

Cricket Society XI - Captain's Report 2025

Record: Played 27 (20), Won 13 (13), Drawn 3 (1), Lost 11 (6), Cancelled or Abandoned 3 (8).

On the first Sunday in May, as I made my way home after a heavy defeat in our opening game at Woking & Horsell, I wondered how our season would unfold. Long term injuries to several regular key players meant it was a minor miracle we managed to field 11 players in that first game. Defeat by a significant margin, in a fixture we usually win, didn't bode very well. Six months on, I look back on the 2025 season (where the weather was incredibly kind to us), with an immense amount of satisfaction and much optimism for 2026. The recruitment of several good quality players has boosted our availability to such an extent that we've had the unusual phenomenon of having the occasional "selection meeting" where demand has exceeded supply. Each of our new players has slotted in seamlessly and the team has gelled together remarkably well. Our team spirit, respect for the game and the opposition is first rate and it's been a pleasure to skipper.

The season had many highlights. Those I've commented on below will not be an exhaustive account, but hopefully provide a flavour of the enjoyment we experienced over the course of the 2025 season.

Our batting was generally very strong, with 6 players scoring more than 200 runs and of those who had 4 or more innings, 6 averaged above 30. David Farrington who missed the opening games topped the batting aggregate with 830 (at 55.33), including 3 centuries, a tremendous effort. David's powerful driving and ability to score off his legs often gave us a fast start. A frequent opening partner with David was Mark Maksic, who in his first season notched up 368 runs (at 46.00). Mark is another who drives sweetly from the word go, and he played a number of high quality innings.

With the ball, Paul Fielding's haul of 44 wickets (at 19.55) saw him top the bowling aggregate. Paul was followed by Anish Shah who had an impressive debut season with 25 wickets at 16.76. Will Halliday topped the bowling averages, his 13 wickets costing a miserly 13.19.

Our fielding was generally decent, with a number of fine catches pouched. Most notably was Raj's diving (fully horizontal) one handed catch in the gully at Hampton Hill. Behind the stumps, we welcomed Simon Lister to the fray. Simon's fine glovework yielded 10 victims, the same number as the evergreen Tom Carmichael. Stumped Carmichael, bowled Fielding is our equivalent of "Catch Marsh, bowled Lillee" – only much slower.

Our games were the usual mixture of traditional time cricket, with a declaration and last hour (and no restrictions on overs), straight 40 / 40 or 35 / 35 overs games or declaration within an overs format where all 3 results are possible. It was interesting to see a few more teams with an appetite for this format.

Our first win of the season came at Tilford, who thankfully play declaration cricket. This was particularly helpful as we arrived with just three bowlers. Our 217/5 was thanks largely to Afzaal Butt's only innings of the season, a fine 130. Our bowlers quickly got to work. David

(Elvis) Chapman with his usual accuracy took 2/33. Paul Fielding wheeled away with an excellent 4/30 and a marathon effort from Illya Kronic, who bowled with his usual rhythmic beauty, yielded 4/58 in 17 overs

The following week at West Hoathly, on a predictably unpredictable pitch where 150 would have been a decent score, we bowled out our hosts for 124. Ash Saleem was almost unplayable taking 4/40. We found ourselves in a spot of bother at 76/6 when Ash was joined by 14 year old Raghav Paliwal. These two looked to be guiding us to a comfortable win, when Raghav (thinking Ash could also run like a 14-year-old) called for a third run that never was, and Ash was run out. However, with 10 runs still to get, the youngster batted with thoroughbred poise and saw us home with an unbeaten 23.

As we headed into June, we were heartened having enjoyed some exciting games and a couple of wins. By this time, we'd also acquired a few new players, and more were to follow. Shavran Patel played his first game for us at Thames Ditton. This is a typically high scoring game, and we found ourselves chasing 250 in 40 overs. Shav (70) and Raj Shanmuganathan (31) were going well, before Shav was unfortunately run out; although the middle order made a good fist of it (Sam Collyer 31 and Gareth Mort 41*) but we fell 20 short.

