

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CRICKET UMPIRES & SCORERS**

### **COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT MARCH 2012.**

#### ***INTRODUCTION***

12 months ago the Annual Report suggested we had good reason to look forward to the 2011 season with confidence and optimism and by and large that has been the case as this report will testify.

The numbers of new officials attending training in 2011 were very encouraging and the challenge for your committee is to keep in touch with all these people as some of them are not yet prepared to officiate. It is of some concern that the numbers signed up for the umpire training this winter/spring are lower. Again, this presents a challenge for your committee and everyone else with an interest in increasing the number of officials.

Although the continuing efforts to improve appointing officials were not without some pitfalls, the committee feels that the use of "Who's The Umpire?" and more clarity in the principles underlying the progression of our officials are to be welcomed by our members. It is vital for the continued development and improvement that the communications between Les Clemenson, making premier panel appointments, and our own Les Stenner are good. The major concern is that for 2011 the recommendations of the Premier Panel were based almost exclusively on Captains' reports. This you will recall was a priority for last year and continues to be so. The actual format of the reports has been taken up too, but as yet there is no indication of any changes planned.

Of major concern to the leagues and the umpire associations nationally is the number of incidents of bad behaviour by players and indeed spectators and GACUS was not exempt from this. In 2011, 11 umpire reports were received, 4 regarding the County League, 6 From WEPL and 1 at the County Cup Final and two of these reports related to spectator behaviour. Of the other 9, 3 were about the abuse of opponents and spectators and 6 were regarding dissent to umpires' decisions. There was a lot of communication regarding this during the 2011 season and follow-up at our post-season meeting. WEPL are introducing new procedures, but whatever systems are in place, inappropriate player behaviour has to be effectively managed by the officials and the captains.

#### ***APPOINTMENTS – UMPIRES – Adult Cricket (Les Stenner) Youth and Schools Cricket (Andy Russell)***

Once again there was an increase in the number of fixtures to which both Andy Russell and Les Stenner attempted to appoint umpires. Appointments were displayed on the WTU website and our own GACUS website. It has been demonstrated that most of us are now able to operate the external website efficiently.

- Although we trained 30 umpires before the start of the 2011 season only about 10 made themselves available for appointment. Although the number trained was encouraging, the 'conversion' rate has been disappointing and a dramatic improvement in our numbers is not expected in the near future. The best we can hope for is to maintain the level as it is now with modest recruitment; this will compensate for those of us who will be retiring or taking on a smaller number of appointments.
- There were 514 weekend appointments (not including Premier 1 and Premier 2 matches). A handful of umpires covered 145 matches for the Cheltenham Indoor League during the winter.

- The GCCL continue to suffer the most due to this low number of independent umpires. We managed to fill 70% of their requirement which is on par with that achieved in the 2010 Season.
- GACUS appointments worked well; in most cases we received early notice from those who had to drop out of an appointment. Our 'customers' should have been well satisfied with the time and effort put in; several of them have expressed their gratitude.
- There were requests for 144 appointments in Youth and Schools matches in 2011, and we were able to fill 117 of those. County youth games were treated as priority and all these games had appointed umpires. Most of the unfilled appointments were for the new district youth competition, games played on Sundays throughout the season. It is pleasing to note that, where appointments were made to district games, there were some reports back from umpires that the games were a pleasure to umpire. But these fixtures will, no doubt, be difficult to man fully each year. Unsurprisingly, every mid-week appointment was fulfilled, and there were some umpires wishing they could have had more of these games. Whenever there was a last-minute gap, it got filled (midweek).
- Appointments to the school games on Saturdays posed the usual priority question. There are umpires who want to take school games in preference to league games and of course they can continue to do so, but men's League games are of higher priority. The problem will continue.
- There was the impression that the organisation behind county youth games was better than before, though still not as good as it ought to be – one or two requests at a day or so notice. There were almost inevitably a couple of "learning opportunities" at the district games, e.g. one game cancelled without telling the umpires, who had no idea who to contact. It would be best if more information about contacts gets on to WTU website, so everyone can be clear.

### **APPOINTMENTS – SCORERS (Linda Collinson)**

#### *Youth and Ladies scoring appointments for summer 2011*

Overall scorer appointments were made for 24 out of 50 home games (48%) covering both north and south Gloucestershire. Officially appointments in south Gloucestershire are the responsibility of BWCACUS.

Boys: 13 out of 33 (39%)

Girls & Ladies 11 out of 17 (65%)

Also a number of away games were appointed to.

It was possible to appoint some scorers to all (or the majority of) games in a particular age group. This was the case for the U17 and U12 boys and the U17 and U15 girls.

#### *Indoor sixes scoring appointments winter 2011/2012*

Scorers have been appointed to all indoor sixes. Geoff Trett, George Yiend, Sue Drinkwater and Mike Turner score on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening respectively. This is greatly appreciated by all the teams involved.

