

League Captain's Report 2022

2022 season was a very successful one, with the Saturday XI unbeaten in the league and crowned champions, having only dropped 13 points all season (having played 13 league games). The difference of last year could not be more following relegation from division 5 of the Hants league, we won every game (apart from 1 friendly at the start of the year), there were new and old faces, such that next year there will be a Saturday 2XI.

There were some great individual performances in the batting department, with 3 batsmen ending in the top 10 in the division. Some highlights of this included Steamer hitting tons, Tom Gailey not quite hitting tons, Andy H managing a pretty 20 – 30 every game, and Hitchy posting statistically the worst 50 conversion rate in cricket in 2022 (I checked). 7 players passed the 50 mark this year in league cricket with Rob, Harry B, and DM also achieving this.

In the bowling department, a similar story. 2 bowlers in the league top 10 for wickets taken, and 7 taking 8 or more wickets – admittedly all with massively varying methods. From the pace of Tom P (15) and Stretch (9) to the medium pace of Andy P (11) and Hitchy (16), and the slow tempting stuff from Steamer (19) and DM (8). Also, Baz bowled some pies and half trackers, and ended up with some unlucky victims (12).

There were members who put their hand up week in week out, so a special mention also to Ash, who played in every game, and Steve, who I gave lots of practice to be treasurer because taking subs at the end of the game is just the worst. Also, to Liam Reed, who as well as teaming up with Alfred Malley to look like Collingbourne's own version of East 17, was an easy pick for the Captain's Youth Player of the Year for his contributions behind the stumps, some lusty blows with the bat, and some iffy medium pace.

As always, before we get into the actual fun part where we remember all the good bits, there are some thanks to be had. I haven't named names, as invariably I will forget someone, and it is important to remember that everyone who helped this year is in some way responsible for the success we had. However, In order of precedence:

1. Those who helped with teas – home and away. You are literally the reason we turn up each week. The introduction of the "away" tea, where the other team mugged us off and said they wouldn't serve tea was a masterstroke. The jealous looks of opposition players at their own grounds as we chowed down was awesome.
2. Anyone who assisted with the preparation and upkeep of the CCG. We wouldn't be playing week in week out without the hours of dedication you guys put in.
3. Umpires and scorers – we are lucky to have a group of people who want to chip up each week and do some admin. You guys make the captain's life so much easier, and it is appreciated.
4. The pub. Enough said.
5. The event/social organisers. I think I speak for the whole club when I say – we like getting drunk.
6. The Committee probably made a few calls which meant the club could function. I don't know – I've never joined a committee meeting (as I'm constantly reminded 😊). But seriously, the stuff you do in the background is great.

Separately, I must thank JB who is leaving the chairman role this year. He has been playing for the Bourne (on and off) for the whole time I've been at the club. As well as some iffy umpiring, he taught

me 2 things. The first is the pre-meditated forward defence (AKA the “portcullis”) – you think Jos Buttler’s ramps are hard, but I’ve seen more of those this year than I have the forward defence. The second – “a nick through the slips for 4 is better than a drive to mid-off for none”. Immortal words.

Finally, to Andy H, who (following my dice with death after 2 major surgeries, 3 weeks in hospital, 10 days without food or water, and 3 months recovering) grudgingly took over the captaincy for the first month of the season. I like to think that by the end of it he was enjoying himself, but I’m not so sure. Thanks very much mate.

Anyway – to business...

Episodes 1-3 - #AndyBall – the phantom captaincy, attack of the runs, and revenge of the dibbly doblers.

With Gringo milking his minor surgery for all it was worth, the captaincy fell temporarily to myself. The first game was a friendly against Farley at the CCG, the toss was won by your stand-in skipper who put the visitors in. Bowling them out for 171 in 33 overs showed this was a good decision with wickets shared between Hitchy, Baz, Proudly, Steve and the returning Tom Pike. The innings was notable for the stand-in skipper placing three fielders behind square on the leg side, something which apparently is not allowed. JB helpfully pointed out that it had only been a law since the 1930’s with a roll of his eyes. Our reply did not really get going until Hitchy, in a portent of what was to come hit a very impressive 86 at more than a run a ball admirably supported by Baz (who injured something) to bring a sniff of victory. Ultimately though we fell 20 short but there were several positives to be drawn from the game and the future looked bright.

