

## SACO County Education Officer's Annual Report March 2018

**DATE OF MEETING**19<sup>th</sup> March 2018**REPORT FROM**

Howard Cohen – County Education Officer

I apologise for being unable to attend the AGM and hope that this written report will be an acceptable substitute. My absence will, of course, be welcomed by many, not least because it will lead to a shorter meeting!

Umpire Stage One and Stage Two courses have been, or are being, run at Ashtead, Croydon, Guildford, The Kia Oval and Sutton – either over three evenings or two Sundays. Our ability to deliver a Stage Three course at Beckenham is in the lap of the weather gods, as I write. Introduction to Umpiring evenings are already planned for Chessington and Hampton Wick Royal and I expect others to be run at Reigate and Wimbledon and, possibly, elsewhere. We held an open event at The Kia Oval to introduce the 2017 Code of Laws and similar presentations will be made at Redhill and Farnham. These may be regarded as continuing professional development for qualified umpires.

The dedication of our Tutors never ceases to amaze me and this year has been much busier for them than most previous years. In addition to having to get to grips with the new Code of Laws, they have had to cope with a completely new suite of training courses that require a different approach to teaching. The material supplied by ECB ACO is a substantial improvement on the already excellent PowerPoint presentations of the recent past. There are many more graphics and video clips than before, to illustrate the points being taught. And the courses are much more interactive than before, placing more responsibility on the participants to actively engage in their own learning. That responsibility also extends to studying the Laws themselves, rather than relying on being spoon-fed by the Tutors. The participants are required to study the Laws and our job is to teach them how to umpire. The excellent MCC e-learning resource, freely available on-line to everyone, makes learning and understanding the Laws much easier than ever before and people can dip in and out of it as often as they choose. I think this gives participants a better experience, with more time for discussions and an increased opportunity for working at home between the sessions. This has allowed us to shorten the courses and reduce the cost of each, in order to reduce the barriers to learning for new recruits.

Speaking of new recruits, our Education Team has been strengthened by the addition of Colin Kent, Nigel Legg, Andy Storey and, more recently, Chris Moore from Sutton CC. This has led to a reduction in the average age of our team. All of them have shown great promise thus far but they will need to attend formal training workshops before they can become accredited.

One sad occurrence in the year under review was the sudden and unexpected death of our colleague, Charles Bowman, following a freak accident. I first met Charles only last year when he attended the Level Two course and displayed a real appetite for umpiring and a rare insight into the requirements of the role. I had the great good fortune to carry out a boundary assessment of Charles in action with his friend, Bernie Dodwell, in a potentially tense match at Egham when the visitors were Old Wimbledonians. There was some “history” attached to this encounter that was efficiently, and pleasantly, defused by two exemplary officials.

Having overseen three years of continual change, the time has come for me to step aside and, with that in mind, David Brown became my deputy in January. With the consent of the AGM, David will succeed me as County Education Officer and I wish him every success in the role. I shall continue as Regional Education Officer for London (Essex, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey) for the time being. Once this change has taken place, my email address for umpire education contacts will become [UmpireEducationLondon@gmail.com](mailto:UmpireEducationLondon@gmail.com).

Finally, some “thank yous”: to the SACO officers for their unwavering support and friendship during the past three years; to those members of the SACO Committee who have shown me support; and to Surrey Cricket Foundation, especially Simon Hards, without whose support we could not have achieved as much as we have.

To all umpires in Surrey I say, “may all your nicks be loud ones!”