

Secretary's Report 2009

Doesn't a year suddenly come round? A Secretary's work is never done, and just as the 2009 playing season has concluded, I find myself with the end of season duties that are equally as important. For the second successive year, I have opted to publish an end of season report booklet, which provides you all with the details since our last Annual General Meeting, held back in November 2008. I hope you will digest all the information within the publication, and should you have any questions regarding this report, I will be free to discuss them at the Annual General Meeting, on Friday 20th November 2009, at 6:45pm in the clubhouse. A prompt start is essential. I hope all members turn out in force.

Despite constant demands for seeking the financial security and stability we desire to purchase newer, more advanced equipment, the club fails to reach its targets. With the credit crunch hitting our country in 2009, the club has struggled to find major sponsorship during the year, but hope this will not be the case for 2010. In fact the club have looked into advertising sponsor boards being displayed on the riverside fence, which should give an improved look and feel, along with much valued revenue. The club is blessed with a small number of people who donate money each year and I thank them immensely for their contribution. The club requires new, improved covers for East Ayton, and following the damage cause to the existing set during the 2009 season, this is essential to retain our Premier League status. However, this cannot be considered until the target amount required is reached, therefore we cannot commit to such expenditure at present.

Some of you may be aware that Mick Almond stepped down as East Ayton wickets groundsman at the end of the 2009 season, after giving us several months notice of his intention. Mick has a long association with Forge Valley Cricket Club, and his efforts should be applauded, as he has produced wickets that are excellent cricket pitches, and fair for both bat and ball. Mick is continuing in his role as Secretary of East Ayton Playing Fields Association (EAPFA), and will still maintain the outfield, on which we have had very positive feedback during the past year. However, Mick's decision does give the club a headache, as we shall have to find a replacement, or replacements. This is where we need the assistance of the membership, some of whom have already been working on the wicket since early September. Should you be interested in helping with the wicket in 2010, please either contact me directly, or pop down to the AGM. I'd also like to thank Mick and the EAPFA committee for their support this year, and Peter Suggitt of the Village Hall committee for his continued understanding with regard to staging cricket matches. I also wish to thank Bob Kimm for his endeavour at the West Ayton ground. This keeping of this facility is essential for our third and fourth team squads, as they bring on the juniors on Saturday match days. Bob also shows our club enormous support in his role as Ayton Sports Association's Secretary, and I thank the whole of the Association for their commitment to the cricket side of things.

Ruth Kimm and Kath Gibson have again provided us with excellent teas over the eighteen weeks of the season, for which we should all be grateful and fully appreciate the time they take in preparation alone. I understand Kath will be standing down from these duties, and I thank her for the efforts over many years. Therefore, the club will require a tea person for 2010 at West Ayton.

For the second season running, entertainment has been downscaled to cut costs, but the presentation evening still continues to be fairly popular. I had intimated that I felt the night should be held in the clubhouse this year, particularly with the recession hitting us all but the committee felt otherwise. I'd like to thank Will Tindall for his help in organising of the event, but despite the insistence that the night goes ahead, additional assistance was virtually non-existent. The disappointing side was the failure to hold the annual BBQ, and also the Forge Valley sixes. There didn't seem any interest from members to run the sixes this year, but instead an inter-club President's XI versus Chairman's XI took place, and will again in 2010.

Net sessions were at times, poorly attended, and this has been reviewed. Therefore, fewer weeks of pre-season nets have been booked again at Graham School in March and April, so please keep your Tuesday nights free. The dates are listed in the publication and on the website. There is also an option to have Sunday afternoon practices using the outdoor net at East Ayton. Details of these sessions will be available in the new year.

There were several incidents during the season, which at times, caused me increasing annoyance and frustration, including numerous instances of the Carr Lane entrance being left open following early season fixtures, and other items being left out in the field and not put away accordingly. It was even more frustrating that the recently purchased net practice facility, which incidentally is the property of the EAPFA, was left insecure one evening, resulting in a mangled caged mess the next day following high winds, meaning the net was unavailable for much of the season,. I'm pleased to confirm it has been permanently fixed into position for use in 2010 and ready for use.

At one stage during the season, I had reached a decision to resign as Secretary due to these ongoing issues, people's failure to listen to the problems, plus being constantly hassled by cricket related telephone calls during work hours, something I can not afford to happen. There is a personal reluctance to remain in the role if such occurrences continue and whilst I've received many reassurances, there are issues that must be rectified.

This time last year the club was celebrating being crowned Scarborough Beckett League Champions for only the fifth time in our history. Little were we to know that the first team would be much changed in 2009, and that other teams would struggle during the season. Did we rest on our triumph? No, but as a club, we should have been more proactive, but hindsight is a wonderful thing. I'm positive that we can rebuild from this, starting from now.

