

BASSETLAW & DISTRICT CRICKET LEAGUE

LEAGUE SECRETARY'S – ANNUAL REPORT - 2011

Introduction:

My report for 2011 will talk about some of the achievements of individual players and various teams, with an emphasis on young players. Additionally, issues for next season, disciplinary matters, umpires and scorers, the need for change, finance, the future and some thanks to individual people will hopefully only occupy only a maximum of fifteen minutes this afternoon, as there are additional, very important matters to present and discuss a little later on.

Teams:

Congratulations to all the winning teams of all Divisions and to those gaining promotion. The final league tables and constitution of the Divisions for 2012, identify those teams and clubs within your agenda today. The Champions of the BDCL for 2011 was Worksop CC and they now go to compete at the higher level of the NCB PL.

The return of Kiveton Park from the PL back to our Championship after only one year and similarly with Farnsfield the previous year, provides a good indication of the difficult, challenging circumstances confronting Worksop next year.

The Tomlins Cup competition this year was won by M & P who achieved their success by beating Championship clubs and their victory was thoroughly deserved. The continuation of this cup competition remains in the balance and although we still intend to soldier on next season, it desperately needs more clubs to participate, to re-generate the reputation of the competition as in years gone by. The LMC accept that the emergence of league cricket in the area on Sunday's, has had a significant impact on this trophy, along with various changes in many players domestic circumstances. Never the less, I would ask you to take back this message to your clubs. Ultimately, our clubs will say whether they wish the Tomlins Trophy to remain or not?

The Mallen T20 Cup in contrast has much more interest. The fact of only consuming a couple of hours of people's time on a Tuesday evening is good evidence of the change in communities and life styles. This year, the trophy was won by Anston CC on their home ground with a very outstanding batting performance of John Lyne from Anston, hitting a marvellous century and being a man of the match with eye catching performance. We hope that the Mallen T20 format can continue to develop and prosper in the years ahead.

The league's senior team, although playing well against the NCB PL at Glapwell in the national President's Trophy were beaten in the 1st Round, with there having been good developmental opportunities for players at this representative level, including players under 25 who represented the league against the Yorkshire and Derbyshire League and the Derbyshire County League. We continue to seek opportunities of a similar nature at perhaps under 21 level with other leagues.

Notable Performances Season 2011:

See separate document.

Disciplinary Matters:

This time last year, I spoke for some time about the decline in the standards of behaviour and conduct with some players and the need for improvement. This, linked with changes to the disciplinary process of the league and the creation of the Accumulated Offence system in addition to the existing Disciplinary Hearing procedures and also better briefing to umpires and robust messages to clubs asking for their help, all made a difference!

It is pleasing to report a much better 2011 season, whereby players and umpires were able to play their role in greater harmony, without reducing any of the very necessary will to win, the vital competitive edge and the importance of playing hard challenging league cricket.

Overall, there were only 5 Disciplinary Hearings, (a reduction of more than 50% on the previous year), with only 4 Accumulated Offence Reports being received. It is important for me to acknowledge the important work of the Umpires Association for their contribution this year and working in partnership with us to make progress on this important topic, and also to people running all of our cricket clubs and the respective captains of those teams whose role is perhaps the most important one of all.

This improved theme and culture, must continue into 2012 and it is with that progress in mind that you will note an amendment to the disciplinary process for next year once again. This is always going to be work in progress, but the central objective is to create transparency and fairness for everyone in our disciplinary policies, so that levels of consistency are delivered, perceptions of fairness are enhanced and that quite simply, the right thing is done on every occasion. More on that subject when we discuss potential rule changes.

2012 season:

We have lost Newark Ransome & Marles who had been a member club of the league for many years, as they made the decision to move to the South Notts League, based on geographical considerations. We also lost Manton CC at the start of last season and the loss of Harthill 3rd XI midway through 2011.

We welcome back Thoresby Park II to the league and acknowledge the hard times this club have been through in recent years. To have the opportunity to re-generate a 2nd XI is good news. Problems can creep up on any club in many ways without realising, and the LMC are very conscious of a number of clubs who are having a tough time, similar to the experiences of Thoresby Park and indeed we remain committed to help and support these clubs where possible. We also welcome for the first time a 2nd XI from Wiseton Cricket Club and a new club Aston Hall CC, who will play at Todwick and had asked for a developmental team to be placed into Division 8.

Umpires and Scorers:

For many years at AGM's, the message has been sent to clubs explaining the shortage of umpires, suggestions as to the reasons why and thoughts as to how to solve the problem. It is important to recognise once again the work of the Umpires Association and to all clubs who have started the process of making a difference, with the emergence of some good quality younger umpires who have attended training courses, passed examinations and have started the pathway to what we hope will be a long commitment to the league and an enjoyable input into the game once playing days are over.

Another message I'm afraid to everyone to take back to your clubs, is the need to advertise for more umpires and more volunteers to complete this vital role. Training courses are advertised by the training team of the BDUA during the winter months, most of which take place here at Cuckney. At this point can I just say thank you on behalf of everyone to John Leaning who as usual this year has done an excellent job by ensuring that the right umpires get to the right matches. John and myself have to liaise a great deal in our respective roles, and I can tell you that John is very committed and very good at what he does for the benefit of us all!

