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MARK RICHARDSON

'Determination is the Biggest Thing' (part 1)

Devon V. Mace, September 12, 2015

WHEN, IN LATE 2004, MARK RICHARDSON ANNOUNCED THAT HE was hanging up his boots, it invoked an immediate expression: surprise. He was 33 years of age, and only a few months earlier was the hero of lord's.

Surely, the masses believed, he was retiring too early? Chairman of Selectors, Richard Hadlee, intimated as much – and reiterated his “surprise” in his 2009 memoirs – whilst then-NZC Chairman Martin Snedden felt idem.

One game bursts appeared to be flavour of the month as the next game saw Papps out, and Craig Cumming reappear.

Not to worry; the talent was around, and capable of assuming that vacancy... Or so the public believed. The reality was quite different.

Craig Cumming replaced Richardson, while Stephen Fleming moved back to the top – in place of Mathew Sinclair – but the pair lasted just two games, before James Marshall came in and Fleming moved south down the team-sheet. Cumming and Marshall J lasted just one Test longer than Cumming and Fleming had, before Cumming was sent packing with Lou Vincent in his place.

Two games later a fresh change was again in order; Hamish Marshall replaced his twin, and Jamie How came in for Vincent. Those two lasted three Tests – although they didn't bat in the third – before the selectors decided to blood Peter Fulton (alongside Marshall) in the colosseum of Centurion.

That lasted one match, before Michael Papps subbed in for Marshall, but they too managed just a solitary game, with the three Tests against South Africa bearing three opening partnerships after Jamie How returned in Fulton's place.

One game bursts appeared to be flavour of the month, as the next game saw Papps out, and Craig Cumming reappear. They were tried twice before How was demoted, in favour of Papps, and the two subsequent Tests resulted in the opening partnership changing in each innings, as Papps-Cumming, Fleming-Cumming, Papps-Cumming (again), and Papps-Vincent were all tried out. After those two games, Matthew Bell returned to Test cricket alongside Cumming.

*“I was never one of New Zealand's great cricketers, but I had built a bit of a brand, and I was going to get an opportunity to do some commentary, so I decided to get out now. So it started with commentary, and then I needed a little bit more TV work and was getting a bit of writing, and honestly it went from there. A little bit of luck, little certain things got me other opportunities – *The Crowd Goes Wild* was a god-send. It's probably been the one job that has been the most influential on my career – and it's a job that I don't try to make sense in ... I just try to entertain.”*

Although Richardson had wanted to move into media, and had written various pieces while a player, he certainly can't have expected the success which has followed: Mark Taylor might be a mandolin-playing heat pump salesman, with Stephen Fleming fronting for the same company whilst sharing banter and nibbles with Nathan Astle; but Richardson has become the frontman of a home-renovation reality TV show.

It was an abused Pick 'N' Mix dispenser. Every other nation had complied with their mother's orders; “only get two, three at the most,” while Australia was the smug kid from the rich family who filled a whole bag-full of shiny candies and exciting prospects.

Retirement itself came because he had “lost my drive” for playing – the signs that the end was nigh had appeared well before the decision itself.

“I came back from England, and had a little bit of a break, and then we had Bangladesh. It was like ‘oh god, I don't want to go to Bangladesh,’ and I was mentally pretty tired by that stage. Even though I hadn't played that much Test cricket, I'd played a lot of cricket at a good level, at First Class. I'd lost my drive, and I didn't want to go out there and bat all day for my runs, so I tried to belt Bangladesh and it didn't work.”

England had been the peak of Richardson's career. The team itself was very sub-par, but it still created personal memories for Richardson to cherish – specifically, a Lord's



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cricketing Claim to fame: Club batting strike rate between three and five.

Devon V. Mace is a kiwi, and self confessed ‘fat bloke with the beard’ on the bank at any Plunket Shield match. Founder of Mind the Windows, he has been a part of the writing team since 2014.



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SO WHERE THE BLOODY HELL ARE YA?



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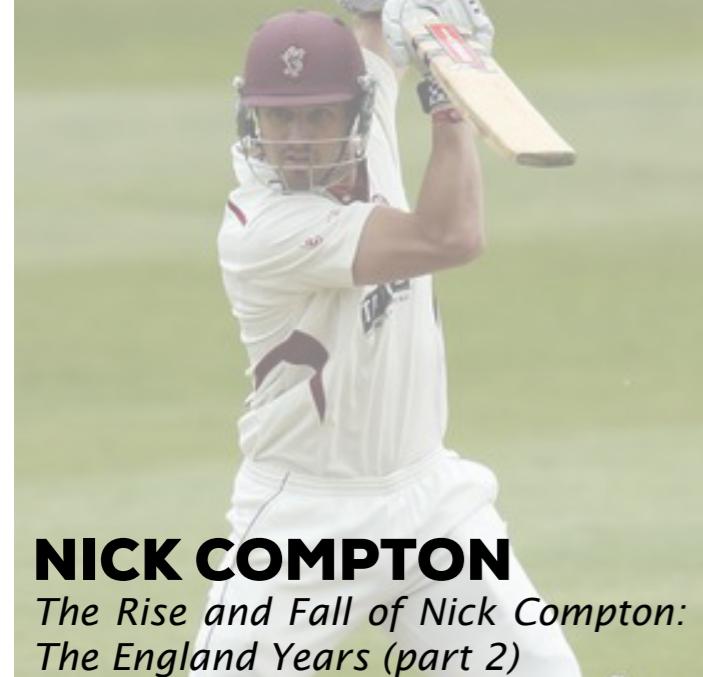
RICHARD PETRIE

'You win some, you lose some'

August 28, 2015

Devon V. Mace

On debut, at the Sydney Cricket Ground, rain marred the entirety of the match, but Petrie held his nerve, and put in a commendable performance.