The Evening League campaign was a sorry affair, with the A Team relegated to Division B, and the B Team spending most of their season in the bottom three of Division C. Changes to the format of the Evening League gave much excitement and expectation. The members had elected Andy Holden as captain, but unfortunately he had to step down during pre-season due to work commitments, with Dave Morris taking the reigns. Paul Wilson also stood down as B Team captain, after electing to take on the Saturday second XI role, and with vice captain Tim Farrant declining the role, Pete Wannop took charge. None of these changes affected the outcome of the season, but it gave a feeling of instability within the evening league ranks. Despite promising opening day wins over Cayton A and Wykeham B for both teams, the season became a struggle with availability becoming a major issue. Couple this with the loss of a small number of Evening League regulars and relegation loomed large. In all the A Team used twenty-nine players, whilst there were thirty-five players used in the B Team. A late season fightback from the A Team gave brief hope, but failure to win the last game of the season confirmed relegation. Upon reflection, this isn't the worst situation for the team, who must dust themselves down, lay solid foundations again, which this league should allow, and push for a return during 2010. The B Team managed to gain enough wins to cement their place in Division C for another season, which considering the number of juniors who played on a regular basis, is a fine effort. The Evening League campaign did finish on a high note as the B Team won the McCain Cup with victory over Ebberston B. Best of luck go to both teams next season.

In the other cup competitions, the club performed poorly, which included a heavy defeat, away at Staithes CC in the Npower Village Cup, and a first round Hospital Cup exit at the hands of Scalby CC. It's fair to say such competitions weren't at the top of the clubs agenda for 2009, as some of the enforced selections proved but 2010 should see the club return to target a couple of cup runs.

The junior squad also had a good season finishing mid table in a competitive league. Dave Hartley along with James Glaves took on the roles of junior managers, who were joined by Katie Shepherdson and Paul Wilson for training sessions on Wednesday evenings. With the juniors being

the future of the club these voluntary coaches and assistants are essential, and I thank them for giving their time over the past year.

The Saturday teams had a mixed season, with the four teams totalling only twenty-four wins between them all season and two sides suffering relegation from their respective leagues.

The first team were again captained by Dave Morris, but during the winter months, then pre-season, it became apparent that some of the 2008 championship winning side would not be available, or were standing down from 1stXI duties. This changed the make up of the side and an opening day defeat, against Staithees CC gave an indication of a difficult season ahead. The team suffered from inconsistency but reacted really well and started to produce performances of a competitive standard. Some of the younger players started to feel more at ease at Premier level, and this resulted in their own personal performances. A final league position of sixth doesn't sound great, but given the circumstances, where I'm sure, many clubs would have fallen, Valley didn't and credit must go to the twenty four players who gave their all during the season. After four seasons at the helm, I understand Dave will not be seeking re-election at the AGM, therefore I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his commitment and effort during his time as captain. Dave managed to achieve the Beckett League title during his stewardship, something many of us have tried, yet failed, and the club will be eternally grateful.

James Glaves was elected at the AGM to run the seconds, but unfortunate, unforeseen circumstances forced him to stand down prior to the season, which left a vacant post, with no one willing to fill it. Paul Wilson, a member of the first team title winning side put himself forward to the committee, which was accepted. The seconds seemed doomed to relegation after the first half of the season, as they felt the full effect of the first team changes and the use of twenty nine players is proof of this. However, a run of six wins in nine games saw them with a sniff of staying up in what has become an increasingly strong and competitive league. The last day of the season saw the seconds needing to win convincingly at Wykeham CC, restrict their opponents to a few points, and hope for other results to go their way. They did their part by winning, but Wykeham gained enough points to remain safe, other results didn't go to plan, so the seconds fell two points adrift, despite attaining 167 points from eighteen games. There's never a good time to suffer relegation and I feel for the seconds and their skipper Paul who I know wanted to keep the team up. The upside is, if they can maintain their second half of the season form next campaign, keep the nucleus of that side together, and return with determination and belief, they can challenge in Division B, and make a swift return.

Despite an opening weekend win, the thirds were always going to find life difficult in the Beckett League Division C and so it proved. Andy McAleese's efforts in attempting to keep the side up should be applauded but with several key players playing at a higher level at various times during the season, the chances of staying in the division were slim. Relegation to the Derwent Valley League was sealed in week thirteen of the season and an overall record of just three wins in two seasons is fair reflection of their struggles in this division. A return to the Derwent Valley League is just what the team need, and I wish the side well for 2010 where they can regroup and start the season with renewed confidence. In total the thirds use thirty one different players.

In a season in what proved to be Micah Greaves' last as captain, the fourths were on the fringes of the promotion battle until week 12 of the season, but the effects of being unable to put out a full strength side on a regular basis proved too much, however, a sixth placed finish is still highly respectable. As always, Micah led from the front with his batting, something he has always shown during his tenure as captain. In the five years since the reformation of the fourths, the side, whilst never gaining promotion but always proving competitive, has always provided a platform for the youngsters to come through, and they have always been given an opportunity to perform. Micah has run the fourth team for the entire five seasons since reforming, and the amount of hours he has put in, unseen by many, has been endless, yet he has always shown full determination to keep moving the team forward. Many of the younger players on our books, have started alongside Micah following their

stints in junior cricket therefore I hope the rewards will be seen for several years yet. I must pay tribute to Micah for his sterling efforts and his enthusiasm in the role.

