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#### October 21 - North Devon League Awards Evening

Half a dozen of us went to the NDLE Awards Evening to collect the Champions Cup 2011.



Not only did we win the title, we also won the Umpires' Fair Play Award and Martin won the Division 1 bowling award. What a season!!

**Yep - it's all done and dusted now.** We collected the Champions Cup (though I noticed the Division 3 cup was bigger than ours!), the Fair Play Award (2nd year in a row) and Martin won the bowling award. Great effort from everyone.

Very proud to have captained the side to the title, against teams from the Premier and A Devon League divisions, as well as strong teams from Filleigh, Newton Tracey and Hatherleigh.

But it's time for me to stand down now. It's been a bit of a roller-coaster ride over the last three seasons, but we've come a very long way. Week in week out I've tried to stress the importance of playing together as a team – everyone has contributed to our title winning season and that's the secret of our success. We've also won the Umpires' Fair Play Award two years in a row now which means not only are we playing some very decent cricket, but we're also playing it in the right way. We were involved in some exciting and memorable games and I hope whoever takes over the captaincy will have the same level of commitment from the players that I had.

Three of our bowlers finished in the League top 5 - Martin, myself and Fordy, and two batsmen were in the batting top 5 - Matt and Fordy again. A great effort not just from those guys, but everyone who came into the team.

Alan got a fantastic hundred against Braunton in the first league game, Dave Smale got a 5-fer against Hatherleigh, Webby a majestic 79 against Sandford who we then bowled out for 56 (Sam Allin 4-15); Dave Staddon got 3-15 to help bowl Filleigh out for 76, Josh hit a superb match-winning 59\* under pressure to beat Filleigh at home, Paul Shepherd spun out Newton Tracey with 5-11, Mike 'Oz' Young and Will Barratt put on 200 against Heathcoat at home, then young Freddie took 2-10, and Martin was almost unplayable against Braunton at home as he took 3-14 off 9.

Great performances all. And let's not forget Matt and Fordy who were outstanding all season and the foundations upon which our victories were built. Matt scored 547



runs at 45, Fordy 372 at 41 and Mikey actually joined in after July and finished the season well with 317 at 35. Will played only half a dozen matches but ended up with 210 at 35. Bowling wise, Martin ended up with 17 wickets at a miserly 14, I got 16 wickets at 16 a-piece and Fordy 13 at 18. Matty was also top of the wicket-keepers with 13 catches and 2 stumpings. And I didn't even let him keep wicket in every match!!



We've taken some superb catches as well. Alan was excellent in the slips, Josh brilliant in the field (when he wasn't nursing a hangover) and our general fielding and catching was good. We had some nightmare games of course - Sandford at home was one with three mental run outs in our innings and five dropped catches. But there you go - these things happen - no one ever deliberately drops a catch or runs themselves out.

But it was a tremendous all-round performance from everyone. I can't stress enough the importance of playing together as a team - we've really done that well this year. Less 'high profile' players have really come to the fore and won us matches. Feedback from the umpires has always been very positive, they are enjoying umpiring our games, though I suspect they enjoy our teas more!!!

I will miss it next year for sure. I won't miss Josh puking all down my car, or someone having a stroop, or banging my head against a brick wall week after week, but I will miss the banter & the team spirit that has built up over the last three years. I'll miss running a team that has evolved into a strong cohesive and supportive unit that plays good cricket but most importantly has fun and enjoys itself.

I said most of my thank you's in an earlier blog, except of course to the players who put up with my 'crazy' batting orders and bowling changes every week. All I can say is - we won the League!! It's been lots of fun, I hope to continue playing next season but I'm not sure yet how much. Whoever takes over, good luck and my very best wishes to them.

Cheers all.

Ian  
25 Oct 2011

Sept 11 v Braunton (H)

A great way to end the season - North Devon League Division One Champions and a home win!!



A great end to the League season with an excellent win over a strong Braunton side giving us another 20 points and leaving us with 7 wins and 4 losses overall

Very wet today, so we started 40 minutes late with a reduced innings of 40 overs a side. Lost the toss and were predictably stuck in to bat.

As we'd already won the title, I juggled the batting order to make sure all the batters got some time out in the middle before next week's League Cup Final. Mike and Will opened and both looked good and Mike went on to score an excellent 60. It wasn't easy to bat, so his 60 was worth a hundred on a dry wicket. Great to see him in the runs. Webby looked good too, and it was a decent effort to get up to 157-8 off our 40 overs. Our batting is strong and looking good for next week's Final.

I mixed up the bowlers today as well - we haven't had a lot of cricket recently so it was important to give everyone some overs. Braunton got off to a good start reaching 50-1, but both Freddy and Fordy, who opened, bowled well. Martin came on from the top and was outstanding taking 3-14 off 9 - and most of those were wides! The spin twins Fordy and the Shepster took two each and with a run out and one each for Josh and myself we bowled them out for 124.

Afterwards we got the champers out and I was all ready to get my wallet out buy a jug or two, but the bar was dry of lager - it

all got drunk last night at Mike's leaving do.. :-( Another time ....-)

A great finish to a superb season for us. Everyone has contributed in their own way to our success. Matty has scored over 500 runs and Fordy 380, with useful runs from Mike (over 300) Will, Alan, myself and Webby. Josh's moment came against Filleigh, scoring a match winning 59\* to see us home, and Dan Barratt an excellent 22\* against Sandford.

