

ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 2014

2014 Season

It is sad to report that about one third of our fixtures during the season were cancelled, but, rather surprisingly, in a largely decent summer, 9 of the 13 cancelled were due to the weather and only 2 were called off because The Ramblers were unable to produce a team. That is not to say that all is rosy, as raising sides is not an easy task. Our Match Managers work very hard with little thanks and I would urge all players to appreciate the work done on their behalf by both the Match Managers and our tireless Secretariat, Messrs Boyd and Carroll.

Justin Langen (the "n" is correct not an "r"!!) heads the batting averages by a country mile and in the process scored two of only three centuries made during the season. This suggests that some of our premier batsmen are either not playing enough or are not greedy enough. I suspect mostly the former. There were notable contributions amongst those playing fewer matches from Jim Fulton, Alex Ball, Archie Reynolds and Ed Maidment. It is a few years since we had a Beak at the school being prominent in the averages with Jim Fulton heading those who have played in fewer than 4 games.

The bowling averages were much more closely contested with George Reynolds just edging out Rob Batey at the top. Freddie Fox bowled the most overs with 60 overs of miserly off spin. The highlight of George Reynolds figures was his 7 for 34 against The Guards.

It is often said that cricket is a batsman's game and I have always disagreed. A bowler can bowl and awful long hop or wide half volley and he gets another chance, not so the batsman who plays a ghastly heave and loses his middle stump. That is why I took up bowling in my 20s and I encourage others to do the same. It makes the drive home so much better if you have taken a wicket after being out first ball.

The Cricketer Cup

The less said about our defeat at Malvern, the better. Malvern is one of the most difficult places to go to and win. We have never managed it since the inception of the competition and we have gone there with some pretty good sides on many of those occasions.

This year we had the severe misfortune to lose our outstanding captain Alex Loudon less than a month before the game, when he was posted abroad to Johannesburg. A new captain had to be appointed and it was Alex's firm view, supported by all concerned that Will Vanderspar should be asked to do the job. He took a talented, but young and very inexperienced side to Malvern and, as I have indicated above, it is not a place to blood newcomers. Inevitably we got well beaten, but I am sure all concerned will have benefited from the experience even if they didn't enjoy it on the day.

It may take Will a year or two to get the right blend of players together, but the talent is most certainly available for us to put a very strong side into the field. **In 2015 we play The Old Eastbournians on Upper Club on Sunday, June 14th.** Put the date in your diaries now and come to support the team.

Lord's

I was unable to be at Lord's and I have plagiarized and abridged Mark Williams' excellent report.

Harrow were delighted to win the toss and elected to bat without hesitation. The match had added poignancy, since it was John Rice's final Lord's match after a distinguished 30 year career as the Eton Cricket Professional, and Simon Halliday will step down as Master-after a highly successful 17 year tenure at the end of the season.

Eton immediately struck the first blow when MacMillan bowled a nervous Ruffell fifth ball. This brought White to the crease, becoming one of the rare cricketers who have made five appearances in this fixture. He cast caution to the wind, and played fluently and aggressively right from the start. He was particularly strong driving straight and on the legside, and hit seven flawless boundaries. The Captain De Silva was playing soundly and responsibly, and the pair had added 50 by the 12th over, when the introduction of Fenwick brought immediate reward as he swung a ball away from De Silva (19) which was neatly held by Watt at slip. The left-handed Rath, a colt who has already represented Hong Kong in a full T20 international, began purposefully, and the score had reached 78 at more than 4 per over when White was bowled for 45. Steward started confidently with a pair of boundaries, and Rath began to really dominate. The pair had fluently added 67 in 11 overs when Gnodde had Steward caught at the wicket by Russell. Gnodde had bowled a controlled spell of 7 overs 2-22 in the midst of the onslaught, but both Yerburgh and Bouchier had been expensive. Soon after, lunch was taken with Harrow 153-4 from 32 overs.

Rath reached an assured and aggressive fifty from 55 balls, and the left-handed Wijaratne looked secure, so that the score mounted steadily to 175, until the return of Griffin induced a wild shot from Rath. He had taken the game away from Eton by scoring 59 from 68 balls. Wijaratne continued to play very sensibly, never missing the opportunity to score, but wickets began to fall at the other end. At 209-9 Eton had clawed themselves back into the game, and were potentially chasing a significantly lower target than expected. However Wijaratne now moved onto the offensive, and found stubborn support from Elworthy; they put on a crucial 24 runs in 23 balls before Wijaratne was bowled by MacMillan for 40. Harrow had finished on 233 from 53.1 overs. The Eton bowlers had stuck to their task, with MacMillan 4-39 and Gnodde 2-30 standing out, and were well supported in the field.

