



# Start of Season Report 2013-2014

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# Project Summary

Thanks to the generosity of both British Airways and Jet Airways during 2013 we were able to take ten bags of donated clothing and kit to Mumbai totalling in excess of 200 kilos.

The volume of kit enabled us to support not only the children of Dharavi, but also seven village schools around Maharashtra, the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Home for Children in Mumbai, the cricket programme of the NGO Salaam Bombay, and the Yuwa Girls' Football Project run by our sister NGO *Reality Gives*.

The *Reality Gives* Reception Centre in Dharavi again hosted our Kit Day in late November.

The jewel in the project crown remains the Indian Gymkhana Ground at King's Circle. Sincere thanks are again due to the Gymkhana President, Mr Jayant Lapsdi, and the Cricket Club Secretary, Mr K Satya Murthy, for their continued support.

Much of the ground work for the new season was done by *Reality Gives* new Director of Sports Programs, Peter Woolcock. He worked tirelessly during the close season on formalising the coaching structure and performance monitoring process. Peter is also responsible for introducing fitness testing to the project format.

We were again fortunate to secure the services of Bhavana Patil and Harshad Bhojnaik as coaches along with project juniors, Jigar and Dilip, as assistant coaches.

For the first time we initiated a Membership Fee of 500Rps (approximately £5) for the children participating in Project Front Foot. It is common practice among NGOs to request a small contribution towards running costs so as to make participants feel a greater worth of themselves and the project.

As part of the new structure there will be individual awards for Player of the Month in both the U14 and U18 sections along with an end of season function in Dharavi where the Player of the Season will be announced for each age group.

Assistant coach Jigar Jethva who began with PFF in 2009 aged 12 has, under the guidance of Bhavana and Harshad, recently taken coaching exams courtesy of the Cricket India Academy.

Ten of the current U18 squad have joined the Indian Gymkhana Club thereby ensuring their progress into senior cricket with selection for the Gymkhana U23 side.

Our coaches have been instructed to arrange two competitive matches a month during the season, one for each age group and, where possible, to enter PFF representative sides in local tournaments.

# Kit 4 Kids

## Summer Appeal

A successful summer appeal brought donated kit flooding in from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Northamptonshire and Kent. At the St Lawrence Ground in Canterbury, Andy Griffith provided a car load of Kwik Cricket kit which has been a huge success at the orphanage we support in Mumbai and the schools with which we have links around Maharashtra. The contribution from the Yorkshire Cricket Board, orchestrated by YCB Development Officer, Steve Archer, saw clothing and kit donated by twelve clubs and a school in his region.



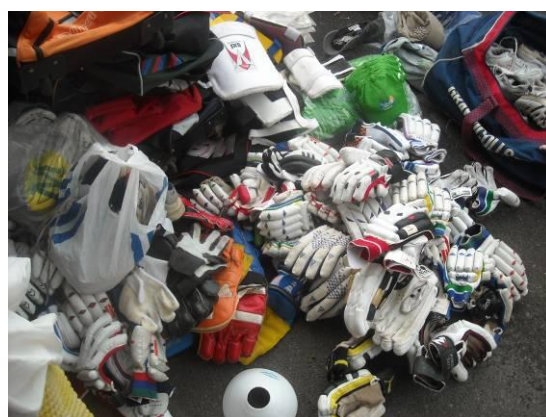
March Kit Run: Chris and Tim at Heathrow



With Andy Griffith from the Kent CB



Back in Lincoln after the Yorkshire kit run



October's Sort & Pack Day

We were again able to count on the support of PFF regulars: Peter Mason at Collingham CC, John Ellison at Trent Bridge, Heather Gosling at the Derbyshire Cricket Board, and Peter Whitehead at the Nottingham Tennis Centre.

In collecting and storing the kit, I'm indebted to Gary Rook and Pat Bowers in Lincoln, Tim Gill in Reading, and Jane Bennett-Powell in London. As last year, we were able to place surplus adult clothing with the Oxford Pathways Project and in Stoke Newington with North London Action for the Homeless. Cricket Without Boundaries also benefitted to the tune of several hundred tennis balls for their work in Africa.

## Passage to India

With limited funding precluding the possibility of sending kit by air or sea freight, we were again reliant on our friends at British Airways and Jet Airways for getting the clothing and equipment to Mumbai. BA's Community Development Officer, Laura Phillips, was able to secure extra bags at no cost to the project.



Emergency supplies for Mumbai



Temple lodgings double as Sports Emporium

We were further helped in August by Neha Lall at Jet Airways. In total we managed to get ten bags of kit to Mumbai on three flights over an eight month period. The checked baggage route (as opposed to air freight) also made getting through Mumbai Customs much easier.



