

Champions at last!

At the Old Ruts we are blessed with an array of talent, young and old right through the club. Since I joined in 2008 I have seen the progress of the 3rd XI culminating in what can only be described as a brilliant 2013!

The season can really be summed up in 2 halves. The first half captained by myself (8 games) and the second half captained by Rob Lever (7 games) and Corbey (2 games) respectively. The first game of the season was a fair old trek to Egham. Fortunately for me and Corbey we were in the luxury of Salim's range rover sniggering at the poor people in their Vauxhall Corsa's. Or in this case Joe Dearsley who had somehow managed to squeeze 6 footer Mike Condron into his back seat. Joe had Mike in his back seat but wasn't interested in getting his leg over. Complete contrast to his batting where he seemed to get his pad across the line of the ball regularly. Half way down the motorway I realised I had forgotten my white trousers, a quick call to Dinesh saved the day as he had a spare pair. However Dinesh generally sets his own meet time an hour after everyone else, meaning I took to the field in blue trousers with a few words of banter from the Egham lads asking if my girlfriend had packed my bag...

Winning the toss and electing to bowl after a week of rain was comforting. New recruit Usman opened the bowling with steady eddy Bilal. Good thing too that Bilal was steady because Uzzy was mayhem! In his first over he bowled 5 wayward deliveries some so wayward they almost missed the pitch! In his second over he bowled 3 howlers and in his third over he turned into the destroyer taking 2 wickets. Bilal picked 1 up for good measure Egham were reeling. The introduction of Waseem was devastating he picked up 3 wickets in quick succession and Salim kept it tight at the other end. **Nadeem finished the job his left arm seamers taking the final 3 wickets for 2 runs in just 11 balls.** After the slightly shambolic start the game having Egham all out for 92 was a good performance. Chasing it down **Dinesh lead the way with 44** well supported by Joe Dearsley 17. A partnership of 65 chasing just 93 to win put us in the box seat. We lost a flurry of wickets towards the end of Joe, Dinesh and Waseem but it didn't take the gloss off a strong first league win.

Things settled down after that game, wins against Chessington, East Molesey, Alleyn and Honour Oak and Normandy all were fairly straight forward. We wobbled chasing 144 against Chessington but **Salim's 33 not out took us home, adding to his amazing bowling figures of 4 for 17.** East Molesey played well early on against our quicks for once we didn't destroy a top order with pace and swing. Rather the depth and variety in our team came through with **Rob Lever taking 4 for 19** narrowly missing out on a five-for. Salim never far away from the party took 3 for 21. **Dinesh starred again in the chase hitting a quick-fire 68.** Other performances of note included **Waseem 5 for 26** at Normandy, **Salim 4 for 26** at Normandy and **Corbey 50 not out** at Normandy.

We suffered only 2 losses. Firstly we had a shocker against Woking & Horsell. We had a young team including Matt Vandeppeer, Eshen Patel, Ross Trimmings and Callum Holden. However being bowled out for 68 was disappointing. Unhelpful LBW decisions didn't do us any good and in response we had them 3 down for 8 runs. However their number 4 nicked one off Bilal's bowling and stood unmoved, their umpire complicit in a shocking turn of events. Needless to

say he went on to 36 not out and won them the game. A bad day in the office. At Purley we lost due to overconfidence, underestimating Purley's desire to win. Waseem played a measured hand of 59 to help us to 172. However their number 3 came out throwing his bat at the ball and we let him off a couple of times allowing him to play a match winning innings of 77. A lesson learnt. Prior to that game we played Walton-on-Thames, who were neck and neck with us at the top of the table for most of the season. At 139 for 4 with Rob Lever on 41 we were strongly poised to set them a target of 200 plus in 40-42 overs (rain reduced). However the rain came down again and we had to abandon the game. Walton escaped. Overall we won 6 out of 8.

In the second half of the season we won 7 out of 9 to secure the league and crown ourselves champions of the league! As I broke my finger the week before in the field, I called on the reliable, run machine, googly spinning, official Clubman of the Year 2013 Rob Lever, also affectionately known as Rob The Slog, Rob The Lob and just Rob. Taking over the team Rob had a lukewarm start away at Leatherhead. At 17-2 with Corbey and Matt Vandeeper back in the hutch things looked rocky...

