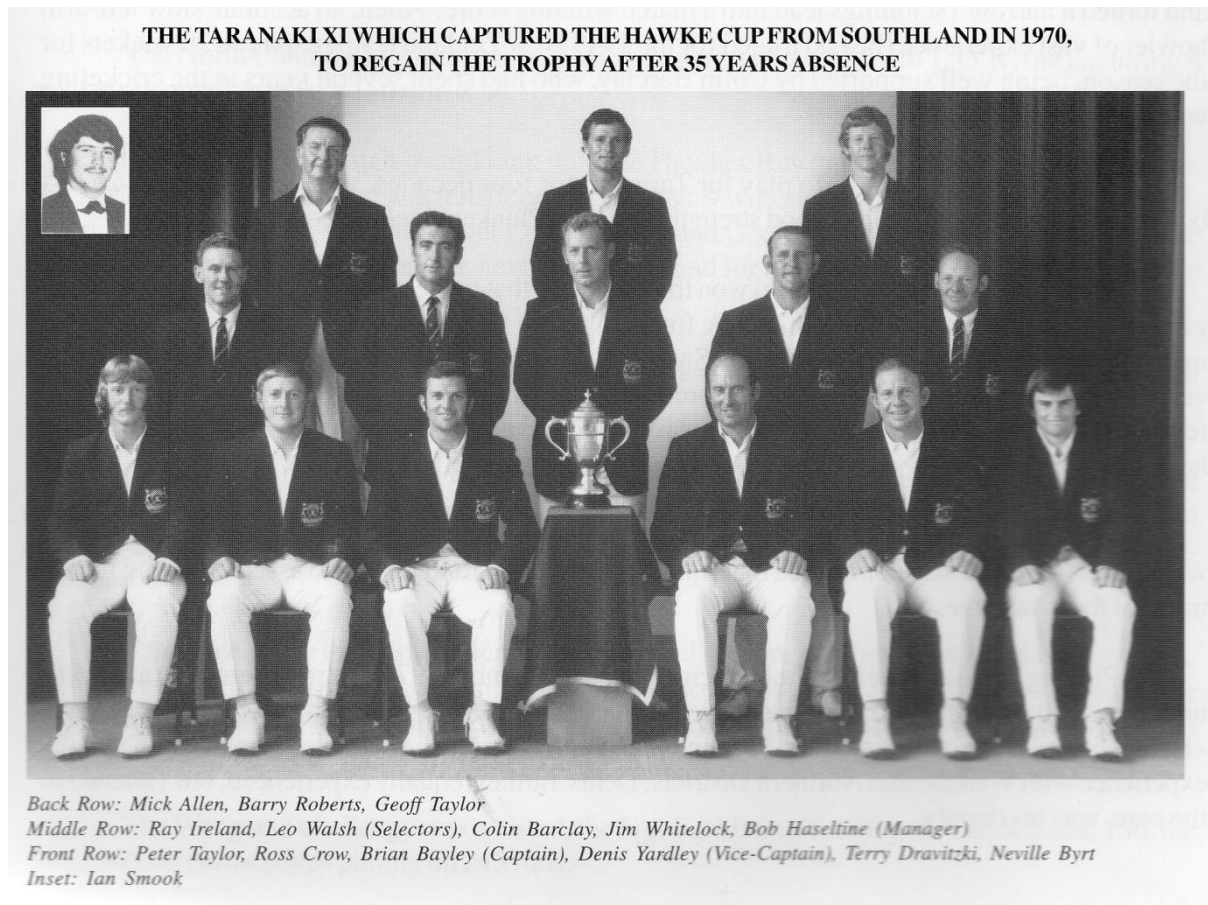


## The Hawke Cup Returns 1968-1973



On the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1970 Taranaki won the Hawke Cup from Southland – on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1973 Southland reversed the result. For twelve successive challenges Taranaki held the cup and proved itself to be the most tenacious of defenders, providing its supporters with matches which ranged over the whole gamut of cricketing emotions – tense, exciting, dour, rain-interrupted, one-sided. The team, well balanced between experienced and youthful talent, provided three seasons that must rank as outstanding in the province's cricketing history.

