

Secretary's Report 2017

Mr President, Members,

When we look back to the 2016 season one day, will always come to mind Saturday 10 September when the 1st XI clinched the Cambs League Division 2 title.

Against the background of early morning rain in March, to quote former club captain Chris Ringham: "I didn't think we were going to play at all and I was just waiting for the call to say that the game was off!" Fortunately, our opponents Fordham wanted to play as they faced relegation. "The leave time was put back by an hour and we travelled through heavy rain all the way to Ely but, when we got to Fordham the ground was fine and we started with no problems at all," said Chris.

Despite some rain interruptions the weather held off and after putting Fordham into bat we bowled them out for 135. With rain in the air the 1st XI just managed to knock the runs off for the loss of four wickets before the heavens opened. March had won the league by 16 points from their season long rivals St Ives. In total the 1st XI won 15 of their 22 Cambs League matches. To complete the story the Cambs League Division 2 trophy and the individual medals were presented to skipper Tyler Phillips and the team by Cambridgeshire Manager Keith Cobun at the annual awards night.

However, returning to the start of the season with Tyler stepping up to the captaincy we were hopeful that we could bounce back after having spent 14 seasons in the top flight. With new signings, Anthony Palmer from Chatteris, Brandon Phillips from Witcham and new Aussie recruit Sam Freedman, expectations were high.

The Saturday 1st XI Player of the Year (Ian Bradshaw Shield) was Tyler, who led by example with his all-round displays; 25 wickets at 18 and 273 runs at 24.

The batting star was the 20-year-old Australian Sam Freedman, who scored 674 runs at 42 to top the averages. His numbers included two centuries against Huntingdon and Weston Colville, the latter a magnificent 130 not out in a mammoth score of 332-8, probably the highest 1st XI score ever, despite being in trouble at 64-4.

Sam received excellent support from Ben Pyle and Brandon Phillips with 501 and 407 runs respectively. Meanwhile Toby Nulty scored his first Cambs League century with 103 against Ufford Park.

The wickets were shared with Sam topping the pile with 38, followed by Andrew Wright 34, Anthony Palmer 30, Tyler Phillips 25 and Toby Nulty on 21. However, top of the overall Saturday averages with his gentle medium pace was opening batsman Tommy Howgego with 15 wickets, which he gathered at only 9.87!

Reflecting on his season at The Avenue, Sam Freedman remarked: "I thoroughly enjoyed my season with March Town Cricket Club and it was made all the more worthwhile winning the league. All the boys worked hard and received the ultimate reward."

Performances from the other sides were mixed, especially on a Saturday, where the 2nd XI struggled, the 3rd XI were relegated and the 4th XI finished bottom of their section. Sundays were more promising with the 1st XI finishing third in Rutland League, while a young 2nd XI won the Fenland Trophy and reached the Ernie Wool cup final.

On Sundays the 1st XI won 10 of their 18 matches in Rutland League Division 2. The young side competed without an overseas player for the majority of the season - Sam Freedman being unavailable due to work commitments from early May.

Their Player of the Year (Michael Wallis Trophy) was Andrew Wright, who captured 32 wickets including two five wicket hauls and scored 159 runs. Andrew was the only bowler to take 50 wickets for the club in 2016. He also took on the role as skipper for most of the season, which he will do officially this year. Steve Coe was the surprise bowling package snatching 20 wickets with his slow bowling.

Nineteen-year-old Brandon Phillips topped their run charts and averages with 358 at 27. Added to his 407 runs for the Cambs League title winning side he deservedly won the Young Player of the Year award (Chris Littler Shield).

Four other players totalled over 200 runs; Ben Pyle 262 Shaz Akhter 252, Tyler Phillips 212 and Nathan Oliver 209.

Nathan's weekend performances, (he scored a total of just over 400 1st XI runs) resulted in him receiving the Most Improved Player of the Year trophy donated by Nick Lowe. His Saturday tally of 202 runs featured his first Cambs League half century, 73 not out against Ufford Park.

The 2nd XI began their season with a flourish, winning their first three games to top CCA Senior League Division 2. Thereafter, the campaign became a struggle for skipper John Wallis and his experienced outfit. They lost their next nine matches, which included some bruising defeats against Foxton, who scored over 300 in each match and champions Needingworth, who dismissed them for only 53.

A couple of late wins helped stave off the drop for the second successive season, but it was hard going all round for John in his final season. Selecting a team of sufficient quality was always going to be difficult but John's role was hampered by last minute call offs by players, a worrying trend within the game.

