



RICHARD WALSH



ROY KERSLAKE





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During the well over 60 years that he has been involved with Somerset County Cricket Club, Roy Kerslake has performed many roles with the club, notably as player, Captain of both First and Second XI, Chairman of cricket, Club Chairman and President of Somerset CCC.

Roy also performed a vital role as confidant to the young and developing team that went onto lift five one day trophies between 1979 and 1983 a period in the club's history know as the Glory Years.

So how did Roy become involved with cricket in the first place?

My mother and father were both very keen on bowls, in fact my mother won the Ladies All England Championships final that was played at Wimbledon and I can remember coming home and hanging the Union Jack Flag in the garden for when she arrived.

Right next door to the bowling green in Paignton where we lived, was Paignton Cricket Club and in those days touring sides from 'up the country' would spend a week or more just playing cricket in Devon and Cornwall for their holiday.

So there was cricket being played at Paignton CC virtually every day in the school holidays and when I was very young I would go there and the players would get involved with me playing using a little bat and ball before the game started, and I just got to love it!

I had my first coaching session when I was seven, and there weren't too many indoor cricket schools at that stage. However there was one in Torquay run by Ted Dickinson who used to run the Torquay Cricket Festival and he'd got an indoor school which was one net above a garage and Dad got me into

there and I learnt a lot from him.

I was at Prep School at Montpellier in Paignton where the headmaster was Richard Jordain who was extremely keen on cricket and he took me under his wing and helped me enormously.

I ended up playing in the Prep School First XI for five years from the ages of 9 until I left aged 13, and skippered the last two. My first captain of cricket was Richard Sharp who went onto play rugby for England.

From there I went to Kingswood in Bath and played in their First XI for five years and in the last year which was 1961 Somerset CCC invited me to play in their Second XI.

I had played for Devon Colts against Somerset Colts a couple of years before then and I'd managed to score a few runs and I think it was after that they asked me to come and play for them.

My first game for Somerset Second XI was at home against Kent and I got bowled behind my legs by John Dye, but in the second innings I managed to get 80 against a fairly strong attack which put me in good stead.

The next game we played at Portishead which was in the Minor Counties against Wiltshire where I managed to get four wickets with my off spin which I was happy about, although I got told off because I was out when we only needed 10 runs to win so the professionals who were playing missed out on their £3 win bonus, whilst to me as an amateur it didn't matter.

On the strength of those performances with bat and ball I played a few more times for Somerset Seconds that season while I was still at school.

Then I went off to Cambridge University and I played a few games for them although I didn't get a blue that year. My first game was against Surrey who had Tony Lock and Peter Loader in their side, and in those days counties would bring a full side to play against Oxford and Cambridge because we had useful sides. In my final term at Cambridge eleven of us were playing county cricket.

At the end of the Cambridge season Somerset asked me to play for them and my first game was at Weston-super-Mare against Kent.

My first scoring shot was when I swept Alan Dixon onto the boundary, David Sayer caught it and carried the ball over otherwise I'd have been out for nought.

I played again for the next two years after university and then I went off to Law School training to become a solicitor for which I got the contact for through cricket. There was a London based firm whose senior partner was mad on cricket and he used to watch the university matches. During one game he asked me if I'd like to take articles with his firm, to which the answer was yes please.

FROM THE ARCHIVES...



Roy batting against Glamorgan



Roy back row - left with the 1964 Somerset team



Captain Roy Kerslake sitting in the centre, front row



Ian Botham consoles Roy after his hamstrung injury



Roy Kerslake pictured with Brian Rose (left) by the portrait by Mike Tarr that was hung in the 1875 Club in 2018 to mark Roy's contribution to Somerset CCC

How did Roy become Somerset captain?

So I did three years articles and in 1968 I'd just taken my exams when I got called up by the press to ask if I knew I was skippering Somerset this year? In 1964 cricket finished with amateurs and professionals. Somerset appointed CRM Atkinson to be captain in 1965 until 1967 and when he left to become head of Millfield and I honestly think that the club wanted an amateur to carry on at that stage. I suspect I may have been third or fourth on the list that were approached but anyway I talked to my parents as I wasn't sure and they said give it a go which I did.

It was a difficult first year but I learned a lot and we finished about mid table. I was hoping to carry on however, although the county wanted me to continue unfortunately there'd been an illness at Clarke, Willmott and Clarke the firm I was going to work for and they said they were sorry but they couldn't give me the summer off.

I had to make a choice and we also had our son John on the way, plus I wasn't sure enough that I was going to make it as a cricketer, and I felt that I couldn't take the risk at that stage because of the responsibility.

It was a difficult decision but that was it and I went off to concentrate on law.



Vic Marks

Brian Close

Viv Richards

Brian Rose

Ian Botham

However that was by no means the end of his involvement with Somerset

In 1970 when I was 27 the Club asked me to go on the committee and be cricket chairman, and then Closey (Brian Close) arrived.

During that period while Closey was there I skippered the Second XI in both the Minor Counties and the Second XI competition.

The firm allowed me to play in those two day games and in the mornings I used to go into the office at 7am and do the post. The secretary would type up the letters and bring them to the ground at tea time for me to sign and I'd also get a list of phone calls to make.

I enjoyed doing that and it worked very well. When I first went onto the committee the one thing that I did say was I was keen that we should be looking for some younger players.

Then with Vic Marks finishing at Oxford, Peter Roebuck finishing at Cambridge, Ian Botham on the Lord's groundstaff and along with Philip Slocombe, all four played well for the Second XI and wanted to join the Club.

In 1973 Len Creed, who was Club Vice-Chairman had brought Viv Richards back from Antigua and that year we had the Under 25s competition and

one player of any age could skipper which I did.

