

Junior Convenor's Report Poloc Cricket Club AGM, October 2014

Season 2014, though finished, is still fresh in most memories. It was a second consecutive season in which the weather was kind to us, and as a result lots of cricket was played. Before reporting on the season's events, a brief word on some decisions taken before a ball was bowled. In recent years the club has entered junior sides in every competition, both league and cup, local and national, open to it. This included what are called the B Leagues. These leagues, for us as a club, gave our junior players additional opportunities to play midweek twenty-over matches, around ten or so a season perhaps. Over the winter, the decision was taken, however, to make a change in this regard, and instead of entering teams in the B Leagues, an Academy XI was entered in to the senior Evening League (T20) and senior Sunday League (40 overs-a-side). This change would see our youngsters face stiffer competition, as well as play more matches in a longer format of the game. This decision, I believe, was the right one as the club continues to develop its young players, as well as look to maximise the number and variety of matches in which juniors can play.

Also by way of background, the junior winter programme – which again started just a month after the outdoor season ended, and ran weekly throughout the winter months – was both well attended, and – I believe – beneficial to our youngsters' development, as well as useful in attracting new juniors. In addition to these now-regular weekly Sunday afternoon sessions, the club also engaged the professional coaching services of South African Con de Lange to work with a number of its younger players over the course of the winter, again on a weekly basis, these sessions taking place on weekday evenings. This commitment by the club continues to reflect the investment we are making in our young players, both in terms of time and money.

The winter also saw the club enter teams at all three age-groups in the WDJCU "Super 8s" Indoor Tournament held in Glasgow between Christmas and New Year. The youngest competing team, the Under 12s, finished third in their age-group tournament to record the best-placed finish for the club. Well done to them.

Winter 2013-14 also saw a number of the club's youngsters involved in the Cricket Scotland Academy and Regional Development Centre programmes, as well as the Western Warrior regional winter training squads. Ihtisham Malik and Owais Shah were both selected for the Academy, and Aliyan Qureshi was selected for the Regional Development Centre. Western Warrior winter training squad places were secured by Ross Armour, Lewis James, Elliott Rousen and Douglas Willoughby at Under 18 level, and Calum James at Under 15 level.

The run-up to, and early weeks of, the new season also saw the club again partner with its "sister" Charity, The Community Coaching Initiative, to deliver over 160 hours of cricket coaching in seventeen local schools. Building on relationships established over many years, this programme remains critical in attracting new players to the game, as well as the club; forges important links with the community in which the club lives; and assists in attracting vital partnership funding support without which our junior programme could not function. Critical to the delivery of this community coaching were Malcolm Nofal and Pierce Fletcher, the club's overseas player/coaches in 2015, both of whom were with us here at Shawholm for the first time.

Turning to a review of the season now. In total, no fewer than 70 junior matches were played (excluding the 31 that were cancelled, mainly due to the weather). There were also seven Sunday "Kwik Cricket" festivals attended by our Under

10s, a further six being washed out. The 70 matches played included fifteen by the Academy side that, as mentioned, competed in the senior Evening League and Sunday League.

And in both instances the Academy side performed well. It won its Sunday League division, and finished fourth in its Evening League division.

In the junior leagues it was a case of so-near-yet-so-far, with a bit of "what might've been" thrown in. The Under 18s finished runners-up, losing only twice and being the only side to beat the league winners. The Under 15s mirrored their older cousins by finishing joint second, again losing just the twice, and again being the only side to beat the league winners! Third place was the finishing position for the Under 13s, who suffered just three losses in their ten-match campaign, whilst the Under 11s reached the Under 11 Finals Day, but had to settle for yet another runners-up spot when Ayr CC beat them in the final on a gloriously-warm September Sunday afternoon at Meikleriggs.

In addition to participation in the WDJCU leagues, the club's age-group teams also competed in all ECB and Cricket Scotland cup competitions open to them, as well as the WDJCU Under 13 League Cup and Frank Smith Trophy competitions. The last of these saw the Under 18s qualify for its Finals Day, a day held over until 2015 after two cancellations due to the weather.

