

Newsletter - July 2016

There's only one place to start this month and that is with the under 11's, who contested the final of the Cotswold Hills Cup at Evesham. Unfortunately they came off second best in a keenly fought match against Wellesbourne but they should be very proud of their achievement and the progress they have made in a very short space of time. Looking very professional in their matching kit, they were a wonderful endorsement for the club. The "supporting" roles provided by all the parents should also be acknowledged, with their enthusiasm being almost as great as the children. All in all it is a real joy to witness.

As for the senior teams, at the beginning of July the 1st XI entertained Leamington at Tanworth Lane. Despite Captain Chris single handedly batting throughout our innings and dragging us to the total of 183, half of which he contributed himself, we still fell short. Leamington ran out comfortable winners. Chris must have been devastated to have played so well, with what should have been a match winning performance, only to walk off at the end as one of the vanquished.

On 16 July the crowds poured into Tanworth Lane (surely I'm allowed some poetic license) for the local derby against Earlswood. We played them at their ground in the opening match of the season and just as that match was heading for an exciting crescendo, rain intervened causing a premature close to events. This time we were always half a stride off the pace, with both bat and ball and the result was rarely in doubt as we closed on 159 having been set a target of 219

Disappointing as that result was, worse was to come the following Saturday when we visited Alcester & Ragley. Following a run of 4 successive defeats we were now 3rd from bottom of the league table with our opponents one place below us. A win would create some badly needed breathing space for us but a defeat would really pile on the pressure for the rest of the season.

It all started well and our bowlers took some early wickets, with the opposition being 14 for 3 at one stage. The home team rallied however and eventually closed their innings on 201.

As we prepared to bat we were cautiously optimistic about getting the necessary runs but in the event this was seriously misguided as we collapsed to a dismal 95 all out. With the exception of Captain Chris, who once again was the victim of a dubious lbw umpiring decision, there did not appear to be any excuses and the whoops of joy, at the end, from the home players and supporters showed just what this result meant to them.

This was an unwanted 5th defeat in a row and we were now spiraling back

towards the first division. On the principle that if you keep doing the same things, then the outcome will be the same, changes are now needed. I'm sure everyone has their own opinions but the views that really count are those of Captain Chris, who had lots to mull over in the build up to our next match at home to Exhall and Wixford, who were riding high in 3rd place in the league

Of course, we need to remember that we are not playing this game professionally and our players are looking for some fun and enjoyment from their devotion. This is why a league system works so well, as the league tables don't lie and you end up in the position in the tables that reflects your ability. No-one gets any fun from losing week after week but similarly there is not a lot to be gained from runaway wins week after week. Close, exciting matches are what gets the adrenalin pumping. In my opinion we have underperformed in recent weeks and although we have suffered the results we have deserved, we showed earlier in the season that we can compete in the Premier Division. But we have no divine right to be there and starting on Saturday we needed to regain the winning attitude.

Running well behind schedule, I arrived at Tanworth Lane just as our batting innings closed and on taking a cautious and nervous glance at the scoreboard (because I was fearing the worst) was overjoyed to see a total of 265 looking back at me. The scoreboard seemed to be glowing with pride and was wearing a big smile as it took great pleasure in displaying this impressive total.

The batting order had been subject to some subtle changes with Andy now going in at 4, which reflects his solid steady performances, freeing up James, to go in at 5, where he can better put to use his flair and cavalier spirit. And the changes worked. Despite the early losses of Fred and Tonka, Chris and Andy set about building a solid platform and took the score into the 90's before Andy was caught and bowled for 31. With a decent score already on the board, James was able to be aggressive from the start and scored 80 runs in the blink of an eye, 68 of which came from boundaries. One fellow spectator opined that these were the fastest 80 runs he'd ever seen scored.

Chris went on to secure his 50 and Shaggy also added a rapido fire 50, so we closed on a very impressive 265

Now we needed to bowl and field well to consolidate this excellent batting performance and with the whole team shouting encouragement and support, Rory and Banksy were called upon to open the attack. They both set a high standard and it was Rory who drew first blood when hitting middle and off stumps to remove the opener.. He then gradually worked his way through the team, with the help of some excellent catches and in the final over of his spell took his 4th wicket thanks to an outstanding one handed catch from Lee.

Brandon and Lee then kept the pressure on by bowling well and each claiming a wicket, before Shaggy came on to remove the tail, which included the help of another fine one handed catch by Lee. When their last batsman came to the crease, Shaggy was on a hat-trick, so extra slip fielders were

called in, to intensify the pressure and as if it had been scripted, a thick edge was pounced upon by Andy followed by jubilant celebrations as Shaggy secured his hat-trick and we won the match

What a difference a week makes. There was only one change from the XI who turned out the previous week, but the team was unrecognisable in terms of attitude. The "sports psychologists" must have been out in force, because the sullen performers from the previous week were now replaced by positive players. A good sign is noise and encouragement when fielding and we can often be very quiet, whereas this week we were exuberant and noisy with our encouragement. Now we need to make sure we carry this "belief" forward for the rest of the season.

The second XI are sitting in mid table and also had a poor start to the month but came good in their latest match when comfortably beating Blockley.

Individual match reports are available on Facebook Simply search for 'Tanworth and Camp Hill Cricket Club' and click the 'like' icon.

Alastair Turnbull