



2019 ESCA AGM - President's Report

Date
19th November 2019

Given conversations I have had since April, I'm guessing 2019 will probably be mostly remembered for the weather and perhaps less so the cricket played. Ok, so maybe more memorable for the winners of their respective leagues. Congratulations to all the individual league winners and individual performers and commiserations to Edinburgh CC in their EPL playoff. Congratulations to the new teams from last year and in particular, Bass Rock, who were a welcome addition to the league.

Well done to Heriots in winning the Masterton and Morton for winning the 2nd Braw Skelp by just 1 run. Thank you to both the Masterton Committee and Senthil for their efforts in administrating the competitions.

A huge and continued thanks goes to our sponsors at Baillie Gifford, Felsham PD, Readers and Murgitroyd for their support. This is hugely appreciated and is absolutely vital to the development, growth and playing of grassroots Cricket in the region.

The leagues for 2020 are not fully set as there are some clubs undergoing restructure and indeed some who will be looking to play their cricket under a different cricket association. It is great to see the reincarnation of Fauldhouse, in a joint venture with Livingston. We will be looking to sort fixtures towards the end of 2019 and ask that clubs confirm any challenges they have with grounds as soon as possible.

Given the weather, it is not easy to have a full picture of growth or otherwise of the game this year, but my perception is that we do still have a general decline, in part offset by new found enthusiasm from those engaged by super overs. The teams suffering my limited talents of nurdling around will be relieved to know that we will not be experimenting with games being won by most boundaries...

There were 26 games scratched in the leagues this year and perhaps some disguised by weather. There were 13 in the development league and some very definitely disguised by the weather.

What I would be interested in is knowing how many people and therefore games were scratched due to players losing enthusiasm or made to do other tasks by their other halves once they had gotten used to having them around...

However one alarming increasing trend seems to be people voting with their feet and finding better things to do on a Saturday than having to be subjected to members of the opposition' behaviour. We should not forget the fact that we are largely amateur cricketers in the East and a win at all costs mentality is not a route we should be going down. This, along with other negative behaviours, has generally been reflected in the fair play scores. I will also be

interested to see the outcome of the CS disciplinary survey; a shame that more clubs and individuals did not respond.

I sat here in March giving clubs a warning that we would be looking at this in the close season and that my more draconian stance was only able to be tempered for so long. As such we are going to review how we use fair play scores to inform disciplinary outcomes for clubs to review in February.

It is not just players who are in reducing numbers, but volunteers. It is true that some of this is simply because of the draw on spare time and differing things competing for it. Volunteers are far choosier about how they chose to spend what time they have and it is unsurprising when they decided certain aspects are too much effort for the hassle caused and poor value for life.

We have seen a lot of instances this year where individuals, clubs and indeed governing bodies have added to the workload unnecessarily. I like to think the best of people, but it's hard not to let frustration creep in with some of the spurious complaints and matters that frankly should have been sorted out by two captains at the time. The amount of 'he said, she said' is all a drain on time, is wearing, and is an unwelcome distraction from getting on with the positives, such as developing the game.

There were two good articles shared by Paul Reddish and David Gibson recently discussing such matters and why we are losing volunteers around the game. The articles noted some of the reasons I've just mentioned, but they also note that some blame may lie with associations, administrators and added bureaucracy. For ESCA, we acknowledge we don't always have the answers but, contrary to some people's beliefs, we do generally have good reason for the decisions we make. We also acknowledge there are times where we need to learn from lessons and, as such, we will be looking at rules and processes such as competitions appeals, to better improve communication and transparency. We will also probably look at the infamous drinks break. Whilst we do this, we ask for support from the clubs and players in thinking twice and ask that decisions are broadly respected, only appealing whether there is a fundamental issue with process, rather than automatically appealing a decision as seems to have been majority case this year.

I have looked to reshape the ESCA committee to make better use of the time we do have. We've looked to better share out the workload so we can focus on the positives, such as game development, club engagement, improved communications or looking at funding new projects in the east. David will talk about some of the positive things that are being discussed in the development sub-committee, which is gaining some traction thanks to David's hard work, and input from Nic Wilson, James Carr and George Munsey. Growing the junior game is a critical part of this to ensure we have sustainable foundations for the future. We are also looking at setting up a new social midweek format as there seems to be a desire to play some lighter hearted cricket.

I'd like to thank the team of committee and sub-committee members, and advisors that have helped over the last 12 months. This includes support from Neil, Clive and the umpires at

ESCOA, Chris and Bruce as South of Scotland reps, Nic Wilson and the Masterton Committee. I'd also like to thank David Gibson and Phil Yelland in particular for supporting me this year.

However, our job has been made more difficult as we lost 3 valuable members of the committee and sub-committees this year in Paul Bailey, Kevin Gallagher and Ian Barnes and I would like to put on record our thanks to them. I add additional thanks to Paul for leading the Comps sub-committee this year and for being a sounding board and shepherding us through organisation of the 2020 fixtures.

Assuming all things go as planned tonight, we will welcome Ramsay Allan to the committee as the new Competitions sub-committee lead for 2020; a welcome appointment. Please don't think that the current list of committee members is enough though. We do need some more support on the sub-committees, including some new divisional reps and support with social media. We also need a rethink of the dinner given its cancellation this year. All offers of help welcome.

There are a lot of positives to take into 2020 but there is a lot of hard work required to overcome challenges and to make our game fit for the future. As has been said in previous years, it is vital that we all work together and help each other to make life less onerous. We must focus on improving standards of behaviour and sportsmanship to ensure engagement in the game follows an upward trend.

Neil Granger
ESCA President