

Chairman's report, season 2011

This is my fourth Chairman's report to the WDJCU and, looking back, weather seems to be a recurring feature. The League Secretary's report details the exact number of cancellations and so I won't say very much more about summer 2011's precipitation levels, save to say that not only were many games washed out, but a great many were also played in poor weather conditions. One particular picture comes to mind as I type this, namely a square leg umpire standing side on to the wicket at Whitehaugh on a cold, wet, evening, wearing beanie hat, gloves and rain jacket, trying to prevent driving sleet from hurting his antipodean face! Wet indeed, but also pretty cold.

Jim Young's report also more than adequately highlights the winners and runners-up in the various age-group leagues, and my congratulations are added to the winning clubs and teams. The B Leagues, as Colin Dawson's report highlights, was arguably even more adversely affected by weather, but again I'd want to congratulate the winners in those leagues.

Turning to cup competitions competed in by west district clubs, the Frank Smith Trophy was not completed, again due to weather, and its semi-finals and final will be played at the start of next season, with all players eligible to play in 2011 remaining eligible for these games. In national cup competitions Clydesdale were the district's representatives on Finals Day in the Under 13 national knockout cup, losing in their semi-final to beaten finalists Kelso. In the Under 15 national cup, Clydesdale were again unlucky beaten semi-finalists, whilst in the Under 18 cup, the Titwood club didn't even get the chance to lose in the semi-final after that competition's Finals Day at Freuchie was washed out in early September.

Any review of any year should also include comment on the Indoor Super 8s tournament – again held between Christmas and New Year. Though participating numbers were lower in 2010, this event continues to be both hugely popular and well run. Thanks to Tim Hart for organising the tournament, and for volunteering to do the same again this December. In this regard I know that he is considering some changes to the competition format to reinvigorate it – more on this in due course.

Beyond competitive league and cup matches, it was pleasing to see younger-age-group West District representative sides playing matches against sides from further afield: Tayside & Fife and counties sides from the north of England providing opposition to Under 11 and Under 12 West District teams under the management of Tim Hart.

Reference to games against English opposition reminds me to congratulate the Ayrshire Area Development Group who undertook a short tour to the north of England with an Under 14 squad. And the WDJCU was pleased to be able to assist the Ayrshire group financially in this undertaking.

Also supported financially in 2011 was the Under 13 Inter-Area competition. This competition was won by Ayrshire Under 13, in what turned out to be a very competitive competition.

Mention of area development groups, and an Inter-Area competition, as well as the earlier mention of Tim Hart, brings me to the appointment, at the end of the playing season, of the district's new Development Manager. Tim Hart was appointed to this role and started in post on 1 September. I wish Tim well in his new role, and looking to the future, am sure he will bring good organisation, as well as no little enthusiasm, to the role. Tim will continue in his role as Administrator to Cricket Scotland's west Regional Development Centre in 2012 too, where coaches Ian Young and Andi McElnea also remain in post providing much-needed continuity at this important stage in the player development pathway.

Also in the area of representative cricket, the west district has provided its fair share of cricketers to Scotland's age-group national teams and squads. Congratulations are due to 2011 west district junior players Gavin Main, Sam Page and Andrew Umeed who played for Scotland Under 19s during the season, the first two being part of the successful Under 19 squad that won the Under 19 World Cup qualifying

tournament in Ireland. At national Under 17 age-group Alex Baum, Danial Chaudhry, Michael English, Lyle Hill, Gavin Main, Andrew Umeed and Craig Young were selected, Lyle skipping the side. And at Under 15, Niall Alexander and Andrew Umeed played, the latter captaining the side.

The strength of the district's young players in the older youth age-group was also reflected by the Under 18 Western Cricket Academy retaining the inter-academy tournament in 2011, defeating Eastern, Caledonia and Northumberland at New Williamfield.

Turning to off-field matters, I would like to express my thanks again to the WDJCU's sponsor, The Trophy Centre, who, despite the recessionary climate we find ourselves, continued its invaluable financial support of the union.

Under "off the field matters" in recent years I have also found myself making reference to issues of discipline and/or other contentious matters. I'm pleased, therefore, to say that, in 2011, the number of such incidents coming to my attention as Chairman were *de minimis*. I hope this will remain. As Jim Young alludes to, there remain some issues surrounding clubs fulfilling fixtures however, and in particular where longer travel times are involved. Can I encourage all clubs to consider carefully before committing to league and/or cup participation with the travel requirements in mind, and also - if cancellation is an unavoidable event, to have the courtesy of informing the other club involved as early as possible.

Looking to 2012 some minor changes to the playing conditions of the WDJCU leagues will be considered over the winter, including, specifically, consideration of the success or otherwise of a split Under 11 league, the future and format of the B Leagues, the rescheduling of cancelled matches and the protocols in connection therewith, and the points and placings systems. Again, as with my comment on the indoor tournament, more to follow. And Junior Convenors' comments on any of these matters are, of course, invited at the AGM.

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.