# Pitch & Pre-Season Planning

## Indian Gymkhana Ground, King's Circle

While a groundsman may struggle to combat the unpredictable nature of the English climate, it is nothing compared to the annual task that faces the Gymkhana's *mali* with much of his square quite literally washed away. Soil erosion is not something we in the UK have to consider when preparing for the new season. At King's Circle combating erosion is the first priority. A monsoon that refused to stop prevented the *mali* from yet again planting any grass seed for the new season.



Ground crew set about the wicket table



Between a rock and a hard place



Sieving the top soil for that final layer



Arguably the heaviest roller in world cricket

The labour intensive operation of rebuilding the square begins with sieving three lorry loads of top soil by hand. In containers little bigger than a wok it is painstakingly carried to all parts of the square. It is then rolled with a hand roller before a final layer of top soil is added. Each afternoon for a week the *mali* then soaks the wicket table and allows it to bake at temperatures in the mid-30s. Finally, the square and outfield are compacted during a day-long rolling with arguably the heaviest roller in world cricket.

With a population of 22 million and growing, Mumbai does not have enough grounds to go around. Of the seven grounds that existed in Matunga thirty years ago, five have fallen victim to property developers. The Indian Gymkhana at King's Circle is the nearest ground to Dharavi and can be reached by our children on foot in fifteen minutes. We continue to have an excellent working relationship with the Gymkhana thanks to the support and far-sightedness of Cricket Club Secretary, Mr K Satya Murthy.

## The PFF Team

The combination of late monsoon and early Diwali led to a later than usual start to our fifth season. The delay offered further opportunity, however, to fine tune the project structure and to verse the coaches in the new performance monitoring processes. A new initiative, the latter will provide evidence of a player's improvement in the various disciplines during the season. With Harshad away for the first two weeks of the season due to playing commitments, this gave an opportunity for the assistant coaches, Jigar and Dilip, to take on more responsibility.



Bhavana explains the various coaching aids



PFF team for season 2013-2014

L-R: Jigar, Bhavana, Peter, Harshad & Dilip

Much of the pre-season discussion centred on the 500Rps (£5) Membership Fee. In the past, some children joining the project stayed just long enough to get their kit and then failed to show. A fee, it was thought, would help prevent this. It was also noted that numbers drop at certain times in the season. The fee would help keep attendance high. It is common practice among NGOs to request a small contribution so as to make participants feel greater self-worth and more involvement in the project.



# PFF Season 2013-2014

## Season launch

Gymkhana tradition dictates that the season does not get officially underway until the pitch has been blessed. This involves a complex ritual of incantations, a garland of marigolds, rose petals, incense sticks, the breaking of a coconut and the offering of sweets.



Pitch blessing in progress



Say it with flowers



Peter points the way

Our fifth season at the Gymkhana started on Tuesday, 12 November with the first week given over to combined U14 and U18 coaching sessions. We were again able to engage last season's coaches, Bhavana Patil and Harshad Bhojnaik; experienced coaches on the Mumbai cricket scene, their input has been invaluable in developing our coaching structure including monitoring player performance.



Happiness is a new season



Early tips for new recruit, Pubalan

Eager to make up for lost time, the early sessions were very much a case of shaking off the monsoon rust and stretching the muscles for the season ahead. Unable to use the nets for the first two weeks, coaching sessions were held on the outfield and consisted of an innovative mix of fitness routines, skill-based games, lessons in technique, and mini matches.





Stretch those hamstrings



A game of Catching Tennis in progress



Hiren on the front foot



Banana refuelling at the session's end

## Project Kit Day

The PFF Kit Day was held on Saturday, 23 November. With a shortfall in donated flannels, we were compelled, as last season, to buy these locally along with footwear for both the U14 and U18 squads. In sourcing and buying these items, I'm indebted to Asim Shaikh of *Reality Gives*. With many of the boys opting to take their shirts, flannels and caps when paying the membership fee, the Kit Day was slightly less manic than in previous years. On the day, Peter, Chris and myself were mainly employed in handing out footwear along with shirts and the occasional pair of flannels.

Donated from around the UK, this was cricket's version of Pick & Mix with blue Tetley Bitter sun hats from Ben Rhydding CC; Kwik Cricket caps and T-shirts courtesy of Steve Archer at the Yorkshire Cricket Board; white Chance to Shine collared shirts (donated thanks to a change of sponsor); and flannels from clubs sides in and around the counties of Notts, Lincs and Derbyshire. Each boy was allocated a cap, collared shirt, T-shirt, a pair of flannels, and boots. An impressive package, made all the more so with two practice sessions a week over a seven-month season, professional coaches, and age group matches.



Footwear and flannels



Hats & Caps



The smiles tell it all



Footwear the big hit



Another satisfied customer

## First Session with the New Kit

The picture that presented itself at the next coaching session three days later was nothing short of spectacular. In clean, crisp whites, sporting a variety of club shirts, their green Kwik Cricket caps at a jaunty angle, the boys created quite a stir among passers-by and Gymkhana regulars. The mantra: look like a cricketer, feel like a cricketer, play like a cricketer.



