

## **Chairman's report, season 2012**

Rain is again the key word that best sums up season 2012. Looking back my first Chairman's report – in 2008 – started with the sentence, "I'd like to start my inaugural Chairman's report with one word: RAIN." And it seems very little has changed in five seasons. It really is a small miracle that as many games were completed in season 2012 as were, and this owes as much to the perseverance of clubs and their junior coaches, as it reflects on the sheer enthusiasm of junior players across the district to play the game they love.

Before any summer season, of course, comes the WDJCU's annual indoor tournament. Again well organised by Tim Hart, the 2011 competition saw Ferguslie CC run out winners at Under 19, Prestwick CC win at Under 15, and West of Scotland CC secure the Under 12 title. The Under 12 tournament was a new age-group introduced in 2011 and its popularity means that it's likely this age-group will again see matches in 2012. Tim will, I'm sure, keep everyone informed about the 2012 tournament over the coming months, including any changes to its structure.

The outdoor season started with the holding of the Finals Day of the 2011 Frank Smith Trophy, held over from last year because of the weather. It, along with the national Under 18 cup Finals Day, had been quite literally washed away by 2011's horrible weather. Little did we know then that this might not be just a one-off! The Finals Day saw Ferguslie CC defeat Poloc CC in their semi-final before going on to defeat Prestwick CC in the final.

The various age-group leagues were up-and-running by the time the Frank Smith Trophy Finals Day was held, with new entrants in the shapes of Forth Valley, Stirling County CC and Stenhousemuir CC. The latter two clubs were playing in the west district's junior competitions for the first time after CSL reorganisation and were – and still are – very welcome additions to the WDJCU. Forth Valley was the name under which the two aforementioned clubs competed in the Under 18 league, as a composite team. In fact 2012 saw a number of joint teams play: Irvine|Kilmarnock in the Under 18s, Ferguslie|Kelburne in the Under 15s and Hillhead|Weirs at Under 13. The ability to field such composite teams is, it's hoped, useful for clubs as they ride the peaks and troughs of player numbers at different ages.

Despite the horrendous weather, league winners were, of course, determined. Congratulations are due to all winning teams, with – interestingly perhaps – there being seven different winning clubs in the eight divisions operated in 2012. Only Ayr CC – winners of the Under 13B south league and the Under 15 league – being multiple division champions.

Beyond the WDJCU's own competitions – noting that the Finals Day of the 2012 Frank Smith Trophy was again held over – there was also west success elsewhere. Ayr CC won the Under 18 national cup, whilst West of Scotland CC were runners-up in the Under 13 national cup, and Drumpellier CC and Prestwick CC made it to the semi-finals of the Under 15 competition.

West-based youngsters also represented Scotland across the various youth age-groups. At Under 15, Ross Armour (Poloc CC), Neil Flack (Greenock CC) and Mitchell Rao (Prestwick CC) won junior international caps. Niall Alexander (Dumfries CC), Michael English (Ferguslie CC), Lyle Hill (Clydesdale CC) and Gavin Main (Uddingston CC) represented Scotland at Under 17, English and Hill as vice-captain and captain respectively. Alex Baum (Greenock CC), English, Andrew Umeed (West of Scotland CC) and Craig Young (Poloc CC) played for Scotland Under 18 in 2012. And, finally, at Under 19 level, Baum, Main, Tom McBride (Dumfries CC), Scott McElnea (Ayr CC), Sam Page (Clydesdale CC) and Umeed all made appearances. And in the women's game, west-based juniors winning age-group and/or senior Scotland Women caps included Lynne Dickson (West of Scotland CC), Samantha Haggio (Prestwick CC), Abtaha Maqsood (Poloc CC) and Nadia Wheeler (Ferguslie CC).

I won't comment here on the Western Cricket Academy or west Regional Development Centre, as both are the subject of separate reports.

What I will make passing reference to are the inter-area tournaments that were completed. Again, despite the weather. The new age-groups of Under 12 and Under 14 seemed to work well. In mentioning these I think it's worth, however, highlighting that – to me – it was disappointing that the Lanarkshire Area Group was not able to complete any matches at Under 12, and only one at Under 14. I hope that this area might better pool the resources of the clubs comprising it in 2013 so that their players benefit from this "next level" of play. This is something I know that Tim Hart is working hard on.

Mention of Tim brings me to thank him for his work in the district over the year.

In reporting on any year I also take the opportunity to comment on matters in-and-around what took place "on the park". I've already mentioned the welcome new additions to the WDJCU. And I've highlighted the helpful fielding of joint teams. But on the negative side, 2012 saw the fielding of ineligible players on more than one occasion, and by more than one club. In short, whilst the union exists to facilitate cricket for youngsters, its age-group-specific leagues do not allow the playing – with only *one* exception – of over-age players. The Under 15/16B League allows the playing of two Under 16 players. In all other leagues only age-eligible players are allowed to play. The clubs that played over-age players, and were "found out", saw the results of the games in question reversed. And quite correctly so. If any club is struggling to field a side at any age-group then the answer is not to cheat. Rather it's to think about joint teams (linking this to my earlier point), or not entering a particular age-group league. If in exceptional circumstances, c.f. Kilmarnock CC this year at Under 11, a club – having entered a league in good faith – finds it cannot field a side without over-age players then playing any scheduled match as a friendly instead can be done. This maintains the integrity of the leagues whilst continuing to facilitate matches for young players. Consideration will also be given to running an Under 18/19B league in the future to provide additional – more flexible – cricket for clubs struggling to field eleven players in the regular leagues at particular age-groups. But, to repeat, playing ineligible players – cheating – is not allowed.

2012 also – again – highlighted the issue of rescheduling matches. And the weather was again the main reason why this became problematic. There is no requirement to reschedule cancelled matches, though some clubs do. And, as was discussed at the 2011 AGM, guidance that clubs should attempt to reschedule matches in the order they were cancelled proved unworkable given the sheer number of cancellations. I am not sure what the answer is. Moving to percentages and not points doesn't help, as this likely would – even in a better summer, weather-wise – see less cricket played. Thought will be given to this issue over the winter. Also to be given thought are playing condition changes. The "free hit" introduced in the Under 18 league proved good fun as an example of a recent change that worked.

Talk of playing conditions reminds me to remind all clubs to read the rules. Ferguslie CC's Under 18 league title owed, ironically, everything to it and Drumpellier CC *not* having read the rules, playing out their final league game over insufficient overs to make it a "game". Ferguslie CC's defeat in the game not counting therefore, meaning they did not slip to second in the table. Notwithstanding this good fortune, can I advise this is not the ideal situation and clubs' junior convenors should acquaint themselves with the playing conditions.

In closing can I thank the WDJCU Committee members for their work, Colin Dawson for another year's service as Treasurer and – last, but certainly not least – Jim Young for his service as Secretary. Jim, as everyone knows, stands down as Secretary of the WDJCU at this meeting, after having served for as long as anyone can remember. Thank you Jim for your service, and it *is* a service, giving of your time and efforts to ensure the good governance of junior cricket here in the west of the country. On a personal level I will miss our regular email, text and 'phone exchanges,.....even if *you* won't, and have greatly valued your wise counsel over the last five years.

Thank you.