

As always the 5th XI is a home for those young cricketers making their first forays into adult cricket, more experienced cricketers who are looking for a couple of casual games, and people like me, who haven't quite worked out which end of the bat to hold yet.

Due to the somewhat bizarre scheduling arrangements in County Division 7 East (yes it really does go that low) the 5th XI only had 10 scheduled matches this year, though we did supplement this with a couple of friendlies for good measure.

You'll be relieved to hear I don't plan on giving a blow by blow account of each of these titanic encounters, though I will pick out some highlights. A tough opening against a Dorchester 3rd XI that would remain unbeaten throughout the season saw us play one of only a handful of games at our defacto home of King's Park. Whilst the opposition proved far to strong, there was a tone setting knock of 46 for Stu Dennis, and Henry Sillence made his adult debut behind the stumps, staking his place in becoming the 5th Xis regular wicket keeper for the season. Emma Heckford took 2-31 and, as often happens, it wouldn't be long before she and other talented youngsters disappeared off to the heady heights of the 4th XI for the rest of the season.

A game against Christchurch on a terrible pitch at Ringwood followed, with seasoned ringer Pete MacDiarmid cashing in with 50 not out and a 5-fer. Unfortunately a 90 from the Christchurch opener meant it wouldn't be our day. Sophie Randall distinguished herself with an early contender for catch of the season too. Dorchester away was, again, rather a mismatch but Stephen Warren managed a 50 achieved in a solid 10th wicket stand with young debutant Theo Smith. Another 40 plus score from Stu Dennis in this game, where he gallantly hit his own wicket as not to take the limelight from young Stephen.

Thus followed a tempestuous game against Bournemouth, who forgot many of the the rules of the game, like bringing their own ball and swiping ours, as well as what a wide and what a no ball are. Losing off the last ball in that one stung a bit, though at least I managed a score above 10 for once.

Fortunately for the 5th XI, after 4 games without a win, I was injured, which meant more competent people could guide the team to it's first victory, a narrow 1 wicket win against Parley. We were indebted to young Mathiw Archchige for his 48\* on debut, as well as 46 from

Julian Boyd at the top of the order. Alfie Dell also made his adult debut in this one, taking the catch that earned Theo his first adult wicket.

Back to back wins came when we beat Christchurch, a maiden adult 50 for young Harley Simpson helping us on our way to a 4 wicket win, alongside Joel Ashton's 8 overs, 2 wickets for 9 runs and Emma Heckford's 4 for 46. Broadstone were too much for us though, despite Stephen Warren dispatching the Broadstone opener and league top run scorer with the County Division 7 East ball of the century. A valiant 51\* from Stu Dennis not enough to chase down the monster target we were set.

A much stronger Parley side beat us on their home turf despite a 5 fer from James Abel, sealign his position as top wicket taker for the 5th XI this season with 11 at an average of 10.73, and sadly our last game against Bournemouth was more of the same from the opposition. A rather ugly affair with shoddy umpiring and poor conduct that left a bitter taste, even with a 73 from Matt Reed and a 45 from Craig Sillence. Sadly we were forced to scratch our final game of the season against Broadstone, which we put down to 'AFC Bournemouth playing at home related availability issues'.

Despite this we finished 5th in the league, which sounds alright but there were only 6 teams competing. I'd really like to thank everyone who represented the 5th XI this season, and especially those non-regulars who stepped in when we were short, like Pete MacDiarmid, Robbie Miller, Harry Reed-Hume, Jo Pilley and Graeme Overy, who I believe flew in from Majorca on the morning of our opening game. I'd like to thank everyone who scored for us, especially Charlotte Randall who did so more than most, and everyone who came to watch our talented youngsters and talented old men. I'd also like to thank my wife Poppy for frequently bringing my children to my games so they could relentlessly heckle me from the boundary.

I'll quickly wrap up with some awards. Our Young Player of the Year goes to a lad who made his adult debut this season and was frequently the first name on the teamsheet. A safe pair of hands doing a job I personally hate and always with a positive attitude and a positive way of playing. Our Young Player of the Year is Henry Sillence

Our player of the year is someone who I've mentioned a few times. Our reliable run scorer and, as I said to him every game, batting at 4 for a change. With 229 runs and the 3rd highest run scorer in the league (amazing what you can do when you don't dislocate your shoulder

with unnecessary boundary fielding) and chipping in with 5 wickets, the 5th XI player of the Year is Stu Dennis.