1968-69 saw the retirement of L.Jones as a Taranaki selector after six seasons, a service which was recognised by his election as a life member of the association. In return he presented the Les Jones Cup for the outstanding representative batting performances – J.Irving was to be the first recipient. L.F.Walsh was appointed as selector and with R.Ireland held those positions throughout this period. Walsh was a sound judge of what type of player was needed to succeed at representative level and imbued in his teams a clear expectation of the tasks that lay before them – he was later to prove as adept and successful at selecting the Taranaki rugby team. In both sports Leo Walsh was well served by outstanding captains – in cricket Brian Bayley and Denis Yardley and in rugby Graham Mourie. Ray Ireland, who had played for Taranaki cricket in the 1940's and 50's had a deep knowledge of Taranaki cricket and cricketers and complemented Walsh nicely.

In terms of results the 1968-69 season was similar to earlier seasons – six matches with two outright wins but inconsistency of performance still occurred; the season's nadir was the first innings loss to Horowhenua in a Hawke Cup elimination match. The highlight was a record breaking tenth wicket partnership of 139 against Wanganui. Ralph West and Mick Allen made the runs in 79 minutes and turned a narrow first innings lead into a match winning score. Allen, an accurate slow left arm bowler of vast experience (he had trialled for the 1949 New Zealand team), captured 29 wickets for the season, being well supported by Colin Barclay, who had spent several years in the cricketing wilderness.

Alistar Jordan, who was to play for Taranaki for four decades, was developing into a fast bowler of great hostility, courage and strength and won Plunket Shield selection this season.

In the 1969-70 season Taranaki won the two matches that mattered – the Hawke Cup elimination games and thus won the right to challenge for the cup the following season. But inconsistency of match performances still occurred. Henry Sampson, a left-handed batsman of rare talent (on his day few bowlers could contain him), scored 112 against Manawatu in 128 minutes, his innings featuring fourteen fours and two sixes. This was the first representative century since the 1965-66 season and helped to win Sampson's selection in the Central Districts team for 1970-71.

With sights firmly set on the challenge against Southland the selectors chose a squad for winter practices and also committed that squad to substantial fundraising to assist in paying for the travel of that challenge.

Playing two matches before the challenge in late December 1970, the representative team was undoubtedly the best prepared Taranaki side to undertake that task. Brian Bayley captained the side – he had first played for Taranaki in 1955 and then work transfers had enabled him to gain valuable experience with Waikato and Northern Districts. Denis Yardley, equally experienced but Taranaki to the core, was his deputy.

The challenge party departed for Invercargill early on Christmas Day and, because of limited media coverage, it was not until well into the second day of the match that the scores became known in Taranaki. Taranaki gained a first innings lead of 56 (and the possibility of the Cup) thanks to the gritty batting of B.Roberts, T.Dravitzki and C.Barley and the tight bowling of Barclay and D.Yardley. B.Bayly then played a captains innings for 60 in the second innings. Finally D.Yardley routed Southland for the Cup to be won outright by 85 runs and for him personally to take ten wickets for the patch and to pass the one hundred wicket milestone for Taranaki. And so the Cup returned to Taranaki.

Taranaki's first defence was against Ashburton in a match marred by rain. For the only time in their twelve defences Taranaki batted first and unfortunately gave a performance that was an anti-climax following the winning of the cup. But the rain had the last say.

Wairarapa mounted a strong challenge with their captain, D.Payton, batting right throughout their innings for 120. Set 277 to hold the cup Taranaki replied with 250-9, a tense draw, certainly not dull.

Hawkes Bay was the last challenge for the 1970-71 season. After two no-decision games Taranaki won outright off the last ball of the match from a wide. Many of the players of this era regarded the Hawkes Bay games as the best of all challenges.

Franklin were the first challengers of the 1971-72 season losing in a day and a half with A.Jordan capturing 14 wickets for the match equalling the Hawke Cup record.