We had a new midweek fixture against an ACE Program XI. ACE was founded by Ebony-Jewel Rainford-Brent and is a thriving charity which focuses on the Afro-Caribbean community and works to broaden the outreach of cricket and allow inner city children, who would not have access previously, the opportunity to learn and play cricket. They were by far, the best team we played all season. In a 35 over game, Alex Cooper (another of our new recruits this year), played one of the best innings of the season with a fine 80, as we posted a respectable 171 in our 35 overs. ACE made light work of it, needing just 20 overs to reach their target. To put the result in perspective, 3 of their top 4 play in the Beddington 1st XI, so we weren't too down-hearted, and I was pleased I didn't choose to bowl first on winning the toss.

Another warm sunny day greeted us for our trip to Hampshire Hogs. It was wonderful to have Rob Humphreys with us for a couple of weeks. Rob (37) and Andy Stokes (51) set us on our way with classy opening partnership of 97. Geoff Warrington (43) and I carried on the good work and we declared half way on 244/5. The Hogs started positively, but we bowled and fielded very well, with Paul Fielding (4/69) and Omkar Pattem (2/49) starring with the ball as we took wickets at regular intervals. Sadly we couldn't quite winkle out their last couple of wickets, but it was heartening to leave having had the upper hand.

At Newdigate, we chased down 205 in 40 overs, which was far from straightforward on a pitch that was a bit up and down and some decent bowling. Rob had rediscovered the joy of batting on southern pitches and won us the game with a masterful unbeaten 82. My overriding memory of that game was sitting in the clubhouse afterwards, enjoying a drink and listening to the conversation with between our many new players, and some of our more longer serving players; Ronald Paterson, Rob, Alan Newman & Peter Hardy.

Ewhurst was a new midweek fixture. It's a lovely setting, a belter of a track and postage stamp boundaries on 3 of the 4 sides. On one of the warmest days of the year, we toiled in

the field ending up having to chase 283 in 40 overs. Although we spent a lot of time searching for various lost balls, Gareth Mort bowled very tidily for his very respectable 4/65. We chased it down all the way, but eventually lost by just 7 runs. David Farrington played what was the innings of the season. A quite brilliant 142. David was well supported in the middle by Raj who scored his maiden Society half century (52), but we couldn't quite get over the line (literally), as David was eventually out right at the death, caught on the boundary.

Our highest partnership of the season came on a glorious summer day at Horsham Trinity where our opening pair of Peter Hardy (40) and David Farrington (70) took us to 150. A strong 150/0 soon become 162/5. Thankfully, a fine partnership of 112 between Anish hitting his maiden Society half century (52) and Aval Patel (49) helped us to 297/7. The hosts began their chase brightly and for a while looked as though they may threaten our score, however Raj with his loopy off breaks took 2 vital wickets and we won by 47 runs.

In the lovely setting of Outwood, we lost a very close game by 1 wicket right. Mark Maksic batted beautifully and looked odds on for his maiden Society ton, before he was dismissed for 87. Mark was well supported by Jon Thornton (45) as we posted a competitive total. Will Halliday's 5 wicket haul nearly won it for us, but it wasn't to be. Thankfully, Mark didn't have that long to wait for his century; that arrived the following week at Lingfield's picturesque Newchapel ground (109) on a lovely summer's afternoon. We posted 240 a decent score, but on a tiny square boundary. We got in amongst them early and Peter Short bowled beautifully, taking 5/19 in 9 overs, but sadly we were unable to get that elusive last wicket as Lingfield hung on for a hard-fought draw.

