FINDON CC 1ST XI REPORT 2013

Before I begin with a summary of the 1st XI season, I must just first of all congratulate the 2nd XI on their promotion and 3rd XI for their efforts throughout the season. I would also like to thank Paul J for his relentless efforts of pulling together 3 teams every week, a thankless task and one which I don’t envy. I must also extend my thanks to Elaine J and Simon J for scoring throughout the season, again a hugely important job and one which generally goes unnoticed. Finally, but by no means least a huge thank you must go to all the players who have contributed to the success of the 1st XI this season. It has been an outstanding effort and one that we, as a side can be immensely proud of.

The 2013 season proved to be on the whole extremely successful. There were some fantastic individual performances coupled with an excellent team spirit, which meant we were only a game away from playing premier league cricket as we entered into the final game of the season. Admittedly other games had to go our way, but to be in that position in the first place was highly commendable. It was only in 2011 that we were playing in the 3rd tier of the Sussex League. Two years on and we are finishing in 4th place only 3 points behind Goring CC who finished 3rd. This is a remarkable achievement and one which has come in a relatively short space of time. There is some great talent within the club and some promising talent coming through, this talent must be continually invested in if we are to compete and achieve at the current level we find ourselves. The future is bright!

Before I summarise the league season, I must first of all mention the disappointing run we had in the VKO. Having reached the regional final, we found ourselves up against Middleton CC. Our performance on the day was poor to say the least. We were dismissed for 143 and Middleton managed to knock the runs off in 25 overs while only losing 3 wickets. I still believe we have a great chance of going all the way in that competition and hopefully the 2014 season will prove to be our time!

The first league game of the season saw us play host to one of the favourites for promotion, Eastbourne. We bowled extremely well and managed to bowl the visitors out for 188. This gave us a great opportunity to get off to what would have been a magical start, unfortunately it wasn’t to be and we capitulated to 149 all out. The only 2 batsmen to trouble the scorers were Jack M (37) and Graham M (34\*). Although ultimately we lost the game, we did manage to take away some positives. Our bowling being one, but the fact we had pushed a premier league side right to the end was an extremely positive start.

The following week we made our way to newly promoted Crowhurst Park. A great game of cricket and one which saw us come out on top. I managed to win the toss and chose to insert. Crowhurst batted well and accumulated a total of 205 for 9. This was a total which I backed us to get, the deck was good and the boundaries were relatively small. We got off to a steady start but soon found ourselves 105 for 5. John R and Bradley B batted extremely well and took us to the brink of victory. Unfortunately John was bowled on 50 with the score on 186 for 6. We managed to lose a couple more wickets, just to make the game interesting! Bradley ended up on 56\* and saw us home, taking all 30 points. A well deserved victory.

For the third game of the season we welcomed another one of the favourites for promotion, Bexhill. We batted first and amalgamated a below par score of 149 all out. Jack M batted well for his 52 and Felix J chipped in with 26. These were the only 2 to trouble the scorers to any degree. We did come out fighting and again pushed a very good side right to the end. Harry M bowled well and picked up 4 for 52 but unfortunately that wasn’t enough to see us home. We lost by 2 wickets, but yet again took some positives from what was a disappointing defeat.

Next in line were our local rivals, Goring CC. I won the toss and decided to bowl, when Goring were 138 for 1, off not very many overs I had my doubts over inserting! However, we fought back and restricted Goring to 206 for 9 with Toby K picking up 5 for 49. This set the scene for what was an extremely exciting run chase. We got off to a solid start with John R reaching 34 in quick time and Glen B batting well for his 19. In came Andrew C and Felix J who put on a great partnership of 105 until Andrew was dismissed for 50. It was then left to Felix to take us home, 9 required off the last over; Felix decided he would finish the game in 2 balls! A great win and a huge confidence boost for the side.

Middleton CC arrived at Longfurlong on a warm summer’s day in June. This was probably a fixture that everyone involved would rather forget. We were dismissed for 51 and Middleton chased them down losing only 4 wickets. A thoroughly disappointing performance all round. However, we did bounce back the following week with a victory away at St James Montefoire. We restricted them to 165 for 9 in their 53 overs. We replied well with a few tense moments on the way, Jack M scored a solid 37 and Andrew C a good 49. It was left to Toby K to steer the ship home with an intelligent 31\*. Subsequently we won the game by 3 wickets with plenty of overs to spare.

A comfortable win at home to Pulborough gave us some good momentum and saw us creeping up the table. We bowled first having won the toss and removed Pulborough for 143. We didn’t get off to the best start and found ourselves 81 for 5. It was left to Bradley B (63\*) and John R (24\*) to take us home. A 5 wicket victory with some good individual performances.

The final fixture at home in the first half of the season saw us host Glynde. I was unavailable for this particular fixture which meant the team were left in the capable hands of Bradley B. Glynde managed to scrape together 144. Some good bowling from the Metters’ brothers taking 7 wickets between them, this ensured a low total and one that should have been chased down with ease. In true Findon style we made hard work of it but fortunately we scraped home with Harry M finishing on 18\* and Curtis H on 10\*.

