

70s 2nd XI – Annual Report 2025

The inaugural season for the team had been intended to be within a "Monday Friendly" league, but regrettably, this didn't come to fruition.

Consequently, Len Attard and I spent a lengthy period trying to organise fixtures against relatively local opposition, eventually managing to secure six fixtures, which we felt was enough to start up the fledgling group.

As we were playing friendlies, we advised our opposition teams that there was a possibility that we may need to involve "under age" players to ensure a full team initially - all were happy to play us, on the basis that they "will probably do the same!".

Our first game against Hertfordshire (who, according to some reports, are the second strongest 70+ squad in the country), inevitably saw us turn out with only 10 players due to injury or last minute call-ups to other teams, so not a great start! Having invited Herts to bat first, they battled to 126-8 off 40 overs, with Geoff Eaves (first - and only - appearance before promotion to the 1st XI) returning 3-11 from 8, and Ken Whitmore 4-34 from 8 doing most of the damage, supported by Mike Heath, Alan Thomas, Len and myself returning miserly figures. With a reasonable target in sight, naturally a rain interruption saw our innings reduced to 34 overs, but according to the umpires, no reduction in the total required ??? No matter, Tom Parsons 57*, Richard Woolley 28 and Len 17* saw us to 127-3 in the 28th over, to give us a 6-wicket win in our first game.

Game two, our second at Stowell Park, saw us host Buckinghamshire, and we were actually going in with 12 players - albeit with a couple of "youth" members. Having been inserted, our intention to adopt the 70's rotation policy was dealt a severe blow when Len had to retire hurt after the first over. The early loss of Parsons and Woolley left us at 18-2 in the 11th, but this only served to bring together Alec "Robbo" Robinson and new boy Michael Pickard. These two combined to put on a 150 run partnership before Robbo (47) departed in the 36th over, followed by Mike (102* - retired). A few more runs and a couple of wickets took us to 191-5 at the close of innings. The Bucks reply, aided by 19 wides and 4 no-balls, was effectively hindered by opener Francis Braganza taking 33 overs to accumulate 43 runs before being dismissed by Phil "Golden Arm" Dickenson (2-30 off 6). Tight spells by Andy Howe (0-14 from 8) and Tim Cull (0-12 from 6) put the squeeze on, and despite a late flurry of runs, the visitors just fell short at 168-3.

Our third match took us to the picturesque setting of Birlingham CC to take on The Fossils (Worcestershire select). Much to my surprise, I discovered that our opposition included three Gloucestershire Seniors members - Mike Morrissey, Tim Cull and Dick Tugwell. With the toss mysteriously delayed by a few minutes - just enough time for the groundsman to lock his shed and disappear - home skipper Martin Woodward apologised for the lack of a fielding circle before suggesting that we "retire" batters at 40 to "give everybody a game". The home team batted first, with Dave Sayple (43 ret), Liz Dean (40 ret) and Tim Cull (our 60's opening bowler, batting at 4!) with 37 before becoming Whitmore's second wicket, taking the Fossils to 177-3, Andy Howe the only other wicket taker. One notable incident during the innings occurred when our umpire appealed for an LBW, only to then turn it down!! Needing around 4.5 an over, our reply got off to a reasonable start before Bob

Draycott (6) was bowled, followed by Robbo the very next ball to leave us on 21-2 from 6, with opener Len having to steady the ship, with only the bowlers to bat around him. Despite his best efforts, Len (29) departed in the 22nd over with the score 71-5 leaving us to get another 107 in 18 overs. Howe (16), Murray (40 ret), Heath (16) and Dickenson (13*) got us close, but we ran out of overs at 164-8.

Match 4 saw the return fixture with Herts at Abbots Langley CC. At the toss (lost again!), the home skipper declined the option of "retiring" batters as he "didn't have many", therefore we could bat first. Openers Len and Bob D briskly put on 35 for the first wicket, Len (16) the first to fall, with Bob (24) next to go at 53 in the 16th over. The pairing of Dave Collinson and Robbo doubled the score in 8 overs before Colly (33) fell. Robbo and "youth" player Jon Peck added 46 between them in quick time before Peck (22) was bowled. Mike Heath, trying to push the score - and Robbo! - along, was stumped for 12 at the end of the 37th with the score on 171, leaving Robbo (58*) and Murray (21*) to add 30 in 3 overs to finish on 201 for 5. The home teams reply was dominated by Dileep Patel who batted through to the last over for 97, after his opening partner Sheldon went for a duck in the third. Number 3 Doyle (58) and Patel put on 158 for the second wicket, but Doyle's dismissal at 167-2 in the 35th over stemmed the flow. three wickets and 29 runs off the last five saw Herts pull up short at 196-5, close but another win for Glos.

