

## **ROLLESTON CC.**

### **SEASON 2009 ANNUAL REPORT**

With a new chairman, new captains for the First, Second and Fourth XIs and a new divisional structure in the Derbyshire County League, 2009 was a year of transition for the club both on and off the field.

On the field, the first team, despite having lost the services of the previous year's two most successful bowlers, achieved their aim of retaining their First Division status, but as in 2008, some spectacular batting collapses proved their Achilles heel and were in large part responsible for a disappointing sequence of results in July and August (five consecutive defeats) which put the team in real danger of going down. Fortunately, they recovered to win vital games against Clay Cross and Staveley, finishing a comfortable two positions and 25 points above the above the relegation zone.

Although inconsistency was again an unfortunate feature of the season, there were some very good individual and team performances.

The eventual champions, Elvaston, were soundly beaten on their own ground at the beginning of July, showing what the team was capable of when firing on all cylinders, but this win proved to be the last for seven weeks.

Faced with the loss of Rizwan and Steve Scrimshaw, and Alex Britton's injury problem, the other bowlers responded well, with Graham Dent managing to combine the onerous duties of captain and opening bowler to such good effect that he had his best ever season with the ball, finishing top of the averages with over 40 wickets in league and cup games.

Michael James had to resume duties as an opening bowler and despite opening the batting as well, took over thirty wickets. The openers were ably supported by the evergreen John Thompson, who proved that an old head can compensate for old legs, with his hat-trick against Clay Cross contributing towards a match-winning performance and a consistent season's work. Luke Nelson was rewarded for his decision to concentrate on spin by taking 28 league wickets and providing much-needed variation in the attack.

With the bat, Aafan Janjua was signed with the aim of strengthening the brittle batting, but he failed to reproduce the form that was evident when he scored a century against us the previous year, and also had to miss some games owing to a family bereavement, ending with an aggregate of 393 league runs. Gareth Marshall (450 runs in 19 innings), Alex Britton (459 runs in 17 innings) and Michael James (476 runs in 15 innings) were the leading batsmen, but over the course of the season, not enough players scored runs consistently enough for the side to mount a reliable threat with the bat.

Fielding was like the curate's egg – good in parts, but again not consistent enough to create the required sustained pressure and support for the bowlers.

In cup matches, the team slipped out of the league cup at the first hurdle, losing to Sawley, but compensated for this disappointment with a comfortable win in the Breweries Cup final against Hilton, having played exceptionally well to defeat a strong Ticknall side in the semi-final, when Alex Britton and Ian Wakefield put together a match-winning century partnership after the game seemed to be going inexorably in Ticknall's favour.

The Second XI, captained by Anton Williams, started promisingly but did not achieve their aim of an immediate return to Division 4. Indeed, like the Firsts, a depressing run of results and some disappointingly low scores resulted in a slide down the table before a late recovery enabled the team to finish in eighth position.

Richard Bryan and Ian Wakefield were the most successful batsmen with 499 and 452 runs respectively, and Nigel West scored his maiden century for the club before being promoted to the Firsts, whilst on the bowling side, David Cooke and Anton Williams were the leading wicket-takers, with Mark Bellm lending consistent support.

One promising feature was the emergence of some of the younger players later in the season with Andy Cooper, Dan Henderson and Mark Chalkley all putting in creditable performances.

The gap of four divisions between the First and Second XIs makes transition from the seconds for players more difficult. We need to try to narrow this gap (by promotion for the seconds, not relegation by the firsts!) as quickly as possible.

The Third XI, captained again by Mick Clay, enjoyed a better season than in 2008, with the father and son combination of Tom and Steve Yates proving to be the mainstays of the batting. Both scored centuries, with Mark Chalkley also achieving three figures. Yates junior was also the most successful bowler, taking thirty wickets with his off-spin, ably backed up by the experience of Trevor Foster and Steve Dolby. Several members of the Under 17s played regularly, and the experience gained will help their development in senior cricket.

In 2008, the club had fielded a fourth XI for the first time in its history and the demise of the Burton and District League meant that this year the team competed in the Derbyshire County League for the first time. Under the astute leadership of leading wicket-taker Mick Acton, supported by team secretary Alan Featherstone, this predominantly young team made a most creditable start by finishing in a comfortable mid-table position in their division.

Again it was good to see the junior players, some of them from the Under 15s and 13s offering invaluable support to the experienced players such as the captain, leading run-scorer Daryl Ford and your ageless secretary, and it is to the great credit of the captain and the team secretary that, unlike several other clubs, Rolleston not only fulfilled all its fixtures, but did so with a full complement of players for each match.

It is clear that the standards of the Derbyshire County League are continuing to rise steadily. If we wish to keep pace with this improvement, then qualities other than playing ability alone are needed by team members. If players in the senior teams (not just the 1<sup>st</sup> XI) truly subscribe to the notion of competitive league cricket then, to do themselves and the club justice, they all have to accept the

necessity of what this entails. This includes thorough and consistent preparation, including “putting in the hard yards” in practice.

The Sunday XI, captained by Anton Williams, together with the friendly fixtures, once more provided a valuable opportunity for members to play a rather more leisurely form of the game which was much appreciated by those who made themselves available.

The Youth Section again had a full programme of practices and matches. The club/school link with the De Ferrers pyramid of schools, which had been made under the auspices of the Sport across Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire scheme, proved to be something of a disappointment, with the secondary school refusing to make its sports hall available for community use, even on payment of the market rate for the hire of the facility. It is to be hoped that members of the club who are parents and governors of the school will make their disappointment known to the powers –that- be in St. Mary’s Drive.

Nevertheless, numbers attending practices at the lower age groups held up well throughout the year, both at Repton during the winter and at the club in the season, and we are grateful to the all the managers and coaches for the considerable time and effort which they put into their squads.

