

## FINDON CRICKET CLUB JUNIOR REPORT 2020

The bad news this year was that due to COVID restrictions the league season was cancelled for all junior sides this year. The good news however was that the lifting of restrictions in the middle of the summer allowed a full programme of festival cricket to go ahead as planned.

Findon entered teams in the U11, U13, U14, U16 and U18 age groups with the only age group that we were not represented in being the U12's. This meant that Findon was one of the best represented clubs in Sussex in the festival this season. This is real testament to the strength and depth of the junior section at Findon.

In respect of the U18's they had a good week. Whilst the weather was not kind for the first match against Bognor which was abandoned as a draw after 10 overs, the weather improved dramatically after that with the final game at Horley being played in temperatures approaching 37°C! In game 2 we beat Stirlands, chasing down relatively comfortably 225 after Stirlands had declared. Archie Cairns top scored with 85 and was ably supported by Matthew Glover with 57. In Game 3 we were beaten by a very good Chichester side who themselves only just missed out a finals place by the smallest of margins. Game 4 and our final game was away at Horley who, batting first, racked up 312-5 off 37 overs. In response some gutsy batting meant that we managed to bat out a draw finishing on 247-9 off 42 overs. A fantastic effort in the heat with Joel Eaton top scoring for Findon with a marvellous 92. From my perspective it was particularly pleasing to see so many younger age group players representing the U18 age group and playing such an integral part in the team. One highlight for me was seeing Matt Hawke, an U13 player, resolutely defending his wicket in securing the draw against Horley when the team was 9 down in the face of some good bowling from the opposition. I was also very pleased by the attitude of all the players that represented the club during the week, playing the game in the right spirit and being so supportive and encouraging of each other.

In the U16 age group some good performances from the team resulted in a 6th place finish in their group of 21 teams. The week started in defeat to Rottingdean, despite good knocks from Archie Cairns who top scored with 46, supported by Drew Hammersley with 41\*. After a washout against Stirlands, the team inflicted a 5-wicket defeat on Preston Nomads with Archie Cairns starring with the ball taking 5-9. Alex Stephens scored his second junior century with 100\* in the final game against Portslade before Oakley Bird took 3-14 with the ball in a convincing victory.

The U14's had an excellent festival winning 3 games and drawing 1; finishing 4th in a group of 19 teams. The team put in some really strong team performances with contributions from the whole squad. Individual highlights with the bat included Sam Mason's 51 versus West Chiltington and two scores of 57 from Matt Hawke against Pagham & Rudgwick. With the ball, Fin Roberts impressed with figures of 4-5 against Eastergate & 4-14 versus Rudgwick. George Colbran also took 4-17 against Pagham, Matt Hawke 4-29 against Rudgwick and 3-12 from Jacob Knowlton versus West Chiltington.

The U13's drew 2 and lost 2 games in a tough group against some strong opposition in their festival week. Shams Suddahazai struck a superb 117\* in a losing draw against Chichester Priory Park followed by an unbeaten 133 in a heavy defeat at the hands of table-toppers Preston Nomads. Hashim Khan struck 44 in a draw against St Peters as the team finished 18th in the Group.

The U11's enjoyed their introduction to festival cricket, finishing 12th from 21 teams after a win, a defeat and 2 draws. The week started with an abandoned match against Southwick who were bowled out for just 23. Dennis Woolridge led the way with the ball, taking 3 wickets for 3 runs but unfortunately the weather didn't allow for our reply. An excellent team bowling performance followed against Stirlands Girls, with wickets shared around between 7 players. Ruben Kingsbury struck a terrific

37\* as we chased down the total of 101 with the loss of just 3 wickets. Wickets were shared around again the following day as Stirlands were bowled out for 66 before we fell just 4 runs short of the total in a close and well-fought match. The week ended with a draw against West Chilmington – Toby Quick returned figures of 3 for 11 before we reached 56/7 in response.

In regards to the U19's ECB T20 Cup, unfortunately this fell victim to COVID which I know was a real disappointment for the players as for many of the players it is one of the highlights on their cricketing calendar.

On a positive note, we were however able to once again run all All-Stars programme. This is a national programme that is designed to inspire five to eight year old boys and girls to take up cricket and provide a great first experience of the game. The intention of the course is act as a pathway to our junior section and to act as the foundation for them to progress through the ranks at the club. However, if all we do is to instil children with a lifelong love of our sport then we will have been successful.

At Findon, we try and put fun right at the centre of the All-Star experience which, with the coaches we have for the All Stars, I firmly believe we achieve. It is fantastic to have someone of the calibre of Gary Howell to help run the course and to make it so much fun for all the children. It is also great to see two of our "older" juniors, being Matthew Glover and Archie Cairns, also giving up their time so freely every Saturday morning to help.

Due to COVID restrictions we were this year limited to having 26 children on the course and unfortunately, within 10 days of opening the bookings window, we had reached our maximum capacity. Hopefully the 2020 intake will all be back for 2021 as well as more children enrolling in the course to ensure we continue the upwards trajectory in terms of attendees that we have experienced year on year since the inception of the programme in 2018.

In respect of girls cricket at Findon this was severely affected by COVID with unfortunately no fixtures being possible. We did however manage to run winter nets for the girls which were expertly led by Laura Dean from Sussex, ably supported by Dean Wards.

In terms of Sussex, a huge congratulations to Archie Cairns, Alex Stephens, Matt Hawke and George Garner who have all been selected for the Sussex pathway programme for 2021. A great effort and just reward for all the hard work they have put in.

From a cricket perspective whilst 2020 has been extremely challenging and the season significantly curtailed, ultimately, I believe that it has been a very successful one for the development and growth of our junior players. The restrictions in place and the format of the August Cup for senior cricket, has allowed more junior players than ever to play senior cricket this summer. It is so wonderful to see so many of our junior players step up into senior cricket and being so successful. Playing at this level can only help their long term development and enjoyment of the game. We have also witnessed junior players become integral and important players for all three Saturday sides and which is so important for the long term future of the club. We have also seen a Sunday side play fixtures every available Sunday this summer with junior players making up the backbone of the side.

Finally, I would like to pass on a massive thank you, as always, to all our junior managers, coaches, umpires, scorers and parents. Without all your hard efforts and adherence to the new rules we would not have seen any junior cricket this summer.

David Glover – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021