

Keswick getting prepared for mid-May start - possibly

Contributed by John Walsh
Sunday, 31 January 2021

KESWICK Cricket Club is quietly optimistic that cricket will once again return to its award-winning Fitz Park ground this summer, writes KEITH RICHARDSON.

That's even if restrictions have still to be in place in the ongoing campaign to suppress COVID.

Although no formal decisions have yet been taken by the competitions - the Cumbria Cricket League and the Eden Valley Cricket League in which Keswick teams compete - it is generally felt that the return of local cricket could be achievable by mid May.

Last season, from late July to mid September, local clubs featured in a shortened season that was planned and run, in the initial stages at least, on tighter geographic grounds in order to cut down on travel.

This year, with the continued roll out of the vaccine, there is a hope that a full league fixture list might be possible to run from mid May to late September.

In the final analysis all amateur clubs in Cumbria, and elsewhere, are subject to Government decisions, informed to some extent by the input of the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board).

While, clearly, there continues to be a great deal of uncertainty, and the COVID situation changes almost on a daily basis, the Keswick club is making plans - as it did last year - in the belief that there will be competitive league cricket on Fitz Park this summer.

Keswick's Head Coach Mark Cameron, who did a lot of work on the introduction of the club's COVID-19 protocol last summer, says: "What we achieved last year was amazing, not only from a club point of view in winning the county title but also, and perhaps more importantly, in providing through cricket a social outlet in an open space after people had endured months of lockdown to protect the NHS and save lives.

"This was important as we see ourselves as being very much a community-based club.

"At a similar time last year a vaccine was nowhere in sight but now that it is, there is greater optimism that COVID can be suppressed and we can look forward to a new normal this summer. There is still a long way to go but as a club we have to prepare for that eventuality."

With that in mind the club has invested £4,000 in new practice netting. Last summer Keswick Lions generously supplied more than £1,000 to buy canvas surrounds for the nets, and while this kept the nets safe for use, and will continue to do so, it was clear that the netting had to be renewed entirely as it has been in situ for many years.

KCC also took the decision to re-appoint Sri Lankan professional Geeth Kumara for what will be his ninth successive season at the club and, again, is hopeful that plans for a full season of cricket starting in mid-May and Government policy re flights and visas will eventually enable his arrival.

On other fronts the club has a new principal sponsor in O'Reilly Wealth Management and has recognised the contribution to the club of Keswickian and former secretary and 1st XI scorer, Barry Ward, by placing his name on the electronic scoreboard.

Similarly the club also has plans to install a new "Boco"; Barnes clock on the frontage of the building to

replace the previous clock that had, quite simply, ran out of time.

Picture - BEN CHALLIS