The second friendly of the season brought Thruxton to the hollowed turf of the CCG. The stand-in skipper again won the toss and inserted the opposition and another good bowling performance saw them bowled out for 114 in 30 overs. The same people contributed wickets with the addition of Andy Pelling and Ash. Hitchy moved up the order to open the innings in the style of a 1990’s Sri Lankan pinch hitter and we made short work of knocking off the total with time to spare.

The final friendly before the league started brought East Anton to the Field of Dreams. Your stand-in skipper continued his impressive winning streak with the toss (better than his batting record at the time) and again asked the opposition to bat. They were no match for a strong Collingbourne bowling attack; being skittled out for 74. Every bowler played their part with Liam Reed and Ollie Nuttall getting two wickets each along with the usual suspects contributing. We quickly knocked the total off with Hitchy again scoring a half century at better than a run a ball. Ash McGuire ably accompanied him as we won by 10 wickets to lead us nicely into the league season.

Bramshaw 3rds were the visitors for the league season opener at the CCG which was fast becoming our Field of Joy. The toss was lost, and we were asked to bat. Tom Gailey scored an impressive 90, falling short of a maiden league century. 62 from your stand-in skipper and valuable contributions lower down the order brought a total of 224. Bramshaw were never allowed to get going in their reply. A good opening spell from Andy Pelling and Stretch brought them two wickets apiece and an impressive but injury-inducing spell up the hill from Baz brought him 4-13 from his 8 overs. Bramshaw were bowled out for 83 to continue our good run of form.

We did not have a game for a couple of weeks which brought the visit of Hungerford 2nds to the player’s paradise that is the CCG and a return to winning the toss and electing to field. The formidable opening bowlers, Andy and Stretch took two wickets each again and with Hitchy bagging

three we restricted them to a very gettable 167. Hitchy again batted well for 74 but sadly let himself down a little as his strike rate was less than 100. A little 30 odd from your stand-in skipper (a frustratingly common occurrence) helped and a 31 from Owen saw the good guys from Collingbourne reach their target with the loss of 5 wickets. Momentum continued to be built.

A first away game for the Saturday team took them to the absolute road that is Winterbourne. Your stand-in skipper was like a 7-year-old on Christmas Eve all week knowing he was going to bat there as he scored runs there the previous season. Winning the toss (again) he couldn't help himself but bat first. A rare low score from Hitchy brought your stand-in skipper eagerly to the wicket. A few minutes later he was on his way back to the pavilion with a single tear rolling down his cheek after being run out at the non-striker's end with Owen being removed from his Christmas card list. All was forgiven though as Owen scored a brilliant 120 with Tom Gailey scoring 93 not out despite having Covid and visibly struggling. It did not go unnoticed though that for the second time in three weeks he had bottled his first league ton. DM contributed 28 not out to leave us on a strong total of 287 for 3. Andy & Ollie opened the bowling and took a wicket each. Ollie's was significant in being his first league wicket. Baz took another two and injured something, but it was the spin twins of Tom Pike and Owen who bowled excellently to wrap up the innings taking 2 & 3 wickets respectively to bowl them out for 134. We started to dream that this could be a special season, but the stand-in skipper was also dreaming of being run out at the non-striker's end. No, I don't want to talk about it.

The next game was Ampport away. The toss was lost, and the home side chose to bat. Consistently accurate bowling meant we were always in control. Everyone contributed with a wicket or two whilst restricting them to 104 all out. Owen managed to get three to continue his strong start to the season with bat and ball and we had three Reeds in the side (one of them injured). The chase was never in doubt after another blistering start from Hitchy and solid not outs from Owen and your stand-in skipper to see us home. There was however a noticeable lack of backing up from the stand-in skipper this week. The winning streak continued, and Gringo was back the following week having decided to man up at last. My thanks go to Julie and JB for umpiring and talking me through the admin of being captain (and for remembering to bring a coin out for the toss), Jodie for scoring, Steve for collecting the money, and most importantly Karen, Sandra & Eleanor Malley for preparing what are undoubtedly the best teas in the league and all the players for their performances but most of all their attitude.

