

Chairman's report, 2010

My third year as Chairman of the "junior union" has been one that's seen a number of innovations, including member clubs receiving office bearers' and other reports on the season in advance of the AGM. Whilst the success of some of the changes made for 2010 can be argued, getting my Chairman's Report in advance and therefore not having to listen to me reading it – *verbatim* – has got to be a plus! More seriously it's hoped that attendees getting the reports before the AGM is a useful thing, allowing more time – if required – for discussion of issues and exchanges of views. Thanks, therefore, to those who have prepared and submitted their reports in plenty of time for distribution in advance of our meeting.

Any review of any year arguably has to start with comment on the Indoor Super 8s tournament – again held between Christmas and New Year, this event continues to be both hugely popular and well run. Thanks to Tim Hart for organising the 2009 event, and for volunteering to do the same again this year. And it's good to hear of another indoor competition being run: a west inter-schools sixes event having been announced in mid-October by Cricket Scotland.

And mention of schools cricket begs comment on Andy Teiger's stepping down as the driving force behind the Glasgow Schools Cricket Association whose tournaments he's so successfully organised for more years than likely he'd thank me for mentioning. Andy's handed over his baton to Tony Coyle, and we wish Tony well in his new role. Strong and active connections between schools and clubs are a vital part of the development of the game here in the west, and as one part of that equation it's important, as clubs, we do our parts.

Rolling forward to the outdoor season, I won't spend any real time in my report on the leagues, save to add my congratulations to the respective winners. Jim Young's Secretary's report, and Colin Dawson's B League report, will adequately deal with the leagues' comings-and-goings, and ups-and-downs. One comment worth noting in the passing is, however, that I was pleased to hear about fewer instances of poor on-, or indeed off-, the-field behaviour. Good news. Long may this continue.

As regards cup competitions, congratulations are due to Clydesdale Under 18s for their success in the Clydesdale Bank-sponsored Frank Smith Trophy. Clydesdale defeated West of Scotland in what turned into a tense and closely-fought final that, as the last over started, could've gone either way. In other cup competitions, west representatives at the Finals Days of the national Under 13, 15 and 18 competitions all came up short on the day, none coming home with the silverware. Congratulations nevertheless to Prestwick, Clydesdale and Poloc for their respective wins in the regional qualifying competitions. Talk of "Finals Day" brings me to one of the proposals for 2011, namely the Frank Smith Trophy's semi-finals and final all being played on the same day. This year – through chance rather than design – one of the semi-finals and the final were played on the same day and this produced a good matchday atmosphere. Extending this to a full "Finals Day" should further enhance the "experience" for competing clubs and players and I'd recommend this change in structure to the trophy.

Talk of change brings me to a couple of other changes made in 2010. One quite clearly did *not* work, namely the splitting of the Under 18 league competition into two divisions. The late withdrawals of Active Life Club and Weirs resulted in the Under 18 First Division being badly compromised. Thanks are due to the remaining clubs in that division for completing the fixture card that was left, but it's clear that – yet again – clubs must think carefully before committing to participating in any league programme. The issue also raised the question of whether imposing a penalty on defaulting clubs is appropriate. Your Committee's views on this will be aired at the AGM, as well as a proposal being made that makes indicating league participation at an age-group a more serious decision on behalf of clubs.

The new west junior cricket website was another new development in 2010. As its Webmaster maybe I'm conflicted from being objective in assessing its success or otherwise. It has, however, objectively succeeded in a number of areas. It published league results and tables promptly, was an easy means of

publicising news from around the junior game here in the west district, and provided a simple and generic means of reporting match results. Others views on the site are welcome, and I will be happy to listen to these at the AGM. The AGM will also be an opportunity for clubs' representatives to update the information on their clubs that's on the website. Please have a look at this to check the accuracy of what is said there about your club.

The West District Under 12s were again a district representative side that played a number of fixtures in the year. Tim Hart's report on its season is one of the reports being circulated before the AGM, and so all that's really left for me is to thank Tim and Drew Pryde for their work in managing, coaching and administering this squad. It is planned to continue to run an Under 12 team in 2011.

At representative level three other age-group representative events took place. The Under 13 Inter-Area Tournament, the Under 15 Inter-Area "Camp", and the Under 17 Inter-Area Competition. The first of these – successfully organised by Tournament Director Tim Hart – was another example of where change had been implemented in advance of the 2010 season. These changes saw matches played on a calendar monthly basis, spread across the season. This assisted with potential weather problems, and allowed for greater flexibility in match scheduling and player participation. I think it likely also resulted in matches being better attended by supporters and being played at "better" grounds, most being played on Sundays or local holidays. Thanks to all who worked with Tim in the new structure, and it will be interesting to hear feedback at the AGM on others' views of the revamped tournament. Congratulations, too, to Ayrshire who were tournament winners.

