

3rd Team Captains Report – 2023 Season

It's been a fantastic season, club wide. The brave decision taken to try and put out five sides most Saturdays proved to be a gamble worth taking, even if it did lead to some busy weeks of trying find players 53, 54 and 55. And before we get to the Saturday stuff, can we raise a glass to everyone who gives up their time and puts in huge effort to ensure that Saturdays can take place.

Nick Williams, Andy Milner and Nick Heckford in particular, they do the tireless unseen work. The copious amounts of Admin, liaising with other clubs, the DCL takes more hours than we have fingers and toes in this room, especially in a year where we have had to go through club mark scrutineering. So to everyone who sits on the committee, a thank you.

I'd also like to pass on my thanks to the other captains, Matt Reed has once again done a fantastic task of the unenviable leading the fifth team,

The threes season then, we were keen to make a good impression in County Division three following our promotion the year before. Club recruitment and retention had been good, we would also be joined by Nick Whitton as scorer. We were fortunate to have John Wright and on occasion John MacDiarmid help us out as umpires, a huge help and a huge devotion of time and on a Saturday both were outstanding in their field

The season would start against Cerne Valley who had been relegated with a chip on their shoulder given the circumstances around the season prior, but we felt well prepared, that was until 7 players went off on a stag do on the opening weekend. But a hard working performance so us push a good team close, but was also followed up with defeats against Kingston Lacy and Broadstone 2's. We were playing good cricket, we were pushing teams close but could get a result over the line.

Multiple options were considered, moving around the batting line up, alternating the bowling, field positions, dropping Hobbsy to the fours again but did what any self-respecting captain would do in such a position – changed the scorebook as it was obviously cursed and bought a flag. THE flag. Our Flag. Both debuted away to Bere Regis, and we won by ten wickets. No idea how Rob Key got the top job over me. But it worked, The bowling unit were exceptional and Hobbsy and Paul Reynolds knocked off 150 odd runs with ease, with Hobbsy petrified to get out as Paul had told him he wasn't allowed to. But the flag gave us something to take with us to every game and a bit of Whitecliff went with us across Dorset for the rest of the season and we would then go on a run of nine games with only one defeat (probably the only game we genuinely deserved to lose) and see us rise to second in the table at the end of July. We also had a rare, enjoyable run out at Poole Park after a late 2's game was scratched by the opposition.

August would be a mixed month however with us back to losing some tight games with us eventually finishing 7th, although 5th if you add in points we (as a team feel) we were harshly docked. Nothing takes away from what we achieved as a side. Ultimately, wherever we finished this year, we would be the best placed third team in Dorset. But we mixed it up with some good sides, all of them first teams or second teams, and the majority of the second teams were second XI's to premier league sides in a competitive league.

We completed our season 49 players having played in the 3's with ages ranging from 13 to 61, 7 players being under 15 or younger. and everyone who stepped on to the field having an impact on the season, and I hope everyone that played in that side had as much fun as I had leading them.

12 players passed 50, 4 of those scores being not outs and while nobody took a five for – There were some superb bowling performances across the season, which were backed up by fielding improvements that were made every week, highlighted by some wonderful catches.

Top of the days out were two away trips

The performance against Bere Regis 2's from the entire team I've already touched on kick starting our season. A day that started with Flynn and Sam Leaton holding their top order to 27 for 2 off 12 overs, and was backed up by a Tom on debut and Matt Williams, before Paul Reynolds and Matt Hobbs gave everyone a pad rash while they went about their work for 30 overs.

The away day to Sherborne was also fairly special, Flynn and Sam were again miserly opening up, along with Matt Williams who somehow went wicketless, while Nick, Tom Perry and Simon Fairweather held things tight in the back overs. Nick would go on to open up with 63 runs, with partners getting starts but not hanging around it was left to Tom and Flynn to see it home with three balls to spare.

Tight games were our speciality it seems, but we definitely got value for money.

Our wonderful team sport is always made up of individual performances, however.

Liam O' Hara has been a great addition to the club, his menacing swing bowling gracing many a Saturday afternoon and Wednesday night and fitted in with our ethos perfectly, always seeming to make valuable runs, and excellent with the ball – especially when playing Martinstown for some reason.

Rob Hellawell was a perfect clubman, there were times when his selection wasn't settled until around 13.25 some weekends, but was happy to help out wherever he could offering interesting runs, and we will be petitioning Wisden to run a "Greatest Gully Fielders of Dorset" article where he will surely place in the top 3, as highlighted on the final day at Abbotsbury.

James Bice impressed behind the stumps, and showed genuine development in his batting, and also led showed good leadership amongst the youngsters of our group, and while he will be happy to have passed fifty this year, his progress for next year is developing his batting to make fifty a regular occurrence, he is more than good enough to make that leap.

Henry Morrison joined the adult ranks this season and despite his young years showed excellent skills with the ball and however torturous 18 weeks of "am I coming back on" can be for a captain but is another player that will see huge benefit of playing at this level in his first year as we progress into next season. It was easy to forget he's 13, mainly as he's built like a seasoned wrestler, but played above his years and has a fantastic future ahead of him. He was joined by the Jeremiah Edy and Oli Thorne in breaching into the adult ranks, and Elliot Holland, Jack Boyd and Sam Baker who made their third team debuts this year, showing further proof of the excellent work of the junior section.

Mitch Allman and Scott Thompson were both welcome returnees to the club, Scott is someone we've missed having about but it must have been so long since we played together, as I'd apparently forgotten he could rag the ball sideways, and Mitch made valuable contributions at the top of the order.

Flynn was outstanding for us this year, the only thing missing from his game being a smile, but he impressed with the ball and it was good to see his hard work on fielding pay off with some crucial

catches, we also saw his batting develop and to also be in the middle with him for his first adult 50 was a special memory.

Sam Leaton gave great value, never short of a send off but he also provided some superb all-round performances, sharp with the ball and adding key contributions with the bat at points through the season.

Dave Spencer and Matt Hobbs, my confidants in chief and sounding boards throughout the week. It's been a pleasure to share Saturday afternoons with you gents again this year, that is unless Spence was booking camping trips to avoid playing, but both were missed by the group on weeks they were elevated to the twos. We were grateful however that on those trips up, Hobbsy appeared to learn to catch – the game changer against Bere Regis at home was superb and started a phenomenal batting collapse.

I also need to give a special mention to Tom Perry. Tom epitomises everything the three's stand for. A guy fairly new to cricket, but who has worked hard and been keen to learn from everyone around him. He sets high standards and can be on the giving and receiving end of a good laugh. Wherever he plays, in the field he helps set our standards and his bowling has become as dependable as his ability to play shots on the request of the opposition wicket keeper. Thank you for all your endeavours this year Tom.

Congratulations to Nick Williams on Player of the Season for the threes. This was a fairly unanimous decision amongst the votes received. Nick lead the 3's in runs and wickets for the majority of the season, despite often being stolen by the twos, and more often than that playing with only one or two working limbs.

His highlights included

76 at home to Cattistock, 63 away to Sherborne, 62 away to Broadstone, 4/14 on the opening day against Cerne, 3/21 at home to Kingston Lacy and delightfully rinsing me on the boundary to a 7 year old away to Bere Regis