Bowling wise, Martin has come on so much this season. Unplayable in some games, finishing with 17 wickets at 14.2 – he might well win the Division 1 bowling award, I got 16 at 16.9, James got 13 at 18.4. Paul came into the team half way through the season and ended with 9 at 14.2. Other good contributions came from Dave Smale, Dave Staddon, Sam Allin and Josh. (Stats from NDL website

<http://braunton.better-than.tv/ndl/current/bowling.php?search=Bideford> )

We have played every game in the right way, in a good spirit, and after each match the feedback from the umpires has always been very positive. We've played 11 games and had 3 rained off. No one has hammered us, we've won 7 and of the 4 we lost the games against North Devon away and Sandford at home were ours for the taking. A tremendous effort all season. Congrats and well done to everyone who has played for the side.

Lastly, but certainly not least, we must not forget the contribution to the team's – and the club's – success by the people who give up their time in order for us to play; so a huge cricket bag full of thank you's to:

**Andy** and his team who spend so much time working on the square come rain or shine – usually rain!

**Jackie** - for providing us with the best teas on the circuit week in and week out.

**Kevin** – while we're devouring our pizzas, cakes and honeyed sausages, he's re-painting the creases, and after the game is ready to serve us a beer or three

**Jolyon** – who's scored more runs than anyone this season, though none with a bat

And of course **John**, the 11's captain, for never complaining when the shark that is the First team snaps up his tastiest players.

I hope that none of the above feel taken for granted, I know that all the players really appreciate the many hours' work you put into the running of the club in order that they may actually play, and I also hope you feel proud and very much part of the team's Championship winning efforts this season.

Let's also take this opportunity to thank our sponsors for the season - Farm and Country Cottages for our shirts, and the North Devon League matches were all sponsored by West End Precision Ltd. I hope that our success on the pitch gives them satisfaction too, and perhaps a financial boost to their businesses.

And finally of course thanks to my missus who allows me to indulge in my passion once a week - I'm talking about cricket of course – while quite often running around like a headless chicken on Sundays with the boys who have a very hectic sporting and social agenda of their own, and sacrificing her own tennis playing availability at the same time.

Don't forget our annual dinner is on October 14<sup>th</sup> and the following Friday 21<sup>st</sup> is the League Awards night. Anyone who has played this season is entitled and welcome to attend.

Next Sunday is our last game of the season, the League Cup Final at Hatherleigh. I will be discussing the team selection with Chris and letting people know Tuesday or Wednesday. It would be great to have plenty of support down there so if anyone wants to come along, please do .....

Photos of today here:

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.139407592821661.28108.100002572633671&l=2f458b32d9>



**NORTH DEVON LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 2011**

Sept 4 v Newton Tracey (H)

#### **We are Division 1 Champions!**

Our match against Newton Tracey was abandoned at tea, and North Devon's game at Sandford suffered a similar fate, which means that with just one game left to play, we cannot be caught by anyone. I have confirmed this with Steve Birley, the journalist who writes the weekly reports throughout the season, and keeps the tables up to date.

A great effort all season long, with some fine individual performances, but more importantly it was the team that won the title, not one individual. Contributions from **every** player who represented the First team won us the title, and every player who has played for the First team this season is entitled to credit for it.

Today's match was a wet and fairly miserable affair, being put in on a wet one we were 3-2 with Matt and Fordy back in the hutch, but Will (91), Mike and Webby dug us out of a hole, and with a few lusty blows from Josh at the end we got up to 189-8. Will batted superbly, riding his luck at times, but was the only batsmen to master the conditions. An excellent total after such a difficult start.

On a personal note, I broke my bat in my massive innings of 4 not out, so if anyone's got one I can borrow next week and for the Cup Final, please get in touch :-)

But after tea the rain got harder, the clouds blacker and the umpires called the match off at 5pm. Then an anxious wait to find out what happened to North Devon .... and eventually found that they were called off too.

I would have preferred to clinch the title by winning the match today instead of the weather spoiling what would have been a very exciting climax to a long season..... but I'll take it this way too!

A night out is called for, though I'll be catching the last bus home again.

### Aug 21 v North Devon (A)

A disappointing defeat at North Devon off the last ball of the game - but looking at it in the cold light of the following day, it was a game which we were losing for the majority of the afternoon except for a brief period of about an hour when we had them in trouble at 120-7 chasing 226. And if someone had told me before the match started we'd come away with 10 points, I'd have been well happy.

Won the toss and batted on what looked like another excellent Instow wicket with a lightening fast outfield. I fully expected our batting line-up to post something in excess of 260, so it was surprising and frustrating to score so slowly for over half of our innings. Matt batted beautifully to notch up his first Sunday hundred of the season with 11 4s and a six, but when the next highest run scorer is our good friend 'Extras' you know something's wrong. Other than 20-odd from Mike & a few blows from George at the end, nobody could lay bat on ball properly. I bumped Joshy up the order to try and force the scoring rate, but after he was unluckily run out at the non-striker's end wickets tumbled in the pursuit of runs. A very poor batting display, especially from a team that had a chance to secure the title. 225 was below par but a lot better than it could have been.