There was a tight battle against Manawatu for first innings lead but then D.Yarley took his second ten wicket haul for the game to also finish in two days.

The North Canterbury game was perhaps the dourest of the twelve with T.O'Byrne capturing six wickets to give Taranaki a 150 run lead.

The Hutt Valley match would rank with the Hawkes Bay game as one of the notable ones. Alistar Jordan bowled with characteristic courage to take nine wickets and hold the challengers to 234. Taranaki then slumped to 52 for 5 but Colin Barclay and Geoffrey Taylor fought back to carry the home team through to 237 before the next wicket fell, and for Barclay to score the first Hawke Cup century by a Taranaki player since 1934.

The final challenge for 1971-72 was by Bay of Plenty and again rain prevented a decision, but not before Taranaki had displayed their superiority.

By the end of that season several personal milestones had been achieved – Colin Barclay and Henry Sampson reached the 1000 runs mark for Taranaki; Alistar Jordan, Trevor O'Byrne and Colin Barclay all passed the 100 wicket figure; and Terry Dravitzki took his 100<sup>th</sup> dismissal as a wicket-keeper.

Rangitikei were the first challengers in the third season but they were outclassed with A.Jordan's pace being too much for them. Ross Crow, in scoring his first fifty for Taranaki, revealed the ebullient batting which was a feature of his play. This match was the first time Taranaki players wore representative pullovers.

The Wanganui challenge was resisted, the highlight being T.O'Byrne's undefeated 150, with the last two batting partnerships putting on 243 runs.

Nelson, having held the Hawke Cup on more occasions than any other association, was thought to be the ultimate test. In a game of thrust and counter-thrust, Taranaki, by brave batting, gained the vital first innings lead. When Nelson then laid down the challenge to score 186 runs in 224 minutes to hold the cup outright Taranaki responded and won in the last over.

Waikato, with seven first class players, failed to mount a strong challenge and succumbed to T.O'Byrne's wiles.

Then the wheel turned full circle with Southland mounting the thirteenth challenge. In a match bedevilled by rule book manoeuvring Southland, with two of its four New Zealand players in B.McKechnie and J.Alabaster playing dominant roles, regained the cup.

But the memories remain in Taranaki forever.

A feature of this Hawke Cup era was the outstanding efforts by the experienced core of Taranaki players who regularly outplayed teams containing first class players.

Denis Yardley was the only player to play in all the fourteen matches of that Hawke Cup era, capturing 55 wickets at an average cost of 14.49 and captained the side in the second and third season. Alistar Jordan also captured 55 wickets at an average cost of 13.93 and, like Yardley, was a more than useful batsman. One of the strengths of the team was the depth of its batting, as shown against Wanganui. Henry Sampson scored the most runs - 456 – with Colin Barclay, Terry Dravitzki, Barry Roberts, Geoff Taylor and Denis Yardley each scoring 290 or more runs. In all twenty eight players took part in the cup matches with ten appearing in at least eight matches.

The home association had the right to appoint the match umpires – S.Copelin stood in ten of the thirteen Hawke Cup defences – as befitted an umpire of first class status.

This era also produced five Taranaki players who were to play first class cricket – A.Jordan, H.Sampson and I.Snook for Central Districts, and B.Roberts and G.Taylor for Northern Districts.

Sampson and Jordan were members of the Central Districts team which won the Plunket Shield in 1970-71 under the management of O.Balsom, the Taranaki Chairman. Sampson was to join an elite number in scoring a century in his first Plunket Shield match and in all matches in that season was to score 1200 runs. Jordan, in twelve seasons, was to capture 157 wickets and gain New Zealand selection in 1973.

Financially the holding of the Hawke Cup was of advantage to Taranaki – the thirteen defences netting \$2249.63 with the Nelson match attracting the highest gate of \$1014.60 and the highest net return of \$559.64. The cost of travelling to Southland in 1970 was \$1574.61 of which the representative team raised half by various fund raising projects – further incentive, if it was needed, for the challenge to succeed.

