



STAR OF INDIA



Profile of Dilip Doshi by Rob Hardie

Dilip Doshi was one of India's best left-arm spin bowlers during the 1970s and 1980s and it was Meltham CC that benefited from his talents during the early years of his career.

Born in Rajkot, Gujarat, in 1947, Doshi arrived in England at the age of 25 in 1972. He came to this country with the intention of plying his trade as a holidaying cricketer and, with his family ties in the south of England, Doshi began to play for Sussex's 2nd XI.

In 1972 Meltham had re-laid their pitch for the forthcoming season and with this the committee signalled their intention for a fresh start, including the prospective signing of a few top players.

Initially the club had the intention of signing another player at the time, as former club chairman Dennis Schofield explains. "We tried to sign John Sullivan from Lancashire for the '73 season, but he had a year left on his contract." This did not deter the pursuit of Sullivan as the committee members went after their man. "We went to his house one Sunday in August 1972 and sat down over a coffee and talked it through." The meeting was not without reward, however, as Sullivan told the MCC delegation of a left-arm spinner he witnessed as his county side played against Sussex.

The player was confirmed as Dilip Doshi by Lancashire's Clive Lloyd after a phone conversation with Meltham officials. Lloyd gave Doshi a glittering recommendation and said he could be a 100-wicket-a-season bowler. This was only just enough to convince the club as the decision to sign the Indian only just scraped through a committee vote. A letter sent to Hove gave Doshi details of the contract offer which included a £24-per-week wage and a guaranteed benefit match.

Acquiring the bowler's signature, however, was not without drama. A week after contacting Doshi, it was found out that he was returning to India. Cue a mad dash to London by several board members to snare the player. Schofield was on the trip and narrates the events. "We found out he was to board a plane to India and had to reach him before he did. At 4am in the morning a car of committee members drove to Heathrow Airport to catch him." Their tracking down of Doshi bore fruit as beside Heathrow's Terminal 3 Doshi signed the papers which confirmed him as being under sole contract to Meltham Cricket Club for the 1973 season.

After only a few weeks of the 1973 season his performances started to make county teams take notice of his considerable talents and Meltham gave him permission to take part in a trial match for Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club. After only a short while at Mean Lane, Doshi was to be transferred to Notts. However, due to the Trent Bridge club already having an overseas player, it was arranged that Doshi play on for Meltham until the end of the 1974 season.

In 1973 Doshi became the first Meltham player to be awarded the Huddersfield League bowling prize for his phenomenal 112-wicket haul. Only Paul Booth has achieved the honour since then, completing a hat-trick of prizes in 1999, having won the award in the two previous years.

Doshi went on to play for a number of sides including Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and Hertfordshire. He was finally called up to India's Test side in 1979 at the age of 30 and went on to take 114 wickets at Test level. It is little surprise that Doshi's abilities were called upon by his country and even when he wasn't in contention for a place he was glued to his country's Test performances.

This was most notably the case in 1974 when India were touring. During a match at Mean Lane, Doshi set himself up a wireless near the boundary and didn't stray far from it despite this harming his fielding performance! Many would claim this wouldn't have been an issue as he was well known for his poor fielding, except of course taking catches off his own bowling!



Doshi was a well educated man known for his excellent linguistic skills and exceptional grasp of the English language. He retired from cricket in 1989 after becoming only the second man in history to take more than 100 Test wickets after having made their debut aged 30.

Doshi's son Nayan currently plays for Derbyshire County Cricket Club.