At tea as I munched on a yummy curried pasty I thought we didn't have a hope in hell of restricting them to under 225 with their batting line-up on that wicket but you always have to try to stay positive. Having not bowled at all for three weeks (or batted for five!), I wasn't sure if I should be opening the bowling, but fear of micky-taking from my darling team-mates for not doing so against North Devon's Premier League batsmen spurred me on. Luckily I got a wicket second ball, but then Neil Bettiss took a fancy to me and Josh and knocked us all around the park for a few overs until he nicked one to Alan who took a superb catch at slip. Hedds then survived an LBW shout first ball which I swear was taking all three stumps out...

Martin (3-38) got Bowser out courtesy of an excellent Fordy catch, who then dragged the scoring rate back well with 3-28 off his 9. The Shepster got a wicket with his slow left arm. We had them seven down needing another 100, and nine down needing 64 off the last seven overs. But we couldn't stop the runs and we couldn't get that last wicket. A dropped catch behind from number 11 and you can't help thinking it's just not gonna be your day...

I could go on, but the game was lost in our innings, not in the last 7 overs of theirs. Our bowlers did well to give us a sniff, but we couldn't take it. But really we should have had more runs on the board... None of us came out of the match with huge amounts of credit, barring Matt's batting and Fordy's bowling. Still, as I said before, 10 points from an Instow match is a good effort and the fact that we put them under pressure by getting their top order out relatively cheaply is very much to our credit. That we couldn't drive home the advantage is not. :-)

No match next Sunday, instead we have the Festival on Bank Holiday Monday. Fingers crossed for the same good weather we had last year..

Latest results & tables etc here: <http://braunton.better-than.tv/ndl/current/results.php>

### Aug 7 v North Devon (H)

Not much to say this week - because of the awful weather we couldn't start on time, and when we did start the rain came after 2.3 overs. The end.

Annoying, but at least we tried. No game next week (14th) but there is the Steve Elworthy/President's match. Please let Kevin know if you are able to play. Our next League fixture is away to North Devon 21st Aug - pls let me know your availability for that one.

### July 31 v Heathcoat (H)

Mike finally turns up to play!!!

A superb knock from our resident alien knocked the stuffing out of visiting Heathcoat and leaves us firmly at the top of the table.

Mike scored his ton off 55 balls ending up on 127\* with twelve 4s and seven 6s, and in the process shared a massive 216 run partnership with Will B (81). Not a bad effort after a heavy night out hitting the town - or in Matt B's case, hitting Fordy - the night before...

Batting first Matty A (47) and Fordy (34) took us to 90-2 at the half way stage when Mike and Will got together. Will carried on his excellent form from Saturday and the two of them blasted 216 in just over 20 overs as we finished on a whopping 328-4. I told Mike before the game he'd be getting a ton today, but as he rightly pointed out, I've been saying that to him before every match since he washed up lost on our shores. Law of averages I guess, I'd eventually be right...

This should make you laugh ... When the press rang up to find out the scores, and I told them Mike Young had scored a ton, they replied, "Oh, that's a name you haven't mentioned before." "That's because he hasn't scored a sodding run all season", says I. "Oh," says journalist. "Nuff said!"

Chuffed to bits for Mike though. Now that he's found this confidence and Sunday form, let's hope he carries it on for the next few games. Will played beautifully too and it's good news that both will be around to play the rest of the season's league matches, and Mike for the League Cup final as well.

Treated once again to a great tea (thanks Jackie!) it's always hard to start bowling afterwards. One day I'm gonna win the toss, bowl first and just pig out and let the batters do their bit.

Anyway, Josh started off with an early wicket and I got three, Martin came on from the top and after a stutter or two(!) found the right line and length to trouble all their batsmen. Good pace & hostile too, finishing with 2-35. He's a secret weapon, so secret in fact, no one ever knows if he's really turned up or not until it's too late.

The Shepster winkled one out with his slow left arm and Freddie came on for a terrific spell getting his first - but certainly not last - wickets for the First team. 2 for 10 off 4 overs - great stuff, even knocking the off stump out of the ground for one of them. With Mike getting the final wicket with his first ball we were all done with 20 points in the bag before Songs of Praise had finished. Heathcoat 154ao

An excellent batting performance, decent bowling effort but, being a grumpy old fella sometimes, I think our fielding was a little disappointing. A few easy singles given away, a few poor throws and a bit untidy at times. Not crucial in the context of the game, but it could make a difference next week. Mike took a stunning catch though.

Anyway, well done to Mikey and Will for their batting efforts, and Martin and Freddie for their bowling. Four games to go, people are hitting form at the right time ....

Latest results & tables etc here: <http://braunton.better-than.tv/nd/current/results.php>

### July 17 v Newton Tracey (A)

Shep spins his way to a 5-fer!

Another win and an incredible match to boot!

A wet day with the threat of rain all afternoon, won the toss and stuck them in. The only way to get 20 points on a day like this is to bowl first and try to get them all out quickly and knock the runs off before the heavens open.. which is exactly what we did. Though no one could have predicted the manor of the win!

Wasn't easy to bowl to start with, wet pitch, wet run ups, not a lot of lateral movement. But we got a bit lucky, I took 3 early wickets with two full tosses and a half volley, and Fordy got one in his first over. Mike had a nightmarish couple of overs, Josh and Martin bowled well without any success so I turned to Paul Shep to do his stuff ...

Well, his first ball went straight back over his head into the next field... in his next 28 balls he gave away 5 runs ..... and took 5 wickets .... finishing with 5-11... What an effort!! Fantastic stuff. Alan took a good catch behind the stumps, and when Shep bowled Screechy for 60 we were nearly home. Shep bowled 4.5 overs and took 5-11. I expect Paul A will be scanning through those record books ..... The Journal have already been on the phone asking who this new wonder kid is.... :-)

Bowling them out in 32 overs for 126 gave us 40 minutes to bat before tea, and in those 40 minutes Matt and Fordy were outstanding. They put on 79 for no wicket meaning that we had all but won the match before tea.

