



BEYOND THE BOUNDARY ROPE

A look inside the 2009/10 Canterbury Wizards Camp

By Canterbury Wizards All Rounder Andrew Ellis

The 1st of October is the official start of the contract period for the Canterbury Wizards. It also marks the official start of the pre-season preparations for the wider Canterbury Wizards group, which includes Canterbury contracted players, players from the Elite Player Development Programme (EPDP) and also returning Cantabrian and New Zealand Contracted player Chris Martin.

October is a preparation month where all activity is focused on being ready to start the Men's 1st Class Championship campaign on the 10th November against the Wellington Firebirds at The Allied Finance Basin Reserve. Just prior to this there will be a final warm-up match in Otago against the Otago Volts starting on the 2nd of November and concluding on the 5th of November.

All players will be turning out for their club teams during the month of October improving their cricket specific fitness with more over's in the field, batting or at the bowling crease. Also, the advent of the new Premier Cricket Series will allow even more cricket for those aspiring to play for the Wizards. This league will contain four teams, the first two being metro teams, which will contain contracted players and wider Wizards squad members. A Districts XI will also be involved, which will be captained by Peter Fulton and will also be bolstered by contracted player Hamish Bennett when he returns from the lay-off after surgery to an abscess on his pelvis. The final team to make up the four team competition will be a team made up from the fourteen EPDP players and will be captained by contracted player Andrew Ellis. These games will provide the potential Wizards players with matches at an intensity above club cricket in preparation for the start of the 1st class campaign. Venues for these matches will include Elmwood Park, Mainpower Oval and Hagley Oval. With each game being played on the two best wickets in the greater Christchurch area at any one time, the opportunity is there for a high intensity and high quality Sunday league. As the season progresses there will be more Sunday League games, all of which will coincide with the format of cricket that the Wizards will be involved in at the time, for example, 20/20 during January and 50-over cricket during February. The main aim being to bridge the gap between club cricket and representative cricket, so that any player that may be called upon for the Wizards will have some cricket of a good intensity behind them.

Fitness has been the major component of pre-season training to this point, and while this continues, it is the specific skills work that is starting to become more prominent. As the weather allows the group to get into outdoor nets, bowling loads will increase and batters will start to face balls on grass wickets rather than indoor surfaces. For those that have been based in Christchurch, October is a continuation of the pre-season training that extends back to June. For those that have been based overseas it is time to join up with the squad and continue the preparations they have been undertaking on their own. Trainer Neil Tyndall has carefully managed the progression of training sessions so that as the 10th of November looms, the Wizards squad are in the best physical shape in order to stay injury free throughout the season and also to have the base to perform their skills to the highest level possible in the first game and onward. Both running fitness and strength training have been a part of an arduous past four months, with all involved being pushed past what they thought was their limits. The presence of the EPDP players has pushed the standards to a new level. Having a youthful bunch of emerging talent around has pushed the more seasoned representative players to an even higher standard, which bodes well for the Wizards for the 2009/2010 season and definitely beyond.

The Elite Player Development Programme is an initiative from New Zealand Cricket that sees 63 players from around the country identified as potential 1st class and international players. Canterbury has 14 of these players, the highest of any province. These players are subject to all the same training processes and evaluations as the current Wizards group in order to fast-track their learning and develop their potential as quickly as possible. Their progress will be closely monitored by Canterbury's new Network Coach, Paul Wiseman.

Paul Wiseman is also a new addition to the Wizards group as the Network Coach. Paul returns to Canterbury after a successful 1st class and test match career. He has spent the last three years playing and coaching in Durham, who have retained the English 1st class championship this past season after winning it for the first time in their history the season before. He will bring a wealth of experience to the province. Paul will oversee the players in the EPDP and the coach Canterbury Under 17 and Under 19 side. He will also assist Head Coach Bob Carter but will also oversee the emerging talent within Canterbury.

As the group comes together during October, Canterbury will have three new faces join the playing personnel from outside the province. Chris Martin needs no introduction as a former Cantabrian and current Black Caps contracted player, not to mention one of New Zealand's best test match bowlers of recent times. His presence will bolster Canterbury's bowling stocks and will no doubt inspire those around him to perform to a higher level. Rob Nicol is also new to the Wizards and joins us from last years 1st class champions, the Auckland Aces. Rob is an established top-order batsman and right arm off-spin bowler. Our last new face is Jason Donnelly who joins us from the South Australian set-up. Jason is originally from Auckland but moved to Adelaide to continue his career before joining up with the Wizards. Jason is a left arm off-spin bowler and will add value to the provinces spin-bowling stocks.