

“I’VE DECIDED TO PUT A BIT OF PRESSURE ON MYSELF”

Profile of Matt Hayes by Matt Ottey

At Nortonthorpe Cricket Club there are a number of people who voluntarily carry out important jobs and tasks, some to keep the place running, others to try and improve the club, but most do both. Take, for example, Matt Hayes; his association with the club hasn't necessarily been that long, having joined as a player four years ago, but he's shown a willingness to get involved in the running of the club that most wouldn't. This enthusiasm is what many local clubs like Nortonthorpe need in order to lift some of the pressures off the older members as well as to bring in fresh ideas regarding the future of the club.

Matt has not had the conventional cricket upbringing in the sense that he didn't actually start playing until he was 17 which, in comparison to many players who have been cricketing since they could stand up, is impressive.



He got involved in cricket in the same way that most do, by scoring for his local team (Cawthorne) at the age of 14. It seems as though, from an outsider's perspective, scoring is the traditional way to get into cricket, almost acting as both an initiation and education.

Another aspect of local cricket that I keep coming across, at least in this part of the world anyway, are the family ties within the game. Matt's uncle played for Cawthorne and encouraged him to start scoring for them, which eventually, at 17 years of age, led to him playing for Cawthorne's second team with no experience of junior cricket.

He carried on playing at Cawthorne for two years before stopping to have eye surgery. What would have originally been a significant yet ultimately short spell out of the game turned into a two-year break from cricket.

However, in 2004 Matt decided to get back into the sport, and with Nortonthorpe being his local club it seemed a perfect place for him to get his cricketing career back on track: "It's my local club so it's convenient for me, we've got a nice ground to play at and there's a good atmosphere throughout the club."

Matt went straight into the first team and until now has enjoyed a stable run of cricket at the club. However, the 2008 season brings with it a new challenge for Matt, one that he'll no doubt be relishing as well. He'll take over as captain of the second eleven come the opening day of the season, and previous captain Roger Littlewood thinks he could do a good job: "I'm glad he's decided to have a crack at it, he should do alright, and of course, he's got the backing of everybody. If we're playing and he wants some advice then I'd be happy to help him out."

However, it looks like Matt's going to be up against it from the off, as Roger explains: "We've lost a few good players this year so he's up against it but that's just part of being captain, he'll have to be diplomatic and pick an eleven he thinks will have a chance of winning a cricket match. I think he'll do that, and he'll be fine."

All in all, Matt's roles within the club stretch from being webmaster for Nortonthorpe's extremely impressive website to committee member with special responsibility for events - where he'll be looking to raise money for the club through barbeques, poker nights and race nights along with other club members. And now he has the added responsibility of being a team captain as well.

"I've decided to put a bit of pressure on myself. I think I'll be able to handle it though!"