We had to come off for 30 minutes for tea and we kept an eye on the black clouds coming towards us. After tea we set about knocking off the remaining 50 or so as quickly as possible. Unfortunately Matt and Fordy got out trying to up the rate, Josh needs to remember that not everyone in the team is 19 years old, fit as a fiddle and can run like a whippet (Webby never had a chance being run out going for a third..), still, to teach Josh a lesson, he got a real grubber that never got more than an inch off the ground, and George was caught at slip off a turner. That left me and Mike to see us home, which we did, although we were both dropped getting there. A win by 5 wickets just before the rain came.

And there you have it. Still top of the table with 5 games left. If we continue to play as a **team** and not concern ourselves with who's got the best average, most runs, most wickets etc then I would expect us to be at the business end of the table come the end of the season. Bowlers need the support of the fielders, not the piss taken out of them when they get tonked for 6. Batsmen need to remember it's not important what number you go in, it's what you do when you get there that's important.

One more thing. Can anyone tell me why Mike keeps stroking my butt?????

Oh yes - if you didn't know already, Beaford beat Heathcoat in the League Cup yesterday meaning that **we are in the final** against Newton Tracey at Hatherleigh on Sunday Sept 18th, 1pm start. Should be a good day...

Latest tables etc here: <http://braunton.better-than.tv/ndf/current/table.php>

### July 10 v Filleigh (H)

A terrific win - never in doubt ..... well, sort of!

A wonderful run chase saw us get home off the last ball of the penultimate over against a strong Filleigh attack. A super innings from Josh - forget last week's ton against Westleigh, this was a real batsman's knock. Panic-free, sensible batting according to the needs of the team and the situation.

Chasing 246 against the Filleigh attack was always going to be tough, but James (32) and Matt (53) got us off to the best possible of starts with a 90-odd opening partnership off 18 overs. They had just a little help from the Filleigh keeper though, he dropped a total of 5 catches all by himself, three off James and two off Matt!!!

Mike, Will, Webby and Al all got decent starts but got out in the mid-teens, leaving us needing around 6.5 an over off the last 11. Josh and I saw it through from there, staying calm and taking the singles on offer, the odd two and a boundary when we could. Josh batted beautifully, taking no risks, **not** trying to run me out, and belting it when the bad ball came. Needing 16 off the last two overs, he smashed a huge 6 and next ball stroked a boundary through the covers to see us home, ending on 59°. Great stuff! Even Fordy's mum enjoyed it...

Earlier I had asked Filleigh to bat, there was a lot of cloud cover and I had hoped to make inroads into their not inconsiderable batting line-up early doors. Both Josh and I bowled well, the ball was seaming around, but the edges didn't come although there was plenty of playing and missing.

In my last over I went for a caught and bowled, dropped it and smashed my index finger. I had to come off (it was hot, I needed a sit down so I thought what the hell!) and Danny went on to field in my place. Cheers fella! James took over the captaincy, which was great as I had a ready made excuse if we lost the match. I said to Fordy as I went off, bring Mikey on to bowl from the bottom end.. By the time I'd put an ice pack on my finger and come back out again, three guesses as to who was bowling ... well it wasn't Mike!

We struggled to take wickets as Filleigh moved forward. Fordy bowled well and picked up 3 good ones, and Martin came on to bowl a second spell at the end and was excellent. To keep them down to 245 was a good effort when at one stage more like 300 was on the cards. We bowled pretty well throughout but we let ourselves down in the field. Matt threw one backwards over the boundary off Fred's bowling, we turned 1's into 2's by not attacking the ball and again we put catches down. If we seriously want to be at the business end of the table come the end of the season, we must take these chances.

After a scrumptious tea (thanks Jackie!) we watched their keeper have a day he'll want to forget. We made steady and consistent progress throughout the innings, a master class of how to bat second. We are blessed with a strong batting line up, this time everyone contributed. A terrific team effort.

Newton Tracey away next Sunday, not home as I told everyone yesterday. Let's carry on this excellent teamwork. Latest tables etc here: <http://braunton.better-than.tv/ndf/current/table.php>

### Westleigh (A) League Cup

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No - it's another massive six from Josh!!!

Well what an astonishing game! Not sure where to start with this one ..Down in our fixture card as a 1.30 start, got Westleigh to confirm it was a 1.30 start the Tuesday before the game, we were all there by 1 o'clock, but 1.30 came and went with no sign of the opposition... They eventually turned up saying they thought it was a 2pm start.

Well, I had briefly flirted with the idea of bowling first - I knew they were weak - so we could get home early, but my nasty side came to the fore when I won the toss as I was a bit peeved we'd all got there so early. I could have had a roast dinner if I'd known we were starting at 2! So I decided to bat first. Make them suffer a bit, make their bowlers toil, make them run around in the hot - **very hot** - sun all afternoon.

But I couldn't have predicted what happened over the next 45 overs.

In 33 years of playing cricket I'm pretty certain I've never been in a team that scored 400 - **four hundred** - in an innings. (Some teams I've played for haven't scored 400 all season, let alone in one afternoon - but that's another story!) But that's what we did.

