



**THE BEST WESTERN
SHRUBBERY HOTEL
SOMERSET CRICKET LEAGUE**

Honorary Secretary's Report 2009

**Prepared by Ray Hancock
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The 2009 Season proved to be another keenly contested one although on closer examination of the point's differences at the end of the season in both competitions all of those teams that finished in top spot did so by a convincing margin. Indeed, many winners were determined well before the final weekend. The closest contest in the 1st XI competition took place in Division 1 where Ilton had a 27 point advantage over second placed Westlands. This contrasted with two huge differences in Divisions 4 and 6 where Middlezoy won Division 4 by 69 points over second placed Kilmington & Stourton and Baltonsborough won Division 6 by 62 points over second placed Westonzoyland, but this was from only 16 matches which was two less than the Division 4 winner!

Once again the weather conditions played a major part in the way the season unfolded, however fewer games were lost through wet pitches and rain. After many years of trying to secure the John Bail Trophy as winner of Division 1, the Ilton players finally achieved their ambition and will play in the Somerset Division of WEPL in season 2010. Congratulations to the Club for raising their playing status for next year, certainly their perseverance has paid huge dividends. The West Somerset teams, Ashbrittle, Stawley & Clayhanger and Stogumber again did exceptionally well. The former club was promoted for a second time in successive seasons when they won Division 2 and will play in our top flight in 2010. While Stogumber, who only joined the SCL at the start of the 2009 season won Division 3 and will be a most competitive force in Division 2 next year.

The introduction of a revised system of recording marks for the 'Don Crouch Trophy' proved to be more objective than the previous one where scores were

simply noted out of 10 for sportsmanship. The home team scored their opponents in 5 distinct categories namely:- conduct, responsibility and sociability of visiting captain; conduct of visiting team OFF the field of play; conduct of visiting team ON the field of play; conduct of individual members of visiting team; acceptance of umpires decisions by visiting players. The Committee believes that the result of this change was that the new scoring system more accurately reflected the sportsmanship of the game and it also had the effect of raising the average score by a clear two points over the previous years' scores. The final outcome of the published scores showed that 5 clubs attained a maximum average score of 10 and the Committee determined that the joint winners should be Wells 1st XI; Glastonbury Lambs and Spaxton all of whom recorded their score from 8 matches. However, Belvedere A and Huntspill & District 1st XI should also be highly commended for a similar score of 10 but from fewer games.

Two noticeable factors regarding the issue of cancelled games for reasons other than the weather were firstly the lack of sufficient players due to problems such as holidays, work and family commitments. However, a second issue became apparent during the season as some teams found considerable difficulty in getting enough transport to move teams that comprised many young players. With the average age of many of our teams dropping, the conveyance of entire teams has become a problem that needs a resolution. In the context of cancelled games, the Committee was most concerned to note that two long established clubs, Peasedown St. John and Evercreech both withdrew a team from the League during the season as both clubs were constantly being unable to field two elevens. Upon the request of both clubs, the Committee made an unprecedented decision to allow the 2nd XIs to remain in the 2nd XI Competition and withdraw a team from the 1st XI Competition. The reason for this move was based upon an assessment by the clubs concerned and me. We looked at the relative strengths of all four teams and it was our opinion that this arrangement was best for all concerned. Hopefully by next year there will be sufficient time for the two clubs to re-group and once again field two teams each. In the meanwhile, both 1st XIs have been relegated to the bottom level of the competition in the 6th Division.

The ongoing issue of the relationship between the WEPL and the SCL was opened up to a full discussion by all concerned at three specially convened

meetings. These meetings comprised all Somerset based clubs in the WEPL structure at levels 3 & 4 and the clubs in the SCL Division 1. The officers' group met on three further occasions in an attempt to facilitate the transition. Initially, it seemed that a consensus view had been achieved and the Somerset Division of WEPL would return to the administration and organisation of the SCL. However, some recent re-thinking by the WEPL Board seems to have derailed the initiative and the Somerset Cricket League's officers are still trying to meet the original wish of those representatives that attended the special meetings.

