

Captains Report

General summary

I didn't find 2012 an easy or straightforward season. Though the statistics again report a winning return of 18 victories in 34 matches, which we should be proud of, they also report the great frustration of 2012: 17 cancelled/abandoned matches. In summing up the season, though we played some wonderful cricket at times (sometimes some rubbish cricket as well), bad weather and the lack of a sustained run of games created a lingering "when is our season going to get going" feeling for me which lasted from April until the final game of the season against Hospitals.

That said, generally we played well this year and there were many positives to take. Once again we won more than we lost in both 40 over and 20/20. We overcame an awful and depressing start to the season of played 7, won 0, lost 2, cancelled 4, and abandoned 1, to then win 4 on the bounce – great character. We recruited some new faces who contributed enormously to the season like Rahul, Abdullah and Jonny Gifford. We had some outstanding and exciting individual results such as the nail-biter against OCC at SSJ and the destruction of Appleton – twice in the same day!

And we also saw a great number of people contribute to our success – rather than the reliance/dependence on 2-3 individuals to produce the goods. It may sound obvious, but although there were of course star performers during the season, there was a genuine feeling that we are above all else a team, with a strong team bond running throughout. Isis consists of team-players, not individuals, and essentially team-players full of character and a great love and knowledge of the game. Isis players are quick to offer support when necessary, we commiserate individuals following a golden duck or a particularly expensive tonking, and we will celebrate that same individual following a gem of an innings or a blinding run-out. We are a club that is a pleasure to play for and each of us are lucky that we've in our own ways, found our way into being part of this club.

We should always want to win, but we must never forget that above all else, we play cricket for the love of the game, for the love of the club, and that playing with enjoyment and a glow in the belly is as important as any personal performance.

Thanks to:

- Vice-captains – after becoming a father on the 7th June, I missed a large portion of the season coming to terms with the mysteries of nappy-changing and sleep deprivation, and am really very grateful for their help and support throughout the season.
- Keith Whiter for a superb set of fixtures (as always) as well as his support as Chairman. We mustn't also forget the tireless work he does with our website – it is a superb tool and the amount of time and effort that Keith puts into this (in addition to his day job at Elsevier) is something that we should be very grateful for.
- Roy – for his generosity in organising fantastic net sessions at the Oxford Academy
- Joe – for unofficially and diligently taking on the role of match-fee collector in the second half of the season
- Nick – for his role as club Secretary and chief social event organiser throughout the

season, including a fantastic curry night last week.

Individual acclaim

- Will Green – outstanding first full season for the club. Great talent with the bat, epitomised by the best 20/20 innings I've ever seen for Isis, a sparkling century against OUP at Jordan Hill. Will be sorely missed next season – not only his runs, but also his character and sense of fun that he brings to the club.
- Rahul Venkat – another who will be sorely missed next year. A destructive batsman, his innings in the 15 over slog we played against Appleton bordered on the incredible – he just smashed it everywhere. Equally impressive with the ball – economical, clever and a real wicket-taker.
- Jakey – another solid season behind the stumps and with the bat for Jakey. Around 300 runs, and another couple of 50's – Jakey is now one of the most dependable batsmen we have at the club.
- Joe Walter – solid with the bat and with 27 wickets and a wicket every 16 balls, Joe's value to the team is huge. Fantastic to see him with 12 catches as well and no broken fingers! Makes a magnificent tea as well – olives, pistachio nuts.....we'll be having truffles and quails eggs next.
- Keith Whiter – wrestled back the top wicket taker trophy and bowled superbly all season. Can't be easy to abandon your run-up and effectively switch from 90mph pace to bamboozling spin, but the newly named Sultan of Spin has made the adjustment seamlessly.
- Jonners – with his highest number of Isis runs in a season, and the usual great economy, wicket-taking ability and control with the ball, Jonners was crucial for us in the matches he played.
- Nick Wyatt – Nick definitely doesn't get the amount of wickets that his bowling deserves, but bowled spells this season that were as good as I've ever seen him bowl. No-one gives more effort on the pitch than Nick, and his level of effort in the field is to be admired.
- Abdullah – 28 wickets at an average of 10 and a strike rate of 18 only begin to tell the story of what was a fantastic season for Abdullah. He well and truly etched himself on Isis history on the 30th June 2012, breaking the 22 year old club record bowling performance which I thought I'd never see surpassed. He took an astonishing 8 wickets for 7 runs – a moment that those lucky enough to be playing won't ever forget.
- KP – so nearly won the top wicket taker trophy, but with 32 wickets at an incredible strike rate of a wicket every 13 balls, KP had a superb season and just seems to get better with age. Blinding catch in the final game of the season as well!!

My match of the season (joint award)

26th August 2012 – Appleton away – 40 over

- With a team missing several regulars, we arrived at the formidable Appleton fortress not expected to be anything more than also-rans. However, a magnificent opening bowling display from Nick Hardy and Rahul Venkat (3 wickets each) tore through the

Appleton top order, leaving them punch-drunk and on the ropes. Whereas in the past they have recovered to post a reasonable score, this time we showed no mercy and the bowling change of Joe Walter worked wonders. Joe took 3 for 11 in 2.1 overs and Appleton, in their own back yard, had been skittled out for an astonishing 55. It's fair to say we took our sweet time getting those runs in reply, and Appleton to their credit defended their paltry total with great courage; however in the end it was simply too much to ask, and with a joy on our faces, Nadeem ended years of Isis misery at the hands of Appleton with a cracking 4 to cow-corner. Cue celebratory beers in the pub afterwards!

2nd Sept 2012 – OCC (at SSJ) –40 over

- On a very slow, green and tricky wicket, we bowled first and bowled with wonderful skill and control. Every bowler brought on did their job and wickets were shared around equally. Of particular note was Abdullah's 2-7 of 5 overs and Rahul's miserly 6 runs conceded off 5 overs. Wickets also for Nick, KW, KP, Jonny and Joe and OCC had posted only 124.
- Our reply was both tortuous and utterly compelling to watch. After losing myself, Rahul, Ravi and Joe fairly early on, we were tottering and the target of 125 was a mile off. Harry Stoneman and KW steadied the ship, but once they departed, OCC were favourites. Then Jonny and Harry Hudson came in, blasted the ball around the place and took us to a few runs of victory...but then disaster struck – both got out very quickly and suddenly OCC smelt victory – 5 runs needed for us, 1 wicket for them. With Isis folk agonisingly watching the scenes from the clubhouse, and Captain Walter umpiring out in the middle praying that he wouldn't be called on to adjudicate a close lbw shout, this was a genuine grandstand finish. Ponsford and Wyatt eked out run by run, until finally Wyatt put us out of our misery with the winning run in the gathering darkness to huge cheers on the side-lines. A genuine classic match.

In Conclusion

I've decided to stand down as captain, which hopefully will see a return to batting form which deserted me for the majority of the season (I blame a tiny little chap called Harry for that!!); however I would like to say a big thanks to everyone who's played both this season and also my previous years as captain for being such great colleagues to play cricket with. It's not an easy job being skipper and at times can be a pretty lonely position on the pitch, but it certainly helps when you know that you play the game you love with such a good bunch of guys and friends. Have a great winter everyone, and lets all look forward to a brand new 2013 season!

Olly Walter