

GOSPORT PROUD OF HOME-GROWN STARS

James Ayles reports on a club that has come back from the brink to be able to field a first team that is 90 per cent local

After biding their time in Southern Premier League Division 3, Gosport Borough CC are hoping their homegrown stars can help the club start progressing on the field.

The Privet Park side finished fifth in 2017 – their third season in the division – with first-team captain Tom Larner winning the league batting award after scoring 651 runs, while team-mate Lee Harrop contributed 559.

Club treasurer and fourth team captain Chris Giles highlighted the make-up of the first team, with the vast majority including Larner and Harrop having come through as colts at the club.

And Giles admits the club takes pride in seeing homegrown cricketers perform so well.

He said: "Something like that is great to see.

"When it is someone who has come through at Gosport, to be a local talent and do that is really good.

"We can look at the players we have got and say 90 per cent of the first team is local. I think that's really good, it is maximising what we have.

"We need to get to the next level to make the promising ones we have that much better."

After their pavilion burned down in 2005, Gosport faced a long road to rebuild and restore the club's facilities.

Having achieved that, Giles is confident the club can continue to progress.

He said: "We had Portakabins at Privet Park to get changed, and there was no bar so we went to a nearby pub.

"The club kept going and eventually re-opened. We managed to keep our heads above water when times were difficult thanks to the hard work of many at the club.

"It showed a real spirit to come through that.

"It would have been easy for people to say 'oh forget it' and the club on the pitch could have gone down but a lot of people worked very hard to keep it going.

"We can look at that and think, 'we've got through that so now it is time to push on'."

Australia ODI and T20 international Chris Lynn turned out for the club as an 18-year-old in 2008, scoring 754 runs that year.

Lynn's recent performances saw him sold for \$1.86m in January's Indian Premier League auction – making him the highest-paid Australian ahead even of Mitchell Starc and Glenn Maxwell.

And Giles remembers the youngster well: "He was such an easy-going guy, we obviously thought he was good.

"He didn't play quite so many extravagant shots as he does now, but you could see the class without a doubt and when you see him playing for Australia it is brilliant.

"It is just a shame we don't get a percentage of his price!

"He was only 18 and you could see he was good even then."

Gosport have also invested in their women's side in recent years, and Giles feels this is something the club must continue to press forward with.

He said: "We've had some grant money they can put money towards training and developing. The idea is to get people who don't play much sport to get out and do something.

"They attend indoor sessions and have some tournaments they play in.

"That's what it is about, trying to get more people involved in playing, especially on the ladies side as you don't have a huge pool of ability."



Our young players don't come into the club without the work of a number of coaches at all the youth levels

A key part of the club's development has been the work of volunteer coaches and team managers who have kept the outfit's four youth sides running.

Several senior players also take training sessions, and Giles considers this spirit to be an essential part of Gosport's appeal.

He added: "Our young players don't come into the club without the work of a number of coaches and managers at all the youth levels who do their job throughout the year.

"If we don't have people who are willing to take on those roles, those youngsters just aren't going to be around or they're going to go elsewhere.

"What they are doing is invaluable and because what they do is behind the scenes a lot of the guys don't see that."



Local pride: the club is booming despite the loss in 2005 of their old pavilion, inset



Happy in their new pavilion: the facilities at Gosport Borough are excellent

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