Competing in such an array of competitions, and physically fielding sides in so many matches or so many days, requires the hard work of many people. Thanks are due to Malcolm Nofal and Pierce Fletcher, already named, for their contributions in this regard. In addition however specific thanks should be given to David James, Grant Cathcart and Anjum Aslam, all of whom were "regulars" in organising, managing and transporting players to and from, matches. Without this help the club's junior programme would simply fail to exist.

Looking beyond club cricket we continue to see our players selected for representative teams and squads, and selected for development programmes. I have already mentioned those youngsters involved in winter 2013's representative training squads. Bringing this up-to-date, at present we have three players in the 2014-15 Under 17 Cricket Scotland Academy programme, and another one in the Western Warriors Under 18 squad. Then at Under 15 age-group, three of the eight players in Cricket Scotland's Regional Development Centre are Poloc juniors. Representation in the younger age-group Area Squads is also encouraging, with eleven of our juniors – the same number as in 2013 – 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 2014 in addition to making her full senior women's international debut in 2014.

Junior international honours were also achieved by Ihtisham Malik and Owais Shah, both of whom played for Scotland Under 15s throughout the season, and were integral to the side winning the ECB Under 15 Cup, beating Gloucestershire at Meikleriggs in the final on the 6th of September. Owais also won representative honours at Scotland Under 17 level. Congratulations to both players.

There were strong individual performances by junior players at club level too. In the Under 18 age-group, Under 18 Captain Elliott Rousen scored 295 runs at 59 to top the batting averages, Owais Shah running him close in the aggregate runs stakes scoring 275 runs at 39. Ross Armour (158) and Calum Stout (113) were the other Under 18 batters to score more than 100 runs in the season. With the

ball Robert Cathcart (ten wickets at 10) and Haider Akram (ten wickets at 17) were the top wicket-takers, whilst Ihtisham Malik's 26 overs cost just 3.4 runs each as he topped the economy rankings.

In the Under 15 age-group, Owais Shah's 195 runs at 28 saw him finish with the best batting average, run close by Ihtisham Malik whose average of 22 saw him score two runs more than Owais. Uzzair Shah (117) was the other batter scoring more than 100n runs. Hamaad Anwar's eight wickets was the best wicket-haul in the Under 15s, Aliyan Qureshi (22 overs costing 3.1 apiece) just pipping Ihtisham Malik (34 overs costing 3.2 each) to the most-economical bowler award.

Uzzair Shah dominated the Under 13 batting averages, scoring 244 runs at 49, younger brother Sohaib averaging 22, and scoring 197 runs, finishing second in the averages. Hamaad Anwar was the standout Under 13 wicket-taker with fifteen wickets at 12.1, Uzzair and Sohaib both taking twelve wickets to finish tucked in behind Hamaad.

And in Under 11 cricket (played under "pairs cricket" rules) Sohaib Shah amassed 171 runs, with Samee Mehmood (121), Hassaan Mehmood (113) and Abdul Malik (110) the other batters scoring 100 or more runs in the season. Sohaib also dominated the bowling averages taking an impressive 32 wickets in the Under 11 age-group. Nabeel Khan with nineteen wickets at 9.1 was the other standout wicket-taker, with Samee Mehmood (twelve wickets), James Cathcart (twelve wickets) and Moiz Maqsood (eleven wickets) also taking more than ten wickets over the course of the season.

At the start of this report I mentioned the Academy side that competed in senior cricket in 2014, and there were a number of strong individual performances here too. Elliott Rousen scored 201 runs at an average of 67 to top the batting averages, whilst Ahmed-Raza Hanif's sixteen wickets at 10.1 saw him finish as the Academy's top wicket-taker.

Wrapping up this report, I've mentioned the out-of-season indoor and community coaching already, but 2014 again saw junior coaching at Shawholm on weekday evenings, and my thanks are due to Malcolm Nofal and Pierce Fletcher 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 ground-staff should also be thanked, and in this regard Groundsman Scott McCutcheon is due our gratitude, as are Russell Lauder and our overseas players – Pierce Fletcher in particular – who 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.

2014 also saw our partnership agreement with both Glasgow Caledonian University continue, as well as a new partnership with Strathclyde University commence. A number of local secondary schools used Shawholm as their "home" ground too, and we again hosted a number of junior representative matches.

In closing then – and making no apology for finishing as I have done in recent years – 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
October 2014