

2023 Isis CC Captain's Report (Joe Walter)

It has been an honour to captain Isis for the first time this season. Membership has been very healthy, the season ended with 31 members including 8 new members. It has been great to welcome new members Abi Badmanji, Vishnu Kumar, Harsh Singh, Yash Batra, (with thanks to Alex Beavan for discovering their talent), also we had William Wyatt, James Duckitt, Joseph Asplet and Ed Burn becoming first time members.

Clearly recruiting and retaining new players is going to be key to the healthy future of the club so it was great to see so many new faces.

It has never been a problem getting 11 players on the pitch, there has been lots of interest throughout all the season in playing games, even in August when received wisdom was that I would struggle to find an eleven. For 28 out of 32 games, I had 14 or more players available, and for 14 of those games I had 16 or more available. This has meant in order to be fair to all members people have had to miss more games than perhaps they would have had to in the past as I have had to rotate players.

Statistically there were 32 completed games, with 11 games cancelled and 2 games abandoned. Lots of games were cancelled/abandoned by weather in the second half of the summer in particular - not for a decade have so many games been affected. At one stage we lost 4 weekend games in a row to weather cancellations which was very frustrating indeed for everyone affected! The last 2 games of the season summed it up with the penultimate game abandoned after half an hour and the final game cancelled due to a wet pitch

Tour was soggy but enjoyable, even though the game we played was wet we did our best to drink venues dry to compensate!

Of completed games, we won only 8 games and lost 21, with 2 games abandoned after promising starts. This represents the worst ever win % at 26.6% and gives us a very achievable target for 2024 to get our results back to the realm of what they have historically been.

Particularly disappointing was our midweek performance where we won 2 but lost 12. Compared to weekend games where we won 6, drew 1 and lost 9

In many games Isis ended on the wrong side of relatively close games, not necessarily by runs/wickets but by taking games into the final few overs. I feel, particularly in the shorter format, we play a different brand of cricket to our opposition, lacked the depth in batting that some of our opposition had, and struggled to bowl teams out in the field. Often we started well but were unable to maintain good starts, or pull it around when games started to go against us.

With an average age usually considerably older than the opposition teams, we are not as agile in the field and it's been difficult to maintain control of the run rate on occasions.

A combination of team rotation and many cancelled games meant players often went a long time between games - this may have contributed to lack of match sharpness on occasion, or prevented the opportunity for people to take form or momentum from one game to the next. Some players will be disappointed with their averages compared to previous seasons. Team rotation also meant that rarely was the strongest 11 selected. Perhaps more selection ruthlessness would have ensured more wins but it's a tricky balance to be struck when selecting teams to ensure fairness to members of all abilities while also attempting to win matches.

One thing most captains would agree on, particularly when games are tight or going against us, is that while ideas and advice from teammates is normally welcome, a quiet word in the captains ear is appreciated rather than people calling out their thoughts from a distance for everyone to hear which can give the impression to the opposition that the captain has lost control, which of course is never the case !!!

Within matches, wherever possible, I have always ensured players have had the opportunity to bat or bowl, which I feel is important to keep people interested in playing for the club, especially as cricket is a time demanding game and it's only fair if someone is committing a day or an evening to the club that they get the opportunity to do more than just field.

My favourite game was the first Friendly Cup game against Brightwell cum Sotwell - everyone contributed to a fine 99 run win on a glorious evening. As a team we had struggled for runs in some of the previous games so it was nice to see Olly, Brad, Rich, Luke, Alex and Ravi helping us post 229-5 which was easily defended with Nick, Keith W, Roy and Ravi bowling fine spells.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognise some outstanding individual performances throughout the season

Individual performances - batting

Although there was only one century there were 16 x 50's
(For comparison, last season we had 3 centurions and 28 fifties, albeit from 10 more games)

Olly's 101 not out - not only the top Isis score this season, it set up a win against old frenemies Wytham

Olly's aggressive 91 in a 20/20 against a Hospitals side which had put our bowlers to the sword.

4 excellent knocks by Rich Stephenson - a splendid 84 to set up a victory against the FFTMCC, 91 against Moreton in the Friendly Cup, a jug-avoiding 96 not out against Minster Lovell, getting himself the record partnership for the 5th wicket, and an 83 not out against Enstone, helping Isis to win the match from a precarious 40-5

There was also Brad Harden's 86 to set up a 41 run victory against Stoner

Individual performances - bowling

There was just the one 4 wicket haul this season

(For comparison, last season we had one 5 wicket haul and four 4 wicket hauls)

There was KP's hat trick - although in a losing cause, Keith's hat trick against St Clements Strollers in July was lovely to see and will live long in the memory - congratulations Keith! Nick's 4-12 against Compton Dando on tour and his four other 3-fers throughout the season deserve special praise
There were also 3-fers for Jon Ponsford, Ravi Kella, Keith Whiter and Pete Wiblin.

I'd also like to recognize some milestones that were passed this season

Olly surpassed 15500 runs
Jon Ponsford scored his 5000th run this season and took his 350th wicket to boot
Nick Wyatt took his 950th wicket
Keith Whiter took his 900th wicket
Joe took 500th wicket and 150th catch
Roy Blatchford took his 200th wicket
Luke Bowles and Brad Harden scored their 1500th run
Mo Naqvi scored his 1000th run
Alf Symons took his 100th wicket

I'd like to offer my thanks to vice captains Rich Stephenson, Olly Walter and Harry Stoneman who all stepped in to captain the side at various stages, and also to Rich and Olly who offered invaluable advice and support both on and off the field throughout the season. I want to thank Nick for arranging such a good set of fixtures, and to Keith Whiter for his work looking after the club's finances and the website, and to Allan East for being such a great chairman, KP for disseminating safeguarding information so diligently and Alex Beavan for arranging some cracking events and somehow making sense in his minutes of things said in committee meetings

I also want to thank each and every player who turned out to play for the club, I appreciate your efforts and commitment in what has been a challenging and at times frustrating season. I also want to thank anyone who helped with the unsung matchday duties, such as scoring, umpiring, helping with the covers, doing teas, clearing up after teas or taking the kit bag or helping with the match reports.

There are so many decisions to be made as captain and I know I have not been able to keep everyone happy all the time either in decisions around selection or decisions within games, but I want to take the time to thank all those who did offer me support and encouragement throughout the season - you know who you are!

This season has had its fair share of ups and downs for me. The thrill of the occasional win was offset by the doom of so many losses and it became quite demoralising writing up losing match reports week after week, and seeing the results stats page turning ever more into the red. It was a challenge to inspire the team to perform to the standards of previous years and this is a challenge that we need to meet next year in order to return the club to winning

ways. Regarding my future, I would be happy to stand as club captain again next season and attempt to make a substantial improvement on results, but I would understand if, perhaps given the team performances this year, the club chose to go in a different direction.