

Junior Convenor's Report Poloc Cricket Club AGM, February 2013

I'm please to bring another report on the club's juniors to the members.

And in doing so I will start with the blatantly obvious: 2012 was another wet,.....*very* wet, season. So wet in fact that no fewer than 49 junior matches were scheduled only to be cancelled. Astonishingly, that's more than some clubs play in a full dry season! But perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised given – if I recall correctly – the last junior game of the previous season, an Under 11 home match against West of Scotland, had been abandoned with a West batter in tears in a muddy crease and unable to run on the slippery track, horizontal rain lashing across the ground! We should've seen this as an ominous sign!

But of course there's more to the club's junior programme than just the summer season. Quite literally we are able to offer year-round cricket for our juniors. At present we are coaching juniors of all ages for two hours every Sunday – these sessions continue until April. We also introduced two-hour indoor Friday night sessions before Christmas for our older juniors and students, and from next week we have two-hour Monday evening sessions as well, again for our older juniors and students. I am convinced, therefore, that, as a club, we offer as comprehensive a junior coaching and practice programme as there is in the west of Scotland. The challenge is, of course, to make the quality of what we do as high as the quantity.

The winter months also see the annual indoor Super 8s tournament. The club entered sides in all three age-group competitions, the Under 19s being the most successful in finishing runners-up to Ferguslie, Craig Young being awarded the Player of the Tournament. The Under 15s likely under-performed in their age-group, a defeat to Renfrew in the group stages proving their undoing, whilst the Under 12s – comprising mainly very much younger players – competed really well in the youngest age-group.

One measure of the quality of what we do is how our junior teams, and individual players in them, perform. At present we have one Under 18 player in the Cricket Scotland Academy programme, and another in the Western Warriors Under 18 squad. Then at Under 15 age-group, we have three players in Cricket Scotland's Regional Development Centre. Representation in the younger age-group Area Squads is also encouraging, with seven of our juniors in the South Glasgow Under 14 squad and four in the Under 12 squad, the youngest representative squad players can be selected for. We also have, in Abtaha Maqsood, the club's first woman international player, Abtaha having represented Scotland Women at Under 17 in 2012 and continues to train with this squad.

Talk of junior age-group internationalists also prompts mention of two other players who played at this level in 2012: Ross Armour who represented Scotland at Under 15, and Craig Young who did the same at Under 18. Congratulations to all these players who, in playing for select teams, do so representing our club.

But, whilst individual player performances and successes are good to highlight, so is team performance. First of all it's worth saying that the club again fielded junior sides at every age-group and in all competitions open to it – from Under 10 "Kwik Cricket" to Under 18. In this regard our thanks are due to the many people – parents and coaches alike – who helped with organising, umpiring and scoring at, and transportation of players to and from, the matches played. In the West District leagues our teams managed to play 40 matches despite the weather. Our Under 11 side had another tough season, but were again perhaps the youngest

team in the league – and in this group there are a number of players of real potential, all but one still being eligible to play Under 11s in 2013. Some it should be said can play another three or four seasons at the age-group! The Under 13s finished in the top half of their league, the Under 15s finished fourth in theirs, and the Under 18s were runners-up to Ferguslie in the oldest age-group league. In fact had it not been for a bizarre incident in Ferguslie's last match then the Under 18 title would've been here at Shawholm and not at Meikleriggs. The match concerned saw Ferguslie lose to Drumpellier in a rearranged match at Langloan, a result that would have seen our Under 18s top the table on the basis of having lost fewer matches. However the rearranged match was played as a twelve overs-a-side game when league rules stipulate that a minimum of fourteen overs-a-side must be scheduled for a match to be a valid. So Ferguslie's defeat was scratched from the record books and the engraver had to somehow change a "P" to an "F" before continuing on with his work on the Under 18 league trophy!