#### *Youth and Ladies scoring appointments for summer 2012*

A request has been made for scorers to be allocated to each age group. The benefits for the U17 and U12 boys and the U17 and U15 girls in 2011 have obviously been noted.

This will be difficult to fulfil for all age groups unless we can find interested parents or retired scorers as many youth games take place in the middle of the week. Some scorers like to score at one or two games a season; other scorers also have umpiring duties. Historically it has only been possible to appoint to approximately 50% of the games played.

It is likely that responsibility for scorer appointments for youth and ladies games played in South Gloucestershire will move from BWCACUS to GACUS. Scorers registered with BWCACUS will be approached by the GACUS Scorers Officer for their availability in 2012.

### ***TRAINING – UMPIRES (Bill Griffin)***

Of the 30 candidates who attended the two level 1 umpire courses in the spring of last year, 27 passed the ECBACO exam, including 4 after a retake. 10 newly trained umpires stood in league cricket during the 2011 season.

Four of our umpires secured their Edexcel BTEC level 2 and four were awarded their ECBACO level 2 during the last year.

We ran a two-evening introductory course for the GCCL just prior to the start of the 2011-playing season.

This year, we have completed an umpire level 1 course where only 3 attended and are due to run a second course over the next two Sundays. 13 have registered for this course. We have also just completed the class-based part of an ECBACO level 1A course where 7 of our umpires attended. The latter part of this training is ongoing through this coming season.

We are also scheduled to run two introductory courses for the Cotswold District CA in April.

Bill is pleased to advise that Peter Sawyer and Martin Adams have joined our tutor team to bring the number of umpire trainers up to 6. Additionally, we have acquired or had made a number of supporting training aids courtesy of Martin's endeavours.

We are sure all GACUS members would like to join Bill in thanking our tutors for their splendid efforts in developing the skills of our new recruits.

Bill's well-deserved appointment to the County Club's Executive will take up more of his time and he is standing down from this role, although luckily for us he will still be involved as our lead tutor on the courses. No praise for Bill's work here can be too high and he has the gratitude of all of us for his contribution to training new umpires.

### ***TRAINING – SCORERS (Sue Drinkwater)***

The ECBACO have re-vamped their scorer courses this year to bring the Scorer's Pathway very much in line with that of the umpires and we seem to have attracted reasonable numbers for our courses.

We ran a very successful Introductory Course at Deer Park School Cirencester in early February for 9 new scorers. Another Introductory course is planned for the end of March at Cheltenham CC with 5 people currently booked onto it.

3 of the Introductory delegates came back and joined another 7 delegates, making 10 for the Level 1 Scorer's course in Cheltenham that started at the end of February and will conclude in early mid-March. The ECBACO produced a scorer's training pack for the first time this year, which consists of a score bag containing all the training materials and has been very well received by all Level 1 candidates

5 of last year's Level 1 candidates have expressed an interest in progressing to Level 1A but we are awaiting the materials from ECBACO to be able to run this.

**UMPIRE GRADING (Bill Griffin)**

Umpires' performances have been monitored throughout the last season in support of the ECBACO grading system. Generally, the overall standard has been pleasingly good with some displaying an exceptionally high ability. Thanks must be extended to those who acted as boundary-edge observers and particularly Ron Bomberg and Geoff Clarke who each carried out a significant number. Weather, illness and injury curtailed the total number intended but we still managed 57 assessments. GACO have sent out grading letters to all ACO members.

This year, performance evaluation is due to be extended to use mentors and colleague assessors as well as boundary edge observers. Members identified to fulfil these roles have been contacted and an ECBACO training session is scheduled for this month.

**WEBMASTER (Sue Drinkwater)**

Despite the launch of the WTU website, the GACU&S website achieved a record number of visitors with just over 11,000 and we have just received our 50,000<sup>th</sup> visitor since the site was launched six years ago.

Sue was very grateful to Chris Germaine for sending her regular photographs from umpires in youth games throughout the 2011. If anyone else can help with this in 2012, it would be much appreciated.

**WEPL and WEPL PANEL (Len Attard and John Harper)**

At the end of 2011 season, WEPL sought guidance from GACO in reviewing its regulations and with some input from several sources in GACUS not only are there several changes for 2012, but these should be simplified for officials.

In 2012, all matches in all 4 tiers will start at 1pm and will be of 50 overs each side. There will be no carry-over of additional overs. Bowlers are limited to 20% of the number of overs (i.e. 10).

League positions will be decided by aggregate rather than average points.

In 2012 all deliveries passing outside the legs of the striker and outside leg stump will be called wide (as in 2010).

There are some additional regulations for Premier 1 and 2 matches in relation to power plays and free hits after a front foot no ball.

The new disciplinary regulations will be sent to all officials before the season.

