

## Williams Works Wonders against Australians

Fifty years ago, an Australian side arrived in Swansea acutely aware that their illustrious predecessors had famously been beaten here on the previous two tours. Could it happen again?

There was great excitement as spectators crowded into St Helen's on a late-May Saturday for the start of the eagerly anticipated match against the 1972 Australian tourists. The weather was fine, though the forecast was less promising. The Glamorgan faithful were already re-living the legendary successes of 1964 and 1968 – and, at the same time, dreaming of making it a hat-trick of victories against the visitors.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Australians, led by Ian Chappell, were a strong and competitive group. With the first Ashes Test at Old Trafford only a little over a week away, there was competition for places in the Test side – and the need for some good, last-minute practice out in the middle. Too much time had already been lost to bad weather. Although neither batsmen nor bowlers had settled properly and shown their best form, this young Australian side would be no push-over. They were certainly not in Swansea for the sea air and singing. They were hungry for competitive cricket.

### Lawrence Williams in the wickets



Tony Lewis won the toss and asked the visitors to bat. Malcolm Nash and Lawrence Williams opened the bowling, with Don Shepherd, Peter Walker and Roger Davis poised to take over. Graeme Watson and Keith Stackpole opened the batting. Soon, Australian wickets were falling in the face of Glamorgan's lively opening attack.

Stackpole fell to Lawrence Williams, caught by Roy Fredericks. Then Nash snapped up a catch to dismiss skipper Ian Chappell – again off the bowling of Williams, and again for a single-figure score. Excitement in the crowd was mounting, as was unease in the away dressing room.

Almost immediately, things worsened for the visitors with the careless run out of Paul Sheahan for a duck. The visitors, at 37 for 3, were in disarray. Before long, with wickets falling to Shepherd and Walker, they had subsided to a very shaky 91 for 5. Although Greg Chappell, supported by Doug Walters and John Inverarity, steadied the ship a little, the Australian total of 191 was modest for a touring side. So far, it had been very much Glamorgan's day. And Lawrence Williams' day, too – finishing with figures of 5 for 31 off 14.5 tight overs, seven of them maidens, and with the notable scalps of Stackpole, Ian Chappell, Walters, Marsh and Lillee.

### Rain stops play

It was an outstanding performance. And who knows, Lawrence Williams may have contributed towards another major upset for a touring Australian side had not Glamorgan's fragile batting – and the Swansea rain – intervened.

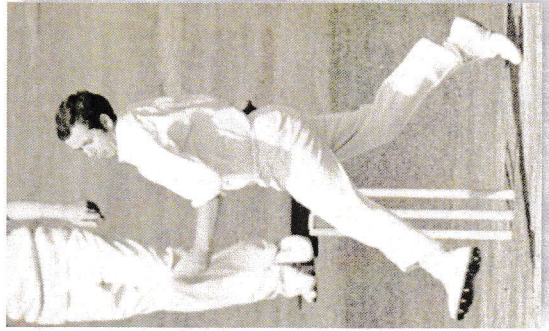
Unable to press home their advantage in the face of a hostile opening attack of Lillee and Colley, Glamorgan soon found themselves 7 for 3 with Alan Jones, Roy Fredericks and Peter Walker all back in the pavilion. At close of the first day's play, this had deteriorated further to 53 for 5. Day 2 was a total washout. After a declaration by Glamorgan a further 40 runs into the final day, Australia batted again to leave their hosts a formidable target of 257 to win in 170 minutes. Understandably, they were determined not to suffer a third successive defeat! Sadly, the target remained of only academic

interest as the rains came again just as the home side's run chase was starting.

The Australians must have been disappointed with their batting performance at St Helen's, especially with the Test encounter with England just around the corner, and against a team performing only modestly in the Championship. In fact, the previous twelve months had seen Glamorgan record only two Championship victories in 23 matches, in 1971 slipping down the table from 2<sup>nd</sup> the season before to a disappointing 15<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps the keen awareness of the defeats of their predecessors was a factor in making them nervous.

#### An unsung hero

But if the Australians had come to Swansea anticipating any difficulty, they would have expected it to come from members of the Glamorgan attack that had made their previous visit so memorably uncomfortable – Malcolm Nash, Don Shepherd and Roger Davis. They would not have expected to have been caused such major difficulty by a bowler who, at the beginning of the 1969 season, had been drafted into the Glamorgan side at the age of 22 from club cricket with Ynysgerwn and Gorseinon.

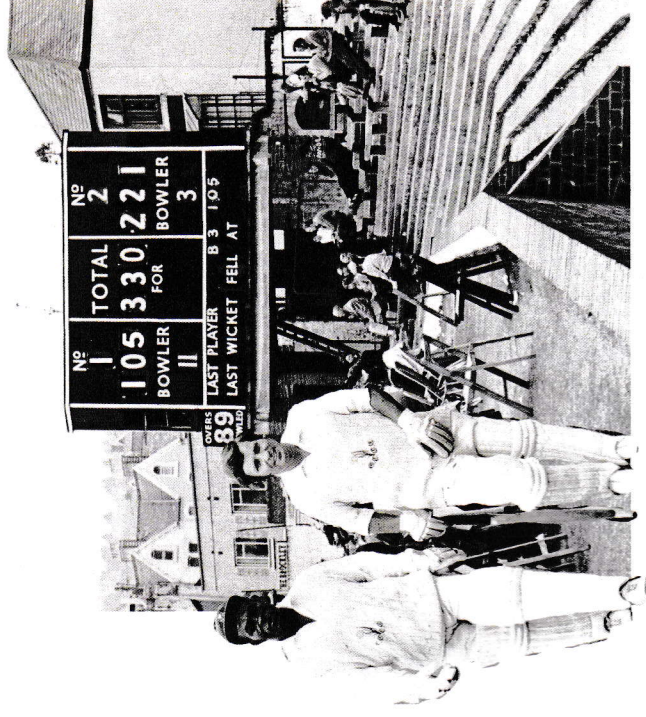


However, to his team-mates, and to Glamorgan's loyal supporters, Lawrence Williams' outstanding performance against the tourists would not have been a surprise. He had performed consistently, and always whole-heartedly, since first being partnered with Malcolm Nash three years earlier at the beginning of the Championship-

winning season, taking over fifty wickets in each campaign and enjoying his best season in 1970 with 61 first-class wickets. He was also a very important part of Glamorgan's limited-over attack, frequently taking wickets and at the same time consistently returning economic figures. In fact, in 1971 Lawrence Williams had been the country's leading John Player League wicket-taker, sharing the honour on 33 dismissals with Kent's West Indian international Keith Boyce.

Although not in a match-winning cause, Lawrence Williams' performance against the Australian tourists in 1982 was one that he, and those privileged to see it, would never forget.

#### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Helen's Balconiers



1972- The partnership that set us on the road