

## INTER-COUNTY MATCHES

(MEN)

SEASON 1967

### MEMORABLE YEAR FOR YORKSHIRE BOTH MAJOR TITLES WON

Our first match of the year, against Lancashire in the quarter-final of the Inter-County Hard Court Singles Championship was the start of a remarkable and unique trilogy in this Competition, in that on our way to winning the Title, victory was gained in three successive matches, only by the number of Sets and Games won, each side being level on Rubbers at the end of the day. We were very disappointed that Roger Taylor did not arrive back to this country in time to lead us, but nevertheless we managed to win on games after finishing level on Rubbers and Sets. John Clifton, playing as Yorkshire's No. 1 for the first time, won both Rubbers in the top bracket after a remarkable run of five consecutive games from 2-5 down in the final set against his fellow "Barrett Boy" Stan Matthews. The dependable Brian Sheridan won both his Rubbers in the middle bracket, and Philip Pool, (who has previously shone more at Grass Court Doubles) very comfortably won his two in the bottom bracket. However, mention must be made here of the very determined long set that Dick Dillon won at No. 4 against the Lancashire Captain Geoff Stubbs to make us equal on sets, and thus enable us to win as close and exciting a match as is normally possible.

After the thrills of this match the Grass Court Doubles season began quietly enough with the usual County Friendly Matches which were used, apart from normal competition of course, to give greater experience to some of our younger players who had previously played in only junior matches, and now played alongside our County colours and in this respect, I would like to acknowledge the ready willingness of the latter to help whenever possible and to stand down in turn from matches in order to make room for junior players; this is part of the great team spirit which has helped so much to put Yorkshire tennis at the top. On the whole the younger players acquitted themselves well in these

Friendly matches and we took two of them, Robert Armytage and Richard Webb, on our Southern tour. However, because of the prolonged early season rain, they were deprived unfortunately of that first experience, enjoyed by so many past Yorkshire players, of continuous play on the good fast grass courts of this tour, particularly those at Wimbledon.

Our programme was curtailed somewhat, and played on either tarmacadam or shale surfaces, but at least it did provide some guidance towards ultimate County Week selection which at the time, created a flutter of surprise, and some criticism, mainly over the recall of Stewart Moses after several years seemingly in the wilderness. However, as a youngster he had shewn his mettle in Group I, and as he with Dick Dillon, formed probably the best club pair in Yorkshire, it seemed a worthwhile calculated risk to try them as a third pair (for so long our weakness when previously in Group II) in our coming fight for the major title. From the original selection Terry Pickering the then current County Champion, was eventually withdrawn after arriving back from a Squash Tour of South Africa and finding himself short of the Tennis practice he expected to get out there. This ended a remarkably long run of successive County Weeks for Terry, but in a negative way it did at least slightly ease our final pairing problem whilst at the same time it brought back that other consistent stalwart Brian Sheridan into the team as reserve.

So to Eastbourne where the luck of the draw rather unkindly placed us against Essex, the then Champion County, on the first day, making it even more difficult for our normal club players to adjust their game to the more demanding conditions. After a great deal of thought and discussion the composition of the team was finally settled on straightforward lines by first of all reverting to the first pair of Hann and Taylor who had shewn themselves some years ago to be one of the finest combinations ever at this level, and bringing together again, as our second pair now, Clifton and Pool who had in the past played many times as a Junior pair. Thus we stuck to our original intention of playing Dillon and Moses as an established pair at third string, and though we disappointingly just lost the match by four Rubbers to five I was convinced more than ever that we could still win

the Championship should circumstances give us the opportunity so to do. However, with the same team the following day against Staffordshire we came within sight of disaster in a match which on paper should have given us a comfortable win. Hann and Taylor suffered their first defeat ever in County Tennis, against the very capable Staffs. first pair of Keith Wooldridge and Ted Beards, and our second pair again lost two rubbers, but our third pair came good in a big way by winning their first Rubbers, against the second and third pairs. Thus we scraped home by five rubbers to four.

However, to keep us in the Championship hunt it was essential to strengthen the second pair, even though it meant splitting the third pair after their highly successful day. Therefore Dillon, who had settled down from the start as if he had been there all season, was moved up to partner Clifton against Surrey on Wednesday, leaving Moses with Pool, who had not so far this week realised his very considerable natural ability and talent, though we all hoped he would settle down better at third pair. The move could hardly have worked better, at least so far as the second pair, and consequently the team as a whole, was concerned, as Dick and John immediately formed a first class partnership, winning all their rubbers in that match and the remaining two. Even though our first pair dropped another rubber against the Surrey first pair of Ambrose and Crump, we won again by five rubbers to four.

On Thursday we trounced Lancashire, who have unfortunately lost most of their recent championship team, by eight rubbers to one (Moses and Pool winning their first two rubbers) and as Essex on that day lost to Middlesex, the opportunity we so badly wanted, to win the County Championship, was presented to us. It was now the classic situation, wide open, with Essex, Middlesex and Yorkshire all having an option on the title the final day, the relegation issue by no means settled, and the possibility of rubbers counting. Middlesex, our opponents and fellow contenders, altered their team again but Yorkshire were once more unchanged, thus keeping the same six players throughout the whole week. Tension increased as the rain poured down all Friday morning and into the afternoon, but at last it stopped and miraculously the matches started at tea-time. Yorkshire were vibrant with determination, spirit and confidence, winning the first three

rubbers to establish a wonderful supremacy. Though the third pair lost their next rubber, the other pairs both won, so that we established a winning lead before the final round started. Though the records give the final score as a convincing 7-2 victory, it could even have been 8-1 as our third pair were only down by one long fiercely contested set against the redoubtable Bobby Wilson and his partner Geoff Ward when uncertain light and circumstances called a premature postponement until morning. In the event I conceded this rubber after losing the toss of a coin with the Middlesex Captain Geoff Ward, during a late stage of the subsequent celebrations. It was a reluctant concession, but all the issues were by then settled, and in particular the magnificent Championship Cup was already back in Yorkshire hands after sixty long years. We were naturally delighted to have "Bunny" Heron, the Y.L.T.A. President, with us on this momentous occasion, but at the same time it was a great disappointment that Sidney Hacking, my predecessor up to this year, was prevented by serious illness from attending.