The mid way point of the season meant a trip over to Ifield. Ifield has always been one of my favourite places to travel to! Once again I managed to win the toss and chose to insert. We dismissed Ified for 182, which was probably 40 more than they should have got. Our reply started as probably one of the worst I have ever been involved in. Jack M went for 0 followed by Alasdair Wilson (debut) who also went for 0, swiftly followed by Andrew C, 5 and Bradley B, 0. We were 8 for 4 at one point and staring down the barrel of a good hiding! We managed to get ourselves to 69 for 6, Felix J and myself very nearly got us home until Felix holed out on the boundary for 95 and the score was 164 for 8. His 95 was certainly one of the best knocks I have seen, he batted with patience and outstanding shot selection, and his innings certainly deserved 3 figures. It was down to me and Harry M to see us over the line, which we did and complete a great win.

A trip to The Saffrons against Eastbourne was next on the agenda. Eastbourne elected to bat first on what was a great deck. We were put to the sword a little and although they batted well, they also batted with an arrogance that I took distinct disliking to. This meant they had to be reminded they were playing in the same league as us! They bludgeoned their way to 284 for 7 of 46 overs. We replied extremely well and all was looked positive at a 136 for 2. However, once again we had a collapse and found ourselves fighting to save the game. This was a game I really didn’t want to lose, primarily because of their attitude. We took it to the final over but unfortunately Spider was given out LBW with 3 balls to go and we were dismissed for 176. A disappointing result but it was good to see a little fight at the end.

The newly promoted Crowhurst Park travelled to Findon on a hot day in July. Having inserted, they accumulated 181 for 7 in their 53 overs. We managed to knock the runs off in 34 over’s, primarily down to Alisdair W scoring 99 in 88 balls, a great knock which was supported well by Glen B with 34\* and Toby K with 19\*. A convincing and fully deserved 5 wicket win.

The following week we travelled to blustery Bexhill. They batted first and scored 239 for 4 from their 53 overs. We made steady progress but never really looked like winning the game. We accumulated 191 for 7 from our 47 overs and the game fizzled out into a draw. The highlight of the game was Glen B’s 50 from 58 balls.

The following week’s fixture against Goring was unfortunately abandoned due to the weather. This was a pivotal game which could have made a big difference with regards to promotion, it certainly would have seen us finish above Goring had we won. But it wasn’t to be and we had to settle for 10 points apiece.

Middleton CC was next on the agenda; this was a fixture which I was extremely keen to win. We owed Middleton, as they had comprehensively beaten us twice during the season already, once in the league as well as knocking us out of the VKO. As a team we performed well, we bowled them out for 162 in 49.5 over’s and our reply could not have been better. We won by 9 wickets with Bradley B scoring 69\* and Jack M, 63. A hugely convincing and well deserved win.

As we moved towards the back end of the season, we found ourselves in a pretty good position with a chance of promotion. Early August saw us host St James. I lost the toss and we were inserted, we accumulated a good score of 224 for 2 off 51 overs. Jack M scored the only 1st XI ton of the season and finished on 101\*, Bradley B scored 50 and Felix J finished on 61\*. St James replied well but were always up against it and never quite managed to get ahead of the game. We ended up dismissing them for 198 off 47.1 over’s and taking all 30 points.

The fixture away at Pulborough was going to be a crucial one, if we had any chance of promotion it was a game we had to win and take all 30 points if we were to have any chance of promotion. The weather forecast was poor for the day and it was always going to play apart. The plan was to win the toss and insert, bowl them out cheaply, knock them off and be back in the bar by 1700! Unfortunately I lost the toss and they decided to insert us, not a great start. We did score relatively quickly which was primarily down to Alisdair W with a great knock of 88 from 90 balls. Bradley B and Andrew C also batted well with scores of 50 and 36\* respectively. We completed our innings on 207 for 6 off 46 over’s. The rain was extremely threatening and it began to fall towards the end of our innings. Fortunately it stopped just as we finished tea, but continued to remain a threat. We had to get through them quickly if we were going to walk away with all the points. We produced one of our best fielding and bowling performances of the season and dismissed them for 93 of 23.4 overs. This included 6 wickets from myself and a hat-trick. Although some would argue that it wasn’t a proper hat-trick as the 3rd wicket came from the first ball of the following over! A great result, which put us in a good position just behind the top 3.

Unfortunately the weather put a stop to any chances of promotion as the penultimate game of the season over at Glynde was a complete wash out. We did our very best to play, which included hanging around for most of the afternoon. We did start a T20 match but that only lasted a couple of overs until the heavens opened again!

The final game of the season was at home to Ifield, mathematically we could have still finished in the top 2 but it would have meant other results going our way, which was unlikely. I lost the toss and they decided to bat first on what was a pretty dead track. They amalgamated 246 for 6 from their 53 overs, 246 runs was a lot of runs to chase down in any form of the game especially at Findon. We could only rely with 189 for 8 from our 47 overs. Some may say we should have had a better crack at going for the runs. I would argue that you have to weigh the percentages up and I thought it was unlikely we were going to win the game and therefore I didn’t want to lose it. I knew the chance of promotion had gone as the results within the league hadn’t gone our way. We must begin to breed a winning mentality and that means being bothered when we lose even if there isn’t anything riding on the game.

As I said towards the beginning of this report, on the whole we had an extremely successful season and one that the club can be proud of. Finishing 4th in the league only 3 points behind Goring was probably above most peoples expectations given the way the majority of sides in the league operate with regards to overseas players. Findon CC has some fantastic home grown young players who are undoubtedly the future of the club. I am feeling extremely positive about the 2014 season; players are a year older which means another year’s experience. With the talent we currently have coupled with a winning mentality, we could surprise a few more people this season!