



# **CHRISTCHURCH JUNIOR CRICKET ASSOCIATION**

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27 June 2024

The 2023/24 season saw the massive loss of Derek Cockburn our patron. Derek had been unwell for a number of years but his contribution to the CJCA will unlikely be challenged. The Association acknowledges Dereks passing and will in his memory continue to strive in the best interests of the boys and girls of Christchurch to deliver Junior Cricket to the best of our collective abilities.



The CJCA remains one of the largest deliverers of junior sport in Christchurch despite a reduction in playing numbers both on Saturday and in our Festivals. Cost of living pressures may have had an impact in 2023/24 as families adjusted to some of the challenges facing many households.

Despite this every Saturday nearly 200 teams experienced an almost total unaffected weather season of 15 weeks of play. The season saw the introduction of a new grade for the CJCA, the first for a number of years.

The Mini Mags Girls grade was established in order to provide a “Girls only” grade for those younger than the existing offerings in the Girls space which start with the Junior Girls Year 5/6 grade. The CJCA was aware of many girls playing either in Girls teams in Mixed grades or being included in blended teams in either Kiwi (Year 1/2), or Year 3 or 4 grades.

The initial brief of the grade was to provide an entry point younger in the Female Pathway which meant some of the positives of Girls only grades were able to be experienced earlier in a female athletes “Career”. The grade started with 5 teams from 4 clubs and provided Girls an opportunity to play with and against Girls who were taking on a sport that had a different social dynamic to other sports and also has quite technical aspects.



The environment witnessed in “Mini Mags” was one in which all the participants in the match had a shared desire to improve, hang out with their friends and meet similarly like-minded girls also seeking to participate in sport which is heavily dominated by male participants. These girls being able to watch lots of both Domestic and International Women’s Cricket on free-to-air television and be part of the game even at an entry level will hopefully see more girls and teams keen to enter in future seasons. The CICA thanks all the Clubs who engaged with the new grade and also the teams from the Year 3 grade who took up the opportunity to play the bye team when that grade also had a bye so that 16 players still got a chance to play on a Saturday.

It was pleasing to see that many Clubs continued to develop their Smash Play Programmes that can immediately start the development of the skills and values that the Cricket network wishes to make available to those initially attracted to the sport.

The introduction of the Game Development Officers in Christchurch aims to assist clubs to improve the delivery of such programmes so that those new to the sport gain, in a fun environment, the skills to, (as soon as ready) be ready to start to play as part of teams at the appropriate part of the Boys or Girls pathways that exist.

Under the guidance of Rebecca Gillett - Abigale Gerken, Dylan Smith and Gabriella De Latour have been aligned with a cluster of clubs that they were tasked to get to know and develop a bespoke support plan to address the needs of each Club or School. As collective this group can also deliver en masse when required and also drive initiatives of Canterbury Cricket such as All Abilities Cricket or specific development with Ethnic Communities that we wish to see involved as much as possible with our sport.

It was certainly a baptism of fire for the GDO's and over the winter months of 2024 more planning and understanding of Clubs is being developed so that this vital asset can have an impact as we get into the crucial Term 3 when children are encouraged to indicate a summer sport that might excite them. Having Clubs able to accept players into Programmes such as Smash Play or straight into teams is vital and the initial experience of new parent with a new Club and a new Sport can be daunting one. With the GDO's, staff of the CJCA and the wonderful volunteer committees that underpin Cricket in Christchurch we aim to build a network that keeps Cricket as a preferred sport for many each Summer.

Assisting Rob Wilkinson with the Operational activities since 2020 has been Cat Quinn who undertakes a number of portfolios including Girls Convenor. Cat's role provides some more specific focus on tasks of the CJCA of which there are many. Rob Wilkinson continues in his role of General Manager of the CJCA, a position he has held since 2016. Rob values the support of the Christchurch Metro team of Mike Harvey, Tim Murdoch and Keryn Ambler, Canterbury Cricket community team and the community arm of New Zealand Cricket.

### **Saturday Cricket**

The cornerstone of the CJCA's activities remains Saturday Cricket and for 15 weeks of the Summer many Parks and Schools are full of junior cricketers all experiencing the most important cricket – their cricket.

The CJCA aims to facilitate an environment based on its core values - Fun, Participation, Opportunity & Respect. Adults involved in junior cricket have a vital role to model these values and disappointingly the 2023/24 season did see a spike in behaviours that fell short of the standards that are definitely the norm. As such the CJCA undertook a review of the Grade Conditions and Rules related to the games that are being played as “grey areas” often were the cause of unnecessary angst between adults which unfortunately had to be witnessed by others and most importantly the participants whose sport it is – the children.

Clubs and Schools will be asked to ensure that they are mindful of the behaviours of their adults to reflect their own expectations. The CJCA remains committed to dealing with behaviours contrary to the values of the Association and is reviewing its current judicial processes to put the experience of the participant to the forefront of our focus.

The Association thanks all the hundreds of volunteers who help get teams to their games each week, the vibe around the vast majority of games played is great and especially valued after the restrictions that were experienced by many over the “Covid years” – Covid remains a presence in our society and as such we remain vigilant that basic precautions and responses to outbreaks at whatever level are appropriate. At a Club and School level there remains those core people going the extra mile by contributing to Committees or filling specific roles for Clubs we thank you and hope you continue to see your efforts as being greatly valued by the wider Cricket Network.

