**3rd XI 2013**

Played 16, won 7, lost 7, drawn 1, cancelled 1.

Our first season in West Sussex Invitation League Div 4, and we were due to meet the 3rd XIs of some ‘big’ Sussex clubs (Horsham and Brighton & Hove) and the 2nd XIs of both Southwater and Littlehampton, whom I felt might be strong sides too.

As it was, we more than held our own, and were in with a decent chance of a third successive promotion right up to the end of the season. Our batting performances let us down several times, but we got more bowling points than anyone in our division except Horsham, a measure of how many good young bowlers we had all year, plus one good old one (yes, Nigel, that means you). Finishing 8 points behind third-placed Portslade 2nd XI (with the same number of wins as them) was a great effort.

We started against Horsham 3rds , and despite my assumption that we might struggle, we won comfortably. We posted 187-8 with Mark Higgin (60) and John Flower (53) scoring the bulk of the runs in an opening stand of 130. We then bowled them out for 69 in 30 overs. They folded embarrassingly after being 50-1, and I can say that because a vet’ with a dodgy shoulder took 4-1-3-4!

The second game against Felbridge and Sunnyside was also a win – we bowled them out for 145, with Charlie Brown, Jack Pierce, James Henman and Ryan Meighan sharing the wickets, before Flower(49\*) and Lewis (43\*) knocked off the runs. We then well beaten by Littlehampton by 78 runs, a game that saw our top order fail rather spectacularly (we were 31-6 at one point). A highly entertaining partnership of 72 between Jon Cooper and James Henman that went from the sublime to the ridiculous, sometimes in consecutive deliveries, saved us some face. Earlier, Meighan (5-46) and Lambert (4-63) had bowled well to dismiss them for 204 on a good track.

A good win by 8 wickets against Southwater 2nds, with Sam Hulston hitting 79\*, was followed by another batting collapse on an ‘interesting’ track against Himani. We bowled them out for 112 with Tom Lawson, Nigel Lambert and Charlie Brown sharing the wickets, before getting skittled for 68 (which would have much worse without Hulston’s 41!).

We then lost to Portslade 2nds after posting 244-5 (Jamie Lewis hitting the only 3rd XI ton of the year, 117\*). They got them, 4 wickets down, in the last over. At Partridge Green, another good performance from Sam Hulston (63\*) saw us to a slightly tense win, this time by 4 wickets chasing 131. There was nothing tense about the halfway point of the season when another batting calamity – getting bowled out for 51 – meant we lost to Brighton and Hove 3rds by 126 runs.

After that debacle we put in one of the best all round performances of the season, by beating Horsham 3rds for a second time. We made 254 all out, with 81 from Sam Dunkley and then bowled them out for 168 with Lambert and Jack Woods taking 4 wickets each.

Away at Felbridge saw us getting bowled out for another low score, 60, when chasing a 131, and then against Littlehampton we managed to slump to 77-7 in reply to their 111. However, James Henman made a very useful 24\*, and we won by 3 wickets. A draw against Southwater in a rain affected match followed, and then we were well beaten, by 82 runs, by a very strong Portslade 2nd? XI.

The penultimate game of the season was a very painful loss to Himani and a game we should have won; we were bowled well to dismiss them for 133, with Nigel Lambert taking 5-32, but we were all out for 131, having been 36-5. We then made our best batting total of the season in the final match, against division champions Brighton & Hove 3rds. Jack Woods (48), Cameron Young (80) and Alex Caughlin (73\*) got us to 257-6 in 47 overs and allowed us to declare for only the second time in the season! Caughlin and Lambert took 7 wickets between them to bowl them out for 197.

As ever the season saw some great performance from emerging young players in their first seasons in senior cricket – 2013 was notable for the bowling of Charlie Brown and Tom Lawson, and Cameron Young played one of the outstanding innings of the year in the final game.

Thanks to the umpires and scorers - Alan, Paul, Steve, Iain, Sheila, Debbie and Elaine - that helped throughout the season and to Jamie Lewis for skippering when I wasn’t available.