

## TWO LEGENDARY CRICKET COACHES AT DHS

### ... CALL BACK THE PAST

DHS, the first government high school in Durban, founded in 1866, had 44 unchallenged years to stamp its identity on the folk of Durban.

In 1894, School relocated to the Berea. The staff were all graduates mostly from English universities and they brought with them impetus towards the game of cricket. Not surprisingly, boys with cricket skills converged on DHS where the standard of coaching and play was high. The First Team were pitted against the only other high schools in Natal of the period, namely Maritzburg College, Hilton and Michaelhouse. Further fixtures were played against local men's teams. At the magnificent, memorable Cricket Dinner held at the ICC in 2006, organized by Alan Norton ably assisted by Esmond Caro (First Eleven 1956), six hundred odd folk sat down to an excellent meal and entertainment. One of the speakers announced that more international cricketers, according to the editor of Wisden, have come through DHS than any other school in the world – the number 29 was mentioned.

DHS was fortunate that it enjoyed a huge catchment area up until the foundation of Northlands High School in 1953; Westville Boys' in 1965 and Pinetown Boys' in 1987. These schools are fiercely competitive and maybe their attitude was inculcated by their founding headmasters, all DHS old boys and teachers; all great sportsmen, namely Messrs Percy Hardacre, Wynn Bowden and 'Sas' Nourse, respectively.

LCW Theobald, master from 1949 to 1977, is considered to be 'Mr Cricket' of Natal schools by his fellow coaches throughout Natal during his tenure as 1<sup>st</sup> Eleven cricket coach at DHS.

Mr Alan Norton, about twenty-one years later, was appointed First Team coach at DHS. He recently stepped down as first team coach after a very successful tenureship from 1999 to the end of 2011. Comparing the two gentlemen's statistics are noteworthy:

|              | Years as coach | Natal School players                  | SA School players |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| LCW Theobald | 13 years       | 44 players<br>(Average: 3 per year)   | 10 players        |
| WA Norton    | 12 years       | 35 players<br>(Average: 2,9 per year) | 7 players         |

Les Theobald and Alan Norton set very high standards. Alan Norton's statistics, compared to LCW's are as near as dammit the same.

At the end of year Cricket Dinner held in Founders in 2011, many tributes poured in for Alan Norton, all of which would be too voluminous to record here. However, here follow two notably communiqués. Imraan Khan (Old boy and present captain of the KZN Dolphins):

"... I was fortunate to have had Alan as my coach practically throughout my schooling period at DHS. I believe that his no nonsense approach was exactly what we needed as a team, and throughout my time at the school under his tutelage, we were an extremely successful team. There was also the added motivation to win to avoid the dreaded 400m laps around the main field as punishment. To this day Hashim Amla and I have a good chuckle about that. No doubt

that gave us a good grounding for what was to come in the modern era of professional sport, where fitness is a key component to longevity in any sport.

Finally, Mr Norton can be really proud of his service to the school as a cricket coach. I know for a fact that the number one batsmen in world cricket, Hashim, has huge respect for Alan. I can personally say that he's played a significant part in my development as a cricketer, and I will always be grateful for his guidance."

Hashim Amla (currently rated the best One-day batsman in the world and a Test cricketer of the highest ranking):

"... My association with Mr Norton dates back to around 1995 or maybe 1996. I was about 13 years old and we shared the same cricket club team called Pirates Kismet. After an under 14 club match was over, my honourable father as well as Mr AK Khan and Imraan Khan would drive to wherever the 1<sup>st</sup> team was playing and watch them compete. Just the other day Imraan and I went down memory lane smiling about how we used to just hope that we could get a chance to be a substitute fielder for the big boys.

Mr Norton was one of those big boys. Committed to the core, how often I have seen him rolling the wicket or drying a spot so that we could get a game in. I remember watching him score 170 odd against Umbilo at Tills Crescent. I think everyone was surprised that it didn't take him five days to do it. Jokes aside though, apart from serving as a motivating factor in getting Imraan and I to DHS, there are aspects of Mr Norton that remain with me.

The first one is the constant reminder that my sideburns were too long. I guess I have the last laugh on that one Mr Norton.