I must congratulate both our first and second teams on their achievement of winning the Beckett League Spirit of Cricket award for 2009. This is the second time in three seasons we have won this award, and proves good guys can play decent cricket, and be successful. This is a success the club can be extremely proud of, and credit must go to you all. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of continuing this style of play in future seasons.

Our website www.fvcc.co.uk continues to be an essential tool for information whether its selection, fixtures or general information, and I'm pleased the site is popular. I am open to offers on how the site can be improved further, so if you have any ideas, please drop me an e-mail.

I hope the club will continue to make significant strides forward. How do we go about this? For one, I hope members elected onto the 2010 committee will look into increasing their roles. Such decisions can be made at the AGM, or in committee, but sharing the workload can modify the workings of the club, and the more involved the better. This may seem as I'm trying to opt out of certain duties, which I can assure you is not the case, but I feel this is in the best interests of the club, and a positive way forward.

I am also wary of the problems younger players face in the transition from juniors to moving to senior level. The age group 17-21 is still essential to player development and we must keep looking at working with players within that age range. At times, there has been a tendency for the club to lose focus on some players within this age group, and this is something that needs to be addressed. Whilst I realise the early part of the season is the most hectic of times, I would like to recommend Monday practice nights, where all members can turn up and work on aspects of their game.

Recruitment of players is constantly being discussed, and the need for the club to strengthen at all levels. There is a tendency for players to remain with their existing teams these days, perhaps due to the transfer system, but that doesn't mean we have to stand still. I am all for adding to the existing squads, but remember, the players must be of the right quality and substance, and that doesn't relate to just on the field. Nescafe type success isn't always the way. The ability to contribute off the field not only aids the team, but the club as a whole, as we enjoy a healthy social scene. The club must retain its true identity, an identity that gives youth its chance whilst constantly competing on the field of play. We need to keep the spirit of the club and provide every encouragement for players to perform at whichever level.

The management team have also given full endeavour to ensure the club runs as smoothly as possible, and I thank them for their efforts, Regrettably, Gary Gibson resigned from the committee during the season, and the committee chose not to replace, but we are looking for new candidates this term. It's essential that the committee has the experience onboard, which George Ireland, Dave Long, Dave Hartley and Chairman Derick Hall provide. Between them these four individuals have vast experience on the running of the club, experience that cannot be replaced and they remain the core of the committee ensuring my role is made easier and I hope they continue to do so. Couple this with younger members, with fresh ideas, it can only serve well. If you wish to be part of the management setup, please put yourself forward on the nomination sheets in the clubhouse. It can be very rewarding.

Most members know I like reeling off statistics, so, before I conclude, here's some from 2009, which relate to all competitions. In total, Valley used 72 players at senior level during the season, and these players scored a total of 10486 runs. There were 29 fifties and 4 centuries. Valley's fielders claimed 251 catches, whilst the wicket-keepers snared 14 stumpings between them. The bowlers took 588 wickets between them, which included 24 five wicket hauls. In all the bowlers bowled 2846 overs, with 386 maidens. In all, the club played a total of 113 matches in all competitions, winning 36, losing 61

and 16 drawn, or rain affected. This is a winning percentage of 30%. This amount of matches is huge for any club, and shows the necessity for voluntary efforts in many guises. I document all the matches the club has played, collating all runs, wickets and catches for players at senior level. Some members have taken advantage of my offer to provide them with a report on their performances during the season. I do aim to maintain this, and keep delving into the archives to find further statistical achievements and now have Beckett League records going back to 1950. This is an ongoing task, and one that takes up some of the long winter months. If anyone has any scorebooks from yesteryear, it would be appreciated if you could forward them to me.

I always like to reminisce at the end of my reports and this season was a landmark for me personally as it was my 25th year involved in local cricket, and my 16th with Valley. Alongside others, who have been involved with the club for such a length of time (and more in some cases!), we have seen the club evolve into what it is today, one we can be proud of. Ten years ago, the club had enjoyed a successful season back in the top flight of the local following a two year absence. The seconds were struggling in the Derwent Valley League, as were the thirds, whilst reforming the fourths hadn't even been considered. Evening League, like always, was a work in progress. The club is much better now, than then, and I believe it was pretty good then. Some faces have disappeared, some remain, new ones have joined, but we should all have the club's best interests at the forefront of our thinking, whilst keeping the honest nature of the club. I'm sure this can be maintained. Despite the tricky times of 2009, I believe Forge Valley Cricket Club can be full of optimism for next year, when we all can start afresh and represent the club to the full. Players must enjoy each others company, gel together, work well as a team, perform as an individual and then you can reap the rewards. I am hugely proud of the clubs achievements during my time as Secretary, the most successful period since the glory days of the mid 1980's, with the pinnacle obviously being the club being crowned Beckett League Champions in 2008. The club has won numerous league and cup competitions and the fourths made a vital return to the fold, but, to me, it all started back in 2003, when the second team, captained by Steve Robinson, won the Derwent Valley Championship. I knew as a club, as a group, we were onto something good and I still feel that. Every season since has given progression and at times, success. Let's maintain that in 2010.

Simon Dobson

Secretary