

Good evening everyone.

Last year I talked about Continuity Plus following the development of the Club during Tim's time as Chair.

So tonight I want to check off the things we have done as well as look at what we haven't quite achieved.

Then look forward to our plans for this close season leading into next year, highlighting the key issues as I see it.

Achievements:

- The 2nd XI were promoted beginning to close the gaps between teams – the 3rd XI had a good chance to do the same but weather, availability and some indifferent form in key games saw a third-placed finish.
- We appointed and integrated our first proper professional who is coming back next year.
- We took sponsorship income from around £4k to around £12k and have a higher target this year. Thanks to AB for some sterling work.
- The Ladies performed admirably in a higher league finishing third and will enter the Hertfordshire competition next season in good shape.
- The girls' teams were established.
- The junior section as a whole continued to thrive under Sarge's guidance.
- We reached out to local schools and Aran did a great job of holding our first schools' festival, which will continue in 2025.
- Graces continued to play here and we extended their associate memberships to achieve greater income. They are fundamental to our good reputation with the ECB and MCC by the way.
- I talked last year about reputation and we built that with representative fixtures, Budge in particular doing a great job with Essex over 50s and England over 50s. We hosted England over 60s too and received a glowing report from Mark Illott when we had Herts Under 18s here, as well as MCC loving their fixture here with Graces.
- It's worth noting that Jago returned to New Zealand with his family giving a ringing endorsement of our quality as a club, especially the welcome and atmosphere that you have all helped to create.
- Budge, Nigel and Gerry were fantastic in organising our weekly meat raffle and it really made a significant difference to our income and independence as a club.
- Lashings and the Army came here and our partnership with the hockey section looks stronger as a result, with everyone having a good day and the club making good money. The Army want to return as of course do Lashings.
- The live stream was improved and the sponsor of that is very happy to commit to another season at least, as I believe are all other sponsors, subject to some negotiation that Ill cover in a while.
- Finally, your committee did superb work, with everyone taking on their specific roles with enthusiasm and good grace and I'd like to thank each of them.

The Not Quite List, includes:

- Training and coaching – we didn't get any new coaches on board and I hope that will be addressed this winter.
- Additionally I hold my hands up to not really having clear expectations for James and his involvement in coaching.
- Our midweek training was inadequate and it is my view that the occasional underperformance in the first XI was a failure of training and coaching rather than a lack of ability – we'll change that this winter and into 2025.
- Financially there were a few late payers, with one still outstanding, and one who paid up very late having decided to move onto a premier league club in Essex.
- On the disciplinary front, we had a minor issue raised at the Sports Club committee over behaviour from a couple of folks – just let's be clear that swearing at the bar staff (who are mostly on minimum wage and do a good job) is never acceptable and we need to police that as a community.
- So that's a short list and we aim to address the key issues this winter.

So, What's Happening?

- ❖ James has been re-signed and will give us more in terms of coaching of the senior group of players.
- ❖ Gagan is returning as head coach, though not as a player, and will head up a coaching group which includes James and will give more structure to our midweek training, which I will ask now that all players respect and allow to happen by taking a full part as and when they are asked to do.
- ❖ Additionally, we plan to run a 10 week winter programme of skills development for senior and our best junior players to assist with improvement across the board but particularly in transitioning from junior to senior cricket. And that is likely to be an annual event.
- ❖ We are investigating the installation of hybrid pitches to allow greater use of the wicket in both matches and training, with this and a contribution to coaching costs coming from John Astin's legacy. No final decision has been made but we are committed to doing something along these lines.
- ❖ I am also exploring other sponsorship opportunities, with Skelton's having been sold to another Financial Services provider who is keen to continue to support the club, but in a more professional and mutually-beneficial way.
- ❖ That is likely to mean a change to shirts with a new name so we are looking at a different supplier though not committed to this and I am seeking front, back and sleeve sponsors.

The hope is to be as transparent and honest as we can be as a committee, and to bank on your full support as a club for the direction we are heading.

Cricket with these facilities only gets more expensive to provide so finance is absolutely key and I make no apology for being relentless in pursuit of sponsorship.

My message to players is this – commit to training and coaching, pay up on time and keep recruiting new members across all teams.

To supporters and the wider club, thank you and please stick with us – talk to your committee if there are ideas or if things don't work for you as we can't fix what we don't know about.