Next was the attention he gave to classical batting. Perhaps because his own technique was sound, the way he coached was to be solid and effective... basic as a foundation... something I too am still working on. In this cricketing age we need that more than ever, otherwise fewer and fewer youngsters are going to make the grade when they reach provincial, let alone international level. Remembering his war cry of "do you think you are bulletproof?" one just has to appreciate the wealth of knowledge and passion he has for the game. I certainly do.

He sets a very high standard for his players and I am sure it is because he knows what it takes if the budding youngster are to stand a chance in the extremely competitive world of professional sport. The truth of the matter is, a coach has to be firm and patient. Firm, because some school cricketers get arrogant when they don a colours or honours blazer and think that they have achieved much; and patient, so that the players learn from the coach that making mistakes is part of learning and to persist with hard work to eradicate the weakness. On many occasions he would question me on a rash shot and to this day still reminds me about my mishaps.

Mr Norton, congratulations on a fantastic coaching career. Let alone the thousands you have influenced, you have made a big difference in my upbringing. Whatever success that get allocated to me, know with certainty that you have a share of it and I am grateful and proud to be a student of yours."

JJ Oddy  
Archivist



LCW Theobald known to his friends as Theo. The Theobald Oval was named after him, a master at the school from 1949 – 1977 in recognition of his contribution to cricket at DHS



Alan Norton – Hashim Amla has fond memories of his coaching

## Some Outstanding Captains of Cricket at D.H.S.

William Eric Williams had the honour of being Captain of Cricket and Head Boy at both DPHS and DHS in 1924 and 1928, respectively.

Towards the middle of the year in 1928, Eric, as he was known throughout his life, visited Mr Langley at the office. Because of financial problems, Eric had to leave School and go out to work in order to help support the family. Mr Langley was rather upset about the early departure of his Head Prefect. He called in the School photographer to record the 1st XI with Eric in the photograph. A second 1st XI photo was taken later in the year and in this photo Eric is an inset. There was only one photo ever printed showing Eric in the front row with Mr Langley and it is in the Williams' family possession.

Eric's leadership qualities, so early recognised by his Head Master, were evident throughout his life. He rose to the rank of Major in World War 2 and he ended up being in charge of staffing, promotions, etc. at Barclays Bank in Natal. He retired in 1974.

Timothy, Eric's son, told the Archivist that, "Dad was a brilliant fullback". This was indeed startling news to the Archivist, who knew Eric well. Eric certainly did not have the build of a rugby player. Then Tim explained, "The fullback is the last line of defence to put things right and to take the pressure off the team in front." This is what Eric, the quiet family man, always did for his family.

Eric passed away on 4 December 2006 at the age of 97. By the way, this leader of men and 'Fullback' for the Williams family stood at 165 cm.

Arthur Tayfield, Captain of the 1st XI in 1948 was an outstanding medium slow off-spin bowler, a fast scoring batsman and an excellent fielder in any position. His statistics for his year as captain read: Batting: 17 innings, 3 not outs, top score 113 and an average of 38 runs.

Bowling: 171 overs, 48 maidens, 416 runs and 51 wickets, that is an average of 8.1 runs per wicket. He took 5 wickets in 5 innings and 4 in 2 innings. His last school match as captain against Michaelhouse, however, was a disaster. DHS required 25 runs for victory with 7 wickets in hand. Those 7 wickets fell for just 9 runs. Under Arthur's captaincy the 1st XI played 19 matches, won 11, drew 6 and lost 2. Arthur made his debut appearance for Natal against Transvaal while he was a 17 year-old schoolboy. He scored 50 before being stumped by the wicket keeper, P Loeser. In the bowling department, he conceded 52 runs off 42 overs.

He was chosen to play for Natal against the MCC at Kingsmead on November 26 - 29, 1948.

He was given special permission by the Natal Education Department to write his matriculation exams early on the Friday and Monday morning in order to be at the Kingsmead ground in time for the start of play. In the 1st innings he bowled 17 overs, 3 maidens and conceded 53 runs. In the 2nd innings he bowled 7 overs, conceded 19 runs and took 1 wicket.

Arthur represented South African Schools in 1947 / 8 / 9. His younger brother, Cyril, won S A School Caps in 1949 / 50 / 51. Interestingly, Hugh, the eldest brother, never won a S A Schools Cap but was the only one of the three to represent South Africa.

