

9



Years Graeme Smith has captained South Africa – a job he will do for Surrey next season after agreeing a three-year deal with the county.

Smith replaces Rory Hamilton-Brown, who returned to Sussex in September.



ELEMENTARY CRICKET

As the 125th anniversary of the first Sherlock Holmes story approaches we take a look back at the author Arthur Conan Doyle's love of the game.

On August 25, 1900, at the Crystal Palace Park cricket ground, there was a singular occurrence. Batting for London County, William Gilbert Grace, WG, the Doctor, the world's most famous cricketer, was dismissed by an MCC bowler who had never before and would never again take a first-class wicket. What is more he had the temerity to write a poem about it. It sounds a case for Sherlock Holmes, particularly as the bowler in question was Holmes's creator, Arthur Conan Doyle.

This December marks the 125th anniversary of Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, when *Beeton's 1887 Christmas Annual* published *A Study in Scarlet*. Over the next 40 years

Conan Doyle tantalised *Beeton's* and *Strand* magazine readers with tales of mystery, deduction and hounds from hell. But Holmes' creator also loved cricket. His Cricinfo page shows 10 first-class games for MCC between 1900 and 1907, with 231 runs at 19.25. He once took 7 for 61 in a non-first-class match against Cambridgeshire at Lord's, bowling "right-arm slow".

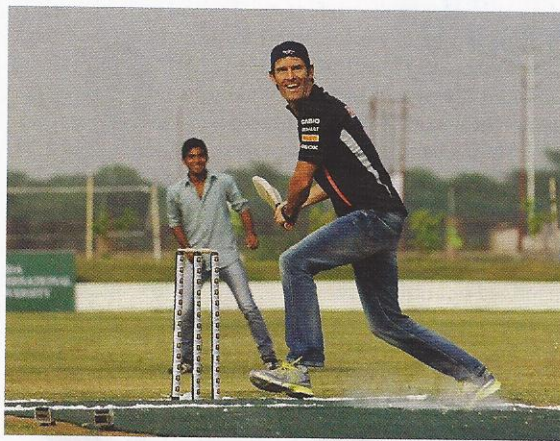
Throughout his life, in letters to his mother, Mary, he wrote fondly of the game. In one he told how his batting average for Portsmouth CC was doing well after a hard-fought 27 and 11 against the Royal Engineers. In August 1897, then aged 38, he was particularly excited. "We are playing the MCC today," he wrote. "Albert Trott is coming down so we'll have some good bowling against us."

In 1905 Doyle co-founded the Sussex Martlets CC to encourage amateur cricket and they are still going strong.

Cricket found its way into Doyle's literary works, too. In a short story, *Spedegue's Dropper*, he shows how an asthmatic schoolteacher inadvertently won the Ashes for England with a Jeremy Snape-style moon ball. This was after the England bowler Bunny Lucas had got Doyle out with a ball Doyle claimed dropped vertically from 30 feet.

In his poem *A Reminiscence of Cricket* Doyle called Grace "A Hercules shrouded in white, an Assyrian bull-like colossus" with "the beard of a Goth or a Vandal". Doyle scoffs at his luck at getting the great man out. It seems Grace top-edged a long-hop and the wicketkeeper Bill Storer took a steeping catch. "Homeward he [Grace] lurched to his lunch," Doyle wrote. MCC won the game by two wickets. Doyle, batting at eight, got a duck.

Crispin Andrews



Quick feet Australia's Formula One driver, Mark Webber, took his chance for a knockabout game of cricket ahead of the Indian Grand Prix at Buddh International circuit, near Delhi, on October 28.

Webber, who finished third in the race, behind Red Bull team-mate Sebastian Vettel, faced a number of balls from Gautam Gambhir. "Cricket requires concentration and hand-eye co-ordination under extreme conditions, and so does Formula One," he said.

Matches Pakistan will play in India between December 25 and January 6 – two T20s and three ODIs.

The games, which are sandwiched between the Test and one-day legs of England's tour, represent the first bilateral series between India and Pakistan in five years.