



SOMERSET
COUNTY CRICKET
CLUB

REPORT FOR 2021

Whilst there were many memorable moments in 2021, the highlight was undoubtedly the return of Members to the Cooper Associates County Ground. I am struggling to put into words exactly the emotions we were all feeling when the Club's ever-loyal supporters were finally allowed to return. Despite the initial reduced capacity, the ovation that the players received when they walked out in front of the Somerset faithful for the first time in over a year was a genuinely special moment for everyone.

A challenging year

In many ways, like 2020, the history books are likely to show that 2021 was a year of survival for the club, as we wrestled with the impact of COVID-19, and the numerous Government restrictions which needed to be complied with to enable Members to return to the Ground to watch live cricket. A huge amount of work was undertaken behind the scenes by all our staff to ensure that we could safely welcome you back to your home away from home. I can't thank those who put in the hard yards and long hours enough for ensuring that your return was possible. It is important that we pay tribute to the staff here at the Club. They have done a tremendous job in keeping us on an even keel during the most trying of circumstances.

There is no escaping from the fact that Covid-19 has had an ongoing operational and financial impact on the Club. We have had to make some extremely difficult decisions over the last couple of years, to ensure that the Club not only survived, but was well placed to 'bounce back' once the pandemic was behind us. I can assure you that every decision taken has been designed to achieve our over-arching goal: ensuring the long-term future of Somerset County Cricket Club.

Elsewhere, the game of cricket made front page news for the wrong reasons. It is important that our Club learns lessons from events at Yorkshire and we have made it clear that there is no place for racism or discrimination of any kind in cricket in our County. The Club will continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of behaviour which is anything other than inclusive for all regardless of gender, race, sexuality, or any other characteristic.

Cricket

On the field, there were enough positives, despite a disappointing conclusion to the County Championship season, to indicate that the Club is in a very strong position. To finish as runners up in the Vitality Blast is no mean feat, and the emergence of so many talented young players in the Royal London Cup has given everyone associated with the Club an exciting insight into the future. There were also some impressive performances in the LV= Insurance County Championship. To finish the first half of the season at the top of Division One, despite starting the campaign with a points deficit, was an outstanding achievement and great credit must go to the players and the coaching staff.

I couldn't reflect on the 2021 season without mentioning three matches in particular. Our superb Championship victories at Lord's and the Ageas Bowl showed that the squad is capable of great red-ball performances; and the quarter-final victory over Lancashire in the Vitality Blast is a night that will never be forgotten. Those occasions are perfect examples of why we love this wonderful game and how it can give people special lasting memories.

It has also been so good to witness several of our players receiving international recognition, both at full and Under 19 level. Congratulations go to Jack Leach and Craig Overton on their Test Match selections, Lewis Gregory for his performances for England's white-ball sides, Tom Abell on being chosen to play for England Lions and last but not least, to James Rew, George Thomas and Sony Baker on their selection for the England U19 World Cup squad. James made us all proud with his magnificent 95 in the Final.

A good many of our players have also featured in domestic white-ball competitions around the world throughout the winter. This demonstrates the high regard that the Club and our players are held in across the globe.

Our thanks must go to Sam Young and Eddie Byrom, who served the Club well during their time with us and have moved onto pastures new. We wish them every success for the future.

2021 was also another exceptional year for the Women's game in the region. Somerset Women finished top of the County T20 West & Midlands Group, whilst six Somerset players were named in the main Western Storm squad. We were once again lucky enough to witness Anya Shrubsole and Heather Knight in the Green and Black of Western Storm in 2021, both of whom have strong links to the region and indeed to Somerset specifically, as Storm finished second in Group B of the Charlotte Edwards Cup. It was also a year that saw a Women's PCA Team of the Year announced and we are extremely proud that the XI featured our very own Sophie Luff.

Somerset also played it's part in the success of the England Women's team as a large crowd at the Cooper Associates County Ground witnessed an incredible victory for the Three Lions over New Zealand as the IT20 match, and indeed the series, went down to the penultimate ball.

Whilst a lot has quite rightly been made about the introduction of professional contracts within the women's game, it is also important to note the vital work that is being carried out at grass roots level by the Somerset Cricket Foundation and our Clubs. 2021 saw growing numbers of young girls involved in the All Stars and Dynamos programmes at both participant and activator levels. There are now over 37 women's and girls sections at clubs within the County whilst 1100 secondary school girls received cricket delivery during the year.

