

= Yorkshire captaincy affair of 1927 =

The Yorkshire captaincy affair of 1927 arose from a disagreement among members of Yorkshire County Cricket Club over the selection of a new captain to succeed the retired Major Arthur Lupton . The main issue was whether a professional cricketer should be appointed to the post . It was a tradition throughout English county cricket that captains should always be amateurs . At Yorkshire , a succession of amateur captains held office in the 1920s , on the grounds of their supposed leadership qualities , although they were not worth their place in the team as cricketers . None lasted long ; after Lupton 's departure some members felt it was time to appoint a more accomplished cricketer on a long @-@ term basis .

The Yorkshire committee , prompted by the influential county president , Lord Hawke , approached Herbert Sutcliffe , one of the side 's leading professionals . After Sutcliffe 's provisional acceptance of the captaincy , controversy arose . Some members objected to the appointment on the traditional grounds that Sutcliffe was not an amateur ; others felt that if a professional was to be appointed , the post should be offered to the county 's senior professional , Wilfred Rhodes , who had been playing much longer than Sutcliffe . Rhodes himself was offended that he had not been approached . When Sutcliffe became aware of the controversy , he withdrew his acceptance . No offer was made to Rhodes , and the county subsequently appointed amateur William Worsley as captain . He was respected by the team but had little personal success , lasted for just two seasons , and was followed by two further short @-@ term leaders . In 1933 Brian Sellers , a more competent amateur , was appointed and became the long @-@ serving captain that Yorkshire had sought .

= = Background = =

In the 1920s , every English county cricket team had an amateur captain . Yorkshire had been led by amateurs since Lord Hawke took over the position in 1883 . Amateurs were usually from privileged backgrounds , while professionals were mainly from the working classes . Class distinctions pervaded the game , which was organised and administered by former and current amateurs . They wished to preserve leadership roles for members of the Establishment , in defiance of broader social changes that had reduced their influence in other sports . Administrators argued that amateurs were better captains as they were free from worries over employment . The Wisden editor believed that " the professional may have difficulty in enforcing discipline . He would naturally hesitate to suggest to his committee that this player or that should be dropped , and so be instrumental in depriving the man in question of some part of his livelihood . Further , feeling that an error of judgment would prejudice his standing with the committee , he might well hesitate to take risks . " In 1925 , Lord Hawke , then the Yorkshire president , expressing his hope that an amateur would always be available to captain the national side , had made the impromptu comment , " Pray God , no professional shall ever captain England . " His remarks were widely reported in the press and heavily criticised . This was to leave Hawke in an awkward situation in 1927 .

By the end of the 1927 English cricket season , Yorkshire had had a succession of short @-@ term captains . Generally , these men were neither sufficiently good players nor leaders to merit a position in the team , but Yorkshire 's side was strong enough to include them in the interest of maintaining amateur leadership . Tactically , Yorkshire 's success came not from the captain but from the influence of leading professionals Wilfred Rhodes and Emmott Robinson . The captain 's primary role was the enforcement of discipline : maintaining an amicable attitude within the team during games and ensuring that umpires and opponents were respected . In the early 1920s , Yorkshire had been undisciplined on the field ; cricket correspondent Jim Kilburn wrote that they were in danger of becoming " social outcasts " , and E. W. Swanton commented that Yorkshire 's hostile attitude when fielding looked likely to jeopardise their relations with other teams . Matters came to a head in a match against Middlesex in 1924 at Sheffield . The crowd became very antagonistic and a Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) enquiry found that a Yorkshire player had incited the unrest . Further incidents against Surrey that season led the captain Geoffrey Wilson to resign , though he led the team to the County Championship in each of his three years in charge .

His resignation was possibly prompted by the Yorkshire president , Lord Hawke , but Wilson did not like the belligerent nature of the team and found it difficult to handle Rhodes .

