

## **Junior Convenor's Report Poloc Cricket Club AGM, December 2015**

Season 2015 saw the club enter junior sides in each of the age-group leagues, and enter all available cup competitions. From the indoor "Super 8s" in December, through to the final match of the outdoor season, the Frank Smith Trophy Final. Of that match, more later.

And in addition to junior competitions, the club also, again, entered an "Academy" side in the WDCU's senior Sunday and Evening Leagues, the former 40 overs-a-side, the latter a midweek T20 league.

Poor weather during the season – as all too often – was also a recurring feature however. In overall terms, season 2015 can be summarised as:

Junior team matches scheduled:	110
Junior team matches played:	63
Junior team matches won:	46
Junior team matches lost:	14
Junior team matches abandoned:	3

Losing 47 matches to the weather (equating to 43% of matches scheduled) is tough, but, as always, we can only "control the controllables".

Returning to the start of the year, a junior winter programme again started just a month after the 2014 outdoor season ended, and ran weekly throughout the winter months. Attendance at sessions was good, and the programme keeps the club's young players involved in the game over the close season, as well as providing a good opportunity for coaches to work with players on key technical parts to their games. The sessions are also useful in attracting new juniors. Thanks are also due to the coaches who give up weekend leisure time in this regard.

The WDJCU "Super 8s" Indoor Tournament was held in Glasgow between Christmas and New Year as usual at the end of 2014. The club entered three age-group teams in the tournament, the Under 12s narrowly missing out on qualification for their finals day. The Under 15s and 19s fared better though, both reaching finals day. However neither would claim the crown, Clydesdale CC defeating the Under 15s in their final, and Ferguslie CC beating the Under 19s in theirs. Nevertheless it was another successful tournament for our juniors, and, of course, there's always next year! And,.....talking of "next year", with the club's 2015 AGM taking place after the completion of the 2015 "Super 8s" I can report on it too. Pleasingly this means mention of the Under 12s winning that age-group tournament can be made! The Under 15s missed out on their Finals Day, whilst the Under 19s finished third in their age-group. But it was the Under 12s, defeating both Clydesdale and Ferguslie on the 30th of December 2015, Finals Day, who brought what will go down as another good year for the club's juniors to a fitting finale and saw the club's first success in the annual indoor tournament for over quarter of a Century!

The winter also sees Cricket Scotland age-group squad training, regional academy player development programmes, and regional squad training. The club was well represented in all of these. At national age-group level Aliyan Qureshi (Under 15), Ihtisham Malik (Under 17 and 19), Abtaha Maqsood (Under 17) and Owais Shah (Under 17 and 19) were involved in winter training squads. Ihtisham Malik and Owais Shah were also included in the 2014-15 Cricket Scotland Academy (West) squad, whilst Aliyan Qureshi was joined by Ahmed-Raza Hanif, Calum James and Uzzair Shah in the younger age-group Cricket Scotland Regional Development Centre (West) programme. Then, in the "Western Warriors" Under 18 squad, the club contributed no fewer than five players, with Ross Armour, Lewis James and Calum Stout included in addition to Ihtisham Malik and Owais Shah. And our four Under 15 players in the Regional Development Centre (West) were joined by Amaan Ramzan in the "Western Warriors" Under 15 squad.

As the 2015 outdoor approached, and in to the early weeks of it, the club again partnered with its "sister" Charity, The Community Coaching Initiative, to deliver over 150 hours of cricket coaching in no fewer than eighteen 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 Niel Bredenkamp and Christopher Graham, the club's overseas player/coaches in 2015, both of whom were with us here at Shawholm for the first time.

Turning now to a more detailed review of season 2015. The 63 matches played was ten percent fewer than in 2014, reflecting the poorer weather. Particularly hard hit were the Sunday morning "Kwik Cricket" festivals for Under 10s, no fewer than ten being washed out. The matches that did beat the weather also included just six by the Academy side that competed in the senior Evening League and Sunday League, more than two-thirds of this side's scheduled matches being called off.

The Academy side did, however, perform well when its games beat the weather, and it won its Evening League division.

There was also success at the other end of the junior hardball cricket spectrum with the Under 11s winning the league after completing an unbeaten season. Well done to them! But their success wasn't the only one, the Under 19s finished off the season in great style with a thrilling win over local rivals Clydesdale CC in the Frank Smith Trophy Final, at Titwood. Set 131 to win, 35 was scored off the final sixteen deliveries of the match to see the side home, with Elliott Rousen – in his final junior appearance – scoring an unbeaten 54 from just 49 balls to secure a successful, and thrilling, run-chase.

