

# MR FIX-IT!

## Profile of Tony Baxter by Sam Smith

At the age of 37 Tony Baxter had never played club cricket. Then came a life-changing experience – he discovered Blackley CC. That was a decade ago in 1998 – now he is an occasional player, Level 2 coach, Under-15s team manager, and committee member, and also runs the club website, acts as family welfare officer and, for good measure, has also taken on the role of general handyman.



“I played cricket at school but work commitments always prevented me from joining a club,” said Tony. “I always liked watching cricket on television and it was as a spectator I first went to Blackley.” But it was when his son Tom first wanted to play at Lindley Road as a 10-year-old that Tony really started to get involved.

Tony gains a great deal of satisfaction from coaching the junior players but he also thoroughly enjoys his duties as handyman and webmaster, which are a “labour of love”. He works for the club all year round but in the summer months Blackley takes up the “lion’s share” of his leisure time.

Happily, Blackley Cricket Club is a family affair for the Baxters – his son Tom now opens the batting for the First XI, his wife Vicky helps out with teas, and his daughter Alice is first-team scorer. “We live near to the ground and as a family

we enjoy being part of the club - everyone who comes to the club says what a lovely set-up it is," said Tony who is site manager at nearby Brooksbank Sports College, which enjoys close links with the club.

Tony, a former engineer, first helped out at the club by mending the lawnmowers, altering the sightscreens, installing new garage doors and putting up fencing and nets – quickly acquiring a “Mr Fix-it” reputation, which he has retained every since.

Then he started to join in with the junior training sessions on Saturday mornings. He wanted to improve his own coaching skills so took his Level 1 certificate – then, four years ago, he completed another course to become a Level 2 coach. Now, during the season, he spends three hours coaching on Friday evenings and three hours on Saturday mornings prior to settling down to watch his son play in the afternoon.

Tony is delighted with way the club encourages youngsters to take up playing cricket. “We say to local schoolchildren ‘come and play cricket, however good you are, whether you are a boy or a girl – you can all have a go.’ That’s got to be good for the future of the Blackley,” he said. “We need to bring in as many coaches as we can and keep moving forward.”

His duties as webmaster is something Tony has conscientiously carried out for five years. He takes pride in ensuring the site is up-to-date in the season with results, reports and team news. In the winter he keeps interest “ticking over” with information about forthcoming social events.

Tony enjoys the odd few games with the Sunday side. “I once hit a match-winning 34,” he says. This was one of his highlights but he adds, with a wry smile, that he will not forget dropping a catch at Copley when the bowler was on a hat-trick!