

Isis Cricket Club

Chairman's Report – 2022 Season

Welcome to the Isis Cricket Club AGM for 2022. As Chair of the club, it is my remit to report back to you all. The operating guide says, and I quote, 'comment on the season past and any notable events'. Well, sadly, one event this year overshadowed all else. The tragic death of Felix Roper came not just as a shock but as a terrible loss to all who knew him and, of course, to our cricket club. Felix played a handful of games each season and had become a regular on the Isis golf scene playing in the annual match against the FFMCC as well as the club events. Felix embodied the spirit of the club. He was easy going and generous but most of all he enjoyed playing with friends, happy with whatever role he was given and supportive of others, wanting them to succeed

His last match for us, away to Islip, saw him charging around the boundary prior to scoring a good 11 runs, and for those who know the Islip track you will realise that is no easy feat, before being bowled by a ball that barely reached shin height. A quick look down, gentle shrug of the shoulders and then the appearance of his gentle, loose smile. No histrionics, no cursing the unjust gods of cricket. Just pleased to be part of it all. We are so much less without him. Please raise your glasses to Felix.

Well, what of the rest of the year? I will leave the on-field exploits to the captain and instead focus on the club as a whole. Having only played two games in 2021 and my first year as Chairman in 2020 coinciding with the pandemic (a season where the initial twenty-five matches were cancelled) it is good to report that both myself and the club are in a very healthy place.

How do we know?

Well, if we look at this year, we had:

A full fixture list with only two games cancelled because of weather or getting a team together; plenty of home games played at Queens and Brasenose; Successful nets with new people attending (although we could always do with more coming along); A great tour – well subscribed; A successful season winning 51% of games played; A really good awards evening; Great social events from lunch after the final nets in March right through to conkers this month; The golf events; The Fantasy League. I could go on.

Alex will talk through the end of season questionnaire later. However, I would like to look at a few things in more detail as to how we are doing longer term. Two years ago, the committee spent some time debating how we could ensure the long term prosperity of Isis given the age profile of some players and the key positions they held in the running of the club. In May of 2021 we decided on three main objectives to ensure this was addressed.

1. Solid membership base and recruit ten (younger) new members over three years.

Whilst there is always a turnover of players at any club as people move or commitments change (think Damo and Brad this year) we had a very healthy membership of 27. We had five new members, and special thanks to Luke Bowles, Matt and KP for their efforts there. Four of the five were considerably younger than the average age, and they played a total of 31 games. This would have been more if not for injury and marriage. Of this group, four are very keen to play next season and hope to play more frequently. They all wrote extremely complimentary letters about how they

have been welcomed into the club and how much they enjoyed playing. I will share this information in more detail at the first committee meeting, but examples include:

I really enjoyed playing for ISIS last season and thought the team were a great bunch of guys who were easy to get on with. I felt comfortable in getting to know everyone and looked forward to playing each week. The games were played in good spirit with everyone getting behind each other, even if someone made a mistake.

Being completely honest with you – I am happy I came to play with you guys. I found everyone so approachable, friendly, kind, but also had a good balance of being competitive. I always felt like we were playing as a team and encouraging one another, but still playing tough cricket and wanting to win.

One of the reasons I never continued playing cricket after I left school was because Uni was so overly competitive with a toxic masculinity, playing for Isis has reminded me why I have always loved cricket and how it can be played! I didn't think I would get back into playing, but now look forward to (hopefully) many more years of playing for the club. Might sound a bit over the top, but I mean it and would echo Rich's comments from the end of season dinner about how playing for Isis got him wanting to play cricket again.

I thought that you all took a lot of time and made a lot of effort to help me fit in and learn the game. I know how hard it is to manage a team, and that we want to win, but have to find a balance to keep all involved - it's not always possible. However, I always felt included and supported on the pitch, even if not batting or when bowling poorly. I always felt that you all tried to lift my spirits (even through clenched teeth after a no-ball boundary) and kept me positive.

