



Edenbridge Cricket Club : Sunday Academy Cricket

Introduction

To reinvigorate Sunday cricket where there is declining interest from adult players; and to provide a bridge for junior cricketers into senior cricket; Edenbridge Cricket Club (ECC) is intending from the 2018 season onwards to operate just one Sunday team which will be known as the Sunday Academy. The existing ECC Sunday 1st XI and Sunday 2nd XI will be replaced by the new Sunday Academy XI.

The Problem

The level of interest in Sunday cricket from senior adult players is declining. Senior players no longer wish to play two matches each weekend and therefore prefer to play competitive league cricket on Saturday. Sunday cricket is consequently becoming a game for those unable to play on Saturday owing to work commitments and/or older cricketers who are no longer interested in playing league cricket. The outcome from this mixture of interest, ability and fitness levels is that Sunday cricket can be erratic, resulting in many one-sided and/or unenjoyable matches for many of the players involved.

Alongside this trend, there is also a decline in teenagers playing any cricket at all between the ages of 12 and 18. Many clubs have strong Colts sections but start to lose players once they begin secondary school, owing to school work, homework and other commitments and interests. Teenage players who want to play cricket are eligible for Saturday league cricket from the age of 13, however, many teenagers lack the physical strength and confidence required for league cricket until the age of at least 15 years. With school cricket also in short supply, there is a distinct age group gap where opportunities for teenagers to play cricket are limited.

The Solution

To address the problems described above, ECC has concluded that Sunday cricket has become the perfect opportunity to provide a link from Colts cricket to senior cricket for teenage players. This is the basis for the Sunday Academy.

The Sunday Academy introduces junior players to adult cricket in a 'safe' environment by providing competitive but friendly cricket for teams with a mixture of adults and teenage junior cricketers, both male and female. The junior players are those who are not yet ready for Saturday league cricket; the adult players are those that may no longer regularly play league cricket. It is this mixture of junior and senior players that prepares the junior players for the demands of senior competitive cricket.

How does it work?

A Sunday Academy team should consist of a minimum of 4 and up to 8 junior players between the ages of 12 and 17 years. The balance of the team should be adults who are there to nurture and support the junior players. Those adult players should be mindful of bowling and batting against



junior players but must not make unnecessary allowances. ECC will request that all senior players make themselves available for at least one Sunday Academy match each month

All junior players in the team should be provided with the opportunity to bowl, bat and keep wicket, should they wish to do so. Those junior players who choose to bowl should be allotted a sensible number of overs, i.e. more than just one or two overs, but in line with most recent ECB guidelines for fast bowling (see appendix below). Junior players who wish to bat should be allotted a position in the batting order that is most likely to provide that opportunity. Captains must manage their innings and their players to ensure that junior players are actively involved and not merely present to field (unless that is all a junior player wishes to do).

It is recommended that junior batters are partnered by an adult batter wherever possible; which may require the Captain to adapt the batting order during the innings.

If a junior who does want to bat is at risk of missing out, the Captain can ask an adult batter to retire his/her innings to allow the junior some overs.

When making fielding placements a Captain should be mindful of the junior players' safety.

Academy matches can be played over a format agreed between the two Captains. It is also recommended that any bowling and fielding restrictions are agreed by the two Captains prior to the start of the match. Recommended formats are:

- a) 30 overs per side based on one-day cricket rules, with a win or lose outcome.
- b) A timed match of 4 hours duration presenting the option for the match to be drawn.

If one or both teams are short of 11 players, the Captains should make every effort to ensure the match goes ahead. This may involve an agreement to share fielders, or to play to a different format, e.g. 8-a-side pair's cricket. Ideally a minimum of 8 players would be available for each team.

Conclusion

The Sunday Academy provides a solution for several problems facing local cricket clubs. By requiring only half the team to be adult players it addresses the lack of interest and availability of senior players for Sunday cricket. By requiring the other half to be juniors it addresses the difficulty facing junior players in making the step up to senior cricket. In being played over 30 overs or 4 hours, the matches address the time constraints of many players. In ensuring that junior players are actively involved in the match it addresses the problem of junior players being called into senior teams simply to make up the numbers and run around in the field. By requiring both teams to play a mixture of junior and senior players, the Academy should address the problem of one-sided matches which are not enjoyable for either team. By being flexible in format, it ensures that matches can go ahead and players always get a game, rather than become disillusioned by cancellations.



Next Steps

Having been unable to fulfil many Sunday fixtures in recent seasons, ECC is firmly of the opinion that the Sunday Academy provides the most realistic option to maintain a healthy schedule of Sunday cricket. The Sunday Academy is the only team that ECC will support for Sunday cricket from 2018 season onwards and fixtures will only be arranged against opposition teams on this basis.

ECC would like to retain as many of its traditional Sunday fixtures as possible and will be delighted to arrange matches with local clubs who are willing to embrace the idea of a Sunday Academy and join ECC on this journey.

APPENDIX:

ECB Fast Bowling Directive 2017

| AGE | Max overs per spell | Max overs per day |
|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Up to 13 | 5 | 10 |
| U14, U15 | 6 | 12 |
| U16 – U19 | 7 | 18 |

Tea Time

Clubs and Captains should agree the arrangement for Tea ahead of the match.