Review of the 2009 Season

2009 was a successful season for the club. The 3 league sides achieved top 3 finishes, with promotion to Division One for the 1st XI, a fine runners up pennant for the 3rd XI in the Premier Division and a commendable third place for the 2nd XI, also in their Premier section. With the continued development of the colts section, giving us a growing player pool, we now find ourselves in a strong enough position to enter a 4th XI into the league from 2010.

First Eleven

Off season recruitment for the first team saw the arrival of Arshad Ali, Junaid Sarwar, Bradley Scully and Elliot Richter. Ali turned in some typically explosive performances with the bat on his way to over 600 runs. His brutal 130 off only 54 balls against Billericay, the highlight. His contribution with the ball was equally as impressive as he took 49 wickets (although some cynical team-mates noted the number of cheap tail-end wickets he picked up!) and formed a partnership that strangled many an innings with fellow off spinner Ryan Lugg, who was not too far behind with 42 wickets.

Elliot Richter, a youngster from the Gordon club in Sydney, was the club's overseas player and he proved a success. He survived the ordeal of cohabiting with fellow Aussie John Weber and despite his increasingly ridiculous hairstyle he scored just shy of 600 league runs which could have quite easily been greater. Hopefully Elliot will be returning next season.

At the top of the order Jamie Walton provided the perfect foil to Arshad's whirlwind style and topped 500 runs at an average of just under 40. This included his first league ton which hopefully will be regularly repeated, especially if it continues to encourage his father to weigh out for the post game rehydration. There were also some solid contributions in the middle order from John Walter and Junaid Sarwar.

Behind the stumps Jack Kliber's keeping was safe and on occasions he contributed with the bat. It is doubtful if he received too many Christmas cards from umpires or opposition but his abrasive, competitive spirit can really keep the team going if things aren't going to plan.

Of the other bowling, 16 year old Matt Salisbury proved very consistent with the new ball, regularly taking an early wicket in his restricted spell and Scully made some inroads at the top of the order in the half season he was available. John Weber turned in an impressive 20 over spell at Harold Wood picking up 6-95, but the effort mangled his ageing right hand and he was unable to bowl for the rest of the season.

With quite a few one sided games a number of players went a few weeks without getting too involved, but generally everyone made a contribution at some point.

Second place was a fair result as we lost both games to the eventual winners and we head into the challenging looking Division One with a new skipper at the helm in John Walter. John has a big act to follow as long serving skipper and all round club legend Dave Wright steps down to concentrate on, er, nothing in particular. In his seven year stint as captain (longest successive spell in the clubs history, if you're asking), he oversaw two promotions and three relegations (mostly other peoples fault!) and whilst he initially led from the front taking plenty of wickets, he gradually over the years has taken a back seat role involving flipping the coin, hiding in the field, eating loads of tea and overseeing post game analysis in the bar.

Freed from the burden of skippering he no doubt will revert to terrorising opposing batsmen, probably in the 4th XI, but he would like to thank all those who have and have not supported him over the years.

Second Eleven

A really enjoyable first season in the Premier League for the 2nd XI. Continuing skipper Peter Rider's policy of trying to play attacking 'result' cricket the team eventually finished third in a competitive division.

The side benefited from a settled 1st XI and there were strong returns in both departments. The batting was consistent, if not spectacular, with all the top 5 scoring around 400 runs. Rob Wickes (549) and Tom Austin (460) led the way and there were centuries for Tom, the captain and Mike Maynard. The bowling was spearheaded by the impressive James Salisbury, who took 53 league wickets at 13.5, including 8-47 against Clayhall, as well as 4 other 5 wicket hauls (one of them for the 1st XI). Rob Wickes provided chief support with the ball, taking 22 wickets and the unfortunate shoulder injury that restricted last year's leading wicket taker James Kliber to a batting / general irritant role, meant there were chances for young spinners Joe Pratt and Ollie Bailey, both of whom look capable of progressing through the ranks.

In the field, Tom Austin was superb wherever he was stationed and Kliber took numerous decent snaffles.

Next year the team will miss Michael Maynard's cavalier batting, noisy and occasionally unpredictable glove work, not to mention some bizarre fashion statements as he leaves to spread the Louis Vuitton gospel to Australia.

The side will look to improve on the 2009 finish whilst the likes of Austin and Salisbury will be pushing hard for promotion to the first team.