Their Player of the Year (Pat Ringham Trophy) went to opening batsman Steve Hinson who scored an excellent 625 runs at an average of 52. His figures included an undefeated 108 against Barley. The other batting mainstay was former 1st XI opening batsman and wicketkeeper John Gilson who scored 327 runs. Meanwhile, the skipper persuaded elder brother Stephen to play a few games and he managed to score two half centuries in three innings, the first he has scored for the Saturday 2nd XI since 2005.

County Over 50s slow bowler Richard Green took most wickets with 26. Richard's tally included a 5-7 spell in victory over Hardwick. Second on the list was 17-year-old Sam Clarke with 18 wickets. Playing regularly for the Sunday 1st XI he added a further 12 wickets in the Rutland League. Sam showed great commitment during the season and we hope his talent as a batsman will come through again in 2017.

Fresh from his autumn hip operation John battled hard throughout a difficult campaign and sometimes showed some of the old magic though he regularly put others first in the order. He was the third highest run scorer with 187 runs.

John made his debut for the club as a young off-spinner in 1978. His rapid progress in this art led him to play for the full Cambridgeshire side at the age of 20 in 1984. Checking back through the club records in the 1983 and 1984 season John took 78 and 77 wickets respectively for the 1st XI. Sadly for John and for the club, problems with releasing the ball meant his bowling never realised the glowing potential. Thereafter, the young tearaway batsman at the start of his career converted into a much more controlled, but quick scoring 1st XI batsman.

However, it has been as a leader that John has made the biggest difference at The Avenue. Early days as the Midweek XI captain in 1983-88 led him to become 2nd XI skipper in 1988-89 and subsequently club captain between 1990 -1993. During his 1st XI term he had the pleasure to have a fiery, probably our fastest ever bowler, Joseph Benjamin Grant to look after.

Returning to the 2nd XI ranks in the mid '90s John took on the responsibility of captain again in 1997 and 1998. Since the turn of the century he has led the Saturday 2nd XI in 13 of the 16 seasons. During that time he helped steer the side from the CCA junior league ranks to Senior League Division 1. Despite relegation in 2015 he should be proud of this achievement.

John has now decided to pick the white coat and join the umpiring ranks. I have no doubt he will make an excellent umpire and I am sure as a club we would all like to wish him well in his new role. Hopefully, the phone will be a bit quieter John.

The 3rd XI suffered through failing availabilities and perhaps because they were in the wrong section, were relegated. Finishing bottom of CCA Junior League Division 2 North they only managed to win three of their 15 completed matches.

Their Player of the Year was Ryan Wright, who deservedly won the Mel Pooley Shield for his all round skills. Ryan headed the 3rd XI run scoring chart with 298 runs, bowled tidily when required, but more importantly led, and kept the side going as the season progressed. Vice-captain Jacob Gray topped their batting averages with 224 runs at 37 and scored the teams's highest individual score with 68 not out against Wisbech 3rd XI.

Leading wicket takers were medium pacers Manuj Patel, Adrian Bussey and David Haslegrave with 14, 14 and 12 respectively. David producing the best figures with his 6-48 against Little Downham

Likewise the 4th XI faced similar problems with selection and finished bottom of CCA Junior League Division 6 North, winning only one of their five matches played. Their Player of the Year was vice-captain Simon Bradshaw with nine wickets, though he also played numerous times for the 3rd XI and made one appearance for the Saturday 2nd XI against Barley.

James Mortlock impressed with the bat scoring a 230 run aggregate which included two half centuries and the highest individual score of 85 not out v Wimblington 2nd XI

Under the new leadership team of Captain Curtis Oldroyd and Vice-captain Sam Mason, the Sunday 2nd XI took the Fenland Trophy by storm winning nine of their 11 matches played, to easily clinch the title.

Rob Conyard produced some amazing batting exploits for the team scoring 598 runs in his six innings at an average of 299. His tally included four centuries – 137 not out v Wimblington, 148 not out v Chatters and a double of 151 not out and 102 against Wisbech 3rd XI. These individual performances were recognised by the league at their recent Annual General Meeting with Rob being awarded both the batting award and young player shield. We sincerely hope that Rob can in the future display his undoubted talent at the higher levels.

The other leading batsman in the Sunday ranks was skipper Curtis who scored 267 league runs including two half centuries. In addition Curtis struck a century in an opening friendly match against Wimblington on his debut in his new position.

Their Player of the Year award (Les Mills Trophy) went to the ever reliable Sam Mason with 20 wickets at 9 apiece. His tally included an impressive 5-13 against Ely, who were bowled out for a meagre 32 at Paradise in June. The other major wicket takers were 14-year-old leg spinner Geoff Kirby and pace man Charlie Revell with 15 and 14 wickets respectively. Geoff who is currently training with the county under 15 programme topped the averages.