I had already decided to juggle the batting order for this match, give people a chance to get some runs under their belts before some very tough games coming up in the second half of the season. Matt had dropped down to the seconds to help Jon out, Alan had pulled out on Friday night, which meant that I could open with Will and Webby. Webby was unluckily caught at third man early on, then Will and Elliot took the score up to 65 in the 10<sup>th</sup> over before Elliot was bowled for 23. He'd hit some big blows in that 23. Will seemed to be scoring in 6's.

I went in at 4 and then Will and I proceeded to take 189 runs off the next 22 overs. Both of us hit plenty of 4's and 6's even though the field was set deep, but that meant that even if they bowled us a decent ball - which didn't happen very often to be honest - we could still get a single or sometimes two. We both passed 50 with ease and after that I decided to go for it. Will marched steadily on towards his ton and got there, a well-deserved hundred which will give him confidence going into next

weekend's league games. (And very much to his credit as well, Monday evening he was having a net against the bowling machine!)

I got out on 96 with 11 overs to go and the Westleigh boys breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that a new batsman would take time to settle in before hitting out.

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear... How wrong they were!!

Josh came in to bat... He faced 47 of the next 66 balls, and of those 47 balls eighteen went over or across the boundary line! He smacked an incredible 100 not out. Unbelievable hitting.

Will was finally bowled for a superb 137 – his highest score to date – Fordy came in against his old club and very unselfishly made sure Josh had as much strike as possible. I umpired for the last 10 overs so had the best possible view! This knock of Josh's made Pete Stevens look like Geoffrey Boycott. Astonishing hitting power!! His got his ton with a scrambled single off the last ball of the innings to huge cheers from his team mates. His first – but certainly not last – hundred.

We finished on 400-4 off 45 overs, with over 140 scored in the last 12 overs and Joly our scorer had run out of ink! And spare a thought for Westleigh's Lee Merrick – he went for 100 runs off his 8 overs... :-)

After tea of course we had to finish the job. Martin opened up and bowled quite sharp, and straight. Ali started keeping wicket, he hadn't done it for a couple of years, so when their opener nicked it to him, rather than catch it he decided to kick it to second slip to catch. And who was at second slip? Josh of course!

Martin's first spell was excellent. (He second wasn't, in case you were about to ask.) Too quick for the Westleigh lads he ended up with 3-25 off 9, including his first bowled of the season. Young Fred (although I accidentally called him Josh, to much hilarity and subsequent micky-taking) opened from the other end, and impressed once again with his pace, line and length. Got a good future that one. Didn't get a wicket, but if the slips had been awake and not day dreaming about their respective hundreds, he might have had one...!

I wanted Mike to get some overs under his belt, Dave S and Ali C too. I've seen Ali bowl in the nets and I think he could be a handful if he bowled a bit more. So he took his keeping stuff off, and I took over. I've kept wicket only once in the last 8 years, though back then I regularly did it in the midweek games, but today I can barely move. My legs won't bend and my back won't straighten.

Anyway, I digress.

Mike bowled an excellent 9 over spell of leg spin. He took 3-13 and they could barely lay a bat on him. Flight, loop and turn. I hope he gets to bowl a lot of overs in the second half of the season, he certainly will on Sundays. There are lots of wickets with his name on them I reckon.

Dave Stadds continues to befuddle me! He bowls some unplayable balls mixed in with some ... other types. But he knows that and we're all routing for him to get back to bowling the way he did a few weeks ago at Beaford, Sandford and Filleigh.

Ali had a few overs of off-spin too. Like the look of him, pity he's off to Ayia Napa and will miss next weekend's matches. Wonder if he'll actually come back....? He's tall, and gets turn on the ball. Elliot too had a few tidy overs and was excellent in the field.

All in all a performance to be proud of. The Westleigh lads to their credit kept going to the end for 191-8 and took it all in good cheer. Our boys were simply too good.

What can we take from a game like this? Huge confidence, and enjoy the moment. Remember the tables were turned a few weeks ago when we played Lewdown in the Devon League. So keep things in perspective, but take confidence from a win.

Our batting in recent weeks has relied on one or two batsmen only, now we have almost all the top 7 or 8 guys scoring runs and finding the middle of the bat.

Bowling wise, all were good but Martin and Mike stood out and we'll need them to carry on at the weekend.

But anyway, many congrats to Will and especially Josh on his maiden hundred... Joly our excellent scorer very kindly sent me some stats from our knocks:

**Will Barratt:** 137 (10 x 4s, 9 x 6s, 111 balls)

**Josh King:** 100\* (13 x 4s, 5 x 6s, 47 balls)

**Ian Hayter:** 96 (9 x 4s, 6 x 6s, 59 balls)

I reckon Elliot hit a couple of maximums too, so that would make a total of 22 sixes in the innings!! Who'd be a bowler???

And all's well that ends well - when I got home I had my Sunday roast afterall... yum yum.

At home to **Sandford**, on a sunny day! Bit wet underneath, but the sun was out to play... which is more than we were.

Lost the toss yet again and was put in to bat. As per Heathcoat last week, most of the batsmen simply failed. This week, only two - Matt Allin and myself - scored any runs. Matt batted sensibly and beautifully for 75 while wickets tumbled all around, and we put on 60-odd after being 80-5. I got 41 out of a total of 173-9 and Freddie King, making his 1st team debut, batted with a calmness and assuredness way beyond his years. He certainly has the temperament for 1st team cricket.

