



# SEAXE NEWS

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## Winter 2024

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### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT WINTER 2024

Another year is coming to an end, and depending on your preferred cricketing format, Vitality Blast or County will decide if you're happy or not. Shame about the Gloucestershire match, looks like we'll be visiting Canterbury and Old Trafford next season. It is pleasing when I see so many Seaxe members at away matches, as was certainly the case at Derby recently.

It has been a slightly frustrating time for the Seaxe Club, what with a change of venue for our AGM, and Committee meetings being held via Zoom rather than around a table. Nevertheless, we managed. On the bursary support side, there hasn't been much demand despite our offers of assistance. We shall be helping with the financing of the expansion of the Seaxe Indoor Winter League for Girls by a further 2 age groups. This covers umpire costs, trophies etc. We have been led to believe that further requirements from MITC are in the pipeline for next season, enabling us to fulfil our *raison d'être*.

As you will have read or heard, the planned reconstruction of the Tavern Stand has been deferred, this means that the Seaxe Club will continue to have boxes C&D throughout the coming season's County games. On the subject of the box, our thanks go once again to Marilyn Storer for the occasional supply of cakes, and of course to Brian Cahill for the managing of the box, and who paid in to the Seaxe funds the sum of £1063.00, a record amount. Well done, Brian.

I'm pleased to say, that following the retirement of Steve Baldwin as our Social Secretary after some thirty odd years, Gary Ford has stepped up and agreed to take on the role. His first assignment being our winter social. Once again, from popular demand this is being held in the Clarence pub, Dover Street, on November 3rd. On the subject of social activity, our celebratory Christmas lunch will be on December 8<sup>th</sup> and, as per last year, in the Lord's Tavern. The menu details are inside the back cover of this issue; AND we have been assured that the sprouts will be a bit softer this year! What we are delighted to confirm, is that we have been able to hold the price at the same level as last year, namely £40/

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member and £45/guest. In this day and age when everything seems to be going up, it is pleasing that we have been able to maintain the same costs as last year. Furthermore, we will be holding the final lottery of the year after the coffee, tickets are available. Our honoured guests this year are Angus Fraser Managing Director of Middlesex in the Community, and his wife, I'm sure you will welcome them and enjoy their company. The Christmas order form will be posted/ emailed to you, which you will need to return to me. Upon receipt of payment, your name will be recorded and you shall receive your voucher for a free glass of sparkling wine upon arrival at the Tavern. Therefore there is no further need for a S.A.E..



We held our annual Box Reception on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, which was well attended. My personal thanks go to the Seaxe Committee members who generously provided the food and soft drinks. The wine was provided at cost by the MCC, for which we are extremely grateful. We held a lottery draw, the result of which is on the back cover of this edition, congratulations to the winners.

As highlighted in last year's winter edition, we will not be providing a form for your nominations for the red ball player of the year nor your nomination for the white ball player of the year. Just email me (address on the back) and I will record the results ready for our awards evening in early 2025. All other awards are nominated by the relevant coaches. The closing date for your choices will be December the 8<sup>th</sup>. Please vote, they do appreciate the fact that the award has come from our members.

Believe it or not, we still have a number of "members" who have yet to pay their subs or are still paying £12.50 despite numerous reminders. Please check your standing orders.

My thanks to the other main contributors to this edition; Mark Ramprakash, Angus Fraser, Alan Coleman, Alvan Seth-Smith and Mark Lane. If you ever feel

like contributing something, then simply send it through to me, and I'll see if there's space.

I hope you enjoy the read and I look forward to your company next season in the box and also at some ground or another.

**Glen Birkwood**  
**Chairman Seaxe Club**



*Glen Birkwood*

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### **A VIEW FROM THE TOP**

Disappointment and frustration seem to be the overriding feelings as I write, following the final game of the season. Our main objective was to gain promotion to Division 1 following last season's relegation, and we have missed out on this on bonus points having completed the same playing record as Yorkshire across the 14 games. We can all bemoan the scheduling of the season, the inclement weather, the challenge of the Kookaburra ball, but ultimately, I believe you get what you deserve in this game, and we didn't quite do enough to achieve our main goal.

