

1st XI Captain's Report

The 2019 season saw a change in mentality throughout Heriot's Cricket Club. With the 1st XI winning the league in 2017 followed by National T20 success in 2018 there was an expectation going into the 2019 season to bring more success to the club. Could the squad deal with the expectations?

There was a change in the club coach as Joe Kinghorn-Gray replaced Peter Ross while overseas recruits Hayes van der Berg and Elnatan Meiri returned. Seam bowler Callum Stuart also joined the club and would go on to make an impact during the season.

The season started with an Edinburgh derby against old foes Watsonians at Goldenacre. A rusty batting display on seam friendly conditions saw us bowled out for 144. In the second innings the determination that has brought recent successes was there for all to see as we reduced Watsonians to 72/5 before the rain came resulting in a Nails win on DL.

Another hard-fought win was to follow against RHC at Barnton before we took on Forfarshire who were at their swashbuckling best setting 322 to win. In reply we were in the game before vital wickets fell as we ended up 100 runs short.

In amongst our league games was the Masterton trophy competition which saw our first centurion of the season as Peter Ross blasted his way to 137 not out in an opening stand of over 200 with Meiri.

The Masterton games continued to show excitement as an understrength 1st XI defeated RHC by 4 runs and Stewart's Melville by 27 runs. During these fixtures the first XI was represented by players from all three senior sides.

A number of games this season succumbed to the weather which made it hard to gain any kind of momentum. This lack of momentum showed in a lacklustre defeat against Stewart's Melville at Inverleith. Even at this early phase of the season we know we couldn't afford any more slip ups if we were to compete for the title.

It was another two weeks before we next played as we met Watsonians in the first round of the Scottish Cup. Some inside knowledge led me to go against my usual thinking and bowl first. This turned out well as our spinners dominated the first innings to set up a 9 wicket win.

Our win at Myreside was followed by our first win at Arbroath in over 20 years. It turned out that none of the XI who played that day had ever one up there. The team song in the dressing room post-match wasn't met well by our usually hospitable hosts!

Our next match saw a last ball victory to defeat Watsonians in the Masterton, followed by another hard-fought win against promoted Stoneywood-Dyce. This led on to our Scottish Cup second round tie against Prestwick at Goldenacre. The sides hadn't met since the drama of the 2017 grand final with a number of us still wearing the scars from that particular fixture were keen to put them to bed.

On an excellent Goldie pitch, Prestwick set us 228 to win which we felt was around par. We chased with great purpose as all our batsmen chipped in and we cantered to a 5 wicket win.

Our next league match effectively ended our title hopes as we lost a rain affected game against Watsonians at Myreside. Had the game gone the full distance we were of the belief that we would have gone on to win the match.

Our dramatic campaign in the Masterton continued as we took on a Grange side, boasting in the region of 500 international caps, at Raeburn Place.

Hayes and Chris Ashforth battled well to give us a modest total of 135 however the game looked over as Grange sprinted to 61-2 from 4 overs. All of a sudden, wickets started to fall, international cricketers started to doubt themselves, and the never say die attitude of the Nails left the hosts needing 8 from the final over and 2 from the final ball. Hayes and

our fielding unit managed to hold their nerves as Grange only managed to scamper through for one run resulting in a tie. This result had huge ramifications as it eliminated Grange from the competition and meant we won the group phase of the Masterton trophy, booking our spot in the Masterton final.

We met West of Scotland in the Scottish Cup quarter final at Goldenacre. The visitors brought a vociferous support along the M8 on what was to be a 'Super Sunday' at Goldie.

Batting first we set 234/7 thanks to an anchor innings of 89 from Peter Ross. A total we felt was slightly above par due to the slower nature of the pitch.

West got off to a flier reaching 100-0 within 15 overs and very quickly our cup campaign was coming to an end. A couple of wickets stunted progress however West pro and test Cricketer Rory Kleinveldt looked to have all but sealed the match for the visitors as they required 56 from 17 overs with 8 wickets still in hand. The large visiting support were loving their day out on the £2.50 Tennents!

Up stepped Callum Stuart who quickly removed dangerman Kleinveldt before ripping the West middle order whilst being ably supported by Hayes at the other end. The host would go on to lose their final 8 wickets for 40 runs sparking jubilant celebrations at Goldenacre and a very quiet away support. Callum ending with figures of 5/33. This was a day at Goldie that will live long in the memory.

League matches continued to be hampered by the weather as we welcomed Arbroath to Goldenacre for the Scottish Cup Semi Final. The Nails batting line up clicked as we posted a strong total of 263/7. A total which we felt would be enough as long we took care of the Arbroath professional who had was one of the leading run scorers of 2019.

