

3rd XI 2016 – CAPTAIN'S REPORT

Prior to the start of the 2016 season, I was hoping that the 3rd XI could build on our mid-table finish from the previous season and possibly push on to maybe even challenge for promotion. "If I can just get people to sort out their availability and be able to pick a regular team with a decent core of players who are good at that level, then this could be a good year" I remember thinking...

Well, things once again didn't turn out like I hoped. Frustratingly, the problem wasn't even of our making – the sudden drop off in availability from the 2nd XI meant that for much of the season a lot of the players that I had hoped to have pushing for promotion in Division 10a, were instead having fun in Division 3b.

The bare facts of our season are – Played 18 League games, Won 5, Drew 0, Tied 1 (we'll come back to that), Lost 9 with 3 games abandoned part-way through due to the weather. We finished 8th (out of 10 teams) in Division 10a – far enough from relegation in the end (thanks especially to only 1 team going down). We used a total of **48** players over the course of our 18 games (the same as the 2nd XI) but still had to play with only 10 players on 3 occasions and just 9 on 1 other – which ironically was one of the games when I was most proud of the team as we put up a more of a fight than many teams did against eventual champions Potten End. That we used so many players shows what a difficult job it was to get the team together this year – there was barely a weekday that went by without some attention having to be paid to who was going to be playing, or who the 2s would need, or who couldn't play etc etc – it was exhausting over the 4 months of the season and is the main reason for me considering my position seriously now – playing cricket is meant to be about enjoying yourself – and that was something it was very difficult to do after many of the weeks in between games this season.

Anyway – the actual cricket. For a long while our opening game of the season at home to Ickleford looked like it was going to be exactly the start I wanted – despite only having 10 men, we looked to be on course to chase down a target of 222, as we sat at 209-4. But then one of what became our trademark batting collapses meant that we eventually had to settle for a tie as our last wicket fell to a direct hit run-out whilst our last pair of Nigel Tyler & Mark Fletcher attempted a quick single to win the game! As almost as heart-breaking was the 2-run loss in our next home game to Holtwhites Trinibis when Rosey was caught attempting to hit the winning runs in a rain-affected match. Rosey redeemed himself with a match-winning cameo as we beat Boxmoor by 2 wickets after my nerves were once again shredded by another batting collapse when we looked like we could have strolled to victory. Fingernails were once again gained being bitten in our penultimate game of the season before Jimmy Irwin & Rohan Dua saw us home in dramatic style for a 4-wicket win in an at times testy local derby at Rickmansworth.

In amongst all this there were a number of players who should look back at their season with some pride – Martin Tyler led the way with the bat scoring 3 centuries and a further 2 fifties in his 10 games with us, whilst there was also a ton for Jonny Lyons. Charles Hardcastle & Gulam Sherali were the only others to hit half-centuries, Nigel Tyler finished as top wicket-taker with 23 and the only 5-wicket haul of the year, although 6 other bowlers did pick up 4-wickets in a game over the season.

It was good to have Mick Rose back playing regularly, taking wickets, not getting hit for many runs and even cracking the occasional smile! (Well, until the 4 drops in 4 successive balls off his first over away at Watford Town!). It was also good to have Nathan Hawker back at the club after a 3-year absence – re-born as an attacking batsman, but picking up wickets as well – Nathan also brought along Keval Dattani who added some pace to our attack in the middle of the season. Jimmy Irwin was our stand-out discovery of the season though – another convert from Rickmansworth CC, Jimmy brought some Kiwi-style aggression and humour to the team as well as putting in some excellent performances with both bat & ball and really becoming part of our club.

Special thanks to both Nigel Tyler & Mike Reeve for captaining the team in my absence (with Luigi captaining a winning side away at Ricky for the second year running!) and to our regular umpire Roy Rosenthal. Thanks also to Steve Ord & Helen Smithson for scoring for us and to Jean (and Lesley Neal) for providing our excellent teas.

But my thanks really go to everybody who played for the 3s this season – I thank you for your availability & really appreciate you all being part of the team.