Episode 4 - #GringoBall – A new way of getting out

The long-awaited return of "skipper of our hearts" Gringo from the clutches of the reaper saw the Bourne face the mighty Broughton CC. Winning the toss, we had a field on a blustery day. 2 wickets a piece from Ollie N and Baz, and 1 from Hitchy, as part of a really controlled bowling display, went for only 134-5 in 40 overs. In between innings, Steve quite rightly commented that it was a boring batting effort. Confidence was high, with Hitchy and Tom G having hit big scores recently. They decided to welcome Gringo back to the fold by deciding others could have had a go. Andy continued his form as Collingbourne's version of James Vince with a nice 23. At 45-3, things were getting nervous. However, at the other end, Ash M had clearly been watching the other team bat. A sincerely boring (but important) 42 not out off 100 balls, as well as Harry B's counterattacking 59 not out, the Bourne ended up clear winners. The windy conditions had clearly got the best of umpire Julie S, who instead of joining us for a drink, went home to have a cup of Horlicks.

The much anticipated "Beerfest" game started with Bourne losing the toss and being inserted. To bowl. An early wicket from Andy P got us off to a good start, but a partnership between the eventual league winning batsman and some other bloke was looking hard to crack at the half. However, a

wicket from Proudly opened the floodgates, and a sustained battery of pace bowling from stretch (1-18 off 8), some dibly stuff from Hitchy (2 wickets), and some spin from resident rapper T-Pain (4-26), 128 all out was all Littleton could muster. Just so they could start the beers early, Ash and Rob clearly didn't fancy it, meaning Andy (pretty 30 odd) and Hitchy (52) led the way. After a mini-collapse, singer/songwriter of "Buy U a Drank (Shawty Snappin')" T-Pain (15), and Gringo (14*) saw the team over the line.

Compton and Chandlers Ford up next. A huge battle between first and second. And yet, all we can all remember is Rob having a gentle stroll after a ball, stopping to pick up his own hat before he fielded the ball, and the other team running about 18. But seriously, fielding first, Tom P and Steamer taking 3 a piece, Hitchy taking 2, and Stretch taking 1 wicket, Compton ended on 172-9. The bowling started off tight, Hitchy on his way out advising "I guarantee that opener won't go for more than 12 in his 8 overs". Shortly after, Steamer (70) hit the same bowler for 12 in 3 balls. Runs from Andy (pretty 30 odd) got us close. But following a middle order collapse, it was Tom P (27*) and stretch (2*) that saw us over the line with 2 wickets and 7 balls to spare.

Episode V - #AndyBall - The pulled calf strikes back

On a blisteringly hot day in July, I was once again stand-in skipper for the game away at Damerham as Gringo had heard a rumour that there was family of four living just north of the Watford Gap who had not heard the tale of his minor surgery so had to race up there to regale them. Losing the toss, we were asked to field (did I mention it was hot?) Steve Sinclair opened the bowling, much to his surprise and sent down 8 excellent overs of slow bowling. He told me that JB mentioned to him that if he had an LBW appeal, apart from the usual considerations, he would also have to consider whether the ball had enough pace to knock the bails off. He duly got an LBW. Baz chipped in with another wicket and another injury and Owen gave a spin bowling masterclass, picking up 4 wickets whilst we restricted them to a manageable 193. One notable incident was that Tom 'Glass Fingers' Gailey hurt his finger whilst 'keeping because he can't catch the ball properly meaning Oliver Howard-Vyse took the gloves mid-innings on debut. Hitchy and new Saturday signing Rob Macey gave us a good start with a 50-opening partnership. A near 100 partnership between Rob & Owen (who was making a strong claim to be the most in form player in world cricket) took us close to our target. Rob scored a half century, and his face resembled a tomato when he walked off when dismissed. We were seen home by DM and Glass Fingers to continue our winning run.