Findon was a new fixture for us. Their fabulous ground is nestled in the heart of the Sussex Downs. David produced his second century of the season, which was largely responsible for getting us beyond 200 and allowed me to declare early. With just 3 bowlers and 9 fielders, we acquitted ourselves admirably. Findon generously lent us a fielding substitute, and then Sam Collyer, who'd been working at his club all day arrived and added his athleticism to our fielding. David Bradley on debut for us bowled skilfully taking 4/55 from 15 overs whilst at the other end Jim Lewis bowled economically and straight, and was rewarded with excellent figures of 4/28 from 11 overs. Every now and again, cricket serves up a beautiful moment which just deserves to be savoured. There was a point where Findon had a man well set who was starting to look very dangerous. Enter Mo Uddin. Mo's first spell hadn't quite gone to plan. However, he returned to bowl the perfect away swinger that pitched on leg stump and hit off stump and see of the danger man. He repeated the feat the very next ball, and although he didn't get his hat-trick, he'd turned the game right back in our favour, which we eventually won by 40 runs with a couple of overs to spare.

For me, the match of the season was an all-day game at South Nutfield. Put in to bat, we lost David and Mark (in quick succession) and were in danger of being under par. However, Simon Lister (42) showed the strength we have in depth with the bat, coming in at number 9, we shared a partnership of 70 as we took the score north of 200. Then our spin twins of Anish Shah (6/56) and Mo Amin (3/52) bowled superbly in tandem. It really was a joy to watch these two bowl skilfully and intelligently. The icing on the cake for a skipper is when you get a hunch, act on it, and it pays off. In the dying overs, with just one wicket needed, I

moved myself to short point. The next delivery from Anish saw the batsman lunge forward. The ball squirted off the bat and I managed to hold onto a one handed catch. It was a superb day where everyone contributed and we enjoyed some wonderful hospitality.

Our final game at Shepperton saw us pay tribute to Jason Fenn as he was inducted into the Cricket Society Hall of Fame. Jason is a superb cricketer and a wonderful man. We could have used his superb batsmanship as we stuttered to 138 all out. In a nail-biting finish, we lost by 1 wicket with 2 balls of the game remaining.

Will Halliday and Anish Shah were the two contenders for the prestigious Perry-Lewis / Kershaw award. This award is given to someone who has made a significant contribution to the Society XI. Both Will and Anish are a joy to have in the team, contribute with both bat and ball and play the game in the perfect spirit. Congratulations to Will who won the award. I'm sure that Anish will have his name on the trophy in the not-too-distant future.

Anish and Will have already been mentioned in some of the highlights above, but they both enjoyed their day at Weybridge Vandals where we bowled them out for 147; Will 2/25 and Anish 2/24 – although the star of the day with the ball was Peter Short with 4/26. Our top order unusually failed, and we slumped to 36-4. But Will 38* and Anish (41) steadied the ship with sensible, positive batting to take us up to 125 before Anish was bowled. We needn't have worried as Sree Pathmarajah played a super little cameo to see us home – the winning runs a lovely drive through the covers for 4.

This season, there was an early contender for the Champagne Moment award at Northwood. Sam Collyer hit 4 successive 6's in one over and with the other 2 deliveries hit a 4 and a single. These 6's weren't mishits that landed inches over the rope. The first went over the scoreboard, the second landed on the scoreboard roof, the 3rd hit the adjacent flats and the final one thudded into the sight screen. I looked on with awe from the non-striker's end. Sam's modest response to my enthusiastic congratulations at the end of the over was "well, they were in the slot".

Finally, my thanks to Peter Hardy for his almost obsessive recruitment skills which have been so effective this season and for ensuring that we were always able to take the field with 11 players. Thanks to Richard Plume, Graham Jackson, Alan Newman, Tom Carmichael, Peter Hard, Bernie McAlister and Martin Pither who umpired for us. Your contribution is hugely valued. Thanks also to Alan Newman who frequently neatly and effectively kept score.

Thanks also to our merry band of supporters. You are all very much part of our beloved Society XI. Winter well, and see you in 2026.

Best wishes,
Stuart Cosstick