

## **Report on Umpire Administration to VDCA/VISCUS on 2017 Season**

From Johnny Carline

There were 90 league games and 3 play-off games scheduled for 2017. Two of these games were defaulted ahead of time and 3 matches have still to report. This leaves a total of 88 matches. 77 of these had two scheduled umpires turn up and umpire the matches, which is a success rate just shy of 90%. That is an impressive success rate and all the clubs should share in the credit for that.

In a number of cases the umpires had qualified but not registered, which meant that my VISCUS colleague Darren Buhr had a fair amount of unnecessary chasing about to do to remedy that. Registration is not expensive and, among other things, it means that the registered umpires are insured. Cricket injuries are rare and those involving umpires are very rare indeed. But conducting a serious cricket match without taking the simple and easy precautions that insurance brings seems to be, to say the least, unwise. Clubs and individuals might wish to ensure that this situation improves.

On the positive side, in almost all cases, the situation does seem to have been oversight and was remedied in due course.

5 matches had only one qualified umpire, which was regrettable. But a bit of context is useful. I have no statistics but when I last umpired, in the 2014 season, a second qualified umpire was there barely half the time, and that seemed to be the common experience. So we have improved.

However, on 6 occasions the designated teams were unable to supply any umpires at all. Five different teams were involved, so there were no 'serial

offenders', which is good news. But we have an ever increasing pool of qualified umpires, so we should be able to do better. And certainly there should never be occasions when umpires simply don't turn up or a number of people turning up 'randomly' throughout the day.

I know the efforts my local club goes to try to schedule umpires before the season starts and to address the inevitable personal schedule changes that throw everything out of whack. It is clearly a chore. But they have never failed to provide two umpires – even if sometimes they have difficulty putting out a team! That is surely a worthy standard to aspire to.

In terms of sending in match reports, the first two weeks were a bit chaotic and we need to make better efforts to ensure that everybody knows what they have to do. That pre-season meeting of captains, umpires and league and VISCUS officials, that everybody thinks is a good idea but no-one seems to want to come to, would probably help solve a lot of these problems.

But after the first two weeks, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Umpires and club captains were magnificent and weeks went by without me having to chase anything. Some of the telephone photos were very hard to read and one noble veteran's attempt at communications technology defied both eyesight and computer skills. But I sensed the spirit was there with all clubs and I applaud them all.

In the last quarter of the season, the wheels fell off a bit – well more than a bit – and so perhaps a mid to late season process reminder might be in order next year.

As for reports on the standard of umpiring, again I have to conclude we are making progress. Only 8 of the matches included critical comments of the umpire and one of those was from the umpire himself who, trying to

umpire solo, admitted he had made some mistakes. His next match got very positive reviews, as did 57 of the matches reported!

Of the issues raised in reviews, there were very few of a technical nature. The no ball rule and the substitution rule perhaps need reinforcing.

But the predominant issue was player behaviour, including excessive appealing, intemperate language and dissent. Again, the vast majority of games were played in an excellent spirit and the reviews reflected that. But when this does not occur, umpires can only do so much. In cricket, as in life, it is sometimes tempting to put success, or the result, ahead of how we play the game. Hopefully the leadership in all of the clubs will continue to try to provide guidance that the contrary is what cricket, and life, is really all about.