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THE NAME RICHARD PETRIE ISN'T one that sits amongst the upper echelons of New Zealand cricketing folklore. The bowling all-rounder who first took off with Canterbury, and later became a senior figure at Wellington, played just 12 ODIs – and while his stats weren't poor, they equally didn't lend themselves to greatness.

For those who didn't follow New Zealand domestic cricket through the 1990s, he was simply the young lad tried out for New Zealand over a four-month stretch over the 1990-91 summer.

Yet Petrie was still a trailblazer in New Zealand cricketing terms. Towards the end of his career, at a time when cricket players in Kiwi domestic cricket rarely played beyond 28 or 29, Petrie was one of a very, very small handful of 'senior' players who continued cricketing on.

Mark Douglas from Central Districts, and Grant Bradburn from the district cousins Northern, were virtually the only others to do so at that period in time.

"Back then, if I played every single game for the whole season, I'd earn something like 12 000 dollars. So effectively, for four months you were a full-time cricketer, to earn 12 000 dollars – and if I didn't play, if I got injured or got dropped, I would've earned less. So my take was that if I wanted a career in cricket, I would've been better off to go and get a job as a secretary at New Zealand Cricket down at Christchurch ... and I'd be better off, putting away files, than I would as a senior First Class cricketer."

It was, as Petrie puts it, "not a financial career".

And Petrie was virtually the only man to make a stand on the matter; by the time the 2002 players' strikes happened, Petrie was well retired from cricket. But he had been the first to vocalise the plight of the players of the time.

His comments to Lynn McConnell in late 2000, at a time when players simply put up with what they got and sniped behind closed doors, was – at the very least – a catalyst for what happened later. "Matthew Walker was awarded the player of the final, and there was nothing in his envelope either. It was all done for show," Petrie told McConnell.

He described it succinctly to me:

"The older guys weren't staying in the game, because they weren't looking after the players. They were looking after the 30 people at New Zealand Cricket at that time, on the salary bill, all earning more than the highest-paid First Class cricketer."

That's changed now; with central contracts, and the healthy wage now paid to all domestic and international-level cricketers in New Zealand, the quality of cricket improves, and the encouragement to play the game increases.

Few people make it as successful businessmen, fewer make the grade as professional sportsman. Petrie might not be a household name, but he's done both.

A decade and a half earlier, the inspiration to play cricket certainly wasn't the fiscal one. For Petrie, it was simply a matter of enjoying the game at high school, and playing because of that.

"[Age group cricket] was a stepping stone, but I suppose the training, and the stuff they put you through wasn't really... It was just bowling in the nets for hours and things like that. It was all, I suppose, amateur – nowadays they go into camps, and academies, and really get grilled all winter. Whereas then, even First Class cricketers had their own jobs, working part-time or full-time as well as playing cricket."

He made his way into the Canterbury side, and made his First Class debut (having played a handful of one-dayers) in the 1988-89 season, against Otago. It was a rain-affected affair, and Otago ran out victors by some distance, but Petrie enjoyed moving into that environment – he even picked up the wicket of the father of New Zealand's current captain, an Otago cricketing legend in his own right.

"You're always nervous, aren't you, in your first game? It wasn't too bad, I think I got a couple of wickets in one of the innings, and I got Stu McCullum out, caught at third slip. But once you get into it, it's alright. What was the step up like? It was good; it was where I always wanted to be, it's what you dream about."



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Clive Rice

Obituary

Ryan Harris

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Steven Davies

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The English Cowan

Assessing the post-Strauss options

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PAKISTAN vs ENGLAND TEST SERIES:

A preview from an English perspective

George Collyer October 13, 2015

Ahead of the first Test, England's batting is a big worry apart from Cook and Root. Collapses in the warm-ups, plus in the Ashes before that is a cause for concern.

ENGLAND EMBARK ON A THREE TEST SERIES AGAINST PAKISTAN STARTING TUESDAY. THE ODDS are very much stacked against England and it will take something special; a collective team performance if England are to be victorious.

England warmed up for this series with two, two-day warm-up games against Pakistan A, who fielded a decent side. The circumstances were farcical, with England batting one day regardless of how many wickets they lost and Pakistan A batting the other day regardless of how many wickets they lost. Some players got one opportunity to bat/bowl, whilst others had two or even three opportunities across the 2 warm-ups. Anyway, that isn't the problem. The problem is knowing what England's best XI is for the first Test.

