

= Claire Taylor =

Samantha Claire Taylor MBE (born 25 September 1975) is a former cricketer who represented England more than 150 times between 1998 and 2011 . A top order batsman , Taylor was the first woman to be named a Wisden Cricketer of the Year . Along with Charlotte Edwards , she was the mainstay of England 's batting during the first decade of the 21st century , and played a key role in the team 's two world titles in 2009 .

Taylor did not play cricket until the age of 13 , but four years later made her county debut . Initially considered a wicket @-@ keeper with limited batting ability , Taylor struggled to break into the England team . She made her international debut in 1998 , and within two years was a regular in the team . After an unsuccessful World Cup in 2000 , Taylor left her job to become a full @-@ time cricketer . Over the subsequent five years , she developed into one of the leading batsmen in women 's cricket , but after another failure in the 2005 World Cup she resumed her career alongside cricket .

Despite her struggles at the World Cup , Taylor continued to improve as a batsman , and in 2006 , she scored 156 not out , the highest individual total in an ODI at Lord 's Cricket Ground . Her batting successes resulted in her being short @-@ listed for the ICC Women 's Cricketer of the Year in 2007 and 2008 , and she won the award in 2009 . After being the leading run @-@ scorer in the 2009 World Cup , and player of the tournament in the World Twenty20 later that year , she was less consistent from 2010 , though she performed well in the pair of quadrangular tournaments played in England during her final summer of cricket , and completed her career with batting averages in excess of 40 in both Test and ODI cricket .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Samantha Claire Taylor was born in Amersham , Buckinghamshire on 25 September 1975 , as part of a sporting family : her father played rugby , and her mother played hockey . She attended Dolphin School in Hurst , Berkshire , where she initially played softball , participating as the only girl in the school team . Taylor did not play cricket until a summer camp at the age of 13 , but thereafter improved to such a level that she captained the Dolphin School cricket team , playing alongside the boys . She subsequently moved to The Abbey School , Reading for a short time , and finally Kendrick School . Although she primarily played hockey as a teenager , at which she represented England at Under @-@ 17 and Under @-@ 19 as a forward , she began playing women 's county cricket for Thames Valley , making her debut for the side in May 1993 .

Taylor was awarded a place at The Queen 's College , Oxford to study Mathematics in 1994 . At Oxford , Taylor earned three blues for hockey , and three half blues for cricket . She also played for the college men 's cricket team , which included Iain Sutcliffe , who later played over three hundred county cricket matches . During her time at Oxford , Taylor continued to play for Thames Valley , and scored her maiden century in the women 's County Championship , scoring 109 runs against Lancashire and Cheshire in July 1996 . Her highest score prior to that innings had been 37 . The following year , having graduated from Oxford with a second @-@ class honours degree , Taylor scored successive half @-@ centuries for Thames Valley , reaching 97 against Sussex , 77 against Lancashire and Cheshire , and an unbeaten 62 against East Midlands . She had been making intermittent appearances for England at various age group levels for the previous five years , and in September 1997 , she scored 85 for England Under @-@ 21s against the touring South African side . Even so , she was not included in the team for the 1997 Women 's Cricket World Cup , but she was named as a non @-@ travelling reserve , something that Taylor said " confirmed to me my breakthrough into the senior squad . "

= = = International breakthrough = = =

In April 1998 , Taylor travelled to South Africa as part of the England Under 21 squad that competed in the women 's Inter Provincial Tournament , scoring two half centuries in the competition . Her full international debut occurred later that year , during the fourth One Day International (ODI) between England and Australia . Playing as a specialist batsman , Taylor scored one run during a heavy defeat for England . Taylor finished the 1998 women 's County Championship with two strong batting performances : she struck her second century , scoring 103 runs against West , followed by 65 runs against Surrey . Towards the end of the English season , she kept wicket for England in a match against England Under 21s , scoring an unbeaten 45 runs . She retained her place in the England squad for the series against the touring Indian team in 1999 . England struggled in the series , and Taylor was one of a number of inexperienced players in the squad who " failed to seize their chance " , according to the Wisden Cricketers ' Almanack report . Taylor 's highest score in the series was 12 runs , and she had batting averages of 11 in the ODIs , and 5 in the solitary Test match .

