



ECB Yorkshire South Premier League

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Chairman's blog – 2 May

On Saturday, we went to see my daughter-in-law on her birthday and babysat whilst she and my son went out for a meal. Keeping in touch with the scores on TCS is addictive and the iPhone was never far away! League tables at this stage are quite meaningless but it is perhaps significant that our four unbeaten sides all finished in last year's top five.

But a much improved Treeton side made Wakefield Thornes work hard for their home win, and Hallam gave Whitley Hall an almighty fright with their tenacious defence of a relatively low score at Sandygate.

I watched a rather unsatisfactory game of rugby league on Sunday afternoon at Craven Park. Rochdale

Hornets arrived with the sole intention of spoiling the game to ensure that they wouldn't get a 40 or 50 point hiding, and the referee played into their hands. We got the two points, but that is all that can be said.

On Sunday evening, Sheffield & Phoenix chairman Michael Heseltine rang to ask for advice about the cup-tie at Aston Hall the following day. The club have endured a somewhat turbulent close season, with a number of players leaving on the eve of the season and some reinforcements are still to arrive. Michael told me that he had lost two further key players on the eve of the game and although he was sure he would be able to field 10 or 11 bodies, he felt that the game would be a mismatch and potentially embarrassing to his club and the league. I was mindful that players have previously told me that they'd rather have a day off than waste it on a 'non-contest.' After consulting with Aston Hall chairman Graham Simmonite, we agreed to cancel the game and award Aston Hall a bye. I was very impressed by Graham's understanding toward the difficulties being faced by a fellow club.



Hallam's ground from the scoreboard end



Hallam from the football end looking towards the old pavilion

On Monday lunchtime, fortified by Kirsty's magnificent kedgeree, we travelled to Hallam, where we arrived in time to see Billy Root putting the home attack to the sword. His 120 was the backbone of Collegiate's 277-5 and after the home side lost their first four wickets for 37 to Collegiate's opening bowlers Henry Eldred and Luke Shutt, the result was never really in doubt.

I caught up with Collegiate skipper Matt Dixon whilst his side were batting. Matt is, of course, our league vice-chairman, and we had a few matters to discuss in advance of next week's committee meeting. Matt also told me that in a recent game he had been criticised for not allowing an opposition player a runner. I found this strange because my understanding

of a law change a few seasons ago was that decisions on substitutes and runners were now made exclusively by umpires. One of our leading umpires, Jason Pitcher, was standing in the game at Sandygate and he confirmed that my understanding is correct. I understand that future law changes will remove the entitlement to runners. It has always struck me as anomalous that batsmen alone can be afforded this luxury, so it will be not before time in my opinion!

Hallam are a very good, well run club, and I was welcomed by their ambitious chairman Matthew Mawson, long-serving secretary Richard Storer and enthusiastic skipper Nick Dymock. Matthew told me that the club were now stepping up their fundraising activities to fund the planned extension to their cricket pavilion, starting with their Buy-a-Brick initiative this week. I told him to let me have details of this and their other forthcoming fund-raising activities so that I could help them by publicising these on our website and social media outlets. It is worth mentioning at this point that I am very happy to help publicise activities and events on behalf of any of the YSPL clubs.

Whilst walking around the ground, we met former Yorkshire League stalwart and leading groundsman Alan Kettleborough, who was watching the game with his wife. We reminisced a bit and discussed the merits of various changes to rules over recent years. Alan is clearly and very justifiably proud of his son Richard's achievements in the umpiring world, and he obviously dotes on his grandson who, at six, is already displaying a talent for cricket – we later saw Alan hard at work giving the young lad his catching practice!

Of course, our esteemed secretary Steve Ward was in attendance in his role as Collegiate's scorer. He tells me that he is going to Benidorm on a 'stag do' this week. This is very worrying on many levels. Aside from the fact that I hope nothing happens in his absence and I pray for his safe return, I hope that his experience does not mirror that of a well-known Premiership football referee who recently returned from a stag do and had a stinker at the weekend.

The afternoon was punctuated by calls to and from Treeton, where my colleagues Messrs Beardshall and Bentham were in attendance. By the time I spoke to him, Mark was slightly recovered from the first innings, and his team were putting up a real fight in their quest to overhaul Treeton's daunting total of 327. In the end, Barnsley fell just short at 305 in a game that Terry referred to as a 'great advert for our league.'

After the game, as Kirsty was not as frozen as the week before, we went into the bar and had a drink with Jason and his colleague Ray Knowles. Ray, in addition to his work on behalf of the YSPL, is the county Child Welfare Officer. This is an onerous responsibility that could really be a full time job. Ray can tell some shocking stories about incidents that really underline the need for us all to be aware of safeguarding issues and to comply with the basic safeguarding requirements. I outlined to Ray my plans for the disciplinary sub-committee I referred to last time, and took the opportunity of hearing his thoughts. I have a lot of respect for Ray's views, and found it very reassuring that we have the same perspective on disciplinary matters.

After saying goodbyes, we returned home for a glass of red wine and an episode of *Line of Duty*. It was a good day. I enjoyed my visit to Hallam – it has not been an easy start for them, but I am sure that they will be competitive and will prove to be a valuable addition to our league.

I will now single-handedly have to arrange the agenda for next week's committee meeting, and distribute it myself. You just can't get reliable staff these days! At least I have a trip to the *Goodmanham Arms* to look forward to tomorrow, then tea in Leeds on Thursday and a trip to Treeton on Saturday. It's a hard life!

Till next week.

Roger