In junior league games – notwithstanding so few matches being played – there were a number of strong individual performances, both in matches and across the season. At Under 13 level, Ahmed-Raza Hanif took nine wickets at 8.6, and Calum James scored 169 runs at an average 24. In amongst this 169 runs one innings in particular should be highlighted – *CJ* hitting an eleven-ball, eight-scoring shot, 31 at Meikleriggs that saw him have to retire in the second over of the match! The Under 15 age-group bowling was dominated by Akhil Ahmed, who took twelve wickets at 12.1, whilst Calum Stout's 171 runs at 34, Akhil's 169 runs at 21 and Ross Armour's 105 runs at the same average were the standout batting performances in the season. At Under 18, Craig Young's sixteen wickets at 4.9 dominated the bowling averages, and both he and Mike Allcock scored more than 250 runs at averages over 50 with the bat. Mike narrowly missed out on a hundred with an unbeaten 96 at New Anniesland, while Craig closed out his junior career with 100 not out in the last match of the season here at Shawholm, against Stenhousemuir. Elliott Rousen, in his first season as a true Under 18, also did well with the bat, averaging 45 with a top-score of 70 not out.

Junior players also played a lot of senior cricket in 2012. The league-winning Shawholm XI featured seventeen juniors in one or more match. Four averaged 20 or higher with the bat, Elliott Rousen averaging 53 to top the side's batting averages. His high-score of 66 was also the second-highest individual score in league matches behind the 78 scored by Under 15 Calum Stout. Juniors also featured prominently in 1st XI cricket too, with Elliott and Craig Young both playing regularly in league games. Craig finished second only to Carl Huyser in league runs scored, whilst Elliott's improvement continued, playing a couple of important innings. The challenge for these two, as it is for *all* our juniors, is to continue their development beyond the junior ranks and make regular and meaningful contributions in senior cricket.

I've mentioned our ongoing indoor coaching already, but 2012 again saw junior coaching at Shawholm on weekday evenings, and my thanks are due to the many senior players – as well as our overseas player/coaches, Carl Huyser, Glenton Stuurman and Mike Allcock – who gave so much of their time, and willingly, in this regard. Mention by name should be given to David James, Russell Lauder, Matt Coyle, Craig Young, Aamir Kayani, Russell Lauder, Paul Flanagan, Saqib Ahmed and Ross Armour. As I always say at this juncture: the club's junior programme simply wouldn't function without the input of these people.

Our junior programme also wouldn't work without the support of the many parents who assist with match logistics. In this regard our thanks should go to Graham Stout, Jon Raine, Stuart Rousen, David and Jacqueline Armour, David and Eilidh James, Colin McWilliam, Stuart and Helen Macdonald, Grant and

Frances Cathcart, Muhammad Maqsood, Warren Bowden and Brian Spence all get mentions. Apologies if I have missed anyone out here. Without this help, we simply couldn't carry out the amount of work we do.

Another component in any successful junior cricket programme is the support of ground-staff. Again in this area we are lucky to have incredibly willing people, from groundsman Adam Richardson and Ground Convenor Leslie Ingram-Brown, to our overseas players who worked tirelessly in a truly horrible season, weather-wise. Unashamedly repeating what I said last year: these people put in a power of work throughout the year to provide a standard of playing facility that is second-to-none as far as what juniors at other clubs are being provided with. Our youngsters continue to be fortunate to be learning and playing their junior cricket at Shawholm.

The club's related coaching charity, The Community Coaching Initiative, also continued its community coaching in local schools in 2012, delivering over 200 hours of coaching at thirteen schools. The demand for this only grows and we are only constrained by the availability of coaches. Importantly, it's also from these programmes that we attract some of our new juniors. 2012 also saw our partnership agreements with both Glasgow Caledonian University and Langside College continue.

So how to conclude? Well, I continue to believe that – notwithstanding summer 2012's weather! – our junior section is in good heart, is developing good players within a comprehensive programme, whilst at the same time, and as importantly, encouraging as broad an involvement by as many people as possible in this area. And I'd simply ask all members to ask themselves what *they* might be able to do to contribute towards the continued growth and development of the section, the future of our club.

On a very personal note, 2012 also saw the end of an era in some sense for me with my own son finishing his junior career. Ten years that seem to have passed in a flash, and my thanks go to the many who have coached and encouraged him in his cricket, and as importantly been positive role models as regards how to play the game.

And, finally, if that last game of 2011 was an omen for the weather we had last season, let's hope the glorious weather that the Under 18 match against Stenhousemuir was played in is a similar indicator for this coming season!

Keith Young

Junior Convenor

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