During the subsequent English winter of 1999 ? 2000 , Taylor was part of the touring party that travelled to Australia and New Zealand for nine ODIs . The tour was a failure for the team : they lost all nine international matches , and their only win was a warm up match against Wellington , in which Taylor scored 83 runs . She secured another half century in the second ODI against New Zealand , scoring 56 runs after opening the innings . In a series in which England 's batting was described as dismal , her half century was one of only two in ODIs during the tour , and Wisden reported that giving Taylor an " overdue opportunity " was one saving grace of the trip . She struggled for runs in the series against the touring South Africans in 2000 , aggregating 68 runs from five innings , as once again the English batting ? particularly the top order ? was criticised . After the conclusion of the series , Taylor struck a century in a county match , scoring 115 runs for Berkshire against Surrey .

England 's " slide down the international ladder " continued during the 2000 Women 's Cricket World Cup , according to Wisden . The batting was once more culpable , but Taylor provided some relief . She scored 267 runs in the tournament at an average of 66 in 75 , ranking her among the top ten batsmen . She struck her first century in international cricket ; scoring 137 not out against Sri Lanka . In doing so , she shared a partnership of 188 runs with Jane Cassar , which as of 2012 , is a record for the fifth wicket in women 's ODIs . England failed to qualify from the group stage of the competition .

== Full time cricketer ==

After the 2000 World Cup , Taylor wanted to focus on her desire to become one of the best batsmen in the world . In order to achieve this , she decided to become a full time cricketer . After university , she had joined Procter & Gamble , and by 2001 she was earning £ 38 ,000 as an IT assistant manager at the company . In contrast , her income from cricket totalled £ 7 ,000 , and in order to afford to quit her IT job , she had to move back in with her parents . England 's next series was against the World Cup runners up , Australia , who toured in June and July 2001 . England 's batting remained unreliable , and Australia won all five matches between the sides : two Test matches and three ODIs . Taylor was praised as the only highlight of the English batting ; her innings of 50 not out was the highest score by her side in any of the ODIs . In the second Test , she significantly improved on her previous best Test score of 18 runs , batting for over four hours in a gritty performance to reach 137 runs . Taylor missed the tour of India in January 2002 after injuring her knee in a training session , but returned the following summer with a string of good performances in the Super Fours ? a competition in which the England selectors place the 48 leading players into four teams ? trailing only her England team mate Charlotte Edwards as the leading run scorer . In the four ODIs that season , against New Zealand and India , Taylor failed to make an impact , scoring just 43 runs in total .

Ahead of a tour by the England women to New Zealand and Australia , Taylor competed in the State League , a one day competition in New Zealand , for the Canterbury Magicians . She

finished the tournament in the top @-@ five batsmen , scoring 252 runs at an average of 42 @.@ 00 . Unfortunately for England , her good form did not continue into the international matches : in her seven ODI matches , she scored 87 runs . She continued to struggle at the start of the 2003 English domestic season , prompting Wisden to report that she " had barely scraped a run " in the County Championship matches . Despite her struggles , she survived an overhaul of the England squad , in which seven of the players who had toured Australia and New Zealand had been dropped . She repaid the faith shown in her , striking centuries in both Test matches against South Africa . The first , a score of 177 runs , was the highest total she made in Test cricket , and was scored over six and a half hours , and was just twelve runs short of the highest by any England woman . Two weeks later , she became one of only five women , as of 2012 , to have scored centuries in consecutive Test matches , when she scored 131 runs at Taunton . Her performances in the ODI series were less eye @-@ catching , but a half @-@ century in the first match helped her finish second to Laura Newton as England 's leading run @-@ scorer .