It seemed an eventful season - perhaps the future of the game and the sale of the Hundred, alongside the other challenges mentioned above created that sense - and there was no shortage of talking points. We started with an opponent's individual record at Lord's, followed by our own team breaking its own record in the same game - an attritional 4 days of Kookaburra cricket to start the season in comparison to the low scoring affairs we usually witness with the English Dukes ball. And that's how games at Lord's remained, dominated in the most by the bat with the exception of a great performance to defeat Yorkshire in a lower scoring contest - a team blessed with their current international stars. In Championship cricket the team scored as many individual 100s as they did in 2016 - notably in 2 games less this season - and ended with 4 batters nearing or over 1000 runs. The challenges for the bowlers were reflected in only one bowler averaging below 30 with the ball, and this being the area of the season where we did not perform with the potency or consistency we desire. The game, and the season, is often dictated by small margins, and we will all look back at the final hour of day 3 against Gloucestershire at Lord's as the moment we let promotion slip away from us. We must learn our lessons quickly, and regroup to challenge again next year.

As often is the case, the T20 campaign flew past in the blink of an eye, Chelmsford experiment and all. Gloucestershire showed the importance of momentum and peaking at the right time in this competition, and, in truth we struggled to get our campaign going at key moments. The game that sticks in my mind is the Glamorgan match at Lord's, and these are those games that we need to learn to win to change our fortunes. We now have a group of players

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with appearances under their belts following a period of transition, and we expect to see an improvement in the coming seasons.

My favourite time of year remains the 50-over campaign - a competition that presents its own unique management challenges. Though many are understandably unhappy with the de-prioritisation (is that even a word?!) of this competition, I do feel the competition in its current format is as close to the roots of the game as it gets. As a club we are left with a squad of players following Hundred selections, potentially unbalanced, possibly inexperienced, and we have to put a competitive team out on to the field - much like a club captain would have to do in a league game on a Saturday. Our challenge this year was losing 4 of our top 5 white ball batters, but with this, always comes the opportunity for others to stake their claim. Qualification was in our grasp with 2 games to go, but a home defeat to eventful finalists Somerset put this chance to bed. Much like Glamorgan in the T20, Hampshire was again the game I look at as the style of game we need to learn to win - and these tights games are crucial to our future success in the shorter formats.

At this time of year, we do have to wave goodbye to some that have served the club well. Ethan leaves for pastures new in the Midlands at Warwickshire with a desire to push himself to further his career aspirations. Martin likewise heads to the Midlands in search of regular first team opportunities with Derbyshire, and a lot of talent still to be displayed at this level. Mark's hunger for professional cricket is still burning bright, and he will be a great asset as a senior player for any changing room. Thilan is in search for his next opportunity, but has great skill and some good experience to call upon to succeed. Robbie leaves cricket to start his next career, with 2 first class 100s and many appearances that nobody will ever be able to take from him. I personally thank them all for everything they have done for our club, and wish them all well for their futures.

The future though does look bright. Our under 18s reached the national final, we had 4 representatives in England Under 19 squads in the last 12 months and countless more representing the club regionally at ECB events. But like everyone, I want that brightness to burst through to Lord's now, or at least sooner rather than later.

As always, on behalf of the players and the staff we thank our members for their enthusiastic, dedicated and committed support - whether at Lord's, our out grounds, or on the road. It never goes unnoticed and is always deeply appreciated. Winter well, and here's to successful, dry, warm 2025. We'll see you Friday 4th April - if not at a pre-season game before then!

**Alan Coleman**  
**Director of Cricket - MCCC**



*Alan Coleman*

**MIDDLESEX IN THE COMMUNITY MITC**

It is safe to say the cricket season of 2024 has been different to any other I have experienced.

For the previous 40 or so years my focus has been on the playing of cricket in the performance arena. It was work, whether as a player, journalist and administrator, I have been extremely fortunate and happy to do.

This summer, on the cricket playing front, I have returned to where I started - participation and the recreational game with Middlesex in the Community (MITC), this has been the focus of my mind and energy. Now, these may not be the forms of cricket that grab the biggest headlines but, arguably, they are the most important areas of the game. When England play there are 22 players playing the game, and in a busy week of county cricket these numbers rise to around 200. In comparison, in Middlesex alone, each week of the summer, there are 10's of thousands of men, women, boys and girls playing cricket.