The Under 15 "Inter-Area" Camp was also an innovation in 2010. This saw just over 40 Under 15 players – nominated by clubs and Area Development Groups – participate in a three-day, two-site "camp". Included in the activities undertaken were different match scenarios as well as coaching. With a number of local club's overseas Professionals and players working at the "camp", and Cricket Scotland's development officers involved, it is hoped the "camp" was also a useful tool in the player ID process for participation in the new Under 15 Regional Development Centre that will operate over the coming winter. The input of "new faces" as coaches was, in my view, helpful, as was the gathered video analysis and coach comments. As with the altered Under 13 Inter-Area Tournament, it will be interesting to hear feedback at the AGM on others' views of the revamped Under 15 Inter-Area event.

The Under 17 Inter-Area competition was a bit of a "slow-burner" I think – I will leave detailed comment on it to John Blair and Tim Hart who were much more actively involved in its running, but I think careful thought has to be given to its merits, not least given the amount of cricket that – here in the west at least – our players of this age are playing. What's clear is that, at any age-group over Under 15, very little cricket is played by clubs in the other districts. This is, I believe, what drives Cricket Scotland to organising such things as the Under 18 Scottish Cup and Under 17 Inter-Area competition. Perhaps much needed in other districts, but really not here in the west.

Above Area Group level, the Western Cricket Academy operated three squads in 2009-10; at Under 14, Under 16 and Under 18 age-groups. A very full programme of winter coaching and summer matches was undertaken, as well as two tours. A detailed report on the Academy is one of those being tabled at the AGM and so, again, I won't attempt to steal its author's thunder. I will, however, make a few observations in the passing. Firstly, and as I've said in previous years' reports, I do have a concern over the sheer amount of cricket our older young players are being asked to play. This is fine in good weather, and when players are "in form". However when bad weather results in lots of club matches being rescheduled and/or losses of form by players results in them not being able to practise because they're always playing, problems can – and do – arise. Secondly it's clear that still more and better communication between the Academy and clubs can be achieved. I believe there was improvement in this area in season 2010, but more can still be done. As we look to 2010-11 the changes in the structure of the regional academies means that fewer players will be involved – around eighteen – and these will be older, the "intake" being in the Under 16 to Under 18 age-groups. Along with the new Under 15 Regional Development Centre –

replacing the former "junior" academy that was at Under 14 age-group – good communication must be a key objective of all those involved in running such locally-based Cricket Scotland-initiatives.

At national level the west again contributed a healthy number of players to Scotland age-group sides. I hope I will not miss any in my list, prepared by looking through the online scorecards on Cricket Scotland's website. This exercise threw up the following west-based players who featured for Scotland sides in 2010:

Scotland Under 15

Seb' Stewart (Ayr), Haris Chaudhry, Lyle Hill, (both Clydesdale), Stuart Darroch, Michael English (both Ferguslie), Gavin Main (Uddingston), and Andrew Umeed (West of Scotland)

Scotland Under 17

Calum McLaughlin (Ayr), Sam Page (Clydesdale), Fraser Conn (Galloway), Alex Baum (Greenock), Danial Chaudhry, Craig Young (both Poloc), Gavin Main (Uddingston), Andrew Umeed (West of Scotland)

Scotland Under 18

Scott McElnea, Neil Smith (both Ayr), Sam Page (Clydesdale), Thomas McBride (Dumfries), Anjan Luthra (West of Scotland)

Congratulations to each of the players listed, and apologies if I've missed one,.....or even more than one!

In bringing this report to a conclusion I think a word or two on money is apt. Firstly, thanks to the union's two principle sponsors: The Trophy Centre and Clydesdale Bank. Their partnership funding is vital. Thanks, too, to Richard Rutnagur who continues to act as principal liason between the union and The Trophy Centre. Both sponsors' continued participation with the union cannot, however, be assumed going forward, particularly as the economic backdrop continues to be tough. As Colin Dawson's Treasurer's report sets out the union continues to hold reasonable reserves, albeit some tied up for restricted purposes. However, as the accounts also show, the union operated at a deficit in 2009-10. This was not a case of mis-management but, rather, a deliberate decision to demonstrate that doing things "properly", not charging participants for rep' initiatives within the union's direct control, and supporting other local cricket initiatives costs. No charge was made for participation at the Under 15 Inter-Area "Camp", the union paid clubs for hosting events and matches to try and ensure the best playing facilities, it financially supported the Under 12 district side's match programme, and contributed to the two academy tours. The result? A deficit. For discussion at the AGM will be the issue of what things the union should be contributing to financially and which it should not, and the thorny issue of participating player contribution to activities'/events' costs.

In closing, a word of thanks to all the Junior Convenors without whose efforts little if any junior cricket would happen, and to my Committee colleagues for their various contributions to the smooth running of the WDJCU in the last twelve months.

Thank you.