I won't mention the **THREE** ridiculous run outs in our innings .. Oops, just did!

But at tea I thought 173 wasn't a bad score on that wicket and had every hope of bowling Sandford out for less.

Martin, Josh and I started well, reducing them to 30-3 and 40-4, but by that stage 3 catches had already been put down. Why - I don't know. We started off the season excellently in the field, but that seems to have gone now. Sandford's overseas player went to score 95 out of his side's 174 with the next best score a measly 18. In total we put down **FIVE** catches, and we still managed to take 7 wickets, 2 for me, one each for Martin, Josh, Dave and Mike with a fantastic run out thanks to a superb throw from Will.

But we come away with a defeat and only 7 points when we should have bowled them out way before the end. We just cannot field like this and expect to be competitive in this league. I'm sitting here watching Silent Witness and I swear those dead bodies could have caught some of those catches yesterday! And probably run better between the wickets.

Live and learn I suppose. Our batting will start to fire again big time soon. We're half way through the season with lots of cricket to play. Freddie bowled well, in fact we all did, but the catches went down, and you can't expect to have to take 15 wickets to bowl a side out.

Westleigh away next Sunday in the League Cup. Time to end our losing streak.

### June 19 v Heathcoat (A)

Well and truly beaten ...

Well, what can you say? Beaten by a stronger team. The End.

An afternoon not without incident, starting off with the second up-chuck of the season as Josh - looking like total crap from a heavy Saturday night - his head out of the window, decorated the side of my car with the contents of his stomach. OK, these things happen when you're 19... but to wash it off with Lucozade for f\*\*\*'s sake!!! What do they teach kids these days?!? To top it off, he dropped a catch off **MY** bowling and was out first ball. Didn't bowl too bad though...

Lost the toss and they batted. Martin and I bowled decently, reducing them to 20-2 and Martin beating the bat 3 or 4 times an over. But that was as good as it got as their Aussie and Saturday skipper put on 240 for the third wicket, both scoring hundreds (although Aussie nicked one behind off Mike Y, feely admitting it but was given not out) off of 8 bowlers used. No one could get a break-through. But don't forget these guys are **four divisions higher** than us on Saturdays so there were many questions asked of our bowlers. To be fair, we didn't bowl too badly, but we dropped a couple of catches and with the Aussie having a life we could have easilly had them 6 or 7 down. But there you go, 262-2 they finished on.

Early on in their innings I managed to knock over one of the umpires with a throw that was heading straight for the stumps and would have had their batter run out by a country mile. Poor Ray, it stunned him a bit and he went down.. but he got up again after a few minutes. Bang goes any chance of me winning the umpires' award again this season :-)

I must ring him to see how he is. Just rung him, he's out at skittles so seems like he's OK!

Still, even facing 262 at tea I thought we could make a decent fight of it. We do bat all the way down, but just not all in the same match! Matt and James opened up and we were 95-0 at the half way stage - a terrific start, (though I would have liked a few more, but then again I always want more), but we had all 10 wickets intact and it was definately game on.

But Matt went soon after drinks for 39, Mike and Webby didn't stay long, James holed out for 53, numbers 6, 7 and 8 were all out in the same over (I think - it happened so fast!) so that left Alan and myself to salvage something from the game. From 95-0 to 119-7 quicker than it takes Josh to puke up on a Sunday morning..

With no hope of victory batting second it's important to set yourself targets - once you reach 50% of the total you get 2 points and then every 10% nearer you get, you earn 2 more points. 131 was the first target for 2 points, then 157 then 183. Alan and I took the score to 177 and then Martin S helped me push past 183. With a 6 and a 2 off the first 2 balls of the final over and 18 needed off 4 balls for two more points I decided to go for it ..... but didn't make it.

Still, thanks to a good 34 from Alan and 42 from myself we did come away with 6 points and a few plusses in the game. Martin bowled really well, Matt, James, Alan and myself batted well and Josh provided the macabre..

Thankfully that's our last bit of travelling for the season so everyone else's car should be safe - until next year.

Sandford at home next Sunday, let's get behind each other (not you Matt) and get back to winning ways...

Sadly we **lost to Barnstaple in the NDKO Cup**. Struggled to get a team out, but luckily some of the colts agreed to play and although guys like Freddie King, Dan Barratt and George Laing I know to be decent players they didn't really get a chance to shine in the match. Such is the nature of the game sometimes, they will have many more opportunities to show what they can do over the coming months for sure.

Winning the toss and batting first Matty once again batted superbly carrying his bat for 70 odd not out out of 143-5. With support from Alan, Webby and a great little cameo from Josh (19) at the end, 143 looked an OK score on that wicket.

We started off well with Fordy opening the bowling with a great spell of 1-18 off 4 overs and I got 2-26 off my 4 but we struggled to get any more wickets or put pressure on their batsmen. A good effort in the field with Freddie patrolling the cover boundary and good backing up from everyone but at the end of the day we weren't quite good enough.. :-)

### May 29 v Filleigh (A)

Well we did it again - we bowled a team out for double figures in no time at all. Last time around we bowled Sandford out in 14 overs, this time it took us 26 overs to dismiss Filleigh for 82 chasing our total of 219.