Taylor competed in the State League for the second consecutive year in early 2004 , and finished with the second @-@ most runs in the competition , scoring 401 runs at an average of 44 @.@ 55 . From New Zealand , she travelled to South Africa to join up with the England team for five ODIs . After scoring 90 runs in a warm @-@ up contest against an Invitational XI , she finished as England 's second most prolific run @-@ scorer behind Edwards , though she only once reached a half @-@ century in the international matches . Back in England for the 2004 Super Fours competition , Taylor and Edwards once more headed the batting tables , Taylor narrowly trailing her international team mate in terms of runs scored , but ahead of her on batting average , having scored 351 runs at 87 @.@ 75 . In the subsequent series against New Zealand , Taylor was the top @-@ scorer in the first Twenty20 International match played by either gender . Despite the quicker @-@ scoring nature of the Twenty20 game , Taylor was praised for her measured batting and placement . In the ODIs , England possessed greater depth in their batting , making the team less reliant on Taylor and Edwards ' performances . That depth helped them to win the series 3 ? 2 , despite a low @-@ scoring sequence of matches for Taylor in which she averaged below twenty .

In preparation for the 2005 Women 's Cricket World Cup in South Africa , Taylor played her third and final season in the State League , though her 229 runs at an average of 38 @.@ 16 were the lowest she achieved in any year of the competition . During a short warm @-@ up series against South Africa , she enjoyed batting success , scoring 94 and 47 in the two ODIs , and then an unbeaten 166 runs against a side from Gauteng and North West . After the first round of matches were all lost to rain , Taylor struck the highest score of the tournament in England 's second match , against Sri Lanka . She scored 136 runs from 128 balls , and shared century partnerships with both Edwards and Clare Connor to help England record a large victory . She made little impact against India in the next match , but then scored 55 not out against South Africa and 46 against New Zealand to help ensure England 's qualification for the semi @-@ finals . Cricinfo reported that Australia were " undoubted favourites " for their semi @-@ final clash with England , and that Taylor would be one of her side 's key players for the contest . After the early loss of Laura Newton , Taylor was dismissed for the third duck of her ODI career , and England subsided to a five @-@ wicket loss . She finished the tournament as one of the top @-@ three batsmen by both runs @-@ scored and average , aggregating 265 runs at 53 @.@ 00 .

= = = Further development = = =

After the World Cup , Taylor was disheartened by both her own , and England 's , lack of success . She bemoaned that the sacrifices she had made had come to nothing , and after talking to psychologists , she realised that she needed to readdress her work ? life balance . An amateur violinist , she was accepted into the Reading Orchestra , and by early 2006 was working out of the University of Reading as a performance management consultant .

In the English summer of 2005 , England hosted Australia for two Test matches and six limited @-@ overs contests . The two Tests formed The Women 's Ashes , an accolade that England had not won since 1963 . In the first Test , Taylor scored a patient 35 runs in the first innings , and

shared a partnership of 81 with Edwards , but the pair fell in quick succession , and England struggled thereafter . In the second innings , England required over 300 runs to win , but their top @-@ order collapsed , losing three wickets for just fourteen runs . Taylor suffered a duck in the match , and only a century by Arran Brindle rescued a draw for her side . In the second Test , which England won to secure the Ashes , Taylor scored 43 runs in the first innings to help England open up a 158 @-@ run lead . Taylor finished the five @-@ match ODI series as England 's leading run @-@ scorer , totalling 325 runs at an average of 65 @.@ 00 . After hitting half @-@ centuries in the first and the third matches , she was praised by The Daily Telegraph for the quality of her " on @-@ driving and cutting " as she scored 116 runs in the fourth match to level the series 2 ? 2 .

