

**Paul Farbrace meets the Tunbridge Wells District Development Group  
Wednesday, March 10, 2010**

Representatives from every Kent Club in the Tunbridge Wells District Development Group turned out on Wednesday evening to take the opportunity of a joining a round table discussion with KCCC Director of Cricket about the current Kent cricket youth development system. Also in attendance were Tonbridge & Malling DDO, Peter Robinson and Tunbridge Wells DDO, Nick Fairrie who arranged the meeting.

From Paul's opening words: "We are all in the same game for the same reason and we're all coming from the same starting point" to Peter Robinson's closing reminder for us all to be aware of and sign up to ECB's One Game Pledge, the wheel turned full circle through two and a half hours of thought-provoking discussion about the way we run our youth development system.

Perhaps the most telling remark of the evening was Bruce Bristow of Castle Hill CC's rhetorical question: "Are we not trying to do too much with too little and ending up not doing anything?" This seemed to encapsulate all the major points at issue that ranged from coaching and scouting talent at the grass roots, through the structure and dynamics of the representative cricket system to the way in which the entire development system is formulated and run from Canterbury. Major points taken from this included reconsidering the appropriate entry point for representative cricket. Many thought the U11 level for County was too young and some considered the running of U10's district teams might be redundant if there was no exit pathway from there into a possibly disbanded County U11's. Should players remain with their clubs up to U13 level and should we then select the best players at that level to enter a two-year County development programme given that one year tended to prove too short a time to realise a young player's full potential at that level?

Having said at the outset that his aim was for us to be the best at developing youth in the country, Paul listened intently to what the delegates had to say about their experiences of the current system which, if hearing a vociferous minority is believing, has become unwieldy and dysfunctional in several key respects. Paul was, however, quick to remind everyone that it is *our* system not Canterbury's system and that he was well aware of the tendency to perceive Kent County Cricket Club as Canterbury Cricket Club, a perception that he wanted to change for good as a first order of priority. He therefore actively encouraged all delegates, through their clubs, to take ownership of the development system and keep their suggestions for improvements coming through to him.

Paul's sincerity and passion for the game of cricket in Kent was palpable. Citing Joe Denly and James Tredwell's recent successes at international level, he assured everyone that he wanted to see far more of our own young players coming through into the Kent first team and beyond in the future. To ensure that could happen there was widespread support for an effective scouting system at club and school level. Paul made the point that our current scouting activities were "appalling" and that coaches do not necessarily make the best scouts since scouting is a highly specialised skill that may or may not be developed out of excellent coaching ability. Developing a first-rate scouting corps would therefore be something he would be looking at closely in the near future.

In sum, the major points to ponder and the outcomes of the meeting that he took away with him for further consideration and action were:

1. Change in district cricket.
2. Empower the clubs to identify talent through a calibrated system of what is required.
3. Feedback both ways.
4. Manage expectations.
5. Recognition for clubs in selection to age group squads.

Paul finally recommended that this type of meeting should not be a 'one off'. Subsequent such meetings should take place but we needed to ensure that they did not turn into mere talking shops.