

ASSOCIATION DES CLUBS DE CRICKET DU SUD-OUEST

Siège social : Hôtel des Associations - 47160 DAMAZAN



Annual General Meeting – Season 2022

Damazan 26 November 2022

Season 2022 – Report by Outgoing President

When, on 6th February of this year, our good friend and colleague Ian Brown wrote his presidential report on Season 2021, he made it clear that 2022 would be his last year as president of ACCSO Committee.

He wrote of being seriously overloaded with ACCSO work ahead of season 2022 – and this was most certainly true although, truth be told, he had insisted upon retaining quite a bit of the tasks from his preceding stint as ACCSO Secretary.

At our AGM in March 2022, it became évident to all who were there that he was indeed in very poor health. His decline thereafter was, as we now know, very rapid. It was good that he had family and friends with him when he passed away,

Glyn Taylor generously and more than adequately represented Eymet CC, ACCSO and club cricketers in general at the funeral service. There were one-minute silent or applauding tributes at the start of many matches ; plus tributes at the end of the final match of the suitably re-named Ian Brown Memorial ACCSO Pearl League. The same was notably the case at the end of Blevins Franks Cup Final, where the many clients joined in the applause.

Moral support also came in from the FFBS, where the lady in charge of licences and judicial affairs generously expressed the FFBS' sympathies.

During Ian's decline, Peter Brown and Rajesh Gopalan did great work to get things ready for the new season. Much of the success on the field in season 2022 is due to their preparatory work.

ACCSO club presidents honoured me with their request to come back on board to take us through to the AGM of 26th November. I have received tremendous support from Peter and Rajesh, but also from David Horlock who dealt with all the incoming Match Reports.

Club news :

I'm sorry to say that the ACCSO community has lost our good friends at Mansle-Angoulême. They took a year *en sommeil* from the FFBS in 2021 but could not re-form for 2022 and did not pay the 2022 FFBS affiliation fee. As a result they have been *radiés* by the FFBS.

Midi followed the same pattern and have also been *radiés* by the FFBS - but they did pay their ACCSO membership fee for 2022 and so have the right to vote at our AGM. Very generously, Midi made their ground available to Nîmes and Montpellier for their « home » matches in both ACCSO and Ligue d'Occitanie competitions.

Meanwhile, over at Bordeaux-Giscours, Andy Smith found the wherewithal to keep the club afloat in the eyes of the FFBS – and pay his ACCSO membership fee - but could not field a side in 2022.

Here's hoping that 2023 will see all these good people back on the field of play!

Review of season 2022 :

Let's now look at the positive side of the ledger – for the season just past was very much full of good news on – and off - the field.

Starting in fact off the field, where Rupert Holderness continued to provide vital financial support from Blevins Franks. In essence it's that support which makes it possible for ACCSO member-clubs to enjoy no fewer than 3 competitions for way below what FC charge for a single FC competition.

And on the field ?

- Eymet won the Blevins Franks Cup competition (that's the sixth time that they've won the Blevins Franks and its predecessor Siddalls Cup competitions). They beat Montpellier, who appeared in 2 of the 3 finals in their first full season. A word of sympathy for them: their captain went down with Covid just before the match (happily, Nikunj has since recovered fully). But that also deprived the club of 50% of their drivers, so they turned out with only 9 men on the day. Full credit though to Eymet for the manner of their winning, with Nigel Jones outstanding with the bat.
- In the suitably-renamed League competition, Saint Aulaye beat Nîmes, who got to the Final after a long campaign and in their very first year in competition. This was an excellent match, closely-contested throughout. The last time SAC won the League was back in 2013 so the excitement almost justified captain Bilal's losing their scorebook! Happily, NCC president Rolf Zechner was keeping his own immaculate scorebook and confirmed all the numbers.
- And last but not least, Catus comprehensively won the T20 Finals, beating old rivals Eymet and newer rivals Montpellier. This was CCC's first lifting of a trophy since 2016. It's said that Ken Sutton was walking around for days on end with a smile on his face!

Thanks to Damazan, Catus and Toulouse for making their grounds available and suitably prepared for the finals. And thanks, too, to Glyn Taylor and Gary Starke (Cup Final), Glyn and Peter Stirling (League Final) and Rajesh Gopalan and his TCC colleagues Tithir Saha and Christophe Srikanth (T20 Final). Excellent umpiring all round.