Episode VI - #GringoBall – Return of the LBW

Full of confidence, and now 8 wins deep, we played Old Tauntonians, who oddly, come from nowhere near Taunton (confirmed by Google Maps). Another serious bowling display from Andy P (1), Hitchy (1), Steve (1), and DM (3), as well as poor part time spinner B Reed, who was in the middle of a funk, kept the fake Somerset side to a meagre 144-9. The highlight though was Stretch, who bowled some serious pace that day, and in 8 overs took 2-11 off the bat. He also decided that day the pitch next to it hadn't had enough use and threw down an additional 17 wides. When it came to batting, much the same as all season. Hitchy (67) bottled a ton, Andy scored a pretty 20 odd. But it all came down to the pensioners section, with Baz (7), DM (11*) and Steve (2* and hit the winning runs), somehow staving off all manner of health issues and ailments to record our 9th win of the year.

Michelmars and Timsbury were up next on what I'm reliably informed is an absolute road. Batting first, Bourne amassed a huge 317-6, with Steamer hitting 122*, Hitchy bottling a 50 (47), and solid contributions from new man Pat (18) and Tom P (27). Kudos though must go to the evergreen David

Malley, who, thinking only of his personal average, hit a nice 50, ate his bat, and spent the rest of the game showing off the minor scratch he'd received. Then sensing his opportunity, went back in with 3 balls to go and blocked out for a "carried his bat" 60 not out. Absolute scenes. In response, the chase was never in doubt, and the usual suspects cleared them out for 147 in 35 overs.

Thrupton were next up, and by this point it was felt a win here would near enough secure the league title. Apparently, this urgency didn't help Gringo and Hitchy turn up on time, as batting first, Bourne lost 2 wickets in the first 2 overs, and with only 9 players, panic could have set in. Enter Andy H who managed to break the 30 threshold for 62, and Steamer (85) combining for a (I believe) season highest partnership of 130 odd, Bourne raced to a big score. Hitchy hit a quick 30, before Tom P (43*) and Gringo (16*) combined for a rapid 53 runs in 27 balls to end on 261-6. Regular wickets for everybody not named Barry Reed quickly turned the contest into a comfortable victory, with Steamers 4-8 off 3.1 overs the pick.

Redlynch and Hale called off the game as expected, so after a cheeky bye, and promotion now in the bag, we faced Whiteparish. Fielding first, Bourne restricted them to 184-7, with Hitchy (2) and Andy P (1) starting well. We then finished with Steamer (1), Steve (1), and Proudly (1), including an awesome run out from fielding machine Ash. Baz also had a go and went wicketless (we were starting to feel sorry for him at this point). Batting, Bourne decided not to mess about, with Hitchy (57) and Andy (54) going full throttle. Even with these 2 back in the hutch, Steamer (30*) took up the attack, and ably assisted by Ash (22), Bourne took the win, and at that point were crowned champions.

In the final match of the year, already crowned as champions, and with mutterings of a possible 2nd XI for next year, a few new faces joined in to get in on the action. Batting first, Hitchy (89) bottled yet another ton, and DM (24) put on 115. In came Gringo (20) to carry on the assault. But from 144-1, Bourne slipped to 203 all out, with Pat (17), Liam (11), and Baz (16*) getting to double figures. Looking to defend, what looked a par score, Sean (1) and Baz (1) opened, setting the tone nicely. Baz nearly in tears at finally taking a wicket for the first time in what felt like an entire summer. Ash (3), Steve (1), and DM (3) polished up the opponents Steeple Langford, along with a run out from Hitchy.

Episode VII – the alcoholism awakens

Promotion in the bag, and the league season done, the team enjoyed a celebration at the Tipple in September, with Tom P arranging the drinking games and fines for the evening. Much merriment was had by all, and after Julie decided "baby beers" were on the agenda, many sore heads were felt the next morning.

After this, the club were invited to the annual Hants league presentation dinner and drinks. 13 attended, and much fun and joviality was had. After Connor decided it was bedtime at 9.30, the adults stayed up into the night celebrating what was a great season, with many drinks, and lots of Collingbourne badges left in secret hiding spots around the Ageas bowl. Even after the part timers left at 11pm, the part continued into the night, gate crashing parties, and having a great time. Maybe again next year?

~Fin~