

YOUNG GUNS GO FOR IT!

Junior Set-Up By Chris Knowles

Emley Clarence's junior section emerged three years ago when George Bullock, who is the current junior coach, advertised cricket for youngsters around Emley and the surrounding villages. The initiative was to be an enormous success.

By the time the new season begins in May 2008, the club hope and predict to have somewhere in the region of 50 or 60 juniors all signed on for the club. This would be their biggest season to date in terms of numbers and will allow more competition for places, ultimately resulting in an improved standard of cricket.



Alan Walker

Tim Sykes, chairman of the junior section at Emley, spoke to me about retaining the junior players. 'That [retention] is the aim of the juniors, to feed them into the 2nd XI and then hopefully through to the 1st team.' This is a key issue in local sport, especially at junior level; it is increasingly difficult to hold on to young players over a long period of time.

One of the fundamental problems is that, currently, Emley don't have a team that could bridge the gap between the juniors and the 2nd XI. Sykes says: 'If you have an under 17s, it is a lot easier to feed the players through into the seniors because that's the usual age for them to progress.' He continues: 'Having said that, we currently have three or four players in the under-15s who are almost ready for the step up to the 2nd team.'

Currently, Emley run teams for under 9s, 11s, 13s and 15s, which means a high level of dedication from Tim, George and many other people at the club. Tim explains that commitment to the cause is a huge part of the junior set-up. 'We need to start getting all the parents to come and watch and get them more involved in the juniors set-up. It helps if the support is there from outside the club as well as from the coaches.'

Fundraising plays its part in the form of function evenings; the recent occasion with ex-Emley, Northants and Durham fast bowler Alan Walker was a great success. Financial support through sponsorship from local business also helps the club and contributes to the general funding of Emley Clarence CC.

Clarence will also be working to achieve the national accreditation Clubmark, which is awarded to junior sports clubs which provide high-quality facilities and training, as well as promoting a healthy and active lifestyle for young people. If granted, Clubmark will not only be superior recognition for the club; it will mean they will also have access to a higher level of funding, which in turn means the use of better equipment for the juniors.

Next season promises to be an exciting time for the juniors, not only with the prospect of official recognition from Clubmark, but more young people than ever before having the desire to be part of Emley Clarence CC.