

Barnards Green Singles – 2004 Review

From **Highley** to **Knighton** and all venues in between we were consistently inconsistent. Our won five lost eight record with three winnings draws proves this. Having said that, the division was extremely close, with two games remaining two wins would have seen us runners up, two defeats would have seen us relegated as it was one win and one defeat saw us mid table.

Where do I begin to review a season that started with so much promise? The 'Singles' was to be the Club's second team, the team that feeds the firsts, the team that has the promising, the up and coming, the next generation. We didn't always take the easy cricketing option; we always had belief in our own abilities to secure the win! What I am saying is we never played for a draw. Having said that we lost two games batting second, the last by six runs and **Highley** who bowled us out for 82 on a dog of a pitch. Of the games fielding second whether I attacked too long (probably) the bowlers bottled it (I doubt it) or we were just beaten by a better team (seldom) all points to a side confident of its own abilities but devoid of that slice of luck.

I want to thank all 33 players who turned out for the singles. We blooded youth, accelerated retirement but always played with a smile and tried to enjoy it.

Fletch and ten other **Cutnall** players walked the league but it was tight for the rest of us. Our nearest rivals, at the time of each match, came to Newland chased 250+ and won, both **Highley** and **Brintons** had a batsman score chanceless 150+. When you get spanked around like that just applaud.

When we won we won well, usually posting a big score and then knocking the opposition over. Here we praise one or two players for their part in the singles season. Richard 'Archie' Leech requested that I open the batting with him, he wanted to be a "pinch" hitter. First friendly of the season saw him smack 80 in 37 balls and the experiment began. Archie went on to score 381 runs during the league season, always very quickly and much to the annoyance of the opposition (and his batting partners [sorry Icky Bo]) his well placed aerial shots eluding fielders and when it went to hand he picked out those that couldn't catch. Archie developed a sense of responsibility as the season went on and can now be relied upon to play a sensible innings when required. On the bowling front the highest praise goes to Simon Clarke who brought certain calmness and control to his spells of bowling and was more often than not the determining factor in the games we won. Big praise to but playing all too briefly was the monumental talent of Lee Hooper, a Captains dream, batting, bowling, fielding I ran Lee into the ground anywhere and everywhere. Not once complaining and always willing "Thanks Leeroy!"

Other bowlers worthy of praise, Duncan for his pace, Brooker nagging accuracy, Leeroy for sheer aggression, the workhorse Perce who saw more put down off his bowling than any other, but if you cannot catch the caught and bowled then what do you expect.

Of the batters Andy Wheeler came and went after racking up 240 runs scoring our only century of the season and averaging 60 and deserved his elevation to the firsts. We had seven batters pass 200 runs for the season and secure their place in the league averages next season. Archie and Jack have had a mention but the unsung heroes are; Dave White with some of the best off side pull shots ever seen, Metty sublime, James who had no luck all season and myself I just had no mates. Special mention to Steve Beavon who passed 200 with 5 noughts and a couple of fifties in his 11 innings.

As a fielding side we were led by the excellent glove work of Dave White I can only remember one chance going down and one not given to win the match. His seventeen dismissals are a testament to his skills and his superb dives down the legside kept all entertained. Skipper came in with 5 catches after a dolly drop first game and a blinder at **West Malvern** same as Archie "drop one, catch one" Leech, Safe hands Metty got five and Mr. dependable Simon "anywhere close in" Clarke.

With several players leaving to better themselves by going to a team on the way down we are a Club on the way up and selection proved this. The firsts only taking players who had shown the promise and necessary mettle to perform in the firsts. Proven by the selection of Andy Wheeler (averaging 60). Matt Brookes (miserly and taking wickets). The Ender (Duncan Bell) bowling with pace and frightening batters. Finally foresight in selecting Jonathon Lewis a youngster with immense promise and was showing it in the singles who was given a taste of things to come.

So the season saw Barnards Green for the first time, no Newland dominated but we finished mid table, disappointing to say the least, but we were never "stuffed". This probably leaves more questions than answers but in a review of the season this is a discussion for the bar and not this page.

I can only finish by giving a special mention to my Mum for doing the teas every other Saturday and big thanks to Bob Rogers for all of his work on the ground. To Rob Longmore and Dave Price who did all of the 'repairs' to the pavvy, Linda Price for keeping the pavilion spotless for us heathens and my wife who for the 22nd time had a summer on her own.

Sammy.