The use of e-mail has continued to improve the efficiency of communications for all correspondence with the clubs and the Committee. However, the failure of many clubs to keep their contacts (e-mail and telephone numbers) up to date has been a frustrating factor. All clubs were issued with a discrete number and password so that they could access their dedicated page on the website and then regularly check it and up-date it. This data is the essential information that I need to ensure that all clubs are properly informed of all League developments. Similarly, club to club contact has also been hampered by data bases not being up to date. If speed and efficiency is to be maintained then this aspect of club administration needs dramatic improvement. After all, the handbook information was written as long ago as February and it is therefore not surprising that it is frequently lacking in accuracy during the season.

A recent Committee decision to adopt the electronic results system that two divisions piloted last season will operate for the 2010 Season. The pilot scheme proved successful and only faltered when clubs failed to put their scores onto the website on time. The rules and procedures for the operation of this new development will be clearly stated both in the League's Rules and through the Pre-Season circular that will detail the prescribed procedures. The home team will be responsible for entering the result of the match on the SCL website before noon on the day following the match. This result will be verified by the away team before midnight on the same day. The home team will then be required to input the complete scorecard before noon on the Wednesday. The existing Result Sheet will need to be completed in the usual way and be sent by the home team to Ian Latchem by post or Fax after the match in order to be received by Ian no later than the following Thursday.

This will enable Ian to check and monitor the results and record the Don Crouch scores. Any team that fails to meet the deadlines will be fined in the usual way. This initiative will reduce Ian's workload, improve the accuracy of the details, speed up the results service for members/media and produce accurate statistics that will alleviate the need for the averages to be separately input at the end of the season. It is conceivable that clubs will need to register or list all their players so that they can be given a data base number in order to relate to the website. This information will be advised to clubs later.

The Committee was delighted with the response by clubs to send members to the SCL Coaching course that took place during the close season. All attendees finally gained their UKCC Level 1 certificates and a number progressed to the Level 2 course as well. The League has continued to promote the current courses that are organised by the SCB and would recommend any potential coach to contact the Cricket Development Office at the County Ground. This coaching initiative is the lifeblood of cricket development and one that all clubs should be striving to adopt to help young players realise their potential and improve their game.

The Treasurer will be making a separate report and while he will be demonstrating the League's position is a strong one, he will also be showing that it may be necessary to increase the subscriptions for the first time for many years. Tom Packman does a magnificent job with the League's finances and is to be congratulated on his astute management of the funds. However, I know that Tom would be the first to agree with me that we are highly indebted to our Sponsor Stuart Shepherd and the Shrubbery Hotel. This sponsorship allows us to maintain a low subscription base, carry out any perceived developments and promote the coaching initiative. Without this most generous support cricket would be a lot more costly in the SCL.

The SCL has been pleased to accept some new teams, although not necessary new clubs, into the competitions for the 2010 season. North Perrott 2nd XI has returned in place of Chard 2nd XI who were promoted to the WEPL structure along with their 1st XI while Middlezoy and Taunton Deane Crusaders have joined Division 4 SW from the West Somerset Cricket League. The League has exchanged Ilton for Barrington at 1st XI level and trust that both Peasedown and Evercreech will re-join Division 6.

The League's Dinner and Presentation Evening at the Shrubbery Hotel was once again very successful. However, it was disappointing to note that three clubs that won trophies were not represented. Indeed, the Committee decided that trophies not collected at the Presentation Evening would not be presented on any other occasion and would remain in store until the end of the next season. This would also be future policy for the presentation of the League's trophies. 140 members, partners and guests sat down to a fine meal provided by our sponsor and host Stuart Shepherd. The trophies were presented by the Chairman of Somerset County Council, John Edney, who upon his own admission was a committed cricket fanatic. He spoke about cricket in general, reminisced about the past and looked forward to the future of the game as well.

The Disciplinary Committee was not called upon during the season, surely a record for the League! However, there were a few instances of ill discipline that were dealt with by the internal mechanism of the clubs' concerned. The process was most certainly one that reduced the time commitment of all concerned and should be commended, although the 'punishments' given needed to be 'topped up' by the League's Officers to realistically match those that a personal hearing would have administered. Some other general club misdemeanours were dealt with by the Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee in discussions with the clubs concerned.

