

## **Junior Convenor's Report Poloc Cricket Club AGM, February 2014**

Sometimes it's good to look back at what was said in previous years' reports to see if there's any connectivity. So here goes. Last year's Junior Convenor's report ended with me saying "let's hope the glorious weather that the Under 18 match against Stenhousemuir was played in is a similar indicator for this coming season". And the good news is, it pretty much was! After a number of years starting my report bemoaning a wet season with myriad cancellations it's pleasing to be able report on a near full season of fixtures. Including the Academy XI that played in the Sunday League, no fewer than 71 matches were played in season 2013 by our junior sides. In a five-month season that's just under four a week and compares to the 40 games completed the season previous. In addition, our Under 10 Kwik Cricketers attended eight Sunday-morning Kwik Cricket festivals.

So, with this as the back-drop I'm pleased to bring another report on the club's juniors, to members.

And, in doing so, I'll continue to look back to last year's report. As well as hoping for better weather, my 2012 report also – inaccurately as it turned out – mentioned the end of my son's junior cricketing career. "Inaccurately", not as in I'd made a mistake about his age, rather that season 2013 started with the rescheduled Frank Smith Trophy Finals Day held-over from the year before and in which Under 18s from 2012 were still eligible to play. Held here at "Shawholm", this competition's Finals Day featured our youngsters after they'd defeated Prestwick in the quarter-final, and turned in to a glorious one for the club, the Under 18s – or maybe more accurately Under 19s – seeing off Drumpellier in a low-scoring semi-final before beating Ferguslie in a thrilling final, Cammy Armour caressing an extra-cover 4 to win it with three balls to spare, with skipper Craig Young unbeaten on 43 at the other end. The win had earlier been set up by a hat-trick taken by Mike Allcock in the first innings, snaring three of Ferguslie's top four in consecutive deliveries. A great end to first part of the season!

And the Frank Smith Trophy win wouldn't be the only on-field success the club's juniors would achieve in the season: the Under 13Bs won their league, and the Academy XI won the Sunday League. There was also a runners-up finish for the Under 13s. In mentioning league success I think special mention should also go to our Under 11s. Again referencing my 2012 report, in which I said "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...", it's great to report on a season in which this side finished third in their league, losing only four games. And the exciting thing is that every one of those who played Under 11 cricket in 2013 remains eligible to play again at this age-group in 2014. There really are some good young cricketers in this group.

As I say every year, however, the club's junior programme is more than just the summer season. We continue to be 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 – and we are also running two-hour, week-night indoor sessions for our older juniors. As a club, therefore, we offer as comprehensive a junior coaching and practice programme as there is in the west of Scotland.

Continuing to focus on the off-season, the club fielded three teams in the annual indoor Super 8s tournament between Christmas and New Year, the Under 12s being the most successful in finishing third in their age-group competition.

Individually we continue to see our players selected for representative teams and squads, and selected for development programmes. At present we have two players in Cricket Scotland Under 18 Academy programme, and another four in the Western Warriors Under 18 squad. Then at Under 15 age-group, we have a player in Cricket Scotland's Regional Development Centre, and another in the Western Warriors Under 15 squad. Representation in the younger age-group Area Squads is also encouraging, with eleven of our juniors being selected for the South Glasgow Under 12 and 14 squads last year. We also continue to have, in Abtaha Maqsood, the club's first woman international player, Abtaha having again represented Scotland Women at Under 17 in 2013 and she continues to train with this squad in the current 2013-14 off-season.

Returning to the collective, it's worth reiterating 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 league and cup competitions. In this regard our thanks are again 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. I'd particularly like to thank Messrs. Cathcart and Rana for taking on the responsibility for our Under 10s participating in as many Sunday morning Kwik Cricket festivals as they did, chaperoning the youngsters to and from locations as far afield as Greenock, Stenhousemuir and East Kilbride.

