

2022 1st XI Report

Following the disappointment of just missing out on the league title in 2021, hopes were high that the 2022 season would be a triumphant one. An influx of new players in the winter bolstered the depth of the squad and a good pre-season witnessed enough performances to suggest that title ambitions were a distinct possibility.

The season commenced with a pleasing win against Christchurch before a testing away trip to Dorchester, which despite not having the rub of the green, proved to be our worst bowling performance of the season and we were soundly beaten. Two weeks later, on a Saturday of poor availability, we lost a tight game that we should have won against the early pace setters Wimborne. Consequently, we found ourselves in a disappointing mid table position and the prospects of winning the silverware seemed very distant.

A run of five wins which included good displays against Bere Regis and Sherborne then took us to the halfway stage with a playing record of W7 L2. Signs were positive for the second half as confidence was high and the newcomers had all impressed - Jordan Betts and Scott Bellamy with bat and ball respectively, and Darren Van Niekirk who had provided another gear in the middle order. Badrul Alam had returned from a break with 129 at Puddletown and the Joeys, Wormington and Wilson were bowling well and regularly taking the wickets we have become accustomed to.

A bout of Covid in week 10 provided an opportunity for the teenager Aryan Mehta who took it with both hands with a classy, dominant innings of 88* at that got everyone excited. His talent has never been doubted and it was nice to see him deliver on his potential and give the middle order an even stronger feel to it for the remaining games.

The key period of the year ensued with the 'must win' return fixtures against Dorchester and Wimborne, both at home in the space of three weeks. The bowlers had their revenge in the former as they dismissed our opponents for 120 and an 8 wicket win, courtesy of a solid partnership between Badrul Alam and Rich Armstrong, delivered a big points swing and moved us to second in the table. A narrow win at Cattistock where Aryan Mehta starred again, preceded the Wimborne game in which we were set 210 to win. Lewis Marais was given the chance to open the batting and it proved to be a key moment in the season. He provided an excellent start with Jordan Betts before Rich Armstrong and Badrul Alam progressed the score nicely to 130-2. After a little wobble, Darren Van Niekirk and Dan Jackson seized control of the innings and guided the team to a crucial 4 wicket victory.

Results elsewhere meant that 5 wins in the remaining 5 games were required for us to win the league, and the charge was spearheaded by Lewis Marais, batting from the front, as he proceeded to hit a total of 236 runs at an impressive strike rate. His dominance in that spell prevented many batsmen getting to the crease and so chasing 166 in the final game against Sherborne, with the league title as the prize, was always going to be tricky when he departed relatively early in the run chase. Fortunately, however, Rich Armstrong rose to the occasion and having already bowled very well, he calmly composed an innings of 52* to steer us home and earn himself the Performance of the Year award. The victory against Sherborne was our 14th in a row, a feat that I cannot remember being achieved before and was a precursor to one of the best night's celebrations the club has witnessed.

The player of the season award went to the stalwart Joey Wilson who bowled as well as he ever has in all his years at the club. Consistent, containing, accurate bowling that always asks questions of frustrated batsmen is a fielding captain's dream. Figures of 9.3-3-12-4 against Dorchester and 10-1-16-4 at Martinstown were his best but just two of numerous performances that earned him the widespread recognition from all those that played and voted.

As always, at the end of another successful and enjoyable year I would like to thank, in addition to everyone who played and those that came to support, the four other captains and Joey Wilson for their commitment, enthusiasm, patience and understanding. Thank you too to Nick Williams for his wise counsel, the ever-present Phil Quinn for scoring and Andy Milner for his help with all things off the field.



David Miller

1st XI Captain