Considering these figures, it is then interesting to see how people ultimately judge the health of cricket in this country. Do or should we judge its health by how well Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler's sides are performing, or should we judge it by participation numbers and the feeling towards the game that exists around clubs at the bottom of the pyramid?

I believe the second of these options is the most important indicator. Some may say, that for someone who has spent virtually all of his working life in the professional game, this is hypocritical, and that I am changing my stance to suit the area I am currently working in. I understand the view but feel I have been consistent in my position throughout my career, as I am fundamentally a club cricketer that managed to get to the top. I don't believe I have ever lost track of this.

So what have I been doing this summer? I would be lying if I said this summer with MITC has been anything else but challenging. Rewarding – absolutely, but I don't think I have ever worked harder. I began the position of Managing Director around Easter, which was the moment when responsibility for delivering recreational and participation cricket officially moved to Middlesex in the Community. In the move a couple of senior figures took voluntary redundancy and a couple more moved on. With roles changing for some members of staff that stayed on there were quite a few gaps for things to slip down and, undoubtedly, a few things were missed.

There was still lots of good work being done – schools being visited, cricket being played in underserved areas of our community, tournaments were run, programmes were completed, to name just four - but we were definitely running to stand still. The arrival of new members of staff helped to settle things down

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and things have become a lot calmer. The new staff we have employed have made excellent starts and a new set-up seems to have reinvigorated the staff. This has created a much better feel about everything and we feel in a good position to start taking things forward.

We still have some way to go before we can feel we have got close to where we want to get to but I believe we are now moving in the right direction. Middlesex are a humble club and we don't go around shouting about what we do, but MITC has achieved some fantastic things this summer.



*Angus Fraser*

Amongst these are, along with Essex, Kent and Surrey, we were involved in a project called the London Loop, which took 25 underprivileged children from each county to the Olympic Stadium for three days during the summer holidays. Here they were fed and played all sorts of different sports. For almost a year now we have run cricket training for Afghan refugees and Asylum seekers. This project came to a head when their team – London Mavericks – entered the Middlesex Development League. In the league, competing against clubs in Middlesex, they won two games and narrowly missed out on qualifying for the knockout stages. The nets continue throughout the winter.

Our Disability side had an excellent season. Our 1<sup>st</sup> XI won the D40 Quest for the first time and our 2<sup>nd</sup> XI lost in the final of the D40 Pursuit. We have employed a coach that has performed fantastic work within the Sikh community and walking cricket is growing by the week. Our national programme figures – All Stars and Dynamos – are up and we have signed an agreement with Capital Kids Cricket that will allow us to deliver cricket to hundreds of Primary Schools in Middlesex, as part of our Chance to Shine partnership.

Unlike playing, however, October does not signify the end of the season and lessening up of activity. Our aim is to deliver cricket all year round.

If any of you would like to donate to or support any of the programmes we are running please get in contact with me at [angus.fraser@middlesexccc.com](mailto:angus.fraser@middlesexccc.com)

I look forward to seeing you soon.

**Angus Fraser**  
**Managing Director MITC**

## THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSITIONING YOUNG PLAYERS

Back in 1988 aged 19, I travelled back with Norman Cowans on a Friday evening from a 4day match at Hove v Sussex that went the distance, wondering if I would be selected the following day for the Nat West final v Worcestershire at Lords. The equivalent of an FA cup final for domestic cricket.

I had not played in a 60 over match before and so when at 9.55am the captain Mike Gattling shouted over 'youngster you're in' just before he went out to the toss, (as the match started at 10.30am) I was a bit shocked.



*Mark Ramprakash*

After the match when speaking to the media, Gatt was asked why he had left more senior and experienced players out. He said he had faith in my ability. We won the game, and I was named Player of the Match.

This did wonders for my confidence moving forward. I felt at home in a Middx dressing room full of internationals and young talent. I felt backed.

This year we witnessed a remarkable performance from young Nathan Fernandes, a first class county championship hundred in his first such innings for the Club. This has never been done before in the history of Middx so quite some achievement!

To have a performance of this quality so early when jumping up a level is rare. It tells the player, and hopefully those around him, that he can play well at this level. It fosters belief, something that is so important in top level sport.

Knowing when to pick and back players can be intuitive and not necessarily based on evidence. Just look at Shoaib Bashir & Josh Hull's elevation to the England test side. However, when there is evidence, it makes a selector's job so much easier and straight forward.