Scorers can often be forgotten. This shouldn't happen, as history tells us that we can play cricket with less than 11 players, we can play cricket with no umpires, (albeit to the detriment of the game), but you cannot play cricket unless someone is keeping an accurate record of the score. The game quite rightly is essentially about players, but the role of the scorer is critical and is something which the league must advertise and sell to a greater degree. In turn clubs must do more to attract by whatever means someone who will complete this pivotal role on their behalf.

Finance:

I come to a point where I must not steal the thunder of our Treasurer Peter Neale or the presentation a little later on from Fred Clarke representing Sports Media Advertising. Never the less, suffice to say that the LMC are acutely aware of the affects the current financial climate is having on cricket clubs and indeed the league. We have spent considerable time looking at the age old equation of income versus expenditure. You don't need to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer or indeed be a mathematical genius, to work out that keeping our head above water as a league or your head above water as a club is becoming more and more difficult.

For these very reasons, the LMC have been working very hard to seek realistic options of how we can make the financial lives easier for all clubs in the years to come and I hope that you will listen to Fred's presentation very carefully in terms of the benefits on offer to us all and the opportunities which are just round the corner.

Changes:

Someone once told me that change is the only thing that remains constant. Standing still, not seeking improvement, not challenging existing practices is the moment we begin to lag behind. Can I just remind you for a moment of just a few of the important changes which have occurred in recent years:

- The creation of the Championship Division to create a flagship standard to aspire to.
- The need to play various cup finals and representative league games around the grounds to recognise the work of clubs within their community.
- The creation of a website, to improve communication in keeping with the demands of the era in which we live.
- The publication of LMC Minutes and Newsletters to assist with communication and show transparency of the LMC and their honest intent.
- A change of venue for the League Dinner and the format to re-fresh the event
- There are others but time is pressing.....

On the horizon sits the potential for more change and development, as the LMC addresses the need for League Sponsorship to assist clubs not only with their existence but to seek equitable processes to raise and maintain standards at the grass roots of the game.

The persuasion, or in some cases the various forms of incentivisation, for certain players to change clubs linked to honesty and integrity is an issue which will not go away and one potential rule change offered at today's meeting is one small step which the LMC intend to take on a long road to re-planting the seeds of respect between clubs and the need to simply do the decent thing, when approaching someone else's players from other clubs.

A change in the ethos, standards and qualities of cricket balls used throughout the league to create levels of equality and further links to finance and sponsorship is also an important change which will receive a more in depth explanation later on.

In the years ahead, the LMC, the Umpires Association and all clubs will need to continue to seek improvement, embrace the inevitable changes as they gather pace and evaluate the outcomes as they emerge. The balance between tradition, changing to improve and not just changing for the sake of it, is never an easy thing to achieve, but we must not shrink from that challenge.

Finally, a few thank you's

Behind the scenes, there are a lot of people who complete a lot of work for the benefit and efficiency of the league.

- The Umpires Association and their Secretary Ervin Devney, now work in partnership with the LMC for the benefit of everyone.
- Club Secretaries continue to give up hours and hours of their time to create a vital communication link between myself and their club.
- John Heaman, your League President in 2011 has represented the league to a high standard this year and we look forward to John Leaning in 2012, followed by Janet King in 2013 following on in this tradition.
- Peter Neale as Treasurer maintains the league accounts in a totally professional and accurate mind set. Tom Munro completes the very complex process of creating fixtures to a high standard and in a timely fashion and we are also grateful to Tom for accepting the addition responsibility next year of driving through the new electronic player registration system, as the league registrar.
- Malcolm Daniels as the Website Manager, is a committed and very willing helper, to improve communication across the league.
- Richard Martin, who over 20 years as my predecessor and now Handbook Editor, continues to produce one of the most informative and accurate handbooks in recreational cricket across the country.
- Paul Barker as Press Officer has given many years of supportive service and his unstinting commitment to the results service with other people, provides a very prompt and detailed weekly update.
- The decision of Bev Norris at this time last year to step down as League Statistician was a worry as Bev had given years of quality service to the league. The fear was unfounded, as Jack Tarr has stepped into the role like a duck to water. We are grateful to Jack for the way in which he has apparently eased so well into the role.

Finally and very importantly:

- In 1986, Jim Garton was co-opted onto the LMC and has remained so to this date, taking over as League Chairman for the past 9 years. The maths tells us that Jim's 25 years of commitment to the league, his unswerving sense of fairness and his ability to steer the management along the right path has been to the highest of standards.
- He has been through tough personal times recently and although he has now taken the decision to step down as chairman and serve the league from the 'back benches' so to speak, very simply, he will be a hard act to follow.
- 25 years is a long time. Many decisions, many hours, many commitments. Above all his unswerving loyalty, his judgements, always supportive and constructive, are just a few things which I personally, will always remember. On behalf of everyone connected with the BDCL over those 25 years, I would just like you say thank you to Jim and I know that he will be just as supportive to his successor, as he has been to myself over the last five years.

Thank you for listening.

Gary France
League Secretary
November 2011