Put in to bat on a wet one, things looked dicey at the start with the ball popping up off a length and only some great concentration and application from Fordy and Matt saw us through the opening spell. They battled it out and went on to register an opening stand of 151 - a tremendous effort against some decent bowlers on that wicket. Matt went for a heave-ho on 66 and missed it, and wickets fell as the new batters had no time to come to terms with the unpredictable bounce while trying to hit out at the end. James went on to an excellent 106 and we ended up on 219-8, a decent total for sure, though how decent only became apparent after tea.

We started with Sam bowling his off breaks and myself at the other end. We built some pressure and their openers went for a suicidal run, then I got 2 wickets in 2 balls and Alan took a blinding catch at mid-wicket to dismiss Jas Kalsi off Sam leaving them 4 down for not many.

Martin then came on and bowled superbly. Pace, bounce, good lines and lengths and movement off the pitch - he had it all!! Their middle and lower order had no answer to him. What a great spell and another good catch at second gully by Mike the Ozzy(!) gave Martin 3 good wickets.

Meanwhile Stadds continued to enjoy his First team cricket - he too got bounce and turn and great catches by Matty behind the stumps and Fordy at midwicket also gave Dave 3 wickets as we bowled them out just before the rain came ..

Our batting, bowling, catching and fielding continues to impress. Our cricket is good, the team spirit is good. A wise person

once said, there is no limit to what we can achieve if it doesn't matter who takes the credit... Good team work, working together, playing as a team ... let's do it.

#### **May 15 v Sandford** - Stunning victory with a margin of 225 runs!

Sandford away - in all these years my first ever visit to Creedy Park. What a beautiful ground and a batting track hardly bettered throughout the county. Great tea too!

There's a good spirit in the team, despite the recent defeat by Hatherleigh. Arriving an hour before the start, we sat around chatting and laughing. Martin had decorated Matt's car - on the outside thankfully - with half his breakfast, most of the guys were nursing hangovers while the old farts in the team tut tutted...

Won the toss and had no hesitation in batting. Matt, James and Mike at 1, 2 and 3 all got good starts and would have loved to have gone on to a bigger score but all got out in the early 30's. Webby at 4 came in and batted majestically for a run-a-ball 79 and then 15 year old Dan Barratt and myself took 70 off the last 7 overs to get us up to 280-7, Dan getting 22no off 15 balls and me 49no off 22.

I was happy with that, I had targeted 250 at the start so this was a bonus. But nothing prepared us for what happened after a delicious tea...

Martin's first over ..... well, Sandford were 5-0 before a legal delivery was bowled. Four wides and a no ball... Josh started a bit better and then Martin found the right lines and induced an edge to Sam at second slip who shaffled the catch with his bucket hands.

Josh then got a beauty - slipping in his delivery stride, he dragged the ball down short and very wide - somehow Paul their opener managed to reach it with the toe end of the bat and Matt took a terrific catch behind.. Talking of terrific catches, young Dan at cover took a blinder! A ball fairly walloped athim - he parried it up and caught the ball as it came down. Great cricket, quick thinking and a super catch.

At 4 wickets down for hardly any, Sam came on to bowl his off breaks. With flight, loop, turn and bounce their batsmen had no answer to him - he took 4-15 off 2.4. Stadds got a wicket too, another tidy slip catch - this time by the skipper!

Well who would have believed it - Sandford all out for 56!!! A great result for us. Looking good for next weekend though there's no fixture for us hopefully the Saturday 1st team can carry on their good start.

The top 4 batsmen are all looking good, the fielding is pretty slick and catches are being taken. And best of all, people are enjoying their cricket and having fun.

#### **May 8 v Beaford (A)**

NDL Cup - and a 7 wicket victory! A trip to Beaford for our League cup game against the village side. A windy miller day for sure played havoc with everyone's hair...

A green topped wicket, still a bit wet underneath I lost the toss and we bowled first, reducing them to 50-5 with 3-16 off 9 for myself, with a good slip catch from Alan, and one wicket each for Martin and Josh. Then a bit of a partnership took them to near enough a hundred before Fordy got a couple and Dave Stadds mopped 'em up with 3-8 off 4.1! Beaford 121ao.

We got to 122 fairly comfortably in the end, though it wasn't an easy start with the ball still doing loads. Matt saw us home with an undefeated 50 and support from Webby, James and Mike. 122-3.

A decent effort and well deserved victory.

#### **May 4 v Braunton (A)**

NDKO Cup 1st round - and a stunning victory!

An away tie at Braunton for this 20/20 competition was always going to be a tough ask... I won the toss and batted and we were then royally entertained by Matt and James as they put on 188 before they both got out in the final over.

An astonishing partnership where both batters played superbly, mixing quick singles with huge blows over the bungalows, they totally dominated all the Braunton bolwers and bashed them into submission. A total of 196-3 off 20 overs is an outstanding effort whichever way you look at it.

Opening with two spinners and saving the quicker bowlers for the twilight hours, Braunton got off to a decent start but Sam Allin took 3 wickets in his four overs putting the pressure firmly onto the home side. As the run rate creeped up the batsmen had to take more risks and James cashed in with some wickets including an excellent catch at long on by Josh just inches off the ground.

Martin came on and bowled at a decent pace mopping up the tail who had no answer to his pace and bounce.

A great effort by the guys in the field, two superb innings from Matt and James and a memorable victory. It's true what they say - it's a funny old game!!! (See *Hatherleigh match below!*)

#### **May 1 v Hatherleigh (H)**

##### **Our second league game - and a defeat!**

A disappointing defeat against a competitive side but 5-an-over needed off the last 20 overs with our two best batsmen in - and well set - I fully expected us to cross the finishing line.

