

Byfleet CC 3rd XI Captains Report on 2016 season

Byfleet CC 3rd XI is three seasons old and it is fair to say it is now established as an entity within the club structure. It serves its goals by providing the stepping stone to adult cricket for young members leaving the colt network prior to their future involvement with 1st and 2nd XI's, whilst also expanding the footprint of the club within the local league formats and ensuring senior game time is available to as many playing members as possible.

It is when sitting to write a report like this and reviewing the trials and tribulations of a season that we can pat ourselves on the back for serving the club by fulfilling many of the targets we set ourselves in the opening paragraph, but also acknowledging the difficulties faced during the previous summer.

To address the season itself first and foremost. An opening weekend friendly win was followed by a win in our first league game which resulted in our season 'Prosecco' moment when Malcolm Denham and Josh Hill combined to run out the last Cranleigh batsmen with only a couple of runs needed. This bright start didn't last however and we found the going much tougher, and recorded only another three competitive wins in a league season where we had a scheduled 16 matches. The final summation showed we had four wins, nine losses, one abandonment and sadly two games we conceded due to lack of players. It is worthy of a little analysis on the record of the season as it raises some interesting statistics which we hope can be alleviated by better planning and resource for the team.

The most obvious statistic is that all four wins were achieved when batting first and setting a defendable score, and similarly of the nine defeats, only two of the games were with Byfleet batting first and in both cases we collapsed to totals of less than 50, thus offering little for our bowlers to defend. These statistics reflect reasonably well on our season, when we batted well, we competed, when we batted poorly, we failed. The bowlers and fielders when able to attack performed admirably overall, and there were some memorable performances from youngsters and oldies alike with 11 instances of a bowler taking 3 or more wickets in an innings (including two six for's and one five for). The batting problem is perhaps summed up by the fact that only one competitive 50 was scored by the 3rds all season (91 by Iain Bowman) with only 12 other scores of 30 or more (all but three of which were scored by players over 45 years old and none by colts). Finally, in this summation of performance, one more stark fact appears. At no point during the entire season, including both friendlies and league, were the 3rd XI able to field the same team in consecutive games and in the majority of matches there were at least 4 changes from the previous match. This lack of continuity provides an obstacle to progress especially when so many changes are forced due to either lack of availability or late recruitment to the 1st and 2nd XI, a point that bit home late in the season when we conceded two games due to insufficient numbers. It was also manifested in the number of young colts who were drafted in during the season to fill gaps just to allow games to take place. In the main these young players performed admirably, however it was also apparent that many of them were not really ready for adult cricket. We have a duty to develop these colts

but at the same time we must not heap too much pressure upon those not yet ready, and in a similar fashion we should respect our opponents and the league by fielding competitive teams.

Moving off the field, we faced challenges that perhaps are not common for the other teams at the club and without doubt affect performances indirectly. Our somewhat nomad existence probably being the most trying of the hurdles we have to overcome week in, week out. Byfleet Rec remains a difficult home which requires a lot of effort from team members and support staff (tea's etc.) just to get a game on. It also carries an element of risk as its condition is largely beyond our control, and in one incident last season we arrived to find the square and outfield full of broken bottles and other rubbish that left the pitch unplayable on safety grounds. The club managed to negotiate the use of West Byfleet cricket strip for several of the later home games last season and this provided some respite and a much better overall situation for the home team and visitors alike.

We acknowledge the failures of last season alongside the accomplishments, and the need to face the underlying issues that caused them and to seek solutions within the structure of the club. Vitality, we need to bolster the senior to junior ratio on a permanent basis by providing a consistent core of senior players, and to target stability within the 3rd XI selection methodology week in, week out. We look forward to the 2017 season, and to maintaining our aims of player development, inclusion across all age groups and representing Byfleet CC positively within the local leagues and community.

Iain Bowman 3rd XI captain