The other age-group sides also had successful seasons, with no team finishing lower than third in their division. The Under 18s and Under 13s were third, and the Under 15s were league runners-up. And in cup competitions, though no others were eventually won, there were also good performances. The Under 13s won the third/fourth place play off against Broomhall CC on Finals Day in the ECB Under 13 National Club Championship, a feat repeated by the Under 15s when they beat Huntly CC in the third/fourth place play off on Finals Day in the ECB Under 15 National Club Championship. And the Under 18s were beaten semi-finalists in the Under 13 Scottish Cup.

Playing as many junior matches as the club does, on so many days, involves a lot of people and our thanks are due to Niel Bredenkamp and Christopher Graham, already named, for their contributions in this regard. In addition however specific thanks should be given to Anjum Aslam, Grant Cathcart, Phil Cooke, Bill and Caroline Harden, David and Eilidh James, Muhammad Maqsood, Hassan Noor Paganwala, Safder Rana and Sudath Loku Yaddehige, regulars in organising, managing and/or transporting players to and from matches. Without this very practical support and help the club's junior programme would – could – not function.

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 2014-15's representative training squads. Bringing this up-to-date, at present we have four players in the 2015-16 Cricket Scotland Academy programme (of whom three have been selected in the Scotland Under 19 squad to play in the ICC U19 CWC in Bangladesh early in 2016). The club also has two players in Cricket Scotland's provisional Regional Development Centre winter programme.

And, in Abtaha Maqsood, the club's first woman international player, the club will have a representative at the ICC Women's WT20Q event taking place in Thailand in late November/early December 2015.

In fact season 2015 was a "first" for the club in terms of junior national age-group representation, with the club having at least one junior player – both male and female – selected at every age-

group. Abtaha Maqsood played for Scotland Women Under 17s, Aliyan Qureshi for Scotland Under 15s, and Ihtisham Malik and Owais Shah for both Scotland Under 17s and 19s. Congratulations to these four players.

The clubs' juniors also played important parts in the successes of both the "Western Warriors" Under 15s and 18s who both won their respective inter-regional championships.

In junior club cricket, there were good individual performances during, and over the course of, the season. At Under 18, Owais Shah's 245 runs included an unbeaten century, and saw him average 35. Calum James, still an Under 15, was the next highest run scorer in Under 18 cricket with 190 runs at 27, including a maiden half century at this age-group. Lewis James, with thirteen wickets at 8, was the highest wicket taker, Robert Cathcart's ten wickets making him the other bowler with a double-digit haul.

In the Under 15 age-group, three batters scored more than 300 runs, Amaan Ali topping the averages with 30, but Calum James's 329 runs seeing him score most runs. Aliyan Qureshi, with 305 runs, was the third member of this "300 Club". And Amaan Ali can reasonably lay claim to the best all-rounder in this age-group too, his eighteen wickets at 9, making him the highest wicket taker. In taking eighteen wickets he just pipped Sohaib Shah, whose seventeen wickets came at 11 a-piece. Uzzair Shah (eleven) and Joe Spence (ten) were the other bowlers taking at least ten wickets.

Sohaib Shah was still Under 13 however, and his 218 runs saw him top that age-group's batting averages – with 36 – as well as ending up as the highest run scorer. Dilina Loku Yaddehige's 112 runs at 22 are also worth mentioning given he missed a large part of the season whilst back in Sri Lanka. And as Amaan Ali had done in the Under 15 age-group, Sohaib Shah also ended up top wicket-taker, his sixteen wickets coming at 12 each. Abdullah Rana and Dilina Loku Yaddehige (like Sohaib Shah, also still Under 13) took ten wickets each.

And in Under 11 cricket (played under "pairs cricket" rules) Nabeel Khan scored 105 runs and was dismissed just the once leaving him with a season's average of over 100! James Cathcart, meanwhile, had a season to remember with the ball, taking 21 wickets at just 3! But the Under 11s' league title wasn't secured by just the performances of these two players, outstanding though they be. Four other players averaged more than 40 with the bat, and eight bowlers returned economy rates of under 2.5!

Wrapping up this report, I've mentioned the out-of-season indoor and community coaching already, but 2015 again saw junior coaching at Shawholm on weekday evenings, and my thanks are due to Niel Bredenkamp and Christopher Graham who gave of their time in this regard. Mention by name should also be given to David James who continues to be the keystone of much of the club's junior programme.

Our ground-staff should also be thanked, and in this regard Groundsman Scott McCutcheon should be named-checked, as should Russell Lauder and Christopher Graham in particular – who worked hard on the ground in a year where the elements were too often against them. Their efforts mean that the club is 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.

2015 also saw our partnerships with a number of local secondary schools continue, a number using Shawholm as their "home" ground. Shawholm also hosted a number of junior representative matches.

In closing then – and making no apology for finishing as I have been able to do 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 G Young*  
**Junior Convenor**  
December 2015