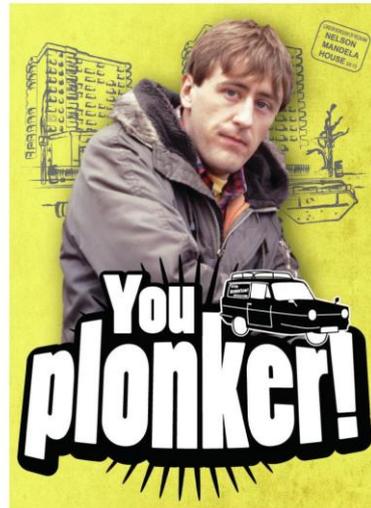
But Daman and Rob steadied the ship with a partnership of 62. Rob was bowled for 33 but Daman continued in sublime form and was joined by Waseem in the form of his life. An epic recovery was underway **Daman blasting his way to 122 not out off 133 balls** and **Waseem hitting 70 off 87 balls**. These two men underlined why they are such key characters in the 3's. At 260-5 off 52 overs Rob declared. Fawad took the new ball and removed their non striking opener for a duck, at 1-1 it looked to be a precession. However Leatherhead fought back to 129-4 as their other opener made 86, the highest score by any opposing batsmen against us in 2013. At 173-6 we finally got him but it was too late in the day we settled for a Winning Draw. The fact that we are now disappointed to draw games is a massive indication of how much our team has come forward in 2013. The boys were quick to shrug it off, similar to the Purley game every dog has its day and their openers 86 was fair play to him. This attitude of resolve helped us hugely, lead by Rob, Daman and Waseem. We won the next game at home to Woking & Horsell emphatically. Sweet revenge for our blushes earlier in the season. This was a crucial result in our season and instilled all the boys with a lot of confidence. But we must admit it was possibly the strongest 3's side we've ever put out with Mappy, Kev Foster, Alex Fox, Chicky and Jolyon all having played 2's or 1's in recent times. Nevertheless it was the familiar face of Daman who took us to victory. A score of **42 by Daman** supported by **Kev's 33** after bowling out Woking & Horsell for just 135 thanks to a devastating **4-31 by Alex Fox** and never far behind **Rob taking 4-35**.

We then went on to record comfortable wins against East Molesey (who we tend to beat regularly without trying very hard) and Egham. At East Molesey, **Fawad stood out taking 5-18** including 6 maidens, the big man doing us proud just reward for his hard work this season. At Egham Freddie Freeman stole the show. Freddie has an immense amount of talent and I texted him practically every week to try and get him to play for us but on almost every occasion Freddie was out of town, at school or out with his mates. It makes us wonder what Freddie really gets up to...

Finally Freddie was available and he didn't disappoint scoring an aggressive 98 not out. Narrowly missing out on his ton! Definitely one to watch for the future for the 2's as his aggressive style could prove a revelation on flatter batting tracks in higher level cricket.

Corbey took over for the game away at Chessington. We lost...

Back to winnings ways against Normandy. **Daman stole the headlines again with a magnificent 124** guiding us to 259. In response we bowled them out for 149, **Henry showing his ability with the ball bagging 3-11.**



On to the biggest game of the season against rivals Walton-on-Thames. Ourselves and Walton had been neck and neck all season and even with our consistency and crushing wins, somehow Walton always seemed to be on our tail. With the first game rained off this one became even more important. We lost the toss and put into bat Henry and Viyaser (yes that stranger who comes along about as often a solar eclipse) got us off to a solid start scoring 32 and 25 each. For once our big gun Daman didn't come off but Matt Vandeeper who we kept faith with through the season came good at the perfect moment. **Matt scored 68, notching up his maiden 50 for the 3rd XI.** A solid platform was all that was needed for O'neil to do his business. Reports suggest **O'neil's 58 not out was BRUTAL** and knocked the stuffing out of Walton as he went from 15 to 50 in a handful of deliveries. A maiden 50 for Neilly. A special word for Neilly and for that matter Salim both who can bat anywhere from 1 to 11 and never make too much fuss about batting down the order. Hopefully Division 1 will be a bit more competitive and allow our middle order power players like O'neil and Salim to put willow to leather! Neilly's onslaught helped us get up to 266 off our 50 and Walton looked like they couldn't wait for the game to be over. **Salim the senior pro ripped out the Walton middle order with 3-33** and **Jamie Pryce cleaned up the lower order and tail with 4-11.** Game over and a massive 10 points for us.

The finishing line was in sight but not quite sealed. We went away to Purley thinking a win would secure promotion. Corbey took over again and this time he delivered. We bowled out Purley for just 78, the second lowest total against us this year. **Henry taking 4-17 in a devastating spell of pace bowling** meanwhile the canny operator that is **Salim took 3-11.** We knocked them off and were back at the club around 4.30pm. We were all delighted to be promoted when in conversation me and Corbey began discussing what we would need next week to win the championship outright. We discovered that in fact thanks to Alleyn & Honour Oak dropping out of the league and rain the previous week it meant Walton didn't have a game and therefore we were CHAMPIONS. Yes we really should have known this before but all's well that ends well! Along with the 1's the celebrations had to be the best and biggest the club has ever seen!



In case you're interested in the last game of the season a dead rubber against Leatherhead we blew them away for 23! Yep their whole team for 23! **Errol snapped up 5-10 a great way to finish off** after he missed most the season with injury.

Overall we had possibly the best season on record for the 3rd XI winning our Division for the first time in our history and gaining promotion to Division 1. Our success can be summed up in 3 words. Unity, Desire and Talent. In the past we've had these elements but for the first time we put them all together. We turn up as one, we turn up to win and we turn up with the best 11 guys available. Our success was as simple as that. A big thanks to Lance Keene, Alix Butler, Joe Riches and the captains of all the other sides. The support we had from key figures in the club's engine room made our job of winning games a lot easier and their advice through the season on selection, tactics and general administration was invaluable. Also a big thank you to all the parents, supporters and tea girls we had on the sidelines over the season who kept us going!

I'm proud to say a few of us were able to attend the Annual Surrey Championship Dinner in early October and we picked up an award for winning our Division. The guys at the awards Salim, Corbey, Rob, Dinesh and Daman were hugely influential through the season but it took a squad of over 20 players for us to win the league and the various names in this report are testament to all the lads who helped us win our league. Here's looking forward to next year. Our ambitions will remain high!



Naz

Captain 3rd XI