The bowlers put Arbroath to the sword as they bowled Arbroath for just 35! The Nails were in the Scottish Cup final for the second successive season!

Or were we? A legal dispute ensued over the possibility of an ineligible player within the Nails ranks. This claim was eventually thrown out and the Nails did have a cup final to look forward to.

Talking of finals, The Nails registered their first success of the season as we defeated RHC to win the Masterton Trophy. Hayes produced a fine innings of 81 to propel us to 158/6 before the spinners took the second innings by the scruff of the neck to restrict RHC to 86/9.

The poor weather was highlighted as the final league match of the season at Stoneywood-Dyce was our first 100 over league match since 6th July. Even though we had the Scottish Cup Final to look forward to the following day this match proved vital in our preparations as batsmen had some time in the middle and the bowlers could perform under some pressure. An 18 run win set us up perfectly for what was to come the following day.

Scottish Cup Final day. Heriot's v Carlton at Meikleriggs, Paisley. Carlton won the toss and made the surprising decision to bat first on somewhat damp conditions. The Nails attack made the most of the conditions, showing great discipline to restrict Carlton to 142/7 putting in us in a nice position going into the second innings.

Cup final chases never run smoothly though. Peter Ross departed early as Meiri and Mark Watt saw off the new ball. The runs required slowly ticked down as Meiri and Watt departed. Van der Berg held firm throughout as Michael Shean scored quickly to bring the total within 30 with 6 wickets in hand.

Surely, we couldn't throw it away from here. Jitters started to appear as we lost a couple of quick wickets with 20 required however the ever-cool Ryan Brown partner VDB to see us over the line to win by 4 wickets. The match was won with a wide, but this didn't affect the celebrations which were a mixture of elation and emotion. We had done it!

Hayes would go on to receive a well-deserved man of the match award the celebrations could begin! The bus back to Goldie always being a particular highlight!

There was still some cricket left to play as we headed to Dumfries to defend our T20 title. A comfortable semi-final win against the hosts set up an exciting final with Forfarshire. Sadly, we were to play our poorest T20 match for a number of years as we lost with an over to spare. Congratulations to Forfarshire who along with ourselves set the standard throughout the season in domestic cricket.

It was another thrilling year to lead this club. The club continues to grow from strength to strength and we should all be excited about what the 2020 season has in store.

Thanks to coach Kinghorn-Gray who brought great professionalism to his coaching, to vice-captain VDB for filling in for me in my absences, to Chaz keeping a tidy book, Barbara for always looking after us and Simon for continuing to produce the best facility in the country. It would be an utter disaster to cricket in this country if it was to no longer exist.

I announced in August that the 2019 season would be my final season as captain of Heriot's Cricket Club. I feel privileged to have led this club onto the field on more than 100 occasions, including every major final. It's been a joy to work with the players and the committee and the success we have had is down to everyone buying into the club's philosophy. It seems a long time ago that we were 'mid table mediocrity' and I must thank the committee and the three presidents during my tenure for their unwavering support throughout my captaincy. I now look forward to taking a playing role within the club whilst enjoying the challenges that fatherhood has to offer.

To finish, it's been no secret that I encountered some unexpected personal challenges during the season, and this brought out the true colours of this cricket club. The support you and the cricketing community showed me, and my family is something I will always be grateful for and only increased my love of this club. There is no sport quite like the one we play during the summer months (weather permitting).

Thanks

KM

Notable Performances

Peter Ross 137* v Edinburgh Accies (T20)

Peter Ross and Elnatan Meiri – 213 opening partnership v Edinburgh Accies (T20)

Elnatan Meiri 72 from 40 v Stewart's Melville (T20)

Elnatan Meiri 73 from 54 v Carlton (T20)

Hayes van der Berg 124 from 134 v Watsonians (League)

Elnatan Meiri 104 from 134 v RHC (League)

Ryan Brown 5/10 v RHC (League)

Peter Ross 89 from 121 v West of Scotland (Cup)

Callum Stuart 5/33 v West of Scotland (Cup)

Mark Watt 4/6 v Arbroath (Cup)

Hayes van der Berg 81 off 56 v RHC (T20)

Keith Morton 4/15 v RHC (T20)

Michael Shean 5/17 v Stewart's Melville (League)

Keith Morton 4/17 v Stoneywood-Dyce (League)

Hayes van der Berg 40* v Carlton (Scottish Cup Final)

Robert More and Bilal Ashraf v Competitions Management Group (Cup)

