

Devon Colts and Under 18s Report
Exec Meeting 27-01-20

Last season I took on the Colts and spent the year getting to know them as players. My expectations were not high. This season I have seen them bond better and play better as a unit. Their knowledge of the game and respect for those they are playing with and against has improved since I took over. Of course, we still have some Prima Donnas who seek glory when not entirely needed. So next season we are looking to see how far they have really moved on. There are four games left to play this season and so far the team have won more games than they have lost. Most recently yesterday with a very good win over Somerset. Again, I want to thank the members of the committee who continue to turn up to the Colts games and support not only the team but Diane and myself.

Our only issue really is still that of finance. I remember last year, asking you all to discuss this with your clubs and trying to come to a realistic charge for these young players who we are trying to encourage carrying this game forward into the future. There is such a difference from not charging the youngsters to play or for food and encouraging them by making donations for them, to charging between £3.50 and £7.00. This is not just a problem within this county, speaking to Somerset and Dorset, they have a system in place where they reimburse parents for getting the players to games. We are lucky if we even offer them a sandwich or drink in some of our clubs. It would be good if we had a blanket fee for the Colts at all the venues. Even better if when there are members of the Committee and the managers of the opposing counties in attendance, that we show them hospitality and are able to offer them refreshments. No names mentioned but recently we have been embarrassed when team players have been offered tea but officials have been left looking at each other! Even more embarrassing at one venue was when Diane went to take some left over sandwiches to offer to the members of the Executive Committee who were supporting the team and she was asked to pay for what she took to them. When we visit Somerset and Dorset we are always offered refreshments of our own without any charge.

We are after all trying to encourage this team to start wearing the Devon jackets. When you consider these players are mostly still at school or college and rely on family to pay their expenses and in some cases there are more than one player from a family, it is very expensive. I would like to say that following the kind donation from a member of the committee at the start of the season and a generous donation from one of the clubs, two of our players have been provided with a Devon jacket each and their families have only had to pay out for 1 other. Eventually we will be expecting all our players to wear a jacket at our games. So we can arrive and leave like a proper team.

Both Diane and I have been looking for a sponsor to cover some of these costs but as yet we have not had much success. If any of you know a rich business person or a company that may be willing to sponsor the team, please see Diane and I after this meeting.

The Under 18s Two Rinks Triples competition was a bit of a disaster this year. From the EIBA planning to our playing. It started off well with a great win against Wiltshire, this was followed by a 1 point loss to Dorset. The worst performance of the season was by far the one against Somerset. This followed a trip to Wiltshire, followed by another drive from one venue to another about 2 hours away! By the time we got to the venue our players had already had enough and wanted to go home. This showed in the heavy loss that followed. Both Somerset and Devon have reported the shambles to the EIBA and following our report Wiltshire have withdrawn from the competition completely. And by the way, we were charged £8 per player that day too, so it is not just Devon clubs that think our players are rich!

We would like more players next season to come in to the Colts programme. So if you know of any young players under 25 who have not played for the county yet, it would be great to invite them along to the Trials in October. We currently have 25 on record and yet, we usually have the same reliable 16 playing week in and week out, so in future it would be great to be able to rotate the players so they are not having to travel so far all the time and can cut costs of playing! Some games this year we have not even had the luxury of having reserves to fall back on.

Thanks again for the support and let's hope that in the next season we are even stronger than we are this year.

Nick Oliver
Joint Manager
Devon Colts and Under 18s