Taylor , and England , had a difficult tour of Sri Lanka and India in late 2005 ; after winning the two ODIs against Sri Lanka , England drew the only Test against India and lost the ODI series 4 ? 1 . Taylor only scored 76 runs in the seven ODI matches , and made scores of five and three in the Test . She re @-@ found her batting form at the start of the 2006 English cricket season , topping the batting averages in the 2006 Super Fours competition , scoring two centuries and two half @-@ centuries in six matches for the Sapphires .

Facing the touring Indians later that summer , Taylor made small totals in her first two appearances at the crease , scoring 10 in the only Twenty20 match , and 32 in the first innings of their solitary Test . She reached her fourth and final century in a Test match in the second innings , scoring 115 runs to put England into a potentially match winning position , though the match finished as a draw . The first game of the ODI series featured what the Marylebone Cricket Club describe as " Taylor 's finest hour in an England shirt " . Batting at number three , Taylor was called upon early , after opening batsman Edwards was run out in the third over . She was dropped twice in quick succession during her innings , but continued to reach her century from 110 balls . Having reached the milestone , she scored more rapidly and remained 156 not out at the end of the innings , hitting 9 fours in her 151 @-@ ball innings . The score was the highest of Taylor 's ODI career , and is the joint fourth @-@ highest total in women 's ODI cricket . It is also the highest score made in an ODI match at Lord 's by either gender , passing the 138 runs scored by Viv Richards in 1979 .

In the Women 's Quadrangular Series hosted by India in early 2007 , Taylor was England 's best performer with the bat . Despite her side losing all six of their group matches , she finished the tournament with the second @-@ most runs of any player , totalling 346 . She scored half @-@ centuries against each of the other three teams competing ? Australia , India and New Zealand ? and also scored an unbeaten 113 in the first match against Australia . She had a relatively quiet domestic season in 2007 , ranking sixth amongst run @-@ scorers in the Super Fours , having passed 50 runs just once , and despite ranking second by both runs scored and batting average in the County Championship , Taylor only scored two half @-@ centuries in her five appearances in that competition . England started the summer with four Twenty20 matches , one against South Africa and three against New Zealand , in which Taylor made three scores of 20 or more , but did not reach a half @-@ century . In the third ODI against New Zealand , she scored her sixth century in the format , but her 110 runs came from 133 deliveries , and the Wisden series report suggests that the scoring rate was too slow : New Zealand chased down the total in fewer than 36 overs . In the next match , Taylor scored 72 as England attempted to chase down 240 runs to win , but they were eventually bowled out 43 runs short . Though she only made small totals in the other three matches of the series , Taylor finished as the leading run @-@ scorer in the series , though New Zealand 's Aimee Watkins had a superior batting average . Her performances over the year from August 2006 resulted in Taylor being shortlisted for the ICC Women 's Cricketer of the Year award , alongside Australia 's Lisa Sthalekar and the eventual winner , India 's Jhulan Goswami . During the voting period , Taylor scored three centuries and three half @-@ centuries in international cricket .

= = = Leading batsman = = =

England travelled to Australia and New Zealand in early 2008 attempting to improve on their previous visits . In ten ODI matches in Australia against their hosts previously , England had only managed one win , while against New Zealand they had won just three of fifteen contests . England

started badly , losing two of their warm @-@ up matches by significant margins , and then falling 21 runs short in the Twenty20 match which opened the series . Taylor top @-@ scored for England in their Twenty20 defeat with 34 runs from 32 balls . She made a similar score in the first ODI match against the hosts , but in the second match both Taylor and Edwards were out for ducks in a heavy defeat for England . After the third match of the series was abandoned without any play , Taylor scored her first half @-@ century of the tour , and shared a century partnership with Edwards to help England secure a 2 ? 1 lead in the series , guaranteeing that they would at least draw the five @-@ match contest . After Australia won the last ODI to tie the series , the two sides met at the Bradman Oval to play the only Test of the tour . Taylor and Edwards again enjoyed a successful partnership in England 's first innings ; Taylor scored 79 runs as the pair put on 159 together . She scored an unbeaten half @-@ century in the second innings to help England to retain the Ashes .