And still on the subject of umpiring, a calendar so full of matches called for a sizable effort on the part of clubs to ensure that every match was duly umpired – and scored. I don't have the names of everybody who stood in all the many games up to the final phases – but thanks to all of them for contributing to getting the matches played.

Rosters/Team sheets and Match reports :

I wish that I could report that there was a 100% submission of Match Reports in 2022. That was not the case and you only have to look at the Results page of the Web site to see that some matches are marked as missing the detail data. This made David Horlock's job of providing informative and authoritative data for tables and such all the more difficult. Fortunately, we could cross-check with other sources. But it's hardly the best way to go about managing competitions ; and the winning club captains really ought to do a better job of making sure that their victories get correctly recorded and their best players

acknowledged. There are places elsewhere in France, I remind you, where the absence of Match Reports results in the match being declared null and void and a fine imposed !

To some extent, the same also applies to producing Team Sheets before the game starts. Again, the captains could do a better job. Not just to make life easier for the scorers but above all to re-assure everybody that every player taking the field is duly licenced and with the necessary medical status. The start of season was overshadowed by a couple of incidents over licences. We try hard to keep « Paris » out of our matches ; but, for as long as you are affiliated to the FFBS, this area is not open to any local flexibility.

Travel constraints :

It is a tribute to the enthusiasm of the players and the ingenuity of the clubs that you are able, year after year, to undertake a whole season of long-distance travel. And that's before anybody talks about environmental concerns or, more recently, the sheer cost of getting from A to B and back home again. Pre-season work on pool structures and sequence of matches obviously helps to reduce the burden but a burden it is, nonetheless.

As in all years, we shall see how many teams are wanting to enter which competitions in 2023 ; also what the situation will be for Nîmes and Montpellier as to grounds of their own/ongoing use of Pouzolles. But the AGM agenda will almost certainly include proposals to modify match structures with a view to managing distances travelled and also time away from home.

Developments at the FFBS and in FC :

At the time of the last ACCSO AGM, on 5th March 2022, there was a stated reluctance to debate yet again whether ACCSO clubs should or should not remain affiliated to the FFBS. The question has of course been debated at several previous AGMs. But Committee kindly allowed me to spend a few minutes updating attendees on the latest developments, both at the FFBS and at FC.

I focussed on the increasing level of discontent on ~~the~~ part of certain (non-ACCSO) clubs over various aspects of FC's governance. These came to a head at FC's AGM a few days later, on 26th March. You have received a copy of FC's minutes. They give you a flavour of the state of affairs.

Since then, there have been developments on all sides :

- FC have made clear their intention to press for independence from the FFBS and attain for cricket the status of *Sport de Haut Niveau (HN)*. To that end, they published radically-revised *Statuts* and *Règlement Intérieur* for an FC free of the FFBS. And put them to member-clubs for vote by online ballot. According to FC's videoconf EGM on 21st September, the clubs voted in favour, but far from unanimously
- As for the FFBS, let's say that their position has fluctuated. From conciliation (at FC's AGM on 26/3) to outright rejection of FC's tactics, via tolerance and back again to a search for compromise.
- And the Ministry (which is the final arbiter in all of this, for only they can award HN status and they alone can give delegated authority for the management of a sport)? Their position is not at all visible – it gets filtered along that way, according to which protagonist is relaying the info.

At the time of writing, the situation is still in a state of flux. But it is certain that there will be major changes to the way cricket is administered in France. The timing and the exact nature of those changes are open questions.

I hope to bring a clearer picture to your AGM on 26th November, so as to inform a debate on how you, the ACCSO member-clubs, should position yourself relative to a re-vamped FC – whose Director-General is on record (Facebook and in English !) as saying that you are « old-timers » who bizarrely insist on playing any other format than T20 !

All of this may seem remote from our cricket. But it is in fact highly relevant – because the cricket we play and the way we play it depends in large part upon a written *convention* between the FC of today and ACCSO. Nominally, that *convention* still has 2 years to run. But will the FC of tomorrow have a different approach to regional cricket ? Would your club fare better in a non-FC environment ?

Inevitably – *n'en déplaise à notre cher ami Ian* – the question invites itself onto the 26/11 agenda ; and it will be a major issue for your new Committee in 2023.

I look forward to seeing you at Damazan on Saturday 26th November.

Peter Townsend,

Outgoing Interim president.

7 November 2022

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