Hugh 'Toey' Tayfield holds a world record. During the test match played at Kingsmead between South Africa and England in January 1957, Hugh bowled 17 consecutive 8 ball overs, 137 balls without conceding a run.

Other DHS cricket captains come to mind, Lee Irvine 1962, B A Richards 1963 and J Vandiar 2007. Cricket pundits will say the 1962 1st XI was perhaps the best side ever produced at DHS. Cricket is a game of statistics and without a scorer there is no game. The 1st Team results during the 1st Terms of 1962 and 2007, are noteworthy.

Lee Irvine (Captain) 1962

Scored 678 runs in 8 innings; 3 centuries; top score 125 n.o.; average 96,8 runs.

Barry Richards 1962

Scored 332 runs in 8 innings; top score 100 n.o.; average 55,3.

DHS played 8, won 7, drew 1.

Jonathan Vandiar (Captain) 2007 (Captain of S A Schools 2006)

Scored 642 runs in 10 innings; 3 centuries; top score 155 n.o., average 91,7.

DHS played 10, won 9, lost 1.

DHS cricket is still healthy. From 2000 to 2006 DHS has produced six S A Schools' Cricket players.

*This article was taken from Jeremy Oddy's book 'Where the Baobab grows' written mid 2007*

## **HashimAmla nurtured in KwaZulu-Natal's cricket nursery**

*By Patrick Compton*

The new South Africa Test captain was nurtured in the KwaZulu-Natal cricket nursery. HashimAmla is, in the best sense, public property now as the wristy 31-year-old bestrides the world of cricket as one of its best batsmen and the Proteas' new leader.

But there are those in KwaZulu-Natal with special, personal memories of a talented Tongaat kid's cricketing development. AK Khan is the former president of the KZN Cricket Union and father of Dolphins and Proteas' cricketer Imraan Khan who was a fellow pupil and teammate of Amla's at DHS.

He recalls his time as a "taxi-driver", along with Hashim's dad Dr Mahomed Amla, as they ferried their sons from practice nets to cricket grounds around the province.

Khan pointed out the complications that arose for the two families as the fathers saw their sons edge towards careers as professional cricketers.

"We had serious reservations about letting the boys become pro cricketers," Khan said. "In our community, education is a vital part of a young person's life, leading to one of the traditional professions. A cricket career was seen as a risk. Things have changed since then, with more opportunities presenting themselves, but at the time it was a difficult situation."

Khan noted that Amla was intelligent and level-headed, as well as being deeply religious from a very young age. Did his religious beliefs help him as a cricketer? "Without doubt. They helped with his discipline, his attitude towards others and his desire to work hard for everything. In some ways he didn't have a normal teenage life because of the way he worked at the game."

Amla made his senior debut for the Dolphins against England in a tour match at Kingsmead in 1999/2000 while he was still captain of DHS. At 16 years and 247 days, he was the youngest to do so.

His school coach, Alan Norton (now vice-principal), remembers him well. Writing about him in the school magazine in 2000, Norton described him as "an astute captain who was not scared to speak his mind and do what was right for the team and not the individual". For Norton, Amla's ability as a batsman was one thing, but for him the key characteristic was his humility. "It is his humble way that makes the real difference. He is an intelligent man, and his own man, and observes and listens before speaking. A rare quality these days!"

Speaking of Amla's prospects as SA captain, Norton said: "As a Test captain, he will have the patience that is necessary to be successful and I think he will be forced to reveal more of who he is as he comes under the spotlight. He is also a very principled man, and a man of great integrity."

One of his teammates at DHS was the Durban-born England and Somerset batsman Nick Compton. "When I was 15, I was in the nets with my dad and I remember saying to him that Hashim would captain South Africa one day. It's funny how I remember that moment so well.

"I looked up to Hash from a young age. It was at that time that he took off. He just flew and was hitting the ball like a man. The way he transitioned into senior cricket was easy for him because he matured so quickly." "He's an intelligent, humble person who has a clear strength within. He's a top man. He was always destined for this and I'm very happy for him. He's a leader and I hope he relishes it."