This is not to say that a young player is in the side for the rest of the season based on one performance. Young players by definition can be inconsistent as they are still learning their game, their strengths, gaining experience and acquiring emotional intelligence.

I am heartened to see Middx finish the season with two young and talented spinning all- rounders in the final XI. It gives the team so much depth and versatility. Josh De Caires and Luke Hollman have both shown enough with

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both bat and ball that if they continue to work hard and smart at their game, they can have very successful careers. This is good for the individual and the Club.

I hope Middx can provide an environment where young players can learn, progress and perform at professional level. Hopefully, they can excel for Middx to then push on for higher honours. For that, we as a club need to challenge them, back them and show faith in them.

**Mark Ramprakash**  
**President MCCC**

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### MUSINGS FROM THE SEAXE BOX

#### Reprieve for the Middlesex Room

In the previous Seaxe News I had urged Members to pay a last visit to the Allen Stand and the Middlesex Room before its demolition. That advice has proved premature because a steep rise in building costs has forced MCC to revise its timing to construct a new Allen Stand and redevelop the Tavern Stand.

We will now have one more year to use the existing Middlesex Room and it is reassuring to know that, in a few years' time, there will be a Middlesex Room in the new Allen Stand.

Next year too, we will continue to have the Seaxe Box in the Tavern Stand during County Championship matches. We had record takings in 2024 and of course all the payments were in cash. Elsewhere at Lord's all payments are "Card Only". Seaxe continues to operate in a traditional way!



*View inside the Middlesex Room*



**Changes at Lord's**

Looking round the rest of Lord's, there is little that remains from my first visit in 1961 (Middlesex v Gloucestershire). The Pavilion of course is the exception and its appearance is unchanged. Inside there are several changes, all improvements. Women are now welcome. The seats are now comfortable. The second floor lounge has excellent display cabinets about Middlesex cricket. A lift has been installed and there are as many as three bars.

Gazing at the ground from the Pavilion, and looking from the left there is a new Warner Stand. It has better seating but rather gloomy nondescript interior spaces. There is a relatively new Grand Stand, no longer with Father Time on top. That iconic weather vane has been moved to the opposite side of the ground. The 'Free Seats' I recall from my first visit have been replaced twice by much larger enclosures, named after the Middlesex 'Twins', Compton and Edrich. The next rebuilt stand, the Mound, has an elegant appearance. It retains its original name but perhaps could be named after a Middlesex cricketer. The same could be said of the Tavern Stand. Why not Hendren or Titmus, with their outstanding records? Or Brearley, Gatting or Strauss, Middlesex and England captains who all beat Australia over there.

Other Test Grounds celebrate their famous cricketers while they are still alive - Micky and Alec Stewart at The Oval, Jimmy Anderson at Old Trafford, most recently Stuart Broad at Trent Bridge. Come on MCC - surprise us with some re-naming!

**Alvan Seth-Smith**  
**President, Seaxe Club**



*Alvan Seth-Smith*

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**NEWS FROM THE PATHWAY**

This season, our County Age Group squads have been incredibly active, participating in over 100 matches across our player pathway. From U11's to U18s, the teams have displayed both commitment and skill throughout the summer, consistently challenging themselves against strong opposition. Each age group has demonstrated their growth and potential, contributing to what has been an exciting and competitive season overall. Across all levels, we have seen some truly exciting young cricketers developing at an impressive rate. These players have showcased not only their individual talent but also their ability to perform as part of a team. Their progress reflects the strength of our Player Pathway, and we look forward to watching these rising stars continue to mature and make their mark in the coming years.

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### **Youth Season Overview**

The U14s put in a strong effort in their ECB competition, reaching the semi-finals before being defeated by a formidable Surrey side.

The U16s made it to the ECB quarter-finals but were beaten by a competitive Hampshire team.

The U18s progressed to the ECB final, delivering a solid bowling performance. However, they struggled in the run chase against a very strong Yorkshire team.

Throughout the summer, many players delivered outstanding individual performances, with Pansilu Wijesinghe's remarkable 250 against Hampshire standing out as the season's highlight.

The Player Pathway continues to show significant depth and quality, offering great promise for the future development of talent.

### **Representative Selection**

Arran Duguid, from the U15s, was selected to play in The Bunbury Festival.