The Crows in their coloured kit lost both of their Jaidka Cup group matches this season against Wisbech and Ramsey. Meanwhile, the Young Crows under the leadership of Sam Clarke competed in the the ECB's national under 19 T20 competition. However, they failed to progress from the group stage.

At the beginning of the year the club played in the local indoor league where they finished third of the 4 teams.

At junior level the club fielded sides at under 11, 13 and 15 for boys.

Their respective players of the year were as follows;

Boys

Under 11

Batsman – Jack Conyard

Bowler – Toby Conyard

Manager's award – Charley Kirby

Under 13

Batsman – Daniel Bradshaw

Bowler – Phoenix Nightingale

Manager's award – Jensen Carpenter

Under 15

Batsman – Doug Furlong

Bowler – Geoff Kirby

Manager's award – Daniel Bradshaw

The trophies were awarded to the winners by the President Alan Day at their presentation evening in late July.

The Avenue hosted a boys county under 13 match in June and already three under 14s boys county matches are scheduled for 2017.

In addition the club hosted two Kwik cricket festivals in May and June respectively.

On the coaching front we would like to thank Bill Adamson, Pat Ringham, Emma Alerton (U11 Manager), Jenny Lambert, Toby & Tara Nulty (U13 Manager's) Bill Crumly (U15 Manager) and the assistant coaches who all helped the club with winter and summer nets. Harry Vaheesan took on the role of club coach and provided a valuable support to the 1st XI in their successful championship win.

The installation of new double bay nets was completed in late February. The project would not have been possible without the determination over many years of Fixture Secretary Pat Ringham. They were soon put to good use by the 1st XI at the beginning of April.

However, we must never forget the financial contribution by the late duo of Frits Makkee and Nigel Read. Without them the scale of the development would not have been possible. Sadly Frits passed away in the spring before having the chance to attend their official

unveiling. The club conferred Honorary Vice President's status to Frits in April.

We have had a number of other members pass away over the last twelve including Peter English, Ken Morris and Arthur Wilkinson. Also Charles Kisby and Ian Bradshaw, who had made major contributions to the life of the club over many years. Each one will be missed in their own unique way.

This year's 3-Day Festival was fully booked before the event started. Once again, thanks to a busy organising committee led by Les Mills (one of his many jobs) a fun filled time was had by just over 100 local boys and girls aged between 6 and 12 years.

We are very grateful to the coaching team of Bill Adamson, Stuart Mills and Toby Nulty plus all the assistant coaches and helpers alongside the catering team of Helen Foad, Lesley Knaves and Tony Knaves for making this possible. The three days were also supported by March Boxing Club, March Athletic Club, March Soccer School, Peterborough Hockey Club and the local Police (PCSO Dawn Rae).

Finally we mustn't forget the vital contribution from the Festival sponsors the Big Lottery, Fenland District Council, Fenland Youth District Council, Fenmarc, Fruit Bowl and Fenland District Council Sports Development Officer Jon Gipson.

Festival Awards 2016 – Presented by Les Mills at the close of the event were awarded to;

Bob Terry Trophy – Serge Lambert
Greg Ward Trophy – Aimee Ward
Cliff Pearce Trophy – Toby Conyard
HMP Whitemoor Trophy – Harry Neal

Sponsorship for local clubs remains a key factor to ease the day to day running of the club and the Committee appreciate the backing we receive from our main club sponsor Maxey Grounds & Co, match day sponsors and advertising board sponsors. In addition we owe a great deal to our dedicated Chairman Les Mills who continues to attract the many match ball donors.

The club remained a part of the ECB initiative for schools "Chance to Shine". Club coach Bill Adamson spent 100 hours coaching at Westwood, Burrowmoor, Cavalry, Neale Wade and Thomas Eaton schools. He also provided 12 hours of coaching for the local group,

FACET. We are pleased to announce that the club will continue to be a part of the Chance to Shine project in 2017.

We were indebted to club scorer Norman Topliss and website editor Pat Ringham who via Twitter and the marchtowncricket.com were able to keep us all informed of playing events at The Avenue. Meanwhile, Facebook kept members abreast of all the general events at MTCC.

The ground team boosted by the news of a 3-Day Minor County match met the challenges encountered during the season. Mel Pooley, the ECB County pitch advisor, worked with a team which included Bill Ransom, Barry Short, John West, Malcolm Southwell, Phil Readman and Bill Crumly, who all helped to produce quality wickets at The Avenue.

A special mention needs to be given to Bill Crumly who helped to prepare wickets throughout the summer at Doddington and latterly at The Avenue. For his hard work and devotion to the task, in addition to his managerial role with the junior section, Bill was made the Clubman of the Year for 2016. Bill's roles even extended at age 75 to making his debut for the 3rd XI when they were short in early May when he scored 2 not out, but to date is still waiting for his second game.

