

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Captaincy at Nortonthorpe by Matt Ottey

Cricket's like any other team sport; it takes a group of players committed to achieving the same goal if there's going to be any success. And, much like any other team sport, there needs to be a leader, someone who is willing to step up and lead by example, to make the decisions no-one else will, and to show encouragement and resilience when things aren't going as planned.



This is exactly what Nortonthorpe Cricket Club are looking for in a captain, and Matt Hayes thinks he can provide just that.

However, there is an added incentive for Matt as the coming season will be his first as captain of Nortonthorpe's second eleven, having chosen to step down from the firsts in order to experience his debut season as skipper. "I've decided to put a bit of pressure on myself! It's a job that's easy enough when you're winning, but I expect it's not so nice when your losing, but I think I'll be able to cope with that."

The role of captain in cricket incorporates a wider range of responsibilities than in football, say, with a cricket captain acting as player, team selector and tactician, making the job a daunting one.

Says Matt: "It's a lot of responsibility, you're picking the team, deciding who gets a bowl and where they get a bat, as well as thinking about what sort of tactics you should be using, and then you've got to think about your own performance on top of that, so it's an important and difficult job but I'm confident!"

It seems that the people involved at the club are also pretty positive about Matt. Current Nortonthorpe umpire Roy England thinks he'll do well: "He's not been at the club that long but he's young and willing to do it, and that's what we need." This is a view his wife Margaret agrees with: "I think he played well last season...so he and Paul [England, Margaret and Roy's son] should make two good captains."

Roger Littlewood, last season's second-team captain, also has high hopes for what Matt can achieve with the second team. However, he also thinks it's a job that takes a fair bit of hard work: "In all honesty, I'm happy that Matt's willing to take the captaincy because organising teams, writing out reports, ringing in results etc have caused me more stress than a week at work. It'll be

nice to take a step back and leave the organising to someone else. But we'll all be behind Matt; he'll have my support, help and advice if he wants it and I'm sure he'll do a good job for us."

The fact that Matt's willing to have a crack at the job is testament to his character, and I'm sure that everyone at Nortonthorpe's going to give him 100% support all season, especially if his views on teamwork follow through onto the pitch. I'll be trying to make everybody feel confident and comfortable. Some players are going to make mistakes but that's always going to happen, it's part of the game."