Though the Hawke Cup dominated the era there were other significant events that occurred. Douglas, in 1969-70, became the first North Country team to win the Taranaki Senior championship. For that, and the next season, the four divisional winners played off in a round-robin series over three weekends but then the senior championship was decided once again on a semi-finals and finals basis.

Though by 1973 the association's net worth had increased to \$2734.10, the financial liquidity varied season by season. The call upon funds to finance the Hawke Cup challenge in 1970 saw the secretary, continuing the action of other earlier administrators, making a personal advance so all accounts could be promptly paid without recourse to the complexities of overdraft arrangements. Raffles were still important to assist in the funding of representative expenses – in 1969 home games were costing \$50 each to stage, whilst the relaxing of liquor laws meant that beer sales were an important component of match revenues earned at Pukekura Park. New covers were purchased for the pitch there but they still lay flat on the ground, with the resultant sweating problem.

In 1972-73 there were serious attempts to inaugurate a Taranaki wide senior club competition which failed because of the refusal of the leading Northern and Southern club teams to participate in such a scheme. The procedural steps to introduce the scheme resulted in two special

general meetings, both of which needed the casting vote of the President to decide matters – in both cases he properly opted for the status quo.

There was also an attempt to give all the divisions equal representation on the executive by increasing the numbers to five apiece and again a casting vote was required to hold to the status quo. The resultant tensions were a major factor in Owen Balsom deciding to retire from the chairmanship, though he still maintained his interest in becoming president in 1973-74, a post he was to hold for five years. He was also on the Central District executive.

In 1969 Jim Crocker became one of the Central Districts Rothmans selectors – the first time Taranaki had provided a selector at the regional level. One issue of continuing concern was that though Taranaki players were being selected for the Central Districts Plunket Shield squad – John Morrison and Alistar Jordan – they appeared to spend more time fulfilling twelfth man duties than was reasonable. The holding of the Hawke Cup was to finally dispel other association's misconceptions of the quality of Taranaki players.

At the secondary school level Neil Johnston and Geof Shearer (subsequently secretary of the association) gained national selection and toured Australia.

Thus by the end of the 1972-73 season Taranaki cricket had proved itself, beyond doubt, at the representative level thanks to those gritty, match-hardened players.

But there was still effort, imagination and vision needed before the internal base was of adequate and continuing strength.

#### THE HAWKE CUP DEFENDERS 1970 - 71



*Back Row: Ross Crow, Trevor O'Byrne, Trevor Glover, Bryan Purser, Alistar Jordan, Colin Barclay, Jim Whitelock, Ralph West  
Middle Row: Bob Haseltini (Manager), Ray Ireland, Leo Walsh (Selectors), Brian Bellringer (Secretary), Owen Balsom  
(Chairman), Fred Duncan (President)  
Front Row: Mick Allen, Barry Roberts, Terry Dravitzki, Denis Yardley (Vice-Captain), Brian Bayley (Captain), Henry Sampson,  
Geoff Taylor, Peter Taylor  
Absent: Neville Byrt*



### THE HAWKE CUP DEFENDERS 1970 - 71



*Back Row: Ralph West, Colin Pepperell, Dennis Green, Paul Martin  
Middle Row: Ray Ireland (Selector), Clive Sligo, Barry Roberts, Trevor Glover, Alistar Jordan, Colin Barclay, Leo Walsh (Selector)  
Front Row: Geoff Taylor, Trevor O'Byrne, Henry Sampson, Denis Yardley (Captain), Ross Crow, Terry Dravitzki  
Absent: Ian Snook*

### THE HAWKE CUP TEAM 1972-73



*Back Row: Dennis Green, Colin McEldowney, Alistar Jordon, Greg Roberts, Colin Barclay, Ron Sutton  
Middle Row: Leo Walsh (Selector), Chad Evans, Ralph West, Bob Old (Scorer), Derek Kitto, Gary Prestney, Ray Ireland (Selector)  
Front Row: Trevor O'Byrne, Ross Crow, Terry Dravitzki, Denis Yardley (Captain), Ian Snook, Barry Roberts  
Absent: Henry Sampson*

The Cup was lost to Southland in the last defence of the season.