A late change in Cambridgeshire's match arrangements meant The Avenue staged a minor county game against Bedfordshire in August. Unfortunately, the match was abandoned as a draw on Day 3. We also staged two one day matches for the full county side at the start of the season against Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

The welcome news is that we have been asked to host a three day minor county game against Northumberland in early July 2017

Steve Hinson made an accomplished debut for Cambs Over 50s - making an unbeaten 49 on his home ground in the washed out match against Suffolk in July. He joined the regular quartet of Stuart Arnold, Richard Green, Dennis Furnell and Pat Ringham, in representing county sides during the summer.

Unfortunately, none of the three teams made it through to the national play-offs. The Over 50s narrowly missed out after they tied their final match with Hunts at Wisbech. They were possibly weighed down by the high level of expectations, but both Cambs/Hunts Over 60 teams seriously underperformed during the season.

Over 60s manager Pat Ringham did manage one milestone - taking his appearances for the county senior sides into three figures...111 to be exact!

The bar team led by their Chairman Nick Lowe continue to operate throughout the year. Nick, ordering the beer and cleaning the pipes each week is ably supported by his reliable bar committee members, Graham Smart, Michael Wallis and Nathan Oliver. We must not forget the other volunteer bar staff, Francis Gaimster Les Mills, Gary Nicholls, Linda Smart and Matthew Vail. Without their help together with Norman Alterton's frequent trips to the cash and carry outlet the club would be seriously affected.

Another vital cog in the March Town Cricket Club machine is Treasurer, Alan Day, who has served the club in this role for 40 years. Alan was deservedly recognised by the Cambs Cricket Board in October when he won their Lifetime Achiever Award for 2016. He was later invited to attend the National OSCA award ceremony at Lord's where he mixed with current and former England Test players.

Social events in 2016 included an early season Race night, Twenty/20 match and barbecue and golf day. Former opening pace bowler David Alterton took the individual honours and was part of the winning team with Paul Goddard and George Campbell.

One exciting event organised by youngsters Andrew Wright and Nathan Oliver involved a trip to a T20 Blast match at Trent Bridge. Although the match was rained off everyone involved had an enjoyable evening's entertainment. I am reliably informed a return trip is scheduled for this year.

A key to our future social events is the involvement of younger members and the Social committee is very open to ideas like the T20 Blast match. If you have an idea please let the Social Committee know, or better still join the Social Committee.

Promoter Terry Hunt, later supported by Alan Day, organised another successful 10 Week draw during the season. I am delighted to see Terry back with us tonight and on the road to recovery.

The club staged an Open Day sponsored by Waitrose on the same day as our annual President's XI versus Chairman's XI in June. The match which was unfortunately affected by the rain was preceded by junior coaching.

Sunday lunches in the winter months have been well attended and the pool, domino and darts teams continue to play regular league matches at the club.

The club is pleased to support the local community by playing host to Age Concern group every Tuesday while March Town Athletic Football Club Boys and Girls football teams play at the ground when the cricket season finishes. Helen Foad organised a charity quiz evening in June when £235 was raised for SWAN UK.

In addition the club regularly hosts quizzes for St Wendreda's Church and in February a one off evening for McMillan Cancer.

The biggest crowd on the ground this year came at the end of October when the 1st March Scouts staged a fireworks display which attracted a four figure attendance. The good news is that the event has already been booked to return in late October.

We hope the spirit of that September afternoon in Fordham will inspire Tyler and his young team this season. Tougher challenges, the like of Ramsey, Wisbech and Foxton lie ahead for our developing side. Nevertheless with everyone's commitment, the arrival of a new Australian overseas player and that team spirit the 1st XI can succeed at the higher level.

However, this commitment needs to come from all players. Captains face a difficult task. Let's not make it a daunting one. Support them and the club will support you. We have shown our commitment with the opening of the new double bay nets, which in 2016 was reinforced by the weekly coaching sessions given by Harry Vaheesan. We also plan this year to extend our junior cricket section by backing a new quick cricket section for children between the ages of 6 and 11. More details are to follow on this venture.

I trust we can count on everyone's support because The Avenue remains a special place to play cricket.

Finally in this report of tributes I would like to thank our retiring President Alan Day for his dedicated work during his three year term. His successor, Pat Ringham, the now, County Over 60s veteran has played cricket at The Avenue for over half a century. His time spent as a playing official meant he was a member of the selection committee for 30 years. A life member and previous long standing Secretary (16 years) he has now been Fixture Secretary since 1995. I think he deserves the honour. Good luck Pat.