Third Eleven

The 3rd XI looked forward to their second season in the Premier League with hope rather than expectation having learnt a lot from a season of promise in 2008. The season began with two 'winning' draws against Wanstead (Larry Tredget 115) and Gidea Park before a convincing win away to Upminster. The following weeks win at South Woodford was possibly the highlight of the season, a dramatic finish with 2 teams playing to win. We successfully chased 250 from a position of seemingly certain defeat. Hats off to Gumbo, Big Sticks and MB who all made huge contribution's in one of the 'Stiffs' most memorable victories.

Confidence in the side was higher than our overseas player at a gig and we followed up with a 280 chase at home to Hainault, Dave Edwards scoring a debut ton (119) in a partnership of 180 with skipper Sapsford (67). We then came up against our nemesis in local rivals Brentwood and once again we underperformed against them with the bat when chasing a realistic target. On the back of this disappointment we were asked to chase 320 at Woodford Wells. Dave Kay made a superb 85 and Sapsford 83* but it proved too big a task and the captain ran out of partners 20 runs short of the target.

In the second half of the season Joe Hedden continued to prove he was the most dangerous bowler in the league finishing with 52 wickets in 16 games, whilst being ably supported by Jimmy 'Jackson' Lyons who took 19. The bulk of the team was made up of a successful U-16 Matchplay squad and these boys were the heartbeat of a developing team. Elliot Joyner 293 runs at 29.3, Matt Simmons 287 at 24, Dave Kay 286 at 47.7 and James Borman who deserved more luck with the ball but proved he is a genuine all-rounder with some excellent batting displays, all made vital contributions. Far from a colt, Larry Tredget produced arguably the performance of the season against Gidea Park. At 1-2 we were in more than a spot of bother when Lozza came in at number 4. Although dropped 3 times he went on to make them pay with some destructive hitting in a superb knock of 205*. Lozza scored 344 runs for the 3s in 4 innings at an average of 114.

All of these excellent individual performances ensured we finished as runners-up to an excellent Chelmsford side in a very competitive league. A tremendous achievement for a club knocking about in Division 2, four years ago.

After 4 happy years in charge of the stiffs, skipper Garry Sapsford is passing on responsibilities and would like to thank everyone at the club who have helped make it a memorable era.

Fourth Eleven

With the depth of talent now available for selection making picking a team difficult, it was not an easy year to keep everyone happy. Hopefully this will be resolved for the 2010 season as the 4th XI will be entering the league for the first time, so the young talent at the club can be exposed early on to Saturday league cricket.

Under Luke Neal this year, the team went unbeaten in 7 friendlies. Highlights of the season were Jake Kavanagh's two centuries. Thanks to Shenfield School for the continuing use of their facilities and to the Neal family for organising everything from tea and transport, to a gazebo, to keep the sun off the regular poker school of Ives, Edwards and Cunnew.

Colts

The Colts section continues to go from strength to strength, with frequent recommendations actually leading to the need for a waiting list for some of the younger age groups as the club chose not to compromise coaching ratios for the sake of a few more subscriptions! However, this policy was vindicated as the boys progressed rapidly under new Head Coach Gareth Fisher, ably assisted by a swathe of level 2 coaches as well as level 1 coaching assistants available throughout each week. One of the biggest headaches in youth cricket continues to be the actions of some clubs, who commit to the district league age groups, who then singularly fail to fulfil their obligations for a variety of insignificant reasons. Our hope is that the authorities can encourage everyone to be more committed in 2010.

The numerous teams competed well in competitions at a range of age groups. The U16 side made it to the Matchplay Quarter finals for the second year running, but will feel they let themselves own with a half hearted showing in the knockout stage. The U15As competed well, as well as often providing players for senior sides and the U15Bs built themselves something of a reputation by not only playing their full allocation of league fixtures, but by also playing as many friendlies as possible involving all the boys in the age group, playing in exactly the right spirit. The U13As finished mid-table in the Peter Coe Cup and gave plenty of sides a run for their money in cup and league, whilst the U13Bs won their league with a 100% winning record. All the other sides gave a good account of themselves, with the U9s winning a triangular tournament involving local rivals. Pitch availability remains a pressing issue and the club hope that the local authority will feel able to support their request to help relieve this burden next season. The social support from everyone involved with the Colts remains a massive plus for the club, on match days, training nights and at functions. Long may it continue.

SNEL team and player statistics are available on the Play-Cricket website.