New kit on parade



All dressed up and somewhere to go





Caught India Bowled England



Sameer in Dharavi



Session's end

Conscious of the need for progression from junior to senior cricket, ten of the current U18 squad have joined the Indian Gymkhana Club. This qualifies them for selection for the Gymkhana U23 XI and the chance to perform at a higher level within the game.

## Player of the Month Awards

As part of our new initiatives, PFF has instituted a Player of the Month Award for both squads. The season will conclude with a function in Dharavi to announce the Player of the Year. The decision-making panel comprises of our coaches, assistants, and *Reality's* Director of Sport. Selection criteria include: attendance, attire, helpfulness, attitude, and improved performance.

The U14 award for November went to Paras Gediya. A student at the SVV School in Sion, 14 year-old Paras is in his third season with PFF. With no cricket played at his school, PFF is the only outlet for his undoubted batting talent. Paras impressed the coaches with his general attitude to the coaching, his fellow players, and the desire to improve his game.

The U18 award went to Hiren Chitroda. A fast bowler of some pace, Hiren is also a wristy middle order batsman. In the field he has an uncanny knack of fielding cleanly on the most uneven of outfields. His approach to the game, however, won the day. He plays the game with a smile. And that, in this day and age, is quite rare.



Paras with certificate and new batting gloves



Hiren receives his award from Harshad

## Jigar's Story

Jigar Jethva joined the first intake of PFF youngsters in October 2009 aged 12. A keen cricketer, he has been with the project ever since, bar one season when his school timings clashed with our sessions. Always immaculately turned out and ever anxious to assist, he soon came to the attention of our coaches. At the start of season 2012-2013 he was appointed assistant coach and worked with the U14s. With the help of his mentor, Bhavana, he recently sat a series of coaching exams courtesy of the Cricket India Academy. A key member of our coaching staff, he is now working alongside Peter on the day to day running of PFF. A quiet, polite, respectful young man, Jigar is the first of what we hope will be many success stories to come out of Dharavi and Project Front Foot.



Season 2009-10



Season 2012-13



Season 2013-14



With mentor, Bhavana



# Beyond Dharavi

## Yuwa Girls' Football Project

With the generous donations of kit at our disposal, PFF has again been able to place surplus kit with other organisations during our fifth season. At the Indian Gymkhana we donated pads and helmets to the NGO Salaam Bombay with whom we share the ground. There were football shirts and shorts for *Reality's* Yuwa Girls' Football Project. Krishna Pujara, *Reality's* co-founder, also delivered a bag of kit to three schools in southern Maharashtra.



Reality's Yuwa Girls' Football Project



PFF kit for schools in the south of the state

## The B.J.Home for Children

We were again able to place stumps, bats and tennis balls with The Byramjee Jeejeebhooy Home for Children in Matunga. The orphanage cares for around a hundred children aged 6-12. Bhavana coaches at the orphanage for an hour a week on a voluntary basis during the season. Unable to take her first session, I stepped into the breach. With twenty-five children on parade, the funny, frantic hour proved a heady Indian mix of coaching, crowd control, and chaos.



Victory for the girls



All winners on the day

## The Road to Tarapur

The remainder of the clothing and kit, as last year, was earmarked for residential schools around Tarapur in the north of the state. In undertaking this visit, I'm indebted to an old Matunga friend, Mr V Ramachandran (Ramu), for enabling us to dovetail with the Corporate Social Responsibility program of his former employer, Galaxy Surfactants Ltd.



Bal Nandanvan Nisang School at Jamshet



Kit handover in Jamshet with school founder,  
Mr P Gaikwad



Ramakant and Ramu with kids and kit at the  
Shasakiya Madhyamik Ashramshala



Movement behind the bowler's arm

During a long, hot day we visited three schools in the north of the state and left kit for a fourth in Jamshet. If not for these residential schools, it is unlikely that the children – the majority from families of migrant workers – would receive any formal education.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Peter, Chris, Krishna, Asim and Mayur at *Reality Gives* for their help and hard work on behalf of Project Front Foot not only over the past few months, but over the last five years.

Special thanks to our coaches, Bhavana, Harshad, and assistants, Jigar and Dilip, who, with Peter at the helm, will carry the project forward in the coming weeks and months.

At the Gymkhana, my thanks to Satya and his colleagues for providing a bolt-hole where, over several evenings, we put the cricketing world to rights.

My thanks to Ramu and Suby for planning the trip to Tarapur, a trip made all the smoother, informed and rewarding for the input of Ramakant Chaudhary of Galaxy Surfactants.

For their continued interest and support our thanks to British Airways and Jet Airways.

Finally, sincere thanks to St Michael & All Angels Church in Barnes, Dr Solveig Buhl, Dr Rita Gebert, Jennifer & Jon Goodwin-Bresslaw, Mark Fletcher, John Dwane, and all who sponsored Tim Gill in the Paris Marathon for providing crucial project funding.



Close of Play

Vic Mills. Berlin. December 2013.