Yorkshire appointed Major Arthur Lupton as captain , hoping that his experience in the army would allow him to exercise greater control than his predecessors had managed . Aged 46 , he was old for a cricketer . He had played once for Yorkshire in 1908 , but was no longer an effective batsman . He was very popular with the players , and managed to improve discipline but had little influence on team tactics . He left such matters to Rhodes and Robinson , to the point where several apocryphal stories emerged about his lack of control . In one story , Yorkshire had scored around 400 . Lupton , hoping to score some easy runs , came out of the amateur dressing room with his bat when a young professional touched his arm and said , " It 's all right , sir . Mr Rhodes has declared [the innings over] . " After three years in charge , Lupton resigned the captaincy at the end of 1927 . In their search for a successor , Yorkshire hoped to appoint a player with a better cricketing reputation who would serve for a longer term .

= = Appointment of Sutcliffe = =

= = Initial approach = =

At the beginning of the 1927 season , Yorkshire secretary Frederick Toone approached Wilfred Rhodes to suggest that he should resign from his position as senior professional . Rhodes declined , prompted by his wife 's suspicion of a plot against him . This may have been an attempt by Yorkshire to clear the way for a new captain . Lord Hawke was in favour of appointing Herbert Sutcliffe , a professional who had opened the batting for Yorkshire since 1919 . In addition to Rhodes , other professionals on the side had debuted for Yorkshire earlier than Sutcliffe . However , Sutcliffe was unusual among professionals : he had received a commission in the British Army in the First World War , his appearance was always immaculate and when speaking he altered his accent to fit what he considered a better class of society . Such characteristics were more common among amateur cricketers , and Sutcliffe in many ways behaved like one . While not particularly popular with his team @-@ mates , he was respected .

Hawke asked Sir Home Gordon , a cricket writer who had assisted Hawke with his autobiography , to sound out other counties to see if they would find Sutcliffe an acceptable captain if he played as an amateur ? some players switched from amateur to professional , or vice versa , around this time . Sutcliffe was en route to South Africa with the MCC touring team , but was aware that Yorkshire were considering him as a replacement for Lupton .

Sutcliffe 's election was confirmed at a meeting of the club 's governing committee on 2 November 1927 , which voted on two proposals sponsored by Hawke . The first , to give Sutcliffe amateur status , was defeated by 19 votes to 5 ; the second , to appoint him captain , was carried 13 ? 11 . On 4 November , a Press Association correspondent informed Sutcliffe on board his ship that he had been appointed . Sutcliffe replied , " It is the biggest honour of my career ... I shall do my utmost to uphold the best traditions of Yorkshire and England cricket . " However , six days later , having arrived in Cape Town , he sent a telegram stating , " I have not yet received by mail an official offer from the Yorkshire authorities of the captaincy of the Yorkshire team next season . "

= = Reaction = =

Reports at the time said that Lord Hawke and Toone had denied all knowledge of the approach to Sutcliffe ; Hawke said he supported the committee but Home Gordon later recalled that Hawke seemed indecisive about the best course of action . In the opinion of cricket writer Alan Gibson , his predicament came from his earlier criticism of professional captaincy . Wisden said that " Yorkshire cricket circles were greatly perturbed by the announcement " . Most opposition to the appointment was based on objections to the idea of a professional captain . In the Yorkshire Post , several members of the county club wrote to express their opinions . Some claimed it was too great a

burden for a professional to captain the team while also earning a living through the game and therefore being concerned with his personal performances . Others said that Yorkshire 's amateur leaders were not given enough opportunities to prove themselves before they were replaced . It was also argued that if a suitable amateur candidate was unavailable and a professional appointment unavoidable , Wilfred Rhodes was the senior professional and longest serving player . Rhodes , drawn into the argument , said that the team would have preferred an amateur captain ; he also stated that he had not been approached , which made him feel unappreciated . Other members wrote to support Sutcliffe 's selection , glad a professional was openly appointed ; they thought the team would be strengthened by the decision . At the beginning of December , one Yorkshire member , S. E. Grimshaw , conducted a poll : 2 @, @ 264 Yorkshire members were in favour of an amateur captain , while 444 wanted a professional . If an amateur could not be found , 2 @, @ 007 preferred Rhodes be captain , compared to 876 who supported Sutcliffe .

