



Yeovil & Sherborne Hockey Club Chairman's Report for the Annual General Meeting 2011

Good evening Ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the 39th annual general meeting of Yeovil and Sherborne Hockey club.

Thank you for your attendance at what is your opportunity to have an input into the current and future running of your club.

I would like to thank everyone for what has been a much calmer season than last years. That is not to say we have not had moments of utter chaos for there have been some eventful phone calls and e mails relating to club matters such as red cards, flood light failure, cancellations and player availability issues.

That said I am very pleased with the overall performance of the club both on and off the field.

Thanks to the diligent work of the Captains we have for the first time ever gone a whole season without collecting a single fine from either the ladies or men`s leagues. This in itself is a real achievement which the captains should be proud of as we will be keeping company with very few other clubs and was absolutely critical for the men`s section following the league ruling last year.

I am confident that the decision we made to with draw a men`s side from the league was most definitely the correct one and that can now be justified with the league standings at the end of this season. The men`s section have, to coin a phrase `passed the probationary period of 12 months` and we can look back at the experience with satisfaction.

The AGM as well as a chance for us to share new ideas is also the only chance I get to publicly thank all those that give so much of their own time for the benefit of others. For those that do not know or realise or have never been involved in the organisation of any sports club – nothing happens automatically and somebody will have given a lot of time to ensure you can enjoy yourself. From captains to coordinators, from committee members to umpires, from fixtures secretaries to coaches – they all will be spending time, money and effort for others. So for that very reason I would like you to listen to just a few words of thanks and take the time to appreciate what others do for us.

Firstly I will start with the captains and thanks to you all for your exceptional determination, often in the face of adversity, for fielding the 7 teams each week. As I have stated you have received no fines this season and assisted in the collection of annual subscriptions in record time.

With the ladies it has at times been challenging fielding 11 players for each team and this was highlighted when I had to make the decision to withdraw the ladies 4th team from the Sunday friendly league. There has been discussion about reinstating this team and whilst I am not against the idea I would like to see proof of player availability at the beginning of next season prior to committing to additional costs and games which we may not be able to fulfil or afford.

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Sadie Watson as a captain, I sang your praises last season for promotion. This season I repeat my thanks and congratulations despite the relegation. I believe that the ladies first team have had an outstanding season with some fine results and performances. The team spirit in the face of some times bad luck or better teams has been wonderful and despite the losses it has been good to see so many people still having a great afternoon of sport or training with their friends and team mates. This has to be a testament to your dedication and relationships with others. The ladies 2nd 3rd teams guided by Di Darch and Su Johnson have also had a very good season and again it is a pleasure to watch or umpire your games and see so many enjoying themselves under your guidance.

The men however have had a slightly more difficult time and the men's captains have been very stretched since the turn of the year putting out 11 players per team. It has reached such a point that only 10 days ago and at the conclusion of the season the captains, Bill Bibby, myself and some finely selected younger club members sat down and discussed the future of the mens section once again. Due to there only being on occasions 40 available men out of almost 80 registered players you will understand how it is impossible to run 4 sides and how utterly frustrating it is for team captains.

Despite the advent of text, e mail, mobile roaming internet and every other possible means of communication the male members still fail to respond to messages and leave those planning and organising teams in limbo.

Despite all of this though the result of this meeting was to continue to run 4 sides as to lose another side could in the long term be to the detriment of the club. This will of course only work with the cooperation of members and the continued dedication of the captains and I would like to point out that despite the hardships they have suffered it is the captains from this year that still believe in the club and what it has to offer others. On a positive note I am delighted with the performances of our 4 men's sides. Sam Holloway and Calum Gray have guided the 1st and 2nd teams to promotion whilst Tony Organ and Kern Vickers have stabilised the 3rd and 4th teams in their respective leagues. Well done and thank you gentlemen for all of your work.

It would be very remiss of me to forget our club captains of Debs Gemmell for the ladies and for the men – well we did not have one, but Tony Organ has filled the void with gusto. Debs you have once again done an admirable job but I must say a special thank you to Tony who has been the driving force behind the men's section this year and it is fair to say that things could easily have fallen apart at times without your dedication and commitment. The implementation of the availability sheets and weekly updates have been of massive benefit and I hope that this year we have a volunteer for the much needed men's club captain role and that he will continue with the fine work you have started.

Our training and coaching sessions have once again been very well attended. This can only be a testament to those that plan and deliver coaching every week. In total the club coaches have delivered over 134 hours of coaching across the season which amounts to over 5 and a ½ solid days of planned entertainment for club members. The coaches, Leah Wilkinson, Nick Whigham, Tracey Aldred, Harriet White and Debs Gemmell have been ably assisted by Martin 'Tommo' Thomas, Sam Holloway and Lewis Walters and to you all thanks for everything. It is a big commitment planning and delivering these sessions every week. It is also worth mentioning that Nick, Tracey, Debs and Harriet also give up their own time and at no cost in order to coach the clubs juniors – our clubs future.

