

Sunday Captain's Report

Over the course of 2022, Collingbourne CC played a total of 22 weekend friendly matches against another club (including the President's match), winning seven games (compared to last year's solitary win).

Weekend friendlies (I hesitate to call them Sunday games, because they are played on Saturdays from time to time) hold a peculiar position in our cricketing calendar in my opinion. They aren't 'competitive' games because they aren't part of the league, so there are no points or league positions to be won and lost, but they *are* competitive because we want to win - and so do the opposition. Going into a game you have no idea what type of opposition you're going to face, so it's not unusual to turn up to a ground with a typical Collingbourne XI to be confronted with a group of Devizes, Marlborough and South Wilts 1sts and 2nds making up the numbers for the opposition (as previous friendly captains will be all too familiar with). While we might play a game in what we consider the 'right' way (i.e. everyone who can bowl will bowl... it goes without saying everyone will bat), the opposition may take the approach that their five best bowlers will bowl all the overs (which seems to have been much more common this year), leading to the occasional one-sided result.

I raise all this because there has been an impression from some that weekend friendlies are just a beer match. Well, beer (or beverage of your choice) is certainly important, but what it's actually about is: giving as many members as possible a chance to play over the season (not everyone can play on Saturday due to work or family commitments); providing a pathway for youth players to progress into League cricket (if they want to); and also providing League players who aren't getting a bat or bowl on Saturday a chance to keep their form up (if they make themselves available) or challenge themselves against teams that may be in a higher league. Perhaps most importantly these games allow the Club to forge and maintain relationships with other local clubs. With a few exceptions, the teams we play friendly cricket against are not those we face in the Hampshire League and one of the highlights of this season has been playing the likes of Appleshaw and Chute after a long absence from the fixture list.

In 2022 40 Club members played at least one weekend friendly, which shows the breadth of membership at the club. However, the flip side to that is that a core of 10 players (including the friendly captain and two VCs) played 10 or more games. I want to record a big thanks to the other nine members in that group (Rob, Aaron H, Sean, Wayne, Ollie K, Ash, Ollie N, Liam and Jim), but also highlight the need to get more members playing more regularly (that doesn't just apply to friendlies). It has been very pleasing to see so many youth players playing over the course of the season, with Ollie K, Ollie N, Tom H, Bradley, Henry and Bobby playing regularly this year and I expect to see plenty of them next year as they're definitely young and fit enough to play two games a weekend.

Every cricketer likes a stat - so here's some from this year's campaign. No 100s were hit in a friendly, but five players hit a 50, scoring 13 50s in total and twice Aaron Hitchmough bottled it somewhere between 80 and 100. There were also some great individual bowling efforts: Jim's 5 for 11; 3-fers for Baz, Ash, Pat, Jake, Wayne and Ollie N. Baz, Jim, Ollie K and Aaron H all took 10 or more wickets, a feat dwarfed by Ash's 23!

Any other notable events from this season? Well, there was Kennet Valley away where the pitch and outfield were indistinguishable; Hitchy's 100th wicket for the club against Mildenhall; in the first (of two) away games at Inkpen we were locked out of the dressing room. While we were cut off from our kit, Ash refused to bat in his trainers and Ollie N refused to pad up as we lost two wickets (including Rob (67)) on 99 with 1 run needed to win; the plastic pitch at Appleshaw; results that could give you nightmares in sweltering heat at East Anton and Chute; losing by 74 runs to Avebury u13s(!) in a game that was billed a 'lads & dads' fixture - the Collingbourne lad and dad were 39 and 63; a big win away at St Mary Bourne where revenge was had, having been beaten by 8 wickets earlier in the season. Swashbuckling batting from Pat, Shankar and Brian posted a small but defendable total and fantastic work in the field, fine captaincy (if I do say so myself) and 3-fers for Baz and Ash saw us home to what was, for me, the best result of the season.