

RECREATIONAL HABITS

THE DASH FOR CASH

Club cricket lifer **Nick Campion** reports for All Out Cricket from the frontline of the recreational game.

When it comes to buying success, it seems the lesson is never learned. Clubs continue to go down the route of paying lots of players and flying up the divisions to glory... until players get fed up or a sponsor withdraws the cash, whereupon they move back down those divisions quicker than you can say 'hubris', usually to great rejoicing from other clubs.

There are sides in the upper echelons of our league that are rumoured to pay practically everyone. I know a couple of good local cricketers who have been in teams where they were the only one not being paid. They were good performers, taking wickets and scoring runs for their local clubs while players shipped in from here, there and everywhere were taking a nice fee. I don't imagine that makes for a happy dressing room.

So why do some teams pay most of their players? Why divert resources from their ground, juniors and facilities in favour of paying slightly-above-average players to play local cricket? Will this action grow the club, grow the recreational game? Will it help the club become a hub for the local community? Why invest in an asset that is so fragile, that could move on to a new club at the sniff of a better offer?

In my experience, it's usually a chairman's (or other backer's) vanity project. A chance to bask in the reflected glory of the men in white, a free pass into the dressing room, an invite to the team night out, an elusive moment of sporting success lived vicariously.

Pros in the higher echelons of the leagues? Fine. But paying several players in a club team in pursuit of a lower league title? I'm not sure whose interest that serves, bar the ego of the investor. Paying local amateurs to play the sport they purport to love in no way enhances the recreational game or improves a club's prospects. It may provide a temporary fillip but it won't last and the club will be poorer for it afterwards, even if it has a trophy in the cabinet for a year. Play the game for enjoyment, play with your mates, play it hard, play it fair and play it freely. If the season ends with a trophy, you can be sure you were the better team, not the most expensive. As Erich Fromm said, "If I am what I have and if I lose what I have who then am I?" ●



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Ian Anderson, MD of Cricket Deal Direct, reflects on an exciting 12 months...

"It has been an amazing year at Cricket Deal Direct. We have continued to grow and enjoyed the added excitement in April of launching the Heather Knight Cricket Collection, and continuing the theme of providing high-quality gear at affordable prices we have put together some incredible offers.

"We see this as the right move as we will be working hard during the winter months to enhance and 'fine tune' our product offerings. Our own hard work and that of our 'women's working group' will enable us to continue to make improvements to the kit we offer to both male and female cricketers." ●

