

Blood, Sweat, Tears and Expense: Old Rutlishians 1st XI Season Review

Looking back, it's clear that it takes an incredible amount of blood, sweat, tears and match fees to get promoted. This season was no exception. There were close shaves, delicate strokes, sensational pulls and the old cliché of cricketers tying people up in knots with their old ball skills... but enough of Tim Sheehan's final month in London, let's get on with the review...

Poplar Road was treated to some quite sensational 1st XI scenes over the balmy summer months. By July our illustrious skipper, CD, had eventually faced up to a reality that had been staring him in the face for nearly two years: no, not that his wretchedly thin body looks like an ironing board with two strategically placed skittles for nipples, no of course not, something much more obvious... he eventually admitted that his bat was a complete plank. With the help of Patel and Co Cricket Supplies this was soon rectified and he saw the season out blocking slow full tosses to mid wicket with aplomb and a brand new Gray and Nichols wedged under his arm as he made his way back to the pavilion.



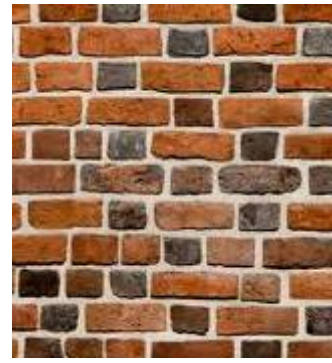
Egg gets ready to put his pads on. Note his old bat in the foreground.

With great Ruts tracks prepared each week, it goes without saying that a number of great moments were turned out on the square. It's a messy job preparing the pitch, but someone's got to do it and we all take our hats off to Mick, Chicky and Perry, so many thanks to them. One colonic underachiever that benefitted from our consistently good strips was Rory Pemberton. Although Roza missed out on at least 12 sixes in his knock against Egham, he more than made up for it in the final home game of the season versus EAHO CC. What a privilege it was to watch his maiden Ruts ton (second in the Surrey Championship); a clinical knock of excellence with the full array of shots that we all know he has. Not only did he wet our appetite for more next season, he also wet Egg's bed that evening.

Woody's class was there for all to see in his 132* against Old Hamptonians. In chasing 189, he and the Aussie overseas foreign import Brad 'Karl' Bradders, batted quite superbly putting on 190 for the first wicket and winning the game, one of the true great partnerships witnessed at Poplar Road - even Perry tested out his new iPod camera picture phone and took a photographic representation for posterity. It was wonderful to see him and Lance gathered around the glowing magical device staring wondrously at what they had achieved - it was like a scene from 'Night at the Museum' when the Neanderthal man waxworks discover fire and chase after Ben Stiller. Dan Wood also went a whole season without booting his stumps down, so congratulations to him too!



The chairman explores other technological advancements of recent times



Spiby shows his full range of strokes in his unbeaten partnership of 190 with Wood.

This season Oxted CC proved themselves to be by far the third best team in Division 4. With an array of youthful talent on show, they certainly tried to demonstrate that teams don't have to rely on foreign imports like Brad Karl Spiby to be successful in this league. West Indian Simon Jackson was important to their cause but certainly not vital, pitching in with a mere 1032 runs at 86 in 17 innings. For the Ruts, essential runs were hit regularly by Egg (ave 40) and Shak (ave 40), this was especially evident in the Oxted run chase which almost guaranteed our promotion - it would have been much simpler if the skipper hadn't been triggered just after bringing up his 50 and Shack given out caught behind for 27. However, it didn't cost us in the long run, although it did ensure that I had to stare intently into the car park for 5 overs such was the tension on the sidelines. All was calm in the middle however, and when Bradders hit the winning runs there were ecstatic scenes from both players and supporters, a champagne moment of the season - great stuff.

A special mention needs to go to Sal - 513 runs at 44 including a special ton against Kingstonian leading us to victory in tough conditions. Although Elsdon did not have such a prolific year as 2012, he still weighed in with vital knocks against Maori Oxshot and Old Emmanuel and of course his consistent top notch catching at slip.

Ok, the bowling. It's tough for me to look at subjectively as I only stopped sobbing on Tuesday evening. Sal did ok. I mean when you look at the stats, I took four 5fers, he took three. My strike rate was 23.76, his was 24.98, that's nearly 25 and 61% of my wickets were caught on the boundary... You get the picture, I bowled well. However, yes, Sal did manage to take one more wicket than me taking his total for the season to a league best 43. It cannot be denied that his wicket taking in the final stages of the season was relentless and at times unplayable. Something else quite remarkable happened by the end of June - James Shackleton decided that he was going to reduce his intake of high quality, rich, upper class dining fare on a Friday night and start to turn up on a Saturday fit to bowl. When he wasn't ambling in, ok, when he ambled in a little less than normal, he often bowled beautifully and took vital wickets. Considering he hurt his poorly little finger against Egham, he raced to 30 wickets at 12.4 and who knows, if he braved his injury and pulled his finger out (!) for the final games, he could have taken even more. Wimp. This serious cricket report is not the time or place to mention what he did to my spicy sausage treat during the final weekend of cricket. Rest assured it was uncalled for.

Fiery young Richard contributed some good wickets to the cause with an especially attacking spell in the crucial Oxted game showing maturity and control. We are all excited about how he's going to develop over the coming seasons, and his bowling and batting should come on too! The future is really secure - Mappy, Evan 'Hips' Watson, Alex Reynard, Oliver Fox, Ringo Patel, Rossco and Nielson all settled in to various roles at different stages of the season, none looking out of place.



Please Mr Bouncer let me in, I am definitely 18!

I won't end this review bombarding you with cliches, but after all is said and done this season, at the end of the day, after all the dust has settled from a tense, hard work but hugely fulfilling and successful set of Division 4 fixtures, it is clear that the 1st XI squad and club as a whole has much to look forward to in 2014. Team spirit, commitment, friendship and future potential will endure and who could possibly bet against more success, tons, 5fers, run chases, booze ups and champers on the square next season. Certainly not me, it was worth every penny.

Barney

11/09/13