

Chairman's Report 2023

Tonight marks my first AGM as Chairman, and completes my first 12/13 months in the role. It has certainly given an insight into the opportunities and challenges which this cricket club faces, both on and off the pitch.

When I took on the role, I was very conscious that I was a bit of an outsider – relatively new to the club – nor had I held a committee position. This was, in hindsight, both a blessing and a curse. It meant I could do things my own way but I needed to be conscious to not rock the boat. So with my first year under the belt in this role, I think the time is now ready, to look to push things on.

I think my experience should also be a lesson for others in the club. Take responsibility, take things on and get involved. The club does not and will not function without a volunteer base and this is something which I will mention a few times over the next couple of minutes or so.

I would like to thank my predecessor again this evening for his work, especially negotiating some tough times around the Covid pandemic. Those times, however, are now long gone and we must look to the future.

This last winter saw us make use of the Cricket Barn in Aston for the first time. It is an excellent facility and turnouts were strong, especially of our younger players, throughout the build up to the season starting.

We were bolstered with the arrival of Brett Taylor, our overseas for the year and expectations were cautiously optimistic especially if players replicated their form from 2022 into 2023. In my mind, a mid-table finish was possible for our 1s and a decent showing from our 2s was a must.

In truth, however, the 1s did not perform as well as might have been anticipated given their league position at halfway and despite beating many of the top teams in the division, it was a combination of poor home form and a lack of application which led to them becoming slightly unstuck in a relegation battle. Survival was eventually secured on the final day of the season.

Several highlights punctured throughout the league season came in the Cheshire Shield as Freddie Cheshire took a youthful side up to Port Sunlight to upset our hosts on DLS in a frankly chaotic and equally laughable run chase. The 1s were also involved in a swashbuckling game at Premier League Neston in the T20 Cup – narrowly being bettered on a glorious sunny evening.

Brett led the way with 677 runs and was an excellent all-round addition to the club and we are delighted to welcome him back to Tattenhall for 2024. Perhaps we will also get a few more smiles out of him next year.

We are now looking at our group of mid-20-year-olds to really kick on and flourish.

The 2s, in reality, had an excellent season and were probably unlucky to not be in the top two after racking up 11 wins. Over the course of the season, we saw a real maturity develop, winning games against good teams in difficult conditions.

It should be noted at this point that consistently strong individual performances in the 2s will mean names are talked about for promotion to the 1s.

We were helped by Thilip who travelled crazily far to turn out for the team and demonstrates the level of commitment which we should all have for this club as well as few new faces – always nice to welcome those to Tattenhall Cricket Club.

It is an exciting time for the 2s and we all hope they kick on in 2024 to bigger and even greater things! They were also involved in a cup run which ended in dramatic heart break as Oxtan beat them off the final ball.

The 3s continues to be a good breeding ground for some of our younger cricketers, and a good chance for some of the older members of the club to play with their lads. In truth, we are probably nearing a crossroads as competitive cricket is required to further develop this group of players. The friendly model has worked for many years but there seems to be an appetite for something a bit more meaty. Hopefully there will be more on this in the New Year.

Additional opportunities for cricket were secured through our participation in the Cheshire Shield, for the first time, and fielding a Midweek XI. There was a good response and uptake for these chances, and we hope this additional game time will continue to develop individuals' all-round skills.

At this point I would like to thank the captains - Roy, Tom, Freddie, Alex, Joe, Ian, Max – for their work in ensuring games went as smoothly as possible. It is not just about the on-field decisions or indeed selection, but the admin that goes alongside these things.

The O40s continue and I hope we will be very competitive in this in the near future as a cohort of people in the club make it to the magic 40 number – shame their batting averages do not match their ages.

I think we can all agree that the ground continues to get better year on year. 2023 was a particularly challenging one given the poor weather, especially in the second half of the season and all our thanks should go to Graham and Max for their work, week on week. Without their willingness to do it, the club would not be the same place nor as enjoyable a place to play.

There are a couple of clouds on the horizon regarding equipment – including our covers, and roller situation. Both of these could become serious issues in the short term and will test our financial resilience. I would like to thank John Gibbon at this point for the use of his roller over the past couple of seasons – it has played an essential role in getting the pitches back up scratch.

Speaking of financial resilience, I was extremely happy that the Committee took the decision to keep the subs at £125 for 2023, despite a 10% increase in sub payments to the Rec Club. We should always look to keep cricket as accessible a sport as possible. This may prove difficult however should the Rec Club get their way and the cricket club be required to pay an extra £2,000 per year for the upkeep of the outfield.