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I would also like to say a special thank you to Tommo for his services this year. We have never had anyone who was prepared to assist with our keeper development before and I have seen firsthand how our keepers have benefited greatly from his input and guidance.

Sadly I have to say that for the next couple of years we are going to be without the services of Nick Whigham as a coach. Nick is going to have his dodgy knees fixed at last and will be unable to train or coach. He is definitely going to be a big loss to the club and at the present time irreplaceable. I am sure you will all join me as I wish Nick good luck for the future – it will not be the same without him.

Once again Tracey Western and Jon Stride have provided a first class service as fixtures secretaries. The two of you are 100% reliable and efficient in your planning and preparation for the club and thanks from all of us for ensuring we have opposition every week.

Our Umpire coordinator Bill Bibby has again provided us with umpires for every game and due to a couple of minor on field incidents liaised with the umpire association regarding disciplinary matters. Bill has a very testing role in that he is not only allocating umpires who are playing members but he is also liaising with non players to fulfil these roles and often where the answer is no or an umpire becomes unavailable then Bill will rearrange his own personal life to ensure the gap is filled by himself.

We all should be grateful for the umpires as all too often they are subject of player's hard stares and comments. We should respect their decisions and admire their commitment for they are also attempting to enjoy an afternoon of hockey and will be the first to admit they do not always get it right. I urge anyone to umpire and tell me that it is easy. Please remember when thanking these umpires that not only are some non playing members of our club but many give up their social time with their teams in order to stay behind and umpire the game in which you are playing. I offer a big thank you to Bill and all that have umpired this year and hope that you keep coming back for we cannot play without you.

I now move to the committee and whilst I have thanked some already I would like to offer particular thanks to the following people for another years hard work;

To Bill Bibby for your support in recent weeks involving the men's section.

To Harriet White, for your continued support in the role of Youth Coordinator. I hope that we can build on this year's juniors games, select more of our club juniors for the county junior development process and that the clubs school link with 8 local schools will be developed.

To Richard McDermid for your assistance as club welfare officer. If you are standing again then it is vital that we keep all of our club volunteers trained in first aid and CRB's up to date.

To Tony Organ for the maintenance and running of the club web site and liaison with the local press – a difficult job in itself.

To Libby Walters who as our club treasurer ensures that we are always in the black. Libby has been the club treasurer for several years now and is unfortunately for us standing down at this AGM. Through Libby's diligence and hard work we now have a firm standing for the future. The accounts, despite the recession are healthy and we have in place very good systems for the collection of money and payment of bills. I personally will not miss the counting cash every Sunday night –especially the £8 worth of pennies that some people seem to pay match fees with. However, with an annual turnover in excess of £24, 000 per annum this is an important role and one the club cannot, and I repeat cannot operate without. Libby has always paid our

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bills on time and as the treasurer has put in place the insurance scheme we now use as recommended by England Hockey. Libby has also been very accurate and precise with our forecast spending and sets very achievable targets for us as a club and it is without a doubt we are a financially healthy club today because of your hard work

Thanks Libby for your service to the club and more importantly managing the accounts in such a way that despite the current financial climate every club member has benefited from no rise in annual subscriptions or match fees for many years. You will be missed in this role but I know you will be on hand to offer advice and support to the new treasurer when appointed.

Finally from the committee I would like to thank Jo McDermid our club secretary. Jo is the hardest working of all our club members and is on a daily basis involved with at least one or more admin tasks that require fulfilling on behalf of the hockey club. Jo acts as our liaison officer and is the club's main point of contact for all administration from general enquiries to England Hockey. The club's accreditation is a full time job in itself and as the club becomes more successful and compliant with the ever changing legislation then so Jo becomes busier. Jo also assists with all the meetings that I cannot attend and more often than not represents the club with me at venues such as League meetings, Somerset County Forum and local authority meetings that concern the development of sport in Somerset. We should all be very grateful for the work undertaken by Jo and I thank you for another year as our club secretary.

Along with The Gryphon Leisure centre and The Half Moon in Sherborne there will be plenty of other people who I will forget to thank and really am sorry if I have missed you out in my tributes to all those that have assisted the club in this past season.

I now need to move to the future and the season of 2011 / 12 which is only 4 months away and the planning for which will start tonight with decisions about umpires, subscription payments and the roles people are going to play in our future development.

Firstly and as ever I urge people to get involved in the running of the club and in particular I aim my request at those who have never assisted and to the younger club members who are the future because the likes of myself, Debs, Jo and several others are not going to be here forever.

We as a club still need more volunteers to become both umpires and coaches. The courses are available and anyone that passes is fully reimbursed by the club. All we ask in return is a little help.

I would desperately like to see better co operation from club members in providing their availability to captains, in particular from the men's section. I would be keen to hear tonight or following this meeting if anyone has a plan as to how we can get people to be more committed to playing and providing their details and availability. I urge next season's captains to make use of the system as formulated by Tony Organ this year and combine it with more regular selection meetings.