It was Eton's turn to suffer a telling blow early in their innings when the in-form Watt was bizarrely run out, stationary and a couple of yards out of his ground when a good throw came in from Smith from third man in the fourth over. Gnodde came in to join Treon and was immediately into his stride. Treon was batting with determination but struggled to get the ball away, and the pair had added 41 in 11 overs when Treon hung his bat outside off-stump and was caught behind by White off Robyns for 11. Russell had played himself in sensibly, and had just

scored his first boundary when he was well held at slip by Kellock. Blake was soon lbw to the left-arm spin of Rath shuffling forward, and Ruffell began an impressive spell, clean bowling Collins and Bouchier, so that Eton had sagged to 91-6. Gnodde meanwhile continued his serene progress, and he at last found a reliable partner in MacMillan who got well forward and played straight. He reached a faultless 50 from 56 balls. Harrow cemented their strangle when the Eton captain was unluckily caught behind down the leg-side off the reliable Elworthy for a fine 73 from 85 balls. With his dismissal at 112-7 went Eton's hopes of winning the game, but MacMillan and Griffin now embarked on a lively partnership of big hitting. They had added 37 in 8 overs when Griffin was bowled by the ever-impressive Ruffell for 22. Yerburch kept MacMillan company, who continued to hit effectively, until the former was bowled by Rath. MacMillan's brave innings was ended by a well-judged catch soon after. Eton had been bowled out in the 51st over for 170, and therefore lost the match by 63 runs.

John Rice

Eton cricket has been blessed with outstanding, long serving professionals. Perhaps the players of each era will consider their own to have been the best. What is certain is that John Rice would stand a test against any professional from any school and he has been involved in a highly successful period for Eton cricket. He also got involved in many other sports, not all of which familiar to him prior to him joining the staff.

He came to Eton from Hampshire, as, of course, his predecessor, Vic Cannings did. Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie had a hand in both appointments and he did his old school a great service. John was good enough to open the batting on many occasion with no other than Barry Richards as well as bowling many overs as first change. His enthusiasm for the game and for passing on his considerable knowledge to others was second to none. He was simply a quite outstanding coach of both batting and bowling.

Finances

The Treasurer has described the year as "boring" which in monetary terms is a good sign. I always like to remind members that we hold a good stock of ties and sweaters and there is a large saving to be made by acquiring these items through the Hon Treasurer rather than retail outlets.

A retirement fund for John Rice was set up during the year and Ramblers contributed about £15,000 to it

The Eton Rambler Fund

The Fund currently has a balance of £61,000 and the Trustees of the fund are considering a request from Eton to assist on the refurbishing of the All Weather nets on Upper Club. We still have Covenants in place to the value of about £6,000 per annum. I might be after the members again, but rest assured that would be in the most gentle of manners.

Obituaries

After losing such stalwart members last year, we had a slightly better year in that respect, but, nonetheless, we have lost some very loyal and active members during the last twelve months.

Brigadier TFR Bulkeley MBE. Thomas Bulkeley was our oldest member, having left Eton in 1934. Despite ending his days in Wales, he was a Scots Guardsman through and through, serving in both Palestine and Egypt. Whilst in Egypt he took great interest in the regular cricket which took place there, which was of a pretty high standard.

AG Doyle. Gavin was in his forties when I first started playing for the Club, but he was still playing at least 10 games a year and always contributing usefully with both bat and ball. If you had Gavin in your side to bat at 6 or 7 and bowl first change, you felt pretty satisfied that you had solved the all rounder problem. He was always immaculately turned out, polite to everyone (unless they were rude to him!) and a great supporter of new young members.

JR Greenwood MBE. Richard was, of course, better known in the Tennis and Rackets world where he made a huge contribution to those two sports both nationally and more specifically in the world of Old Etonians. Nevertheless he was a huge supporter of the Ramblers, attended all our dinners, wrote frequent letters to our Presidents, present and past, normally to say how much he had enjoyed something or other.

The Rt Hon Sir Christopher Staughton. Bridge rather than cricket was more Christopher's game, but he was kind enough to agree to propose the health of cricket at our last dinner at the Savoy Hotel and I suspect his arm was twisted hard by my predecessor to join the Club. He was a most eminent lawyer specialising in Commercial Law and rising to The Court of Appeal.

PNC Howard. Philip was a better Rugby player than cricketer and was not far off a Blue at Oxford. After graduating from Oxford he served for two year's National Service in the Black Watch where he was rather inappropriately appointed as transport officer in Berlin, never having driven a car and was never being seen to do so. After finishing his National Service he entered the world of journalism and became a highly respected journalist.

NF Fane. Nick captained the XI in 1975 and is one of very few people to have captained the XI without having had a previous year in the side. He seldom played for the Club after leaving Eton spending much of his time becoming a knowledgeable countryman and being keen on all Field Sports.

I have also had notice that the following also died during the year:- Maj JAD Weber-Brown, Capt JJ James, MHA Broke, JAD Wilkinson and Lord Roborough.

Floreat Etona

PG Lowndes
President