In junior games played there were a number of strong individual performances, both in matches and across the season. In the Under 11 ranks both Sohaib Shah (18) and Moiz Maqsood (11) got in to double figures as regards wickets taken, and Abdul Malik accumulated 4 runs short of 100 runs in the league's "pairs cricket" matches. The league-winning Under 13B side's successful campaign also saw another crash-bang-wallop batting display by Calum James. Members might remember me reporting on *CJ*'s eleven-ball, eight-scoring shot, retirement-inducing 31 at Meikleriggs last year. Well this season's fireworks from *CJ* came, away against Kilmarnock, in the form of a sixteen-ball, unbeaten 54! And in a cruel twist of fate for elder brother Lewis, this saw Calum beat him onto the Juniors Honours Board!

Others to make it to the honours board in 2013 were Owais Shah (120 not out against Prestwick, 83 not out against West of Scotland, 69 not out against Ferguslie, 53 not out against Ayr and 53 against Prestwick), Lewis James (90 not out against Prestwick, 53 not out against Greenock, 51 against Hillhead and 50 not out against Clydesdale), Ross Armour (82 not out against Irvine), Mike Allcock (54 not out against Prestwick), Akhil Ahmed (54 not out against Greenock and 5 for 11 against Victoria), Calum Stout (53 against Prestwick), and Elliott Rousen (50 not out against Irvine).

Returning to season performances, the Under 13 batting averages were topped by Uzzair Shah (245 runs at 49.0), with Aliyan Qureshi (205 runs) and Calum James (196 runs) both scoring heavily too, whilst the bowling statistics were dominated by Aliyan's 14 wickets and Abtaha Maqsood's 12, the latter's leg-spin victims coming at an average of just 5.2 each. In Under 15 cricket, Lewis James (336 runs at 84.0) and Owais Shah (346 runs at 69.2) both scored over 300 runs, Uzzair Shah taking 11 wickets at 16.3 to be top wicket-taker. Owais also topped the Under 18 batting statistics in terms of runs scored (287), Elliott Rousen topping the averages with 262 at 32.8. Ross Armour was the third batter to score over 200 league runs. Under 18 skipper Oliver Raine was top wicket-taker, his 18 wickets costing just 15.3 a-piece. Akhil Ahmed, with 11 wickets, was the other Under 18 bowler with double-figure scalps.

Junior players also, again, played a lot of senior cricket in 2013, the Academy XI playing in, and winning, the Sunday League under the guidance of David James. The league-winning Shawholm XI featured eleven juniors in one or more match, Owais Shah finishing the league season with a batting average of 35.5, and two others averaging more than 20 in 2nd XI league cricket. Juniors also featured prominently in 1st XI cricket too, with Ross Armour, Elliott Rousen and Owais Shah playing in league and/or Scottish Cup games.

I've mentioned the out-of-season indoor coaching already, but 2013 again saw junior coaching at Shawholm on weekday evenings, and my thanks are due to our overseas player/coaches, Carl Huyser and Mike Allcock who gave so much of their time, and willingly, in this regard. Mention by name should also be given to David James and Anjum Aslam in this regard, both of who were – and still are – mainstays at junior coaching and practice sessions. As I always say at this juncture: the club's junior programme simply wouldn't function without the input of such people.

Our junior programme also wouldn't work without the support of the many parents who assist with match logistics. In this regard – and after having already given Messrs. Cathcart and Rana a name-check – 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, Frances Cathcart, Muhammad Maqsood, Anjum Aslam and Brian Spence. Without this help, we couldn't provide the programme we do.

Our ground-staff should also be thanked, and in this regard former Ground Convenor Leslie Ingram-Brown is due our gratitude, as are our 2013 overseas players who again worked hard on the ground. It is only because of the time and efforts of people like this that we are able to provide a standard of playing facility that is second-to-none as far as what juniors at other clubs are being provided with.

The club's related coaching charity, The Community Coaching Initiative, continued its community coaching in local schools in 2013 too, delivering well over 200 hours of coaching at twelve schools. 2013 also saw our partnership agreements with both Glasgow Caledonian University and Langside College continue.

So, our junior section remains in good heart, continues to introduce youngsters to the game of cricket, tries to develop 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. We also try to emphasise that playing the game in the correct manner, and remind our young players that they represent their club and families whilst doing so, is as important.

**Keith Young**

*Junior Convenor*

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