I believe there is a need in what will be our 40th anniversary year for a better liaison between teams, the players and the club social secretary. If events are going to be planned then we should try to bring the members closer together by advertising and utilising the club mail and web site system. I suggest that to ensure we have an exceptional 40th anniversary dinner dance celebration that each team nominates a social representative and perhaps opens a savings plan that can be payable to the club treasurer. This would offer

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members the chance to pay for event tickets over the year and lessen the burden of a one off cost at the end of the season.

Junior coaching takes place on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. This requires a lot of commitment from the few coaches and I request more people get involved and help out. To have someone there to collect the money each week or even just to move cones around or collect balls is a real help to coaches. Believe it or not you may actual enjoy it. Ask Dan Lloyd who has just spent 5 weeks with me coaching on Saturdays – it really is a pleasure to see these young people enjoying the sport we have all taken so much from. Please help out, it really is appreciated.

I would like to raise the profile of subscriptions during the course of the coming season and in particular the way in which we collect them. As we are all aware it is an onerous task collecting money from people and very time consuming for captains. It is often the case that people feel they should only pay for the games and a portion of the time for which they are available. This in principle is fine but it does not create a stable platform on which the club can operate on a weekly basis. It is actually very destabilising and leads to players dropping in when they feel like it and makes for very difficult selection issues and for forward management when deciding how many teams should be entered in to leagues. If we were a golf club or swimming club or almost any other club you would be expected to pay an annual membership fee up front. I would not propose that as it is obviously very expensive but what if we were to say you could pay for your whole season in one go. Membership, and match fees up front. Yes that would currently amount to £281 for an adult and £160 for a junior but imagine not having to pay match fees weekly. Turning up in the knowledge that petrol money was covered and the Captain would not have to chase people for a penny. I would not suggest we all pay £281 on the 1st September but if we all agreed to pay in instalments over several months, or in one lump sum, I believe it would encourage people to be more readily available to get use of the money they have invested in the club. It could actually improve our teams and player availability. I intend to prepare a paper on this and shall circulate it to all club members in the coming months for their information. I would request feedback from this circular, please do not just bin it as I believe this is worth investigating.

Returning to the subject of umpires I would ask you all too carefully consider the proposals Bill will be putting forward concerning the payment of umpires tonight. There is a strong case for this to happen but there are obvious financial implications which you as club members should realise will rely on your continued goodwill and regular payment of match fees. Please remember once we have committed to paying for the services of others then there no going back. Please do ask questions at the end of Bills proposals as there has been a lot work gone into this and we should be able to answer any of your queries.

I wish to report that the Men`s hockey league are taking a proposal to this year`s AGM on the 18th April that suggests a move away from the current league structure. They are proposing to abolish the current Premier league 3 and redesign the leagues that will subsequently channel in to the remaining 2 premier leagues. In short they are suggesting the men move to a similar structure as the ladies with a Central, Northern and Southern area promotion ladder. The desire for this has come from many clubs, including ours, who have continually moaned about the distances travelled in order to play hockey. It is accepted that when promoted to the higher echelons of hockey then travel will become necessary but for many the idea of a 300 mile

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round trip to play in a league far removed from the premier structure is not only damaging the game but also forcing people away from hockey. Unless any one here has any objections I shall at the forthcoming AGM be supporting this proposal on the proviso that we as a club play in the central league structure where instead of continually playing hockey in Cornwall we should end up playing more local teams and commuting to Bath, Bristol and West Wiltshire.

On a brighter note we have arranged as part of our school clubs partnership for 8 local schools to be involved in a 'Hockey Taster' day. The event will be held on Friday 23rd September at The Oxley astro in Sherborne. The idea being that we can get more of these youngsters involved with the club and hockey. I shall be leading the day and would be very grateful for any person who could give some time and assist me with as many as 160 children. Please see me or give me a call to help out.

Please do all remember that the committee front door is always open. If you have an idea or you would like to come along to a committee meeting then please give me a call. I welcome any constructive suggestions and will always listen to your complaints.

Please can I remind you all to support this year's annual dinner dance on the 14th May. It will be a good night and with only 30 tickets remaining is set to be a real success.

Finally I would like to inform everyone that if elected back as chairman tonight then I will willingly serve the club for another year. I do actually enjoy the job despite the occasional long face and hope that I am not too much of a task master for those that serve on the committee or in club positions of responsibility. However it is only fair to give all club members notice that the season 2011 / 12 will be my last as the club chairman. I will be standing down and ask that you all consider and work towards a suitable replacement. If there is anyone interested and would like to spend some time with me to see what happens and how the club functions then please give me a call.

Thanks for listening to me ramble on. Once again I thank you all and wish everyone a good summer and already look forward to seeing you all next season.

Thankyou.

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