All six of our EPG U17s—Sebastian Morgan, Caleb Falconer, James Isbell, Nilesh Bhandari, Sammy Singh, and Pansilu Wijesinghe—represented London and East in the prestigious Super 4s tournament.

Several players represented England U19s this summer. Naavya Sharma played in the two Youth Tests against Sri Lanka, where he took 5 for 44 in the first innings of the second test. Noah Cornwell featured in the ODI series, while James Isbell, Sebastian Morgan, and Sammy Singh participated in the Tri-Series against Ireland and Scotland. Highlights from the Tri-Series include James' century and 77, and Sebastian's rapid 35-ball fifty in the final game.

Aaryan Sawant was part of the squad for the second Youth Test but did not make the playing XI.

### **Youth Player of the Year - Caleb Falconer**

Caleb Falconer has had an exceptional season, scoring over 1400 runs across U18 and 2nd XI cricket. His standout performances include his maiden 2nd XI century against Lancashire, twin centuries in both innings against Kent, and a double century against Sussex.

In addition to these achievements, Caleb's unbeaten 71 in a tense chase against Essex was a testament to his ability to perform under pressure, further cementing his status as a key player.

### **Mark Lane**

### **Pathway Head Coach**



**THE SEAXE CLUB CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT LORD'S TAVERN**  
**SUNDAY 8th DECEMBER, 2024**

**MEMBERS £40 GUESTS £45**

*Includes*

Glass of sparkling wine on arrival  
choice of main course and choice of dessert  
complimentary tea/coffee and mince pie

DRINKS FROM MIDDAY – MEAL SERVED APPROXIMATELY 1-30

**MAIN COURSE**

ACCOMPANIED BY HONEY ROASTED CARROTS, PARSNIPS, ROAST POTATOES AND BRUSSEL SPROUTS

**ROAST NORFOLK STUFFED TURKEY BREAST & PIGS IN BLANKETS**

CONFIT LEG OF TURKEY, AND MUSTARD JUS

**BRAISED BEEF SHORT RIBS**

GREEN BEANS, PARSNIP PUREE & ROSEMARY JUS

**PANFRIED HAKE FILLET**

STEM BROCCOLI, GARDEN PEAS & LEMON BUTTER SAUCE

**PEA & SHALLOT TORTELLONI (V OR VG)**

ROCKET SALAD & ROASTED TOMATO SAUCE

**DESSERT**

**CHRISTMAS PUDDING**

HOMEMADE CUSTARD

**CITRUS & PASSIONFRUIT CHEESECAKE (V)**

MIXED BERRIES COMPOTE

**TRIPLE CHOCOLATE CHIP BROWNIE**

VANILLA ICE CREAM (VG)

**OR: A SELECTION OF ENGLISH CHEESES**

GRAPES, CRACKERS, CELERY & APPLE CHUTNEY

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#### OPINIONS / IDEAS ALWAYS WELCOME

I would be delighted to receive your comments (good or bad), any articles etc., for inclusion in the Seaxe News and possibly for placing on the Seaxe / MCCC websites.

All correspondence either by email: [glen.birkwood@hotmail.com](mailto:glen.birkwood@hotmail.com) - or by post to: 86 Edgell Road, Staines, Middx. TW18 2EL

Thank you.

If you have yet to do so, could you please forward your email address to Les Rowland - see below. This makes communication so much easier and efficient.

Enquiries about membership should be addressed to Barbara Buxton, 1 Croft Court, Chelmsford, CM1 6UQ - email: [buxtonb@hotmail.com](mailto:buxtonb@hotmail.com)

If you would prefer to receive Seaxe News by email, please send your email address to our joint membership secretary Les Rowland - [leslie.rowland@ntlworld.com](mailto:leslie.rowland@ntlworld.com)

#### **Lottery result    September 11<sup>th</sup>**

<b>Prize</b>	<b>Name</b>
1st £120	Steve Baldwin
2nd £80	Les Rowland
3rd £50	Jeffrey Calvert
4th £25	Glen Birkwood
5th £25	John Hegarty

Congratulations to them all.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND ME YOUR PLAYER NOMINATIONS – THANK YOU

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Lord's next season, and hopefully at a number of our away games.

Enjoy your cricket.

**Glen Birkwood**  
**Editor Seaxe News**