= = = Withdrawal of offer = = =

Following the members ' poll , Yorkshire sent a telegram to Sutcliffe in South Africa , asking him to withdraw his acceptance of the captaincy . Sutcliffe replied that he had now considered the offer and was appreciative but had to decline it . When news reached the Yorkshire committee on 18 December , they appointed William Worsley , who had refused the leadership in 1924 due to farming commitments . In the words of Wisden , " Happily the trouble was eventually settled to the satisfaction of all concerned . Sutcliffe declined the honour and , an invitation being extended to Captain Worsley , that gentleman stepped into the breach . " Lord Hawke sent a message which thanked Sutcliffe for " your loyalty to the club " . The Yorkshire Post also paid tribute to Sutcliffe and the way he handled himself , noting that while a conflict of opinion had been inevitable , it was " carried to unreasonable lengths " . Commenting on the affair , The Times expressed regret that Sutcliffe had felt obliged to turn down the leadership ; it noted that amateur captains were preferable in reminding people that cricket was only a game , but that there was nothing in principle to prevent a professional from performing the role . Of Sutcliffe , it said , " One would have liked to see him lead the side , and his general popularity , combined with his skill as a batsman , makes it probable that he would have been a success . However , half the value of a captain is gone if , before he takes up his duties , people begin to question whether he is the right man for the position , and Sutcliffe has been well @-@ advised to recognise this fact . " The newspaper also pointed out that it might have been difficult to choose a skipper from a group of professionals who considered themselves eligible for the role ; it added that Rhodes might have found it hard to captain the side as bowlers had historically struggled to be good leaders .

= = Aftermath = =

Worsley captained for just two seasons . He struggled with the demands of fielding , while his batting was disappointing . However , he was widely respected by the team . He was slightly more effective in his second season as leader , after which he retired . The next skipper , Alan Barber , although regarded as successful , captained for just one season . He was a more accomplished batsman and a great disciplinarian . However , he chose a career in teaching , limiting his availability , and resigned . The captain after that , Frank Greenwood , also did not hold the post long , resigning due to business commitments . Lord Hawke , writing in 1932 , noted there had been eight captains since he retired in 1910 . While six of them won the County Championship in their first season in charge , he stated that " it is not good for a side to be always changing its captain " . Only when Brian Sellers was appointed in 1933 did Yorkshire gain the leader they wanted . After skippering most games in 1932 during Greenwood 's frequent absences , he remained in the role until 1947 and was considered the best county captain of his time .

When Leicestershire appointed Ewart Astill as their captain for the 1935 season , he became the first professional to lead any county on a regular basis since the 19th century . Yorkshire did not have a professional skipper in the 20th century until Vic Wilson in 1960 . Alan Gibson believed that

Yorkshire erred in rejecting Sutcliffe . He further argued that , if appointed , Sutcliffe would have been made England Test captain in 1931 instead of Douglas Jardine and that he would have done a good job for several years . Sutcliffe later regretted withdrawing his acceptance . In later years , he told Bill Bowes that Jack Hobbs , Sutcliffe 's opening partner on the national side , should have been made England captain . According to Bowes , he said , " ' Lord Hawke lifted professional cricket from there to there ' ... raising his hand from knee to shoulder level . ' Professional cricketers lifted it to there , ' he continued , raising his hand above his head , ' ? and even Lord Hawke wanted it back again . Jack Hobbs , for the sake of the professional cricketer , should have accepted . ' " Sutcliffe 's son Billy subsequently captained Yorkshire from 1956 to 1958 .