



**Carrickfergus Cricket Club
Review of the Season 2008**

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Roger Bell

After the early season sunshine, the second half of the 2008 season will be remembered as one of the wettest on record, with very little cricket played from mid-July until September.

The **1st XI** started the season well, with 3 wins out of their first 6 league matches. This could very easily have been 5 out of 6 had it not been for two very narrow defeats against Derriaghy and Instonians, by 1 wicket and 7 runs respectively. They lost 3 out of the next 4, the final one of these being another very narrow loss, this time by 1 run at Lisburn. At the end of July Carrick had 4 wins out of 10, but it was to be five long weeks before they completed another match, and in the meantime had two No Results in winnable matches against Cliftonville and Bangor. When they did eventually get back on to the field a miserable batting display against Lisburn left them anxiously looking over their shoulders at the three teams behind them, two of whom they had yet to play. A comfortable victory over a weak Derriaghy on a Friday at Comber all but guaranteed their safety, and a 15 run win at CIYMS ensured them of another season among the NCU's elite. They won 6 out of 16 league matches played to finish in 7th place in the Ulster Bank Premier League. After overcoming Section 2 side Muckamore very easily in the 2nd Round, yet another narrow defeat saw them lose to eventual winners CSNI by 1 wicket in the quarter final. Their interest in the Irish Senior Cup and the Ulster Cup was ended in one weekend in the North West, losing to Strabane and Limavady.

Captain Ryan Eagleson led by example and had another superb all round season. While he was not quite so prolific with the bat this year scoring 435 runs @ 31.07, he more than made up for it with the ball where he had his best return for several years, taking 40 wickets @ 14.50, the second highest haul in the Premier League this season. He also claimed the first hat-trick of his career when he sent three Lisburn batsmen back to the pavilion in the first over of the match at Middle Road. The experienced Barry Cooper and comparative youngster Andrew Cowden both scored over 500 runs, and continued to be as good as any opening pair as any in the league, and regularly got the side off to good starts. Their club record opening stand of 243 v Bangor was the highest for any wicket in the Premier League this season, while their 173 v Muckamore was the highest in this season's Challenge Cup. Coops proved he was still a class act, and was leading run scorer with 540 runs @ 45.00, including two hundreds, 106* v Bangor in the league, and yet another Challenge Cup century with 113* v Muckamore. Andrew played several fine innings, scoring 503 runs @ 26.47, none more so than his maiden 1st XI century, a magnificent innings of 151". He completed a fine all round season by having what was easily his best ever season with the ball, taking 32 wickets @ 16.09, including the best figures in the Challenge Cup this season of 6-16 v CSNI, to advance his claims as a genuine all rounder. South African Professional Colin Birch, a late replacement for Daniel Flynn who had been called up by New Zealand for their tour of England, had a steady rather than spectacular season with bat and ball scoring 482 runs @ 32.13, and taking 21 wickets @ 22.71. Irish qualified Zimbabwean

Ryan Ervine bolstered the pace attack, contributing 22 wickets @ 27.68, but after an early fifty he contributed little with the bat. Our other guest, South African Johan Le Roux worked hard and scored over 202 runs @ 18.26, while pace bowler Anthony Martin (13 wkts @ 38.08), improving off spinner Chris Campbell (17 wkts @ 34.12), promising young batsman Michael Gilmour (268 runs @ 17.87), and the experienced campaigners Ally McCalmont (189 runs @ 23.63) and Nasir Khan (106 runs @ 17.67), among others, chipped in with useful performances during the season.

The **2nd XI** are to be congratulated in finishing in 2nd place in Division 2 Section 2, and winning promotion to the top section for the first time ever. Ivan Walker led an essentially young team with great enthusiasm and got the best out of his players. On paper the team looked weaker than in previous years, and this was borne out by the fact that no batsman scored 200 runs, nor did any bowler take 20 wickets. However good all round team performances in which tight bowling was the key saw them win 9 and tie 1 of 14 matches played and they will take their place in Division 2 Section 1 next season. This elevation in standard should be of great benefit to players moving up into the 1st XI, as the gap not be as great.

The **3rd XI** were led by Jim McClurkin, and with a number of stalwarts not being available, the side was generally much younger than in recent years. They started the season well with 3 early wins, before a poor run of results preceded an enforced period of inactivity due to the weather. A fourth win at the end of August ensured their safety, and they finished in mid-table in Division 3 Section 1, despite only completing 8 out of 14 scheduled matches.

The **4th XI**, newly promoted under Tommie Humphries' captaincy, were comfortable in their new environment and by early July had made sure of survival with 5 wins out of 8 league matches, and were eyeing a possible promotion place. However, their season was effectively over after the match at Downpatrick on 13 July, as for a number of reasons, not least the weather, they played just one more match, when Davy Wight led them out against Larne on 15 September. They still managed to finish 4th in Division 3 Section 3.

The Club now looks forward to 2009 when the weather can surely only get better, and the Club's first three XI's will for the first time all be competing in the top Section of their respective Divisions.