

Barnards Green Second Team End of Season Captains Report 2009

The 2009 cricket season was a fantastic year for the club's second eleven in this, the 75th anniversary of the club. To win the Division One title was excellent but to do so without losing a game was, perhaps an even greater achievement for the squad. When one scratches the surface a little deeper the true success of the team can be really appreciated: Young players played a key part in the team, often dubbed 'The Youth Club'; a number of players went onto play first team cricket, one of the fundamental reasons for having a hierarchical club policy this year; the senior players who did play made significant contributions and further enhanced their personal reputations.

The bowling attack did a great job of both suppressing the scoring options of the opposition batsmen and had a happy knack of taking key wickets at key times. Sam Spencer bowled brilliantly with the new ball and was a model of consistency although was often terribly unlucky in the 200 plus overs he bowled across the summer. Tom Clack and Tom Banks bowled with really pace, the former nipped the ball off the seam whilst the latter swung the ball into the right-handers. These two players finished the season in the first team and will, with a little luck, form the cornerstone of the clubs pace bowling department for years to come. James Scullion and Matt Brookes both played a huge part sharing the medium-pace, middle-of-the-innings, bowling slot and had numerous opposition batsmen mesmerised by their lateral movement. The spin twins of Lewis Hooper and Paul Drinkwater were key to the team's success, reliable, consistent and great to watch. Both bowlers took a large haul of wickets and Hooper's 49 victims could well top the league statistics for the year. Hooper also took 10 wickets in the first eleven such was his success.

The batsmen scored heavily across the summer with Drinkwater and myself both comfortably passing 550 and 660 aggregate league runs respectively. Paul Yorke was, at times, devastating, most memorably scoring 99 off 62 balls at home to Belbroughton. Mark Hooper scored runs reliably at the top of the order and was rewarded with the opening berth in the first eleven for the second half of the season. Cyril Dean, plucked from the fourths at the start of the campaign destroyed a number of attacks and won many key battles with his innovative stroke play. Similarly, although more conventionally, Adam Greaves showed his class in the few games he played. The lower order batsmen of Steve Metcalfe, Lewis Hooper, Clack, Scullion and Brookes all scored vital runs in tricky situations but were all too often not required, the downside of the side's success.

One of the most obvious strengths of the team, helped by the young average age, was the fielding. Ash Brewer, in his first season in the side, led the fielding unit excellently and his tally of 11 catches and 14 stumpings could well be the best in the division, not bad for one so young. The catching across the side was, generally, good and the ground fielding was nearly always better than our opponents, even when we had the worst of the conditions.

In my first season as captain of the second eleven I am, of course, delighted with the results the team has posted this year but what gives me even greater pleasure is seeing the team and the individuals which make up the unit, develop as cricketers and, perhaps more importantly, young adults. Thanks must also be passed onto those players who played only a handful of games or were called up at short notice – your efforts really are appreciated. Furthermore, to play cricket at such a wonderful club and on such a beautiful ground every other week is a delight and our appreciation must be shown to those club members who give up their time to make it such a great place.

Despite the great season we won't get carried away as we still have lots of room for improvement for next year, until then however, best wishes...

Judders