

## **2018 Final Report.**

So how do we describe the season. It probably started off with *We are the Champions (Queen)*, was followed by *Down, Down Down (The Hollies)* then a Touch of the *Resurrection Symphony by Mahler* and Finally a refrain of the *Halleluiah Chorus by Handel*.

This team managed to do what that we previously could not do in Division A. Namely stay up. Those of you who remember the last Division A term will recall that we never got up running to the extent that it was not until the second half of the season that we won a game (Barton have not I think got over that). Two early wins this time put up the prospect of finishing near the top – possible promotion? However one had to be realistic, probably the youngest team in the division with no overseas player couldn't possibly match the senior teams, and so it proved. However what was so sad was that we had so many chances. We could – perhaps should – have beaten eventual Division winners Paignton twice, certainly Ivybridge and Chudleigh at home, and we were so unlucky against Abbots away. However to resurrect the season by beating third place Cornwood was an incredible feat which built the confidence for the final tour de force at Chudleigh.

Without the presence of an overseas player the batting had to rely on local talent. It was the opening partnerships of first Tom Brend and James Ford and latterly Tom and Ollie Hannam that paved the way for the successes that we had. Both Tom and James scored over 400 runs each scoring two 50s (as did Fred King) with James' 76 against Paignton being the highest score of the term. Ollie Hannam, Paul Heard and Jack Ford also scored 50s – showing that the batting really was a team effort. The highest average for batting was Tom Brend's 27.73, a huge improvement on the previous campaign. Ollie, Paul, Alex Hannam Jack Ford and Fred King also scored over 200 runs.

In the bowling department the most wickets were taken by Jack Ford (25) a huge feat in his first full year in 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket, whilst Jamie Lathwell and Martin Stewart had 16 each, Josh Atkinson and Fred King 14, whilst Steve Bond who fell in when necessary, and Cameron Atkiknson after he forced his way into the team both had 10, Paul Heard, Alex Hannam, James Ford and Tom Brend shared the rest. The pleasing thing about this is that in a season no one can be on top form at all times and on those days when one

bowler was not at his best, there was always someone to take over. All the bowlers deserve the highest praise.

On the fielding side, apart from the odd misfield and one dolly drop, the catching was of the highest standard. Fred King and Alex Hannam have always been top catchers, but the catching the slips was also of a high standard and Cameron Atkinson with 6 high quality catches from his 12 starts shows that in general Bideford's fielding has been as good as anyone's. And of course behind the stumps Ollie has been a voluble and proficient keeper.

With regard to the club in general, there has been support at the away games which is always a great help – and the hospitality and teas provided at home by all who contributed has been exceptional. My view seems to be that this team, hopefully with an overseas just to steady the ship when it's tottering a bit can go far next season. Talking of which we don't have to go so far season, losing Torquay and Paignton promoted and Chudleigh and Ivybridge relegated they have been replaced by Hatherleigh and Bradninch coming down and Tavistock and Barton coming up.

So there we are a great season which could have been greater, not been good for my health – heart attacks round every corner but I like to think that the team talk at Chudleigh did the trick.

It seems incredible that the season's over, but only another 7 months before these ramblings start again.

So I wish everyone a happy Christmas and profitable new year!

The Quill