2021 also marked another successful year for Somerset Disabled Cricket Club who overcame the Isle of White in the S9 South West Group Regional final.

Thanks should also go to the hundreds of Officials and volunteers working in the game across Devon, Cornwall and Dorset. They do so much for cricket in the South-West region.

Off the field of play

Catering

The catering and events industry has been one of the sectors which has been and continues to be terribly affected by the impact of the pandemic and with this in mind, the Club undertook a rigorous and thorough exploration of the various catering operational models available to ensure that we provide Members and guests with enjoyable experiences.

While acknowledging the advantages of retaining an 'in-house' model, the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry presented challenges and opportunities that the General Committee believed were best tackled with a reputable catering 'partner.' BaxterStorey were identified as the standout candidate, demonstrating a real desire to work in partnership with the Club. Despite some unprecedented workforce challenges, which inevitably have resulted in some delivery issues, the partnership is fully committed to providing high quality food and good service at the right price for our Members and spectators.

Strategy

Elsewhere, we are looking to ensure that the Cooper Associates County Ground remains the envy of the domestic game. We will therefore be investigating how we can develop the venue further to make sure that we are offering our Members, supporters, visitors and guests the optimum experience both on matchdays and non-matchdays. We are aware that certain sections of the ground are in need of attention and, as always, we will keep you up to date with our latest plans and proposals when we are able to do so.

It goes without saying that cricket will remain our primary purpose as a Club, but in order to continue to invest on the field, we must be as successful as we can be off the field. Our goal is therefore to

develop the Cooper Associates County Ground into a 365 day-a-year venue to complement income generated from cricket. Now more than ever, it is vital that we maximise our potential income to ensure a well-funded cricket programme. We are therefore staging a wide range of varied events throughout the whole year, and I would ask that, where possible, you help to support these events.

A big thank you also must go to our commercial partners and sponsors, both long standing and new. Their continued support during the last couple of years has been a major contributing factor to our relative on-field endeavours.

Although we narrowly missed out on silverware on the pitch in 2021, we did pick up the prestigious YouTube Channel of the Year at the annual Broadcast Sport Awards for our brilliant live matchday stream. Our digital team beat off strong competition, from Chelsea FC, the Premier League and others, to win, and huge congratulations must go to all those involved in making this service such as success alongside the excellent work done across our broader communications and digital activities.

Your Club

Somerset Members and supporters are without a doubt the best and most knowledgeable in the country, and you will always play a huge role within the very fabric of the Club. It was therefore great to see so many of you renew your Membership in 2022. It can't be emphasised enough how essential your support is to the future of our Club.

This brings me nicely to an incredibly important moment in the future of our Club which occurred in 2021.

During the year, Somerset County Cricket Club conducted a detailed review of the Club's Governance and following this extensive process Members were presented with details which accommodated requirements outlined at the beginning of this vital review and incorporated valuable input from the consultation process. Members were then asked to vote on the proposal.

An SGM was held in November at which it was announced that Members had overwhelmingly voted in favour of the proposal (98.19%). On behalf of the General Committee, I would like to thank all of those who voted. The outcome has allowed the Club to put in place a diverse Board with the balance of skills and knowledge required to tackle the challenges ahead of us and take advantage of the opportunities which exist.

The future

It is important to stress that the Club does not generate money to pay dividends to investors, but rather reinvests it into cricket, venue facilities and the numerous costs associated with running a professional cricket club. Following two years in survival mode, 2022 is a year of transition, before looking to grow again from 2023.

From a cricket perspective, the forthcoming 'High Performance Cricket Review' led by Sir Andrew Strauss, will seek to address the issues which have for some time prevented England from performing at the highest level across all formats. You can be assured that the Club will contribute to this Review and in particular, seek to ensure that Championship cricket is at the heart of the game going forward.

The development of a long-term Strategy for cricket in Somerset is well under way and will be shared as widely as possible as soon as it is complete. This Strategy will include a plan for the development of the Cooper Associates County Ground and our approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which is important to ensure that our Club and the game as a whole, welcomes everyone, regardless of gender, race, sexuality, or any other characteristic.

Your support

We are indebted to our Members, many of whom have supported the Club through thick and thin over several years. You have been the 'heartbeat' of our Club and will remain so going forward. Your loyalty and support is not taken for granted and underpins the commitment to our status as a Member's Club.

Richard Brice

Vice Chair, Somerset CCC