



Report on the 2002 Season

In the close season much hard work was undertaken to form a committee and the formal election of officers by the players. Devon Over 50's became a club side as well as a team competing in the county competition.

With the sudden news that the ECB had withdrawn their £700 sponsorship for each competing county the new committee was soon in action. With no other extra grants available and grave doubts as to whether or not the game against the Channel Islands in Jersey would take place it was a remarkable achievement that all of the games were played and with the help of sponsored home games and considerably larger contributions from the players the season was undoubtedly one of the best in Devon's history.

The season got underway with an away trip to Jersey which were undoubtedly one of the favorites to win the group. After a horrific Sea Cat journey from Weymouth practically the whole side suffered from severe sea sickness. Devon totalled a very respectable 192 for 7 in their 45 overs with useful scores from all of the batsmen. In reply the Channel Islands were soon in trouble and could only muster 147 for 9 over their 45 overs with all of the bowlers bowling tight spells and picking up wickets.

The second game was against the previous year's group winners, Hampshire and on good batting track at Sandford. Devon totalled 222 for 7 with Eames scoring 107. Hampshire was always up with the run rate but with outstanding fielding and catching, Hampshire were eventually 211 all out.

Two wins out of two at this stage was a fine achievement considering that the two sides played finished first and second in the previous year's league table. The game against the Isle of Wight was played at Exmouth and against some fine Devon bowling the Isle of Wight were restricted to 145 for 5 off their 45 overs. This score was never going to be enough to put the in form Devon batsmen under any real pressure and Eames and Whitby 40 not out soon overhauled the Isle of Wight's score with Devon finishing on 146 for 4 with 15 overs remaining.

The game against Wiltshire was played at Torquay Cricket Club. Wiltshire batted first and looked at one stage to be on course for a score in excess of 220; Devon recovered and with fine bowling spells from Rose. Eames and Barker Wiltshire finally scored 203 runs. Devon got off to a slow start and needing five runs an over Stanton and Arbourne produced a match winning stand with Devon reaching 204 for five.

The annual fixture with Cornwall was rearranged due to bad weather and played at Cornwood Cricket Club. On a very wicket Devon were asked to bat and soon found great difficulties in scoring runs quickly. However, thanks to a remarkable century from Bob Macey Devon reached a respectable 200 from their allotted overs. Cornwall soon discovered how difficult it was to score runs and with fine spells of bowling from all of the bowlers and in particular Francis Adams, Cornwall finished well short of the Devon total.

Having won all five of their games Devon travelled to Weston Super Mare against Somerset full of confidence. However, runs were difficult to score on a very slow wicket, Devon's strength in depth in the middle to late order produced a final score of 201 for 7 adding 70 runs in the last ten overs. In reply Somerset lost early wickets but after 35 overs were exactly the same position as Devon. They too soon found how difficult it was to increase the run rate and they were eventually howled out in the 42nd over for 162. Again the outstanding fielding performance was the difference in the two sides.

Devon went to the final game against Dorset still needing a win to be certain of finishing top of their group and electing to bat. Dorset on another slow wicket were restricted to 145 in 45 overs. Pick of the Devon bowlers were Rose and Howard. In reply what should have been a straight forward win became a real battle in the last 10 overs of the game. Poor batting from the top order left the late order to score 57 in 10 overs which was at a rate much higher than either side had achieved at an earlier stage of the game. However, all-rounder Brent Howard produced the innings of the match with a quick-fire 33 not out ably supported by Stanton and Rose and Devon finally overtook the Dorset score with 3 balls to spare.

Devon having won all 7 of their qualifying groups in the west region now qualified for the quarter-final. The draw saw Devon playing at home against Hertfordshire at Exmouth Cricket Club. In a low scoring game Devon bowled and fielded superbly and restricted the Hertfordshire batsmen. In reply despite losing early wickets the Devon batsmen soon overhauled the Hertfordshire score with Coe, Howard and Canning providing useful knocks.

The semi-final saw Devon drawn at home to Oxfordshire who had previously beaten last year's finalists. The game was played at Sandford and having batted first Devon once again produced an outstanding batting performance in depth by once again reaching 230 in their allotted overs (Macey 95). Despite a quick fire start from the Oxford openers they simply had no answer to Devon's bowling and fielding and eventually fell well short of Devon's total. Lott was the pick of the Devon bowlers but with some outstanding catches and ground fielding Devon were looking forward to the final with anticipation.

Having been drawn away to Lancashire at Liverpool Cricket Club Devon were at full strength for the final. Lancashire having qualified for the finals in five out of the last eight years were obviously going to be one of the toughest tests yet. However, Theedom having won the toss and elected to bat Devon soon stamped their authority on the game with an opening stand of 45 before Macey joined Whitby at the crease. Whitby was in fine form and scored 73 before he was out having shared a partnership with Macey of 138 runs. Macey continued to score quickly all around the wicket and scored a magnificent 103 of 113 balls before he was howled. The Sandford pair both Howard and Theedom then smashed the Lancashire bowlers to all parts of the ground and Devon finally finished on 255 for 3. Expecting a determined reply from Lancashire the Devon bowlers responded and outstanding spells of howling from Rose and Lott put Lancashire under severe pressure. At 45 for 3 Fames and Stanton took wickets and Lancashire found it impossible to increase the run rate. With 10 overs remaining Lancashire were faced with an impossible task although Whittle continued to score runs and was on 75 not out when their innings closed on 174 for 7. Devon won by a comfortable 81 runs and the National Over 50's trophy was presented to the successful Devon learn by the ECB representative Frank Kemp. This is only the second time in their history that Devon has won the trophy. The previous occasion being in 1988

Macey topped the batting averages with 56 and five other batsmen all averaged 34 and over. Six Devon bowlers averaged less than 17 runs per over with Eames and Rose being the leading wicket takers. Arbourne had an outstanding season behind the stumps with 6 catches and 10 stumping's, Theedom led the catching with six

This was an outstanding season from a team who had languished in the middle of the table the previous year. The challenge for next season is to do what no other County has done and that is to win the trophy two years in succession.