

WATSONIAN CRICKET CLUB

AGM – 9TH DECEMBER 2020

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME AND REPORT

At the risk of stating the obvious, it has certainly been an extraordinary and unprecedented year for the club, as it has been for all aspects of our daily lives. In such times, one appreciates the value and importance of activities, such as recreational sport, which it is all too easy to take for granted in normal circumstances. Whilst it was very frustrating for everyone at the club not to be able to play in the early part of the season, we did manage to play a reasonable amount of games in August and September and I would like to thank a number of people who made it all possible:

- Firstly, the school, George Watson's College, was hugely helpful in allowing us to commence training and playing at the earliest possible opportunities. The school owns Myreside and hence is responsible for all activities at the ground. The senior staff at the school could not have been more helpful in reviewing and agreeing our safety protocols, at a time when they were having to deal with all the unforeseen challenges forced upon the school by the pandemic. Therefore, I would like to record our thanks and appreciation to Melvyn Roffe, the Principal, Su Breadner, the Chief Operating Officer, Mike Leonard, the Director of Sport, and Neil McCallum, the Director of Cricket.
- The new groundsman, Craig Eccleston, who was appointed in February, along with his team, performed a sterling job in enabling us to play so many games in such a short period of time. We are a very large club, with 4 senior teams, a women's team, and a junior section of over 100 boys and girls. Craig was able to ensure that all teams and sections were able to train and play as many matches as possible, for which we are very grateful.
- The organisation of firstly training and then the matches required a huge amount of time and effort and was superbly delivered by our new Director of Cricket, Andrew Chalmers. I will return to Andrew's role shortly, but in the meantime, I would like to record our thanks for his hard work in organising the games and training sessions.
- The protocols devised by Andrew required each training net to have a manager to ensure that safety guidelines were being adhered to and I would like to thank all the members who gave up so much time to ensure that training could proceed.
- Finally, I would like to thank all the players for observing the rules, which at times did seem quite onerous, but if we had committed any breach, the school would have had no option but to bar the club from playing: so well done to everyone!

The most significant development for the club during the year was the appointment of Andrew Chalmers as Director of Cricket. The appointment represents a major change for the club, which in the past has relied principally upon the team captains and professional to organise training and preparation for matches. However, the committee recognised that the size of the club and our ambition to develop and enhance the coaching programmes required a professional appointment and that we could not continue to rely entirely upon volunteers.

The role is, in essence, to manage, supervise, and run all the coaching sessions, oversee player development, and to manage team selection. The key tasks are:

- Setting the coaching programmes for both the winter and summer sessions;
- Running the coaching sessions;
- Ensuring there is adequate coaching resource and hiring assistants as and when needed;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the programmes, which will include player feedback;
- Establishing a profile for each player, as required;
- Establishing a Development Academy;
- Establishing a player availability roster;
- Chairing the selection committee;
- Liaising with GWC regarding player development;
- Player recruitment;
- Development of junior coaches; and
- Outreach, particularly to state primary schools.

Andrew has had an outstanding year and we have been delighted with the positive impact he has made upon the club. He has commenced the reorganising of the junior coaching making a number of key appointments, most notably current Scotland player Oli Hairs and Parker Neame, and during the autumn has organised masterclasses led by several noted international players. It is still early days, but the feedback from the boys, girls, and parents has been very positive.

Andrew brings an infectious enthusiasm to the role and already the club has benefitted from the recruitment of a number of new players at all ability levels and we look forward to the continued development of the club during 2021.

We will also see a change in club captain in 2021, as Mike Carson has decided to stand down because of work commitments. As well as bringing his own brand of calm shrewdness to the captaincy, Mike has been the mainstay of our batting for several seasons and we are delighted that he will continue to play for us, as and when work will allow. I would like to thank him for his significant contribution to the club over the last few years and I look forward to a few more swashbuckling tons next season!

Early in the year, the Myreside pavilion was badly damaged by a fire which started in the first floor kitchen. Fortunately, the damage was not as extensive as initially feared and the school has now embarked upon a refurbishment project, the key elements of which are:

- The alcoves in the first floor bar will be raised, providing a clearer view of the square;
- The school's development office will be moved to the Watsonian Room on the first floor; and
- The ground floor will be reconfigured to provide a coffee lounge which will be open all day and the windows overlooking the ground will be replaced by bifold doors.

My view is that these changes will be to the benefit of the club. As well as the upgrade of the physical facilities, the pavilion will be open all day and hence it should be easier to convince Tynecastle Catering, who will continue to run the facility, to extend the opening by a few hours to accommodate our evening use, which has been somewhat of an issue in the past.

The club is also very proud of the continuing success of Kathryn and Sarah Bryce, who were both key members of the Loughborough Lightning squad in this year's Kia Super League, as well as the national team. Sarah recorded a superb century for the Lightning in the last match of the season and Kathryn has been nominated as ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade, an outstanding achievement. We pass on our congratulations to both of them.

An event for the diary next year, although we do not yet have the specific date. Rob More at Heriots has suggested that a trophy is introduced for the 1st XI match between our two clubs to mark the 125th anniversary of the first properly recorded game. We fully support this development and we plan to hold a gala day for our home game, at which there will be various stalls, marquees etc and invite former players, non-playing members, friends of the club, and (hopefully by then!) sponsors for what will essentially be a mini festival. Keep an eye out for the date.

Although it was not part of his brief, Andrew has organised a group to seek sponsorship for the club. In contrast to previous drives, we have offered a variety of options rather than simply seek one overall sponsor, although, of course, that is still available if a suitable offer was received. The suite of options is posted on the website and can I exhort everyone to think about any likely candidates and contact Andrew, myself or any member of the committee to progress: every contribution is very gratefully received!

In summary, the club remains very strong with 4 senior teams, a growing women's section, and a thriving junior section. I would like to thank all members of the committee and, indeed, all members who have given up time to help in the organisation and running of the club. We look forward to a return to some level of normality next year when the club can continue to thrive and provide enjoyment for so many members.

John Reid

6th December 2020