Taylor carried her good form into the subsequent series against New Zealand , starting the second leg of their trip with a half @-@ century against New Zealand A in a warm @-@ up match in which she was acting captain . England struggled in the first ODI however : only Taylor and Edwards reached double figures for the tourists as they suffered a 123 @-@ run loss . In the following match , Taylor scored the seventh international century of her career , remaining 111 not out as England secured a nine @-@ wicket win over New Zealand . She scored a half @-@ century in the third ODI of the series , and 34 runs in the fifth to finish as England 's leading run @-@ scorer of the tour , scoring 342 runs at an average of 48 @.@ 85 from the nine ODI matches in Australia and New Zealand .

Playing in the first match of Berkshire 's County Championship campaign , Taylor scored 146 runs from 148 balls against Nottinghamshire , out of a team total of 212 : no other Berkshire batsman scored more than 10 runs , and Nottinghamshire won by six wickets . In a two match ODI series against the West Indies she made minimal impact , but was described by Cricinfo as being " at her dominant best " in the first match of the subsequent series against South Africa . She struck 7 fours during her 70 @-@ ball innings and scored 83 runs . In the three remaining matches of the series , she made modest totals , before missing the Twenty20 Internationals due to illness . Taylor reached a landmark during the third series of the summer , making her 100th ODI appearance , against India . In the five @-@ match series , which England won 4 ? 0 , Taylor remained not out in each of her three innings , scoring 125 runs . Following that series , the ICC introduced player rankings for women 's ODI cricket , for which Taylor was top of the batsmen .

= = = Double world champions = = =

In 2009 , England participated in both the Women 's Cricket World Cup , and the inaugural Women 's World Twenty20 . Taylor was identified as one of England 's key players in a preview of the tournament , and she set up victory for England in their opening match against Sri Lanka with her eighth ODI century , her third in successive World Cup matches against Sri Lanka . She asserted her dominance once more in the second match , against India , scoring quicker than a run a ball for her 69 not out , to help England chase down a modest total in under 40 overs . Not required to bat against Pakistan , and dismissed for 19 against New Zealand , Taylor helped secure England 's place in the final with a rapid 65 runs , including 2 sixes and 6 fours , against the West Indies . In England 's final match of the group stages , Taylor top @-@ scored with 49 runs in a dead rubber loss against Australia : Australia could not qualify for the final , and England were already through . In the final , having restricted New Zealand to 166 , England were ahead of the required rate early . An early loss of wicket brought Taylor to the crease , and she played an attacking innings of 21 , including 4 fours , before being bowled . England won the match by four wickets , to become ODI world champions . Taylor finished the tournament as the leading run @-@ scorer , having made 324 runs , and her batting average was the highest amongst batsmen with over 100 runs . She was one of five England players to be named in the team of the tournament .

Taylor 's next international action came during the inaugural Women 's World Twenty20 tournament , held in England . Despite not being required to bat in England 's opening match against India , she was the second most prolific batsmen in the competition , finishing with 199 runs , just one less than

New Zealand 's Aimee Watkins . In the group stage match against Sri Lanka , Taylor achieved her highest score in Twenty20 International cricket , making an unbeaten 75 . Just five days later , she improved on that score , reaching 76 not out against Australia in the semi @-@ finals . Batting with Beth Morgan , the pair maintained a run @-@ rate of almost 10 runs an over to secure England 's place in the final . Facing New Zealand in the final , England dismissed their opponents for 85 runs , but laboured to their total ; Taylor top @-@ scored for her side with 39 not out , and was the only England player to score a faster than a run a ball . Taylor was named as player of the tournament , and having only been dismissed once , finished with a batting average of 199 @.@ 00 . In England 's subsequent series against Australia , Taylor struggled for runs , scoring 79 runs across four ODI innings , and being dismissed for under 20 runs in each innings of the only Test match . She opted to miss the tour of the West Indies in late 2009 to focus on her work commitments .

