



Left Luke Wright
Right Bill Athey

depleted following the turmoil of the winter, but unbeaten in the championship - with just the draw to play for on the final day, which to their credit, they almost managed.

The championship-winning years all featured comprehensive home victories, Mushtaq Ahmed not surprisingly enjoying some very fruitful days, one of the highlights being 2003 when after a run-feast for the first three days, Sussex dismantled the Nottinghamshire batting on the final morning en route to a ten-wicket triumph. Mushy took six scalps, including a brilliant one-handed slip catch from Tony Cotter to dismiss Kevin Pietersen cheaply.

Pietersen produced a typically pugnacious, century in the first innings, but that was eclipsed four years later by a master-class from Chris Adams on the Saturday. The skipper fell seven runs short of a double century as Durham were crushed by an innings.

One man with happy memories of this venue is Richard Montgomerie, having reeled off three centuries and two fifties, including carrying his bat in 2002 against Leicestershire, a match also significant for a bowler from each side taking seven wickets in an innings - Robin Martin-Jenkins on his home patch, and Devon Malcolm.

But they were not the first magnificent sevens in that particular fixture, as a quite phenomenal performance from Eddie Hemmings in 1993 hurried Sussex to an innings victory inside three days, despite the first being washed out. The hosts only recorded a

moderate 271, but just over 24-hours later, the 44-year-old had followed up his 5/27 with 7/31.

For me though, my two most memorable days came in limited overs cricket, and in starkly contrasting weather. The post-revolution team of 1997 had not won a Sunday League game thus far, and would have been outsiders at tea after a strong Kent side had posted 220/9, but a perfectly timed chase on a sun-drenched afternoon was sealed in the final over, with an unbeaten century from "Barnacle" Bill Athey.

Nine years on, and a C&G group game with Somerset was reduced to 24 overs a side and in pursuit of 159, the Sharks were in a mess at 16/4, but recovered to 66/4 when the rain returned. With Somerset well ahead on the Duckworth Lewis and any revised target likely to do Sussex no favours, it looked like the game was up, but a seriously concerted effort by ground staff and plenty of volunteers got the game back on with 122 needed off 17 overs. Matt Prior was out straightaway, but Martin-Jenkins and an emerging Luke Wright launched a thrilling assault to reach the finishing line with 10 balls to spare. They should have engraved Sussex's name on the trophy there and then.

As with all out-grounds, how much longer the festival will last is unknown, but there can be few in the country that hold that link between junior and county cricket so evidently....but then I might be a little biased.

John Barnett commentates on cricket for BBC Radio Sussex