

## Findon Cricket Club under 19's 2015 season report

Around the time of March 2015 I was emailed by the clubs Vice Chairman Mr Judges, I thought surely he doesn't want the availability chart filled out already?! But to my delight I was offered the role of captaining the Under 19's side for the up and coming t-20 competition, and soon found myself at the county ground with the other local captains discussing the new exciting plans for the restructured format. Cricket often falls down the priority list (for some of us) in juniors as we reach the ages of 14-19 during exam times and new social opportunities, the hours of coaching and game time as youngsters can often to waste and the pads and bats become mould collectors in garages and garden sheds. It's an issue a lot of clubs suffer with and considering the seniors sides struggle for numbers themselves this year it makes it even more important to keep the flow of juniors into the senior sides. So the ECB decided to try and keep the youngsters in the game with this t20 format, the idea being games could be played in the evenings after school/college and not take up a whole day on the weekend. Determined to go one better than last year's finals day disappointment Paul and I discussed the plans for the new season, and recruited some new blood. The rules allowed us to involve two members from other clubs, so Mike Askew from Littlehampton CC and Keelan Shoulders from Middleton CC agreed to play for us, both of which I played representative cricket with as youngster and have been trying to get them in Findon shirts ever since.

To our first game, an away day visit to Henfield on a Sunday morning. Despite Iain Caughlin oversleeping after a night in a club telling the local girls about his deadly away swingers he was planning for the morning, we managed to start the game at 9:30 with 11 men. Having lost the toss we were bowling and restricted the visitors to 134 from their 20, with Keelan picking up 2 and Harrison Grayston showing his death bowling skills we felt they were below par on a good deck and small boundary. We chased the score down comfortably in 14.3 overs for the loss of 1 wicket, Jack Woods out for 34, Mike Askew retiring 50\* and myself 36\*.

Slinfold at home was our next game, and a fiercely competitive game resulted in our second win. Winning the toss and batting we posted 160-9, although we let ourselves down having built a solid platform at one point we were looking at 180+ potential. Keelan again the pick of the bowlers with 3-10 from his 4 ensured we completed the job winning by 20 runs. Pleasing to beat Slinfold and let our cricket do the talking in light of some off field disputes.

Our next fixture was the return leg of Henfield at home, and the parents and locals were treated to a fine displaying of hitting by the Findon top order as we posted 174-1 from our 20 overs. George Solomon collected 3-27 from 4 overs as we bowled out the opposition in 17.1 overs winning by 30 runs. A much better performance and the lads showed much better discipline with the ball. At the half way stage we were 3/3 and growing with confidence.

Our final home game in the group stages saw yet another high scoring display by the Findon Horses, winning the toss and posting 207-2 from our 20 overs we were in control from the first ball of the game when Jack Woods smashed the ball back down the ground for 4 runs. Despite our strong start with the bat we were sloppy in the field and some generous bowling gave Roffey a slight glimmer in a game we should have won comfortably. With the game getting a little more tense up stepped Mr Caughlin to knock back the middle peg and earn us our 4<sup>th</sup> win by 37 runs.

Two games to go in the group stages and only the top team from each group going through to a finals day in September we felt it was ours to throw away. Thankfully we kept the dreams alive with another win away to Roffey; winning the toss we restricted the home side to 129-5 from their 20. Again we felt this was way under par on a small ground, and made no fuss of chasing down the score in 15.1 overs for the loss of just 1 wicket. Mike Askew again leading the run chase with yet another retirement.

And to our final game away at Slinfold, a win and could start planning the finals day. Our usual warm up of football and enjoying Harrison's masterclass of headers left us in good team spirits ahead of the game. Slinfold had become our closest rivals in the group as they were still in shot with a chance of progressing through; however a crushing performance saw us again dominate to complete a 100% group stage win rate, the only side in the 3 Sussex leagues to do so. Posting 173-6 from our 20 we felt was competitive and it proved to be 36 runs too many as we bowled them out for 137. The celebrations as we took the last wicket ended in a hot tub and pizza party at the sides pin up boy Ross Ball's gaff.

Unfortunately our chase of the 19s t20 trophy goes downhill from here, in a rather disappointing finals day. The ground hosting the finals day was originally the County ground, but was changed to Hastings's Horntye Park, rather convenient for the Hastings side in the final, not so convenient for us travelling over for a 9:30 start. A rain affected game left us second best, as we could only manage 136-6 from our 20 and Hastings chased the score down in the penultimate over. Straight off the defeat we were to play Chippendale (a last minute replacement to Chichester who didn't fancy the long journey) and lost in a 10 over game. Heads and spirits had dropped and we struggled to produce the same dominating performances that had earned us a place in the finals day. Chasing 78 from 10 overs we fell 10 runs short and were left feeling sorry for ourselves at the end of a great cup run. Hastings must be congratulated on their eventual win of the trophy, they were the better side on the day but we could hold our heads high knowing we had represented our famous club well throughout the day and whole competition. Had circumstances such as weather and game schedules been slightly kinder to us we may have hoped for a better result, but an enjoyable day out regardless of the end disappointment.

Finally a massive thanks to Paul Judges for organising the side for the competition, his enthusiasm and will to win rubbed off on our players and we would have loved to have shown our appreciation for his hard work with a trophy. Thanks must also go to Elaine Judges and Karen Whittington for scoring for us, and to Mandy Bridson, Dave Young and Neil Grayston for sponsoring our final day shirts. It's been a massive privilege to skipper such a talented side, and hopefully we can repeat the success and winning mentality we have shown together in the future in the senior sides.

Special mention must go to Mike Askew who finished leading run scorer and leading 6's hitter in the country, a fantastic achievement to be proud of.

I wish all the best to next year's side that have high standards to compete with, the club's history of junior success is something we are proud of and want to continue building on for the future.

Curtis Howell.

Top 5 Batting Stats:	Top 5 Bowling Stats
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Mike Askew: 322 runs. Avg 80.50. 50's: 4 6's: 15	Harrison Grayston: 19 overs, 9 wickets, 7.47 ER
Curtis Howell: 234 runs. Avg 58.50. 50's: 1 6's: 10	Keelan Shoulders: 17.5 overs, 8 wickets, 5.33 ER
Jack Woods: 201 runs. Avg 50.25. 50's: 2 6's: 2	Curtis Howell: 16.5 overs, 7 wickets, 5.82 ER
Keelan Shoulders: 71 runs. Avg 35.50 50's: 0 6's:	Alex Copeland: 15 overs, 6 wickets, 8.00 ER
Cam Young: 61 runs. Avg 12.20. 50's: 0 6's: 0	George Solomon 6.1 overs, 4 wickets, 7.95 ER