Len brought Viv up to a game against Glamorgan at Lansdown. We won the toss and batted and I asked Len when Viv should bat and Len said open with him which I did.

Fourth ball he pushed forward and lost his off stump to a young Glamorgan seamer. He then bowled a few overs and I remember going up to Len after the game and said at least he can field and the rest of course is history, which was his introduction to Somerset cricket.

How did Roy get on with Brian Close?

Closey was very much his own man and did things his way - he didn't need a cricket chairman. He was brilliant and taught us how to win. Closey was soft underneath but had that bravo which stayed with him and for which he is known.

At times I think he was a little bit harsh on the younger players, he tended to treat everyone the same way and not make allowances, but he had his own way and was brilliant with it.

He finished in 1977 and as cricket chairman I made myself responsible for being the link between the committee and the players, which is how it started, with Brian Rose, who I

got to know very well, as skipper.

We had a good relationship and on away games I'd ring him everyday at breakfast just to see if there was anything he needed.

In 1978 we went to Lord's and didn't quite get there. Tom Cartwright was coaching us then and I remember in the semi-final against Essex we were sat in the Old Pavilion, splinters and all, where there was a big bath. It was a very tight game and we were sat there with the taps running loudly so we couldn't hear what was going on. Eventually we heard the roar and rushed out but were very nervous. Then of course in 1979 we won!

I used to be with the players most of the time. Don't ask me what I did I was supporting Brian - we did use to chat a bit!



Roy looking for another boundary



Roy with the legend Viv Richards...

At the end of the 1979 season when we won at Trent Bridge the players presented me with a new suit because I'd worn the same one to every one day game and I wasn't allowed to change it!

They were good times. It was a very closely knit team and I think that the great thing for me was that although more often than not Joel, Viv or Both got the plaudits they never neglected the support that they got from Dredgy, Jennings and all the other members of the team. They recognised that they couldn't have done what they did without their support, so it was a very close unit who played for each other.

I was in the dressing room with them all the time when the games were on, just supporting and being there.

They were all lovely guys and I think it was a question of getting their trust, because being like they were everyone wanted to be on their coat tails and at times I don't think they were sure who to trust. We hit it off and never had any problems in the dressing room

Then in 1980 we had Sunil Gavaskar come over poor chap, he couldn't do anything because in India the servants did everything. He couldn't even make a cup of tea if you went round to see him. He was a superb batsman, really elegant and I think he enjoyed his season.

In 1981 when I did my achilles on the eve of the final Joel Garner and Dasher Denning turned up at my home and invited me out for a drink before they left for Lord's. Unbeknown to me they'd been in touch with Lynn and they drove me straight to London to stay in the hotel with them and go to Lord's on next day which was amazing.

The players treated me as a father figure. I was very fortunate and I had some good years with them.

My burden of work was getting greater so I finished at the end of 1981 and although I was still in touch had a break from being involved in the management side until I was asked to be president in 2004.

President of Somerset CCC

Work was demanding but I kept in touch with Somerset and when I got



...and his West Indies team-mate Joel Garner

the call from Michael Hill, a great man, in 2004 to say would I become president I said yes please. It was a three year term and I did four terms.

What I said was that I didn't just want to be a figurehead I wanted to be involved and know what was going on so when Members ask me questions I can give them a sensible answer and that worked very well.

I felt that the club needed to be represented at committee level and be there at games and I used to go down to the ground early. Then, from 2008 when I stopped working we went to every game, and in the last four years also went to every away game and made some marvellous friendships going round the counties.

I also found out how other counties worked and felt that we were pretty well up the ladder in the management of the club. We have been very fortunate to have had Richard Gould and Guy Lavender as Chief Executives and stability above them in Giles Clarke and Andy Nash.

I have said all along that without Giles Clarke we wouldn't have the ground that we have now. He got us doing rather than just talking and it happened just before the credit crunch, it was the last big contract signed and we were so lucky and you can't take that way from him.

We could have won the championship in 2010 and we've had great times since then. We have put together some great sides with Sarge and Jason and we have a very strong and balanced side this year. Steering clear of injuries I'm very hopeful we are going to go well again.

In 2024 we had a great year but won nothing and it was a fantastic season until the last few weeks. To reach the 50 over final with half the team missing was a real achievement.

You have got to take your hat off to the club as a whole we are the longest standing first division club by a long way and came up in 2007 under the leadership of Justin Langer.

We have been lucky to have some good people running the club and



Andy Nash, Guy Lavender and Roy

good pathways like King's College, Millfield and Taunton School all feeding players in to the county.

Those who have selected the young cricketers to go onto the Academy have done very well, and we have been very fortunate in the numbers who have come through and made their mark in the first team

However, I just worry about what the future holds for county cricket and the four day game.

Roy's Canadian souvenir!

Cricket has been good to me and when I was young I had two MCC tours, one to South America and the other to Canada where I met my wife and brought her back as a souvenir!

Lynn knew nothing about cricket at all, and was in her final year at university when we were out there, and she was invited to an evening cocktail do with the MCC party at the local air force base.

I remember going along with Dennis Silk our skipper - another great man, and when we arrived there was a bit of a dance. There were two girls nearby and he said said let's go and give them a dance and as I walked over I remember saying to Dennis 'I don't like the look of yours!'

The other one of course was Lynn and then in 1968 I tossed up against Gloucestershire at Taunton half an hour after we got married. We won the game on a declaration!

I have had a lifelong involvement with the Club and first played for the Second XI in 1961. I became President in 2004. The Club has always been part of my life.

Cricket has been very good to me and I have had some very special times at Somerset. The Club has a family feel about it and people involved treat each other as a family. They are always doing things together and won't hear a bad word against the Club. Another important thing is the relationship between the members and the players, who are part of the community.