In addition, we had 5 players who helped out but played only 1 or 2 games. Again, we are hopeful that one will join as a member next year and Mr W. Wyatt junior will become more of a regular fixture in the team.

On the downside we will lose Luke Blatchford, at least temporarily, as he galivants yet again.

2. Target existing and ex-members to re-join.

Two players re-joined this year playing 30 games between them and making a significant contribution to the club. There are high hopes that both will play more in the coming season. We also have several established players who will hopefully play a little more as their circumstances change.

3. Retain and develop an active committee (new members)

If numbers tell a story, then this year has been a resounding success. The committee has been expanded and now includes an additional three members who have all played an active role in the development of the club. It is great to see so many willing to take on the tasks associated with running a successful club as well as reducing the average age by about twenty years.

No club is perfect, and Isis is not about to buck that trend, but I believe we are a vibrant and successful club that maintains a desire to be inclusive of all and thankfully, in my case, irrespective of ability and age. As one member put it:

A team that wants to win but recognises that in friendly cricket it's about people playing cricket for a love of the game and socialising. By far and away the friendliest team I have played in.

And so, some thanks to those who do so much behind the scenes to keep the club on the road.

Firstly, to the vice-captains, Olly, Matt and Luke for stepping in and running the show when needed, to those members of the committee – Jakey, Ravi and Jon for their help and advice during the year and especially to Jon for sorting the awards evening and Ravi for the fabulous Fantasy League, and to Matt for his work in the first half of the season as Safeguarding Officer.

I would also like to say a special thanks to Nick for sorting out the fixtures, the tour and the grounds and best of all just doing it without fuss or moan; to KP for being the soul of Isis CC, for all the golf events, for stepping in when Matt was unable to continue with the Safeguarding role and just doing it all without fuss or moan; to Alex for the minutes, the meetings, the correspondence, the social organising and doing it without fuss or moan; and last but by no means least to Keith Whiter for being the collector of subs and membership, sorter of finances, payer of debts, data protector, kit bag counter, buyer of balls, sorter of stats, website wonder and writer of reports and doing it all without... well no-one is perfect!

I do also want to say 'thank you' to Keith for his year as captain. This is a poisoned chalice. Attempting to balance the need and desire to win that still burns in all of us with the need to ensure everyone gets a go and to bat or bowl in a game is an impossibility (ask Phil Salt or me 18 overs in 9 games – sorry for my outburst). Add on the pressure each game to get the bowling changes right, the batting order correct and the field placings as they should be and you have an arduous task that everyone else believes they could do better. I know at different times of the season we have debated whether the balance was right and I am grateful that the captain was open to criticism and attempted to change things to get things right for everyone. The fact that we won half of the games we played is a sign you were never too far away from marrying those different pressures.

And so, finally... what does next year hold?

Hopefully you all playing a full part again. The return of some stalwarts of many years – Ravi free of childcare, Olly free of moving house?

And, will we see:

Whiter 900 wickets, Joe 500 wickets and Roy 200? Jon 5000 runs, Ravi 3000 runs, maybe Olly 16000?

New players	Return players	Established players	
T Hornsey 10	R Stephenson 21	J Ponsford 31	
S Pehley 4	M Naqvi 9	L Bowles 12	
L Brown 4	D Henry 7	O Walter 23	
Al Sharif 1	P Wiblin 14	A Beavan 14	
Az Sharif 1	H Hudson 1	L Blatchford 14	
J Talbot 1		M Stanbury 19	
J Rose 4		P Jacobs 26	
A Cartwright 2		R Kella 14	
R Poyser 1		J Walter 34	
S Gregan 2		D Penhallurick 7	
J Randall 1		H Stoneman 8	
W Wyatt 1		K Whiter 34	
J Bishop 9		A East 34	
		A Symons 6	
		F Roper 4	
		N Wyatt 32	
		J Francis 2	
		R Blatchford 18	
		D Todd 2	
		K Ponsford 28	
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