

MIKE SMITH – England, Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

Mike Smith, who is universally known as ‘MJK’, started his career with Leicestershire in 1951 and moved to Edgbaston in 1956 after National Service and University.



He is one of a rare group of people who are double internationals, having represented England at both cricket and rugby union football. He remains the last English cricketering double international. His one rugby cap was against Wales in 1956.

At Oxford University he was a three times Blue and captain in his final year. He set records for aggregate runs and hundreds in varsity matches before joining Warwickshire where he made his name.

With Warwickshire he was county captain for 11 seasons and his team mates rated him as the best county batsman and the most straight forward and unselfish captain of his time.

Easily recognised by his spectacles, that he wore, he was one of the most prolific scorers in post war cricket.

In county cricket he was noted for his on-side play. In 1959, his most consistent season, he scored over 3000 runs – the first for 10 years – and also became the youngest to reach 3000 since Ranji. He also managed to set County records for most runs in a season and most catches(42)

No wonder that he was chosen as one of the Wisden Cricketers of the Year in 1960.

His consistently prolific batting earned him an England call up and he made his debut against New Zealand at Edgbaston in 1958.

He struggled at first – his first 35 innings yielded only 9 half centuries and as many ducks – and so he was stuck with being a poor starter and he was also nervous in the 90’s.

He made two of his three hundreds in his first 7 Tests but after his third at Cape Town in 1964/5 his form fell away badly. He passed 50 in only one of his last 20 Tests.

His leadership qualities, which included fielding at forward short leg before helmets and shin guards were in vogue, were possibly the biggest factor in his captaining England in half of his 50 Tests which included three successful tours of India, South Africa and Australia.

When his playing career ended he eventually became Chairman of Warwickshire, a position he held for over 10 years, and an ICC Match Referee.

His son, Neil, followed in his footsteps by captaining Warwickshire and playing for England, albeit only in One Day Internationals.