

The Captain's reminiscences of the ICC run in the Haig National Club Trophy 1977.

I guess we began to believe that Ickenham could be on the threshold of something special when we won the regional final against Wokingham to get into the last sixteen of the Haig National Trophy. As winners each player received a special commemorative tie in Maroon and Dick David as man of the match received a cricket bat.

Our first match in the last sixteen was drawn away to Beckenham. Ickenham actually had a loose connection with Beckenham, since that was the club where Derek Underwood started his cricket career, and Derek Underwood in the off season, used to work for Alex Hayward, who was the current chairman of Ickenham.

By this time Ickenham had attracted quite a bit of local support, so much so that to cater for its fans a 50 seater bus had to be hired to ensure they could all get to the ground. The I.C.C. support was led by Keith Westray and had become quite vocal, especially with the famous "Itee - Titee" chant, so on arrival at the ground, they were persuaded to pitch themselves and their liquid refreshment at the rear of the ground, away from the pavilion. I'm pleased to record that this had no effect at all on the volume of the support.

It is well recorded that Ickenham won this game, but there are two particular events that stick in the memory. Not having made a great total only 174 for 9, Ickenham would have to bowl very well to restrict the Beckenham batsmen. They were helped greatly in this task however when having removed both openers for only 17, the third batsman decided to protect the number 4. This allowed me to set fields that restricted their rate to only one or two runs per over. Beckenham soon found themselves way behind the required rate and lost wickets steadily in trying to increase the pace, and were bowled out for only 153.

The second memorable occasion concerned David Lailt, the captain of Reading C.C., who had actually qualified to meet the winners of our game with Beckenham. David Lailt came to watch our game and busied himself in talking to the Beckenham skipper about possible dates for the next fixture, ignoring me and the Ickenham team completely. With the result known, he quickly turned his attention to me. I told him in no uncertain manner, that he should go away and ring John Roberts, who had agreed to act as our Haig fixture secretary sometime the following week.

And so we did face Reading, who included ten minor county players in their team, in the quarter final at Ickenham. In the local newspapers report on this game it was described as the finest club match since the inception of the competition. Again the result is well known but the highlights are well worth recording. Having lost the toss Ickenham had to bowl first and Reading got off to a flying start. So a bowling change was necessary and I brought on Peter Hewitson from the pavilion end. In attempting to sweep him Childs, one of the openers, got a top edge and that flew into his face. Helmets were not part of the batsman's equipment then, and the injury was so bad that an ambulance had to be called and the game stood still for about 45 minutes. Reading still went on to make a good score at 223-8 in the 45 overs.

Ickenham set about chasing this score, Thanks mainly to the valiant efforts of Andy Scott. However, with the light deteriorating quickly, because of the earlier delay, the task was becoming more difficult and wickets began to fall. Two things were in our favour though. Andy was still there and scoring fluently and we still had wickets in hand. At the fall of the second wicket I was due to go in at number 4. As the oldest member of the side and with the light getting worse, I decided to send in a younger pair of eyes in Peter Cook. Peter made a useful 20, but was then out, so I decided to take the bull by the horns and join Andy. I went straight up to him and explained that in this poor light, I would not have much chance playing forward, so I would try to play everything off the back foot to give myself a little more time to see the ball. The bowler from the pavilion end was Jeff Jones, the opening fast bowler. The

lights were on in the pavilion because it was now 8.30pm, and Jeff was just a silhouette running towards me. We needed to score 23 runs in 3 overs, but in the failing light the fielders were having as much trouble seeing the ball and with my nicks and Andy's clean hitting, we scored the winning runs in the final over. Andy threw down his bat, run down the wicket and picked me up in a big bear hug.

And so we reached the dizzy heights of the semi-final, against Bowden C.C. from Cheshire, a team which included Paul Allott, who went on to play for Lancashire and England. It was a Sunday, we had a home draw, I won the toss and decided to bat. We were without Andy Scott, who had disappeared to Canada on a rugby tour with the Wasps. We made a good start but things were brought to an abrupt halt with a huge cloudburst, which made future play impossible. Bowden agreed to stay overnight and come back the following, Monday, to make a fresh start.

Some of the Bowden team were put up by Ickenham families, and the rest spent the night in the Master Brewer.

The following day was bright and sunny but the wicket was very wet. I won the toss and decided to bat again, in the hope that as the wicket dried it would become more difficult to bat on.

We didn't bat very well on a sticky dog. The problem was not so much Paul Allott or indeed the other quick bowler Savin, who bowling from the pavilion end, used to take out his false teeth and place them on the sight screen, which was in fact the start of his run up. The real problem was a slow left arm bowler called Swann, who was unemployed and spent his days as a beachcomber. In his eight overs he took only one wicket, but conceded only eight runs. We eventually made 143 for 9 of which I almost battled through for 65.

The pitch actually got easier and they passed our total in just 42 overs.

After the match Ickenham dressing room was not a happy place, but in true Ickenham style we joined them in the bar, to wish them well for their day at Lords.

Such good friendships were made that the following year Bowden organised a week-end tour for us, to play them and neighbouring Altrincham. We took a strong team and were accompanied by Tim Bishop an umpire from Southgate, who had umpired many of our games in the competition. It rained for the Altrincham game, which we never finished but was fine for the Bowden game, which we won handsomely, to give us a certain amount of satisfaction, but it could not compensate for missing our day at Lords.

J.R. Room