swann contribute with the bat at Test level (scoring quickly as well), but don't bring it to the party in the one-day game.
3. With Andre Nel departed and Chris Tremlett likely to be in England's squads, Surrey's bowling resources look on the light side again this year, with more injuries no doubt yet to strike. I think we may struggle to bowl sides out and will, therefore, remain in the second division. (How long do we think Thommo will give Mr Adams?).
4. Paul Sheldon was the perfect safe pair of hands when he became Chief Executive. A lot of very successful and dynamic things happened with the team and ground during his tenure, though you got the impression that it happened around him rather than through him, which is fine when things are going right. There were a lot of staff at the Operations Manager level by the end.
5. I see that we managed to pay our rent of £200,000 to the Duchy of Cornwall twice in 2005, but it was not noticed. Obviously pretty bad from both sides. I guess we will get a discount this year, though I have to admit £200,000 seems very reasonable for the site. I always believed that the rent Charlie Boy charged was on the charitable side, though perhaps not as much nowadays. Mr Thompson wants to improve relations with the Duchy. I would have thought Sheldon was more a Duchy man than Thompson. I would love to see the accounts from 2005 and 2006 (strangely, I didn't keep them!), to see what was shown on them in relation to rent. I remember John Bennett querying with the club that they put Test takings received this year, for the Test next year, in this year's accounts. I wonder if they still do that, as he was not impressed at the time (like any good bank manager).
6. In view of the above and below – I better come clean – I joined Surrey CCC as a Junior Member in 1971, but given my present circumstances I have not renewed for this year. I will, like quite a few of you, remain a member of the Supporters' Club and the Century Club (which raises money for Surrey Cricket), but not of the Club.
7. Please, if at all possible, support all of the Supporters Club members who are running for the General Committee.

CENTURY CLUB

The results of the final three Century Club draws of 2010, which were made at the Supporters' Club's Christmas Party at the Hanover Arms on December 20, were as follows:

10th Draw

1st - £40 – John Douglas (No.75)
2nd - £12 – Gerry McShane (No.5)
3rd - £8 – Tony Hill (No.72)

11th Draw

1st - £40 – Elizabeth Howgill (No.14)
2nd - £12 – Niven McVicar (No.111)
3rd - £8 – Michael Power (No.9)

12th Draw

1st - £200 – Arnold Long (No.78)
2nd - £25 – Barrie Hogan (No.118)
3rd - £15 – Chris Payne (No.27)

Anyone wishing to become a Century Club member can do so by sending a cheque for £36.00 (made payable to the SCCSC Century Club) along with their details to Sarah Atkins at The Cheviots, 236 Ashbourne Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2DR.

SURREY COUNTY CRICKET DINING CLUB 2011

Friday 8th April – Luncheon with David Frith
Friday 6th May – Luncheon with Richard Thompson
Friday 27th May – Luncheon
Wednesday 22nd June – Luncheon
TBA - Golf Day at Sutton Green GC
Friday 8th July – Luncheon with Lord Marland of Odstock
Wednesday 20th July – Guildford Luncheon (provisional)
Wednesday 14th September – Luncheon
Friday 16th December – Christmas Luncheon

Most of the above events will take place in the John Major Room (OCS Stand, Level 2) at the Kia Oval, starting at 12.15pm for 1.00pm sit down. Members £36. Guests £38. To book your place, contact Les Brewin on 01202-296642 or 07974-282644 or, by email, at lbrewin@cwctv.net or at bookings@surreydiningclub.com.