PlayHQ showed glimpses of improvement over the last season with clubs and schools reporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> season of registration and improvement in the reporting functionality made a difference for administrators. Off season developments have been focused on embedding the improvements and engagement with the Scoring Platform and it hoped that especially in Hardball grades that the majority of games can be E-scored given the benefits of having these statistics going straight into both competition and player statistic platforms.

Grounds remain a challenge as we remain incredibly indebted to many Schools for access to their fields – we especially thank those schools able to mow their outfields in a cricket friendly manner and we remain committed to supplementing school mowing to provide grounds especially in the first 4 weeks of the season which are always challenging.

We thank John Furlong at the Christchurch City Council for being our contact and his help in understanding where our needs are in terms of maintaining existing grounds, promoting the need for new facilities in growth areas and the possibility of introducing more artificial wickets instead of low quality grass wickets into some suburban parks

### **Extension Opportunities**

The CJCA Purpose Statement is to provide the children of Christchurch with the foundation for lifelong participation, enjoyment and success in Cricket. As such from Year 6 we seek to provide opportunities to develop further participants by providing both development and playing opportunities over and above Saturday Cricket.

Our Pre-season Programmes uses best-practice to build on players skills and prepare them both technically and also mentally of the challenging times that cricket unavoidably imposes on participants. This Programme remains well supported and the coaching staff co-ordinated by Keryn Ambler from Metro provide do a great job in developing players. Being able to utilise the more local facilities such as the Sir Richard Hadlee Centre (Saturdays) and Sporting Edge Centre (Sundays) allows a more locally accessible programme than was available a few years ago.

Mirroring Saturday play a slight decline in Sunday Festival player numbers hasn't lessened the quality or benefits of those choosing to participate in both the Spring and Summer Festivals. The melting pot of players from all over the city provides not only cricketing benefits but enormous social benefits and players and parents alike get to interact on these 6 Sundays each season.





The January Festivals continue to add a different challenge for our players to experience multiple day cricket festivals which require added concentration and fitness to be able to perform as well on Day 1 as on Day 3 or in some cases Day 4. In January 2024 the CJCA were represented by 14 Boys and Girls teams in Festivals – there was also a girls club team from Halswell that entered the CJCA hosted Girls Festival. This team proved strong with their teamwork gained from playing on Saturday proving useful as they went undefeated in their 5 games. Our 3 CJCA teams gained massively from the experience and it is hoped many of these girls continue through in the now well populated Youth Girls grades or become senior players in future seasons for both their Club or School side or CJCA teams in January 2025.

Our Boys teams all gained massively from their 3 or 4 day events some of which held in fierce heat especially at Mandeville. Our three Tier 1 teams played at home at Burnside Park and all finished their 5 games with just 1 loss proving those who had constructed even teams had done a fine job.

Special mention should be given to our Tier 2 Year 8 team who played at Mandeville. This team noticed early on in the event that teams from Buller who had many very inexperienced players were struggling in their matches – this team approached their management and the Festival organisers asking if the playing conditions could be relaxed so that when they played Buller so that Buller could get more benefit than just being beaten by a far more experienced team. The way this team approached this issue is a fine example of the type of players and people we want to develop and the tears and pride of those on the sidelines who witnessed the way the two teams interacted and played was superb.

## **Finances and Funding**

The CJCA continues to be in a strong position but continues to need to draw on its reserves as it seeks to build a sustainable funding model based on its activities and due to the changing nature of external funding sources and across the board cost increases. It is hoped that 2024/25 will, after the adoption of a more realistic Player Levy for Saturday players reflective of the amount of work that goes into that core component of the CJCA activities, provide a better financial result than the last 5 years. It should be noted that this includes the Covid response package that drew on approximately \$35,000 of the Associations reserves in the 2020/21 season.

The Association wishes to acknowledge all its funding partners including Christchurch Metro Cricket Canterbury Cricket and New Zealand Cricket, New Zealand Community Trust, One Foundation, Christchurch Casino Charitable Trust and the Kiwi Gaming Foundation. We also greatly value the sponsorship of Cricket Express and Kookaburra as these all contribute to trying to keep our participation costs as low as possible. We would also like to acknowledge the significant contribution of ANZ through both their grants schemes for Clubs and Hardship grants which assist those for whom basic Club fees remain a challenge in the current economic environment.

## **CJCA Executive**

The CJCA Executive at the time of writing was undergoing a refresh with Lynette Ellis (who had been Chair since Mike Dunlop stood down in October 2022) leaving the Executive to focus on her senior roles with the Christchurch City Council and family. We thank Lynette for her work over the past years as a co-convenor for a Year Group and the Chairs responsibilities. Lynette hopes to return to the Executive when circumstances allow as she has her youngest son just starting Hardball Cricket at the end of last season.

The CJCA Executive continues to be a great sounding board for the operations of the Association and governing the Association through a changing governance and structural environment. At the time of writing the Executive including recently co-opted members consisted of Francis van Woerkom, Cat Quinn, Tim McClurg, Matt Shore, Theresa Buller, Rob Dixon, Gemma Dixon, Abhi Shrikande, Callum Green, Nadine Archibald, Rebecca Brocherie and Graham Brown. The Executive aims to ensure that how the CJCA operates services the needs of its member clubs and schools and contributes to the Strategic aims of both New Zealand and Canterbury Cricket

Rob Wilkinson

**General Manager**