"Essentially, 7 places are already guaranteed for the first Test, before the warm-ups started. Cook, Ali, Bell, Root, Stokes, Broad and Anderson. Rashid is pretty much a shoe-in too. Ali was fighting for the opening spot, but he is a guaranteed anyway, so Hales/Taylor/Bairstow were fighting for one batting place, Bairstow/Buttler for the wicket-keepers spot, and Wood/Finn for the third seamers spot. Finn's injury has opened up the slot for Mark Wood."

The first warm-up was the only warm-up Cook and Root both needed to hit the ground running, with a half-century apiece. Anderson, Broad and Wood all bowled with control, although they could only find two wickets between them. Ali got the first go at opening and scored 22, before top-edging a pull shot and finding the fine leg fielder. Bell was LBW to left-arm spinner Zafar Gohar for 19, raising bigger doubts about his form. Stokes scored six, before he nicked the ball to the wicket-keeper off the off-spinner Iftikhar Ahmed. Buttler lasted three balls and went for one when he was lbw to Gohar – a familiar mode of dismissal for Buttler against spin, which is a concern given both his lack of form and apparent weakness against spin.

Bairstow put himself right into contention for a Test place as he scored an unbeaten 66, while Rashid hit an unbeaten 51. With the ball, Ali took 3-41 and Rashid went wicket-less.

The second warm-up saw five changes: Hales, Taylor, Patel, Plunkett and Finn in for Cook, Root, Broad, Wood and Anderson. England spent the first day in the field. Finn ran

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through the Pakistan A batting line-up, taking 4-16 off 15 overs. England's spinners Ali, Rashid and Patel took 1-44, 3-53 and 2-31 respectively. Plunkett also weighed in with two wickets of his own. The bowling went rather well. With the bat on day two, Hales and Ali opened the batting. Ali fell for seven. Hales had to make his opportunity count, but failed to do so when he fell for nine. Taylor came in and he looked comfortable from the start, easing to 45 before retiring to allow others to regain form. Bell got himself a half-century, before he also retired. Buttler failed to get valuable time in the middle when he nicked off for eight against left-arm medium Hamza. Stokes also failed to get practice in the middle as he was bowled for nought by Iftikhar Ahmed. Patel fell for eight, Bairstow went first-ball, Rashid scored two and Plunkett fell for one. England collapsed, but it would also allow some players to bat again. Hales wasn't one of them. His failure and Taylor's runs seemed to make Bayliss' and Cook's minds up. Ali, Buttler and Taylor all got another opportunity to bat. Ali added 13, Taylor added a further 16 to his 45* and Buttler got some much needed time in the middle with 32*.

Ahead of the first Test, England's batting is a big worry apart from Cook and Root. Collapses in the warm-ups, plus in the Ashes before that is a cause for concern. England will be up against a good Pakistan bowling attack. Rahat Ali and Wahab Riaz are likely to lead the pace attack. Yasir Shah and Zulfiqur Babar will be the spinners. They aren't quite the force Saeed Ajmal and Abdur Rehman were, but they will still cause England very similar problems, like they've done to Australia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and to an extent, New Zealand.

For England, Ali will open with Cook, despite never opening in the LVCC for Worcestershire and being vulnerable to the short ball. It does allow Taylor to come in, though. Bell will remain at 3, despite a long run of poor form and struggling the last time England toured the UAE in 2012 averaging 8.50, but hopefully a half-century in the second warm-up sees Bell replicate that form in the Test series and add to his 22 Test hundreds and 45 Test fifties. Taylor is set to come in at five after runs in the warm-up. He's a very good player against spin, so he should be an excellent addition to the side and bolster the middle-order. Stokes hasn't hit the ground so far during this tour, and has struggled for form with the bat since the Test match at Lords against Australia, but he's a dangerous batsman at six and possesses enormous potential. England are desperate to have Buttler in the side, and there's good reason why, given his talent and scoring five fifties in his first 12 Test innings, but still showing poor form in the warm-ups after a poor Ashes series may now go against him, with Bairstow coming in.

The bowling was a less of a worry in the warm-ups, but it will be extremely tough work in these conditions against a Pakistan line-up who consistently score big in the UAE, in particular – Mohammad Hafeez (averages 49.86 with 2 hundreds, but he is susceptible against swing), Azhar Ali (averages 54 with 5 hundreds, but he's missing the first Test), Younis Khan (averages 54 with 9 hundreds and scored 3 consecutive hundreds against Australia, including a double-hundred), Misbah ul-Haq (averages 61 with 5 hundreds) and Sarfraz Ahmed (averages 59.75 with 2 hundreds).

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE:

NICK COMPTON

The Rise and Fall of Nick Compton: The England Years (part 2)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cricketing Claim to fame: Fewer test ducks than Chris Martin.

George Collyer is a pom, with a true fan-girl relationship with Andy Flower, Ashley Giles, David Saker, Graham Gooch, Mark Ramprakash, Paul Farbrace, Peter Moores - whoever is the 'coach of the month'.