

= John Lester =

John Ashby Lester ( August 1 , 1871 ? September 3 , 1969 ) was an American cricketer , active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries . Lester was one of the Philadelphian cricketers who played from the end of the 19th century until the outbreak of World War I. His obituary in Wisden Cricketers ' Almanack , described him as " one of the great figures in American cricket . " During his career , he played in 53 matches for the Philadelphians , 47 of which are considered first class . From 1897 until his retirement in 1908 , Lester led the batting averages in Philadelphia and captained all the international home matches .

= = Early life and career = =

Lester was born in Penrith , Cumberland , England in 1871 . He began playing cricket at a very young age . He was playing a game in Yorkshire in 1892 when he met Dr. Isaac Sharpless . Sharpless was the president of Haverford College , and invited him to the United States to attend the school . In his early days as a student in Cumberland 's Ackworth School , he had been described as a " very indifferent batsman " . It was only after entering Haverford that he developed his batting style . As a student at Haverford , Lester excelled as an athlete and a scholar and played football , track , tennis , and soccer . During his freshman year , he averaged 100 @. @ 5 runs per innings . Lester also won the Cope Bat every year during his time at Haverford . In his final season with the school in 1896 , he scored 1 @, @ 185 total runs and took 40 wickets for averages of 79 and 23 @. @ 2 , respectively . He also captained Haverford on their first overseas tour , scoring 105 against the MCC on his first appearance at Lord 's . On this tour , he created a great impression with an average of over 84 and prepared himself for the Philadelphian 's tour of England the following year .

= = = Tour of England in 1897 = = =

The tour undertaken by the Philadelphian cricketers was very ambitious . Though the results might have been less satisfactory than hoped for by its promoters , the tour was arranged mainly for educational purposes and few of those on the American side expected to win many matches . Previous tours had tended to involve amateur English sides as opponents , with a low level of competition . In 1897 a schedule was prepared including all of the top county cricket teams , the Oxford and Cambridge University teams , the Marylebone Cricket Club , and two other sides , though only a few of the counties thought it worthwhile to put their best elevens onto the field . Starting on June 7 at Oxford , the tour lasted for two months and ended in late July at The Oval . While it initially aroused some curiosity , many English fans lost interest until John Lester and the Philadelphians met the full Sussex team at Brighton on June 17 . Behind a dominant bowling performance by Bart King , Lester helped to seal the victory with his batting . In the first innings , Lester and King were partners in a fourth @-@ wicket stand of 107 , with Lester top @-@ scoring with 92 . He continued in the second innings with 34 not out .

Despite the excitement surrounding Lester 's and King 's performances , the Americans did not fare well overall . Fifteen matches were played , but only two were won , while the team lost nine and earned a draw in four . The other win came against Warwickshire . During this match at Edgbaston , Lester scored 35 runs in the first innings and 67 in the second . Lester was the best batsmen on the Philadelphian side ; beginning with 72 not out in his first match , he kept up his form all through the tour , scoring 891 runs for an average 37 @. @ 12 . Several counties offered him contracts to play in England .

= = = Tours of England in 1903 and 1908 = = =

John Lester was chosen to captain the Philadelphians in 1903 and 1908 on their tours to England . Against Leicestershire in August 1903 , Lester made his highest score in first @-@ class cricket . In

the first innings , he made 126 not out , and this was followed by a respectable 64 in the second innings . His batting on this tour so impressed the critics that he was called the " one batsman ( among the Philadelphians ) who may almost ( be ) described as great " and that he " would soon be one of the greatest men of his day " In his last first @-@ class match on the 1908 tour , Lester posted a score of 34 in the first innings , but was dismissed LBW for nought in the second innings . He did manage to take 4 wickets in the Philadelphians ' loss to Kent .

= = Legacy and later life = =

John Lester helped to lift Philadelphia cricket to the highest levels of international play with his leadership and understanding of the sport . He is one of the few American cricketers noted in Cricket Scores and Biographies , which said that he was " a watchful batsman who could hit well and had plenty of strokes and strong defence . " In 1951 he authored A Century of Philadelphia Cricket , which was a definitive history of the game in the area . Lester was also integral in the foundation of the C.C. Morris Cricket Library when he proposed that cricket , " with a history and literature second to none should be given a permanent home in the United States . " In 1969 he made his final public appearance at a cricket function when the library was opened at Haverford . Lester received his PhD in education from Harvard University in 1902 and for many years was head of the English department at the Hill School Pottstown , Pennsylvania and served as a university professor . He died in 1969 and as a lasting memorial , the pavilion at Cope Field is named in his honor .

= = Teams = =

= = = International = = =

United States of America

= = = USA first @-@ class = = =

Philadelphia

= = = Philadelphia club = = =

Merion

= = Publications = =

Essays of Yesterday and Today . New York : Harcourt , Brace and Company , 1943 .

A Century of Philadelphia Cricket . Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press , 1951 .