

MONTGOMERY CRICKET CLUB – notes on a meeting to discuss development of the club over the next five years (2012 – 2017)

(draft)

INTRODUCTION

In 2007 the cricket club embarked on a five year plan to gain Clubmark Accreditation and improve facilities at the club. This plan, which involves a total spend of over £90,000, will be completed when the artificial pitch is laid in Spring 2012.

The management committee is now considering ways of developing the club over the next five years, and the following notes record a discussion held by the committee at its management meeting on 7 November 2011. The discussion was wide-ranging, but focussed on two priorities – improvements to the square and building the strength of the senior teams.

PRIORITIES

The Square

Improvements to the playing surface are considered to be one of the top two priorities for the next five years. Although it is improving through the efforts of the groundsman, its long-standing reputation as a 'low and slow' wicket is seen as a factor in our difficulties in attracting or retaining good players.

There are two options for improvement;

- i. Re-lay pitch
This option has been discussed in the past, but professional groundsmen have suggested it is likely to be costly, disruptive and not necessarily result in an improvement to the quality of the pitch.
- ii. Year by year improvement
We have already used the expertise of the Shrewsbury School groundsman to scarify and tine the square. Work has focussed on four pitches and has resulted in a visible improvement with less moss and more vertical grass growth. The recently purchased new mower will also improve the condition of the grass.

This is considered the preferred option, and it is hoped that a noticeable improvement will be evident next season and over the course of the next five years.

Playing Strength of Senior Teams

The First XI has managed to hold its own over the past three seasons since its promotion back to Division One of the Shropshire League three years ago, and the second XI has kept its position in Division 4. The club wishes to see gradual and sustained improvements to keep pace and overtake other clubs, but the potential loss of key players and the retirement of others next season may weaken both the 1st and 2nd XIs in the short term.

A number of ways to improve the playing strength of the senior teams were considered;

- i. Progression of youth into the senior teams
This is a process that is already happening, and a number of ex-youth players now play for the 2nd XI and are starting to perform for the 1st XI. The trend is expected to continue, and a number of good players coming through the age groups have already been identified. Obstacles for their development into cricketers remain – commitment to school work (especially when GCSEs and A levels are being studied), leaving the area to study at University or to work, and the pressure from other sports, notably

football. The gap between the final age group and the senior teams has been noted and also causes the loss of players.

ii. Retaining players

A number of players have stopped playing cricket, but for varying reasons – family commitments, work commitments, moving away from the area, moving clubs, and diminished interest in cricket. The club will continue to make playing at Lymore good fun and rewarding, and hopefully success will breed success and keep players interested.

iii. Recruiting players from other clubs

We have never actively tried to attract players from other clubs, but good players with proven abilities would be an asset to the club and should have an immediate impact. Club members are encouraged to use established contacts and friendships to suggest a move to Lymore. Information about the benefits of playing should be available, possibly in the form of posters and leaflets. More formal approaches to players are not considered appropriate.

iv. Recruiting a 'professional'

Paying a professional, or paying for a flight and finding a job in the area, was not considered realistic because of lack of funds and the intention of the club to support gradual but sustainable improvement to the playing strength.

v. Encouraging former players to take up the sport again

Former players who have played for Montgomery before have usually retained contact with the club or have friends still involved. Some may be encouraged to play again.

vi. Recruiting players who have moved to the area

This has been a source of new members in the past, and information and encouragement to join the club should be easy to obtain around the town and surrounding area. Efforts to create better links between the club and town should continue.

vii. Role of the Second XI, Sunday XI and Indoor Teams

The second XI can (and has) be used for a variety of purposes – development of youth players, getting 1st XI players back in form, and as a social team for older players. More consideration should be given to its role.

The Sunday XI has been identified as a way of giving youth players a chance to play cricket once they have become too old for the youth structure. Often the quality of cricket is variable and it has not been able to fulfil this role. There is a reluctance amongst established Saturday players to play again on Sundays.

The indoor team may be a way of attracting players from other clubs.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Finance

The club is on a sound financial basis, based on normal annual income and regular fund raising events. This is expected to continue for the next five years. Most development in the next five years is expected to be financed through self-generated funds, though there will still be opportunities for grants targeted at specific items over the next five years.

Facilities

The club facilities have been the focus for development plan over the past five years. No substantial developments are anticipated, apart from potential alterations to the clubhouse.

Youth Development

The youth section is well established and continues to attract players from the local area and further a-field. It is considered the strongest in mid-Wales and has achieved much since it was established in 2002. No major changes are anticipated over the next five years, but we will need to maintain and replace equipment and coaching materials over time.

Coaching

We now have twelve Level 1, two Level 2 and one Level 3 coaches, and would like to support them to extend and refresh their skills by participation in workshops and other courses. Progress through the levels would also be supported. We will explore the potential of 'coaching clinics' to maintain progress of young players once they have finished formal youth coaching. This could include the use of video analysis.

We also need to make sure that as many of the qualified coaches take an active part in coaching activities.

NEXT STEPS

The priorities for development should be agreed by the committee and presented at the Annual General Meeting in January 2012.

Once the priorities are agreed the management committee and the club as a whole should create an action plan to realise the aims, and identify those responsible for seeing it through.