= = = Later career = = =

Taylor returned to action for England in the 2010 Women 's World Twenty20 , hosted by the West Indies . England , and Taylor , struggled in the competition . Their only victory came against South Africa , after they had already been eliminated from the tournament . Taylor scored 24 runs in the tournament at an average of just 8 @.@ 00 . Later that summer , England hosted New Zealand . Taylor finished as England 's leading run @-@ scorer in the ODI series , scoring 166 runs at an average of 41 @.@ 50 , including half @-@ centuries in two of the matches . In their next series , a tour of Sri Lanka , Taylor started strongly ; scoring 73 runs in a narrow victory against their hosts , but failed to achieve double figures in an innings for the remainder of the tour . Taylor sustained a shoulder injury during the second warm @-@ up match of their subsequent tour of Australia , which ruled her out of the rest of the visit .

Her injury had healed by the start of the 2011 season , but Taylor failed to make a significant impact on England 's first two matches of the Twenty20 Quadrangular series , against New Zealand and Australia . In the third match however , ESPNcricinfo 's Liam Brickhill claimed that she " roared back into form " with 66 runs from 46 balls to help England to a big win over India . England won the tournament , which was closely followed by an equivalent ODI Quadrangular . Taylor made at least 30 runs in three of her four innings of the tournament to finish among the top run @-@ scorers in the series , which was also won by England . At the conclusion of the series , Taylor announced her retirement from international cricket . She finished her career with batting averages in excess of 40 in both Test and ODI cricket , and at the time of her retirement she trailed only Charlotte Edwards in ODI runs scored . She continued to represent Berkshire until the conclusion of the 2011 season .

= = Playing style = =

During her teenage years , Taylor was considered a better hockey player than cricketer . When she began playing for Thames Valley , she was considered a wicket @-@ keeper with no more than average batting ability . At university , she began to develop her batting , playing alongside the men for her college side . The different pace and strength required in the men 's game meant that she had to learn to play off the back foot , in contrast to women 's cricket , which is generally played off the front foot . After graduating from university in 1997 , she made her international debut for England in 1998 , but batted low in the order for England , having been picked as a wicket @-@ keeper . Intent on improving her batting , she began one @-@ on @-@ one coaching with Mark Lane . At the time , it was unusual for a member of the England women 's team to have individual coaching sessions , and Taylor had to pay for the meetings herself . When they began working together , Lane was critical of her batting ; " She was just average , I would say . " The sessions helped to improve Taylor 's mental approach towards batting as well as making technical changes , though Lane promoted the use of bottom @-@ handed hockey @-@ style shots which came more naturally to Taylor . At her peak , she used her intelligence to help manipulate the field ; in an interview she described that , " when I 'm batting at my best I have a 3D awareness of the shape of the field and where the spaces are . "

= = Recognition = =

Taylor was the first woman to be selected as Wisden 's Cricketer of the Year , in 2009 . The editor of that years almanack , Scyld Berry noted that " there is no element of political correctness or publicity @-@ seeking about her selection , " and that she had been " chosen on merit , for being pre @-@ eminent in her form of the game . " She was short @-@ listed for the ICC Women 's Cricketer of the Year in both 2007 and 2008 , and won the award in 2009 . She was also named as the England and Wales Cricket Board 's Women 's Player of the Year in May 2009 . Continuing on from her success in 2009 , Taylor was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on the 2010 New Year Honours list . During her career she topped the ICC batting rankings for both ODI and Twenty20 International cricket , and upon her retirement , former Test cricketer Mike Selvey suggested in The Guardian that she was " perhaps the finest batsman the women 's game has seen . "