

HOPTON'S TEA LADIES ARE TOP DRAWER

By Samantha Shilton

Often the unsung heroes of amateur sporting clubs, Upper Hopton's junior catering ladies were bestowed one of the greatest honours recently.



The three women – Julie Heaton, Tracy Thompson and Alison Dennison – were presented with the coveted President's Award at an awards bash last November. Speaking of the award, Thompson, 43, said, "It was such a shock for us to receive the award, I had no idea we were going to get a mention, and it was a really nice surprise".

But it is not all awards evenings and limelight for the women. Much of their role within the club involves ordinary, everyday things. "We sell pop, crisps, penny sweets, chocolate and we make teas and coffees," explains Heaton. "On match nights we'll make some hot food, usually hot dogs or chip sandwiches, and on weekend mornings we put on bacon sandwiches".

The work is of course voluntary and therefore unpaid, yet at least one of the women is present at every training session and match. Heaton, 42, a previous

winner of the award, said, "It was really nice to get the recognition. I thought it would be going to Tracy and her partner George this year as they've contributed more than they have ever done, with George taking on a coaching role. But it was a real surprise, and nice that all three of us got to share it".

The women also take on responsibility for organising the teas at home games, where everybody in the team has to prepare the teas at least once a season. "Normally, it will be the player's partner who organises getting everything onto plates, but like this week, Craig [Gardner] has done the shopping and we've laid it out for him".

This involves getting to the ground early in order to prepare the food, not that Heaton seems to mind. Julie and her husband Ian, 42, have played an active role in the club's activities as of late, effort that has not gone unnoticed.

"Ian and Julie have been the real driving force behind the club's success in recent years," says Eric Conyers, lifetime member of Upper Hopton C.C.. "The club has changed a lot in all the years that I've been coming but they've made it into the club it is today".

And long may that continue. The women seem to quietly take care of the little jobs that need doing around the clubhouse, such as keeping the kitchen area clean and taking down old sponsorship signs, all the time smiling and having a laugh with each other.

An army cannot march on an empty stomach, and one wonders whether Upper Hopton C.C. would be able to function without the help of these three women.