For 2012, the WEPL Panel is being reduced to 32 now split into two separate groups for Premier 1 and Premier 2 to enable those umpires to have more match appointments. In addition for 2012, each Association, including GACUS were invited to nominate officials at Level 3\* for a Development Group of umpires to prepare future panellists. These umpires will be allocated to matches outside their region at Level 3 by Les Clemenson to prepare them, if performance warrants it, for the Premier Panel. As with the premier Panel, The development Group are required to give availability for a minimum of 12 Saturdays and be prepared to travel in a 50 mile radius. GACUS members will not be expected to travel to Somerset and vice-versa. Development Group umpires would normally be expected to progress to the Premier Panel after 2 years. This group also provides an opportunity for those coming off the Premier Panel to move back.

Fees for Prem. 1 & 2 to be £40 and Levels 3 & 4 £35 for 2012 but we are awaiting confirmation.

***GACO (John Harper)***

Unlike in most of the other counties, in Gloucestershire, GACO acts as a conduit for the local associations with regard to ACO matters.

The committee meets quarterly receiving updates from ACO and GCB, monitors recruitment and training as delivered by the two local Associations for both umpires and scorers. GACO also delegates the making of appointments to the local Associations. After last season's pilot, the ECB are now actively recommending the use of "WTU" for all appointments. WEPL will continue using it as will the ECB for all its competitions. GACO will use it for all County Youth matches and it will be made available to other competitions.

Membership has risen to 156 full members + 15 associates and juniors. CRB clearance remains unchanged and it is the responsibility of each individual official to ensure his or her own Clearance Certificate is renewed promptly. Without clearance, no appointments will be given.

In February, all umpire members (except grades 6) were advised of their grading for this coming 2012 season. These were evidentially based on the level of matches in which umpires stood in 2011. The two local Associations also had input. In future, it is planned to have an assessment and mentoring system up and running to support and develop all members in achieving their umpiring aspirations. The GACO Performance Officer is currently planning appropriate training for a group of Assessors and Mentors.

Geoff Trett, not only as GACO Scorers' Representative, but also as the National Scorers' Officer has produced an 'Action Plan' and is working hard to raise the profile of Scorers within recreational cricket as well as the ACO. He is also looking at the introduction of assessing and mentoring of scorers.

At the end of last season a dialogue with the Sydney Umpires Association commenced with a view to an exchange of umpires. Some expressions of interest were made and perhaps one or two may be able to extend their experience during our winter/their summer of 2012/2013. Additionally, volunteers to provide accommodation will be sought when a Sydney Umpire visits Gloucestershire.

***PUBLICITY (Andy Russell)***

One task of the publicity officer is to publish "Not Out". Jim Downes was assiduous in this task and achieved 3 or even 4 issues every year. Andy's first issue came out more or less on time – it had quite a change of style and there were some favourable comments (and none that were unfavourable!). But Jim would have published something in November or December. Andy felt that as he had so little material at that stage that he should hold back, so the March 2012 issue is only the second. Andy feels he doesn't have the background and long memory that Jim has – that may be a disadvantage.

However, Andy has taken a look at other aspects of publicity. Elsewhere it has been reported on the low conversion rate between those taking training and those standing on Saturdays. So behind the scenes the committee has been trying to check its contacts with candidates during training and after. Wearing two hats, Andy was responsible for a considerable push on publicity in the County League. The campaign was notable for (a) a picture of an umpire (John Wilkes) obviously enjoying himself and (b) an upbeat message (e.g. "you actually get paid for doing this ..."). But we can't point to any success at all yet – maybe some seeds sown?

***CONCLUSION***

Officials in all sports do not set out to seek attention nor glory, yet it is still extremely rewarding when the hard work is recognised. Several GACUS members were identified by the GCB in the last year and were nominated for awards. Colleagues will also have seen that Geoff Trett was in the final three for the ECB OSCA at Lords.

It demonstrates how fortunate we are in Gloucestershire to have such high quality officials both on the field, in the scoreboard and indeed at the boundary edge and in the training room.

Finally, a tribute is due to our retiring treasurer, John Harper. John took on this role 17 years ago and has quietly and effectively ensured we are in the healthy financial state you see today. Apart from his status as one of our leading umpires, John also is the secretary of GACO and seems to sit on many committees and panels. His contributions to these are always valued and go way beyond his role as our treasurer. He deserves all our thanks and praise and, although one less role might appear to ease his workload, John's commitment to GACO and other duties suggest he will still have a lot to keep him busy on our behalf!

A discussion at the GACO AGM regarding its aims and purposes might hopefully bring forward some progress in the whole issue of communicating with officials in our county. Your committee is committed to strengthening our role within the whole county through GACO.

It has been a good year for GACUS and we are sure members recognise the hard work that goes in to make everything happen. But as the report shows, no one on the committee is complacent in ensuring we continue to progress and improve our services to our members and to cricket in Gloucestershire.

March 2012.