Phil Russell was the Dolphins' coach during Amla's successful year as captain in 2004/5. "During our selection meetings, it was obvious that Hashim had thought very deeply about the teams and the conditions and his analysis was always well considered and of good quality." For Russell, who predicted years ago that Amla would captain his country, it was easy to spot his quality as a batsman. "You could see almost immediately that he was a class above everyone. Even as a schoolboy playing club cricket he looked comfortable playing against men much older than him."

That's an opinion shared by the distinguished cricket historian Krish Reddy who also saw him from a young age. "My first impression was that he was just so assured. He had bags of time to play."

As a Dolphins' selector when Amla began his senior career, Reddy always had the sense that he never had a mentor or followed anyone because he always "knew where he was going and would work everything out for himself".

"He understood the game and he couldn't be bullied. He would offer that wonderful, unassuming smile and want to know why certain decisions had been taken. Hashim has always been a man who earns respect, he never demands it. He's the kind of man who is never completely satisfied even if he's done well. He always feels he has more to give."

Former South Africa and Dolphins coach Graham Ford, who is currently coaching Surrey, once said of Amla: "Hashim is as close to the perfect professional as you can get. From a young age he has displayed a fantastic work ethic and real determination to constantly improve his game. Together with this he has at all stages shown a unique humbleness and total respect for his fellow players and the game of cricket."

Two years ago, Amla tweeted with approval this wise comment on captaincy, which may well be a portent for his future leadership style. "Weak people become more selfish with leadership, while the strong become more selfless with it." There is no question that the quiet, reflective Amla, while very different to the openly combative Graeme Smith, possesses the iron will, intelligence and strength of character to lead South Africa into the whitest heat of battle.

## **Anecdotes on Barry Richards** *from Grayson Heath*

There could be a book full of anecdotes related by the numerous players who played at Old Boys and a number of those would involve our greatest batsman ever: BA Richards.

The very competitive Dennis Gamsy had devised a way of overcoming Barry's natural tendency to get bored at the crease in humble league matches and that was to play a game of nominations when they were batting together – Dennis would nominate the shot that Barry had to play irrespective of where the ball was bowled which of course unleashed the dormant genius of a now focused Barry and depending on the state of the game the nominations ranged from conservative to outrageous.

Barry was in his element.

It would have been a game that we were obviously winning when Dennis whispered to Neil Govan, a tear-away fast bowler, as he walked past to his mark that he should bowl Barry a yorker if he wanted to get him out. Dennis then signaled to Barry that his nomination for the next shot was a hook. Well, Barry was busy completing the hook when the ball crashed into his stumps!!!!

In a match at Old Boys when I was playing for Collegians, Barry was batting particularly badly and to his credit he was anything but bored as he tried to bat his way out of what for him would have been uncharted territory. In fact, so badly was he batting that our captain eventually decided it was safe to bring me on to bowl my very straight off-spinners! In my first over Barry played for the non-existent spin, the fine nick was caught by the 'keeper and the umpire ruled not out – he took his customary single off the last ball as the only run off the over. Midway through my second over he tried to play a length ball pitched on middle stump through mid-wicket, missed as he played for some spin and the ball hit him well below the knee, in line with the middle stump and bounced back a couple of meters – not out said the umpire so I walked down the pitch to collect the ball lying on the pitch still in line with the stumps and as I bent down I said, "Shit Barry, that's twice in two overs!" Having bowled one and a half overs for one run, Barry ensured that he faced every ball of my remaining three and a half overs and my figures were five overs none for 54 – he scored 53 off 20 balls! The only reason the captain kept me on for the five overs was because it looked as though Barry would self-destruct – on one occasion he simply walked down the wicket as I was about to bowl and smashed the ball over the scorers box high up on the bank.

In the days when the swimming pool was a feature at Old Boys it would have been another reason why Dennis Gamsy resorted to his game of nominations as Barry's boredom at the wicket on a hot day became increasingly evident as the pool area filled with girls in their

bikinis. Now it may well be an urban legend but the story has it that on one occasion Barry decided the lure of the swimming pool was too great and contrived to lose his wicket. One of the prettiest girls there was the future Mrs Gamsy who did not go unnoticed by Barry. It may have been the only time in Dennis' illustrious career that he deliberately lost his wicket a few overs later as he made his hurried way to the pool.