We desperately need more such volunteers, although it is pleasing to report that last season Scott Copley passed his first coaching qualification and took on the running of Kwik Cricket, ably supported by volunteers from the Under 17s.

Although none of the teams won any competitions, they had much more success than the previous year and showed clearly that they had reaped the benefit, in terms of individual and team development, from the time that was spent with them, and we thank Scott, Matt Parker, Nick Goode, Gareth Marshall and Graham Milnes for their hard work. Mention should also be made of the unstinting support of parents who helped out with the running of the teams.

The various on-field activities were matched by considerable efforts off the field.

At the beginning of the year, a “Helping Hands” appeal was launched with the aim of encouraging more members to donate a small part of their time to the club. This was coupled with a re-appraisal of the management structure of the club, and one result was a re-invigorated ground and premises committee, enthusiastically led by Ian Wakefield. Ian and his helpers have accomplished a tremendous amount of work over the year, with the Natwest Action Force weekend in April being particularly successful and showing just how much can be accomplished if large numbers donate a little time to well-directed work. The result was that both at Marchington and at the Willows, the season started with the grounds and buildings in excellent order.

As far as specialist ground work is concerned, we are again grateful to David Woodburn and John Hodson for their efforts in producing pitches and outfielders of high quality. Two pitches at the Willows were re-laid last autumn at a cost of £3,500, and although the wet weather prevented their use until the last weekend of the season, the first impression is that the aim of producing more pace and bounce has been achieved. We now need to continue this work.

The Marchington pitch continues to improve and display the results of the considerable investment of time and money put into the ground over the last three years.

Another wet summer highlighted the drainage problems which have affected the Willows outfield in recent years, but thanks to the work of John Shakespear and Alan Partington, who drew up specifications for a new system, and the expertise of the assistant head groundsman at Derbyshire CCC, who laid the new drains at considerably less cost than other quotations, we now have a completely new network on the west and north of the outfield.

Even so, this work represents a considerable financial investment and although we have applied for grants, it again highlights the need for a specialized fund-raising committee following the retirement of the previous volunteers. As the Treasurer's report makes clear, running a cricket club cannot be done "on the cheap" and we must look to variety of means to raise income.

The re-appraisal of the club's management alluded to before also led to the setting up of a separate committee to deal exclusively with the junior section. This previously fell under the remit of the cricket committee, but the smaller group with a sharper focus was able to complete a great deal of work. As a result, we now have in place an agreed coaching framework which sets out aims for each age and ability group to ensure appropriate progression in skill acquisition across the junior section. More coaching resources were also purchased.

Another achievement has been the gaining of Clubmark status, which is an ECB quality mark for club management and youth development, coaching and organisation, including close scrutiny of our safeguarding arrangements, an important part of any organisation these days which is involved with young people. Apart from validating our work, Clubmark also gives the club access to more opportunities for grant aid.

On the social side, Nigel Winfield's efforts, aided and abetted by his energetic committee, have produced an extensive programme of events which have not only provided entertainment and relaxation for the members but have also brought in much appreciated revenue. We thank them for their hard work.

The website, [www.rollestoncc.org.uk](http://www.rollestoncc.org.uk), kindly set up by Miles Richardson, has continued to develop, registering over 5,000 unique visitors, 14,000 visits and almost a quarter of a million page impressions since January.

The "Coaching Corner" section of the site now contains an on-line coaching manual for basic batting, bowling and fielding techniques for our younger members, and over the season the publication of match reports was eagerly awaited. In this respect, special mention must be made of Barry Wynne, Tom Yates and Alan Featherstone who took on the weekly reporting of First, Third and Fourth XI matches respectively, and did so with distinction.

The polished prose of our scorer was also published every Tuesday in the "Burton Mail," and in many respects outshone the efforts of the professional journalists whose writing paled in comparison to the elegant style of our correspondent, a style which was clearly influenced as much by Dylan Thomas as by Christopher Martin-Jenkins.

All the documents and information for parents of youth team members can also be found on a dedicated section of the website.

The “play-cricket” website was again also keenly read and we are grateful to Anton Williams for taking on the burdensome task of entering scorecards and teams on the site.

Your committee has been busy throughout the year making sure that the club is run both effectively and efficiently. Thanks are especially due to the indefatigable efforts of Mick Acton, Trevor Foster and Barry Wynne in their respective roles, and to all those who work so hard to make sure that cricket takes place, not forgetting Angie Cobley and her team of tea ladies who year after year achieve something that the players have not yet been able to emulate– be the best in the league.

A word of thanks also to the scorers. During the winter several younger members took the ACO scoring course, and throughout the season all the teams team was able to call upon a team of dedicated and very competent scorers.

The club is as keen as ever to be at the heart of the village and cricket communities. The pavilion was used throughout the year to host a wide range of activities, ranging from meetings of the Civic Trust to courses for umpires and scorers organised by the local branch of the Association of Cricket Officials

At the end of the season, Graham Dent stood down as Club Captain owing to family and work commitments, and Gareth Marshall informed us that he would no longer be able to take on the U15s because of his considerable other coaching commitments.

Thanks are due to both these gentlemen who have carried out their duties with distinction and dedication, sometimes under extremely difficult circumstances, and we are fortunate that Graham will stay on as vice-captain and that Gareth will continue to chair the Youth Committee.

To conclude then, it has been another busy twelve months of steady progress in the distinguished history of the club.

It is, however, vital that we continue to set ourselves high standards on and off the field and not be complacent. It is only by committing ourselves totally to a policy of continuous improvement that we will be able to achieve our aim of promoting cricketing excellence whilst at the same time being firmly rooted in the local community and providing opportunities for all to play the game.