

Isis Cricket Club – AGM 2015
Chairman's Report

Another year has passed, and I am again amazed at the rapidity in which it has done so. In reality the cricket itself only lasts for five months, and I suppose it is just a sign of my advancing years, but it still seems too short a time since I was sitting in this same seat reflecting on the season before. I can actually draw many parallels to the 2014 season, and while our overall win rate was reversed somewhat we still achieved a winning season overall, retained the Friendly Cup, maintained a strong membership and in general represented ourselves well on the field. There were some off-moments too though, and as I believe in learning lessons from our experiences I will be compelled to refer to a couple of these later in my report. But I hope the members present at the AGM or reading this report after the event will agree that we have largely achieved the aims and objectives of the club in 2015.

It is always a pleasure to welcome new members to the club, and for me the notable newbies of 2015 were Brad Harden, Ali Albasri, Robin Tolson and old friend Pete Davenport. I say this every year, but a true measure of the club and what it has to offer is our ability to retain such players. It was also nice to see the like of Rich Stephenson, Dave Lawrence and Ramu Vellayapan playing a few more games, and making important contributions too. But on the other hand, I would have liked to have seen early season regulars such as Matt Thompson and Tom Harper, a newbie himself, and the likes of Brendan Shepherd and Sanjay Mistry feature more on the Isis team sheets in 2015. The statistics show that there was greater contention for wickets and runs this season, and that is a very healthy position, demonstrating strength in depth. But we must continue to keep the club attractive, fun and successful to ensure such players as are named above keep coming back for more.

For me, despite the winning ratio, the cricket season was a bit of a mixed bag. We certainly saw some close finishes and but for very narrow losses against such clubs as Wolvercote, Sunday Funday and Astons we might have seen a similar outcome to that of 2014. But there were some notable losses too; Bartlemas, the end of season game at Ipsden, Blackwells twice and Far From The M.C.C. four times are clear examples of the games that we might normally expect to win, but that set us back a bit last season. On the other hand it is quite healthy that such games remain competitive, and given the 60% win ratio that we achieved it says a lot to me about the kind of success we could enjoy if we set ourselves up in the right way. We also of course retained the Friendly Cup, and while in the grand scheme of things it is not an important competition, the win against Aldworth in the final does show what we are capable of when we have a mind to compete to the best of our ability.

Regardless of our results, I do want to discuss two particular incidents that marred what was otherwise for me a very enjoyable season. I do not mean in any way to call out the people concerned nor embarrass them in any way, but I think there are important points to be made and lessons to be learned. In one game, for whatever reason, a player effectively shut up shop half-way through a midweek innings and turned the game into a non-contest. The way in which he did this was in my opinion disrespectful to the opposition and his teammates and made a mockery of the evening. I witnessed this as umpire from behind the stumps, and did nothing about it, fearing making a bad situation even worse. On reflection, and as Chairman of The Club, I should probably have intervened, and to those involved on the night I therefore apologise. Nobody should have been put in that position, and I hope the player concerned understands and agrees with that. On a different occasion, in a match I was not playing in but nevertheless watching, I saw the opposition behave badly during play and immediately after the game. A catch behind was claimed, the batsman did not walk, and the umpire supported the batsman. The opposition was wrong to put pressure on an inexperienced umpire at the time, and some of their comments then and immediately after the game were quite appalling. I refer to these incidents because we play the game for fun and we play it to a code. And so I would ask that members of Isis continue to play within the laws of the game, stay true to the friendly spirit and sportsmanship of the game, and avoid any chance that we besmirch the good name of Isis. I am sure you agree that it is better to lose fairly and with good grace than to win unfairly or with disrespect to ourselves or our opponents.

I spoke of my concern about the social side of the club last year and we didn't seem to turn things around much in 2015, to be honest. For me, the barometer of a good social cricket club, one that is truly together, is marked by what happens before and after a match. I am as guilty as anybody else I think, but arriving at least 30 mins before play starts, changing together and preparing together will often ensure that the side stays together on the field. And staying together for a bit of post-match analysis and reflection is also a healthy sign of the camaraderie that is important to me. Too often I see half of the team disband before the last man is out of the dressing room, and I would like to see us stay together for longer if we are to progress off of the field as well as on. I know people have commitments outside of the club, and I have to leave quickly myself sometimes too, but for others I would like to see this as an exception rather than a rule. It is not about the beer alone, if you'll excuse the pun. Don't get me wrong, we are not as bad as some clubs, but I do aspire to see a buzz in and around Isis such as that we saw after the Aldworth game, with everybody staying for a time. I think it important that we must protect and grow this aspect of the club together. I was also bitterly disappointed that after working hard through the winter to secure fixtures and accommodation for a tour in 2015, that it had to be cancelled due a complete lack of interest just weeks beforehand. I for one will not be pushing for a repeat of that in 2016. There was also little support for Nick's Rugby World Cup event earlier that month, so I hope we can come together instead for a good night out in December instead.

It has been a quiet time in terms of committee business in 2015. There is no point in meeting for meeting's sake, but I can only recall two committee meetings since the last AGM. Our processes seem to run quite smoothly really, and the number of times the committee meet is not constitutional, but I think the level of business of the club is another sign of the buzz within its ranks. We were not helped by a reduced number of committee members in 2015 either; with people doubling up in official roles and only having two vice captains, we had only five committee members in total, and needing a quorum of four to do business it was hard to get together at a convenient time. Nevertheless, I am grateful to my four colleagues for their effort and personal commitment in 2015, both on and off the field. I say again how important it is for our sustainability that new people come forward regularly to take office and that we have a succession plan for every role.

I want to finish positively, and I am going to take the liberty of repeating myself as I reported similarly in 2014, but this point is important to me. It is specifically about our association with Queens College and the facilities we enjoy at the sports ground. We are in a fantastic location, play on a pitch of very high standard and enjoy excellent amenities in the pavilion. We enjoy these things with little effort, and at a fraction of the cost that we would bear were we to manage such things independently. And this and our good name in local friendly cricket make us an attractive club to play. So again, I would encourage you to think about our good fortune, and when you see him to take the opportunity to thank our groundsman, Martin Cross, for what he does for the club. We remain on a year-by-year agreement with the college for the hire of the facilities, which have remained at the same price for at least six years, while their discussions with Brasenose College continue, and I am pleased to say that we have again been allocated a full complement of dates for the 2016 season ahead.

I remain again to be proud of the history of our fantastic little club, the people in it and our contribution to local cricket, and I am pleased to have thoroughly enjoyed the 2015 season with you all. I look forward to 2016 with unerring optimism and wish you all the best for a short winter and an exciting season ahead.

Keith Whiter
Honorary Chairman