

The 2004 season: First team

The 2004 season, which promised so much, will end up being defined by two below par performances. When August started, the first team was fourth: not by accident either. We had played cricket to a plan: to score 12 points a game, and it had worked. However, in every season, all but the most exceptional teams have a bad run. Unfortunately, ours was a nightmare; the last three games yielded only 7 points, when 26 would have kept us up.

If asked where it started going wrong, I would have to point to the Warrington game: an attempt to field a push to mid-wicket resulted in Neil Ogden tearing ligaments in his ankle, ending his season there and then. This robbed us of the solid foundation that Neil always provided. No team can afford to lose a player of Neil's influence, ours least of all. We never really recovered, as the batting performances in the last three games showed.

In spite of being relegated, there was much about 2004 that was good. Johnny Birchall alternatively thrilled us and caused us despair. There is no finer player when he's on song and going. It has been a pleasure to watch him [most of the time] and there will, I am sure, come a time when he decides that fifty is not enough. I hope he is still playing at Brooklands when this happens. He also found time to break the league record for bowling. He was the division's top all rounder. Well done John!

Well done also to Mike Stephens who stepped up and performed when it mattered.

I also enjoyed watching the development of some of the younger players. They never gave anything less than their best and it is a pity that they were not rewarded for this. Matty Guy came from nowhere to take the new ball and performed creditably. He had the unenviable task of learning to bowl at this level by bowling at the league's best batsman. PG did as he does best: threw himself around in the field and bowled some really good spells, giving us control when we needed it. Danny Halkon put together a few useful knocks and showed what we can look forward in the years ahead. Dave Bolton....well he was just Dave Bolton, oozing confidence; he can see the positive side of bowling a wide....it's all part of a plan! And I have no doubt that Dave Madden will start putting together big scores for us soon. While they can be proud of what they have achieved, they all know they have work to do this winter. I am sure they will return better players: First team players. It's been a pleasure to play cricket with them and I hope they enjoyed the experience too.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for supporting me as they did. In 2004 we embarked upon a rebuilding process, which, although it was forced upon us, was something we would have had to do anyway. This required junior members to step up several levels, with a fast learning curve. Did we ask too much of them? While the eventual ending to the season seems to indicate that we might have done, it is worth remembering when August arrived we were fourth and the juniors played their full part in getting us there.

The one negative for this season has been the state of the pitches we have had to play on at home. If we are to succeed as a club, they have to be improved.

Let us hope that we can build on the positives next year and bounce straight back.

1st team averages

	played	innings	no	hs	runs	average	100/50
Maitra	16	15	7	59*	304	38.0	0/2
Ogden	16	16	2	70	523	37.4	0/5
Birchall	19	19	1	118*	612	34.0	1/5
Stephens	8	8	0	66	211	26.4	0/2
Madden	11	11	1	35	159	15.9	0/0

* denotes not out

	Overs	maidens	runs	wickets	average	best
Birchall	209.4	32	673	44	15.3	10-41*
Bolton	85	14	338	13	26	4-59
Guy	121	27	415	14	29.6	2-23
Garnett	140.1	17	517	17	30.4	3-25
Edwards	163	34	599	15	39.9	3-55

* league record

A MAITRA
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