

Barnards Green Cricket Club - 2008 Roundup

With Barnards Green 1sts back in the top flight of the Worcestershire league once again, 2008 was likely to be a testing year for skipper Chris Smedley and his team. Early season saw them play some of their best cricket with youngsters Liam Paddock and Phil Harris showing good form with the bat along with Tim Clarke and Rich Williams, whilst Mat Shimmell, Andy Ford and Chris Smedley picked up regular wickets, but it was often a case of not being able to bowl teams out. The weather played an even bigger part this season than the floods of 2007 and not only were games lost through rain, but match preparations were also severely hampered. As the season wore on batting form waned, but Jez Clarke seized his opportunity to impress on a number of occasions and Tim Williams and Mat Shimmel played a number of match saving and indeed match winning innings. The season ended as a washout but with the team respectably placed fifth in the table. Skipper Chris Smedley announced that he will be standing down as skipper for the 2009 season, but thanks are extended to him for his capable leadership over the past few seasons and for taking the club on to a higher level.

The second eleven was set up to be a blend of experience and youth with skipper Phil Spencer at the wheel. The team finished an extremely creditable 4th and with youngsters Tom Clack, Tom Banks, Lewis Hooper, Ashlea Brewer and James Scullion making excellent progress through the season, the future of cricket at the Green looks rosey. Phil too has announced that he is stepping down as skipper after a number of years as 2nd XI captain and his leadership and on field rallying chats will be greatly missed. As ever, Ian Scullion put in some credible performances throughout the season and Mat Brookes showed what a great swinger he is.

The third team struggled to get any real consistency to their game in the early part of the season and were grateful to see the return from Uni of Jon Lewis who showed the considerable talent he possesses. Fifth place was a fine effort and with skipper Kevin Ratcliffe also stepping down at the end of the season, he can feel well satisfied with his efforts over the past few years.

The fourth team was a real blend of youth and experience ranging from 13 year olds to those gracing the wicket in their 60's and so a fourth place finish was a superb effort against clubs sending out experienced 2nd XI's. Skipper Andy Wheeler led the way with some lusty innings including a club record equalling 217 and was ably supported by the euphorial Cyril Dean and the enigmatic Robbie Lewis, the bowling honours were taken by the ageless Dave Price closely followed by Ian Alley and Jamie Longmore who reckons on taking the title for most catches dropped off his bowling. The youngsters however must be applauded the loudest and in their debut seasons, 13 year old Elliott Hennesey made his maiden 50 for the club whilst Jack Cullity showed that he could be a 1st XI player of the future.

Thanks from all teams must go to the dedicated band of grounds people Roy Mayo, Chris Home, Andy Wheeler and Kevin Ratcliffe as well as all the tea ladies (and men) and our loyal scorers Ian Shaw, Anne Wilson and Alex Bako.

It would be fair to say that the club reached its realistic targets for the season and no doubt with a long winter ahead, eagerly await the 2009 season when the expectations will be raised and hopefully the weather will be kinder. The club is going from strength to strength and with an exciting batch of youngsters pushing for places even those in critics corner are talking of what might be.

Robin Longmore