

Isis Cricket Club

Chair Report to the AGM 2025 Season

Thanks for coming along. It is a real pleasure to see so many of you and thanks for making the effort to come out and support the club. This is the most important, and boring, event in the Isis calendar. But it is a time to elect a diverse range of people who share one common attribute – that is they all have no great personal ambition or desire to be elected to a post of any responsibility.

However, before such shenanigans begin, let us reflect on another successful season for the club. I will leave it to others to bore you with numbers but I will say that I did a comprehensive statistical analysis and found no correlation between my efforts and any success for the club. But there is nothing better than taking a small sample size, with high standard deviations to reach meaningless conclusions so before moving on just one for you all – I am stepping down as Chair after six years of mediocre management.

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks for allowing me the honour to help shape the club. For me Isis CC is so much more than just cricket. It is great to play, occasionally have a bit of success on the field and even win the odd award, but it is the people here who make this a special club.

I would like to thank everyone for the friendship, help and support that I have been given over the years but especially in the last 18 months. When I suffered the trauma of watching my child come as close to death as you can possibly imagine it was, in no small measure, the camaraderie of you all that helped me through that time. When every moment was invaded by the thought of whether she would survive the year it was great to hear your voices loud and clear - 'You are batting at 10 or 11, sort it out with Nick', 'Sorry, Easty. I should have caught that', and of course 'You need to pitch it up'. I have tried my best but now is the time to pass the baton on to someone else who will run faster with it which, to be frank, is just about everyone – except people called Keith or Harry.

To say this job has been fun would be a lie, not on the scale of Hitler saying he wouldn't invade Poland, but nevertheless an untruth. However, it has been immensely pleasurable to see the club continue to thrive. This is in no small part because of the large contributions made by so many others and I would like to express my thanks to all the individuals who have done so much for the club this last year.

First to Alex whose batting is a true reflection of his secretarial abilities. You never quite know what you are going to get. He might not do much for a while and then will suddenly turn up and produce a great performance that reminds you why you so admire him. Thank you for all the organising, sorting and fixing, Al. Without you, chaos would have reigned. And even with you, frequently did.

Nick Wyatt. A man so miserable about the state of fixtures and groundsmen you would have thought he came from Birmingham. But someone who always seems to find a solution – who locates a ground to play on even though it is miles away, and some unknown opposition destined to thrash us. Thanks, Nick

Keith Ponsford. President, ever faithful supporter, golf arranger, a person who is always working away in the background supporting others and ensuring the club functions effectively. And all that despite not being able to play since September 2023. And whose last wicket was in July of that same year but

still he remains a loyal and steadfast supporter of the club. Thanks, Keith and we all hope to see you back on the field this coming season.

Keith Whiter. Treasurer, website manager. Each year he produces accounts that tally and balance and enables the club to stay in good financial order. He keeps the website and our variable batting and bowling statistics up to date. A club member who through his diligence and hard work has maintained his credibility – which is unbelievable for a man who was found semi naked, pissing in a hotel car park in the early hours of the morning. Thanks, Keith. Appreciated.

Rich Stephenson, The captain. More on this man and the season in a moment but for now, thanks for all your efforts this year.

And to all you others who strive to keep the spirit of the club alive and well: like Jakey, transporting Hugh so frequently and still having the capacity to catapult me into the air when I least expected it; Joe and Olly for looking after Hugh by taking him home early on tour because he was almost as tired as they were; James for captaining so well and, especially for picking me for one game as a specialist fielder – the list goes on. For all the small things, for all the little things that make this club so precious, thank you all.

But what of the cricketing year and that captain, I mentioned?

Twelve months ago, I caused much consternation by stating that, as a friendly club, we should look to a 50% win rate as a marker of success. What could be more sociable than winning and losing equally with our cricketing friends? This was seen by some as an outrageous comment. However, I wish to clarify my remarks. I never suggested, for one moment, that we shouldn't go out to win every game. That we shouldn't strain every sinew to achieve victory. No, I merely felt that we should not judge our success or failure by wins and losses. A close game, with old friends, on a glorious summer's day, with tales to remember and repeat endlessly afterwards, finished with a sociable drink. That is what it is all about. And if we happen to win half of those close games, well...

And so, did we deliver? The captain certainly made his mark. Ignoring me completely he set out on an outrageous winning streak. The first five games, an Isis record, were all marked 'w' in the scorebook. But this captain is nothing if not idiosyncratic. Having proved his genius, he then chose to revert to the 50% model in order to please me. Results - lose, win, lose, win, lose, win, lose. After a couple of cancellations and a conversation about not taking the 50% win rate too literally we set out on a more refined approach – lose, lose, win, win, lose, win, lose, win, lose, win. A brief dialogue about interpreting my words figuratively, and it being acceptable to win when the opportunity presented itself, was followed by the team winning seven of the next nine games.

It was obviously time for a late season performance appraisal. The conversation revolved around the need to maintain equilibrium and not to be carried away by the ups and downs of the sporting year. The result? The season was completely balanced as we matched the great start by losing the final five games. This was also an Isis record as we had not lost so many games on the trot since way back in 2024.

What a captain we have had this year. Able to read the game so expertly, to get performances out of people they didn't know they had (think Olly Walter's bowling), to ensure everyone gets a game, and to manipulate matches towards tight finishes that we, more often than not, just about win. And to

use his outstanding cricketing talent for the benefit of the team (and, as my grandchild says, his average).

Administration may not be his forte but he somehow contrived to get teams out all season and carry the burden of matchday management with grace. He has a rare knack. You may not choose him to be the one to organise a piss up in a brewery, but if he did, you would probably find it closed, end up in the pub along the street having the time of your life, while the same brewery mysteriously burned down. Thank you for a great season, captain.

To finish. The club is in a good place, the cricket enjoyable and successful (at least 50% of the time), the friendship beyond reproach and best of all with a bright, young future. I am hopeful that this year we will be able to elect officers that represent the next generation, even if they are all fast approaching 50 and that the intense breeding programme of the last few years will lead to even more youngsters playing for the club. Looking at you, Harry.

And so, I leave you with two quotes that have helped me over the last six years and may guide you in the times to come:

The first: 'Don't smile because it's over, cry because it happened'

The second: 'Jakey, don't sit on the bench it's going to tiiiiip'.

Thank you all for a special 2025. And here's to next season.

Allan East

November 2025