Back on home soil at Chalford CC for the visit by Wales for our fifth game, and finally a winning toss! Batting first, and having agreed to "retirements", we got off to a poor start, Robbo (6) falling to a sharp catch, and last-minute replacement (and "youth" player) Pete Bovey stumped for a duck, it was left to Colly and Peter Storey to try and repair the damage. Pete (17) was next to go at 38-3 in the 12th. Colly and Andy Howe both retired at 40 before Mike Heath (9) was the next official wicket to fall with the score now 126-4 from 29. Partnerships involving Murray (15), Tony Garton (30*), Ian Bentley (9), Ken Whitmore (13) and Terry Smith (9*) took us to a closing 201-7. A sumptuous tea provided by Kath Bovey set us up for the Welsh reply, which got off to a faltering start, with former Glos (and Frampton on Severn) player Tim Francis (1) LBW to Whitmore, Edwards (4) and Cook (4) also falling to Ken, and Hall (14, retired hurt) leaving Wales reeling at 24-3 from 13 overs. Hewitt (42 ret) knuckled down to try a salvage the situation, but a couple of cheap wickets and another enforced retirement allied to some tight bowling - Whitmore 3-12 (8), Howe 0-10 (7), Heath 0-4 (4), Bovey 0-17 (6), Storey 1-24 (5) and Bentley 1-14 (2) left Wales on 119-5 from their 40.

Our "final" game was also scheduled at Chalford against neighbours Somerset, but early weather forecasts and radar predictions left little doubt that no meaningful cricket would be played, so regrettably we decided to call it off, bringing, as we thought then, our season to a close. Luckily, with Len as 60's Competition Organizer, we had two 60's Finals at Stroud soon after which involved Wales, Cornwall, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. As I was standing as a neutral Umpire for the Wales v Cornwall game, Len and I were approached by John Williams from Wilts with the offer of a game at Swindon, which we naturally accepted - even though it was short notice, so a team was hastily put together even if it did have to include some "ringers" from the 1st team - but Wilts expected to do the same!

And so to Swindon County Ground on a grey, overcast and none too warm day, after the toss (another win!) and optional retirements agreed, I sent our top three run-out specialists to pad up (Robbo, Tom P and Peter Adams) and start our innings. With Robbo (11) bowled by one "that did a lot" (straight!), Tom and "Grizzly" Adams put on 114 between them before retiring - Tom on 60 and Pete on 50 - and the total 131-1. Not wishing to let up on the bowling, Roger Beese and Keith Daniels were unleashed, Danny (47) the next to go, closely followed by Fred Bayliss (4), the score now 209-3. Roger (37 ret), Murray (31 ret), Mike Heath (18) meant that at 40 overs we had reached 282-6. Another enjoyable tea had been provided by our hosts, so suitably refreshed we set out to defend our total. Unfortunately for Wiltshire, the accuracy of Ken Whitmore and Ian Bentley proved to be too much, and combined with an injury, they were reduced to 89-5 just after drinks. Number 3 Capps (55) retired himself voluntarily (but should have carried on, despite it already being a lost cause), A flourish in the last couple of overs by Clinning (13*) and Eustace (8*) took them to 136-7, to give us a convincing win, with Ken 1-31 (8), Ian 1-18 (8), Mike 2-26 (8) and Murray 2-11 (8).

In summary then, played 6, won 5 lost 1 and 1 cancelled - not a bad return for a new group of 70's with the odd 50 and 60 year olds thrown in.

I said at the start of the season that my intention was to give, when possible, meaningful cricket to all players and to give them the opportunity to contribute in all games, even if it meant that some individuals may have found them outside of their "comfort zone". I believe that this has happened, has worked, and may be the way forward in future friendly fixtures, but I would not expect to continue the practice in a league or competition format.

Finally, I must take this opportunity to recognise a number of individuals for their efforts, help and support:-

Len for organizing many of the fixtures and Umpires - without you we wouldn't have even got off the ground;

Tony Goodall (Stowell Park) and Pete Bovey (Chalford) for providing grounds and pitches to play on;

Kath Bovey for the tea at Chalford - superb!;

Roger Beese and Tom Parsons in providing players, often at short notice, without which we may have had fewer opportunities to play;

Ian Wright (GACO) for managing to appoint some Umpires;

Paul "Sicknote" Tucker, Bill Church and Ernie Allen for volunteering to Umpire some of our games when no other officials were available;

Last, but not least, Rose Jackson for scoring all of our games, often in unfavourable conditions!

My grateful thanks to you all.

Bob Murray
70s 2nd XI Captain.