Financial resilience can only be achieved by this cricket club through fundraising and this means events. I am aware that since I came to the club, back in 2020, no fundraising events have taken place. This means we are slowly, but definitely eating into our reserves which were built up over the Covid years. More teams and therefore matches has resulted in increases to our groundsmen bill, for example.

This needs to change otherwise the cricket club will not survive in the long-term. I am looking for people to get involved in a fundraising committee. These people would need to be active in their roles to ensure events are delivered – probably one a year. Please come and talk to me tonight or drop me a message if you want to chat further. Times are changing. Our volunteer pool gets smaller with each passing year. I need people to put their hand up and dedicate their time otherwise we won't be coming to the Flacca to play cricket in three- or four-years' time.

In fact, without the contributions from our sponsors, cricket may have stopped being played at Tattenhall before now. So I would like to put on the record, my thanks to Steve Cheshire and Jackson Stops for their tireless support and for each and every one of the companies that contributes to the running costs of this great cricket club. We are lucky to have them and can never take them for granted – and I certainly won't.

A thanks must also go to our joint Presidents for this year – Ian Okell and John Stout, for their work organising our annual President's Day. To those who played that day, thank you. And also to our Vice Presidents, who may have supported us from the comfort of the veranda, or financially. Tattenhall CC will always welcome you and we are grateful for your support.

Speaking of supporting us from afar, this season saw the Frogbox make its debut. I think it is fair to say there were some teething issues (like a true cricketer, it doesn't like rain) so its use on a Saturday at least, was rather limited in the second half of the season. Let us hope the sun shines in 2024 and that the Frogbox allows our supporters to watch us from the comfort of their sofa. Individuals should also use the technology as a training aid.

Moving onto our junior sections – this is an area of great concern – with no formal teams running this year. We hope, and that it a hope, at this stage to field several junior teams in 2024 but there are no guarantees of this happening.

The All Stars and Dynamos courses have run for the past three seasons, and while it has meant young kids have discovered the game of cricket, we have not really seen the sort of progression, both expected or desired with no formal teams being set up off the back of it.

This is very worrying for the future and our future.

All Stars and Dynamos have proved to be extremely popular, including this year.

But we almost certainly will have a large gap before any more youngsters make it into the 3s, 2s and 1s. Our Argos style conveyer belt is well and truly broken – and this needs to change.

So I intend on ditching the Dynamos programme – meaning 8 year olds and above will be taught specific cricket skills, rather than the ECB games driven by the programme. We want cricketers.

We will retain the All Stars set up on a Monday night as an entry level introduction to cricket for many younger kids.

There is appetite for cricket within our village but we need to develop them. And I need volunteers to do this. A survey has gone out to parents asking them a series of questions including whether they can volunteer to be a coach/team manager etc. I expect the results to be shared with the new Committee in our next meeting.

We also require a Child Welfare Officer – another role which someone can think of applying for.

The junior sessions we run on a Monday wouldn't be possible without the core group of people who have given up many nights over the summer. So, thank you to; Rob Okell, Bob Spann, Joe Clark, Ethan Evans, Chris Cottier, Max Ross and especially Ian Ross for his work. Thanks also to Tim Salt for his junior coaching on a Friday evening and to Ethan Evans and Max Ross for their incredibly popular and well-thought-out summer coaching course which was very well received – I think both could get jobs as coaches if they wanted.

Again the people I mentioned just then have jobs, have families, have other commitments, yet give their time up to help out the club. Others need to follow in their footsteps if we are to get on a sustainable footing.

I would like to thank the Committee for their support as I got my feet under the table, so to speak. For the lively discussions, conversations and views expressed at our meetings. That especially means the man with the money, Mr Rouse, and the man with the pen Mr Dobson.

Now this is Mel's final appearance as the Secretary as he will be standing down at the conclusion of this meeting. I think everyone will join me in saying a big thank you to him for his many years of involvement, including many as Chair.

He will leave massive shoes to fill, fortunately, just like on the pitch, we have Freddie Cheshire ready and raring to land his feet straight into those shoes.

And finally from me, thanks for coming along tonight, and to those individuals who have helped support me over the past year.

I will stop there and invite any questions which people have for me based on my report, or any other areas where I may have missed.

Adrian Waddelove
Chairman – Tattenhall Cricket Club

November 2023