



BEYOND THE BOUNDARY ROPE

A look inside the 2009/10 Canterbury Wizards Camp

By Canterbury Wizards All Rounder Andrew Ellis

Since the last installment of 'Beyond the Boundary Rope' the Canterbury Wizards have started the playing segment of their pre-season preparations, mostly in conditions more akin to that of the winter codes than our beloved summer game. Week-days training at Rangiora in beautiful sunshine have contrasted with weekends of moisture and declining temperatures. Evidence of the fickle weather during October came on the Wizards pre-season camp at Terrace Downs Golf Resort near Methven. The first two days saw pleasant conditions with warm nor'west winds fanning the squad as they enjoyed each others company in the scenic surroundings. However, as the players rose for their final morning at Terrace Downs their exit was hastened by a few hours as a covering of snow had decided to make its presence felt overnight. Evacuation was prompt with cricket a distant thought. The time at Terrace Downs was invaluable as it gave the squad and its management a chance to spend some time together and also ascertain how they were going to go about their season, both mentally and physically.

The first round of the Sunday Premier series has also been completed. This first Sunday planned was lost to rain so the following Sunday saw a 50-over one day game played. The game against the Metro Knights and the Canterbury Districts, to be played at Mainpower Oval in Rangiora, was frustratingly lost due to overnight rain. The second game between the Academy team and the Metro Cavaliers did however get underway on time at Elmwood Park, again with some cold and damp conditions prevailing. The Cavaliers made the best of a long outfield and testing pitch to post 186 off their 50 overs. The Academy side showed an admirable determination in the trying conditions as their youthful exuberance was evident. They committed themselves in the field and bowled with an intent belying their age, even a wet ball did not hinder their progress as not a single wide was conceded. When it came time for the second half, the Metro Cavaliers showed their experience with ball, strangling the life out of the Academy run chase and the innings was ended with the total at 129. The second round of games was played over the Sunday and Monday of Labour weekend with the Academy team taking on the Districts XI and the Metro Knights playing the Metro Cavaliers. The first game saw the Academy side grind out a hard first innings win as they fielded for 100 overs on the first day and then chased down the Districts score of 276 on the second day. Both sides enjoyed a game played in excellent conditions at Mainpower Oval. The second game at Elmwood Park turned into a four innings affair as the bowlers held sway. The Metro Cavaliers having the better of this encounter as they dismissed the Knights for 57 in their second innings. At the end of these two rounds we have definitely seen some intense cricket as the province's best players have enjoyed squaring off against each other.

The Season Launch was held at the Canterbury Breweries on Monday the 16th October, an occasion that served to present the Canterbury Wizards and Magicians for the 2009-2010 season to Canterbury Cricket's stakeholders. One of the highlights was the unveiling of the new CCC kit that will be worn by the mens and womans teams this season and beyond. The partnership with CCC and Canterbury Cricket is exciting as both representative teams will be presented in a very aesthetically-pleasing package that can only set the foundation for some cricket played with the same description. The new gear has been well-received by the squad and provides comfort as well as a fresh new look for the Wizards and Magicians.

The MVP competition is being run again this season by New Zealand Cricket in conjunction with the New Zealand Cricket Players Association. This season Mitre 10 have come onboard as the major sponsor and there will be increased exposure for this competition that pits each domestic and international player against each other to become each format's most valuable player. There will be a separate MVP for each of the three formats; first class cricket, one day games and also 20/20. The formula used to calculate points is more comprehensive than in the past with a multitude of factors being used to calculate a players points tally. More about this competition can be found on the New Zealand Cricket website. Last season Matthew Sinclair was the overall winner with Johann Myburgh being Canterbury's top performer.

Injuries have been kept to a minimum to this point of the season, the only notable omission from the playing field is Hamish Bennett, who is continuing his comeback from surgery on an abcess on his tailbone. Hamish has made an encouraging start to his comeback and is already bowling at a low intensity.

This week will see the absence of four Wizards from trainings and also from club action this weekend. Peter Fulton, Shanan Stewart, Corey Anderson and Craig McMillan will be representing New Zealand at the Hong Kong Six's competition at the Kowloon Cricket Club. It is always good to see a strong contingent of 'red and blacks' in any national team and the boys will be wished all the best for their efforts in Hong Kong.

It is just under two weeks until the Wizards kick off their first class campaign against the Wellington Firebirds at the Basin Reserve in Wellington. Preparations are starting to reach their pinnacle with the culmination being a four-day game against the Otago Volts in Dunedin, commencing on Monday the 2nd November. A shadow Wizards squad will travel by bus on Sunday to the nation's southern-most cricketing stronghold, where there will likely be a brace of two-day games that will entail the Wizards being in the field for a couple of sets of 100 overs and conversely occupying the batting crease for the same periods. Whilst all the fitness preparations have been, and will continue to be undertaken, it is important that the 'cricket fitness' of the team be a main focus. The four days playing in Dunedin will give the Wizards a strong base leading into November the 10th and will prepare them for the arduous nature of first class cricket. From here we hope we can start the season with a win over the Firebirds.