



March Town Cricket Club

March Town Cricket Club has used the Sport England Clubmark accreditation process as an opportunity to adopt a more businesslike approach to its sport.

With a lot of cricket clubs competing for a limited amount of funding, March Town Cricket Club decided that it was time to show that it meant business and so embarked on the Sport England Clubmark accreditation process.

“Recreational cricket does not attract a lot of sponsorship,” explains Les Mills, March Town’s Club Development Officer. “We realised that what money there was available for development would be most likely to go to those clubs able to show a professional approach in all areas, so that’s what we set out to do.”

The Sport England Clubmark is used by national governing bodies of sport as part of their club accreditation programmes for sports clubs with junior sections in recognition of a quality club. By creating a single, national standard, Clubmark helps give all kinds of sports clubs a structure and direction that will benefit them in many ways.

A sub committee from the club worked with local sports development officers and the Cambridgeshire Cricket Development Officer and began by forming their development plan. “This was something that is so common in business but really quite new to a cricket club,” says Les. “It was a very interesting exercise and we’ve kept it regularly updated.”

The new professional approach can be seen in all areas of the club – from the new welfare policies and codes of conduct through to regularly updated notice boards and qualified coaching team.

“Nothing is hit and miss anymore, it’s all carefully thought out. All coaches have had CRB checks, and our members and coaches have given up their time to undergo extensive training in areas including child protection, first aid, equity in sport and much more. These are regularly requirements for businesses but not something usually associated with social or recreational sports clubs,” says Les.

March Town Cricket Club achieved Clubmark status in June 2004 and it represents a step forward for the club which is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. “We see ourselves as a model club for others in the area and we’re developing all the time.”

In the last year the club has had some noteworthy achievements, winning the Active Sports/Radio Cambridgeshire Club of the Year Award and enjoying the benefits of greater publicity. “We’ve had a lot of coverage locally and lots of support, but we’ve also been organised and professional in the way we’ve



promoted ourselves,” explains Les. “Interest and membership are both on the up and people are getting more involved.”

Another major development has been the introduction of girls’ cricket, with an under 13s teams playing for the first time last year and an under 15s team starting this year. As the only club in the area offering cricket for girls, March Town has been able to benefit from a part time coach specialising in girls’ cricket in the Fenland area. “The teams came about as a result of the commitment of one particular committee member who has worked hard to make this happen. It’s great to see her dedication pay off.”

In April the club took part in the ECB’s NatWest CricketForce initiative where local businesses and volunteers offer time and resources to local clubs. March Town’s pavilion got a complete makeover thanks to the hard work of 25 volunteers working over two days, an initiative no doubt helped by the club’s new organised approach.

“We haven’t yet received the funding we are hoping to get, but we know that after all this hard work we’re in the perfect position to be considered,” says Les. “The club is now where we want to be and the end results in terms of professionalism and increased interest have made the Clubmark accreditation process more than worthwhile.”