The winners of the J C Bail Trophy were Ilton with Westlands in second place. In Division 2, Ashbrittle won their second consecutive title by a margin of 30 points over Watchet. Stogumber took the Division 3 title with a 44 point difference over Horrington while in Division 4 Middlezoy were top, amassed the largest total of points for any club with 563 and shared the honours with Wells Wanderers and Uphill Castle 2^{nds} in recording the highest number of wins in a season with 14 games won. In Division 5 Wells Wanderers won their second consecutive title with a 41 point margin over Sparkford, this mirrored the previous year when both teams were promoted from Division 6. Baltonsborough dominated in the 6th Division, recorded an impressive 486 points, with 13 wins from only 16 games including two matches that were cancelled and led Westonzoyland at

the end of the season by 62 points. They were also the only team that was unbeaten in the 1st XI Competition.

Division 1 of the 2nd XI Competition was again evenly contested and Chard won the title by the closest margin of the season with only a 19 points' difference over Bishops Lydeard. Uphill Castle finished an impressive 88 points ahead of Westlands in Division 2 to record the biggest winning margin throughout the 12 divisions of the SCL. Wells convincingly won Division 3NE with 48 points to spare over Wedmore and Belvedere 2^{nds} had a 40 point advantage over Huish & Langport 2^{nds} in Division 3SW. Wincanton easily won Division 4 NE when they scored 41 points more than Horrington, while Bridgwater Sports comfortably edged out Lydford by 23 points in Division 4SW.

The Ladbrokes Trophy for the 'Club of the Year' was awarded to Westlands for the club's consistency in finishing second in both high ranking divisions. The Don Crouch Trophy, as mentioned earlier, was shared by three teams with 100% marks. Middlezoy won the Sunday Independent Cup, awarded to the team that scored the highest number of points (563) in a season. The Committee determined that the award for the AVCO Trust - Young Player of the Year should be given to Jack Sellick of North Newton who bowled well in a team that was facing relegation throughout the season and from his 169 overs had taken 35 wickets in the top division. The Glastonbury Mowers All Rounders Award was awarded to Andy Mortimer of Horrington who had scored 670 runs at an average of 74.44 and took 34 wickets at 13.65. The Committee considered many other club recommendations for these awards and were encouraged to see that there were many outstanding contributions in the Somerset Cricket League during the season.

C. Matthews of Chilton Polden headed the individual performances in a game with the bat and S. Love of Meare with the ball. C. Matthews scored 243 and exceeded the next nearest player, I. Keitch of Taunton Deane Cavaliers by 41 runs, while S. Love took 9 wickets for 17 runs at an average of 1.89 and bettered the performance of K. Packman of Cheddar Colts who also took 9 wickets, but conceded 23 runs in the process. No player exceeded 1000 runs during the season, but Kieron Boucher of Westlands in Division 1 scored 759

runs to top the charts. He was 64 runs ahead of David Higginson of Curry Rivel from Division 3. The best average from 9 or more innings was achieved by Andy Mortimer of Horrington with 74.44. Robert Statham of Belvedere A took the highest number of wickets with 49 at 9.39 runs per wicket and P. Knight of Ilminster B who took 17 wickets for 95 runs at 5.59 achieved the best average based on the league criteria of a minimum of 17 wickets to count.

The method of producing the League's Averages changed this year. Clubs were required to submit their own averages of league games to the website in order that they could be published as the composite League Averages for the season. However, by the closing date for submissions only about 60% of teams had made the effort to put their statistics on record. Hence, some of the statistics in the previous paragraph could have been bettered if clubs had submitted their teams' figures! The time limit has been extended to November 1st, but only those figures that are currently on the database can be used in this report to record the performances of individuals. The final version of the 2009 Season Averages will be published after the new deadline and in time for the AGM.

Finally, I should like to record my thanks to the members of the Committee for all their time and expertise spent on League matters. The Somerset Cricket League is very well served by these dedicated people. We are always in search of new talent to join the Committee and help move local league cricket forward. Anyone who feels that they could make a contribution by joining the Committee should contact me. In particular, we are seeking younger playing members who could bring an experienced view to the meetings.

Ray Hancock.
Hon. Secretary.
October 2009