It was a wet and spicy wicket for both teams, made slightly worse for us after a downpour re-spiced it up just as it was calming down a bit as the new ball hardness wore off. Putting them into bat we kept them down to around 2-an-over for the first 12 overs or so, so how they got to 100-2 at drinks is still a mystery. Martin and I both bowled excellent opening spells, Martin picking up one of the openers, but there was a lot of playing and missing and nothing much went to hand. Josh picked up a caught behind but it was left to the spin twins - James and Dave - who bowled out the last 18 overs of the innings with excellent spells, meaning I couldn't get Martin on to complete his 9. Dave ended up with the first Division 1 5-fer of the season (5-28) and James got 3 wickets - one of which was a superb diving catch by Alan W on the long on boundary. Hatherleigh 187ao.

After a great tea provided once again by Jackie, Mike had his first chance to get a knock in the middle. It certainly wasn't easy on that wicket and I doubt he'll get a more difficult surface to play on all season, but he and Alan weathered the metaphorical - and literal - storm pretty well putting on 50 for the first wicket. Then a bit of a collapse with 3 wickets going for 4 runs but that left Matt and Fordy batting together and looking good as drinks approached. Unfortunately soon after that Matt wafted at a wide one and was caught, and the last 6 wickets fell for almost nothing as we were bowled out for 143. Only Alan (30), Matt (34) and Fordy with 41\* when he ran out of partners made any impression in the runs scored column.

A bit of a sorry defeat. The Hatherleigh boys bowled well though and held their catches. But it's a game that we should have won at the half way stage. :(

#### April 17 v Braunton (A)

##### Our first league game - and a win!

A beautiful day at Braunton, good looking wicket and outfield, lost the toss for the second time in two outings, had to field first again.

Josh had turned up with half the skin missing from his left leg due to a rugby injury, and a huge scab that he'll no doubt be picking at for the next few weeks. He clearly was in no position to be able to bowl as well as we know he can, so he had to come off after three overs.

Luckily for me I found my *mojo* with a 5-over opening spell for 9 runs finishing up with 2-14 off 7. Tom Allin came on after Josh and bowled 2 tidy spells of seam up and Jay bowled beautifully with a good line and length and a bit of turn. 9 overs, 2 for 24 was a great return.

Smaler did the business again and Sam Allin bowled well considering he hasn't played for 4 years. Good loop and flight, hoping he'll be able to play regularly this season.

Webby bowled 2 good overs at the death and picked up a wicket to boot. In general a very good effort to keep them to 203-9 after they were 80-0 after 20 overs. Our fielding was good with 2 blinding catches and two good ones, our bowling was straight and disciplined.

After tea it was the Alan Withecombe show! Opening the batting with Matt he creamed two 4's in the opening over and never looked back. They put on 60 odd til Matt was out, Tom came in and carried on the good work, Andy Webbe was Gower-esque in his shots and all the while Alan carried on his merry way. Half a dozen sixes, and as many fours took him to a super 116 not out out of 204-3, with victory coming with almost 10 overs to spare. Congrats to him on his first 1st XI ton, well deserved. Hope there's many more to come.

No game for us next Sunday but two games the following weekend. See you then.

#### April 10 v Newton Tracey (F)

##### Our first game - a friendly against a strong Newton Tracey team. And a tie!!!

The ground looked fantastic, thanks to the hard work of Andy and Paul in particular and others as well, the pitch was excellent as usual and the weather beautiful. Would that it lasts...!

Tried to make sure everyone got a game, as I always do, but particularly because next weekend the League starts. We agreed to 40 overs, 8 per bowler and batters to retire at 50.

Lost the bloom'n' toss and NT batted first. Less said about the opening spells by Josh, myself and Jon the better, but thankfully our 4 spinners bowled us back in the game. Dave Smale, Jay Corden, Dave Staddon and James Ford bowled fantastically well, Stadds taking two wickets, and all gave us a measure of control over NT's innings. Both their openers retired with 50, but the subsequent batters were unable to play so freely, taking the total to a challenging 241 but could so easily have been 300 !.... Both Josh and I bowled a tidy final 8 overs after the spinners had done their bit to keep it under 250.

A great tea was provided as always by Jackie. We're lucky at the club to have her, feedback from visiting players is always excellent and the umpires are fighting each other to get games at our club! Thanks Jackie.. :-)

We lost 2 early wickets, Matt and Webby going cheaply, but Alan Withecombe and Ali Clements played fantastically well, steadying the ship, with Alan getting out on 46 and Ali retiring on 50. They both played some excellent shots and are looking good for next week. Ali's second 50 in two days! James Ford and I carried on the good work, keeping up the asking rate of 7 an over against some straight bowling from the NT guys. James reached a majestic 50 and retired, and I holed out for 25. Enter Josh and Jon Weekes ... Needing 40 off the last 4, 21 off the last 3 and 14 off the final over, they had us all on the edge of our seats. Both hit boundaries when needed under pressure, and when Josh smashed a masive 6 in the final over it was down to 3 off 3 balls, and 2 off the final ball .... With the field all in and pressure on, the boys managed to scramble a single off the last ball to tie the match!

A great start to the season and a fair result. Played in a good spirit in fine weather as well. My thanks to the umpires Paul and Alex for giving up their Sunday afternoons.

Lessons to be learnt.... bowl straight and **NEVER** give up.

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