

Head of Junior Coaching Report 2020

I would like to start this report by offering my thanks to Ryan Hayward for a solid handover and his support in helping me take on this new role.

Back in Jan all seem to start 'normally' with a strong showing at the junior indoor coaching arranged at UEA, as well as plenty of indoor Zip League cricket for our victorious U15 team.

The pre-season coaching meeting had good engagement and solid plans were put in place for the modifications to Friday nights sessions. This included the introduction of the new Dynamos and existing all stars ECB coaching programs alongside our regular age group coaching. Coaching shirts were also agreed, with thanks to Matt Clarke for getting them added to the club Kukri shop (although not yet used, they will be!)

Covid Coaching

With the outbreak of Covid, and the suspension of all regular cricketing activities, ways of keeping juniors interested was challenging but brought the best out of the coaching team.

The setting up of the Great Melton YouTube Coaching Channel and regular social media posts, kept cricket alive. Feedback and thanks from parents suggest this was well received with videos averaging over 50 views each. A big thank you to all of the coaches that stepped in front of the camera to help with this.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrdDjzTz29hfKPCfJ467v6w>

With the relaxing of the lockdown measures, the nets were opened, and the net booking system introduced. This gave juniors (and seniors) a much-needed opportunity to get out of the house. For the first 5 weeks slots were almost fully booked every day of the week. 96 members in total used the nets with over 500 taking place. Whereas this relaxed slightly in recent weeks, feedback from parents has suggested that knowing they can book the nets is a really useful service, allowing them to book private coaching sessions or have a family net as and when required safe in the knowledge the nets are theirs for the hour.

A special thanks goes to Marcus who along with myself, delivered a number of covid safe, socially distanced 1-2-1 junior sessions at this time keeping our juniors engaged and also bringing in xx of coaching fees to the club.

Once small group sessions were again allowed, I was blown away by the passion, desire, and innovation shown by the coaching team. Game based activities where only one person can touch the ball is very different from the typical Friday night approaches of the past. My thanks go to Martin, Chris, Carl, George and Jonathan for your involvement in some of the most challenging yet rewarding of coaching sessions.

A large thanks also needs to go to the ground staff, junior secretary and fixture secretary for a huge effort in getting matches organized at short notice. Training for trainings sake is tricky, whereas the ability to put it to practice in a match is essential especially for juniors. All of this has helped massively to retain juniors and has even seen talented juniors join from other clubs.

Having a manger / lead coach that is a parent in the age groups in question was a big plus this year and helped enable 28 games to be organized and played at short notice. Thanks also to Clive and Steve who stepped in as cover on the few occasions where the manager/coach was on holiday

As the senior season got underway, the use of play cricket availability ensured that the limited opportunity for juniors was managed in a fair and transparent manner. It was good that we were able to offer at least 1 senior match to all juniors available. Credit should also go to the senior team captains for batting junior batsmen and bowling our junior bowlers, ensuring all were involved and thoroughly enjoyed their senior cricket.

It was also pleasing to see 3 of our u13 girls take a step up into the ladies team and 8 of them be involved in an end of season mixed ladies and U13 friendly game setting in place a good foundation from next years ladies team and helping in that transition.

On the coach's front, I was delighted that both Jonathan and Carl achieved their level 2 coaching certificates and that both Simon and Chris are well on their way to achieving theirs, (slightly derailed by Covid). We also have several other parents interested in coaching that we are hopeful will also look to become qualified.

Reflections and things to think about

2020 has to go down as one of the most challenging but rewarding of coaching seasons and has brought about a number of changes for the good that I believe should be here to stay.

Fridays at Melton are a great social event, but volumes and unpredictable numbers are a constant frustration and can affect the quality of the coaching. The 1-2-1s and focused group sessions during this season have improved the quality of the coaching being delivered. Consideration should be given on how we get the best of both worlds for next season coaching sessions.

The new net booking system has been a real success as it helps and encourages juniors (and seniors) to make use of the nets and to continue their development. Perhaps a small charge for use of the nets could be introduced moving forward now that we have a record of who is using them?

Play Cricket availability gives a club wide view on who can play and ensures the relevant juniors are getting the correct exposure across the senior teams. In my opinion from a junior coaching perspective, this should be continued next year (subject to team captains views)

We will need to wait to see what the future holds, but I am confident that the coaching team at Melton will be able to adapt to it and continue to deliver a great experience for our juniors.. and we may even get a coaching shirt sorted finally.

Matt Rushton
Head of Junior Coaching,